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OPEC not an organization to receive instruction from Trump: Zanganeh

ECONOMY TEHRAN — "OPEC is not the organization to receive instruction from President Trump", Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh stated.
 "OPEC is not part of the Department of Energy of the United States," the Iranian minister told reporters on Tuesday after arriving in Vienna, where OPEC is headquartered, Reuters reported.
 Zanganeh also said that he does not expect OPEC to reach an agreement when the oil producer group holds policy discussions this week. **→4**

Iran produces 22 types of biologic medicines

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iran has already gained the capability of producing biologic medicines and in this regard 22 types of biologic medicines have been produced in the country over the past two years, IRNA quoted deputy health minister as saying.
 Reza Malekzadeh made the remarks at the opening ceremony of the 18th Asian Clinical Pharmacy Congress which was held on June 20-22 at Tehran's Razi international conference center.
 Referring to the high production costs of biologic medicines, he stated that "the use of biologic medicines to the current extent would not be possible, if they were not produced in the country".
 One of the most important plans the Ministry of Health has prepared for the future is to reduce the medicine imports by promoting domestic production, he remarked. **→12**

U.S. withdraws from UN Human Rights Council over anti-Israel bias

The United States has announced its withdrawal from the United Nation Human Rights Council (UNHRC) over what it calls the body's entrenched bias against Israel.
 The announcement was made by the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley alongside the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo at the State Department in Washington on Tuesday.
 The U.S. administration accused the UNHRC of hypocrisy and harshly denounced the 47-nation body as biased against Tel Aviv.
 "For too long the Human Rights Council has been a protector of human rights abusers and a cesspool of political bias. Regrettably, it is now clear that our call for reform was not headed," Haley said. **→13**

EDITORIAL
Mohammad Ghaderi
 Tehran Times editor-in-chief
 @ghaderi62

A contemplation on Washington-Beijing Trade War

The decision of the Trump's government to start its research on the devastating effects of China's measures on the American economy has led to a sharp reaction by the new generation of Beijing Communists. It is clear to everyone that Donald Trump and his companions at the White House have challenged the "open doors" policy of Mao's sons. What attracts the attention more than anything else amid this conflict, is the insistence of the U.S. president on protectionist policies on one side, and Beijing's resistance to these policies on the other side. In other words, Washington and Beijing are going to enter a full-fledged trade war during the presidency of Donald Trump. What has happened so far has only provided the basis for such a controversy. Here are some point that need to be taken into consideration:

Firstly, the withdrawal of the United States from multilateral trade rules in the international system, and the insistence on unilateral economic protectionism, is the result of a special outlook which is dominant at the White House ruling. Economic unilateralism and the pursuit of protectionist policies are two main indicators of Trump's economic approach in the field of global trade and international economics. Obviously, Trump will firmly stand against the Chinese charges of unilateral protectionism. Beyond that, Trump knows well that if he can institutionalize his unilateral protectionist policies within the eight years of his possible presence at the White House, next American governments will have a very difficult job to change this irregular (but smart) structure. Therefore, the charge of "protectionism" can't force Trump to retreat from its economic policies towards Beijing and other powerful international players.

The second point is that Trump has entered a new economic confrontation with Beijing which relies on the possible violation of intellectual property rights and other issues related to technology. Pursuing his goals, Trump didn't resort to changing exchange rates, creating administrative and bureaucratic barriers, anti-dumping laws, direct subsidies to U.S. domestic companies, import quotas, and most importantly, customs tariffs. **→7**

Trump has no political philosophy: Askari

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
 By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Hossein Askari, an expert on Saudi Arabia who also teaches international business at the George Washington University, tells the Tehran Times that "Trump is full of contradictions. He has no political philosophy."
 Hossein Askari, who teaches at George Washington University, tells the Tehran Times that "Trump is not a traditional Republican—the Party of Lincoln. He has destroyed the Republican Party as we have known it. He has used the party to promote his own personal agenda."
 Following is the text of the interview:

■ Is "Trumpism" a school of thought in the United States? Can the current president of the United States produce a political or philosophical thought in the field of American social and foreign policy?

A: Trumpism is not a school of thought and never will be. It is a combination of destroying American institutions, dividing Americans, dividing families, encouraging anarchy, catering to misinformed and angry white men, re-enforcing racism, spouting empty slogans that appear to put America "first" but in reality promote Trump and his family in their quest to secure more wealth. When Americans finally wake up from what has just happened, Trumpism will be relegated to the trash heap of history.

■ Trump has repeatedly stated that he is not a Republican. In your opinion, what is the current political affiliation of Trump?

A: Trump is not a traditional Republican—the Party of Lincoln. He has destroyed the Repub-

lican Party as we have known it. He has used the party to promote his own personal agenda. It will take decades for the party to become a shadow of itself.

■ The president of the United States has used his own cabinet of neoconservatives, such as John Bolton. This is while he previously described himself as George W. Bush's sharp opponents. How do you evaluate this contradiction?

A: Trump is full of contradictions. He has no political philosophy. He uses Bolton, a neocon hawk, in his attempt to convey a tough guy image to Americans. A great deal of bluster."

■ If we think of Trump as a Republican, which spectrum of the Republican Party is closer his conception of the Republican Party? (T-party, Neoconservatives or Traditional Republicans)

A: 75% T-party and 25% Neocon. **→7**

The gradual death of Saudis dream to dominate Al Hudaydah

By Ramin Hossein Abadian

TEHRAN — It's been a few days since the launch of large-scale and aggressive operation of the Saudi-led coalition in the strategic port of al-Hudaydah. The Saudi-led coalition has suffered a miscalculation in its estimates of the security and military conditions governing Yemen's development. The Saudis and their allies, in the form of an all-out war against the defenseless and innocent people of Yemen, thought they would be able to take over the strategic port of al-Hudaydah in a short time.

The Saudis-led coalition, with the aim of covering up their past defeats in the battle with the Yemeni army and popular committees, headed by the forces of Ansarullah, entered the al-Hudaydah campaign. When Saudi Arabia and its

allies failed to overcome Yemeni forces over the course of more than three years during aerial and terrestrial battles, they decided to enter the sea and set targets through the waterways in Yemen. Al-Hudaydah port was the best option for the attacks of the Saudis.

Although Saudi-led coalition have organized numerous attacks over the past days on Yemeni forces and infrastructure, the fact is that they have failed to dominate al-Hudaydah as well as other Yemeni regions and strategic cities. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have not achieved much other than domination of the province of Aden in Yemen. Far from the Yemeni capital, Aden is a province that is virtually impossible to access Yemen's critical through it.

Saudi-led coalition's large-scale attacks have targeted Yemen's al-Hudaydah while human rights organizations and institutions in the region and world, warn about the serious consequences of the attacks. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has also announced that the lives of some 350,000 Yemeni children are at stake. The Red Cross said that the attacks would end up with a lot of human tragedies.

Robert Mardini, the regional director for the Near and Middle East for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), in a conversation with Reuters that what's called a "great battle" for attacking al-Hudaydah could turn into a humanitarian catastrophe in the region, because it's one of the areas which has very high population density. **→7**

PERSPECTIVE
Mostafa Mousavi Sabet
 Head of the Tehran Times
 Art & Culture Desk

Iran's Russian concerts, carrying coals to Newcastle

An ensemble composed of musicians from the Tehran Symphony Orchestra and National Orchestra put on two concerts last Thursday and Sunday in Saint Petersburg, Moscow and Kazan.

Ali Torabi, the director of the Music Office of Iran's Ministry Culture and Islamic Guidance, and Ali-Akbar Safipur, the director of Rudaki Foundation, the main organizers of the concerts, also accompanied the orchestra during the concerts.

They held a meeting with Margarita Karatygina, the director of the International Cooperation Department of the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory, who made sharp, dismissive remarks suggesting that the performances seemed like carrying coals to Newcastle.

"In symphonic music, Iran is following the path that Russia took during the eighteenth century," she said.

"We understand this fact that Iranians want to apprehend symphonic music and acquire it," she added.

"It is difficult for Iranians mentally and physiologically to learn this type of music and how to use it, but if they learn to do it, they will be able to perform easily European symphonic music," Karatygina noted.

Tehran Symphony Orchestra conductor Shahrdad Rohani had previously said that the concerts were designed to show off the ability of the selection of musicians from two major Iranian orchestras in performing pieces by Russian composers in Russia.

However, he and his colleagues preferred to keep mum about Karatygina's remarks, enjoying their journey to Russia, which is currently hosting the FIFA World Cup with its colorful visitors.

In an open letter sent to Persian media earlier in April, former Tehran Symphony Orchestra conductor Ali Rahbari, who has worked with over 100 European orchestras, warned Iran's cultural officials about their plan to perform the concerts in Russia.

He described the decision as taking coal to Newcastle and said that the performance would not receive any public welcome in the country, which is home to numerous professional orchestras. **→16**



Iran fans celebrating the upcoming game

Iranian fans cheering Team Melli players prior to the Iran-Spain football game in Kazan, Russia, on Wednesday.

Jubilant Fans! Some wrapped themselves in the Persian flag and others waved the national flag enthusiastically, as they counted down to watch the game.

Iran secured a goal against Morocco on June 15, in an amazing, breathtaking game in the World Cup.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Zarif responds to Pompeo's list of demands

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has written an article in response to a list of 12 demands set by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for Iran on Tehran's nuclear program, ballistic missile tests and foreign policy.

According to Mehr news agency, Zarif's response to his American counterpart was expected to be published by Iranian media outlets on Thursday.

Back in May, Pompeo demanded that all of Iran's ballistic missile program be halted, that Iran must completely shut down its nuclear enrichment, and that it must desist its foreign policy over regional countries.



Iran, France stress implementation of nuclear deal

POLITICS TEHRAN — The 5th round of Iran-France political consultations was held on Wednesday in Tehran between the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs of France Maurice Gourdault-Montagne on one side and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araqchi on the other.

During the meeting, the two sides stressed the importance of full implementation of the Iran nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and exchanged views about regional and international issues, Mehr reported.

They agreed on the necessity of immediate implementation of political solutions to regional issues, especially the Yemen crisis and the fight against terrorism.



Kazem Gharib Abadi named Iran's ambassador to IAEA

POLITICS TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani appointed on Wednesday Kazem Gharib Abadi as Iran's new representative to the international organizations, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in Vienna.

The appointment was made upon a proposal by Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Mehr reported.

Prior to being appointed to the post, Gharib Abadi was Iran's ambassador to the Netherlands, ambassador and permanent representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and deputy secretary-general of the High Council for Human Rights on international affairs.

Gharib Abadi is replacing Reza Najafi in his new post.



Iran appoints new ambassador to Bern prior to Rouhani's visit

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran has appointed a new ambassador to Bern, weeks before President Hassan Rouhani's visit to Switzerland at the official invitation of his Swiss counterpart Alain Berset, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

Mohammad-Reza Haji-Karim-Jabbari has been appointed as Iran's new ambassador to Bern. This is while the last time Iran had an ambassador to Bern was nearly 4 years ago.

In a Monday statement, the Swiss government announced that President Rouhani is expected to visit Switzerland in early July and will be welcomed by President Berset in Zurich.



Iranian Army overhauls F-4 fighter jet

POLITICS TEHRAN — Experts at the Iranian Air Force have successfully overhauled an F-4 fighter jet, rendering it airworthy, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

The overhaul was carried out at the Shahid Lashkari Air Force Base in northern Tehran Province, using up to 18,500 man-hour works. After undergoing final tests, the aircraft was returned to the Ari Force's fleet.

The Global Firepower List 2018 has ranked various countries in accordance with their defensive strength, placing the Islamic Republic on the 13th position above Israel and Saudi Arabia.



Three Iranian prisoners pardoned in Oman

POLITICS TEHRAN — On the occasion of Eid ul-Fitr three Iranian prisoners in Oman were pardoned and released by Sultan Qaboos.

Iran's embassy in Muscat said on Tuesday that two of the prisoners were charged with drug trafficking and the third one was held for illegal entry to Oman's territorial waters, IRNA reported.

In year 2011, Sultan Qaboos pardoned all 80 Iranian prisoners in Oman and they returned home.

Currently around 100 Iranians are imprisoned in Oman. They are mainly charged with narcotics trafficking.

Europe's proposals not enough to save nuclear deal: Salehi

POLITICS TEHRAN — The director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has voiced doubts about the future of the 2015 nuclear agreement after the U.S. pullout from the deal, saying proposals put forward by the European countries to safeguard the nuclear pact are not satisfying for the Islamic Republic.

Ali Akbar Salehi made the comments in a Wednesday meeting with United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in Oslo, Tasnim reported.

"If it continues like this, all sides will lose," Salehi warned.

Salehi denounced as "destructive" Washington's policies toward the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the official name for the nuclear pact, saying such policies are "doomed to failure".

Last month, U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew the United State from the JCPOA and vowed to impose "the highest level" of economic sanctions on Tehran, drawing strong criticisms from the remaining parties and the international community.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also threatened Iran with the "strongest sanctions in history" if it did not comply with a list of steep demands, including ending uranium enrichment.

The top nuclear official further said the



benefits from the JCPOA in the fields of economy, banking and investment do not live up to Iran's expectations, calling on the advocates of the pact, including the UN and European states, to stand up to Trump's hostile stance.

UN chief: Nuclear deal key to global security

Guterres, for his part, underlined the need to save the JCPOA despite the U.S. withdrawal, saying the multinational agreement is key to ensuring global security.

He said he is in talks with the remaining parties on the future of the nuclear agreement, voicing his full support for the deal.

Guterres further stressed that the nuclear deal plays a significant role in protecting international peace and the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Tehran's political and economic expectations from the European Union are understandable, the world's top diplomat said, adding that he would call on the remaining JCPOA parties to seriously respond to Iran's demands.

The two officials were in the Norwegian capital to attend the 16th edition of the Oslo Forum, which brings together every year international conflict mediators, high-level decision-makers and other peace process actors in informal retreats for discussions on global challenges and experience sharing.

Speaking to reporters upon his arrival in Norway on Monday, Salehi vowed to defend Iran's national interests "in the best way" at the Oslo Forum.

"Certainly, the JCPOA will be one the most important issues which will be discussed and we will declare Iran's positions explicitly and transparently," he said, according to Press TV.

