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Iran is runner up in Global Innovation Index 2018 in Central, Southeast Asia **10**



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Russian President Vladimir Putin (R) and senior Iranian politician Ali Akbar Velayati exchange smiles as they meet in Moscow on Thursday, July 12.



ARTICLE

H.E. Pang Sen
Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Iran

Facts and figures about Xinjiang of China

Due to its important role in China’s Belt-and-Road Initiative, the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang) has attracted much attention. Not infrequently, praises, along with misunderstanding and western media’s distortion are intertwined in the press. It is necessary to present a real and true picture about the region to facilitate a better understanding of Xinjiang.

■ Great achievements since 1949

Located in northwestern China with a land area of 1,660,000 square kilometers, Xinjiang is China’s largest administrative region at provincial level. Historically, Xinjiang was the passage for land transport and exchanges between different cultures across Asia and Europe. The famous Silk Road linking the ancient civilizations of the East and the West went through this vast land. Its geographical location has resulted in Xinjiang’s distinctive feature: coexistence and integration of diverse peoples and their cultures.

Xinjiang now has a population of 24 million. Major ethnic groups include the Uygur, Han, Kazak, Hui, Mongolian, Kirgiz, Xibe, Tajik, Ozbek, Manchu, Daur, Tatar and Russian, with the Uygurs as the largest population.

Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Xinjiang has achieved the fastest development in history. Its gross domestic product (GDP) grew from 1.2 billion yuan (RMB) in 1955 to 961.7 billion yuan in 2016, a growth rate above the national average. Xinjiang’s agriculture and husbandry-based economy evolved into one focused on industry and services. The per capita GDP rose from 241 yuan in 1955 to 40,648 yuan in 2014, about 24-fold increase in real terms. The rate of urbanization increased from 15% to 48% in the same period. By 2016, highway mileage reached 182,000 km, of which 4,395 km were expressways. Operating railway lines totaled 6166 km. It has in operation 18 civil airports, and 155 air routes totaling 230,000 km. Xinjiang now boasts the largest number of airports and the longest flight routes among all provinces and autonomous regions in China. ➔13

Iran says U.S.-caused oil spike will slow growth, add to tariff impact

A rise in oil prices caused by the United States’ sanctions policies will hurt economic growth in China, Europe and other consumers, much like President Donald Trump’s trade measures, a top Iranian official said on Thursday.

Iran’s OPEC governor also told Reuters the rise in oil output by OPEC and its allies, after pressure by Trump to do so, was only 170,000 barrels per day (bpd) in June and would not grow much in 2019, also weighing on economic growth.

While Trump has accused the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries of driving up oil prices, Iran, OPEC’s third-largest producer, says the United States has caused this by imposing sanctions on Iran and fellow OPEC member Venezuela.

“The higher oil prices Trump is causing are leading to a higher energy bill in the EU, Japan, China and India, impacting their economic growth just like the tariffs imposed upon them, also enabling Saudi Arabia and the UAE to pay

their arms bill to the U.S.,” Iran’s Hossein Kazempour Ardebili said.

The comments underline the still-simmering tensions after OPEC’s meeting last month, when the group agreed to return to full compliance with earlier agreed oil output cuts, after months of underproduction by OPEC countries including Venezuela.

Saudi Arabia said the deal allowed countries able to produce more, such as itself, to go ahead and do so, to make up for shortfalls elsewhere. Iran strongly disagreed and criticized Saudi plans to boost output.

Kazempour said Trump may be disappointed by the scale of the production increase so far and voiced skepticism Saudi Arabia and Russia could add much more oil in 2019.

“These days Saudi Arabia are supplying out of stocks not additional production,” he said. “Russia is also unable to do much not even 200,000 barrels per day - all are talking few barrels next year and the world economy will shrink and all

indexes will be down.”

“The June versus May increase in OPEC and non-OPEC production was only 170,000 bpd. Does this surprise you, Mr. President?”

The International Energy Agency, in a report on Thursday, put the combined month-on-month increase at 230,000 bpd.

If Iran were able to develop its liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry to its full potential, Tehran could help reduce reliance on Russia, Kazempour said - something that the United States would favor.

“Trump is concerned about EU and German dependence on Russian gas. Why do Trump and American companies together with EU companies not invest in Iranian LNG for Europe? Iran holds the largest gas reserves.”

The U.S. president had launched a sharp public attack on Germany on Wednesday for supporting a Baltic Sea gas pipeline deal with Russia, saying Berlin had become “a captive to Russia”.

(Source: Reuters)

Poll: 75% of Arabs see Israel, U.S. as biggest threat to security

A new opinion poll has found that a majority of Arabs consider Israel and the United States as the biggest threat to regional stability despite efforts by their rulers to portray Iran as a risk.

The poll, conducted by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies in Qatar, showed that above 75 percent of Arabs consider Israel and the U.S. as the top two threats to their national security.

It also held that the Palestinian cause was an Arab one, dealing a blow to efforts by some Arab leaders to relegate the issue to a standoff between the Palestinians and Israelis.

Persian Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain have recently begun to court Israel more overtly as they have tried to whip up a surge of animosity towards Iran.

The survey, however, showed that an overwhelming majority of respondents - 87 percent - disapproved of their home countries’ recognizing Israel. Ninety percent called Israel a source of instability in the region.

Asked to elaborate, many cited “Israel’s mistreatment of Palestinians and its colonial policies,” the Middle East Eye (MEE) news portal reported,

citing the poll’s results.

The study, known as the Arab Opinion Index, was based on interviews with more than 18,000 Arab citizens in 11 countries and its results were published on Thursday.

For the first time since 2011, when the center started carrying out the study, pollsters had a difficult time gauging Saudi citizens’ opinions on Palestine.

When asked about Palestine, about 36 percent of the Saudis said they did not know or declined to answer, in contrast to five percent in the rest of the countries polled. ➔3

‘Angry Trump baby’ balloon lifted over London



The United States President Donald Trump directly criticized British Prime Minister Theresa May’s “soft Brexit” strategy, saying it could “kill” chances of a U.S.-Britain trade deal in a wide-ranging interview published on the first day of his British tour.

Speaking to the British tabloid The Sun, Trump said a potential trade deal would “most likely” fail if May’s strategy was implemented because the U.S. would be “dealing with the European Union instead of dealing with the UK”. ➔13

Leader receives Lebanese Hezbollah war veterans

POLITICS TEHRAN — Ahead of the anniversary of Israel’s 33-day war against Lebanon, a group of disabled and injured veterans from the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement met with Leader of the Islamic Revolution late on Thursday.

During the meeting, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei praised the victory of the Islamic resistance movement over the Zionist regime in the summer of 2006.

In the 33-day war Hezbollah shattered the myth of the invincibility of the Israeli army. Israel lost more than 100 military personnel. The great damage to the army caused a political and military earthquake in Israel. In January 2007, the Israeli military’s chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, submitted resignation after facing months of fierce criticism over the military’s performance in the war.

Syrian army hoists national flag in Dara’a city

The Syrian army has raised the national flag over the southern city of Dara’a as a major counter-terrorism operation nears an end, with foreign-backed militants leaving the region in negotiated surrender deals.

State television reported on Thursday that the Syrian military had managed to enter the militant-held part of Dara’a and

hoist the flag near the city’s post office.

“Syrian army units enter Dara’a al-Balad and raise the national flag in the main square,” the official SANA news agency said.

Dara’a city was the birthplace of the sedition that began in March 2011 before morphing into a foreign-backed militancy that continues to this day. ➔13

Russia say studying oil-for-goods deal with Iran

Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said on Friday that a deal under which Russia would provide goods to Iran in exchange for oil is still possible. Russia is studying all legal issues related to the possible deal, Reuters quoted Novak as saying.

The remarks by Novak came after senior Iranian politician Ali Akbar Velayati held talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Thursday.

Velayati who carried the messages of

the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani to Putin called his meeting with the Russian leader as very “constructive”, “transparent” and “friendly”.

The Kremlin issued a statement saying the negotiations focused on the Syria crisis and the U.S. pullout from the 2015 nuclear agreement. The meeting came five days before Putin meets U.S. President Donald Trump in Helsinki, Finland.

Iran launching intensive diplomatic campaign to counter U.S. illegal moves

POLITICS TEHRAN — Since Donald Trump left the 2015 nuclear agreement and announced plans to reintroduce sanctions against Iran, officials in Tehran have launched an intensive diplomatic campaign to counter the U.S. moves and highlight Washington’s breach of international commitments under the international agreement.

Shortly after the announcement, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif visited Beijing, Moscow and then Brussels on how to save the agreement. In Brussels, he met with EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and his British, French and German counterparts.

Later, President Rouhani travelled to China for the May 10 Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi told IRNA on Thursday that the visit to China provided an ample opportunity for negotiation with the presidents of Russia and the host country about the important issues.

In line with the intensive diplomatic efforts, he said, the Foreign Ministry is conveying the message of President Rouhani to his counterparts in different countries in order to let them be aware of Iran’s position on the JCPOA, the official name for the nuclear agreement.

To declare Iran’s stance, Vice President for Women and Family Affairs Massoumeh Ebtekar flew to Malaysia and Indonesia, Vice President for Legal Affairs Laya Jonaydi to the Netherlands, Energy Minister Reza Ardekanian to Armenia and Georgia and a number of Zarif’s deputies visited Venezuela, Bolivia, Uganda, Tunisia, Brazil, Chile and some regional Arab countries, Qassemi stated.

He said that there has remained some other countries to which the president’s envoys will travel in the coming days and weeks.

Asked about the level of talks, Qassemi said countries, according to their international position and influence, have a different status in Iran’s foreign policy.

He said Russia and China as permanent members of the UN Security Council and also the European Union, especially its heavyweight member Germany, as well as certain neighboring countries which have good economic ties with Iran are undoubtedly on the list of Tehran’s priorities. ➔3

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Larijani congratulates new Turkish parliament speaker

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Akbar Velayati has called for expansion of parliamentary ties with Turkey.

"I am confident that Iran-Turkey parliamentary relations will enter a new stage of development thanks to active cooperation during your tenure," he said in a message of congratulation to Turkish Speaker of the Grand National Assembly Binali Yildirim on Friday.

Turkish lawmakers on Thursday elected Binali Yildirim as the first speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly under the new government system.



Enemies nearing their collapse: Army chief

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Chief of the Iranian Army Abdolrahim Mousavi said on Thursday that the countdown to fall of enemies has started.

"They [enemies] are getting close to collapse and annihilation," he said, adding that the enemies do not have the power to confront Iran.

"The countdown to the end of their lives has started and they are aware that they are getting close to annihilation, but they are acting in a way that make us believe we are in bad situation," the Army chief remarked.

The general added, "We should be aware not to be trapped by the psychological warfare."



Japan voices full support for JCPOA

Japanese Senior Deputy Foreign Minister Takeo Akiba said on Friday that Tokyo fully supports the 2015 nuclear deal — known as the JCPOA — and wants all other countries to respect it as well.

Akiba made the remarks as Iran's newly-appointed ambassador to Japan Morteza Rahmani Movahhed presented a copy of his credentials to him.

Noting that Iran and Japan will mark the 90th anniversary of their diplomatic relations next year, Akiba expressed hope that cooperation between the two countries will expand in the future.

The Iranian ambassador, for his part, said that a balanced development of relations between Iran and Japan is what Iran expects.



'Trump, MBS, and Netanyahu fully aware of Iran's rising power'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Tehran's interim Friday prayers leader has praised the country's military power and full security and said these are the outcome of the Iranian nation's steadfastness and patience.

No country has been able to reach success and victory without steadfastness, Hojjatolleslam Mohammad-Hassan Aboutorabi Fard stressed, Tasnim reported.

He also said the "sinister triangle" of U.S. President Donald Trump, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (MBS), and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are fully aware that the Islamic Republic's power is quickly growing.



Police seize 2 tons of drugs in clashes with smugglers

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's police have seized over 2 tons of drugs in armed clashes with smugglers in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan.

The police forces arrested five smugglers in the clashes, provincial deputy police commander Ahmad Taheri said, the official website of police reported on Thursday.

During the armed clash, which occurred late on Wednesday, police sized 1,902 kilograms of opium as well as 74 kilograms of hashish and 32 kilograms of heroin, Taheri said.

The police forces also seized three AK-47 guns from the smugglers, he added.



Iran says pleased Thai boys rescued from cave

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi released a message on Thursday saying his country is really delighted that the recent operation in Thailand led to the rescue of 12 teenage boy trapped in a cave.

In his message to Thai Foreign Ministry officials, Qassemi said Iranian people shared the Thai nation's concern about the fate of the teenagers and "watched the Tham Luang-cave operation closely".

"We thank God for bestowing the teenagers and their parents the blessing to live together once again. We also pay tribute to the ghost of the brace officer from Thailand's navy who sacrificed his life to save the teenagers," he explained, according to en.mfa.ir.

Velayati calls meeting with Putin very 'constructive', 'transparent' and 'friendly'

Iranian, Russian and Turkish presidents to meet in Tehran to discuss Syria

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Ali Akbar Velayati, a top foreign policy adviser to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, announced on Thursday that the Iranian, Russian and Turkish presidents will meet in Tehran in the near future to discuss the Syrian crisis.

"Mr. Putin [the Russian president] said that he will travel to Tehran soon to attend the summit on Syria," Velayati told IRIB after his meeting with the Russian president in Moscow. Velayati described his meeting with Putin as very "constructive", "transparent" and "friendly".

In a statement on Thursday, the Kremlin said the meeting between Putin and Velayati focused on regional security particularly the situation in Syria and the U.S. withdrawal from the multinational nuclear deal with Iran.

President Donald Trump who declared the U.S. pullout from the nuclear deal in May announced that sanctions will be re-imposed against Iran "at the highest level".

"The Russian president stressed that he will not care about unilateral sanctions against Iran and Moscow does not accept sanctions which have not been approved by the UN Security Council," Velayati said.

Commenting on relations, he said that ties between the two countries have always been on the rise.

Velayati said Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei views relations between Tehran and Moscow as "strategic".

Velayati, a former foreign minister, said Tehran and Moscow share common interests.

He noted that Iran-Russia cooperation in helping Syria counter terrorism is an "exemplary model of cooperation".

Elsewhere, he said that the current "sensitive" situation in the world makes it more imperative to expand cooperation.

Velayati started a three-day tour of Russia on Wednesday. He delivered messages from Ayatollah Khamenei and President Rouhani to Putin. Velayati, who is accompanied by a diplomatic team, was to depart to China after concluding visit to Russia.

■ **'Iran not willing to negotiate with U.S.'**

Also during a speech at the Valdai Discussion Club on



Friday, Velayati said that Iran is not willing to negotiate with the U.S., because Washington cannot be "trusted".

Analysts say Trump is very eager to negotiate with Iran. They say Trump, unhappy with what his predecessor Barack Obama had done, is willing to strike a deal with Iran with his own record and that is why he exited the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear deal.

Commenting on a plan by the Trump administration to introduce sanctions against Iran's oil export, he said, "In spite of the sanctions, Iran sees no impediment to sell its oil. We will continue exporting our oil even under sanctions. If Iran cannot export oil from the Persian Gulf, no one else can do."

Pointing to the U.S. act in leaving the 2015 nuclear deal in May and vowing to return sanctions against Iran, he said that Iran will quit the deal, known as the Joint

Comprehensive Plan of Action, if it does not enjoy the benefits of the agreement.

■ **U.S. cannot force Iran to leave Syria, Velayati says**
Velayati also said Iran will not be intimidated to leave Syria under a pressure by the Trump administration.

Iran and Russia will continue their presence in Syria by the time there would be no terrorist in the country, he insisted.

Velayati said the U.S.-led coalition which has no permission from the Damascus government to act against Daesh.

Iranian military advisor are in Syria and Iraq upon the request of the countries and will leave there only upon requests by Damascus and Baghdad, he remarked.

"If the U.S. does not leave the Middle East, we will force it to leave the region. The U.S. demand on exit of the Iranian forces from Syria is aimed at creating division among Syria's allies," he said.

Iran rejects accusations contained in NATO statement

Foreign Ministry says 'NATO concern over Iran's missile program is completely unfounded and pointless'

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Thursday dismissed the anti-Iran allegations raised in a statement issued at a summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Brussels.

Qassemi said part of the statement which mentions issues related to Iran is a reshuffle of old allegations.

"Like in the past, we reject and condemn the repeated accusations about Iran contained in the statement," said Qassemi.

"We closely monitored the developments and discussion at the meeting, especially the United States' behavior and pressures on members of this treaty (NATO)," he further said.

"Although most of NATO's spending goes to the [provision of] security for the U.S., this country, behaving as if others are beholden to it, and by exerting pressure, seeks to impose its opinions and policies on other nations, especially on European countries," he pointed out.

"It is surprising that some [states and individuals] still insist on repeating unsubstantiated and baseless allegations regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's policies," the spokesman noted.

The spokesman underlined that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as the only specialized international authority on nuclear issues, has always corroborated the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear activities.

"NATO member states, which are undoubtedly fully aware of the numerous and back-to-back reports by the IAEA regarding Iran's measures and compliance with its obligations, should, instead of pleasing U.S. officials, have



been concerned about one NATO member's non-compliance and illegal and unilateral withdrawal from international agreements, including the JCPOA, and instead of distorting obvious and clear realities, should have reprehended this country's unilateral and dangerous policies," the Foreign Ministry spokesman asserted in a statement.

"However, at this juncture, some NATO members have apparently once again swapped the places of the U.S. and Iran, which has always lived up to its international commitments, and its international policies serve to maintain international peace and security."

Qassemi went on to say that NATO's misgivings about Iran's missile program are unwarranted. "NATO member states' concern over Iran's missile program is completely unfounded and pointless."

Paris request for U.S. waivers on Iran trade rejected

France says the U.S. has rejected its request to exempt French companies from sanctions that Washington plans to impose against Iran.

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire was quoted by media as saying that the U.S. Treasury Department had officially informed Paris that no exemptions would be given to French enterprises for dealing with Iran once the sanctions return.

"We have just received Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin's response: it's negative," Le Maire told Le Figaro in an interview published on Friday, according to Press TV.

The French minister said Europe needed to react quickly and protect its economic sovereignty.

"Europe must provide itself with the tools it needs to defend itself against extra-territorial sanctions," he said.

Foreign and finance ministers of France, Germany and Britain wrote a letter to senior U.S. officials last month, singling out key



areas which they wanted to be excluded from U.S. sanctions.

In their letter, the European ministers wanted key areas, including pharmaceuticals, healthcare, energy, automotive, civil aviation, infrastructure and banking to be exempted.

The ministers have said U.S. measures, including its secondary sanctions that could prevent the European Union from continuing to uphold the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran, would harm Europe's security interests.

Earlier in June, Le Maire said that Europe had to build independent financial institutions that would be immune to U.S. penalties which he said are already making it impossible for European companies to do business with Iran.

Some major French firms such as energy giant Total and carmaker PSA have already been winding down their activities in Iran, but Renault has said that it will stand its ground.

The European Union is currently locked in a trade dispute with the U.S.

In May, U.S. President Donald Trump announced that he would pull America out of the nuclear agreement with Iran and re-impose the sanctions that the deal had envisaged to be lifted.

Trump emphasized that the sanctions against Iran would be "at the highest level."

The first batch of sanctions that will come into force in August will target the Central

Bank of Iran (CBI) as well as the country's precious metals sector. The next batch that will be implemented in November will target Iran's oil and energy sector.

Iran has strongly criticized Trump's decision to pull America out of the nuclear deal - the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as it is technically called. It says the move is a clear violation of the JCPOA, emphasizing that other signatories should provide assurances that Iran continues to benefit from the economic advantages envisaged in the deal.

Europe has pledged to put together an economic package for Iran so that the country benefits from staying in the deal but France said on July 6 the offer was unlikely to come by before November.

Germany's Foreign Minister Heiko Maas has also said that the Europeans would not be able to fully compensate for companies leaving Iran due to the returning U.S. sanctions.

Rouhani's special envoy submits message to Ugandan president

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — On Thursday, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Morteza Sarmadi submitted President Hassan Rouhani's written message to Yoweri Museveni, the Ugandan president.

Sarmadi, the special envoy of Rouhani, also discussed developments in bilateral relations and the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Sarmadi said that the U.S. unilateral actions and destructive policies threaten the international peace and security.

He called on independent countries to adopt "united" stance against "illogical actions and policies".

The Ugandan president said that the U.S. unilateral actions and policies are "unacceptable", urging collective efforts to boost multilateralism.

Museveni also supported efforts to preserve the nuclear deal.



Iran has also sent special envoys to Malaysia, Russia and China to warn against the illegal steps that the Trump admin-

istration has taken toward the multilateral nuclear agreement endorsed by the United Nations Security Council.

The nuclear deal, struck in July 2015 between Iran, the European Union, Germany and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, went into effect in January 2016. Under the agreement Iran is obliged to lower its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of sanctions. However, the U.S. walked out of the multilateral agreement.

