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Answering foulmouthed Trump waste of time

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Norway inks €2.5b deal to build solar farm in Iran

ECONOMY TEHRAN — A Norwegian company called Saga Energy has signed a €2.5 billion (\$2.94 billion) deal with Iran's state-owned Amin Energy Developers to build solar power plants in Iran, Reuters reported citing the company's directors. Based on the deal, solar power plants with two gigawatts (GW) of power generation capacity will be constructed over a four- to five-year period, Saga Energy spokesman Rune Haaland said. The company will rely on banks, pension funds and Norwegian state export guarantees to fund the plan, and aims to recoup its investment through a 25-year deal on electricity prices, he added. **→4**

Syrian Army chief: Syria-Iran ties are strategic

POLITICS TEHRAN — Syrian army chief of staff Lieutenant General Ali Abdullah Ayoub said on Wednesday that Tehran and Damascus have "strategic" relations. "Syria and the Islamic Republic of Iran have common views on many areas especially in fight against terrorism and agree on fighting terrorism to eradicate it from the whole lands of Syria," General Ayoub said during a joint press conference with Major General Mohammad Baqeri, head of the Iranian armed forces, in Damascus. Ayoub also said the complete annihilation of the terrorist groups is close. He also said that Turkish military presence in Syria is contrary to international law. **→2**

Russia: U.S. violating nuclear deal, Tehran 'fully compliant'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said on Tuesday that the United States has failed to comply with its obligations under the Iran nuclear deal, while Tehran has been "completely compliant". Speaking to reporters, Ryabkov warned that Washington's stance on the nuclear accord, which was signed by Iran and six world powers, may lead to its collapse. "The Islamic Republic of Iran has been committed to its obligations under the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) fully and in a most responsible manner, so far and hopefully in the future," he said, according to RT. **→2**

Warmongers worried about Iran's compliance to nuclear deal: Zarif

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that warmongers are more worried about Iran's compliance to the 2015 nuclear deal than a violation of it. "Warmongers confess they're more worried that we abide by JCPOA than violate it. No spin will mask this. U.S. should try to comply—just like us," Zarif tweeted on Tuesday. On Friday U.S. President Donald Trump decertified Iran's compliance to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the formal name for the nuclear agreement, and used a

harsh language against Iran. This is while the International Atomic Energy Agency has confirmed for eight times that Iran has fulfilled its commitments under the deal. According to the JCPOA, Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for the termination of economic and financial sanctions. The deal went into effect in January 2016. European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini published an article on her website on Monday saying that the 2015 nu-

clear agreement is a deal that no country can "terminate" unilaterally. Also the European Union issued a statement on Monday after a foreign ministers meeting in Luxembourg insisting the 27-nation bloc is committed to the "full and effective" implementation of the nuclear deal. The nuclear deal was signed during the Obama administration between Iran, the U.S., Britain, France, China, Russia, Germany, and the European Union in July 2015 and went into effect in January 2016.

Biden: World leaders call me to interpret Trump

U.S. former Vice President Joe Biden said that 14 world leaders have sought him out for insight into President Trump. One European prime minister, describing how Trump pushed the prime minister of Montenegro, Dusko Markovic, out of his way at a NATO summit, compared him to Il Duce, a moniker for the mid-20th-century Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, Biden said. Biden, appearing at an event at the University of Delaware alongside Ohio Gov. John Kasich, also criticized Trump's treatment of another head of state, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Trump has recently referred to Kim as "Rocket Man" as a result of his nuclear provocations, sometimes throwing in one of Trump's favorite slurs, "little." Despite Kim's hostility to the United States,

Biden said, "You don't refer to him as a little guy." Biden also disclosed that he is frequently contacted by frustrated Obama administration holdovers still working in government. Although "we have a president who does not understand governance," Biden said, he urges government workers not to abandon their posts. "They call me all the time," Biden said of government employees. "I say, 'Please stay, please stay. There has to be some competence and normalcy.'" The former vice president also lamented the absence of "certain basic social norms" in politics, contending that certain conventions are "an arbiter of how we work together." "The destruction of these norms is generating chaos," Biden said. "It's generating

chaos internally." He cited President Trump's manner, but noted earlier examples of disrespect as well, including the nickname "Bubba" for former President Bill Clinton, and the occasion when Rep. Joe Wilson, R-S.C., yelled, "You lie!" at former President Barack Obama during a joint session of Congress. Biden and Kasich appeared onstage with a moderator, who had to do very little to keep the conversation flowing between them, although Biden dominated the session. The two politicians, although they are from different parties, seemed to share an affinity based on their working-class origins, and were whispering cordially to one another as they were introduced at the start of the program. (Source: Yahoo News)

EDITORIAL
 By Mohammad Ghaderi
 Tehran Times editor-in-chief
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Tom Cotton avariciously seeking to become CIA chief

Tom Cotton, a 40-year old radical senator, has been making a lot of maneuvers in the U.S. Congress in recent days.

A couple of years ago, prior to the historic nuclear accord, struck between Iran and the P5+1 group, Cotton put every effort to kill the deal but eventually with 42 Democratic senators voting in favor of the agreement his attempts were to no avail.

Following the agreement, Cotton was one of the sworn enemies of the deal and favored a return of sanctions against Iran.

Subsequently, during Donald Trump's presidential campaign in 2016, he declared his consent to Trump's approach toward the deal.

Today, as the U.S. Congress role once again gets a boost in deciding the fate of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Cotton makes every effort to take advantage of the opportunity for his political rise.

Cotton, from Arkansas, is named the youngest and chief opponent to the pact in the Senate.

In his newest position, Cotton has told those officials within the U.S. administration who do not favor the abrogation of the nuclear deal either resign or join with Trump in opposing the agreement.

Cotton's statements, which grabbed headlines in American media, were directed at Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, and Secretary of Defense James Mattis.

It is worth noting that Cotton's stance on the JCPOA has been backed up by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, AIPAC, and other opponents to the nuclear agreement.

It is quite clear that in today's American political climate, even those closest to Trump, including secretaries of state and defense, oppose withdrawal from the multilateral accord. **→13**

ARTICLE
 By Payman Yazdani
 Political analyst

Iraq developments send explicit messages to Washington and regional states

Despite all warnings and oppositions from regional players, world major powers and certain Kurdish political parties, Iraqi Kurdistan President Masoud Barzani unilaterally pushed for the independence referendum on Sept. 25 to not only materialize his old unrealistic ambition but also to extend his illegal and undemocratic rule over the Iraqi Kurdistan region.

Now that Iraqi troops have retaken Kirkuk and Dala which were under the control of the Kurdish Peshmerga forces, all Barzani and his overt and covert friends' dreams appear shattered.

The oil-rich city of Kirkuk, which some Kurdish leaders call it Qods of Kurdistan and claimed by the Kurds, was critical to the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government's ambitions for secession.

The KRG Peshmerga forces gained full control of Kirkuk in 2014 when Iraqi forces melted away after ISIL swept through the north of the country. The Peshmerga used the opportunity to enter the city and seize its military base, airport and oilfields.

Regarding the recent developments in Iraq four main points should be considered:

First, Barzani's critics believe his insistence on pushing for a referendum, particularly in Kirkuk, despite oppositions from all key regional and international players put the Kurds in a difficult position. These events highlight the depth of intra-Kurdish divisions on the independence referendum.

Many believe the Kurdistan government's use of the referendum and the northern Iraqi oil resources as political leverage on the Goran movement and the PUK. These two Kurdish political factions saw the referendum as an attempt by Barzani and his son Masrour to reassert their leadership and re-legitimize KDP authority, even in areas outside of its traditional base. **→13**



Mazari, a profession dating to 700 years

Mazari, or henna rubbing, is an old profession peculiar to Yazd Province. Its history goes to 700 years back. The industry has its origin to trades between businesspersons from Yazd province with those from India, Pakistan and Arab states in the Persian Gulf region. Today the industry only exists in Yazd province due to its climatic situation. The profession attracts the attention of local and foreign tourists in Yazd, the capital of the province with the same name.

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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

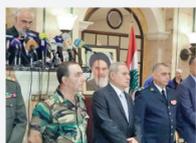


World navy commanders voice willingness to work with Iran

POLITICS TEHRAN — Navy commanders of different countries who have attended the Venice symposium told their Iranian counterpart that they are willing to gain experience from Iran in dealing with pirates in international waters.

Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari held separate talks on Tuesday evening with navy commanders of Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Spain, Portugal, South Africa, Croatia, Algeria, Argentina and Russia.

Sayyari arrived in Italy on Tuesday to address the Venice Regional Seapower Symposium for the Navies of the Mediterranean and Black Sea Countries.



Iran plays significant role in Mideast stability: Ireland

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Chairman of the Senate of the Republic of Ireland Denis O'Donovan said on Wednesday that Iran is an important country with a significant role in establishing peace and stability in the Middle East.

O'Donovan made the remarks during a meeting with Iran's ambassador to Dublin, Javad Kachouei.

"Ireland attaches great importance to its relations with Iran," he said, IRNA reported.

He also thanked Iranian officials for their warm hospitality during his visit to Tehran, expressing the hope for the expansion of ties between the two countries.



Ex-minister: Iran should be among top five defense powers

POLITICS TEHRAN — Former defense minister said on Wednesday that Iran should be among the top five countries in the world in terms of defense capability.

Brigadier General Amir Vahidi stressed that Iran should become so powerful that no country dares to violate the rights of the oppressed and Muslims across the globe, ISNA reported.

He then pointed to the plight of the Rohingya Muslims who have been forced out of their homes in Myanmar. "Is what we're witnessing in Myanmar acceptable?" he asked empathically.



Nuclear spy transferred \$15.5m overseas: prosecutor

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Tehran prosecutor said on Tuesday that Abdol-Rasoul Dorri-Esfahani, who has been jailed on charges of nuclear espionage, has transferred 620 billion Rials (roughly \$15.5 million) overseas.

"In addition to espionage charges, the convict is accused of financial fraud," Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi said, adding that a financial case has also been opened.

Last week, Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Mohseni Eje'i revealed the confirmation of espionage ruling against Abdol-Rasoul Dorri-Esfahani at appeals court and his conviction to five years in prison.



'Majlis to take any legal measure needed to counter U.S.'

POLITICS TEHRAN — The chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has made assurances that the lawmakers will take any legal measure necessary to counter any threats posed by the United States against the Islamic Republic.

In an interview with Tasnim, Boroujerdi deplored U.S. threats to impose sanctions against Iran.

The senior MP also rebuked Washington for threatening to put embargos on the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, saying that all oppressed nations around the world are grateful to the IRGC.



Diplomat: Nuclear deal stronger, U.S. more isolated

POLITICS TEHRAN — Mohammad Fathali, Iran's ambassador to Lebanon, said on Tuesday that the international support for the Iran nuclear agreement shows it is becoming stronger and the United States more isolated.

In a meeting held to commemorate the 37th anniversary of the eight-year Iraqi imposed war against Iran, Fath-Ali said Tehran will remain committed to the deal as long as it meets the country's interests, IRNA reported.

He added that Iran had started nuclear talks with the 5+1 group to show its good faith and to solve a made-up problem.

Iranian security chief calls Trump a liar



POLITICS In an interview with Euronews on Wednesday, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani described U.S. President Donald Trump as a liar, denouncing the U.S. president for calling Iran "the terrorist nation".

Euronews correspondent in Tehran asked Shamkhani for his view on the U.S., Europe and how relations with Iran are progressing.

"Unfortunately, Trump is a liar. The U.S. imposes sanctions on Iran, supports the growth of terrorism in Iraq and Syria, and bombards Yemen," he told euronews.

"When Trump calls Iran 'the terrorist nation', or distorts the 2,500 years of history the 'Persian Gulf' has, by calling it the 'Arabian Gulf', people realize that they are being targeted."

He made the remarks in the wake of Washington's decision to decertify the Iran nuclear deal.

■ Europe needs to do more than just lip service

Asked about the role of Europe since the nuclear agreement was struck, Shamkhani said, "It has always been our plan to develop our ties and relations with Europe within our values and beliefs."

However, he said, the truth is that Europe has not done the same since the nuclear deal was signed.

"It has mainly paid lip service, with a

few exceptions. It is now stating that it is against the elimination of the nuclear deal by the U.S.," Admiral Shamkhani added.

Ayatollah Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, on Wednesday welcomed the European governments for condemning Trump's refusal to certify Iran's compliance with the nuclear deal.

However, the leader said, "This is not enough for them to say that he (Trump) should not tear up the JCPOA. The JCPOA serves their interests."

The Leader also said, "As long as the other party has not torn up the JCPOA, we will not tear it up," said the Leader. However he warned that Iran will rip the

deal into shreds if the other side decides to tear it up.

On October 7 Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said, "The nuclear negotiations and deal have achieved benefits that are irreversible. Nobody can roll them back, neither Mister Trump nor 10 other Trumps."

U.S. allies have sided with Iran, nuclear deal: Rouhani

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday that the United States' "traditional allies" and other countries have sided with Iran and the 2015 nuclear deal.

"Even the U.S. traditional allies did not accompany the U.S. administration and immediately announced their opposition [to the U.S.] and said that they will stand beside the JCPOA [the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action] and will continue cooperation," Rouhani said during a meeting of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution.

Commenting on U.S. President Donald Trump's Friday speech, Rouhani said that the speech contained nothing except repeating "unfounded accusations" and "old claims".

He added "domestic unity" and "international support" for the JCPOA will make the U.S. officials review their policies.

The president noted that the Trump administration is following the path of "isolation".

Trump on Friday unveiled a new strategy on confronting Iran, which included "de-certifying"

Iran's compliance to the nuclear accord despite repeated confirmations by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog body, that Iran is living up to its obligations.

The European Union foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, has said the 27-nation bloc will remain committed to the nuclear deal with or without the United States.

All international dignitaries have said the agreement which went into force in early 2016 is working well.

Leader: Answering foulmouthed Trump waste of time

Ayatollah Khamenei warns Iran will 'shred' nuclear deal if U.S. tears it up

POLITICS TEHRAN — Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, said on Wednesday that it is a "waste of time" to respond to the insults against Iran by U.S. President Donald Trump.

"I do not want to spend time to answer the foul-mouthed president of America," the Leader told a meeting of academics and students. "It is a waste of time that one wants to respond to him."

In a speech on Friday when he announced his new Iran strategy, Trump used an insulting language against Iran and leveled many charges against the Islamic Republic, especially against the

Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC). The Leader said one should not expect Trump not to be angry against the IRGC which has stood against Daesh which itself is being created by the United States.

"As the servant of international Zionism, America is creator of Daesh and the Takfiri current, and then you expect that it would not be angry against a force (IRGC) which has stood against Daesh," Ayatollah Khamenei noted.

He said that unfounded remarks by U.S. officials indicate their "mental backwardness" regarding issues of Iran and its neighborhood.

■ Iran will not be first to tear JCPOA

On Trump's approach to the nuclear deal, Ayatollah Khamenei said that Tehran will not be the first side to tear the deal, but warned that it will cut the deal into shreds if the U.S. chooses to tear it up.

"Trump's stupidity should not distract

us from America's deceitfulness ... If the U.S. tears up the deal, we will shred it."

Trump on Friday refused to certify Iran's compliance with the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

The Leader said Europeans need to take practical measures in the face of Washington's threats to the deal, and refuse to join voices with the U.S. in its opposition to Iran's regional role and defense program.

"It is not enough for them (EU) to say that he (Trump) should not tear up the JCPOA. The JCPOA serves their interests," Ayatollah Khamenei remarked.

The Leader also said Europe should "avoid meddling with our defense issues."

Leader says unfounded remarks by U.S. officials indicate their "mental backwardness" regarding issues of Iran and its neighborhood.

Syrian Army chief: Syria-Iran ties are strategic

1 → Baqeri also said that Iran stands beside the Syrian government and people in countering terrorists.

"Brotherhood and cooperation between the nations of Iran and Syria have been continuing for 40 years and I am in Syria to declare that we are on each other's side in campaign against terrorism," General Baqeri stated.

He also said that Iran considers respect to territorial integrity of the countries in the Middle East region as a "principle".

The top Iranian military official said a requirement to protect the "national sovereignty and territorial integrity" of the regional countries is that minorities and groups raise their demands "through negotiation".

He added any military operation in another country should be based on request and respect to territorial integrity, he explained.

Elsewhere, he said it is "unacceptable" that the Zionist regime of Israel invade Syria at will



Iran's military chief General Baqeri(L) says the Zionist regime's aggressions against Syria are "unacceptable".

"It is unacceptable that the Zionist regime invade Syria from air and land whenever it wishes," he asserted.

General Baqeri also censured Iraqi Kurdistan President Masoud Barzani for pushing ahead with the independence referendum in Kurdistan despite international calls not to do so, expressing hope that no such mistake would be repeated in northern Iraq.

"Now with the decision of the Iraqi parliament and timely measure by the Iraqi armed forces the Iraqi government has taken the control," the Iranian commander said.

On Monday, Iraqi government forces captured the major Kurdish-held oil city of Kirkuk, responding to the independence referendum with a bold lightning strike.

A convoy of armored vehicles from Iraq's special force seized Kirkuk's provincial government headquarters on Monday afternoon, less than a day after the operation began, according to Reuters.

Neither side gave a casualty toll for the operation.

Russia: U.S. violating nuclear deal, Tehran 'fully compliant'

1 → But the U.S. administration "violated not only the spirit, but also the letter" of the agreement, he said, cautioning that U.S. proposals on the deal "could de-facto paralyze the JCPOA or completely wipe it out in the worst case scenario."

The remarks came as a response to U.S. President Donald Trump's castigatory speech on Friday, during which he decertified Iran's compliance to the JCPOA, a move that threatens the fate of the internationally-endorsed agreement.

"Based on the factual record I have put forward, I am announcing today that we cannot and will not make this certification. We will not continue down a path

whose predictable conclusion is more violence, more terror and the very real threat of Iran's nuclear breakout," Trump said at the White House.

Ryabkov said Russia is going to "explain again and again to our American colleagues [the] unacceptability and shallowness of the [U.S.] approach."

Tehran, too, has reacted to Trump's anti-Iran rhetoric, saying the Iranian na-

tion has not and will never bow to any foreign pressure. "Iran and the deal are stronger than ever... Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps will continue its fight against regional terrorists," President Hassan Rouhani said.

On Wednesday, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei reiterated the country's commitment to the nuclear accord, saying Tehran will not be the first to vio-

late the deal, but will "shred it to pieces" if the U.S. withdraws.

It followed Trump's remarks earlier this week, when he said terminating the deal was a "very real possibility" and that Iranian leaders had a "very modified" tone in their reaction to his speech.

In recent months, European leaders have time after time voiced support for the deal.

The EU has announced that its foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, will be travelling to Washington in November to lobby for the preservation of the deal. However, whether the efforts bear fruit remains to be seen.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov says the U.S. administration has "violated not only the spirit, but also the letter" of the agreement.

Xi lays out vision for 'new era' led by 'still stronger' Communist Party

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday laid out a confident vision for a more prosperous nation and its role in the world, stressing the importance of wiping out corruption and curbing industrial overcapacity, income inequality and pollution.

Opening a critical Communist Party congress, Xi pledged to build a "modern socialist country" for a "new era" that will be proudly Chinese and steadfastly ruled by the party but open to the world.

Although his wide-ranging address made clear there were no plans for political reform, Xi said China's development had entered a "new era", using the phrase 36 times in a speech that ran nearly 3-1/2 hours.

"With decades of hard work, socialism with Chinese characteristics has crossed the threshold into a new era," Xi said.

The twice-a-decade event, a week-long, mostly closed-door conclave, will culminate in the selection of a new Politburo Standing Committee to rule China's 1.4 billion people for the next five years, with Xi expected to consolidate his control and potentially retain power beyond 2022, when the next congress takes place.

The 64-year-old Xi, widely regarded as the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao Zedong, spoke to more than 2,000 delegates in Beijing's cavernous, red-carpeted Great Hall of the People, including 91-year-old former president Jiang Zemin. Security was tight on a rainy, smoggy day in the capital.

As expected, the speech was heavy on aspiration and short on specific plans.

On the economy, Xi said China would relax market access for foreign investment, expand access to its services sector and deepen market-oriented reform of its exchange rate and financial system, while at the same time strengthening state firms.

During Xi's first term, China disappointed many investors who had expected it to usher in more market-oriented reforms, especially in the debt-laden state sector.

"If Xi gets the political mandate that he is expected to out of the congress, then my hope is that the state sector reforms actually get done," Damien Ma, fellow and associate director at U.S. thinktank the Paulson Institute, told the Reuters Global Markets Forum.

"If not, then I would also revise my assessment of the state of reforms in China. There have been talks in Beijing that the state sector will be a focus after the 19th party congress, so we need to see."

The European Union Chamber of



Former presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao sing the national anthem next to China's President Xi Jinping during the opening of the 19th National Congress.

Commerce in China said it welcomed commitments to open wider the door and treat all companies equally, but said European companies operating in China continued to suffer from "promise fatigue".

"The only cure for this is promise implementation," it said in a statement.

In what was probably an indirect reference to U.S. President Donald Trump's "America First" policy, Xi promised that China would be fully engaged with the world, and reiterated pledges to tackle climate change. Trump this year opted to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate pact.

"No country can alone address the many challenges facing mankind; no country can afford to retreat into self-isolation," Xi told the delegates, among them Buddhist monks, Olympic medallists, farmers and at least one astronaut.

Xi set bold long-term goals for China's development, envisioning it as a "basically" modernised socialist country by 2035, and a modern socialist "strong power" with leading influence on the world stage by 2050.

But he signalled there would be no significant political reforms, calling China's system the broadest, most genuine, and most effective way to safeguard the interests of the people.

Xi has overseen a sweeping crackdown on civil society, locking up rights

lawyers and dissidents and tightening internet controls as he has sought to revitalise the Communist Party and its place in contemporary China.

"We should not just mechanically copy the political systems of other countries," he said. "We must unwaveringly uphold and improve party leadership and make the party still stronger."

■ Firm on graft, Taiwan

Xi praised the party's successes, particularly his high-profile anti-graft campaign, in which more than a million officials have been punished and dozens of former senior officials jailed, saying it would never end as corruption was the "gravest threat" the party faces.

On self-ruled Taiwan, claimed by Beijing as its own, Xi said China would never allow the island to separate from China, adding that China would strive to fully transform its armed forces into a world-class military by the mid-21st century.

He made no mention of neighbouring North Korea, which has angered Beijing with repeated nuclear and ballistic missile tests in defiance of U.N. sanctions. Pyongyang sent a congratulatory message ahead of the meeting.

Xi has consolidated power swiftly since assuming the party leadership in 2012, locking up rivals for corruption, restructuring the military and asserting China's rising might on the world stage.

Focus at the congress will be on how

Xi plans to use his expanded authority, and moves to enable him to stay on in a leadership capacity after his second term ends in 2022.

