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Final line-up for post of Tehran mayor revealed **12**

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Iran says has own options against U.S. violations of nuclear deal

Iran says it could resort to its own options if the mechanisms featured in its 2015 nuclear agreement with world powers, including the U.S., fail to force other parties to live up to their end of the bargain.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Abbas Araqchi, who heads the Iranian task force overseeing the implementation of the agreement, made the comments on Thursday following talks in Vienna with Yukiya Amano, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Araqchi is in Vienna to attend a new meeting of the Iran-P5+1 Joint

Commission, which monitors the implementation of the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The committee comprises representatives of the signatories to the deal and regularly meets in the Austrian capital.

In an interview with Press TV, Araqchi criticized the US for poisoning the atmosphere for the global business community seeking to work with Iran in the post-JCPOA era.

"Unfortunately, it has become a bad habit [for] the US. Whenever they do their commitments, for example they extend their waivers, which is their responsibility [as part of] the JCPOA, →2

Tehran protests Kuwait over embassy decision

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran **d e s k** said on Thursday it had lodged a protest with Kuwait after the Arab state's decision to close Iran's cultural mission for alleged links to a "spy and terror" cell.

Tehran has summoned the Kuwaiti chargé d'affaires to explain the decision and protest against it.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has no implications in case and the Kuwaiti authorities had been notified of this from the outset," Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Thursday.

"Iran has always acted responsibly toward regional countries, including Kuwait in trying times," Qa-

assemi added, stressing that Tehran deserves its right to reciprocate the move.

On Thursday, Kuwait told Iran to close down its cultural mission and to reduce its embassy staff, a decision state news agency KUNA said was made after "Iranian parties" were found implicated in a terror cell in 2015.

Last year Kuwait convicted 23 men - one Iranian and the rest Kuwaiti - of spying for Iran and Lebanese group Hezbollah after a cache of guns and explosives were discovered in a raid of the so-called "Abdali cell" in 2015, according to Reuters. →2

CIA chief promises fundamental policy shift toward Iran

TEHRAN — The CIA director, Mike Pompeo, said on Thursday that Washington will change its policy toward Tehran, signaling a tougher stance against the Islamic Republic.

Pompeo made the remarks at the Aspen Security Forum, an annual gathering of intelligence and national security officials and experts in Aspen, Colorado.

He noted the Trump administration was working on ways to push back against Tehran, which wanted to be a "kingpin" in the Middle East.

The CIA director also criticized the nuclear deal and the former U.S. administration for signing it.

When it comes to Iranian compliance with the agreement, Iran is a "bad tenant", he said, adding that Tehran's compliance to the deal was like a renter who did not pay rent until the landlord demanded it and then sent a bad check.

Meanwhile, the U.S. administration recently confirmed, though reluctantly, that Tehran met its obligations under the deal.

The U.S. president had been working with Persian Gulf states and Israel to find a common way to push back against what he called "Iranian aggression" in the region.

What won't work is appeasing Tehran or forcing them into compliance, Pompeo said. "When we have our strategy in place, I'm confident you will see a fundamental shift in policy" towards Iran.

Iran's missile attack on ISIS is game changer: Indian analyst

By **Vahid Pourtajrishi**

TEHRAN — Bhakti M. Desai, an Indian international relations analyst, is of the opinion that Iran's missile attack on ISIS strongholds in Syria on June 18 was a "historic game changer".

Desai also says BRIC members including India appreciate Tehran's approach toward Syria.

Following is the text of Desai's interview with the Tehran Times:

Question: During the BRICS meeting in Beijing last month Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov asserted it is better for the U.S. to end its unilateral activities in Syria. How could Russia and the U.S. work shoulder to shoulder in Syria to fight terrorism? Is it possible?

Answer: The recent meeting of BRICS foreign ministers at Beijing saw fruitful discussions and talks on terrorism, trade and commerce. So when Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov chose to use this potent platform to assert his country's concerns over Syria, it did not really

come as a surprise to anyone. Russia has constantly called upon the U.S. to stop unilateral activities in Syria and appealed for well-coordinated multilateral approach to solve the Syrian crisis. Russia also believes that any action in Syria should be coordinated with Damascus. Trump on his part throughout his election campaign had been vocal about the threat that ISIS posed to humanity and had showed willingness to co-operate with even Iran and Russia to eliminate ISIS; he had also spoken of reducing U.S. involvement in Syria. However post-elections Trump has gone back on his words. The U.S. is now involved not only in a power game politics in Syria but is also concentrating more on targeting the Syrian regime forces rather than the ISIS. The fact remains that no matter who comes to power in the U.S., their foreign policy is driven by corporate interests. In my opinion the recent developments in Syria as well as past experiences clearly indicate that there can nev-

er be a U.S.-Russia rapprochement on Syria. There is no possibility of the two former cold war foes working shoulder to shoulder in Syria. First and foremost both Russia and the U.S. have contradictory interests and intentions in Syria. While Russia has long standing geo-political interests in Syria, it supports the Assad regime and has been focusing on eliminating ISIS so that the region can be stabilized. On the other hand the U.S. like always is playing a pretentious game in Syria. It is more interested in downing the Assad regime and bringing in a puppet government rather than fighting ISIS. The U.S. is actually fighting a proxy war in Syria by supporting the rebel groups. The recent downing of a Syrian warplane by U.S. forces and the consequent Russian response have sparked fears that the two countries could be heading for a confrontation which could manifest into a prolonged proxy war in Syria. →2

Kharrazi: We are ready to negotiate with Saudi Arabia

POLITICS TEHRAN — Kamal Kharrazi, former head of the Iranian diplomacy, has said Tehran is ready to enter dialogue with Saudi Arabia to settle disputes.

"We are ready to negotiate with Saudi Arabia," Kharrazi told a number of French journalists, Le Point reported on Friday.

Iran and Saudi Arabia have been at odds since the conflict arose in Syr-

ia in 2011. The relations suffered more setbacks as 464 Iranian pilgrims were crushed to death in a stampede in Mecca in September 2015.

The relations started deteriorating as a number of Iranians attacked the Saudi diplomatic missions in Tehran and Mashhad in protest to the execution of the pro-democracy cleric Nimr al-Nimr in January 2016. Though senior Iranian officials condemned

the move, Saudi completely cut ties with Tehran.

Iran has been seeking to reach to Saudi Arabia, though new rulers in Riyadh are reluctant to respond positively to Iran's overtures.

In an interview with the Tehran Times recently, Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said Saudi Arabia is under illusion in seeing Iran as a threat.



Tehran Times/Mohammadreza Abbasi

Iran ranks first in 2017 Thailand Asian Junior Wrestling Champs

Iran Greco-Roman wrestling team finished in first place at the 2017 Asian Junior Championships in Thailand.

Iranian wrestlers snatched two gold, three silver and one bronze medals in the competition. The 2017 Junior Asian Wrestling Championships opened in Thailand's capital Bangkok on Thursday (July 20).

Several teams from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, South Korea, Uzbekistan and India are competing for the second and third titles. The competitions would wrap up Friday (July 21) evening.

Syria army, Hezbollah attack terrorist positions in border areas

The Lebanese resistance group Hezbollah and the Syrian army have launched an offensive to clear fighters from an area of the Syria-Lebanon frontier, according to reports.

The operation is targeting fighters in the Aarsal area, on the outskirts of the Lebanese town of Aarsal, and in areas of the western Qalamoun Mountains in Syria, the commander said.

A commander in the military alliance fighting in support of the Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad confirmed the assault to Reuters, while a Lebanese security source explained to DPA news agency that shells were "raining down" on posts belonging to Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, the former Syrian branch of al-Qaeda previously known as al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra), and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit.

The Qalamoun Mountains between Syria and Lebanon have also been a base of operations for ISIL terrorists.

Several thousand Syrian refugees are living in camps in the Juroud Aarsal region, a largely barren area situated in Qalamoun between Syria and Lebanon. The Lebanese army said it is helping Syrian refugees flee the area to safer grounds.

Hezbollah's al-Manar TV said fighters were being targeted in Aarsal and areas near the Syrian town of Fleita.

Meanwhile, the Lebanese army has deployed reinforcements on the outskirts of Aarsal in anticipation of the operation, aiming to prevent fighters from fleeing into Lebanon.

Jabhat Fatah al-Sham was al-Qaeda's official affiliate in the Syrian conflict until last year when it formally severed ties to al-Qaeda and renamed itself. The group now spearheads the Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS/Organization for the Liberation of the Levant/Levant Liberation Committee), commonly referred to as Tahrir al-Sham alliance.

Lebanese Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri said on Tuesday that the Lebanese army would carry out a carefully planned operation in the Juroud Aarsal area, but there was no coordination between it and the Syrian army. →13

KSC
INVITATION TO INTERNATIONAL TENDER
No. 371846
KHOUZESTAN STEEL COMPANY
INTENDS TO PURCHASE 1,000 MT
CALCINED PETROLEUM COKE WITH
THE FOLLOWING SPECIFICATIONS:
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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Iranian colonel killed in terrorist clash

POLITICS TEHRAN — An Iranian colonel **d e s k** was killed and a soldier wounded on Thursday in a clash with terrorists in the country's northwestern borders, according to the Hamza Sayyed al-Shohada Headquarters, a Revolutionary Guards' wing in the area.

Also, three terrorists were killed, four wounded, and one arrested, it said. The rest fled the scene.

Iran shares borders with insecure countries in the region such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, where terrorist intrusions have been a continuous source of concern for Tehran. Year-round armed clashes are reported.



Russia: New U.S. sanctions against Iran unfounded

POLITICS TEHRAN — A senior Russian official **d e s k** has criticized fresh U.S. sanctions against Iran on "unfounded" grounds, saying they will only undermine the implementation of the 2015 nuclear agreement with Tehran, Press TV reported.

Mikhail Ulyanov, head of the Russian Foreign Ministry's department for non-proliferation and arms control, told RIA Novosti news agency that the nuclear accord calls on "Iran to refrain from launching ballistic missiles, but ... it is just an appeal, not an obligation."

Earlier this week, the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump announced new sanctions on 18 Iranian individuals, groups and networks.



Saudi Arabia not happy with Iran nuclear deal: Forbes report

POLITICS TEHRAN — Saudi Arabia is definitely **d e s k** not happy about the Iran nuclear deal and is not happy that its archenemy is coming out of isolation, James Conca, an environmental and nuclear scientist, wrote in an op-ed in The Forbes on July 20.

The animosity is explicable, Conca added. "The Saudis have been stoking sectarian violence in the region for the last two years in the hopes of pushing Iran off the wagon and claiming itself as the only rational partner in the region."



Iran, Japan wrap up human rights roundtable

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran and Japan wrapped **d e s k** up the 12th round of human rights negotiations in the capital Tokyo on Thursday.

The forum provided an opportunity for the two sides to study bilateral human rights consultations as well as human rights ties in relevant international bodies.

The previous session was held two years ago. Relations between Japan and Iran have gathered momentum particularly after the signing of the nuclear deal in 2015 between Iran and six world powers of the U.S., Russia, China, France, Germany and England.



Cleric: American-Zionist lobby at work to mar regional ties

POLITICS TEHRAN — The American-Zionist **d e s k** is doing its utmost to damage relations between Iran and its neighbor, Tehran Friday prayer leader Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami said.

"It is crystal clear that American-Zionist lobby does its best to tarnish Iran's relations with its neighboring countries," Khatami said, a reference to Kuwait's decision to order Iran to reduce its embassy staff in the country after an Iranian was reportedly found implicated in a terror cell in 2015.

Iran has strongly objected to the decision, rejecting any implication in the case.



NYT warns Trump against war with Iran

POLITICS TEHRAN — Enumerating a list of flaws **d e s k** in U.S. foreign policy, The New York Times urged the Trump administration that to engage in dialogue with Tehran in lieu of resorting to coercion.

The paper offered a list of concerns over a possible war in the Middle East in a Thursday opinion piece, which sounds like a warning amid the U.S. administration's reckless acts of incitement to an armed conflict with the Islamic Republic.

"The last thing the United States needs is another war in the Middle East," the paper said in the opinion piece.

Nuclear deal joint commission convenes in Vienna

POLITICS TEHRAN — The joint **d e s k** commission of the nuclear deal, which is tasked to monitor the implementation of the agreement, met in Vienna on Friday.

Representatives from all sides of the nuclear deal, including Iran, Russia, China, the U.S., Britain, France and Germany as well as the European Union gathered to address Iran's complaints about U.S. breach of its obligations under the deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA.

The deal was inked in July 2015. It lifted nuclear related sanctions on Iran and in exchange put certain limits on Tehran's nuclear work.

Speaking to reporters in Vienna on Thursday, Abbas Araqchi, the Iranian deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, said the newest issues surrounding the process of the implementation of the JCPOA and Iran's complaints about United States' failure to meet its obligations under the agreement would be discussed during the meeting.



Helga Maria Schmid (L) and Abbas Araqchi

He further emphasized that over the past year and a half, Iran has remained committed to its obligations as confirmed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The seventh session of the JCPOA

joint commission was held in Vienna in late April. The meeting focused on various issues, including proper implementation of the deal as well as all parties' compliance with it. It was co-chaired by

Araqchi and EU's Deputy Foreign Policy Chief Helga Maria Schmid.

Earlier this week, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the Trump administration's attempt to reimpose sanctions on Iran was a violation of the nuclear deal.

"They have been talking about 'scrapping the deal,'" he said. "Then they came to realize that would not be globally welcome. So now they are trying to make it impossible for Iran to benefit."

On Tuesday the Trump administration confirmed that Iran had met its obligations under the deal. However, it slapped new sanctions against Iran for its missile program which Tehran insists is for defensive purposes.

Back in April, Zarif slammed the United States for defying both spirit and letter of the accord.

"We'll see if U.S. prepared to live up to letter of the JCPOA (the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) let alone [its] spirit. So far, it has defied both" Zarif said on his official Twitter account.

Tehran calls U.S. terrorism report 'invalid'

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Iranian Foreign **d e s k** Ministry on Thursday called the new U.S. report on terrorism "invalid", saying it is an attempt to divert public opinion from Washington's support for terrorism.

"The U.S. report on terrorism in the world is invalid and is a fruitless attempt to divert the international public opinion from the country's supports and the role it plays in forming and boosting the terrorist groups," ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said in a report posted on his Telegram channel.

His comments came as a response to the annual U.S. Reports on Terrorism 2016 in which it claimed

Iran is sponsoring terrorism worldwide. The report was released on Wednesday.

Qassemi said the report reveals U.S. hostile policies and its "shameful" instrumental use of any issue.

The report is drawn up based on "unrealistic" approaches which seeks to "deny obvious truth" and level "unfounded accusations" against Iran, he added.

Qassemi also said that some of the U.S. allies in the Middle East region have been ideological source of terrorism in the past two decades, yet they are regarded U.S. partners in fighting terrorism which proves that the report is "invalid" and "unfounded".

Elsewhere, he said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran is

determined to continue fighting the terrorist groups and violent extremism as the most serious international threats and will stand beside the Iraqi and Syrian governments in fighting Daesh and other Takfiri groups as long as the two governments request. Leveling wrong, biased and unfounded accusations like what has been said in the recent report of the U.S. State Department will not influence this policy."

It is possible to reach a world without terrorism if some regional and extra-regional countries cut financial and ideological supports for the terrorist groups and have firm determination in fighting terrorism, Qassemi stated.

Tehran protests Kuwait over embassy decision

1 -> Iranian state television said Kuwait's Foreign Ministry summoned Tehran's ambassador and ordered the number of diplomats to be cut from 19 to four and the closure of the cultural and military missions.

KUNA, citing a Foreign Ministry source, said Kuwait had also decided to freeze any activities involving joint committees

between the two countries.

"The government of the state of Kuwait decided to take actions in accordance with diplomatic norms and in abidance with the Vienna conventions with regards to its relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran," acting Information Minister Sheikh Mohammad al-Mubarak al-Sabah said in a separate statement.

The row comes as Kuwait attempts to mediate an end to the Persian Gulf's worst diplomatic crisis in years, after Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates cut ties with Qatar over accusations it supports "terrorism", an allegation Doha rejects as "baseless".

Kuwait has had no ambassador to Tehran since January 2016 after it

followed suit other fellow Arab countries which downgraded diplomatic relations with Tehran following the storming of Saudi Arabia's diplomatic posts in Tehran and Mashhad.

The move is expected to make a dent in Kuwait's efforts to mediate in the escalating feud between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Iran's missile attack on ISIS is game changer: Indian analyst

'U.S. playing pretentious game in Syria'

1 -> Basically, the Syrian issue and conditions in Middle East were two of the main topics of negotiations between BRICS members. How these states, which are not in Middle East, can help find a solution to the wounds of the Middle East?

A: The Middle East in general and Syria in particular have increasingly become a main thread of discussion at consequent BRICS summits and meetings. The international political scenario in the past decade has been dominated by issues of the Middle East and Syria. The Syrian crisis in particular has escalated enormously over the years with a potential of a possible spillover. Even though the BRICS countries are not located in Middle East, the involvement of Russia as a direct actor in the Syrian conflict has made the group a key actor in solving the Syrian crisis. BRICS approach towards Syria is largely driven by its standpoint of questioning certain international norms and pushing for a more just international system based on peaceful relations and respect for national sovereignty. BRICS has challenged and criticized tendencies of the U.S. and its allies to carry out crafty military interventions in the Middle East to suit their political designs. While Russia has been historically close to the Assad regime the other BRICS nations too have not only maintained full diplomatic ties with Syrian government but also kept their embassies in Damascus. Russia and China as permanent members of the UNSC have blocked several unfair and unbalanced resolutions against Syria and certain other Middle East countries. India, Brazil and South Africa on their part have also held non-interventionist approach in the Middle East. The summit documents of BRICS have directly addressed the Syrian crisis reiterating their stand of respect for national sovereignty and independence of

Syria while devising any political solution to the escalating crisis in that country. They have acknowledged terrorism as a salient aspect of Syrian crisis. The Middle East being rich in natural resources has always been on radar of the U.S. and its allies. The U.S. and its allies are always on a lookout for opportunities to topple popular governments in these countries and replace them with puppet governments which could help them control the resources and markets of these countries. BRICS nations have objected to the use of Responsibility To Protect (R2P) framework to justify military intervention by the U.S. and its allies in the Middle East in general and Syria in particular. The BRICS clique could play a crucial role in resolving the issues of the Middle East because this group promises a fair and innovative approach to the problems of the Middle East as opposed to western self-motivated solutions. To begin with BRICS on account of its vast political, economic and cultural weight can influence the shaping of international attitude towards Syrian crisis. Further while Russia's intervention has helped in fighting the ISIS, China and India can play a major role in facilitating humanitarian aid for the war-torn nation. BRICS as a whole could play a key role in peace building efforts and post-conflict reconstruction in Syria.

■ As, you know, Iran attacked ISIS strongholds in Syria on June 18 using its ballistic missiles for the first time. How India sees this. What is your opinion?

A: I believe Iran's attack on ISIS strongholds in Syria is a historic game changer in many ways. For the first time in 30 years Iran has chosen to fire missiles from its territory. Iran's Revolutionary Guard clearly announced that the attack was in retaliation for double terrorist attacks in Tehran two weeks ago (June 7) and also warned that Iran will not hesitate to launch more missile attacks if the ISIS militants plot any future attacks on Iran. This is a bold step and will now change the dynamics in the Middle East in many ways. Through this attack Iran has sent a clear and stern message to the ISIS, and various other terrorist outfits and its enemies that Iran is fully prepared to retaliate with full force to any threat to its people and its national interests even beyond its boundaries. India would completely understand and support this stand of Iran because India too faces cross border terrorism and has resorted to cross border surgical strikes in retaliation of terrorist attacks. Moreover India too is opposed to the ISIS and would like to see the ISIS out of Syria. Past experiences have proved time again that Iran is the most reliable friend India has in the Middle East. Hence India would appreciate Iran's presence and involvement in Syria. India shares Iran's concern about terrorism and has similar approach towards ISIS. Moreover like Iran, India also supports the Assad regime and understands that Iran's involvement in Syria is part of an effort to fight terrorism and extremism in the Middle East. Though India is not directly involved in Syria but like Iran it endorses peaceful solutions to the ongoing crisis on the basis of respect for Syrian independence and sovereignty. India would like to see a stable, ISIS-free Syria which in my opinion is possible only with Iran's involvement.

BRICS (which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) as a whole could play a key role in peace building efforts and post-conflict reconstruction in Syria.

Iran says has own options against U.S. violations of nuclear deal

1 -> they add some poison to that by adding new names" to their sanctions list, he told Press TV.

Iran and the P5+1 group of countries -- the U.S., the UK, France, Russia, and China plus Germany -- inked the deal in July 2015. It lifted nuclear related sanctions on Iran, which, in turn, put certain limits on its nuclear work.

The IAEA has invariably certified Iran's commitment to its contractual obligations since January 2016, when the deal took effect.

The U.S., however, has prevented the deal from fully yielding. Washington has

refused to offer global financial institutions the guarantees that they would not be hit by American punitive measures for transactions with Iran.

Since U.S. President Donald Trump's January inauguration, Washington has, on three occasions, slapped sanctions on Iran over its national missile program. This is while the missile work does not violate the JCPOA.

Iran has reacted by sanctioning some American entities. It has also raised the issue of the U.S. lack of commitment at meetings of the Joint Commission.

Araqchi further said Iran would bring

up its complaints about the US behavior at the Commission's Friday meeting. It is up to the Commission to decide whether Washington is violating the deal as well as the proportions of such violations, he said.

He said referring the matter to the Commission has helped amending the situation in some cases. However, he added, "if the arbitration mechanisms enshrined in the JCPOA do not give us [the desired] result, we have certain options before us."

"We have prepared ourselves for each and every scenario which may happen.

There are mechanisms in the JCPOA and there are plans by Iran to protect its rights and its benefits," he added.

The official also Iran, itself, would decide the reaction to U.S. breaches of the deal, he said, noting that the JCPOA has given Tehran such an option.

"Iran's [verified] commitment to its obligations under the JCPOA as opposed to the US lack of commitment constitutes a forte for Iran on the international arena," the official noted. "This is partly due to good cooperation between Iran and the IAEA."

(Source: Press TV)

UN: Latest Saudi strike in Yemen had no military objectives

The United Nations has censured the House of Saud regime-led coalition against Yemen for a recent air raid that killed about 20 civilians in an area without military targets.

Yemeni media reported that 22 civilians were killed when Saudi regime warplanes targeted displaced families in Mawza' District in the southwestern province of Ta'izz on July 18.

The UN human rights office, which reported 18 civilian deaths in the attack, said in a statement the raids hit three families who were staying in a makeshift straw house after being forced to flee from their homes three months ago.

The office said in a statement that the attack was carried out by "Arab Coalition Forces", referring to the so-called Saudi regime-led military alliance, which has been engaged in a deadly campaign against Yemen since March 2015.

"There do not appear to have been any military objectives anywhere in the immediate vicinity of the destroyed house," the statement said.

The UN also urged a "comprehensive and impartial investigation" into the strike.

■ Yemen's cholera epidemic is worst on record: Oxfam

Meantime, an ongoing cholera epidemic which has swept war-ravaged Yemen is the "largest ever recorded" in a single year, with more than 360,000 suspected cases in the three months since the outbreak started, the charity Oxfam said.