Iran has repeatedly warned that if its interests are not guaranteed under the nuclear agreement it would resume its nuclear activities with a greater speed.

The U.S. plans to reintroduce sanctions against Iran. The first stage of sanctions is going to be enforced in August and the last stage in November. The U.S. has threatened to punish any country or company that do business with Iran.

U.S. airstrikes kill 30 civilians in Syria's Bukamal: SANA

At least 30 civilians have lost their lives when the United States-led coalition purportedly fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists carried out airstrikes in Syria's eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr on Friday.

Local sources said the airstrikes struck a residential area on the outskirts of the city of al-Bukamal, which lies on the Euphrates River near the border with Iraq.

Many others, including women and children, were injured in the overnight airstrikes, with medical sources indicating that the death toll may rise due to the critical condition of some of the wounded. The U.S. has been conducting airstrikes inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from Damascus or a United Nations mandate. It has repeatedly been accused of targeting and killing civilians. It has also been largely incapable of fulfilling its declared aim of destroying ISIL. On December 14, 2017, Syria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates stated that the U.S.-led coalition was indeed targeting civilian facilities and providing ISIL terrorists with cover. The latest U.S. airstrikes come a day after the Syrian army entered the militant-held part of the southern city of Dara'a and hoisted the national flag near the city's post office. The final push into the city happened after militants agreed to put down their arms through a deal facilitated by a Russian military delegation.

Earlier on Thursday, militant officials and witnesses said a Russian military delegation had entered Dara'a's terrorist-controlled area and begun negotiations over the region's handover to the Syrian government. Two armored vehicles with senior Russian officers entered the al-Shayah area and began talks with commanders from the so-called Free Syrian Army (FSA) on implementing the terms of the surrender deal.

Russia warns militants 'Idlib will be next'

Meanwhile, opposition-linked Smart Syria news agency cited an FSA spokesman as saying that Russian officials had warned the militant group's negotiators in Dara'a that they plan to launch an attack on the northern Syrian province of Idlib in September. According to Ibrahim Jibawi, a spokesman



for the FSA's Southern Front Central Operations Room, the Russians advised militants during a meeting in the Dara'a province town of Busra al-Sham not to continue north after Dara'a. The news agency also quoted an FSA military commander as saying that the militants were now fortifying their bases in Idlib in anticipation of a new offensive.

The foreign-backed crisis in Syria first broke out in Idlib in 2011. The province has been the focal point of the militant campaign against the Damascus government.

Syrian government forces retook Idlib a year later, but it fell back into the hands of militants in 2015, when a coa-

lition of Takfiri terrorists, including then al-Qaeda offshoot al-Nusra Front and Ahrar al-Sham (Islamic Movement of the Free Men of the Levant), launched an offensive in the province, seized Idlib City and laid a siege to the Shia-majority villages of al-Fu'ah and Kafriya.

Currently, the dominant militant force in Idlib is the so-called Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (Organization for the Liberation of the Levant/Levant Liberation Committee), which was formed after al-Nusra Front rebranded itself as Jabhat Fatah al-Sham and swallowed smaller militant groups there.

(Source: Press TV)

Bahraini court gives prison sentences to five anti-regime activists

A court in Bahrain has handed down prison sentences to five anti-regime protesters as the ruling House of Khalifah regime does not shy away from its heavy clampdown on political dissidents and pro-democracy activists in the tiny Persian Gulf tiny state.

On Thursday, Bahrain's Supreme Criminal Court sentenced the defendants to five years in jail each after finding them guilty of "deliberately setting fire to a vehicle and endangering the lives and property of ordinary people for a terrorist purpose" on Sitra Island, located five kilometers south of the capital Manama, on May 25.

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

They are demanding that the House of Khalifah regime relinquish power and allow

a just system representing all Bahrainis to be established.

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

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

On March 5, 2017, Bahrain's parliament approved the trial of civilians at military tribunals in a measure blasted by human rights campaigners as being tantamount to imposition of an undeclared martial law countrywide.

Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah ratified the constitutional amendment on April 3 last year.

(Source: Press TV)

Riyadh detains Islamic scholar as crackdown on dissent intensifies

The House of Saud regime has taken into custody a prominent Muslim scholar as part of an ongoing campaign to silence dissidents in the regime.

Human rights campaigners and online activists said on Thursday that Sheikh Saif al-Hawali had been detained, without providing further details.

Hawali is a leading figure in Saudi Arabia's Sahwa (Awakening) movement, which opposes the presence of the United States troops in the Arabian Peninsula.

In the 1990s, Hawali was jailed for opposing the Saudi regime ties with the U.S. troops leading a military operation in Kuwait. In 1993, he was banned from public speaking and dismissed from his academic posts on suspicion of attempting to incite civil disobedience. In 1994, the Islamic scholar was once again arrested, but was soon released.

Last month, the Saudi regime authorities

detained a number of prominent women's rights advocates, just days before lifting the decades-long ban on women's driving.

Hundreds of influential Saudi businessmen and members of the royal family were also rounded up in the November 2017 in an alleged "anti-corruption campaign" spearheaded by the Saudi regime's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS).

Bin Salman was appointed the first in line to the Saudi throne by his father, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, last June.

Since then, he has engaged in a string of radical economic and social projects in a bid to portray himself as "reformist." However, those projects have been widely seen as being more about consolidating his personal power rather than bringing about real change to Saudi Arabia.

(Source: Press TV)

Iran launching intensive diplomatic campaign to counter U.S. illegal moves

➔ Turning to Iran's special relationship with certain states including Russia, Qassemi said Tehran has had good cooperation with Russia as a neighbor and regional power to fight terrorism and bring security to the region.

Ali Akbar Velayati, the senior advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution, held talks on Thursday with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday to submit the messages of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Rouhani to him.

Qassemi said these travels are taking place in continuation

of Tehran's policy for "better interaction with the world".

All these meetings and contacts are aimed at reaching mutual understanding and exchanging views about the current conditions, the Foreign Ministry spokesman said, stressing such visits, without a doubt, are not against any other country. During such meetings, the envoys try to elaborate on the dangerous consequences of the "illegitimate", "unprecedented" and "unilateral" measures against other countries by the U.S., he pointed out.

Referring to the JCPOA joint commission meeting held in Vienna on July 6 at the level of ministers, Qassemi said the sides discussed the latest questions surrounding Iran's economic cooperation with the EU, China and Russia after the U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal.

He added the expert talks are still continuing.

Qassemi also expressed hope that the European side would soon present its "practical proposal" to guarantee continued implementation of the JCPOA.

Bomb blast at election rally in Pakistan's Bannu: 4 killed, 19 wounded

At least four people were killed and 19 others, including a senior leader of an Islamist party, injured in a bomb blast on an election rally in northwest Pakistan on Friday, the third terrorist attack on a political rally ahead of the July 25 general elections.

Former federal minister and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F/Assembly of Islamic Clerics) central leader Akram Durrani received minor injuries in the blast in Bannu district bordering north Waziristan tribal district.

The explosives were fitted to a motorbike which exploded close to the vehicle of Durrani, who is the candidate of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA/United Council of Action), a political alliance consisting of conservative, Islamist, religious, and far-



right parties of Pakistan.

The blast took place around 40 meter away

from the venue of a public meeting, Regional police officer Bannu Karim Khan said.

The injured have been shifted to a local hospital where five are stated to be in critical condition.

This was the third terrorist attack on an election rally in Pakistan ahead of the general elections. On July 10, senior secular leader of the Awami National Party (ANP) Haroon Bilour and 19 others were killed when a Taliban suicide bomber blew himself up in an election rally in Pakistan's northwestern Peshawar city.

Earlier this month, seven people including a candidate of the MMA were injured in an explosion during an election rally near Taktikhel in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

(Source: hindustantimes)

China chemical plant blast kills at least 19

An explosion at a chemical plant in China has killed at least 19 people and injured 12 others, authorities said, in the latest industrial incident in the country.

The cause of Thursday's blast at Yibin Hengda Technology in an industrial park several hours southeast of Chengdu, the capital of the southwestern province of Sichuan, is not yet known, local officials said on Friday.

According to state news agency Xinhua, an investigation into the blast has begun.

A fire, which broke out early on Thursday evening due to the explosion, was put out by 11:30pm local time (3:30pm GMT), the government said in a statement.

Images on Chinese social media showed a huge fire and plumes of smoke rising from the facilities Thursday night.

A trio of three-storey buildings were reduced to their steel frames by the explosion, the Sichuan Daily newspaper said, citing witness accounts.

Windows of nearby buildings were shattered by the explosion at the factory, which is surrounded by a sand and gravel plant, it added.

(Source: agencies)

Poll: 75% of Arabs see Israel, U.S. as biggest threat to security

➔ According to the report, Saudi Arabia's repressive domestic political atmosphere coupled with the ascension of Mohammed bin Salman to the position of crown prince as well as the regional shift in Persian Gulf-Israeli relations have affected the way Saudis engaged with the survey.

Bin Salman, who has been trying to portray

himself as a reformer, controversially said earlier in the year that Israelis were entitled to their "own land," and that Palestinians should either accept "peace proposals" or "shut up".

In the poll, 87 percent said they held a negative view of US policy towards Palestine. Washington is about to unveil a "peace

plan" aimed at resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without negotiating with the Palestinians. Last year, the U.S. recognized the occupied holy city of al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israel's "capital" and later relocated its embassy from Tel Aviv to the city.

The survey found that 81 percent of Arabs perceived the U.S. foreign policy towards

war-ravaged Syria negatively, as did 82 percent on Iraq.

The Arab Opinion Index, which has been published yearly since 2011, has become a barometer of Arab public opinion from Lebanon to Mauritania on issues ranging from local economy to global foreign affairs.

(Source: agencies)

French FM blasts Trump over bid to 'destabilize' EU

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian has blasted the United States President Donald Trump for what he described as his attempts to destabilize the European Union, insisting that Europe will not allow itself to become destabilized.

"He (Trump) jeopardized the climate agreement, he jeopardized the agreement on Iran, jeopardized the UN operating model. And he does not tolerate the fact that there is a unity called the European Union," Le Drian said on Friday in an interview with the France-based BFM TV channel.

"He is taking initiatives with respect to Europe, in particular in the field of trade, which are aimed at destabilization. But Europe will not allow itself to be destabilized," he added.

The development came as a major trade conflict between the U.S. and its European allies has escalated since March after Washington imposed a 25-percent tariff on steel imports and a 10-percent tariff on aluminum imports from EU member nations.

Although the tariffs on Canada, Mexico, the European Union, and several other allied nations were initially suspended, Washington removed the exemption on May 31, after the trading partners refused to engage in negotiations over the matter with the Americans.

This is while the French government announced in April that it was against engaging in talks on customs duties with Washington after the U.S. administration announced that the formerly introduced aluminum and steel tariffs would be temporarily deferred for EU member nations.

NATO not enemy of Russia

The French foreign minister further emphasized that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is not an enemy of Russia and that its members intend to maintain dialogue with the Kremlin.

"NATO is not an enemy of Russia, we need to maintain dialogue," Le Drian emphasized in remarks regarding the outcome of the alliance's summit in Brussels. "Although our views on several issues differ, the alliance maintains a firm dialogue with Russia," he noted, pointing to issues such as Crimea and the allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria.

Further insisting that "the NATO summit has been successful," Le Drian said, "the final declaration has been signed by all 29 members of the alliance, including the U.S."

He went on to say that NATO "has contributed to maintaining peace for almost 70 years," adding that during the summit "we agreed on our program for the next two years."

Describing the alliance as "an instrument of collective defense" that "protects [member] countries from numerous risks and threats," the top French diplomat emphasized that "Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty on collective defense has only been used once in history, in order to support the United States, when they asked for it after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, which allowed us to begin the operation in Afghanistan."

"Yesterday, we reminded US President Donald Trump about that," Le Drian emphasized.

(Source: Press TV)

Moon presses Trump, Kim for breakthrough in nuclear talks

South Korean President Moon Jae-in has urged the United States President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un to try harder to achieve a breakthrough in their nuclear negotiations.

Speaking at a forum in Singapore on Friday, Moon said that Trump and Kim would "face the stern judgment of the international community" if their promises on denuclearization were not kept.

"I believe the countries will honor the agreement reached by their leaders even if they face many difficulties in the process of working-level negotiations, because their leaders personally made a promise in front of the entire international community," President Moon said, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

"If they do not keep the promise made by their leaders in front of the international community, they will have to face the judgment of the international community."

Singapore was the host of a landmark summit between Trump and Kim last month when they agreed to work towards the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, without describing when and how it would occur.

Follow-up talks between the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and North Korean senior officials got off to a rocky start with Pyongyang accusing Washington of making "unilateral and gangster-like" demands.

On Friday, Moon, who met Kim twice this year, said that the North Korean leader has a "great desire to break away from the ideological confrontations" in the Korean Peninsula.

"If Chairman Kim Jong-un keeps his promise to denuclearize, he may be able to lead his country to prosperity," Moon said.

But he also urged Pyongyang to come up with more details on their commitment to denuclearize.

When later asked by reporters whether the agreement between Trump and Kim would actually be implemented, Moon said the leaders "have no choice" but to carry out the agreement, according to Yonhap.

"What is completely different this time is that the leaders of the North and the U.S. met directly and reached an agreement," he added.

Moon also said that while negotiations will face "many bumps and bruises" along the way, he is confident a deal can be reached eventually.

Meanwhile, in Seoul, the U.S. and South Korean officials held a ceremony on Friday to return home the remains of two U.S. servicemen killed during the 1950-53 Korean War.

Seoul's defense ministry said the remains of an unidentified allied soldier, presumably American, found in South Korea in 2016, will be sent to the United States.

The U.S. military has also brought to Seoul the remains of a South Korean soldier found in North Korea in 2001 during a joint search between the United States and North Korea, according to the Associated Press.

The ceremony came a day after talks between the U.S. and North Korea over the return of the U.S. war remains were postponed tentatively to Sunday, according to the U.S. State Department.

Following his talks with North Korea's Kim in Singapore, Trump announced that the remains of American soldiers who died in North Korea would be repatriated to the U.S. shortly. But since then, negotiations have stalled and the remains have not yet been turned over to the U.S.

(Source: agencies)

STOCK MARKET

| | |
|--------|----------|
| TEDPIX | 109505.1 |
| IFX | 1225.79 |

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

| | |
|-----|--------------|
| USD | 43,190 rials |
| EUR | 50,423 rials |
| GBP | 57,999 rials |
| AED | 11,761 rials |

Source: mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

| | |
|-------------|----------------|
| WTI | \$70.67/b |
| Brent | \$74.65/b |
| OPEC Basket | \$74.40/b |
| Gold | \$1,242.15 /oz |
| Silver | \$15.84/oz |
| Platinum | \$832.40/oz |

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Liquidity at \$35.3b in a month

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's liquidity stood at 1.52 quadrillion rials (about \$35.3 billion) during the last month of the previous Iranian calendar year, Esfand (February 20- March 20, 2018), according to a report released by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI). The CBI announced that the liquidity figure shows 22.1 percent growth in comparison with the same period in the preceding year, IRIB reported.

Production units to receive above \$302m of facilities by Mar. 2019

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Domestic production units will receive 13 trillion rials (about \$302.3 million) of facilities by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019), Iranian Deputy Industry Minister Mahmoud Navvabi announced in a conference. According to Navvabi, on the way to spur production and exports of Iranian products, the government has submitted a bill to the parliament which seeks to exempt domestic producers from paying value added tax, IRNA reported.

13 industrial projects implemented using \$1.8b of investment in a year

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — According to Iranian Ministry of Industry, 13 industrial projects were implemented during the past Iranian calendar year 1396 (ended on March 20, 2018) using 81.3 trillion rials (about \$1.89 billion) of investment. The projects were in petrochemical, aluminum, steel, cement and tire industries, IRIB reported. Some 46 percent of the created projects

were in base metals (steel and aluminum), 23 percent were in non-metallic minerals (cement and plaster) and the rest were in petrochemicals, coke producing, tire manufacturing, and extraction of metal ores, the report said. Among the implemented projects, five steel projects attracted 29.1 trillion rials (about \$676.7 million) of investments, which accounts for 36 percent of the whole announced figure.

Iran assures India on secured oil supplies, offers incentive

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Iranian embassy in New Delhi said in a statement that the Islamic country will take all necessary measures to ensure secured oil supplies to India, offering "flexible measures" to boost bilateral trade. "Iran understands the difficulties of India in dealing with (an) unstable energy market and it has done and will do its best to ensure security of oil supply to India," the statement said. As reported by Reuters on Thursday, Iran has offered Indian refiners incentives including low-price shipping and an enhanced credit period on oil sales. "Iran has always been a reliable energy partner for India and others, seeking a balanced oil market and regional prices of oil which ensure the interest of both countries as consumer and supplier," the statement read.



India was one of the few countries that continued to deal with Iran during previous sanctions. Officials from the U.S. Treasury Department are expected to meet Indian officials next week regarding sanctions on Iran. Iran also wants India to expedite its investment and accelerate engagement for the development of Chabahar port in Iran, the statement said.

Russia ready to invest \$50b in Iran's oil, gas projects

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Ali Akbar Velayati, an international adviser to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, said that Russian President Vladimir Putin has announced his country's readiness to make \$50 billion of investment in Iran's oil and gas projects. The official made the remarks in a live TV interview after

meeting President Putin in Moscow on Thursday, IRIB reported. A Russian major oil company is to sign a \$4 billion deal with Iranian Oil Ministry and related project will be started soon, Velayati said. Two other main companies of Russia namely Rosneft and Gazprom Neft have also started negotiations with the Oil Min-

istry and the value of their deals with Iran can rise up to \$10 billion, he added. "As Mr. Putin said Russia is willing to expand oil and gas ties with Iran", Velayati further noted and added, "\$50 billion is a high figure for investment making; in this way Russian companies can take the place of those European ones that left Iran."



Theses 13 projects created 4,945 jobs in the said time. As Iranian industry, mining and trade minister announced earlier in mid-April some 88 industrial projects are being

implemented in Iran using foreign direct investments. According to Mohammad Shariatmadari, 49,916 projects related to his ministry are being implemented presently in Iran.

Iran's oil production stands at 3.799m bpd in June: OPEC

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — According to OPEC's latest monthly report published on July 11, oil production in Iran stood at about 3.799 million barrels per day (bpd) in June, falling 22,700 bpd from 3.822 million bpd in May, based on secondary sources. The OPEC's report also announced Iran's oil output based on direct communication. It said the country's oil production in June fell to 3.802 million bpd, a 4,000 bpd decrease from 3.806 million bpd in May. Meanwhile, the report put the country's heavy oil price at \$71.69 in June, a \$0.46 or 0.6 percent decrease from \$72.15 in May. The report put average Iranian heavy crude price at \$66.89 since beginning of 2018 up to the report publishing day. According to OPEC, oil demand in Iran



decreased by about 30,000 bpd in April while the demand in other Middle Eastern neighbors like UAE and Kuwait increased. In its previous monthly market review published in June, OPEC reported that Iran's oil output increased by 6,000 bpd in May compared to April. The country produced 3.829 million barrels per day of crude oil in May, the report read.

First Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 97-04/138

Tender Holder:
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Two-Stage Tender:
Supplying Video Equipment for Project of SD to HD TV Channels 1, 2, 3 (IRIB Deputy Office) according to the tender documents

Deadline of Receiving Documents:
As of publishing second announcement of advertisement latest by the business hour dated on **Wednesday July 18, 2018.**

Place of Receiving Documents:
Secretariat of Tenders' Commission, Technical Purchasing (KALA) Dept., Media Technology and Development Deputy Office, Bldg. No. 2, IRIB, Jam-e Jam St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran

Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participating in Tender:
The amount of USD 184,143 which should be in the form of extendable bank guarantee

Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:
The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted within one main envelope marked with tender number no later than **15 p.m. on Saturday August 18, 2018** and submitted to the Secretariat of Commission of Tenders.

Time and Place of Opening Envelopes
The date of opening envelopes A&B is at **8:30 a.m. on Monday August 20, 2018** in the office of Vice President of IRIB Planning and Financial Resources and opening of envelope C will be after technical evaluation. It should be noted that bidders should hold license from the authorized bodies.

For more information, please contact the following phone numbers: **0098-21-22166313**
It is obvious that cost of publishing two advertisements shall be borne by the winner of tender.

Public Relations Dept. of IRIB

First Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 97-04/137

Tender Holder:
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Two-Stage Tender:
Supplying HD Interfacing Equipment for Project of SD to HD TV Channels 1, 2, 3 (Tehran IRIB Center) according to the tender documents

Deadline of Receiving Documents:
As of publishing second announcement of advertisement latest by the business hour dated on **Wednesday July 18, 2018.**

Place of Receiving Documents:
Secretariat of Tenders' Commission, Technical Purchasing (KALA) Dept., Media Technology and Development Deputy Office, Bldg. No. 2, IRIB, Jam-e Jam St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran

Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participating in Tender:
The amount of USD 90,956 which should be in the form of extendable bank guarantee

Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:
The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted within one main envelope marked with tender number no later than **15 p.m. on Saturday August 18, 2018** and submitted to the Secretariat of Commission of Tenders.