Iran has repeatedly said it will remain committed to the JCPOA as long as the European Union as well as China and Russia safeguard its benefits from the deal.

Domestic laws should replace intl. conventions

"Some international conventions are unclear and contain problems"

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Leader of the Islamic Revolution has cast doubt upon the view that jointing the convention on Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) may go without problems for Iran, calling it unnecessary to join such a convention.

"There is no reason why we should accept for their good points something that we do not know where it leads and even know to contain some problems," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a meeting with parliamentarians on Wednesday.

"Big powers draft such treaties according to their interests and expediency. Then governments which are aligned with them, or fear them, or follow them, ratify these conventions in their own countries."

"Then if an independent country like the Islamic Republic rejects it, they attack it and say why it does not ratify it while 150 countries already have," the Leader said, Fars reported.

He nevertheless underlined that "some of these treaties have positive points... The solution is that the Majlis defines rules of its own. For example a law on fighting money laundering; a law on fighting terrorism."

Iran's parliament on June 10 decided to suspend debates on joining the CFT for two months until negotiations with the European Union on the fate of the 2015 nuclear agreement becomes clear.

The decision came after 50 MPs issued a statement calling for suspending discussion on the bill for two months. 138 out of 253 MPs present in the parliament voted in

favor of the proposal and 6 parliamentarians voted against.

Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani told the open session of the parliament then that the administration agreed with the suspension.

Reformist MP Gholamreza Tajgardoost said that the decision would provide the administration with an opportunity to announce to Europe that it should give essential guarantees to preserve the 2015 nuclear deal.

"The administration will have two months to negotiate with Europe," Tajgardoost said.

On May 8, U.S. President Donald Trump officially withdrew from the UN-endorsed nuclear agreement and plans

The issue of separating several thousand children from their mothers in America is no small thing... How can they be convinced over a policy, a procedure, to initiate such wrong and criminal overture of separating several thousand kids from their mothers?

to reimpose sanctions on Iran.

Iran has warned the remaining parties to the nuclear agreement — the European Union, E3 (Germany, France and Britain), Russia and China — that if its interests are not guaranteed it will not remain in the deal.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Leader raised voice against the United States' separating children of immigrants at border.

"The issue of separating several thousand children from their mothers in America is no small thing. It is a very big issue. One cannot bear to listen on television to these kids crying. How can they be convinced over a policy, a procedure, to initiate such wrong and criminal overture of separating several thousand kids from their mothers?"

He added: "This is who they are. This is who they are. These are the same several big, advanced powers which, equipped with modern arms, took to the sea to face the people of Yemen to take from them a port city which is their only passage to breath. They kill people without a doubt. This is who they are."

"They are not bad only to the Islamic Republic. They are innately oppressive people. They are the creatures of systems of oppression. And yes, since the Islamic Republic seeks justice, boasts of Islam, and boasts of defending the oppressed, they will severely oppose her and renege as they do. One should stand up against this. We should stay firm and make sure that with the help of Almighty God, the Iranian nation will gain victory over America and the enemies."

Iran's Kharrazi urges EU to stand up to U.S. pressure



POLITICS TEHRAN — Former Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi who currently serves as the chairman of the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations has called on European countries to show unity in the face of U.S. pressure and save the Iran nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Kharrazi made the remarks after a meeting with Italian Foreign Minister Enzo Moavero Milanesi on Wednesday, as the two sides discussed various issues including the fate of the JCPOA, bilateral ties and regional and international developments.

President Donald Trump announced the U.S. pullout from the JCPOA last month. Iran has warned the remaining parties to the deal that if its economic interests are not guaranteed under the agreement it will remove the cap on its nuclear activities.

"Iran always seeks the European Union's solid guarantees with regard to the JCPOA," Kharrazi said. "We have said that the European Union's mere political po-

sitions are not sufficient."

Kharrazi also said as Iran's first and leading trade partner, Italy is making great efforts to abide by the implementation of the JCPOA.

"I hope that Iran and Italy will continue to make every effort to expand and broaden their bilateral relations," added Kharrazi who was Iran's chief diplomat from 1997 to 2005.

Milanesi also said after the meeting that his country supports the JCPOA in the wake of the U.S. withdrawal from the multilateral accord.

He underscored the European Union's firm position on full implementation of the JCPOA, calling the JCPOA an important deal for non-proliferation of nuclear weapons which can guarantee peace and security at regional and international levels.

Kharrazi is also scheduled to meet with high-ranking officials in Vatican, and depart for Spain to confer on a range of bilateral issues with the new Spanish administration.

Saudi-led coalition to lose more if war on Yemen continues: Velayati



Ali Akbar Velayati, an international adviser to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, hailed recent victories of the Yemeni army and Houthi fighters against the Saudi-led coalition and said the alliance will suffer more if it continues the "unequal war".

"The Yemenis' situation is triumphant and we are witnessing their advances every day," Velayati told reporters in Tehran on Wednesday.

"The role of the Houthis and the resistant army of Yemen has been very influential, so that after three years of bombardment (by the Saudi-led coalition), today, they are much stronger than the first day of the war," he added.

"The Emiratis and Saudis should know that if they continue this unequal war, they will suffer more than today," the top adviser went on to say.

The remarks came as the Saudi-led coalition and its mercenaries have launched massive attacks since June 13 to bring Yemen's port city of al-Hudaydah under their control, but have failed to achieve

their objective due to Yemenis' resistance.

The United States, Britain and France have backed the coalition in the Yemen conflict and keep providing weapons to both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

While the Yemeni army and popular committees are fighting off the assailants and countering attacks on residential areas, international humanitarian organizations have warned of dire consequences of any escalation of violence around Hudaydah.

UN Humanitarian Coordinator Lise Grande recently said "as many as 250,000 people may lose everything—even their lives," if there is a military attack on Hudaydah.

Since March 2015, Saudi Arabia and some of its Arab allies have been carrying out airstrikes against the Houthi Ansarullah movement in an attempt to restore power to fugitive former president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi, a close ally of Riyadh.

(Source: Tasnim)

Rouhani's cabinet to be joined by young, new faces

POLITICS TEHRAN — In the run-up to a cabinet reshuffle, the presidential chief of staff announced on Wednesday that President Hassan Rouhani plans to add "young and new faces" to his cabinet.

Speaking to reporters after a cabinet meeting, Mahmoud Vaezi said plans are underway to divide

up certain ministries and add another one.

The changes are part of reforms by Rouhani aimed at achieving better governing performance. The reshuffle must still be approved by parliament.

Currently there are 18 ministries.

Vaezi said following Rouhani's promise of new moves for the youth, the National Youth Organization will

come out of the umbrella of the Ministry of Sports and Youths and itself becomes a ministry.

He also said a ministry of commerce will come off the existing Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Commerce.

Vaezi also hoped that a ministry of housing is derived from the existing Ministry of Transport and Urban Development to tackle housing problems.

Europe's democrats must unite to prevent a far-right takeover

By Natalie Nougavrière

The battle lines are now drawn for Europe's ultimate test: the May 2019 elections for the European Parliament. That's when far-right and populist parties will attempt to complete their power grab in the EU. In the elections of 2014, they made gains. Next year, they'll seek to dominate. The dramatic events we've witnessed over the past fortnight, in Germany and Italy have been a mere foretaste of the showdown that lies ahead.

It's often said that anti-establishment and nationalist parties want to dismantle the European project altogether. But what's at stake is more likely to be a full-on effort to redraw it to their liking. The migration issue is the starting point of a continental power struggle pitching two very different versions of the principles that should bind Europe together. One is liberal democratic,

and attuned to the notion of an open society; the other is fortress-minded, illiberal and intolerant. This has global implications: anti-EU leaders in Washington and Moscow want to reap their own rewards from the mayhem – which they are playing their own part in fomenting.

June 2018 shook Europe's liberal order in unprecedented ways. First, there was a far-right show of strength in Italy (the first EU founding state to be run by a far-right dominated government), as the Aquarius migrant rescue ship was turned away. Next, the 31-year-old Austrian chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, who governs alongside the Freedom party, an institution created in the 1950s by former Nazis, heralded the creation of a new "axis of the willing" in Europe, comprising like-minded populists in Italy and Hungary.

Then came an assault on the power of Angela

Merkel in Berlin. The chancellor has now been given a two-week ultimatum by her own federal minister of the interior, Horst Seehofer, leader of the conservative Bavarian Christian Social Union, a party that has absorbed just about all of the far-right Alternative für Deutschland rhetoric on migrants. The EU summit scheduled for the end of this month, and destined to be dominated by the subject of immigration, is likely to be an acrimonious shambles.

To top it all off, from across the Atlantic Donald Trump decided the occasion warranted one of the most provocative tweets of his presidency. In an intervention unprecedented for a U.S. leader, Trump appeared to relish the possibility of Merkel's downfall, writing: "The people of Germany are turning against their leadership as migration is rocking the already tenuous Berlin coalition."

More anarchy is loosened

Trump had earlier given the nod to irredentism in Europe, in claiming: "Crimea is Russia because people there speak Russian." Who else will have heard that message loud and clear: far-right Hungarian irredentists perhaps, who still dream of a Greater Hungary stretching beyond current borders? One could be forgiven for quoting Yeats: "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world."

"Axis", with its World War II connotations, is perhaps an innocent choice of words by Kurz – or perhaps not. An ideological nexus does connect him to Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Seehofer in Bavaria and Matteo Salvini in Italy. Look at the map, and what emerges is the shaping of a core transalpine and Danubian Europe of the far-right and nationalist conservatism. With elections due in

October in Seehofer's powerful southern regional German state, and the Austrian presidency of the EU Council starting on 1 July, Catholic-dominated, German-speaking regions of Europe look set to define much of the debate about Europe's future.

Trump may well be oblivious to the minutiae and dark symbolism. But be sure that Vladimir Putin isn't. Some of these political forces have a track record of closeness to Russia's strongman. The far-right Freedom party, to take one example, has a formal partnership with the Kremlin-sponsored United Russia party, and regularly calls for the lifting of EU sanctions – just as Seehofer does. Meanwhile, in the midst of his World Cup extravaganza, Putin is reportedly awaiting a call from Washington soon to set up a meeting with Trump – a summit Kurz would like to host in Vienna. ➔13

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A cruise ship passenger demanded a full refund for his trip because his neighbors snored too loudly

Brendan Ritson, a passenger on a Royal Caribbean South Pacific cruise, claimed that his holiday was "ruined" by his snoring neighbors and demanded a full refund from the cruise company. However, his appeal for \$2436.78 was rejected in court because the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal Court said his refusal to move to a different room on the cruise ship was "unreasonable."

The Sydney Morning Herald reported that Ritson and his partner departed on an 11-day Royal Caribbean cruise from Sydney to Fiji on December 11, 2016. On the first night, the couple found a water leak in their interior cabin. Therefore, they were upgraded to a larger and more expensive exterior double cabin.

However, as Ritson explained to the tribunal, a mother and



daughter moved into the next-door cabin three nights later. Ritson claimed that his new neighbors were "very loud" and they "snored, spoke loudly, argued and used offensive language."

According to the Sydney Morning Herald, Ritson complained to cruise staff about his snoring neighbors twice on the night of December 18. The Royal Caribbean cruise ship management offered to move Ritson and his partner to an interior cabin that was equivalent to the one that the couple had originally booked, according to the Sydney Morning Herald. However, the tribunal heard that Ritson refused to accept the interior cabin, claiming that he "did not want to be downgraded."

The next day, the cruise staff reportedly informed Ritson that another cabin was available for him. According to the Sydney Morning Herald, Ritson told the management that he would let them know if he wanted to be moved. That night, Ritson again complained to the cruise staff about his snoring neighbors, claiming that the noise was so intrusive that he and his partner were being kept awake. On the final day of the cruise, Ritson was reportedly offered a new cabin again by the cruise staff, but Ritson claimed that at this point his holiday was already "ruined."

Ritson filed for a full refund from Royal Caribbean Cruises, claiming that his holiday had been "ruined" by his snoring neighbors.

Ritson brought an appeal to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal Court, demanding a refund for everything he paid while he was on board the cruise ship — an amount that totaled \$3,270.29. But after the initial hearing, this amount was reportedly reduced to cover only the cost of accommodation, which was \$2,436.78.

The tribunal court adjudicators found that, while the noise from Ritson's neighbors may have been disruptive, the cruise management had not failed to provide quality service to Ritson.

"I accept the noisy neighbours' snoring caused Mr Ritson and his partner annoyance, even great annoyance, and disturbed their sleep and enjoyment of the cruise," Adjudicator Howe said, according to the Sydney Morning Herald.

However, Howe also pointed out that Ritson made his complaint on December 18 — five whole days after the new neighbors moved in.

Furthermore, the cruise company had offered multiple times to move Ritson into another cabin. The adjudicator concluded that Ritson's refusal to change cabins was "unreasonable," and he dismissed Ritson's appeal for a refund.

Brendan Ritson could not be reached for comment, and Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. did not immediately respond to INSIDER's request for comment.

(Source: Insider)

Last chance tourism: Is this trend just causing more damage?

One of the greatest ironies of our time is that humans are simultaneously intrepid travelers, and one of the main causes of the irreversible damage happening to our planet. Rising sea levels, erosion, deforestation and urban development are just some of the man-made reasons our most treasured corners of the earth are changing beyond recognition.

But this irony is big business; visiting parts of the world before they disappear is becoming increasingly common. Last chance tourism, which Forbes named as one of this year's top travel trends, is attracting visitors to the Amazon rainforest, the retreating mangroves in the Everglades in Florida, Australia's bleaching Great Barrier Reef, the melting ice in Montana's Glacier National Park and the sinking city of Venice.

Since 2003, tourism to the Maldives has increased by 68 per cent, and the number of visitors to the Galapagos Islands have increased by 38 per cent, according to travel insurance comparison site Squaremouth. But with these increasing numbers comes more damage to already fragile areas. Tourism to the Glacier National Park, which is warming at twice the overall rate of the planet, rose 15 per cent between 2001 and 2005, but tourists there are trampling over vegetation, introducing non-native species to the ecosystem, littering and causing pollution, the National Park Service has said.

Damage is also on a much wider scale. A longhaul journey to view polar bears in Churchill, a town in the Canadian province of Manitoba which is the only easily accessible place to view the creatures in their natural habitat, can contribute up to 8.61 tons of carbon dioxide per person per trip.