That could include resurrecting the position of party chairman, a title that would put him on par with Mao, the founding father of modern China.

"In all aspects he is on the right track to be our next Chairman Mao," Su Shengcheng, a delegate from the northwestern province of Qinghai, told Reuters. "He will lead the party and Central Committee to continue its way to success."

As with other major set-piece events in the capital, Beijing has been blanketed with security in the run-up to the congress, with long queues of passengers at some subway stations waiting to go through metal detectors and be patted down.

Large red banners plastered around Beijing trumpet the congress, while censors have stepped up already tight monitoring of the internet.

Tencent Holdings Ltd's WeChat, China's top social media platform with more than 960 million users, said late on Tuesday that "system maintenance" would render users unable to alter profile pictures, nicknames and tag lines until month-end.

The disabled features are sporadically used to show solidarity for popular social and political causes.

(Source: Reuters)

Qatar accuses Saudi Arabia of promoting 'regime change'



Qatar has accused Saudi Arabia of trying to engineer "regime change" during its four-month blockade of its Persian Gulf neighbor.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani told CNBC that Riyadh is attempting to destabilize Qatar's leadership.

"We see [Saudi] government officials talking about regime change ... We see a country that is bringing back the dark ages of tribes and putting them together in order to create a pressure on connected tribes in Qatar," he said.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt severed diplomatic and trade links with Qatar on June 5, accusing Doha of supporting "extremism and terrorism" and cosying up to Iran - a regional nemesis.

Qatar has vehemently denied all allegations.

Sheikh Mohammed said the plan of the blockading countries was not to thwart "terrorism" but to "disrespect and bully".

"It is nothing to do with stopping financing terrorism or hate speech while they are doing the same by promoting incitement against my country, promoting a regime change in my country," he told the U.S. broadcaster.

Qatar is the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas, and also houses the region's biggest U.S. military base with more than 11,000 American troops.

Sheikh Mohammed said the blockade has impeded the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist group in the region.

The airspace blockade meant that Qatari aircraft providing logistical support for the American military base have been diverted, and Qatari officers participating in operations against ISIL were expelled from the Bahrain-based U.S. military headquarters.

"So there are a lot of things which undermine ... the global efforts in countering ... Daesh," Sheikh Mohammed said, referring to ISIL by an Arabic acronym.

■ 'unjust siege'

Meanwhile, Qatar's leader says he is "open to dialogue" in resolving the four-month blockade imposed by Persian Gulf neighbors, calling the move an "unjust siege".

Speaking in Indonesia - which has the world's largest population of Muslims and close ties to the Arab world - Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani said he discussed the crisis with President Joko Widodo.

"We conveyed ... that Qatar is ready to conduct a dialogue to solve the problem as we already know that no one will win," Sheikh Tamim told reporters after meeting with Widodo at the state palace in Bogor, outside the capital Jakarta.

"We are all brothers and suffering because of this crisis," he added.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Bahrain cut diplomatic and trade ties with Qatar on June 5, accusing it of financing "terrorism" and maintaining too close of ties to their arch-rival, Iran. Doha denies the allegations.

(Source: agencies)

Turkey says will not submit to 'impositions' from United States in visa crisis

Turkey will not submit to "impositions" from the United States over an on-going visa crisis and will reject any conditions it cannot meet, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Wednesday.

A delegation from the United States is visiting Turkey in an attempt to repair diplomatic ties between the NATO allies after both countries stopped issuing visas to each other's citizens this month.

Washington first suspended visa services at its missions in Turkey, after Turkish authorities detained two Turkish nationals employed as U.S. consular staff. The U.S. delegation has asked Ankara for information and evidence regarding the detained staff, private broadcaster Haberturk reported.

"We will cooperate if their demands meet the rules of our constitution but we will not succumb to impositions and we will reject any conditions that we cannot meet,"



Cavusoglu told a news conference, when asked about the report of requests from the U.S. delegation.

A translator at the consulate in the southern province of Adana was arrested in May and a Drug Enforcement

Administration (DEA) worker was detained in Istanbul two weeks ago. Both were detained on suspicion of links to last year's failed coup, allegations the United States has rejected. Haberturk said the U.S. delegation, which arrived in Turkey this week, laid out four conditions to solve the visa crisis, including that Turkey must provide information about its investigations into the detained workers, and evidence related to DEA worker Metin Topuz. President Tayyip Erdogan's spokesman said last week Topuz had been in contact with a leading suspect in last year's failed military coup. Turkish media reported similar accusations against the translator in May.

The U.S. delegation told Ankara that if the contacts which Turkish authorities are seeking to investigate were undertaken on the instructions of the consulate, the employees should not have been arrested, Haberturk said.

(Source: Reuters)

Bahrain signs \$3.8bn F-16 fighter jet deal with U.S.

Bahrain has concluded a \$3.8-billion deal with a U.S. aerospace and military equipment giant to purchase 16 upgraded F-16 fighter jets.

The Bahrain Defense Force announced it signed the agreement with Lockheed Martin during a military exhibition in the Persian Gulf sheikhdom, AFP reported.

The State Department had informed Congress in March that it planned to approve a request by Manama to purchase the fighter jets.

The U.S. multi-billion dollar arms deal with Bahrain, which is home to America's Fifth Fleet, comes as U.S. President Donald Trump has eased restrictions on arms sales to certain countries including Bahrain.

In September, Reuters cited an unidentified U.S. official as saying that the \$3.8-billion agreement was a package arms deal, which included 19 F-16 fighter jets, upgrades, 35-meter patrol boats equipped with machine guns, and 221 anti-tank missiles.

The U.S. State Department removed human rights conditions on the sale of F-16 fighter jets to Bahrain after U.S. President Donald Trump announced in May that Washington's relations with Manama were set to improve. The announcement came after Trump met Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah during a visit to Saudi Arabia.

The deal comes as the Manama regime has been under fire by the international community for its heavy-handed crackdown on dissidents and political activists.

Scores of people have lost their lives and hundreds of others sustained injuries or got arrested as a result of the Al Khalifah regime's ruthless clampdown, which has the backing of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

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

(Source: Press TV)

UK intelligence chief says terror threat is worst of career

Britain's domestic intelligence chief warned during a rare public speech that the terrorist threat the country faces has accelerated at an alarming pace and is worse now than at any time in his 34-year career.

MI5 Director General Andrew Parker said his agency, also known as the Security Service, is constantly expanding and upgrading its capability, but cannot realistically prevent all attacks targeting civilians.

"In 2017, with all that has happened and much that has not, it is clear that we are contending with an intense UK terrorist threat from extremists," Parker told journalists in London. "That threat is multi-dimensional, evolving rapidly, and operating at a scale and pace we've not seen before."

He noted a "dramatic upshift" in the threat this year, with successful attacks

in London and Manchester that killed 36 people combined.

"Twenty attacks in the U.K. have been foiled over the past four years," Parker said. "Many more will have been prevented by the early interventions we and the police make. There have been a record number of terrorism-related arrests: 379 in the year to June."

He said continental Europe has faced a similar surge, particularly in France, Belgium, Germany and Spain.

"The scale at which we are operating is greater than ever before," he said.

Parker said MI5 has more than 500 live investigations involving roughly 3,000 people known to be involved in extremist activities. In addition, he said, more than 20,000 individuals have been scrutinized in the past for

possible terror ties and there are undoubtedly "violent extremists" who have thus far not been detected by the Security Service. The risk is further heightened by the possible return to Britain of citizens who joined the ISIL terrorist group in Syria and Iraq, Parker said.

He said MI5 is well-equipped to cope with the deepening threat, with its ranks set to grow from 4,000 to 5,000 over the next few years.

Parker cautioned, however, that it is impossible to stop every attack. "Attacks will occur sometimes because this is a free society, a liberal democracy, and we do not monitor everybody all the time," he said. "Nor would we want to live in a country that was like that."

The director called on technology companies to work with the govern-

ment on preventing their social media platforms from being used by extremists for communications that cannot be monitored.

When asked if Facebook and Google were doing enough on this front, Parker declined to discuss specific companies.

He praised advancements in communications technology, but said an "unintended side effect" has been to make it easier for extremists to avoid legal monitoring by using apps, including many that provide encryption, to avoid detection. He said companies should do more to prevent this abuse of their communications systems.

"For the companies there must be an ethical responsibility," Parker said. "The way to move forward is in partnerships together."

(Source: AP)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Iran, Italy ink MOU on flare gas recovery

ENERGY TEHRAN — The Italian power engineering company Ansaldo Energia signed a memorandum of understanding with some subsidiaries of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) for cooperation on flare gas recovery, Shana reported on Wednesday.

National Iranian South Oil Company, Pars Oil & Gas Company (POGC), Iranian Central Oil Fields Company (ICOFC) and Iran Fuel Conservation Company inked the MOU with Ansaldo to collect flare gas for electricity generation and upgrading oil and gas equipment.



TCCIMA to dispatch trade delegation to China in late Dec.

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) will dispatch a high ranking economic and trade delegation to China from December 24 to 29, 2017, the official website of TCCIMA announced.

The delegation will be led by TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari and will pay visits to two Chinese cities of Beijing and Shanghai, the reported said.



Iranian, French water associations sign co-op MOU in water sector

ENERGY TEHRAN — Iran Association of Water and Wastewater Experts (IAWWE) and L'Association Internationale de L'Eau (IWA) signed an agreement on the sidelines of the 13th Iran International Water and Wastewater Exhibition (Watex 2017) in Tehran, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

The agreement which focuses on cooperation on renovation, expertise, and development in water sector between the two sides was signed by IWA's representative Emilie Fillol and Qanbar-Ali Rajabi, the managing director of IAWWE.

As reported, the agreement also seeks to strengthen cooperation on international research projects as well as international water expositions in Iran and France.

Norway inks €2.5b deal to build solar farm in Iran

I-> While Saga and Lithuania's SoliTek will produce the solar panels, much of the remaining equipment will come from Taiwan's Delta Electronics Inc.

Saga's deal was the latest in a flurry of deals by foreign companies since the easing of international sanctions on the country in 2016 after it agreed to limits on its disputed nuclear program.

This deal comes just days after U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled a more confrontational policy toward Tehran.

"We are a little bit worried about what Trump is doing, we are very much in favor of the atomic deal, but we will of course continue with our plans whatever Trump does, no doubt about that, nothing can change that," Saga's Haaland said.

Hundreds of companies leave Catalonia amid independence bid

Director of the Spanish Trade Registration Office Ana del Valle announced that just over the past week, 92 companies had left Catalonia, while the overall number of companies moving to other regions in the country had reached 691. The newspaper added that October 9 and October 10 were the busiest days, as 212 and 175 companies left Catalonia, respectively.

This move followed the October 6 decree by the Spanish government, aimed at facilitating the procedures for changing the companies' legal addresses from Catalonia to other regions.

The newly released figures from the country's registry office show a significant decline in the newly registered organizations in Catalonia in the third quarter of 2017. Their total number fell by 26.8 percent, while in Spain as a whole this decrease amounted to 11 percent. Also, the number of operations to increase market capitalization has dropped in Catalonia by 12.2 percent over the same period, while in Spain the total fell by only 1.7 percent.

The situation around the Catalonia region has been significantly aggravated after the independence referendum, held on October 1. About 2.26 million Catalans took part in the vote, around 90 percent of them supported the region's secession from Spain. Despite this, Madrid has repeatedly called the vote illegal.

On October 10, Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont said that the vote results had shown that the region had received the right to become an independent state in the form of a republic. However, Puigdemont urged the regional parliament to suspend the declaration of the region's independence and instead push for talks with the central authorities.

In response, Madrid set Monday as a deadline for Puigdemont to clarify the status of Catalonia. Puigdemont, in turn, called for a dialogue between the Catalan and Spanish authorities on the independence issue.

(Source: Sputnik)

Iran supports OPEC deal's extension beyond 2018

ENERGY TEHRAN — Iranian Deputy Oil Minister for International Affairs and Trading Amir-Hossein Zamaninia said Iran will support extending the OPEC, non-OPEC deal to cut oil output beyond 2018, TASS reported.

"Yes, we will support [it]," Zamaninia said at the Oil & Money conference on Tuesday, answering a question on the matter.

The deal by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and non-OPEC producers including Russia to cut supply by about 1.8 million barrels per day runs until March 2018.

The OPEC-led supply cut at present covers 24 countries.

On the sidelines of the conference, Zamaninia also noted that Iran is interested in cooperation with consortiums of Russian, European and Asian companies in oil projects to ramp up the country's oil production.

"We want that Russian, European and Asian companies work in Iran in consortiums," the official said.

According to the official, Russian oil companies are holding talks with European partners in this regard. He did not mention any further details.

Six Russian oil companies, Rosneft, Gazprom, Gazprom Neft, Lukoil, Tatneft and Zarubezhneft, have signed memorandums on several oil producing projects with the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).



Total sticks with Iran deal if U.S. imposes sanctions: CEO

ENERGY TEHRAN — Total Chief Executive Patrick Pouyanne said his company will go ahead with Iran deal if the United States decides to impose unilateral sanctions on Teheran.

According to Reuters, in an interview with International Oil Daily, Pouyanne said, however the company would examine the consequences of Trump's decision, and if there are any laws that obliges it to withdraw from Iran, then it will comply.

"If Iran is compliant, if the European Union and China and Russia continue to consider that the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) can be applied, then that means the U.S. would have to take unilateral sanctions..." Pouyanne said in the interview published



on Tuesday. "But we will try on our side to obtain the comfort that we can continue the project, which will be our priority," he added.

Last week, Trump refused to formally certify that Iran was complying with the nuclear deal, defying both allies and adversaries. He warned that he might ultimately terminate the agreement. The U.S. Congress now has about two months to decide whether to reinstate sanctions.

Total became the first Western oil major to sign an agreement with Iran to develop phase 11 of Iran's South Pars, the world's largest gas field. Total is the operator of the \$5 billion project with a 50.1 percent stake.

U.S. keeps Japan, China on forex policy monitoring list

The U.S. government said Tuesday that it has kept Japan, China and three other major trading partners on the list of countries it monitors over their foreign exchange policies.

No major trading partner was ruled a currency manipulator that may be subject to sanctions, according to a semiannual report released by the Treasury Department.

The remaining three were South Korea, Germany and Switzerland. Taiwan was removed from the list.

Ahead of President Donald Trump's tour to Japan, China and other Asian countries in November, the report warned against policies designed to lower currency rates in order to strengthen export competitiveness.

The report is intended to put pressure on its trading partners to cut their trade surpluses with the United States.

Pointing to Japan's goods trade surplus with the United States, the report said, "Treasury remains concerned by the persistence of the large bilateral trade imbalance."

The department urged Japan to reduce its imbalances with the United States mainly by expanding domestic activity and creating a more sustainable path for long-term growth.

While noting that Japan has not intervened in the foreign exchange market for

almost six years, the report said, "On a 20-year rolling average basis, the yen is more than 20 percent below" its longer-term real effective rate.

Currency intervention should be reserved only for very exceptional circumstances with appropriate prior consultations, the department stated.

As to China, the report said, "Treasury remains concerned by the lack of progress made in reducing the bilateral trade surplus with the United States."

China's recent currency intervention has "likely prevented a disorderly currency depreciation," the report said.

Still, the report warned that the effective

exchange rate of the yuan versus the dollar on a real trade-weighted basis has been falling, possibly giving advantage to China in exports to the United States.

The U.S. government in principle designates as a currency manipulator a country that meets all three criteria — large-scale and one-sided currency intervention, a big bilateral trade surplus with the United States and a material current account surplus.

Trading partners that meet two of the three are placed on the monitoring list. Japan has major trade and current account surpluses with the United States.

(Source: The Japan News)

Italy leads euro zone bond yields lower ahead of ECB line-up

Italian bond yields fell to five-week lows on Wednesday, leading yields in the euro area down as investors looked to speeches by ECB officials for fresh insights on their thinking before next week's closely-anticipated central bank meeting.

European Central Bank chief Mario Draghi, Chief Economist Peter Praet and Executive Board Member Benoît Coeuré are among those officials scheduled to speak. They are in the spotlight after a report last week that ECB rate setters were moving towards announcing more asset purchases at lower volumes at the October meeting.

The ECB is widely expected to scale back its 2.3 trillion euro asset purchase scheme programme given stronger economic conditions, but a growing perception that this process will be prolonged has bolstered policy-sensitive bond markets.

Given that people are feeling brighter about the economy, the ECB should con-

sider tweaking its bond-buying scheme, Governing Council member Ardo Hansson told newspaper Handelsblatt.

Italy's 10-year bond yield dipped a basis point to 1.988, a five-week low. Demand for Italian debt also been bolstered in the past week by a reduction in political uncertainty.

German bond yields were also a touch lower, trading at 0.36 percent and within sight of Tuesday's 5-week low. Other euro zone bond yields were little changed in early trade.

"Speeches from Draghi and Praet will also be closely followed for hints at how the central bank will manage the process of reducing new asset purchases to zero over the next year or so," said Craig Erlam, senior market analyst at Oanda.

"The ECB is expected to make an announcement next week, with the consensus reportedly favouring a 30 billion euro reduction until September, likely followed by a reduction to zero."

(Source: Reuters)

Germany's top court rejects fresh challenge to ECB powers

Germany's Constitutional Court on Wednesday rejected a new request to stop the Bundesbank from taking part in the European Central Bank's 2.3 trillion euro (\$2.7 trillion) asset purchase program, leaving the case with the European Court of Justice.

Although Germany's top court has expressed reservations in the past about the asset buys, it argued an injunction would essentially preempt a European ruling on the case, since it would severely restrict the ECB's ability to carry out asset buys, commonly known as quantitative easing.

Germans have repeatedly challenged the ECB's powers to deploy unconventional monetary policy measures and while courts have placed some limits on asset buys, past decisions have cleared the ECB, arguing that its measures fall within its mandate to keep inflation stable just below 2 percent.

The ECB has bought over 2 trillion

euros worth of bonds to depress borrowing costs in the hope that cheap financing would induce spending and eventually inflation.

Wednesday's ruling follows a court's decision in August to send the challenge to the ECJ, even though judges at the time suspected that the ECB's measure may be violating a ban on government financing by central banks.

But the plaintiffs, a group of German academics and politicians, brought the case back in front of the judges, requesting a temporary injunction on the argument that a European court decision would not come soon enough since the asset purchase program is nearing its end.

Although the asset buys are due to expire at the end of the year, policymakers are likely to extend them well into 2018 as inflation remains weak and will not rise back toward the ECB's target before the end of the decade.

(Source: Reuters)

Xi says China will continue to open its economy, deepen financial reforms

China will deepen economic and financial reforms and further open its markets to foreign investors as it looks to move from high-speed to high-quality growth, President Xi Jinping said on Wednesday.

China will push ahead with market-oriented reforms of its foreign exchange rate as well as its financial system, and let the market play a decisive role in the allocation of resources, Xi said at the opening of a key, twice-a-decade Communist Party Congress.

"China's open door will not be closed, it will be only be opened wider," Xi said.

The government will "clean up rules and practices that hinder a unified market and fair competition, support development of private firms and stimulate vitality of all types of market entities," Xi said, while pledging to further open China's services sector to foreign investors.

However, while expressing support for market reform and private firms, Xi also called for stronger, bigger state firms.

The government will "promote strengthening, improvement and expansion of state capital, (and) effectively prevent loss of state assets, deepen reform of state-owned enterprises, development a mixed-ownership economy and cultivate globally competitive world-



China's President Xi Jinping speaks during the opening session of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China October 18, 2017.

class firms," Xi said.

Xi's comments reiterated a long-standing pledge by party leaders to give a greater role to free-market forces to improve efficiency and put the economy on a more sustainable growth path.

But as Xi gears up for his second five-year term, foreign business executives and analysts increasingly be-

lieve market liberalization is seen as secondary to his state-centred approach to economic policy and his focus on stability.

Other painful reforms that many economists say are needed have also moved slowly under Xi. They include overhauling China's bloated and debt-laden state sector, fixing the fiscal system to tackle local government debt and bringing in new property taxes to ward off housing bubbles.

Narrowing the income gap
China should also strengthen consumption as a foundation for economic development, Xi said, and will expand the middle class and narrow the gap in development between rural and urban areas.

Beijing's campaign to rein in high debt levels and industrial overcapacity will continue as part of supply-side structural reforms, Xi said.

Fiscal reform has also been a key objective of policymakers as Beijing tries to make local governments take more responsibility for their own budgets and debt.

China is expected to post its strongest economic growth in several years this year, riding on a government-led construction boom, but analysts said it is still relying too heavily on credit-fueled stimulus.

(Source: Reuters)

OPEC oil deal compliance falls to 86%

Amid a fresh oil price rally, albeit a moderate one, on the back of events in Kurdistan, the head of the International Energy Agency said that OPEC's compliance rate with the oil production cut deal had fallen to 86 percent.

Speaking to Reuters on the sidelines of the World Knowledge Forum, Fatih Birol added that the compliance rate is "higher than in the past" and that if OPEC decides to pursue the deal beyond its March 2018 deadline, the market will move closer to rebalancing.

This compliance rate is not particularly high, and compares to the all-time high of 116 percent for August, which sparked the last price increase, helped by forecasts for higher oil demand growth than previously estimated. The July compliance was also significantly higher than the current rate, at 94 percent, and so was compliance in May, at 95 percent. The lowest compliance rate was recorded in June, at 78 percent.

Back in July, the IEA noted that



"Each month something seems to come along to raise doubts about the pace of the rebalancing process." This seems to still be true, despite efforts by OPEC officials to reassure market

players that everyone in the cartel and its partners are committed to the cut that was supposed to take 1.8 million bpd off daily global production to prop up prices.

The latest production report from OPEC has further undermined hopes for a quicker, rather than slower, rebalancing of the world's supply of crude oil. OPEC pumped 32.75 million bpd in September, up 88,500 bpd from the previous month, the cartel reported in its latest Monthly Oil Market Report. August was the first month in five when OPEC production declined.

Under the production agreement, OPEC committed to 32.5 million bpd in daily production.

The cartel tried to cushion the blow by revising its 2017 and 2018 world oil demand forecast by about 30,000 bpd in 2017 and 2018. After this latest update, OPEC now expects crude oil demand this year to grow by 1.5 million bpd and in 2018 it sees it growing by 1.4 million barrels daily.

The IEA in June forecast that demand for OPEC oil will reach 33.6 million bpd in the last quarter of the year, up 1 million bpd on the cartel's June production rate.

(Source: oilprice.com)

The world's first floating wind farm has begun production



Norwegian oil and gas powerhouse Statoil has announced that Hywind Scotland, the world's first floating wind farm, has started to send electricity to the Scottish grid.

The 30-megawatt project is set to be officially opened by Nicola Sturgeon, the First Minister of Scotland, later today.

