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Europeans are new customer of Iranian heavy water

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Majlis decides on presiding board

Larijani officially voted parliament speaker

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Masoud Pezeshkian, a reform-minded lawmaker from Tabriz, and Ali Motahari, a vocal and yet moderate principlist MP representing Tehran, were elected respectively as first and second deputy parliament speakers on Tuesday.

Out of the 273 votes cast, Pezeshkian secured 158 votes and Motahari 133.

Motahari garnered the highest number of votes in the Feb. 26 parliamentary election in the 30-member candidate list in Tehran led by reformist Mohammad Reza Aref.

In the voting, as expected, Ali Larijani was also reelected as the speaker of the new parliament, gaining 237 votes out of 276.

Mostapha Kavakebian who secured a seat in the Majlis from the Tehran constituency ran for the post of speaker, but he just won 11 votes.

28 MPs abstained in the voting. It was the highest number of votes that a parliament speaker had succeeded to win since the history of the Islamic Revolution.

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It's essential to involve private sector in resistance economy: Rouhani

Rouhani officially inaugurates Mahabad Petrochemical Complex

ECONOMY TEHRAN — To have a dynamic and generative economy and meet the targets of resistance economy it is essential to pave the way for the private sector's contribution to national economy,

President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday.

Rouhani made the remarks as he officially inaugurated the Mahabad petrochemical complex in northwest of Iran.

Resistance economy, as outlined by the Su-

preme Leader, calls on the government to secure the utilization of the country's resources, struggle to promote a knowledge-based economy, take efforts to increase energy consumption efficiency and boost domestic production.

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French, Iranian artists top at Holocaust cartoon contest

ART French cartoonist Zeon, who was arrested for his anti-Zionist work in March 2015, and Iranian artist Arash Forughi have won first prizes at the 2nd International Holocaust Cartoons Contest in Tehran.

Zeon was awarded a cash prize of \$12,000 in the cartoon section and Forughi received a cash prize of \$7,000 in the caricature category during a ceremony held at the Art Bureau on Monday.

Speaking at the ceremony, the secretary of the competition, Masud Shojaei-Tabatabai said, "One of the subjects we asked cartoonists to focus on was why the Western countries arrest any scholar who doubts the Holocaust while they put no limit on freedom of speech in other categories."

"The other subject was why Palestinians should pay for the Holocaust... we are concerned about the modern Holocaust that is being sought by the Zionist regime, which is known as a child killer government," he added.

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Zarif: U.S. must soothe fears over banking ties with Tehran



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Iranian FM Mohammad Javad Zarif held talks on Tuesday in Helsinki with his Finnish counterpart Timo Soini. Leading a 60-strong team of businessmen, Zarif arrived in Helsinki late on Monday. As part of his European tour Zarif has already visited Poland and plans to visit Sweden and Latvia as well.

Iranian, Turkish cultural execs meet in Tehran

CULTURE TEHRAN — National Library and Archives of Iran (NLA) Director Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri met with a Turkish cultural delegation led by the director of the Atatürk Culture Language and History High Commission, Derya Ors, in Tehran on Monday.

Ways to exchange of experts and some other subjects, including holding exhibitions of rare manuscripts, were discussed at the meeting. Iran and Turkey have reached an agreement to jointly submit the Masnavi-ye Manavi, the masterpiece of Persian poet Molana Jalal ad-Din Rumi, to UNESCO to UNESCO's Memory of the World Register list, Salehi-Amiri announced yesterday.

Experts from both countries also scrutinized the procedure of mutual cultural relations earlier on May 28 and 29 during a conference held at the University of Guilan in the northern Iranian city of Rasht.

Norway's Hemla Vantage closes in on \$600m Iran gas joint venture

A Norwegian oil and gas company is closing in on a \$600m contract with an Iranian petrochemical group for one of the first major gas deals since international sanctions were lifted.

The contract will be a joint venture between Hemla Vantage and the Kharg Petrochemical Company, a quasi-privately-owned company, to produce and export liquefied national gas and liquefied petroleum gas by 2017.

"Hemla will secure debt financing and will be 50/50 equity partners with KPC/KGRC [the latter is a sister company of the former]," said Gerhard Ludvigsen, a founding member of Hemla group and director of Hemla Vantage.

"We are inspired that Iran really wants to shift from a traditional player to a modern player. Nobody would believe that Iran could be the first in the world to produce LNG from a floating production vessel (FLNG) in 2017," he added.

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Cancellation of Hajj by Iran hits Saudi economy: CNN

Iran has barred its pilgrims from traveling to Mecca to take part in the annual Muslim Hajj pilgrimage after accusing Saudi Arabia of failing to guarantee the safety of its citizens and the issue hits the Saudi economy where it hurts.

CNN reported on Monday that Saudi Arabia makes around \$18 billion a year from religious tourism, and Iranians comprise one of the biggest groups of visitors, estimated at around 600,000.

At least 769 people were killed in a stampede at the holiest Muslim pilgrimage site on September 24 last year. Among the dead were 464 Iranians.

Tehran has kept blaming the stampede on Saudis, demanding an apology from Riyadh, criticizing Saudis over for lack of cooperation



to immediately repatriate the bodies.

Iranian officials suggested Riyadh was incapable of managing the annual event, holding the country accountable for the disaster.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hossein Jaber Ansari said in a televised interview that Saudi officials refused to provide Iranian pil-

grims with consular services or guarantee the safety of pilgrims.

Saudi Arabia cut diplomatic ties with Iran after mobs, angry over the execution of Shiite cleric Sheik Nimr Baqr al-Nimr in January, attacked the Saudi embassy in Tehran and its consular office in Mashhad.

Saeed Ohadi, head of the Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization of Iran, announced on Sunday that Saudi Arabia sought to "buy time" in order to bar the Iranians to participate in the hajj ritual.

He added, "The Saudis had not serious will to accept Iranian pilgrims."

According to Ohadi, Saudi Arabia has put some limitations for Iranians which were not acceptable.

Health Ministry pledges to build 131 cancer diagnostic centers nationwide

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iran's Health Ministry is committed to building 131 cancer diagnostic centers in 13 cities across the country, the ministry's spokesman said.

These diagnostic centers will also provide the patients with primary treatments, ISNA news agency quoted Iraj Harirchi as saying.

He went on to say that "building such centers are considerably costly and to finance such projects we need to raise fund from other

ministries, non-governmental organizations and overseas resources."

"In line with fundraising efforts we are planning on signing contracts with Defense Ministry and some other non-governmental companies to take a step forward in setting up such centers," Harirchi added.

Although cancer is getting prevalent in Iran same as other countries that some believe Iran is facing a cancer tsunami is wrong,



he highlighted.

80 percent of the leading causes of deaths in Iran are non-communicable disease such as high blood pressure, diabetes, heart conditions, and cancers, the

spokesman said adding, healthy diets, getting enough exercise and regular checkups can help minimize the possibility of developing such diseases.

One of the key measures adopted by the Health ministry to fight cancer is screening patients for breast and colon cancers, he noted, stating, early diagnosis of cancers can increase the chances of recovering from it and responding better to the course of treatments.

FAO calls for promoting partnership on water resource management in Iran

FAO and Urmia Lake Restoration Program (ULRP) organized an international meeting in Tehran on "Promoting Partnership on Water Resource Management" on May 29 to expand collaboration between UN Agencies and donor countries with the aim of strengthening efforts to save Urmia Lake in Iran.

According to a press release published by the Representation of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in the Islamic Republic of Iran, by underscoring that water shortage in Iran has become more visible and tangible in recent years, in his opening remarks, Dr. Issa Kalantari, Secretary of Urmia Lake Restoration Commission (ULRC) warned that the majority of important wetlands have already dried up or are in the process of meeting this fate.

"Urmia Lake is no exception. Experts point to a number of factors contributing to the drying up of the Lake, including the reduction and



changes in precipitation patterns over the last 20 years, increased water demand due to agricultural development and changing patterns in agricultural practices, as well as the cultivation of water intensive crops, and the lack of proper surface and ground water resource management including the illegal excessive withdrawal

of surface water and ground water ground water through illegal wells" he added.

Dr. Pasquale Steduto, Deputy Regional Representative at the FAO Regional Office for Near East and North Africa (NENA) has also confirmed that the restoration of the Lake Urmia has required a significant reduction in water consumption in the basin.

"Irrigated agriculture as the major water consumer in the Urmia Lake basin, requires relevant reform such as halting further development and converting existing production systems and practices that reduces significantly water consumption while preserving the livelihood of the local communities" the high rank FAO official said.

He concluded his remarks by saying that achieving such results requires "courage", "political willingness", "perseverance" and a new "social compact".

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ARTICLE
By: Haniyeh S. Jafariyeh
Tehran Times journalist

FDI comes into question

In their recent speeches, President Hassan Rouhani and his administration's spokesman Mohammad-Baqer Nobakht have reportedly put the volume of attracted foreign direct investment (FDI), at more than \$3.41 billion in the four-month period after the implementation of nuclear agreement with world powers in mid-January.

The announced figure, however, has triggered a debate between critics, who cast doubt on its authenticity. They argue that in accordance with the Islamic Republic's regulations and under ordinary conditions, from obtaining preliminary investment permits to acquiring final exploitation licenses would take a foreign investor between five to 10 years and the procedure could have not be carried out during the four intended months as of the past January. Therefore, the data released by the incumbent administration, as critics suppose, should stand for the value of the issued permits for foreign investments planned to be attracted in the near future or else, it should account for those foreign investments the preparatory steps of which were basically taken before the nuclear agreement but have borne fruit in post-sanction time.

As the Organization for Investment Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran (OIETAI) - the investment authority of the country - clarified in its official statement put out on May 18, the announced \$3.41 billion by the administration represents the value of foreign investment permits granted in the said time and the government is currently in the course of making relevant contracts operational. The statement admitted that injecting the attracted foreign investments to domestic projects takes between three to five years but not four months.

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MEDIA MONITOR



Claims of disagreement among officials is illusion: Rouhani

TEHRAN — The president has said the claim that there is disagreement among the three branches of government is merely an “illusion”.

Elsewhere in his address to people of Urmia on Monday, Hassan Rouhani said lack of insight in the past was the reason behind the country's problems, the Arman newspaper reported.

Commenting on the recent elections, he said people “said no to extremism”.

He also said there is no difference between “Kurd and Turk” when it comes to development projects in the country.



25,000 policemen to secure Imam Khomeini ceremony

TEHRAN — 25,000 police forces are prepared to secure the ceremony marking the death anniversary of the late Imam Khomeini, the police chief announced on Tuesday.

Hossein Ashtari said the forces will go on standby on Wednesday and will remain so until Saturday, ISNA reported. He predicted this year 20,000 buses and 7,000 cars from across Iran will arrive in Tehran for the ceremony.



Iraqi parliament speaker congratulates Larijani on re-election

TEHRAN — Iraqi Parliament Speaker Salim al-Jubouri on Tuesday congratulated Ali Larijani on his re-election to the post of Iranian Majlis speaker.

Speaking with Larijani over the telephone, al-Jubouri underlined the need for regular consultations between the two parliaments on different bilateral and regional issues, particularly those related to the fight against terrorism, IRNA reported.

He expressed hope that friendly relations between the two nations, parliamentary cooperation, in particular, would further expand during Larijani's new tenure. In the meantime, Larijani said that the new Iranian parliament would work toward deeper cooperation between Tehran and Baghdad.



Ahlol-Bayt council condemns Saudi approach to Hajj

TEHRAN — The International Ahlul-Bayt Council in a statement on Tuesday condemned Saudi Arabia's approach to Hajj which left Iran with no option other than withdrawing from the Muslim event this year.

Criticizing Riyadh for being influenced by “American, Zionist, and Takfiri” policies, the statement expressed regret for numerous Saudi-triggered conflicts and bloodshed in regional countries.



Iran to deploy new naval flotilla to high seas

TEHRAN — The Iranian Navy's 41st flotilla of warships will depart from the country's southern coasts on Wednesday for the international waters, Tasnim reported on Tuesday.

The dispatch of the 41st flotilla, comprising Martyr Naqdi destroyer and Lavan logistic warship, will coincide with the arrival of its predecessor from a nearly 2-month overseas mission.

Including Alborz destroyer and Tonb logistic warship, the 40th flotilla has sailed 6,750 nautical miles in the international waters in 55 days.



New IRGC Special Marine Force commander appointed

TEHRAN — Asqar Memari was appointed as the new commander of the IRGC Special Marine Force on Tuesday, Mizan reported.

IRGC Naval Force Commander Ali Fadavi appointed him to the new post after Memari's predecessor Mohammad Nazeri died of health complications resulting from the Iraqi chemical warfare against Iran in the 1980s.



IAEA to address Iran nuclear program in quarterly meeting

TEHRAN — The IAEA Board of Governors will convene a meeting at the agency's headquarters starting at 10:30 CET on Monday, June 6, the IAEA reported on Monday.

The Vienna-based nuclear watchdog said during the meeting the body will address Iran's nuclear program. The board will assess Iran's commitment to the terms of UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

Majlis decides on presiding board



The voting for the Majlis presiding board is held every year.

Aref, the leader of “Hope” faction in the new parliament, refused to field candidacy for the speakership post after he just got 103 votes for the interim parliament speaker on Saturday.

In the voting for the interim parliament on Saturday Larijani won 173 votes out of 281.

Larijani held the post of speaker for two consecutive terms, from 2008 to 20016, when the principlists dominated the parliament.

During the vote for presiding board, Hamidreza Hajbabayee, a representative from Hamadan, and MP Mohammad Dehqan from Cheneran and Tarqabeh, failed to gain enough votes for deputy speakers, gaining 123 and 118 votes respectively. The two MPs were from the principlist camp.

Accordingly, Gholamreza Kateb, Amir-Hossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi, Akbar Ranjbarzadeh and Ahmad Amir-Abadi Farahani from the Majlis principlist faction, along with Ali Asghar Yousefnejad and Mo-



hammad Ali Vakili from the Hope faction were among other candidates who were elected as the secretaries of the presiding board.