This is compared to the 10.9 tons someone living in the UK contributes over the course of an entire year, according to a 2010 study published in the journal Current Issues.

One defence of last chance tourism is that it helps raise awareness of climate change, which offsets the damage caused. But the researchers have found that while tourists to Churchill perceive climate change to have a negative impact on polar bears, they don't necessarily understand how they themselves contribute to greenhouse gas emissions.

Similarly, a survey of Antarctic cruise passengers found that 59 per cent felt that their travel did not impact on climate change, and fewer than 7 per cent said they had or might offset their emissions as a result of their experience.

Eke Eijgelaar, researcher and lecturer at the Centre for Sustainability, Tourism and Transport at NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences, says he doesn't believe last-chance tourism raises people's awareness of the effects of climate change enough to outweigh the unwanted effects they can have on fragile environments.

"The impact of these mostly long-distance journeys is just too big. Just imagine all 500 million Europeans travelling to either the Great Barrier Reef or Antarctica. Their total carbon footprint would amount to the annual carbon footprint of 250 million British or Dutch people," he says.

Another argued benefit of last chance tourism is that it raises money and publicity for conservation efforts. The president of the Maldives, Abdulla Yameen, said last year that mass tourism will create the funds it needs to adapt to climate change, and has backed plans to increase tourism from 1.3 million people a year to more than 7 million in 10 years.

Money from tourism to the Great Barrier Reef contributes to the marine park that is tasked with protecting the reef. But the downside to this is that human activity also pollutes the individual reefs, which can be damaged by tourists getting sun lotion into the sea, re-



search has found.

In 2012, scientists estimated that the Great Barrier Reef had already lost more than half of its coral cover since 1985, but the way research is reported, and the threats that drive tourists to visit such endangered places, are misplaced, according to ecologist Peter Mumby.

"The reef has experienced a very serious impact over the last few years in particular, but remember that it's the size of Italy," he says. "There remain many wonderful areas, and I've little doubt that tourists will always find something valuable to enjoy."

"Yes, the reef is likely to deteriorate, and we need to accelerate action to protect it, but the notion that it will die is wrong."

Similarly, while you can see climate change having an impact on the people and wildlife living in the Arctic, it isn't disappearing or melting, as media reports may have us believe. At least, so says Edda Falk, of the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO), which helps regulate tourism in the region.

"It's such a massive area of land, and species and people adapt and develop. It's not disappearing, it's just going to change. Polar bears are considered vulnerable and climate change is affecting their habitat, but it's not disappearing," she says.

Eijgelaar says last chance tourism is happening mostly in areas that "make it into the headlines".

"Tourism's constantly on the rise. Perhaps, with more and more tourists looking for new and exotic things, they are a bit more attracted by media accounts of coral losses at the Great Barrier Reef and sinking images of Venice, and then choose that as their destination," he says.

But these areas are suffering greater numbers of tourists year-on-year. Mumby says the majority of the tourism industry acts responsibly, particularly in Australia, and aware of the impacts of climate change, but this isn't the case globally.

"I've seen unregulated mass tourism in much of Asia and Micronesia, where snorkellers and divers are let loose with no instructions."

Regulations on tourism are increasingly being implemented to combat damage to precarious and threatened ecosystems in places

including the Antarctic, where regulation is left up to the private sector because no country is allowed to own sovereign territory on the continent, in accordance with the Antarctic Treaty, signed in 1959 by 12 countries.

Amanda Lynnes, of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO), AECO's equivalent in the Antarctic, says the Antarctic can be a role model for managing tourism in other wilderness areas.

"It's about collaborating with as many expert groups as possible, and long-term monitoring," she says.

Last chance tourism is on IAATO's radar, but it isn't driving tourism to the area, Lynnes says. "We hope last-chance tourism doesn't drive people here, because ultimately we want to protect it. If there is a trend, I'm sure it will pass on to the Antarctic, which can take more visitors, but it's about not sitting back and letting it happen."

If and when the time comes, Lynnes says the response will be to balance the priorities of environment and tourism. "It's about making more of what people can see there, while making decisions to balance protecting the Antarctica and delivering a unique experience," she says.

"Once you start diminishing the experience, you'll miss the opportunity to educate and inform people how special it is here."

However, Lynnes says that ecosystem protection ultimately comes before tourism. "You don't want to ruin the environment you're promoting and selling," she says.

This concern goes the other way for some policy makers. The Australian government, for example, successfully suppressed information about the unhealthy state of the Great Barrier Reef in a 2016 UNESCO report, worried that it would drive away tourism.

But in many cases, tourism is balanced with conservation. Tourism in the Galapagos is very tightly controlled, with strict regulations on where visitors can walk and how many can visit each island daily, and it rotates which islands are available to avoid erosion. According to a report by the Galapagos National Park Directorate, tourism increased by 4 per cent between 2014 and 2015.

Rachel Dodds, a professor at Ryerson University in Toronto and adviser to businesses

and governments on sustainability, says last chance tourism needs to be controlled like this in order to reduce stress on ecosystems and the environment.

"Without proper management and thinking about the limits to acceptable change, places are being ruined beyond repair. Tourism is planned for the short-term, and policies or plans are not developed with the medium or long-term impacts," she told The Independent.

"Once an ecosystem has been destroyed it can't easily be brought back. What we don't seem to realize is that development is irreversible."

Other areas, such as Machu Picchu in Peru, have been inundated with increasing numbers of tourists for years and suffered erosion and litter. Some experts warn that recent measures to control this don't go far enough. But Machu Picchu is a world heritage site, which some argue fuels tourism and the challenges that come with it.

Peter Debrine, who's in charge of world heritage sites at Unesco, says tourism is only going to increase.

"We're travelling more as countries develop and the middle class increases. It's human to want to travel and experience other cultures," he told The Independent. But this has brought with it negative impacts, such as a rise in what Debrine calls "in-and-out selfie tourism".

"This is where visitors visit a site for an hour and take pictures, which raises the question of whether they're really experiencing it."

He advises taking time to visit places. "If you go to Venice, go for a few days and visit nearby world heritage sites; don't just spend the day so you can tick a box saying 'I saw Venice', when really you didn't. Eat in local restaurants, and if you spend money, spend it on local providers, rather than cheap keychains to say you were there," Debrine says.

Ultimately, Debrine says, we all want to see the world without the downsides of over-tourism.

"We all need to do some soul-searching, because we're all travelers. There's some disconnect, but we're all part of the problem. It's like sitting in traffic complaining about traffic. We have vision about what we want — but a billion others have same vision."

(Source: Independent)

You can visit this abandoned, ivy-covered town in China for just 50 cents

Houtouwan, a once-thriving Chinese fishing village located about 40 miles southeast of Shanghai, is now empty and eerily overgrown with ivy. Well, not entirely empty—the abandoned town has become a popular tourist destination since it was "rediscovered" by travelers in 2015, as Travel+Leisure reports.

Located on Shengshan, one of 394 islands that make up the Shengsi archipelago, the town was home to 2000 people in the '90s. However, when villagers could no longer compete with commercial fishing operations in Shanghai, they picked up and moved to the mainland in search of better opportunities. Some left all of their furniture and belongings behind, which can still be seen if you peer inside some of the abandoned homes.

Only a few people still live in the village, including tour guides ready to cater to curious tourists who find themselves captivated by the half-ruined buildings blanketed in plants and vines. "It feels like this place belonged to nature from the very beginning, and the old invaders finally left, and nature finally made it back," Huang Dan, a recent visitor to the town, told the Associated Press.

How bats protect books at this Portuguese library

Visit the Joanina Library at the University of Coimbra in Portugal at night and you might think the building has a bat problem. It's true that common pipistrelle bats live there, occupying the space behind the bookshelves by day and swooping beneath the arched ceilings and in and out of windows once the sun goes down, but they're not a problem. As Smithsonian reports, the bats play a vital role in preserving the institution's manuscripts, so librarians are in no hurry to get rid of them.

The bats that live in the library don't damage the books and, because they're nocturnal, they usually don't bother the human guests. The much bigger danger to the collection is the insect population. Many bug species are known to gnaw on paper, which could be disastrous for the library's



rare items that date from before the 19th century. The bats act as a natural form of pest control: At night, they feast on the insects that would otherwise feast on library books.

The Joanina Library is famous for being one of the most architecturally stunning libraries on earth. It was constructed before 1725, but when exactly the bats arrived is unknown. Librarians can say for sure they've been flapping around the halls since at least the 1800s.

Though bats have no reason to go after the materials, there is one threat they pose to the interior: falling feces. Librarians protect against this by covering their 18th-century tables with fabric made from animal skin at night and cleaning the floors of guano every morning.

(Source: mentalfloss.com)

ROUND THE GLOBE

Sewell Mining Town

Situated at 2,000 m in the Andes, 60 km to the east of Rancagua, Chile, in an environment marked by extremes of climate, Sewell Mining Town was built by the Braden Copper company in 1905 to house workers at what was to become the world's largest underground copper mine, El Teniente.

It is an outstanding example of the company towns that were born in many remote parts of the world from the fusion of local labor and resources from an industrialized nation, to mine and process high-value natural resources. The town was built on a terrain too steep for wheeled vehicles around a large central staircase rising from the railway station. Along its route formal squares of irregular shape with ornamental trees and plants constituted the main public spaces or squares of the town. The buildings lining the streets are timber, often painted in vivid green, yellow, red and blue. At its peak Sewell numbered 15,000 inhabitants, but was largely abandoned in the 1970s.



A view of Sewell Mining Town, a World Heritage in Chile

The most outstanding attributes of the property are the industrial installations, which take advantage of the hillside incline for the mineral grinding process; the buildings that combine houses on the upper floors with business or services in the ground floor; the service buildings, public spaces and pedestrian circulation system; the electric infrastructure and drinking water and sewer systems; as well as the assorted and diverse networks of pipes crossing the town.

(Source: UNESCO)

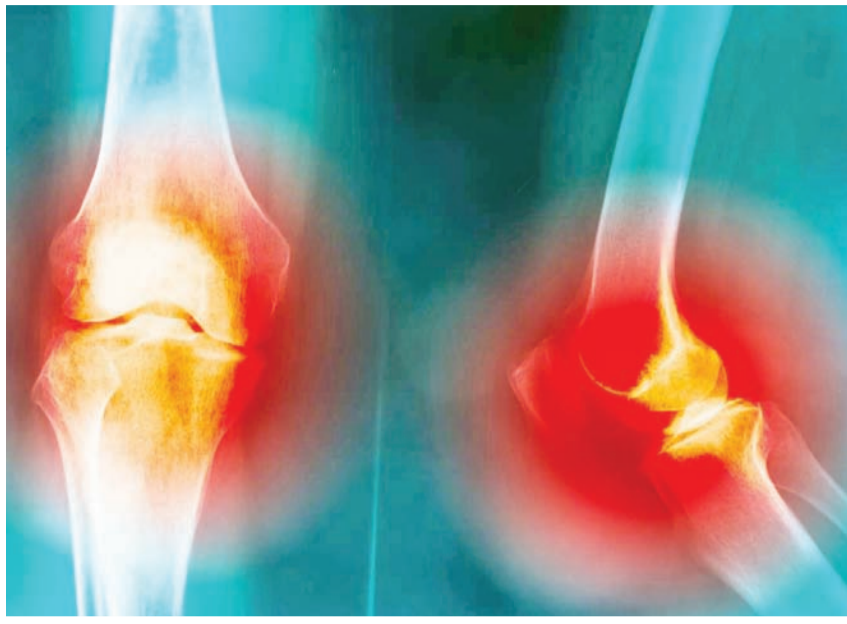
Losing weight may reduce pain caused by knee osteoarthritis, study shows

Shedding those pounds could help alleviate some of the pain caused by knee osteoarthritis, a common condition among overweight or obese individuals.

According to a new study, losing 20 percent of one's body weight could lead to a 25 percent reduction in knee osteoarthritis pain. Researchers from the Wake Forest University in North Carolina studied data from a previous trial that involved 240 overweight and obese patients with knee osteoarthritis and pain, each of whom lost weight over a period of 18 months.

The level of weight loss among the participants varied. Some lost between 5 and 10 percent of their overall body weight, others shed between 10 and 20 percent, and a few burned 20 percent or more. Every single of them reported improvements in terms of pain, quality of life, knee joint loads, and inflammation. In addition, the more weight a participant loses, the better chances they get at reducing pain, the researchers discovered.

This good news isn't that surprising, though. Since 2015, the National Institutes of Health has been saying that overweight or obese individuals with knee osteoarthritis can reduce their pain or discomfort by 50 percent, plus improve their function and mobility, if they just lose 10 percent of their body



The "importance of our study is that a weight loss of 20 percent or greater — double the previous standard — results in better clinical outcomes, and is achievable without surgical or pharmacologic intervention"

weight within 18 months.

But the new study suggests that if a patient loses more than 20 percent of their body weight, they can expect an additional 25 percent reduction in pain.

■ Weight loss importance

The "importance of our study is that a weight loss of 20 percent or greater — double the previous standard — results in better clinical outcomes, and is achievable without surgical or pharmacologic intervention," said Stephen Messier, the study's lead author.

Studies have shown that excess weight can put unnecessary stress on the weight-bearing joints such as the hips and knees. Knee arthritis can make it hard to do many everyday activities, such as walking or climbing stairs. It is a major cause of lost work time and a serious disability for many people, according to OrthoInfo.

For now, it seems that losing weight is the best palliative cure to knee osteoarthritis-related pain, as there is currently no medical treatment that cures or even slows down the condition, according to Messier.

Pain management can be aided with a combination of weight loss and injections, according to Sidney Kimmel School of Medicine's James J. Purtill, who wasn't part of the study. Physical therapy, pain medications, and other anti-inflammatory drugs also help, he says.

(Source: Tech Times)

MIT neural network accelerates MRI image processing by 1,000 times

Doctors often need to compare two MRI images to track changes in the body over time, but the process of lining up the images to make accurate measurements is extremely time-consuming. It can take hours for a computer to match all the locations in a 3D map, but researchers from MIT have developed an algorithm that could cut that time to less than a second.