Since cholera began to spread in April due to Saudi regime war on Yemen, the epidemic has killed more than 2,000 people, while the country grapples with death, starvation, malnutrition and diseases due to a worsening humanitarian situation caused by the war, Oxfam said in a statement on Friday.



"It is quite frankly staggering that in just three months, more people in Yemen have contracted cholera than any country has suffered in a single year since modern records began," Nigel Timmins, Oxfam's humanitarian director, said in the statement.

"Cholera has spread unchecked in a country already on its knees after two years of war and which is teetering on the brink of famine. For many people, weakened by war and hunger, cholera is the knockout blow."

The charity said it fears that the total number of people infected with cholera could rise as high as 600,000, making it one of the largest outbreaks since records started in 1949.

The previous annual record was in Haiti in 2011, when 340,311 cases were recorded.

"It is hard to imagine how much more Yemen can take before it collapses entirely," Timmins said.

In a statement released earlier this month, UNICEF's (United Nations Children's Fund) Yemen office said that most children in the country lacked basic medical care, adequate nutrition, fresh drinking water, suitable sanitation and education.

The World Food Program said more than 17 million Yemenis do not know where their next meal will come from.

Earlier this month, Jamie McGoldrick, the UN humanitarian coordinator in

Yemen, said at a news conference in Sanaa that aid groups in Yemen had pulled resources from the fight against malnutrition to battle the cholera outbreak in the country, raising the risk of famine as they struggle to find funds.

"We're trying to do our best, but it's very much beyond what we can cope with," he said.

The House of Saud regime has been leading the campaign against Yemen to reinstate the former government.

The campaign has seriously damaged the country's infrastructure. Local Yemeni sources have put the death toll from the Saudi regime war at over 12,000, including many women and children.

(Source: agencies)

Israeli premier, UAE FM secretly met in New York in 2012: report

A new report has revealed that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan held a clandestine meeting, mainly on Iran's nuclear issue, in New York in 2012.

In a Friday report, Israeli daily Haaretz cited two informed Western diplomats, who spoke on condition of anonymity, as saying that bin Zayed agreed to the meeting after a long period during which Netanyahu sent messages to senior UAE officials through intermediaries.

The meeting was held at Netanyahu's hotel room in the Loews Regency Hotel on the corner of East 61st Street and Park Avenue in New York during the United Nations General Assembly meeting on September 28, 2012.

According to the two diplomats, who received the reports of the meeting, Netanyahu and bin Zayed mainly discussed the Iranian nuclear issue. The UAE foreign minister also told Bibi that his country could not start relations with Israel unless there is progress in the so-called peace process with the Palestinians.

A day earlier, Netanyahu had delivered a speech at the UN General Assembly in which he repeated the allegations that Iran's nuclear energy activities has a military dimension and called for preventing Tehran from possessing nuclear know-how.

The UAE ambassador to Washington, Yousef al-Otaiba, accompanied bin Zayed to the meeting. The two



Arab diplomats reportedly entered the hotel very discreetly through an elevator at the underground parking lot.

Israel's then-security advisor, Yaakov Amidror, and the prime minister's military secretary, Major General Johanan Locker accompanied Netanyahu during the meeting.

The meeting was described as "friendly" during which Bin Zayed expressed his appreciation for Netanyahu's speech to the General Assembly. The two sides also agreed on a wide range of issues regarding the Iranian nuclear issue.

Bin Zayed also expressed the UAE's willingness to improve relations with Israel, but noted that the Arab monarchy cannot do that publicly, unless there is progress in Israel's so-called peace process with the Palestinians.

Kashmir: Indian troops kill young tailor amid protests

The Indian army shot and killed a man and wounded another while firing at a group of protesters in the Indian-administered Kashmir region.

Police on Friday accused the group of throwing rocks at soldiers, but residents said the army was shooting indiscriminately and only a few rocks were hurled - and none hit soldiers.

The slain man, a tailor in his mid-20s, was hit by multiple bullets and died on the way to a hospital. The injured man was reported to be in a stable condition.

Soldiers fired after some rocks hit iron shutters of shops that were closed owing to a general strike in Kashmir, witnesses said.

Police claimed that patrolling soldiers were pelted with stones near the main mosque in western Beerwah town where worshippers gathered to offer Friday prayers.

A firecracker was hurled at the soldiers, who mistook the loud noise for a grenade and retaliated, police claimed in a statement.

Friday's killing triggered widespread protests as hundreds chanted slogans against Indian rule and demanded the Indian army leave Kashmir.

The strike was called by separatists who challenge India's sovereignty by



closing down shops, businesses and schools in most parts of the region.

The separatists also called for a march by Kashmiris to the United Nations office in Srinagar, the region's main city.

Authorities clamped a stringent curfew in downtown Srinagar and areas near the UN office in anticipation of anti-India protests and the march.

Armed police and paramilitary soldiers in riot gear patrolled streets and blocked roads with razor wire and steel barricades.

Nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan each administer part of Kashmir, but both claim the Himalayan territory in its entirety.

Rebel groups have been fighting since 1989 for the Indian-administered portion to become independent or merge with Pakistan.

Nearly 70,000 people have been killed in the uprising and the ensuing Indian military crackdown.

India maintains roughly 500,000 soldiers in the territory.

Anti-India sentiment runs deep

among Kashmir's mostly Muslim population and most support the rebels' cause against Indian rule despite a decades-long military crackdown to fight the armed rebellion.

India has accused Pakistan of arming and training the rebels, which Pakistan denies.

Rebel groups have largely been suppressed by Indian forces in recent years and public opposition to Indian rule is now principally expressed through street protests.

Last week, Indian authorities said clashes in Kashmir killed 10 people - five police officers, a soldier, two civilians and two suspected separatist fighters.

Suspected separatists ambushed a police patrol in the town of Achhabal, killing five police personnel, a police officer told AFP news agency last Friday.

Armed groups active in divided Kashmir have stepped up attacks in recent weeks on Indian government forces patrolling the area as part of "counterinsurgency" operations.

Officials say dozens of youth have joined the separatist ranks since last July after a popular commander was killed by security forces, sparking months of wide-scale protests in the territory.

(Source: agencies)

Germany 'halts all arms shipment to Turkey'

Germany has frozen all arms shipment to Turkey after Ankara arrested several human rights activists, including a German national.

The Bild newspaper reported on Friday that Germany was "freezing all planned and ongoing arms deliveries to Turkey."

In the months after the July 2016 abortive coup in Turkey against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Germany had already blocked 11 separate arms shipments to Turkey, including handguns, ammunition, and weapons components.

The latest move came after a Turkish court on Tuesday issued arrest warrants for six human rights activists for allegedly aiding a "terror" group, among them German citizen Peter Steudtner.

The arrests further strained the already tarnished relations between the two NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) allies.

Relations between Turkey and Germany, which is home to three million ethnic Turks, have been badly strained over what Europeans describe as Turkey's human rights violations.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaueble criticized Turkey for acting like the former Communist East Germany.

He advised Germans traveling to Turkey to be careful not to get arrested as the crackdown against opposition and dissent continues.

"If Turkey does not stop playing this little game, we need to tell people: 'You travel to Turkey at your own risk — we can't guarantee you anything anymore,'" Schaueble separately told Bild.

"Turkey is arresting people arbitrarily and not respecting even minimal consular standards," said Schaueble, comparing Erdogan's Turkey with the former communist German Democratic Republic (GDR).

"It reminds me of the way it was in the GDR. When you traveled there, you knew, if something happens to you, nobody can help you," he said.

(Source: Press TV)

Infighting hits ranks of Takfiri militants in Syria's Idlib

Heavy infighting has erupted between two major Takfiri terrorist groups in Syria's northwestern Idlib Province, with the clashes spreading to a border crossing with Turkey.

The battles between Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and Ahrar al-Sham, a coalition of Takfiri Salafists supported by Turkey and the House of Saud regime, erupted earlier this week, director of the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP on Friday.

So far, 15 civilians, including four children and a media activist, and 50 terrorists have been killed during the conflict.

Overnight, fierce battles spread to several parts of the province, including the Bab al-Hawa border crossing, previously controlled by Ahrar al-Sham.

"The fighting is now inside the crossing. It has become a battlefield, with part of it under Hayat Tahrir al-Sham's control, and part under Ahrar al-Sham's control," Abdel Rahman said.

AFP also reported heavy battles on the outskirts of the town of Binnish and HTS attempts to break into the village of Ram Hamdan.

The two Takfiri groups were once the key parts of Jaish al-Fatah (Army of Conquest) umbrella group for Takfiri terrorists that captured most of Idlib Province from the Syrian government in 2015.

The battles have turned parts of the province into virtual ghost towns as residents stay at home to protect themselves from the fighting.

Meanwhile, civilians have held sporadic protests against the HTS in several parts of the province, including in the town of Sarmada where the Takfiri terrorists opened fire on the demonstrators on Wednesday and Thursday.

Idlib has become the base for thousands of terrorists who fled Syria's largest city of Aleppo after facing a rout against government forces in December in their worst defeat since March 2011.

Rival terrorist groups are now competing for clout in the territories they control after seeing their campaign to topple the Syrian government broadly in tatters.

Due to the barbarity of their actions, al-Nusra and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) are not subject to an all-Syria truce deal clinched late last year with the mediation of Russia, Iran and Turkey.

(Source: Press TV)

S. Korea urges N. Korea to accept military talks offer

South Korea has urged North Korea to break its silence on an offer of military talks aimed at easing simmering tensions over the hermit state's nuclear ambitions.

Seoul had proposed to hold rare inter-Korea talks this week at the border town of Panmunjom to ease hostilities after a series of missile tests this year.

"It is an urgent task to reduce tension between two Koreas... to achieve peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula," defense ministry spokesman Moon Sang-Kyun said.

"We urge the North again to respond to our talks proposal," he said.

The military talks, if realized, would have marked the first official inter-Korea talks since December 2015.

North Korea has also remained silent on another offer made by the South Korea's Red Cross to meet on August 1 and discuss potential reunions for families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War.

Millions of families were separated by the conflict that sealed the division of the peninsula. Many died without getting a chance to see or hear from their relatives on the other side of the border, across which all civilian contacts are banned.

Monday's twin proposals are the first concrete steps towards rapprochement with North Korea since South Korea elected dovish President Moon Jae-In in May.

Moon has advocated dialogue with nuclear-armed North Korea to bring it to negotiating table and vowed to play a bigger active role in global efforts to reach a resolution.

(Source: agencies)

NEWS IN BRIEF



ELECOMP 2017
hosting over 800
exhibitors

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Over 800 Iranian and foreign companies are participating in the 23rd Iran International Exhibition of Electronics, Computer & E-Commerce known as ELECOMP 2017 which kicked off on Friday in Tehran, Mehr news agency reported.

As the greatest commercial event in Iran's market of electronics and computer products and services, the four-day event hosts exhibitors from 20 countries at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds.

North Korea 2016 economic growth at 17-year high despite sanctions

SEOUL (Reuters) — North Korea's economy grew at its fastest pace in 17 years in 2016, South Korea's central bank said on Friday, despite the isolated country facing international sanctions aimed at curbing its defiant pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Gross domestic product (GDP) in North Korea last year rose 3.9 percent from the previous year when the economy contracted due to a drought and low commodity prices, the Bank of Korea said. The expansion, driven by mining and energy, marked the biggest rise since a 6.1 percent gain in 1999.

North Korea, which counts China as its biggest trading partner, also boosted exports by 4.6 percent, the most since an 11.8 percent jump in 2013.

Still, the isolated state's per capita gross national income in 2016 was just 1.5 million won (\$1,342), less than 5 percent of the comparable number in South Korea.

North Korea does not publish economic data. The Bank of Korea has released GDP data on North Korea every year since 1991 based on information from government agencies including South Korea's Ministry of Unification and the National Intelligence Service. The estimate is widely used by international organizations and researchers.

North Korea has been under U.N. sanctions since 2006 over its ballistic missile and nuclear programs and the Security Council has ratcheted up the measures in response to five nuclear tests and two long-range missile launches.

Greece approved for \$1.8b conditional loan from IMF

The International Monetary Fund agreed to a new conditional bailout for Greece, ending two years of speculation on whether it would join in another rescue and giving the seal of approval demanded by many of the country's euro-area creditors.

The Washington-based fund said Thursday its executive board approved "in principle" a new loan worth as much as \$1.8 billion. The disbursement of funds is contingent on euro-zone countries providing debt relief to Greece.

"As we have said many times, even with full program implementation, Greece will not be able to restore debt sustainability and needs further debt relief from its European partners," IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde said in a statement. "A debt strategy anchored in more realistic assumptions needs to be agreed. I expect a plan to restore debt sustainability to be agreed soon between Greece and its European partners."

IMF officials estimate that, even if Greece carries out promised reforms, the nation's debt will reach about 150 percent of gross domestic product by 2030, and become "explosive" beyond that point. European creditors could bring the debt under control by extending grace periods, lengthening the maturity of the debt or deferring interest payments, the IMF said in a report accompanying the announcement.

Greek banks will need to undertake another asset quality review and stress test to ensure they are adequately capitalized before the end of the program, Lagarde said.

In its debt analysis assumptions, the IMF set aside a buffer of about 10 billion euros (\$11.6 billion) to cover potential support for banks, which have undergone successive capital increases over the course of Greece's debt crisis, most recently in 2015. "This amount may not be sufficient," according to the fund. (Source: Bloomberg)

ECB survey sees lower inflation, higher GDP growth

FRANKFURT (Reuters) — Euro zone inflation may be lower than earlier thought in the coming years but economic growth and the drop in unemployment could exceed past projections, the European Central Bank's Survey of Professional Forecasters showed on Friday.

The ECB, which factors the survey into policy decisions, kept borrowing costs at record lows on Thursday, calling for patience and persistence in getting inflation back up to its target.

Still, suggestions that the drag on inflation is temporary and may be looked past, reinforced expectations that the bank is going to curb stimulus this autumn, easing off the accelerator even if easy monetary policy is likely to persist for years to come.

The survey, based on responses from 56 forecasters, sees inflation at 1.5 percent this year, 1.4 percent in 2018 and 1.6 percent in 2019, all 0.1 percentage point below previous projections made three months ago.

The longer-term expectation for five years out was unchanged at 1.8 percent, at or just below the ECB's target of inflation "close to but below" 2 percent.

"To two decimal places, however, these revisions were actually much smaller (typically less than 0.05 p.p.) across rounding thresholds," the ECB said about the revisions.

Iran-Ireland trade jumps in Q1

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Trade volume between Iran and Ireland witnessed a sudden increase during the first three months of 2017, Iranian Ambassador to Ireland Javad Kachoueeian said in an interview with ILNA published on Friday.

"The two countries' trade volume presently stands at €100 million per annum," he said.

As he underlined, the mutual trade between Iran and Ireland should not be confined to trading goods since there are some other fields for cooperation including establishment of solar power plants, providing technical services for newly purchased airplanes, and tourism.

Ireland to invest on 2 solar farms in Iran

Ireland is experienced in renewable energy sector and two of its prominent companies are taking preparatory steps for building two solar farms in Iranian provinces of Qazvin and Alborz, he said, completion of which will create jobs for Iranian young workforce.

Tehran, Dublin can collaborate on tourism

As Kachoueeian informed, more than 9

million tourists visit Ireland every year and tourism can be a proper field for the two sides to cooperate on. Iran can benefit from the European country's experiences in tourism, he said. A tourism conference is going to be held in Ireland some seven months later and Iranian officials are going to take part in the event, he added. This can be a good opportunity for the two sides to improve their tourism bonds.

Ireland' state min. to visit Iran in few weeks

A seminar, titled as Trade with Iran, was held last week in Dublin to make Irish businessmen familiar with various cooperation areas with Iran such as information technology, healthcare, medical equipment, medicine, technology of foodstuff and agriculture, renewable energy, air industry, and etc., the Iranian ambassador said. Accordingly, an Irish trade delegation, to be led by Ireland's Minister of State for Business Pat Breen is to pay a visit to Iran in few weeks, he added.

Some banking barriers hindering Iran-Ireland trade

As Kachoueeian described, there are no specific impediment on the way of boosting common trade ties in economic area



and investments are expanding but there are some banking barriers which make the way to trade with Iran a little bumpy.

Ireland to dispatch trade delegation to Iran

After the removal of sanctions, the ground is set for Ireland to boost economic and trade ties with Iran. Accordingly,

some Irish trade delegations have traveled to Iran and some MOUs have been signed between the two countries. In near future, a trade and economic delegation comprised of managers and company owners, headed by the country's employment minister, will visit Iran, the Iranian official said.

NITC, oil research institute ink contract on promoting fuel quality

ENERGY TEHRAN — National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC) and Iran's Research Institute of Petroleum Industry signed a contract for cooperation on promoting the quality of bunkering fuel and reducing the pollutants, Shana news agency reported.

The contract was signed by Sirous Kianersi, the managing director of NITC, and Hamidreza Katouzian, the chairman of the Research Institute of Petroleum Industry, on Wednesday.

Addressing the signing ceremony of the contract, Kianersi said: "The International Maritime Organization



Sirous Kianersi (L), managing director of NITC, and Hamidreza Katouzian, chairman of Research Institute of Petroleum Industry, shaking hand when exchanging documents of cooperation contract (Photo: Mojtaba Mohseni/NIOC)

(IMO) requires all ships to use fuels with a maximum 0.5 percent sulfur content as of January 1, 2020, and as there is a short time to that date we decided to benefit from the scientific capabilities of the Research Institute of Petroleum Industry to meet this target."

He expressed hope that cooperation between NITC and the research institute will bring fruitful results in the international level.

Katouzian, for his part, said Iran should play its part in promotion of fuel quality which has an effective role in reducing pollution, and expressed hope that this cooperation will continue.

Crude steel exports up 67% in Q1

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran exported 1.675 million tons of crude steel in spring 2017, which corresponds to the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), a 67 percent rise year on year, according to the Iranian Steel Association.

The association put crude steel exports from the country at 1.016 million tons in the first quarter of the previous year, Tasnim news agency reported on Friday.

Iran exported 5.8 million tons of crude steel in the past Iranian calendar year 1395 (ended on March 20), Deputy Industry, Mining and Trade

Minister Jafar Sarqini told IRNA in late June and said the figure is planned to hit 8 million tons in the current year and at least 15 million tons by the end of the country's Outlook Plan for calendar year 1404 (March 2026).

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

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

Iran's total cereal production set to rise 0.9% in 2017: FAO

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's total cereal production is predicted to reach 20.1 million tons in 2017 to register a 0.9 percent increase compared to the previous year, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) said in a report.

The report, called "Crop Prospects and Food Situation", said the country produced 19.9 million tons of cereal in 2016.

According to the data provided, during the mentioned period Iran's wheat production level will stay steady at the last year's 13.5 million tons which exceeded the five-

year average by 25 percent.

The country's paddy fields are estimated to produce more rice in 2017 compared to the previous year. As the report said, Iran is predicted to produce 2.6 million tons of rice in 2017 to top last year's 2.5 million tons by 100,000 tons.

The country's cereal stocks are probably going to follow last year's pattern and continue falling during 2017. Iran's cereal stocks fell by 200,000 tons in 2016 from 6.5 million tons in 2015. It is likely that the figure further falls during the current year to settle at 5.4 million tons.

Qatar, Iran meet to strengthen bilateral trade

Qatari businessmen and their Iranian counterparts discussed ways of enhancing bilateral trade cooperation as well as the possibility of reaching commercial partnerships and special deals in food sector.

A bilateral meeting was held on July 19 between a number of Qatari businessmen and members of Iranian trade delegation, visiting Doha.

The Iranian companies expressed their readiness to export their products to the Qatari market, while Qatari companies expressed willingness to partner with them to achieve this end.

Qatar Chamber Vice Chairman Mohammed bin Ahmed bin Towar Al Kuwari said that Qatari businessmen were keen to explore Iranian products and to have joint cooperation with the Iranian companies operating in the food sector.

He stressed that Qatar Chamber was ready to provide the necessary informa-



Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim Al Thani (right), Chairman of Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, meeting Mojtaba Khosrotaj, Iranian Deputy Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade in Doha

tion and data to Iranian businessmen to help increase joint cooperation between the private sectors of both countries.

Iranian Deputy Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade Mojtaba Khosrotaj, who

chaired the visiting delegation, expressed his country's aspiration to strengthen trade and economic ties with Qatar.

He stressed that the visit and bilateral meetings would contribute to enhancing

trade exchange between the two countries for the sake of the national economies.

Earlier on July 18, the deputy minister met Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim Al Thani, Chairman of Qatar Chamber.

The meeting focused on Qatar-Iran economic and trade relations and ways of enhancing them for the advantage of both countries' economy and their trade exchange.

The Iranian deputy minister said large number of Iranian companies are looking forward to entering the Qatari market and establishing trade partnership with Qatari companies.

For his side, Al Thani said that Qatar Chamber was ready to match Iranian businessmen with their Qatari counterparts with the aim of strengthening cooperation between both firms in both the countries.

(Source: thepeninsulaqatar.com)

BOJ blames Japan's unique labor practice for low wages, inflation

TOKYO (Reuters) — A gap in pay and working conditions between temporary and permanent employees is preventing a tightening job market from pushing up overall wages and inflation, the Bank of Japan said in a rare analysis of the country's job market.

Wages for temporary workers are "clearly on the rise" as companies struggle to lure employees, with the job mar-

ket having tightened to levels not seen since Japan's asset-inflated bubble era in the early 1990s, the BOJ said.

But permanent workers' pay remains stagnant because labor unions representing these employees, who enjoy better benefits than those on the temporary roll, tend to prioritize job security over higher pay, it said in a report on Friday.

Japan's unique pay scale, where salaries rise according to seniority, also discourages job hopping and prevents a tight job market from pushing up overall wages, the central bank said.

The slow growth in permanent workers' income, which makes up nearly 70 percent of total wage-earners' income, partly explains why wage growth is subdued despite a strong

economy, it said.

"Companies are taking various steps to address a shortage of labor," such as introducing robots to automate operations and cutting back on extra services, the BOJ said.

Restaurant chain operators like Royal Holdings, which used to open their outlets 24 hours, are shortening opening hours due to a paucity of staff.

OPEC, Russia to stand pat on oil deal even as glut persists

OPEC and Russia's plan to clear the global oil glut hasn't worked as they hoped, but there's little expectation the world's largest producers will act more aggressively when they meet this weekend.

Oil has slumped into a bear market and inventories remain stubbornly high despite a deal between OPEC and 10 countries outside the group to cut output. The implementation of supply curbs is faltering as Libya and Nigeria restore lost production.

The trouble for ministers meeting in St. Petersburg to review the progress of the deal is the alternatives look little better than the status quo. If the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries abandons the deal and increases oil output, a further plunge in prices would inflict more pain on their economies. And while deepening the production cuts would spark a rally, that might encourage even bigger flows from U.S. shale drillers.

"They're between a rock and a hard place," said Mike Wittner, head of oil market research at Societe Generale SA in New York. "The bottom line is, it hasn't worked" and "if they cut more, the more they support prices, the more they support U.S. production."

