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President Donald Trump (L) and Russian President Vladimir Putin sit next to each other before their meeting on Monday, 16 July 2018.

General Baqeri urges Iran, Pakistan to jointly establish regional peace

POLITICS TEHRAN — Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Mohammad Baqeri said on Monday that Iran and Pakistan are duty bound to take actions in line with establishing regional peace and security. Baqeri, who is on three-day tour of Pakistan, told IRIB that the U.S. is the leader of the countries which seek to

weaken security in the region. The general described Pakistan as one of the most important neighbors to Iran and called for expansion of military relations between the two countries. This is the first visit by the chief of staff of the Iranian Armed Forces to Pakistan over the past 40 years. The trip was made upon an invitation by Pakistan's Army Chief Qamar Javed Bajwa.

Iran warns OPEC, Saudi on violating output-cap agreement

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian oil minister has written separate letters to OPEC President Suhail Al Mazrouei and his Saudi Arabian counterpart warning about the consequences of raising oil production above the allowed targets.

Addressing Al Mazrouei, Zanganeh warned that any violation of OPEC's oil production ceiling will hurt the effectiveness of the organization, Shana news

agency reported on Monday. Urging strict adherence to the agreed caps, the Iranian minister noted that some member countries have produced "far above" their original commitment in June and violated the agreement. Zanganeh further stressed the role of the Joint OPEC-Non-OPEC Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC), saying that JMMC should monitor and report the conformity level of the members. →4

Analysts Network suggest turning to oil products to fight sanctions

POLITICS TEHRAN — In a letter to President Hassan Rouhani on Monday, the Resistance Economy Analysts Network has suggested that selling petroleum products instead of crude oil is an important measure to counter the impact of anti-Iran sanctions, Mehr reported.

It also said since bypassing sanctions during the Ahmadinejad administration led to corruption and lifting sanctions

under the 2015 nuclear agreement under the current administration did not produce the desired results, the government must attempt to neutralize sanctions, increase the costs of imposing sanctions and reduce vulnerability of Iran's economy. The network suggested that since oil as the main source of national income is the main target of sanctions it is necessary to immediately take steps to cut reliance on crude oil sale.

ARTICLE
Syed Zafar Mehdi
Journalist
from New Delhi

The curious case of Afghanistan-Pakistan shaky relationship

A few weeks ago, at an event in Kabul, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani remarked that an agreement had been reached with Pakistan on rooting out terrorism and extremism in the region. The announcement, after a flurry of accusations and counter-accusations in recent years, brought cheer to many peacekeepers who have grown weary of war, death and destruction.

The issue of Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan, Ghani said, needs to be resolved between the two estranged neighbors for bilateral relations to improve, by which he essentially meant that Islamabad must stop differentiating between 'good' and 'bad' terrorists. Unlike in the past, Ghani stated, the two countries had this time agreed 'in writing' to find a common ground.

Last week, speaking at Atlantic Council on the sidelines of NATO Summit in Brussels, Ghani reiterated that a consensus was emerging in the region and Afghanistan had made some progress with Pakistan. "On paper, we have had a very significant movement with Pakistan," he said, expressing hope that it will translate into action. Afghanistan's relationship with Pakistan, the economist-turned-politician said, has been one-dimensional, where everything has been shadowed by their relationship with the Taliban.

Ghani, who succeeded Hamid Karzai as the president of Afghanistan in 2014 through a power-sharing deal brokered by Washington, has not found the going easy. It is always difficult to be heading a fledgling government, which is beset by problems of deteriorating security, political infighting, rampant corruption and rising unemployment. Under the Ghani-led coalition government, Afghanistan has seen some of the worst terror attacks. And, the dance of death continues.

According to a latest report by United Nations, civilian casualties in Afghanistan in the first half of 2018 rose by one percent to 1,692, mostly caused by ground attacks and suicide bombings. Barely a few hours after the report was released, a suicide bomber killed at least 10 people outside the Education Ministry in Kabul, underlining the unpredictability of life and death in the war-ravaged country. →6

Iran is one of most important countries in human history: Adib-Moghaddam

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, Chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute, believes that Iran is one of the most important countries in human history.

Professor in Global Thought and Comparative Philosophies also says, "There is something enticing about Persia, in many ways it is unique in terms of civilizational complexity."

Here is the full text of the interview:

■ How much do western scholars know about Iranian culture and civilization?

A: I think the "western" scholar has faded away a long time ago. Knowing Iran or trying to capture some truths about the country doesn't have much to do with location, social and/or national background. Any person can study



and understand Iran if he or she equips herself with the knowledge to do so. In academia, in the universities all over the world, including in many universities in North America and Western Europe, there are scholars who have excellent knowledge about Iran. In Western Europe in particular, there is still the freedom to think critically about everything in the world, including Iran,

without censorship by the state. Indeed, it is this context which explains that some of the better scholarship about Iran is produced outside of the country. There is a long history in Iran of such "exile" scholarship, not least because of the psycho-nationalist suppression of academic freedoms by successive Iranian states. Don't forget that the biggest philosophers and poets in world history, from Ibn Sina, Ibn Arabi to Mowlana, roamed around because they were persecuted.

■ Why is Iranian studies important for the west?

A: Iran is one of the most important countries in human history. There is something enticing about Persia, in many ways it is unique in terms of civilizational complexity. The idea of Iran or Persia has been around since the beginning of history, so there are ancient archives about the country. →7

U.S. has no ethical right to impose sanctions on any country: Nicaraguan amb.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Maryam Khormaei

TEHRAN — Nicaraguan Ambassador to Tehran accused U.S. of human rights double standards and said the ultimate goal of imperialist is not regime change anymore but the total destruction of social and economic infrastructure by civil unrest.

Once a popular tourist destination in Central America, Nicaragua is struggling for peace after months of deadly violence familiar to countries in America's backyard. In an exclusive interview, Mr. Antonio Barquero Baltadano Nicaraguan ambassador to Iran discussed a host of issues with

Tehran Times and Mehr News correspondent including the chaos in Nicaragua, the reason behind the popularity and even recent failure of some socialist governments as well as Tehran-Managua bilateral relations.

■ The recent protests in Nicaragua were triggered by President Daniel Ortega's decree of social security reforms. Why is the unrest growing and spreading so fast? Let me put the question this way: what does help the opposition to fuel the unrest?

A: First of all let's say that Nicaragua needed a change in the social security. The finance in this sector wasn't that good. This is something

happening for many years even before President Ortega came into office. So President Ortega was the only one who thought of solving the problem. It was also something that international organisms such as International Monetary Fund and World Bank were constantly insisting that it should be solved. So President Ortega government was the only government which tried to solve this financial problem of the social security institution of Nicaragua. He issued a decree giving different options to solve it. In the decree, it is clearly stated that the employers were to pay more social security portion for every employee they hire. But they started the protest against it. →7

ARTICLE
Batool Subeiti
Journalist
from London

Together against Trump and his dangerous policies

Tens of thousands of demonstrators poured into the streets of London on Friday to protest against the visiting 'megalomaniac' president of the United States. Holding placards and chanting slogans, the protestors called Donald Trump a "complete idiot" who does not understand how the world works. More than 100,000 protestors from all walks of life joined the 'Together against Trump' march, which left the U.S. president and his coterie of aides hugely embarrassed.

America's interventionist foreign policy, hegemonic ambitions, anti-immigrant policies, blatant war mongering and saber-rattling is no secret. But, under Trump, the U.S. has touched a new low, with some foolhardy, incoherent and delusional decisions taken by the 'madman' in White House.

A swarm of people who paraded through the streets of central London on Friday sought to convey a strong and clear message to Trump that his shallow, myopic and xenophobic worldview was not going to win him or his country any friends.

It is important to note that Trump's erratic actions and bizarre policy decisions stem from the environment of hostility, hatred and fear that has been fostered and institutionalized in the U.S. over the years. It is not only detrimental to the world order but to his own country as well.

His eccentric and bizarre actions include separating families due to the 'zero tolerance' immigration policy and locking children up in prisons, recognising Jerusalem as the capital of the Zionist regime in hopes to crush the Palestinian nation's spirit of resistance; imposing a blanket travel ban on citizens from several Muslim countries due to his deep hatred for Islam (which stems from the realization that the threat Islam, practised in its truest form, poses to fulfilling his aggressive policies and interests).

He decided to withdraw from the Paris agreement on climate change, even though an average American consumes almost seven times the average world's energy consumption per capita (all coming from major fossil sources). →7



Saudi jets target wedding ceremony in Yemen

A wedding ceremony in Yemen's is targeted by Saudi airstrikes as the kingdom continues with its relentless war on the impoverished country.

According to Yemen's al-Masirah television network, the Saudi-led coalition has conducted five airstrikes on Salif district and the island of Kamaran of Hudaydah Province on Monday.

Saudi warplanes have also bombed Baqim district in the northern Province of Sa'ada but there were no immediate reports of possible casualties.

The Yemeni Ministry of Human Rights announced in a statement on March 25 that the Saudi war had left 600,000 civilians dead and injured until then. →13

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Rouhani's message delivered to Aoun

POLITICS TEHRAN — A message from President Hassan Rouhani was delivered to his Lebanese counterpart Michel Aoun on Monday.

The message was delivered by Hossein Jaber Ansari, a senior assistant to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who met with President Aoun on Monday.

It contained information on the new developments surrounding the Iran nuclear deal following the U.S. exit from the internationally-endorsed agreement, IRNA reported, quoting a senior official.

Lebanon has repeatedly voiced support for Tehran's peaceful nuclear program and has explicitly opposed U.S. withdrawal from the deal.



Industry Ministry men summoned over car import violations

POLITICS TEHRAN — Judiciary Chief Sadeq Amoli Larjani said on Monday that some officials from the Industry Ministry have been detained, summoned or barred from leaving the country due to issues concerning violations in import of cars.

Larjani said investigation is still ongoing with regard to car import violations, and that CEOs of some car import companies have been summoned for clarification on the cases.

He also called on all three branches of government as well as other state bodies to double efforts in fighting corruption, especially in cases of gold coin market and car and cellphone imports.



Tehran, Damascus discuss Syrian Constitutional Committee

POLITICS TEHRAN — Hossein Jaber Ansari, a senior assistant to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, held talks with Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem in Damascus on Sunday.

Jaber Ansari and Muallem discussed the latest political developments as well as issues related to the Syrian Constitutional Committee, according to the Foreign Ministry website.

They also talked about an upcoming meeting which is due to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, between the three guarantor states of the Syria truce and the UN special envoy for Syria as well as the tenth round of the Astana talks in the Russian city of Sochi.



'IAEA inspections in universities undermine Iran's independence'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Islamic Society of Students Secretary General Hossein Akhgarpour has said inspection of Iran's scientific centers and universities by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would undermine the country's independence and national identity.

Speaking to Fars on Monday, Akhgarpour said universities are a source of honor for the country and that the enemies should not be allowed to visit them.

He also warned that should the country's authorities do not prevent such events, "revolutionary students would fire at will" and stand up to the presence of IAEA inspectors in the universities.



EU, China reaffirm commitment to Iran deal

POLITICS TEHRAN — The European Union (EU) and China issued a joint statement reaffirming their commitment to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the Iran nuclear deal which was struck back in 2015, according to the EU website.

The statement was released after meeting of European Council President Donald Tusk, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang in Beijing on Monday.

In the statement, both sides recalled that the JCPOA is a "key element of the global non-proliferation architecture and a significant diplomatic achievement endorsed unanimously by the UN Security Council in its Resolution 2231."



U.S. says oil buyers may get Iran sanctions waivers

POLITICS TEHRAN — U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Washington will consider waivers for countries that need more time to wind down their oil imports from Iran as the U.S. reimposes sanctions.

"We want people to reduce oil purchases to zero, but in certain cases if people can't do that overnight, we'll consider exceptions," Mnuchin said on Friday, CNBC reported.

The Trump administration is pushing countries to cut all imports of Iranian oil from November when the U.S. reimposes sanctions against Tehran, after Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal agreed between Iran and six major powers.

Leader says 'deal of century' won't come true



POLITICS TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Monday that "deal of the century" for the Palestinian territories will not come true.

According to an Israeli intelligence website, U.S. President Donald Trump has proposed to establish a Palestinian state with limited sovereignty over around half of the West Bank and Abu Dis as its capital.

The Leader said this "devil policy" is doomed to failure.

"The Americans have named their devil policy on Palestine 'the deal of the century' but they should know that, by divine grace, this 'deal of the century' will never materialize," Ayatollah Khamenei said during a meeting with organizers and officials of the Hajj Organization.

"To the dismay of the enemies, the Palestinian issue will not be forgotten and al-Quds will remain the Palestinian capital," the Leader said, according to Press TV.

Ayatollah Khamenei said the Palestinians will stand against this policy and all the Muslims will support them.

The Leader added though certain Muslim governments, which do not believe in Islam and have become "ready-to-die followers

of the Americans out of foolishness", the Islamic Ummah including the Palestinians will win over the enemies and will "see that day when the fake Zionist regime" will vanish.

He also described "unity" as the most essential need of the world of Islam, saying

the coming Hajj season should become an occasion to consolidate unity among Muslims.

Noting that Hajj is a symbol of "spirituality and politics", Ayatollah Khamenei said, "A real Hajj is the one that includes the disavowal of the infidels on the one hand and paving the ground for unity and

empathy among Muslims on the other." He added that Kaaba, Great Mosque of Mecca and Al-Masjid an-Nabawi belong to all Muslims and not just to those who are ruling that country.

Leader urges establishment of 'fact-finding committee' to probe Mina incident

Ayatollah Khamenei also pointed to the Mina incident and said that the issue must be investigated and the victims' rights should be restored.

In the stampede in Mina on September 24, 2015, 464 Iranian pilgrims lost their lives. The incident happened as families were preparing to receive their dear ones after a month.

"This issue must not be forgotten. And responsible bodies should follow this issue through different ways especially international bodies."

The Leader suggested the establishment of a "fact-finding committee" with the involvement of Iran to cast light on the core of the issue because Saudi Arabia as a country responsible for the "safety and security" of the pilgrims did not do its duties and even did not "blood money" to the families of victims.

Trump likely to call Tehran asking for negotiations: Foreign Ministry

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Islamic Republic on Monday refused the prospect of any talks with the United States, suggesting President Donald Trump could possibly in the future decide to call Tehran for talks.

The remarks by Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi came after Trump last week said that with the United States increasing sanctions on Iran, "at a certain point they're going to call me and say 'let's make a deal,' and we'll make a deal."

Speaking at a weekly press conference, Qassemi said: "I do not know if he (Trump) was serious or just joking, but there is the possibility maybe that someday he calls Tehran and asks for negotiations. I think this would be more likely and there have been signs to that in the past. It depends who they will call."

"The behavior of America and the Trump administration from the beginning of his tenure

has been inimical toward the Islamic Republic of Iran, just like in the past, maybe even with some extra force. And such inimical behavior is still witnessed in various forms," Qassemi said, underlining that Iran finds no grounds for talks with Washington.

On Trump's threats to prevent Iran's oil sale, the spokesman said: "Trump has spoken a lot, and speaks a lot, and has a lot of fantasies and dreams a lot of dreams. But this claim, or this effort, to halt Iran's oil exports or to reduce it to zero, is bragging and impractical. Past experience has on many occasions in fact proven this that such a thing is not possible in the world today."

'We don't have any message for Trump via Mr. Putin'

Elsewhere in his statements, Qassemi rejected speculation that Iran has taken Russian President Vladimir Putin as mediator to carry messages to Israel in last week's separate

meetings of representatives of the two sides with the Russian leader.

"We don't have any message for Trump via Mr. Putin. If anywhere or on any occasion there has been talks or something has been written and conveyed, it think it is speculation. The meeting between Mr. Putin and Mr. Trump had been previously arranged and they have issues or their own; and we have not had relations with the Russian government on that topic."

On how Tehran will pursue the future of the nuclear deal with European signatories, he said, "We surely cannot predicate our economy and our country and the government of our country on the decisions of the remaining parties to the JCPOA. Ultimately time was given to work more on this package so that they could through their efforts meet Iran's expectations. We are looking forward to the coming days and the coming weeks to being

able to see a package or some proposals that could satisfy Iran in all of the fields that we discussed during the negotiations and which matter to us. Hoping we could arrive at a fair mutual understanding."

Qassemi also lashed out at anti-Iran media barrage, saying, "The heavy barrage of a psychological war against the Islamic Republic of Iran is well underway which is performed in various forms. We should be aware of this inimical and targeted policy of America, alongside the Zionist regime and some inimical regional countries. If we want to make a list of false reports and accusations during even this past month, I think there will be a lengthy list which is in the end baseless and ... aimed at weakening the Islamic Republic of Iran and creating schism in Iran's relations with other countries. We are quite vigilant to use the tools we have to lay waste the plans they are following."

Holding talks with U.S. not expedient: Nateq Nouri



POLITICS TEHRAN — Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri, a member of the Expediency Council, has said that under the current situation holding talks with the U.S. is neither "practical" nor "expedient".

"We should trust the Leader of the Revolution's wisdom to pass the (sanctions) crisis," Mehr news agency quoted Nateq Nouri as saying on Monday.

The remarks by the veteran politician comes as the U.S. has unilaterally withdrawn from the international nuclear agreement and snapped back sanctions against Iran.

Nateq Nouri, the former parliament speaker who ran for the post of president in 1997, said through unity and "trust" on the Leader's "prudence" Iran will succeed

to counter challenges facing the country. He noted that Iran has great capacities to counter the sanctions.

Last month about 100 political and civil rights activists signed an open letter calling for direct talks between Iran and the U.S. without any "preconditions".

The letter drew widespread criticism from across the political spectrum, with dozens saying U.S. President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal shows his untrustworthiness.

Government spokesman Mohammad Baqer Nobakht dismissed the possibility of talks with U.S., saying, "The letter showed lack of political wisdom... We must stand and resist... Our stance is right and we should stand united."

Iran files complaint against U.S. over sanctions



POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday that Iran has filed a complaint at the International Court of Justice against the U.S. over re-imposition of unilateral sanctions.

"Today Iran filed a complaint @ CIJ_ICJ to hold U.S. accountable for its unlawful re-imposition of unilateral sanctions. Iran is committed to the rule of law in the face of U.S. contempt for diplomacy & legal obligations. It's imperative to counter its habit of violating int'l law," Zarif tweeted.

U.S. President Donald Trump announced Washington's exit from the 2015 nuclear deal on May 8 and said

sanctions will be restored against Iran.

According to the U.S. Treasury, the first stage of sanctions will be snapped back in August and the second stage in November.

Trump has asked countries to cut their oil imports from Iran by November. Under the nuclear agreement approved by the UN Security Council, Iran is obliged to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of sanctions.

The entire world, excluding despots in Saudi Arabia and the UAE along with extremists in Israel, has expressed an unequivocal support for the preservation of the nuclear agreement without the U.S.

Iranian politician says 'egoistic' Trump is threat to future of the world

'U.S. not trustworthy to negotiate with'



Kharrazi, who served as Iran's foreign minister from 1997 to 2005.

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's experience shows that the U.S. is not committed to documents it signs, head of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations said on Monday, stressing that it is absolutely impossible that Iran negotiate with the U.S.

"Iran negotiated with the U.S. twice: On the Afghanistan and nuclear issues. In both, the U.S. was disloyal to its commitments," said Kamal Kharrazi in an interview with IRNA, while in Beijing to participate in the 7th World Peace Forum.

Kharrazi said solving regional issues doesn't require U.S. interference, suggesting that foreigners should stop interfering and let the main actors in the region to solve the problems.

If the regional countries get close to the U.S., the direction of the issues will change and their interests will be jeopardized, said

He also said the main actors of the region are Iran, Iraq, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and these countries should decide about regional problems, including the spread of terrorism. There is no need for American interference, he repeated.

The former senior diplomat further said U.S. President Donald Trump is a threat for the future of the world.

"The world is confused how to deal with Trump. He has disrupted everything. He makes new decisions egotistically," he remarked.

On the 7th World Peace Forum, Kharrazi said, "Countries presented some solutions for fighting terrorism. A lot was said on Syria and the Middle East."

He went on to say that a lot of extremist groups in the Middle East are rooted in Wahhabism, which is promoted by Saudi Arabia.

"The world is confused how to deal with Trump," Kharrazi, the former chief diplomat, notes.

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One-on-one meeting with Putin a 'good start': Trump

By staff & agencies

U.S. President Donald Trump described his one-on-one meeting with Russia's Vladimir Putin as a "good start" Monday.

Trump made the brief remarks in front of reporters, at a conference table surrounded by top officials at the start of a "working lunch" that began after he and Putin met behind closed doors for two hours with only their interpreters.

Both leaders made public remarks with translators before entering a private discussion. Trump repeatedly expressed optimism the talks would yield positive results.

"I think we have great opportunities together as two countries that, frankly, have not been getting along very well for the last number of years," Trump said, later adding, "I think we will end up having an extraordinary relationship."

While Trump outlined several topics that he hoped the pair would discuss, he did not bring up Russia's interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. America's intelligence agencies have all concluded Putin's government conducted a hacking and social media campaign designed to boost Trump and hurt his opponent, Democrat Hillary Clinton. On Friday, the Department of Justice announced indictments against 12 officers in Putin's intelligence services and accused them of involvement in the campaign cyberattacks. Putin has denied Russia attempted to interfere in the U.S. election.