The facility is based 25 kilometers off the coast of Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, and will be able to power roughly 20,000 households. The wind farm, which can be used at water depths of up to 800 meters, is operated by Statoil in partnership with Masdar.

In a statement Wednesday, Sturgeon said that the opening of Hywind marked an "exciting development" for

renewable energy in Scotland.

According to its government, Scotland is home to 25 percent of Europe's offshore wind resources. There are more than 58,000 jobs in Scotland's low carbon and renewable energy economy, the government said.

WWF Scotland's acting head of policy welcomed the facility's opening.

"With around a quarter of Europe's offshore wind resource in Scotland, it's great to see the world's first floating windfarm inaugurated off our coast," Gina Hanrahan said. "Offshore wind is already an industrial success story across the U.K., cutting emissions, creating jobs and dramatically driving down costs."

(Source: CNBC)

Egypt draws \$1.8 billion investments for 1.4GW of solar



Egypt's fledgling solar industry attracted \$1.8 billion of investment, largely from the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank's International Finance Corp.

The EBRD is backing 16 photovoltaic projects, and the IFC is financing 13 in the sunny North African nation with a combined capacity of 1.4 gigawatts. They are writing loans for \$380 million and \$203 million, respectively, and have mobilized the rest from co-investors.

Egypt is targeting to generate 20 percent of its electricity from clean sources by 2022. It currently gets more than 90 percent of its power from oil and gas, according to data from

Bloomberg New Energy Finance.

The solar projects that got funding are being developed in the Benban solar park in Egypt's Aswan province in the southeast. The site is expected to have a capacity of 1.8 gigawatts and cost \$2.8 billion by the time it's complete in the first half of 2019.

They are being built by international developers such as Scatec Solar ASA of Norway, Saudi Arabia-based ACWA Power and Al Fanar Co., French firms EDF Energies Nouvelles SA and Eren Renewable Energy SA and Access Power MEA in Dubai.

The loans are part of a program that the EBRD began in 2015 to invest as much as \$500 million in solar in Egypt.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Big Oil to bet on petrochemicals as demand peak looms

By Irina Slav

Remember that "This Ain't Your Daddy's Oil" commercial that blew up on Twitter at this year's Super Bowl? It was about crude oil being used for things other than fuels—useful, sometimes indispensable things. Like it or not, this is what the future holds for the industry, according to a new report from Wood Mackenzie.

The energy consultancy expects that petrochemicals will turn into the top driver for demand growth in crude oil in the long run as fuels lose their top spot. It's actually demand for petrochemicals that will keep global oil demand growing until about 2035, Wood Mac says, adding that this growth, however, will slow to a crawl by that year.

In places like Europe, Japan, the United States, and even China, crude oil consumption will plateau by 2035, while in India, some other Asian states, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, it will continue to grow.

Gasoline consumption will start declining in the middle of the next century, according to the consultancy as quoted by Bloomberg's Javier Blas, with electric cars slowly taking over. Meanwhile, naphtha demand will skyrocket—the derivative is used as feedstock in petrochemicals production. Distillates demand will also continue to grow—they are used to fuel maritime vessels and heavy freight vehicles.

According to another energy consultancy, there is one more factor that will



hurt gasoline demand even more than EV adoption: fuel efficiency. FGE recently forecast that gains from fuel economy will wipe out 11.3 million bpd from global gasoline consumption between 2016 and 2040. This compares with 5.3 million bpd in gasoline becoming redundant thanks to the increasing sales of hybrids and full-electric cars.

Natural gas will continue to gain prominence, Wood Mac's analysts also said in their report, and demand will continue to grow. Natural gas, too, is used for petrochemicals, as well as for fuel. In this department, the consultancy noted Shell's takeover of BG Group, the biggest acquisition in the oil sector in recent his-

tory, which established the Anglo-Dutch titan as a leader in LNG production and trade.

Yet Shell is also diversifying into renewables and electric vehicles. The company's chief executive Ben van Beurden said earlier this year Shell will pledge up to US\$1 billion annually by 2020 to renewable energy initiatives aimed at supporting the global drive to tackle climate change targets set out in the Paris Agreement. This month, the company entered the EV market with the takeover of NewMotion, the largest EV charging network owner in Europe.

The Anglo-Dutch giant is not alone in its renewables push. French Total and

Norway's Statoil have an extensive renewables agenda, too. BP is also moving into that direction, as well as betting bigger on natural gas. Exxon and Chevron, Blas notes, meanwhile continue to focus on their traditional business. These Big Oil players seem to be confident that demand for crude will continue to grow in the decades to come despite changing consumption trends.

In the U.S., they may well have a point. Energy industry expert Robert Rapier wrote in a recent article for Forbes how despite the rising sales of EVs, gasoline demand in the country has this year hit a record. This includes California, Rapier noted, the biggest U.S. market for EVs. The reason, according to him, is that the population is growing and the majority is opting for ICE cars rather than their costlier EV alternatives.

Perhaps the only fact that cannot be ignored or argued is the adoption of EV-supporting regulations. This year we've seen a lot of news in this department, some of it notably coming from China and India. If two of the world's top three oil consumers indeed make a successful switch to electric cars within our lifetimes, then there can hardly be a bright future for gasoline.

Oil producers that currently make a hefty portion of their profits from fuel sales may want to pay closer attention to petrochemical developments in view of their long-term sustainability.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Oil rises on expected fall in U.S. inventories, geopolitical tensions

Oil prices rose on Wednesday as weekly U.S. crude inventories are expected to have fallen steeply and geopolitical tensions around oil-rich Iraq and Iran raised risk premiums.

International benchmark Brent crude futures were trading 41 cents higher at \$58.29 a barrel at 1002 GMT.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures traded at \$52.03 a barrel, up 15 cents on the day.

Weekly U.S. crude inventories fell by 7.1 million barrels in the week to Oct. 13 to 461.4 million barrels, the American Petroleum Institute (API) said late on Tuesday.

Official U.S. fuel inventory data is due later on Wednesday from the government's Energy Information Administration.

"There are market expectations for a bullish EIA inventory report this afternoon so Brent is heading towards \$60 a barrel again," said Hans van Cleef, senior energy economist at ABN Amro.

Oil market investors were also closely following developments in the Middle East, where tensions in northern Iraq were threatening to disrupt oil flows.

Iraqi government forces captured the major Kurdish-held oil city of Kirkuk earlier this week, responding to a Kurdish independence referendum.

"It remains to be seen whether the Kurds, after withdrawing from the region they claim to be entitled to, will allow crude oil to be transported by pipeline across their territory to the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan," said analysts at Commerzbank.

The Iraq crisis adds to a looming dispute between the U.S. and Iran. U.S. President Donald Trump last week refused to certify Iran's nuclear deal, leaving Congress 60 days to decide further action against Tehran.

During the previous round of sanctions against Iran, some 1 million barrels per day of oil was cut from global markets.

A technical pattern known as a "Golden Cross" was approaching in WTI crude oil contracts on Wednesday, in which the 50-day moving average climbs higher than the 200-day. This is widely seen as a bullish price indicator, and already occurred with Brent futures on Sept. 25.

(Source: Reuters)

Iraqi oil minister asks BP to develop Kirkuk oilfields, oil ministry says

Iraqi Oil Minister Jabar al-Luaibi has asked BP "to quickly make plans to develop the Kirkuk oilfields," an oil ministry statement said on Wednesday.

Iraqi government forces on Monday took control of the oil-rich region of Kirkuk from Kurdish peshmerga fighters who had occupied the area in 2-14, in the course of the war on Islamic State.

BP says on its website it has provided technical assistance in the past to the Iraqi state-owned North Oil Company to aid the redevelopment of the Kirkuk field.

Kirkuk is estimated to have around 9 billion barrels of recoverable oil remaining, according to BP.

(Source: Reuters)

Oil's biggest rigs head to the junkyard

Transocean Ltd. is finally sending Pathfinder to its grave, after two years in a Caribbean purgatory that cost about \$15,000 a day.

The move by the world's biggest offshore-rig operator signals just how bleak the future looks for deepwater drilling. Pathfinder is the most famous of six floating rigs the company is scrapping in burials that will add up to a bruising \$1.4 billion write-off. Competitors are going the same route, jettisoning more rigs in the third quarter than have ever been trashed in a 90-day stretch, according to Heikkinen Energy Advisors analyst David Smith.

That's how bad it is, with predictions crude prices won't go much higher than \$60 a barrel in the next year compared with around \$50 recently. "Deepwater is going to be playing a much-reduced role on the global oil-supply stage relative to what the industry expected as recently as three years ago," said Thomas Curran, an analyst at FBR Capital Markets in New York.

For all that, it could have been worse, in one way, for Transocean. It has been the most aggressive in an unprecedented experiment with what's called cold-stacking for big drills. After oil prices cratered in 2014, the company didn't send all of its unwanted rigs out to sea in the time-honored temporary holding pattern where engines keep running and a crew remains on board -- something known as warm stacking, naturally, that runs up a daily bill of some \$40,000. Instead, Transocean dropped anchor on nine high-tech ships 12 miles off the coast of Trinidad & Tobago and simply shut the motors off. So far the savings are in the neighborhood of \$90 million.

This hadn't been tried before with the new generation of finely tuned, computer-driven giants never intended for long-term parking. Equipped with derricks towering 220 feet above the platform and able to drill in 10,000 feet of water, the vessels had been in demand since birth. The big question was whether one could be shut down so solidly and later switched back on at a reliable cost. (Rival Enasco PLC brought its DS-4 drillship back from cold stack, but it wasn't mothballed as long as Transocean's rigs and was tied to a dock, allowing it access to more auxiliary power while parked.)

With Pathfinder, and a cousin called the GSF Jack Ryan that's also being scrapped after its Caribbean cold stacking, Transocean will never know for sure. The Vernier, Switzerland-based company declined to comment for this story.

For Transocean and the others that went the cold-stacking route, "this has been a very painful process," said Greg Lewis, an analyst at Credit Suisse in New York. He doesn't disagree with the company's decision. Cold-stacking Pathfinder was only a \$5 million-a-year expense, and with that "you're basically paying for a call option on a recovery in the market."

(Source: Bloomberg)

We need a smarter approach to refugees

By Neven Mimica

In recent years, few issues have generated as much public debate as the plight of refugees. With an unprecedented number of people uprooted by political instability, conflict or persecution and forced to seek protection beyond their countries' borders, the inadequacy of international responses has been laid bare.

One central problem with current approaches is that they fail to ensure sustainable futures for refugees. Meeting refugees' basic needs – food, shelter, medical care and safety – is essential. But so is providing the knowledge, tools and opportunities displaced people need to support themselves and their children in countries where they seek asylum, in countries to which they are resettled or when they return home.

Such a strategy will require new methods, partnerships and financing mechanisms. It will not be easy, but there are already heartening examples. Over the last year, countries in the Horn of Africa, home to almost 4 million refugees, and other parts of East Africa have all been pursuing bold efforts.

Last September, at the United Nations Leaders' Summit on Refugees in New York, the leaders of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda committed to providing more comprehensive support for their respective refugee populations, as well as for host communities. These countries have also moved to apply the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and the principles of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

By providing better access to jobs, education, health care and land, and moving toward integrated service-delivery for refugees and their hosts, these countries are helping refugees become more self-reliant and lead more dignified lives. And they are reaping the benefits of improved security and more economically productive residents.

African countries are taking these efforts further, and the EU stands ready to support them, including through the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. In March, the members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development regional bloc – Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda – convened the first-ever high-level summit focused on developing a regional approach to delivering durable solutions for Somali refugees.

At that summit, which received strong support from the EU and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), IGAD heads of state and government expanded on their earlier commitments and laid out a comprehensive plan of action, which recognized the need for action in four key areas:

- Stabilizing Somalia, to enable the voluntary and sustainable return of refugees.
- Protecting refugees within host countries, including by supporting their integration and self-reliance.
- Strengthening sub-regional cooperation.
- Increasing international burden-sharing.

Last month, IGAD foreign ministers convened in Brussels, together with the EU and the UNHCR, to assess progress, identify challenges and set priorities for the coming months. This systematic, comprehensive and forward-looking approach promises to go a long way toward helping not just the refugees themselves, but also their host communities and, when the time is right, their home countries.

Donors also stand to benefit, as these efforts reduce the need for costly and indefinite emergency responses.

Long-term solutions

The EU has helped to pioneer this promising approach. With our 2016 policy framework Lives in Dignity, we have adjusted our policies to include more development assistance at the outset of a humanitarian crisis. In 2016 alone, we allocated 130 million euros (\$153 million) to support long-term solutions for refugees in East Africa.

In Somalia, the EU is leading efforts to promote stability, in order to facilitate the voluntary return and reintegration of refugees. To that end, last May, we made available an additional 200 million euros, to be used to respond to security challenges, create economic opportunities and enhance democratic governance.

In Kenya, the EU, the government and the UNHCR are spearheading a development project for an open settlement near Kalobeyei Township in Turkana, the country's poorest region. Bordering South Sudan, Uganda and Ethiopia, Turkana has long been host to many refugees. With new waves of South Sudanese refugees entering Kalobeyei, the township is introducing a model that promotes cooperation and resource-sharing between refugees and their host communities, while providing both groups with better access to education, health care, and other services.

At the Refugee Solidarity Summit in Kampala, Uganda, the EU pledged 85 million euros to support a progressive refugee policy, which offers refugees opportunities to nurture their skills and integrate into local communities.

That money, together with the pledges of EU member states, represents more than 80 percent of the total amount committed to support Uganda's refugee programs. Next month, we aim to buttress these efforts by scaling up our support for the implementation of the CRRF.

But, as powerful as the EU's support has been, it is not enough. The rest of the international community, including donors, international financial institutions and the private sector, must marshal its resources, whether financial, political, and diplomatic or technical, to help roll out forward-looking refugee policies across affected countries.

Such an effort must include broad support for investment in the necessary social and economic infrastructure, as well as promotion of entrepreneurship among refugees. It also demands sustained political leadership focused on ending conflicts and building inclusive societies in refugees' home countries. That leadership must come not only from the affected countries, but also from neighbors, such as the broader Red Sea region, and from the international community.

With the world's support, refugees can be empowered to develop their skills not just for their own benefit, but for that of their host countries, too.

And, in cases where refugees can return to their homes, they will be prepared to start anew. (Source: The Daily Star)

Be in no doubt, Xi Jinping wants to make China great again

By Nick Bisley

It was long, very long. And, as with previous iterations, Xi Jinping's speech to the Chinese Communist Party's five yearly national congress was a mix of party slogans, Marxist jargon, subtle signaling and long to-do lists.

Given the density and length of the speech it will repay careful scrutiny, particularly given its political function within the party-state. But on first impression a number of interesting developments were immediately evident.

One of these could be found at the end of speech's title, itself a typically catchy CCP number: "Secure a decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and strive for the great success of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era."

The age-old task of the party, to create socialism with 'Chinese characteristics' has entered a new phase. It is a new era because China has improved over the past five years – noted in loving statistical detail at the outset – and China's standing the world has also changed. But the demands of the new era could also be used to justify changes to traditional party practices, such as giving Xi a longer tenure than the usual 10 years.

Xi also conveyed a very positive view about China and its future prospects. He expressed a high level of confi-



In his Communist party speech Xi's ambition and confidence were on display. He wants nothing less than for China to be the world's most important country.

dence that the country would become a "moderately prosperous country" by 2020.

But Xi also described the "second centenary goal" in which China becomes a modern socialist prosperous society by 2049 as likely to occur provided reform continued.

List of reforms

Indeed, much of the speech entailed a long list of reforms, from market access, and innovation to a moral campaign and greater involvement in sport.

Xi exuded confidence that through these reforms China will become the world's leading country in terms of "na-

tional power and international influence".

But he also made clear that this optimism is only possible because of the absolute centrality of the Party and party discipline both to China's past success and future prospects.

And references to the anti-corruption program, predictability, received stormy applause.

While focused mainly on domestic matters a number of international issues were notable beyond the assertion that China expects to be the pre-eminent global power by mid-century.

China will also resist any efforts "to divide the country". Taiwan, Hong Kong and disputant countries in the South and East China Sea you've been warned.

Xi also reiterated the point he made at Davos: China will be a champion of economic openness. And the key mechanism for this will be the Belt and Road Initiative. A closed off America will be left behind.

While the length and rhetoric of the speech matched the drab weather outside the Great Hall of the People, the ambition on display and the confidence of Xi were striking.

Whether he is able to deliver on these is an open question, but we should be in no doubt that Xi wants nothing less than to make China the world's most important country on every conceivable measure. (Source: The Guardian)

The West cannot afford to give up on Turkey

By Luigi Scazzieri

European leaders are set to discuss the increasingly difficult issue of Turkey at a summit this week in Brussels amid the deepest freeze in bilateral relations in years.

Criticism of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's crackdown following last year's failed coup and diplomatic bust-ups with Germany and the United States have taken their toll. Last month, German Chancellor Angela Merkel called for a suspension of talks to bring Turkey into the European Union.

But if the EU ends accession negotiations without an alternative in place, it will only deepen the rift.

Turkey, which first applied to join the EU in 1987, has long been seen as an important partner for Europe on security and migration. EU nations have remained committed to granting Turkey membership, partly in the hope the process would help foster reform, although some -- such as Germany -- have been wary of the challenges of assimilating such a large nation.

Accession talks

Despite a pledge to revive accession talks as part of a migration deal with Ankara in 2016, bilateral relations have deteriorated to a crisis point.

Erdogan's crackdown, which included the arrest of 40,000 people, has fueled concerns about human rights and political freedoms in Turkey. Relations with Berlin in particular have soured dramatically.

Germany's decision to block Turkish politicians from campaigning on German soil ahead of an April referendum to give Erdogan more powers prompted the Turkish leader to accuse Germany of "Nazi" practices.

Turkey's detention of some German citizens over the summer was the straw that broke the camel's back. In response, Berlin warned Germans traveling to Turkey that they risked arbitrary detention. And Merkel has said she now wants to call off Turkey's accession negotiations as well as freeze pre-accession financial assistance and talks on deepening trade



Turkish Minister for EU Affairs Omer Celik (L), Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu (2nd L), High Representative of European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini (2nd R) and European Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn (R) hold a joint press conference following EU-Turkey High Level Political Dialogue meeting at European Union (EU) headquarters in Brussels, Belgium on July 25, 2017.

cooperation.

The European Parliament has also passed a nonbinding resolution to end accession talks.

The crisis in EU-Turkey relations is a symptom of Turkey's drift away from the West, not only in terms of values but also in its foreign policy.

U.S.-Turkey relations soured following Barack Obama's decision to back Syrian Kurds against ISIS in 2014. The Syrian Kurds are linked to the Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has fought a guerrilla conflict against the Turkish state since the 1980s.

The Turkish government has accused the United States of being behind the failed coup and criticized its refusal to extradite Fethullah Gulen, the Muslim cleric exiled in the United States who is a former close ally-turned-leading critic of Erdogan.

The crisis in EU-Turkey relations is a symptom of Turkey's drift away from the West, not only in terms of values but also in its foreign policy.

Tit-for-tat fashion

In July, Turkish state TV revealed the location of U.S. secret positions in Syria, and earlier this month, Turkish authorities arrested some U.S. consulate employees in Turkey. That move prompted the United States to stop issuing visas to U.S. citizens, and Turkey retaliated in tit-for-tat fashion.

Warm words from President Donald Trump toward Erdogan have not helped, and relations are unlikely to thaw while the Washington continues to support the Kurds in Syria. Amid the antipathy with the West, Turkey has pivoted to Moscow. In September, it signed a deal to purchase an S-400 air defense system from Russia, rather than seek an alternative that was interoperable with its NATO allies.

An alternative framework

Against this backdrop, it is easy to

see why it would be tempting for the EU to suspend accession negotiations with Turkey. But this would be counterproductive. The talks, which began in 2005, are already de facto frozen. Formally acknowledging this without putting an alternative framework in place would push Turkey even further away from the West. Keeping the negotiations alive maintains the hope that Turkey's governance may one day return to a European path.

The EU should instead make Turkey an ambitious alternative offer of cooperation, including greater access to its market in both goods and services and increased labor mobility.

The proposal should be tied to strict conditionality, as an original customs union arrangement was in the mid-1990s. Such a proposition would stand little chance if the accession process was simultaneously taken off the table, so it would initially have to run parallel to it. If at some stage negotiations on the new partnership made good progress, then the accession process could be terminated.

Should the EU develop several tiers of membership, as some expect, Turkey could one day find a home in an outer ring, which would allow for valued cooperation on migration, counterterrorism and commerce.

The EU has more leverage on Turkey than vice versa. Good diplomatic and economic relations with the EU are in Turkey's self-interest -- and Erdogan's domestic popularity rests on Turkey's economic success.

A further deterioration of the rule of law and political instability is likely to unsettle international investors. Erdogan said this month that Turkey no longer needs to join the EU, but it won't be the one to break off the accession talks.

Ultimately, a constructive EU-Turkey agenda can only develop if Turkey alters its current course. Suspending accession talks will not help to heal the rift. Instead, the EU would do well to look past the stasis and attempt to develop new ways of working together. (Source: CNN)

With a journalist's murder in Malta, a global threat grows

At 02:35 P.M. on Monday, the fearless Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia published a characteristically blunt post on her influential blog accusing leading politicians of corruption.

"There are crooks everywhere you look now," she concluded. The "situation is desperate."

Less than 30 minutes later, the car she was driving was blown to pieces.

For journalists around the world, this is the new normal. They are rounded up en masse and imprisoned in Turkey and murdered in Russia and the Philippines.

In India, they have been slapped with spurious defamation suits when they report on suspicious doings of the powerful, and

beaten by mobs and killed for their reporting — Gauri Lankesh was gunned down last month in front of her home.

Journalists taunted

Even the president of the United States questions the patriotism of journalists for doing their job and taunts them in front of angry crowds.

Many leaders see the danger. "If journalists are silenced," Frans Timmermans, the first vice president of the European Commission, wrote of Ms. Caruana Galizia's murder, "our freedom is lost."

In Malta, the opposition lawmaker Simon Busuttil warned: the "rule of law has collapsed. Our democracy is at stake."

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But democracy in Malta was compromised before the murder of Ms. Caruana Galizia, who had ceaselessly reported massive government corruption in this favored European tax haven.

The Times of Malta reported that she alerted the police two weeks ago that she was receiving threats.

Legal harassment

That warning does not seem to have been taken seriously. She had also suffered legal harassment for her reporting; in February, a court in Malta ordered her bank accounts frozen after she was sued for libel by two government officials she reported were

seen at a brothel.

Malta's Prime Minister, Joseph Muscat — who has denied reports by Ms. Caruana Galizia that he and his wife had benefited from a secret Panamanian shell company — said national police and security forces have been instructed to "take every step necessary in the investigation," and he wisely asked for assistance from the FBI.