Oil prices have given up all their gains since OPEC and Russia assembled a coalition of producers in December to try and end the market's two-and-a-half-year slump. Despite forecasts that the measures would reduce the world's bloated oil inventories, that doesn't seem to be happening, the International Energy Agency said on July 13.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate futures were at \$46.94 a barrel at 12:14 p.m. Singapore time, while Brent crude, the benchmark for more than half the world's oil, traded at \$49.34 a barrel. Both are still more than 50 percent below their 2014 peak.

The agreement between OPEC and its allies was undetermined before it even started, as key producers such as Saudi Arabia, Russia and Iraq ramped up exports just before the deadline to cut output took effect. The pact faces a further challenge as Nigeria and Libya, which were exempt from cuts while they tackled political crises, recover output.

"The underlying problem is Libya and Nigeria combining to produce significantly more than anyone anticipated they would," said Ed Morse, head of commodities research at Citigroup Inc. in New York.

Weakening compliance

While both nations have been invited to the St. Petersburg gathering, neither would be willing to reduce supplies even if they were asked, Morse said. Moreover,



as both producers are near the limits of their capacity, any agreement to cap at current levels would merely be symbolic, he said.

Weakening compliance among other nations poses another challenge. Implementation by Iraq - which says it shouldn't have been asked to cut while suffering so much economic hardship and battling terrorists - has fallen to a low of 29 percent, according to the Paris-based IEA. Ecuador's Oil Minister Carlos Perez said on Monday that his country was pulling out of the deal, before diluting those comments the following day.

The failure of the accord is driving Saudi Arabia to consider taking extra steps by itself, according to a report by consultants Petroleum Policy Intelligence, citing information from "key players" in OPEC. The kingdom's exports would probably drop by 600,000 barrels a day this summer as local demand peaks, and it may deepen the reduction to 1 million a day, it said.

"OPEC has grown a bit weary of the negative sentiment, and Libya and Nigeria have made it impossible to get inventories down to the five-year average," said Bill Farren-Price, founder of UK-based PPI. "We think they're looking at options to speed up the rebalancing."

Extra steps

Recent data suggest the extra effort is needed. At current production, OPEC's curbs won't achieve their stated aim of reducing inventories to average levels by the time they expire in April, according to Bloomberg calculations using IEA data.

Tightening supplies further would give an immediate boost to prices, but that just encourages U.S. shale producers to invest even more in drilling. Those shale drillers are on track to hit a record output of 5.58 million barrels a day in August, the U.S. Energy Department said on July 17.

"Every few dollars that the price does begin to rise, it incentivizes more oil from the U.S.," Neil Atkinson, head of the IEA's oil markets and industry division, said in a Bloomberg television interview.

Yet the threat posed by shale is what will hold the flawed deal together, according to Paolo Scaroni, vice-chairman of NM Rothschild & Sons and former chief executive officer of Italian oil giant Eni SpA.

"This is the game changer for everybody," Scaroni said. "The situation is so difficult for them that I'm convinced any agreement in OPEC has more chances than before. They have no alternative." (Source: Bloomberg)

UAE energy minister hopes global oil markets begin to tighten in H2

The United Arab Emirates Energy Minister Suhail bin Mohammed al-Mazroui said on Friday he hopes that global supplies will start tightening in the second half of the year when demand picks up.

"We have seen healthy demand and a flattening of rig counts in the United States," Mazroui told reporters.

"This is the beginning of the third quarter and demand picks up in the third quarter and I hope the agreement will have a significant impact in the third and fourth quarter."

Brent crude oil prices remain just under the key \$50 per barrel mark on concerns about high supplies from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) despite a pledge to cut output in a bid to tighten the market.

OPEC, together with some non-members like Russia, has extended a deal to cut production by 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) to March 2018.

However, OPEC's compliance slumped to 78 percent in June as higher-than-allowed output from Algeria, Ecuador, Ga-

bon, Iraq, the UAE and Venezuela offset strong compliance from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Angola, the International Energy Agency said last week.

"The UAE is committed to its cut," Mazroui said.

"We have seen some increase in production in some of the countries that were not part of the agreement because of their special stance."

Oil traders are looking ahead to Monday's meeting between OPEC and non-OPEC members to see if it will address

rising production from Nigeria and Libya, which have been exempted from the cuts.

OPEC's Joint Ministerial Committee monitors compliance with the supply pact and will meet in St Petersburg, Russia.

OPEC's supply cuts have also been countered by rising U.S. production, which has increased almost 12 percent since mid-2016 to 9.4 million bpd. The number of rigs drilling for new U.S. oil supply has also climbed since last year though the pace has slowed in recent weeks. (Source: Reuters)

Oil rises on weak dollar, Persian Gulf tensions as producers set to meet

Oil prices edged higher on a weaker dollar and diplomatic tensions in Persian Gulf, but Brent held below the \$50 per barrel level that was breached for the first time in six weeks on Thursday.

Investors were also taking positions ahead of a meeting between OPEC and non-OPEC members in Russia on Monday at which they will discuss compliance with agreed production cuts and progress towards rebalancing an oversupplied market.

Benchmark Brent crude futures were up 24 cents at \$49.54 a barrel at 0822 GMT on Friday, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures traded at 47.09 a barrel, up 17 cents.

"The weak dollar, the rising tension between Kuwait and Iran and the upcoming meeting in St. Petersburg should all contribute to some kind of short-covering today," Tamas Varga, senior analyst at London brokerage PVM Oil Associates, said.

The dollar index fell to the lowest in more than a year on Friday, incentivizing the purchase of dollar-denominated commodities such as crude oil.

OPEC members Iran and Kuwait are embroiled in a diplomatic spat that saw Kuwait ordering the expulsion of the Iranian ambassador and other diplomats.

The expulsions were an unusual move for Kuwait, which typically avoids conflict and has worked at keeping good relations with all countries in the region.

The tensions come just days ahead of the oil producers' meeting. OPEC, together with some non-members like Russia, has pledged to cut production by 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) between January this year and March 2018.

The United Arab Emirates' Energy Minister said on Friday he hoped that production cuts would have a significant impact in the third and fourth quarter.

Jefferies said "actions from the next OPEC/non-OPEC working committee meeting seem unlikely".

But "if OPEC is to achieve its objective of bringing OECD inventories back to normal levels it will need to take further steps", the U.S. investment bank added. (Source: Reuters)

Russia remains EU's top gas supplier

Russia, with its share in total gas deliveries to the European Union amounting to 41 percent in the first quarter of 2017, maintained its lead as the primary gas supplier to the bloc during that time period, the European Commission said in a quarterly report on European gas markets.

"Russia remained the top supplier of the EU in the first quarter of 2017, covering 41 percent of total extra-EU imports. While Ukraine pulled through two consecutive winters without Russian supplies, Ukraine remained the main supply route of Russian gas coming to the EU," the report read.

Russian market share has increased by two points in the first quarter of 2017, up from the 39 percent share recorded in the same period of 2016. Russia is followed by Norway, which had its market share amount to 35 percent in the first quarter of this year.

Total imports from Russia in the first quarter of 2017 were up 18 percent year-on-year and remained close to the record-high level reached in the last quarter of 2016, according to the report.

In June 30, 2016, Russian energy giant Gazprom's CEO, Alexey Miller, said that the company forecast the growth in European demand for imported gas to average at least 100 billion cubic meters annually up until 2025 and then 150 billion per year by 2035. Aside from this, the shipping of liquefied natural gas, which has covered only 12 percent of the gas supplies in the first quarter of 2017, remains expensive and requires sizable infrastructure investment. (Source: Sputnik)

Why oil prices aren't going anywhere

By Nick Cunningham

The most recent report on the U.S. oil market offers a mix of data, providing ammunition for both oil bulls and bears alike. One can find whatever they want in the data. Looking for signs that the oil market is moving towards balance? There's a strong inventory decline for you. Worried that the market is still woefully oversupplied? Yep, there is also data to back up that conclusion - another week of strong production increases.

Casual market watchers can be forgiven for being confused by the varying perspectives on the same data release. For example, two headlines from the same news outlet, The Wall Street Journal, highlight how interpretations of the health of the oil market can vary depending on the focus. Following the release of the EIA data, the WSJ reported: "Oil Rises on Bigger-Than-Expected Inventory Decline." But early the next morning, another WSJ article reads: "Oil Struggles after Rise in U.S. Output."

Both are true, of course, and sentiment in this confusing oil market seems to shift by the hour. Indeed, the EIA reported a decline in crude oil inventories by 4.8 million barrels for the week ending on July 14, the third consecutive week of a substantial drawdown. At the end of last month, the strong drawdown could have been seen as an aberration, a one-off decline that wouldn't mean much if inventories increased in subsequent weeks. But three consecutive weeks of declines is starting to look like a real trend, providing stronger confidence that the oil market is finally starting to tighten.

OPEC has made oil inventories the key metric upon which its production cuts

should be judged. Bringing inventories back into the five-year average range has been the goal, and that has thus far proven to be stubbornly out of reach. But things are starting to head in the right direction.

Of course, oil bears could have latched onto the production data from the EIA report, which was not as promising for oil prices. Total U.S. oil production increased for yet another week, according to the most recent data, this time by 32,000 bpd. That puts overall U.S. production at 9.429 million barrels per day (mb/d), the highest level in two years. It is also not far off from the all-time production record of just over 9.6 mb/d reached in the first half of 2015.

In other words, the shale drilling rebound is still going strong, even if the gains in the rig count have started to slow. Production is still rising, and because 2017 drilling plans probably won't change much even with the recent dip in oil prices, production should continue to rise. Also, because a number of drillers have locked in their future production with hedges, some companies are less sensitive to short-term movements in prices. There are plenty of reasons to think that the U.S. oil industry will break the all-time production record in the not so distant future.

That is all bad news for oil prices. Rising output from Libya and Nigeria is undermining the OPEC deal and U.S. shale production is also dragging down the oil market.

However, there was another piece of bullish news in the data that bolsters the case of a tightening market. Inventories of gasoline, not just crude, are also down sharply. The glut of gasoline, particularly

in early 2016, has put a ton of downward pressure on crude oil prices. But the significant drawdowns since June have suddenly put U.S. gasoline stocks back within the five-year average range.


In other words, one could argue there is no longer a situation of oversupply for gasoline. That comes despite record levels of processing from refiners, and relatively flat demand. But a lot of gasoline has been exported, clearing the excess and bringing stocks back to normal levels.

There is one more data point to consider, one that is certainly less publicized but nonetheless offers further evidence of a balancing market. Reuters reports that crude inventories in Saudi Arabia are down much more severely than in the U.S., a sign that the market outside the U.S. has been tightening for some time. Saudi Arabia's oil inventories peaked in late 2015, and have continued to decline sharply each month. As Reuters sums it up: "the persistent draw in domestic stocks likely explains why Saudi officials sound confident when they say the global oil market is rebalancing." U.S. data is much more transparent and routinely discussed, but as the Saudi data shows, there is much more going on in the oil market than just U.S. storage.

There are a lot of variables to consider, and oil traders move up and down on a daily basis depending on what appears to dominate the zeitgeist. But this week, at least, the market chose to focus on falling inventories, particularly in the U.S. WTI jumped into the upper-\$40s per barrel and Brent crude broke through the \$50-per-barrel threshold during midday trading on Thursday, the first time it has done so in nearly two months. (Source: oilprice.com)

First Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD



KSC

INVITATION TO INTERNATIONAL TENDER

No. 371846

KHOUZESTAN STEEL COMPANY INTENDS TO PURCHASE 1,000 MT CALCINED PETROLEUM COKE WITH THE FOLLOWING SPECIFICATIONS:

WITH THE FOLLOWING SPECIFICATIONS:

SPECIFICATION		PERCENT	
Fixed Carbon	98.0%	MIN	
S	0.5%	MAX	
P	0.2%	MAX	
ASH	1.0%	MAX	
V.M.	1.0%	MAX	
MOISTURE	0.5%	MAX	
SIZE	1 - 3 mm	MIN	88 %
	Less than 1 mm	MAX	6 %
	Over than 3 mm up to 5 mm	MAX	6 %

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Trump's astounding interview -- the blamer in chief

By Julian Zelizer

The new moniker for President Donald Trump should be the "blamer in chief." When confronted with challenges and problems, there is nothing the President likes to do more than lash out against someone else.



In his interview with the New York Times, President Trump seemed like a leader who is fed up with his job. He said he would never have appointed Attorney General Jeff Sessions, one of his longest and most loyal supporters in politics, had he known Sessions would recuse himself concerning the Russia investigation.

He attacked the FBI director he fired, James Comey, as someone who had tried to intimidate him to keep his job, while saying that Special Counsel Robert Mueller's office is compromised as a result of conflicts of interest. "There are very few Republicans in Baltimore, if any," the President said about the hometown of Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who appointed Mueller special counsel to investigate the Russia matter.

This is saying a lot from a President who has two children running a massive global business while their father sits in the Oval Office. This interview came shortly after President Trump threatened Republican Senator Dean Heller's career if he did not vote for a bill that the Congressional Budget Office estimates would leave 32 million Americans without health insurance. You could watch Heller's nervous laugh and just imagine what he thought about his lunch partner.

Trump's public rebukes were pretty stunning. The President says the kinds of things about his own Cabinet in public that other presidents would reserve for behind the scenes. This President has absolutely no restraint when it comes to attacking anyone who crosses his path. His own attorney general, the former FBI director and the special counsel now find themselves, at least temporarily, in the space occupied by the entire journalistic community -- other than Fox News -- which he has spent much of his time dismissing as "fake news" for its critical coverage.

■ No sense of restraint

President Trump can't stop blaming, and maybe this is one of his biggest problems as a leader. The New York Times interview gets right to the heart of his perspective as the leader of the United States. He sees every single problem that he faces, whether that has to do with disclosures about his son's meetings or the collapse of health care reform on Capitol Hill, as someone else's problem. His willingness to turn on an ally like Sessions is evidence that the President has virtually no sense of restraint when it comes to attacking those who do not fulfill his objectives.

As any teacher would say about a student who exhibits these traits, this is the kind of person who is incapable of self-improvement. The comments suggest that the President, who does feel the weight of the Russia scandal much more than he usually admits, is not interested in being introspective and not willing to look at what he, himself, has done or is doing the wrong way.

The venom that he used to talk about Sessions, a conservative Southern Republican who has stood by him from the start of his campaign, is much worse than anything he has been willing to say about Russian President Vladimir Putin and the confirmed Russian intervention in the presidential election. That's probably because, at least in his mind, Putin has not yet let him down.

Our great presidents are aware of their own limitations and are capable of learning from their mistakes. This is an essential quality of effective leadership, otherwise the person in power is unable to grow and incapable of bouncing back from moments of political peril.

The problem for President Trump is that it becomes clearer and clearer that many of the problems he faces are of his own making. The health care debacle was not just the result of Senator Heller somehow being disloyal but of the President supporting a deeply flawed and unpopular bill without his having the political acumen to sell the legislation to a skeptical public.

The Russia scandal continues to grow because of the ongoing revelations that members of his family and inner circle met with Russians at Trump Tower and questions about whether there is more to the story.

His refusal to be firm and resolute about what Russia did wrong in meddling in the election aggravates the suspicions of a public that doesn't seem to understand why he feels so determined to be chummy with the Russian leader.

His falling public approval ratings are a product of his behavior and nothing more. The polls register that much of the public doesn't like how he is conducting himself in office.

The interview with The New York Times was incredibly revealing -- not because of the specific words that Trump used but because of his entire outlook about why his time in office has been a struggle and seems to be trending the wrong way. Rather than keeping his eye on the television screens, the President might think about looking in the mirror to get a better sense of what's going wrong and consider what steps he would need to take to change the direction of his presidency.

(Source: CNN)

President Trump can't stop blaming, and maybe this is one of his biggest problems as a leader.

Will the Doklam standoff lead to a second India-China war?

Both India and China have every incentive not to go to war

By Rajeesh Kumar

The mounting military tensions at Doklam, the triboundary area connecting Bhutan, China, and India, have generated the impression that India and China are going to repeat their 1962 war. Official Chinese media and think tanks have warned India that conflict can lead to war if not handled properly and India should learn lessons from history. When asked about the possibility of the current dispute escalating, Luo Zhaohui, China's ambassador to India, did not dismiss the likelihood of such a development. And an article in The Global Times, referring to India's involvement on behalf of Bhutan, reminded New Delhi that "under India's logic, if the Pakistani government requests, a third country's army can enter the area disputed by India and Pakistan."

In New Delhi the rhetoric is similarly tough. For instance, when Beijing invoked the 1962 war and its humiliation for India, Defense Minister Arun Jaitley replied that "India of 2017 is different from India of 1962." Likewise, General Bipin Rawat, India's chief of army staff also acknowledged the possibility of an Indo-China war and said that the "Indian Army is fully ready for a two and a half front war." The government's recent authorization of the army to make an emergency purchases of ammunition, stores, and spares for several weapon platforms also point toward an impending short, intense war between India and China. Taking it further, some policy observers have directly compared the current standoff with 1962 by casting new actors and settings; Narendra Modi and Bipin Rawat instead of Jawaharlal Nehru and B.M. Kaul, and Doklam in place of Dhola Post.

The fear of an India-China war does not emanate from the Doklam standoff in isolation. The possibility of war between the two nuclear-armed giants of the Asia-Pacific, with their 2.6 billion combined population, has been one of the significant concerns of the global strategic community for the last few decades. Certainly, a war, which could cause thousands of casualties and decimate a substantial part of the global economy, is a pressing matter for the strategic community.

The most significant question regarding escalation is who would fire the first bullet, India or China? Interestingly, answering this question will help us to answer the million dollar question: will there be another India-China war? In my view, either side escalating the current border skirmishes to a short or long war is unlikely for many reasons.

■ Will India go to war with China?

If the question is whether India will go to war with China, my answer is a sound "no." The reasons go beyond strategic calculations, such as strength and numbers of forces and weapons. In other words, cognizance of pure military strength and weakness is not the primary force that stops New Delhi from firing the first bullet against its enemy. It is the structure of the government, and concerns of leaders about the domestic constituency that

holds back a forward move.

Let me clarify this. War is fundamentally a political act. It is not the military, who fights the war, but rather the political leaders, who declare the war, that are accountable for its outcome. A war can bring different incentives for domestic institutions including a change of government or change of leadership.

In their Selectorate Theory of War, Bueno De Mesquita, James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alastair Smith explain the general tendency of democratic leaders to fight easier wars. According to the theory, democratic leaders are more likely to opt out of difficult wars because their grip on power is more contingent on the support of the population. Compared to other types of regimes, in a democracy, the chances are high that the outcome of the war will be reflected in the re-election campaign. Therefore, once a war is underway democratic leaders need to ensure nothing less than victory. The necessity of a win to secure support from the domestic constituency compels leaders to put in additional efforts, including more military spending at the price of public welfare spending. If they win the war, people will forget all their sufferings in the delight of victory. However, if they lose, the people will not only recollect the futile sufferings they underwent but the leaders who brought humiliation to their nation as well. Here, democratic leaders have to ensure that war will not be a destructive force to their support base.

In the context of India, this is very much applicable. The incumbent government is going to face an election in May



The possibility of war between the two nuclear-armed giants of the Asia-Pacific, with their 2.6 billion combined population, has been one of the significant concerns of the global strategic community for the last few decades.

2019, and their record so far is not good when it comes to delivering public goods. In any case, a war with China, whether short or long, will have a destructive effect on the economy, which has already been disturbed by reforms and policies such as demonetization. Even if New Delhi won such a war by putting forth massive efforts, the economic and military might of Beijing and China's strategic advantages will ensure that the battle is unproductive for India. On the other, average Indians have been living with humiliated hearts since 1962; a repetition of this defeat would be unpardonable.

Hence, for New Delhi, the best option is to prepare for war but not to start it. In fact, preparing for war increases the government's chance to win re-election through uniting national feelings and sentiments. Considering these assumptions and factors, one can say that New Delhi will not go to war with Beijing, at least until the next election.

■ Will China take the risk?

To those who follow Chinese provocations and warnings, and their continuous references to 1962, it seems that Beijing is preparing for an imminent and unavoidable war with its neighbor. However, it is sure that Sun Tzu's descendants will think twice before such a move. First, Beijing's current priority is translating their economic might to global public support in favor of their impending superpower status. Though the international community has acknowledged China as an economic superpower with footprints in every corner of the globe, the world is not ready to accept China as a future leader. The main reason behind this unacceptability

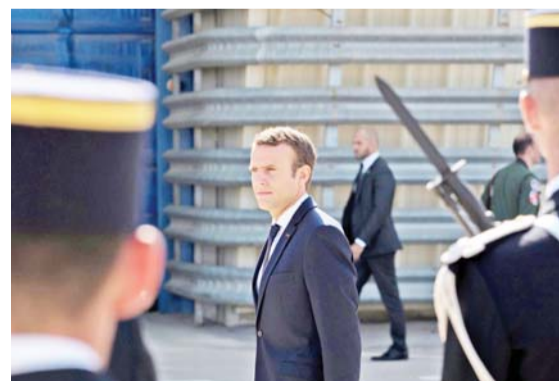
is Beijing's inability to provide alternative norms and rules for the crisis-ridden neoliberal values and Western-led global governance system.

In this context, if China takes the risk of waging war against India, it will only strengthen charges of Chinese interventionism and imperial tendencies. In other words, a war against India will ultimately destroy the image China is desperately seeking -- that of a benevolent superpower which emerged out of a peaceful transfer of power. Unless and until Beijing could ensure a war against its powerful neighbor has the generative capacity of remaking the world order, the best option for Xi Jinping is to follow Sun Tzu's advice: "the skillful leader subdues the enemy without fighting." Here, the only option left for Beijing is to convince the world that New Delhi is an existential threat. However, it is not an easy task since Doklam is situated in territory disputed between China and tiny Bhutan.

To sum up, while domestic calculations and preferences hold New Delhi back from going to war with Beijing, in China's case it is their international image that prevents them from doing so. Since the incumbent government in New Delhi is going to face re-election in 2019, a war with an uncertain outcome is not a good option for them. Since Beijing is attempting to step into the shoes of Washington and be the new global hegemon, waging war with its neighbor is a bad look for them as well. Therefore, India and China have only one option: to prepare for an indefinite standoff to satisfy their own constituencies.

(Source: The Diplomat)

Macron starts making waves



Emmanuel Macron's entry to the French presidential stage was about as exciting and theatrical as electoral politics gets. Rising from relative obscurity, he seized the Élysée Palace and the National Assembly with huge majorities. He was the wunderkind, at 39 the youngest French head of state since Napoléon, promising radical economic change while restoring the presidency to a Jupiterian level, in his words, after the garish "bling bling" of Nicolas Sarkozy and the tawdry "normality" of François Hollande.

After so grand an entrance, and with so ambitious a program, there was bound to be pushback. And it has begun.

Surprisingly, for France, the first of what promises to be a tough series of domestic confrontations was with the military, which is traditionally quiet in public. Facing budget cuts equivalent to nearly \$1 billion, the top general of the French armed forces, Pierre de Villiers, used an unprintable epithet before a parliamentary committee and quit. Macron promptly struck back at a military garden party, telling the generals, "I am the boss."