Putin was about an hour late to the meeting. The pair stood next to each other for photos before sitting in adjacent chairs. They did not shake hands at the outset of their public remarks.

The Russian president spoke first and his comments were far briefer than Trump's. He declared, "The time has come to talk in a substantive way."

In the hours leading up to the meeting, Trump sent a pair of tweets criticizing the U.S. investigation into Russian interference in the election as a "Rigged Witch Hunt." A team led by special counsel Robert Mueller is conducting the investigation that filed the charges last week against the Russian intelligence officers. Mueller's probe has also led to charges against multiple former members of Trump's campaign, and investigators are looking into whether anyone on the president's team worked with the Russians.

Trump has vehemently denied anyone in his orbit colluded with the Russians. In his first tweet on Monday, Trump criticized his predecessor, President Barack Obama, for not doing more in 2016 to address initial reports of Russian interference. Trump also pointed to the involvement of Peter Strzok, an FBI agent who was found to have expressed anti-Trump sentiment in private during the election, as proof the probe is biased and "rigged" against him.

"President Obama thought that Crooked Hillary was going to win the election, so when he was informed by the FBI about Russian meddling, he said it couldn't happen, was no big deal, & did NOTHING about it. When I won it became a big deal and the Rigged Witch Hunt headed by Strzok!" Trump wrote.

Trump went on to claim the Mueller probe was part of a pattern of "stupidity" that hurt U.S. relations with Russia.

"Our relationship with Russia has NEVER been worse thanks to many years of U.S. foolishness and stupidity and now, the Rigged Witch Hunt!" said Trump.



Russia's foreign ministry later took to Twitter to tout Trump's message. "We agree," it said.

Sitting next to Putin in Helsinki, Trump started his remarks by congratulating the Russian president on the World Cup. This year, Russia hosted the quadrennial soccer tournament, which France won on Sunday.

"First of all, Mr. President, I'd like to congratulate you on a really great World Cup, one of the best ever from what everybody tells me, one of the best ever. And also, for your team itself doing so well," Trump said to Putin.

"I watched quite a bit — in the United States we call it soccer — and I watched quite a bit of it and I watched the entire final and the semifinals," said Trump. "They were really spectacular games, but it was beautifully done, so congratulations on that."

Trump outlined a series of topics he hoped to discuss with Putin. "Most importantly, we have a lot of good things to talk about. ... We have discussions on everything from trade, to military, to missiles, to nuclear, to China. ... We'll be talking a little bit about China, our mutual friend President Xi," Trump said.

Trump went on to express his hope the pair would "end up having an extraordinary relationship." The president noted that he has repeatedly said he'd like to improve relations with Russia.

"I've been saying — and I'm sure you've heard over the years — and as I campaigned, that getting along with Russia is a good thing, not a bad thing," said Trump.

Trump's past comments praising Putin and calling for improved ties to Russia have been widely scrutinized in light of the cyberattacks during the election.

The American president also said he'd like to "do something" about the two countries' nuclear arsenals.

"I really think the world wants to see us get along. We are the two great nuclear powers. We have 90 percent of the nuclear [weapons], and that's not a good thing. It's a bad thing," Trump said. "I think we hopefully can do something about that because it's not a positive force. It's a negative force. So, we'll be talking about that among other things."

While Trump spoke, Putin slouched in his chair and watched his American counterpart with his head leaning on one hand. As Trump concluded his remarks, the pair turned towards each other and shook hands.

"And with that, the world awaits and I look forward to our personal discussion, which I think begins now," Trump said, adding, "We all have a lot of questions and hopefully we'll come up with answers. Most importantly, it's great to be with you."

Reporters were ushered out of the room after the pair of presidents made their opening remarks. Before they left, one reporter shouted a question about Russia's involvement in the U.S. election. Trump and Putin did not respond, but according to the White House press pool, the Russian president "appeared to smirk" when he heard the question.

Trump and Putin were originally scheduled to talk for an hour and a half, including time spent alone with their translators and meetings with staff. After those meetings, the American and Russian groups participated in a working lunch with both presidents. According to Russian officials, the meetings before the meal lasted two hours and ten minutes. The White House would not confirm this figure. As they sat down to eat, Trump responded to a reporter's shouted question asking how he felt about the talks.

"I think it's a good start. Very, very good start for everybody," Trump said.

U.S. State Department in talks with Turkey to sell Patriot system

The U.S. State Department is negotiating a potential deal to sell Turkey the Raytheon Co Patriot missile defense system as an alternative to the Russian-made S-400 system Turkey has agreed to purchase, an official said on Monday.

U.S. Ambassador Kaidanow, the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs, told reporters that a delegation of U.S. government officials at the Farnborough Airshow was holding meetings with allies in the hopes of bolstering U.S. defense trade.

She said the U.S. State Department was in talks with Turkey and "trying to give the Turks an understanding of what we can do with respect to Patriot." She did not say if the delegations were meeting at the air show.

Turkey has attracted criticism from NATO allies over its planned purchase of the S-400 missile defense systems from

Russia, which could jeopardize Ankara's purchase of Lockheed Martin made F-35 Joint Strike Fighter jets.

"Ultimately we are concerned that by purchasing these systems from the Russians it will be supportive of some of the least good behavior that we have seen from them (Russia) in various places including Europe but also elsewhere," Kaidanow said.

She said Washington wanted to ensure that systems acquired by U.S. allies "remain supportive of the strategic relationship between us and our allies, in the case of Turkey that is Patriots."

In April, the Trump administration rolled out a long-awaited overhaul of U.S. arms export policy aimed at expanding sales to allies, saying it would bolster the American defense industry and create jobs at home.

(Source: Reuters)

Italy's Salvini calls for Russia sanctions to be lifted by year end

Italy's far-right Interior Minister Matteo Salvini said during a visit to Moscow on Monday that he wanted to see EU sanctions against Russia dropped "by the end of the year."

Salvini said he would use any means possible to convince European partners to scrap sanctions brought in over Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and subsequent activity in the east of Ukraine.

"Vetoes are only a last resort but I am not excluding anything," he told a press conference. "Italy is the European country that has suffered the most from these sanctions against Russia."

He said he wanted to create opportunities for small- and medium-sized businesses in the two countries to work together.

Russia banned most food imports from the EU in 2014 as a counter-measure to the Ukraine sanctions.

Salvini also said Russia's return to the G7 would be "absolutely legitimate". U.S.

President Donald Trump made a similar suggestion last month.

Italy's new Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said in June that his government favored a "revision" of economic sanctions against Russia. Salvini on Monday met representatives of the state Council for Russian National Security. They discussed opportunities for cooperation between Italy and Russia including in "the fight against Islamic terrorism" as well as illegal immigration.

The day before the Italian minister attended the World Cup final in Moscow.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban was also in Russia for the game, and denounced EU sanctions during a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Salvini said the Italian prime minister would travel to Russia to meet Putin "in the second half of October".

(Source: AFP)

Cuba to begin recognizing private property

Cuba will officially recognize private property, something it has long rejected as a vestige of capitalism, under a new constitution that also creates the position of prime minister alongside the president, state media reported. Cuba's current constitution recognizes state, cooperative, farmer, personal and joint venture property. But former President Raul Castro's market reforms, aimed at trying to boost the economy and make Cuban socialism more sustainable, have prompted Cubans to become self-employed since 2010, in new privately owned businesses ranging from restaurants to beauty salons.

Ruling Communist Party newspaper Granma published a summary of the new constitution Saturday, saying a draft it had seen included 224 articles, up from 137 previously.

Details were not immediately available, and Reuters did not see the draft. But Granma said it enshrined recognition of both the free market and private property in Cuba's new Magna Carta. That could mean enhanced legal protections for Cuba's entrepreneurs and foreign investors, even though Granma said the constitution reaffirmed that central planning and state enterprise are the pillars of the economy overall. It also noted the Communist Party would remain as Cuba's dominant political force. Cuba expert Luis Carlos Battista at the Washington-based Center for Democracy in the Americas cautioned that the acknowledgement of private



property did not mean the government wanted to give private enterprise a greater role.

Earlier this week, he noted, the government published a set of regulations tightening control on the self-employed and hiking possible fines to include property confiscation.

According to Granma, the government commission revamping the constitution will present its draft to the national assembly. It will then be put to a national referendum, expected later this year.

(Source: AP)

Over 400 items found in UK nerve agent poison probe



British police said that search teams have found over 400 items as part of the investigation into the poisoning of two Britons by the nerve agent Novichok — but searches will likely take many more weeks as officers seek further evidence.

Metropolitan Police announced a breakthrough in the case Friday when they said they had found a small bottle believed to be the source of the nerve agent that killed Dawn Sturgess and sickened Charlie Rowley. The bottle was found at Rowley's home in Amesbury, a southwestern town not far from Salisbury, where British authorities say Russian ex-spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia were poisoned with Novichok in March.

Britain blames the Russian government for the March attack, an accusation the Kremlin has denied. The case prompted Western nations including the United States and Britain to expel scores of Russian diplomats and for Russia to retaliate with similar expulsions.

Police are trying to figure out whether the substance in the bottle — confirmed by scientists as Novichok — came from the same batch used in the attack against the Skripals. They're also looking into where the bottle came from and how it got into Rowley's house.

"It is not an exaggeration to say that the search process linked with both this and the Salisbury investigation has been one of the most complex and difficult that U.K. policing has ever faced," said Assistant Police Commissioner Neil Basu, Britain's top counter-terrorism officer.

The force said, in total, search teams recovered over 400 "exhibits, samples and items" linked to the investigation into the poisoning of Sturgess and Rowley. It said a "significant number" of the items are potentially contaminated and have been sent to laboratories for analysis.

Sturgess, 44, and Rowley, 45, were sickened on June 30. Sturgess died in a hospital on July 8. Rowley was in critical condition for more than a week, but has regained consciousness.

Police said earlier they suspected the pair had handled a container contaminated with Novichok and had no reason to think they were targeted deliberately.

In a statement detailing the difficulties police face over the probe, Basu said each search has to be meticulously planned to ensure that traces of the deadly agent don't get leaked out. Protective suits for each officer take 40 minutes to put on and take off, and they can only work in short bursts because of heat and exhaustion.

"Not only are we trying to solve an extremely serious crime that has been committed, but we're also working to identify any potential outstanding risks to the public; all whilst ensuring that all those involved in the search process are not themselves exposed to any risk of contamination," he said.

Officials say Novichok, produced by the Soviet Union during the Cold War, could remain active for 50 years if kept in a sealed container.

The Skripals survived and were released from a Salisbury hospital before Rowley and Sturgess were poisoned and taken there. British authorities have taken the Skripals to a secret protected location for their safety.

(Source: AP)

China, EU reaffirm Paris climate commitment, vow more cooperation

China and the European Union Monday reaffirmed their commitment to the Paris climate change pact and called other signatories to do the same, saying action against rising global temperatures had become more important than ever.

Following President Donald Trump's decision last year to withdraw the United States from the agreement, China and the European Union have emerged as the biggest champions of the 2015 accord, which aims to keep global temperature increases to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius.

In a joint communique on Monday, the two sides stopped short of criticizing the United States, but said the deal proved that "multilateralism can succeed in building fair and effective solutions to the most critical global problems of our time."

The two sides said they remained committed to creating a mechanism to transfer \$100 billion a year from richer to poorer nations to help them adapt to climate change. The fund has been a major bone of contention for the United States.

They also promised to work closely together to promote an effective solution to the problem of aviation and shipping emissions, and consider further ways to cooperate in carbon emissions trading.

"What gets the pair together isn't just Trump - China and the EU understand the opportunities offered by a clean and climate-safe world," environmental group Greenpeace said in a statement.

(Source: Xinhua)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	108110.0
IFX	1215.41

Sources: tse.ir, ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	43,35 rials
EUR	50,659 rials
GBP	57,400 rials
AED	11,804 rials

Source: mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$69.88/b
Brent	\$73.93/b
OPEC Basket	\$72.15/b
Gold	\$1,244.20 /oz
Silver	\$15.82/oz
Platinum	\$829.50/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Iran signs MOUs with Azerbaijan, Nakhchivan on customs co-op

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The Islamic Republic of Iran **d e s k** Customs Administration (IRICA) signed memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with Azerbaijan Republic and Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic for facilitating and promoting bilateral trade.

As reported by IRNA, the MOUs were signed on Sunday in Iran's consulate general in Nakhchivan, where Head of the IRICA Forud Asgari held separate meetings with his Azeri counterpart Safar Mahdiyev and Azeri Parliament Speaker Vasif Talibov.



\$15.2b to be granted to job creation

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Some 654 trillion rials (about **d e s k** %15.2 billion) is predicted to be allocated for job creation by the end of the present Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019), Iranian Minister of Labor and Welfare Ali Rabiee announced on Monday.

"Iranian banks have signed contracts, worth 30 trillion rials (above \$697 million), with applicants for receiving facilities to create jobs in rural areas," IRNA quoted him as saying.

Iran warns OPEC, Saudi on violating output-cap agreement

1 → JMMC can't interpret OPEC's decisions
In his letter to Khalid al-Falih, Zanganeh stressed that JMMC doesn't have the right to interpret the organization's decision which was made during the 174th meeting.



He further noted that last month's OPEC supply pact does not give member countries the right to raise oil production above their targets.

"Member countries committed themselves to reach a production adjustment conformity level of 100 percent, as of July 1, 2018," Zanganeh stated.

"This decision neither warrants member countries the right to exceed their production level above the allocated production level decided, nor the right to redistribute the unfulfilled production adjustment commitments among member countries."

Global regulators set out monitoring system for crypto-assets

Global regulators have published a framework for "vigilantly" monitoring risks from crypto-assets like bitcoin BTC=BTSP and ether, even though they don't pose a major risk to financial stability for now.

The Financial Stability Board (FSB), which coordinates financial regulation for the Group of 20 Economies (G20), said the framework focuses on how risks from crypto-asset markets could spread to other parts of the financial system.

"Monitoring the size and growth of crypto-asset markets is critical to understanding the potential size of wealth effects, should valuations fall," the FSB said in a statement on Monday.

"The use of leverage, and financial institution exposures to crypto-asset markets are important metrics of transmission of crypto-asset risks to the broader financial system."
(Source: Reuters)

Major steel producers' output rises 17% in a quarter on year

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's major **d e s k** steel producers produced 4.849 million tons of crude steel during the first quarter of current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), with 17-percent growth from the figure of the same period of time in the past year, IRNA reported on Monday based on the data released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).
"Iran produces 34 million tons of steel

per year and is aimed at producing 55 million tons of the product by 2025," Industry Minister Mohammad Shariatmadari said last week.

To hit the target, Iran is in need of attracting €8 billion of investments, the minister added.

He also announced that the country exports 9 million tons of crude steel per year and plans to improve the figure up to 15 million tons by 2025.



As Iranian Deputy Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Jafar Sarqini announced in mid-June, several crude steel production projects have been specified in the country over the past five years that have 40-percent

progress at the moment.

The official said that Iran's crude steel output will reach 40 million tons per year once the mentioned projects are complete, Shata news agency reported.

201 industrial units resume activity in 3 months

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Through supportive **d e s k** measures taken by the government, some 201 industrial units that had stopped their activity resumed their operation during the first quarter of current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), Iranian deputy industry minister announced.

Sadeq Najafi, who is also the managing director of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), further said that there are 84,000 industrial and production units in the country at present, IRNA reported.

Referring to the 350 trillion-rial (about \$8.13 billion) facilities with 10-percent interest rate allocated to the small



and medium-sized entrepreneurs (SMEs), the official said these facilities should be paid to the units that can continue their activity.

Najafai also told IRNA on Sunday that 36 Iranian SMEs attracted above \$2.3 billion of foreign investments during the previous Iranian calendar year 1396 (ended on March 20, 2018).

He added that Iran has attraction of investments and modern technology among its top priorities and under the conditions that the country is trying to deal with the U.S.-led economic pressures, SMEs can act as suitable means to absorb foreign investments.

Iran eyes Asia buyers to protect oil exports from U.S. sanctions

Iran is pinning its hopes on Asian oil consumers as it battles to protect crude exports and shield its economy from U.S. sanctions.

The U.S. has been lobbying oil importers such as India, China and Japan to end crude purchases from Iran, as Donald Trump's administration ratchets up the pressure on the Islamic republic. Washington has suggested waivers to consumer countries keen to continue buying Iranian oil will be in short supply.

Iranian analysts and western diplomats say that China, which is caught up in a spat of its own with the U.S. over trade tariffs, could be the determining factor in helping Tehran withstand economic pressure when new sanctions on its vital energy industry kick in from November.

"If China buys Iran's oil, we can resist the U.S.," said one Iranian economic analyst, who declined to be named. "China is the only country which can tell the U.S. off."

China, India, Japan and South Korea account for almost 65 percent of the 2.7m barrels a day Iran exported in May, according to Kpler, the tracking company.

Iranian crude is also exported to countries in Europe, Turkey and elsewhere in the Middle East.

China is more likely to object to any U.S. demands that it stop buying from Tehran. "The unilateral sanctions [in Iran] should be abandoned because they are counterpro-



ductive," a spokesperson for China's foreign ministry said, adding that the country continued to support the nuclear deal.

Iranian officials hope that global supply dynamics and Trump's own concern over the effect of oil price rises on U.S. consumers will strengthen their hand, even as Saudi Arabia and its allies have been called on to boost production by 2m b/d.

Hossein Kazempour Ardabili, Iran's OPEC governor, said the market could not afford to lose a significant number of Iranian barrels. "You will be a hostage to Saudi Arabia and

Russia's production capabilities and they will be able to do little," he told the Financial Times in a statement directed at Mr. Trump.

Russia, although not an importer of Iranian crude, could also have significant influence. Moscow has floated the idea of a goods-for-oil deal to trade Iranian oil, and Tehran last week touted \$50 billion worth of potential investments by Russian companies in its oil and gas sector.

Eshaq Jahangiri, Iran's first vice-president, said this month: "The U.S. has declared an economic war against us." He added: "We

plan to export oil at the maximum possible levels."

It is not just Iran that is worried by the impact of sanctions. It creates difficulties for consumer countries, too. When the Obama administration placed sanctions on Iran, Asian buyers could import oil but at much lower levels. "We are in continuous talks with the U.S. to win a waiver in order to minimize the adverse impact that Washington's re-imposition of sanctions and the expected stoppage of Iranian oil imports will have on our related industries," Seoul's energy ministry said in a statement.

A senior Indian oil ministry official said New Delhi would stress its willingness to cut imports from Iran while also seeking a waiver. Yet India also hopes the Trump administration's desire for it to play a greater role in Asian regional security will count in its favor.

Tehran has also said it would permit private companies to export Iranian crude as a way of getting round the impact of U.S. sanctions.

Mr. Zanganeh, Iran's oil minister is insisting that the country's exports had not fallen. "We need to wait and see in which direction the market will go," he said. "But I repeat that Iran will stand against the U.S. actions and will do its best to maintain our market share."

(Source: Financial Times)

Stocks rise as earning expectations beat China growth fears

European stock markets inched higher on Monday as expectations for a flurry of bumper corporate earnings and merger speculation outweighed fears about the escalating trade conflict between Beijing and Washington.

Data showing China's economy and factory production growth had slowed hurt Asian markets at the start of the week, as investors fret an escalating trade battle between China and the United States may soon start to hurt the real economy.

But European shares mostly opened higher, although the gains were marginal. Germany's DAX, GDAXI was the biggest riser, up half a percent before giving up most of those gains. France's CAC 40, FCHI rose 0.16 percent and the pan-

European STOXX 600 0.23 percent.

Basic resources .SXPP and autos .SXAP were among the worst-performing sectors. Both rely on solid Chinese growth, but merger speculation concerning industrials helped outweigh the Chinese data.

The MSCI world equity index .MIWD0000PUS, which tracks shares in 47 countries, was flat on the day.

"The [Chinese] numbers were not way out of line and slower activity numbers were kind of priced in," said Ian Williams, a strategist at Peel Hunt.

"Despite all the noise around China and Trump, you are going to get a real indication of macroeconomic health much

more from company management. I suspect that's what the focus will be for the next two to three weeks."

U.S. banks kicked off the earnings season on Friday and this week sees dozens of European companies report their second-quarter numbers.

JP Morgan equity strategist Mislav Matejka said earnings results in both the U.S. and Europe would likely be strong, beating expectations by a good 4-5 percent.

After strong profits from industrial and energy firms underpinned gains on Wall Street on Friday, the S&P 500 e-mini futures ES1 rose 0.1 percent on Monday.

(Source: Reuters)

EU's Tusk warns Trump trade wars can lead to 'hot conflicts'

European Union President Donald Tusk called on Donald Trump to reform the world order rather than bring it down, warning that trade wars can lead to "hot conflicts."

Tusk issued his appeal in opening remarks to an annual EU-China summit on Monday, as he made an explicit link between the European delegation visiting Beijing and the U.S. president's meeting later the same day in Helsinki with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The comments came a day after Trump called the EU his biggest "foe" due its stance on trade.

"The architecture of the world is changing before our very eyes and it is our common responsibility to make it a change for the better," Tusk said.