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Public Relations Dept. of IRIB

Oil futures edge lower, set for big weekly declines, on oversupply concerns

Oil prices fell on Friday as markets digested big swings earlier in the week that have left both major benchmarks facing a second weekly loss and largely shrugged off a warning about tightness in spare capacity.

Brent crude dropped 35 cents, or 0.5 percent, to \$74.10 a barrel by 0657 GMT. On Thursday it gained \$1.05 a barrel, rebounding from a session low of \$72.67. It is heading for a weekly fall of nearly 4 percent.

U.S. benchmark West Texas Intermediate crude edged down 12 cents to \$70.21 a barrel, after falling 5 cents in the previous session. It is heading for a weekly decline of nearly 5 percent.

It has been a wild week for oil prices with both the main benchmarks suffering heavy losses on Wednesday as traders focused on the return of Libyan oil to the market amid concerns about a China-U.S. trade war.

However, a warning on spare capacity by the International Energy Agency (IEA) pushed Brent higher on Thursday, helping it recoup



some losses.

"It is a tough market," said Tony Nunan, oil risk manager at Mitsubishi Corp in Tokyo. "I think it is supported by relatively strong

demand and inventories are falling, but if you look a little bit ahead U.S. shale oil just continues to grow and then it depends on what goes on with OPEC."

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other key producers including Russia have responded to the recent market tightness by easing a supply-cut agreement.

The IEA cautioned that the world's oil supply cushion "might be stretched to the limit" due to production losses in several different countries.

"Rising production from Middle East Persian Gulf countries and Russia, welcome though it is, comes at the expense of the world's spare capacity cushion, which might be stretched to the limit," the Paris-based IEA said in its monthly report.

"This vulnerability currently underpins oil prices and seems likely to continue doing so," the agency said.

China's crude oil imports fell for a second month in a row in June as shrinking margins and volatile oil prices led some independent refiners, known as "teapots", to scale back purchases, official data showed on Friday.

(Source: Reuters)

Foreign companies evacuate oil fields as violent protests in Basra continue



Iraqi security forces wounded at least two people as protestors stormed one of the oil fields in the oil-rich province of Basra in southern Iraq.

On Thursday, people from different provinces in southern Iraq, particularly in Basra, took to the streets to protest the lack of services and job opportunities in the region.

Iraqi security forces fired into the air to disperse the protesters at one of three demonstrations outside major oilfields in the southern oil hub of Basra, police sources told Reuters.

According to hospital and police sources, security forces wounded at least two protesters near an entrance of the giant West Qurna 2 oilfields run by Russian Lukoil.

"Local workers said around 10 protesters managed to briefly enter a crude separation facility before police pushed them back," Reuters reported, adding that an angry crowd set fire to a caravan used by police.

Kurdistan 24 correspondent Shivan Jabary was live at the scene where he spoke to one of the protesters who said the demonstrations would continue until the government meets all their demands.

People are jobless, and there is a lack

of electricity, water, and other basic services with no proper government response to resolve those issues, the protester added.

A video released by Iraqi activists on social media shows demonstrators trying to breach security gates to storm one of the oilfields in Shia-populated Basra while gunshots, fired by security forces, are heard behind the walls of the entrance.

"Security forces from Ramadi and Mosul [Sunni-populated areas] are firing at us," one of the protesters shouts, calling the people of Basra to come to their aid.

Confrontations between protesters and security forces in the al-Huwait subdistrict in northern Basra Province injured seven people, including a police officer, Shafaaq news reported, quoting a security source in the region.

In the Shat al-Arab district of eastern Basra, hundreds of people gathered on the road leading to the Shalamja border crossing with Iran, blocking the movement of vehicles.

Elsewhere, in northern Basra, protesters blocked the main Basra-Baghdad road using concrete blocks.

(Source: Kurdistan24)

Libya's oil production ramps up after ports reopen



Libya's Abu Attifel oil field has restarted operations after a two-week halt due to the closure of oil ports—a closure that ended on Wednesday after Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC) lifted the force majeure on four ports in the eastern part of the country after the export terminals were handed over to the Tripoli-based internationally recognized Libyan oil company.

"Production and export operations will return to normal levels within the next few hours," the NOC said in a statement yesterday, lifting the ten-day force majeure on the ports of Ras Lanuf, Es Sider, Hariga, and Zuetina, which had crippled Libyan production and had oil market participants worried that another major supply disruption would push oil prices up.

Production resumption at Abu Attifel will be gradual, a Libyan oil source and an engineer told Reuters on Thursday. The most recent production at the oil field had been 50,000 bpd-60,000 bpd, compared to its 70,000-bpd capacity.

Last month, after two weeks of fighting with several other armed groups at Libyan ports, the Libyan National Army (LNA)—an eastern government-affiliated militia—decided to give control of the ports to the eastern NOC.

Libya's oil production came to a halt at the beginning of July, after the Tripoli-based NOC declared force majeure on crude oil loadings at the Hariga and Zuetina oil terminals, adding to the force majeure at the Ras Lanuf and Es Sider terminals. The NOC confirmed on July 2 that the total daily production loss amounted to 850,000 bpd of crude oil.

After the ports reopened, the NOC said on Wednesday that the company and its subsidiaries "are concentrating on managing the build up of operations, to maximise production, and overcome obstacles and losses incurred during the crisis of the last four weeks."

Also on Thursday, the NOC lifted the force majeure at the El-Feel oil field, which had been in place since February 23, 2018, as a dispute over pay and benefits drug on. Oil pumping at the field—operated by a joint venture of Italy's Eni and NOC—is expected to resume to 50,000 bpd within two days, and to 72,000 bpd three days later, the NOC said today.

"We are happy to announce the return to production at El-Feel. Bringing El-Feel back online will help us swiftly return to maximum production levels," NOC chairman Mustafa Sanalla said.

(Source: oilprice.com)

No end in sight for Venezuela's oil crisis

Venezuela's oil production plunged by another 47,500 barrels per day (bpd) in June, compared to a month earlier. An exodus of workers and field shut downs were reported for the month, pointing to a grim near-term future that could see total production dip below 1 million barrels per day (mb/d) by the end of the year.

According to OPEC's secondary sources, Venezuela's output fell to 1.34 mb/d in June, which, aside from a brief interruption of output due to a strike in 2002-2003, puts production at its lowest point in nearly seven decades.

The problems plaguing Venezuela's oil industry are well-publicized, but the situation continued to deteriorate in June. Two officials from state-owned PDVSA told Argus that workers are fleeing operations. "More production wells are being shut down, the skilled oilfield labor force declined in all upstream divisions by at least a combined 1,000 workers in June, and scheduled maintenance continues to be postponed," a PDVSA official from the western division said.

A separate official from the eastern division told Argus that production continued to fall in the first 11 days of July as more rigs were scrapped and more wells were shut down. PDVSA is "dying operationally," the official said.

You wouldn't know that if you went by government statistics, however. While OPEC's secondary sources estimated average output at 1.34 mb/d in June, the Venezuelan government reported production figures at 1,531 mb/d, flat from May levels. Those figures



defy belief and are not credible, but PDVSA's leader, Manuel Quevedo, is "cooking the official data sent to OPEC to hide the truth about [PDVSA] from president Maduro and from the public," an official from the energy ministry told Argus.

Venezuela's production is now down nearly 800,000 bpd from a year ago, and falling.

"Output from Venezuela's ageing conventional oil fields is in rapid decline and upgraders operated by foreign joint-venture partners in the vast Orinoco heavy oil belt are malfunctioning and running below capacity," the IEA said in its latest Oil Market Report. "At the end of June, PDVSA and Chevron

restarted the 210 kb/d Petropiar upgrader after almost a month-long closure."

"In total, upgrading projects in Venezuela can turn roughly 600 kb/d to 700 kb/d of extra-heavy Orinoco crude into export grades. Recently they have been largely out of action due to bottlenecks at loading facilities."

China has decided to invest \$250 million to help slow the decline underway in Venezuela, but it isn't at all clear that that amount of money will have a significant impact. After all, China has poured \$50 billion in loans into Venezuela over the past decade, and the trajectory of Venezuelan oil production has only gone in one direction.

Spare oil capacity could be 'stretched to the limit' by OPEC's supply boost, IEA says

OPEC's rejuvenated bid to tame crude prices could soon exhaust the world's spare capacity cushion, according to the latest monthly report from the International Energy Agency (IEA).

The IEA's closely-watched report comes shortly after crude had its biggest one-day drop in two years, amid heightened U.S.-China trade tensions and persistent global crude supply problems.

"The large number of (supply) disruptions reminds us of the pressure on global oil supply. This will become an even bigger issue as rising production from Middle East Persian Gulf countries and Russia, welcome though it is, comes at the expense of the world's spare capacity cushion, which might be stretched to the limit," the Paris-based organization said Thursday.

"This vulnerability currently underpins oil prices and seems likely to continue doing so," the IEA added.

When spare capacity is high, it acts as a shock absorber to the energy market. But that cushion has shrunk considerably in recent months because of a flurry of outages in Venezuela, Libya and Canada.

And with OPEC and Russia now ramping up output, even minor disruptions in key oil-producing countries could cause prices to spike.

■ Vienna agreement

The IEA said crude production jumped to hit a four-month high of 31.87 million barrels per day in June. Meanwhile, spare capacity in the Middle East was thought to be around 1.6 million barrels per day in July, approximately 2 percent of worldwide output.

OPEC, Russia and several other producers recently agreed to increase output by 1 million barrels in order to ease oil prices away from 3½-year highs. But many external observers think they will struggle to add that much supply because only a handful of the Middle-East dominated countries have spare capacity.

Saudi Arabia ramped up its crude production in June to the highest level since the end of 2016, making good on its recent pledge to tame oil prices.

The kingdom has faced elevated pressure from the likes of China, India and the U.S. in recent months, with all the big crude importers citing anxiety over rising fuel costs.

"The prospect of higher supply from members of the Vienna agreement ... Is very welcome if we are going to ensure stability of oil supply to markets over the next few months," Neil Atkinson, head of the oil industry and markets division at the IEA, told CNBC's "Street Signs" Thursday.

■ Oil prices

International benchmark Brent crude traded at around \$74.57 on Thursday morning, up around 1.6 percent, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) stood at \$70.65, up almost 0.4 percent.

Brent crude had slumped almost 7 percent in the previous session, amid news Libya is poised to resume oil exports. The announcement of the country's National Oil Corp on Wednesday appeared to signal an end to the tense standoff that had shut down most of the country's oil supply. It's reopening could see the return of as much as 850,000 barrels per day of crude flow back into international markets.

(Source: CNBC)

Renewables overtake coal for first time ever in Germany

For the first time in history, renewable power sources have overtaken coal in Germany's energy mix, the German Association of Energy and Water Industries (BDEW) reports, saying the share of wind, solar, hydro, and biomass in the country's energy production mix reached 36.3 percent as of end-June this year, versus a combined 35.1 percent for hard coal and lignite coal. This compares with 32.5 percent for renewables and 38.5 percent for coal same time last year. Great, news, right?

And there's more. Total electricity production from renewables in the first half of 2018 in Germany hit 118 billion kWh, which compares with 114 billion kWh generated from coal. The difference may not be all that great, but it has been hailed as a clear signal that "Renewables are on the march," as the head of BDEW said, and coal is on its way out.

Yet the 118 billion kWh seems to be only an estimate, and not the only one. Utility E.ON has calculated that electricity from renewables actually came in at 104 billion kWh in the first six months of the year. That's less than even the coal-generated electricity estimate of BDEW. However, on the flip side, it is a record-high electricity output, enough to power all households in the country for 12 months. So, despite the difference in calculations, the news is decidedly good for the renewable industry in Europe's biggest economy.

It looks like this news is a natural consequence of a concerted government effort to increase the country's reliance on renewable energy at the expense of coal and nuclear power. Sporting one of the strongest national environmental lobbies in the world, Germany's coalition government earlier this year set a target of 65 percent of electricity to be sourced from renewable capacity by 2030. According to a clean energy think tank, the goal is fully within the capabilities of Germany. So why is it that the country is on track to miss its own emissions targets?

Germany had set itself a target of having 40 percent lower emissions in 2020 than in 1990. Last month, the coalition government admitted the actual reduction will fall short of the target, by as much as 8 percentage points. Also, Germany has been pushing for lower EU-wide renewable energy targets for 2030.

Energy industry representatives and environmentalists are blaming the government for the missed 2020 targets. BDEW's Stefan Kapferer told media at the time the industry was putting more effort into advancing renewable energy targets than the government. Simone Peter, president of the Renewable Energy Federation, noted that the government is effectively harming the industry by failing to provide clarity on energy and emissions policies, which means companies can't adequately plan for spending and capacities.

If we are to judge by Energy Minister Peter Altmaier's comments regarding the EU targets, perhaps the government is being cautious.

"Let's have higher goals but with a lower degree of reliability and a lower degree of measures. That's exactly what I think leads to citizens' dismay with politics, if you define targets, which are not underpinned, which cannot be controlled, without legal liability," he said at a recent BDEW event in Berlin.

Further, commenting on a proposed 2020 target to have 1 million EVs on German roads, Altmaier said "We're not going to manage that. Nowhere in Europe is going to manage that. And even if we did manage to get enough electric cars, we wouldn't have enough renewable electricity to keep them on the road."

The minister's remarks are refreshingly different from the usual renewable enthusiasm demonstrated by other senior government officials from different parts of the world. It is also the safer approach to the renewable shift.

(Source: oilprice.com)

A new approach to MENA's refugee crisis



By Nasser Saidi

There are now more people displaced by conflict than at any time since World War II, and violent conflict in the Middle East and North Africa accounts for the majority of today's refugees. With no evidence that the fighting will end anytime soon, host countries and major donors must adjust their aid accordingly.

The human toll from violence in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has reached historic proportions. Since 2000, an estimated 60% of the world's conflict-related deaths have been in the MENA region, while violence in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen continues to displace millions of people annually.

For countries hosting refugees from these conflicts, the challenges have been acute. According to a 2016 report by the International Monetary Fund, MENA states bordering high-intensity conflict zones have suffered an average annual GDP decline of 1.9 percentage points in recent years, while inflation has increased by an average of 2.8 percentage points.

Large influxes of refugees put downward pressure on a host country's wages, exacerbating poverty and increasing social, economic, and political tensions. And yet most current aid strategies focus on short-term assistance rather than long-term integration. Given the scale and duration of MENA's refugee crisis, it is clear that a new approach is needed, one that shifts the focus from temporary to semi-permanent solutions.

To accomplish this, three areas of refugee-related support need urgent attention. First, donor countries must do more to strengthen the economies of host states. For example, by buying more exports from host countries or helping to finance health-care and education sectors, donors could improve economic conditions for conflict-neighboring states and, in the process, create job opportunities for refugees.

For this to pay off, however, host countries will first need to remove restrictions on refugees' ability to work legally. Allowing displaced people to participate in formal labor markets would enable them to earn an income, pay taxes, and eventually become less dependent on handouts as they develop skills that eventually can be used to rebuild their war-ravaged countries.

Employment might seem obvious, but most MENA host countries currently bar refugees from holding jobs in the formal sector (Jordan is one exception, having issued some 87,000 work permits to Syrian refugees since 2016). As a result, many refugees are forced to find work in the informal economy, where they can become vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

But evidence from outside the region demonstrates that when integrated properly, refugees are more of a benefit than a drain on host countries' labor markets. For example, a recent analysis by the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford found that in Uganda, refugee-run companies actually increase employment opportunities for citizens by significant margins.

A second issue that must be addressed is protecting refugees' "identity," both in terms of actual identification documents and cultural rights. For these reasons, efforts must be made to improve refugees' digital connectivity, to ensure that they have access to their data and to their communities.

One way to do this would be by using blockchain technology to secure the United Nations' refugee registration system. This would strengthen the delivery of food aid, enhance refugee mobility, and improve access to online-payment services, making it easier for refugees to earn and save money.

Improved access to communication networks would also help refugees stay connected with family and friends. By bringing the Internet to refugees, donor states would be supporting programs like "digital classrooms" and online health-care clinics, services that can be difficult to deliver in refugee communities. Displaced women, who are often the most isolated in resettlement situations, would be among the main beneficiaries.

Finally, when the conflicts end – and they eventually will – the international community must be ready to assist with reconstruction. After years of fighting, investment opportunities will emerge in places like Iraq, Syria, and Sudan, and for the displaced people of these countries, rebuilding will boost growth and create jobs. Regional construction strategies could reduce overall costs, increase efficiencies, and improve economies of scale.

In fact, the building blocks for the MENA region's postwar period must be put in place now. For example, the establishment of a new Arab Bank for Reconstruction and Development would ensure that financing is available when the need arises. This financial institution – an idea I have discussed elsewhere – could easily be funded and led by the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council with participation from the European Union, China, Japan, the United States, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and other international development actors.

With this three-pronged approach, it is possible to manage the worst refugee crisis the world has experienced in decades. By ensuring access to work, strengthening communication and digital access, and laying the groundwork for post-war reconstruction, the people of a shattered region can begin planning for a more prosperous future. The alternative – short-term aid that trickles in with no meaningful strategy – will produce only further disappointment.

(Source: Project_Syndicate)

The Guardian view on the Trump visit: not welcome in Britain

Theresa May let her country down by inviting a hostile U.S. president to make a needless visit here. We support peaceful protests against his presence and his policies

The first sitting president of the United States to visit Britain arrived here 100 years ago. President Woodrow Wilson came to Britain in 1918 on his way to the Versailles peace conference following the First World War. He came with the most noble of objectives: to help make peace in war-ravaged Europe and to lead the construction of a liberal international order based on laws and rights. Although the global order he was decisive in establishing was rejected at home and later challenged to within an inch of its life by fascism, it survived and was rebuilt more strongly. We are all the beneficiaries.

The contrast between that first presidential visit and the visit of Donald Trump a century later could not be more eloquent of the changing global role of the United States. Trump does not come with a message of peace, as Wilson did, but with messages of conflict and disruption. He arrives not as the optimistic upholder of an international order but as its casual potential destroyer. Where Wilson spoke during his visit of his wish to make right and justice the "controlling force of the world", Trump arrives in 2018 as the vengeful tribune of might and injustice.

During his 1918 stay, Wilson made a point of travelling to his mother's birthplace in Carlisle. He also went to Manchester, where he was met by cheering crowds, received the freedom of the city, addressed a lunch in the Midland Hotel, spoke at a public meeting in the Free Trade Hall – and even invited CP Scott, editor and owner of the Manchester Guardian, for an hour's discussion, a scoop that caused consternation in the U.S. press. It is a sign of changing times that the White House in 1918 could assure Scott that the president "relied on the Guardian's wholehearted support".

■ Better off without it

Trump is never going to get that support today. He is the elected leader of a very great nation, but his arrival here last week is a visit that this country would be better off without. It shames those who offered it so prematurely and foolishly. Little good and much difficulty is likely to come of it. There are many reasons for feeling the unusual sense of outrage and violation that attach to the Trump visit to Britain. Trump's personal character and behavior are more than enough reason for many. They certainly belong on any list of objections to his presence here, for he is one of the most unsuitable people to hold his great democratic office in American history. But it is Trump's politics, his expressed views, his actual actions, and above all his effect and his intentions that are the fundamental issues.

The charge list against Trump is long, ignorable and impossible to tolerate. Morally, it is headed by the racism of the immigration policies he was so proud of in Brussels on Thursday, the cruelty of their enforcement, especially in the separation of children from their parents, the racism to which he gives encouragement at home, and the taunting and visceral threat to the rights and dignities of women, people of color, and LGBT people, who are all now directly



There are many reasons for feeling the unusual sense of outrage and violation that attach to the Trump visit to Britain. Trump's personal character and behavior are more than enough reason for many.

threatened by his latest supreme court nomination. He has ignorantly spurned the threat from climate change, has sucked up to tyrants, has conducted an unprecedented campaign against the free press, launched a trade war, insulted America's allies, praised America's enemies and made dangerous mischief in the domestic and regional politics of countless parts of the world. Only last week, heading for Europe, he insulted Germany and said meeting Vladimir Putin would be easy work compared with his meetings in Brussels and Britain.

Over the century there have been U.S. presidential visitors to Britain whose policies were destructive, with whom we did not agree and whose presence here as guests was difficult to navigate. Trump, though, is different. He is unique in his egotistical disrespect for international order and agreement, his overt malice towards long-term allies and institutions, his shameless disregard for truth, and his clear willingness to make trouble and do direct harm to European nations like ours. This puts him into an altogether different category from his predecessors. All these, from Wilson onwards, professed and – less consistently – practiced support for international order and rules in which the U.S. was a leading partner and indispensable bulwark. Trump does not.