Also, Mohammad Ashouri Taziani and Behrouz Namati, MPs from the principlist

faction, and Mohammad Qasim Osmani, a member of the Hope faction, were elected as supervisors of the presiding board.

■ **Popularity among both factions**
Larijani, a moderate principlist politician, has gained backing both

Zarif says U.S. must soothe fears over banking ties with Tehran



TEHRAN — The Iranian foreign minister has called on the U.S. to do more to remove what he termed a “psychological barrier” to alley foreign banks’ concerns over resuming banking ties with Iranian counterparts.

Making the remarks after visiting his Finnish counterpart Timo Soini in Helsinki on Tuesday, Zarif said, “It seems that there is a psychological barrier.”

“Some European countries, even European banks, continue to be concerned about retribution by the United States. I believe that (in) the United States, they need to go further in order to provide reassurances to the banks that this will not take place.”

International limitations against Tehran were removed in January 2016 as part of the deal with world powers in exchange for a limited nuclear program.

Unlike the expectation that the arrangement ease up trade with Iran, foreign banks have been acting cautiously, fearing falling foul to U.S. fines incurred for sanctions breaches.

To soothe the concerns, the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry met with heads of some of European biggest banks in London in May, saying “There has been a reluctance in some places to take risk.”

Zarif says the U.S. needs to do more to remove “psychological barrier” for resuming banking ties with Iran.

“We want to make it clear that legitimate business, which is clear under the definition of the agreement, is available to banks,” Kerry told them.

Also, British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond said in the same session the U.S., England, and other world powers that negotiated the deal were actively working “to support European businesses in resuming normal trade and investment patterns with Iran.”

In an appearance on April 15 at the Council on Foreign Relations, Central Bank of Iran Governor Valiollah Seif said Iran had not seen the results it expected after implementation of the JCPOA, asking for more “serious efforts” by the U.S. government to fulfill its commitments to help Iran re-enter the global financial system.

Rafsanjani says joining nuclear club has led to recognition of Iran's rights



TEHRAN — Chairman of the Expediency Council has said joining the nuclear club caused the world to recognize Iran's rights to carry on with its peaceful nuclear activities, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

“Joining the nuclear club has given international recognition to Iran's peaceful activities and it behooves the International Atomic Energy Agency to meet Iran's scientific and equipment needs,” Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said.

According to the terms of the nuclear deal between Iran and Western powers struck in July 2015, Iran will convert the Fordow facility into a nuclear, physics and technology center. Also, international collaboration including in the form of scientific joint partnerships will be established in agreed areas of research.

Referring to the importance of nuclear fission as a secure source of energy in the future, the veteran politician

saw it as vital for Iran to enter relevant joint partnerships so as to guarantee energy demands of the country.

Under the terms of the nuclear deal, EU and E3+3 countries and international participants will engage in joint projects with Iran and will take necessary measures, as appropriate, for the implementation of these projects.

The projects are in the field of peaceful nuclear technology, including nuclear power plants, research reactors, fuel fabrication, agreed joint advanced R&D such as fusion, establishment of a state-of-the-art regional nuclear medical center, personnel training, nuclear safety and security, and environmental protection.

Prior to the signing of the nuclear pact, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Tehran and the West had reached almost an impasse over Iran's nuclear program.



The bargaining sides agreed on removal of sanctions against Tehran in exchange for some constraints on the country's nuclear activities.

Iranian, Finnish FM's hold talks in Helsinki

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who is Finland as part of a European tour, met with his Finnish counterpart on Tuesday for talks on development of the relations between the two countries.

In the meeting, Zarif expressed the hope that termination of anti-Iran sanctions under a nuclear deal with world powers would contribute to closer cooperation between Tehran and Helsinki.

Zarif also hailed as “promising” the prospect of bilateral relations between Iran and Finland.

For his part, Finland's Foreign Minister Timo Soini hailed the Iranian top diplomat's trip to Helsinki with a delegation

of business people, saying bilateral ties could improve in various fields, such as telecommunication and education.

The two senior diplomats also discussed the crises in West Asia and the ways to resolve them.

Earlier in the morning, Foreign Minister Zarif delivered a speech to a closed-door political forum in Helsinki on the opportunities and challenges of Middle East security.

He later held a meeting with Martti Ahtisaari, the tenth president of Finland from 1994 to 2000, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and a United Nations diplomat.

Zarif's busy schedule in Helsinki also



includes participation in Iran-Finland economic and mercantile conference, as well as separate press conferences with Finland's President Sauli Niinistö and Par-

liament Speaker Maria Lohela.

Travelling with a 60-strong delegation of Iranian businessmen, Zarif arrived in Finland on Monday night after a two-day visit to Poland.

He is also scheduled to visit Sweden and Latvia.

The European tour comes against a backdrop of international enthusiasm for enhanced ties with Iran after Tehran and the Group 5+1 (Russia, China, the US, Britain, France and Germany) on July 14, 2015 reached the agreement on Iran's peaceful nuclear program and started implementing it on January 16.

(Source: Tasnim)

Europeans are new customer of Iranian heavy water

Europeans seek to buy 20 tons of heavy water from Iran: nuclear chief



TEHRAN — Ali Akbar Salehi, chief of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, announced on Tuesday that European countries seek to buy 20 tons of heavy water from Iran.

He also said Iran will sell 32 tons of heavy water to the U.S. only after it receives the money for it, he explained.

On Sunday, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said the U.S. is about to pay for the heavy water it has purchased from Iran.

On Sunday, Salehi also said Iran is negotiating with Russia to sell 40 tons of heavy water to the country.

In an interview with RIA Novosti on Monday Russian

envoy to international organizations Vladimir Voronkov said “the Americans have bought a significant amount of it [heavy water]. Moreover, Rosatom is thinking and is likely to follow this path.”

■ **Producing stable isotopes in Fordow**
The AEOL chief also said that new activities are planned to be carried out in Fordow such as producing stable isotopes.

Many scientific works for producing stable isotopes have been done through cooperation with Russia, Salehi said.

He also said part of the Fordow nuclear plant

will be turned into very advanced technical and scientific laboratory.

Salehi, a nuclear physicist, said IR1 centrifuges will be installed in Fordow to produce isotopes.

According to the terms of the nuclear deal between Iran and Western powers struck in July 2015, Iran will convert the Fordow facility into a nuclear, physics and technology center. Also, international collaboration including in the form of scientific joint partnerships will be established in agreed areas of research.



Barzani to visit Iran in near future



TEHRAN - President of Kurdistan Regional Government Masoud Barzani plans to visit Iran in the near future, Iranian ambassador to Baghdad Hassan Danaeifar said on Tuesday.

The exact date of the visit has not been specified yet, Danaeifar told ISNA.

The Kurd Press reported on Saturday that preparation for the expected visit has been made, though the date of the trip has not been announced yet.

The agency also reported that Barzani is to meet Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, President Hassan Rouhani and a number of

other Iranian officials.

Ambassador Danaeifar said Barzani's trip will be taken within the framework of expanding bilateral ties.

Barzani will be accompanied by a political and economic delegation, he added.

In May, Iran's Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi visited Kurdistan Region and met with Barzani.

Sanders says he is one to beat ‘disaster’ Trump

Trump aide defends bringing up judge’s ‘Mexican’ heritage

By staff & agencies

United States Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders predicts he is more capable than party frontrunner Hillary Clinton of defeating presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump.

Because of the more than 500 super-delegates who have pledged to Clinton's campaign, she is considered to have nearly won the nomination.

However, a big win in California for Sanders in the state's June 7 primary election would be a significant problem for the former secretary of state.

The U.S. senator from Vermont continued has been on a grueling schedule of campaigning up and down California in the past week, speaking to large and buoyant crowds in packed rallies.

In recent weeks, Sanders has been rapidly closing the gap with Clinton in California, with recent polls placing Sanders in a virtual tie with the frontrunner.

Even if Clinton gains enough delegates to capture her party's presidential nomination, a loss in California would provide a sour and deflating end to her primary campaign.

It could also encourage Sanders to stay in the race through the party's convention, at a time when many Democrats would be asking him to concede the race and join with Clinton in turning the party's attention to defeating Trump.

According to an NBC News/Survey-Monkey tracking poll released last week, 37 percent of the participants said they

“dislike” Clinton while 39 percent had the same feeling about Trump.

This is while 21 percent said they “hate” the former first lady and 24 percent expressed the same sentiment toward the New York billionaire.

Also, a Fox News poll released earlier this month found that majorities of voters feel both frontrunners lack strong moral values and will say anything to get elected.

■ **Secret Service protects Sanders as audience members rush stage**

Elsewhere, members of Sanders's Secret Service team surrounded him as audience members at a rally on Monday tried to rush the stage, according to multiple reports.

At least three people were led away by security at the Oakland, Calif, event, held eight days before the state's June 7 presidential primary.

Sanders was unharmed when agents leaped on the stage and pulled him away from his microphone as the unidentified attendees pushed through audience barriers.

A protester also tried to jump onto Sanders's stage in March during a rally in Ohio.

Sanders was spotted later on Monday in Oakland at Game 7 of the Golden State Warrior's Western Conference Finals against the Oklahoma City Thunder.

■ **Trump aide defends bringing up judge's 'Mexican' heritage**

The development follows as Donald Trump spokeswoman Katrina Pierson on



Monday defended the presumptive GOP (Grand Old Party) presidential nominee for calling a California judge overseeing a fraud case against Trump University a “Mexican” and a “hater.”

On Friday, Judge Gonzalo Curiel rejected arguments from Trump and called for documents related to the not-defunct university to be unsealed. In an interview on CNN, Pierson pointed to his membership in a Latino lawyers group in California to show he is anti-Trump.

At a rally earlier this week, Trump said Curiel should not have scheduled a trial for the suit against Trump University in November.

When CNN host Alisyn Camerota

pointed out that Curiel was born in America, Pierson continued to link the judge with protests taking place outside Tump rallies. She said she doesn't know if the judge is Mexican or not, but people need to identify who is protesting and what they are doing.

“Well, it's because of what we see outside of these rallies, these anti-Trump rallies, these criminal rallies, these criminal protesters out there defacing property and attacking police officers,” Pierson said.

“They're doing so under the guise of an anti-Trump protest, with their Mexican flags, and La Raza and this judge is connected to that.”

Netanyahu: Reconciliation deal with Turkey very close

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a delegation of visiting United States congressmen on May 30 that an agreement on reconciliation with Turkey was very close, sources involved in the meeting have said, as reported by Israeli daily Haaretz on its website.

Netanyahu was very optimistic about relations with Turkey, repeating his statements on the matter three times during the meeting with the congressmen, the sources said.

They said Netanyahu had noted that while relations would not return to the level they were at a decade ago, normalization would help both nations in advancing a long list of shared regional interests.

However, officials in al-Quds (Jerusalem) were still waiting to set the decisive meeting between the two negotiating teams, during which the remaining disagreements are meant to be closed.

The Gaza-bound Mavi Marmara aid flotilla was attempting to pass the blockade of Gaza in May 31, 2010, when Israeli forces stormed the vessel and killed nine Turkish activists. A tenth died in hospital four years later.

Relations between the two countries were seriously damaged in the aftermath of the incident.

Ankara demanded an apology and compensation for the families of those killed, as well as the removal of the blockade on Gaza.

Talks between the two countries have been ongoing in order to restore the relationships.

Speaking after a cabinet meeting on May 30, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus said that two of Turkey's three demands – the apology and compensation – had been realized but Turkey was expecting “at least an ease on the blockade [on Gaza] to make people's lives there easier.”

The decisive meeting between the two negotiating teams was supposed to have been held a few weeks ago, but was postponed after the resignation of former Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and the appointment of a new prime minister, Binali Yildirim.

Haaretz reported the next meeting was expected to be held next week in Europe.

(Source: Hurriyet)

Taliban attack buses in north Afghanistan, kill 9, abduct 35

The Taliban attacked several buses on a road in northern Afghanistan on Tuesday morning, forcing passengers to disembark and killing nine people and abducting at least 35, officials said.

According to Mahmood Danish, the governor's spokesman, the assault in the volatile, northern Kunduz province took place in Aliabad district as the buses were travelling from the capital, Kabul, northeast to Takhar and Badakhshan provinces. It wasn't immediately clear where the nine were killed, he said.

“There is still no report on the fate of the remaining hostages with the Taliban,” Danish said.

Hayatullah Quareshi, the Aliabad district chief, said the attackers were wearing Afghan army uniforms. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, both Quareshi and Danish blamed the Taliban, who are increasingly active in the area and have been behind mass abductions last year across Afghanistan.

The Taliban have a presence in different districts in Kunduz and usually target Afghan security forces in their

attacks. Last year, they briefly overran the city and the provincial capital, also called Kunduz, and held it for a few days until Afghan forces, helped by U.S. airstrikes pushed them out.

Meanwhile, in the eastern Ghazni province, a bomb blast killed a civilian and wounded 12, including a local policeman, said Asadullah Shujayee, the deputy provincial police chief. He said the bomb was attached to a bicycle and detonated by remote control. No one claimed responsibility for that assault.

Also Tuesday, the Taliban launched attacks in southern Helmand province on the several districts and on the outskirts of the provincial capital, Lashkar Gah, said Karim Atal, the head of the provincial council.

Atal said both sides suffered casualties but that there are no definite numbers. He appealed on the Kabul authorities for help.

“If the central government doesn't come up with a strong security plan, we will witness of the city's fall to Taliban,” said Atal.

(Source: AP)

North Korea missile launch failed, says South Korean military

North Korea apparently failed with an attempted missile launch on Tuesday, the latest in a series of setbacks for a ballistic weapons program that aspires to threaten the United States mainland.

South Korea's defense ministry detected the dawn launch effort, which Japan condemned as an unacceptable and “provocative” act.

The ministry declined to speculate on the missile type, but military sources cited by local media said it was a powerful, medium-range “Musudan” that has already undergone three failed launches this year.

United Nations resolutions ban North Korea from any use of ballistic missile technology, although it regularly fires short-range missiles into the sea off its east coast.

Tuesday's effort came with tensions still running high on the divided Korean peninsula following the North's fourth nuclear test in January and long-range rocket launch a month later.