The strife is likely to get worse as Macron works to cut more than five times that much from this year's overall budget, and

more for 2018, to meet the European Union's deficit limit of 3 percent of gross domestic product. The French have long understood the need to trim their spending, but every cut is fiercely, and often successfully, resisted. Town mayors are up in arms against cuts to local government budgets, university professors are furious about cuts to their funding, and an overhaul to pension and labor laws is certain to bring down the wrath of the unions.

A toehold for peace in Syria

The truce in Syria's southwest, brokered by Russia and the U.S., hints at war fatigue and some hope for ending a six-year war now largely driven by foreign interests.

After six years of war, nearly 100,000 civilian casualties, and rising foreign intervention, Syria has a toehold on peace. A truce in southwest Syria, brokered on July 7 by Russia and the United States,

has so far held up. While the silencing of guns may fail, it at least shows growing war fatigue and provides some hope for a reshaping of Syria by peaceful means. Much of the fighting in Syria, which began with pro-democracy protests in 2011, is now driven by foreign powers. The U.S., for example, has tapped local forces to defeat Islamic State (ISIS) in the city of Raqqa. Iran seeks a land corridor to the Mediterranean Sea. Turkey wants to block a Kurdish state. But it is Russia, which has found it difficult to balance its many interests in the Middle East, that is driving this local truce between the forces of the Syrian regime and its opponents.

A solution for Syria's long war lies ultimately in a reframing of the bonds of com-

munity, even if that requires a partition of the country along religious or ethnic lines.

The cease-fire, as well as ongoing talks in Geneva between the regime and the Syrian opposition, allows a small respite for Syrians to consider an alternative to armed conflict. It may also allow for civilians in the area to receive humanitarian aid. The truce might be a cornerstone for peace. (Source: CSM)

American provocation on Syrian-Iraqi border

By Sharmine Narwani

As the battle to drive ISIS out of its remaining territories in Syria and Iraq rapidly advances, the US and its allied forces have entrenched themselves in the southeastern Syrian border town of al-Tanaf, cutting off a major highway linking Damascus to Baghdad.

Defeating ISIS is Washington's only stated military objective inside Syria, so what are those American troops doing there, blocking a vital artery connecting two Arab allied states in their own fight against terrorism?

"Our presence in al-Tanaf is temporary," says Col. Ryan Dillon, spokesman for the Combined Joint Task Force of Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR), the US-led campaign against ISIS, via phone from Baghdad. "Our primary reason there is to train partner forces from that area for potential fights against ISIS elsewhere...and to maintain security in that border region."

"Our fight is not with the (Syrian) regime," Dillon emphasizes.

But since May 18 when US airstrikes targeted Syrian forces and their vehicles approaching al-Tanaf, American forces have shot down two Syrian drones and fired on allied Syrian troops several times, each time citing "self-defense." Yet in that same period, it doesn't appear that Tanaf-based US-backed militants have even once engaged in combat with ISIS.

Dr. Bouthaina Shaaban, political and media advisor to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, is bemused by that rhetoric: "When asked what they're doing in the south of Syria, they say they're there for their 'national security,' but then they object to the movements of the Syrian army – inside Syria?"

She has a point. Under international law, foreign troop presence inside a sovereign state is illegal unless specifically invited by the recognized governing authority – in this case Assad's government, the only Syrian authority recognized by the UN Security Council. Uninvited armies try to circumvent the law by claiming that Syria is "unable or unwilling" to fight ISIS and the threat to international security it poses. But "unwilling and unable" is only a theory, and not law, and since the Russians entered the Syrian military theater with their considerable firepower directed against ISIS, that argument no longer passes muster.

Col. Dillon acknowledges the point, but argues that the Syrian army "only just showed up recently in the area. If they can show that they are capable of fighting and defeating ISIS, then we don't have to be there and that is less work for us and would be welcome."

It's not clear who made the US arbiters of such a ruling. Syria's fight against ISIS has picked up considerably in recent months, since four "de-escalation zones" were established during May negotiations in Astana between Russia, Turkey and Iran. Reconciliation agreements between government forces and some militant groups in those zones – and the transfer of other militants to the northern governorate of Idlib – has meant that Syrian allied forces have been able to move their attention away from strategic areas in the west and concentrate on the ISIS fight in the east of the country.

An April 2017 report by IHS Markit, the leading UK security and defense information provider, claims "the Islamic State fought Syrian government forces more than any other opponent over the past 12 months."

"Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, 43 percent of all Islamic State fighting in Syria was directed against President Assad's forces, 17 against the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the remaining 40 percent involved fighting rival Sunni opposition groups — in particular, those who formed part of the Turkey-backed Euphrates Shield coalition."

In other words, Syrian forces fought ISIS more than twice as often as US-backed ones, during the period where IS territorial losses were most significant.

■ An American wedge between Syria and Iraq

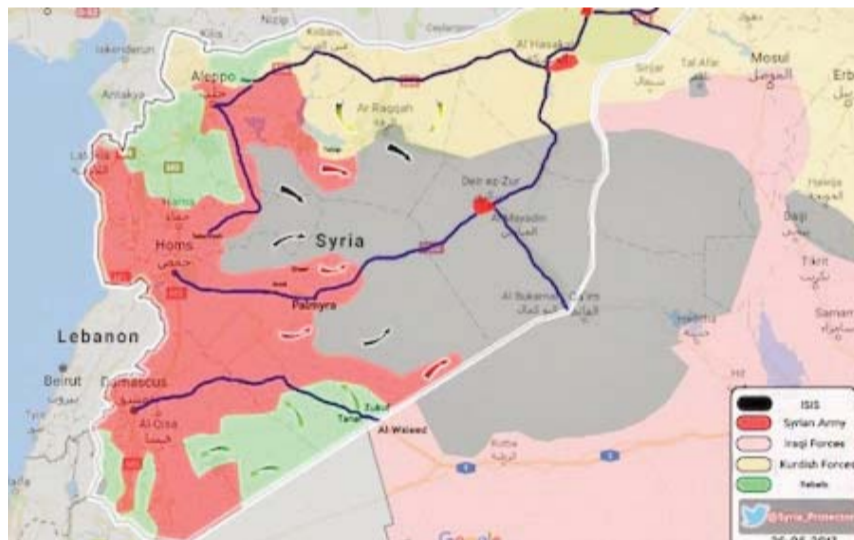
So what's with the continued US presence in al-Tanaf, an area where there is no ISIS presence and where the Syrian army and its allies have been making huge progress against their militant Islamist opponents?

If you look at the map above, there are approximately three main highway crossings from major Syrian centers into Iraq. The northern-most border highway is currently under the control of US-backed Kurdish forces who seek to carve out an independent statelet called Western Kurdistan.

The Homs-to-Baghdad highway in the middle of the map cuts through ISIS-be-seiged Deir Ezzor, where up to 120,000 civilians have been protected by some 10,000 Syrian troops since ISIS stormed its environs in 2014. While that border point to Iraq is currently blocked by the terror group, Syrian forces are advancing rapidly from the west, north and south to wrest the region back from ISIS control.

The Damascus-to-Baghdad highway in the south of the country, which allied Syrian forces have largely recaptured from militants, could have easily been the first unobstructed route between Syria and Iraq. Until, of course, US-led forces entrenched themselves in al-Tanaf and blocked that path.

The Syrians cleared most of the high-



way this year, but have been inhibited from reaching the border by a unilaterally-declared "deconfliction zone" established by US-led coalition forces.

"It was agreed upon with the Russians that this was a deconfliction zone," says the CJTF spokesman Col. Ryan Dillon.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov begs to differ: "I don't know anything about such zones. This must be some territory, which the coalition unilaterally declared and where it probably believes to have a sole right to take action. We cannot recognize such zones."

Since regime-change plans fell flat in Syria, Beltway hawks have been advocating for the partitioning of Syria into at least



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three zones of influence – a buffer zone for Israel and Jordan in the south, a pro-US Kurdish entity along the north and northeast, and control over the Syrian-Iraqi border.

But clashes with Syrian forces along the road to al-Tanaf have now created an 'unintended consequence' for the US's border plans. Syrian allied troops circumvented the al-Tanaf problem a few weeks ago by establishing border contact with Iraqi forces further north, thereby blocking off access for US allies in the south. And Iraqi security forces have now reached al-Waleed border crossing, on Iraq's side of the border from al-Tanaf, which means US-led forces are now pinned between Iraqis and the Syrians on the Damascus-Baghdad road.

When Syrians and Iraqis bypassed the al-Tanaf area and headed northward to establish border contact, another important

unintended," observes Iran's new envoy to Syria, Ambassador Javad Turk Abadi.

He and others in Damascus remain optimistic that the border routes long been denied to regional states will re-open in short shrift.

"Through the era of the Silk Road, the pathway between Syria, Iraq and Iran was always active – until colonialism came to the region," explains Turk Abadi.

In the same way that Western great powers have always sought to keep Russia and China apart, in the Middle East, that same divide-and-rule doctrine has been applied for decades to maintaining a wedge between Syria and Iraq.

"In the history of the last half century, it was always prevented for Syria and Iraq to get close, to coordinate. When (former Syrian president) Hafez al-Assad and (former Iraqi president) Ahmad Hassan Bakr almost reached a comprehensive agreement, Saddam Hussein made a coup d'état and hung all the officers who wanted rapprochement with Syria," says Dr. Shaaban, who has just published a revealing new tome on Hafez Assad's dealings with former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

Saddam then launched an eight-year war against the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the latter lost road access through Iraq for more than two decades of his reign. In early 2003, US troops invaded Iraq, deposed Saddam, and occupied the country for the next nine years. During that era, Iranian airplanes were often ordered down for inspections, instigated by US occupation forces interested in thwarting Iran's transfer of weapons and supplies to the Lebanese resistance group Hezbollah and other allies.

By the time US troops exited Iraq in late 2011, the Syrian conflict was already underway, fully armed, financed and supported by several NATO states and their Persian Gulf allies.

"When those borders are re-opened," says Dr. Asadollahi, "this will be the first time Iran will have a land route to Syria and Palestine" – though others point out that the Iranians have always found ways to transport goods undetected.

"Our army is now almost at the border and Iraqis are at their border – and we are not going to stop," insists Dr. Shaaban.

Syrian and Iraqi forces have not yet checkmated American forces operating in their military theaters. There is still talk of an escalation that may pit the US against Syria's powerful Russian ally, a dangerous development that could precipitate a regional or global war.

But in Baghdad, the US-led coalition spokesman Col. Dillon struck a slightly more nuanced tone from the more belligerent threats sounded in Washington:

"We're not in Syria to grab land. If the Syrian regime can show they can defeat ISIS, then we're fine with that. The Waleed border crossing is a good sign that shows these capabilities. We are open to secure borders both on the Syrian and Iraqi side. We're not there with the intent to block anything, we're there to defeat ISIS and train forces for that."

US-trained militants in the al-Tanaf garrisons are not fighting ISIS today, and they failed dismally in 2016 when they last launched a major operation against the terror group. But maybe that explains Dillon's new flexible tone. Perhaps US forces inside the Syrian theater are the first to fully understand the implausibility of their Syrian objectives.

The U.S. police state's answer to free speech. tear gas, guns and riot squads...

By John W. Whitehead

Forget everything you've ever been taught about free speech in America. It's all a lie. There can be no free speech for the citizenry when the government speaks in a language of force. What is this language of force?

Militarized police. Riot squads. Camouflage gear. Black uniforms. Armored vehicles. Mass arrests. Pepper spray. Tear gas. Batons. Strip searches. Surveillance cameras. Kevlar vests. Drones. Lethal weapons. Less-than-lethal weapons unleashed with deadly force. Rubber bullets. Water cannons. Stun grenades. Arrests of journalists. Crowd control tactics. Intimidation tactics. Brutality.

This is not the language of freedom. This is not even the language of law and order.

Unfortunately, this is how the government at all levels—federal, state and local—now responds to those who choose to exercise their First Amendment right to peacefully assemble in public and challenge the status quo.

Recently, this militarized exercise in intimidation reared its ugly head in the college town of Charlottesville, Va., where protesters who took to the streets to peacefully express their disapproval of a planned KKK rally were held at bay by implacable lines of gun-wielding riot police. Only after a motley crew of Klansmen had been safely escorted to and from the rally by black-garbed police did the assembled army of city, county and state police declare the public gathering unlawful and proceed to unleash canisters of tear gas on the few remaining protesters to force them to disperse.

To be clear, this is the treatment being meted out to protesters across the political spectrum.

The police state does not discriminate.

As a USA Today article notes, "People demanding justice, demanding accountability or demanding basic human rights without resorting to violence, should not be greeted with machine guns and tanks. Peaceful protest is democracy in action. It is a forum for those who feel disempowered or disenfranchised. Protesters should not have to face intimidation by weapons of war."

A militarized police response to protesters poses a danger to all those involved, protesters and police alike. In fact, militarization makes police more likely to turn to violence to solve problems.

You want to turn a peaceful protest into a riot?

Bring in the militarized police with their guns and black uniforms and warzone tactics and "comply or die" mindset. Ratchet up the tension across the board. Take what should be a healthy exercise in constitutional principles (free speech, assembly and protest) and turn it into a lesson in authoritarianism.

Frankly, any police officer who tells you that he needs tanks, SWAT teams, and pepper spray to do his job shouldn't be a police officer in a constitutional republic.

All that stuff in the First Amendment sounds great in theory. However, it amounts to little more than a hill of beans if you have to exercise those freedoms while facing down an army of police equipped with deadly weapons.

It doesn't have to be this way. There are other, far better models to follow.

For instance, back in 2011, the St. Louis police opted to employ a passive response to Occupy St. Louis activists. First, police gave the protesters nearly 36 hours' notice to clear the area, as opposed to the 20 to 60 minutes' notice other cities gave. Then, as journalist Brad Hicks reports, when the police finally showed up:

They didn't show up in riot gear and helmets, they showed up in shirt sleeves with their faces showing. They not only didn't show up with SWAT gear, they showed up with no unusual weapons at all, and what weapons they had all securely holstered. They politely woke everybody up. They politely helped everybody who was willing to remove their property from the park to do so. They then asked, out of the 75 to 100 people down there, how many people were volunteering for being-arrested duty? Given 33 hours to think about it, and 10 hours to sweat it over, only 27 volunteered ... and were escorted away by a handful of cops. The rest were advised to please continue to protest, over there on the sidewalk ... and what happened next was the most absolutely brilliant piece of crowd control policing I have heard of in my entire lifetime. All of the cops who weren't busy transporting and processing the voluntary arrestees lined up, blocking the stairs down into the plaza. They stood shoulder to shoulder. They kept calm and silent. They positioned the weapons on their belts out of sight. They crossed their hands low in front of them, in exactly the least provocative posture known to man. And they peacefully, silently, respectfully occupied the plaza, using exactly the same non-violent resistance techniques that the protesters themselves had been trained in.

As Forbes concluded,

"This is a more humane, less costly, and ultimately more productive way to handle a protest. This is great proof that police can do it the old fashioned way – using their brains and common sense instead of tanks, SWAT teams, and pepper spray – and have better results."

It can be done.

Police will not voluntarily give up their gadgets and war toys and combat tactics, however. Their training and inclination towards authoritarianism has become too ingrained.

As I make clear in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People*, if we are to have any hope of dismantling the police state, change must start locally, community by community. Citizens will have to demand that police de-escalate and de-militarize. And if the police don't listen, contact your city councils and put the pressure on them.

Remember, they work for us. They might not like hearing it—they certainly won't like being reminded of it—but we pay their salaries.

We must adopt a different mindset and follow a different path if we are to alter the outcome of these interactions with police.

The American dream was built on the idea that no one is above the law, that our rights are inalienable and cannot be taken away, and that our government and its appointed agents exist to serve us.

It may be that things are too far gone to save, but still we must try.

(Source: TruePublica)



An April 2017 report by IHS Markit, the leading UK security and defense information provider, claims "the Islamic State fought Syrian government forces more than any other opponent over the past 12 months."

Don't let political correctness obstruct the fight against extremism

All terrorist threats must be dealt with, but should they all be dealt with in the same way? This dilemma gets to the heart of creating an effective Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) policy.

The Department of Homeland Security defines CVE as the "proactive actions to counter efforts by extremists to recruit, radicalize, and mobilize followers to violence." Yet there was never complete clarity over its purpose.

Was CVE intended primarily as a soft-power complement to law enforcement, military and intelligence-gathering operations against violent groups such as ISIS and Al Qaeda? Or is CVE's main focus on challenging all forms of radical ideologies — from extremists to black separatists, eco-terrorists, white supremacists and the Far Right?

Many of America's allies across Europe take a more inclusive approach. There is a logic to this — you don't have to look hard to see there is a problem beyond ISIS-inspired terrorism. In the UK, for example, a far-right terrorist murdered

the Labour MP, Jo Cox, last year, and Muslims were targeted in the attack near Finsbury Park Mosque this June. In 2011, mass murderer Anders Breivik struck in Norway, and five years later, Germany saw Ali David Sonboly, seemingly inspired by Breivik, carry out a mass shooting of his own.

Threat from Far-Right

In the wake of these kinds of attacks, there is an obvious compulsion to treat the threat from the Far Right as analogous to that of terrorism. Indeed, the pressure Prime Minister Theresa May and the police were under on this front after the Finsbury Park Mosque attack was palpable. To not do so, the argument goes, is essentially to ignore certain forms of hatred and validate the views of those who regard programs such as CVE.

There is no doubt that law-enforcement officials regularly have to deal with the threat posed by white supremacists.

Governments are currently so keen to make sure CVE is done in a manner as politically correct as possible they only

seem to feel comfortable addressing a dangerous ideology that exists within ethnic-minority communities by also focusing on another that exists within the ethnic majority. That is hardly intellectually satisfactory, regardless of the politics around it.

Crafting effective CVE policy

Those interested in crafting effective CVE policy must also consider where the government's role in such initiatives ends. Jamie Bartlett wrestles with these kinds of issues in his new book, *Radicals Chasing Utopia*.

Bartlett spent time among militant environmentalists, trans-humanists, psychedelic societies. One chapter deals with Prevent (the UK's equivalent to CVE). He argues that "radicalization, in all sorts of unpredictable directions, is on the rise," yet posits a scenario in which public servants are "told to watch out for the signs of psychedelic radicalization" and in which children are "taught about the dangerous recruitment techniques of transhumanists." Even if Bartlett's

scenario plays out, some will be relaxed with this. Others will believe that government will be going too far in attempting to control which ideas are and are not acceptable.

For those concerned about CVE overreach, thought needs to be given to crafting appropriate metrics in helping trying to assess what ideologies CVE should address. Furthermore, these programs should not all be part of generic, one-size-fits-all strategy.

Wrapping up competing ideologies in one counter-radicalization strategy undermines their complexity and variety.

With the arrival of a new administration in the U.S. and a review underway of existing CVE policy, now is the time for the Trump administration to weigh such issues. The momentum seems to be behind government taking an even larger role. Yet it may be time to go back-to-basics and ask what the U.S. actually wishes to achieve from CVE — and what the most effective way of achieving it is.

(Source: nationalinterest.org)

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UNAIDS: 19.5m people on life-saving treatment, AIDS-related deaths halved since 2005

UNAIDS has released a new report showing that for the first time the scales have tipped: more than half of all people living with HIV (53%) now have access to HIV treatment and AIDS-related deaths have almost halved since 2005. In 2016, 19.5 million of the 36.7 million people living with HIV had access to treatment, and AIDS-related deaths have fallen from 1.9 million in 2005 to 1 million in 2016. Provided that scale-up continues, this progress puts the world on track to reach the global target of 30 million people on treatment by 2020.

"We met the 2015 target of 15 million people on treatment and we are on track to double that number to 30 million and meet the 2020 target," said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS said in Geneva on Thursday. "We will continue to scale up to reach everyone in need and honour our commitment of leaving no one behind."

The region showing the most progress is eastern and southern Africa, which has been most affected by HIV and which accounts for more than half of all people living with HIV. Since 2010, AIDS-related deaths have declined by 42%. New HIV infections have declined by 29%, including a 56% drop in new HIV infections among children over the same period, a remarkable achievement resulting from HIV treatment and prevention efforts that is putting eastern and southern Africa on track towards ending its AIDS epidemic.

What's on track?

■ 90-90-90 progress

The report, Ending AIDS: progress towards the 90-90-90 targets, gives a detailed analysis of progress and challenges towards achieving the 90-90-90 targets. The targets were launched in 2014 to accelerate progress so that, by 2020, 90% of all people living with HIV know their HIV status, 90% of all people with diagnosed HIV are accessing sustained antiretroviral therapy and 90% of all people accessing antiretroviral therapy are virally suppressed.

The report shows that in 2016 more than two thirds (70%) of people living with HIV now know their HIV status. Of the people who know their status, 77% were accessing treatment, and of the people accessing treatment, 82% were virally suppressed, protecting their health and helping to prevent transmission of the virus.

Eastern and southern Africa, western and central Europe and North America and Latin America are on track to reach the 90-90-90 targets by 2020. In eastern and southern Africa, 76% of people living with HIV know their HIV status, 79% of people who know their HIV-positive status have access to antiretroviral therapy and 83% of people who are on treatment have undetectable levels of HIV—this equates to 50% of all people living with HIV in eastern and southern Africa with viral suppression. The Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific can also reach the 90-90-90 targets if programmes are further accelerated.

Seven countries have already achieved the 90-90-90 targets—Botswana, Cambodia, Denmark, Iceland, Singapore, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland—and many more are close to achieving it.

"Ending AIDS is possible - it is a shared engagement and aspiration. One that cities can lead while promoting inclusive societies for all," said Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of Paris. The most significant impact of 90-90-90 scale-up has been in reducing AIDS-related deaths, which have been reduced by almost half in the past 10 years. As a result, life expectancy has increased significantly in the most affected countries. In eastern and southern Africa, life expectancy increased by nearly 10 years from 2006 to 2016. "Communities and families are thriving as AIDS is being pushed back," said Mr Sidibé. "As we bring the epidemic under control, health outcomes are improving and nations are becoming stronger."

■ 90-90-90: more work to do

Progress against the 90-90-90 targets has, however, been poor in the Middle East and North Africa and in eastern Europe and central Asia, where AIDS-related deaths have risen by 48% and 38%, respectively. There are excep-



tions within these regions showing that when concerted efforts are made, results happen. For example, Algeria has increased HIV treatment access from 24% in 2010 to 76% in 2016, Morocco from 16% in 2010 to 48% in 2016 and Belarus from 29% in 2010 to 45% in 2016.

Globally, progress has been significant, but there is still more work to do. Around 30% of people living with HIV still do not know their HIV status, 17.1 million people living with HIV do not have access to antiretroviral therapy and more than half of all people living with HIV are not virally suppressed.

■ Eliminating new HIV infections among children

Global solidarity to stop new HIV infections among children has produced results. Around 76% of pregnant women living with HIV had access to antiretroviral medicines in 2016, up from 47% in 2010. New HIV infections among children globally have halved, from 300 000 [230 000-370 000] in 2010 to 160 000 [100 000-220 000] in 2016. Five-high burden countries—Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and Uganda—have already met the milestone of diagnosing and providing lifelong antiretroviral therapy to 95% of pregnant and breastfeeding women living with HIV.