MRI scans are cumbersome to manage because of how much information they contain. Each scan is essentially hundreds of stacked 2D images. These form the 3D map known as a volume. The volume is made up of 3D pixels known as voxels. When a computer aligns two different MRI scans, it's sifting through millions of voxels to assign them locations in a new, unified image. Scans can also come from different machines with varying spatial properties, slowing the work even more.

Several hours of computing time is considered quite good for MRI analysis. Researchers trying to analyze data from large populations across multiple patients with the same disease can end up waiting hundreds of hours for a computer to generate aligned images. Simply throwing more processing power at the problem isn't practical, but the "VoxelMorph" system from MIT researchers might do the trick.

VoxelMorph is a convolutional neural network, so the team started by training it with 7,000 publicly available MRI brain scans. In a neural network, you add data at one end, and the network passes it through numerous nodes that feed forward into other nodes. Depending on the weighting of each node, you end up with an output that should provide the desired results.

After training, the team used 250 new scans to test the network's effectiveness. VoxelMorph completed in two minutes what would have taken a conventional MRI analysis program several hours to do. That's just with a regular CPU. (Source: extremetech.com)

Remarkable fossil of strange platypus-like armored fish discovered

Paleontologists have discovered the remarkable fossil of a bizarre armored fish with a long, paddle-like beak resembling that of a platypus.

The strange creature, named *Brindabellaspis*, belonged to an extinct group of animals called placoderms — primitive-jawed fishes which existed throughout the Devonian Period (around 416 to 359 million years ago).

The first *Brindabellaspis* specimen was found in 1980 in limestone near Lake Burrinjuck, southeastern Australia — a region that was once home to an ancient reef and contains some of the earliest known examples of reef fish. However, the fossil was missing its snout area.

But newly discovered specimens have shown that the fish had a long bill extending out in front of its eyes, according to researchers from Flinders University and the Australia National University (ANU). Their findings have been reported in a study published in the journal *Royal Society Open Science*.

"This was one strange-looking fish," Benedict King, lead author of the study and a Flinders University graduate now based at the Naturalis Biodiversity Center in Leiden, Netherlands, said in a statement.

The "eyes were on top of the head, and the nostrils came out of the eye sockets. There was this long snout at the front, and the jaws were positioned very far forward."

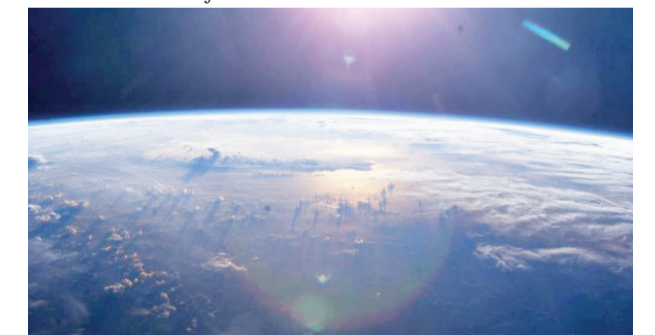
The researchers found that the fish had a unique sensory system on its snout, which would have helped it to search for prey on the sea floor, while the eyes at the top of its head kept watch for predators.

The site at Lake Burrinjuck is particularly rich in fossils, many of which are shining a light on animal evolution. Recent discoveries here have helped researchers to better understand electroreception (a specialized sense that allows aquatic animals to detect electrical currents) and the evolution of jaws, among other insights.

(Source: Newsweek)

Did plate tectonics set the stage for life on Earth?

A new study suggests that rapid cooling within the Earth's mantle through plate tectonics played a major role in the development of the first life forms, which in turn led to the oxygenation of the Earth's atmosphere. The study was published in the March 2018 issue of *Earth and Planetary Science Letters*.



Scientists at the University of Adelaide and Curtin University in Australia, and the University of California at Riverside, California, USA, gathered and analyzed data on igneous rocks from geological and geochemical data repositories in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden and the United States. They found that over the 4.5 billion years of the Earth's development, rocks rich in phosphorus accumulated in the Earth's crust. They then looked at the relationship of this accumulation with that of oxygen in the atmosphere.

Phosphorus is essential for life as we know it. Phosphates, which are compounds containing phosphorus and oxygen, are part of the backbones of DNA and RNA as well as the membranes of cells, and help control cell growth and function.

To find out how the level of phosphorus in the Earth's crust has increased over time, the scientists studied how rock formed as the Earth's mantle cooled. They performed modeling to find out how mantle-derived rocks changed composition as a consequence of the long-term cooling of the mantle.

Their results suggest that during an early, hotter period in Earth's history — the Archaean period between four and 2.5 billion years ago — there was a larger amount of molten mantle. Phosphorus would have been too dilute in these rocks. However, over time, the Earth cooled sufficiently, aided by the onset of plate tectonics, in which the colder outer crust of the planet is subducted back into the hot mantle. With this cooling, partial mantle melts became smaller.

(Source: space.com)

Machine learning may be a game-changer for climate prediction



A major challenge in current climate prediction models is how to accurately represent clouds and their atmospheric heating and moistening. This challenge is behind the wide spread in climate prediction. Yet accurate predictions of global warming in response to increased greenhouse gas concentrations are essential for policy-makers (e.g. the Paris climate agreement).

In a paper recently published online in *Geophysical Research Letters*, researchers led by Pierre Gentine, associate professor of earth and environmental engineering at Columbia Engineering, demonstrate that machine learning techniques can be used to tackle this issue and better represent clouds in coarse resolution (~100km) climate models, with the potential to narrow the range of prediction.

"This could be a real game-changer for climate prediction," says Gentine, lead author of the paper, and a member of the Earth Institute and the Data Science Institute. "We have large uncertainties in our prediction of the response of the Earth's climate to rising greenhouse gas concentrations."

■ Machine-learning techniques

The primary reason is the representation of clouds and how they respond to a change in those gases. Our study shows that machine-learning techniques help us better represent

clouds and thus better predict global and regional climate's response to rising greenhouse gas concentrations."

The researchers used an idealized setup (an aquaplanet, or a planet with continents) as a proof of concept for their novel approach to convective parameterization based on machine learning. They trained a deep neural network to learn from a simulation that explicitly represents clouds.

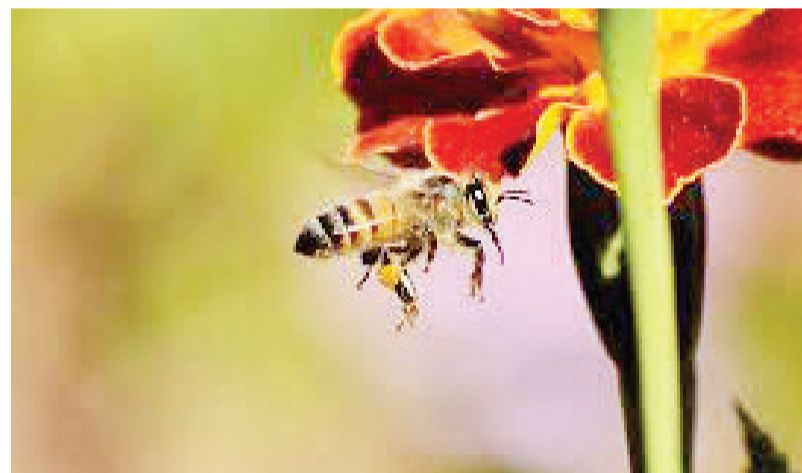
The machine-learning representation of clouds, which they named the Cloud Brain (CBRAIN), could skillfully predict many of the cloud heating, moistening, and radiative features that are essential to climate simulation.

Gentine notes, "Our approach may open up a new possibility for a future of model representation in climate models, which are data driven and are built 'top-down,' that is, by learning the salient features of the processes we are trying to represent."

The researchers also note that, because global temperature sensitivity to CO₂ is strongly linked to cloud representation, CBRAIN may also improve estimates of future temperature. They have tested this in fully coupled climate models and have demonstrated very promising results, showing that this could be used to predict greenhouse gas response.

(Source: phys.org)

Light pollution a reason for insect decline: study



Climate change, pesticides and land use changes alone cannot fully explain the decline in insect populations in Germany. Scientists from the Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries (IGB) have now discovered that regions that have experienced a sharp decline in flying insects also have high levels of light pollution. Many studies already suggest that artificial light at night has negative impacts on insects, and scientists should pay greater attention to this factor when exploring the causes of insect population declines in the future.

The biomass of flying insects has decreased by more than 75 per cent - this alarming figure made front page news in autumn 2017. The study, published in 2017, analyzed trends in biomass of flying insects in selected protected areas within agricultural landscapes over the last 27 years, and concluded that changes of climate and habitat are to blame for the decline in insect populations. At the same time, they pointed out that these impacts alone are unable to explain this drastic decline.

Clearly an assignment for scientists from the Light Pollution and Ecophysiology research group at IGB. After all, they know from previous studies that artificial lighting at night strongly affects the number of insects and insect communities. Therefore, the team led by

IGB researcher Dr. Maja Grubisic looked at the locations of the areas involved in the 2017 study: areas in conurbations that have a higher than average level of light pollution.

■ Escaping from predators

"Half of all insect species are nocturnal. As such, they depend on darkness and natural light from the moon and stars for orientation and movement or to escape from predators, and to go about their nightly tasks of seeking food and reproducing. An artificially lit night disturbs this natural behavior - and has a negative impact on their chances of survival", explains Maja Grubisic the starting point of their investigation.

The scientists analyzed all recent studies on the effects of artificial light at night on insects, and found that there is strong evidence to suggest a credible link between light pollution and declines in insect populations. For example, flying insects are attracted by artificial lights - and, at the same time, are removed from other ecosystems - and die from exhaustion or as easy prey. Additionally, rows of light prevent flying insects from spreading; causing a lack of genetic exchange within fragmented insect populations that could reduce their resistance to other negative environmental influences, which are especially pronounced in agrarian areas.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

IRALCO to Launch Five New Production Lines by Yearend

Iranian Aluminum Company (IRALCO) will launch a number of five new production lines by the year end (to end March 20, 2019), Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

For his part, CEO of IRALCO Mohammad Goudarzi said that aluminum transfer system will be commissioned by end of Dec. 2018 and presently, die casting workshop has been put into operation.

Given the above issue, five production lines of the company will go on stream with the production capacity of about 25,000 tons by the yearend.

In addition, alumina powder transfer system will go on stream by the end of Dec. 2018, he said, adding, "this system benefits from world's most modern and advanced technology which will reduce pollution and conserve fuel consumption to a great extent."

Presently, 80,000 tons of billet ingot is produced in the company in order to meet demand of steel and profile manufacturers of the country, he maintained.

Once two 110,000-ton production lines are launched in Kheirabad, 220,000 tons will be added to the



company's billet production capacity, the manager observed.

About 60,000 tons of aluminum ingot produced by IRALCO were exported to the countries including India, China, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, South Korea and European countries in the past year (ended

March 20, 2018) while the rest aluminum ingot is consumed in the country.

Goudarzi put the per capita aluminum consumption in the country at 5 to 6 kg and reiterated, "more consumption of this metal is encouraged in the country, because, per capita consumption of this metal is increased which can accelerate production activity."

Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to the construction of major aluminum equipment and machinery in Arak and said, "4,400 manpower are still working in this industrial and production complex. In addition, a major part of equipment and machinery required for Al-Mahdi, Hormozal and SALCO companies are manufactured in Arak."

IRALCO was set up in 1967 and was put into operation in 1969, he said, adding, "the company started manufacturing aluminum with two production lines in 1972."

In the end, CEO of the company said, "the company has currently taken effective steps in line with materializing most of its objectives."

Iran produces 22 types of biologic medicines

Malekzadeh also mentioned that the pharmaceutical market in the health sector is one of the most important sector economically, adding, Iran's pharmaceutical market reaches to a total of 160 trillion rials (about \$3.8 billion) a year. Only one fourth of the pharmaceutical market amounting to 40 trillion rials (nearly \$950 million) is imported and the rest is domestically produced.

He further expressed hope that the amount of imported drugs would decrease in the future.

"Regarding domestic production, medicine in Iran is low-priced compared to other countries around the world, and the current insurance coverage make it available to almost all patients," he concluded.

97% of medicines are domestically-made

Over 97 percent of the medicines in the country are made domestically, so new medicines such as biotic ones are started to be produced in the country shortly after being produced in other countries, head of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said on the sidelines of the event.

The cost of producing medicine in the country is one tenth of the cost spent for imported medicines, IRNA quoted Gholamreza Asghari as saying.

He also noted that the average per-capita medicine consumption in Iran is about \$60 per year, adding, "So, Iran has reached a moderate level in the world due to its good health system".

"We plan to provide Iranian researchers with a list of required pharmaceuticals to be produced, and then put restrictions on imports of pharmaceuticals," he concluded.

UN General Assembly elects Iran as the member of Economic and Social Council

The General Assembly has elected 18 members of the Economic and Social Council to serve three-year terms beginning 1 January 2019.

Those elected were Angola, Armenia, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Jamaica, Kenya, Luxembourg, Mali, Netherlands, Pakistan, Paraguay, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and the United States. The 18 outgoing members were Afghanistan, Algeria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czechia, Guyana, Iraq, Italy, Lebanon, Nigeria, Peru, Republic of Moldova, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, United States and Viet Nam.

The new members were elected according to the following pattern: Five from African States; four from Asia-Pacific States; two from Eastern European States; three from Latin American and Caribbean States; and four from Western European and other States.

The Assembly also elected Cambodia, Malta and Yemen to complete the remaining terms of three current Council members who had decided to relinquish their seats before the end of their respective terms. In doing so, Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák (Slovakia) announced that Tajikistan would relinquish its seat on the Council on 31 December 2018 for the remainder of the term, in favour of Cambodia; the United Arab Emirates would relinquish its seat in favour of Yemen; and Spain would relinquish its seat in favour of Malta. The new members would fill those seats from 1 January until 31 December 2019, in the cases of Cambodia and Yemen, and in the case of Malta, expiring on 31 December 2020.

As of 1 January 2019, the remaining States making up the 54-member organ will be Andorra, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Benin, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, China, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, Eswatini, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Ireland, Japan, Malawi, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Norway, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sudan, Togo, Turkey, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Venezuela and Yemen.

(Source: UNIC)

LEARN ENGLISH

Presentation - Discussing the Competition

Mr. Ford: Now, of course, with all this **cutting-edge** technology there must be a **catch**, you might ask yourself. I bet the retail price will be too much for most consumers, you might say. Well, you'd be wrong!