One sign of that shift came when the EU and China agreed to issue their first joint summit statement in three years. Premier Li Keqiang touted the document as evidence of a willingness to cooperate to uphold the global order and preserve a multilateral approach to solving world problems.

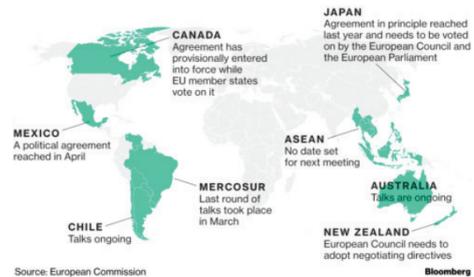
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EU Trade Talks

The European Union has more than a dozen discussions ongoing



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Trump's attacks on key U.S. allies have stood in contrast to his lavish praise for Putin and North Korea's Kim Jong Un. Even so, Chinese Premier Li said the EU meeting was not targeted at any third party, adding that trade friction with the U.S. was a "bilateral" issue for China and the Trump administration to work out.

It was an indication of China's desire to avoid inflaming tensions with Trump any further, since it already faces potential

U.S. tariffs on \$200 billion of goods. It also hinted at EU-China disputes -- from European concerns over intellectual property to EU attempts to screen Chinese investment -- that rule out the two economic powers lining up against the U.S. any time soon.

While there are signs that China is reaching out to Europe, there is little indication that Europe is ready to turn away from the U.S. just yet. In fact, the EU broadly agrees with the U.S. criticism of China, but not with its use of punitive tariffs to force change, according to two people with knowledge of the 28-member bloc's approach to the summit.

China and the EU together account for about one third of the global economy, yet European foreign direct investment into China has reached a cap, said EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, alluding to persistent complaints about reciprocal market access. Germany's VDMA machinery makers lobby urged a hard line against China in a statement on the eve of the summit, saying that state subsidies for manufacturers linked to the Made in China 2025 program make a mockery of greater domestic competition.

"The EU remains critical of China on several key issues, very much in line with the U.S. administration, most notably subsidies" along with "remaining barriers to entry, particularly technology transfers requirements," said Federico Santi of Eurasia Group.

Rather than demonstrate a united front with China, according to Eurasia's Santi, the summit was set to "show the limits of EU cooperation with China in the face of U.S. protectionism."
(Source: Bloomberg)

Oil prices fall but supply tight with focus on outages

Oil prices slipped on Monday as concerns about supply disruptions eased and Libyan ports reopened while traders eyed potential supply increases by Russia and other oil producers.

But global supply remained tight with investors wary over the impact of production losses in several exporting countries.

"There are mixed supply signals," said Kim Kwang-rae, analyst at Samsung Futures.

Brent crude was down 30 cents at \$75.03 a barrel by 0750 GMT. U.S. light crude was down 50 cents at \$70.51.

Supply outages in Libya, a labor dispute in Norway and unrest in Iraq all helped push oil prices higher late last week, although prices still fell for a second straight week.

Russia and other oil producers may raise output by 1 million barrels per day (bpd) or more if shortages hit the market, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said.

"If we need more than 1 million bpd, I don't rule out that we can quickly discuss it and make a quick decision," Novak told reporters on Friday.

Production at Libya's giant Sharara oilfield



was expected to fall by at least 160,000 barrels per day (bpd) after two staff were abducted in an attack by an unknown group, the National Oil Corporation said on Saturday.

A Norwegian union for workers on offshore oil and gas drilling rigs stepped up a six-day

strike on Monday that has hit oil output.

In Iraq, two protesters dies on Sunday in clashes with security forces in the town of Samawa amid anger in southern cities over public services and corruption.

Demonstrations have not yet affected crude

production in Basra, whose shipments account for more than 95 percent of OPEC producer Iraq's state revenue. But any disruption could severely impact the country's economy and push up prices.

Investors are also on edge over the impact of the trade dispute between the United States and its big trading partners.

U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin are set to hold their first stand-alone meeting in Helsinki on Monday. Trump has been vocal about his dissatisfaction with higher oil prices, asking OPEC to lower prices.

Stephen Innes at futures brokerage OANDA said U.S.-China trade tensions "should subside this week and could be a possible plus for oil prices," but a possible sale of U.S. oil reserves would hurt prices.

The United States holds a reserve of about 660 million barrels, and the Trump administration was considering drawing on the country's oil reserve, which would increase supply, according to a Bloomberg report.

(Source: Reuters)

Iraq says oil safe as government cuts social media amid protests

Iraq is pumping oil at normal levels even as protests spread across the southern region from where OPEC's second-biggest producer exports most of its crude, according to a government spokesman.

"Production and exports from southern Iraq are stable as per normal levels," Oil Ministry spokesman Asim Jihad said by phone. Authorities have deployed security forces to protect energy fields and facilities in the region, he said.

Protests broke out last week in the southern province of Basra by residents asking for jobs at some of the country's giant oil fields operated by international companies such as Exxon Mobil Corp. and Lukoil PJSC. Iraqis have protested about unemployment and inadequate public services including power and water shortages ever since the U.S.-led invasion of 2003.

Iraq has been rebuilding its energy industry and ranks second only to Saudi Arabia for production within the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. The country is pumping 4.55 million barrels day, according to the International Energy Agency. Its exports, most of which leave by tanker from southern sea terminals, have increased over the past few years and reached 3.521 million barrels a day in June.

At least one civilian was killed during riots in Basra last week, according to police. The protests have proliferated, with residents demanding jobs and reliable electricity and water supplies. Authorities have disrupted social media and other internet services in Baghdad and many other regions across the country, mainly in the south, over the last few days.

(Source: Bloomberg)

U.S. oil boom delivers surprise for traders, and it's costly

The world's biggest oil traders are counting hefty losses after a surprise doubling in the price discount of U.S. light crude to benchmark Brent in just a month, as surging U.S production upends the market.

Trading desks of oil major BP and merchants Vitol, Gunvor and Trafigura have recorded losses in the tens of millions of dollars each as a result of the "whipsaw" move when the spread reached more than

\$11.50 a barrel in June, insiders familiar with their performance told Reuters.

The sources did not give precise figures for the losses, but they said they were enough for Gunvor and BP to fire at least one trader each.

The companies declined to comment, and none of them publish details of their individual trading books.

It highlights the challenges of trading in WTI futures, the benchmark for U.S. crude, when U.S. pipeline and storage infrastructure struggles to keep pace with surging shale output, that has lifted the United States above Saudi Arabia to become the world's second biggest crude producer behind Russia.

"As the exporter of U.S. crude, traders are naturally long WTI and hedge their bets by shorting Brent. When the spreads widen so wildly, you lose money," said a top executive with one of the four trading firms.

The discount of WTI to Brent hit \$11.57 a barrel on June 6, the widest in more than three years, as U.S. output surged to record highs and surpassed pipeline capacity as traders rushed to export. The discount had been about \$5 just a month before.

Betting on the price spread, a popular trade in oil markets, is based on predictions of price differences between European and U.S. market fundamentals.

The jump in U.S. output, now almost 11 million barrels per day (bpd) from below 5 million bpd a decade ago, has upended the spread. Until 2010, U.S. crude mostly traded at a premium to Brent. But the growing availability of U.S. crude has meant that it has almost always been at a discount since then.

However, it is the big, sudden moves that tend to claim trade casualties, sometimes earning the moniker "widemaker".

(Source: CNBC)

Ireland plans to move oil reserves from UK over Brexit: reports

Dublin plans to move 200,000 tons of its oil reserves from Britain, the Sunday Independent reported, quoting an unnamed senior government source. According to the outlet, the decision on the matter will be signed this week.

In total, Ireland has 1.5 million tons of oil reserves, with about a third of them located overseas, the report said.

However, the oil reserves are not the biggest problem in regards to Brexit from the Irish point of view. The border issue has become a "stumbling block" for Brexit, as a majority of voters in Northern Ireland voted to remain in the European Union.

Britain's withdrawal from the bloc could create complications for the free movement of goods and workers between the Republic of Ireland and the UK's Northern Ireland, returning a "hard" border between the two — something that might be considered to be a potential violation of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which ended decade long conflict on the island.

(Source: Sputnik)

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NEWS IN BRIEF



Terrorism charges opened against PML-N leaders in Pakistan

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN — Less than a week after Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) chief Nawaz Sharif and his daughter Maryam Nawaz were arrested by an accountability court in Islamabad in an anti-graft case, some top leaders of the party have been booked under an anti-terrorism law by Pakistani authorities.

The fresh development comes just 10 days before the general election in Pakistan, which has further demoralised the party workers. The case pertains to a march carried out by PML-N workers on July 13, the day Sharif returned to Pakistan from UK. Those who defied a ban on holding public rallies that day find themselves in trouble.

The former Pakistani premier, sentenced to 11-year prison term, was arrested, along with his daughter, upon their return in Lahore on July 13. They were taken from the aircraft and transferred to Islamabad in a special plane, from where they were shifted to Adiala Jail in the garrison city of Rawalpindi.

According to a report published in The News International, copies of two First Information Reports (FIR), which mark the opening of criminal investigation, were filed against PML-N leader and Sharif's brother Shahbaz Sharif and other senior leaders including Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, the former prime minister.

The FIRs cite Section 7 of the Anti-Terrorism Act, which has broad definition of terrorism including the actions to create public fear, and lists 10 alleged violations of ordinary criminal law, according to the report.



Civilian deaths in Afghanistan hit record high, says UN report

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN — According to the latest report released by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) on Sunday, there were 5,122 civilian casualties (1,692 deaths and 3,430 injured) in the first six months of 2018, marking a three percent decrease in overall casualties from last year but one percent increase in civilian deaths.

Besides casualties resulting from two ISIS-claimed attacks in eastern Nangarhar province during the ceasefire, UNAMA said that it had documented almost no other civilian casualties during the brief period of truce.

"We urge parties to seize all opportunities to find a peaceful settlement — this is the best way that they can protect all civilians," said Yamamoto, who heads the UNAMA.

The report noted that the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in attacks by armed opposition groups continued to be the leading cause of civilian casualties in Afghanistan. The combined use of suicide bombings and non-suicide IEDs together caused nearly half of the civilian casualties. Ground engagements were the second leading cause of civilian casualties, the report said.



Illegal Indian immigrants in U.S. 'treated as criminals': Report

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN — More than 50 illegal Indian immigrants, seeking asylum in the U.S. after fleeing India due to fear of religious and political persecution, are being treated like criminals in a federal prison in Oregon where they have been detained for several weeks now, according to a report published in India's state-run news agency.

"It is heartbreaking when you go in there and you see the young kids like the ages are close to starting from 18 onwards, 22 to 24 in those jumpsuits...and you wonder how they ended up being treated as criminals," says Navneet Kaur, a community college professor in Oregon. "They have not committed any crime, they have crossed the border and asked for a refuge or asylum."

Navneet has interacted with most of the 52 Indian inmates in the federal prison in Oregon and says they were chained and handcuffed for 24 hours. "Even the hardcore criminals are not treated like that," she is quoted saying in the report.

The Innovation Law Lab, a non-profit legal organization, has filed a lawsuit to seek access to these inmates and has been providing legal assistance to these inmates, the report added.



Kashmiri journalists protest against 'government harassment'

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN — A day after a Kashmiri journalist Hakim Aaqib working with a Srinagar-based daily Kashmir Observer was summoned by the National Investigative Agency (NIA) to New Delhi, journalist bodies in Kashmir expressed shock and anger over what they termed 'continued harassment' by government agencies.

In a joint statement issued on Sunday, The Kashmir Working Journalist Association (KWJA) and Kashmir Journalist Association (KJA) took strong note of the summoning of Kashmiri journalists by NIA, terming it "intimidation and harassment", which "reflects high-handed approach of the federal agency to ascribe motive to journalists' professional work and summon them like criminals".

The statement added that it would be "in the national interest" for the federal government authorities as well as the government in J&K, to "improve their record for press freedom", rather than "resort to authoritative measures that further malign the image of the country".

The journalist fraternity in Kashmir appealed to the Governor of J&K NN Vohra to intervene in the matter and "ensure an end to harassment and intimidation of Kashmiri journalists". Pertinently, a young Kashmiri photojournalist Kamran Yousuf continues to be in the custody of NIA. There have been several protests in Kashmir demanding his immediate release.

India to step up assistance to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and aid in their repatriation

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN — India has pledged to provide relief supplies to Rohingya refugees currently languishing in impoverished conditions in the cramped refugee camps of Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh and to aid in their repatriation process from Bangladesh to Rakhine state in Myanmar.

The decision was taken during Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh's visit to Dhaka earlier this week. Singh said India will provide relief supplies to Rohingya refugees, build homes for them in Rakhine state and help in the repatriation process, according to a statement issued by the Indian High Commission in Bangladesh.

Singh, according to a report published in Indian daily The Hindu, said India will "step up" assistance to Rohingya refugees who had fled the violence in Myanmar.

It comes ahead of Bangladesh Foreign Minister AH Mahmood's trip to Myanmar to oversee the repatriation of the first batch of Rohingya refugees who have been verified as residents of Rakhine, as per a deal between Bangladesh and Myanmar brokered by China.

During his visit to Dhaka, Singh held wide-ranging discussions with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on issues of mutual interest including the aid and repatriation of Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, sources said.

As per conservative estimates, there are around 905,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar presently, although some human rights bodies have put the figure higher. The exodus of persecuted Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar's Rakhine state started in October 2016, following the crackdown by Burmese security forces. Almost 200,000 of them fled to neighboring Bangladesh and settled in Cox's Bazar, which has now become famous as home of Rohingya



refugees.

However, things took ugly turn in August last year when more than 720,000 Rohingya refugees fled to Bangladesh en masse to escape persecution, murder, arson and rape. The savagery in Rakhine was described by the United Nations as "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing".

Meanwhile, during Singh's visit, the two sides discussed bilateral security collaboration through training for and assistance to the Bangladesh Police force, after which a

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Bangladesh Police Academy and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy. An agreement to liberalise the visa regime between the two countries was also signed.

Bangladesh's Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, after holding talks with Singh, said his government will not allow any part of Bangladeshi territory to be used for the planning of terror activities against India, as Bangladesh had a zero tolerance policy for terrorism.

'Pakistan has come out of America's shadow and CPEC project is a good example of that'

By Syed Zafar Mehdi

TEHRAN — Omar R. Quraishi is a senior Pakistani journalist and commentator. He has worked with Dawn, Express Tribune, The News, ARY TV, Samaa TV and is currently media consultant to Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Zardari Bhutto

■ In less than two weeks, Pakistan will go to polls at a very critical time in country's history. Which party according to you has got the edge?

A: I would say Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf (PTI) has the edge but only because it is getting help from various quarters. Its rivals are being harassed, or being made to switch sides and join a particular party that is being favoured above all others. Despite that, I still have hope that come election day, this unnatural advantage given to this particular party will wither away.

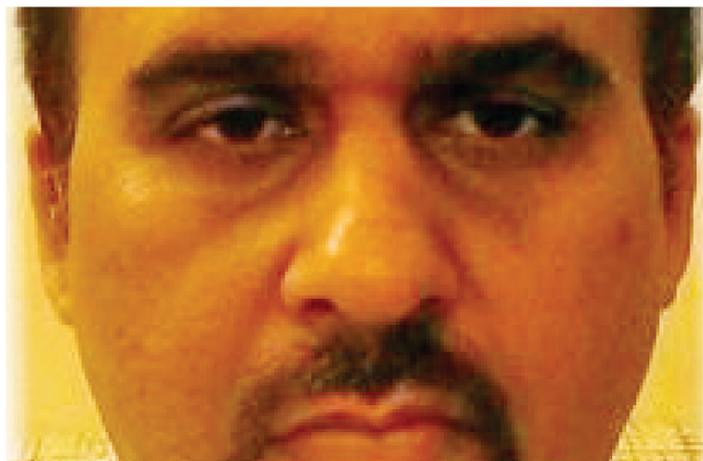
■ Imran Khan has been vigorously trying to woo voters ahead of elections and some observers have already pitted him as the next Prime Minister. Do you think PTI will sweep the elections as being predicted?

A: No I don't think his party will sweep the elections. Yes, he is acting as the next prime minister but that probably has more to do with the fact that his party is being given undue advantage while the other parties are not being given a level playing field.

■ Is Nawaz Sharif's arrest in an anti-graft case a blessing in disguise for PML-N? Sympathy factors can turnaround political fortunes overnight.

A: Yes, that is possible

■ We saw deadly attacks just few days ago in Baluchistan claimed by ISIS, which



has cast a shadow over elections. What is the message the terrorist group is trying to send?

A: That the election process is fraught with danger. Trying to send a message to the rest of the world as well — that Pakistan is an unsafe place.

■ Pakistan was recently put on 'grey list' by FATF for not doing enough to crack down on terror activities. Do you think Pakistan needs to do more to be removed from the grey list?

A: Yes, it does.

■ The relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan continue to be marked by mistrust and hostility. Afghanistan accuses Pakistan of hosting terrorist groups like Haqqani Net-

work while Pakistan has similar complaints against Afghanistan. What is your take on this?

A: Both sides need to sit down and discuss their differences and complaints — and then take practical and concrete steps to remove these differences and address these complaints. Both are neighbours and have to live in an atmosphere of mutual trust and peaceful co-existence.

■ Since Trump's hyperbolic tweet against Pakistan, the relations between the two countries have nosedived. Do you think Pakistan needs to come out of America's shadow?

A: To a great extent, Pakistan has come out of the America's shadow — and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project is a good example of that.

■ The proximity between Pakistan and China has grown recently and China even issued statement in support of Pakistan after it was put on FATF grey list. What is the future of this relationship?

A: It is a very rosy relationship with immense potential. However, Pakistan needs to ensure that it gets the maximum benefit out of its growing economic ties with the rising superpower.

■ Iran and Pakistan share historical and cultural ties. Do you think the two countries can do more to strengthen ties on political and economic front?

A: Yes, absolutely. They can increase people-to-people contact, especially in the fields of media, arts, culture, cinema and economy.

■ PPP, which was the strongest political force during the Benazir Bhutto time, seems to be a shadow of its glorious past now. Do you think Bilawal can take the party to greater heights again and how do you see party's chances in this election?

A: Yes, I believe Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has what it takes to make the party win seats all over the country in the coming election. He has taken his positive message of a peaceful, prosperous and progressive Pakistan all across the country since he embarked on a nationwide campaign on July 1.

He has been very well-received everywhere he has gone, and not just in Sindh, where many think the party's main power base lies. Thousands turned up to hear him speak in Punjab as well and in KP in Malakand from where is also contesting. All these are signs that in the coming election, the party has a very good chance of doing well, gaining a number of seats in all provinces.

The curious case of Afghanistan-Pakistan shaky relationship

1 → The relations between Kabul and Islamabad have always been marked by mistrust. During the Hamid Karzai government, the relations between the two countries went from bad to worse. However, after assuming power in September 2014, Ghani looked keen to shake hands with Pakistan and work together to eliminate the scourge of terrorism in the region. During his much-publicized first visit to Islamabad, he held talks with top political and military leadership there and sought their cooperation in combating terrorism and extremism. He even extended an olive branch to the Taliban and other armed opposition groups to resolve the crisis.

Pakistan's then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, reciprocated in kind, saying he will not allow Pakistani territory to be used for terrorism activities against Afghanistan. "If our soil is used for terrorism activities against Afghanistan, we will take serious action against the insurgents," he said at that time.

But, after a massive truck-bomb explosion in central Kabul in April 2016, which claimed 68 lives and left 347 injured, it was back to square one. While Ghani vowed to "avenge every drop of blood", his coalition partner Dr. Abdullah Abdullah cancelled his official visit to Pakistan. There were no direct accusations against Pakistan, but many senior government and security officials blamed the hostile neighbor of providing safe havens to terror groups like Haqqani Network.

After that attack, the damage done to the peace process seemed irreversible. Ghani spoke about Pakistan having terror safe havens at every big platform, without mincing words. Afghan authorities often accused Pakistan of surreptitiously sponsoring cross-border terrorism, a claim Pakistan repeatedly and strongly dismissed.

Afghan authorities believe the complex urban attacks in Afghanistan are carried out by Haqqani Network, a militant organization that fought alongside CIA against Russians in Afghanistan in 1980s and has been based in the tribal belt of Pakistan since 2001. Ahmed Rashid, a renowned author



and analyst, once said the peace process in Afghanistan can make headway only "if Pakistani military facilitates it since Afghan-Taliban leaders live across the border".

Some analysts believe Pakistan's obsession with Afghanistan is largely due to the growing influence of India there, and the two regional archrivals have turned Afghanistan into a battlefield for proxy war.

Now that the two countries have agreed "on paper" to cooperate and coordinate in fight against terrorism, as remarked by Ghani, we hope it is not a chimera. The two

countries can work together because they face similar challenges of terrorism and extremism. Pakistan needs to act against all terror groups without any distinction. Then only the cooperation can be extended to economics and trade and as Ghani once said Afghanistan believes that expansion of trade with Pakistan will result in development and prosperity for both the countries.

The two countries must learn to live as good neighbors first, and together fight the common problems of terrorism and extremism. That seems to be the only way forward.

U.S. has no ethical right to impose sanctions on any country: Nicaraguan amb.