■ New HIV infections are declining, but not fast enough

The report also shows that, globally, new HIV infections are declining, but not at the pace needed to meet global targets. Globally, new HIV infections declined by 16% from 2010 to 2016, to 1.8 million [1.6 million-2.1 million]. Declines were estimated in 69 countries, in the majority of which treatment scale-up has been implemented alongside an increase in the availability of combination HIV prevention services and in some countries condom use. However, alarming increases have been seen in new HIV infections in eastern Europe and central Asia.

■ Tuberculosis

Major gains in the global response to tuberculosis and HIV led to a 33% decline in tuberculosis deaths among people living with HIV. As of 2015, only 11% of the 10.4 million cases of tuberculosis globally were among people living with HIV. However, nearly 60% of tuberculosis cases among people living with HIV were not diagnosed or treated.

■ Community health workers needed

Ending AIDS shows that providing services closer to where people live and work will be a key factor in ending the AIDS epidemic. UNAIDS is championing an initiative recently backed by the African Union to recruit and train 2 million community health workers in Africa to further bolster the capacity of health systems to deliver health-care services across the region.

"When health services reach the doorsteps, the health of families and communities is transformed," said Mr Sidibé. "Community health workers will become the backbone of strong and resilient health systems across Africa."

"I am not alone living with HIV, there are millions of us and we are determined to put an end to AIDS," said Christine Kafando, community health worker and founder of Association Espoir pour Demain. "We have the will to do it and must continue our concerted efforts."

What's off track?

■ Treatment for children living with HIV

Only 43% of children living with HIV have access to antiretroviral therapy, compared to 54% of adults. Ending AIDS also reveals that as many as two thirds of children under two years old are diagnosed late and start treatment with advanced immunodeficiency, resulting in a high mortality rate for children of this age group. More action is needed to diagnose and treat children living with HIV.

■ Young people are lagging behind

Young people (15-24 years) are lagging behind on multiple fronts—knowledge of HIV, HIV testing, treatment and prevention. Young people continue to be at great risk of HIV infection, especially young women in sub-Saharan Africa. New HIV infections among young women in sub-Saharan Africa are 44% higher than among young men of their age in the region. Around 610 000 new HIV infections occurred among young people aged 15-24 years; 59% of those new infections occurred among young women age 15-24 years.

In Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, half of young people do not know their status and more than half do not have access to HIV treatment. Only 36% of young men and 30% of young women in sub-Saharan Africa had a basic knowledge of how to protect themselves from HIV. Population-based HIV Impact Assessments (PHIAs) conducted in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and supported by the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, found that less than 50% of young people living with HIV were aware of their HIV status, compared to 78% of adults aged 35-59 years.

■ Men not being reached

The report reveals that less than 50% of young men know how to protect themselves from HIV infection, that men are much less likely to know their HIV status or start treatment than women and that less than 50% of men living with HIV are accessing antiretroviral therapy. Many men who are diagnosed with HIV are diagnosed late and start treatment only when they fall ill, making them much more likely to die of AIDS-related illnesses than women. Deaths from AIDS-related illnesses were 27% lower among women than among men.

■ Key populations

Outside of sub-Saharan Africa, key populations and their sexual partners accounted for 80% of new HIV infections in 2015 and even in sub-Saharan Africa key populations account for 25% of new HIV infections. The report outlines that efforts to reach key populations with integrated HIV services are essential and that a combination approach is needed that includes harm

reduction services.

■ Regions off track

Eastern Europe and central Asia is the only region in the world where new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths are both rising. New HIV infections increased from 120 000 [100 000-130 000] in 2010 to 190 000 [160 000-220 000] in 2016. People who inject drugs accounted for 42% of new HIV infections in the region. In the Russian Federation, newly reported cases of HIV increased by 75% from 2010 to 2016. Several other countries in the region—including Albania, Armenia and Kazakhstan—also have rapidly growing epidemics.

Even though access to HIV treatment in eastern Europe and central Asia has more than doubled in the past six years, still only 28% of people living with HIV have access to antiretroviral therapy, despite two out of three people living with HIV knowing their HIV status. AIDS-related deaths have increased by 38%.

In the Middle East and North Africa, just over half of people living with HIV knew their HIV status, with less than half of those on HIV treatment. Only one out of five people living with HIV was virally suppressed.

UNAIDS has been working with Doctors Without Borders and the African Union on a catch-up plan for western and central Africa, which is lagging far behind the rest of the continent. Only 42% of the 6.1 million people living with HIV in the region knew their HIV status, just 35% were accessing HIV treatment and only one in four people living with HIV were virally suppressed in 2016.

"I would like to reiterate our support for the catch-up plan for western and central Africa, launched by UNAIDS and now joined by partners. The adoption of this plan by the heads of state of the African Union is an essential step for mobilization and the efficient implementation of this plan by the countries in the region," said Michèle Bocoz, French AIDS Ambassador.

■ Resources for the AIDS response continue to flatline

Resources for the AIDS response remain flat. At the end of 2016, around US\$ 19 billion was available in low- and middle-income countries, with domestic resources accounting for 57% of the global total. An estimated US\$ 26 billion will be needed for the global response to HIV by 2020.

"We are maximizing the use of every dollar available, but we are still US\$ 7 billion short," said Mr Sidibé. "With more international assistance, increased domestic funding, innovative financing and effective programming can end the AIDS epidemic by 2030."

■ In 2016 an estimated:

- 19.5 million people were accessing antiretroviral therapy
 - 36.7 million [30.8 million-42.9 million] people globally were living with HIV
 - 1.8 million [1.6 million-2.1 million] people became newly infected with HIV
 - 1.0 million [830 000-1.2 million] people died from AIDS-related illnesses
- (Source: UNIC)

7 signs it's time to quit your job

By Susie Moore

Every Sunday night, my heart would begin to feel tight and heavy. "What's wrong with me?" I'd worry. Nothing made sense, apart from the fact that Monday was approaching.

How do you feel every Sunday night? Enthusiasm for the week ahead? A disconnected feeling of neutrality? Perhaps a sense of foreboding? When it's the latter, it's time to ask yourself some questions. I spoke with Jim Kwik, celebrity brain and memory coach and host of the Kwik Brain podcast, who works with the likes of Elon Musk and Will Smith, and he shared some insights on this topic.

If you've been feeling as if it might be time to quit your job, you could be right! Here are some signs you need to make a change:

■ 1. You're not growing.

"If you're not feeding your mind, you're falling behind," Kwik says. "It's one thing for your job to support you financially, but does it also support your personal and professional growth?"

Are you expanding year over year? "You can be at a job for seven years, but without new learning and growth, what you really could have is one year of experience repeated seven times," Kwik says.

Your time on earth is far too precious for that!

■ 2. You're not learning anything new.

Progress is the joy we feel as we move in the direction of our potential. When we learn, we feel alive. It's as if our life kicks into high def.

"Education doesn't end when you leave school," Kwik says. "If there is one skill to master in today's fast-paced Information Age, it's the ability to learn rapidly. The faster you can learn, the more you can earn."

Are you immersed in an ongoing education at the office that makes you feel challenged and energized?

■ 3. You're physically fatigued.

Unhappiness or complacency can manifest physically. Sunday after Sunday, I would feel the same thing happening to me—and it was more than the Sunday night blues. My anxiety about my job was manifesting as my feeling worn down. My vitality was gone. My shoulders and neck felt tight. I was in a slump because I lost my appetite for my job.



How does your body feel?

■ 4. Your inner voice is getting louder.

Our intuition whispers to us, always, and it increases its volume when we try to silence it. At our core, we are curious, creative, hungry beings. When we aren't satisfied at work, our emotional GPS refuses to tolerate it. Because we're in an age of outsourcing, "your ability to outthink, outlearn, and outperform is your competitive advantage," Kwik says. "Invest in your unique capacity to be creative and solve problems, so you don't lose opportunity [to outsourcing], automation, and artificial intelligence."

Creative problem solvers will always remain the most in demand in the workforce. Cultivating these skills is not only fun, it's critical to future-proof your career.

■ 5. You seek relief elsewhere.

When I was unhappy at work, I'd seek solace in a third (or fourth!) glass of wine. Some of my clients now find distractions in online shopping, toxic relationships, or food. Are you seeking satisfaction and excitement outside the service you bring to the world because you're out of alignment—or because your job's simply not enough?

■ 6. You just know there's more.

"Is this all there is?" is a common question I receive as a life coach. The truth is, the only limits you experience are the ones you create. If you can't seem to quit your daydream (or think it can only be a dream), you're underestimating yourself. Career changes are common. Lateral internal moves happen constantly. So is starting a passion-based side hustle—one-third of millennials rock one now. What are you not letting yourself pursue?

■ 7. You feel as if you're betraying yourself.

On LinkedIn, I used to be a successful sales director at a Fortune 500 company. But in my heart, I was always life coach and teacher. Year after year, it was harder and harder to maintain what felt like a betrayal of who I really am. When I turned 30, I made the commitment to work for myself as a life coach and committed side hustler. Less than 18 months later, I left cubicle life for good. It was terrifying at the time, but I consider it the best decision I have ever made.

I've realized the biggest impediment we have to our wild success is our belief in what's possible for our lives. Every great manifestation comes from what we believe to be real about who we are and what we can achieve. And the vast majority of the time, we aim too low. We fail to appreciate our unique talents, gifts, and magnificence.

"We are taught a lie that our intelligence, our potential to learn, is fixed like our shoe size," Kwik says. "We grossly underestimate our own mental power."

How will you focus on what you can do (instead of what you can't) right now? How will you seize your power? Then let the possibility unfold! (Source: greatist.com)

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 YouTube shutting down its video editor and photo slideshow tools on September 20. YouTube says that they are discontinuing both services because there are many free and paid third-party editing tools available online and suggest users look through forums to see what other content creators are using.

2 Intel puts Movidius AI tech on a \$79 USB stick. Intel has announced that the deep neural network processing stick is now available and going by its new name, the Movidius Neural Compute Stick. "Designed for product developers, researchers and makers, the Movidius Neural Compute Stick aims to reduce barriers to developing, tuning and deploying AI applications by delivering dedicated high-performance deep-neural network processing in a small form factor," said Intel in a statement.

3 Google Street View takes you aboard the ISS. Astronauts aboard the International Space Station just got an adorable floating camera, but what do we get? While nobody's handing out free rides to the ISS, you can digitally explore it now that it's up on Google Street View.

4 Amazon keeps popular items stocked by buying from other retailers. The company offers the items it buys to customers in other parts of the globe. According to CNBC, the Fulfilled by Amazon team has emailed thousands of sellers in the US, offering to buy their goods at full retail price so it can have them in store in its warehouses.

5 If for some reason you're an iOS and CarPlay user that also manages your tunes with Google Play Music, you're in luck. Google's music service is now compatible with Apple's in-car system, which means you can control things from the safety of your car's display rather than fiddle with your iPhone while on the road.

6 Google Duo adds video chats to your regular call history. Duo now tracks your video calls alongside other ones on Android phones.

7 GE's \$99 'Talking Laundry' box was built for the blind. The device works with most current washers and dryers, too.

8 Mozilla's new Firefox features improve browsing on iOS and Android. Firefox is adding a few quality-of-life features to its mobile browsers. To celebrate hitting one million downloads in the month since it launched, the minimalistic, privacy-intensive Firefox Focus for Android now lets users download files, supports full-screen video and enables opening the browser right from notifications.

9 Elon Musk's Hyperloop 'approval' seems to be from the White House. The cities involved don't appear to be a part of the conversation yet.

10 IBM's AI can predict schizophrenia by looking at the brain's blood flow and it does so with 74 percent accuracy. IBM and the University of Alberta could soon help doctors diagnose the onset of the disease and the severity of its symptoms using a simple MRI scan and a neural network built to look at blood flow within the brain.

AlphaBay and Hansa dark web markets shut down

Two of the largest dark web marketplaces have been shut down following a "landmark" international law enforcement investigation.



The AlphaBay and Hansa sites had been associated with the trade in illicit items such as drugs, weapons, malware and stolen data. According to Europol, there were more than 250,000 listings for illegal drugs and toxic chemicals on AlphaBay.

Hansa was seized and covertly monitored for a month before being deactivated.

"The capability of drug traffickers and other serious criminals around the world has taken a serious hit today," said Europol's executive director Rob Wainwright.

It was a "landmark" operation, according to US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) acting director Andrew McCabe.

AlphaBay has been offline since early July, fueling suspicions among users that a law enforcement crackdown had taken place.

Police in other countries, including the UK, France and Lithuania, also contributed.

The Dutch National Police took over the Hansa marketplace on 20 June after two men in Germany were arrested and servers in Germany, The Netherlands and Lithuania were seized.

Ever since AlphaBay went offline earlier in July, users of the site had discussed potential alternative dark web marketplaces on online forums.

Hansa was frequently mentioned, meaning that the authorities were likely able to uncover new criminal activity on Hansa as users migrated to it from AlphaBay.

(Source: bbc)

Google to radically change homepage for first time since 1996

By Samuel Gibbs

Google's famously simple homepage with its logo and single search box on a white background is set to undergo a radical change for the first time since its launch in 1996, with the addition of Google's interest and news-based feed.

The feed of personalized information, which has been a mainstay of Google's mobile apps for Android and iOS since 2012 along with a home-screen page on Google's Nexus and Pixel smartphones and tablets, will become part of the main web experience in the near future, the Guardian understands.

Google announced it was deploying further customization to the feed, which took over from its Google Now personalization in December, using the company's "advanced machine-learning algorithms".

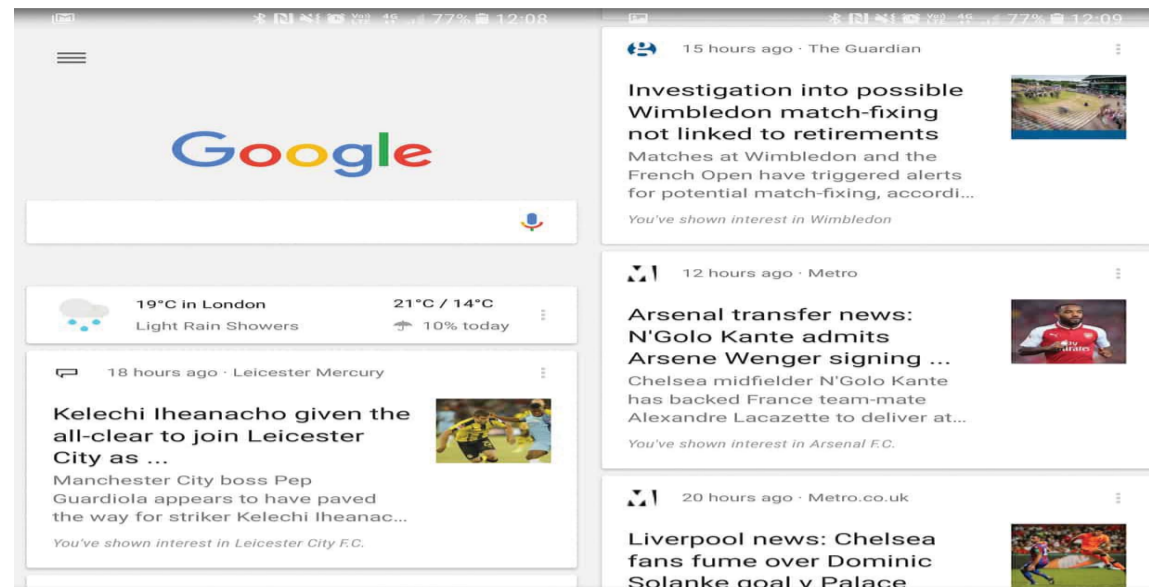
Shashi Thakur, vice president of engineering at Google said: "You'll see cards with things like sports highlights, top news, engaging videos, new music, stories to read and more. And now, your feed will not only be based on your interactions with Google, but also factor in what's trending in your area and around the world."

Users will also be able to follow topics straight from search results for things such as sports, movies, music and celebrities, showing updates on those topics in the feed.

Google said the new additions to the feed would roll out to US users immediately and internationally in the next couple of weeks.

While most of the new features are iterative, with some form of them available in the Google search apps already, the addition of the Google feed to the main desktop sites will mark one of the biggest changes to Google's approach to search.

Google once had a personalized homepage called



iGoogle, which resembled other web portals of the day, was available from May 2005, and discontinued in November 2013. However, iGoogle was only shown to those who were logged in and had selected to use iGoogle, rather than the default simple search box Google homepage.

How it will look and work on the web and whether it will include the search company's voice assistant Google Assistant is not yet known. The feed is likely to require users to log into Google to see it, and will probably resemble the tablet experience of the Google feed, with multiple card-containing columns with news posts, event

updates and more. The mobile app feed also contains things such as boarding passes and calendar events based on things taken from Gmail and Google calendar.

Google already had an experience for Google Now on its Chromebooks, which included the search box and the feed containing everything that's currently displayed on mobile devices. Rolling out that experience to the main Google.com homepage would almost instantly turn it into the biggest web portal available, dwarfing stalwarts Yahoo and Microsoft's MSN and Bing.

(Source: Guardian)

Xbox One console revenues have slowed

Microsoft's gaming division generated \$1.657 billion during its fiscal Q4, and that is up \$44 million or 3 percent year-over-year. Xbox game sales and services picked up a lot of momentum and were more than enough to make up for a dip in revenues from hardware.

Console sales are bringing in less cash for Microsoft as the average price for an Xbox One continues to fall. The company released the Xbox One S last year as part of an effort to protect the price on

its system, and it will do something similar later this year when it launches the more powerful Xbox One X. It's the game sales, Xbox Live subscriptions, and other services that are bringing in the stacks for Microsoft now.

"Xbox software and services revenue grew 11 percent driven by continued momentum in digital distribution and strong game title performance," Microsoft wrote in a note to investors. "Xbox Live monthly active users grew 8 percent to 53 million,



with continued growth across Xbox One, Windows 10, and mobile platforms."

Microsoft was also able to save some cash on the other end of the equation by pulling back on the marketing budget for Xbox One.

"Operating expenses decreased \$318 million or 10 percent, primarily due to a reduction in phone expenses and Surface and Xbox marketing expenses in the prior year," the company wrote in its financial report.

(Source: VentureBeat)

Vodafone reports 2.2 percent growth in first quarter



Vodafone, the world's second largest mobile operator, reported better-than-expected 2.2 percent revenue growth in its first quarter, reflecting a robust performance in Italy and Spain and an acceleration in demand in Turkey.

The company said the rise in organic service revenue, which was ahead of market forecasts of 1.4 to 1.9 percent, boosted its confidence in the outlook for the full year, when it expects to grow core earnings by 4-8 percent.

(Source: Reuters)

Samsung, Google, & others formally back Apple in legal dispute with Qualcomm



Apple has received support from a handful of tech companies in its ongoing legal dispute with Qualcomm. As reported by Reuters, the Computer & Communications Industry Association, which consists of tech companies such as Samsung, Intel, Google, Amazon, and more, today filed comments with the U.S. International Trade Commission arguing that an import ban on iPhones would hurt consumers.

The group argued against the ITC blocking Apple from importing iPhones with Intel modem chips, as Qualcomm has requested.

(Source: 9to5mac)

Microsoft profit beats expectations on strong cloud demand



Microsoft reported strong fourth-quarter earnings on the back of its fast-growing cloud computing business, stoking optimism that the once-stagnant company has found a new groove. revenue from the cloud unit, which includes the flagship Azure platform and server products, rose about 11 percent to \$7.43 billion in the fiscal fourth quarter ended June 30.

Analysts on average had expected cloud revenue of \$7.32 billion, according to data and analytics firm FactSet. Revenue from Azure, which competes directly with Amazon.com's market-leading AWS division, nearly doubled in the quarter.

(Source: Microsoft)

LG will be exclusive battery supplier for next year's 'iPhone 9'

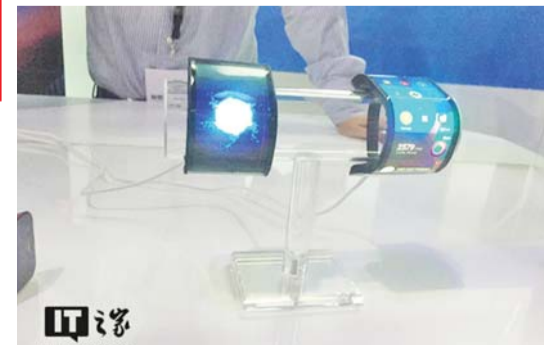


A new report from The Korea Economic Daily claims that Apple has reached an agreement with LG Chemical for it to be the sole provider of the iPhone 9's battery.

The iPhone 9's battery is said to be L-shaped, a feature we have also heard that is coming to the iPhone 8 this year. This technology allows Apple to increase battery size without a notable increase in the device's size. The battery design also allows for faster charging times.

(Source: 9to5mac)

Lenovo shows off concept flexible phone



Lenovo let its imagination go wild and showed the result at the Lenovo Tech World summit.

The Lenovo Cplus concept phone is very flexible, much more so than an LG G Flex, for example. It uses a 4.35" AMOLED screen and a real leather back (with a choice of many colors). The goal is to wear the Android-running Cplus like a bracelet, which will allow it to function like a smartwatch. You can easily transition to smartphone mode (the handset uses ESIM).

(Source: lenovo)

Galaxy Note8 launch event date confirmed: August 23



Samsung has officially sent out invitations to the press for its Unpacked event in New York City, where the company will announce the Galaxy Note8.

The Samsung Galaxy Note8 is expected to have pretty much the same internal hardware as the Galaxy S8 and S8+: Snapdragon 835 chipset in the US or an Exynos 8895 CPU with 4GB of RAM, and a fully water-resistant metal and glass unibody design.

(Source: gsmarena)

Byron Bay to get world's first solar-powered train

A coal baron is delivering the world's first solar train to Australia.

And while bringing solar to Byron Bay might be a bit like taking coals to Newcastle, that's just what the Byron Bay Railroad Company is doing.

"I think this is a world first," said John Grimes, chief executive of the Australian Solar Council, which is not connected to the project.

"There is a train in India that has solar panels to power lights and fans, but not a whole train."

The Byron Bay Railroad Company, operated by mining executive Brian Flannery, expects to have its two-carriage heritage train running before Christmas, said Jeremy Holmes, a spokesman for the company.

It will operate on part of the disused Casino-to-Murwillumbah line, which closed in 2004.

■ Literally solar powered

Dan Cass, a renewable energy specialist at the Australia Institute, said: "This is the first we have heard of a train this size that is literally solar powered, with PV modules on the roof"

The Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator told Fairfax Media that it is discussing some minor outstanding issues



with the company but expects to grant a license for the train.

The train will travel three kilometers each way from Byron Bay to North Beach, just near Elements of Byron, a five-star resort owned by Brian and Peggy Flannery, who also have the

controlling interest in the not-for-profit train company.

"We had approval two years ago to run the train as a diesel service, however in December we decided to convert to solar," Mr. Holmes said. "Technology had advanced rapidly and so we accelerated

The train is being fitted out with flexible solar panels and a 77kW solar battery on board.

the conversion."

The train is being fitted out with flexible solar panels and a 77kW solar battery on board. The train shed in north Byron has a 30kW solar array that will supply the grid when not recharging the train.

■ Prolonged period

"Even if the sun doesn't shine for a prolonged period the train battery can be charged from mains power using certified Green Power," Mr. Holmes said. The train will retain a back-up diesel engine for emergencies.