“We believe that it was a failure,” said Jeon Ha-Gyu, spokesman for the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff.

“As to why and how it failed, we are in the process of analyzing that,” Jeon told a press briefing.

“We are maintaining a strong defense posture with potential further provocations by the North in mind,” he added.

In April the North failed three times to test-fire a Musudan, which has an estimated range of anywhere between 2,500 and 4,000 kilometres (1,550 to 2,500 miles).

The lower range covers the whole of South Korea and Japan, while the upper range would include U.S. military bases on Guam.

“North Korea's repeated ballistic missile launches are serious, provocative acts against the international com-



munity, including Japan,” Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida told a regular press briefing.

“We absolutely cannot accept this,” Kishida said.

First unveiled as an indigenous missile at a military parade in Pyongyang in October 2010, the Musudan has never been successfully flight-tested.

The three failures in April were seen as an embarrassment for the Pyongyang leadership, coming ahead of a rare ruling party congress in May that was meant to celebrate the country's achievements.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency quoted official sources as saying Tuesday's missile may have exploded on its mobile launcher.

■ **Dialogue offer**

“The explosion is presumed to have inflicted serious injuries on personnel in the immediate vicinity,” Yonhap said.

During the party congress, North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un personally extended an offer of military dialogue with the South aimed at easing tensions.

The proposal was repeated several times by the North's military, but Seoul dismissed all the overtures as insincere “posturing” given Kim's vow at the same congress to push ahead with the country's nuclear weapons program.

Following Tuesday's attempted missile test, the South Korean Foreign Ministry said Pyongyang was willfully defying the warnings of the international community.

“North Korea will face even stronger sanctions and isolation if it doesn't end its provocations,” spokesman Cho June-Hyuck told reporters.

“The government will review necessary counter-measures through talks with our allies,” he added.

The UN Security Council imposed its toughest sanctions to date on the North following the January nuclear test.

In recent months, North Korea has claimed a series of technical breakthroughs in developing what it sees as the ultimate goal of its nuclear weapons program -- an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capable of delivering a nuclear warhead to targets across the continental United States.

The claimed achievements included miniaturizing a nuclear warhead to fit on a missile, developing a warhead that can withstand atmospheric re-entry and building a solid-fuel missile engine.

The North also hailed the successful test of an engine specifically designed for an ICBM that would “guarantee” an eventual nuclear strike on the U.S. mainland.

Outside experts have treated a number of the claims with skepticism, while acknowledging that the North has made significant strides in upgrading its nuclear arsenal.

(Source: AFP)

NEWS

‘Withdraw your troops from Iraq,’ Russia tells Turkey after Ankara’s criticism

Russia demands that Turkey withdraw its troops from Iraq, the RIA news agency quoted Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov as saying on May 31.

“This [keeping troops in Iraq] is an absolutely unacceptable position,” it cited Lavrov as saying.

“In principle, I believe that what the Turks are doing deserves far greater public attention on the part of our Western partners.”

The remarks came after Ankara called on the international community to act swiftly against what it called the “indefensible” crimes of the Russian and Syrian administration.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry said in a statement earlier in the day that heavy air strikes reported to have been carried out by Russian jets on a hospital and a mosque in Syria's rebel-held city of Idlib had killed more than 60 civilians and injured around 200 people.

(Source: Hurriyet)

China to ‘pressure’ U.S. on maritime issues

China will “pressure” the United States on maritime issues at talks in Beijing next week because of Chinese concern about an increased U.S. military presence in the disputed South China Sea, a major state-run newspaper said on Tuesday.

China has been angered by what it views as provocative U.S. military patrols close to islands China controls in the South China Sea. The United States says the patrols are to protect freedom of navigation.

“Beijing will pressure Washington over maritime issues during the upcoming Strategic and Economic Dialogue, as the United States’ increasing military presence in the South China Sea is among China's major concerns,” the official China Daily said, citing unidentified officials.

China claims most of the South China Sea, through which \$5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes every year. The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei have overlapping claims.

This month, Beijing demanded an end to U.S. surveillance near China after two Chinese fighter jets carried out what the Pentagon said was an “unsafe” intercept of a U.S. military reconnaissance aircraft over the South China Sea.

The South China Sea is also likely to feature at a June 3-5 security forum in Singapore known as the Shangri-La Dialogue.

China's Defense Ministry said on Tuesday that Admiral Sun Jianguo, a deputy chief of the Joint Staff Department of the Central Military Commission, would lead China's delegation at the Singapore talks.

At the Beijing talks with the United States, which U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry will attend, other issues will also be on the table.

China will bring up the issue of self-ruled Taiwan - claimed by Beijing but which elected a pro-independence party to power in January - as well as the situation on the Korean peninsula, the China Daily added.

“The two countries have differing pursuits on major issues at the strategic level. However, the two still have many common interests,” the paper said.

“Whether it is on the South China Sea issue or on the Korean Peninsula issue, the two countries have a shared security goal to maintain regional stability,” it added.

The newspaper did not elaborate.

China is reclusive North Korea's only major ally but has been angered by Pyongyang's nuclear and missile tests and signed up to tough United Nations sanctions against it in March.

(Source: Reuters)

Britain to boost border security to prevent migrants crossing English Channel

Britain is investing in extra patrol boats and surveillance to try to prevent migrants crossing the English Channel, a spokesman for Prime Minister David Cameron said on Tuesday.

Twenty people, including 18 Albanians, were rescued from the Channel over the weekend after their inflatable boat started taking on water.

Last year, extra fencing, cameras and police were deployed at the French terminal of the channel tunnel after passenger and freight services were severely delayed by migrants trying to stow away to Britain.

“We have taken measures at Calais which have improved the situation there: it is clear that people are now trying different routes and we will look to cut those off,” Cameron's spokesman said.

“We take every necessary action to protect our border security and will continue to do so.”

The government has said the Border Force, which currently has three vessels, will get extra patrol boats to help tackle smuggling of weapons, drugs and migrants. The first batch will be in place in the coming months, it said, but declined to specify how many boats that would include.

Border Force officers have been given extra powers to stop, board, divert and detain vessels and make arrests, and three maritime hubs will also be set up to improve intelligence.

“Our intent is to prevent people attempting to cross the Channel ... we are taking steps to improve our ability to combat them,” the spokesman said.

Immigration is a key part of the debate over Britain's European Union membership ahead of a June 23 referendum.

A poll published in Tuesday's Daily Telegraph newspaper showed support for leaving the EU had grown by 4 points to 46 percent, with Cameron's former political strategist Lynton Crosby attributing the boost to the “Out” campaign's focus on migration over the last seven days.

(Source: Reuters)

NEWS

Iran-Europe center
on economic co-op
opened in Berlin

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran-Europe economic co-operation center was inaugurated in Berlin on Monday, IRNA reported.

Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohamadreza Nematzadeh, who attended the opening ceremony of the center, underscored the key role of his country as Europe's partner in the region and said that the launched center can be a turning point for Iran-Germany collaboration.

"Tehran and Berlin had a warm relation even when the Islamic Republic was confined by financial sanctions and the bilateral trade volume stood at more than seven billion euros at the time," he said, "presently, when the sanctions are lifted a new round of cooperation can be commenced with western countries including Germany."

Nematzadeh noted that Tehran is not faced with any specific political restrictions and those European companies and banks which were concerned about reviving their relations with Iran are now fully aware that the path to future cooperation is smooth.

"Currently, two or three trade delegations from other countries make trips to Iran per week and it is the time for foreigners to accept Iranians as their long-term economic and trade partners," he added.

Meanwhile, the 3rd Europe-Iran Forum opened on May 3 in Zurich, Switzerland. The 2-day event offered a new and innovative program designed to balance high-level networking opportunities with panels and industry-focused workshops of real practical value.

Siemens showcases
innovative, efficient wind
technology in Iran

Siemens showcased the company's comprehensive portfolio of products and services for the wind industry at its first Wind Technology Day in Tehran, held in close collaboration with Iran's Ministry of Energy.

The one-day event on Tuesday brought together Siemens executives, technology leaders and experts to explore new technologies to bring down the cost of energy and making wind energy more competitive with other energy sources.

Executives representing a range of the company's wind power business units participated in the Technology Day.

Within its portfolio of solutions along the entire energy value chain, Siemens combines modern wind turbine technology with efficient transportation processes and installation as well as operational management, service and maintenance.

"Thanks to its strategic location along several wind corridors, Iran has a great potential for wind power generation which can help diversify the country's energy mix," said Dr. Mohsen Nayeibzadeh, CEO of Siemens in Iran. "We are pleased to highlight our cutting edge technology at Siemens Wind Technology Day to further contribute to the growing renewables' share in the Iranian energy sector."

With more than 30 years of global experience in onshore wind projects, Siemens is one of the world's leading suppliers of wind power solutions. More than 17,000 Siemens wind turbines are installed worldwide, with a combined capacity of more than 33,500 MW to produce clean, renewable energy every day.

(Source: Siemens press release)

Iran to sign \$3b power
plant deal with Turkish
companies: Hurriyet

Iran will soon sign a \$3 billion investment deal with Turkish private companies on building a 5,000 megawatt power plant in Iran, Turkey's Hurriyet newspaper on Tuesday cited the Iranian deputy energy minister as saying.

Most international sanctions on Tehran were lifted in January in exchange for curbs on Iran's nuclear program under a deal reached with world powers in 2015.

Hurriyet reported Houshang Falahatian as saying the Turkish energy sector had shown strong interest in Iran after the lifting of sanctions.

"In the coming days we will sign an investment deal with Turkish private sector companies for the construction of a 5,000 megawatt power plant in Iran. The size of this deal is \$3 billion," he was quoted as saying.

"We have other agreements with Turks but they have not been finalized and talks are continuing," he told Hurriyet during an energy conference in Tehran.

He said Iranian power trade with Turkey would also increase.

(Source: Reuters)

Germany slips out of global
competitiveness top 10,
study says

Germany has slipped out of the top 10 most competitive economies in the world, falling two places to 12 from last year, a study by Swiss business school IMD showed on Monday.

The study, based on a worldwide survey of 5,400 managers assessing 342 criteria, showed that a diminished assessment of Germany's government and the economy's performance were the main reasons for the drop, IMD director Arturo Bris said.

"The biggest danger for Germany is self-satisfaction," Bris said. "If it rejects that, it will get back into the top ten."

Hong Kong came top in the survey this year, followed by Switzerland and the United States.

(Source: Reuters)

It's essential to involve private sector
in resistance economy: Rouhani

1→

"The Mahabad petrochemical complex can help downstream industries expand, which will bring huge changes to the region," Rouhani explained.

Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh and his deputy Marzieh Shahdaie attended the opening ceremony of the complex.

Shahdaie is the managing director of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC).

The 185-hectare Mahabad complex started operation in February with the capacity of producing 300,000 metric tons per year (mt/y) of polyethylene and 30,000 mt/y of Butene-1.

In a report released by IRNA in February, around \$350 million were invested in the construction of the complex that \$267 million of which was supplied through foreign investment.

Some 30 percent of the complex's products are consumed domestically and the remaining 70 percent are exported.



President Hassan Rouhani and Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh officially inaugurated the Mahabad Petrochemical Complex on Tuesday.

FDI comes into question

1→

Whether the published figure stands for FDI as of the implementation of the nuclear agreement or it represents the value of investment permits issued by the government, the share of the private sector from the said \$2.41 billion is of question.

As Nobakht announced on May 3, in the first three months after the initial lifting of sanctions, eight presidents, five prime ministers, three parliament speakers, and 14 foreign ministers have accompanied 16 trade delegations to Iran. However, the private sector activists and officials repeatedly lament their near-to-zero stake of the attracted investments in post-sanction time and admit that foreign investments are mainly absorbed by state-run companies or semi-governmental ones.

Farhad Fozouni, a member of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) said on May 14 that a majority of the investments are made by the cooperation of governmental and semi-governmental companies and the private sector does not play a great role in this story. "No cooperation agreement has been endorsed with the private sector and all the visiting trade delegations were just investigating Iran's domestic market as well as trade conditions with Iranians," Masoud Daneshmand, the secretary general of the privately-owned Iran Economy House said, Jam-e-Jam daily wrote on May 20. "About 50 MOUs have been signed with the pri-

vate sector, none of which have been so far turned into final agreements," Reza Padidar, another TCCIMA member said. "Foreign investors find state-run organizations more reliable than the private sector and the issue has had a high negative impact on the volume of their interactions with us," he added. The vice chairman of Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce, Majid-Reza Hariri, also told the Jam-e-Jam daily that "A majority of companies to which foreigners pay attention are governmental and for that the share of private sector in the recent foreign investments is almost zero." Also, in an interview with YJC news agency on May 14, another TCCIMA member Mehdi Qazipour criticized that on the way to facilitate attraction of foreign investments, neither the administration nor the Central Bank of Iran provides the private sector with safety nets, such as promoting deregulation to increase competition in domestic business environment, modifying value-added tax rates, and offering bank guarantees.

To get a clear view over the issue, the Tehran Times conducted a phone interview with Pedram Soltani, vice president of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) on May 25. He primarily illuminated that the announced \$3.41 billion should definitely represent the value of the permits issued by OIETAI and does not stand for the volume of FDI in the said time span. Being questioned about the share of private sec-

tor in attracted foreign investment, Soltani described that in his view, a majority of the investment permits belongs either to the semi-governmental or the private sector, although no official data has been released in this regard. As he described, "most of the contracts made by the government are for the purchase or finance, but not for absorbing foreign investment." In addition, he asserted that the private sector has made some agreements with foreign partners in this regard, the detail of which would presently remain confidential due to some reasons.

The ICCIMA vice president was also asked about the present-day economic situation of Iran and its chance of attracting foreign investors. As he elaborated, for every investment, there is a risk-return tradeoff, which is the direct correlation between the expected return and the risk of an investment. "Although under the present circumstances the risks of making investments in specific sectors are estimated to be high," he said, "the rate of return in Iran is certainly higher than those of the risks." He underscored that the assessed level of risk in Iran is high since the international institutes and research centers in charge of calculating the investment risks are adopting models and methods which do not fit the present conditions of the Islamic Republic, which has experienced a turning point in its economic relations with the world after the withdrawal of the

financial embargo. "Their obtained results mostly include a level of standard deviation for making investment decisions." "While the investment risk in Iran is going through a rapid downward trend and the country is predicted to improve a bright economic outlook in the long run and as expected, the upcoming four or five years would be a golden era." Consequently, those foreigners who take the premier steps in making agreements with Iran, would have a bigger loaf from the untapped lucrative market, he underscored.