1 → And the unrest simply became not only social but political because those who started the protest were employers and some students pushed by them. The workers, the trade unions in Nicaragua didn't protest. On the contrary they were in favor of the new social reforms. Then events started getting a little bit violent. On one hand these were Nicaragua businessmen from a bourgeois background who began this revolt. Then you have fake news introduced by big newspapers and different media outlets. It's really interesting that the government didn't shut down these media outlets that are constantly reporting fake news. That means that there is the great liberty of expression and journalism that they always say there is no such liberty. To be totally honest, I must say there were some exaggerations about the police. There were some people who died but they were not only the protesters but also from the police side. The government has nothing to do with those who went to homes and killed the people. So there has been an increase of violence unfortunately. That is true. This increase of violence also comes from some of priests in Catholic Church. They have promoted the violence with the idea of overthrowing the government of Daniel Ortega. In this way, the protest which started against the law issued by President Ortega became suddenly political with the aim of overthrowing the government by force which we can simply call it a coup d'état. Different forces were involved including employers and the Catholic Church. Even in the last stage, criminals were involved in the violence because they wanted to create chaos in Nicaragua, to have the possibility of working as traffickers and dealers. In order to do more criminal activities, chaos is for their benefit. So it's a mixture of things that are happening in Nicaragua and leading to violence.

■ Talking about the coup d'état, you have to launch it in favor of someone or a political party. You should have an alternative in your mind to replace it for the ousted government. So which political party or who is the alternative of protesters?

A: It's an interesting question. So far there has been no such a unique leader from the opposition side. There are many figures who wish to become the president of Nicaragua once the current government was collapsed. And this creates again a chaos in Nicaragua because they have struggles among themselves.

■ What do the protesters want? Do they seek a more western capitalist form of government?

A: They don't know what they want. Nobody knows what exactly they want. They do want a change but with no alternative in their mind to say once we changed the government, we will do this! So it's a matter of being fanatic. There is no a real opposition with a plan. It's a total chaos preparing the ground for most criminal activities. We were able to be one of the more secure countries in Central America but now the criminal activities have increased. I can't say there is a special political party behind the criminals but I think that some parties have common contacts with juvenile gangs and these recent ones are now more independently active. Even the political parties don't know what to do with these juvenile gangs that they once created and are now out of control. So they are in a difficult situation but they are not able to resist the dream of toppling the government. Meanwhile the government says if the people want the President Ortega to leave, they should do it through the constitutional, peaceful and democratic process which is going to elections where each political party will present plans and let the people choose whatever government. But they prefer to act through violent means to do so.

■ You discussed the problems with the opposition. In which stage is the negotiation process and did you get any result from the previous steps?

A: We can see the dialogue in two faces. One is what is called the national dialogue which is being monitored by the Catholic Church. It's moving but very slowly. So far what has been accomplished is the formation



of three commissions. One commotion is to verify what's happening and who is guilty and should be taken to court and trial. Then we have the commission which will analyze the future of the elections which the opposition has said would be March 30 or 31 the next year. The third one is the commission of law which reforms certain laws in the constitution of Nicaragua and also the supreme court of Nicaragua.

The other face which works faster includes community commissions in different parts of the country. There are people who gather and say we can't continue with violence. Let's decide among us that we should work for peace and promote dialogue. So there are communities around the country which sit and discuss that this violence is avoiding traffic and people to go to work and children to go to school. That is why we witnessed for example a community went to Police for protection and promised they would not involve in any violent protests. And they also agreed that during the night the community members will patrol the streets to avoid criminal actions, robbery, assassination and putting fire to buildings.

■ Do you people trust the Catholic Church? As you told the national dialogue is going ahead very slowly.

A: The one who called for national dialogue was Daniel Ortega. We have to state that very clearly. And it was Mr. President who said the Catholic Church will moderate the national dialogue. More than 80 percent of the population is catholic. So it was not strange to request the assistance of the Catholic Church. What was not predicted is that many priests and bishops in the Catholic Church would be totally against the government. They are not neutral and have a tendency to be on the opposition side of the government. I can't say all but some of the priests are on the opposition side. Unfortunately some of them are outspoken and promote people to go through the streets and create sort of unrest.

■ Do you see any foreign fingerprints over this turmoil? Is there any evidence to prove foreign political interference in current unrest?

A: If you ask about evidence, the plain answer is "No". But we cannot be so naïve. There must be some interference and we know this by fact. You can see that in different websites. For example there are some organizations in the U.S. that finance some NGOs in Nicaragua and heads of these NGOs are people who are openly speaking against the government. The U.S. congress issued a request to revoke the visa for some Nicaraguan officials. This is very open interference of what is happening in Nicaragua. The excuse they provide to revoke visa is that Ortega's government is violating the human rights. But the U.S. has no ethical right to speak about the human rights. They are the biggest violators of the human rights in the world. You have cases like Guantanamo, other clandestine jails around the world where they take the prisoners without trial. Recently, they have separated children from the parents to curb immigration. We can make a big list of the U.S. violation of human rights. But there

is also a double standard because the U.S. is supportive of many countries which are human rights abusers. Even some of them, I have no idea to mention the name, are here in the Middle East. But to everybody's surprise, the U.S. has excellent relations with and even sells weapons to them. So Washington has no ethical right to impose any sanctions against Nicaragua or any country. But it is an imperialist country and that's the plain answer as to why the U.S. feels that it has the right to impose whatever it wishes especially on what is considered as its backyard which is Latin America.

■ Despite the U.S. effort to make puppet states of Latin American countries, the independent states such as Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua managed to survive. Even after one decade, we are witnessing the rise of a leftist movement in Mexico. What are the reasons behind the popularity and the recent failure of some socialist governments?

A: The popularity is because the socialist governments or leftist governments of Latin America really work for the people and try to struggle against poverty and extreme poverty. That is what happening in Nicaragua. For example, thanks to the government of President Ortega, there is no illiterate person in Nicaragua. It is one of the most important achievements of our government in a short period of time. All these leftist governments are constantly promoting all the benefits for the people which is not the case for those governments called neoliberals or liberals. They work for the rich people and forget about the poor ones. This leads to a common ideology that everybody believes in and says "Hey my neighborhood today is much better than some years ago that there was not this socialist government." But such a feeling is not in appreciation of imperialism which has always been the main enemy of leftist governments and try to destroy them. Imperialism doesn't want us to spread (our ideology) all over. There is a theory that today the imperialism doesn't want to impose governments. That's not its main goal now. That was something of the past. What they want today is creating a situation so difficult and so chaotic that any social benefits will be destroyed so that the leftist government doesn't have the economic or political possibility of improving the people's life. The imperialist countries want to destroy the economy and any social benefits. For example, in recent unrest, they have burned down ambulances and clinics so that the government be in shortage of medicines and health facilities. They destroyed the schools and now the question is why to destroy a place that belongs to children? The plain answer is that they want the situation of Nicaragua to be socially so difficult. Then, they say you see this socialist government is not good enough to be an example for other countries. So there is a theory that the imperialism doesn't want to change governments anymore but to destroy what is being built. In this way, they can put blame on that specific government later. That is what they are doing in Nicaragua. There is no real leader behind the protests. Of course there are some organizations behind the

scene but not a decision-driven one with a certain plan. The main objective is to destroy the leftist government achievements. As I told you we don't have any proof of foreign interference but we can't be naïve. There must be foreign fingerprints but the new tactic and strategy of imperialism is not changing the governments but destroying what exists.

■ Did you witness any economic manipulation from outside like what we face in Venezuela? As you know an economic war against Maduro government is waged. Do you share the same experience?

A: Even now we are facing an economic war in Nicaragua as there is the plan of destruction. Let say that hopefully the peace will be back once again but we have already schools, city halls, clinics, hospitals, universities, etc. that have been destroyed.

Rebuilding ruins costs enormous because the scope of economic destruction in Nicaragua is enormous. Some of the foreign investments are leaving the country. The lost in tourism sector is increasing on a year to year basis. In Central America, we had the most tourist attractive country. People from all around the world including movie stars, businessmen, royalties, etc. used to come to Nicaragua. All that is gone. So from this point of view there is an economic war against Nicaragua.

■ What about the soft position the U.S. took towards Nicaragua in OAS? It was kind of strange when the U.S. stood behind you. It seems as if they don't seek regime change.

A: As I told you the U.S. is not interested in changing the governments anymore. It's OK if the unfriendly government falls but it's not the main goal. They just want to destroy the country. So to have a wider range of movement sometimes they act very strongly and sometimes very softly. I can explain it through that way. Of course, I don't know what is behind their minds. So far they have been in some moments very harsh, in some moments very soft or trying to be sort of neutral. But we will see. The government of Nicaragua has to keep moving forward and things in our country are not as bad as two weeks ago. Day by day we try to bring life back to normal. We are trying to do things through peaceful process. The change should be through dialogue and democracy.

■ The sanctions are coming back and Iran is under pressure by the U.S. In which level are the political and economic relations between Iran and Nicaragua? In which areas can we expect more cooperation and convergence?

A: From the political point of view, it's an excellent relation. It can't be better. According to our culture and believes, we share the same values and principals. Even in the same year (1979) we experienced revolutions. We share even some historical backgrounds. Back to 1953 in the time of Mossadegh, there was a coup d'état here in Iran while there, in Nicaragua we had the same experience. So as I told you the political relation between two countries is excellent. But what we have to do much more is in trade and investment. I'm very optimistic that in the near future we will witness achievements in this area. Nicaragua is mainly an agricultural country. So we could offer agricultural products such as meat, fruits, vegetables and different types of seeds like peanuts. I remember that 6 years ago, Iran wanted Nicaragua to give some advice on fish and shrimp farming ponds. And we accepted to give some assistance in this area. Finally the plan didn't work for different reasons not necessary to explain here. But there are many fields in which we can cooperate. Iran can cooperate with us in renewable energy, irrigation, nanotechnology, medical equipment, medicine, etc.

There are on both sides the areas of mutual benefits. But we need to remove obstacles which are not posed by Nicaragua nor Iran. This is the case of sanctions especially in the financial field and banking system. How to make a transfer from Iran to Nicaragua is an important thing. In the case of any trade, Nicaragua doesn't know how the payment should be made. So those things should be discussed in order to find a solution. So this excellent political relation can also be transferred to excellent commercial relation.

Iran is one of most important countries in human history: Adib-Moghaddam



1 → From Herodotus who famously said that Persians only decide when they are drunk on wine, to the modern obsession with Iran, which has both cultural, economic and political manifestations: Persia solicits strong feelings. But Iranian Studies is not at all dominated by "western scholars". It is largely in the hand of scholars with a background in Iran, who speak the language and know the culture of the country. It is necessary that these scholars are supported, so that they can produce better knowledge about the country for society and other interested stakeholders. There shouldn't be any paranoia in Iran about academics and scholars because we are regulated by the standards of truth. The difference is between good and bad scholarship and not between political proclamations and ideological strategies. The standards of academia still hold and they marginalise political manipulation in a very effective way. If you want to find the truth about Iran, the university is still the best place to search for it.

There is of course a formal and informal nexus between power and knowledge everywhere in the world. But it is up to us intellectuals to position our research beyond such confines, and the mainstream political consensus. This is a matter of the individual integrity and principle of any intellectual anywhere in the world. There is then a constant battle for the truth and it is entirely viable and possible to speak truth to power. The first pre-condition is the possibility of freedom. This possibility will be there until human societies exist, because our intrinsic human instinct seeks liberty from force.

■ Some argue that comparable to Orientalism that was study of east for control it, Iranian studies in the west is for control of Iran, finally. What is your opinion?

A: I largely disagree with the idea that Iranian Studies exists to control Iran. Orientalism continues to be real, but Edward Said himself was located in the "west", in New York which was at that time the centre of the "free world", as opposed to now when it is the financial centre of a country in political and economic decline. The United States, both in terms of culture including universities and economically is in decline exactly because it is increasingly difficult to think freely in that country. The Trump administration, the epitome of an Orientalist nightmare, has pushed the former leader of the free world into a cultural abyss. Today, the freedom to think in the United States is certainly conscribed.

There is of course a formal and informal nexus between power and knowledge everywhere in the world. But it is up to us intellectuals to position our research beyond such confines, and the mainstream political consensus. This is a matter of the individual integrity and principle of any intellectual anywhere in the world.

And yet Said, exactly because of his critical mind and because of the freedom he had to write about such matters, came up with this powerful idea of Orientalism and he was absolutely right about its repercussions. But the book was published in 1978 and a lot of time has passed since then. Societies in Europe and North America are mixed. The academic elite is by far more diverse and international than during Said's time. Even my own institution, SOAS, has a history connected to the British Empire. But today it is probably the most progressive and critical academic institution focusing on Iran and the region in the world. The composition of academics and students is incredibly diverse and multicultural, reflective of the cosmopolitan atmosphere that London oozes. Don't get me wrong. The battle for the truth about Iran is a fierce, awesome, strenuous and stressful one. But the possibility of standing in this battlefield of truth has been there. I will not be swayed by the cynics about this. The battle, then, is not so much within Iranian Studies but outside of the Ivory Tower within society where there continues to be this subliminal "Orientalist" consciousness – indeed there is a lot of bigotry and racism against "the other" spearheaded by a powerful right-wing coterie symbolised by illiterate and angry people such as Donald Trump. This cultural context, which is always also resisted by institutions and individuals, does have an effect on policy and public perceptions of Iran which are largely negative in the mainstream media.

■ What is your suggestion for introducing the better of Iran culture and civilization in the west?

A: First and foremost, the Iranian Foreign Ministry, through its cultural attaches, should foster close relations between scholars inside of Iran and those residing outside. In a joint effort, one could institutionalise "Hafiz Institutes" all over the world much like the model of the Goethe Institute for Germany and the Confucius Institute which operates under the wing of the Chinese Ministry of Education.

Second, there needs to be a "Diaspora ministry" in the Iranian government which should be equipped with enough authority by the other ministries to foster closer relations between the global Iranian Studies community.

Together against Trump and his dangerous policies

1 → Hence, America not only refused to be a part of the solution to the greatest problem the world is facing today, but it actually became the source and greatest contributor to it all, and does not want to be held accountable in any way possible.

Trump's decision to send more troops to Afghanistan, despite no desirable results on the ground, is an indication that his penchant for war is even greater than his predecessors. His decision to resume arms sales to Riyadh and support Saudi bombardment in Yemen, where the world's worst humanitarian crisis is unfolding, is not only shameful but outrageous.

More recently, he took a unilateral decision to pull out of Iran nuclear deal despite Iran fulfilling all conditions stipulated in the deal as he simply cannot stand the existence of an Islamic republic that will never bow before the American hegemony. He even issued diktats to world powers to stop buying crude oil from Iran, to weaken Iranian economy. Now, Trump is engaged in an ugly trade war with China,

which threatens to trigger the global trade war.

These rash policy decisions by Washington did not come from vacuum and most certainly didn't begin when Trump was voted into office in 2016. Trump is only revealing the true and transparent face of the colonial domination, which is at the heart of Western policies. He is proudly carrying forward the flag of American hegemony. What about Obama, who deported millions of immigrants whilst in office, hiding behind his identity as a black man, even though he himself likened the Zionist movement to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, stating that both movements sought to bring justice and equal rights to historically persecuted peoples?

He was once quoted saying: "To me, being pro-Israel and pro-Jewish is part and parcel with the values that I have been fighting for since I was politically conscious and started getting involved in politics."

We ought to understand why we are protesting against Trump? Why we are attending these marches? What exactly is it that we are protesting? Is it Trump himself or the

structural system in place in the U.S.? The answer is simple can clear. We must raise our voice against every leader who becomes a part of problem and contributes to corruption, organized violence and injustice. Sadly, I do not recall any protests carried out against Obama when he was committing crimes in office.

It really should be no surprise to us that someone like Theresa May, who is perpetuating these policies, creating an environment of hate domestically and globally through Britain's aggressive foreign policy, is actually meeting up with someone like Trump.

They are both enemies of peace, justice and humanity. Trump by having countless proved that he will cross all boundaries and limits without bothering about their detrimental consequences, and May by dressing up as a wolf in sheep's clothing and implementing such policies, while brazenly appearing on TV screen to wish the Muslims of Britain a <Happy Eid> or <Ramadan Mubarak> We ought to wake up.

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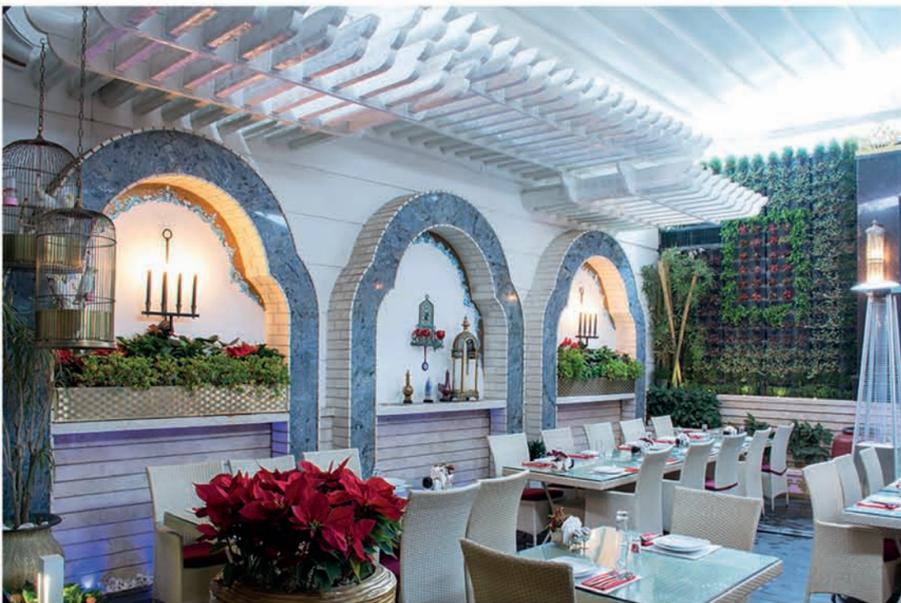
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Tehran exports \$15.3m of handicrafts in 3 months

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Handicrafts exports from Tehran province reached \$15.3 million during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year, which started on March 21.

It exported traditional sets of glasswork, leatherwork, marquetry and woodcarving along with personal ornamentations, handmade textiles, semi-precious stones amongst others, IRNA quoted tourism official Mohammad Enshaei as saying on Saturday.

Tehran exported \$62 million worth of handicrafts during the past [Iranian calendar] year while the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization has anticipated it would reach \$75 million this year, he explained.

Germany, Armenia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Russia, the Netherlands, France, Italy, South Africa and the Persian Gulf littoral states constitute the main importers of Iranian handicrafts, he said.

According to data compiled by the CHHTO, Iran exported \$280 million worth of handicrafts during the past year.

Dozens of Iranian handicrafts have gained the UNESCO Seal of Excellence during the past couple of years.

Landscape restoration planned for Sassanid palace



HERITAGE TEHRAN — A landscape restoration will be implemented on the premises of a UNESCO-registered Sassanid palace in Sarvestan, Fars province.

The archeological area is currently subject of fence operations and tourism infrastructure modification as well, ISNA reported on Monday.

The monument along with several counterparts are altogether inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list under the name "Sassanid Archaeological Landscape of Fars Region".

The ensemble embodies political, historical, cultural and artistic developments of the mighty Sasanian Empire (224–651), which was a leading world power alongside its neighboring arch-rival the Roman-Byzantine Empire.

Earthquake reveals 1,000-year-old Aztec temple

A devastating earthquake that rocked central Mexico in September last year has revealed the remnants of a temple inside an Aztec pyramid.

The temple, dedicated to the rain god Tlaloc, was unearthed by archaeologists using radar technology.

It is located deep within the Teopanzolco pyramid in the city of Cuernavaca in Morelos state.

Experts from the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) in Mexico say the structure probably dates back to around 1150..

(Source: Sky News)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Historic center of Agadez

The historic center of Agadez in Niger dates back to the 15th and 16th centuries, when the Sultanate of Air established itself there, encouraging the consolidation of Tuareg tribes and the development of trans-Saharan economic and cultural exchanges.

Sedentarisation took place based around the former encampments, which led to an original street plan, which is still respected today.



The adobe Agadez Mosque in 1997

The historic center includes a large amount of housing, and a well preserved palatial and religious ensemble, including a tall minaret made entirely of mudbrick. The old town is characterized by mudbrick architecture and a decorative style that are specific to the Air region.

The traditional sultanate system is still in place, ensuring social unity and economic prosperity. It is a living historic center inhabited by about 20,000 people.

The boundaries of the nominated property are those of the historic center. The overall urban fabric is well preserved, and is spatially organized around the politico-religious monuments linked to the Sultanate of Air. A significant number of houses (easily a majority) have been preserved, which allows the satisfactory expression of the specific values linked to the mudbrick architecture and decoration specific to the Air region.

(Source: UNESCO)

14th-century Rab'-e Rashidi getting ready to host visitors

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Rab'-e Rashidi is getting ready to host visitors as the first phase of a restoration project is nearing completion on the 14th-century educational complex in northwest Iran.

Modification of landscape, construction of tourist routes, installation of guide signs, and reinforcement of neighboring structures are among measures that have so far been implemented, CHTN reported on Monday.

Restoration is being carried out under close supervision of experts affiliated with the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, the report said.