Ms. Caruana Galizia's killers must be brought to justice. But the most fitting tribute to her work would be for leaders who purport to be democrats to denounce the demonization of journalists and to let reporters perform their essential democratic role without fear or harassment. (Source: The NYT)

Young chancellor and old Europe

By Hanif Ghaffari

TEHRAN — Eventually the Austrian general election was held. The outcome of the election was very disappointing for the EU. Routing the far-right to power shows that Europe will have a hard time ahead. This is the first time that a radical right-wing party in Europe could enter into the equations of the country's executive. Although the far-right parties are present in the European Parliament, they have not yet been present in the government. The parties to the right-wing extremism have practically failed to enter into the political equations of their countries in the process of forming a coalition government. Most European countries oppose the adoption of extreme right-wing parties in the process of forming a coalition government. For example, in Germany, the Christian Democrat never stands in a coalition with the AfD (which is the third most powerful party in the country). In Sweden, the Democratic Party affiliated with the Straight Right is the third most powerful party in the parliament, but none of the traditional parties are willing to join the coalition, and they form coalition governments without it.

As media reported, SEBASTIAN Kurz has declared victory in the Austrian elections following the latest vote projections, which could see him form an alliance with the far-right in a crushing blow for the European Union (EU).

The People's Party (OVP) got 31.6 per cent of the vote, according to exit polls from pollster SORA. Mr Kurz's party is tough on migration, easy on taxes and widely Eurosceptic after rebranding itself over the last few months to propel its popularity in the wealthy Alpine nation.

The 31-year-old is expected to form a coalition with the right-wing populist Freedom Party (FPÖ), founded by a former SS officer, who got 26.9 per cent of the vote, according to the latest projections.

Speaking after 85 per cent of the votes were counted, Mr Kurz told his cheering supporters: "Today we have won a huge mandate to change this country, and I promise you I will work with all my energy for change. We want to establish a new culture in politics. And we want to change the country for the better."

The Social Democratic Party, the largest party in the last government, are in third place with 26 per cent.

The OVP will be the biggest party in the new parliament, according to the OE24 exit poll, with 57 seats — an increase of 10. The FPÖ will take 51 seats, up 11. The SPO, the largest party in the last parliament, will lose three seats, leaving them with 49. Mr Kurz said: "I would of course like to form a stable government. If that cannot be done then there are other options." He said he planned



to talk to all parties in parliament.

■ Kurz against Macron

As Express reported, Mr Kurz has already rejected EU reform proposals by Mr Macron. He was the foreign minister in the coalition government with the centre left SPO which ruled Austria until this election.

Sunday's result shows a move away from the middle ground and comes just a month after Germany's far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) won nearly 13 per cent of the German vote. Mr Kurz was one of the backers of the recent law imposed in Austria banning the burka.

He was also instrumental in closing down the Balkan route into Europe used by Middle Eastern refugees. Mr Kurz's OVP has promised to cut access to social welfare benefits for refugees for at least five years. The move comes after Austria was used as a gateway for nearly 900,000 migrants making their way to Germany. Austria also received more than 68,000 applications for asylum in 2015.

■ Victory of Freedom party

However, the most important point about the recent national elections in Austria was the Freedom Party's move to the coalition government. The Freedom Party was founded by ex-Nazis in the 1950s. It nearly won the presidency last year and topped opinion polls in the midst of Europe's migrant crisis. While the Freedom Party got 26.8 per cent of the vote. During the first exit poll by OE24, the People's Party (OVP) got 31 per cent of the vote, while the Freedom Party got 29 per cent of the vote, according to the exit poll.

Meanwhile, the Social Democratic Party were in third place with 25 per cent. The SPO's projected result of 26.3 per cent represents the party's worst showing since the end of Adolf Hitler's rule in Austria, according to Europe Elects.

Mr Kurz, 31, will become Europe's youngest leader after becoming foreign minister at the age of 27. Although the OVP has been in government for 30 years and

Mr Kurz is one of the cabinet's longest serving ministers, he has run his campaign with a promise of change.

The stunning result will come as a crushing blow to the EU and essentially a strong vote against liberal politics, peddled by France and Germany. And as a member of the EU, Austria could now go on to resist efforts by Germany's Angela Merkel and France's Emmanuel Macron to reform the bloc and expand cooperation on issues such as immigration.

■ Austria's turn to conservatism

As Express reported, The results are being seen as a worrying "rightward shift" which is likely to cause a fresh headache for the European Union as it struggles with Brexit and the rise of nationalists and separatists across the bloc. But speaking to reporters on Sunday, Kurz said: "I promise I will fight for great change in this country. It's time to establish a new political system."

The soon-to-be youngest ever chancellor of Austria, Kurz is highly unlikely to form a coalition with his SPO rival after the OVP leader triggered the snap election following months of rowing between the two.

It is thought Kurz's officials are already engaged in intensive behind-the-scenes negotiations with the FPÖ, as the incoming chancellor warned Austria had witnessed a "massive rightward shift".

He said: "We are open to talks... but there are enormous overlaps in the programmes of the OVP and the FPÖ."

■ Austria and the immigration crisis

The Austrian government's opposition to the European Union's policy on the immigration crisis will increase over the coming months. On the other hand, Austria will hold the EU Presidency in the second half of 2018. This will be the worst case for the eurozone and the European Union. Without a doubt, we will see a lot of tensions between Austria and the European Union in this regard. The Austrian Chancellor disagrees with Brussels on issues such as immigration and economic reform in Europe. Opposi-

tion that could encourage other European countries to oppose the EU.

As Vox reported, at the height of the European migrant crisis in 2015, Austria was often seen as a way station rather than a final destination for refugees seeking new lives in Europe. That image isn't exactly correct: Some 90,000 refugees settled in Austria that year, a country of just under 9 million people. At first, there were joyful images of Austrians meeting refugees in train stations. But soon that sentiment shifted to worry.

In November 2016, Kurz sat down with the Financial Times. He applauded his country for taking such a large number of refugees — more than the US or Canada had welcomed, he noted. Then he shifted gears and began to speak about how the welcome mat needed to be rolled up. Uncontrolled migration, he said, "overburdens our system and cannot function."

"It is not an Austrian phenomenon," he continued. "Lucky Europe, step by step, recognized that these mass refugee movements to Europe cannot work."

That position has become more and more mainstream in Europe. In Germany this year, Angela Merkel's refugee policy became a turning point of the elections. This past July, Kurz very publicly berated his Italian counterparts for not doing enough to stop migration, calling on them to do more to keep migrants from arriving on Europe's shores and stop them from continuing northward.

"If Italy were to continue its transfers to the mainland, not only will Central Europe be overwhelmed, but drownings will continue," Kurz told the Italians. He insisted as well that the international aid groups attempting to save drowning migrants crossing the Mediterranean "should not be a ticket for Central Europe."

That kind of sentiment sounds a lot like the far right. But by midsummer, this had become an increasingly common position in Europe.

Indeed, by August, European leaders had made a bargain with the Libyans, propping up their coast guard and keeping migrants on African shores; migration dropped precipitously. Kurz, an early and outspoken voice on this issue, now no longer sounded like the far right.

"Austrians are fearful because of immigration and the refugee crisis," Reinhard Heinisch of the University of Salzburg told the Washington Post on Monday. "Kurz addressed these fears, and played with these fears."

Bernhard Weidinger, a researcher of the far right at the Documentation Center of the Austrian Resistance, told me that a non-partisan poll from the Austrian monitoring group SORA found "migration was considered the No. 1 topic for this election."

Rifts between Europe, U.S. over Iran are not strategic, rather tactical: political expert

By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN — U.S. President Donald J. Trump's statements about Iran and Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the official title of nuclear deal, were analysed and put at the focal attention of political circles.

To learn more about this, our correspondent conducted an exclusive interview with senior political analyst Sadeq Maleki.

Following is the full text of Maleki's interview:

■ As the first question, would you mind explaining the main objective of US President Donald Trump about Iran's nuclear deal?

A: In response to your question, I should say that election of Trump as the President of the United States can be considered as a disaster for both America and international body. Today, it is a matter of regret to say that a person who is suffering from psychological problem has assumed power as president of the United States of America. Therefore, he should be dealt with cautiously. In the Middle East politics, Trump is a merchant and businessperson working for Tel Aviv and Riyadh. Over the course of a decade of tough negotiation over Iran's nuclear standoff, rationality of Iranian nuclear negotiating team led to the implementation of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with collective wisdom. In an idealistic point of view, although JCPOA was not ideal for the Islamic Iran, it has been a trouble-shooter to move the country out of serious crisis in certain conditions. Today, Trump's activities and behaviours show that Iran's nuclear deal dubbed "JCPOA" has been carried out in proper time and conditions. Currently, adhering and living up to commitments within the framework of JCPOA has been turned into a nightmare for Trump but he cannot do anything in this respect. Although JCPOA is a multilateral and international agreement, the role of the United States has been more prominent than others. It should be kept in mind that despite Trump's opposition to JCPOA, he has not yet succeeded in lifting the deal.

■ Is there any trust to US and Trump that JCPOA cannot be lifted?

A: Trust in America is naive. Negotiations over JCPOA have been done neither based on trust nor trust-building goal. These negotiations have their own defining frame-



work, so that JCPOA has been implemented in this regard.

With regard to Trump, we should not worry, so that lifting JCPOA by the U.S. government is possible but it will be very difficult for this country and can jeopardize its prestige in international arena severely. As mentioned in above, if JCPOA is abolished, U.S. prestige will be marred in international level and this country will sustain irreparable damage in international community as well.

If JCPOA is lifted by U.S. government unilaterally, the gap, which is created as a result of lifting JCPOA, will pave suitable ways for other parties involved in the deal to resume their activities with Iran. That is to say that if U.S. withdraws from JCPOA, Iran's status will be improved in international arena in return. In the meantime, lifting JCPOA by the U.S. government will increase unity and amity among Iranians and such bullying behaviour, breaching commitments and oppression of U.S. government against people of our country will have a special meaning in the culture of Iranians.

■ To what extent Iran can rely on its relationship with Europe and U.S.?

A: In response to your question, I should say that interests should be secured in the scene of politics. The disagreements between Europe and U.S. over Iran are not strategic, rather, it is tactical.

But in the arena of politics, these tactical discrepancies and differences are often created an opportunity. For this purpose, some major European firms will consider their interests with U.S. more than that of investing in Iran. Under such circumstances, some major European companies pre-

fer to consider more investment in U.S. than Iran. It should be kept in mind that if a crisis is spread with relation to Iran, Europe's stance will be at serious stake than U.S. Therefore, security implication of nuclear crisis and its marginal issues have been focused by the European countries.

In the meantime, it should be kept in mind that the difference between Brussels and Washington is more focused on the nuclear field and JCPOA in particular. It should be noted that Europe and United States have the same opinion with regard to the human rights charges and Iranophobia provocations caused by the missile power of Iran. Even, Europe can even be pioneer in exertion of severe human rights' pressures to Iran in this respect.

■ Considering the performance of regional countries especially with regard to supporting terrorist groups like ISIL (DAESH), is a serious crisis predictable between Tehran and Washington during Trump presidency?

A: It is difficult to foresee the upcoming future especially in the Middle East region which is passing through important developments but transient. Risk of waging war with Iran will be very costly for the United States. The challenge between Iran and United States is not merely related to nuclear issue. United States is at loggerhead with Iran's independent approach in the global arena. U.S. government does not want Iran to be a model country for others and for this reason, it fears to wage war against Iran. U.S. government knows very well that Iranian government and its people have modern and realistic approach, history of which dates back to many years ago and has a wide gap with tribal, ethnic and religious systems of the region. Meanwhile, thousands of people from countries which are claimant of secularism and also NATO member states have joined DAESH (Persian acronym for the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant, ISIL) terrorist groups. Iran and Iranians have been at the forefront in fighting terrorists and terrorism. The U.S. government's accusations against Iran are the result of political and economic considerations.

Regarding its accessibility to information and also its experience of waging war in Afghanistan and Iraq, Washington knows very well that Iran's performance in dealing with terrorism is not comparable with the U.S. allies in the region at all.

"One" election and "three" catastrophes for the united Europe

By Hanif Ghaffari

Eventually, the Austrian general election was held in the midst of concern and worries of the United Europe leaders. The Conservative, middle right party of People (OVP) has won about 31.4% of the vote, and the party gains 61 seats out of a total of 183 seats in the parliament. The "Freedom" right-wing party (FPÖ), which many media outlets know it as "Far Right" political party, are second only to 27.4 percent of the vote, with a 6.8 percent increase over the past four years, and it will gain 53 seats in the parliament. The Social-Democratic Party (SPO), ranked first with 26.9 percent of the vote four years ago, won 26.8 percent of the vote on Sunday and will hold 52 seats, although the second and third parties may be replaced by polls counting. In Austria, too, there was a turning to the right political direction, and the formation of a coalition government of the conservative party of "People" with the Right-wing Freedom Party is the most likely option for the formation of the future Austrian government.

It is emphasized here that, given the disagreement between the two parties of People and the Social Democrats over the issue of immigrants and their being admitted into the country, the Austrian coalition government is likely to be formed by the two parties of Freedom and the People. Without any doubts, the presence of this combination at the head of Vienna's political and executive equations will be the worst possible news for the United Europe. Both parties are opposed to the European Union's approach to refugees.

During the campaign, Sebastian Kurz promised to drop the number of asylum seekers in Austria to zero. The leader of the extremist Freedom Party Hans Strache also emphasized that Austria should pursue a policy like Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic in relation to the asylum seekers crisis.

As mentioned above, one of the issues that both parties of the People and Freedom of consensus agree on is the imposition of severe restrictions on the admission of refugees. These two parties are both critics of the EU's policy on this issue. However, the issue can become more complicated for Europe in the future. What is certain is that the formation of the combination of the two parties of the People and Freedom is a very bad news for the European Union and the Eurozone. What has happened in Austria's recent election is a sign of three catastrophes in the political equations of Europe:

- For the first time in the past years, a radical right-wing party has managed to lead the political and executive equations of a member state of the Eurozone and the European Union. The presence of the extremist Freedom Party in the Austrian coalition government naturally leads to an intensification of the anti-immigration and even anti-Muslim approach in Austria. On the other hand, the nationalist approach of the party and its opposition to the totality of the existence of the Eurozone are not simply issues that could be overcome. It is the first time that a right-wing extremist party in Europe can enter into the political and executive equations of a country.

Although the emergence of extreme right parties in the European Parliament in Brussels (during the 2014 parliamentary elections) is a precedent, and even in some other countries such as France, Germany and Sweden, we are witnessing the progress of the extreme right parties, but until now, these extremist right-wing parties have always practically failed to integrate into the political equations of their countries in the process of forming a coalition government.

- Until now in Europe, it was customary that the middle right and middle left parties were always united against the Far-Right extremists. For example, during the French presidential campaign, we saw that after Macron and Le Pen reached the second and final round of election, both the Socialist and Republican parties supported Macron to curb the right-wing movement led by Le Pen. Also, in the recent national election in Germany, neither Christian Democrats nor Social Democrats were willing to co-operate with the "Alternative for Germany" party (AFD) (which is affiliated with the extreme right).

It is noteworthy that even in Austria, during the 2016 presidential election, the leaders of the Social-Democratic parties and along with the People, in order to prevent Norbert Hoffer from reaching the presidential standpoint, supported Alexander Van der Bellen, his rival from the Green Party. But with the incident that has already occurred in Austria, this tradition was violated for the first time in Europe. In other words, the Conservative People's Party of Austria made it possible to form a coalition with a radical right wing party in Europe. This issue can be repeated in the future in other European countries.

- In the second half of 2018, about eight months later, Austria will assume the EU's rotating presidency. Traditionally and naturally, the EU's rotating Presidency is considered the responsibility of a government that is in power in the country which has reached its turn to become the President of the EU. Hence, the extremist and anti-Euro party of "Freedom" will have the opportunity to be present, for a period of 6 months, in the presidency standpoint of the European Union! Obviously, during this time, the Freedom Party will try to use its presence in power to strengthen other right-wing extremist parties in Europe. In this six-month period, we will see an escalation of tensions between the members of the European Union.

More importantly, this period (the second half of 2018) will coincide with the rise of the EU-UK confrontation over Britain's exit from the European Union. Meanwhile, the British authorities will try to use the presence of the Freedom Party at the top of the political and administrative equations of Austria and the European Union in order to gain more concessions from the European Union. Meanwhile, in the second half of 2018, the immigration crisis in Europe will again has a peak. A crisis in which the Freedom party will adopt the toughest positions.

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Polluted environments kill 1.7 million children each year, WHO says

By Meera Senthilingam

Each year, environmental pollutants cost an estimated 1.7 million lives among children under 5, according to World Health Organization reports released Monday.

The causes include unsafe water, lack of sanitation, poor hygiene practices and indoor and outdoor pollution, as well as injuries.

The new numbers equate to these pollutants being the cause of one in four deaths of children 1 month to 5 years old.

One new report highlights that the most common causes of child death are preventable through interventions already available to the communities most affected. These causes are diarrhea, malaria and pneumonia, which can be prevented using insecticide-treated bed nets, clean cooking fuels and improved access to clean water.

"A polluted environment is a deadly one -- particularly for young children," Dr. Margaret Chan, the WHO director-general, said in a statement. "Their developing organs and immune systems, and smaller bodies and airways, make them especially vulnerable to dirty air and water." Infants exposed to indoor or outdoor air pollution, including secondhand smoke, have an increased risk of pneumonia during childhood as well as an increased risk of chronic respiratory diseases -- such as asthma -- for the rest of their lives, one report states. The global body also highlighted the increased risk of heart disease, stroke and cancer from exposure to air pollution.

More than 90% of the world's population is thought to breathe air that violates quality guidelines set by the WHO. The reports further list ways in which these risk factors can be removed to prevent disease and death.

"Investing in the removal of



environmental risks to health, such as improving water quality or using cleaner fuels, will result in massive health benefits," said Dr. Maria Neira, director of the WHO's Department of Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health. "A polluted environment results in a heavy toll on the health of our children."

The growth of electronic and electrical waste is also a concern, according to the report. If not disposed of correctly, waste can expose children to toxins that can harm intelligence and cause attention deficits, lung damage and cancer.

Also among the fears: an increasing risk of climate change, due to rising temperatures and carbon dioxide levels, boosting pollen growth and possibly asthma. An estimated 44% of asthma cases among children worldwide are thought to be related to environmental exposures, the reports say.

In addition to highlighting the burden borne by young children, the new reports suggest ways in which risk factors -- and therefore death rates -- can be reduced.

These include reducing air pollution, improving access to clean water and sanitation, protecting pregnant women from secondhand smoke and building safer environments in order to reduce accidents and injuries.

"Both indoor and outdoor air pollution have an important effect on the health and development of children, and not just in the stereotypical 'polluted cities' context but also for very poor rural families who cook indoors," said Joy Lawn, professor of maternal reproductive and child health epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

"Clean water is taken for granted by families in high-income countries, and yet those children in the hottest climates, facing the greatest risks of infectious diseases, are the very ones with least access to clean water."

"We also need to be careful in attributing these deaths just to dirty water or pollution," she said. "To prevent deaths from pneumonia, we also need vaccines and antibiotics; from malaria,

we also need bed nets and anti-malarial. It is not just about pollution."

Other potential solutions mentioned in the reports are removing mold and pests from housing, removing lead paint, ensuring sanitation and good nutrition at schools and using better urban planning to create more green spaces in cities. Safe management of industrial waste by industries is also highlighted, along with stopping the use of hazardous pesticides and child labor in agriculture.

The report "highlights the scale of the problem of how environmental pollution affects the health of children across the globe," said John Holloway, professor of allergy and respiratory genetics at the University of Southampton. Holloway recently authored a report on the lifelong impact of air pollution.

"We must also remember that it is not just the acute effects of pollution on children's health mentioned in the report that we need to be concerned about, it is also the potential long-term effects of exposure to pollutants in early life that can have lifelong effects on health and well-being," he said.

Holloway also stressed that this is not a concern solely for developing countries. "Exposures such as air pollution and secondhand tobacco smoke affects the health of children in developed countries such as the UK as well," he said.

But, like the WHO, he also stressed that things can be done to help solve the problem and said authorities and individuals should act now -- as well as think long-term -- to protect the health of future generations.

"We all have a responsibility for reducing environmental pollution," he said. "This is going to require changes in society such as better monitoring of pollution and taking into account the true long-term economic cost of pollution when assessing the cost of measures to reduce environmental pollution."

(Source: CNN)

More than 90% of the world's population is thought to breathe air that violates quality guidelines set by the WHO.

Melatonin: What you need to know

Walk the vitamin aisle of your local grocery store and you'll find everything from flavored teas and mouth sprays to raspberry gummies and animal-shaped chews, all containing the purported sleep aide melatonin.

In all, U.S. consumers will spend more than \$437 million on melatonin supplements in 2017, up from \$159 million in 2010, according to Nutrition Business Journal. More than 3 million adults and a half-million children take it, and that number is expected to grow as more sleep-deprived families clamor for cheap "natural" remedies.

But with such growth also come concerns that consumers have an oversimplified view of the potent, complex hormone. Taken at the right time, in the right dose, it can, indeed, repair a sleep schedule thrown off kilter by jet lag, a long weekend filled with late nights, or certain circadian rhythm disorders.

But for insomnia that happens now and then, research shows its effectiveness is limited. And some fear that if misused, it may do harm.

Experts also question how safe it is for children. Australian experts called the increase in use among children "alarming" and warned in 2015 that parents shouldn't give it to their children.

"A lot of people just take it right before they go to bed as if it were a sleeping pill," says Michael Breus, PhD, a California-based clinical psychologist who specializes in sleep disorders. "It's not that simple."

Works for some, not for others

Discovered in 1958, melatonin is a potent hormone naturally produced in the body to help regulate our circadian rhythm, or natural body clock. Light is the switch that controls it: As daylight fades, levels of melatonin begin to rise about 2 hours before bedtime, nudging us to become sleepy. In the morning, when light hits the eyes, it signals the brain to halt melatonin production, and we grow alert.

"Melatonin is a sleep regulator, not a sleep initiator," explains Breus, author of "Good Night: The Doctor's 4-week Program to Better Sleep and Better Health."

Since the 1980s, dietary supplement makers have billed melatonin made in a lab as a promising sleep aid. But its effects on occasional insomnia are not significant.

One review of 15 studies involving 284 subjects found that those who took melatonin before bed fell asleep 3.9 minutes faster on average and slept 13 minutes longer. Another, of 19 studies involving 1,700 people, found melatonin users fell asleep 7 minutes faster on average and slept 8 minutes longer.

"When you are already making melatonin naturally at night, taking a little bit more exogenously is kind of like spitting in the ocean. It doesn't do much," says Cathy Goldstein, MD, an assistant professor of neurology at the University of Michigan Sleep Medicine Clinic.