■ Threat to liberal values

It is sometimes argued, in defense of the Trump visit, that Britain's wider interests require us to engage with

disreputable and even brutal leaders with whom we may not agree. That is true. But the president of the United States is supposedly our chief ally, with whose country we claim a special relationship, with whom we have shared deep democratic values. When such a leader spits on the foundations of that alliance and actively promotes values and interests which are hostile to ours, the tough lesson of history is that he should not be honored and must not be appeased. Given the threat to liberal values and order that he so obviously represented from the very moment of his election in 2016, Mr Trump should only have been invited to this country after a decent pause and period of careful circumspection. Shamefully, Theresa May rushed to Washington in early 2017 to press a invitation on him which he had done nothing to merit and which made Britain appear, to coin a phrase, a vassal state. She let this country down by doing so. Eighteen months on, the Trump visit is an embarrassment to be endured. Even May probably knows now that this was a case of invite in haste, repent at leisure. The rest of us should recognize the immense seriousness of this dark turn in our history. We support all those who protest peacefully and with dignity against the presence of a president who is a bad and unreliable ally. Before leaving for Britain on Thursday, Trump told the press: "They like me a lot in the UK." Fake news again. We don't like him at all. He is not welcome here.

(Source: The Guardian)

Peace accord brings hope to the Horn of Africa

In the Horn of Africa, a diplomatic turn-around has taken place with far-reaching consequences for the region and beyond. Yet no one outside the continent has paid much attention. A few weeks ago, Isaias Afwerki, the authoritarian leader of Eritrea, was refusing to take calls from Abiy Ahmed, the young Ethiopian prime minister whose elevation in April has transformed the atmosphere in a country that had been beset by years of civil strife. Now, the two men have met and signed a peace agreement that brings to an end a 20-year stand-off since the bloody conflict of 1998-2000. The implications of the Eritrea-Ethiopia peace deal – ending one of the world's last remaining interstate disputes – are greater than the world has yet realized. The accord was made possible thanks largely to the forward thinking of Abiy, at 41 Africa's youngest leader, who offered to cede land in accordance with a peace deal that has never been implemented.

Isaias, whose regime has rightly been criticized for human rights violations, sensibly seized the opportunity. Mr Abiy's gesture – together with behind-the-scenes diplomacy involving several regional powers – secured him a visit to Asmara last weekend, the first by an Ethiopian leader since the two cut off ties at the start of the century. Abiy's welcome by thousands of cheering Eritreans underlined the senselessness of what has been essentially a feud between the same



The deal was made possible thanks largely to the forward thinking of Ethiopia's leader Abiy Ahmed, here embracing Eritrean president Isaias Afwerki.

Ethiopia-Eritrea deal ends one of the world's last interstate conflicts.

people – Tigrayans living on either side of what is now a militarized border since Eritrea seceded from Ethiopia in 1993. The resulting deal has real and immediate practical implications. Daily flights between the two capitals, operated by Ethiopian Airlines, will start next week. Landlocked Ethiopia will get access to two Eritrean ports, giving

it an alternative to shipping goods in and out of Djibouti. Eritrea's economic outlook should improve. Poor economic prospects, repression and military conscription have made Eritrea one of Africa's biggest sources of refugees bound for Europe.

The opportunities go further. Thousands of families separated by the conflict are now

likely to be reunited. For the troubled Horn of Africa, there could be knock-on effects. Abiy should now play a role in helping negotiate an end to a border dispute between Eritrea and Djibouti. Somalia, where Eritrea and Ethiopia have been accused of conducting a niggling proxy war, for the first time in decades has a chance of some kind of stability. Clearly there are risks. Care is needed in demarcating the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which could result in people having to move between countries. There are also resources along the border, principally potash, that the two countries would do well to exploit jointly. Nor is it clear what the peace deal will do for freedom of movement. Daily flights from Asmara to Addis will be all but empty unless Isaias is ready to lift stringent restrictions on leaving the country. That begs the biggest question of all. Could the peace accord presage a wholesale change in Eritrea, one of the world's most isolated countries? Isaias, its sole leader since independence, could seize the moment to push through broader political and economic reforms, as Abiy has done in Ethiopia. If he does, it will be – along with developments in countries including Zimbabwe and Angola – another sign of potential political rejuvenation on the continent. If Isaias embraces reform, the international community should stand ready to engage.

(Source: FT)

U.S.'s demand for reciprocity with allies

On trade access and defense spending, he seeks an equality that requires rewriting the West's social contract.

Twice in two months Trump has met with other Western leaders, first at an economic summit in June and last week at a gathering of NATO nations. A common theme? Trump's demand for reciprocity in both trade and defense spending between the United States and its allies.

Trump asked for more access to European markets for American farm goods, for example, while insisting that other NATO countries spend about 3.5 percent of gross national product on their military forces – as the United States does – not the agreed target of 2 percent by 2024.

"All allies have heard President Trump's message loud and clear," said NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg at the summit in Brussels. "We understand that this American president is very serious about defense spending, and this is having a clear impact."

On trade, Trump has slapped tariffs on imports from allies in an aggressive attempt to win an opening for more

exports of U.S. products and services. In response, a few European nations have eased restrictions on U.S. imports.

"At a time when nations have become so unwilling to play by the rules and restore reciprocity, tariffs are a wake-up call to the dangers of a broken trading system that is increasingly unfree," warns Trump's economic adviser, Larry Kudlow, in a Washington Post op-ed. Trump says he is making up for the mistakes of past U.S. presidents who gave away too much in both trade talks and in forming alliances during the cold war and afterward. Instead of seeing the U.S. as a superpower making generous concessions for the sake of global order, Trump has in effect asked the U.S. to be treated as an equal. Or as Gary Cohn, Trump's former National Economic Council director, put it: "You treat us the way we treat you, or we'll treat you the way you treat us."

In all this, Trump has asked Americans to be patient while he plays tough with demands and tariffs in order to somehow achieve a greater good. "There may be a little pain for a little while, but ultimately for my farmers ... you're going to do

much better," he told supporters in Michigan last April.

Is there a moral claim in Trump's demand for reciprocity, even if his tactics and tweets can sometimes be crude?

Equality is often the basis for reciprocity in relationships. It opens doors for negotiations and allows for the creation of a social contract in which all sides find it easier to acknowledge the other's interests. Yet it is hard to tell how U.S. allies will respond.

In a speech this week, Tony Abbott, former prime minister of Australia, said, "Being America's partner as well as its friend will be even more important now given Trump's obsession with reciprocity."

In each summit with allies, Trump keeps hammering on reciprocity. Many of those allies agree in principle and some are conceding to his demands. A new contract on trade and defense is slowly being written within the Western alliance. The fact that these leaders keep meeting is a testament to their hope to find common ground – among equals.

(Source: The CSM)

In Presence of 1st Vice President: SABA Continuous Rolling and Steelmaking Development Plan Inaugurated

SABA Continuous Rolling and Steelmaking Development Plan, affiliated to Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Group of Companies, was inaugurated in the presence of First Vice President Es'hagh Jahangiri, Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Mohammad Shariatmadari, a number of provincial officials, representatives of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, managing director, staff and personnel of Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company (EMSCO).

Moreover, SABA Steel 25-Megawatt Power Plant, Mobarakeh Iron Steel Calcination Line Factory, Mobarakeh Steel Industrial Wastewater Treatment Plant and Gas Pressure Reduction Station were put into operation on the sidelines of this inaugural ceremony.

All these projects were put into operation with investing more than 1,500 billion tomans, generating employment opportunities for more than 250 job-seeking people.



■ Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Co., Birth of Islamic Revolution and Largest Industrial Unit in Country

Managing Director of Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company (EMSCO) Bahram Sobhani was the first speaker in this inaugural ceremony who pointed to SABA Continuous Rolling and steelmaking Development Plan and said, "this giant industrial and production complex is the brainchild of the Islamic Revolution which is regarded as the largest industrial unit in the country."

Construction operation of this giant industrial unit started its activity in 1980s and was put into operation in 1990s, he maintained.

Presently, EMSCO is the largest producer of steel sheets in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), accounting for 22 percent share of steel production in the region.

Productions at this giant industrial complex in the past year (ended March 20, 2018) exceeded 100 million tons, he said, adding, "currently, Mobarakeh Steel Group of Companies includes three complexes of Mobarakeh Steel Company, SABA Steel Company and Hormozgan Steel Company."



Steel production in this industrial unit has exceeded 1,300,000 tons, Sobhani reiterated.

EMSCO is the largest producer of sponge iron in the world with producing 12 million tons of sponge iron, he said, adding, "this company also is the largest and most important company

in Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) in a way that its total stock value exceeds 30,000 billion tomans.

He pointed to the widespread supply and distribution chain of the company in downstream and upstream industries and asserted, "more than 1,000 companies are busy active in the upstream section of the company."

It should be noted that about 1,000 and 3,000 industrial and production units in the country use products of EMSCO directly and indirectly respectively.

■ Operational Units of EMSCO Have Spread in Various Parts of Country

Elsewhere in his remarks, CEO of the company said, "presently, this industrial and production unit has been turned into one of the largest industrial holding companies in the region and added, "SABA Steel Company, Hormozgan Steel Company, Amirkabir Steel Company in Kashan, Sangan Steel Company and Sepiddasht Steel Company in Chaharmahal-o Bakhtiari Province, Novin Electrode Company in Ardakan and also three holding companies are subsidiary companies of EMSCO."

Given the above issue, all subsidiary companies as mentioned in above have been spread in various parts of the country, he maintained.

Presently, 30 percent of stocks of the company belongs to Justice Shares, 17 percent of which belongs to IMIDRO, about 15 percent of which belongs to Social Security Investment Company (SHASTA), and about 19 percent stock of which belongs to other legal and real shareholders.

EMSCO stood at first place among top 100 companies in major index of basic metals, followed by Hormozgan Steel Company.

■ Added Value of EMSCO Due to Lack of Dependency of Steel Production



Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company is of rare industrial units that produces products in one unit, ranging from iron ore to steel products.

The added value of Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company is due to lack of its dependency to production of steel in various stages of production.

Then, he pointed to the situation of employment in Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company and said, "11,800 manpower are cooperating with the company directly. In general, 350,00 manpower are cooperating with the company directly and indirectly."

The company is on the development and progress track, he said, adding, "6,600,000 tons of production capacity in 2012 hit 9,450,000 tons in 2017, showing a considerable production growth."

The volume of exporting steel products strictly depends on the situation of international market and domestic demand, he said, adding, "1,800,000 tons of steel products were exported in 2015."

He pointed to the distribution of customers of steel products in various production sectors and said, "the company has focused on producing product that is not produced inside the country, rather, it is imported from abroad."

Given the above issue, the management of the company has concentrated on producing steel products in the country without any dependency to importing products from abroad.

■ Investment of Over 6,000 Billion Tomans for Development of Steel Industry in Various Parts of Country

CEO of the company pointed to the development plan of Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company and said, "we have invested more than 6,000 billion tomans in various parts of



SABA Steel Production Company has the lowest water consumption level as compared to similar companies, so that major portion of water in this industrial and production unit is provided out of treating wastewater and recycling of wastewater. However, a 25-Megawatt power stations was inaugurated in SABA Steel Company as well."

the country for the development of steel industry."

For this reason, we have concluded a contract with Germany for Hot Rolling Mill No. 2 within the framework of finance scheme, he reiterated.

Moreover, Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company has concluded a contract with a foreign company for increasing production capacity in Hormozgan Steel Company from 1.5 million tons to 3 million tons.

■ Considerable 75% Reduction in Consumption of Water in EMSCO

He pointed to water shortage as one of the main problems grappling steel industry of the country and said, "in this regard, we have taken effective steps and managed to reduce water consumption rate as much as 75 percent."

In line with fulfilling its social responsibilities, the company also has made huge investment.

In conclusion, CEO of Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company Sobhani pointed to the inauguration of five steel projects and said, "all the aforementioned projects were put into operation, costing 1,500 billion tomans."

■ Isfahan, Main Hub of Country's Important Industrial and Economic Progresses

First Vice President Es'hagh Jahangiri was the next speaker in the inaugural ceremony and pointed to the pioneering role of this province in all sectors and said, "Isfahan Province has thus far played an important role in socioeconomic and cultural development of country."

■ EMSCO, Forerunner and Leader in Production and Exports

Preventing Iran from exporting products is the main objective of US, he said, adding, "in this regard, EMSCO should be pioneer in both production and export."

He called on senior managers of the company to make their utmost efforts in line with boosting and accelerating export.

■ With Saving 10% Water in All Sectors, Country Will Not Feel any Deficiency

Today, EMSCO is able to meet most demands of the country, he said, adding, "as the country's water resources is very limited, the company managed to reduce 75 percent of water consumption."

If all industrial and production units save water as much as 10 percent, the country can overcome its water shortage problem, the issue of which should be taken into serious consideration."

■ Leading Role of EMSCO in Booming National Economy of Country

Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Mohammad Shariatmadari was the next speaker in this ceremony who pointed to the activities of Mobarakeh Steel Company and said, "it is a great honor for me to announce that Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company has taken a leading role in booming industrial sector of the country."

He pointed to the employment of domestic manpower for launching projects and said, "about 4,000 manpower are cooperating with the company in downstream and upstream sector, so that 2,800 SMEs backs and supports

manufacturing parts and equipment of this industrial unit."

This company also has indigenized world's modern-day technologies, he reiterated.

Production of 55 million tons of steel has been predicted in 2025 Vision Plan, 25 million tons of which is going to be produced by this giant industrial unit, Shariatmadari maintained.

Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company accounts for about 1 percent of gross national product (GNP) and also accounts for five percent share of industry in the country.

Allocation of 3,800 billion tomans to its co-operative units with considering 12 percent interest rate is of the other salient achievements of the company, he maintained.

He put the per capita steel consumption in the country at 230 kg, the rate of which is expandable with the implementation of construction activities in the country.

■ Need to Investment €8bn in Steel Supply Chain

Elsewhere in his remarks, minister of industry, mine and trade said that the country will be in dire need of investment, valued at eight million euro, for the production of 55 million tons of steel in 2025 Outlook Plan.

Moreover, the country should invest about 6 billion euro and also 4 billion euro in rail and power supply sector respectively, the minister of industry opined.

He put the world's growth of steel in 2017 at six percent (6%) while Iran attained 22 percent growth in this sector, showing a considerable jump in the field of production of steel.

The country managed to export 1,907,000 tons of steel products to abroad in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year in 1397 (March 21-June 21), showing a considerable 10 percent increase as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

In this period, ingot and steel products experienced a considerable 17 percent hike, he said, adding, "the country also recorded a considerable 11 percent growth in production of other steel products, the issue of which shows that steel industry is a dynamic industry which moves towards generation of employment and production."

■ Steel Industry, One of Samples of Resistance Economy in Country

Minister of Industry Shariatmadari pointed to steel industry as one of clear-cut examples of resistance economy in the country and said, "redundant and additional production should be controlled strictly."

He called on responsible officials to create a balance between supply and demand chain and diversity of production in steel industry should be taken into serious consideration.

Despite destructive efforts taken against the Islamic Iran, it is a matter of happiness to say that leaders of industry and entrepreneurs rolled their sleeves up in order to boom industrial sector of the country in international level.



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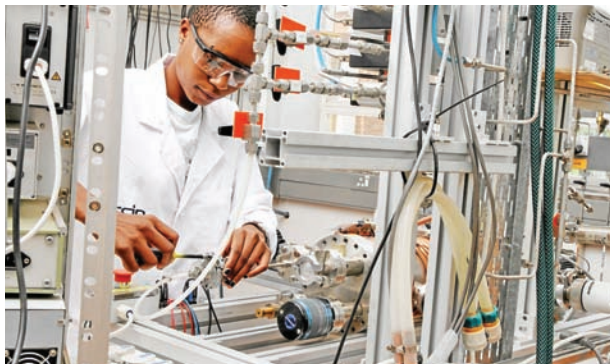
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Iran aims to bolster technological ties with African countries

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — A delegation of Iranian experts will travel to Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya from September 3 to 7 to discuss technology and trade cooperation with the east African countries.

The delegation is composed of knowledge-based companies active in fields of agricultural machinery and input; health, medicines and medical devices; IT; industrial machinery; building material and polymers; mineral industry and processing industry, ISNA reported on Wednesday.



Officials from the Export Development Bank, the Trade Promotion Organization, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Agriculture will also accompany the delegation.

According to weforum.org, as Africa transitions from the margins to the mainstream of the global economy, technology is playing an increasingly significant role.

Bolstering regional trends in business, investment and modernization is the emergence of an IT ecosystem — a growing patchwork of entrepreneurs, tech ventures and innovation centers coalescing from country to country.

Knowledge-based companies exporting 73 types of medicine

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Seventy three types of medicine produced by Iranian knowledge-based companies are being exported to other countries, deputy health minister Reza Malekzadeh said on Wednesday, Mehr reported.

Over 1200 knowledge-based companies are active in the field of healthcare products in Iran, of which 458 are in 60 incubation centers in different parts of the country, he said.

Malekzadeh said that knowledge-based companies active in medicine have managed to manufacture over 4,000 products during recent years.

“Some startups active in the field of healthcare face problems like administrative bureaucracy or lack of budget, which we plan to solve,” he said.

Malekzadeh expressed hope that knowledge-based companies meet the needs of the country in the field of medicine and medical equipment in the near future.

In late May, Hossein Vatanpur, an official with the Ministry of Health, announced that Iranian knowledge-based companies operating in the field of health have supplied over 2,500 products to the domestic market.

The companies offer products like medical equipment, medicine and biological products, herbal medicine, diagnostic testing kits and gene therapy products and out of this number, 52 companies export their products with value more than 70 million dollar, he explained.

SOCIALLY SAFE

Learn how sites can use your information

Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Twitter, Ning, Digg, MeetUp, blogs, etc., -- the number of social networking sites and tools is exploding. Social networking is the killer app of the Internet for everyone — not just the texting teenybopper crowd. Such sites have breached the walls of the corporate firewall, are a part of our most important smartphone apps, are a vital tool for any serious job search, and are the new way to connect with current and new friends.

But using social networking tools and sites seems to be in direct conflict with another important principle of using the Internet — protect your identity from identity theft. Participating in online social networking sites leaves a trail of personal information that can make stealing your identity a whole lot easier. What's a current-day Internet user to do? Should we go blithely along like a fish protected in a larger school of potential identity theft victims, or maybe we should forego social networking altogether? No and no. Instead each of us should take responsibility for protecting ourselves.

Social network sites are typically free to use which means they are making their money by advertising to you. And that means they are collecting information about you. Is your information shared with outside companies and partners? What information can third-party plug-in software, such as Facebook Applications, use from your profile or page content? Review the site's privacy policy and watch closely the privacy settings you can control.

There is currently a lot of M&A activity in the social networking software industry. A significant part of what an acquirer buys when acquiring a social networking company is the community of users on the site. Your account, including personal information, trades hands from the old company to the new one as part of the transaction. Privacy statements on sites like Digg discuss situations like this. The new owners may have new and different plans for using the information contained in the site. Changes in privacy policies may follow an acquisition. Watch for this when you hear about an acquisition and always read notifications about changes to privacy terms, acceptable use policies and user agreements.

(Source: networkworld.com)

Iran is runner up in Global Innovation Index 2018 in Central, Southeast Asia

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — As per an annual ranking of countries by their capacity for, and success in, innovation, 2018 released on Wednesday Iran ranks second amongst 9 central and southeast Asian countries in Global Innovation Index (GII) 2018.

The GII 2018 provides detailed metrics about the innovation performance of 126 countries and economies around the world. Its 80 indicators explore a broad vision of innovation, including political environment, education, and infrastructure and business sophistication.

It analyses the energy innovation landscape of the next decade and identifies possible breakthroughs in fields such as energy production, storage, distribution, and consumption.

It also looks at how breakthrough innovation occurs at the grassroots level and describes how small-scale renewable systems are on the rise.

Iran is the runner up after India while other countries are Nepal, Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Bangladesh.

The total ranking of Iran has moved up 11 spots to place

GLOBAL INNOVATION INDEX 2018

Energizing the World with Innovation



65 in 2018.

In 2017, Iran ranked 75 amongst 127 countries on GII, which is published by World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and Cornell University, INSEAD.

With score 33.44 out of 100, Iran ranks 16 in 34 upper middle income countries and with 0.82 Innovation Efficiency Ratio it ranks 11 amongst 126 countries.

Switzerland, Netherlands and Sweden followed by United Kingdom and Singapore are on top of the list.

The GII 2018 marks the 11th edition of the GII, and the beginning of its second decade providing data and insights gathered from tracking innovation across the globe. This year's edition, is dedicated to the theme of Energizing the World with Innovation.

The ranking published by the WIPO, which is the global forum for intellectual property services, policy, information and cooperation. It is a self-funding agency of the United Nations, with 191 member states.