Following the JCPOA implementation, President Rouhani's administration has created great opportunities and offered special incentives to attract foreign investors. As reported, foreign applicants for investing in Iran are presently capable of making investments in projects up to 100 percent in various sectors, including, production, transportation, telecommunication, services, power, construction and health, and they can also possess land pieces here. In addition, the government will issue three-year residential certificates for foreign managers, experts, and their families to stay in the country.

Time is now ripe for foreigners to change their attitude toward Iran on the way to find a realistic view over the potential investment projects in the Islamic Republic, specifically after the withdrawal of the financial embargo which is meant to usher in an era of economic expansion.

Lifting of sanctions on Iran an opportunity for Malaysian SMEs

KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) — The recent lifting of trade sanctions by the U.S. on Iran should pave the way for local companies, especially Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), to further increase their market presence there.

"The Iranian halal market is big. It is a country with a population of almost 80 million," Deputy International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Ahmad Maslan said on Tuesday.

The country's central location in Eurasia and Western Asia makes it a strategic

gateway to penetrate the region's halal market with an estimated 400 million people, he told reporters after attending a forum on halal business opportunities in Iran here on Tuesday.

"Trade between the two countries is expected to rise as we can now do business in the open since the removal of the sanctions in January," he said, adding that there are also other sectors that Malaysian SMEs can tap into.

Meanwhile, Iran's Ambassador to Malaysia, Marzieh Afkham, urged Ma-

laysian exporters to consider Iran as a bridge to the regional markets.

"Having access to Europe and central Asia is one of the priorities for working with Iran, and the Iran market is available at the same time," she said.

The forum was organized by Halal Industry Development Corporation (HDC) in collaboration with Iran ASEAN Business Council (IABC) mainly to explain the standards and practices to enable access to Iran and the surrounding regional halal markets.



Battered by crude collapse, Norway now faces risk of oil strikes

Norway's oil companies and the industry's biggest union had set aside two days to negotiate over wages for offshore workers. Instead, the talks broke down after less than a minute.

The failure shows the width of the gap that will need to be bridged in state-backed mediation if Norway, Western Europe's biggest producer of oil and gas, is to avoid strikes that would deepen the crisis provoked by the collapse of

crude prices since 2014.

The breakdown of wage talks for offshore workers on production platforms, where a strike would have immediate consequences on output, comes after negotiations stranded earlier this month for workers on oil-rigs and onshore supply bases. The risk of several strikes comes as Norway's economy is already suffering more than during the financial crisis, with offshore investments set to drop for a third

consecutive year in 2017 and about 40,000 jobs lost in the oil industry.

"The situation is the most deadlocked in a long time," Leif Sande, leader of the Industry Energy union, said about the talks that broke down on Monday. "The differences were so obvious so early on that it was just as well to make an appointment with the National Mediator right away rather than sit here for two days."

(Source: Bloomberg)



VW 1Q profit gains
on special items
related to scandal
provisions

Volkswagen posted a surprise gain in first-quarter profit on special items related to provisions it has set aside to pay for its diesel emissions scandal, the carmaker said on Tuesday.

Operating profit rose to 3.4 billion euros (2.58 billion pounds) from 3.3 billion a year earlier, including 300 million euros of "currency-related adjustments" to provisions for the emissions crisis.

Profit exceeded the highest estimate in a Reuters' poll of analysts, which was at 3.15 billion euros. Excluding the "positive special items", operating profit of 3.1 billion euros still beat consensus for 2.75 billion euros.

VW reiterated guidance issued in April for the group's operating margin to come to between 5 and 6 percent, versus 6 percent last year, adjusted for special items.



Jaguar Land Rover
sales lift profit at Tata
Motors

Strong sales of the luxury brand Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) have lifted profits at Tata Motors.

India's biggest carmaker saw quarterly profit triple to 51.7bn rupees (\$771m; £527m) from 17.17bn in the same quarter last year.

JLR sales rose 28% in the three months to March, with the biggest increase in sales in Europe.

Chinese sales, which had been suffering, rose 19% in the quarter, but are down 16% for the year as a whole.

Tata Motors also benefited from increased domestic demand for its trucks.

But it gained from an unexpected insurance payout linked to an explosion at the JLR plant at its Tianjin plant in China last summer, in which it lost 5,800 cars.



AIA, Prudential,
others weigh bids for
Thai SCB's insurance
unit stake

AIA Group and Britain's Prudential PLC are among insurers considering bids to buy at least 49 percent of the \$3 billion (2.04 billion pounds) insurance unit of Thai lender Siam Commercial Bank (SCB), people with direct knowledge of the matter said.

A successful stake sale in SCB Life Assurance Public Company Limited would make it one of Southeast Asia's biggest insurance transactions ever. The deal would also allow the new partner to distribute insurance products through the branch network of SCB, Thailand's third-biggest lender.

While the sale process is only expected to kick off in the third quarter of 2016, the insurers have started preliminary discussions with potential advisers for prospective bids, the people told Reuters.

France braces for further strikes in half-term travel chaos

Half-term holidaymakers in France may be stranded by further strikes that will disrupt flights and rail services as fuel shortages persist in the worst labour unrest for decades.

Days before the Euro 2016 football tournament kicks off, President François Hollande, already under pressure over terrorism fears, is frantically seeking a face-saving way to end the crisis over bitterly disputed labour reforms.

Hollande, who is nicknamed 'Flanby' after a wobbly caramel dessert partly because of his reputation for caving in when challenged, is reportedly ready to offer the unions a compromise. If they drop their opposition to an employment bill to make hiring and firing easier, he will grant concessions in separate negotiations on working conditions and pay.

The more moderate CFDT union backs the labour reforms, which have already been watered down, to the disgust of many employers, but the hardline CGT refuses to compromise.

"The CGT knows it will not obtain the withdrawal of the law but it will be necessary for them to win concessions in other areas," a source close to the president told the Journal du Dimanche newspaper. Negotiations are already in progress with the national rail company, SNCF, the state-owned Paris transport corporation, RATP and Air France.

Air controllers plan to strike from Friday to Sunday, which will affect airports across France and is likely to force French and international airlines to postpone and cancel flights.

Rail workers are also planning stoppages that will lead to severe cuts in national train services from Wednesday. In Paris, Métro and suburban train services will be reduced from Thursday, when CGT members are to begin a strike. Another leftist union, SUD, has called a strike from June 10, when the month-long football tournament starts.

Many of the strikers voted for the



People cross railway lines during a protest against the French government's labor law reforms

Socialist president who came to power promising to curb the "excesses" of international finance. Now that he has adopted a more pragmatic, business-friendly stance in a bid to cut unemployment, at a record of more than 10 per cent, they accuse him of betrayal.

The far-Right Front National has gained popularity as Mr Hollande's approval ratings have plunged to 14 per cent, unprecedented for a serving president.

He cannot afford to give in to the hard-left CGT, but surveys show the public is likely to blame the government if strikes and street protests continue.

The centrist prime minister, Manuel Valls, said the labour reforms are essential to spur job creation: "I don't want to join the list of all those (previous leaders) who backed down and wasted time for France."

A poll published on Sunday showed that about 46 per cent of French voters want the labour bill dropped, but most of those who support it believe it should be further modified. However, the poll also showed that the moustachioed CGT leader, Philippe Martinez, who champions 1970s-style class struggle, is widely distrusted and disliked by two-thirds of the French.

I don't want to join the list of all those (previous leaders) who backed down and wasted time for France
Manuel Valls

A fifth of petrol stations were dry on Sunday and the main Le Havre fuel depot remained idle, although police removed strikers blockading several refineries.

Worryingly for football fans planning to travel to France for the Euros, a survey showed that 73 per cent of French voters fear a terrorist attack during the month-long event, which starts on June 10.

Concern grew over alleged police brutality as footage emerged of an officer throwing a tear-gas grenade into a crowd that seriously injured a 28-year-old freelance journalist in a demonstration in Paris last week. He remained in a coma on Sunday and an investigation is under way.

In another incident captured on camera, a policeman in riot gear in Toulouse grabbed a woman by the throat and slammed her to the ground as she was remonstrating with him.

Police spokesmen said officers are coming under sustained attack by troublemakers on the fringes of street protests.

(Source: The Independent)

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IKCO

Giant Stride towards Export of Products in International Markets

Last year, Iran Khodro Company (IKCO) took a giant stride and managed to strengthen status of its previous export markets and attained considerable achievements in new markets for exporting its high-quality products. Presently, the management of company is seeking to implement strategy of developing and promoting export of products in international markets. Based on logical planning made in this respect, the company should be able to manufacture three million passenger cars by 2025, based on which, one third of its manufactured products will be exported to overseas. As Iran's leading car manufacturing company, IKCO not only managed to export 30,000 vehicles to international markets in previous year (ended March 19, 2016), but also it succeeded in commissioning an equipped production line for manufacturing ARISUN Pickup with the daily production capacity of 30,000 units. As the largest and leading car manufacturing company both in the country and Middle East region, it seems that IKCO will strengthen its export strategies in current Iranian calendar year 1395 (started March 20, 2016) in line with materializing its objectives diagrammed in 2025 Vision Plan.

● Exporting 30,000 Cars

With the studies made in this regard, Iran Khodro Industrial Group has exported 30,000 cars to target markets.

Announcing the above in an interview with our correspondent, Deputy CEO of IKCO for Exports and Intl. Affairs Saeed Tafazzoli pointed to the export of 30,000 various types of vehicle to the international markets in previous year (ended March 19, 2016) and said: "assembling passenger cars [including RUNNA, DENA and SOREN] in CKD basis (Completely Knocked Down) were put atop agenda of the company in line with the new policies taken by IKCO's CEO."

Depending on tastes, interests, needs and rivals at competitive market as well as other factors, Iran Khodro Industrial Group defines one or more cars in each target market as its export product, he maintained. He also pointed to the other programs taken by the company in order to get lion's share of its products in international markets such as: obtaining Euro "5" and "6" standards, promoting and increasing qualitative level of products and equipping its products to automatic transmission and diesel-powered engine as well as other options required in target markets.



● Production of ARISUN in Iraq

Last year, Iran Khodro Industrial Group (IKCO) also launched its production line in Alexandria city, Iraq for manufacturing ARISUN, with the daily production capacity of 30,000 units.

With the agreements made in this regard within the framework of joint-venture cooperation in the field of exporting Completely Knocked Down (CKD) and Semi-Knocked Down (SKD) parts as well as exporting technical and engineering services, production line of ARISUN was replaced with one company's rival products in Iraq, he maintained.

He pointed out that production of this product is defined in the form of Semi-Knocked Down (SKD) at zero level, based on which, body and its main parts will be exported to Iraq from Tehran and Tabriz.

With the launch of this production line, the second production line, belonging to products of IKCO, will start working in Iraq, he observed.

Given the capacity and high potential of Iraqi market, at

least 5,000 cars of this model will be predicted to be manufactured by IKCO in Iraq next year, the official asserted.

According to the results of studies conducted in the field of marketing and need of Iraqi market to this car, it is expected that this product will highly be welcomed by customers, he opined.

● Production Line in Algeria

Signing and sealing contract concluded with Algerian private sector in previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 19, 2016), IKCO started selling production line and transferring technical and engineering services to this African country. The contract was concluded in the last months of previous Iranian calendar year in 1394 (ended March 19, 2016) at the condition that IKCO did not require making direct investment to have an active presence in this African country.

Presence without Direct Investment in Foreign Countries is considered as new strategy taken by IKCO in export field, the Deputy CEO of the company highlighted.

At first phase of this contract, IKCO's products including DENA, SOREN, RUNNA and ARISUN will be sent in the form of Semi-Knocked Down (SKD) car to Algeria and will be assembled in production line based in this African country.

He put the annual production capacity of car in Algeria in one working shift at 10,000 and said: "This equipped production line will be commissioned in Feb. 2017."

He stipulated: "Of total 15,000 cars ordered by Algeria in 2016, 1,500 DENA passenger cars were exported by IKCO to Algeria in Q3 of previous Iranian calendar year in 1394 (ended March 19, 2016), so that the remaining cars will be exported to this African country in the form of Completely Knocked Down (CKD) parts."

● Cash Investment-Free Presence of IKCO in Oman

On the sidelines of Iran's exclusive exhibition held in Omani capital Muscat in last year (ended March 19, 2016), Iran Khodro Company (IKCO) concluded a contract with Omani government and private sector of this country.

Under the terms and conditions of contract, the contracting sides were obliged to embark on setting up a company as joint venture bilaterally.

Accordingly, Omani sides including its government and private sector will provide 80 percent of total investment amount while IKCO will provide 20% of contract total amount as noncash within the framework of exporting technical -engineering services and production technology as well as commissioning production line for manufacturing DENA and RUNNA passenger cars in Omani Duqm Free Zone.

At the first stage, cars, which will be manufactured in this factory, are assembled by IKCO in the form of Semi-Knocked Down (SKD) parts, so that SKD parts are dispatched from Iran to this factory based in Oman, he maintained.

With the coordination made in this regard, IKCO will set up paint production line and then, body workshop in next stages for development project of the factory, he said, adding: "Once development projects of the factory based in Oman are completed, this factory will be turned into a regional hub for manufacturing IKCO's products in the Persian Gulf region and also North Africa."

Who should prevent violent extremism?

More world leaders, weary of military efforts against terrorism, turn to preventing violent extremism.

They're seeking help from private groups and everyday folk in thwarting radicalization of young people.

Where exactly is the frontline against extremist violence these days? Syria and Iraq? Mosques? Classrooms? Family dining tables?

In one global forum after another on terrorism, that's a question many world leaders seem to be asking.