Alfred Lewy, MD, professor emeritus at Oregon Health & Science University and a pioneer in melatonin research, says he has found that a larger dose (3 mg) can promote sleep, but only in about one-third of



people who take it. "It works for some people, but not for others. You just have to try it and find out which one you are."

Experts do agree that melatonin can have a big effect on treating circadian rhythm disorders like delayed sleep phase disorder (extreme night owls), advanced sleep phase disorder (extreme morning larks), or shift work disorder. In these cases, the body makes melatonin too late or too early, creating a mismatch between when the person should sleep and when they feel like it.

"Say you are an extreme night owl who only begins to feel sleepy at 4 a.m. and likes to sleep until noon. You could take low-dose melatonin (0.5 mg) at 11 p.m., well before your natural melatonin kicks in. Not only will it help you feel sleepy earlier, it will start to pull your internal clock earlier too," explains Goldstein.

Melatonin also works great for jet lag from eastward travel, says Breus, who recommends taking 0.5 mg of melatonin 90 minutes before bedtime in the place you're traveling to.

After a weekend of staying up late and sleeping in, a low (0.3 mg) dose of melatonin late Sunday afternoon can also help you get to sleep at a regular hour and avoid the "Monday morning blues" that often happen when your days off disrupt your body clock, says Lewy. (Caution: If you are one of those people melatonin makes sleepy, don't drive after taking it.)

His research also suggests that for some patients, as

While short-term use (a few months or less) of melatonin is thought to be safe in healthy adults, it can boost blood sugar, so it is not recommended for people with diabetes.

little as 0.3 mg of melatonin daily in the late afternoon may ease symptoms of winter depression brought on by shorter days and shifting circadian rhythms. But because a small number of people respond better when taking the melatonin in the morning, he only recommends its use for this purpose under a doctor's guidance.

"The challenge with melatonin is that it's complicated. If you take it at the wrong time, it can shift your body clock in the wrong direction, and that can cause problems," Lewy says.

Safety concerns on the rise

While short-term use (a few months or less) of melatonin is thought to be safe in healthy adults, it can boost blood sugar, so it is not recommended for people with diabetes, Goldstein says. Taking too much can also lead to bad dreams and grogginess the next day, and it can make many drugs less effective, including high blood pressure medications, seizure medications, and birth control pills, Breus says.

Because dietary supplements are not regulated as much as prescription drugs, quality can vary wildly from bottle to bottle. One recent study found that 71% of melatonin supplements surveyed did not contain exactly what they said on the label. Some had more than four times as much melatonin as indicated, and 26% contained the powerful neurotransmitter serotonin, a chemical found in many antidepressant medications.

When it comes to children's use, concerns abound

The American Association of Poison Control Centers reports that calls about melatonin have skyrocketed 114% nationwide since 2012, with 79% of the 24,000 calls in 2016 involving children. Parents often call poison control after their children have taken it unintentionally or taken too much. That can lead to nausea, diarrhea, headaches, changes in mood, lasting sleepiness the next day, and bedwetting, experts say.

(Source: webmd.com)

You have a painkiller six times stronger than morphine in your saliva



By Esther Inglis-Arkell

Right now, you are walking around with a mouth full of extremely powerful, untested pharmaceuticals. Your saliva contains opiorphin, a painkiller that's about six times more powerful than morphine.

After so many decades spent prodding lab rats, one would think that there is nothing more to be discovered about the horrid little things, or how they relate to humans. One would be wrong. (What a fool one is!) In the early 2000s, scientists discovered that rat saliva contains sialorphin, a powerful painkiller. Rats are, in many ways, analogous to humans. Researchers began wondering if human saliva contained its own painkilling compound.

Enter opiorphin, a painkiller that seems to be both very effective and very simple. It works by preventing the breakdown of little chemicals called enkephalins. These chemicals stimulate the body's opiate receptors, which block pain signals. Liberal application of opiorphin keeps the body's own pain-blocking system going. Why such a powerful pain-killer is in saliva is up for debate. Possibly so many of our ancestors had to gnaw off their own feet when caught in traps that anything that kept them from having a coronary from the pain was an evolutionary advantage. Speaking of pain, no painkiller's effectiveness can be determined without some good old-fashioned rat torture. Scientists compared rat reactions on opiorphin and on various quantities of morphine. Some tests were simple tail flicks. Others included having rats walk on upward-facing pins. (Torture is an exaggeration. The pins weren't sharp enough to cut the rats. The test was more like a "bed of nails": Enough small points are clustered together to support a body safely, if slightly uncomfortably.) The rats required about six times the amount of morphine as opiorphin to comfortably walk across the pins.

Opiorphin is a promising painkiller. Because it's already in our bodies, it could be used to cut down on bad reactions to painkillers, waning effectiveness, and addiction. On the other hand, it might preserve more than just enkephalins. If it prevents the breakdown of other chemicals in the body it could cause real problems if it were injected into someone in large quantities.

(Source: io9.gizmodo.com)

Science just found a way to get a cardio workout while sitting down

By Lauren Rearick

It's certainly exciting to attend a live theater performance. Whether you're waiting for the curtain to rise for a famous Broadway production (perhaps one of these musicals you definitely should have heard by now) or enjoying a performance starring local thespians, the tales told onstage can be memorable and moving. Audience favorites, including the much beloved Hamilton, can cause one to feel a range of emotions and, in turn, can set their hearts racing. According to new research, the cardiovascular response that we feel during a performance is actually beneficial for our bodies.

Findings of a study from researchers at the University College London, University of Lancaster, and Encore Tickets indicate that watching a musical performance causes a heart response that's equal to that of a half-hour workout. Cardiovascular Business reported. For the study, researchers monitored the heart rates, brain activity, and physiological signals of 12 seated volunteers during a production of the musical Dreamgirls. Participants were reported to have spent 28 minutes with a heart rate between 50 and 70 percent of its maximum, which is the ideal rate for "stimulating cardio fitness and stamina," the study said. This means that although the participants were seated and watching a performance, their body essentially went through 28 minutes of healthy cardio activity. Talk about a way to burn calories without really trying!

Participants' heart rates were at their highest peaks just before the beginning of the intermission and at the show's conclusion. Researchers believe the heightening and lowering of heart rates indicate the "surge of deep emotion and energy seen on stage." "This demonstration paints quite a clear picture that attending a live performance has an impact on cardiovascular activity," Joseph Devlin, Ph.D, head of experimental psychology at University College London told Encore Tickets. "By the end of the first act, heart rates nearly doubled from their resting state at the beginning, while in the second act, it tripled. You see comparable changes in heart rate in professional tennis players during burst of highly intense exertion such as long and fast rallies." Experts also attribute the heightened heart rates to the emotion of seeing a performance in a crowded room, surrounded by an audience. Dr. Devlin notes that being in a live audience increases the emotional intensity of the theater-going experience.

Based on the results of their findings, researchers said that the frequently changing moods and dynamics of a theater performance allow an audience member to go through a "range of emotions that can stimulate the heart and induce heart rate activity that is parallel to an exerting cardio workout." Now, you have two reasons to check out the next musical that comes to town: getting a workout and learning these hidden lessons from beloved Broadway shows.

(Source: rd.com)

Overnight intl. visitors to Tehran on rise for sixth years in a row

TOURISM TEHRAN — The number of overnight international visitors to Tehran shows sixth years of consecutive growth, Mastercard Global Destination Cities Index 2017 Report suggests.



An undated picture released by irandoostan.com shows Western travelers posing for a photo at the premises of Chehel Sotoun, a Safavid-era pavilion in Isfahan, central Iran.

The figure is estimated to witness 0.9 percent of year-on-year rise by the end of 2017.

Some 1.11 million overnight travelers arrived in Tehran in 2012. The number rose to 1.38m in 2013, 1.43m in 2014, 1.51m in 2015 and 1.64m in 2016, the report says.

The sprawling Iranian capital is also one of the fastest-growing destinations in the Middle East & Africa section of the report, which was released on September 26, 2017.

Dubai named the top destination city in the category followed by Johannesburg, Riyadh, and Abu Dhabi, with estimated growth of 7.7%, 6.8%, 3.7%, and 4.5% respectively in the number of overnight international visitors. Tehran ranked fifth.

The 2016 Mastercard report placed Tehran ninth among the top ten fastest-growing destination cities.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, for the first half of the year, Palestine was the world's fastest-growing destination, having experienced a 57% jump in visitors between January and June, Travel Weekly reported.

Mastercard based its judgments on figures compiled from some 130 most visited cities around the world. The study roughly shows visitor volume and spend estimates for the 2016 calendar year, yet delivers a profounder insight of how people travel and spend around the world.

In 2016, over 5.5 million foreign travelers from the Middle East, the Americas, Europe, South and East Asia set foot in Iran, fetching close to \$8b in revenues.

Iran hosts some of the world's oldest cultural monuments, including 22 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and its varied terrain ranges from desert locales to ski resorts.

Filled from corner to corner with ancient bazaars, museums, mosques, monuments, gardens and palaces set inside bustling cities, historical ruins and rich rural landscapes, the country is increasingly filled with camera-wielding Westerners seeking adventure, archeology and art.



ROUND THE GLOBE

Ancient City of Aleppo

The Ancient City of Aleppo is the historic city center of Aleppo, Syria. Located at the crossroads of several trade routes since the 2nd millennium BC, Aleppo was ruled successively by the Hittites, Assyrians, Akkadians, Greeks, Romans, Umayyads, Ayyubids, Mameluks and Ottomans who left their stamp on the city.



The Citadel of Aleppo in 2010

The Citadel, the 12th-century Great Mosque and various 16th and 17th-centuries madrasas, residences, khans and public baths, all form part of the city's cohesive, unique urban fabric.

The monumental Citadel of Aleppo, rising above the suqs, mosques and madrasas of the old walled city, is testament to Arab military might from the 12th to the 14th centuries. With evidence of past occupation by civilizations dating back to the 10th century BC, the citadel contains the remains of mosques, palace and bath buildings.

The walled city that grew up around the citadel bears evidence of the early Graeco-Roman street layout and contains remnants of 6th century Christian buildings, medieval walls and gates, mosques and madrasas relating to the Ayyubid and Mameluke development of the city, and later mosques and palaces of the Ottoman period.

Outside the walls, the Bab al-Faraj quarter to the North-West, the Jdeide area to the north and other areas to the south and west, contemporary with these periods of occupation of the walled city contain important religious buildings and residences.

Fundamental changes to parts of the city took place in the 30 years before inscription, including the destruction of buildings, and the development of tall new buildings and widened roads. (Source: UNESCO)

Iran-Armenia exhibit conveys message of peace and friendship

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Top Iranian and Armenian cultural officials and figures cut the ribbon on a joint exhibition of historical relics at the National Museum of Iran on Tuesday. Titled "Armenia and Iran: Memory of The Land", the event is aimed to relay a message of peace and friendship.

The event was attended by Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization Director Ali-Asghar Mounesan and Armenia's Minister of Culture Armen Amirian, Mehr reported.

In a keynote speech to the opening ceremony, Mounesan said: "The common heritage represents some deep-seated associations that have been formed over thousands of years between human societies."

"These deep-rooted ties in the modern world causes proximity of nations while helps promote peace and friendship," he added.

The similarities between treasures of the two neighboring lands reflects the position and attitude of the ancestors who, in accordance with their conditions and abilities, adhered to the principles of respect for roots and common heritage and profound cultural concepts, while tried to convey their wisdom, arts and beliefs to next generations, Mounesan explained.

Mounesan who also doubles as vice president reminded the attendees of the message of peace and friendship that the Iranian government pursues as its cultural diplomacy, adding "I hope that this valuable event will deepen cultural, political and social relations of the two countries and the convergence of the two great nations of Iran and Armenia."

The joint exhibit showcases some 200 Iranian historical relics and 103 loaned Armenian counterparts which mainly date from the Iron Age kingdom of Urartu which is believed to be part of common history and heritage of the two neighboring nations.



Armenia's Minister of Culture Armen Amirian (R) and Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization Director Ali-Asghar Mounesan cut the ribbon on "Armenia and Iran: Memory of The Land" exhibit in Tehran on October 17, 2017.

Most of the artifacts, which will go on display during the showcase, belong to 1st millennium BC when the Iranian Plateau was part of the Urartu kingdom, centered on Lake Van in the Armenian highlands.

The art of Urartu is especially notable for fine lost-wax

bronze objects: weapons, figurines, vessels including grand cauldrons that were used for sacrifices, fittings for furniture, and helmets. There are also remains of ivory and bone carvings, frescos, cylinder seals and of course pottery.

The event will be running through January 17, 2018.

Shrine of Hilal ibn Ali: Well-worth destination while touring central Iran

TOURISM TEHRAN — Each day hundreds of devoted Muslims along with domestic and foreign travelers visit the magnificent shrine of Hilal ibn Ali, which is located in Aran-va-Bidgol near Kashan, Isfahan province, central Iran.

Hemmed on each sides by the Islamic architectural gems such as blue-tiled minarets, arched arcades, domes and halls and chambers, the mausoleum embraces intricate tilework, plasterwork, woodwork, which occupy the spaces on the interior and exterior sides.

The mausoleum building itself has different entrances for men and women. The entrances are also mirror-tiled and very impressive. Inside is heavily decorated with mirror-tiled ceilings, stained glass windows and chandeliers.

Entry to the site is free while women are obliged to wear a chador, a shape-



A view of Hilal ibn Ali shrine

less gown that covers their entire body, which is provided at the door also free of charge.

Just outside the mausoleum building

one can notice the sound of melodic prayers that some visitors say upon the graves of fallen heroes who martyred during the 1980-88 Iraqi imposed war.

The picturesque mausoleum may be at its best in late afternoon when the blue-tiled minarets and domes are lit up by the last rays of the sun, when the surrounding areas turn to red.

"Stunning shrine - well worth a visit," says Janev, a visitor from Sydney, Australia, in a comment he left on the TripAdvisor, a fairly popular travel website, in September 2016.

"We visited this shrine near Kashan in April 2016. The shrine is a little way out of the city of Kashan. It is huge and features some very attractive tiling. It is well attended by local people who are welcoming to tourists. This shrine has something indefinably 'special' - a beautiful atmosphere. Well worth a visit."

Aran-va-Bidgol is home to some other holy shrines and mausoleums. Hilal ibn Ali was the son of Imam Ali (AS) who was the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Berlin's popular Thai Park faces threat of closure

The iconic but illegal Preussenpark food market could become a victim of its own success as officials clamp down over hygiene and safety regulations

Under the last of the summer sun, Thai hawkers dish up noodle soups flavored with garlic and coriander, and prepare spicy papaya salads to order by hand. The sea of women in floppy brimmed hats, cooking street food under multi-colored umbrellas, looks straight out of Bangkok, but this is western Berlin.

Thai Park, an open-air food market and popular tourist attraction usually

wraps up at the end of October. But this year it is ending on a troubled note - the illegal market might not be allowed to resume in 2018.

"The fight over Thai Park is as old as Thai Park itself," said one seller on condition of anonymity, fearing trouble from city authorities. "But this time it looks serious."

Since August, Berlin officials have been discussing the market's fate. For more than 20 years, Thais have congregated on the same stretch of green turf called Preussenpark, catching up and sharing traditional feasts.

Passersby caught whiffs of the authentic fare, from frying catfish and honey-dribbled banana fritters to sizzling pork and chicken satay, and began asking if they could buy some. Today, dozens of vendors peddle off picnic blankets and handwoven mats, cooking with portable and disposable grills - in blatant disregard of regulations on health, safety and the use of public parks.

Until now district officials have done little more than conduct stony-faced visits - after all, Thai Park enjoys cult status after being featured in Berlin travel



Breach of the feast ... Berlin city authorities are set to apply food safety standards to Preussenpark vendors. (Photograph: Alamy)

guides and foodie blogs over recent years. (Source: The Guardian)

How to navigate extreme weather on a trip

Hurricanes Harvey and Irma are recent examples of how extreme weather can lead to endless flight cancellations and delays.

Now, with the snowstorm season fast approaching, the threat of inclement weather disrupting the most well-laid travel plans continues to be top of mind.

While you can't control the climate, Andrew Collins, the chief executive and president of the private aviation company Sentient Jet, says that there are ways to minimize the chances of it interrupting your itinerary. He also has advice on what to do when bad weather does intervene with your plans.

Take the earliest flight

On days when flights tend to be at or near capacity, such as Mondays and Fridays, and the day before a holiday, such as the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, Mr. Collins advised booking a ticket for the first flight of the day. "If you're on the earliest flight, your aircraft is likely already at the airport, and therefore, taking off on time," he said.

"Delays tend to increase as the day progresses, particularly when inclement weather in one area causes a ripple effect across multiple regions and airports."

Mr. Collins also said that in winter, when there's always a chance of a snowstorm, travelers should book the first flight out no matter what day of the

week it is.

Know your benefits

When the weather does disrupt your travel plans, your credit card and loyalty memberships with airlines and hotel chains could come to the rescue.

In the event of a flight cancellation, for example, some airlines have dedicated customer service agents for members of their frequent flier programs, who can help them find alternative flights; some credit card companies also offer this service to their cardholders.

And, if a flight cancellation has you spending an extra day at your destination, your hotel loyalty membership could help you score a room at that brand's ostensibly sold-out hotel in town.

Ask to be rebooked

If your flight is canceled because of inclement weather, don't wait for your airline to reschedule. Instead, Mr. Collins suggested asking a customer service agent to find you a flight with another carrier.

"Airlines don't advertise this option because they want to keep their revenues in-house, but it is something that they can do and could potentially get you to your destination faster," he said.

Chill out

When bad weather puts a kink in your travel plans, it's easy to get agitated, but keeping relaxed, Mr. Collins said, will make the situation seem more manageable. Find an airport lounge or consider an on-site hotel room to wait



out a delay, rather than fighting the crowds at your gate.

And, while you're waiting, use a meditation app like Headspace, which can help keep you calm. Or, try Mr. Collins's favorite way to decompress at the airport from the stress of challenging travel: "I use my Amazon Prime and Netflix memberships to binge-watch my favorite shows on my laptop," he said. (Source: The New York Times)

Elevated blood pressure increases risk for mitral regurgitation, says Iranian researcher



Patients with long-term exposure to elevated blood pressure have an increased risk for primary and secondary mitral regurgitation, according to an analysis published in PLOS Medicine.

The "findings from this study suggest that mitral regurgitation is not an inevitable consequence of aging and that its risk might be modifiable with established interventions," Kazem Rahimi, FRCP DM, MSC, FESC, director of the Oxford Martin Program on Deep Medicine, associate professor of cardiovascular medicine, James Martin Fellow in Healthcare Innovation and honorary consultant cardiologist at the

University of Oxford, and colleagues wrote.

Analyzed data

Researchers analyzed data from electronic health records of 5,553,984 patients from the United Kingdom from 1990 to 2015.

Patients were free from CVD and mi-

tral valve disease, including mitral valve prolapse, and were not prescribed antihypertensive or lipid-lowering medication at baseline. Follow-up was conducted for a median of 10 years.

The primary outcome of interest was incident reports of mitral regurgitation, and the primary exposure was systolic blood pressure (BP).

During follow-up, 0.52% of patients developed mitral regurgitation and 0.02% were diagnosed with mitral stenosis.

The link between systolic BP and the risk for mitral regurgitation was continuous in age-specific analyses throughout all systolic BP ranges ($P < .001$). No thresholds were found to have different associations between systolic BP and mitral regurgitation.

A 26% increased risk for mitral regurgitation was associated with each 20 mm Hg increment of systolic BP (adjusted HR = 1.26; 95% CI, 1.23-1.29). Associations between mitral regurgitation and 10 mm Hg increment in diastolic BP ($P < .001$) and 15 mm Hg increment in pulse pressure ($P < .001$) were similar.

Mitral regurgitation

The association between systolic BP and



kazem Rahimi

mitral regurgitation was partially mediated by diseases of the left ventricle during follow-up; those diagnosed with any of ischemic heart disease, MI, HF or cardiomyopathy during the study period were at elevated risk for mitral regurgitation (HR = 2.94; 95% CI, 2.86-3.03).

A mild attenuation of the link between systolic BP and mitral regurgitation was seen after adjusting for confounders alone (HR = 1.26; 95% CI, 1.23-1.29) and confounders plus mediators (HR = 1.22; 95% CI, 1.2-1.25).

Excess risk associated with causes of secondary regurgitation was 13% (95% CI, 6.1-20).

Systolic BP was not associated with the risk for mitral stenosis in a negative control analysis (HR per 20 mm Hg increased systolic BP = 1.03; 95% CI, 0.93-1.14).

(Source: *healio.com*)

The "findings from this study suggest that mitral regurgitation is not an inevitable consequence of aging and that its risk might be modifiable with established interventions," Rahimi says.

Ocean clams, worms release much planet-warming greenhouse gas: study

Ocean critters produce the highly potent greenhouse gases methane and nitrous oxide. A study finds that clams and worms are behind about 10 percent of methane emissions from the Baltic Sea.

Ocean clams and worms release significant amounts of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere that contribute to global warming. A new study reported in the journal *Scientific Reports* reveals a neglected source of greenhouse gas in the sea.

In a new study, researchers revealed that ocean critters produce large amounts of highly potent greenhouse gases namely methane and nitrous oxides from the bacteria in their guts.

Although carbon dioxide is widely blamed for climate change, methane is 28 times more potent than carbon dioxide when it comes to warming potentials. Nitrous oxide, on the other hand, is nearly 300 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

Chemical reactions

"Nitrous oxide molecules stay in the atmosphere for an average of 114 years before being removed by a sink or destroyed through chemical reactions.

The impact of 1 pound of N₂O on warming the atmosphere is almost 300 times that of 1 pound of car-

bon dioxide," the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said.

Methane was responsible for about 16 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in 2006. Cattle operations are known to contribute to methane emissions along with other human activities that include the production and transport of coal, gas and oil.

In a new analysis, researchers found that about 10 percent of the total methane emissions from the Baltic Sea can be attributed to clams and worms.

"Apparently harmless bivalve animals at the bottom of the world's oceans may in fact be contributing ridiculous amounts of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere that is unaccounted for," said study researcher Ernest Chi Fru, from Cardiff University's School of Earth and Ocean Sciences.

Methane emissions

The researchers estimate that this amount of methane emission from ocean critters is equivalent to that produced by 20,000 dairy cows, or about 1 percent of the entire dairy cow population in the UK.

"Through a combination of trace gas, isotope, and molecular analyses, we studied the direct and indirect contribution of two macrofaunal groups, polychaetes



and bivalves, to methane and nitrous oxide fluxes from coastal sediments," the researchers reported in their study.

"Our results indicate that macrofauna increases benthic methane efflux by a factor of up to eight, potentially accounting for an estimated 9.5% of total emissions from the Baltic Sea."