"The second phase will soon be followed by the first in late August."

Located in Tabriz, the capital of East Azarbaijan province, Rab'-e Rashidi was established during the reign of Ghazan, a ruler of the Ilkhanid dynasty.

It embraces a paper factory, a library, a hospital (Dar-al-Shafa), a Quranic center (Dar-al-Quran), residential facilities for teachers, students' quarters and a caravanserai amongst other facilities.

The CHHTO keeps an eye on possible inscription of the site on the UNESCO World Heritage list by 2025.



Excavation starts at ancient Iranian troglodytic dwelling



HERITAGE TEHRAN — Excavation work has commenced at an ancient troglodytic dwelling, which is located in Nig village, South Khorasan province, eastern Iran.

"The underground structure dates from the Ilkhanid era (1256–1353) and embraces multiple residential spaces," CHTN reported on Monday.

"Some 40 chambers, each including several rooms, passageways and hallways have so far been recovered," archaeologist Mohammadreza Soroush said.

Most of the structures have been evacuated from jam-packed soil and sediments caused by floods and roofs collapses, he added.

"The site has yielded pieces of potteries and earthenware most of which date back to Ilkhanid Iran."

Experts believe that such structures were not considered as the creative artistic masterpieces of their builders.

Iran will host the 3rd International Troglodytic Architecture Conference in October, which will put the spotlight on arenas of troglodytic architecture in the country.

Old schools in Kerman to be turned into eco-lodges, guest houses



TOURISM TEHRAN — Old and abandoned schools will be transformed into eco-lodges and guest houses in order to develop hospitality industry across towns and villages in Kerman province, southeastern Iran.

In this regard, the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization has called for closer cooperation with local authorities, CHTN quoted Gholamreza Farrokhi, the provincial tourism chief, as saying on Sunday.

"We should exploit untapped potential to develop tourist accommodation," Farrokhi said.

"Historical structures hold considerable tourism potential and can cater to boost arrivals if properly restored and renovated," the official added.

Iran plans to add 2,000 eco-lodges to its budding hospitality industry until 2021.

Having a very diverse natural setting, the country offers a lively and interesting environment to nature lovers. Sightseers may live with a nomad or rural family or enjoy an independent stay.

Spain set to replace U.S. as second most popular tourism destination

Spain is set to replace the United States as the world's second most popular tourism destination while France has retained the top spot, the UN World Tourism Organization has said.

It is expected that Spain will take the second position with 82 million visitors last year, UNWTO head Zurab Pololikashvili said.

Definitive figures will be published in the spring.

Pololikashvili did not give any details about the US, nor did he explain why Spain took the second spot despite a terror attack in August and an independence crisis in tourism magnet Catalonia, home to Barcelona and the Costa Brava.

John Kester, head of tourism trends at the UN agency, said "everything indicates" France would retain its top spot in 2017 – a good year for the industry as the number of global tourists leapt 7% on 2016, the biggest increase in seven years.

Europe was the star of the show as it attracted a large number of visitors, up 8% from the previous year, lured in particular by the Mediterranean's sea and sun.



This contrasts with 2016 figures that saw security fears hit visitor arrivals in Europe.

"We do see that demand for European destinations has been very strong," said Kester. "We also see important recovery in

France," he added, without giving further details about a country that was hard hit by extremist attacks.

Spain also suffered a deadly terrorist attack in August in Catalonia, the same region whose leaders tried unsuccessfully to break

away from Spain, triggering a major crisis that shook Europe.

And while the political crisis sparked a drop in visitor numbers to the north-eastern region as massive demonstrations were staged following the independence bid, it does not appear to have dented overall tourist figures for Spain in 2017.

In 2016, Spain welcomed 75.3 million visitors, just behind the US with 75.6 million, while France easily remained the world leader with 82.6 million visitors, according to the UNWTO.

International tourism to the US shrank during the first five months of Donald Trump's presidency, according to the US International Trade Administration.

Arrivals fell 5% in the first quarter and 3% in the second quarter, official figures show.

The Spanish Prime Minister, Mariano Rajoy, had already announced last week that tourism numbers had soared, saying earnings in a sector that accounts for 11% of Spain's gross domestic product rose 12% to €87bn in 2017.

(Source: The Guardian)

Uninsured travelers risk paying 12 times more than a five-star hotel for a hospital bed

Uninsured travellers can expect to pay up to 12 times more for a foreign hospital bed compared with a luxury hotel, according to new research.

A study conducted by finder.com, the price comparison site, investigated how much holidaymakers would have to spend if they needed to stay overnight in a hospital whilst abroad, compared with the average cost of a room in a five-star hotel.

The accident-prone would do well to steer clear of Monaco, where one night's hospital stay comes at the eye-watering price of £2,583.

This is a whopping 511 per cent higher than the average price of a UK hospital bed for overseas visitors of £423.

Comparably, a night in a five-star hotel in Monaco will set you back £325, which is almost seven times cheaper than a night on the ward, with a saving of £2,158.

Luxembourg is the second most expensive place to fall ill, costing £1,360 for a night in a hospital bed. That's 12 times



more expensive than the average price of a five-star hotel room in the city, which costs £117 per night for two people.

Even a night in a hospital ward in Spain, the UK's most popular holiday destination, will cost £332.

The Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), the UK's largest travel association, revealed earlier this year that nearly 10 million British holidaymakers (38 per cent) travelled

abroad last year without the necessary travel insurance.

Susan Crown from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) said: "People are risking thousands of pounds in medical bills by travelling without an insurance policy that covers them for everything they want to do abroad."

"It's important to know that the FCO cannot pay medical bills if you are hospitalised abroad, nor can we fly you home."

Finder.com CEO, Jon Ostler agreed: "While most of us are lucky enough to avoid hospitals when abroad, the costs of staying overnight are eye watering – and this is before you take into account the cost of medicine and specialist treatment as well."

The 10 most expensive hospital beds in the world are in Monaco, Luxembourg, Norway, Qatar, Switzerland, San Marino, Denmark, Ireland, United Arab Emirates, and the Netherlands respectively.

(Source: Independent)

Eating oranges are up to 60% less likely to lose sight to macular degeneration

Include oranges as a regular part of your diet, and your chances of developing macular degeneration – a particularly nasty form of sight loss – could be reduced by as much as 60 percent, according to a new study spanning 15 years.

The data collected by the researchers suggests that the health boost is caused by flavonoids in the fruit, chemicals that give fruits and vegetables their distinctive colors and which can also act as powerful antioxidants.

These flavonoids have been linked to anti-inflammatory boosts for the immune system for a number of years, but this is the first time they've been analyzed in connection with this eye disease, which affects millions of people over the age of 50.

According to the researchers behind the study, if you want an easy and healthy preventative medicine, this might well be it.

Macular degeneration

"Essentially we found that people who eat at least one serve of orange every day have a reduced risk of developing macular degeneration compared with people who never eat oranges," says one of the team, epidemiologist Bamini Gopinath from the University of Sydney in Australia.

The researchers looked at data from the Blue Mountains Eye Study, a population-based study in Australia that got underway in 1992.



They picked out 2,037 individuals aged 50 and above who were asked about their dietary habits, with a follow up analysis added a decade and a half later.

Those who reported eating oranges reg-

ularly were significantly less likely to have developed macular degeneration over that 15 year timespan, and it seems as though the flavonoids in oranges were the key.

"We examined common foods that contain

flavonoids such as tea, apples, red wine and oranges," says Gopinath.

"Significantly, the data did not show a relationship between other food sources protecting the eyes against the disease."

The macula is part of the retina in the eye, and handles everything to do with central vision.

Causing total blindness

As macular degeneration develops, those with the condition become unable to see what's right in front of them – while it doesn't cause total blindness, it can make life much harder.

The exact cause of macular degeneration isn't known, but it's usually linked to age. In most cases, signs of the condition appear when people are in their 50s and 60s.

How widespread the condition is depends on the country, but millions of people are affected in the US alone, while in Australia, 1 in 7 of the over-50s have some kind of macular degeneration. Those numbers are going up too.

As yet there's no cure, but perhaps oranges will one day form the basis of a preventative treatment. While the new study doesn't prove that oranges can ward off macular degeneration, the long timespan and reasonably large sample between fruit and eye condition mean the link is a relatively strong one.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

As macular degeneration develops, those with the condition become unable to see what's right in front of them – while it doesn't cause total blindness, it can make life much harder.

Super telescope finds a blazing black hole at the heart of the Milky Way

South Africa's ultra-powerful MeerKAT radio telescope proves its capabilities when it captures an image of a fiery black hole at the center of the galaxy.

The MeerKAT just debuted in South Africa last Friday, July 13, and it performed quite well on its first try, producing the clearest image yet of a massive black hole at the heart of the Milky Way galaxy.

With the 64-dish telescope just freshly inaugurated, the researchers at the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory wanted to show off its capabilities the best way possible.

The "center of the galaxy was an obvious target: unique, visually striking and full of unexplained phenomena – but also notoriously hard to image using radio telescopes," Fernando Camilo, the chief scientist of SARAO, explains in a statement. "Although it's early days with MeerKAT, and a lot remains to be optimised, we decided to go for it – and were stunned by the results."

Milky Way's center is 25,000 light-years away from the Earth, and it is often blanketed in thick clouds of gas and stellar dust, so it is difficult to detect using regular telescopes. To catch a glimpse, scientists use infrared, X-ray, or radio wavelengths instead.

MeerKAT provides the clearest look yet of the black hole located at Milky Way's mysterious center with many never-before-seen features visible in the resulting image.

Central black hole

Specifically, the photograph captures the filaments in the central black hole that aren't found anywhere else in the galaxy. Discovered way back in the 1980s, the origins of these long, narrow filaments are



still a puzzling mystery – and scientists hope that MeerKAT's capabilities to clearly depict the Milky Way's center can finally shed more light on this.

Farhad Yusef-Zadeh of Northwestern University says that the MeerKAT image is so clear that it could actually crack the three-decade riddle of the filaments. Yusef-Zadeh is one of the world's experts on these strange filamentary structures.

It consists of 64 dishes or antennas along with four receiver systems that are operating on different radio bands. Data can be processed at a speed of 275 gigabytes per second.

The incredible achievement is the crowning jewel of the country's astrological program, but it's expected to benefit the rest of the continent as well as part of the Square Kilometer Array.

"Other African partner countries will host the outer stations of the telescope during SKA Phase 2 in later years and we have signed an MOU (memorandum of understanding) with them to commit ourselves to grow the field of astronomy in their countries," Takalani Nemaungani, the Department of Science and Technology's chief director for the SKA and African Very Long Baseline Interferometry, explains to News24.

(Source: natureworldnews.com)

FDA warns about dog food that may bring heart disease

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has issued warning against certain types of dog food that are linked to canine dilated cardiomyopathy or DCM.

On July 12, FDA released a statement making all dog owners aware about a possible link between the dog heart disease and specific dog foods that contain peas, lentils, other legume seeds, or potatoes as the main ingredient.

The cases were observed in Golden and Labrador Retrievers, a Whippet, a Shih Tzu, a Bulldog, and Miniature Schnauzers and other mixed breeds. The cases were particularly worrisome as these breeds are not genetically prone to DCM. The heart condition is also less common in small and medium breed dogs, except American and English Cocker Spaniels.

In its announcement, FDA said they received reports from the veterinary cardiology community about the growing cases of dog breeds that developed DCM even when they were supposed to be not at risk for the condition. The dogs observed were found to have relied on the said types of dog food as their main source of nutrients from months to years.

The "FDA is investigating the potential link between DCM and these foods. We encourage pet owners and veterinarians to report DCM cases in dogs who are not predisposed to the disease," said Martine Hartogensis, deputy director of the FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine's Office of Surveillance and Compliance.

Changing dogs' diet

The FDA advised pet owners to still consult with licensed veterinarians if they decide to change their dogs' diet.



The board said it is now working with pet food manufacturers and the veterinary community with the investigations. For the meantime, anyone who suspected DCM in their dogs and a possible link to their pet food are encouraged to report to the FDA.

The condition mostly results in congestive heart failure. However, cases in dogs that are not genetically at risk with the disease may improve given the timely medical intervention.

The major symptoms of DCM include lethargy, anorexia, rapid and excessive breathing, shortness of breath, coughing, abdominal distension, and transient loss of consciousness. The dogs affected with the disease may also have muffled or crackling breathing sounds due to the accumulation of water in the lungs.

DCM is characterized by an enlarged heart that does not function properly. Specifically, both the upper and lower chambers of the heart become enlarged. The one side can be more affected than the other. When the lower chamber becomes enlarged, it cannot pump blood out into the lungs. When this happens, fluid builds up in the dogs' lungs. Soon, the heart becomes overloaded and congestive heart failure follows.

(Source: Tech Times)

Early primates groomed with claws, new research says

Last week, just because I wanted to, I decided to paint my nails. I was due to get my hair dyed a bright shade of blue, anyway, so I figured I'd just lean into the punk aesthetic and spend a little time spreading glossy black over the keratinized chips on the ends of my fingers. And as I did so, I thought about a paper recently published in the Journal of Human Evolution. The fact that I was brushing black over nails, rather than claws, is an evolutionary happenstance that puts me in touch with my Eocene ancestors.

"Euprimates are unusual among mammals in having fingers and toes with flat nails," Doug Boyer and colleagues write in the abstract of their new study. The earliest of our primate

ancestors had claws, but, somewhere along the way to the origin of the more specific subset called euprimates, claws were generally lost in favor of specialized little shields at the digit tips.

But there is an exception to this rule, and it's one that might help elucidate how and when claws drew back in favor of nails. Among some modern primates – namely lemurs, lorises, and tarsiers, and two New World monkeys – the second toe on each foot has a toilet claw. (And tarsiers, just to be weird, have a second toilet claw on their third toe.) It's a grooming appendage that's retained its sharp point. Anatomists debate how this relates to the older claw types, as well as whether the grooming claw is an old

piece of skeletal inheritance or a more recent modification. That latter question is at the center of the new paper.

Fossil primate toes

Paleontologists had previously found two early relatives of lemurs and lorises with grooming claws, meaning that the trait was present along their lineage. But what about the other half of the primate family tree – the haplorhines, or tarsiers and the anthropoid primates that include us in their membership? Boyer and colleagues report on fossil primate toes found in the Eocene strata of Wyoming that now answer this question.

The grooming claws are isolated remains

from three different sites in three distinct parts of the Eocene of Wyoming. The oldest among them goes back to about 56 million years ago. This is when subtropical forests covered much of the American west and primates were coming into their own, the prehistoric equivalents of lemurs and tarsiers inhabiting this verdant realm.

Paleontologists have been studying these relatives of ours for over a century, allowing Boyer and coauthors to narrow down the attribution of the toe bones to a group called omomyiforms. These were small, tarsier-like primates related to the ancestry of the greater haplorhine group to which we belong.

(Source: scientificamerican.com)

CBI Praises SINA Bank Merited Performance in Interbank Market

Central Bank of Iran (CBI) appreciated merited performance of SINA Bank in interbank market of the country, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

In line with accompanying and merited cooperation of the bank in observing provisions of the instructions and criteria notified by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI),

senior officials at the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) appreciated salient achievements taken by the managers and directors of SINA Bank in this respect.

In addition to its active and constructive role in interbank market of the country and also observing implementation of notifications governing the capital market

of the country, giant steps have been taken by the bank in the field of granting facilities to all fellow countrymen especially job-generating plans in rural areas, the report added.

Earlier, SINA Bank had been appreciated by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) in the field of observing rules and regulations

notified by the Money and Credit Council (MCC) with regard to observing interest rate of deposits, etc.

The management of SINA Bank has taken effective steps to materialize most objectives of the bank in the current year, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank concluded.

BMI Takes Giant Stride in Privatization of Stocks of Co.s

In line with the special emphasis of the government on exclusion of banks from non-business activities, Bank Mellī Iran (BMI) has transferred stocks of subsidiary companies to the private sector through tender notices and after conducting legal procedures, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Given the special emphasis of the CEO of the bank and

in line with the implementation of Article 16 of the Law on the Removal of Competitive Production Barriers as well as promotion of financial system of the country, weekly sessions of the Working Group for divesting stocks of the company was held regularly in the current year (started March 21, 2018), the report added.

However, the bank divested 14,000 billion rials worth of stocks of its subsidiaries to the private sector.

After proceeding legal procedures through tender notices, the bank managed to stand at the first rank in divesting stocks of its subsidiary companies, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank ended.

Expectant millennial mothers more depressed, study says

Researchers have credited the "millennial mental health crisis" to academic pressure, perfectionism, lower wages and social media, among other factors. A new study adds pregnancy to the list: Young women are more likely to feel depressed before they give birth than their mothers did one generation earlier.

Depression in young mothers is 51 percent more common than it was 25 years ago, researchers claim in a study.

The study followed two generations of mothers in southwest England, all pregnant between 19 and 24 years old. It found that the women who gave birth between 2012 and 2016 scored higher on depressive symptom tests than their mothers who were pregnant between 1990 and 1992.

Of the nearly 2,400 first-generation mothers, 17 percent experienced prenatal depression. But rates were much higher among their daughters. One-fourth of young women surveyed reported high scores of symptoms like unnecessary self-blame, sleeping problems, and anxiety or worry.

The study credited inflexible work arrangements, mounting financial pressures and difficulty balancing work and home life with rising depression rates.

Researchers warn the risk of depression is likely higher among 18-year-old mothers, who weren't included in the study.

"Given that very young age at pregnancy is a risk factor for depression, this would suggest that, if anything, depression in [millennial women] is underestimated and the increase could be greater," lead author Rebecca Pearson wrote.

Similar hormonal fluctuations could explain why diagnoses are common during pregnancy and after giving birth. Postpartum depression affects up to 15 percent of new mothers, the Mayo Clinic reported, caused in part by new sources of stress, hormonal shifts, bodily changes and intense sleep deprivation.

(Source: Newsweek)

Tree shrew tolerance for spicy foods unlocked by researchers

Spicy foods elicit a pungent or hot and painful sensation that repels most mammals. However, the tree shrew (*Tupaia belangeri chinensis*), a species closely related to primates, seems to violate this rule of thumb.

Researchers accidentally observed tree shrews directly and actively consuming chili peppers, despite the deep geographic isolation between the animal and the food.

To understand this tolerance for spicy food, a research group led by Prof. LAI Ren from the Kunming Institute of Zoology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences along with researchers from Zhejiang University performed genomic and functional analyses on the tree shrew and its TRPV1.

The research revealed that a single point mutation in the tree shrew's transient receptor potential vanilloid type-1 (TRPV1, a polymodal nociceptor) ion channel (tsV1) lowers its sensitivity to capsaicinoids, thus enabling tree shrews' unique feeding behavior regarding pungent plants.

The experimental evidence suggests that strong selection for this residue in tsV1 might be driven by *Piper boehmeriaefolium*, a spicy plant that geographically overlaps with the tree shrew and produces Cap2, a capsaicin analog, in abundance.

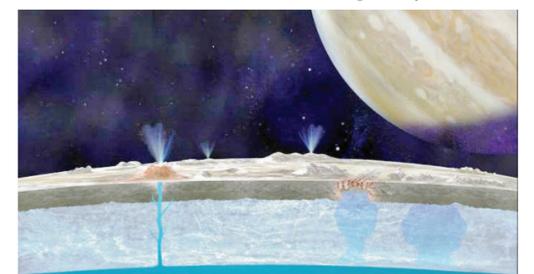
Therefore, researchers think that feeding adaptation to *P. boehmeriaefolium* is the most likely explanation for the fixation of this mutation by positive selection, thus allowing the tree shrew's diet to expand.

This study broadens understanding of the evolutionary and molecular mechanisms of pungency tolerance behavior.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

NASA simulation shows how Europa's "fossil ocean" rises to the surface over time

In the 1970s, the Jupiter system was explored by a succession of robotic missions, beginning with the Pioneer 10 and 11 missions in 1972/73 and the Voyager 1 and 2 missions in 1979. In addition to other scientific objectives, these missions also captured images of Europa's icy surface features, which gave rise to the theory that the moon had an interior ocean that could possibly harbor life.



Since then, astronomers have also found indications that there are regular exchanges between this interior ocean and the surface, which includes evidence of plume activity captured by the Hubble Space Telescope. And recently, a team of NASA scientists studied the strange features on Europa's surface to create models that show how the interior ocean exchanges material with the surface over time.

The study, which recently appeared in the Geophysical Research Letters under the title "Band Formation and Ocean-Surface Interaction on Europa and Ganymede", was conducted by Samuel M. Howell and Robert T. Pappalardo – two researchers from the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory. For their study, the team examined both Ganymede and Europa to see what the moons surface features indicated about how they changed over time.

Using the same two-dimensional numerical models that scientists have used to solve mysteries about motion in the Earth's crust, the team focused on the linear features known as "bands" and "groove lanes" on Europa and Ganymede. The features have long been suspected to be tectonic in nature, where fresh deposits of ocean water have risen to the surface and become frozen over previously-deposited layers.

However, the connection between this band-forming processes and exchanges between the ocean and the surface has remained elusive until now. To address this, the team used their 2-D numerical models to simulate ice shell faulting and convection.

