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# Drug money circulate in Western banks



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## Iran, Pakistan to jointly manufacture arms

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Mohammad Baqeri announced on Tuesday that Iran and Pakistan plan to jointly manufacture weapons.

“We make efforts to jointly manufacture defensive arms with Pakistan which can be introduced as the Islamic countries’

joint product,” he told reporters after his meeting with Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain in Islamabad.

Baqeri, who was on three-day tour of Pakistan, said that during his visit, he discussed a number of issues, including military training and defense relations, with officials in Islamabad.

## European governments explore financial channels for Iran

The French, British and German governments have told Iran they are exploring activating accounts for the Iranian central bank with their national central banks in a bid to open a financial channel to keep alive the Iranian nuclear deal, according to several European officials.

The move is the first concrete sign that Europe could deliver on its promise to take steps to sustain the Iranian nuclear deal, setting European governments

squarely against the Trump administration’s Iran sanctions policy aimed at isolating Tehran economically.

Following the U.S. withdrawal from the deal in May, Iran has said it would stop complying with the nuclear deal unless it continues to receive the economic benefits of the 2015 agreement. That deal saw most international sanctions on Tehran lifted in exchange for strict but temporary restrictions on Iran’s nuclear work. ➔ **4**

## Iranian pilgrims due to start Hajj today

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — The first group of Iranian Hajj pilgrims are scheduled to leave Tehran for Medina, Saudi Arabia, on Wednesday morning, head of Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization, has said.

The rest of the pilgrims will travel to Saudi Arabia as of Thursday from Imam Khomeini International Airport, IRNA quoted Hamid Mohammadi as

saying on Tuesday.

Mohammadi explained that so far some 25,000 electronic visas have been issued for the Iranian pilgrims and the rest will be issued over the few coming days.

Doctors, relief forces and other Hajj coordinators excluded, this year some 85,200 pilgrims will travel to Saudi Arabia for Hajj pilgrimage from 20 airports nationwide, he added.

## ‘Impact of Islamic philosophers on western philosophy is huge’

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**  
By Jalal Heirannia

**TEHRAN** — Charles Taliaferro, a professor of philosophy at St. Olaf College in the U.S., believes that the impact of Islamic philosophers on western philosophy especially in the middle age is “huge”.

“As the various translation projects got underway in Spain and in Southern Europe, it became obvious that Christian as well as Jewish philosophy had much to gain and to question by the enormous sophistication of Islamic philosophy,” Taliaferro tells the Tehran Times.

Following is the text of the interview with Professor Taliaferro:

■ How much do western scholars know Islamic philosophy and philosophers? If answer is little, why?

A: Western scholars of the history of ideas would have to be knowledgeable about some of the great Islamic philosophers, including Avicenna or, in Arabic, Ibn Sina, Averroes or Ibn Rushd, Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, and probably Al-Kindi and Suhrawardi.

There were massive translation projects in the 12th but especially the 13th century that made numerous Islamic philosophical texts available in Latin to philosophers in the west, and we can see their influence in western concepts of God, arguments for God’s existence, the soul, causation, and more.

Muslim philosophers also challenged western beliefs, about for example the Christian understanding of God as triune while the awareness of the riches of Islamic philosophy is more common among historians of ideas, some philosophers, such as William Craig, have employed cosmological arguments traced back

to primary Islamic sources to argue for the existence of God.

Probably the reason why more mainstream philosophers do not engage with Islamic philosophy is partly explained by the fact that a great deal of philosophers today in Europe and America are not primarily concerned with the historical roots of the ideas they discuss. Also the exchange between contemporary Islamic philosophers and western philosophers is not assisted by the entrenched secularism in western academics and the difficulties, in today’s political climate, of arranging meetings, free and open exchanges among scholars.

Maybe one other explanation as to why there is not more widespread engagement with Islamic philosophy today, is that some philosophers are reluctant to claim expertise in areas where they do not read the primary languages. ➔ **7**

## Amnesty: U.S.-led coalition in denial over civilian deaths in Raqqa

By staff & agencies

The United States-led coalition is “deeply in denial” about the number of civilians killed during an offensive it launched to remove the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit from Syria’s Raqqa last year, Amnesty International has said.

In a statement released by the rights organization on Tuesday, the group condemned the U.S.-led coalition’s position on the findings of a report, published on June 5, about the four-month-long assault to remove ISIL from its self-proclaimed capital in Syria.