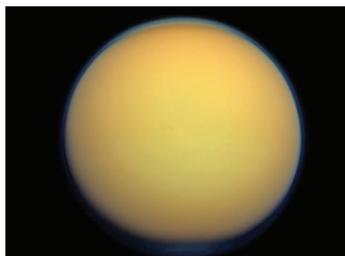
The researchers said that stakeholders need to consider the potential impacts of promoting shellfish farming to large areas of the ocean.

(Source: *Tech Times*)

Scientists find evidence of extreme methane storms on Titan

Saturn's largest moon, Titan, is a mysterious place; and the more we learn about it, the more surprises it seems to have in store. Aside from being the only body beyond Earth that has a dense, nitrogen-rich atmosphere, it also has methane lakes on its surface and methane clouds in its atmosphere. This hydrological-cycle, where methane is converted from a liquid to a gas and back again, is very similar to the water cycle here on Earth.

Thanks to the NASA/ESA Cassini-Huygens mission, which concluded on September 15th when the craft crashed into Saturn's atmosphere, we have learned a great deal about this moon in recent years. The latest find, which was made by a team of UCLA planetary scientists and geologists, has to do with Titan's methane rain storms. Despite being a rare occurrence, these rainstorms can apparently become rather extreme.



The study which details their findings, titled "Regional Patterns of Extreme Precipitation on Titan Consistent with Observed Alluvial Fan Distribution", recently appeared in the scientific journal *Nature Geoscience*. Led by Saun P. Faulk, a graduate student at UCLA's Department of Earth, Planetary, and Space Sciences, the team conducted simulations of Titan's rainfall to determine how extreme weather events have shaped the

moon's surface.

Methane rainstorms

What they found was that the extreme methane rainstorms may imprint the moon's icy surface in much the same way that extreme rainstorms shape Earth's rocky surface. On Earth, intense rainstorms play an important role in geological evolution. When rainfall is heavy enough, storms can trigger large flows of water that transport sediment into low lands, where it forms cone-shaped features known as alluvial fans.

During its mission, the Cassini orbiter found evidence of similar features on Titan using its radar instrument, which suggested that Titan's surface could be affected by intense rainfall. While these fans are a new discovery, scientists have been studying the surface of Titan ever since Cassini first reached the Saturn system in 2006. In that time, they have noted several interesting features.

Sand dunes

These included the vast sand dunes that dominate Titan's lower latitudes and the methane lakes and seas that dominate its higher latitudes – particularly around the northern polar region. The seas – Kraken Mare, Ligeia Mare, and Punga Mare – measure hundreds of km across and up to several hundred meters deep, and are fed by branching, river-like channels. There are also many smaller, shallower lakes that have rounded edges and steep walls, and are generally found in flat areas.

In this case, the UCLA scientists found that the alluvial fans are predominantly located between 50 and 80 degrees latitude.

As Jonathan Mitchell – a UCLA associate professor of planetary science and a senior author of the study – indicated, this is not dissimilar to some extreme weather events that were recently experienced here on Earth.

(Source: *Universe Today*)

Automatic POS and iSTM Services Go on Stream: IRANCELL

For the first time in the country, automatic Point-of-Sale (PSO) device and mobile phone services dubbed "iSTM" was put into operation, the Public Relations Dept. of IRANCELL reported.

"POS and Automatic Services" became operation in cooperation with IRANCELL and Bank Shahr, the report

added.

At the first step, the services have been launched in six parts of the country.

For this purpose, applicants may refer to the "NET City" branches of Bank Shahr in order to purchase and enroll for various types of SIM cards, change old

SIM cards to U-SIM cards, buy charge, activate the internet packages, etc.

"iSTM" devices at the first step has started working at six parts of the city including Beyhaqi Terminal, Sabzeh Meydan, Ferdowsi Sq., Water and Fire and Water Parkland, Gavmish Goli square in Sare'in and Vali-e Asr St. of

Tabriz.

With the coordination made in this regard, the service will also be installed at highly-transited areas, airports and shopping centers.

IRANCELL welcomes dear visitors at IRAN TELECOM 2017 Exhibition in order to familiarize with the system.

CEO Expounds on Salient Activities of Bank Maskan

Bank Maskan has thus far taken giant strides in line with modernizing its economic objectives.

Mohammad Hashem Botshekan Chief Executive of Bank Maskan announced the above statement in a get-together meeting held in the presence of senior managers of the bank across the country and said: "Over the past four years, we have managed to correct and modify policies of the bank."

The method of financing Mehr Housing Plan in 2013 caused Bank Maskan to face heavy debt to the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), he said, adding: "Relying upon the

assistance of the Almighty God, the bank has currently managed to compile and formulate Bank Maskan's document up to 2021 according to the determination of facilities paid by the bank on Mehr Housing Plan and also certain time period for moratorium and installment payment of the facilities to CBI."

In the end, Mohammad Hashem Botshekan Chief Executive of Bank Maskan said: "Under the act, 50 percent (50%) of facilities paid to the housing sector will be offered by the bank to the applicants and activists of this sector."



Complex whale behavior tied to brain size

Cetaceans -- whales and dolphins -- are among the brainiest of beings. In terms of sheer brain size, the sperm whale is tops on Earth, with a brain six times larger than that of a person.

And now, scientists have identified key differences among cetaceans linked to brain size. A study of 90 cetacean species published on Monday found that those with larger brains exhibit greater complexity in social structures and behaviors, with species like the killer whale and sperm whale leading the way.

"Dolphin and whale societies are at least as complex as what we have observed in primates," said evolutionary biologist Susanne Shultz of the University of Manchester in Britain.

"They are extremely playful, they learn from each other, have complex communication. One problem for understanding just how smart they are is how difficult it is to observe them and to understand their marine world. Therefore, we have only a glimpse of what they are capable of."

The researchers created a comprehensive database of brain size, social structures and cultural behaviors across cetacean species. The group of species with the largest brain size relative to body size was the large whale-like dolphins such as the killer whale, the similar-looking false killer whale and the pilot whale, Shultz said.

"Killer whales have cultural food preferences, have matriarchs that lead and teach other group members, and cooperatively hunt," Shultz said.

In terms of intra-species food preferences, certain killer whale populations, also known as orcas, prefer salmon whereas others prefer seals or other whales or sharks depending on their group's culture. Other big-brained cetaceans also demonstrate sophisticated behaviors.

(Source: *Reuters*)

Genes for skin color rebut dated notions of race, researchers say

For centuries, skin color has held powerful social meaning — a defining characteristic of race, and a starting point for racism.

"If you ask somebody on the street, 'What are the main differences between races?', they're going to say skin color," said Sarah A. Tishkoff, a geneticist at the University of Pennsylvania.

On Thursday, Dr. Tishkoff and her colleagues showed this to be a profound error. In the journal *Science*, the researchers published the first large-scale study of the genetics of skin color in Africans.

These genes are shared across the globe, it turns out; one of them, for example, lightens skin in both Europeans and hunter-gatherers in Botswana. The gene variants were present in humanity's distant ancestors, even before our species evolved in Africa 300,000 years ago.

The widespread distribution of these genes and their persistence over millennia show that the old color lines are essentially meaningless, the scientists said. The research "dispels a biological concept of race," Dr. Tishkoff said.

Humans develop color much as other mammals do. Special cells in the skin contain pouches, called melanosomes, packed with pigment molecules. The more pigment, the darker the skin.

(Source: *The NYT*)

Our dolphin overlords have rich, humanlike cultures thanks to their giant brains

Cetaceans, the group of animals including dolphins and whales, are intelligent, big-brained creatures with several social behaviors similar to those of humans. And, according to new research, the bigger the brain, the more social the cetacean.



Dolphins engage in several behaviors that demonstrate their sociality and resemble human culture. They play, babysit one another's offspring, hunt cooperatively and teach one another how to do things. "They have signature whistles. They actually have names for each other," study co-author Michael Muthukrishna tells *Newsweek*. Muthukrishna is an assistant professor of economic psychology at the London School of Economics.

Many scientists have sought evidence of connections between dolphin behavior and the dolphin brain. Some of them have approached the topic by calculating the encephalization quotient—the ratio of actual to predicted brain mass for a given species relative to body mass. But that measurement is limited in its usefulness. "You do need to control for body size in some way," says Muthukrishna. "But a lot of research is actually showing that encephalization quotient is actually a terrible measure of brain power."

This new study, conducted by researchers at the University of Manchester, the University of British Columbia, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and Stanford University, took a different tack. Instead of looking at the encephalization quotient, they focused on absolute brain size. Their research, published today in the journal *Nature Ecology and Evolution*, found a relationship between social behaviors and absolute brain size.

Researchers gathered data from years of studies examining brain sizes of 90 different species of whales and dolphins and cataloging their social intelligence. (Source: *Newsweek*)

Drug rehab centers set up for mothers, children

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Two drug rehabilitation centers, one for mothers with their children and the other for addicts under the age of 18, were established in Tehran on Tuesday.

One of the centers, which is the first of its kind in the country, is for mothers suffering from severe drug addiction and their children.

"The center gives children the chance to be with their mothers," labor minister Ali Rabiei said during the opening ceremony.



Supported by a NGO named Rebirth Society, the center hosts drug addicted mothers with their children who are below six years old.

The center has the capacity for 40 mothers with their children and covers treatment costs of up to 12 million rials (about 3,000 dollars) per capita, the managing director of Rebirth Society Abbas Deilamzadeh announced in a press release.

The center also holds workshops to empower mothers and teach them skills to earn their living.

He expressed his hope over the increase of such centers across the country.

Meanwhile, the State Welfare Organization inaugurated a rehabilitation center for drug addicts below 18 years old.

"The center hosts teens who become addicted due to their family problems and environmental challenges," SWO official Mohsen Roshanpajoo said in a press release.

"The center accommodates 25 persons, providing patients with treatment periods from three months to six months to go through detox stages," he explained.

"Children who have their own families are treated at their homes and others are taken care of at the center," he explained.

Tehran mayor to attend 'Champion Mayors' meeting in Seoul

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Tehran Mayor Mohammad Ali Najafi is slated to attend the third meeting of the Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth, October 19-20, in Seoul, South Korea.

The event has been organized jointly by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group and Seoul Metropolitan Government.

Mayors and local governments are advancing policies and programs that aim to boost equity and economic growth across the world through innovations in health care delivery, issuance of official identification cards for all city residents, facilitation of access to public services, and improvement of urban mobility for people with disabilities, according to OECD official website.

The event will be followed by the



Mayors' Forum on Climate Change, organized by International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), Seoul Metropolitan Government and the Global Covenant of Mayors.

Created and led by cities, C40 is focused on tackling climate change and

driving urban action that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and climate risks, while increasing the health, wellbeing and economic opportunities of urban citizens.

The C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group connects more than 90 of the world's greatest cities, representing over

650 million people and one quarter of the global economy.

Najafi is scheduled to deliver a speech at the third meeting of the Champion Mayors. He is also due to meet with Korean mayor and other officials and discuss investment opportunities with them as well, according to Mehr news agency.

Najafi and his Korean counterpart Park Won-Soon will also sign a memorandum of understanding on friendship as well.

On June 27, 1977, the Seoul Metropolitan Government suggested that the city of Seoul and Tehran exchange the names of streets on the occasion of the then Tehran Mayor Gholamreza Nikpey visit to Korea. Therefore in order to celebrate the new partnership, they decided to name one of the streets in their capital after the name of their sister cities.

Scientists race to stop parrot massacre in Tasmania

Australian scientists are racing to save critically endangered swift parrots from being "massacred" by sugar glider predators in Tasmania's ancient forests.

The rare parrots migrate to Tasmania to breed, and this year abundant food supplies will draw them to forests "infested" by marsupial sugar gliders that love to feast on eggs, chicks, and even sleeping adult birds.

"If we don't intervene immediately, this year could be a huge blow to the conservation of this species," Dr Dejan Stojanovic, a researcher at the Australian National University, told Sky News.

But he thinks the birds can be saved - using a new light-sensitive nesting box that closes during the night to protect the sleeping parrots from marsupials searching for food after dark.

"It's literally like locking the front door," said Dr Stojanovic, explaining that tests of the boxes, in areas with no sugar gliders, boosted the parrot population by 300.

"They just used the boxes and got on with raising their babies," he said. "Now we know the birds are okay with it we're ready to roll it out."

The swift parrot is one of just two migratory parrots in the world, and there are estimated to be fewer than 2,500 left in a declining population.

Much of the drop is thanks to humans. In recent years deforestation has seriously depleted Tasmania's ancient forests, slashing the birds' habitat and making them more likely to come face-to-face with a sugar glider.

"In areas where deforestation is worse, the likelihood of being eaten by a sugar glider is higher," Dr Stojanovic said.

"Habitat is the most important issue and it's still being lost by industrial forestry."

The parrot's defense strategy of nesting in hollows where larger predators cannot reach is also useless against squirrel-like sugar gliders, which were introduced to Tasmania by people. A crowdfunding campaign to finance the boxes had on Wednesday raised nearly AUS \$33,000 in less than 24 hours, a success Dr Stojanovic described as "overwhelming".

"People really identify with this parrot that's in trouble and needs a helping hand," he said.

But he added Australia must do more than install nest boxes and address logging if the parrots are to survive.

"Unless we address the broader issue it's fiddling while Rome burns."

(Source: Sky News)



Shrimp fishing season begins in Hormozgan

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Shrimp fishing season has started in the southern province of Hormozgan.

The shrimp fishery season which started on October 3 in the Persian Gulf will last for 40 to 45 days. According to Tasnim news agency, 1,600 tons of shrimp were caught last year.

Before the beginning of the fishing season, and in order to minimize the damages of overfishing the sea is closed for 10 days.

With some 30,000 fishermen and a total allowable catch of 40 percent, Hormozgan province is a fishing hub of the country. Hormozgan ranks first in fishing industry nationwide with more than 240,000 tons of aquatic animals caught per annum.



LEARN ENGLISH

Getting A Subscription

A: Good afternoon Ma'am, My name is Mike and I am selling **subscriptions** to all sorts of **periodicals**.

B: No thank you, I am not interested.

A: Please ma'am, **if you could spare** five minutes of your time, I am sure we could find something that interests you!

B: I wish I could, but I have to walk the dog and finish cooking so if you would excuse me.

A: We have a great variety of magazines all about cooking! This one for example, is a bi monthly publication with recipes from all over the world!

B: Wow that would be kind of useful, do you have any other cooking magazines?

A: Sure do! This one is a **quarterly** publication, but each issue has over 200 color pages of recipes and also many home decorating ideas!

B: Wow, this is nice! Ok, sign me up for both publications.

A: You mentioned you have a dog, most pet owners sign up for this weekly newsletter that has information on dog care, pet shops and even **pet sitters**!

B: That is exactly what I needed! What else do you have?

A: Well, I also have....

Key vocabulary

subscription: a purchase by prepayment for goods or services

periodical: a magazine, especially one about a serious or technical subject

if you could spare: do you have, can you offer

quarterly: at three month intervals

issue: a final publication such as a magazine

pet sitter: person who takes care of pets in owner's absence

Supplementary vocabulary

cable TV: TV channels which are purchased for a monthly fee

internet service: service that provides internet access for a fee

gym membership: paid membership that provides access to the gym

(Source: irlanguage.com)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Phenylketonuria patients to receive online care

A newly developed system called "Hami" (literary meaning supporter) has been designed to provide patients suffering from phenylketonuria (PKU) with online care and provision. The online care system would be helping in providing diagnosis, food stuff in accordance with the patients' strict diet and medications using postal services, Tasnim news agency quoted Amir-Hossein Jamshidi, an official with Food and Drug Administration, as saying on Wednesday. "All prescriptions will be published online and each patient's treatment process and medical history would be accessible through this system worldwide," Jamshidi explained.

Owing to the arrangements made with the post office patients would be provided with their medications in three days tops, he added.

ارائه خدمات آنلاین به بیماران متابولیک

در طرح جدیدی تحت نام سامانه حامی بیماران متابولیک قادر به دریافت مراقبت و خدمات آنلاین خواهند بود. به گزارش خبرگزاری تسنیم، امیر حسین جمشیدی یک مسئول سازمان غذا و دارو عنوان کرد: برنامه کاملی برای تشخیص تا تجویز فرآورده‌های متابولیک و رژیمی با سامانه‌های مختلف بر خط کشور از قبیل پست فراهم آمده تا موقعیت بیمار و وضعیت حیاتی با اطلاعات دقیق میسر شود. جمشیدی توضیح داد: با الکترونیک شدن نسخه‌ها تمامی سوابق پزشکی بیمار به صورت الکترونیک ثبت می‌شوند و در هر نقطه از دنیا قابل دسترسی باشد. وی افزود: با همکاری حساب شده‌ای که پست جمهوری اسلامی ایران با سازمان غذا و دارو انجام داد در حال حاضر می‌توانیم اعلام کنیم که فرآورده مورد نیاز بیمار حداکثر تا ۷۲ ساعت تحویل وی می‌شود.

ENGLISH PROVERB

Attack is the best form of defense

■ **Explanation:** launching an offensive is the best way to protect oneself

■ **For example:** I need to start some rumors about Dean, before he comes after me. I know it sounds harsh, but attack is the best form of defense!

PHRASAL VERB

Dress down

■ **Meaning:** to wear clothes that are more informal than the ones you would usually wear

■ **Example:** In many offices, people dress down on Fridays.

ENGLISH IDIOM

Beyond any reasonable doubt

■ **Explanation:** it is a legal expression which means that something is certain

■ **For example:** The court established, beyond any reasonable doubt, that the man was innocent.

Iraqi PM: Kurdistan referendum is over, belongs in the past

Barzani: Kurds vote won't be in vain

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi says that he will impose the Iraqi federal authority in each part of Iraq, including in the Kurdistan Region. Photo: Iraqi PM media office

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region – The Kurdistan independence referendum is over, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has declared.

"The referendum is over and belongs in the past. It happened at a period of time in the past and its results are over," Abadi said in a press conference on Tuesday.

He also said that he will impose federal authority in every part of Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region.

His statement comes as Iraqi forces have taken control of several Kurdistan or disputed areas such as oil-rich Kirkuk on Monday and Tuesday after a military incursion.

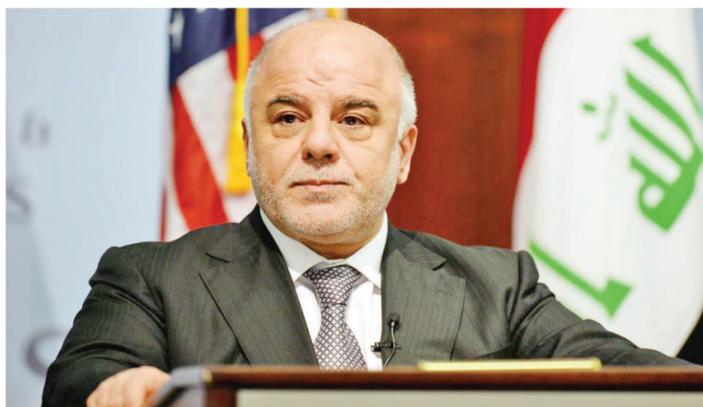
■ Kurdish forces withdraw to June 2014 line

A senior Iraqi military commander says Kurdish Peshmerga forces have pulled back to the positions they held in June 2014, before the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group swept through the Arab country.

The commander told Reuters on Wednesday that the withdrawal came after the Kurds handed over their positions in the northwestern Nineveh Province to Iraqi troops.

Additionally on Wednesday, Iraqi forces said that they had achieved their objectives in a 48-hour operation against Kurdish forces in the disputed areas.

"Security has been restored in sectors of Kirkuk. Forces have been redeployed and have retaken control of Khanaqin



and Jalawla in Diyala province, as well as Makhmur, Bashiqa, Mosul Dam, Sinjar and other areas in the Nineveh plains," the federal government's Joint Operations Command said.

Earlier in the day, the Iraqi military said in a statement that government forces had managed to retake control of parts of the northwestern Nineveh Province that were controlled by the Kurdish forces over the past three years.

The Nineveh areas were evacuated by Kurdish forces before the arrival of Iraqi soldiers, the statement read.

Kurdish forces have been holding parts of the Iraqi territory since 2014, when they joined the fight against Daesh.

Baghdad has long wanted the Kurds to pull out of the territories they seized during their advances against Daesh.

On Monday, Iraqi government forces and allied fighters entered the disputed oil-rich city of Kirkuk. Kurdish Peshmerga forces withdrew without a fight and thus Iraqi troops recaptured some neighborhoods, the Kirkuk provincial governor's office, key military bases and several oil fields.

The oil fields won back accounted for over 400,000 of the 650,000 barrels per day that Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region used to export.

The last Kirkuk oil field still in Kurdish hands is the Khurmala field, south of Erbil, the main city in Iraq's northern Kurdistan region.

On Tuesday, the Izadi Kurdish town of Sinjar, situated in Nineveh Province, was also retaken from the Kurdish forces.

The developments followed weeks of simmering tensions between Baghdad

and the Kurdistan Regional Government over a recent controversial referendum on the secession of the Iraqi Kurdish region.

The plebiscite took place on September 25, sparking strong objection from Baghdad. Iraq's neighbors and the international community also voiced concerns about the repercussions of the vote, which was only supported by Israel.

■ Kurds vote won't be in vain

Meanwhile, the president of Iraq's Kurdistan has said the independence vote recently held throughout the region won't be in vain.

On Tuesday, Masoud Barzani further vowed to preserve what he referred to as the achievements of the Kurds despite their defeat in Kirkuk.

He went on to blame the setback on unilateral decisions by Kurdish politicians. "What happened in the city of Kirkuk was due to unilateral decision of certain officials within an internal political party in Kurdistan, which eventually led to withdrawal of Peshmerga."

Kurdish forces have been holding parts of the Iraqi territory since 2014, when Daesh began an offensive across Iraq and the Kurds began fighting it and overran the territory in the process.

The Baghdad government has long insisted that the Kurds pull out of the territories they had overrun, but the Kurdish militants have refused. Ever since a controversial referendum on secession in Iraqi Kurdistan on September 25, the Iraqi government has lost patience, sending security forces to retake the Kurdish-held areas.

(Source: agencies)

Amnesty: Myanmar committed crimes against humanity

Amnesty International has said it has strong evidence that the Myanmar army committed crimes against humanity in northern Rakhine State.



A new report published by the global rights group on Wednesday detailed mass killings, rape, torture and forcible transfers of Rohingya Muslims in the army's ongoing campaign against fighters from the persecuted minority.

Amnesty has called for the UN Security Council to impose an arms embargo on Myanmar and set targeted sanctions against senior officials.

The report said hundreds of thousands of Rohingya men, women and children have been "the victims of a widespread and systematic attack," and that "Myanmar's security forces unleashed an attack against the Rohingya population in its entirety."

The army's Western Command was responsible for some of the worst violations, it said.