(Source: Universe Today)

Hijab controversy: Amasa Firdaus finally called to bar

Amasa Firdaus, the law graduate who sparked controversy for challenging the restriction on use of hijab during call-to-bar ceremonies, has been called to bar.

Firdaus was called on Tuesday, seven months after the controversy.

Firdaus was in December denied entry into the hall for the ceremony which took place at the International Conference Centre, Abuja, for refusing to remove her hijab.

She had described the action as "a violation of her rights", adding the hijab does not violate the dress code set by the law school.

She also said the restriction was a mere convention "that the British gave to us and we have to stick to it."

Firdaus told TheCable that she wore the hijab to the ceremony to challenge the status quo.

"Actually there are no rules preventing us from wearing hijabs. They just call it convention that the British gave to us and we have to stick to it," she had said.

Islamic bodies, including the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) and the Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC), had rallied around her, calling for a review of the dress code.

In a historic ruling, the body of benchers responsible for calling law graduates to bar, in June approved the use of hijab as proper dress code. (Source: The Cable)

RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Summer lasagna

"Zucchini takes the place of pasta in this recipe, making it lighter than a regular lasagna. Most people don't realize that there is no pasta and think it delicious."

Ingredients:

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 cup chopped green bell pepper
- 1/4 cup finely chopped carrots
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 (15 ounce) can tomato sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon dried basil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 5 medium zucchini, sliced lengthwise into 1/4-inch thick strips
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- 1 egg, beaten
- 3/4 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Lightly grease a medium baking dish.



In a skillet over medium heat, cook the ground beef until evenly brown. Drain juices. Mix the onion, green bell pepper, carrots, garlic, and tomato sauce into the skillet. Season with oregano, basil, salt, and pepper. Bring the mixture to a boil, reduce heat to low, and simmer 10 minutes, until vegetables are tender.

In the bottom of the prepared baking dish, layer 1/2 the zucchini strips. In a bowl, beat together the cottage cheese and egg, and spread over the zucchini. Scoop 1/2 the beef mixture over the cottage cheese and egg mixture, and sprinkle with 1/2 the mozzarella cheese. Layer with remaining zucchini, beef mixture, and mozzarella. Top with Parmesan cheese.

Bake 45 minutes in the preheated oven. Allow to sit 10 minutes before slicing to serve.

LEARN ENGLISH

Talking To Your Roommate

A: Charlie, do you have a second?
 B: Yeah what's up?
 A: Well, I went and paid the **bills** today and you still haven't given me your half.
 B: Yeah I wanted to talk to you about that. I agreed we would **go halves** on all the bills, but frankly I think it's unfair.
 A: Unfair! Why?
 B: Well, you have long hair and use the hairdryer every morning. I don't. You leave your computer on all night downloading torrents. I don't. You see **what I'm getting at** here?
 A: You leave the air conditioner on day and night! You also take 30 minute showers which means you are using **way more** gas and water than me!
 B: Well, while we are at it, stop bringing your friends over for drinks every weekend. You always leave a **mess** and keep me up all night!
 A: Maybe you should just **move out** and find another place.
 B: Maybe you should move out!

Key vocabulary

bill: a document that shows how much you must pay
go halves: divide equally
what I am getting at: what I am trying to say
way more: much more, a lot more
mess: if there is a mess somewhere or a place is a mess, things there are dirty or not neatly arranged
move out: to vacate a residence, cause to leave
Supplementary vocabulary
landlord: one that owns and rents land, buildings, or dwelling units
lease: a contract granting use or occupation of property during a specified period in exchange for a specified rent
utility: a commodity or service, such as electricity, water, or public transportation, that is provided by a public utility
dower: the rights of a widow in the property of her husband at his death
breach of contract: a legal violation of an established contract between two parties

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Goharshad Intl. Award to honor benevolent women of monotheistic religions

W O M E N TEHRAN — The 3rd **d e s k** Goharshad International Award is to be granted to eight benevolent women of monotheistic religions from across the world in the Iranian city of Mashhad on Wednesday.

Out of the eight women designated for the Award, four are from Iran and the other four are from Britain, Thailand, Tanzania and Nigeria, IRIB reported.

Goharshad International Award seeks to promote teachings of the Holy Quran and the Ahlul Bayt of infallibility and purity, said

Ali Sarvari Majd, the secretary of Goharshad International Award.

The Award pivots on benevolence and generosity in the areas of self-sacrifice, martyrdom, resistance and Islamic awakening in the fields of science, education and research, culture, devotion, construction, medicine, management and entrepreneurship, he stated.

The Award is not allocated only to Shia or Muslim women but all the benevolent women of monotheistic religions are allowed to participate in the festival.



A view of Goharshad Mosque in the city of Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi Province

Goharshad, the wife of Shah Rukh, the Emperor of the Timurid Empire of Herat, is an example of benevolent women, who stepped in the path to promote religion and Shia views, and Goharshad Mosque in the Holy Shrine of Imam Reza (AS) is a symbol of this pious woman's benevolence and her devotion to infallible Imams.

140% growth in welfare services to women in Tehran

W O M E N TEHRAN — Welfare services to women **d e s k** in Tehran has increased by 140 percent in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year, beginning March 21, compared with the same period last year.

A number of 46 women have applied to reside in the "health homes" during the first three months of the current [Iranian] year, showing about 46 percent growth year on year, IRNA quoted Daryoush Bayatnejad, head of Tehran province's welfare department, as saying on Sunday.

Speaking at a congress with the theme of "girls, social and psychological support, and sustainable development," here on Sunday, Bayatnejad explained that "health homes" are centers in which vulnerable girls who do not enjoy family support or runaway teenage girls who have escaped their



homes are sheltered. He went on to say that girls receive psychological and counseling services at "health home, and become socially and economically independent.

A number of 85 women have applied to stay in welfare organization's "safe homes" during the first three months of current Iranian year, receiving 41 percent more rehabilitation services comparing with the same period last year, he added.

"Safe homes" are safe shelters for women and their children who are exposed to domestic violence. The women will receive short-term services in "safe homes" such as food, clothing, shelter, security as well as long-term services such as support and empowerment.

The welfare organization provides women with supporting services after releasing vulnerable women, he added.

India tourism ministry launches campaign to highlight safety of women

India's tourism ministry has launched a campaign to reassure women that they are safe in the country after a poll of experts ranked the nation as the most dangerous country in the world for women.

In a survey conducted by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, 548 experts in women's issues ranked India as the most dangerous country in the world for women, ahead of Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia and Saudi Arabia, due to the perceived high risk of sexual violence and slave labor faced by women.

Respondents were asked which of the 193 UN member states they thought were worst in six categories, including human trafficking, healthcare, cultural practices and sexual and non-sexual violence.

But a letter sent to its government's overseas offices and shared with The Independent rejects the assessment, claiming: "India is far ahead of many countries in most of these areas ... the ranking of India appears to be clearly inaccurate."

The letter dated 6 July lists a series of safety initiatives implemented by the country since the fatal gang rape of a student in New Delhi in December 2012, which prompted global outrage.

It emphasizes the tougher punishments for rape, acid attacks and stalking that the



country introduced since 2012, in addition to helplines and support services to assist women.

It also highlighted the launch of a free multilingual helpline available for tourists visiting the country.

Government offices have been urged to

publicize the contents of the letter to reassure visitors to the country.

Asmita Basu, programs director of Amnesty international India, told The Independent that women's safety in India continues to be an issue of concern and that violence against women is "widespread and pervasive."

"According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), a total of 338,954 incidents of crimes against women, including nearly 38,947 cases of rape, were reported in 2016—an increase of 2.9 percent over 2015. On the other hand, conviction rates in rape cases were as low as 23.9 percent in the same year. Overall, NCRB data shows that the number of reported crimes against women has been rising steadily since 2009.

"However, despite the steady increase in reportage, it is widely believed that incidents of violence against women remain underreported. Reasons for underreporting include concerns of security, associated social stigma and fear of reprisals.

"Crimes against women continue to be adjudicated based on notions of 'modesty' and 'morality' rather than the impact it has on the physical and mental integrity of the victim. Grave gender disparities and prevalent gender stereotypes exacerbate women's vulnerability to violence.

"India is ranked 125 out of 159 countries in the Gender Inequality Index in the Human Development Report 2015, compiled by the United Nations Development Program. If the Indian state is serious about reducing incidence of violence against women, it needs to address the causes of violence.

(Source: independent.co.uk)

Death rates from heart failure higher for women than men, study says

For years, health experts have struggled to challenge the perception of heart failure as a man's disease and raise awareness of its disproportionate impact on women. A new study signals there's more work to be done.

The researchers analyzed more than 90,000 patients diagnosed with heart failure in Ontario during a five-year period starting in 2009. They found that women were more likely to be hospitalized, and were more likely to die as a result of the condition, particularly within one year of diagnosis, according to the study published on Monday in the Canadian Medical Association Journal. This trend is ongoing, even though fewer people are being diagnosed with heart problems and the mortality rate from heart disease is declining for both sexes.

Women examined in the study were also older and more frail than their male counterparts, and tended to have lower socioeconomic status. Louise Sun, a cardiac anesthesiologist at the University of Ottawa Heart Institute and lead author of the study, said the new data raise awareness that men and women are in fact "different" when it comes to heart health.

Heart failure is a condition in which the heart is too weak to pump enough blood to vital organs to function properly.

It can be caused by a heart attack or other medical issue.

A report published in February by the Heart and Stroke Foundation showed heart disease is the leading cause of premature death of women in Canada, and that women who have a heart attack are more likely than men to die or have another heart attack. According to Statistics Canada, about 25,000 women die each year from heart disease.

Dr. Sun said the reasons are unclear. But some of the gaps can be linked to the different ways men and women experience conditions that can lead to heart failure. For men, signs of a heart attack, for example, are easier to spot. Women suffer more muted symptoms and are sometimes misdiagnosed as a result. "There is a lower index of suspicion," Dr. Sun said of heart failure in women.

Lack of research is another issue facing women's heart health, Dr. Sun said. This was echoed by Lesley James of the Heart and Stroke Foundation, who said two-thirds of clinical research on heart disease is focused on men.

"Women have been under-researched, under-diagnosed and under-treated," Ms. James said. Because of this, heart failure treatment for men has advanced over the past 10 years, while treatment options for women are behind. "Un-



fortunately, that gap is larger than we would like to see," Dr. Sun said.

Ms. James said the findings of the study are in line with some of the trends the Heart and Stroke Foundation has noticed.

(Source: The Globe and Mail)

London protesters unite against Trump for women's rights, climate and refugees

With colorful banners, loud chants and pots and pans banging, tens of thousands of people marched through central London to protest U.S. President Donald Trump's stance on climate change, refugee policies, and treatment of women.

Organizers estimated more than 80,000 people demonstrated in London against Trump's first official visit to Britain as president, and other protests were expected in major cities around the country.

"Trump represents everything I hate: racism, bigotry, misogynist, xenophobe. As a mother of daughters I want to show that he can't treat women like he does," said Diana Yates, 67, as demonstrators cheered and drivers honked horns in support.

"It's not just that he made comments about women, his policies have been so divisive.

We want to make a stand but also unite as many people as we can," Aisha Ali-Khan, an organizer of Women's March London, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Supporters carried placards saying "Dump Trump" and "Our rights are not up for grabs and neither are we", while others sang "Trump's going home, Trump's going home, he's going!" in reference to a popular English football song.

Earlier, activists floated a six-meter-high blimp outside parliament depicting the U.S. president as snarling, nappy-wearing orange baby.

Britain regards its close ties with the United States, which it calls the special relationship, as a keystone of foreign policy and Prime Minister Theresa May has courted Trump ahead of a projected departure from the European Union. But some Britons see Trump as crude,

volatile, unreliable and opposed to their values on a range of issues.

"It's important to protest because Mr Trump has wrong opinions and it's not right the way he treats women. It's unfair and it's not equal," said 10-year-old Beatrice Carrell, who came to protest with her mother Jilly and older sister Scarlett.

The movements sprang up after a string of scandals involving powerful men in Hollywood, Washington and elsewhere.

Some 5 million women around the world staged demonstrations on Jan. 21 last year, the day after Trump's inauguration, many wearing pink "pussy hats" in reference to the president's boast about grabbing women's genitals.

In that same year, Trump also vowed to pull the U.S. out of a global climate pact, which

campaigners, U.S. businesses and the country's allies have denounced.

The 2015 Paris deal committed nations to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and keeping the global hike in temperatures "well below" 2 degrees Celsius (3.6F) above pre-industrial times.

"Donald Trump comes in and tries to slam the brakes on it ... in complete disregard for all the people around the world who are already suffering the effects of climate change," said Claire James from the Campaign against Climate Change.

"We want to be at the protest to say that you cannot withdraw from responsibility in that way and still have the red carpet rolled out for you," said James, who helped to organize a march to protest Trump's climate policies. (Source: Thomson Reuters Foundation)

Saudi jets target wedding ceremony in Yemen

➔ The conflict and the accompanying Saudi-led blockade have also caused famine across Yemen.

The aggression has taken a heavy toll on the country's infrastructure, destroying many hospitals, schools, and factories. The United Nations says a record 22.2 million Yemenis are in need of food aid, including 8.4 million threatened by severe hunger.

Several Western countries, the United States and Britain in particular, are accused of being complicit in the ongoing aggression as they supply the Riyadh regime with advanced weapons and military equipment as well as logistical and intelligence assistance.

■ **Yemeni tribes back Houthi forces, vow to defeat Saudi, allies in Hudaydah**

Local tribes have gathered in the capital Sana'a to voice their support for the Yemeni army and allied fighters from the Houthi movement in their fight for Hudaydah, which has been under Saudi-led attacks for weeks.

Cars, loaded with ammunition, on Sunday carried fighters to Sana'a where tribal heads pledged to take their battle to Hudaydah to confront the Saudi push for the Red Sea



port, a lifeline for the majority of Yemen's population.

"The representatives will gather by the coastal area so as to defeat the Saudi and American enemies, and all of their mercenary

and hypocrite allies," Mohamed al-Sanhani, a tribesman, said.

"Today, we tell the enemies that there are men headed to the coast. We are ready for the battle [of Hudaydah] on all battle fronts.

We are ready for the enemies, more than they can ever imagine," another participant in the gathering said.

Backed by Saudi-led airstrikes, Emirati forces and militants loyal to Yemen's former president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, launched the Hudaydah offensive on June 13 despite international warnings that it would compound the impoverished nation's humanitarian crisis.

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

The coalition of aggressors has, however, failed to make any major gains in the face of stiff resistance from Houthi fighters and their allied forces.

Meanwhile, the UN health agency warned about the "critical" conditions of civilians in Hudaydah, saying military operations in the key port city threaten over 70 percent of the population who are in need of relief aid.

(Source: agencies)

'There will be no second Brexit referendum'

Parliament vote to reveal extent of anger over May's Brexit plan

There will be no second referendum on Brexit, a spokesman for Britain's Theresa May said on Monday, repeating the prime minister's belief that her plan for leaving the European Union was the only way to get a deal that meets the government's aims.

"The British public have voted to leave the European Union. There is not going to be a second referendum ... under any circumstances," the spokesman told reporters.

May is battling for her political survival after announcing a negotiating plan that enraged eurosceptics in her Conservative Party, who see it as keeping Britain too closely tied to Brussels.

The size of the threat to her position should become clear on Monday when eurosceptic MPs put forward a series of proposals to toughen up the government's customs legislation during a parliamentary debate.

May is not expected to be defeated on the amendments, and could even order her government to back some of the least controversial ones to neutralize the impact of the rebellion without watering down her exit plan.

But, if she chooses to fight and then sees a large number of her own party rebel, it would undermine her leadership and cast fresh doubt on whether she can deliver the Brexit plan agreed by her cabinet this month at her Chequers country residence.

The Chequers agreement, which is only a starting point for negotiations with the EU, has already led to the resignations of her Brexit minister David Davis and foreign secretary Boris Johnson, and the eurosceptic faction say it has to change.

"I suspect the Chequers deal is, in fact, dead," Conservative lawmaker Bernard Jenkin told the BBC.

It has also been rejected by some in the pro-EU faction in her party, with former minister Justine Greening calling on Monday for a second Brexit referendum to end the stalemate in parliament over the best future relationship with the bloc.

May's spokesman said there would not be a second referendum under any circumstances, and restated the prime minister's position that the Chequers plan was the only way to deliver a Brexit that worked in the best interest of the country.

On Sunday, May attempted to face down would-be eurosceptic rebels by warning that if they sink her premiership then they risk squandering the victory of an EU exit that they have dreamed about for decades.

Business minister Greg Clark urged party members to get behind the prime minister's plan: "When it comes to parliament I hope and expect that it will be persuasive that what is on offer will be good for the UK, it would be good for every part of the UK."

■ **Fresh momentum**

A party meeting last week looked to have snuffed out talk of a confidence motion challenging May's leadership, which would require 48 Conservative MPs to initiate, and 150 to win.

But, fuelled by criticism from U.S. President Donald Trump and anger among grassroots party members, the sentiment against May has gained fresh momentum.

A ministerial aide became the ninth party member to resign their post in protest over the Chequers deal. Lawmaker Scott Mann quit on Monday, saying the plan would put him in conflict with his constituents by delivering a "watered down" Brexit.

Davis said he would not speak in the parliamentary debate



but could back one of the rebel amendments. Changes to the parliamentary schedule meant the debate was expected to start at 1630 GMT, later than originally planned, with the first votes due around 2000 GMT.

The amendments to the Taxation (Cross-border Trade) Bill have been proposed by arch-eurosceptic Jacob Rees-Mogg. He said he did not expect the bill, or another bill on trade due to be debated on Tuesday, to be blocked outright by the 650-member parliament.

"I'm sure Theresa May does not want to split the Conservative Party and therefore she will find that the inevitable consequence of the parliamentary arithmetic is that she will need to change it (the Brexit policy) to keep the party united," Rees-Mogg said.

"We'll have an idea of the numbers, I suppose, at 10 o'clock on Monday evening."

(Source: Reuters)

Republicans target elections with more deficit-boosting tax cuts

As November's U.S. elections approach, Republicans in the House of Representatives and the Trump administration are planning another deficit-financed tax-cut plan, but one widely seen as a vote-getting exercise with little chance of becoming law.

The plan, coming on the heels of deep tax cuts already approved in December, underscores both the Republican Party's steadfast confidence in tax cuts as a winning political tool and its recent shift away from fiscal policy conservatism.

House tax committee Chairman Kevin Brady says his panel and the White House are considering a measure that would make permanent \$1.1 trillion in tax cuts that were approved on a temporary basis in December for individuals, families and private businesses. The cuts are set to expire in 2025.

Brady, of Texas, says he aims to unveil a proposal before Congress departs Washington on July 26 for a summer campaigning break. He says he expects the House to vote on the measure before the Nov. 6 congressional elections.

"This is largely a 2018 re-elect-driven

effort for House Republicans," said Rohit Kumar, a tax policy expert at accounting and consulting group PwC and former senior aide to Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has already warned that making permanent the temporary individual tax cuts would further expand the federal deficit and debt.

Both measures of red ink on the U.S. taxpayers' ledger ballooned with the Republicans' \$1.5 trillion December tax cuts package and a \$1.3 trillion spending bill approved in March.

Brady says he does not expect the Republicans' new bill to be "revenue neutral," meaning it will expand the deficit.

Florida Republican Representative Carlos Curbelo, who sits on Brady's committee, called the bill "a good second chapter for tax reform that's going to help American families."

Republicans see the second tax bill as helping to focus voters on the growing economy, with Trump's focus otherwise shifting

haphazardly from immigration to tariffs, federal investigations, North Korea, U.S. NATO participation and Russia.

The temporary cuts approved in December were part of a sweeping tax package, formally known as the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, that was passed by Republicans, who have majorities in both chambers of Congress, over Democrats' unanimous opposition.

The package gave individuals temporary tax relief, but cut taxes permanently for corporations.

Months later, the package is viewed favorably by only 36.4 percent of Americans, according to a polling average compiled by RealClearPolitics.com, which tracks political trends.

Some Republicans say the December package has fared better in parts of the country. "In my district, it polls very high," said Republican Representative Don Bacon of Nebraska.

Representative Richard Neal of Massachusetts, the top Democrat on the House tax committee, said, "I hope the new legislation is as popular as their last tax cut."

The new bill is not without political risk, said analysts.

House Republicans in competitive districts with lots of Democrats and independents may encounter voter concern about the deficit and giveaways to the rich, analysts said.

The hastily drafted December package has resulted in some unanticipated complications for multinational corporations, but a bill to fix those was not expected until after the elections.

In any case, prospects for passage of another round of tax cuts are low, with the fall legislative session already crammed full of other issues. Even if House Republicans win passage, a new tax bill could die in the Senate, where Republicans hold only 51 of 100 seats and would need help from Democrats, who do not seem to be inclined to offer any.

The idea of more deficit-financed tax cuts already faces opposition from Republican Senator Bob Corker of Tennessee, one of the few remaining fiscal hawks in the party. Asked if he would support making permanent individual tax cuts, Corker said, "No."

(Source: Reuters)

German FM: Europe can no longer fully rely on the U.S.

Europe can no longer "completely rely" on Donald Trump after the United States president referred to the European Union (EU) as a "foe" with regard to trade, Germany's foreign minister said on Monday.