Mr. Ford: Yes, of course the x420 is **aimed** at the luxury market, but if you compare the price of our leading competitors, the x420 represents incredible value for money. At only 15,000 RMB it is far more affordable and far more attractive than almost every leading brand and model.

Mr. Ford: So, what **differentiates** us from our competitors? Well, if we compare Orange's luxury MP40 range then we can really **highlight** some of the differences.

Mr. Ford: Now, of course Orange has an **enviable** record for producing revolutionary and top class products, and I must admit the MP40 is a breathtaking machine. However, for most consumers the MP40 is simply far too expensive to consider.

Mr. Ford: The questions we must ask ourselves are "What does the Alpha brand stand for?" and also "How can we set ourselves apart from our competitors?" The answer to both of these questions is the same my friends.

Mr. Ford: Alpha stands first and **foremost** for quality, for excellence and for service. If we always stick to this philosophy, then I'm confident that we will really be able to expand our market share significantly. Okay, let me move on now to give you an idea of our marketing campaign for the x420.

Key vocabulary
cutting edge: the newest and most advanced
catch: hidden problem that makes something complicated
aim: to direct (something) at a particular goal
differentiate: to make different in some way
highlight: to make or try to make people notice
enviable: causing envy; very desirable
foremost: most important

Supplementary vocabulary
high-end: at the top level of consumer purchases, aimed at luxury and high quality markets
outsource: to send a job somewhere else, often overseas
hotline: a phone number people can call to get help any time of day
motto: an expression that is the guiding principle of a person or organization
trademark: something (symbol, logo, phrase, etc.) that distinguishes one company's product from its competitors

Early Childhood Development programs being piloted in Iran

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs are being piloted in three cities in provinces of Tehran, Kordestan and Kerman, head of the Welfare Organization has said.

According to the World Bank, ECD refers to the physical, cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development of a child from the prenatal stage up to age eight. This development happens in a variety of settings (homes, schools, health facilities, community-based centers); and involves a wide range of activities from child care to nutrition to parent education. Providers of services can include public, private, and non-governmental agencies.

Welfare organization is implementing the pilot programs in Malard, Tehran province; Divandarreh, Kordestan province; and Zarand, Kerman province, IRNA quoted Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey as saying on Tuesday.

Mohseni-Bandpey expressed hope that the Ministry of Education will execute the programs in the near future.

Once policy makers recognize the importance of health and education the way will be paved for social well-being of the citizens, he noted.

For one providing preschoolers with one hot meal in underprivileged provinces and outskirts of the cities which, according to the figures revealed by the Ministry of Health,



have help in improving nutrient intake by 50 percent in those areas, he highlighted.

Why is ECD so important?

The World Bank states that early years

of life are a window of opportunity to lay a strong foundation for a child's life. Proper health, nutrition, and early stimulation play a critical role for brain development and child well-being. Around the world, poor children under five lag behind their more advantaged peers in physical, language, cognitive, and socio-emotional development. Without access to quality ECD, poor children often fall behind their more advantaged peers before they even begin school. As they get older, the gaps widen: they are likely to perform poorly in school, earn less as adults, and engage in risky social behaviors.

Therefore, supporting early childhood development improves equity improving the health, nutrition, and education outcomes of children. Research shows that ECD interventions benefit the poorest and most disadvantaged children the most even though these children currently are the least likely to have access to them. In addition, it is more difficult and more costly to intervene later in children's lives.

Furthermore, ECD targeted to the most disadvantaged are a cost-effective strategy to promote children's success in school and life. Children who participate in quality ECD programs are more ready to learn when they begin school and are less likely to repeat grades or drop-out of school, which reduces the overall costs of the education system. When they get older, they are more likely to earn more and less likely to engage in crime.

World Refugee Day 2018: How many displaced people are there around the globe?

World Refugee Day is held on 20 June every year to draw attention to the plight of displaced people around the globe.

Inaugurated by the UN Refugee Agency, the occasion was first observed in 2001, 50 years on from the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in Geneva, Switzerland, which defined the term and agreed on the responsibilities of nations to grant asylum to those rendered stateless by warfare, famine or natural disasters and most vulnerable to persecution.

This year's World Refugee Day has seen the UN publish a damning new report stating that just 100,000 refugees were resettled by the international community in 2017, a year in which 2.9m new asylum seekers were created as conflicts raged in Syria, Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan.

That total, the biggest single-year increase in the history of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), equates to 44,500 a day and brings the total number worldwide to 68.5m.

"We are at a watershed, where success in managing forced displacement globally requires a new and far more comprehensive approach so that countries and communities aren't left dealing with this alone," said Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

"But there is reason for some hope. Fourteen countries



South Sudanese refugees sit at the Al-Nimir camp in the Sudanese state of East Darfur

are already pioneering a new blueprint for responding to refugee situations and in a matter of months a new Global Compact on Refugees will be ready for adoption by the United Nations General Assembly.

"No one becomes a refugee by choice, but the rest of us can have a choice about how we help."

The UNHCR works to provide legal protection for the

stateless, raise awareness of their circumstances and develop long-term solutions to their problems with governments.

The organization's efforts aim to protect those fleeing conflict from sexual exploitation, abuse, violence and forced enlistment in military groups, offering education, training, medical aid and emergency shelter, often in partnership with international humanitarian organizations.

According to the 1967 amendment to Article 1 of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is:

"A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

This year's World Refugee Day also comes after the U.S. made the divisive decision to withdraw from UN Human Rights Council, with ambassador Nikki Haley branding the organization "not worthy of its name" and a "protector of human rights abusers and a cesspool of political bias" over its inclusion of states like China, Cuba and Venezuela among its members.

(Source: Independent)

88% of children of refugees in Iran go to schools

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Some 88 percent of children of refugees who are living in Iran are studying in schools across the country, head of the international affairs department of the Ministry of Education has said.

Gholamreza Karimi made the remakes on the sidelines of a conference on foreign national students' educational affairs in Iran, Mehr reported.

A decree issued in May 2015 by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei allows all foreign nationals, even those who have no identification and are living in Iran illegally, to attend schools in Iran.

Currently some 110,000 illegal Afghan national students are studying in Iran,

Karimi added.

A total 88 percent of the refugees' children are studying in Iranian schools, it is anticipated that this rate increases to 90 percent in the elementary schools by the next school year (September 2018), he highlighted.

He also noted that the number of high school refugee students is also 29 percent.

The Ministry of Education has allocated 10 trillion rials (nearly \$240 million) for refugees' education, while international donations constitute only 2-2.5 percent of this amount, he said, mentioning that this great gap led to a majority of problems.

"We are calling on NGOs and international entities to help improve the quality of education for these children in Iran," he concluded.



ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Tehran subway short of 10,000 cars: councilor

Tehran subway is short of some 10,000 cars in order to be fully operational, councilor Mohammad Alikhani has said.

It is a high priority for us to equip the current operational subway lines, Fars quoted Alikhani as saying. Adding 2,000 new cars carries a cost of 100 trillion rials (nearly \$2.4 billion) and equipping the station and subway lines drives up the costs to 220 trillion rials (\$5.2 billion), he explained.

The aforesaid expenses greatly exceed the municipality's budget and it takes some 10 years to achieve this goal, Alikhani lamented, adding, "But we are looking into other options to raise fund for equipping subway lines by drawing from the National Development Fund."

عضو شورای شهر تهران: کمبود ۱۰ هزار واگن در مترو تهران

محمد علیخانی عضو شورای شهر تهران با بیان اینکه ۱۰ هزار واگن باید وارد خطوط مترو شود، گفت: با این کار می‌توانیم از تمام ظرفیت خطوط استفاده کنیم.

علیخانی در گفت و گو با خبرگزاری فارس، با بیان اینکه اولویت اصلی ما تجهیز خطوط فعلی مترو است، گفت: برای ورود ۲ هزار واگن ۱۰ هزار میلیارد هزینه لازم است و ۱۲ هزار میلیارد تومان هم هزینه تجهیز خطوط است بنابراین برای تجهیز این خطوط ۲۲ هزار میلیارد تومان اعتبار لازم داریم.

به گفته علیخانی این موضوع فراتر از اعتبارات شهرداری است و با اعتبارات فعلی اگر بخواهیم این کار را انجام دهیم در ۱۰ سال آینده محقق می‌شود اما به دنبال راهکارهای جدی هستیم تا بتوانیم سریع‌تر این کار را انجام دهیم. انتظار ما این است که بتوانیم از صندوق توسعه ملی استفاده کنیم.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"ante-"

Meaning: before or preceding
For example: In the southern end of the *antechamber* there lay a pile of dismantled chariots of the king.

PHRASAL VERB

Hash something out

Meaning: to discuss something very thoroughly and carefully, especially until you reach an agreement
For example: The reorganization plan was hashed out September 16.

IDIOM

Bundle of nerves

Explanation: very nervous, tense or worried
For example: My son is doing his driving test today. Needless to say he's a bundle of nerves!

U.S. withdraws from UN Human Rights Council over anti-Israel bias

Russia calls out U.S. 'cynicism' for rights council pullout

➔ "Human rights abusers continue to serve on and be elected to the council... Therefore, as we said we would do a year ago, if we did not see any progress, the United States is officially withdrawing from the UN Human Rights Council," she added.

Haley accused governments with woe-ful human rights records of seeking a seat on the UNHRC to avoid scrutiny and then resisting proposals for reform.

"When we made it clear we would strongly pursue Council reform, these countries came out of the woodwork to oppose it," she said. "Russia, China, Cuba, and Egypt all attempted to undermine our reform efforts this past year."

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations blasted the Geneva-based council as "a hypocritical and self-serving organization that makes a mockery of human rights."

Last year, Haley accused the council of "chronic anti-Israel bias" and warned that Washington was reviewing its membership.

During the Tuesday announcement, Pompeo was also scathing in his assessment of the UN Human Rights Council, calling the body an "exercise in shameless hypocrisy, with many of the world's worst human rights abusers going ignored, and some of the world's most serious offenders sitting on the council itself."

"The only thing worse than a council that does almost nothing to protect human rights is a council that covers for human rights abusers, and is therefore an obstacle to progress and an impediment to change," he said.

The UN Human Rights Council was



established in 2006 and Washington joined in 2009 after President Barack Obama came to power. Since President Donald Trump took office in 2017, the U.S. has quit the UN cultural agency UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), cut UN funding and announced its withdrawal from the UN-backed Paris climate agreement and Iran nuclear deal.

Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch said the withdrawal is "a sad reflection of the U.S. administration's one-dimensional rights policy," adding that Washington's

defense of Israeli abuses takes precedence above everything else.

Scores of Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli forces in Gaza since March 30, when they began protests for their right to return to their homelands in the occupied territories.

In May, UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein said Israel has systematically deprived Palestinians of their human rights, with 1.9 million in Gaza "caged in a toxic slum from birth to death."

The UN official backed calls for an international probe into Israeli war crimes

in Gaza after the regime's deadly reaction to protests along the Gaza fence which he described as "wholly disproportionate."

The U.S. administration has for long been pushing the UNHRC to end its scrutiny of Israel's widespread human rights abuses against Palestinians.

■ Cynicism & Disregard

Meanwhile, Russia on Wednesday voiced surprise at the United States' decision to withdraw from the UN Human Rights Council, accusing Washington of "gross cynicism" and "disregard" for the world body.

"The U.S. has once again brought a powerful blow to its own human rights reputation by demonstrating its disregard for the UN and its bodies," Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told a briefing in Moscow.

She charged the U.S. with "stubbornly refusing to acknowledge the existence of serious human rights problems at home while at the same time trying to shape the council under its own interests."

She also criticized the U.S. for "imposing a specific American understanding of human rights on other countries."

Zakharova said the withdrawal was "unexpected" for Moscow although "a precedent was already set with UNESCO", the UN's Paris-based cultural body that Washington left in October last year.

"The UN Human Rights Council has worked effectively without the U.S. in the past and we hope that it will continue to do so," she said.

(Source: agencies)

Saudi regime-backed forces claim control of Hudaydah airport

Yemeni prisoners say UAE officers sexually torture them: AP

By staff & agencies

The House of Saud regime-backed Yemeni forces, loyal to ex-president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, claim that they have seized the airport in the port city of Hudaydah from the Ansarullah (Houthi) movement fighters.

Brigadier Abdul Salaam al-Shehi, a Saudi regime-led coalition commander in Yemen's Red Sea coast, said in a video posted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) official WAM news agency on Wednesday that the Hudaydah airport is "completely cleared" and "under control."

However, Mohammad al-Bukhaiti, a top figure in the Ansarullah movement's Supreme Political Council, had early on Wednesday rejected reports of the airport's seizure by the Saudi regime-led aggressor.

Shehi's remarks came one day after the Saudi regime-led troops announced that they had entered the main compound of the Hudaydah airport amid a military offensive to capture the flashpoint port city.

Coalition forces claim to have entered the airport in Yemen's Red Sea port city. But Ansarullah fighters deny the claims and say they have managed to repel the attack by UAE-led militants.

The Hudaydah airport lies just eight kilometers from the city's port, through which three-quarters of Yemen's imports pass, providing a lifeline for millions of people.

Backed by the Saudi regime-led airstrikes, the UAE and allied militants loyal to the former Yemeni government launched the Hudaydah assault on June 13 despite warnings that it would compound the impoverished nation's humanitarian crisis.

The Ansarullah and allied armed forces, however, said that they have dealt a heavy blow to the aggressors, inflicting heavy losses on the invaders.

The United Nations says fierce clashes in the port city have driven 5,200 families from their homes.

The Saudi regime-led coalition, which has been waging a war against Yemen since early 2015, claims that the Ansarullah are using Hudaydah for weapons delivery, an allegation rejected by the fighters.

■ Yemeni prisoners say UAE officers sexually torture them: AP

Meantime, the 15 officers who arrived at the prison in southern Yemen hid their faces behind head dresses, but their accents were clearly foreign - from the UAE.

They lined up the detainees and ordered them to undress and lie down. The officers then searched the anal cavity of each prisoner, claiming that they were looking for contraband mobile phones.

The men screamed and wept. Those who resisted were threatened by barking dogs and beaten until they bled.