In April, for example, the UN Security Council held a discussion that highlighted different views on ways to counter the "narratives and ideologies" of terrorists. In May, at the Group of Seven summit, leaders cited "critical gaps" in efforts against extremist violence.

"There is a justified anxiety that we do not, as of now, despite all the experience and some progress, have a fully effective strategy to counter (extremism)," says former British prime minister Tony Blair, who is helping launch a commission on countering violent



extremism.

■ Impeding radicalism

Despite military progress against Al Qaeda and Islamic State, the new emphasis is on ways to impede radicalization, especially of young people.

In January, UN Secretary General

Ban Ki-moon launched a "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism." And the U.S. State Department has started a "Global Engagement Center" to work with private groups "who can help address key factors that drive radicalization."

→9

Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

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Diba: 09128103206

Apt. in Zafranieh
2nd Fl., 350 sq.m, 4 bdrs, nice balcony, fully furn, SPJ, yard, **Diplomatic**, 5000 Euro
Diba: 09128103206

Apt. in Southern-Dibaji
Super luxury, 4th Fl., 125 sq.m, 2 bdrs, fully furn, SPJ, **Diplomatic**, 2500 USD
Diba: 09128103206

Villa

Duplex Villa in Shahrak-Qarb
400 sq.m built up, 4 bdrs, furn, small yard, pool, quit, 6500 USD
Diba: 09128103206

Duplex Villa in Elahieh
500 sq.m built up, 5 bdrs, un furn, completely renovated, **Suitable for Embassies**
Diba: 09128103206

Luxury Villa in Niavaran
Duplex, 450 sq.m built up, 4 bdrs, modern & unbelievable furn, remodeling & renovated, pool, green garden, **Suitable for Residency**, 8000 USD
Diba: 09128103206

Duplex Villa in Mahmoudieh
600 sq.m, 5 bdrs, semi furn, nice garden, Pkg, servant quarters, **Suitable for Embassies & Residency**, 10000 USD
Diba: 09128103206

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Obama's anti-ISIL envoy: 'We have exposed their lies'

The U.S. has scored some successes against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist group with the deployment of Special Forces. In a SPIEGEL interview, President Obama's anti-ISIL envoy Brett McGurk says the terrorist militia is shrinking and calls for help from NATO in battling the terrorists.

What follows is an excerpt of the interview:

Q: Ambassador McGurk, in recent days we have been hearing announcements of a strike on Raqqa in Syria, an ISIL's stronghold and an advance towards Fallujah in Iraq. Is a major assault against ISIL now starting?

A: We are moving into a new phase of the campaign against ISIL. Our goal is to attack the enemy and put simultaneous pressure on multiple points. The major offensives are starting on Fallujah and Raqqa to shrink the territory of the self-proclaimed caliphate of the ISIL and to show that they are not expanding anymore.

Q: There has been talk of the offensives for quite a while. Why are they only just beginning now?

A: We needed some time. It took a while time to build military capacity on the ground, to recruit local forces, fighters from the region, to train and advise them. Now we are at a point where they can take on the fight.

Q: How strong is ISIL today?

A: They are substantially degraded. Forty-five percent of the territory in Iraq has been lost, 20 percent in Syria. We are taking out one of their battlefield commanders almost every three days because we are inside their networks. We know where they are and we can target them with more and more precision. After some intensive work by the intelligence services, we are also targeting their financial system. We found out where they are storing their cash. After some work by the U.S. Special Forces on the ground, we know where they get their oil out of the ground, how they transport it and we hit those sites.

Q: Will airstrikes be sufficient for fighting them?

A: Don't take my word on that, listen to them. Back in 2014, their leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced his caliphate was expanding all over the Middle East and into Europe. Now the key spokesman puts out a very different message, admitting that their territory is shrinking, that their leaders are being killed one by one, even that Raqqa and Mosul will fall. It's a very different



message. They are no longer able to claim they are a divine movement; they are a criminal terrorist organization. We have exposed their lies by beginning to beat them on the battlefield.

Q: When you mention "we," are you referring to the U.S. Special Forces units?

A: These brave Americans play an extremely important role. The Special Forces started with 50 men in northern Syria, they started to find local fighters who were willing to take up the fight against the ISIL, they trained them and advised them on how to conduct their operations. They took out ISIL's finance chief, they killed their military war emir. With the Special Forces, we have increased the pressure and we

The major offensives are starting on Fallujah and Raqqa to shrink the territory of the self-proclaimed caliphate of the ISIL and to show that they are not expanding anymore.

won't let up.

Q: The mission was difficult since Washington said for a long that the U.S. won't put troops on the ground in Syria.

A: I remember a day in May 2015 when I met with President Obama. We were together in the Situation Room in the White House. ISIL had just taken Ramadi near Baghdad and we were assessing our possible actions. Finally, the president authorized the opening of a small Special Forces base near Ramadi. By being there we had the chance to reach out to the local tribal leaders and help the Iraqi forces to plan a counterattack push on the city to take Ramadi back. It was a success. We learned from that incident that where we have presence, even in very small numbers, where we gather local knowledge, where we build relationships by reaching out to local leaders, we can have success.

Q: So does that mean that more units will soon be sent to Syria?

A: It's always a possibility to send in more forces. I think President Obama has been very clear in saying that we only invest in things which are working. If something is working, we will consider if more investment might deliver a quicker result. We want to accelerate and do as much as we can as fast as we can. The number of 300 (Special Forces soldiers) gives us a great deal of capacity. We'll see where it goes.

Q: What is the plan in the meantime?

A: We're trying to cut off Mosul from all sides -- that's pretty much done, it's almost isolated. Now we are targeting their leaders. We are destroying their cash storage sites so they can't pay their fighters anymore. As we squeeze and isolate Mosul, we target sites with airstrikes and we work with forces inside Mosul who fight ISIL. We hope it won't be a street-to-street fight. In the end, we want to degrade ISIL so far that it implodes from inside.

Q: During his recent visit to Germany, President Obama asked for greater military support from NATO. What could the alliance do to strengthen the coalition?

A: NATO has a very important role to play. The alliance has started a defense building initiative with Iraqi officers in Jordan and we hope this will expand. NATO's AWACS air platforms can play an important role and they would be a great help for the coalition. I hope that by the time of the Warsaw NATO summit in early July, we will have some concrete objectives for that new mission.

(Source: Spiegel)

COMMENT

We must do more to protect our borders

The Home Office rarely suffers a surfeit of praise, but the department deserves some credit over its plans to increase the capacity of Britain's maritime border forces.

The changes that we reveal today may strike some as being somewhat overdue – and there is something alarming about the fact that until now almost 1,000 miles of coastline have been patrolled by just three boats.

Nevertheless, as this newspaper has, in recent weeks, repeatedly highlighted concerns about Britain's border security and called for improvements, we prefer to see such changes as better late than never.

That does not mean that these measures alone will be adequate, however. Even with the additional resources that will be given to maritime patrols, in the form of a string of new vessels and three new maritime co-ordination hubs, the border force's ability to patrol the seas around Britain will be limited at best.

For obvious reasons of geography, the EU's failings on migration will be a problem for Britain whether or not we are in the EU.

And giving all staff appropriate powers to board all vessels will mean little if those staff are too scarce to scrutinize the ships that could bring illegal immigrants.

So we must point out that still more has to be done. The need for even greater action is being very visibly demonstrated in the English Channel this week, as would-be migrants attempt clandestine crossings, often at risk to their own lives.

The fact that these desperate people are even in a position to attempt such crossings says something about the European Union and its handling of migration. Arguably, EU rules should mean that illegal migrants should be stopped and processed long before they reach the Channel.

The fact that they have not been undermines arguments from the Remain campaign that being in the EU better secures Britain's borders. Voters, always smarter than politicians realize, know that – which is why, as our poll shows today, a political focus on immigration boosts support for Brexit.

Regardless of the result of the referendum, more will have to be done to protect Britain's borders – and that job will fall to the British government alone.

(Source: The Telegraph)



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NEWS IN BRIEF

Earth-like planet 1,200 light years away 'could be habitable'

An Earth-like planet orbiting a star 1,200 light years away could have conditions suitable for life, say scientists.

Kepler 62f is about 40 percent larger than the Earth and may possess surface oceans.

It is the outermost of five planets circling a star that is smaller and cooler than the sun discovered by the American space



agency NASA's Kepler space telescope in 2013.

New computer simulations of possible kinds of atmosphere that might be found on Kepler 62f suggest it could sustain life.

Lead scientist Dr. Aomawa Shields, from the University of California at Los Angeles, said: "We found there are multiple atmospheric compositions that allow it to be warm enough to have surface liquid water. This makes it a strong candidate for a habitable planet."

Because of Kepler 62f's distance from its host star, it would need the greenhouse effect of a thick carbon dioxide-rich atmosphere to keep its water from freezing, the research showed.

However certain types of orbit could allow the planet's surface temperature to rise above freezing at certain times of the year - even with much lower levels of carbon dioxide, closer to those found on Earth.

More than 2,300 exoplanets outside the solar system have been identified, and a few thousand others are as-yet unconfirmed planetary candidates.

Only a couple of dozen are known to orbit the "habitable zones" of their stars, the narrow region just the right distance away to allow the existence of liquid surface water.

(Source: The Independent)

Gene connected to MS discovered, claim scientists

In a major development, researchers have managed to discover a gene involved in deregulation of certain immune cells in the neurological disease Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

Characterized by the onset of chronic, neurodegenerative damage of the central nervous system, this unpredictable, often disabling disease disrupts the flow of information within the brain, and between the brain and body by attacking the protective sheath (myelin) that covers nerve fibers.

Right now, its causes are unknown although various self-immune mechanisms are known to be involved.

Researchers are already aware that genetic variants lead to changes in the code of the DNA component and that in order to understand their biological effects, the effects of the expression of the corresponding gene need to be studied,

The new study showed that the gene known as ANKRD55 produces three different transcripts of the messenger RNA, and that the genetic variant associated with MS greatly increases the production of these transcripts.

"We have also discovered and proven that this takes place specifically in the case of a particular category of immune cells, the so-called T CD4+ cells," said lead author of the research Koen Vandenbroeck from Ikerbasque, the Basque Foundation for Science in Spain.

(Source: Zee News)

All sharks are not alike: new study

Sharks have personalities, too. A group of researchers at Australia's Macquarie University department of biological sciences found that the behavior of *Heterodontus portusjacksoni* sharks, which they observed in Port Jackson, Australia, revealed differences in personalities. When exposed to stress or an unfamiliar environment, while some shark responses were consistent with one another, others were unique to the individual.

The group tested sharks' boldness and risk-taking characteristics by initially putting them in a tank with a shelterbox and fish (as their food), and timed how long it took each shark to emerge from the shelter and explore the new surroundings.

Certain sharks also seemed to become more stressed than others when they were held out of water.

Researchers found a correlation between boldness and more active stress responses, while juvenile sharks seemed to be bolder over all.

The "strong link between boldness and stress response commonly found in teleosts was also evident in this study, providing evidence of proactive-reactive coping styles in *H. portusjacksoni* (the Port Jackson shark)," the study says. "These results demonstrate the presence of individual personality differences in sharks for the first time."

The study shows that not all sharks can be thought of as the same, said Evan Byrnes, lead author of the study, which appeared in the *Journal of Fish Biology*. "Each has its own preferences and behaviors, and it is likely that these differences influence how individuals interact with their habitat and other species," he said.

"Understanding how individual sharks vary in behaviors such as foraging and habitat use may have large ecological implications and it is important to managing these species.

(Source: The CSM)

New robotic arm may help restore sensation of touch to amputees

Researchers are developing a robotic arm that may one day allow amputees to regain their sense of touch and improve their movement.

Individuals who lost their arm to trauma and diseases may turn to prosthesis. Unfortunately, most of these artificial body parts do not feel much like the real thing.

The project, a collaboration between Melbourne University and St. Vincent's Hospital-based Aikenhead Center for Medical Discovery, however, could be a game changer in the field of prosthesis.

Peter Choong, from St. Vincent's Hospital, and colleagues identified a way to transmit signals from the brain to the robotic arm and are now looking for ways to return the signals that could give the sensation of touch.

Transmitting signals

The researchers used 3D printing to produce microchips for transmitting communication signals between limb tissues and electrodes, allowing for movement messages to be sent from the brain to the robotic arm.

The breakthrough could allow amputees and those who suffered from stroke to



The breakthrough could allow amputees and those who suffered from stroke to control the movement of their robotic arms just as they would control a normal limb.

control the movement of their robotic arms

just as they would control a normal limb.

(Source: Tech Times)

New cloud formation discovery may lessen warming forecast

A discovery about how clouds form may scale back some of the more dire predictions about temperature increases caused by man-made global warming.

That's because it implies that a key assumption for making such predictions is a bit off.

"What this will do is slightly reduce and sharpen the projections for temperature during the 21st century," said researcher Jasper Kirkby.

Kirkby works at the European Center for Nuclear Research, or CERN, near Geneva. He is the lead author of one of three studies on the topic newly published by the journals *Nature* and *Science*.

Essentially, the work reveals a previously unknown natural process that creates atmospheric particles around which clouds form. The most common source of particles is air pollution, usually sulfuric acid from the burning of fossil fuels. There are also natural sources, but they have been considered far less important for cloud formation.



Combination of cosmic rays

The new work shows that a combination of cosmic rays from space and gases emitted by trees also creates particles, and then clouds, without man-made pollution. The scientists witnessed this in a cloud simulation chamber and from a Swiss mountaintop observatory more than two miles high.

"This process is only effective in pristine environments,

and there are very, very few pristine environments left on Earth," Kirkby said. Nowadays, the process is overwhelmed by pollution particles.

The computer models that are used to make those predictions require making assumptions about what conditions were like before industrialization, when the widespread burning of coal, oil and gas began pumping greenhouse gases into the air. Clouds are an important factor in this because they cool the Earth by reflecting sunlight back to space.

Nobody knows just how cloudy skies were in the old days. Scientists have figured there were far fewer clouds than now, Kirkby said. But the discovery of a new natural route to cloud formation suggests that cloud cover was, in fact, greater than scientists had assumed.

If so, greenhouse gases haven't been quite as potent in producing warming as scientists thought. So, ton for ton, they also may not be quite as potent in producing future warming.