It aims to lead the development of a balanced and effective international intellectual property system that enables innovation and creativity for the benefit of all.

Tehran to host exhibition on cloud computing

TECHNOLOGY d e s k **TEHRAN** — An exhibition on cloud computing will be held at Iran Telecommunication Research Center in Tehran on July 17.

Cloud computing is an information technology (IT) paradigm that enables ubiquitous access to shared pools of configurable system resources and higher-level services that can be rapidly provisioned with minimal management effort, often over the Internet.

The event aims to introduce potential markets for cloud computing in Iran and to introduce services offered by startups and companies in this field.

Organized by the Open Community of Cloud Computing, the exhibition is held on the sideline of annual Open Community of Cloud Computing gathering.

It provides a chance for startups to get familiarized with the cloud computing market in Iran.

Iran Telecommunication Research Center, as the most experienced research entity in the information and communication technology (ICT) field, with more than 39 years of scientific experience in research acts as mother consultant to the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology.



A checklist for your startup



Why do so many new businesses fail? Maybe it's because too many would-be entrepreneurs concentrate on the wrong issues before the actual startup happens.

The pre-startup checklist requires one to undergo a process of self-evaluation that will help answer the question, 'Am I prepared to start a business?' If more people considered the following four issues, there would likely be a higher success rate in future startups.

■ **Investigate and apply for business licenses**

Most small businesses need a combination of licenses and permits from both federal and state agencies. The requirements — and fees — vary based on your business activities, location, and government rules.

You may need one, if not several, business licenses for your startup, depending on your industry and where you are located. Most licenses are at the state or local level. Here in the United States, the SBA has a helpful business license and permits tool.

(Source: smallbiztrends.com)

What does B2B mean?



What is B2B? This term simply means business-to-business, which is a model that focuses on selling products and services to other companies. Think of it as a supportive enterprise that offers the things other companies need to succeed or get a leg up on the competition. In contrast with the business-to-consumer or consumer-to-business models, B2B offers the raw materials, parts or services companies need to boost profits, from manufacturing industries to retail environments.

A good example of a traditional B2B

market is automobile manufacturing. The tires, hoses, batteries and electronics essential to the final product — the vehicle — are often manufactured by separate companies, and then sold directly to the automobile manufacturer. When you buy a car from one company, you're really purchasing parts that were created by dozens, if not hundreds of businesses. Because so many small transactions result in one large business-to-consumer sale, B2B companies tend to experience a high volume of sales.

(Source: businessnewsdaily.com)

Ways diversity makes a difference in tech

Diversity is more than a buzzword, it's the wave of the future. It is coming to tech and the industry is ready for it. There are multiple benefits to diversity and inclusion and tech companies are ready to reap the rewards.

Forbes Technology Council is an invitation-only community for world-class CIOs, CTOs and technology executives. Do I qualify?

We asked members of the Forbes Technology Council about what ideas they think diversity will bring and how companies will benefit from it. The answers varied but they all predicted positive outcomes that will make technology better than ever.

■ **The right solutions**

The value of diverse teams goes well beyond the obvious sentiment that inclusion is the right thing to do. The diversity of thought is crucial in coming up with the right solutions to business challenges, customer success and creative thinking. When team members are too similar, a large part of the innovation spectrum is missed. Quite simply, diverse teams win more often and more consistently. - Wade Burgess, Shiftgig

■ **Best ideas rule the day**

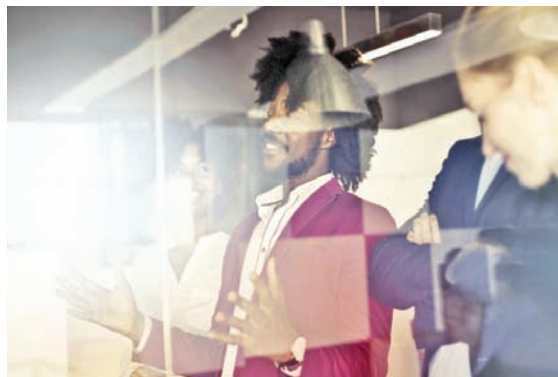
Simply put, diversity is how we ensure the best ideas rule the day. My company has recently taken the ParityPledge to ensure that we are considering women for leadership roles where they are statistically under-represented today. Not only does that commitment present us with the best possible talent pool as an employer, but it also broadens the perspective and diversity of thought we can leverage in how we best serve our customers and employees. - Jim Higgins, solutionreach.com

■ **Solve problems faster**

Innovation is crucial for any tech company and diversity plays a significant role in this. A company is much more likely to experience innovative change with a diverse team as they have an array of different knowledge bases. Diverse teams provide different perspectives and new ways of seeing a problem. This way, teams are able to identify, assess and solve it faster than they would as a homogenous group. Therefore, diversity is essential to innovation and delivering better business results.

■ **Build a product for everyone**

Diversity isn't just about race or gender. It's about back-



ground, perspective, age, education and so much more. If you have a homogenous team, then you're going to build a product that serves that team. In order to build a product that serves everyone, you need voices and input from all types of people. - Meetesh Karia, The Zebra

■ **Increased creativity**

Teams need to be innovative to be truly valuable today. Innovation happens when teams challenge the status quo, look beyond the obvious and work creatively. If everyone on the team has the same knowledge, the same skills, the same worldview and the same biases, they will inevitably reach the same conclusions. Diversity is the only way to avoid this trap and foster truly creative teams. - Chris Grundemann, Myriad Supply

■ **Connect with customers**

Ultimately, it goes back to customer-centricity. The audience for our software is widely diverse, so why wouldn't we want our team to reflect that level of diversity as well? Teams that are too homogenous have a challenge in tapping into empathy for customers and being able to reach a wider market. - Alan Price, visioncritical.com

■ **Increased profits**

Analysis of a global survey suggests that the more gender diversity there is in a company, the higher the performance and the higher the financial results. In fact, it was proven that it is simply good for your business. The more gender diversity

there is, the better the company performed including in the financial profitability, exit price, share price and the return over investment ratio. - Dr. Karin Lachmi, Bioz

■ **People grow faster**

Value to tech team diversity is no different than diversity for any other team in that it makes for better overall people. The advantage for tech versus other industries is speed. Teams are highly specialized and this common training is what helps bond teammates right away (skills matter more in this regard). The diverse backgrounds blend in later making the group more cosmopolitan overall. - Seth Wasserman, Menin Hospitality

■ **Expand the borders**

Diverse teams who work cohesively encourage new ways of thinking and problem solving, which naturally enhances creativity and the ability to overcome challenges. More importantly, a diverse approach, not just gender or ethnicity but also diversity within roles, allows the tech community to expand its borders and employ a rich cross-section of people who may not fit "classic" tech profiles. - Ofer Garnett, YouAPPi Inc.

■ **Different Work Styles**

There are so many different ways of working that can be incorporated just by making your team more diverse. This helps us all learn and put together the best possible way of getting things done. - Chalmers Brown, Due

■ **A better product**

Diversity in your team is important to have a complete product that attracts many customers. If you just have a male team that develops a product, they may do a great job attracting male customers but may be alienating a lot of female customers because they were not present in the ideation and creation of the product. - Thomas Griffin, OptinMonster

■ **Culture of diversity**

Diversity in tech is all about building great company culture. There have been many examples in recent years of tech companies where a lack of diversity and empathy were nearly their undoing. Creating culture is a dynamic activity where every choice will shape the outcome. A great culture will attract great talent and a toxic culture could be the end.

(Source: forbes.com)

Heat waves make it hard for people to think, scientists find

Heat waves may actually impact the ability to think, scientists have found. Harvard scientists reported that students in dorms who have air conditioning during heat waves do better on cognitive tests than students who live with the hot temperatures.

The findings from researchers at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health were published on Tuesday in the journal PLOS Medicine.

Harvard researchers found that heat causes cognitive decline in college students. Students in dorms who have air conditioning during heat waves do better on cognitive tests than students who live with the hot temperatures.

Since most research is typically on the health effects of heat on fragile populations, like the elderly, there is a perception that the general population is not in danger from heat waves, Jose Guillermo Cedeño-Laurent, research fellow at Harvard Chan School and lead author of the study, said in a statement.

■ As a natural intervention
To “address this blind spot, we studied healthy students living in dorms as a natural intervention during a heat wave in Boston,” he said.

“Knowing what the risks are across different populations is critical considering that in many cities, such as Boston, the number of heat waves is projected to increase due to climate change.”

The study looked at 44 students in Boston. Twenty-four lived in air-conditioned build-



ings. The other 20 lived in buildings that did not have air conditioning. The researchers installed a device in each student’s room to monitor the temperature over a 12-day period in the summer of 2016. The first five days temperatures were sea-

Harvard researchers found that heat causes cognitive decline in college students. Students in dorms who have air conditioning during heat waves do better on cognitive tests than students who live with the hot temperatures.

sonable. Then came a five-day heat wave, then two days of cooler weather.

After waking up each day, the students took two cognition tests on their smartphones. The first test required students to correctly identify the color of displayed words. The second test consisted of basic arithmetic questions and was used to assess mental speed and memory.

■ Heat waves

The findings showed that during the heat wave, students in the buildings without AC performed worse on the tests than students in the air-conditioned dormitories and experienced decreases in reaction times and memory.

Surprisingly, the biggest difference in cognitive function between the two groups was seen during the cool days after the heat wave.

The researchers found that as outdoor temperatures began to subside, indoor temperatures stayed high in the dorms without air conditioning.

“Indoor temperatures often continue to rise even after outdoor temperatures subside, giving the false impression that the hazard has passed, when in fact the ‘indoor heat wave’ continues,” said Joseph Allen, one of the study’s authors and an assistant professor of exposure assessment science and co-director of the Center for Climate, Health, and the Global Environment at Harvard Chan School.

(Source: Newsweek)

New species may arise from rapid evolution, researchers say

Genetic research at Oregon State University has shed new light on how isolated populations of the same species evolve toward reproductive incompatibility and thus become separate species.

Scientists sequenced the entire genome of a Pacific tide-pool crustacean, *Tigriopus californicus*, a model species for differentiation based on geographic separation – an early stage of one species becoming multiple species.

They examined the co-evolution of mitochondrial and nuclear genes. Mitochondria act as a cell’s power plant, generating adenosine triphosphate, or ATP – a source of chemical energy.

As in all animals, most of a *T. californicus* cell’s genes are in its nucleus but some are in the mitochondria.

The “mitochondria organelle contains a small chromosome with only 37 genes, but these genes are absolutely essential for metabolism,” said the study’s corresponding author, Felipe Barreto, assistant professor of integrative biology in OSU’s College of Science.

■ Reactions in metabolic performance
“In order for ATP to be produced properly in a cell, a few

hundred other genes encoded in the nucleus must interact directly with the 37 mitochondrial genes. Mutations in the mitochondrial genes may cause these interactions to be subpar and thus cause reductions in metabolic performance.”

T. californicus populations along the Pacific coast of North America have mitochondrial genes that differ widely from one population to the next – there are lots of mutations relative to each other.

“As a result, hybrid offspring between populations suffer from lowered fitness in the form of lower fecundity, slow development and lower ATP production as determined by several previous experiments,” Barreto said.

Barreto and collaborators from the University of California, San Diego, the University of Southern California and the University of North Carolina used molecular statistical models to screen the genomes of eight populations in order to detect which genes might be incompatible between populations.

“Those genes may therefore be candidate genes for understanding how different populations become incompatible and possibly eventually become different species,” he said.

(Source: ktvz.com)



Scientists trace a single neutrino back to a galaxy billions of light years away

In a global observation campaign, scientist have for the first time located a source of high-energy cosmic neutrinos, ghostly elementary particles that travel billions of light years through the universe, flying unaffected through stars, planets and entire galaxies.

Using an internationally organized astronomical dragnet, scientist have for the first time located a source of high-energy cosmic neutrinos, ghostly elementary particles that travel billions of light years through the universe, flying unaffected through stars, planets and entire galaxies.

The joint observation campaign was triggered by a single neutrino that had been recorded by the IceCube neutrino telescope at the South Pole, on 22 September 2017.

Telescopes on Earth and in space were able to determine that the exotic particle had originated in a galaxy over three billion light years away, in the constellation of Orion, where a gigantic black hole serves as a natural particle accelerator.

■ Neutrinos from the same source
Scientists from the 18 different observatories involved are presenting their findings in the journal Science. Furthermore, a second analysis, also published in Science, shows that other neutrinos previously recorded by IceCube came from the same source.

The observation campaign, in which research scientists from Germany played a key role, is a decisive step towards solving a riddle that has been puzzling scientists for

over 100 years, namely that of the precise origins of so-called cosmic rays, high-energy subatomic particles that are constantly bombarding Earth’s atmosphere.

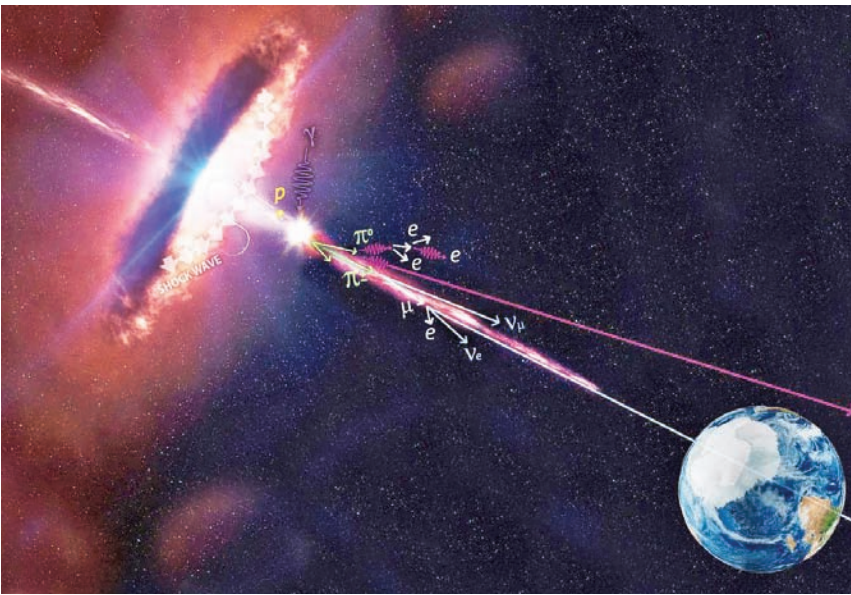
“This is a milestone for the budding field of neutrino astronomy. We are opening a new window into the high-energy universe,” says Marek Kowalski, the head of Neutrino Astronomy at DESY, a research center of the Helmholtz Association, and a researcher at the Humboldt University in Berlin.

The “concerted observational campaign using instruments located all over the globe is also a significant achievement for the field of multi-messenger astronomy that is the investigation of cosmic objects using different messengers, such as electromagnetic radiation, gravitational waves and neutrinos.”

One way in which scientists expect energetic neutrinos to be created is as a sort of by-product of cosmic rays that are expected to be produced in cosmic particle accelerators, such as the vortex of matter created by supermassive black holes or exploding stars.

■ Cosmic magnetic fields
However, unlike the electrically charged particles of cosmic rays, neutrinos are electrically neutral and therefore not deflected by cosmic magnetic fields as they travel through space, meaning that the direction from which they arrive points straight back at their actual source.

Also, neutrinos are scarcely absorbed. “Observing cosmic neutrinos gives us a glimpse



of processes that are opaque to electromagnetic radiation,” says Klaus Helbing from the Bergische University of Wuppertal, spokesperson for the German IceCube network. “Cosmic neutrinos are messengers from the high-energy universe.”

Demonstrating the presence of neutrinos is extremely complicated, however, because most of the ghostly particles travel right through the entire Earth without leaving a

trace. Only on very rare occasions does a neutrino interact with its surroundings. It therefore takes huge detectors in order to capture at least a few of these rare reactions. For the IceCube detector, an international consortium of scientists headed by the University of Wisconsin in Madison (USA) drilled 86 holes into the Antarctic ice, each 2500 meters deep.

(Source: Science Daily)

Research shows pesticides influence bee learning and memory

A large-scale study published by researchers from Royal Holloway University of London has drawn together the findings of a decade of agrochemical research to confirm that pesticides used in crop protection have a significant negative impact on the learning and memory abilities of bees. Their findings are published on 11 July in the Journal of Applied Ecology.

Ph.D. student Harry Siviter, alongside Professor Julia Koricheva, Professor Mark Brown, and Dr. Elli Leadbeater (all from Royal Holloway) combined data from a large number of studies in which bees that had been exposed to pesticides had to learn about floral scents, a test that is commonly used to measure learning and memory in bees.

Their research reveals that even at very low field-realistic dosages, pesticides have significant negative effects on bee learning and memory, with worker bees exposed to pesticides less likely to learn and memorize a rewarding scent.

Learning abilities are a vital component of the search for food in

bees, because individuals must remember what type of flowers to visit, where to find them, which flowers they have recently drained of nectar, and how to find the way back to the hive.

■ Impact of insecticides on pollinators
Harry Siviter said: “Policy makers need robust information about the impact of insecticides on pollinators if they are to develop appropriate regulation for sustainable bee health”.

“Our results show that, when combining data collected from a wide range of studies, insecticides have a significant negative impact on bee learning and memory. This occurs even at the low levels of pesticides that bees would routinely encounter in the field.

“Importantly, as the near-total European ban on neonicotinoid insecticides is set to be implemented in December this year, our results showed that non-neonicotinoid insecticides also have a robust significant negative impact on bee learning and memory.

“Our findings therefore highlight the need for policy mak-



ers and regulators to increasingly consider the sub-lethal impacts of insecticides on important pollinators such as bees.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

NASA may have accidentally destroyed evidence of organics on Mars 40 years ago

NASA announced last month that Mars has complex organic molecules, which could point to current or past life on the planet. There’s a lot of work to be done before we can understand the significance of this discovery, but some researchers have also started wondering why the discovery took so long. It turns out that NASA might have discovered and accidentally destroyed organic molecules on Mars back in the 1970s.

Scientists long expected organic molecules to be present on Mars if for no other reason than carbon-rich meteorites frequently hit the planet. However, the Viking landers which touched down on the red planet in 1976 found no trace of organics in their soil sample instruments. This was surprising at the time, and we now know the findings were inaccurate. So, what happened?

A new analysis of the Viking data focuses on other compounds that may have affected the results. In 2008, the Phoenix lander confirmed the presence of perchlorate on Mars. This chlorine-oxygen salt is used in the production of fireworks and propellants because it’s a powerful oxidizing agent that can be explosive under the right conditions.

The presence of perchlorate is important because the Viking landers used a gas chromatograph-mass spectrometer to analyze soil samples. That instrument heats material in order to determine the chemical composition, but heating perchlorate in the presence of organic molecules will destroy the organics. So, it’s possible NASA was on the verge of making this momentous discovery decades ago, but the lander burned up all the evidence.

The team suspected that Viking might have also produced chlorobenzene from burning up organic molecules in its sample collector. They looked back at the original Viking data and confirmed that, yes, it also detected chlorobenzene.

(Source: extremetech.com)

Embodying Einstein can make you smarter, new study shows

People experiencing Albert Einstein’s body as their own through virtual reality simulation have scored better on cognitive tests, a new study has found.

Don’t be surprised when people start to behave differently in immersive virtual reality that creates the illusion of a virtual body substituting one’s own. It’s called virtual embodiment, and it’s used by the researchers to test subjects with low self-esteem and see how they can increase their cognitive potential.

“In an immersive virtual environment, participants can see this new body reflected in a mirror,” Mel Slater, University of Barcelona professor, said in a statement. “And it exactly matches their movements, helping to create a powerful illusion that the virtual body is their own.”

In their research, they wondered: how will giving subjects a recognizable body representing intelligence, such as that of Einstein, affect their performance on cognitive tasks compared to those given a normal body?

According to previous studies, the virtual embodiment can have astounding effects on attitudes as well as behavior. White people experiencing a virtual black body, for instance, exhibited less implicit bias against black people.

To find out, the team recruited 30 young males to participate in the virtual embodiment, prior to which, they completed tests measuring planning and problem solving, implicit bias toward the elderly, and self-esteem. Half of them took on a virtual body resembling Einstein, while the rest embodied a body similar to theirs.

When they retook the tests, subjects with low self-esteem with Einstein’s body in VR scored better on cognitive tests, as well as were less likely to unconsciously stereotype older people.

The study seemed to suggest that the way the human brain perceives the body can be somewhat flexible. Being in an older body likely changed the Einstein group’s attitudes as it blurred the difference between elderly individuals and themselves.

(Source: Tech Times)

Student designs and builds underwater jetpack

The UK’s Archie O’Brien had a dream of zipping below the waters off Iceland or swimming with dolphins off the coast of Bora Bora. He looked at contraptions that would pull him along underwater at speed – something like the AquaJet H2 or Scubalec, for example – but everything already available proved beyond his reach. So he decided to design and build the Cuda underwater



jetpack, which will be going into production early next year.