"We can no longer completely rely on the White House," Heiko Maas told the Funke newspaper group.

"To maintain our partnership with the USA we must readjust it. The first clear consequence can only be that we need to align ourselves even more closely in Europe."

Maas said Europe "must not let itself be divided", however "sharp verbal attacks and absurd tweets may be".

Maas' comments come a day after Trump said in a CBS interview that the EU was a "foe".

"Well, I think we have a lot of foes ... Now you wouldn't think of the European Union, but they're a foe," he said in an interview with the Face the Nation that aired on Sunday.

He added that the EU has "really taken advantage of us on trade" though this "does not mean that they are bad".

The U.S. president also called Russia and China foes, but said such a label does "not mean they are bad".

"It doesn't mean anything," he said. "It means that they are competitive."

Germany's European affairs minister, Michael Roth,

appealed for unity on Monday as he accused Trump of "provoking" a response Europe.

"He is trying to bring about a split in the EU. He is describing us as enemies. We do not see it like that at all," Roth said, speaking of the "deep and close partnership".

He said the EU should not be unsettled by Trump's "in part very aggressive, untruthful and not particularly constructive" comments, noting that "indignation alone will not help us".

"The only thing that helps is clear language, and a clear united position," the minister added.

■ **Best friends**

In response to Trump's remarks, European Council President Donald Tusk said the EU and the U.S. are "best friends".

"Whoever says we are foes is spreading fake news," Tusk, who is also a former Polish prime minister, wrote on Twitter on Sunday.

On Monday, EU Foreign Policy Chief Federica Mogherini said that "for sure, we consider the United States friends, partners - close friends and partners".

"We have very clear in mind who our friends are: the United States for sure," she said.

"A change in the administration doesn't change the friendship between countries and peoples."

The U.S. president has been feuding with European leaders in recent weeks, and the controversy burst out into the open during last week's NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) Summit, where he accused Germany of being "captive" to Russia, and criticized other European allies for not paying for their defense.

In Sunday's interview, Trump again complained "it's a very bad thing for Germany" that the country depends on Russian gas, for which it is paying "billions" to Moscow.

Trump is sitting down with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday.

The United States also recently imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum against the EU and other allies, sparking retaliation.

A trade war is also under way with China after the U.S. implemented tariffs for what it called unfair trade practices by Beijing.

British Prime Minister Theresa May, whose country is in talks with the EU to leave the bloc, revealed on Sunday that Trump advised her to sue the EU instead of negotiating Brexit.

(Source: agencies)

Iraqis protest at Siba gas field amid growing unrest

Nearly 200 Iraqi people have staged a protest at the main entrance to Iraq's Siba natural gas field following a week of unrest in the country's southern cities over poor public services and alleged corruption, police and energy sources say.

Siba officials stressed that operations at the gas field, which is run by Kuwait Energy PLC, have not been affected by Monday's protest.

Angry residents of the oil-exporting city of Basra in southern Iraq have also gathered at the main gate to the three major oil fields of West Qurna 1, West Qurna 2 and Rumaila.

Iraqi Interior Ministry spokesman Brigadier General Saad Maan said on Monday that 487 Iraqis have been injured in southern Iraq, noting that half of them are security forces.

But, medical sources said 11 civilians, including a 17-year-old child, were killed in the protests that rocked the southern cities. Meanwhile, security sources in Dhi Qar Province said scores of tribesmen burned tires and blocked the Nasiriyah-Baghdad highway.

According to Iraq's Interior Ministry, Iraqi security forces inspected many houses in Najaf, Karbala and Basra, and arrested many people.

Sheikh Wahid al-Nasser, one of the tribal leaders in Basra, stressed that the security forces arrested more than 600 people in the province.

■ **Two more protesters dead in rallies over economic woes**

At least two protesters have lost their lives as demonstrators clashed with security forces in Iraq's southern province of Muthanna, amid escalating unrest in the crisis-hit Arab country's southern cities over poor public services and claimed widespread corruption.

The deadly incident occurred in the provincial capital of Samawa on Sunday, a week after protest rallies began to form in the southern cities, including the important port city of Basra, over poor government services and corruption.

"Hundreds of people tried to storm a courthouse. Shots were fired towards us. It was not clear who was shooting. We had no choice but to open fire," said a local police official.

Earlier in the day, hundreds of protesters rallied in Basra, where police used water cannons and tear gas as some of the demonstrators tried to storm the provincial government building.

Basra is an important hub for oil exports which account for over 95 percent of Iraq's government revenues.

Long neglected, the city is one of the few cities in the Middle East without an effective water treatment system. Many of its waterways are stagnant cesspools, with state officials blaming a public funding crisis caused by years of low oil prices. Basra residents had previously warned of more rallies if their demands were not met.

On Friday, one protester was killed and 15 others were injured in the province of Maysan's capital of Amarah. Local authorities at the time said that angry demonstrators were reportedly attempting to storm the governor's office. Another protester was also killed in Basra on the same day.

Additionally on Friday, at least 25 security forces were wounded in the province of Dhi Qar as they tried to break up crowds of protesters in Nasiriyah, the provincial capital.

A similar rally was also staged in the holy city of Najaf on Friday as public anger mounted over unemployment and delivery of basic services. Local sources said hundreds of demonstrators entered the main hall of the city's airport and walked on to the tarmac, temporarily disrupting air traffic.

Najaf is a popular destination for Shia pilgrims. Flights to Iran's holy city of Mashhad also take place from Najaf, with IRNA news agency saying they had been temporarily suspended until further notice.

Unidentified calls were posted on social media Saturday for massive demonstrations to take place in Baghdad. Some urged demonstrators to head for the fortified Green Zone, an area out of bounds for most Iraqis where key institutions and embassies, including the US and British missions, are located.

On Friday, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, Iraq's top Shia cleric, issued a statement, expressing solidarity with the protesters. He added that he was concerned about people's difficult living conditions.

The protests over basic services come at a sensitive time when Iraqi political factions are trying to form a coalition government after the May 12 parliamentary elections.

(Source: agencies)

Eritrea reopens embassy in Ethiopia amid thaw in relations

Eritrea has reopened its embassy in Ethiopia in further evidence of a rapid thaw between the two countries that a week ago ended two decades of military stalemate over a border war in which tens of thousands died.

In a brief ceremony on Monday, Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Eritrea's President Isaias Afwerki jointly raised the Eritrean flag inside a newly refurbished embassy as a military band played Eritrea's anthem.

Ethiopia and Eritrea expelled each other's envoys at the start of a 1998-2000 border war that killed around 80,000 people.

Monday's embassy visit marked the end of the Eritrean leader's three-day stay in Ethiopia, which also included a visit to an industrial park and a Sunday evening dinner and concert attended by thousands of Ethiopians.

■ **Rapid thaw in relations**

The visit came just a week after Abiy signed an agreement with Afwerki during a landmark trip to Eritrea's capital Asmara. The agreement formally declared that the "state of war" between the neighboring countries was over.

Abiy said last Tuesday that his government wanted to implement a deal restoring relations with Eritrea quickly to "make up for lost opportunities" after a two-decade military standoff.

Eritrea and Ethiopia have so far agreed to open embassies, develop ports and restart flights.

Ethiopian Airlines is scheduled to conduct the first passenger flight between Ethiopia and Eritrea on Wednesday.

The newly appointed reformist Abiy first instigated the peace overtures and restoration of relations in April.

The Horn of Africa nations had remained at loggerheads since Ethiopia rejected a United Nations ruling and refused to cede to Eritrea land along the countries' border following a 1998-2000 war.

(Source: agencies)

Djokovic doubted another Grand Slam win



Novak Djokovic says he doubted he would ever win another Grand Slam before ending a two-year drought by claiming his fourth Wimbledon title.

Djokovic, 31, won his 13th major by beating South African eighth seed Kevin Anderson in straight sets on Sunday.

The Serb struggled for form and fitness after his 2016 French Open win, falling out of the top 20 earlier this year.

"There were several moments where I was frustrated and questioning if I'd get back to the desired level," he said.

"But that makes this whole journey even more special for me. I'm really grateful to go through these mixed emotions and turbulence mentally. I'm human and we all have to go through that."

Djokovic dominated the men's game earlier this decade, holding the number one ranking for 223 weeks and completing a career Grand Slam when he claimed the title at Roland Garros two years ago. However, his form tailed off as he dealt with what he described as personal issues, before a persistent elbow injury also began to affect him.

He did not play the rest of the 2017 season after losing in the Wimbledon quarter-finals, opting to rest before returning at this year's Australian Open.

Still it gave him problems, particularly during his quarter-final defeat by Hyeon Chung, leading to surgery at the start of February.

He returned for the clay-court season but after losing to unseeded Italian Marco Cecchinato in the French Open quarter-finals claimed he might skip Wimbledon.

(Source: BBC)

China firm to refund \$12 million after France World Cup win

A Chinese kitchen appliance maker is paying out up to 79 million yuan (£8.9 million) in refunds to its customers after vowing last month that it would do so if France won the soccer World Cup competition.

Vatti Corp Ltd, based in China's southeastern province of Guangdong, said early on Monday on its official Weibo microblog account that it would honour its pledge and issued instructions on how customers could claim their refund.

The company is an official sponsor of the French national football team. It had offered the deal to buyers of its "championship package" - which is valued up to 16,100 yuan and includes gas stoves, water heaters and dish washers - from June 1 to July 3 as part of a marketing campaign.

France won the World Cup for the second time on Sunday, beating Croatia 4-2.

"Fees incurred are within our annual budget and will not have significant impact on our distribution system and profit," Vatti said in a statement on July 4 ahead of France's quarter-final match, in which it estimated it was potentially on the hook for 79 million yuan in refunds.

The firm's stock, which has declined more than 20 percent since the start of the World Cup on June 14 as the company coped with other issues such as asset seizures, jumped by close to its 10 percent daily limit on Monday.

Vatti's refund situation was one of the most frequently mentioned topics on Weibo on Monday, with users commenting that the publicity the relatively unknown company was receiving was worth far more than the amount it had to pay in refunds.

(Source: Reuters)

Eden Hazard could 'try something different' amid Real Madrid links - Roberto Martinez

Belgium coach Roberto Martinez believes Eden Hazard is ready to lead a team anywhere in the world -- and Chelsea teammate Thibaut Courtois hopes the two will continue to play together.

Hazard and Courtois have both been linked to moves to Real Madrid for months, with Hazard hinting at his Chelsea exit after Belgium's third-place game on Saturday and Courtois saying he is worth more than his club's most recent contact offer.

"It could be the best time [for Hazard] to try something different," Martinez told Cadena Ser's "El Larguero" radio show when asked if Hazard would be the right fit for Real Madrid. "He is a player who has maturity and a lot of leadership. His play is based on talent. Hazard could carry a new project anywhere in the world. He is at the best moment of his career."

"For me, it's very easy to answer that question. He could fit in any team in the world. Players need new challenges and new projects. Perhaps it's a good time for [Chelsea] and for Eden [to split]. I would be very surprised if Chelsea didn't have big offers for him right now."

Hazard, who joined Chelsea from Lille in 2012, said earlier this month that playing for Madrid "is everyone's dream."

According to Marca, Madrid will have to make a big-money transfer to sign the 27-year-old, who has two years left on his contract with Chelsea.

"Eden is a player you don't really know until you work with him," Martinez said. "I've been pleasantly surprised. He has such maturity and leadership skills. Eden is one of the few players that exists around the world where his play is based on talent one on one."

(Source: ESPN)

France are worthy World Cup winners after seeing off Croatia

France are world champions after an incident-packed 4-2 victory over Croatia. Didier Deschamps had been criticised for his conservative tactics, but his team were the most efficient in the tournament and that was all that mattered in the end...

At half-time of this World Cup final, it was difficult to comprehend quite how France were ahead. Croatia had dominated the first period, with Luka Modric and Ivan Perisic picking up where they left off against England, and yet they were 2-1 down. With an own goal and a controversially-awarded penalty, France had scored more goals than they'd had shots on target.

It was a freakish scenario but in many ways it was typical of a France team who simply know how to win. Deschamps insisted on substance over style and he was vindicated in the most emphatic way possible. France were fortunate with the penalty but they made their luck count after that. In the end, they were winners and worthy world champions.

Deschamps deserves credit for his bullishness. He is only the third person to win the World Cup both as a player and a manager and it owes a lot to his refusal to bend to public pressure. The critics were out in force as France laboured through the group stage, only narrowly beating Australia and Peru and playing out a dour draw with Denmark, but Deschamps was unfazed.

France had the most lavishly gifted squad in the tournament but winning was all that mattered to him. Crucially, he convinced his players to think the same way. "I don't care how," said Antoine Griezmann after the semi-final win over Belgium. "I want a second star to be on this shirt, and if I have the star, I do not care about the game we have done."

France's success was built on solid foundations. They conceded three times against Argentina and twice more against Croatia, but for the most part they were dogged and difficult to break down. In total, there were four clean sheets on their route to the final. They were the only team to stop Uruguay from scoring and it was the same story against Belgium.

"They are not just good players, they are not just skillful players, they are tough, they are resilient, and they can



come through difficult games," said Sky Sports pundit Gary Neville in the ITV studio. "They don't necessarily have to play well to win."

Of course, the emphasis on defence did not strangle France's attacking potential. A more adventurous coach might have implemented a more free-flowing style, but Deschamps knew that the counter-attacking pace of Kylian Mbappe was their most dangerous offensive weapon and he found a way to maximise it.

France had just 34 per cent of the possession against Croatia and finished the tournament with a lower average than Australia, Tunisia or Japan, but by ceding the ball to their rivals they were able to play to their strengths. Mbappe destroyed Argentina on the break and he was similarly ef-

fective against Croatia. France did not control the ball but they certainly controlled where it ended up.

Olivier Giroud spearheaded their attack without scoring, but his aerial presence and link-up play were invaluable and France were still clinical when it mattered. Of the 13 sides to attempt more than 50 shots in Russia, their 17.3 per cent conversion rate was the highest. That ruthlessness made the difference.

"We've been accustomed over these last 10 years to thinking that possession is the dominating factor in a game because of what Spain and Germany have done with the influence of Pep Guardiola," added Neville. "But at this World Cup it has turned a little bit."

(Source: Sky Sports)

World Cup celebrations rock France; 'Les Bleus' victory parade set for Champs Elysees



Newspapers and TV stations hailed France's World Cup victory on Monday, while clean-up crews worked against the clock to tidy up after a crazy night's partying in Paris ahead of a victory parade down the Champs Elysees.

"Our Day of Glory Is Here" declared Le Figaro, referencing a rousing line from the Marseillaise anthem.

"History Made" announced sports daily L'Equipe, while business journal Les Echos wrote for the more straightforward "Champions of the World". Photos of superstars Kylian Mbappe, Antoine Griezmann and Paul Pogba, as well as shots of the team holding aloft and kissing the trophy, dominated coverage. The victory has created a sense of national unity, with commentators playing up the fact the squad, the second-youngest in the competition, includes many with central and north African heritage, even if all but two were born in France.

When the country won its first World Cup in 1998, when Zinedine Zidane was its talisman and playmaker, the team was referred to as "Black-Blanc-Beur" (Black-White-Arab), a positive reference to its diverse ethnic make-up. But some were keen to push that phrase to one side, seeing in it a sense of separateness, even if it was meant positively.

"We're not in 1998," said Mounir Mahjoubi, the secretary of state for digital affairs, whose parents emigrated from Morocco. "We're not still celebrating 'Black-Blanc-Beur', we're celebrating brotherhood," he

said of the current team.

Videos shot by the players in the frenetic changing room after the win showed them singing, dancing and raising a toast together, while teaching President Emmanuel Macron, who could barely contain his excitement, how to do a "dab".

■ Metro stations

For Macron, who became president last year at the age of 39, taking his political movement to victory against the odds, the football team's success is likely to have positive repercussions after a slump in the polls.

The Paris metro system got into the celebratory mood, announcing the names of a number of stations were being briefly changed to honour the players and coach, Didier Deschamps.

So Notre-Dame des Champs station was relabelled "Notre Didier Deschamps", and Victor Hugo was switched to "Victor Hugo Lloris" after the captain and goalkeeper.

The 2 km Champs Elysees, the Arc de Triomphe and the vast Place de la Concorde turned into a heaving sea of people on Sunday night, waving red, white and blue flags, setting off firecrackers and blowing horns until early morning.

On Monday, the after-effects were still visible. A number of smashed windows, an overturned car and graffiti scrawled here and there, including the phrase "Liberte, Egalite, Mbappe", a reference to the national motto "Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite".

(Source: Reuters)

Mbappe's France have quality to emulate Pele's boys from Brazil



When teenager Kylian Mbappe netted France's fourth goal in the World Cup final, thoughts turned to the possibility that the French could go on to emulate the dominant Brazilian teams led by their great striker Pele.

The 19-year-old Mbappe became only the second teenager after Pele to score in a World Cup final as a talent-laden French side overcame resilient Croatia 4-2 to win the sport's top prize for the second time, 20 years after their first triumph.

Pele did it at the age of 17 in 1958, sparking a period of dominance as Brazil won three World Cups in a 12-year period culminating in a one-sided final victory over Italy in 1970.

While there are growing comparisons between Mbappe and Pele, the Parisian still has a long way to go to even come close to matching the achievements of the great Brazilian.

But the precocious Mbappe could be one of the pillars of a French team with the potential to dominate the world game in the way Pele and his team mates did from the late 50s through to 1970.

Alongside Antoine Griezmann, voted man of the match in Sunday's final in Moscow, in attack, with Paul Pogba in the midfield engine room and the powerful Samuel Umtiti and Raphael Varane in defence, France have a firm foundation to build on.

Their World Cup squad had an aver-

age age of just over 26 and they have an abundance of world-class players but the way the team negotiated the tournament with intelligence and fortitude gives even greater cause for optimism for the future.

France were efficient, calculating, clever and in command in most of their matches without showing a huge amount of entertaining flair.

In all seven games they played in Russia they had an average of 48 percent possession, doing the hard work off the ball.

Tactically they were able to adapt throughout the tournament and show flexibility — the hallmark of a successful squad.

Their chances of continuing on a winning path are also increased by the fact coach Didier Deschamps, very popular with his players, is staying in the job for at least two more years.

He has a contract until the end of the 2020 European Championship but with such enormous potential to build on he will surely be tempted to extend his reign.

"Today there were imperfections, we did not do everything right but we had those mental and psychological qualities which were decisive for this World Cup," Deschamps said after the final.

With such qualities, there is legitimate cause to believe there will be more glory-filled days for French football.

(Source: Mirror)

Back to harsh reality for Croatia after stellar World Cup run

It was a dream run that came agonisingly close to being crowned with a World Cup title but for Croatia now comes a return to a harsh soccer reality of sketchy infrastructure and scandals.

With Luka Modric most likely having played his last major international tournament at the age of 32, and several of his teammates, including Ivan Rakitic (30) and the 32-year-old Mario Mandzukic, in the twilight of their careers, Croatia's presence in the World Cup final is an event unlikely to be repeated soon. Modric was the standout of the team and can still earn the title of world player of the year, breaking the stranglehold of Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi.

Croats took to the streets on Sunday to celebrate their national team despite their 4-2 defeat to France but the nation of 4.5 million knows its soccer future is all but secure.

Croatia almost failed to qualify for the tournament in Russia, needing a 2-0 victory at Ukraine in their last group match to earn second spot that sent them into a playoff against Greece.

It was the start of Zlatko Dalic's term at the helm and the coach managed to guide them to Russia where they



displayed some of the finest soccer on show.

Dalic's future, however, is still unclear despite having a contract until 2020.

"I will take a time out, take a breather. I never take decisions overnight," the soft-spoken coach said on Sunday when asked about seeing out his contract.

"At this moment I am not thinking of anything else but going back safely to Croatia and taking a rest."

Dalic, however, knows any long-term decisions are diffi-

cult to take in Croatia, which is still engulfed in the biggest soccer scandal the country has seen.

Only last month a Croatian court sentenced former Dinamo Zagreb chief Zdravko Mamic to six-and-a-half years in prison for fraud and corruption.

Croatia's state attorney has also charged Modric with giving false testimony in the case, a major black spot on the player's reputation.

Coupled with the country's limited resources to improve their soccer infrastructure, it was no wonder Dalic called their World Cup run a miracle.

"Something has to be started, if not now then when? We have character and pride but in all other aspects we have to improve," Dalic said before the final.

"This is the ideal moment to say 'let's do something'. Sport has brought so much joy to the people.

"We have definitely written ourselves into history, given the conditions and infrastructure back home, we are a miracle."

It will take more than that to keep Croatia in the forefront of international soccer.

(Source: Eurosport)

Alireza Beiranvand remains with Persepolis

SPORTS Despite being heavily linked with moves away, Alireza Beiranvand will remain at Persepolis football team.

Beiranvand represented Iran in three matches in the 2018 World Cup and blocked a penalty kick from Cristiano Ronaldo to deny Portugal a 2-0 lead in Group B.

Beiranvand had been linked with a move to the professional Turkish football club Caykur Rizespor Kulubu in the country's Super Lig.

The Iran international goalie had also caught the eyes of Italian Torino and Ukrainian Dynamo Kyiv.

Persepolis are not allowed to sign new player in the summer transfer window.