(Source: The Washington Post)

As much as 35 percent of Great Barrier Reef dead or dying

Mass bleaching has destroyed as much as 35 percent of the coral on the northern and central Great Barrier Reef, Australian scientists said on Monday, a major blow to the World Heritage Site that attracts about A\$5 billion (\$3.59 billion) in tourism each year.

Australian scientists said in March just seven percent of the entire Great Barrier Reef had avoided any damage as a result of bleaching, and they held grave fears particularly for coral on the northern reef.

After further aerial surveys and dives to access the damage across 84 reefs in the region, Australian scientists said the impact of the bleaching is more severe than they had expected.

"This year is the third time in 18 years that the Great Barrier Reef has experienced mass bleaching due to global warming, and the current event is much more extreme than we've measured before," said professor Terry Hughes, director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies at James Cook University.

Bleaching occurs when the water is too warm, forcing coral to expel living algae and causing it to calcify and turn white. Mildly bleached coral can recover if the temperature drops, otherwise it may die.

Weather systems

Although the impact has been exacerbated by one of the strongest El Nino weather systems in nearly 20 years, which recently subsided, scientists believe climate change is the underlying cause.



The survey findings come just days after Australia's Department of Environment confirmed it omitted its contribution to a UN report examining the impact of climate change on world heritage sites over concerns it could create "confusion" and have a negative impact on tourism.

The World Heritage and Tourism in a Changing Climate report, which was released on Friday with no references to Australia, has sparked outrage from climate scientists, who were not informed that their contributions had been removed.

UNESCO's World Heritage Committee last May stopped short of placing the Great Barrier Reef on an "in danger" list, but the ruling raised concern about its future.

Australia is one of the largest carbon emitters per capita because of its reliance on coal-fired power plants for electricity.

(Source: Reuters)

Premature babies may grow up to have weaker bones

Among the many important processes that happen during a woman's last few weeks of pregnancy is the transfer of calcium to the growing fetus to boost bone development. But what happens if this transfer is interrupted when a baby is born prematurely?

The answer, it seems, is lower peak bone mass as an adult, compared to adults who were born full term. Adults who were born full term but were small for their gestational age also had lower bone mass. These findings are important since peak bone mass is a major determinant of future osteoporosis.

"Few studies to date have addressed bone mass in adults who were born with low birth weight, and there are conflicting findings," said Chandima Balasuriya, the first author of the study. Balasuriya is a medical doctor and Ph.D. candidate at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and St Olavs University Hospital.

Normal weights

"Our study shows that both those born prematurely with a very low birth weight and those who were born full term, but small for their gestational age, had lower bone mass than the control group, who were born full term with normal weights."

The study was conducted by the Endocrinology and Bone Group, headed by NTNU Professor Unni Syversen, and looked at 186 adults who were 26-28 years old.

Fifty-two of the participants were very



low birth weight babies, with a mean birth weight of 1.2 kg, and a mean gestational age of 29 weeks. Another 59 participants had been born to term, but were considered "small for gestational age", with a mean birth weight of just under 3 kg. The researchers also had a control group of 77 adults who were born at term with normal weight.

For all three groups, researchers measured bone mineral content and density in the spine, neck, hip and the whole body, and looked at current height and weight, smoking, level of physical activity and a variety of other measures.

When the researchers looked at the data from adults who were born small for their gestational age at term, they found that this group had lower bone mass than adults who were born with normal weight at term.

(Source: EurekAlert)

Protein that controls strength of circadian rhythm identified

At noon every day, levels of genes and proteins throughout your body are drastically different than they are at midnight. Disruptions to this 24-hour cycle of physiological activity are why jet lag or a bad night's sleep can alter your appetite and sleep patterns for days -- and even contribute to conditions like heart disease, sleep disorders and cancers.

The discovery is unusual in the field, as most circadian genes and proteins only shift the timing or length of the daily cycle.

"Whether it is Beethoven's 9th Symphony on your stereo or the symphony of genes in our bodies, both require volume to be heard," says senior author Ronald Evans, director

of Salk's Gene Expression Laboratory, a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator, and holder of the March of Dimes Chair in Molecular and Developmental Biology. "Our recent work describes how REV-ERB acts as a molecular conductor to allow the volume or activity of thousands of genes to be dialed up or down."

Circadian cycle

Disrupting just the amplitude -- or strength -- component of the circadian cycle, Evans adds, was enough to alter hormone levels, including those that wake us up in the morning. This means that people with lower amplitude fluctuations of the genes might feel flat and have less energy during the day.

Previous research in the field revealed genes that cycle on and off throughout the day and showed how altering these circadian genes can shift the timing of the cycle and make the circadian rhythm longer or shorter than 24 hours. In 2012, Evans' group showed that REV-ERB bound to many of these circadian genes and acted as a brake, affecting when during the day or night they were expressed.

"We saw REV-ERB interacting with all these circadian-related genes," says Xuan Zhao, a research associate in the Evans lab and first author of the new paper. "So we wanted to see if it had a more central role in circadian rhythms."

(Source: Neuroscience)

Several top commanders of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group have been killed along with a number of other militants an Iraqi aerial attack in the western province of Anbar, media reports say.

In a statement released late on Monday, the Iraqi Joint Special Operations Command said Iraqi bombers hit their gathering in the town of Qaim.

Among those killed was a high-ranking intelligence director who was a close ally to the so-called leader of the terrorist group, Ibrahim al-Samarrai, aka Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, it said.

The unnamed intelligence director was reportedly responsible for orchestrating a string of terrorist attacks including a recent bomb attack in the strategic city of Hit.

He was an officer in Iraq's defunct General Directorate of Intelligence under slain Dictator Saddam Hussein. He had worked with terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi before pledging allegiance to Baghdadi.

Commander of the militants Tabuk Battalion operating inside both Syria and Iraq also died in the air raid.

ISIL press director in Baghdad and southern Iraqi regions, a fugitive from Camp Bucca prison in southern Iraq, sustained injuries in the attack, and succumbed to his grave wounds later on.

■ Peshmerga forces kill ISIL terrorists near Mosul

Separately, Kurdish Peshmerga forces have launched an operation against

ISIL commanders killed in Iraqi airstrike near Syria border

Iraqi forces intensify assault against ISIL in Fallujah



the ISIL terrorists in Kazir region, which lies northeast of the militant-held city of Mosul.

Arif Tayfour, a spokesman for Peshmerga forces, said on Monday that his fellow fighters have killed 140 ISIL members over the past two days and purged more than 130 square kilometers of the area of the terrorists.

Tayfour added that four Peshmerga

fighters lost their lives during the cleanup operation.

■ ISIL abducts 100 Iraqi youths for not growing beard

Moreover, ISIL terrorists have abducted 100 young residents of Fallujah, located roughly 69 kilometers (43 miles) west of Baghdad, on trumped-up charges of not growing beard and refusal to join the ranks of the terrorist outfit in battles

against government forces and allied Popular Mobilization Units (al-Hashd al-Shaabi) fighters.

Majid al-Jarisi, a tribal elder from Fallujah, told Arabic-language al-Sumaria satellite television network that the terrorists took away the youths to an unknown location and there is no information about their whereabouts.

■ Iraqi forces intensify assault against ISIL in Fallujah

Elsewhere, Iraqi Special Forces have launched an assault on one of the ISIL terrorist group's strongholds, Fallujah, facing stiff resistance with the group launching suicide attacks.

The assault was launched in the early hours of Monday morning.

There are between 400 and 1,000 ISIL terrorists stationed inside the city - including its most experienced.

In a new report on Tuesday, the United Nations refugee agency said ISIL terrorists have been using civilians in Fallujah as human shields to slow the advance of Iraqi forces.

Some 3,700 people have fled Fallujah over the past week since Iraqi forces began their counter-terrorism operations in the ISIL-held city, according to the UN organization.

William Spindler, spokesman for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said the body has received reports of casualties among people in the city center in Fallujah due to heavy shelling.

(Source: agencies)

New Jordanian PM enjoys strong ties with Israel: observers

Arab media and ex-Jordanian officials have described newly-appointed Prime Minister Hani Mulqi as a "pro-Israel" figure, who is likely to help advance Tel Aviv's policies against Palestinians.

Jordan's King Abdullah dissolved the parliament on Monday and appointed Hani Mulqi as caretaker prime minister. The legislative body had ended its four-year term and the election should be held within four months under the constitution.

The 65-year-old is believed to have strong connections to Israeli leaders, according to Arab media reports.

In an interview with Qatar's Al Jazeera network on Monday, Husam Abdallat, a former top government aide at the office of the Jordanian premier, said Mulqi's appointment was aimed at reviving Israeli-Palestinians talks in pursuit of a solution that would not benefit the Palestinian nation. The TV channel also reported that the new prime minister has "strong" ties with Israel. Tareq al-Fayed, an Amman-based analyst on Jordanian affairs and a journalist at the London-based Al-Quds Al-Arabi newspaper, said Mulki has two main mandates while in office.

"The first is to manage the new phase of the parliamentary elections and set the government's political agenda. The second is to manage Israeli-Jordanian relations, which have seen tension over Israel's policies and encroachment on the Palestinians in Jerusalem (al-Quds) and against al-Aqsa Mosque," he said.

Meanwhile, the report highlighted the pro-Israel "investment law" approved by Jordan's outgoing parliament, which

allows foreign investments, including by Tel Aviv, in key projects such as energy and infrastructure development.

Jordan and Egypt are the only Arab states that have inked peace treaties with the regime in Israel.

The prime minister-designate served as the head of Jordan's Aqaba economic zone before he was chosen by King Abdullah. Observers believe the appointment comes as no surprise because Amman and Tel Aviv have long been working to promote their economic relations.

■ Jordan working to oust Abbas

Mulqi's appointment amid reports that Israel and its allies, including the UAE, Egypt and Jordan, are planning to overthrow Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and replace him with the former leader of the Fatah movement, Mohammed Dahlan.

The key objectives of the scheme for Abbas' ouster include uniting Fatah, weakening the Hamas resistance movement, completing the so-called peace agreement with Israel and seizing control of sovereign Palestinian institutions in the West Bank, the report said.

The initiative was corroborated by a senior Jordanian source who revealed a visit by Dahlan to the Jordanian capital, Amman, on March 31, during which the Palestinian figure requested Jordanian intervention to reconcile him with Abbas.

The developments come ahead of a June 3 conference in Paris, France, aimed at reviving the so-called peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians.

(Source: Press TV)

Nearly all female Israeli lawmakers sexually abused: report

Nearly all female members of Israel's Knesset have fallen victim to sexual harassment or sexual assault at some point in their lives, a report says.

Of the total 32 current female lawmakers at the Israeli legislature, 28 revealed they had suffered from some sorts of sexual abuses in the past, Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported on Tuesday, citing a survey conducted by Israel's Channel 2.

The report added that two of the lawmakers, Michal Biran from the center-left alliance Zionist Union, and Merav Ben Ari from the centrist party Kulanu, experienced the harassment even after they had entered the Knesset.

"Even today, the fact that I'm a single woman in the Knesset puts me in unpleasant situations. Sometimes people make comments ... I don't want to elaborate, but there was a situation recently in the Knesset," said Ben Ari, speaking of a recent incident in the Knesset building.

"There was an incident that repeated itself in the planning and building committee, of which I was a member. Another city councilor would make remarks of a sexual nature regarding things that I said, and the whole room would burst out laughing," said Rachel Azaria from Kulanu party.

"I consulted with the legal adviser and other officials, and they all said there was nothing to be done," she said, recounting a bitter experience she had when she was a Jerusalem City Council member.

The lawmakers also exposed different kinds of other sexual abuses, which happened on military buses or on the streets.

In December, the Israeli interior minister and vice-premier, Silvan Shalom, was forced to resign after his ex-staffer revealed that she was sexually harassed by her boss and was "touched" against her will, giving details on how he had abused her more than a decade ago.

Subsequently, "several other women also alleged that the minister sexually assaulted them," according to a December 20, 2015 Ha'aretz report.

The Israeli interior minister is by no means the first top Israeli politician to leave office over sexual misconduct.

Former Israeli President Moshe Katsav stepped down in 2007 on charges of raping two women as a cabinet minister in the late 1990s, as well as sexual assault against two of his female staffers as president.

The issue of sexual misconduct is also frequently reported in the Israeli military, which has given rise to heated debates over the past years.

The Israeli military itself says it has launched about 250 investigations into sexual abuse allegations over the past two years. Twelve of the investigations concern alleged rape, up from eight in 2014 and five in 2013.

(Source: Press TV)

Families of British soldiers killed in Iraq may sue Tony Blair after Chilcot report

The families of slain British soldiers might sue former British Prime Minister Tony Blair if evidence suggests the equipment provided to the troops during the Iraq War was inadequate, Roger Bacon, father of an army serviceman killed in a roadside bomb blast, told RT.

Bereaved relatives of British servicemen and women slain during the Iraq War are contemplating taking legal action against Blair and/or other officials if the much-anticipated report commissioned in 2009 and prepared by Sir John Chilcot reveals that the government failed to adequately provide for the needs of British military personnel participating in the 8-year-long invasion and occupation.

Bacon, who is member of the Iraq Fam-

ilies Action Group, which is seeking justice from British authorities on behalf of the 179 British servicemen killed in Iraq, told RT that he firmly believes Blair "committed an illegal act in taking us [the UK] there." What is worse, Bacon believes the invasion focused on "regime change," but lacked planning, leading to grave consequences that put the "entire country in chaos" and allowed groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group to take over parts of Iraq.

He added that, after looking at specific cases of British families that had lost children in the war, it was "quite clear" that the troops had been ill-equipped for their task.

"There is an equipment issue," Bacon

said, while promising to carefully look at Chilcot's inquiry before he and members of other affected families decide whether to file a lawsuit against Blair or other parties, including Britain's defense ministry.

"Whether it has to do with suing Tony Blair himself or the ministry of defense over equipment we will have to wait until the report comes out to see what it says about it," said Bacon, whose son Matthew was killed by an IED in 2005, just five weeks after being deployed, while on his way back from the allies' headquarters in Basra.