O’Brien developed the Cuda while in his final year at the Loughborough Design School in Leicestershire, noting that existing products were either too heavy, too slow or far too expensive. His original idea was simply to try and shrink down a jetski engine so that it could be worn as a jetpack, but this didn’t hold water.

The Cuda is about the size of a small backpack and has been built around a patented propulsion system. No details of exactly how this works have been made available, though Amsterdam’s 3D Hubs was responsible for making the impeller, which was SLS printed using carbon fiber-infused powder, chosen for its stiffness.

For the rest of the Cuda, which can be assembled in less than 10 minutes, O’Brien has used a combination of CNC machining, turning and, mainly, 3D printing. The latter making use of low cost and commonplace Fused Deposition Modeling (FDM) technology and PLA materials. To keep the Cuda prototype running smoothly underwater, all 45 3D-printed components were coated in a thin layer of epoxy resin and the access hatches for the hotswap rechargeable batteries and electronics were treated to silicone seals.

(Source: newatlas.com)

Ovine rinderpest outbreak reported in southeastern Iran

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — An outbreak of ovine rinderpest, a contagious disease of cattle, sheep, and goats, has occurred in the southeastern province of Kerman, ISNA reported on Friday.

According to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) ovine rinderpest commonly known as Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) or sheep and goat plague, is a highly contagious animal disease affecting small ruminants. Once introduced, the virus can infect up to 90 percent of an animal heard, and the disease kills anywhere from 30 to 70 percent of infected animals. The PPR virus does not infect humans.



PPR was first described in 1942 in Côte d’Ivoire. Since then the disease has spread to large regions in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Today, more than 70 countries have confirmed PPR within their borders, and many countries are at risk of the disease being introduced. These regions are home to approximately 1.7 billion heads – roughly 80 percent – of the global population of sheep and goats.

Following the spread of the infection in Khabr national park, in Kerman province, so far some 50 heads of rams and wild goats have been killed.

Not vaccinating the livestock and movement of unvaccinated livestock without health permits are among the main causes of the infection outbreak in Kerman, head of wildlife diseases office of the Department of Environment (DOE) said.

The disease was first spotted in Iran in late 1370s (1997-2000), following the smuggling of domestic livestock to the country, Siamak Masoudi explained.

Over the past few years more than 1,200 heads of precious wild ruminants are killed by the virus, Masoudi regretted, adding that in addition to its harmful effects on the environment the virus can incur heavy costs on the economy.

According to World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) standard disease control measures consisting of quarantine, movement control, sanitary slaughter, and cleaning and disinfection should be applied to prevent or control the disease. The virus is susceptible to most disinfectants. There are no medications available to treat the disease, but supportive treatment may decrease mortality. A vaccine is used where the disease is established and it provides good immunity.

Welfare Organization to carry out ‘social census’

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Welfare Organization will conduct ‘social census’, a pilot scheme to evaluate the social status of the population, for the first time in the country, the organization’s deputy director for social affairs has said.

The scheme will be piloted in Islamshahr, southwestern Tehran, from the [Iranian calendar] month of Shahrivar (August 23-September 22) and will continue to the end of the current year (March 20, 2019), ISNA quoted Habibollah Masoudi-Farid as saying on Friday.

The organization’s experts will go door to door and by collecting information on social status of each family will refer them to entities that offer social support and healthcare services if need be, Masoudi-Farid explained.

Since the beginning of the next year (March 21, 2019) other urban and rural areas, especially those underprivileged ones located in the outskirts of the cities, will be covered, he added.

The scheme will be carried out free of charge and assesses the family’s health and family relations, he said, explaining that for example the experts will ask if there are any members with disabilities in families, is the family breadwinner male or female, are they receiving any services from Welfare Organization, are the children going to kindergarten, or whether or not the children have undergone vision or hearing screening test, etc.

LEARN ENGLISH

Having Leftovers

A: What’s for dinner?
B: **Leftovers**.
A: What? Leftovers of what and from when?
B: From last night! I took the leftover **turkey**, **mixed** it with some **diced** peppers and onions, added a little bit of mayonnaise and made some sandwiches!
A: Isn’t that dangerous though? I mean **bacteria** and **germs** reproducing on food that was left out or reheated?
B: Well, I didn’t leave the turkey out at room temperature for more than an hour and I **refrigerated** it soon after we finished eating. Also, when **reheating**, I put it in the oven for fifteen minutes at one hundred degrees Celsius.
A: Well ok, I am just afraid of getting **food poisoning**.
B: Don’t worry about it! Making a new meal out of leftovers is almost an art! Not only do you save money, but you also get to be creative and have something different to eat!
■ **Key vocabulary**
leftovers: food remaining uneaten at the end of a meal
turkey: a large American bird similar to the chicken
mix: of different kinds combined
dice: to cut into small cubes
bacteria: small organisms
germ: a microorganism
refrigerate: to make or keep cold
reheat: to make hot or warm again
food poisoning: becoming sick because of bacteria in food
■ **Supplementary vocabulary**
sanitary: of or pertaining to health or the conditions affecting health
microwave: to cook, defrost, or otherwise prepare in a micro-wave oven
soap: a substance used for washing and cleansing purposes
contaminate: to make impure or unsuitable by contact or mixture with something unclean, bad

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Iran eyes increased pharmaceutical exports to Azerbaijan: minister

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Following his two-day trip to Azerbaijan, the Iranian health minster expressed hope for increased pharmaceutical exports to the neighboring country, IRNA reported on Friday.

“The two countries have close, cultivated relations in all fields and medicine is one of them,” Hassan Qazizadeh-Hashemi said subsequent to his visit with Azerbaijani Minister of Economic Development Shahin Mustafayev.

“The meetings with Azerbaijani officials were very much constructive and issues such as insurance coverage and exchange of experience were discussed,” the Iranian minister added.

He went on to say that holding such meetings [for improved cooperation] between the neighboring countries can produce desirable outcomes.

Qazizadeh-Hashemi further expressed hope for increased investment opportunities and transfer of knowledge and technology between the two sides.

President Hassan Rouhani and his



Iranian Health Minister Hassan Qazizadeh-Hashemi (3rd L), and Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev (1st R)

‘Tehran municipal fruit markets offer biodegradable bags’

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Bags used in all fruit markets affiliated to Tehran Municipality are either biodegradable or bio-plastics, an official with Tehran Municipality has said.

As per a law passed by Tehran City Council since 2009 all municipal fruit markets are bound by law to use biodegradable bags or bio-plastics. Abdolhossein Rahimi said, Fars reported on Thursday.

In order to encourage citizens to use less plastic bags municipal fruit markets offer small discounts to those who refuse to get plastic bags, Rahimi highlighted.

Unfortunately each Iranian is throwing away three plastic bags on average every day, Tehran city councilor Nahid Khodakarami said on July 10.

■ Why plastic bags are problematic?

Conserving Now reports that on average a person uses a plastic carrier bag for only 12 minutes we only recycle one plastic bag in every 200 we use. Each year, an estimated 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags are consumed worldwide. That comes out to over one million per minute. Billions end up as litter each year.

According to Mother Earth News plastic bags have some unique problems. While their environmental costs are burdensome for communities and of course the planet, the cost of plastic bags for retailers is pretty low.

Plastic bags are made from ethylene, a byproduct of petroleum or natural gas, plastic bags are so cheap and flimsy that cashiers use them freely, double bagging as a matter

of course and often sticking just a few items in each bag.

Therefore, shoppers end up with piles of plastic bags spilling out of closets and threatening to take over cupboards until we finally throw up our hands and either dump them in the trash or, if we’re lucky enough to live in an area where stores provide plastic bag collection bins, cart them back for recycling. Sure, some of us reuse plastic shopping bags, but the bags still end up in the landfill.

Even when disposed of properly, plastic bags are so lightweight and aerodynamic, they are easily picked up and carried by the wind. They can escape from trash bins, recycle bins, garbage trucks, and landfills, and end up littering the landscape. Blowing down the street, flapping from trees, clogging

counterpart Ilham Aliyev are also determined to extend ties in various fields, he highlighted.

In a meeting in Tehran in August 2017, the two presidents discussed increased pharmaceutical exports from Iran to Azerbaijan, the minister said, adding that they also exchanged views about treatment of refractory diseases and performing complicated surgeries by Iranian specialists in Azerbaijan.

Heading a high-ranking delegation Qazizadeh-Hashemi travelled to Azerbaijan on Thursday. During his stay, the minister also met with his counterpart Ogtay Shiraliyev, Minister of Labor and Social Protection of the Population Sahil Rafiq oglu Babayev, and President Ilham Aliyev.

Increased cooperation in medical tourism, setting up specialty clinics, holding talks for joint production of pharmaceutical products and vaccine production, holding workshops for broadening nursing skills, and student exchange programs were among the other outcomes of the trip.



storm drains, and making their way out to sea, plastic bags have been referred to as “urban tumbleweeds” for good reason. And they persist in the environment, causing harm for a very long time.

White-headed ducks victims of steep decline

By Farnaz Heidari

White-headed duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) has endured high levels of habitat loss in Iran. Long-term population declines have intensified as a result of wetlands’ changes and also droughts. Iran’s dying wetlands were once breeding habitats of white-headed ducks and now are vulnerable to drainage, pollution, and other disturbances.

The problem of habitat loss is an extension of one of the oldest battles in nature: the competition between species for space. It is not surprising that some valuable species such as white-headed ducks are losing out because of habitat over-exploitation. International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) categorized white-headed duck as an Endangered species in 2017.

Amy-Jane Beer and her colleagues in the encyclopedia of endangered animals, have explained that destruction of white-headed ducks breeding habitats during the 20th century, will all end up in large historical declines.

■ Relentless decline in Iran

Disturbances are specific to each population, so that conservationists need to study the situation of different populations in the field to understand the role of particular disturbances. Endangered species such as white-headed ducks are strongly affected by drought and wetlands’ dryness especially in the hot countries like Iran and so are continuously declining.

The optimism has faded in habitats of Fars and Sistan Provinces while Ghourigol, East Azarbaijan province, and Kanibarazan in Mahabad, West Azarbaijan province, are considered as main habitats for smaller populations of white-headed ducks in Iran.

But in general numbers seem to have climbed down during the last decades. The decline has been most severe at sites like Yanigh wetland number 1 and 2, also known as burnt wetland, (35 kilometers south-west of Hashtroud, East Azarbaijan province) and Zolbin wetland (24 kilometers west of Hashtroud). Smaller populations of these wetlands have simply scat-



tered to other sites like Ghourigol, and Kanibarazan. Despite the small size, Zolbin was one of the fantastic breeding sites of this species in Iran and now it is dead as the result of extensive drainage.

Some small populations have also been spotted in northern wetlands of the country and are subject to a variety of threats such as lower water levels, disturbances associated with fisheries, drowning in fishing nets, illegal hunting, and ingestion of lead shots.

■ The impact of rational decision-making on conservation

It is not surprising to find that the number of threats are more extensive for white-headed ducks. The range of threats differs but major problems include industrial, domestic, and agricultural pollutions; while sedimentation and water extraction are documented as threats too. The most widespread documentation refers to hybridization and competition but hybrids are never recorded in Iran’s populations.

Conservationists say the effective protection of wetlands is a high priority in Iran because without such protection it is almost certain that the white-headed duck populations will continue to drop in the country. Basic conservation initiatives have been launched to assure the future of white-headed ducks in Iran but these steps are not sufficient.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Helicopter emergency medical service in Iran to transport, transfuse blood

Helicopter emergency medical service (HEMS) provider in Iran plans to transport and transfuse blood on the scene, Emergency Medical Services director Pir Hossein Kulivand has said. Since some 8 percent of the deaths in road crashes often result from major internal hemorrhage or severe blood loss it is necessary for helicopter emergency medical services maintain an independent supply of blood for use during transport, Tasnim news agency quoted Kulivand as saying on Friday. By purchasing new helicopters the number of helicopter emergency medical service providers have reached 40 in the country, he said.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“down-”

- **Meaning:** reduce or lower
- **For example:** When no replies came, I began to feel **downhearted**.

PHRASAL VERB

Cut in on

- **Meaning:** to interrupt someone who is speaking by saying something
- **For example:** Sorry to cut in on you, but there are one or two things I don’t understand.

IDIOM

When pigs fly

- **Explanation:** something that will never happen
- **For example:** When pigs fly she’ll tidy up her room.

بالگردهای مجهز به سیستم ذخیره خون در ایران به پرواز در می آیند

سرپرست سازمان اورژانس کشور پیرحسین کولیوند گفت: بالگردهای اورژانس در کشور به ذخایر خونی تجهیز می‌شوند. به گزارش روز جمعه خبرگزاری تسنیم کولیوند ادامه داد با توجه به اینکه ۸ درصد از فوتی‌ها در تصادف‌ها به دلیل خونریزی داخلی و یا از دست دادن قابل توجه خون می باشد لازم است تا بالگردهای اورژانس به ذخایر خونی تجهیز شوند. وی گفت: با خرید بالگردهای جدید تعداد بالگردهای اورژانس هوایی کشور به ۴۰ فرزند رسید.

‘Angry Trump baby’ balloon lifted over London

Trump: May’s Brexit plan could kill hope of U.S. trade deal

➡ “If they do that, their trade deal with the U.S. will probably not be made because we have enough difficulty with the European Union,” Trump told The Sun.

He also said he told May “how to do it”, but that she “didn’t listen” and “wanted to go a different route”.

The comments were published on Thursday as May hosted an elaborate state dinner for the president and his wife Melania in honor of their arrival in the country.

It’s a blow May doesn’t need as she tries to sell her Brexit strategy to Tory conservatives, many of whom say it doesn’t secure British independence from the European Union.

Asked about the comments, a spokesperson said May was “looking forward to sitting down with Trump to talk him through the Brexit negotiating stance”.

After The Sun story was published, White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said the president “likes and respects Prime Minister May very much,” adding that he said in the interview she “is a very good person,” and that he “never said anything bad about her”.

■ **Boris Johnson would be a great PM**

In another setback, however, Trump also praised the plan’s chief critic, Brexitite Boris Johnson, saying he was “a very talented guy”.

“I’m just saying I think he would be a great prime minister,” Trump told The Sun.

“I think he’s got what it takes, and I think he’s got the right attitude to be a great prime minister.”

Johnson was one of a handful of top party officials, including Brexit Minister David Davis who have resigned in the wake of the deal, which May had claimed was agreed upon after a twelve-hour crisis meeting



last Friday.

May has defended the plan, saying it delivers “on the vote of the British people to take back control of our money, our laws and our borders.”

Al Jazeera’s Laurence Lee, reporting from Chequers where Trump and May are meeting on Friday, said “you have to ask yourself, who is likely to benefit from Trump saying any deal would likely be off if May’s Brexit strategy was implemented”.

■ **Blaming immigration for violence is ‘preposterous’**

Trump also commented on European immigration policies as protests continue back home against his headline immigration strategy, which saw the separation of parents from their children.

“I think the immigration, allowing the

immigration to take place in Europe is a shame,” he said.

“I think it changed the fabric of Europe, and unless you act very quickly, it’s never going to be what it was, and I don’t mean that in a positive way. So I think allowing millions and millions of people to come into Europe is very, very sad. I think you’re losing your culture.”

He also criticized London Mayor Sadiq Khan, blaming him for recent attacks and violence.

“I think he has done a very bad job on terrorism,” Trump told the tabloid. “I think he has done a bad job on crime, if you look, all the horrible things going on there, with all of the crime that is being brought in.”

Responding to the comments, London Mayor Sadiq Khan said it was preposterous

to blame a rise in violent crime in the city on immigration.

“The idea that you can blame this on immigration from Africa is I think preposterous and we should call him out when he does so,” Khan told the BBC on Friday.

May and Trump will formally meet for talks on Friday.

■ **‘Angry Trump baby’ balloon lifted over London**

Meantime, on Thursday night, hundreds of demonstrators chanted outside the U.S. ambassador’s residence where Trump was staying on the outskirts of London, providing a preview of the large protests expected on Friday.

Trump told The Sun he felt unwelcome because of the protests, including plans to fly a giant balloon over Parliament on Friday that depicts him as an angry baby.

Organizers behind the giant six-meter-high balloon were given permission by London’s city hall to fly the balloon over parliament square gardens. They raised 18,000 British pounds (almost \$24,000) from crowd funding.

Trump’s schedule will largely keep him out of central London, however.

His meeting with May will take place in her Chequers country residence on Friday, followed by tea with Queen Elizabeth II at Windsor Castle.

Ahead of the talks, Trump said his relationship with May is “very, very strong”, adding the two will discuss trade and military issues during their meeting on Friday.

Trump is also expected to spend a private weekend in Scotland with his wife, where he owns two golf resorts.

(Source: agencies)

Syrian army hoists national flag in Dara’a city

➡ Two armored vehicles with senior Russian officers entered the al-Shayah area and began talks with commanders from the so-called Free Syrian Army (FSA) on implementing the terms of the surrender deal.

Since June 19, the Syrian army has been conducting the operation in Dara’a, which borders Jordan and the Israeli-occupied side of Syria’s Golan Heights.

Dara’a’s return to the Syrian government control would cut the much-reported collaboration between anti-Damascus militants and Israel which has beefed up its military presence in the Golan Heights in recent days.

In a bid to minimize civilian casualties, both Damascus and Moscow have been initiating talks with militants to make

them hand back the areas they control to the Damascus government without fighting.

A militant official said the Takfiri elements, who are still holed up in Dara’a, are in talks with Russian officers to secure a safe passage to the terrorist-controlled areas in northern Syria.

The discussions are expected to resume on Thursday. Latest estimates say some 2,000 militants are still holed up in Dara’a city, along with their families.

■ **Syrian army retakes Dara’a cities**

Separately on Thursday, Syrian forces liberated the cities of Mazirib, Enkhel, Kafr Shams and Tafas, all situated in Dara’a Province.

Syria’s official SANA news agency reported that Tafas

residents had welcomed the Syrian army units and participated in a ceremony to hoist the national flag over the city council.

■ **Terrorists capture southern village**

However, the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said that an Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) affiliated terrorist group had seized a village in southern Syria from militants who had agreed to hand back the area under their control to Damascus.

SOHR head Rami Abdel Rahman said Jaish Khaled bin Walid terrorists captured the village of Hit near the Jordanian border “after violent clashes.”

(Source: Press TV)

Facts and figures about Xinjiang of China

➡ The mobile phone penetration reached 90%. Internet has covered most of the region, transforming Xinjiang into an information society. Xinjiang has registered rapid development in industrial, new and high technologies, and leads the country in such areas as railway traction transformer technologies, research and manufacturing of solar and wind power equipment, information processing of ethnic minority languages.

Xinjiang’s ecological system is extremely fragile, due to the fact that oases accounts for only 5 percent of the region’s total area. It has been making unremitting efforts to protecting and building the ecological system and pollution control, carefully balancing need for economic growth and environmental protection.

In 2014, education expenditure increased to 6.47 percent of the GDP. A complete educational system from pre-school education to higher education has been established, and Xinjiang enters into the era of higher education popularization. The average life expectancy exceeds 72 years.

Xinjiang has become China’s frontline in opening to the west, the window for exchanges and cooperation with Central, South and West Asia. It also serves as the core area of Belt and Road Initiative. As a region with rich natural resources and great growth potential, Xinjiang is catching up quickly with the pace of national development.

■ **A system of ethnic regional autonomy**

As a multi-ethnic region, Xinjiang implements the system of regional autonomy for ethnic minorities. The essence of this system is that under the unitary and unified state leadership, a certain degree of autonomy is accorded to Xinjiang.

Compared with other provinces and municipalities directly under the central government, Xinjiang enjoys the power of legislation and the power to flexibly carry out decisions from higher-level state organs in accordance with local conditions.

People of all ethnic origins in Xinjiang are ensured an equal legal status. They enjoy the rights to vote and stand for election as prescribed by the Constitution and the law, the right of equal participation in the administration of state affairs, the right of religious belief, the right to receive education, the right to use their own spoken and

written languages, the right to inherit and carry on the traditional culture of their own ethnic groups, etc.

Internal affairs of Xinjiang are administered by itself. Xinjiang guarantees all ethnic groups’ right to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, in such fields as justice, administration, education, news media, publishing, radio, movies, television programs, the internet and daily life. The diet, marriage and funeral customs of ethnic minorities are respected.

Candidates of ethnic minority origins are selected and cultivated as officials and professionals. Ethnic minority officials account for 51.4 percent of the total officials in the region.

At the same time, Xinjiang has always being an inalienable part of the unified and multiethnic country, bearing the responsibility of safeguarding national unity, ethnic harmony and social stability. The region has focused on eliminating ethnic misunderstandings carried over from the past. It has firmly opposed any form of ethnic oppression or discrimination, and outlawed any action that might sabotage ethnic unity or incite ethnic separatism. Along with the region’s economic and social progress, contacts and exchanges among various ethnic groups of Xinjiang grow ever closer. A relationship of unity, harmony and mutual assistance has been developed.