The service will initially run 14 round trips a day from 08:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. Extra services could be put on for events such as the Byron Writers' Festival and the Byron Food and Beverage Festival, which are held on land owned by the Flannerys.

Byron Shire Greens Mayor, Simon Richardson, said: "It's a project that sits within our community values. It's a short track but hopefully it is scalable for the region."

Earlier this year, Mr. Flannery gave Ian Macdonald a character reference during sentencing proceedings. Macdonald was jailed for 10 years in June, with a seven-year non-parole period.

(Source: Western Advocate)

Hubble sees Martian moon orbiting the Red Planet

The sharp eye of NASA's Hubble Space Telescope has captured the tiny moon Phobos during its orbital trek around Mars. Because the moon is so small, it appears star-like in the Hubble pictures.

Over the course of 22 minutes, Hubble took 13 separate exposures, allowing astronomers to create a time-lapse video showing the diminutive moon's orbital path. The Hubble observations were intended to photograph Mars, and the moon's cameo appearance was a bonus.

A football-shaped object just 16.5 miles by 13.5 miles by 11 miles, Phobos is one of the smallest moons in the solar system. It is so tiny that it would fit comfortably inside the Washington, D.C. Beltway.

The little moon completes an orbit in just 7 hours and 39 minutes, which is faster than Mars rotates. Rising in the Martian west, it runs three laps around the Red Planet in the course of one Martian day, which is about 24 hours and 40 minutes. It is the only natural satellite in

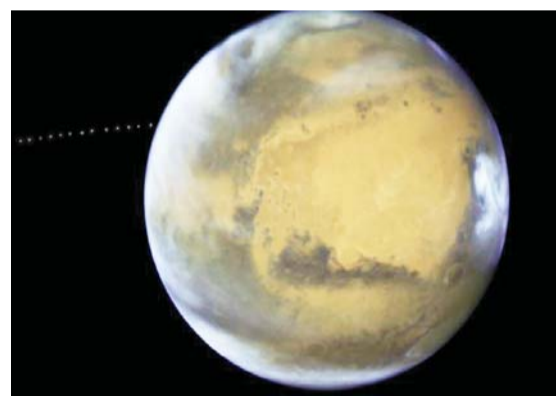
the Solar System that circles its planet in a time shorter than the parent planet's day.

■ Gaping crater

About two weeks after the Apollo 11 manned lunar landing on July 20, 1969, NASA's Mariner 7 flew by the Red Planet and took the first crude close-up snapshot of Phobos. On July 20, 1976 NASA's Viking 1 lander touched down on the Martian surface. A year later, its parent craft, the Viking 1 orbiter, took the first detailed photograph of Phobos, revealing a gaping crater from an impact that nearly shattered the moon.

Phobos was discovered by Asaph Hall on August 17, 1877 at the U.S. Naval Observatory in Washington, D.C., six days after he found the smaller, outer moon, named Deimos. Hall was deliberately searching for Martian moons.

Both moons are named after the sons of Ares, the Greek god of war, who was known as Mars in Roman



mythology. Phobos (panic or fear) and Deimos (terror or dread) accompanied their father into battle.

(Source: phys.org)

Bank Mellat's Activities, Consistent with Integrated Framework of Strategic Decisions: Official

Head of Bank Mellat's Research and Development Center Dr. Alireza Jalali Farahani said that activities of Bank Mellat are in compatible with the integrated framework of the strategic decisions.

Given the above issue, professional activities of the bank are precisely in line with the integrated framework of the strategic decisions, he reiterated.

If strategy is defined as a complex of integrated choices, it must be said that Bank Mellat is an integrated network composed of interconnected and purposeful decisions which has affected and influenced all spheres of activity and operations of the bank, he observed.

He pointed to a sample of strategic decision of the bank dubbed "compatibility and synchronization" which has been put atop agenda in all organizational structure of the bank including branch offices, resourc-



es, spending, combination of staff and personnel, etc. Active avoidance of Bank Mellat from competing to attract resources with preferential rates is of the tan-

gible consequences of such a strategic rates which has been published as a deadly poison in the body of banking system of the country, he mentioned.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he clarified the other strategic topics of the bank and said: "Bank Mellat has adopted a broad range of measures to create, strengthen and stabilize unobserved (noncash) revenues."

In the end, Head of Bank Mellat's Research and Development Center Dr. Alireza Jalali Farahani pointed to the triple goals of the bank including gaining customers' satisfaction, professionalization of sales network and maximization of common interests between bank and customers, and said: "Relying upon the assistance of the Almighty God, the wise management of the bank has taken effective steps in order to materialize most of its objectives in the current Iranian calendar year in 1396 (started March 21, 2017)."

Eyeing Mining and Mineral Sector, Prerequisite for Industrial Development: Industry Minister

Mining and mineral sector is prerequisite for the industrial development in the country, Public Relations Dept. of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IM-IDRO) reported.

Speaking in the inaugural ceremony of construction operations of mining projects and also lead and zinc plants in Mehdiabad, Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Eng. Mohammad-Reza Nematzadeh said: "Paying due attention to the mining and mineral sector is one of the main goals emphasized by the su-

preme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, senior executive official and Parliament."

Effective steps have been taken in this regard since the 11th government dubbed "Hope and Prudence" assumed office up to the present time, he observed.

The minister of industry put the total mineral reserves discovered up to the 11th government at 160,000 km, the rate of which hit 450,000 km since the outset of the 11th government up to the present time.

In addition to the exploration activities of Geological Survey of Iran (GSI),



discovery of mineral and mining projects, as long as 250,000 square kilometer, was transferred to IMIDRO, he said, adding: "For this purpose, we have ne-

gotiated with some organizations such as Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) in order to carry out discovery operations jointly."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the minister of industry pointed to Mehdiabad Mining project and said: "With the studies made in this regard, the first phase of this mineral and mining project will be put into operation in the next year."

In the end, the minister of industry reiterated: "The country has no choice but to invest in mineral and mining projects in order to boost export activities in related field."

AYANDEH Bank Wins "National Leading Economists Award"

At the 16th edition of Iran's Leading Economists Seminar, AYANDEH Bank managed to receive "National Leading Economists Award" on Monday July 17, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

This prestigious seminar was held at the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) Conferences Center in the presence of senior executives of the bank, representatives of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Iranian

Parliament), senior directors of industrial and production units, etc.

Given the above issue, AYANDEH Bank managed to receive four exemplary awards.

The aforementioned four awards include as follows: 1- Plaque of Honor dubbed "Iran's National Leading Economists in Banking Industry", 2- Plaque of Honor on "The Most Trusted and Efficient Bank in Iran",

3- Badge of Honor on "Best Trusted, Honest Bank in Banking Industry" and also 4- Plaque of Honor on "Best Electronic Services Certification".

As licensed by German's prestigious ICS Institute, the said four certificates were awarded by EU to AYANDEH Bank.

As accredited by the prestigious Euro Money Institute, AYANDEH Bank was introduced as the top and leading bank in the Middle East.

Bank Shahr CEO Awarded with Iran's Leading Economics Badge of Honor in Banking Industry

In 16th Iran's Leading Economists Conference, Chief Executive of Bank Shahr was awarded with Iran's Leading Economic Badge of Honor and also trophy for trust, honesty and trusteeship in

banking industry of the country.

This prestigious conference was held at IRIB Conferences Center in the presence of a number of officials and managers in the field of production, services

and exports.

Chief Executive of Bank Shahr Dr. Hossein Mohammad Pourzarandi was awarded with a Plaque of Honor as leading economic enterprise in bank-

ing industry of the country under the auspices of his salient achievements in the field of e-banking and gaining customers' satisfaction, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

What would you say to an extraterrestrial?

What would we do if aliens sent us a message? One astronomer says he would reply with the entire contents of the internet.

Whether the extraterrestrials arrive here on a gigantic spaceship or relay a transmission that one of our telescopes pick up, the conversation between most world leaders and other humans might focus on whether it would be dangerous to engage with an alien species or it might go more like this: "Should we invite the aliens for dinner or what?" That's according to Seth Shostak, a senior astronomer for the non-profit Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, better known as SETI. But if it were up to him, "I would just send them the internet," he told International Business Times, because it would give them a lot more information about us and our planet.

When it comes to a transmission, rather than a physical visit from aliens, we would have time to collect our thoughts, Shostak notes. Given the distribution of stars in our universe, in many cases the aliens potentially contacting us would be living hundreds of light years away from Earth, which means their transmission took hundreds of years to reach us and our response would take just as long to hit them back.

"There's no real hurry to get to the microphone and start broadcasting," Shostak said, and we already broadcast television and radio signals into space constantly.

Despite the massive distances to other stars, people eager to find extraterrestrial life got pumped earlier this week when it was announced that there were some mysterious signals coming from star Ross 128, just the latest out of numerous cases of possible alien contact that have emerged over the years.

(Source: IBT)

Running would have broken a Tyrannosaurus Rex's legs, new research shows

Jurassic Park's most iconic scenes should have run a little slower, based on new research suggesting our favorite dinosaur, Tyrannosaurus Rex, couldn't manage more than a walk.



Calculating the top speed of the tyrant lizard king seems to be an obsession for paleontologists, who have debated over the decades whether the giant predator was a sprinter or a stroller. It turns out that while T. Rex could still take quick steps, any serious gait would leave it with more than just a bad case of shin splints.

The research, led by scientists from the University of Manchester in the UK, created a detailed computer model that used multi-body system dynamics – which looks at connected solid objects – to analyze the bends and twists applied to different parts of a skeleton.

CT scans of various fossils provided limits the team could work with to decide the kinds of forces bones could take before they were damaged.

Working out the mass of any dinosaur isn't without its challenges, but the researchers settled on a conservative 7206.7 kilograms (about 15,900 pounds) of meat and bone for their calculations.

From there it was a matter of determining the forces of impact bones would experience as the dinosaur built up speed, taking into account hypothetical soft tissues that could cushion the blow.

Speeds above 27.7 kilometers (17 miles) per hour would have pushed the limits on Stan's bones, which were estimated to have a yield strength of about 200 megapascals (29,000 psi).

(Source: Business Insider)

Tour the international space station with google street view

The search engine on Thursday announced that anyone can now see inside the ISS using its popular map tool, Street View. Launched in 2007, the technology feature in Google Maps and Google Earth provides 360-degree views from different positions — previously limited to streets around the world. For the first time ever, Google has extended the feature into outer space.

Earth is seen behind the International Space Station from Space Shuttle Discovery as the two spacecraft begin their relative separation in this NASA handout photo taken on September 8, 2009. Google Street View on Thursday landed on the ISS.

Users can poke through 15 parts of the ISS. Tiny dots within the images allow users to launch notes that explain specific functions. In the "Pirs, Docking Compartment 1," for example, clicking on the description for the "Orlan Spacesuit" explains that the accessory is designed to protect an "Extravehicular Activity" crewmember from the vacuum of space, ionizing radiation, solar energy and micrometeoroids.

The ISS is a large spacecraft and science lab that orbits around the Earth. It houses astronauts from around the world and acts as a base for space exploration, with possible future missions to the moon, Mars and asteroids.

(Source: Newsweek)

Missing Swiss couple found frozen in Alps after 75 years

A Swiss couple who disappeared from their farm in the Alps during World War II have finally been found, 75 years later, mummified in a glacier.

Marcelin, 40, and Francine, 37, Dumoulin went missing on August 15, 1942, after leaving to milk their cows in a meadow near their home. They never returned to their family, including their six children.



A worker found the frozen bodies of a man and a woman last week during routine maintenance. The corpses were preserved in the receding Tsanfleuron glacier, near a slew of trendy ski resorts at 2,600 meters (8,500 feet) above sea level.

"From afar, it looked like small rocks, but there were too many in the same place," noted nearby Glacier 3000 resort director Bernhard Tschannen in an interview with Radio Television Suisse.

When he got closer, he noticed a collection of frozen accessories -- backpacks, watches, mess kits, a glass bottle and boots -- all of which dated back several decades.

Decked in World War II-era clothing, the duo was frozen close together. Their bodies have since been airlifted from the Alps.

The couple's youngest daughter, 79-year-old Marceline Udry-Dumoulin, told Swiss paper Le Matin their children had never stopped looking for them.

"We spent our whole lives looking for them, without stopping. We thought that we could give them the funeral they deserved one day," she said.

Another daughter, Monique Gautschi-Dumoulin, told Radio Television Suisse (RTS) her parents were walking to the valley the morning of their disappearance. It was a nice day, she says. Her father was singing.

But that was the last Monique would see of her parents, whose disappearance left her to care for her young sisters and brothers.

Their mother, a schoolteacher, and father, a shoemaker, likely fell into a crevice of the glacier, where their bodies were preserved.

The Institute of Forensic Medicine will seek to formally identify the bodies, through DNA tests, but the couple's children are convinced they are their missing parents.

"I can say that after 75 years of waiting this news gives me a deep sense of calm," Udry-Dumoulin said. "Now, I know where my parents are."

(Source: CNN)

LEARN ENGLISH Vegan or Vegetarian?

A: Hey Julie, you want to go grab something to eat?
B: Sure! What do you **feel like** having?
A: I really feel like having a big juicy **steak**!
B: Oh. Ok. I don't eat meat, but that's fine, I am sure wherever we are going they will have other options right?
A: I didn't know you were a **vegetarian**!
B: I'm not, I am a **vegan**.
A: A what?
B: A vegan. I don't eat or use any animal based products. I don't wear **leather**, eat eggs, drink milk or anything that **comes from** an animal. I used to be a **pesctarian** before, which basically means you don't eat meat, but still have fish and seafood.
A: Wow! That's interesting! It must be **tough**!
B: It's a bit difficult to find vegetarian friendly restaurants sometimes, but since **more and more** people are vegetarians or vegans nowadays, it's getting a bit less difficult.

Key vocabulary

feel like: have an inclination or desire for
steak: piece of cow meat
vegetarian: a person who does not eat meat or fish
vegan: a person who does not eat or use animal products
leather: made with animal skin that is chemically treated
come from: originates from
pesctarian: a person who does not eat meat but does eat fish
tough: difficult to do or deal with
more and more: continuing to become larger in number

Supplementary vocabulary

hippie: a person whose behavior, dress, etc., implied a rejection of conventional values

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Have an idea?
Be in touch!
lifestyle.tehrantimes@gmail.com

Final line-up for post of Tehran mayor revealed



Mohammad Ali Najafi



Hossein Mar'ashi



Mohammad Ali Afshani



Elahe Koulaei



Habibollah Bitaraf



Mohammad Shariatmadari



Mohsen Mehralizadeh

By Maryam Qarehgozlou

TEHRAN — During a session of the new Tehran City Council on Wednesday seven candidates succeeded to win the necessary votes to compete for the post of mayor in Tehran.

The seven figures voted to compete for the post were among a pool of other candidates.

The order of votes received by each candidate is as follows:

- Mohammad Ali Najafi: 21 votes
- Hossein Mar'ashi: 20 votes
- Elahe Koulaei: 16 votes
- Seyyed Mohammad Ali Afshani: 14 votes
- Habibollah Bitaraf: 12 votes
- Mohammad Shariatmadari: 11 votes
- Mohsen Mehralizadeh: 9 votes

Now the seven candidates must present their plans for the metropolis of Tehran for a final voting.

The 21-member council plans to elect the mayor in the first week of the calendar month of Mordad (July 23-28).

Below is an introduction to the seven prospective figures for post of mayor.

■ **Mohammad Ali Najafi**
Najafi, 66, is currently serving as economic advisor to President Hassan Rouhani. He had also served as education minister, head of the Budget and Planning Organization, and director of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization.

A former board member of Sharif University's school of mathematics won a seat at Tehran city council in 2006.

■ **Hossein Mar'ashi**
A former parliamentarian, the 60-year-old Mar'ashi was a former director of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization, and Kerman province

governor general.

■ **Elahe Koulaei**
Koulaei, 61, is an academic and a reformist politician. As professor of political sciences at the University of Tehran she has represented Tehran in the parliament from 2000-2004. She is the only female candidate for the post of mayor.

With Masoumeh Ebtekar, chief of the Department of Environment, withdrawing from the race, Koulaei is now the only woman among the candidates. She has managed to obtain more than two thirds of the votes.

■ **Mohammad Ali Afshani**
A former deputy education minister, Afshani is currently serving as Fars province governor general. He has also served as deputy governor general in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Khuzestan, and Semnan provinces.

■ **Habibollah Bitaraf**
Bitaraf, 61, has previously served as deputy energy minister and Yazd province governor general. He currently is the deputy oil minister for engineering, research and technology.

■ **Mohammad Shariatmadari**
Serving as the current vice-president for executive affairs, the 57 year-old Shariatmadari, has also been a member of the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations since 2006. He was also the minister of commerce from 1997 to 2005.

■ **Mohsen Mehralizadeh**
Mehralizadeh, 61, is a reformist politician. He has served as the head of the National Sports Organization and the governor general of Khorasan province. He ran for president in 2005.

The pro-reform Hope list succeeded to win all the council seats in Tehran on May 19 election, concurrent with the presidential election.

Al Gore's new climate change film raises huge question: Will he run again in 2020?

Al Gore has reemerged on the U.S. national scene to once again try and educate Americans about the dangers of climate change, and the timing is raising the question of a potential 2020 challenge to Donald Trump.

Mr. Gore has been drumming up publicity for his latest movie, An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power, and recently spoke with Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders — the most liked politician in America at the moment — about the clean energy economy, and the difficult task the world faces to save the world from dire potential consequences of a warming planet.

But, when it comes to taking on Mr. Trump in 2020, the former vice president notably hasn't ruled out a run.

"I'm a recovering politician," Mr. Gore says in the film, an indicator that he may be leaning toward not running, but also a statement that doesn't rule out the possibility.

Mr. Gore has spent the past 17 years rebuilding his public image after a devastating and messy election loss in 2000 in which he won the national popular vote but lost in the electoral college to George W. Bush.

During that post-election period, he's focused on climate change as an existential crisis for the world to grapple with. Mr. Gore, climate change activists and scientists say, has been one of the most prominent and effective American

leaders spreading the word about the issue. Although it has been over 10 years since he released his widely praised first movie on the subject, which ended up winning an Academy Award, his network of connection to people in the environmental movement, the business world, and in government still makes him a force to contend with.

"He's still a very important figure in climate change and sustainable communities broadly. He has a big audience and also is of course extremely widely connected to both decision makers and funders throughout the philanthropy community and so on," Andrew Rosenberg, the director for science and democracy at the Union of Concerned Scientists, told The Independent.

It's unclear if Mr. Gore would actually consider a 2020 run, however. Presidential campaigns are long, grueling affairs that last nearly two years. There's constant scrutiny from the press, and he'd have to face off against Mr. Trump in a general election — a man who is well known for vicious attacks and name-calling as a campaigner. He may not publicly announce for quite a long time as well, since he waited until the proverbial last minute to announce in 2004 that he wasn't going to pursue a rematch in 2004 against Mr. Bush.

Plus, he'd enter what is likely to be a crowded Democratic

field. While his elder statesman status as a former vice president would surely get him a lot of attention, the Democratic Party appears to lack a clear front-runner for the next election. Hillary Clinton's loss has left the field wide open.

Still, the same qualities that make Mr. Gore a strong climate change advocate could serve him well in a presidential run if he decides to go for it.

David Hawkins, the director of climate programs at the Natural Resources Defense Council, says that he doesn't comment on political matters, but noted the qualities that have allowed him to remain a leading voice in the climate debate, and contrasted Mr. Gore on the issue with Mr. Trump.

Having someone remind people of the fact that the issue remains important — indeed, it's more important — and to be out there as a voice from national leadership who can command an audience isn't phony," Mr. Kawkins told The Independent.

Whatever the case, Mr. Hawkins says that whether Mr. Gore decides to reenter politics is beside the point. The film, out in the United States July 28, has an important message of its own, he said.

"It's important regardless of what Gore may or may not decide to do about running for president," he said. "I don't think it's any reason to dismiss the movie."

(Source: Independent)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Sharif University offers support for students hit by Trump's visa ban

Tehran's Sharif University of Technology has offered to grant admission to Iranian students who are barred from education in the U.S. in the wake of U.S. President Donald Trump's visa ban.

In a statement issued by Sharif University after expressing regrets over U.S visa ban as a discriminatory practice they have announced that Iranian students enrolled in scholarship programs in top 20 universities in the United States chosen based on the latest edition of the QS World University Ranking and Times Higher Education can apply to Sharif University.

اقدام دانشگاه صنعتی شریف برای جذب دانشجویان منع شده از تحصیل در آمریکا

دانشگاه صنعتی شریف آمادگی خود را جهت پذیرش دانشجویان ایرانی منع شده از ادامه تحصیل در کشور آمریکا بر اساس فرمان منع ویزا دونالد ترامپ رئیس جمهور آمریکا اعلام کرد. در اطلاعیه دانشگاه صنعتی شریف در واکنش به فرمان منع ویزا آمده است: دانشگاه صنعتی شریف ضمن ابراز تاسف از سیاست تبعیض آمیز و غیرآکادمیک دولت آمریکا در خصوص ممنوعیت ورود اتباع هفت کشور عمدتاً مسلمان به خاک آن کشور، در نظر دارد از میان دانش آموختگان ایرانی که دارای پذیرش توأم با حمایت مالی در سال ۲۰۱۷ از ۲۰ دانشگاه برتر آمریکا بر اساس نظام های رتبه بندی و هستند، به صورت مازاد بر ظرفیت پذیرش کند.

ENGLISH PROVERB

A penny saved is a penny earned

■ **Explanation**: money that you save is more valuable than money that you spend right away
■ **For example**: It is good to save money. Now that you have your first job, you ought to open a savings account. A penny saved is a penny earned.

PHRASAL VERB

Decide on/upon something

■ **Meaning**: to choose something or someone after thinking carefully
■ **For example**: Have you decided on a date for the wedding?

ENGLISH IDIOM

Below the belt

■ **Explanation**: an action or remark described as below the belt is considered to be unfair or cruel
■ **For example**: Politicians sometimes use personal information to hit their rivals below the belt.

Al-Aqsa: 4 Palestinians killed during rallies

World reacts to Israel siege of al-Aqsa

At least four people have reportedly lost their lives during clashes in the occupied Palestinian lands as tensions remain high there in the wake of the Tel Aviv regime's crackdown on Palestinian worshippers wishing to pray at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

Israeli police also fired live ammunition, tear gas and rubber-coated bullets at Palestinians protesting against the new measures, including the barring of Muslim men under the age of 50 from the holy site and the installation of metal detectors.

The protests come a week after a deadly shoot-out at the occupied East al-Quds (Jerusalem) compound, which triggered tensions.

The rallies started after the Muslim Friday prayers, which took place around midday local time.

Video of the clashes shows Israeli police kicking a man who was praying in the street.

At least 140 Palestinians have been injured in occupied East al-Quds and the West Bank, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent.

Earlier in the day, police swarmed into al-Quds's Arab neighborhoods, particularly in and around the walled Old City where the shrine is located.

At least 3,000 Israeli police and border police units had been deployed to the area, according to a police spokesman.