Hundreds of detainees suffered similar sexual abuse during the event on March 10 at Beir Ahmed prison in the southern city of Aden, according to seven witnesses interviewed by the Associated Press news agency.

Descriptions of the mass abuse offer a window into a world of rampant sexual torture and impunity in UAE-controlled prisons in Yemen.

The UAE is a key United States ally whose secret prisons and widespread torture were exposed by an AP investiga-



tion last June.

The news agency has since identified at least five prisons where security forces use sexual torture to brutalize and break inmates.

The AP first asked the Pentagon about grave rights abuses committed by the UAE one year ago.

But despite well-documented reports of torture reported by the AP, human rights groups and even the United Nations (UN), Marine Major Adrian Rankine-Galloway, a Pentagon spokesperson, said that the U.S. has seen no evidence of detainee abuse in Yemen.

The U.S. officials have acknowledged that American forces receive intelligence from UAE partners and have participated in interrogations in Yemen.

UAE officials did not respond to requests for comment.

In Yemen's three-year Saudi imposed war, UAE forces that are purportedly fighting on behalf of Yemen's government have overtaken wide swaths of territory, towns and cities in the south.

They have swept up hundreds of men into a network of at least 18 hidden prisons on suspicion of being al-Qaeda or the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists. The prisoners are held without charges or trials.

Witnesses said Yemeni guards working under the direction of Emirati officers have used various methods of sexual torture and humiliation.

They raped detainees while other guards filmed the assaults. They electrocuted prisoners' genitals or hung rocks from their testicles. They sexually violated others with wooden and steel poles.

"They strip you naked, then tie your hands to a steel pole from the right and the left so you are spread open in front of them. Then the sodomizing starts," said one father of four.

From inside the prison in Aden, detainees smuggled letters and drawings to the AP about the sexual abuse. The drawings were made on plastic plates with blue ink pen.

The drawings show a man hanging naked from chains while he is being electrocuted, another inmate on the floor surrounded by snarling dogs as several people kick him, and graphic depictions of anal rape.

Of the five prisons where the AP found sexual torture, four are in Aden, according to three Yemeni security and

military officials who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation.

One is at the Buriqa base - the headquarters for the Emirati forces. A second is at the house of Shallah Shaye, the Aden security chief closely allied with the UAE, and a third is at a nightclub-turned-prison called Wadah. The fourth is at Beir Ahmed, where the March atrocities occurred.

The U.S. personnel have been seen at the Buriqa base, along with Colombian mercenaries, according to two prisoners and two security officials.

The detainees could not say whether the Americans, some of whom wear military uniforms, are members of the U.S. government or mercenaries.

A former security chief who himself was involved in torturing detainees to extract confessions told the AP that rape is used as a way to force detainees to cooperate with the Emiratis in spying.

"In some cases, they rape the detainee, film him while raping, use it as a way to force him to work for them," he said. He spoke on condition of anonymity, because of security concerns.

Based on the AP investigation last year, the House of Representatives voted on May 24 to require Defense Secretary Jim Mattis to determine whether the U.S. military or intelligence personnel violated the law in interrogations of detainees in Yemen.

The House adopted the measure as part of the 2019 defense authorization bill. The amendment was sponsored by Representative Ro Khanna, a Democrat from California.

The Defense Department has to submit a report within 120 days to Congress.

The U.S. provides arms worth billions of dollars in addition to logistical and intelligence support to the Saudi-led coalition.

The U.S. has also intensified its drone campaign against al-Qaeda and the ISIL group in Yemen. The Pentagon has said that American forces are helping UAE and Yemeni forces in driving al-Qaeda fighters from southern Yemeni cities.

Another prisoner gave the AP what he said were the real names of five Emirati torturers. UAE officials did not respond to requests for comment about the men.

One of the most brutal torturers is Yemeni, a former prisoner called Awad al-Wahsh, who was arrested and tortured before agreeing to work with the Emiratis, four witnesses told the AP.

His supervisor, Yosran al-Maqtari, could not be reached for comment. Al-Maqtari is Aden's chief of anti-terrorism. Other torturers named by detainees are Emirati officers known to prisoners by their noms de guerre: Abu Udai, Abu Ismail, and Hitler.

The prisoners who were sexually abused in March had tried to fight back. They had organized three hunger strikes to protest their treatment.

They had launched a campaign with their families to get human rights groups to secure their release.

That's when the 15 Emirati officers showed up with their dogs.

Sheikh Salman was also charged with "revealing defense secrets to a foreign country and disseminating information that would harm Bahrain's status and reputation."

The senior Bahraini Shia cleric has been in jail on a nine-year prison sentence since late 2014 for what the Manama regime has called "insulting" government officials, "inciting" unrest through his speeches targeting the authorities during the 2011 uprising, attempting to overthrow the regime and collaborating with foreign powers.

Sheikh Salman denies all the charges, saying he has merely been seeking reforms in the country through peaceful means.

(Source: Press TV)

Bahraini regime urged to drop charges against top opposition leader

More than 30 independent rights groups have called on the Bahraini regime to drop all charges against prominent Shia and opposition leader Sheikh Ali Salman as the ruling House of Khalifah dynasty does not shy away from its heavy-handed clampdown on political dissidents and pro-democracy campaigners in the tiny Persian Gulf state.

The 32 NGOs announced in a joint statement that the June 21 trial against Sheikh Salman constitutes a violation of his "rights to liberty, fair trial, free expression, and free association... [and] further contracts democratic space in the country."

They also called for an end to the "prosecution of political dissidents and human rights activists for exercising their right to freedom of expression," demanding the Manama regime to stop using legislation to "criminalize the peaceful practice of freedom of opinion and expression."

On November 1, 2017, the 52-year-old secretary general of the dissolved al-Wefaq National Islamic Society and two of his colleagues, Hassan Sultan and Ali al-Aswad, were charged with "spying on behalf of a foreign country... with the aim of carrying out subversive acts against Bahrain and harming its national interests."

Israeli forces arrests 20 Palestinians in overnight raids across West Bank

Israeli military forces have arrested nearly two dozen Palestinians during separate overnight operations across the occupied West Bank.

The rights group Palestinian Prisoners' Society said on Wednesday that Israeli military vehicles rolled into the northern West Bank city of Nablus, located approximately 49 kilometers (30 miles) north of al-Quds (Jerusalem), and violently ransacked it before taking four Palestinians away to an unknown location.

Israeli soldiers also stormed the town of Tell, and detained two Palestinians there.

Moreover, three Palestinians were detained in the north-western West Bank city of Tulkarm, one in al-Bireh, located 15 kilometers (9.3 miles) north of al-Quds (Jerusalem), three in Jenin refugee camp and another in Hindaza village, located six kilometers southeast of Beit Lahm (Bethlehem).

Israeli troops also arrested a Palestinian in Beit Fajjar town, situated eight kilometers south of Bethlehem, and another in Ramallah.

In the southern West Bank city of Halhul, located five kilometers (3.1 miles) north of al-Khalil (Hebron), Israeli forces detained four Palestinians.

More than 7,000 Palestinians are reportedly held at Israeli jails. Hundreds of the inmates have apparently been incarcerated under the practice of administrative detention, a policy under which Palestinian inmates are kept in Israeli detention facilities without trial or charge.

Some Palestinian prisoners have been held in administrative detention for up to eleven years.

Palestinian inmates regularly stage hunger strikes in protest at the administrative detention policy and their harsh prison conditions in Israeli jails.

According to reports, at least 13 Palestinian lawmakers are currently imprisoned in Israeli detention facilities. Nine of them are being held without trial under administrative detention.

■ Israeli warplanes attack over two dozen targets in Gaza Strip

Meantime, Israeli fighter jets have conducted fresh airstrikes on the Gaza Strip, hitting 25 targets across the blockaded Palestinian territory.

The Israeli army said in a statement that the targets hit early on Wednesday were military compounds belonging to the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement, which runs Gaza.

However, a Gaza medical source said the Israeli strikes had struck empty sites, including some already hit in recent weeks.

The town of Rafah in southern Gaza was among the targets of the Israeli air force.

According to sources in Gaza, four people have been wounded in the attacks.

Elsewhere in its statement, the Israeli army said its air raids came in response to rocket fire from Gaza to the occupied territories.

It also claimed that Israeli "Iron Dome" missile system had intercepted seven out of some 45 rockets fired from Gaza late Tuesday night and early on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Eshkol regional council said three projectiles had fallen inside populated communities, with one causing damage to buildings and vehicles.

(Source: Press TV)

Europe's democrats must unite to prevent a far-right takeover

➔ What Seehofer, Orbán and others are gearing up for is an overthrow of the values of the liberal order within the EU. They want to mould it according to their conservative Christian, nation-centered beliefs, and they see the west as being under assault from non-white and Muslim threats and migration. This was a vision also laid out by Trump, remember, in his 2017 Warsaw speech.

They don't want to break up Europe, they want to take control of it. The "axis" will grow branches in Poland's populist-led government and in parts of the Balkans. These people may not agree on everything, (for example, Salvini wants compulsory EU relocation plans for refugees, which Orbán rejects) but their interests are sufficiently aligned to make this the perfect moment to launch a common assault on EU institutions.

The "axis" aims to get rid of Merkel and seize control of the European People's party (EPP), which has dominated the EU parliament for years and encompasses all the mainstream right-wing forces. The EPP has been a vehicle for Merkel's hegemony over the EU all these years, which is one of the reasons she has always refrained from chucking out Orbán and his Fidesz party.

■ Utterly powerless EU Parliament

These leaders are now uniting to attempt a national-populist takeover of the EU as we've known it. Merkel is only the first target in a wider endeavor. And don't be fooled by talk of an utterly powerless EU parliament: it does matter if the populists gain control, because the parliament has co-decision powers on legislation, alongside the council of ministers.

Orbán, who's arguably the most outspoken about this, made the strategy abundantly clear in a speech last week. He suggested the EPP would need to change if it wanted to survive, and threatened to set up a new, "pan-European anti-immigration formation" if the EPP isn't ready to be renewed on his terms. What's to be done? The French president, Emmanuel Macron, and Merkel (if she survives the coming weeks in power) will try to peel away some parts of the "axis". Macron has already courted Kurz in the Elysée palace, despite his association with the far right. On Tuesday Macron met Merkel at a castle north of Berlin to try to showcase a plan for eurozone consolidation. The news coming out of Europe isn't all bad. Spain has a new, center-left government. The EU's economy is also doing better, and polls show growing support for it among citizens.

But for the democratic-minded across Europe, now is the time to make a clear choice. There's no need to be obsessed with history to know that, when the "rough beast" slouches, "its hour come round at last" (Yeats again), surely anti-far-right forces must unite.

Given the context, hard-left clashes with centrists become something of a distraction. And criticism of the EU's institutional "democratic deficit" is currently a sideshow. Let's protect what we have. On 14 June, in the European parliament, the far left and the far right voted together against a resolution calling for the release of political prisoners in Russia. Would they likewise have voted together against a call for the release of migrant children held in cages by Trump's America? Some people need to get their priorities right, before it's too late.

(Source: The Guardian)

England less threatening than Belgium, says Panama's Rodriguez

Panama midfielder Jose Luis Rodriguez believes England will not pose as big a threat as the Belgium side that defeated the Central Americans 3-0 in their World Cup opener on Monday.

The tournament debutants held their own against a highly rated Belgian side in the first half in Sochi before a stunning volley from Dries Mertens and a Romelu Lukaku brace after the break helped the Europeans climb to the top of Group G.

Panama are bottom of the group on goal difference and need a positive result against England in Nizhny Novgorod on Sunday to retain any hope of progressing to the knockout stages.

"For me, Belgium are a more difficult opponent than England," Rodriguez was quoted as saying by The Telegraph.

"England are a big team with very good players but we will try to win. I watch Premier League football every week... It is fantastic to play against some of those players and I will try to have a good game. "It will be difficult to stop England — we have to be well organised — but we will take the same (physical) approach against them and we will try to win."

Belgium manager Roberto Martinez expressed concern over potential injuries emerging from Panama's hard tackling but defender Roman Torres says his team will continue to be aggressive to counter a speedy England side.

"Football is like that — you always have to impose yourself, you have to mark out your territory," he said. "I think we competed well against Belgium, and I think when there were tackles, they got stuck in just as much as we did."

"England are a bit more direct than Belgium. They try to make use of the pace they have. We'll need to be compact and limit their space."

England are second in Group G after their 2-1 win over Tunisia on Monday.

(Source: Reuters)

VAR helps tournament reach 10 penalties - so is it working?

A "fairer World Cup", better player behaviour and a reduction in the "mobbing" of officials.

The introduction of video assistant referees was one of the major issues heading into this World Cup and, as expected, it has been a near constant talking point during the first round of games.

Four penalties have been given using VAR, while England and Brazil both had cause to be unhappy with the system.

Like it or not, it is certainly having an impact - 10 penalties have been awarded in 17 matches. The World Cup record is 18 for an entire tournament. Former Premier League referee Mark Halsey told BBC Radio 5 live the failure of VAR to give spot-kicks to England for fouls on Harry Kane against Tunisia showed the system is "inconsistent" and "should not be in this tournament".

But Fifa says it is "extremely satisfied with the level of refereeing to date and the successful implementation of the VAR system".

And David Elleray, technical director of the International Football Association Board - the body which oversees the laws of the game, told BBC Sport its overall impact has been "very positive". "There have only been five reviews in the first 17 matches, which conforms to the global average of one in every three games," said Elleray, who helps to train referees in the use of VAR.

"This is 'minimal interference' and with the outcome of three matches being directly affected by the VAR intervention this is 'maximum benefit' and a fairer World Cup.

"The behaviour of players has been excellent, with only one red card and a low average of yellow cards and little mobbing of referees." Here, we take a look at the incidents so far and get Elleray's verdict on whether VAR worked in each case.

(Source: BBC)

Mexican captain Márquez on US sanctions blacklist



The United World Cup 2026 bid might not be quite as united as its principals claim as US authorities pursue Mexican football legend and national team captain Rafael Márquez, 39, who in the past week has become only the third player ever to appear at five World Cups.

The US justice authorities have, according to a report in the New York Times, had him on a US Treasury blacklist since August, with a number of businesses connected to him accused of acting as fronts and holding assets for Raúl Flores Hernández — a suspected leader of a major drug trafficking organisation.