■ **Freedom of religious belief protected**

Xinjiang is also a region with multiple religions. At present, the major religions are Islam, Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism and Taoism. Historically, the religious relations in Xinjiang were very complicated. Since the 4th century BC, Zoroastrianism and Buddhism made their way into Xinjiang. Manichaeism and Nestorians were introduced into Xinjiang in the 6th century. In the late 9th century, Islam was introduced into southern Xinjiang. Today, Islam has become the principal religion in the region.

Between different religions and different sects of the same religion in Xinjiang, there had occurred many conflicts, religious wars lasting for decades, and sectarian disputes of hundreds of years, causing serious damage to the economy and society of Xinjiang.

Since its founding in 1949, the People’s Republic of China has been pursuing a pol-

icy of freedom of religious belief. The state protects citizens’ freedom of religious belief and normal religious activities. All normal religious activities that believers conduct at venues for religious activities or in their own homes, including attending religious services, fasting, preaching, reciting scriptures, are protected by law, and no organization or individual may interfere with them. Muslim customs are fully respected.

Xinjiang now has 24,800 venues for religious activities, including mosques, churches, lamaseries and temples, with 29,300 clerical personnel. Among these, 24,400 mosques have 29,000 clerical personnel.

Clerical personnel have been trained through study under senior clerical personnel, at scripture schools (classes or workshops), at colleges, and by other means. Religious classics and books including the Koran have been translated and published in the Uyghur, Chinese, Kazak and Kirgiz languages.

To ensure successful pilgrimages for believers in Islam, Xinjiang adopts a policy of organized and planned pilgrimages. The Xinjiang government has arranged charter flights every year to take Muslims to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, and offered medical care and interpretation services for pilgrims to ensure safe and orderly pilgrimages.

Xinjiang engages in active communication and exchanges with other religious organizations worldwide. Representatives from Xinjiang religious circles have participated in many international academic meetings and seminars, and clerical personnel and students from religious schools in Xinjiang have won prizes at many international Koran recitation contests, and some have been sent abroad for further study.

Religious believers serve as deputies and members in People’s congresses and committees of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) at all levels, participate in the deliberation and administration of state affairs, and supervise and inspect the implementation of the policy of religious freedom.

At the same time, religious believers must also fulfill their constitutional and legal obligations, and must not make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt social order, impair the health of citizens, or interfere with the educational system of the state. Religious affairs and religious organizations in Xinjiang are not subject to control by foreign forces. Due to the effective

implementation of the policy of freedom of religious belief, all religions in Xinjiang enjoy harmonious coexistence.

In China’s history, there had been attempts by colonialists and imperialists to split Xinjiang from China. Since the end of the Cold War, religious extremism, ethnic separatism and violent terrorism have been rampant in many parts of the world. Xinjiang’s stability and development was also disturbed and impacted. The splittist forces, headed by East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), plotted and organized a number of bloody incidents of terror and violence, including explosions, assassinations, arson, poisonings, assaults, and riots, seriously jeopardizing the lives, property and security of the Xinjiang people. The July 5 riot in Urumqi in 2009 caused huge losses in lives, in which 197 people died and over 1,700 were injured. The violent terrorists brutally killed innocent civilians, including the Islamic clerics and believers

Religious extremism betrays and distorts religious doctrines, deludes and deceives the Muslims with their fallacies, and endangers religious and social harmony in Xinjiang.

To fight against the violent crimes by the ETIM separatist forces and safeguard Xinjiang’s security and economic and social progress, resolute steps have been taken by the Xinjiang Government. The occurrence of violent and terrorist incidents and the spread of religious extremism have been suppressed effectively. These measures received broad support by people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang and are understood by friendly neighboring countries.

Xinjiang has a long history of being the key junction of the Silk Road and played an important role in the exchanges between China and Iran. Today, the Belt and Road Initiative provides new historic opportunities for economic cooperation and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. Once again, Xinjiang occupies a position to significantly influence China-Iran cooperation and exchanges. It’s my sincere hope that Iranian friends take this opportunity to explore more of and better appreciate Xinjiang, conduct trade and investment on this land of hope, and promote the welfare and friendship of our two peoples.

Thousands take to streets in Sa’ada, censure bloody Saudi regime-led war on Yemen

Thousands of Yemenis have taken to the streets of the northern city of Sa’ada to denounce the deadly campaign led by the House of Saud regime and supported by the United States against the impoverished country.



“Death to America and Death to Israel;” that was what banners read during the demonstration on Friday.

Demonstrators called for a boycott of American and Israeli products. They urged banning the sales of Western-made arms to the Saudi regime.

Riyadh uses the U.S.-made warplanes among other military equipment to bombard Yemen.

The Saudi regime was the first country the U.S. President Donald Trump visited after taking office last year. During his visit, it was announced that Washington could sell military equipment worth \$110 billion to Saudi Arabia in a period of 10 years. The U.S. Department of State said at the time that the deal’s worth could grow to \$350 billion.

According to a study released in March, the United States sold weapons worth more than \$650 million to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) the past year.

In April, the U.S. administration gave the green light to a \$1.3-billion sale of artillery to Saudi Arabia, ignoring reports that its weapons had greatly contributed to a high rate of civilian deaths in Yemen.

Washington has also been providing logistic and surveillance support to Saudi Arabia in the bloody campaign.

On Thursday, a news agency affiliated to Yemen’s Ansarullah (Houthi) movement said nearly 280 civilians had been killed and 300 others injured in airstrikes on Sa’ada province in the first half of 2018. The victims included nearly 80 children and close to 40 women.

Since the beginning of the Saudi regime war on Yemen in March 2015, which was launched in an attempt to reinstall the former president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, a staunch ally of Riyadh and crush Ansarullah the Saudi regime warplanes have pounded the country day and night.

■ **Yemeni forces shoot down Saudi regime jet in Asir: Ministry**

Elsewhere, Yemen’s Defense Ministry says the country’s air defense forces shot down a fighter jet in southwest Saudi Arabia in retaliation for fresh airstrikes by the regime against its impoverished neighbor.

In a statement, the ministry said on its website on Thursday that the fighter jet belonging to the Royal Saudi Air Force had been hit in the Asir region as it was returning from Yemen’s northern province of Sa’ada.

According to Yemeni military officials, the invading aircraft had taken part in deadly airstrikes against residential neighborhoods in the country.

In another development on Thursday, Yemeni army snipers shot dead five Saudi regime mercenaries at the strategic Jabal al-Doud military base in the kingdom’s southwestern border region of Jizan.

In addition, at least 44 Saudi regime-backed militants were killed in a series of violent clashes across Yemen.

According to al-Masirah television network, the Saudi regime warplanes carried out new airstrikes across Yemen, hitting different parts of the impoverished country.

At least two people were killed after the jets bombed residential areas in Al Shajan village and other towns across Hudaydah Province.

■ **Amnesty calls for probe of torture claims in Yemen prisons**

Meantime, an international rights group is calling for an investigation into alleged disappearances, torture and likely deaths in prisons and “network of secret detention facilities” run by the United Arab Emirates and allied militias in southern Yemen.

Amnesty International said in a report on Thursday that it has documented “systemic enforced disappearance and torture and other ill-treatment, amounting to war crimes” in the facilities.

The report said “some (detainees are) feared to have died in custody”.

Based on more than 70 interviews, the authors said “cruel and unlawful” practices were being committed in those prisons.

Amnesty called on the UAE government to immediately stop the torture, and to release detainees.

In the meantime, it said the U.S. should suspend intelligence gathering cooperation with the UAE, and stop supplying it with weapons.

Amnesty said that the 51 cases of enforced disappearance took place between March 2016 and May 2018.

Nineteen of the men remain missing, it said.

Amnesty said it had collected testimonies from released detainees and relatives of the missing across Yemen.

One former detainee told Amnesty that “UAE soldiers at a coalition base in Aden repeatedly inserted an object into his anus until he bled” and that he was “kept in a hole in the ground with only his head above the surface and left to defecate and urinate on himself in that position”.

Last year, the Associated Press news agency reported that the UAE and its allied militias were running a network of secret detention facilities, beyond the control of the Yemeni government.

(Source: agencies)

Chelsea part ways with manager Antonio Conte

Chelsea have parted company with their Italian manager Antonio Conte after two years at Stamford Bridge, the Premier League club said on Friday.

Conte joined the Roman Abramovich-owned club in 2016 and led them to the league title in his debut season along with an FA Cup triumph last campaign.

The former Italy manager had a year remaining on his current contract and had already taken charge of pre-season preparations at the club's Cobham training ground outside London.

"Chelsea Football Club and Antonio Conte have parted company," Chelsea said on their website.

"We wish Antonio every success in his future career."

The 48-year-old's departure comes after Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis said on Wednesday that Chelsea were close to securing a deal for the Italian club's former boss Maurizio Sarri.

Sarri, 59, led Napoli to two second-place and one third-place finish in three seasons in charge. He was replaced by former Chelsea boss Carlo Ancelotti in May with the Naples club seeking to end Juventus' dominance in the league.

Conte's relationship with Chelsea's hierarchy was strained after disagreements over their transfer policy last season.

His future has looked uncertain with Chelsea failing to qualify for the coming season's Champions League after finishing fifth. The team will now play in the Europa League.

Chelsea take on Huddersfield Town in their opening fixture of the new Premier league campaign on Aug. 11.

(Source: Mirror)

Argentina's Pitana to referee World Cup final

Experienced Argentine official Nestor Pitana will referee the World Cup final between France and Croatia at the Luzhniki Stadium on Sunday, an uncontroversial decision which rewards his authoritative performances in Russia.

The 43-year-old also took charge of the opening match of the tournament between hosts Russia and Saudi Arabia at the same stadium and becomes the second Argentine to referee the biggest game in football after Horacio Elizondo in 2006.

Pitana officiated at four matches at the last World Cup in Brazil and the final will be his fifth match at this tournament with his previous outings including the quarter-final between France and Uruguay.

He will be assisted on the touchlines by compatriots Hernan Maidana and Juan Pablo Belatti, while Italian Massimiliano Irrati will be the first Video Assistant Referee (VAR) to officiate at a World Cup final.

(Source: Reuters)

Fiat workers strike over Ronaldo signing

Workers at a Fiat Chrysler plant in Italy are to strike after its main investor decided to pay €112m (£99.2m) to sign footballer Cristiano Ronaldo for Juventus.

Both the football club and the carmaker are controlled by the Agnelli family through their holding company.

For the USB union, the decision means Fiat is missing out on investment.

It said the firm needed to guarantee the future of thousands of people, "rather than enriching only one".

The union added that it was "unacceptable" that while Fiat Chrysler workers were making "huge economic sacrifices", millions of euros were being spent on the purchase of a player.

The four-year deal to woo Ronaldo from Real Madrid was announced on Tuesday amid concern that Juventus might have overpaid for the 33-year-old forward.

However, football finance expert Rob Wilson, of Sheffield Hallam University, said Juventus should earn more than enough money from Ronaldo to cover the transfer fee and his wages.

He added: "The marketing leverage that Juventus will be able to create will be significant. Added to that the likelihood that he will strengthen the team, it seems plausible that they will be more successful domestically and qualify routinely for the Champions League. That means more sponsors, more TV money and more prize money."

(Source: BBC)

Zidane left Real Madrid with 24 million euros on the table

Zinedine Zidane walked away from Real Madrid this summer and gave up the 24 million euros left on his two-year contract.

Zidane continues on vacation with his family, as shown through his social networks and that of his children.

The Frenchman has decided to move away from the day to day grind of football. He wanted to disconnect and recover strength, he felt it was time to hit the brakes and think about other things.

In the end, he has shown his little care for the money, as he gave up 6 million after tax as a player and now 12 million for each of the seasons he had signed.

It is his philosophy of life, and when he saw that the conditions around him were not the best, he decided to end his time as coach of Los Blancos after two and a half seasons.

Zidane anticipated problems. He knew about the Cristiano Ronaldo case in detail, since he was informed.

The Frenchman thought that the dressing room needed a change at all levels, but his commitment to some of the players prevented him from leading that change, which is now testing Madrid.

For a whole day, Florentino Perez tried to convince the Frenchman to reconsider, to turn his back and agree to continue, at least, one more season, but the decision was firm and there was no way that the president of Madrid and Jose Angel Sanchez could help him change his mind.

It was a thoughtful decision and apart from the 24 million euros left on the table.

(Source: Marca)

Dejected England, Belgium aim to leave World Cup on a high



England manager Gareth Southgate admits the World Cup third-place play-off is a game that no team wants to play, but Saturday's match against Belgium offers the chance to finish the tournament on a winning note.

A gut-wrenching 2-1 loss to Croatia after extra-time denied England a shot at a second World Cup triumph, instead setting up a consolation game against familiar foes Belgium.

Roberto Martinez's side, who were beaten 1-0 by France in the last four, topped Group G ahead of England after an Adnan Januzaj goal settled a low-key encounter in Kaliningrad. That game saw both coaches heavily rotate their teams, and a similar scenario is likely in Saint Petersburg, with several fringe players pushing for a start.

"The honest thing is, it's not a game any team wants to play in," said Southgate, whose side have drawn praise for the way they have briefly united a country bitterly divided over Brexit.

However, he insisted that will not alter England's approach as they look to achieve their best finish since they

won the competition in 1966.

"We'll want to give a performance of huge pride, there's no question about that," said Southgate.

"Every time we wear the shirt of our national team we want to play with pride, we want to play well and we want to win."

Reserve goalkeepers Jack Butland and Nick Pope are the only two members of England's 23-man squad yet to feature in Russia, as Southgate stuck with the same line-up throughout the knockout phase.

■ 'Important game'

For Belgium and their "golden generation", many of the key players should return for the 2022 World Cup, even if Vincent Kompany and Jan Vertonghen will probably be gone by then. Martinez, who signed an extension until after Euro 2020 in May, can guide Belgium to the nation's best result at the World Cup. They finished fourth in 1986.

"We want to finish on a high and these players deserve to finish on a high," said the Spaniard.

"You need to try to see the opportunity of finishing third

France not expecting tired Croatia in World Cup final



France have been surprised by the physical fortitude of Croatia and are not expecting a tired opponent in Sunday's World Cup final, midfielder Blaise Matuidi said on Friday.

Croatia have been forced into extra time in each of their three knockout matches, edging Denmark and hosts Russia on post-match penalties before scoring late in added play to come from behind and beat England in Wednesday's semi-final in Moscow.

France by contrast have won all of their matches since the round of 16 inside 90 minutes, effectively playing a full match less than Croatia at the tournament in Russia. But Matuidi said he did not think the Croats would be fatigued by their added time on the pitch over the last week.

"I don't think it's a factor," he said at news conference at the French training base on the outskirts of Moscow.

"We saw in the last game that they finished the stronger of the two teams. They did not look like a side who were playing extra time for a third time in a row. Surprisingly, they looked like they were playing their first game.

"They are a team playing in the World Cup final, a team with players who have a lot of experience. It will be a match they will be ready for and I don't think extra time or penalties has been or will be a handicap for them."

The 31-year-old, who said it would be his last World Cup, predicted an exciting final with a high level of expertise.

"They are a team who defend well and attack well after recovering the ball. We are up against players of a high quality and with lots of experience," Matuidi said.

"It is going to be important to concentrate hard because they have tremendous qualities."

But it was much the same with the French team too, he added.

"It's the game of our lives to play in a World Cup final, a dream I've had since I was a kid. The cup feels so close we can almost touch it but there is still a lot to do to get there," he said.

"We've prepared everything to win the game even if its extra time or penalties. It's the winning that counts."

(Source: Eurosport)

Super-Mom Serena into 10th Wimbledon final



That enjoyment was clear to see as she dashed Goerges's hopes of setting up an all-German final with Angelique Kerber in 70 unforgiving minutes.

The 13th seed had never taken a set off Williams in three previous meetings and unfortunately for her, the American was once again at her dominant best on Thursday as she bludgeoned down five aces and 16 winners to finish off Goerges.

In both sets Goerges was broken in the sixth game, surrendering each with an error on break point.

She did fight back to break Williams when the American, seeded 25th despite her laughable ranking of 181st, was serving for the match at 5-3 up in the second.



"Feel the power of dream at 2018 World Cup"

at the World Cup. That doesn't happen too often, so we need to understand that this is an important game.

"But I would accept it is very difficult when you had the ambition of getting to the final. It's very difficult to prepare for the next game."

European teams have claimed third place at the past nine World Cups. The Netherlands beat Brazil 3-0 in 2014 after the hosts were embarrassed 7-1 by Germany in the semi-finals.

England skipper Harry Kane is the tournament's top scorer on six goals, while Belgium striker Romelu Lukaku trails by two in the race for the Golden Boot.

With one more goal Kane would become the highest scorer at the competition since 2002, when Ronaldo struck eight times, including twice in the final, as Brazil clinched a record fifth title.

The Tottenham forward would be just the second England player to scoop the award, after Gary Lineker was the top scorer in 1986.

(Source: AFP)

Infantino says VAR means the end of offside goals



Goals scored from offside positions will be a thing of the past, at least in competitions where video assistant referees (VARs) are used, FIFA president Gianni Infantino said on Friday as he hailed the success of the technology at the World Cup in Russia.

Infantino, dressed in a red volunteer's uniform and in triumphant mood, also declared the tournament the "best World Cup ever" in an hour-long news conference.

Infantino said that, despite initial fears, the VAR system had worked well, it had reviewed a of 19 decisions in the 62 matches so far and had corrected 16 decisions which were initially wrong. "This is progress, this is better than the past," he said. "VAR is not changing football, it is cleaning football, making it more honest and transparent and helping referees to make the right decisions."

"It is difficult to think of the World Cup without VAR, it has been certainly a more just competition and this is what we wanted to achieve."

"The goal scored from an offside position is finished in football, at least in football with VAR," Infantino added.

"You will never see any more a goal

scored in an offside position, it's finished because either you are or are not offside."

He said VAR's deterrent effect had reduced the number of direct red cards for violent play from 16 in the 1998 tournament to none this time. "Everyone knows that, whatever you do, someone will see it... one of the 30-odd cameras will spot it and you will be sent off," the 48-year-old said.

Of the overall tournament, he said: "For a couple of years, I was saying it would be the best World Cup ever, today I can say that with more conviction."

Infantino promised that the tournament would leave a lasting legacy and there were "concrete plans" to make sure the stadiums were used in the future.

"This country, Russia, has changed. Russia has become a real football country... where football has become part of the country's DNA and the culture," he said.

"We had 98 percent occupancy of the stadiums, one million fans from abroad to discover this country, more than three billion viewers on television and there will certainly be one billion for the final."

(Source: Soccerway)

Alireza Jahanbakhsh; Persian Pride

“Having finished the season as the top scorer in Netherland’s in Europe. The Islamic Republic of Iran forward was part has his eyes set on the AFC Asian Cup title.”

By: Paul Williams

Alireza Jahanbakhsh lives to play football. Born in Qazvin to the manager of a local bicycle factory and a stay-at-home mother, football was a shared love for the Jahanbakhsh family.

“I come from a really big football family; my uncles, my cousins, they really love football,” the 24-year-old revealed. “One of the most amazing moments that I still remember is the qualification for 1998, I was five or six years old and the dramatic qualifying of Iran to the World Cup against Australia. The country was crazy; everyone was out [in the streets]. It was crazy and people were so happy. My parents, my father, who is crazy about football, and I still remember the people were cheering and dancing in the streets.”

It was that moment that inspired Jahanbakhsh, the second of three children – he has an older sister and younger brother – to take up the sport. But had a school teacher not intervened, Jahanbakhsh may have been lost to football at an early age. A prodigious talent in multiple sports, Jahanbakhsh was selected for the junior national teams in both handball and futsal.

“I tried different sports,” he explained. “Kung fu and athletics; I played handball for the national team, and I was also selected for the country’s youth futsal team. I think when I was 12 we had a sport teacher in the school, he told me I had to find my way, I had to choose between football and futsal. And at that time I would rather play football.”

Like so many of Iran’s footballers, Jahanbakhsh learned his craft playing in the streets with his friends from his local neighborhood in Qazvin.

“What I really remember about that time was I was in a hurry to finish school and to go and play in the streets with the guys from the neighborhood,” he recalled. “All that mattered for me was that small ball and playing with the ball. It didn’t matter if that was in the afternoon in 32 or 35 degrees or even in the winter in the cold weather. I had a lot of fun. “The nicest thing I remember was always playing with the older people because they were always saying ‘he has really nice skills’ and they wanted me on their team. It was such a great time.”

With his talent obvious for all to see, his parents were only too happy to nurture their son’s ambitions. “We weren’t from a rich family, but [my father] was always supporting me because he knew that I was just following my ambitions, following my dreams,” he said.

But his father also wanted his eldest son to learn the value of hard work. Over the summer break, when Jahanbakhsh was a young teenager, his father made him work in the bicycle factory alongside him to engender a sense of independence in his son – but there was a downside.