The Amnesty report, based on about 150 witness accounts, satellite data, and photo and video evidence, is the most detailed and comprehensive analysis to date since Rohingya refugees began pouring into Bangladesh in late August.

Efforts to reach the Myanmar government were unsuccessful.

Officials have previously denied any systematic violence against the Rohingya, who they consider as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

Laura Haigh, Amnesty's Myanmar researcher, said the crimes they documented were similar to the army's abuses against other ethnic minorities in Myanmar, including the Kachin, Shan and the Palaung.

"There are common threads here: A military that is completely unaccountable, often out of control, and impunity that breeds further impunity," she said.

"And it's time for that to stop."

The violence in Buddhist-majority Rakhine erupted after an armed group known as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacked at least 30 security posts on August 25.

An estimated 582,000 refugees have now fled Myanmar and thousands more are continuing to make the perilous journey on foot to the country's border with Bangladesh, the UN said on Tuesday.

Page after page in the Amnesty report, entitled "My World Is Finished", provide detailed testimonies of widespread killings, rapes, and burning of entire villages.

■ 'Burned all over'

In one account, a 30-year-old woman from the village of Min Gyi, also known as Tula Toli, said soldiers killed scores of men and older boys, raped the women, torched Rohingya homes, and burned people, including children, to death.

"They [the soldiers] first hit us in the head, to make us weak ... Then, they raped us," she said.

Soldiers then set fire to the house she was assaulted in, but she said she managed to escape after her seven-year-old daughter found a weak point in the hut's bamboo siding.

"I was burned all over," she told Amnesty. "The flame was so hot. When I ran, the fire was still on me. The clothes we wore, they were all burned."

The pattern was similar in dozens of villages across Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathetaung townships, the report said.

The Myanmar army killed at least hundreds of Rohingya women, men, and children in the hours and days since the ARSA attacks in August, it says. Many people were shot as they ran away.

The elderly and disabled were often unable to flee and were killed or burned in their homes.

Mohamed Zubair, 26, told Amnesty he left his 90-year-old grandmother in their home when the military opened fire on his village, Chut Pyin, in Rathetaung.

"I asked her to follow us to the hill. She said, 'I'm old, they won't do anything to me. Go,'" Zubair said.

In hiding, he watched as soldiers torched his village, including the house where he had left his grandmother.

When the military left, he found his grandmother dead, her body "burnt very seriously".

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Tom Cotton avariciously seeking to become CIA chief

▶ What is interesting is that U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley supports Cotton while she disagrees with Tillerson and Mattis. This suggests differences in the Republican Party have hit an all-time high over the JCPOA.

Another point to address here is that Cotton is doing all he can to become the next CIA director.

Zionist regime's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his war minister Avigdor Lieberman are among those who favor Cotton as the head of the U.S. intelligence agency.

What's certain is that Cotton has called on the Zionist regime's authorities to spare no effort in making that happen. Thus, more than ever before Cotton is after pleasing Netanyahu and authorities in Tel Aviv by adopting a tough stance on the nuclear accord.

With all that said Trump's position on appointing Cotton as CIA director is not clear.

Weakened Merkel warns of compromise as talks on coalition start

A chastened Angela Merkel warned her conservatives they must compromise to forge a nationally untested alliance in Germany as she heads into talks with other parties on Wednesday after suffering losses in last month's election.

Merkel's conservatives, comprising her own Christian Democrats (CDU) and Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU), are striving for a tie-up with the pro-business Free Democrats (FDP) and the Greens.

But policy differences are wide and in the last few weeks politicians from all parties have set out their stall, narrowing room for compromise in policy areas from immigration to the EU and environmental policy.

A senior CSU figure even said the conservatives may yet have to talk to their former coalition partners the Social Democrats several months down the line.

Bild daily quoted Merkel, whose conservatives bled support to the far right in the Sept. 24 vote, as telling her parliamentary party on Tuesday evening: "We won't come out of this without compromises" even if they have clear goals.

Merkel, chancellor for 12 years and known as a skilled negotiator, angered many voters over her open-door migrant

policy and her conservatives saw their worst result since 1949.

She has said she expects a government to be in place by Christmas, but some senior politicians say January is more likely. That points to policy standstill in Europe's biggest economy for at least three months.

Even then, there is no guarantee of success. The prospect of a minority government or new elections loom over the talks, a scenario Merkel wants to avoid due to fears the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) could make bigger gains.

"It is totally conceivable that before Christmas or in January, we say that the whole thing is pointless and we'll talk to the Social Democrats (SPD)," Peter Ramsauer, a senior CSU member but not on the negotiating team, told Deutschlandfunk.

■ Exploratory talks

There seems almost no chance of that as the SPD, licking their wounds after their worst result since 1933, have vowed to go into opposition.

A Jamaica coalition, so called because the parties' black, yellow and green colors match those of the Caribbean nation's flag, is in place in the northern state of Schleswig-Holstein but the first regional experiment, in Saarland, failed.

"The road to Jamaica is a long one," CSU politician Alexander Dobrindt said.

Wednesday's "exploratory" talks - first between the conservatives and FDP at noon (1000 GMT) then the conservatives and Greens - will not tackle policy but focus on the format for future talks and on building trust between political foes.

All three blocs will come together for the first time on Friday in a meeting of more than 50 people and further exploratory talks could take weeks.

Combative CSU chief Horst Seehofer met the Greens on Tuesday evening. Katrin Goering-Eckardt, co-leader of the Greens parliamentary group, told German television they had "talked politely" for about an hour while eating Bavarian pretzels.

Seehofer said that in his experience red lines were often "withdrawn once things firm up".

Merkel, weakened further by losses in a state election on Sunday, has already had to give way to the CSU on immigration, effectively bowing to a demand to limit the number of people allowed into Germany. That may be unacceptable to the Greens.

(Source: DPA)

EU demands Israel 'reconsider' West Bank settler homes plan

The EU on Wednesday demanded Israel reconsider plans for nearly 1,300 settler homes in the West Bank, saying they were illegal under international law and undermined the prospects for peace.

Israeli authorities on Tuesday advanced plans for 1,292 new homes, with approval from a committee overseeing settlement construction in the West Bank, according to the Peace Now watchdog.

The move came after Israeli government officials pledged a major boost in settlement home approvals this year, with

U.S. President Donald Trump much less critical of such plans than his predecessor Barack Obama.

But the EU condemned the step, restating its position that settlement activity was "illegal under international law" and damaged "the viability of the two-state solution and the prospect for a lasting peace".

"The European Union has requested clarifications from Israeli authorities and conveyed the expectation that they reconsider these decisions, which are

detrimental to ongoing efforts towards meaningful peace talks," an EU statement said.

The bloc voiced particular concern about proposals to build settler homes in the flashpoint West Bank city of Hebron for the first time since 2002 and about the start of preparatory groundwork in the east Jerusalem area of Givat Hamatos.

Construction in Givat Hamatos would "severely jeopardize the contiguity and viability of a future Palestinian state", the EU said, adding that it would contin-

ue work with international and regional partners to try to restart dialogue.

Trump is seeking to restart peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, which collapsed in 2014 following the failure of an earlier U.S.-led initiative.

Settlement building in east Jerusalem and the West Bank, occupied by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War, is seen as a major obstacle to peace as the homes are built on land the Palestinians see as part of their future state.

(Source: AFP)

Saudi commercial airplane lands in Baghdad, first time in 27 years

A Saudi Arabian airplane has made history by landing in Iraq amid efforts by the regime in Riyadh to restore ties with Baghdad and compensate for almost three decades of diplomatic inaction in the country.

The Iraqi Transport Ministry said in a statement on Wednesday that the Saudi commercial airplane arrived in Baghdad for the first time in 27 years. "Baghdad International Airport today welcomed the first Saudi plane after a 27-year break."

Iraqi officials said the airplane belonged to Flynas, a Saudi company launched as Nas Air in 2007. The airline, which faces increasing competition inside Saudi Arabia,

plans to launch flights to several Iraqi cities in a bid to improve revenues. Saudi Arabia has a sizable population of Shia Muslims in its eastern territories who wish to visit holy shrines in Iraq, a Shia-dominated country.

However, the launch of the flight is apparently in line with Saudi Arabia's efforts to refurbish its image as a friendly neighbor to Iraq. Many have blamed the Saudis for the protracted militancy that has gripped Iraq for the past years. They say elements in the Saudi kingdom have openly supported militants in Iraq through funds and weapons.

Iraq ordered the expulsion of the Saudi ambassador

to Baghdad last year, saying he was clearly interfering in the internal affairs of Iraq. Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeiri then traveled to Baghdad to personally introduce another ambassador.

The two countries also announced in August that the Arar border crossing would be opened for trade for the first time since 1990, when Saudis cut diplomatic ties to Iraq in protest against former dictator Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. Iraqi pilgrims also used the border crossing for the 2017 Hajj rituals in Saudi Arabia.

(Source: APO)

Iraq developments send explicit messages to Washington and regional states

▶ Second, the rapid defeat of the Barzani forces supported and trained by the U.S. and the Israeli regime in less than 24 hours shows that Washington and Tel Aviv are not the only players in the region and the unity of the regional countries can easily foil the U.S. and the Zionist regime's regional plots to redraw the borders in the Middle East to suit to their geopolitical interests.

Third, all developments in the region show that the best solution for the regional problems is cooperation among regional countries like the one between Iran, Iraq and Turkey in thwarting the most destabilizing plot of breaking up Iraq.

Meddling of the transregional powers can just complicate the situation and destabilize the region more.

Fourth, the Israeli regime was the only supporter of the Iraqi Kurdistan's independence referendum and many analyst believe the United States' stated and actual policy on the Erbil independence referendum are incongruent. Those in favour of creating an independent Kurdish state count on U.S. support via Israel. In other words, Washington is plotting and have been

plotting against its own strategic regional partners and allies like Turkey and Iraq by supporting an Iraqi disintegration that is a direct security threat to Iraq's neighbours, too. So all these developments shows how untrustworthy the White House is and the regional countries should cooperate with each other to guarantee their own interests

Danish women risk World Cup expulsion over FA dispute

The Danish women's football team will not play Sweden in their planned World Cup qualifier on Friday and risk being kicked out of the competition as a dispute between the players and the Danish Football Association (DBU) has not yet been resolved.

"The DBU has today told the Swedish FA that the players of the women's national team have not gathered in order to play the game, which will now not be played," DBU officer Kom Hallberg said in a statement on Wednesday.

The statement also added that the FA now faces fines, points deductions and possibly expulsion from the competition because of the failure to fulfil the fixture.

The Danish players, who lost in the final of the European Championship to hosts Netherlands in August, have been engaged in tough negotiations with the DBU over compensation and conditions for female internationals.

Norway recently announced that its male and female players would receive the same pay, but talks between the DBU and the its women's team have broken down several times in recent weeks. Denmark have so far played one match of their 2019 World Cup qualifying campaign, which was a 6-1 victory over Hungary last month. They are scheduled to play against Croatia on Tuesday.

(Source: Reuters)

Financier Amanda Staveley eyes \$400 million bid for Newcastle United



PCP Capital Partners, the investment firm run by British businesswoman Amanda Staveley, is interested in bidding around \$400 million (£303.7 million) for Newcastle United after owner Mike Ashley put the Premier League club up for sale on Monday, according to a source familiar with the matter.

Speculation over Staveley's interest in the St James' Park club was sparked when she was seen at the ground watching a match earlier this month against Liverpool, another club she has been linked with buying in the past.

PCP Capital, which acts for investors in the Middle East and China, is one of four potential bidders for the club, the Financial Times reported on Tuesday. PCP is best known for acting as an intermediary between Barclays (BARCL) and a group of Abu Dhabi investors during the 2008 financial crisis, helping the British bank avoid a government bailout.

Newcastle United did not respond to requests for comment.

PCP, which has not yet put in an offer for Newcastle United, believes the club is worth around 300 million pounds with a further 150 million pounds needed to invest in players over the next two years, according to the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the deal is not public.

The club has said they were willing to listen to offers that would be capable of "delivering sustained investment" towards achieving their ambitions in the top flight.

Newcastle have been relegated twice since Ashley took charge in 2007. After winning promotion back to the Premier League last season, Rafael Benitez's side are ninth in the standings with 11 points from eight games.

(Source: Daily Star)

Redknapp: Spurs boss Pochettino could manage Real Madrid

Forget Harry Kane, Mauricio Pochettino is good enough to move to Real Madrid according to Jamie Redknapp, who believes the Tottenham boss could manage any club in the world. Pochettino oversaw Tottenham's 1-1 Group H draw with Champions League titleholders Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu on Tuesday.

England star Kane has been linked with Madrid but former Spurs midfielder Redknapp said Pochettino - who guided the club to second place in the Premier League last season - could swap London for the Spanish capital as he continues to impress. "Everyone's talking about him. He's up there with the best. He could manage any club in the world make no mistake. Tottenham are very, very lucky to have him," Redknapp told Sky Sports. "They have one of the best managers in terms of his development of players; he improves footballers and also tactically he's as good as anyone."

"You want to look after him. People are talking about Harry Kane maybe going to Real Madrid, but maybe someone like him as well, unless he gets looked after."

"I'm sure we'll be talking about him in the same terms. He already is, probably."

Tottenham are level with Madrid atop Group H after three matches, while the Londoners are third in the Premier League as they prepare to host Liverpool on Sunday.

(Source: Four Four Two)

Pep Guardiola dedicates Man City win to imprisoned pro-Catalan leaders

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has dedicated his team's 2-1 Champions League win over Napoli to two pro-Catalan independence leaders imprisoned since Monday in Madrid for charges of sedition.

City triumphed at the Etihad stadium on Tuesday to make it three wins out of three in the competition and move three points clear of nearest rivals Shakhtar Donetsk at the top of Group F.

Ex-Barcelona player and coach Guardiola, who has been actively involved in the political campaign for pro-Catalan independence, had words of support for Jordi Sanchez and Jordi Cuixart, leaders of the Catalan National Assembly (ANC) and Omnium Cultural respectively.

Both were leading figures in an independence referendum on Oct. 1, which was deemed illegal by the Spanish government, and since appearing in Madrid's high court on Monday have been held in a Madrid jail without bail.

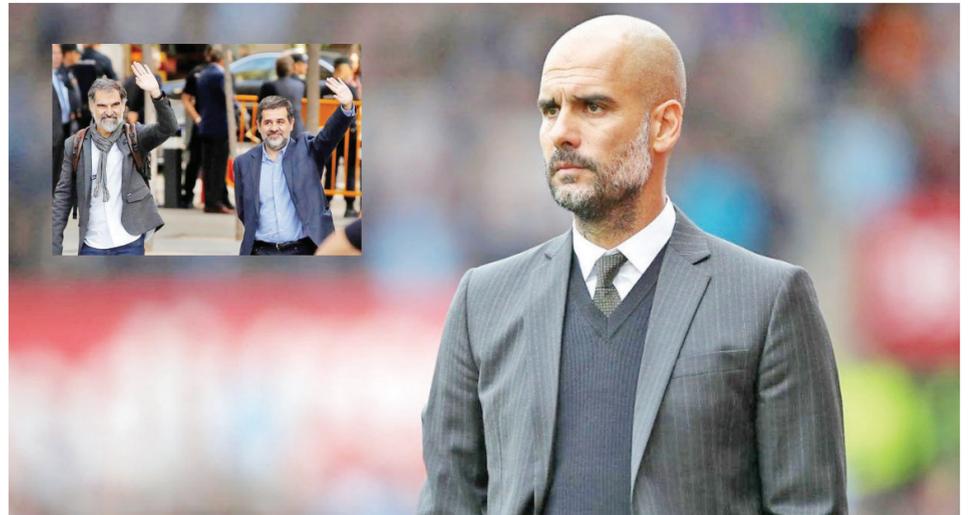
When asked about Sanchez and Cuixart at his post-match news conference, Guardiola said: "It's a good time to dedicate them this win."

Guardiola added: "We have shown in Catalonia that citizenship is bigger than any ideas. Omnium and ANC have always acted with civility, expressing their ideas of what we want. Right now the situation is as it is and we hope they can be released soon because right now it feels as if we all were there."

More than 200,000 people protested in Barcelona on Tuesday evening over the pair's detentions and other demonstrations are expected across Catalonia this week.

When Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde was asked if he was concerned that the political unrest in Catalonia would affect his team ahead of Wednesday's Champions League game against Olympiakos at the Camp Nou, he told a news conference: "People come here to watch the game, to have fun. Hopefully tomorrow [Wednesday] will be just the same. But if people do want to express themselves in any way, that won't affect us."

La Liga president Javier Tebas, meanwhile, has warned of the negative financial impact that an in-



dependent Catalonia would have on Spain's football leagues.

"La Liga would lose between 20 percent to 25 percent of its business volume if the Catalan clubs leave the tournament," Tebas told El Pais. "We would have to renegotiate all the TV contracts and have a [top-flight] league of 17 teams [without Barcelona, Espanyol and Girona]. I hope this will not happen. I can't imagine a league without Real Madrid and Barca [together]."

Since taking the helm of the Liga de Futbol Profesional (LFP) in 2013, Tebas has been working on strengthening the finances of the country's 42 first- and second-division teams and pushing for La Liga to catch the Premier League in order to match its economic strength.

"This crisis could throw away all the good work we have done in La Liga," said Tebas, who corrected Gerard Figueras, the sports secretary of Catalonia, that Catalan-based clubs -- Barca, Espanyol, Girona, Reus

and Nastic -- could choose which league they would like to play in if Catalonia was to claim independence from Spain.

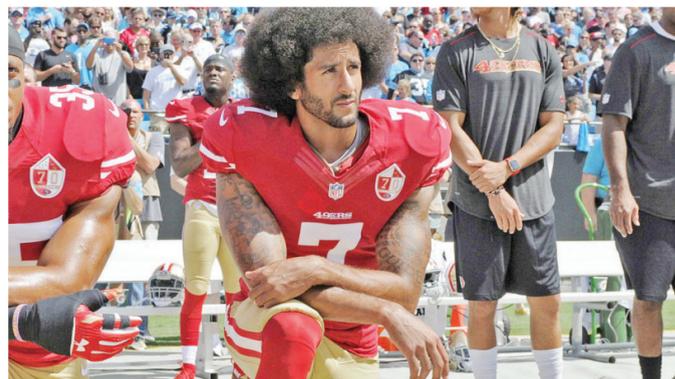
"It's not true what the sports secretary of the Generalitat Catalana said, that Catalan clubs can choose where to compete if Catalonia claims independence from Spain. The law is very clear and cannot be changed from one day to the next. It has to be respected."

"If there is an independent Catalonia and the Catalan federation leaves the Spanish federation, Catalan clubs will not be able to compete in the Spanish leagues."

"I cannot lie to people. I cannot lie to TV operators with whom we've had to suspend international courses that we had arranged for these days. We've suspended for 15 days the sale in Turkey, Singapore and India. It's not the best of times to sell (TV) rights."

(Source: ESPN)

Colin Kaepernick was 'not invited' to NFL talks about anthem protests



Colin Kaepernick was not invited to NFL talks about player protests during the national anthem despite other players wanting him there, his lawyers said.

"Other players wanted him present and have asked that he attend the next meeting with the goal of forging a lasting and faithful consensus around these issues. Mr Kaepernick is open to future participation on these important discussions."

In an earlier joint statement with the players' union, the NFLPA, the league said it had been agreed that promoting equality was among "common issues", and pledged to meet again "to continue this work together".

"As we said last week, everyone who is part of our NFL community has a tremendous respect for our country, our flag, our anthem and our military," the statement read.

"In the best American tradition, we are coming together to find common ground and commit to the hard work required for positive change."

He has filed a grievance against team owners he believes are conspiring not to hire him because of his protests.

"Colin Kaepernick was not invited to attend today's meeting by any official

(Source: BBC)

That will be hard to beat - Klopp revels in record win



Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp hailed his team for their record-breaking win over Maribor and believes the 7-0 victory will be hard to top.

Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino scored braces to go with goals from Philippe Coutinho, Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain - his first for the club - and Trent Alexander-Arnold on Tuesday.

The win marked the biggest away victory by an English club in European Cup/Champions League history, overtaking Leeds United (6-0 over Lyn in 1969) and Manchester United (6-0 over Shamrock Rovers in 1957).

Klopp was delighted with his side's display, saying Liverpool's history could sometimes be a "backpack" for players.

"I was told immediately after the game, I had no idea actually," the German told a news conference.

"We spoke a few times about how the wonderful history of this club can

sometimes feel like a backpack so it's nice to write history, and it will probably be difficult to beat that."

"It's quite rare that you win 7-0 but it shows again we did unbelievably well. I think Maribor was quite confident before the game because of different reasons [and] because they are a very good team."

The big win was a huge boost for Liverpool, who are eighth in the Premier League after just three victories in eight.

Ahead of a trip to high-flying Tottenham on Sunday, Klopp said he hoped the win could lift his team.

"We try to use the result now, but the next game is against Tottenham so it's pretty likely it will not be a similar result," he said.

"But no problem, we have four or five days to recover and prepare for the game, so that's good and we are already looking forward to it."

(Source: Goal)

Chris Froome: 2018 Tour de France a 'massive challenge'

Chris Froome says he faces a "massive challenge" to win his fifth Tour de France, as the route for the 2018 race was announced on Tuesday.

The 105th edition will run from 7 to 29 July and be the shortest route of the 21st century, covering 3,329km.

It will start with a 195km stage from Noirmoutier-en-Lile and stage nine will include 21.7km of cobbled road. There is a return for the famous climb and finish up Alpe d'Huez on stage 12 and the shortest stage will be 65km.

Stage three will be a team time trial and the penultimate stage could be a potentially crucial hilly individual time trial from Saint-Pee-sur-Nivelle to Espelette.

"I wouldn't expect anything different from the organizers," said the 32-year-old, who has won the Tour in four of the past five years.

"It is a massive challenge for next year and a Tour de France that tests every aspect of cycling."



Britain's Mark Cavendish, who has 30 stage wins at the Tour de France and is chasing Eddy Merckx's record of 34, said the 2018 route was "absolutely brutal".

The 32-year-old withdrew from the 2017 tour after breaking his shoulder blade in a collision with Peter Sagan during the sprint finish on stage four.

"Some of the toughest stages I've ever seen," he said on Twitter, adding that he did not believe many sprinters would finish the race in Paris.

Only 15km of the race will take place outside France, when it goes into Spain on stage 16.

"We especially wanted to emphasize stage variety and the routes that may prove decisive, whilst combining legendary climbs with brand-new ascensions or ultra-dynamic formats, to provide a vision of modern and inspired cycling," said Tour director Christian Prudhomme.

At the announcement of the route, Froome was awarded the 2017 Velo d'Or - the Velo magazine rider of the year prize - for the third time after also claiming it in 2013 and 2015.

It is in recognition of becoming only the third man to win the Tour and Vuelta a Espana in the same year.