Márquez denies any links to drug traffickers and is supported by both the Mexican FA and the Mexican government in that they have known of his situation for months but still allowed him to lead the national team at Russia 2018.

The US authorities have nevertheless frozen his financial assets in the United States, as well as his Mexican assets with ties to the American financial network.

Márquez's lawyers, Jose Luis Nassar, told press "we are in a frank phase of collaboration" with American officials to resolve the matter.

The situation has caused for extreme measures surrounding Márquez for fear of Treasury sanctions against any company or organisation associated with him — these can include fines of up to nearly \$1.5 million per violation, rising to \$10 million and a maximum of 30 years in jail for individuals who knowingly break the rules, according to the NYT.

(Source: Insidefootball)

Signs bad for Messi's last chance to emulate Maradona



Lionel Messi's 31st birthday this weekend is an ominous reminder Russia may be his last World Cup and final chance to emulate fellow Argentine great Diego Maradona in lifting the ultimate prize.

The diminutive Argentine captain known as "La Pulga" (The Flea) has won every club accolade imaginable with Barcelona, but has agonisingly missed out on international trophies both at the World Cup and Copa America.

For many Argentines, that means while he may be the world's best player currently, Messi has not entered the same pantheon as Maradona "El Pibe" (The Kid) who won the 1986 World Cup.

With Argentina looking dysfunctional and under-performing throughout the qualifiers, Messi's dream of matching Maradona in Russia always looked a tall order.

But it became harder in the 64th minute of Argentina's opener when his tame penalty was saved by Iceland's goalkeeper - watched inevitably by Maradona who had lapped up adoring cries of "Dieeeeeego!" beforehand.

Though Maradona, 57, consoled Messi that even he too once missed five consecutive penalties and the 1-1 draw with

Iceland was a collective failure, the signs are bad.

"Look, I love Messi, we all do. But it's just not working out for him internationally," said Guillermo Aguirre, strolling round Nizhny Novgorod as Argentine fans began to arrive for Thursday's game against Croatia.

"I want to see him lift the cup so the Maradona debate can be ended because it's not fair on him. But if I'm realistic, Brazil was the best opportunity," added Aguirre, in reference to Argentina's 1-0 defeat by Germany in the 2014 final.

Some expect Messi to exit international football after Russia, after his aborted "retirement" in the aftermath of a devastating penalty shootout defeat to Chile in the 2016 Copa America where he again missed from the spot.

He has enjoyed a glittering club career, winning World Player of the Year five times with a string of La Liga and Champions League titles.

"It is clear that Messi's legacy and standing within the game would be enhanced with victory in Russia this summer, but he does not need to win the World Cup to be viewed as Maradona's equal," argued London-based sports writer Greg Lea in an article for The Sportsman.

Iceland keeper Halldorsson swaps film-making for World Cup drama



Iceland film maker-turned-goalkeeper Hannes Halldorsson showcased his skill at creating drama in his side's 1-1 World Cup draw against Argentina, taking centre stage as he saved a penalty from Lionel Messi in front of millions of TV viewers.

To complement the modest wages on offer as he started his career in the domestic league, the 34-year-old net-minder worked in the film business before going full-time as a professional footballer when he moved to Norway in 2012.

Back home in Iceland, 99.6 percent of the country's TV viewers saw him stop Messi's shot as the tiny island nation made their World Cup debut on Saturday.

"Many footballers, when they play in the Icelandic league, they have a job on the side, it's a semi-professional league," Halldorsson told reporters ahead of Iceland's clash with Nigeria on Friday.

"My job just happened to be a film-maker. I always had a passion for it when I was young, and that's what I got sucked into after high school," he added.

Plenty of players in the squad have followed the same path through the semi-professional ranks as Halldorsson, and head coach Heimir Hallgrímsson still practices as a dentist when he has the time.

"I'm not an expert in which jobs the play-

ers have, but I think film-maker must be up there among the strangest - it's not a usual combination, footballer and film-maker," Halldorsson said. The heightened exposure brought about by World Cup qualification has caused Halldorsson, who plays his club football for Danish club Randers, to take a seat in the director's chair once again, if only briefly, to make a TV ad.

Big sponsors

"It was a commercial for Coca Cola, they are one of the big sponsors of the football federation and we made a commercial shortly before the World Cup. The response has been very positive," he said.

With the team dominating the TV ratings and Halldorsson's commercial rolling regularly during the ad breaks, the nation's footballers are almost never off Icelandic screens, and there is also a documentary film being made about their progress.

Though he may have another starring role to play between the posts in Friday's Group D clash with Nigeria, Halldorsson says he will not be offering the documentary crew any advice.

"It's a very ambitious project. They are following us and I am looking forward to seeing the result, but I'm staying out of the way this time!" he said.

(Source: Euronews)

Hazard warning fires hungry Lukaku up for glory



It may have needed a half-time rocket from captain Eden Hazard to jolt Romelu Lukaku into action in Belgium's World Cup opener but coach Roberto Martinez believes the striker has the hunger to fulfil his ambition of global domination.

The Chelsea playmaker gave Lukaku a piece of his mind in Sochi on Monday after Belgium had huffed and puffed but failed to blow Panama's modest defensive fortress down before the interval.

"At half-time, I told him we needed him. He'd been hiding out a bit up front," Hazard told reporters. "It's not easy playing with a man missing. But once he got in there, involved in the game, like magic, he scored two. "I hope he understands that now," Hazard added after Belgium opened their Group G campaign with a 3-0 win.

That public dressing down fuelled talk of discord in the camp outside Moscow, where Martinez gave his players Wednesday off following their exertions on the humid Black Sea coast before they face Tunisia on Sunday and England next Thursday.

Images of defender Jan Vertonghen screaming at a lack of cover from Yannick Carrasco before the winger was withdrawn, have also sounded alarm bells about a return of the infighting that has dogged the Red Devils at previous big tournaments.

Martinez played down rumours of disharmony and said he had faith in Lukaku delivering not just on his promise of becoming the best striker in the world but also for a team anxious to go further than Belgium's previous best of semi-finalists in 1986. "My team can share views," the Spaniard told reporters on Tuesday. "Any sort of negative word between the players... is not a type of attitude that we have."

"Of course, we want to demand from each other, and that's natural, what happens in a dressing room."

Vertonghen, the side's most capped player, also denied talk of a rift, calling it the best Belgian team he has known: "We're a complete team," the Tottenham Hotspur defender said. "There's always going to be stress, but I think we coped well."

Lukaku could get better yet, Martinez said: "The drive is what interests me in a young player, why does he play football? And Romelu Lukaku plays football to be the best in his position."

"He can be as good as he wants to be." Lukaku himself, in an interview with The Players' Tribune magazine, spoke of the childhood poverty and smears against his Congolese heritage as motivation for his ambition.

(Source: Mirror)

Hamilton boosted for ground-breaking F1 triple-header

Lewis Hamilton can expect a welcome boost in engine power this weekend as Formula One embarks on an unprecedented triple-header at a French grand prix returning to the calendar after a decade's absence.

Le Castellet's Paul Ricard circuit last hosted a Formula One race in 1990, before 10 of the current 22 drivers were born, and has been reconfigured from the one fondly remembered by older generations.

France's most recent grand prix was at Magny-Cours in 2008, the year Hamilton won his first world championship with McLaren, and it remains a rare country that has yet to see the Mercedes driver triumph. If the four-times world champion does so on Sunday, he will take another record from retired great Michael Schumacher; that of the most wins at different grands prix. The pair are tied on 22 at present, although Hamilton already holds the record for different tracks (25) after winning in Azerbaijan this year.

Hamilton is one point behind Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel after seven races, with the German taking the lead in Canada two weekends ago when he celebrated his 50th career win.

Ferrari and other rivals had an engine upgrade for that race and Mercedes did not.

Reigning champions Mercedes had delayed the introduction of their planned upgrade due to what they said was a 'quality issue', a problem that also affected customer teams Williams and Force India.

That should change as of this weekend, with Mercedes planning on making the change and Hamilton determined to hit back hard in the first of three races on successive weekends. "I'm really going to make sure that we come back strong at the next race," he said after Canada.

The France-Austria-Britain sequence of races poses a fresh logistical challenge for teams hitherto committed only to back-to-back weekends, with the 21-round season hurrying to the halfway point.

The three-in-a-row format was scheduled specifically to avoid a clash with the World Cup soccer final in Russia on July 15.

"France should be an interesting race. We don't often get to race on a track where we have little to no historical

data," said team boss Toto Wolff.

"It makes preparing for the weekend a bit trickier than usual, but that element of the unknown also adds to the challenge. "The triple header... will test all F1 teams to their limits, but also offers the chance to score a lot of points over the course of three weeks — which is precisely what we're setting out to do."

McLaren's Fernando Alonso and Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen, 36 and 38 respectively, are the only current drivers to have won a grand prix on French soil — although former double world champion Alonso won the Le Mans 24 Hours at the weekend.

Renault will have plenty of support for their first home race, as will the country's Formula One drivers Romain Grosjean (Haas), rookie Pierre Gasly (Toro Rosso) and Esteban Ocon (Force India).

Sauber's Charles Leclerc is the most local of the lot, growing up in Monaco, about three hours up the road from the circuit between Marseille and Toulon.

(Source: Euronews)



"Feel the power of dream at 2018 World Cup"

We are not afraid of any team in World Cup: Mehdi Taremi



words cannot describe the joy and happiness we feel when the final whistle blew," Taremi said.

"Iran were under pressure against Morocco in the first 15 minutes but we controlled the match towards the end. We had some goal scoring chances but failed to convert them into the goal," he added.

He came off the bench at the last minutes of the match against Morocco and played a role in Team

Melli's victory over the Lions of Atlas.

"I felt pain in my back and played with pain for my people but I am hopeful of quick recovery for the coming matches," Al Gharffa striker stated.

"We want to make history in the World Cup and make our people happy, that's why we are here. Team Melli respect all the teams but we are not afraid of any team," Taremi concluded.



"80 Million People, One Nation, One Heartbeat"

KAZAN, Russia — Iran national football team striker Mehdi Taremi says they are not afraid of any team in the 2018 World Cup.

Ahead of a crucial match against Spain in Group B of the 2018 World Cup, Taremi says Team Melli have the potential to qualify for the next stage for the first time.

"We won a great match against Morocco and the

Iran goalkeeper Beiravand's story source of inspiration for soccer fans worldwide

The life story of the first-choice goalkeeper of the Iran men's national football team Alireza Beiravand, who worked in a bakery, a car wash, a pizzeria and as a street sweeper before rising to stardom, could be a source of inspiration for millions of soccer enthusiasts around the globe.

Beiravand, born on September 21, 1992 in Sarab-e Yas village of Iran's western province of Lorestan, started playing football as a goalkeeper at an early age but his father vehemently objected.

His father told him that being a footballer could not be a job, and preferred his son to be a simple worker and make money.

"My father didn't like football at all and he asked me to work. He even tore my clothes and gloves and I played with bare hands several times," the custodian of the Iran national football team, nicknamed Team Melli, said.

At last, Beiravand bought a ticket with the money he had saved working as a baker, and traveled to the Iranian capital Tehran in the hope of joining a club.

He met Hossein Fayz, the manager of Tehran-based Vahdat Football Club, on the bus. Fayz told Beiravand he would let him train if he paid him some money.

The young goalkeeper told Fayz he did not have any money at all, so the manager felt pity and agreed to give Beiravand an opportunity.

He did not have a place to sleep so he spent nights around Azadi Tower, where many migrants and street vendors gathered.



Beiravand then started working in a pizza shop so he could sleep there at night. One night, his coach came to buy pizza. The goalkeeper did not want him to know his situation, but the shop owner forced him to serve. Beiravand left the shop a few days later.

His next job was working in a car wash, where he achieved fame for washing sport-utility vehicles because of his height.

After that, he worked as a street cleaner and started his job as early as 5 o'clock in the morning.

Finally, Beiravand signed for Naft-e Tehran under-23 team and began to shine.

He was then invited to Iran national under-20 football team (also known as Iran Youth Team) and Iran national under-23 football team — domestically known as Iran Olympic Team.

In April 2014, he was called up to the Iran national football team training camp in South Africa by coach Carlos Queiroz.

Beiravand currently plays as a goalkeeper for Persepolis in the Persian Gulf Pro League.

During the official 2018 FIFA World Cup draw ceremony at Kremlin State Palace in the Russian capital city of Moscow on December 1 last year, the Iran football

team joined the Portugal national football team, nicknamed A Seleção, Spain's La Furia Roja and Atlas Lions of Morocco in the preliminary round of the tournament.

The host nation, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Uruguay form Group A in the upcoming quadrennial international sports event.

France is drawn in Group C, and is pitted against Australia, Peru and Denmark. Argentina, Iceland, Croatia and Nigeria are drawn in Group D.

Group E consists of Brazil, Switzerland, Costa Rica and Serbia.

While the 2014 FIFA World Cup champion Germany, Mexico, Sweden and South Korea shape Group F, Belgium, Panama, Tunisia and England are in Group G.

Group H has Poland, Senegal, Colombia and Japan.

The 2018 FIFA World Cup kicked off on June 14 and will run through July 15. Russia opened the event against Saudi Arabia in a Group A fixture at Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium. The hosts won the match 5-0.

A total of 64 matches will be played in 12 venues located in 11 cities.

Iran started its World Cup campaign against Morocco at Krestovsky Stadium in Saint Petersburg, Russia, on June 15.

The Iranians were gifted a 1-0 win over Atlas Lions when Moroccan striker Aziz Bouhaddouz thumped a powerful header into his own net five minutes into injury time.

(Source: Press TV)

Iran's soccer icon Daei turns down FIFA invitation to aid quake victims

Former Iranian footballer Ali Daei has declined an invitation by the world's soccer governing body to visit the Russian city of Kazan, where the Iran men's national football team will take on Spain in a 2018 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup Group B fixture.

The 49-year-old, who currently manages Iran's Persian Gulf Pro League club Saipa Tehran, offered his profound apologies for the rejection, citing his efforts to reconstruct homes devastated in the quake that struck western Iran last November.

The quake measuring 7.3 on the Richter scale rattled the border region between Iran and Iraq on November 15, 2017, causing extensive damage and loss of life.