The Iranian giants will have to face Qatari powerhouse Al Duhail in the 2018 AFC Champions League quarter-final and goalkeeper's presence in the gate will boost their confidence.

Persepolis are also looking to win Iran Professional League (IPL) title for the third year in a row.

The Tehran based football team have yet to negotiate with free agent Vahid Amiri.

The 30-year-old midfielder was one of the best Team Melli players in the 2018 World Cup.

Amiri played a key role in two previous seasons, helping Persepolis win back-to-back IPL title.



Next stop, Gareth Southgate - London rail station renamed after England boss



LONDON (Reuters) — London's transport bosses temporarily renamed an underground station in honour of England football team manager Gareth Southgate after the team flew home following their run to the last four of the World Cup.

England enjoyed their best World Cup performance in 28 years under Southgate's leadership, reaching the semi-finals and narrowly missing a spot in the final, losing to Croatia after extra-time.

Southgate proved popular with England's fans for helping create a renewed sense of optimism and after the team returned home on Sunday Transport for London (TfL) rebranded Southgate underground station in North London as the "Gareth Southgate" station for 48 hours.

"We have to celebrate the achievement, it's important," said Patricia Gomez, 44, who

travelled from Morden in south London on her day off on Monday to get a photograph with the new sign.

"(Gareth) was awesome, he gave the team motivation, he made them work as a family."

After winning the tournament on Sunday, France also saw similar tributes on the Paris Metro, where six stops have been temporarily renamed.

Southgate's popularity led many fans to copy his fashion style during matches of wearing a waistcoat as he watched from the dugout. One retailer said sales of waistcoats had soared during the tournament while the day of the semi-final clash with Croatia was dubbed "Waistcoat Wednesday".

"Maybe we'll get a statue next," said Steve Ingall from TfL.

Paris renames Metro stations to honour World Cup win



Paris Metro passengers will be forgiven if they miss their usual stop on Monday after transport chiefs changed the names of some stations to honour the heroes of France's World Cup win in Russia. And Mona Lisa also donned a French football shirt with two stars.

Paris transport authorities RATP have decided to hail the victorious Les Bleus in their own way. After the cup final win workers were busy putting up new names of Metro stations in honour of France's victory. Some six stations have been given new names, although it is not clear how long they will last, with some of them honouring the players and the manager behind the stunning victory.

Champs Élysées Clemenceau on line 13 was renamed Deschamps Élysées-Clemenceau in honour of the French coach Didier Deschamps, who won the World Cup as a captain in 1998 and now as a manager.

On Line 12 Notre-Dame des Champs was also changed to honour the coach and became Notre Didier Deschamps.

The station Victor Hugo on line 2 no longer honours the famous French author but the goalkeeper of the French national team can now bear two stars instead of just one.

Bercy on lines 6 and 14 has been renamed Bercy les Bleus, presumably a play words that rhymes with "Merci les bleus", and the station Avron on Line 2 has been changed to "Nous Avron Gagné".

(Source: *TheLocal.fr*)

Son Heung-min, Ji So-yun headline Korea Republic squads

Seoul: The Korea Football Association (KFA) has unveiled the men and women's squads for the Asian Games Indonesia 2018, led by Son Heung-min and Ji So-yun respectively.

The Tottenham Hotspur forward, who turned 26 recently, will make his first appearance in the Asian Games as one of their "wild card" members and is joined by goalkeeper Jo-Hyeon-woo, who impressed at the recently concluded 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia, alongside Gamba Osaka's Hwang Ui-jo.

The squad also includes Lee Seung-woo of Hellas Verona and Red Bull Salzburg's Hwang Hee-chan, who also represented Korea Republic at Russia 2018.

Son scored two goals in Russia and although the Taeguk Warriors failed to progress to the Round of 16, they made headlines after stunning 2014 World Cup champions Germany 2-0 to finish third in Group F.

Son will look to help Korea Republic defend the gold medal won in 2014 on August 14 to September 1 in Jakarta and Palembang.

Meanwhile, Chelsea Ladies forward Ji will headline the 20-player squad for the women's football competition on August 16-31.

Ji is Korea Republic's all-time leading scorer with 45 goals from 103 appearances. Cho So-hyun with 112 caps, and Jeon Ga-eul who has 35 goals from 91 matches, also



made the list.

Seventeen of the 20 players competed in the AFC Women's Asian Cup Jordan 2018 last April, where Korea Republic finished fifth and secured a spot at the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup in France next June.

Led by head coach Yoon Deok-yeo, the Taeguk Ladies are paired with hosts Indonesia, Chinese Taipei and Mal-

dives in Group A.

Defending champions DPR Korea are in Group B with China PR, Hong Kong and Tajikistan. Group C features Japan, Vietnam and Thailand, who recently claimed their fourth AFF Women's Championship title.

The Taeguk ladies have yet to win a gold medal at the Asian Games but finished on bronze in the last two editions. Yoon's charges will begin training at the National Football Center in Paju on July 30 and will travel to Indonesia on August 13.

"Our goal is change the colour of the medal we had achieved at the Incheon Asian Games four years ago," Yoon said. "We will try to meet the fans' expectations."

The 57-year-old further revealed that the humidity and hot weather could influence their performance, but vowed that his players would overcome those difficulties.

"We have experienced players like Ji and Cho, so I'm sure they'll cope with the weather conditions."

"Women's football in Asia is at a high level, and I'm not going to say we are certain to win gold. We will probably meet Japan in the semi-finals and that would be the key match. We're confident and if we can prepare thoroughly, we will have better results than what we achieved at Incheon 2014."

(Source: *the-afc*)

Heavy rain damages Russian World Cup stadium



MOSCOW (Reuters) — Heavy rain damaged one of Russia's newly-built World Cup stadiums on Sunday when the tournament ended with the final in Moscow.

Footage from the southern city of Volgograd showed a fresh landslide on an embankment near the stadium, which made a several-meter-deep hole in it and covered a sidewalk with mud.

A spokesman for the state Sport In company overseeing the construction said there were also leaks inside the stadium which

could take up to a week to repair.

"I'm sorry for the city. They invested so much money and it was washed away by one rain," 19-year-old Vitaly Ovchinnikov, a local resident, told Reuters TV.

Volgograd Arena, a stadium that can accommodate up to 45,000 spectators, was built for the World Cup at a cost over 16 billion rubles (\$257 million), according to data on the regional government's website.

"It's not normal. It was built for federal money, for taxes we pay them," another

local resident, Mikhail Nesterenko, 64, said.

Eight teams played World Cup group matches in Volgograd, including England and Japan who made it to the knockout stages.

Spokesmen for the Volgograd government and Sport In said the rain was extraordinary and was dealt with as an emergency.

"This happens once in a hundred years," a Sport In spokesman said.

The Sroytransgaz company, which built the stadium, gave no immediate comment.

Iran beat India at Asian Junior Handball Championship

MNA — Iran Men's Junior Handball team commandingly defeated India in the 16th edition of the Asian Men's Junior Handball Championship.

In their first match, the Iranian handball players beat India 48 to 17 on Monday.

Some 15 teams from different parts of Asia are competing in the tournament.

The national Iranian team is pitted in the Group D along with national teams of Oman, India and Yemen.

The Iranian handball players will take on Yemen in their second match.

Mehdi Rahbari is coaching the Iranian squad in the competitions.

The 16th edition of the Asian Men's Junior Handball Championship started on July 15 in Salalah, Oman and will end on July 25, 2018.

It acts as the qualification tournament for the 2019 Men's Junior World Handball Championship.

Top three teams from the championship will directly qualify for the Junior World Championship to be held in Spain.

Asian Women's Club Volleyball C'ship: Paykan suffers fourth successive loss

TASNIM — Iran's Paykan suffered one more defeat at the 2018 Asian Women's Club Volleyball Championship on Monday.

The Iranian team were defeated against Indonesian Garuda VC 3-1 (25-23, 20-25, 22-25, 18-25) in Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kazakhstan.

Paykan had previously lost to Kazakhstan's Altay 3-0, Chinese Taipei's CMFC 3-2 and Thailand's Supreme Chonburi 3-0.

The 2018 Asian Women's Club Volleyball Championship is the 19th edition of the Asian Women's Club Volleyball Championship, an international volleyball club tournament organized by the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) with the Volleyball Federation of the Republic of Kazakhstan (VFRK).

It's being held in Kazakhstan from July 11 to 18.

The tournament serves as the Asian qualifiers for the 2019 FIVB Volleyball Women's Club World Championship with the champion qualifying for the World Championship.

Carlos Queiroz among five Algeria candidates: Report

PLDC — Carlos Queiroz is one of the five candidates to take charge of Algerian football team, *lagazette.dufennec.com* reported.

The Portuguese has yet to extend his contract with Iran national football team.

The Algeria Football Federation recently dismissed Rabah Madjer following a poor run of results that saw the national team lose to Iran, Saudi Arabia, Cape Verde and Portugal in their last four friendlies.

The Algerian Football Federation (Faf) are discussing the return of Vahid Halilhodzic to the national team.

Morocco coach Hervé Renard, Al Gharafa SC coach Christian Gourcuff and Djamel Belmadi, who has recently stepped down as Qatar's Al Duhail coach, are also among the candidates to take charge of Algeria.

Iran wins team kumite event at Asian Karate Championships



Iran won the men's team kumite event on the final day of the Asian Karate Championships in Amman, Jordan.

The Iranians beat Saudi Arabia 3-0 in the men's final at the Prince Hamza International Hall.

They had earlier defeated Japan 3-2 in the semi-finals.

Japan was one of the two bronze medalists along with Kazakhstan.

In the women's final, Japan overcame Kazakhstan 2-0.

Vietnam and China came away with the bronze medals. The Asian Karate Championships was the first event to offer qualification points for Tokyo 2020, where karate will make its Olympic debut.

(Source: *Insidethegames*)

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Neil Simon's "Star-Spangled Girl" on stage at Tehran theater

A R T TEHRAN — American playwright Neil Simon's comedy "The Star-Spangled Girl" is currently on stage at Tehran's Mehregan Theater House.

"When I read this play I found it in perfect harmony with my character," director/actor Ruzbeh Shafiei told the Persian service of Honaronline on Monday.

"The play is about the people of an intellectual stratum who feel a responsibility toward enlightening the ordinary people, but their basic needs thwart their plans to carry out the social duty," he added.

The story of the play is set in San Francisco during the 1960s in an apartment where the radical journalists Andy and Norman barely make a living working on their magazine, "Fallout" that fights the system in America. However, everything is affected after Sophie, a former Olympic swimmer and an all-American Southern girl, moves into the apartment next door.

Starring Amir-reza Nazari and Farinaz Nasrin, the play has live music, "which helps the audience gain a real insight into the apartment atmosphere," Shafiei said.

"The audience was given to laughter during the performance, but the main topic is the pain and reality facing the



Farinaz Nasrin (L) and Ruzbeh Shafiei act in a scene from American playwright Neil Simon's comedy "The Star-Spangled Girl" at Tehran's Mehregan Theater House. (Tiwall/Ziaeddin Safavian)

society," he noted. "The Star-Spangled Girl" will be

onstage at the theater until August 6. The play has previously been staged by

various Iranian directors such as Bahram Tashakkor and Moineddin Oshaqi.

Kerala film festival dedicates section to Iranian shorts

A R T TEHRAN — The 11th edition of the International Documentary and Short Film Festival of Kerala in India will put its spotlight on short films from Iranian cinema in a program titled "Persian Tales: Short Fiction from Iran".

A lineup of 18 films selected by Amir-Masud Soheili and Hadi Alipanah will be reviewed in the program, the organizers have announced.



A scene from "Pale Mirrors" by Salem Salavati

"Lunch Time" by Alireza Qasemi, "Lost Property" by Hamed Nejabat, "Icky" by Parastu Kardgar, "A Girl in the Room" by Karim Lakzadeh, "Animal" co-directed by Bahram and Bahman Ark, "Not Yet" by Arian Vazirdaftari and "Maned & Macho" by Shiva Sadeq-Asadi are among the movies.

Also included are "Pale Mirrors" by Salem Salavati, "The Little Boy" by Mona Shahi, "The Man Who Wasn't Here" by Ata Mojabi and "Whole to Part" by Vahid Hosseiniani.

In addition, "Like a Good Kid" by Arian Vazirdaftari will go on screen in the competition section of the festival, which will be running from July 20 to 24.

The film tells the story of Sara, a 24-year-old girl who is supposed to babysit Matin, a 6-year-old boy, for the day, while his mother is at work. In the morning, Matin tells Sara a story of a fight with his mother from the night before that leads to a series of events throughout the day that will change Matin and Sara for the rest of their lives.

Iranian doc on Shias in Azerbaijan dubbed into Azerbaijani

A R T TEHRAN — "Fire and Pomegranates", Iranian filmmaker Heidar Bani-Hamzeh's documentary about the Azerbaijani Shia center of Nardaran, has recently been dubbed into Azerbaijani, a public relations team announced on Sunday.

"In this film, we tried to present the real face of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev who pretends he is the symbol of the Azerbaijani Muslims and also the leader of the Muslim Unity Movement Taleh Bagirov," producer Amir Mehryzdan once said in a review session for the film.



A poster for "Fire and Pomegranates" by Iranian filmmaker Heidar Bani-Hamzeh

"The documentary gives a real insight into Azerbaijan and the audience will see the cruel side of the country that has been concealed behind its tourist attractions," he added.

The documentary was critically acclaimed during the 8th Ammar Popular Film Festival in Tehran in January of this year. The festival takes a global view of cultural, socio-economic, environmental and political issues that may endanger peace, freedom and justice in the world.

Will Smith brings down curtain on Russia World Cup

MOSCOW (Reuters) — Hollywood actor and singer Will Smith performed the soccer World Cup's official song "Live It Up" in the tournament's closing ceremony in Moscow on Sunday.

France beat Croatia 4-2 to win the football World Cup on Sunday, handing them their second victory in the competition after a successful campaign on home soil in 1998.

As Smith performed at Moscow's Luzhniki stadium, giant screens laid out on the pitch showed images of soccer players and the colors of the Croatian and French flags - the two teams who faced each other in the final.

Smith was joined on stage by Nicky Jam, a U.S.-born singer with Puerto Rican roots, and by Era Istrefi, a pop singer who describes herself as Albanian Kosovar. Both artists had featured with Smith on the "Live It Up" single.

"Duel" to compete in Durban film festival



A scene from "Duel" by Mohammadreza Kheradmandan.

A R T TEHRAN — "Duel", a short film by Mohammadreza Kheradmandan, will be competing in the Durban International Film Festival (DIFF) in South Africa, Iran's Art Bureau that is the producer of the film announced on Monday.

The short portrays a street boy in a duel at the Tehran crossroads.

The Durban festival, which will be running in the South African city from July 19 to 29, is scheduled to celebrate the 100th birth anniversary of Nelson Mandela this year.

New secretary appointed to Fajr Intl. Music Festival



Composer Shahin Farhat in an undated photo

A R T TEHRAN — Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Seyed Mojtaba Hosseini has appointed composer Shahin Farhat as secretary of the 34th Fajr International Music Festival.

Farhat is the composer of over eighty symphonies, including "Iranian Lady", "Dama-

vand", "Persian Gulf", "Muhammad (S)", "Martyrs" and "Iran".

"Ruhollah Symphony", a piece that Farhat composed in memory of Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, was premiered by the Tehran Symphony Orchestra in May 2017.

"Skyscraper" gets rocky start as "Hotel Transylvania 3" checks in at No. 1

LOS ANGELES (Variety) — It turns out Dwayne Johnson was no match for Dracula and company.

"Hotel Transylvania 3: Summer Vacation" topped the domestic box office charts with \$44 million from 4,267 locations, while Dwayne Johnson's "Skyscraper" washed up with a paltry \$25.5 million from 3,782 theaters.

Sony's animated family feature picked up \$46.4 million overseas this weekend for a global start of \$100 million, including Amazon Prime showings. The third installment of the franchise — featuring the voices of Adam Sandler, Selena Gomez, Andy Samberg, and Kathryn Hahn — carried an \$80 million production budget.

"We're thrilled", Sony's president of worldwide distribution Josh Greenstein said. "We took the No. 1 slot this weekend with a tremendous amount of competition." As the first film in the series debuting during summer (its predecessors opened in September), Greenstein said the studio hopes "Hotel Transylvania 3" will benefit in coming weeks from kids being out of school.

The opening for "Hotel Transylvania 3" represents the second-best for the franchise. The first film, 2012's "Hotel Transylvania", bowed with \$42 million, while the sequel started with \$48 million.

"Skyscraper's" debut wasn't enough to secure the No. 2 slot, which went to the second weekend of Marvel's "Ant-Man and the Wasp" with \$29.5 million from 4,206



Voice cast member Lesia Nikituk pose on a pier for a photocall for the animation film "Hotel Transylvania 3: Summer Vacation" (Hotel Transylvania 3: A Monster Vacation) out of competition in the 71st Cannes Film Festival Cannes, France, May 7, 2018. (Reuters/Stephane Mahe)

locations. The superhero sequel picked up another \$35.3 million internationally, taking its global total to \$284 million. Domestically, the Paul Rudd and Evangeline Lilly-led tentpole earned \$133 million, while overseas it has made \$151 million.

Universal and Legendary's "Skyscraper" checked in third place, coming in way under projections. With \$25 million, "Skyscraper" represents the lowest opening for a Johnson-starrer in recent years. The studio is banking on his massive international following to justify the film's pricey \$125 million budget. It bows in China, where the action film is set, next weekend.

Universal's head of domestic distribution Jim Orr emphasized "Skyscraper's" reliance on overseas markets.

Robert Wolders, actor and longtime Audrey Hepburn companion, dies at 81

LOS ANGELES (Hollywood Reporter) — Dutch actor Robert Wolders, the longtime companion of "Breakfast at Tiffany's" star Audrey Hepburn who starred on the 1960s TV Western Laredo and appeared in films like "Beau Geste", has died. He was 81.

Wolders died Thursday "surrounded by loving family," according to Ellen Fontana, executive director of the Audrey Hepburn Children's Fund. She said his family did not wish to divulge any other details of his death. He was a member of the board of directors of the fund.

Wolders was the fourth husband of actress Merle Oberon (Wuthering Heights, The Scarlet Pimpernel), married to her for about four years until her death in 1979 at age 68 from stroke complications. They starred opposite each other as lovers in the May-September romantic drama "Interval" (1973), her final film.

The actor met the Oscar-winning Hepburn in 1980 as her marriage to Italian psychiatrist Andrea Dotti was winding down, and they were together when the icon of Hollywood and style died from a rare cancer of the appendix on Jan. 20, 1993. She was 63.

"I have a wonderful man in my life, I have my Robert," Hepburn said in a 1989 interview with Barbara Walters. "We have so much in common, he's so good to me, he takes great care of me. He gives me that marvelous feeling that I'm protected and that I'm the most important thing to him."



Robert Wolders

"After I'd met her, a mutual friend prompted me to ask her out for dinner, but she said she had a night shoot," Wolders told People magazine last year. "I thought it was her gentle way of rejecting me."

Hepburn was a longtime UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, and Wolders accompanied her on many of her missions for the children's charity, including her last one, to Somalia, in 1992.

Wolders was born on Sept. 28, 1936, in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. The son of an actress, he came to the U.S. and enrolled at the University of Rochester, then studied acting at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York. He appeared on a 1965 episode of NBC's Flipper and signed a contract with Universal.

Wolders played the French soldier Fouchet in the 1966 remake of "Beau Geste" that starred Guy Stockwell and was a military man who is slain in the Rock Hudson-George Peppard drama "Tobruk" (1967).

U.S. lawmakers shown backing fake kindergarten gun scheme in Sacha Baron Cohen satire

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — In Sacha Baron Cohen's provocative new comedy show, American politicians are filmed backing a fictitious program to teach kindergartners how to use guns to defend themselves in school shootings.

In a seven-episode series launching on cable channel Showtime on Sunday, the British prankster takes on four different personas as he satirizes the political and cultural life of the United States in the era of President Donald Trump.

In the first episode of "Who is America?", previewed for media by Showtime, Baron Cohen poses as an anti-terror expert who gets two U.S. congressmen to voice support for his

fake "Kinderguardians" scheme for children as young as three.

The scheme includes a fake instructional video featuring children's songs and "gunimals" — weapons adorned with soft toys — that would purportedly help kids confront the school shootings that have plagued the United States for the past decade.

Republican congressmen Dana Rohrabacher of California and Joe Wilson of South Carolina, along with former Senate Republican leader Trent Lott, who is now a lobbyist at a Washington law firm, are shown enthusiastically backing the idea, alongside gun rights advocates and a former congressman-turned-talk radio host, Joe Walsh.

Showtime and Sacha Baron Cohen both declined to comment on the series. Those shown endorsing the fake scheme, including the politicians, had not seen the finished show ahead of its Sunday premiere. Rohrabacher, Wilson and Lott did not immediately reply to requests for comment late on Saturday.

Walsh told CNN on Saturday that he was tricked into reading the words off a teleprompter.

The show marks Baron Cohen's first television project in a decade after he launched his comedy career as subversive white English rapper Ali G., whose interviewees included Donald Trump and Newt Gingrich. His 2006 faux documentary film "Borat" ridiculed Kazakhstan and Middle Americans.