"You don't expect to lose your son before you go," the grieving father added.

Over the past years, the families of British servicemen killed over the course of the war have slammed Chilcot for

delaying the report's publication, while threatening to take legal action if a deadline for its release was not set.

Now we expect a Chilcot report to come out on July 6. It's just taken far too long to do," stressed Bacon, who has become one of the most vocal critics of the increasingly protracted publication process.

"It is morally reprehensible to keep delaying the publication of the report," he said back in 2015.

The report, which is supposed to examine the justification for deploying British troops, may further tarnish the former PM's less than perfect reputation, as it is expected to be loaded with heavy criticism of his actions prior to the invasion.

(Source: RT)

JUMP

Who should prevent violent extremism?

6→ Preventing people from turning into violent extremists has become as important as destroying terrorist groups.

"Unless we address the circumstances in which radicalization and terrorism thrive, we will always be fighting a rear-guard action against it," said Theresa May, Britain's Home Secretary, in February.

A leading think tank on terrorism, the Rand Corp., finds that a country's open and inclusive politics can help keep many young people from being tempted to join a radical group. And, as one Rand study concluded, a young person's family is more influential than peers in dampening any tendency to become a terrorist.

"We should approach efforts to reduce radicalization among youth in much the same way we work to prevent other problems such as underage drinking and gang recruitment," said Rand researcher Kim Cragin.

One good example of a private, grassroots effort to reach young Muslims is a group called Teachers Against Violent Extremism. Founded by Ayub Mohamed, a business teacher in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi, it has trained more than 100 teachers on ways to conduct classroom discussions with high school students aimed at safeguarding them against the recruitment tactics of terrorist groups like al-Shabab.

Preventing radicalization, says Mr. Mohamed, is the responsibility of everyone in a community.

That is exactly the conclusion many world leaders are reaching.

(Source: The CSM)

Norway's Hemla Vantage closes in on \$600m Iran gas joint venture

1→ The joint venture will purchase 200 million standard cubic feet of flared gas from offshore oilfields near Kharg Island over a period of up to 15 years. In its first phase, the site is projected to produce 500 metric tons of LNG and 200 tons of LPG per year. The FLNG barge, produced in China and ready to be shipped to reach Kharg Island by October, will be leased from Exmar, a Belgian company.

Hemla Vantage said that financing the new project will not be a problem, despite international banks being wary of doing business with Iran. Sanctions against the state were removed under the nuclear agreement which came into effect earlier this year. Iran and Kharg Island have a lot of facilities including jetties, pipelines and storage which make projects much easier and economically justifiable, Mr Ludvigsen said.

He added that European banks, including German institutions, are ready to finance the project showing "that banks are opening up and are now being positive to engage with Iran". However, he did not know when exactly the contract will be signed.

Iran is pushing hard to regain its position as a global energy supplier, ramping up production and exports of oil since the start of the year and re-establishing relationships with former customers.

(Source: Financial Times)

Yemen's warring sides close to reaching major deal: report

The warring sides in the Yemeni conflict are close to reaching a major deal in Kuwait, where they have been negotiating for more than a month, a report says.



High-ranking diplomats attending the talks in Kuwait City said on Tuesday that the two sides had agreed on ceasing the hostilities on the ground and setting up a transitional government in Yemen, the Lebanese al-Mayadin TV reported.

The sources said the new government would have former President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi at its head for a maximum of 45 days, after which he would give up his authorities to a deputy picked with mutual consensus. Who that deputy will be is, according to the report, still an issue of disagreement.

According to the report, Yemen's former Vice President, Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, will have no role in the transitional government. A committee comprising of senior political and military figures will also be established to supervise the implementation of the agreement during the transitional period.

If officially declared, the agreement will be the first major achievement of the peace talks on Yemen, which have been going on in Kuwait since April 21. The talks, mediated by the United Nations (UN), drew together the representatives of Yemen's Ansarullah (Houthi) movement and those of Hadi's former regime.

Hadi resigned from the presidency and escaped the capital, Sana'a, to southern Yemen in late 2014 and later to Saudi Arabia. In March 2015, the House of Saud regime launched a war on Yemen in an attempt to have Hadi reinstated. Around 10,000 people have been killed and at least 16,000 others injured in the Saudi war. UN envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed said last Thursday that there was hope the talks would progress as the warring parties had started discussing the details of a comprehensive agreement.

(Source: Press TV)

THE ECONOMY Senior managers of Iran Khodro Industrial Group came together to explore the micro-strategies of the Middle East's leading car manufacturer.

The meeting was attended by Iran Khodro CEO Hashem Yekkehzare, his deputies and the general managers of the group's main companies.

Addressing the meeting, IKCO CEO numbered the main priorities of the company as introducing new products, raising vehicles quality, offering better after-sales service and expanding the export.

He then expressed hope that realization of the priori-

ties could enable Iran Khodro to play a successful role in the domestic and global markets.

Yekkehzare also pointed to the main capabilities of IKCO for attracting foreign investment, saying the company has the potential to lead Iran's vehicle market, enjoy advanced production lines and sites as well as an extensive and competent network for sales and after-sales service, recruit professional human resources, use a capable group of part manufacturers and take advantage of huge capacity production as well as cooperating with leading global car companies. "IKCO enjoys an advanced value chain: TAM for industrialization and establishment

of new production lines, IPCO for the design and development of new motor power, Iran Khodro's New Product Development Center for the design and development of new vehicles, Iran Khodro Company for producing motor vehicles, Iran Khodro Diesel for producing commercial vehicles, ISACO for offering after-sales service to light commercial vehicles and Govah for offering after-sales service to commercial vehicles," claimed Yekkehzare.

Meanwhile, a report was read out during the meeting on the quality of IKCO products as well as the projects underway to achieve the "customer-oriented" goal of the company.



A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out.
Walter Winchell

Saying No

Liang: I have a favor to ask.
Christian: Uh oh, what is it?
Liang: I'm doing a project for my class in **culinary school** and I need a volunteer to taste some of my **creations**.
Christian: **Not on your life**.
Liang: But, why?
Christian: You don't remember the last time I was your **guinea pig**? I was sick for two days.
Liang: That was a **stroke of bad luck**. Come on, please.
Christian: **Count me out**. **No amount of pleading** is going to change my mind. I bet I'm not the first person you've asked.
Liang: Well, no.
Christian: Who else has **turned you down**?
Liang: Jacob said no.
Christian: I bet he said something stronger than no.
Liang: He said that he would let me cook food for him **over his dead body**.
Christian: That's what I thought. Did you ask Mele, too?
Liang: Yes, and she said she'd **rather not**.
Christian: Who's next on your list of victims, I mean candidates?
Liang: You're my **last resort**. If you won't do it, then I'm **sunk**.
Christian: The answer is still no, but I know someone who won't **turn up his nose** at your cooking.
Liang: Who?
Christian: Come here, Fido!

(Source: eslpod.com)

■ **Words & phrases**
culinary school: a school that teaches people how to cook and become a chef
creation: something that you make; here means the food that Liang is going to prepare
not on your life: used as a reply to a question or suggestion to say that you definitely will not do something
guinea pig: someone who is used to test to see how successful or safe a new product, system etc. is
stroke of bad luck: it was a negative experience and was just an accident that would never happen again
count somebody out: to not include someone or something in an activity
no amount of something will do something: used to say that something has no effect
pleading: to ask for something that you want very much, in a sincere and emotional way
turn somebody down: say no to an offer
over somebody's dead body: used to say that someone is determined not to allow something to happen
rather not: I do not want to
last resort: what you will do if everything else fails
be sunk: to be in a situation where you are certain to fail or have a lot of problems:
turn up your nose at something: to refuse to accept something because you do not think it is good enough for you
Fido: used to be a common name for a male dog, what Christian is saying is that his dog will eat Liang's food but he won't

161) What does the idiom mean?
She has a green thumb.
a) she dyed her thumb green
b) she is good with plant
c) she has good color sense
(Quiz No. 160 answer: c)

Stick up for

- **Meaning:** defend
- **For example:** It's important to stick up for one's principles.

Every path has its puddle

- **Explanation:** progress is rarely without difficulty

FAO calls for promoting partnership on water resource management in Iran

➔1 Mr. Gary Lewis, the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Representative in the Islamic Republic of Iran together with Mr. Alessandro Amadio, the Representative of UNIDO in Iran and Ms. Niloofar Sadeghi, the UNESCO Program Officer for Natural Sciences have also attend the meeting and expressed their views on employing an inclusive approach for saving Urmia Lake and other water resources management issues in the country.

Ambassadors and delegations from, Japan, Netherlands, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Australia, Denmark, Russia and representative from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Ministry of Energy, Department of Environment, Ministry of Jihad-e Agriculture, Sharif University and other national research institutes were among the active participants of the meeting.

Iran is experiencing a severe escalation of water scarcity, similarly to several other countries of the Near East and North Africa Region, due to key drivers such as demographic growth, tendency to increase food self-sufficiency, urban-



ization expansion, energy demand and overall socio-economic development, further compounded by the negative impacts of climate change and the considerable degradation of water quality.

In the last decades, independence and self-sufficiency have characterized the development policies of Iran, with consequent

fast expansion of agriculture, and mainly irrigated agriculture area (with over 8 Million ha, withdrawing more than 90% of renewable water resources, of which 62% are from groundwater and 38% from surface water), so that the consumptive use of water has increased exponentially.

In this context, the Urmia Lake (the

Lake) (5000 km2) has faced intense pressure during the last decade and it is currently in a state of ecological crisis with major impacts on biodiversity and socio-economic conditions. It is a vast hyper-saline lake in North West Iran, formed in a natural depression at the lowest point within the closed Urmia Lake basin, where water comes in through several rivers but leaves only by evaporation.

Since 1995, the area and water level of the Lake have dramatically decreased and salt concentration increased. Many of its satellite wetlands have also been damaged by infrastructure and land conversion works, pollution and significant decrease of water inflows. These problems, exacerbated by a long period of drought, have an impact on region's industrial and agricultural sectors and induced salt beds to be exposed by the Lake shrinkage and to be picked up by winds, creating a serious threat to the health of the inhabitants of the region. Such condition put at risk the biodiversity of the environment, cutting down the many benefits that the lake provides to the society.

(Source: FAO)

86-year-old Iranian man gets master's degree

SOCIETY TEHRAN — An 86-year-old man earned his master's degree in educational research from Ajab-Shir Azad University, East Azarbaijan province.

Mir-Qanbar Heidari Shishvan finished his bachelor's degree in social sciences in 2012 at Tabriz Azad University and was admitted for his postgraduate degree the next year.

He wants to get his PhD and be a source of inspiration for the youth, IRNA news agency reported.

He used to work in a bank and was also a teacher.

There is documentary named President Mir-Qanbar based on his life which was screened in Japan and Switzerland and won an award in Japan. He has so far written and published a book in addition to three other books he is writing now.

He has registered for former presidential and parliamentary elections and is willing to join the race for the upcoming presidential election as well next year.



Global loss of agricultural biodiversity a challenge for agricultural sustainability

By Saikat Kumar Basu and Peiman Zandi

Agricultural biodiversity (also known as agrobiodiversity/agribiodiversity) or the genetic resources for food and agriculture is a broad and classical concept that encompasses all forms of natural biological diversity (biodiversity) pertaining to food and agriculture.

The term also includes all necessary biodiversity components constituting global agricultural ecosystems (agroecosystems). Agrobiodiversity refers to biodiversity among planned agricultural crops or livestock, such as the genetic diversity of several crop varieties or cattle or poultry breeds.

It is the ingenious product of both natural selection processes as well as human intervention in selective breeding of animals and crops for specific agricultural purposes such as high yield, disease resistance, shorter time for maturation etc. a significant section of the global human population are directly and indirectly dependent on the sustainable management of various agricultural and/or biological resources for achieving self-sufficiency and food security with respect to food and agriculture.

Crops such as corns, maize, wheat, rice, potatoes etc. and animals such as numerous poultry races, dairy, livestock and cattle breeds are all integrated within the multiple and complex yet intricate network of global agricultural biodiversity.

One of the highly diverse crops that exist in over 4,000 known landraces, varieties, cultivars or germplasms is potato in South America. The wide genetic diversity of this crop as observed in the Neotropics is the result of the successful cultivation of potato germplasms across all the major continents except Antarctica.

This abundance of diversity is the consequence of dedicated farmers artificially selecting various traits over many generations for specific purposes. Unfortunately, we are losing global agricultural genetic resources relevant to food and agriculture at an alarming rate. Several scholars and academics have refereed this unprecedented loss of global agrobiodiversity due to several factors referred to as 'biological meltdown'.

■ **Some important characteristics of agrobiodiversity are presented as follows:**

■ Being actively managed by both male and female farmers in both developed as well as developing and under developed nations

■ Developing and under developed nations hold the bulk components of global agricultural biodiversity

■ Major components of agrobiodiversity may not survive without active human interference;

■ Indigenous knowledge and culture as well as age-old traditional framing practices are integral parts of efficient agrobiodiversity management. They are also an important aspect for the maintenance as well as successful conservation of global agricultural diversity

■ Many economically important agricultural systems are based on 'alien' crop or livestock species introduced from elsewhere (for example, horticultural production systems or Friesian cows in Africa). This creates a high degree of interdependence between countries for the genetic resources on which our food systems are based

■ Diversity within species is as important as diversity between species

■ Due to human management, conservation of agrobiodiversity in existing production systems is intimately associated with long term, sustainable use of available agricultural resources

■ Indigenous knowledge are in preservation through establishing protected areas is less relevant

■ Both ex situ and in situ conservation of various crop and animal genetic resources is an important aspect of agrobiodiversity conservation

■ With the emergence of the industrial age in global agriculture, gene banks are emerging as significant store houses as well as important data bank centers for protecting agrobiodiversity rather than traditional on-farm conservation approaches

FAO has estimated a loss of around 75% global crop diversity in the past century as a phenomenon referred to commonly as global genetic erosion. This significant loss of genetic diversity of global crops and animal breeds is extremely detrimental since it directly impacts the global food resources and impinges into the realms of global food security.