“I was working just fixing the wheels of the bicycles. My father told me if you want to get some money you have to come there and work and be independent and earn your own money. And I was working there fixing the wheels in the factory; it was also a lot of fun. But what made me a little bit annoyed was I had less time to play football as I had to work from six o’clock in the morning to

Eredivisie, Alireza Jahanbakhsh is fast establishing himself as a star of a side that won many plaudits at the FIFA World Cup and he now



“What I really remember about that time was I was in a hurry to finish school and to go and play in the streets with the guys from the neighborhood,”

afterwards I told them I would like to play closer to goal, so I went to the right wing.”

And he hasn’t looked back since. Given his prodigious ability it wasn’t long before scouts in Europe were aware of his talents – skills that were on full display at the 2012 AFC U-19 Championships, where he scored two goals as he helped Iran reach the quarter-final.

“After the tournament I heard that I had an offer from NEC Nijmegen,” he said. “They gave me an offer, and at that time I had offers from France and Turkey. But I knew because of their academies and the way they work with the youth and everything, that in Holland they could help me more,” explained Jahanbakhsh.

“In Iran we have a lot of good players, [but] mostly we are individual players with good skills. But I knew if I wanted to be a better player, to become better and better every single day, there would be a limit in Iran. So if you want to make it further you have to go to Europe. And the learning didn’t just come on the pitch, the adjustment to life in a foreign country at just 19 years of age was not easy. The first couple of weeks were really tough because Holland is really different from Iran,” said the forward, who spoke only a little English when he arrived.

“It’s a different culture, different language, different mindset. They’re one of the freest countries in the world. I am going from an Islamic country to the freest country in the world, so it was difficult and I had to adapt myself to different situations, like how to communicate with the people. Communication with my teammates was really difficult because I couldn’t understand them. When I got the offer from NEC I had almost two months to decide if I wanted to go or not. In that time I had a personal [English] teacher. But that wasn’t enough. When I went there I understood my teammates, but just to answer, just to say what I wanted was really difficult. But the club asked the local teacher to teach me how to speak. At the same time I was learning English and also a little bit of Dutch. It was great and after a couple of months I could speak with my teammates.”

“In Iran we have a lot of good players, [but] mostly we are individual players with good skills. But I knew if I wanted to be a better player, to become better and better every single day, there would be a limit in Iran.”

five or six o’clock in the evening, and then afterwards I had only three hours to play football. I was so tired but still I went to the street to play.”

Before too long Jahanbakhsh had outgrown his hometown and at the age of just 15 moved to Tehran to further his burgeoning football career. He made his professional debut at age 17 for Damash Gilan, a club that represents the province of Gilan in northern Iran, where his parents were born and raised. Looking for any opportunity to play, Jahanbakhsh began his career as a full-back, because the right wing position was already occupied by Iranian legend Mehdi Mahdavi.

“The first game that I played in the first division in Iran I played as a right-back,” he said with a chuckle. “At that time the club spent a lot of money, they invested in a lot of big players, so they took Mehdi to the club, but he wanted to play as a right winger. So they were searching for someone and the coach said, ‘ah this little kid, he has potential to play right-back’. I was 17 and he asked me can you do that and I said ‘why not? [I’ll play] wherever’. I played right-back the first game, and also the second game, but

After two seasons with NEC Nijmegen, during which he won the Eerste Divisie (second division) Player of the Year award in his second year at the club, the opportunity presented itself to take the next step in his career.

“It was a big decision because I knew at the age of 21-22 you have to make a really good step,” he explained. “Because I became the Player of the Year, everyone expected me to make a good step. I had different offers but I wanted to stay in Holland because I wanted to learn more, to stay in the competition, because after two years I knew more about the culture, about the language, the people, the style of football – everything. I had three offers and AZ Alkmaar was the best I had at that time, and I am very happy I made that step.”

A knee injury in his first season meant he couldn’t have the impact he would have liked, with just three goals in 23 matches. In his second season he improved his output and hit double figures, with 10 goals. But his third season, the 2017/18 campaign, saw him take his game to a whole new level. His

21 goals were enough for him to win the Golden Boot award, while he also finished in the top three in the league for assists with 12, which he says gives him more satisfaction than scoring goals.

“For me personally giving assists is a better feeling than scoring goals,” he revealed. That doesn’t mean he doesn’t value the Golden Boot award, however, admitting it is his greatest achievement in his career so far – but he wants more.

“To be honest until now it’s the top moment in my career,” he said. “That means a lot to me. That says that hard work pays off. I dedicated this to my family, my agent, my friends, all my teammates; all the people who helped me. It’s been an amazing feeling, but on the other side I am also going to forget it because I have a long way to go and I want to achieve more things as an individual and as a team.”

One of the things I always dream of is winning the Asian Cup with Iran. That’s one thing that hasn’t happened for a long time now.”

At the same time he was flourishing in Europe, so too was his career with the Iran national team. He was just 19 when he was named in the 23-man squad for the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil and, while he only managed 49 minutes off the bench across the three group stage matches, just having that experience on the global stage was a dream come true.

“The first World Cup was unbelievable,” he admitted. “It was a great experience for me at the age of 19 after six months playing in Europe. Inside of football and outside of football I learned a lot, and at the age of 19 when you go to such a tournament it’s

just about having the experience, learning a lot and watching a lot, and seeing the best players in the world.”

Jahanbakhsh recently played a major role in his country’s memorable FIFA World Cup performance in Russia as Team Melli came within a goal of qualifying for the Round of 16 for the first time. After defeating Morocco in their opening game, Iran lost 1-0 to 2010 FIFA World Cup winners Spain in a hard-fought contest, before drawing 1-1 with Portugal to miss out on the knockout rounds by the narrowest of margins after Mehdi Taremi skewed a golden chance to win it wide at the death. The tournament may have ended in heartbreak for the forward and his teammates, but Iran won many new fans by giving two of the global giants an almighty scare as they proved themselves a match for anyone.

Jahanbakhsh is still only 24, but he has

well and truly established himself as one of the stars of the national team, and for him there is no better feeling than wearing the jersey of his beloved Iran. But with his rising stature comes increased pressure, and he knows he must now deliver the same form he has produced at club level if he is to realize the one goal he is desperate to achieve – win the AFC Asian Cup, something Iran have not done since 1976. “I know that after such a season the expectation is higher for me,” he admitted. “But on the other side, I just try to do my best whenever I am wearing the jersey of the national team, whether it’s a World Cup or Asian Cup or even just a normal friendly. But of course some competitions are more important. So that’s why I know the value of these two competitions, the World Cup and then the Asian Cup, they mean a lot for our people.

One of the things I always dream of is winning the Asian Cup with Iran. That’s one thing that hasn’t happened for a long time now.”



Alireza Faghani picked for World Cup third-place match

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – Iranian referee Alireza Faghani **d e s k** has been chosen to officiate the third-place match between Belgium and England.

Faghani will be assisted by his countrymen Reza Sokhandan and Mohammad Mansouri.

The match will take place in St. Petersburg on Saturday.

Also, FIFA have named Argentinian Nestor Pitana as the referee for Sunday’s World Cup final between France and Croatia.

The 43-year-old officiated the tournament’s opening game between Russia and Saudi Arabia and was in charge for France’s quarter-final victory over Uruguay, as well as Croatia’s last-16 clash with Denmark.

It will be the fifth game at this World Cup for Pitana, and his second working with each of France and Croatia.

Pitana handled France’s 2-0 win in the quarterfinals against Uruguay, and Croatia’s round of 16 win over Denmark.

Eindhoven, Rangers eye Milad Mohammadi

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – PSV Eindhoven and Glasgow **d e s k** Rangers have reportedly shown interest in signing Iran defender Milad Mohammadi.

PSV are hoping Mohammadi will follow compatriots Reza Ghoochannejhad and Alireza Jahanbakhsh in plying his trade in the Dutch Eredivisie, scotsman reported.

English Premier League teams Huddersfield and Stoke are eager to bolster their squads ahead of the upcoming season.

According to reports from the Scottish Sun, Glasgow Rangers are keeping tabs on the defender, and could move for him this summer.

The 24-year-old plays as left-back for Russian outfit Akhmat Grozny and has played for Iran in the 2018 Russia World Cup.

The report claims that Mohammadi has just a year left on his current deal, but Rangers will still have to pay in the region of £2 million to sign him.

Getting the work permit shouldn’t be an issue as Mohammadi now has 21 caps to his name, two of which came as a substitute in games at the World Cup this summer.

Steven Gerrard has already made nine summer signings so far and the Liverpool legend is reportedly working on a £3 million deal to sign Millwall’s Jake Cooper.

Iran B to participate at William Jones Cup

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – Iran B, consisting of youth play- **d e s k** ers, will partake at the 2018 William Jones Cup in Taiwan.

The Iranian team will start the competition with a match against Lithuania on Saturday.

The team will be headed by Farzad Kouhian in the eight-day tournament.

The 2018 William Jones Cup will be the 40th staging of William Jones Cup, an international basketball tournament held in Taipei, Taiwan.

The men’s tournament will be held from July 14 to 22 with participation of 11 teams.

The women’s tournament will be held from 25–29 July 2018 and will be contested by six teams.

Both tournaments will be held at the Xinzhuang Gymnasium in New Taipei City and will follow a single round robin format.

The U.S. are the most decorated team with 15 title and the Philippines and Iran have won five titles each.

AZ hope Jahanbakhsh remains at club

AZ Alkmaar director Max Huiberts is hoping that Alireza Jahanbakhsh will remain at the club this summer but admits that it will be difficult despite no concrete interest at the moment.

The Iranian, who was top scorer in the Eredivisie last season, had been linked with Brighton and Hove Albion earlier this summer but the interest seems to have gone quiet.

Speaking to NH, Max Huiberts said, “At the moment nothing is playing. The only player who has left is Wout Weghorst. For the time being, there is no concrete interest in Ali, but for a few weeks something happened, but now it is quiet.

“It would be very nice if he was on the field at the first Europa League match. Let’s hope that there is very little interest in him, although I cannot imagine that, then it could just be that he is playing at AZ for another year.”

(Source: Oranje Football)

Two Brazilians join Foolad

PLDC – Iranian top flight football team Foolad have completed the signing of two Brazilian players Vinicius Lopes Laurindo and Vinicius Silva Soares.

Vinicius Lopes Laurindo, known as Vinicius, is a center back and Vinicius Silva Soares, usually known simply as Tarta, plays in midfield position.

Foolad, coached by Sirous Pourmousavi, will kick off the new Iran Professional League (IPL) season on July 26 with a match against Pars Jonoubi in Ahvaz’s Ghadir Stadium.

Foolad have already signed Brazilian striker Luciano Pereira Mendes from Sanat Naft Abadan.

Foolad finished in seventh place in IPL last season with 20 points behind title holder Persepolis.

The Ahvaz based football team are going to win IPL title for the third time in their history.

Foolad have won titles in 2004–05 and 2013–14 seasons.

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Tehran hosts meeting on Iran-Russia media cooperation

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Press Affairs Department of Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance hosted the Meeting of Iran-Russia Media Cooperation in Tehran on Thursday.

The Vice Minister of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of Russia, Alexey Volin, and the representatives of 10 Russian media attended the meeting, the ministry announced in a press release on Friday.



Deputy Culture Minister for Press Affairs Mohammad Soltanifar (L) and Vice Minister of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of Russia Alexey Volin attend the Meeting of Iran-Russia Media Cooperation in Tehran on July 12, 2018.

Speaking at the meeting, Deputy Culture Minister for Press Affairs Mohammad Soltanifar said, "There have been joint economic, political and cultural interests between the two countries, which can lead to further media cooperation."

Volin also on his part stressed the need for the expansion of relations between Iran and Russia.

Managing directors of several Iranian news agencies also attended the meeting.

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Painting

■ Saye Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Afsaneh Mesgarzadeh.

The exhibition named "Sheds of a Colorful Mind" will run until July 18 at the gallery located at No. 21, 13th Alley, Sanai St. of Karim Khan Ave.

■ Paintings by Alireza Masudi are on display in an exhibition at White Line Gallery.

The exhibit will be running until July 23 at the gallery located at 22 Parvin Alley, off Jame Jam St. off Vali-e Asr Ave.

■ An exhibition of paintings by a large group of female artists, including Farah Osuli, Parvaneh Etemadi, Rana Farnud and Iran Darrudi, is underway at E1 Gallery.

The exhibition entitled "This Is Me" will run until July 24 at the gallery located at 1 Hamid Dead End, off Lesani Alley, Jebbeh St., off Mahdiah St. in the Elahieh neighborhood.

■ Hosna Karnama is displaying her latest paintings in an exhibition at Saless Gallery.

The exhibit will run until July 18 at the gallery located at 148 Karim Khan Ave.

Calligraphic painting

■ Calligraphic paintings by Monir Atashi, Mansur Khorrami, Mostafa Kargar, Fatemeh Mohebbi, Shiva Moradi and dozens of other artists are on display in an exhibition at Atashzad Gallery.

The exhibition runs until July 22 at the gallery that can be found at 3 North Abbaspur (Tavanir) St. near Vanak Sq.

Watercolor

■ The Yazdchi Watercolor Group is displaying the latest works from its members in an exhibition at Ariana Gallery.

The exhibit runs until July 18 in the gallery located at 9 Fereshteh St., off East Maryam St., in the Elahieh neighborhood.

Arijit Singh, Sonu Nigam to sing for "The Devil's Daughter"

A R T **TEHRAN** — Indian singers Arijit Singh and Sonu Nigam will sing for "The Devil's Daughter", a co-production between Iran and India that is being shot in India by Iranian director and producer Qorband Mohammadpur.

Two songs will be recorded by the singers for the project, the public relations team of the project announced in a press release on Thursday.

Four more songs, which have been composed by Dilshad Shaikh, will also be performed by other Indian singers for the film will premiere in Tehran during November.

Starring Hamid Farrokhejad and Fardin Hafizi, the film is about Satan's daughter who intends to repent. She is first asked to find an innocent man to bow down to until her repentance is accepted. The Satan's daughter descends to search for the man.

The cast also includes the Indian actors Jackie Shroff and Simran Mishrikoti, and also the bad man of Bollywood, Gulshan Grover.

Mohammadpur is scheduled to visit China to hold talks with a number of Chinese companies to screen the film in the country.

"The Devil's Daughter" is Mohammadpur's second film being shot in India. He made the first, "Salam Mumbai", in the country in 2015.



This combination photo shows Indian singers Sonu Nigam (L) and Arijit Singh.

Germany, Iran discuss expansion of ties on Fajr theater festival



The first secretary and director of the Cultural Section of the German Embassy, Justus Kemper (R), meets the organizers of the Fajr International Theater Festival in Tehran on July 11, 2018.

A R T **TEHRAN** — The expansion of relations at the Fajr International Theater Festival was discussed in a meeting between the organizers and the first secretary and director of the Cultural Section of the German Embassy, Justus Kemper, in Tehran on Wednesday.

The director of Iran's Dramatic Arts Center, Shahram Karami, and the secretary of the 37th Fajr International Theater Festival, Nader Borhani Marand, attended the meeting, the center announced in a press release on Thursday.

Kemper asked if Iran would have difficulties in organizing the festival due to its current economic climate.

"There are economic troubles at all levels in the country, but it doesn't mean we are unable to host great works," Borhani Marand said.

"We prefer works of high quality and

appropriate to our culture," he noted and expressed his hope that the foreign embassies in Tehran would encourage great troupes to participate in the festival, which will take place in Tehran during January 2019.

"We don't have any concern about the country's economic and political problems," noted Karami.

"We have learned how to deal with this situation and despite current conditions, I hope we will organize a great festival," he added.

Kemper pointed to those German troupes that have participated in the Fajr festival since 2014 when he began his mission in Tehran and expressed his hope that more of the various theatrical troupes from Germany could attend the festival, which is organized every year to celebrate the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

Austrian, Iranian cultural officials meet in Tehran



The director of the cultural section of the Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria, Teresa Indjein (L), and the Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, meet in Tehran on July 11, 2018.

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, the director of the cultural section of the Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria, Teresa Indjein, met in Tehran on Wednesday.

The expansion of cultural relations in fields such as cinema, theater and music was discussed at the meeting, the ministry announced in a press release published on Thursday.

Salehi said that there are numerous fields for cooperation between the two countries.

"Over the past decades, the Embassy of Iran in Austria and the Austrian Cultural Forum in Tehran have made great efforts to promote bilateral cultural relations

and we would like to keep these relations going," the minister said.

Salehi next emphasized the need for developing bilateral ties on cinema, theater, music and religious dialogues to help give a real image of Islam in the world.

Indjein also said that the Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria is very active in cultural fields and performs about 6 to 7 thousand cultural projects across the world each year.

She added that cooperation with other nations is one of Austria's main priorities and noted that her country mostly would like to collaborate with creative youth in Iran.

She next gave a report on cultural activities in Austria.

Locarno festival to screen "Women with Gunpowder Earrings"

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Reza Farahmand's "Women with Gunpowder Earrings" will be screened at the 71st Locarno International Film Festival, which is scheduled to be held the Swiss city from August 1 to 11.

The film will be competing with six other documentaries at the Semaine de la critique section, the organizers have announced.

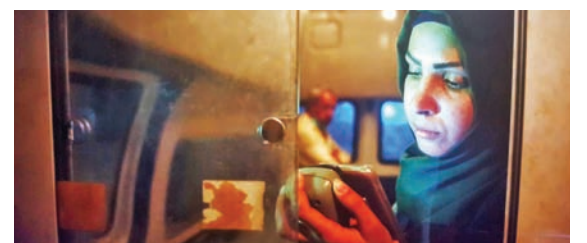
The film is about Nur, a female journalist who covers

stories about Syrian and Iraqi women and children in the war against the ISIS terrorists.

Other documentaries are coming from Canada, France, Germany, Slovenia, Hungary and Argentina.

Founded in 1990, the Semaine de la critique is an independent section within the Locarno festival organized by the Swiss Association of Film Journalists.

The section focuses on innovative films on the periphery of the mainstream — both formally and content wise.



A scene from "Women with Gunpowder Earrings" by Reza Farahmand

Blockbusters in Alaska set to close; 1 store left in U.S.

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Alaska's last two Blockbuster video stores are calling it quits, leaving just one store open in the U.S.

The stores in Anchorage and Fairbanks will close for rentals after Sunday night and reopen Tuesday for video liquidation sales through the end of August, said Kevin Daymude, general manager of Blockbuster Alaska.

"It's going to be crazy," Daymude said of the temporary reopening. He said residents were sad when they heard the news and many people have been reminiscing about their Blockbuster memories.

The news was announced to Alaskans on Blockbuster Alaska's Facebook page.

The closures come just two months after the host of HBO's "Last Week Tonight with John Oliver" sent a jockstrap worn by Russell Crowe in the 2005 movie

"Cinderella Man" and other items to the Anchorage store, which displayed it in an effort to ramp up business.

Daymude says the buzz from the Oliver connection brought more people to the store.

"You would not believe how much business we got just from that memorabilia alone," he said. "I can't thank John Oliver or his show enough."

But it wasn't enough to counter a planned lease increase at both Alaska locations.

The jockstrap will probably go to the franchise owner, Alan Payne, who lives outside Austin, Texas.

A request for comment from HBO was not immediately returned.

In its heyday, Blockbuster had 15 stores in Alaska, Daymude said. Some stores in more remote, less populated parts of the state began closing in the early 2000s.

"Mission: Impossible – Fallout" premieres in Paris

PARIS (Reuters) — The sixth installment of spy movie franchise "Mission: Impossible", which sees actor Tom Cruise leap from a military plane 25,000 feet above Paris, premiered on Thursday in the French capital.

"Mission: Impossible – Fallout" tells the story of a mission gone wrong. Agent Ethan Hunt, played by Cruise, is hunted by assassins and former allies as he races against time to prevent a terrorist organization from provoking a global catastrophe.

Cruise, who is known for doing his own stunts, also races a motorbike helmet-less through oncoming traffic round Paris' Arc de Triomphe and pilots a helicopter through mountain ravines in Kashmir.

Hundreds of fans queued for hours to see the actor arrive at a movie theater close to the Eiffel Tower.

"I have been attending Cruise's premieres for the past six years and it still has the same

effect; I am just as happy," fan Julia Margot told Reuters.

Cruise told reporters that filming in the city had often been difficult.

"It is always a challenge but I am never afraid," he said. "I chose to shoot in Paris because it is so beautiful, it is a city of cinema."

Rebecca Ferguson, returning as Hunt's love interest — a government agent sent to track his enemies down — said she was happy women were involved in the action.

"We shouldn't bring women in films just to create an equality ... women need to be there," she said.

The film, directed by Christopher McQuarrie, will be released in movie theaters worldwide from July 25th.

The first five "Mission: Impossible" movies have raked in \$2.8 billion at the box office, according to Box Office Mojo, putting it in the top 20 movie franchises of all time.