“The coalition’s knee-jerk reactions are long

on rhetoric and short on detail,” Donatella Rovera, a senior adviser at Amnesty International, said in a statement on Tuesday. “They lay bare how deeply in denial the coalition leadership is about its failure to protect civilians caught in conflict,” she added.

“Unless the coalition learns from its mistakes in Raqqa - and Mosul beforehand - it will be doomed to repeat them, with civilians again paying a devastating price,” she warned.

The report, titled War of annihilation: Devastating Toll on Civilians, Raqqa - Syria, includes field investigations from Amnesty International researchers who visited 42 coalition air attack

sites across the city.

It found that hundreds of civilians were killed during the U.S.-led coalition’s military offensive to remove ISIL from Raqqa.

Responding to the June 5 report, The Global Coalition said in a statement at the time that it “sees any non-combatant death or injury as a tragedy and we have meticulous processes in place to ensure we do everything possible to avoid them”.

It added: “The Coalition has been transparent about our process for conducting strikes and assessing any allegations of civilian casualties that may have resulted from those strikes.” ➔ **13**



© Tehran Times/ Mahdi Pedramkhoo

## Mandaeans practicing baptism in Karun River

Followers of Mandaism are seen as performing baptism in Karun River, Khuzestan province.

The Mandaean community reveres John the Baptist, who they call Yehyea Yahana. Baptism, or masbuta, is the key ritual of this gnostic faith.

Unlike Christians, Mandaeans may be baptised hundreds, even thousands of times over the course their life.

**ARTICLE**  
**Mahnaz Abdi**  
Head of the TehranTimes Economy Desk

## IME laying a proper ground to support Iranian products

The current Iranian calendar year has been named as the year of ‘support for Iranian products’ by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

‘Supporting Iranian products’ has been always emphasized by the officials, but there should be a clear roadmap to achieve such goal.

While attracting the customers is a main point, supporting products also requires related businesses thriving; and flourishing businesses needs establishment of direct connections between producers and consumers.

Commodity exchanges are some places that can play significant role in creating such connections and such role is more highlighted in Iran in this year of ‘support for Iranian products’.

Given the expanding process of offering and trading different kinds of commodities including industrial, petrochemical and especially agricultural products in Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) since the past year, it can help materialize the motto of ‘supporting Iranian products’ significantly, according to Hassan Amiri, the deputy head of Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) for supervising the exchange markets.

“IME has already played some special part in promotion of Iranian products and it will continue its role in this way”, Amiri told ISNA on April 29.

Meanwhile, as one of the main requirements of a production or industrial unit is reliable funding, capital market including IME as an organized market can provide the ground for reliable and on-time funding and also for competitive prices.

“The country’s financial system should move in a way to encourage investors to develop capital market and flourish domestic industries. Reliable funding for domestic producers can support Iranian products and make them competitive in the international markets”, according to Mohsen Fazelian, a capital market expert.

He also believes that another way through it IME can support Iranian products is offering comprehensive reports on the quality of the goods. ➔ **4**

**ARTICLE**  
**Martin Love**  
Political analyst from North Carolina

## Let’s hope Ocasio-Cortez has real guts

A comely 28 year old restaurant employee with a Latin name and background from the Bronx, New York City, knocks off the multi term Congressman in a primary election who may ultimately have become the Democratic Party leader in the U.S. House of Representatives, displacing Rep. Nancy Pelosi (who really is no leader at all). This is heady stuff, and she arrived on the political scene with a slate of progressive ideas, including calls for an end to U.S. warmongering and universal healthcare for all citizens. Even more notably, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez a month ago, before her win, was tweeting that she opposed the U.S. embassy move to Jerusalem, rampant Israeli human rights abuses, and what she termed Zionist “massacres” of the hapless Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

What’s remarkable is that, having opined as much, she actually won the primary election as a Democrat in a district full of Jewish voters against her incumbent, “establishment” opponent. The win over Rep. Joe Crowley in the 14th Congressional District said quite a lot about her: that she appears smart, articulate and ever so refreshing to many people across the U.S. -- especially those Democrats tired of same old who may realize that in the upcoming mid-term elections and later for the Presidency, the Democrats don’t have a good chance to take back control of the House nor to defeat Trump in 2020, who has already amassed and election war chest of \$90 million to spend on his future reelection bid.