Israel's security cabinet said that Israeli police would decide when to remove metal detectors and turnstiles installed at the compound last week - a disappointing statement to Palestinians who view the measures as collective punishment and an infringement on the status quo, which gives Muslims religious control over the compound and Jews the right to visit, but not pray there.

Israel tightened its grip on the compound after two Israeli security officers were killed in an alleged attack by three Palestinians, who were killed by Israeli police following the violence.

On Thursday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu received recommendations from different sectors of Israel's security services on the metal detectors.

Israel's internal security service, Shin Bet, said the barriers should be removed, while al-Quds (Jerusalem) police insisted they stay.

Palestinian member of the Knesset Mohammad Barakeh told a meeting of Palestinian leaders in al-Quds (Jerusalem) early on Friday that the security cabinet's decision is a "political game".

"The Israeli government's [decision] of referring the matter to the police is a political game in order to absolve Netanyahu of any responsibility by implying that this is not a political issue, rather a security issue, but the truth is that this is a political decision."

The leaders rejected Israel's measures and vowed to continue to hold prayers outside the compound until the barriers are removed.

Over the past week, there have been daily demonstrations and clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians.

On Friday, a Palestinian advocacy group said 10 prominent Palestinian activists had been detained in al-Quds.

The Palestinian Prisoners Club said Hatem Abdel Khader, the al-Quds (Jerusalem) leader of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party, was among those arrested.

Day of rage

Meantime, the Palestinian group Hamas and Muslim leaders worldwide called for mass protests on Friday over the measures.



On Wednesday, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh condemned the Israeli crackdown and its prevention of Palestinian worshippers from entering the al-Aqsa Mosque for Friday prayers.

Haniya warned Israel against crossing a "red line" at al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

"To the Zionist enemy, I say openly and clearly: al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem are red lines. Truly they are red lines," he said.

"To the enemy I say, your policy of closure and imposition of collective punishments against the residents of Jerusalem and our places of sanctity will not be tolerated."

"Entry to the Old City and Temple Mount will be limited to men aged 50 and over. Women of all ages will be permitted," the Israeli police said in a statement.

Israel fully closed off the compound to Muslims after a reported shootout on July 14 near the site that left two Israeli soldiers and three Palestinians dead. The move sparked far-and-wide condemnations across the Muslim world.

It restored access to the compound later, but placed metal detectors at its front, prompting Muslims to refuse to reach the site and hold prayers outside in a show of protest.

Elsewhere, the Doha-based International Union of Muslim scholars called for all Muslims to show solidarity with worshippers at al-Aqsa in a "day of anger".

"We call on all Muslims to make this Friday a day of anger against the Zionist actions in Jerusalem and the people residing there," a statement by the group read.

Earlier this week, al-Quds (Jerusalem) top Muslim leader called on all the city's mosques to close on Friday and encourage worshippers to gather outside the gates of al-Aqsa Mosque for the weekly Friday prayers.

Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip on Friday prayed in public spaces in solidarity with worshippers in al-Quds (Jerusalem).

In al-Khalil (Hebron), Palestinians gathered in the Hussein Stadium for Friday prayers.

The wider al-Aqsa compound is known as al-Haram al-Sharif, or the Noble Sanctuary, by Muslims and the Temple Mount by Jews.

Abbas calls for intervention

Meantime, Netanyahu said this week that he does not want to alter the status quo.

But Palestinians fear Israel is trying to retake the site by stealth.

There had been speculations that Netanyahu may order the detectors to be removed for Friday prayers, but he reportedly decided not to do so after consultations with cabinet members.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Ab-

bas cut short a trip to China on Wednesday to return to the occupied West Bank to deal with the mounting tensions.

On Wednesday he urged the international community to intervene.

The site houses al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock shrine, Islam's third holiest site after Mecca and Medina, as well as the ruins of the Biblical Jewish Temple.

Questions about control of the site frequently lead to outbursts of fighting.

Israeli troops attack Aqsa worshippers on 'Day of Rage'

The developments follow as, Israeli troops clash with Palestinian worshippers who are marking a "Day of Rage" to protest Tel Aviv's virtual siege of the al-Aqsa Mosque in East al-Quds.

At least four Palestinians were injured on Friday as Israeli forces fired rubber bullets at worshippers near a church in the Old City of al-Quds.

Thursday marked the sixth day of clashes between Muslim worshippers and Israeli forces. Some 50 Palestinians were wounded in the latest skirmishes.

Palestinian al-Aqsa satellite channel, separately, reported that Israeli forces had raided the house of Amjad Abu Asab, the chairman of the al-Quds Committee for Families of Prisoners, in al-Quds and arrested him.

The local body campaigns on behalf of the kinsmen of the thousands-strong Palestinians in Israeli incarceration.

World reacts to Israel siege of al-Aqsa

World officials have expressed their concern and called on Israel and Jordan, the custodian of the compound, to reach an agreement in a bid to defuse the tensions.

Turkey

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who had spoken to Abbas by phone earlier in the day, urged his Israeli counterpart Reuven Rivlin to remove the detectors.

"Given the importance that Haram al-Sharif carries for the whole Islamic world, the metal detectors put in place by Israel should be removed in the shortest possible time and an end put to the tension," Erdogan said.

"Any restriction on Muslims entering al-Aqsa Mosque is unacceptable," Erdogan said. "The protection of the Islamic character and sanctity of al-Quds [Jerusalem] and al-Haram al-Sharif [al-Aqsa Mosque compound] is important for the whole Muslim world."

"It is unacceptable for the entry of Muslims and Palestinians to the mosque to be blocked," said presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kahn. "We interpret the move as a shift in the status quo at the al-Aqsa Mosque."

Lebanon

In a statement released by his media office, Lebanese President Michel Aoun "condemned and denounced the recur-

rent Israeli aggressions against the sanctity of al-Aqsa Mosque and the closure of the doors of the mosque against the worshippers".

"The recurrent Israeli aggressions...are part of an Israeli scheme to target the sacred sites after the usurpation of the land, in its attempt to continue changing the geographic and demographic status quo in Jerusalem," the statement read.

The United States

In a statement released on Wednesday, the White House said it is "very concerned" about the tensions surrounding the compound.

"[The] U.S. calls upon the state of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to make a good faith effort to reduce tensions and to find a solution that assures public safety and the security of the site and maintains the status quo," the statement said.

Jordan

Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman al-Safadi told the European Union High Representative Federica Mogherini that Jordan is exerting its utmost to restore calm and end the crisis, based on principles of security, stability and Israel's respect of the historical situation in Jerusalem.

He also underscored the importance of the international community to de-escalate the situation and prevent further tensions, by cancelling all Israeli actions that aim to impose new facts on the ground.

Egypt

In a statement posted on Facebook, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry urged Israel to stop the violence and warned of escalating tensions at the al-Aqsa Mosque.

The statement called on Israel to "stop violence against Palestinians and holy places, and to respect Palestinians' freedom of worship, and not taking more measures that may trigger conflict and decrease the chances of reaching a comprehensive peace based on the two-state solution".

Saudi Arabia

The House of Saud regime's Council of Ministers called on the international community to bear the responsibility to halt these practices that "deeply hurt the sentiments of Muslims around the globe."

The weekly session, chaired by Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman, described the Israeli act as a dangerous development that would further complicate the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

South Africa

South African Muslim leaders and civil rights groups have condemned Israel's restricting access to al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third holiest site.

"We have appealed to Imams across the country to concentrate their sermons this Friday on what is happening in al-Aqsa and rally solidarity for fellow Muslims there," Shakir Baker, operations manager of the al-Quds Foundation, told Anadolu Agency.

"We have called on Muslims worldwide to fast every Thursday until al-Aqsa is liberated."

The European Union

"We call on the state of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to work together and make all efforts to find solutions that ensure security for all, respect the sanctity of this holy site, and preserve the status quo," said Maja Kocijancic, spokesperson for European Union High Representative Federica Mogherini.

"We also call on all political and religious leaders to act responsibly and work towards restoring calm. We will continue to closely monitor the developments."

(Source: agencies)

Syria army, Hezbollah attack terrorist positions in border areas

Earlier this week, Amnesty International urged the Lebanese army to "prioritize the protection of Lebanese residents as well as Syrian refugees in the area" when it launches its operation.



"They must refrain from using lethal force except when it is unavoidable for self-defense or defense of others against threats of death and serious injury," Amnesty's Lynn Maalouf said in a statement on Tuesday, adding: "Thousands of lives are on the line."

In 2014, the area was the scene of one of the most serious spillovers of the Syrian war into Lebanon, when fighters briefly overran the town of Aarsal.

Hezbollah has provided Syrian government with crucial military support in the war.

A source close to the Hezbollah movement told the DPA news agency: "This might be a preliminary shelling for the long-anticipated military operation by Hezbollah to root out the militant groups from the outskirts of Aarsal ... Hezbollah militants are ready for the anticipated battle."

Meanwhile, activists in the area said Syrian warplanes also carried out a round of raids on the fighters' posts in the border region.

Hezbollah has been fighting alongside Syrian government's forces throughout the Syrian foreign instigated war.

The Lebanese Red Cross had started setting up field centers in the northern Bekaa region in anticipation of a battle.

Rami Abdel Rahman, head of Britain-based so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor, said the fighters are holed up in areas on Aarsal's outskirts and "some pockets" at the Syrian-Lebanese border.

Some expect that the battle will not be an easy ride for Hezbollah due to the nature of the terrain.

Aarsal is surrounded by hills and deep valleys, and fighters are positioned on the hilltops and have a clear view of any advancing force, a military expert who requested anonymity told DPA.

On July 11, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah proclaimed that "it's about time we put an end to the threat of the militant groups in Aarsal's outskirts".

(Source: agencies)

Bahraini inmates seeking medical attention punished with torture, solitary confinement

A Bahraini human rights group says detainees being held at a detention center in the tiny Persian Gulf kingdom will be punished by solitary confinement and torture in case they seek medical attention from prison authorities.

Duraz Youth Movement announced on Friday that inmates at Dry Dock Detention Center will be locked up in solitary cells and subjected to torture should they demand treatment, Arabic-language Lualua television network reported.

The movement noted that the practice has been drawn up by one of the prison's senior figures identified as Ahmad al-Amadi.

It also expressed deep concerns over the deteriorating health conditions of Ali Majeed Rabea and Hussein Mahdi Qassem, stressing that the pair faces serious health risks after continuously being denied proper medical care.

The two were wounded with birdshot pellets after Bahraini regime troops attacked supporters of prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Isa Qassim in the northwestern village of Diraz on May 23, killing at least five people and arresting 286 others. Reports said 19 policemen were also injured in the clashes.

Duraz Youth Movement also warned against the spread of a "highly contagious skin condition" among prisoners at Dry Dock Detention Center, and severe swelling of the eyes due to constant exposure to darkness.

Bahrain forces detain another Shia cleric

Meanwhile, Bahraini regime forces have arrested another Shia Muslim cleric as the ruling House of Khalifah regime presses ahead with its heavy-handed crackdown and persecution of the members of the religious community.

Bahraini troopers stormed the house of Sheikh Bashar al-Aali in the northwestern coastal town of al-Budaiya on Thursday afternoon, and arrested the cleric without providing any reasons.

Thousands of anti-regime protesters have held demonstrations in Bahrain on an almost daily basis ever since a popular uprising began in the country in mid-February 2011.

They are demanding that the House of Khalifah relinquish power and allow a just system representing all Bahrainis to be established.

Manama has gone to great lengths to clamp down on any sign of dissent. On March 14, 2011, troops from the House of Saud regime and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were deployed to assist Bahrain in its crackdown.

Scores of people have lost their lives and hundreds of others sustained injuries or got arrested as a result of the House of Khalifah regime's crackdown.

(Source: Press TV)

U.S. lawmakers introduce new sanctions against Hezbollah

The United States lawmakers in Congress have introduced legislation seeking to increase sanctions on the Lebanese Resistance Movement, Hezbollah.

The Republican and Democratic lawmakers introduced the bill on Thursday over accusations that the resistance movement is involved in violence in Syria and has transferred rockets along the Syrian border.

The measure, an amendment to an existing sanctions law on the anti-Israeli group, seeks to further restrict Hezbollah's ability to recruit and fundraise.

The bill also seeks to increase pressure on foreign banks that do business with

Hezbollah, and put pressure on countries that support it, including Iran.

Officials in Lebanon say the U.S. efforts to expand sanctions would damage the Arab country's important banking industry.

Versions of the legislation were introduced in both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

"These sanctions will severely limit Hezbollah's financial network and transnational activities, as well as crack down its backers, most importantly Iran," Representative Ed Royce, the Republican chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said in a statement.

The U.S. Congress, as well as Presi-

dent Donald Trump's administration, are eager to curb Iran's support of anti-Israeli resistance movements in Lebanon and other countries in the Middle East.

This week, the Trump administration added new sanctions on Iran over Tehran's ballistic missile program.

During the past six years that the foreign-backed crisis has been raging on in Syria, Hezbollah and the Lebanese military have been defending the country, especially along its northeastern frontier, against spillover of foreign-backed terrorist groups from neighboring Syria.

Hezbollah fighters have fended off several Islamic State in Iraq and the Le-

vant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit's attacks inside Lebanon as well. They have also been providing assistance to Syrian army forces to counter the ongoing foreign-sponsored militancy.

The movement accuses Israel of supporting Takfiri terrorists operating in the Middle East.

Israel, which continues to occupy Lebanon's Shebaa Farms and Syria's Golan Heights, is widely reported to be offering medical help to Takfiri terrorists injured in Syria. In December 2015, British newspaper the Daily Mail said Israel had saved the lives of more than 2,000 Takfiri militants since 2013.

(Source: Press TV)

LaLiga key fixtures: Clasico on December 20, Madrid derby after World Cup play-offs

The first Clasico of the 2017-18 LaLiga season is set to be held on Wednesday December 20, with the return fixture not until May 5/6.

Champions Real Madrid will host Barcelona at the Santiago Bernabeu in the final round of fixtures before Spain's winter break, while the clash at Camp Nou is scheduled to be held on the third-from-last matchday of the campaign.

The first meeting between Spain's biggest clubs is due to be held only four days after the final of the Club World Cup in the United Arab Emirates, in which Madrid will be looking to defend the trophy they won in 2016.

Atletico Madrid will host the first Madrid derby of the season on November 18/19, just five days after the second leg of the World Cup play-off matches. The reverse fixture is due to be played on April 7/8.

Atletico's first league match at the new Wanda Metropolitano stadium will be against Malaga on September 16/17, provided that construction work is completed on schedule.

Diego Simeone's side take on Barca for the first time on October 14/15 in the capital and are due to meet them at Camp Nou on March 3/4. Barca's first derby against Espanyol is to be held at Camp Nou on September 9/10, with the reverse fixture on February 3/4. Ernesto Valverde's side travel to near neighbours Girona on September 23/24 and host them on February 24/25.

Sevilla will meet fierce rivals Real Betis at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan on January 6/7 and will travel to the remodelled Estadio Benito Villamarin on May 12/13.

All fixture dates are provisional and are subject to change.

(Source: Soccerway)

Top Russian clubs receive fines for fan racism

Spartak Moscow and rivals Dynamo Moscow have been fined for racist behavior involving their fans by the Russian Football Union (RFU).

The decision was made by RFU Disciplinary Committee, with the offences having been raised by a new monitoring system in the organization.

Russian champions Spartak Moscow were sanctioned after their fans directed a racist chant at Lokomotiv Moscow's goalkeeper Guilherme during their 2-1 win in the Russian Super Cup at the Lokomotiv Stadium.

The Brazilian-born goalkeeper was a member of the Russian squad for the Confederations Cup last month.

Dynamo Moscow were fined following "discriminatory gestures" aimed at Spartak players during the clubs' 2-2 draw on Tuesday (July 18).

Both Spartak and Dynamo were given fines of 250,000 rubles (£3,261/\$4,240/€3,640).

Alexei Smertin, who has been put in charge of investigating football racism in Russia, claimed the monitoring system would improve the environment at games.

Russia has long stressed that racism will not be a problem at next year's World Cup.

However, there have been a number of racism-related incidents in previous years with players targeted with monkey chants and bananas.

Former Chelsea midfielder Smertin was put in charge of investigating football racism despite claiming in 2015 that it did not exist in Russia. "The main task of the new anti-discrimination monitoring system is to create a favorable and friendly atmosphere in the stands in the matches of the Russian Premier League," he said.

"This system has proved itself well in the Confederations Cup, and we are confident that it will be extremely useful in the Russian championship.

"Ahead of us is the World Cup, and we want the culture of supporting teams at Russian stadiums to meet the highest international standards not only during this grand football festival, but also after its completion, becoming part of the tournament's legacy for the entire national football."

Both Spartak and Dynamo have been warned they could face more severe sanctions if recurrences of the incidents are identified.

(Source: Inside the Games)

Niki Lauda: 'Halo has destroyed DNA of an F1 car'

Formula One's decision to introduce a 'halo' cockpit protection device next year is a mistake, according to former champion Niki Lauda.

The Austrian, who is non-executive chairman of world champions Mercedes, told Germany's Auto, Motor und Sport on Thursday that he recognized safety had to be improved where possible.

However a convincing solution had yet to be found to protect drivers' heads from debris.

"We tested the Halo, the Red Bull Aeroscreen and Ferrari's Shield as a cockpit protection. None has convinced 100 percent. You have to make the right decision in such a situation. The halo is the wrong one," he said.

Lauda, a triple world champion who retired from racing in 1985 after a near-fatal fiery crash in 1976, said the halo destroyed the "DNA of a Formula One car".

"The FIA has made Formula One as safe as it gets. Also the danger of flying wheels is largely eliminated, because the wheels are always more firmly attached. The risk to the drivers has become minimal.

"We are just trying hard to get new fans for the sport with fast cars and getting closer to the spectators, and now this is destroyed by an overreaction."

The governing FIA announced on Wednesday that the halo would be introduced for 2018 rather than the transparent 'shield' tested at Silverstone last week.

The halo, which is fixed to the car at three points including a central pillar in front of the driver that supports a protective loop above his head, has been widely criticized on aesthetic grounds.

Some have compared its appearance to the toe strap of a flip-flop. Former Dutch F1 racer Giedo van der Garde posted a photograph on Twitter of himself holding a sandal to his head as an example.

(Source: AP)

Barcelona will leave Neymar's decision on future up to him, his father - source

Barcelona have grown tired of the ongoing Neymar speculation and will leave a decision on the player's future up to him and his father, a source close to the Catalan club has told ESPN.

Various reports this week have linked Paris Saint-Germain to a possible move for the Brazilian star, who has a release clause that would allow him to end his contract at Barcelona for €222 million.

A PSG spokesperson told ESPN that a deal "is possible," while Catalunya Radio, citing a source with the French club, reported on Thursday night that the Paris club believes there exists "a high possibility to sign Neymar; a transfer is at 95 percent."

Barcelona have shown a united front in response to the transfer speculation, with club president Josep Bartomeu the latest to say on Thursday that Neymar "is not on the market."

But a source said that behind the scenes, Barcelona are tired of "playing a game that they do not want to play," with Neymar yet to issue a statement dismissing the reports and thereby presenting a more fractured image.

"At Barcelona those who want to play will do so. Nothing more can be done," the source said, adding that it will be Neymar who decides where he'll play.

Neymar was also linked to a move to PSG last summer, with one of his agents saying his father met with the French club twice in June 2016, until the player himself decided to stay at Barcelona and weeks later signed a five-year extension.

Neymar posted a photo of himself with his father on Instagram on Thursday, with a caption saying: "You represent ALL my FRIENDS ... having you as a friend is one



of the best things I have in my life. I love you, Dad!"

Bartomeu earlier on Thursday said financial fair play rules would make any move to trigger Neymar's release clause impossible, but Catalunya Radio reported that PSG had a plan to circumvent the restrictions by having Neymar

pay the clause himself.

The station also said Neymar would be in line for a signing bonus that would exceed the €40m that Barcelona paid to ensure his signing from Santos in 2013.

(Source: ESPN)

Lukaku on target as United top City in Houston derby



Strikers Romelu Lukaku and Marcus Rashford delivered a devastating one-two punch just before half time to carry Manchester United to a 2-0 victory over Manchester City in a derby held 5,000 miles from home on Thursday.

Lukaku struck first in Houston in the 37th minute with his second goal for his new club after moving to Old Trafford from Everton last week in a deal reported in the British media to be worth nearly \$100 million.

The Belgian found the net with a sensational finish on the half-volley from a narrow angle which exposed the positioning of goalkeeper Ederson, who recently joined City from Benfica for around \$45 million.

Two minutes later, Rashford took Henrikh Mkhitaryan's pass all alone to the right of the City penalty area and placed the ball beyond Ederson to ensure the red half of Manchester prevailed in the first derby played outside England.

The strike duo gave the United faithful hopes of a more explosive attack in the upcoming season by creating numerous chances against City, who were playing their first match of the pre-season in the International Champions Cup opener.

Lukaku missed two more tantalizing

opportunities early in the second half misdirecting a header off a corner from Rashford and then rattling the frame of the goal with a rocket off his left foot.

"I couldn't be happier with what he's doing, and I could not be happier we managed to sign him before the pre-season," United manager Jose Mourinho said of Lukaku on MUTV.

"(He's a) team player, who holds the ball, who waits for support, who allows the team to leave pressure zones. People look to goals and chances, I have a different perspective."

The entertaining contest drew a crowd of more than 67,000 to NRG Stadium, home of the National Football League's Houston Texans.

United, who have already played two games in the U.S. against Major League Soccer clubs LA Galaxy and Real Salt Lake, will play another four pre-season contests against Real Madrid, Barcelona, Valerenga and Sampdoria.

City have games against Real Madrid, Tottenham Hotspur and West Ham United following the derby clash.

"It was our first game, a good training (run) against another team," said City manager Pep Guardiola.

(Source: Reuters)

Liam Malone: In three years I'll run faster than Usain Bolt



Double Paralympic champion Liam Malone has said that in three years time he'll be capable of running quicker than Usain Bolt's 9.5 seconds in the 100m.

Malone, who is a double-leg amputee, won gold at the Rio Olympics in the T44 200m and 400m.

The 23-year-old explained to BBC Radio 5 Live that with the progress of technology in three years he believes he could run 9.4s in the 100m, which would break Bolt's world-record run from 2009.

"I'm aiming for 9.4 seconds, in the next three years I'll run faster than Usain Bolt over 100m,

"It won't be done in the Paralympics, and I've no intention of ever racing Usain Bolt or able-bodied people, it's about racing against their time outside of the rules and regulations that limit technology. That's what I'm focused on at the moment.

"If you were me and you were bullied as a kid from five to 15, and you had this opportunity to use technology to do something that hasn't been done before, you'd absolutely want to do it and that's what I'm doing."



Malone, who had both his legs amputated aged just 18 months after being born with fibula bones, added that he felt this was only natural due to the development of technology compared to the biological advancement of the human body.

"The point is that artificial bodies improve at a faster rate than the biological body, until about nine years old, my legs were basically like a pirate's from the 16th century - wood, rubber, really basic.

"It's only in the last five to 10 years I've had these new forms of technology come through. If blades are allowing blade runners to run as fast as able-bodied human beings at this point, what's it going to look like in 20 years?"