The loss of global genetic diversity also

predisposes our existing genetic stocks to several pests and diseases. Already several countries across the globe are reporting significant reduction in the yield of major crops due to cumulative reduction of important germplasms. As a consequence we are now compelled to rely on less number of germplasms of crops and breeds of animals as our food sources.

Furthermore, the increasing loss of genetic diversity in species previously consumed as food species are putting even greater pressure on the available and existing species making them more vulnerable to over exploitations. Industrial agriculture recommends genetic uniformity and hence the preference of growing single, high-yielding, genetically identical cultivars along with intensive inputs of irrigation, synthetic fertilizers and pesticides to enhance production within a short time frame is already demonstrating detrimental impact on agribiodiversity across the planet.

The exponential increase in global human population is putting additional pressure on the global food resources and with the enhanced loss of different wild types, land races, cultivars, varieties and germplasms of crops and different breeds of poultry, dairy, cattle, livestock; our food bases are becoming increasingly narrower.

Agricultural biodiversity plays an important role in maintaining the household food security. However, drastic loss of this agricultural biodiversity has reduced the choice of available food and plants grown by average households or procured from the nature. The gross reduction in the diversity of available diets of a significant section of global human population could have long terms of health consequences due to wide deficiency in the dietary intake of appropriate amounts of essential vitamins, minerals (micronutrients), essential amino acids and essential fatty acids.

The marine biological resources could be looked upon as a classical example. The global over exploitation of marine food species way beyond the carrying capacity and rates of regeneration have wiped out several species completely from various parts of different oceans, seas, bays, gulfs and straits. Moreover, increased marine traffic and pollution in the oceans are further jeopardizing the existence of many major food species at

an alarming rate.

The over application of synthetic fertilizers and different synthetic pesticides are a major source of agricultural pollution eroding several beneficial species of microbes from the soil and friendly insect species from the ecosystem. The most important factor resulting in loss of crop and animal genetic diversity is the spread of industrial agriculture and the slow but steady displacement of traditional or conventional agricultural systems.

The alarming loss of native bee species in Europe and North America due to the impacts of modern highly mechanized, toxic, synthetic chemical based industrial agriculture is a major concern for the alarming drop in the number of potential crop pollinators in these continents. The surface run off through rain and irrigation water carrying residual chemicals from agricultural fields are polluting both adjoining surface water resources as well as percolating in the water table causing long term detrimental impacts on the biodiversity.

Rapid eutrophication of fresh water lakes, rivers, swamps, pools, fens, bogs, ponds and swamps in most developing and under developed nations are changing the aquatic ecosystem species profile drastically. Harmful and predatory species are replacing friendly and food species with implications for serious consequences in the not so distant future.

Pesticide runoff is another detrimental factor impacting biodiversity in the agricultural fields as also adding detrimental impacts to both within terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. A classic example has been the over application of DDT in the past seriously threatening the global avian and fish populations.

Saikat Kumar Basu is a Canada and India based freelance journalist specializing in global geo-political, strategic and foreign policy issues, science & technology and environment & conservation related themes. Regularly contributes to newspapers, newsletters, bulletins, magazines and journals in Asia, Africa and the Americas.

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LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ج

Sand storm buries 16 villages in southeastern Iran

16 villages in Rigan, southeastem province of Kerma, were buried in sand and became completely deserted, IRIB reported.

Massive sand influx and consistent sand storms led to the complete disappearance of the villages under piles of sand, the Rigan governor, Amin Baqeri said.

Agriculture and livestock are totally ruined in this area and it suffered a loss of 320 billion rials (nearly \$9 million), Baqeri added.

The continuance of sand influx has already endangered 80 other villages and if not stopped timely they are subjected to be deserted too, the governor warned.

فرو رفتن ۱۶ روستای ریگان در کرمان در شنهای روان

به گزارش خبرگزاری صدا و سیما ۱۶ روستای شهرستان ریگان واقع در کرمان با فرو رفتن در شنهای روان خالی از سکنه شد.

امین باقری فرماندار ریگان گفت: بر اثر هجوم شنهای روان و تداوم پدیده ریزگردها روستای های این شهرستان به طور کامل در شن فرو رفتند و ناپدید شدند.

باقری افزود: کشاورزی و دامپروری در این روستاها بطور کامل نابود و بیش از ۳۲۰ میلیارد ریال خسارت وارد شد. فرماندار ریگان هشدار داد: با توجه به گسترش شنهای روان ۸۰ روستای دیگر در معرض خطر هستند که در صورت مهار نشدن شنها این روستاها نیز خالی از سکنه می شوند.

France beats Iran in straight sets at WOQT

TT SPORTS d e s k France improved its win-loss record to 2-1, after the team defeated Iran in straight sets (25-20, 25-18, 25-22) at the Men's World Olympic Qualification Tournament at Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium on Tuesday.

France took advantage of the absence of Iran's main hitter Amir Ghafour, as it was able to set up a wall on the other Iranian hitters.

Iran looked completely different without its main opposite spiker Ghafour, as Shahram Mahmoudi and Milad Ebadipour were forced to run their offence with minimal support from their teammates.

Mahmoudi topped all scorers with 19 points. Ebadipour chipped in 14 points on a losing effort for Iran. Antonin Rouzier looked sharp on his offence and scored 18 points, while Kevin Tillie had a good stint from the flanks, scored 13 points.

"We did not pass or receive well. France was better than us in all aspects of the game. They were better in service, reception and attacks. This is why the result was 3-0," Iran coach Raul Lozano told fivb.com.

Iran will meet host Japan on Wednesday.

Eight strong teams are competing for the Men's Olympic Qualification Tournament from May 28 to June 5 at the Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium.

The qualification tournament in Tokyo, which also serves as the Asian qualification tournament, will provide the top ranked Asian team and the top three ranked teams with the four Rio 2016 Olympic Games qualification slots available.



Amir Ghafour fit for Japan match



TT SPORTS d e s k Iran's opposite spiker Amir Ghafour will be fit for Japan match at the Men's World Olympic Qualification Tournament.

The match will be held at Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium on Wednesday.

"Ghafour has some inflammation in his knee. We decided to rest him in the match against France and save him for Japan's match. He is fine," Iran coach Raul

Lozano said.

Iran suffered a 3-0 defeat against France after two win against Australia and Canada.

The qualification tournament in Tokyo, which also serves as the Asian qualification tournament, will provide the top ranked Asian team and the top three ranked teams with the four Rio 2016 Olympic Games qualification slots available.

Esteghlal parts company with Mazloumi



TT SPORTS TEHRAN — Iranian giant football club Esteghlal has parted ways with Parviz Mazloumi.

Esteghlal came third under tutelage of Mazloumi in the Iran Professional League 2015-16 season behind Esteghlal Khuzestan and arch-rival Persepolis.

Esteghlal lost to Zob Ahan in the Iran's Hazfi Cup final match in penalty shootout on Sunday.

The Blues are reluctant to continue their cooperation with Mazloumi, who was appointed as Esteghlal coach in June 2015 on a two-year contract.

Alireza Mansourian and Dragan Skocic are favorites to take the job.

The Iranian media suggest that Mansourian, who led Naft Tehran to AFC Champions League, will be the team's head coach for the next season.

Team Melli to hold training camp in Armenia

TT SPORTS d e s k The Iranian national football team will hold a training camp in Armenia.

The camp was originally scheduled to be held in South Africa but it has been cancelled.

Team Melli will play Macedonia and Kyrgyzstan on June 2nd and 7th respectively in friendly matches.

Carlos Queiroz's men will travel to Armenia on

June 19 to hold their nine-day training camp in the country.

The team will also travel to Austria to continue its preparation for the 2016 World Cup qualification after the Armenia's camp.

Iran has been drawn along with South Korea, Uzbekistan, Qatar, China and Syria in Group A.



Sepahan striker set to join Gostaresh Foolad

TT SPORTS d e s k Former Persepolis and Team Melli striker Mohammad Reza Khalatbari is on the verge of joining Tabriz based club Gostaresh Foolad, according to the local media.

Khalatbari, whose contract with Sepahan has expired at the end of this season, is currently a free agent player.

The 32-year-old striker has scored 11 goals in 36 appear-

ances for Sepahan during his latest two year spell at the club.

Gostaresh Foolad has done a good job in the transfer period so far as it made a shocking move for this season's best goalkeeper Fernando de Jesus Ribeiro from Esteghlal Khuzestan on one-year contract.

Gostaresh finished in 9th place in the 2015-16 Iran Professional League season.

Iran defeats Lebanon at WABA Championship

Iran defeated titleholder Lebanon in the opening match of the 16th WABA (West Asia Basketball Association) Championship on Monday.

Dirk Bauermann's men defeated Lebanese team 81-75.

The Iranian team has been scheduled to meet Syria on Tuesday.

Iran will play Iraq and Jordan on Wednesday and Thursday, respectively.

The WABA Championship serves as a qualifier for the 2016 FIBA Asia Challenge.

Iran is preparing for the Olympic Qualifying Tournament (OQT), slated for July 4-9.

(Source: Tasnim)



@d_degeaofficial
#DiaDeCastillaLaMancha



@karimbenzema let's go...



@poldi_official good night #nachbar
#diemannschaft

FOOTBALL

Germany spring huge shock as injury-hit Marco Reus axed from Euro 2016 squad

Borussia Dortmund forward Marco Reus was culled from Germany's squad for Euro 2016 in a shock move by coach Jogi Low.

Reus missed the friendly defeat to Slovakia with an adductor problem, but the severity of the problem only became clear when Low unveiled his squad on Tuesday.

"He can only run straight," said Low, inferring that Reus is unable to turn at speed.

"We took more players to training camp due to minor injuries. I know that those left behind will be disappointed."

It is a huge setback for the talented forward, who also missed Germany's 2014 World Cup triumph due to injury. The news was delivered on Reus's 27th birthday.

Low had to cull four players and also dropped Karim Bellarabi, Sebastian Rudy and Julian Brandt.

Manchester United midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger makes the squad despite his injury struggles and will captain Germany in France.

FULL SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Manuel Neuer (Bayern Munich), Bernd Leno (Bayer Leverkusen), Marc-Andre Stegen (Barcelona)

Defenders: Jerome Boateng (Bayern Munich), Emre Can (Liverpool), Jonas Hector (Köln), Benedikt Howedes (Schalke), Mats Hummels (Borussia Dortmund), Shkodran Mustafi (Valencia), Antonio Rudiger (Roma)

Midfielders: Sami Khedira (Juventus), Bastian Schweinsteiger (Manchester United), Mesut Ozil (Arsenal), Andre Schurrle (Wolfsburg), Toni Kroos (Real Madrid), Mario Gotze (Bayern Munich), Julian Draxler (Wolfsburg), Leroy Sane (Schalke), Julian Weigl (Borussia Dortmund), Joshua Kimmich (Bayern Munich)

Forwards: Thomas Muller (Bayern Munich), Mario Gomez (Besiktas), Lukas Podolski (Galatasaray) (Source: Eurosport)

Manchester United open to Juan Mata and Daley Blind exits - source

Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho is ready to listen to offers for Juan Mata and Daley Blind this summer, a source close to the club has confirmed to ESPN FC.

Mourinho is making plans to reshape the squad he inherited from Louis van Gaal after his appointment at United was confirmed last week.

The former Chelsea boss is drawing up a list of transfer targets as he looks to assemble a side capable of challenging for the Premier League title next season and that means some players will be moved on.

Sky Sports News originally reported that Spanish midfielder Mata and versatile Dutch defender Blind are the two players United are ready to cash in on and a source has told ESPN FC that the pair are likely to be sold if their valuations are met.

Mata's future has been the subject of speculation since Mourinho's arrival, with the Portuguese selling the midfielder to United in January 2014 while he was in charge of Chelsea.

The source said Mata is happy to fight for his place but Mourinho has doubts over how the attacking midfielder will fit into his plans at Old Trafford.

Blind is also in danger of losing his place in the United side, with Mourinho determined to bring in a new central defender to play alongside Chris Smalling next season.

Netherlands international Blind lined up alongside Smalling in central defence for the majority of last season, but Mourinho will look to make a marquee signing at centre-back. Sources close to the negotiations told ESPN FC last week that he would revive his interest in Everton's John Stones.

Blind, who expressed disappointment at Val Gaal's departure last week, will miss Netherlands' friendlies against Poland and Austria this week with a calf injury. (Source: ESPN)

Lionel Messi tax trial begins in Barcelona ahead of Copa America

Lionel Messi's trial on charges of defrauding the Spanish tax payer of €4.1 million begins on Tuesday in Barcelona.

Prosecutors maintain that Barcelona and Argentina forward Messi and his father Jorge used tax havens in Belize and Uruguay to avoid paying taxes totalling €4.1m on earnings from image rights between 2007 to 2009.

The prosecutors have called for 22-month jail sentences for both accused, but it is very unlikely that this will happen even should they be found guilty. Both deny any wrongdoing, and €5m has already been paid in arrears and extra charges.

Messi is not due to appear in court until day three of the trial on Thursday, June 2. Since the end of the club season he has been in Argentina preparing for the upcoming Copa America Centenario in the United States.

The Albiceleste national captain picked up a back injury in a friendly against Honduras on Friday last, but is expected to be able to travel back to Europe, and then quickly return to California ahead of the team's opener against tournament holders Chile on June 7.

Both Lionel and Jorge Messi appeared in court previously in the Catalan town of Gava in September 2013.

The player has said that he does not closely scrutinise his contracts and lets his father and advisors look after his financial affairs.

The Spanish revenue service (Fiscalia) initially accepted the 28-year-old's version of events, however another sector of the government (Abogacia del Estado) decided to continue with the charges.

Other Barcelona players have also run into difficulties over their tax affairs. Javier Mascherano was reportedly fined heavily and received a one-year suspended sentence for fraud in January 2016.

A long-running investigation into the structure of the €90m-plus transfer of Neymar from Santos to the Camp Nou outfit in summer 2013 has yet to be resolved. (Source: Soccermet)



The auction smashed last year's record by grossing over 253 billion rials (over \$7.3 million). The art sale last year grossed 214 billion rials (over \$6.1 million).