According to official figures, at least 432 people lost their lives and over 7,817 others sustained injuries in the earthquake. More than 12,000 homes were also completely destroyed in the incident.

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Iran will face Spain at Kazan Arena on Wednesday.

(Source: Press TV)

Morocco out of 2018 FIFA World Cup as Portugal grabs 1-0 win

The Morocco men's national football team, nicknamed Atlas Lions, has failed to book a spot in the Round of 16 of the 2018 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup in Russia, slumping to its second consecutive defeat in the preliminary round.

On Wednesday, Portuguese professional footballer Cristiano Ronaldo thumped a fourth-minute header to give A Seleção a 1-0 over Morocco in a Group B tie at the Luzhniki Stadium in the Russian capital city of Moscow.

Portugal is now the top-ranked soccer team in the group with four points.

The Iran men's national football team, better known as Team Melli, stands in the second spot, having earned three points.

Spain's La Furia Roja has racked up one point to claim the third position, while fourth-placed Morocco has not earned any point.

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(Source: Press TV)

Pakdaman wins bronze medal at Asian Fencing C'ships

TASNIM — Iranian sabrist Ali Pakdaman claimed a bronze medal at the 2018 Asian Fencing Championships.

Pakdaman, who had defeated Japanese Kenta Tokunan 15-6 in quarter-final, lost to eventually champion fencer Bongil Gu from South Korea in the competition's semi-final and failed to advance to the final.



The 2018 Asian Fencing Championships are being held in Bangkok, Thailand from 17 to 22 June 2018 at the Rangsit Campus.

The Asian Fencing Championships are the fencing zonal championship organized by the Asian Fencing Confederation for the Asia-Oceania zone.

The tournament began in 1989 and it has been held annually since 2007. It awards points for the Fencing World Cup.

Mohammad Ansari extends contract with Persepolis

PLDC — Persepolis defender Mohammad Ansari has extended his contract with the club for three more years.

Ansari had been already linked with a move to Chinese and Croatian football teams but he has penned a three-year contract extension with Persepolis on Tuesday.

Ansari joined Iranian giant Persepolis from Azadegan League side Shahrdari Tabriz in 2015 and quickly became a first team regular at the left back position.

He was one of the surprise performers of the 2015-16 season and played an important role for Persepolis in his second season helping the team win the Persian Gulf Pro League in the 2016-17 which resulted in calling up to Iran national team.

It will boost Persepolis since the team is not allowed to sign new player in the summer transfer window.

Iran captain sidesteps women in stadiums issue

By Nick Mulvenney

KAZAN, Russia (Reuters) — Iran captain Masoud Shojaei said on Tuesday that the World Cup was the wrong place to discuss the issue of women being allowed to watch football matches at stadiums in the Islamic republic.



Iranian women are expected to be in the crowd at the Kazan Arena on Wednesday when their country takes on Spain, taking advantage of an opportunity not available to them back home.

A banner proclaiming "#NoBan4Women" and "Support Iranian women to attend stadiums" was held up when Iran played Morocco in their World Cup Group B opener in St. Petersburg last Friday.

Shojaei, though, told the official pre-match news conference that the debate was one that would be better conducted in Iran after the tournament.

"We are a family, we are a nation when we are out on the pitch," he said through a translator.

"These are not just empty words. To talk about this issue now would be disrespectful to the tournament.

"I prefer to solve our problems within our family and if we have the opportunity to talk about this later, we will."

According to media reports in Iran, Shojaei has previously offered backing to the lifting of the ban, which was imposed on women attending all sports events after the revolution of 1979.

Andres Iniesta wary of facing Iran National Football Team

TASNIM — Spain veteran midfielder Andres Iniesta says they will have a difficult match against Iran.

La Roja will face Iran in Kazan's Kazan Arena on Wednesday in Group B of the 2018 World Cup.

"Wednesday's game is like a final," said Iniesta. "If we win it will give us an advantage in our group and then we can start to look towards the later stages.

"It will be a tough game but you have to remember we're a really united team that's been together for many years," the Barcelona captain added.

"We trust each other blindly."

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433
Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
Printed at: Rooztab - ISSN: 1017-94

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.o. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713



Tbilisi gallery hangs works by Iranian artists

A R T TEHRAN — Iart Gallery in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by a group of Iranian artists.



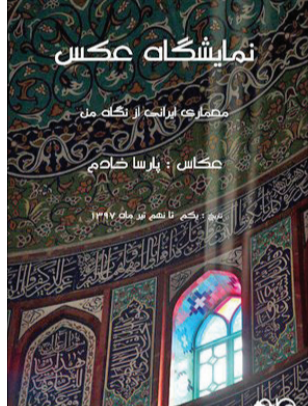
Art lovers visit "You Look for", an exhibition of paintings by Iranian artists, at Iart Gallery in Tbilisi, Georgia on June 18, 2018. (Nidar Art)

The exhibition named "You Look for" is displaying about 60 paintings by 20 artists including Nima Ansari, Zeinab Khodabakhsh, Maryam Izadi, Mehdi Mansuri and Elika Keshavarz, organizer Nidar Art announced on its Instagram.

Iranian group Nidar Art is an international platform for young artists organizing pop-up exhibitions and art events all over the world. The exhibit will be running until June 24.

12-year-old photog focuses on Persian architecture in new collection

A R T TEHRAN — A 12-year-old Iranian photographer has highlighted Persian architecture in his solo exhibition, which will open at the Niavaran Cultural Center in Tehran on Friday.



A poster for photographer Parsa Khadem's exhibition "Iranian Architecture in My Vision"

A collection of 30 photos depicting aspects of architecture in a number of Iranian historical buildings will showcase at the exhibition of Parsa Khadem, the center announced on Wednesday.

"Iranian Architecture in My Vision" will run until June 30.

Khadem began learning photography from veteran photographer Leila Nurai when he was seven. He is also pursuing his education through courses held by Hossein Kiani, with whom he co-organized an exhibition at the Kazan National Cultural Center in the capital of Tatarstan during October 2017.

Iran's Russian concerts, carrying coals to Newcastle

I → Rahbari also called the musical program costly for Iran and asked the cultural officials to spend the sums allocated for travel to Russia to improve the orchestras instead.

"These showoff exercises are unnecessary and unproductive for Iran that enjoys a century-long history of orchestral music, which has dropped off to sleep as a result of mismanagement and the misappropriation of public funds," noted Rahbari who is the conductor of the Antalya State Symphony Orchestra.

"Why don't you take a group of prominent Persian traditional musicians such Hossein Alizadeh and Keyhan Kalhor to Russia if you insist upon giving performances in the country?" he asked.

All these words, which are almost identical to those uttered later by Karatygina, fell on deaf ears and the selection of musicians from the Tehran Symphony Orchestra and National Orchestra along with a number of officials with a mania for foreign travel embarked on the Russian tour.

Colombian pop star loses \$785,000 in valuables at World Cup

MOSCOW (Reuters) — Colombian pop singer Maluma was robbed of luxury items worth over 50 million roubles (\$785,000) from his hotel room near Moscow's Red Square, Russian media reported on Tuesday, citing police sources.

An intruder stole valuables including a Louis Vuitton bag, 11 luxury watches, various items of Cartier jewelry and 10 glasses studded with diamonds and pearls, two police sources told news portal RBC.

Maluma, who is one of the biggest names in Latin music, is in Russia to watch the soccer World Cup.

Moscow police opened an investigation into suspected theft on Tuesday, both RBC and Interfax said, quoting a source as saying he had been staying at the Four Seasons Hotel near the Kremlin.

Books good replacement for cellphones: actor Reza Kianian

A R T TEHRAN — Actor Reza Kianian has asked a group of young students at a Tehran film school to replace cellphones with books.

"If you are interested in acting you need to read books. You must read books written about acting," Kianian said during a surprise birthday party the students organized for the 67-year-old actor at the Seventh Art Film School on Tuesday.

Kianian was attending the Transferring Experience Workshop held at the school dedicated to teens.

"If you are really interested in acting you should make every effort to achieve your goal," he told the participating teens.

He also said that he has written five books about acting, which carry his opinions about acting and his articles about cinema and theater.

"Those who have entered cinema as a result of their attractive images or because of money, will not remain if they do not have the talent. Bahram Radan and Mahnaz Afshar are those who joined cinema because they were good-looking, but remained by working hard. We should do our job right and think about it. We should have nothing to do with others and should not make laws for them," he explained.



Actor Reza Kianian blows the candle of his 67th birthday cake in a ceremony held at the Seventh Art Film School on June 19, 2018.

Iran's National Orchestra to perform in Azerbaijan



Vocalist Salar Aqili performs a concert with the National Orchestra in an undated photo.

A R T TEHRAN — Iran's National Orchestra will perform two concerts in the Azerbaijani cities of Baku and Ganja next week.

The performances, which are part of a five-day Iranian cultural festival, will be held on June 27 and 29.

A repertoire of pieces from Iranian composers such as Aref Qazvini, Nasrollah Zarrinpanjeh, Ali Tajvidi, Babak Zarrin

and Hossein Dehlavi will be performed during the concerts.

"Airiqliq" ("Separation"), a piece by Iranian Azerbaijani composer Ali Salimi, is one of the highlights of the repertoire.

The National Orchestra and a selection of musicians from the Tehran Symphony Orchestra have been in Russia over the past week, performing three concerts in Saint Petersburg, Moscow and Kazan.

Iranian movies picked to screen at intl. festivals



A scene from "It Rains Slowly" by Saeid Nejati

A R T TEHRAN — A number of Iranian films has been selected to screen at two festivals in Kashmir and Italy.

"It Rains Slowly" by Saeid Nejati, "Grey Umbrella" by Mohammad Pustinduz and "Foruzan" by Mir Abbas Khosravinejad, are competing in the short film category of the Kashmir World Film Festival, the Iranian Youth Cinema

Society (IYCS) that is the producer of the movies announced on Tuesday.

The festival opened in Srinagar on Tuesday and will run until June 25.

The Lago Film Fest, which will be organized from July 20 to 28 in LAGO, ITALY, is scheduled to screen "Animal" co-directed by Bahram and Bahman Ark in the International Film Competition.

Rubaiyat of Persian poet Baba Afzal Kashani appear in Turkish

CULTURE TEHRAN — A Turkish translation of a selection from the Rubaiyat of Baba Afzal Kashani, a book by the Persian poet who lived during the 12th and 13th centuries, has recently been published

in Turkey. The book has been rendered into Turkish by Behruz Dijurian and has been released by Okumuslar Publishing House in Istanbul last week. Baba Afzal is the author of many

Persian works on philosophical and metaphysical subjects and has translated the Arabic version of Aristotle's "The Book of the Soul" into Persian. He was a Sufi and the author of about 500 mystical Rubaiyat, some of which

have been mistakenly identified as Khayyam's.

According to Dijurian, the book also bears the Persian version of the poems with a description of the correct pronunciation of the poems in Turkish.

CBS to expand "Star Trek" with five-year deal for new TV shows

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — U.S. broadcast network CBS will expand the popular "Star Trek" science-fiction franchise with new series, mini-series and animation under a production deal announced on Tuesday.

CBS said in a statement that it had signed a five-year deal with producer Alex Kurtzman to supervise a range of new programming related to "Star Trek".

Kurtzman is a writer and producer of "Star Trek: Discovery", which premiered in September 2017 on the CBS All Access streaming service. A second season is currently in production.

He also co-wrote and produced the 2009 "Star Trek" feature film and 2013 sequel "Star Trek: Into Darkness."

The original "Star Trek" debuted in 1966 as a U.S. television series depicting the adventures of the Starship Enterprise.



Director Alex Kurtzman arrives for the premiere of the film "The Mummy" in New York, U.S., June 6, 2017. (Reuters/Lucas Jackson)

It was created by the late Gene Roddenberry and featured characters including Captain James T. Kirk, played by William Shatner, and Vulcan officer Mr. Spock, played by the late Leonard Nimoy.

Michael Jackson show headed to Broadway in 2020

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — A musical inspired by the life of late pop singer Michael Jackson will open on Broadway in 2020, Jackson's estate and its producing partner said on Tuesday.

The story will be written by two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Lynn Nottage, according to a statement from the "Thriller" singer's estate and Columbia Live Stage, co-developers of the untitled production.

The show will feature songs from Jackson's extensive catalog of hits, it said.

Known as the King of Pop, Jackson died at age 50 in 2009 from an overdose of the anesthetic propofol and sedatives.

His estate previously collaborated on a live tribute show by Cirque du Soleil called "Michael Jackson One," which has been running in Las Vegas since 2013.



U.S. popstar Michael Jackson performs during concert in Vienna, July 2, 1997. (Reuters/Leonhard Foeger)

Jackson gained success with songs such as "ABC" and "I'll Be There" as a child singer with his brothers, and later pursued a solo career that earned him worldwide fame and fans with hits such as "Rock With You," "Bad" and "Beat It."

Hollywood producers speak out against Fox over immigration stance

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Some powerful Hollywood producers and directors have criticized Twenty-First Century Fox Inc over its news commentators' support for the U.S. immigration crackdown that separates children from their parents, with one award-winning producer threatening to take his work elsewhere.

Steve Levitan, the co-creator of Emmy-winning comedy "Modern Family", said on Twitter he was "disgusted" to work for the Fox television studio because it is owned by the same company as Fox News. He tweeted on Tuesday that he would be "setting up shop



elsewhere" after his contract with Fox for one more season of the series expires next year. Levitan later backtracked, expressing re-

spect for senior Fox group executives Peter Rice, Dana Walden and Gary Newman. "For now, I will take some time to see where those people land, and at that point, make a decision about my future," he said in a statement.

Levitan's criticism of Fox News was echoed by three other influential television and movie producers and creators as an outcry grew in the United States and abroad over a policy to separate immigrant children from their parents who cross the U.S. border illegally.

Conservative commentators on Fox News have spoken in support of the policy. Laura Ingraham on Monday described the detention

centers being used to house the separated children "as essentially summer camps."

On Sunday, author Ann Coulter appeared on Fox News show "The Next Revolution" and described the detained migrant children as "child actors weeping and crying" and urged U.S. President Donald Trump: "Do not fall for it, Mr. President." Host Steve Hilton said in a statement later that he did not endorse Coulter's comments.

Representatives for Fox News and the Fox television studio declined to comment. The 20th Century Fox film studio did not respond to requests for comment.