"It's not just in Paralympic sport. Artificial bodies is one of the biggest trends in the world - from dying your hair to using contact lenses to hearing aids to breast implants and fake teeth. It really is the future.

"Human beings love customising things and the human body is the pinnacle of something you can customise."

(Source: Eurosport)

Void in the pool as post-Phelps era dawns

The world swimming championships will usher in a new era following the retirement of American great Michael Phelps when eight days of racing commence at Budapest's Duna Arena on Sunday.

This will be the first global meeting since 1998 without either Phelps, holder of 23 Olympic gold medals and 26 world titles, or compatriot and six-time Olympic gold medalist Ryan Lochte who is ineligible to compete after a 10-month ban.

Although Phelps missed the 2013 and 2015 championships, it is his farewell after his final competitive race at the Rio Olympics which still resonates.

Phelps was the last to leave pool deck as he waved an emotional goodbye to a boisterous crowd after helping the U.S. to gold in the men's 4x100 meters medley relay.

Nearly one year on, his departure has left a void as the sport searches for the next global star to take over the 32-year-old's mantle.

A mixed medley relay, along with a men's 800m and women's 1500m freestyle races were last month added to the Tokyo 2020 program by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in a radical shake-up of the Games program.

However, if those changes were implemented to ensure gender parity across the sport, it is women's elite swimmers



who are likely to receive top billing in Budapest.

Following local favorite Katinka Hosszu's trio of Olympic titles at last summer's Olympics, an expectant nation will now be anticipating more bounty in the pool where she has been training for multiple individual tilts.

Following her Rio exploits, the self-billed 'Iron Lady' has entered six individual events across medley, backstroke, freestyle and butterfly. The 28-year-old is also bidding for a hat-trick of world titles in both the 200m and 400m individual medley.

Katie Ledecky of the United States is set to go one better.

Unbeaten at world championships, the American's freestyle brilliance is set to continue in the Hungarian capital as she aims for a hat-trick of individual world titles in the 400m, 800m and 1500m.

Like Hosszu, she is entered into six events - and unless she scratches some races, the 20-year-old collegiate will undertake her most active schedule yet in a major meet.

Along with Hosszu and Ledecky, Swedish sprint star Sarah Sjöström, 23, will be vying to win her first freestyle world title, having come to the fore with Olympic gold in the 100m butterfly, her signature event.

Top male swimmers to look out for in Budapest include Britain's Olympic breaststroke champion Adam Peaty and South African Chad le Clos, who is aiming to put a disappointing Rio Games behind him after the defending champion finished outside of the medals in the 200m Olympic butterfly final.

Away from the pool, Julio Maglione will be seeking re-election at the helm of the sport's international body, FINA, when a presidency vote is held on Saturday.

Maglione, 81, is considered favorite for a fourth term when he stands against Italy's Paolo Barelli, the European Swimming Federation president.

(Source: Reuters)

Iranian athletes receive 5 more medals in World Para Athletics Championships

Iranian sportsmen have picked up more honor at the ongoing 2017 World Para Athletics Championships in England, and collected five more medals in the multinational and multi-sport event, and raised the Islamic Republic's medal tally to twelve.

On Thursday evening, Iran's Paralympian athlete Hamed Amiri competed in the men's shot put F55 category contests at Olympic Stadium in London, and recorded a throw of 11.17 meters to get the bronze medal.

Bulgaria's 26-year-old Ruzhdi Ruzhdi featured an inspiring display of athletic skills and might, and threw the shot 12.47 meters to snatch gold. Lech Stoltman from Poland came second with a throw of 11.37 meters.

In the men's javelin throw F12/F13 division, Iranian pitcher Sajad Nikparast earned the silver medal with her best effort of 61.88 meters on Wednesday evening.

Aleksandr Svechnikov, a representative from Uzbekistan, won the gold medal with a throw of 71.01 meters. Spaniard Hector Cabrera Llacer struck the bronze with 61.53 meters.

On Tuesday evening, Iranians made a clean sweep of all the available medals in the men's javelin throw F57 final.

Amanollah Papi snatched the snatch gold with 44.87 meters, and Mohammad Khalvandi recorded 42.18 meters to pocket the silver. Abdollah Heidari Til got the bronze medal, having thrown the javelin 41.83 meters.

The 2017 World Para Athletics Championships started in London on July 14, and will conclude on July 23.

It is the 8th edition of the event, which was formerly known as the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Athletics World Championship prior to 2017, and features 213 medal events.

(Source: Press TV)



AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers: Group A - Iran beat Kyrgyzstan

The Islamic Republic of Iran emerged as the early leaders of Group A in the 2018 AFC U-23 Championship qualifiers thanks to a 2-1 win over hosts Kyrgyzstan Republic on Wednesday.

With Ali Gholizadeh pulling the strings early on, Iran looked the more dangerous, however it was to be Kyrgyz Republic who were to take the lead, Roman Levchenko firing home on 11 minutes much to the delight of the home support.

Iran were not to be outdone though, and they hit back just three minutes later courtesy of Reza Shekari's neat finish. The Iranian's continued to press and were duly rewarded when Gholizadeh put his side ahead in the 42nd minute, before disaster struck for the hosts moments before the break when Askarbek Saliev was dismissed after picking up a second yellow card.

With chances few and far between in the second



period, Iran maintained their composure to secure a vital opening win and go top of a three-team which also includes Oman.

Iran head coach Amir Hossein Peiravani

"The first match is always the hardest. I would like

to thank my team. They all did their very best get the positive result. During the first half, we scored twice and then concentrated on maintaining our advantage after the break. Also, my respect for the national team of the Kyrgyz Republic. The national team of Kyrgyz Republic is a good team with a good coach. I hope that in the future we will hear a lot of good news about Kyrgyz football."

Kyrgyz Republic head coach Valeri Berezovskii

"As expected, the guys slightly burned out and could not handle the pressure. All our plans were scrapped at the end of the first half. The lack of international experience affected the result of the game. Nevertheless, we showed incredible commitment. Now we will forget the result of this match and prepare for the game with Oman. We know that we are in a very difficult situation, but we will fight to the end."

(Source: AFC)

Iran's judoka Bodaghi wins 2017 Summer Deaflympics bronze



Iranian judo practitioner Mehrdad Bodaghi has exhibited remarkable athletic skills at the 23rd edition of Summer Deaflympics in Turkey, and been awarded a bronze medal at the prestigious sporting event.

On Thursday, Bodaghi simply progressed to the quarter-final round of the male minus 60-kilogram category, after his Cameroonian opponent did not show up for the preliminary round encounter.

The Iranian audibly-challenged sportsman prevailed over a representative from Mongolia with an ippon in the next contest, and advanced to the semi-finals.

Bodaghi faced a rival from Ukraine in the semi-final round, where he conceded a 1-5 defeat.

The Iranian judoka outmuscled a contestant from Russia in the third-place challenge and won a bronze medal.

The 2017 Summer Deaflympics, officially known as the 23rd edition of Summer Deaflympics, opened in Samsun, Turkey, on July 18 and will finish on July 30, 2017. A total of 3,148 athletes from 97 countries are competing in 21 sports at the international multi-sport event.

Dozens of Iranian athletes are in action across 13 sports. They are vying for top honors in athletics, beach volleyball, bowling, football, freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling, judo, karate, shooting, swimming, table tennis, taekwondo and volleyball.

(Source: Press TV)

Iran B beaten by Iraq in William Jones Cup



SPORTS Iran's B basketball national team were defeated against Iraq on Friday at the 39th edition of the William Jones Cup.

The Iranian basketball team suffered their fourth defeat in the tournament, losing 90-75 to the Iraqi team.

Iran B had previously lost to Atletas All-Star Lithuania, South Korea and Team Canada 150 and got victory against Chinese Taipei White, India and Japan U24 so far.

The Iranian team will play Chinese Taipei Blue next on Saturday in the Day 8 of the tournament.

The R. William Jones Cup, also known as the Jones Cup, is an international basketball tournament held annually since 1977 in Taipei, Taiwan.

It was named in honor of basketball promoter Renato William Jones, who was one of the founders of the International Basketball Federation (FIBA). Like the Olympics and the FIBA Basketball World Cup, it has both men's and women's versions. Iran finished fourth in the 2016 William Jones Cup after Mighty Sports (Philippines), South Korea and Chinese Taipei A (Blue), with five wins and three defeats. Iran have won the William Jones Cup five times.

We decided to sell Costa back in January, claims Chelsea boss Conte as he admits transfer market is 'crazy'

Antonio Conte has revealed his decision to cut Diego Costa from his future plans was made in January.

Costa made it clear at the turn of the year that he was interested in a big-money move to Chinese Super League club Tianjin Quanjian.

Chelsea resisted the transfer but the manager's mind was made up and there is no way he is changing it.

"I don't like to talk about players who are not here," said Conte, speaking for the first time since the infamous text message sent to Costa at the end of the season to inform him he would be allowed to leave.

"In January, the Costa situation was made very clear. For the club, for him and his agent and for me the situation is closed."

Costa was top scorer last season with 20 goals in the Premier League as Chelsea won the title.

He wants to return to his former club Atletico Madrid and has been granted an extended summer break in order to complete the transfer.

Having missed out on Romelu Lukaku, who joined Manchester United for £90m, Chelsea have signed Al-



varo Morata as his replacement.

Morata, who underwent a medical in London on Thursday, will cost a club record fee which starts at £58million and could rise to £70m.

"For sure this transfer market is crazy," said Conte. "Not only for this season, but now if you want to buy a simple player - a normal player - you have to start to think about spending 40 to 50 million euros."

"It's incredible this situation but there is this situation

and we must live with it.

"Lukaku cost a lot of money but the same with [Alex] Lacazette and Arsenal who spent 65m euros. For a right-back you spend 60-70m euros. This is the situation now."

"We must be very good and not make a mistake when we buy a player. You have to spend a lot and it is very important to make the right choice."

Morata is expected to complete his move before the weekend and join up with the Chelsea squad on the next leg of their tour in Singapore.

"This is a good signing for us," said Conte. "Morata is a young player but he has a lot of experience and played in the past with Real Madrid and Juventus in the league and the Champions League."

"He's a good striker, a player with the right prospects for Chelsea. He will be our first-choice. He can show his value with us. He is young and can improve a lot."

Chelsea face Arsenal in Beijing on Saturday before games against Bayern Munich and Inter Milan in Singapore.

(Source: Daily Mail)

Hamid Derakhshan named Naft Tehran coach

SPORTS Former Persepolis coach Hamid Derakhshan has been named as new head coach of Naft Tehran.

Derakhshan replaced Ali Karimi in the Tehran-based football team.

Karimi was appointed as Naft Tehran coach on July 1 but parted company with the team due to financial problems.

Naft Tehran will meet Persepolis last night in Iran's Super Cup. Derakhshan started his coaching career, as coach of Persepolis in 1995. He became the head coach of Paykan in summer 2009. He has also coached Shahrdari Tabriz, Shahin Bushehr and Damash Gilan.

On 10 September 2014, Derakhshan was named as Persepolis coach but stepped down on 5 April 2015 after a poor run of results.

Iran beats China in 2017 International Men's Basketball Challenge

The national Iranian men's basketball A team has defeated China in the preliminary round of the 2017 International Basketball Challenge, also known as the 2017 Atlas Challenge, in China.

On Thursday, the Iranians sealed a 94-87 victory over the Chinese team in a match played at the Suzhou Sports Center in Suzhou.



The Iranian sportsmen had defeated Belarus 84-73 in their previous match on Wednesday.

The Iranian team overcame Ukraine 78-68 in its opening game on July 18.

The 2017 International Men's Basketball Challenge started in Suzhou on July 18 and will run through July 23.

Basketball teams from eight countries, namely Australia, Belarus, China, Iran, Jordan, Lithuania, Ukraine and the United States, have participated in the tournament. They will compete in 20 matches. International Basketball Culture Week will also be held during the period.

On June 19, 2016, the national Iranian men's basketball team defeated the Lithuanian side 85-70 in the last encounter of the 2016 International Basketball Challenge, and was crowned as the champion of the six-day international sporting event.

The 2016 International Basketball Challenge started in Suzhou on June 14 and finished on June 19.

The tournament served as a warm-up exercise for Iran before the 2016 FIBA World Olympic Qualifying Tournament, which was held between July 4 and July 9 at the multi-purpose Pala Alpitour indoor sports arena in Turin, Italy.

(Source: Press TV)

Thailand pulls out of AFC Asian Cup bidding

Thailand have withdrawn their bid to host the Asian Cup in 2023, the Asian Football Confederation confirmed on Friday.

A statement released by the AFC said: "Football Association of Thailand have today notified the Asian Football Confederation of its decision to withdraw from the on-going bidding process for the AFC Asian Cup to be staged in 2023."

It is not yet known why Thailand withdrew from the bidding which now leaves only China and South Korea contesting the right to host the quadrennial continental championship. The final hosting decision is expected to be made in 2018.

The United Arab Emirates are hosting the next Asian Cup in 2019 between 5th January and 1st February and participants in the event will be expanded from 16 to 24.

The eight venues to be used in 2019 to host the matches are Zayed Sports City Stadium, Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium and Al Nahyan Stadium in Abu Dhabi, Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium and Khalifa Bin Zayed Stadium in Al Ain, Al-Maktoum Stadium and Maktoum Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Stadium in Dubai, and Sharjah Stadium in Sharjah.

(Source: Fox Sports)

Iran's Mohammad Tayyebi Joins Qatar SC

Iran's Esteghlal Khuzestan defender Mohammad Tayyebi joined Qatar SC on Thursday.

The 30-year-old player has joined the Qatari club on a one-year contract for an undisclosed fee.

Tayyebi had already reached an agreement with Iran's Pars Jonoubi Jam.

Tayyebi started his playing career at Naft Omidiyeh in 2011 and joined Esteghlal Khuzestan one year later.

He left Esteghlal Khuzestan after five years to join Qatar SC.

Qatar Sports Club is a sports club based in Doha, Qatar. It is best known for its football team which competes in the Qatar Stars League.

(Source: Tasnim)

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“Kelileh & Demneh” competing in Eurasia Intl. Film Festival

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian animation “Kelileh & Demneh” will be competing in the Eurasia International Film Festival, which will open in Astana, Kazakhstan today.



A scene from “Kelileh & Demneh”

Directed by Alireza Tavakkoli-Bina, the movie will be screened in the Children's Fest Competition, the organizers announced.

The film is about Kelileh and Demneh, two young jackals. The story starts in the middle of a rainy night when a horrified owl pays a visit to the king of the jungle to report on the excessive hunting he has witnessed.

A wide lineup of films from around the world will screen at the event, which will run until July 28.

NEWS IN BRIEF



“Matryoshka” returning to Tehran theater

A R T TEHRAN — Director/actor Parsa Piruzfar will restage “Matryoshka”, a monologue based on eight short stories by Anton Chekhov, in Tehran.

The play will go on stage at the Paliz Theater for a month starting Sunday. Piruzfar performed the play for a month at the Nazerzadeh Kermani Hall of the Iranshahr Theater Complex during September 2016.

The play was also performed in several cities of the U.S. and Canada earlier in 2015 and 2016.

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Photo

Photos by Hossein Musavi Sadr are on display in an exhibition at Atashzad Gallery.

The exhibit entitled “Small Galaxies” will be running until July 27 at the gallery that can be found at 3 North Abbaspur (Tavanir) St., near Vanak Sq.

Painting

A collection of paintings by Firuzeh Bakhtiari is on display in an exhibition at Shokuh Gallery.

The exhibit named “Different” will run until July 26 at the gallery located at 19 Amir Nuri Alley, North Salimi St.

near Andarzgu Blvd.

An exhibition of paintings by Hannibal Alkhas, Hosseinali Zabehi, Mehdi Sharifi, Homa Sadr, Bahareh Rahimi and several other artists is underway at Sayeh Gallery.

The exhibit titled “How” runs until July 26 at the gallery located at 3 Aqakhani Alley, Omidvar St. in the Niavaran neighborhood.

An exhibition of paintings by Elham Kheiran is currently underway at Negar Gallery.

The exhibition will run until July 26 at the gallery located at 33 Delaram Alley, East Roshanai St. in the Qeitarieh neighborhood.

Paintings by Suzan Azimi are on display in an exhibition at Aliha Gallery.

The exhibit will be running until July 28 at the gallery that can be found at No. 31 Ramezani Alley, Mahurzadeh St., Shariati St.

2nd Ceramic-Based Exhibition opens at Iranian Artists Forum

A R T TEHRAN — The 2nd Ceramic-Based Exhibition on the theme of frontier opened at the Iranian Artists Forum on Friday.

A collection of works including photos, paintings and video art created by different artists have been put on display in the exhibit, secretary of the exhibit Rojhaneh Hosseini said in a press release published on Friday.

“The exhibit aims to put the spotlight on ceramic as an ancient medium. This material can have very active usage in different branches of visual art,” she said.

“The collection on show features 40 different artworks in four different categories. They include ‘Frontier between Applied Art and Fine Art,’ ‘Frontier between Reality and Dream,’ and ‘Frontier between Pure and Impure,’” she said.

Two exhibits have also opened in Japan and the United States concurrent with the Tehran exhibit. However, the cities and the galleries have not been mentioned in the press release.

The exhibit will be running until August 4 in the forum located on Musavi St., Taleqani Ave.

Urban film festival announces international lineup



A R T TEHRAN — A rich lineup of nine features and 13 short films will be competing in the international section of the 6th International Urban Film Festival, the organizers announced in Tehran on Friday.

Among the feature films are “Chronicle of a Passion” by Fabrizio Cattani from Italy, “News from Planet Mars” by Dominik Moll from France, “Power to Change” by Carl A Fehner from Germany, and “Three Days till the Spring” by Alexander Kasatkin from Russia.

“Mousse” by John Hellberg from

Sweden, “Transit” by Oliver Kracht from Germany, “Vida” by Daniel Yopez from Colombia, “The Silence” by Farnush Samadi and Ali Asgari from France and Italy), and “Happy without Money” by Mahyar Hamidian from Germany are among the shorts selected for the event.

In addition, “Awakening City” by Fernando Ramos from Brazil, “Parks” by Natsuki Seta from Japan and a film from a Russian director are scheduled to be reviewed in a special section.

The festival will take place at Tehran's Mellat Cinema Complex from July 31 to August 5.

Linkin Park singer Chester Bennington dead in apparent suicide: coroner

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Chester Bennington, the lead singer of Linkin Park, was found dead on Thursday of apparent suicide a week before the California alt-rock band was due to embark on a U.S. tour.

Bennington, 41, known for his powerful, belting vocals, died at his Palos Verdes home near Los Angeles, the Los Angeles County Coroner's office said.

Spokesman Brian Elias said the death was being handled as an apparent suicide, and celebrity website TMZ, citing law enforcement sources, said Bennington had hung himself while alone at the house when his family was out of town.

“Shocked and heartbroken, but it's true. An official statement will come out as soon as we have one,” tweeted Linkin Park vocalist Mike Shinoda.

Bennington had a history of alcohol and drug abuse. He spoke openly in the past about his struggles to overcome his demons when Linkin Park first found fame in 2000 with their best-selling debut album “Hybrid Theory” and went on to become one of the most popular alt-rock bands of their generation.

The band's latest album, “One More Light”, was released in May, and Linkin Park had been touring South America and Europe until two weeks ago.

Bennington's death came a week before the band



Chester Bennington of the band Linkin Park performs during the second day of the 2012 iHeartRadio Music Festival at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada September 22, 2012. (Reuters/Steve Marcus)

was due to kick off the U.S. leg of the tour on July 27 in Mansfield, Massachusetts. It also came the same day as the release of Linkin Park's music video “Talking to Myself”.

“This BREAKS OUR HEART. Suicide is the devil on earth walking amongst us,” tweeted U.S. band One Republic.

Shakespeare play accused of walking on the grave of England's Richard III

LONDON (Reuters) — A sold-out performance of Shakespeare's “Richard III” was set to go ahead on Wednesday despite attempts to stop the play taking place at the final resting place of the last English king to die in battle.

Richard, one of England's most controversial monarchs, was reburied at Leicester Cathedral in 2015 after his remains were discovered under a local authority car park some 530 years after he was slain at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485.

Shakespeare depicted him in his play as a cruel, sadistic, tyrannical hunchback responsible for one of the most notorious crimes in English history - the murder of his young

nephews, “the Princes in the Tower”. His defenders believe his reputation as an enlightened king was unfairly smeared by Shakespeare's play which they say was a work of propaganda by the Tudor dynasty that ousted Richard from the throne.

Some 1,300 people have signed a petition to stop the production at the cathedral, saying it was wrong to perform it so close to his tomb.

“The staging of Shakespeare's defamatory play beside the king's grave is not an appropriate or Christian act,” said Philippa Langley, a historian who played a key role in recovering the dead king's remains in 2012.

A poster for the Second Ceramic-Based Exhibition

“Outcasts” producer Habibollah Kasesaz dies at 55

A R T TEHRAN — Habibollah Kasesaz, the producer of box-office hits such as “The Outcast”, died of gastric cancer in a Tehran hospital on Wednesday. He was 55.

Some Persian news websites quoting Kasesaz's son, Mohsen, announced his death.

His stomach was removed a few months ago after he was diagnosed with cancer.

Kasesaz was mostly famous for the films revolving around the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, which is known as the Sacred Defense in Iran.

Among the films are “Hoor on Fone” by Azizollah Hamidnejad and “Family Farm” by Rasul Mollaqaolipour. He was also the producer of the two episodes of director Masud Dehnamaki's comedy series “The Outcast”, which became box-office hits in 2006 and 2008.

“Open String” by Mehrshad Karkhani and “A Butterfly in the Mist” by Mohammad-Javad Kasesaz are also among his credits.

He also made his directorial debut with “Carnival of Death” in 2008.

A number of officials, including Minister of Culture and Islamic



Colleagues and relatives carry the body of producer Habibollah Kasesaz during his funeral in Tehran on July 21, 2017. (Fars/Mehdi Bolurian)

Guidance Reza Salehi-Amiri, Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani, IRIB Director Abdolali Ali-Asgari, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi and the Cinema Organization of Iran director Mohammad-Mehdi Heidarian offered their condolences over the death of Kasesaz.

His funeral procession began at the Iranian House of Cinema on Friday and he was buried in the Artists Section of Tehran's Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery.

Two new Harry Potter books to be released in October

LONDON (Reuters) — The Hogwarts universe is set to expand by an additional two new Harry Potter books, published in conjunction with a British Library event, in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the magical series.

The library exhibition titled, “A History of Magic,” featuring the two books will be open from October 2017 to February 2018, British publishing house Bloomsbury has announced.

Readers of “Harry Potter: A History of Magic – The Book of the Exhibition” will be able to explore the curriculum at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Potter's wizardry school, which includes Herbology, Astronomy

and Care of Magical Creatures. Mystical subjects including unicorns, alchemy and ancient witchcraft will be explored in “Harry Potter – A Journey through A History of Magic”.

The books, both by the British Library, include unseen sketches and manuscript pages from author J.K. Rowling, magical illustrations from Jim Kay and artifacts from the archives at the library.

June 26 marked 20 years since the release of “Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone”, the first of seven Potter books in a series that sold 450 million copies in 29 languages and sparked a \$7 billion movie franchise.