(Source: BBC)

What are the secrets of Iran's success in India?

With four wins from four matches, scoring 12 goals while conceding just two, Islamic Republic of Iran continued their unstoppable march through the FIFA U-17 World Cup India 2017 by defeating Mexico 2-1 in their Round of 16 encounter in Goa.

Reaching the last eight marks Team Melli's best result in the history of the competition and continues a remarkable few months of success.

Coach Abbas Chamanian's charges were the only team in the world to qualify for five different FIFA tournaments in 2016/2017 – an outstanding achievement unparalleled even by nations such as Brazil, Germany and France.

■ Iran before India 2017:

3 appearances
Best result: Round of 16
3 wins, 3 draws, 5 defeats
10 goals scored
14 goals conceded

■ Iran at India 2017:

Quarter-finals
4 wins
12 goals scored
2 goals conceded

What are the reasons behind Iran's success? In the search for answers, FIFA.com has discovered four particularly marked trends from their opening four matches.

■ 1. Super-fast switching

One thing that has been clear in every game is that Iran play out from a foundation of discipline.

If their opponents have the ball, all of the players often stay in their own half and close down the space.

"Our first objective is to keep a clean sheet," defensive maestro Taha Shariati (pictured above) told FIFA.com. "Our second objective is to score a goal, and our third objective is to defend our advantage and win the match."

The Asian side wait for a mistake and, once they win the ball, move it forward at lightning speed with just a few passes.

While pacy strikers Younes Delfi and Allahyar Sayyad come into their own as the target comes into view, the entire team can track back just as quickly if they lose possession.

■ 2. Solidarity and team spirit

Iran's selfless and passionate playing style is evident long before kick-off.

During the warm-up, substitutes applauded the starting 11 as they complete their final exercise. A few minutes later, a loud cheer of encouragement goes up from inside the changing room before the players make their way towards the pitch.



"We are one team, and we can only succeed with solidarity and team spirit!" said suspended captain Mohammad Ghoobeishavi (pictured above) in the mixed zone of the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium after watching the game from the stands.

■ 3. Control without possession

Team Melli have enjoyed less possession than their opponents in all four of their matches so far:

Iran 40 per cent – 60 per cent Guinea
Iran 43 per cent – 57 per cent Germany
Iran 48 per cent – 52 per cent Costa Rica
Iran 35 per cent – 65 per cent Mexico

Despite this, they have remained in control of every game.

"Although spending so much time behind the ball definitely saps your energy, we give our all for the team's success, and winning the match means we've achieved our goal," said Mohammad Sharifi, who dictates play in midfield alongside Ghoobeishavi and has already scored

two penalties in India.

■ 4. Strong players in key positions

While Sharifi shone in central midfield in Iran's first game, strike pair Sayyad (pictured below, left) and Delfi (pictured below, right) were the standout performers against Germany.

Ghoobeishavi was the team's lynchpin in the encounter with Costa Rica before goalkeeper Ali Gholam Zadeh kept Mexico at bay with a series of impressive saves.

Despite their overarching focus on teamwork, the Iranians have a healthy mix of genuinely strong individuals in several key positions that could yet allow them to go all the way in India.

"We have our sights set on the big goal of reaching the final and winning the World Cup," said Shariati.

One thing is certain – Iran are determined to continue making history with European champions Spain their next target.

(Source: AFC)

Persepolis fail to advance to AFC Champions League final



S P O R T S Iran's Persepolis failed to book a spot in the 2017 AFC Champions League final after being held by Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia on Tuesday.

Being beaten 4-0 in the first leg of the semi-final, Persepolis drew 2-2 with Al Hilal in Muscat's Sultan Qaboos Stadium.

Godwin Menshah gave the Iranian team the lead in the 16th minute with a header.

In the 30th minute, Omani referee Ahmed Abu Bakar Said Al Kaf made a

mistake awarding a penalty to Al Hilal. TV replays showed the Saudi Arabian player was brought down by Persepolis defender Mohammad Ansari outside the penalty area.

Omar Kharbin calmly chipped the resulting penalty past goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand.

Persepolis Nigerian striker was on target once again just after the hour mark but Kharbin ensured there would be no way back for Persepolis with 14 minutes on the clock.

Iran upsets Uruguay in FINA Water Polo Development Trophy



Press TV — Iran men's national water polo team has recorded its first victory at the 6th edition of the Fédération Internationale de Natation (FINA) World Men's Water Polo Development Trophy in Malta, defeating the Uruguayan squad.

On Tuesday and the opening day of the international tournament in the central Maltese town of Gzira, the Iranian athletes overcame their South American counterparts 15-8.

The 6th edition of the FINA World Men's Water Polo Development Trophy opened on October 17, and will conclude on October 22, 2017.

The Iranian team is scheduled to play against Tunisia in its second match on Wednesday.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is drawn with Malta, Tunisia and Uruguay in Group A.

Australia, Peru, Saudi Arabia and Singapore are in Group B.

(Source: The National)

Rafael Silva strike takes Urawa Red Diamonds through

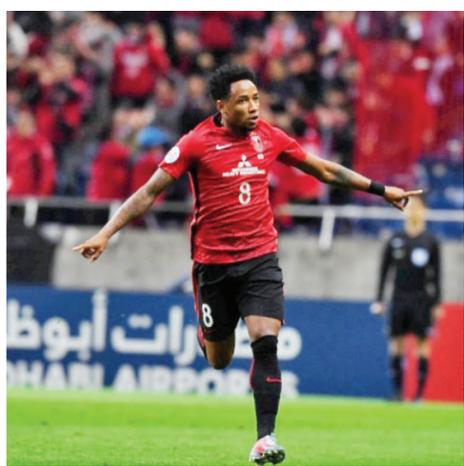
Urawa Red Diamonds will clash with Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia in the final of the 2017 AFC Champions League after they defeated China's Shanghai SIPG 1-0 in their semi-final second leg on Wednesday night to secure a 2-1 aggregate win.

Rafael Silva's 11th minute header decided a nail-biting tie at Saitama Stadium in Urawa's favour, sending the Japanese side into their first continental final since they won the competition in 2007.

It was actually SIPG who had the first chance of the evening as they looked for a crucial away goal, but Wu Lei sent his header from a Hulk free-kick straight at Urawa goalkeeper Shusaku Nishikawa after seven minutes.

Rafael Silva was more accurate with his aerial attempt four minutes later, getting to Yosuke Kashiwagi's outswinging corner ahead of Odil Ahmedov and nodding home via the palm of Yan Junling.

That goal served to enliven the hosts, and they could have doubled their lead in the 17th minute if Yuki Muto had been a little more accurate with an unmarked



header from close range after a whipped Wataru Endo cross from the right.

The second half was an incredibly tense affair with no margin for error, and despite plenty of possession SIPG struggled to create any clear-cut chances.

Urawa, on the other hand, went close on a couple of occasions – first as Tomoaki Makino headed another Kashiwagi corner onto the bar in the 56th minute and then as Yan tipped a Shinzo Koroki header over 12 minutes later.

The closest SIPG went was with 12 minutes remaining when yet another Hulk attempt from distance skidded off the slippery surface, causing Nishikawa to spill the ball to Elkeson, but the 'keeper reacted well to block the 2013 and 2015 champions' follow-up and ensure his side's safe passage.

Urawa will now travel to Riyadh for the first leg of the final against 2014 runners-up Al Hilal on November 18, before hosting the decisive second leg a week later, when they will hope to become the first Japanese side to win the AFC Champions League since Gamba Osaka in 2008.

(Source: AFC)

Persepolis coach Ivankovic blasts referee decisions

Tasnim — Iran's Persepolis head coach Branko Ivankovic blasted the referee's decision not to award them a penalty.

Persepolis was held to a 2-2 draw (6-2 on aggregate) by Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia and failed to reach the AFC Champions League final.

"In the first leg, the referee ruled out our correct goal for offside. In the second leg, the Omani referee had to award a penalty to us. Al Hilal player also fouled on our player before their second goal. Also, I believe that the referee should not award Al Hilal a penalty because our player brought down their player outside the area," Ivankovic said.

"I am happy with my players' performance. They met my expectations. We showed how wonderful we are and we are not afraid of any team."

"Persepolis made a big job reaching semifinals and I think we can move forward next season," the Croat added.

Iran reaches 2018 AFC Futsal Championship

Press TV — Iran men's national futsal team has posted its second resounding win in the 2018 Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Futsal Championship qualification tournament, and found a place in next year's international tournament.

On Tuesday evening, the Iranians, who had defeated Afghanistan 8-2 in their opening Group B fixture of the South & Central Zone in Shahid Poursharifi Arena of the north-western Iranian city of Tabriz two days earlier, routed the Tajik side 12-2.

Farhad Tavakoli, Abolghasem Orouji, Mehran Alighadr and Mehdi Javid scored a brace each for the Iranian squad, domestically known as Team Melli Futsal.

Tohid Lotfi, Shahab Talebi, Saeed Ahmad Abbasi and Ali Asghar Hassanzadeh jabbed a goal apiece.

Asian powerhouse Iran had been pitted against Afghanistan and Tajikistan in Group B of the South & Central Zone of the 2018 AFC Futsal Championship qualification.

The 2018 AFC Futsal Championship, which will be the 15th edition of the games, will take place between February 6 and 18 next year in Chinese Taipei.

Team Melli Futsal holds a record of 11 championship titles, and the team has enjoyed much success in recent years.

Retired Usain Bolt set for return to the track

Usain Bolt is set to trade the running track for the race track after he was confirmed as the official starter for the United States Grand Prix.

The eight-time Olympic champion, who hung up his running spikes following August's World Championships in London, will give the signal to Lewis Hamilton and Co to start their formation lap ahead of Sunday's race in Austin.

Hamilton, who could clinch his fourth world championship this weekend, is also set to drive Bolt round the 3.4-mile Circuit of the Americas track in a Mercedes-AMG road car two hours before the start of the grand prix.

As part of a star-studded line-up thrown together by Formula One's American owners Liberty Media for their first grand prix on home soil, boxing announcer Michael Buffer will introduce Hamilton and the rest of the pack one-by-one as they make their way on to the grid ahead of Sunday's race.

F1's new owners have also taken the unprecedented step of changing the sport's schedule to accommodate a Justin Timberlake concert.

Pop star Timberlake is due to perform at the circuit on Saturday evening – and following a request by promoters of the Texas race – qualifying will be moved back by two hours. It means the one-hour session that determines the grid will now take place at 4pm local time.

F1 fans in the UK will be forced to wait until 10pm to watch the action unfold, rather than the original 8pm start.

"We continue to layer in new elements at each grand prix and this innovative driver presentation format seemingly was an appropriate addition for Austin," said F1's American commercial chief Sean Bratches.

(Source: The National)

Rafael Nadal withdraws from Basel with knee problem

World number one Rafa Nadal has withdrawn from the upcoming Basel indoors tournament due to a knee issue, the Spaniard has said.

With the ATP Finals coming up next month, Nadal said on his Facebook page he had made the decision to pull out of next week's Basel tournament after getting medical advice.

Nadal's 16-match winning streak was ended in the Shanghai Masters final on Sunday by world number two Roger Federer, who will now have the chance to make up some ground in the rankings chase.

"I sadly announce that I have to pull out of the Swiss Indoors Basel, after seeing my doctor in Spain just after landing from Shanghai," said Nadal on Tuesday.

"I am suffering from an overstretching of the knee and the problems where already present at the tournament in Shanghai which now forces me to take a time off on advice of my doctor."

Nadal, 31, leads Federer by 1,960 points in the rankings but the 36-year-old Swiss can gain 500 points if he wins at Basel with another 1,000 up for grabs at the Paris Masters.

Their battle for the year-end top spot could go down to the wire with the winner of the season-ending ATP Finals, which will be held from Nov. 12 to 19 in London, to receive up to 1,500 points.

Nadal and Federer have each won six titles this year, splitting the four grand slams between them.

(Source: Eurosport)

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Two literati from Iran attend Sarajevo Poetry Days

CULTURE TEHRAN — Two Iranian literati, Gholamreza Tariqi and Hamidreza Shekarsari, are in Bosnia-Herzegovina to attend the Sarajevo Poetry Days.

Introduced by Iran's Poetry and Fiction Foundation, Shekarsari delivered his speech on Wednesday and Tariqi will give his speech today, the organizers have announced on the website.



This combination photo shows Iranian writers Gholamreza Tariqi (L) and Hamidreza Shekarsari.

The Sarajevo Poetry Days has been one of the most important cultural events in Southeast Europe since 1962.

Writers, literary critics, and translators from Bosnia, Croatia, Germany, Serbia, Macedonia and Turkey are attending the six-day festival, which opened on Tuesday.

"No Date, No Signature" to compete in Stockholm festival

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Vahid Jalilvand's acclaimed drama "No Date, No Signature" will be screened at the 28th Stockholm International Film Festival.

The film won two top prizes — best director award for Jalilvand



A scene from "No Date, No Signature" by Vahid Jalilvand.

and best actor award for its star Navid Mohammadzadeh — in the Orizzonti section at the 74th Venice International Film Festival in September.

It tells the story of Dr. Nariman, a forensic pathologist who has a car accident with a motorcyclist and injures his 8-year-old son. He offers to take the child to a clinic nearby, but the father refuses his help and money. The next morning, in the hospital where he works, Dr. Nariman finds out that the little boy has been brought for an autopsy after a suspicious death.

The festival also will screen four more Iranian films.

"A Man of Integrity" by Mohammad Rasuloof, "Disappearance" by Ali Asgari and "Searing Summer" by Ebrahim Irajzad will go on screen in the main section of the festival, while "Retouch" by Kaveh Mazaheri will compete in the short film category.

The Stockholm International Film Festival will run from November 8 to 19.

Iranian authors, illustrator to attend Belgrade book fair

A R T TEHRAN — Two Iranian authors and an illustrator are scheduled to attend the 62nd Belgrade International Book Fair, the Iran Cultural Fairs Institute (ICFI) announced on Wednesday.

Authors Mohammadreza Bayrami and Mohammad Keshavarz and illustrator Amir Shabani Purfumanii will promote their latest offerings at the fair, which will be held in the Serbian capital from October 22 to 29.

The ICFI also plans to display a collection of books introducing the literature, art and culture of Iran at Iran's pavilion.

Iran was the guest of honor at the last edition of the Belgrade International Book Fair.

Goethe-Institut London to review Sohrab Shahid-Saless films

A R T TEHRAN — The desk Goethe-Institut London plans to review works by Sohrab Shahid-Saless, a seminal figure of the Iranian New Wave cinema, during a program that will begin on November 4.

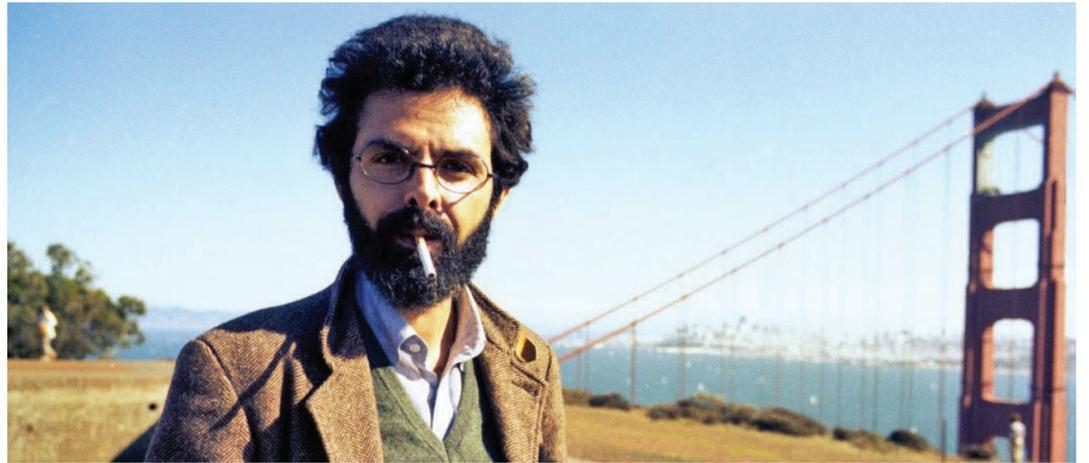
Shahid-Saless left his homeland in the mid-1970s to pursue his career in West Germany, where he made an original lineup of works for cinema and television.

"Far From Home", the opening film of the program titled "Sohrab Shahid-Saless: Exiles", is about the life of the Turkish guest worker Hussein in 1970s Berlin.

The program, which is organized in collaboration with the Munich Film Museum, will go on with screening "Black and White" and "A Simple Event" on November 9.

"Still Life", "Utopia", "Coming of Age", "Order", "The Willow Tree", "Hans — a Young Man in Germany", "Diary of a Lover", "Changeling" and "The Long Vacation of Lotte H. Eisner" will also be screened.

The program will come to an end with a one-day conference on Shahid-Saless. The U.S.-based Iranian scholar Professor Hamid Naficy of the Northwestern School



Iranian filmmaker Sohrab Shahid-Saless in an undated photo

of Communication will be the keynote speaker at the conference.

"In meditative but searing images of everyday life, his slow-paced films tell simple stories that speak forcefully to the traumas of homelessness and

displacement," the organizers have written about Shahid-Saless, who called himself a "guest worker" after moving to West Germany.

"They are more urgent than ever today," they noted.

Azadeh Fatehrad and Nikolaus Perneczky are the curators of the program that is also supported by the Visual and Material Culture Research Centre, Kingston University, and the Iran Heritage Foundation and Arts Council of England.

Noriyuki Haraguchi visits "Oil Pool" in Tehran after 40 years



Japanese artist Noriyuki Haraguchi (L) takes a glance at "Oil Pool", his sculpture on display at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMCA), on October 17, 2017. An unidentified person is also in the photo.

A R T TEHRAN — Japanese artist Noriyuki Haraguchi visited his "Oil Pool" sculpture at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMCA) 40 years after making the sculpture.

Haraguchi who has been invited by the TMCA to carry out restoration of "Oil Pool" expressed his hope that the museum would preserve the artwork for many years to come, the TMCA announced in a press release on Wednesday.

He also held a meeting with TMCA director Ali-Mohammad Zare' and

said that the culture of Iran and Japan enjoy a common perception, which causes the museum to keep the artwork.

Zare' also expressed happiness over the artist's visit to the museum and said that the restoration would help the sculpture remain at the museum for a long time.

"Oil Pool" was exhibited to great acclaim at "Documenta 6" in the German city of Kassel in 1977 and was soon afterwards acquired by the TMCA, where it remains installed to this day.

Rendezvous with Madness festival to screen movies from Iran

A R T TEHRAN — The 25th edition of the Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival, which will be held in Toronto, Canada from November 3 to 11, will screen two Iranian films.

Mehrdad Oskui's acclaimed documentary "Starless Dreams" will be screened on November 5 and Hossein Kondori's drama "Nobody Dies Here" will go on screen on November 7.

"Starless Dreams", which has been awarded at many international events, shows the lives of seven young teenage girls sharing temporary quarters at a rehabilitation and detention center on the outskirts of Tehran.



A scene from "Nobody Dies Here" by Hossein Kondori

"Nobody Dies Here" is about a young conscript, Ashkan, who is sent to a distant, isolated frontier where he lives alone to complete his military service. Left for weeks with nothing but his memories and fears to keep him company, Ashkan begins to wonder whether he's losing his grip on reality.

The Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival is the first and largest mental health film festival in the world, which organizes review sessions after each screening, which is being attended by filmmakers, mental health professionals and people who have lived through mental health experiences.

Amazon Studios chief resigns after harassment allegations

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Amazon Studios (AMZN.O) chief Roy Price has resigned, a company spokeswoman said on Tuesday, following allegations that he harassed a producer and took no action when an actress told him she was sexually assaulted by producer Harvey Weinstein.

Price went on a leave of absence last week and Albert Cheng, the studio's chief operating officer, remains interim head of the division, the spokeswoman said.

Price did not return requests for comment.

Many women have shared their experiences of mistreatment on social media using the hashtag #MeToo, in the wake of allegations of harassment against Weinstein in reports this month by The New York Times and The New Yorker.

Weinstein has denied having non-consensual sex with anyone.

The Hollywood Reporter last week reported an allegation by Isa Hackett, a producer on one of Amazon.com Inc's shows, that Price had lewdly propositioned her in 2015.

On Tuesday, a lawyer for Hackett confirmed the allegations.

"I'm pleased Amazon is taking steps to address the issues," Hackett said in a statement on Tuesday. "An important conversation has begun about the need to create a culture in our industry which values respect and decency and rejects the abuse of power and dehumanizing treatment of others."

The accusations against Price represented a rare scandal for the online retailer.

"This is a necessary move because of the sexual harassment allegation, but I think it's a convenient excuse to replace him," said Michael Pachter, an analyst at Wedbush Securities.

Amazon fared poorly for its original TV shows at last month's Primetime Emmy Awards. Pachter said the company has appealed to elite, liberal tastes with its original TV lineup but has lacked "content that has mass appeal."

Amazon did not reply to requests for comment.

Amazon is investing some \$4.5 billion this year on video content. The company has said it hopes original shows will encourage people to sign up for its streaming and shopping club Prime.

YouTube debuts comedy video series in virtual reality push

NEW YORK (Reuters) — YouTube virtual reality video series "The Confessional" debuted on Tuesday, featuring comedians Trevor Noah, Judd Apatow and Howie Mandel, as parent company Google races Facebook Inc to attract viewers to the new medium.

Google, a unit of Alphabet Inc, has boosted funding for virtual reality video producers since it unveiled in October the \$79 Daydream View headset, which straps a smartphone display close to a user's eyes for stereoscopic video.

About 500,000 immersive videos are available on YouTube, and the streaming service plans to increase the titles and genres.

"Nearly half the time in VR headsets is spent in video," Julia Hamilton Trost, partner development manager at Google VR, said in an interview. "We need to give creators tools to make VR content more easily, then also partner with people to push content to the platform as well."

An undisclosed Google grant to production company Felix & Paul Studios in Montreal funded the creation of "The Confessional." In

seven, minutes-long episodes over the next few weeks, comedians and YouTube stars including Lilly Singh and Grace Helbig will confess about embarrassing and awkward moments in their lives such as first dates gone wrong.

Felix & Paul Studios proposed the idea to Google a few months ago and filmed at Montreal's Just for Laughs comedy festival in July.

Underscoring the infancy of the medium, Felix & Paul co-founder Paul Raphael said "The Confessional" marked the first time in four years that the studio felt comfortable cutting between shots in a video without disturbing the immersive experience. Jumps can be jarring to viewers, especially when wearing a virtual reality headset, he said.

Felix & Paul benefits from government tax credits and venture capital, but most of its work is funded by Facebook or Google. Facebook announced in May plans to spend \$50 million on virtual reality content, excluding video games, over an undisclosed period.