Ocasio-Cortez has frightened the U.S. political establishment like few other candidates in recent memory, and brought smiles to the faces of many voters, especially those depressed for decades about U.S. policies and actions in the Middle East. But already, interviewed extensively about her astounding win over Crowley, she is equivocating.

We don’t know to what extent and how exactly she has been threatened, but during an interview on face the Nation on prime-time television the impact of threats has become apparent. She claimed, for one thing, that her comments had been the comments of an “activist” and that now, ➔ **7**



## MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



### Security forces nab Daesh members in southwest Iran

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alawi announced on Monday that security forces managed to detain members of a terrorist team affiliated to Daesh (ISIL) in southwestern Iran.

One of the members of the terrorist cell, whose brother had been killed as a Daesh militant in Syria, intended to form a four-member group to join Daesh but they were arrested by intelligence forces in the southwest, Alawi said, according to Tasnim.

The terrorist team had planned to carry out acts of terror in some districts but their plots were foiled by intelligence forces, he explained.



### 'Without JCPOA, Iran will expand nuclear program'

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Without the nuclear agreement, called the JCPOA, Iran will resume its halted nuclear activities and will expand them, spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization said on Tuesday, ISNA reported.

Talking to reporters, Behrouz Kamalvandi said Iran has received a package from the remaining signatories of the deal and is weighing it before making any decision.

Kamalvandi said negotiations are still going on between top Iranian officials and the other five countries (Germany, Britain, France, China and Russia) remaining in the nuclear pact.

He also rejected Israel's claims that it had stolen top-secret information on Iran's nuclear program, saying, "The Zionist regime has always made such claims."



### London won't follow U.S. on JCPOA: ambassador

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — British Ambassador to Tehran Rob Macaire said on Monday that London does not follow the U.S. on the Iran nuclear deal, noting that his country's policies is the yardstick for action.

Macaire said the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (the official name for the nuclear agreement) is very important to Britain, and it has been successful in maintaining world peace and security, IRNA reported.

He added London has been committed to the deal and will continue to do so because it has many economic gains for both Britain and Iran.



### Tehran urges cooperation to fight dust pollution

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Tehran has voiced concerns over the issue of dust pollution in the West Asia region, saying tackling the issue hinges on regional and international cooperation, Tasnim reported.

Addressing a meeting in New York on Monday, Seyed Ali Mohammad Mousavi, director general of the international environmental affairs department at the Foreign Ministry, highlighted social, economic and environmental damages to a large part of Iran directly caused by dust pollution.

He said a major part of the fine particles (known as PM2.5) enter Iran from neighboring countries.



### U.S. pursuing failed policy of backing MEK: advisor

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the parliament speaker, said on Tuesday that Washington is pursuing the failed policy of supporting the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO/MEK) to put pressure on Iran.

In a meeting with the new Dutch Ambassador to Tehran Susan Trstal, Amir Abdollahian called on the Netherlands to stop the activities of the MEK terrorist group in the European country.

Trstal, for her part, said Amsterdam is eager to expand ties with Iran in all fields.



### Ex-Chinese general urges parties to save nuclear deal

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Saving and implementing the 2015 Iran nuclear deal is the main obligation of signatories, a former senior Chinese army officer has said, IRNA reported.

"All parties should try to save the deal from collapse, and it requires all signatories to defend it firmly and implement it," said Yao Yunzhu, a retired major-general of the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

Yao further said that the U.S. not only has withdrawn from the deal, but it has also tried to impede its implementation by other parties.

# Iran to continue talks on oil sale, banking ties: Zarif

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday that despite the U.S. exit from the 2015 nuclear agreement Iran will continue talks with the remaining signatories to the accord on guaranteeing sale of oil and banking transactions.

During a meeting with businessmen and foreign diplomats based in Iran, Zarif said that all the remaining parties to the nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, are ready to cooperate with Iran.

Zarif also said, "Our foreign partners have understood this reality that there is no safer market to do business activities than Iran's."

He noted that the meeting has the "political determination" to continue economic activities in Iran.

Pointing to the meeting of the Joint Commission of the JCPOA in Vienna on July 6, he said the meeting "shows there is political commitment" to preserve the JCPOA. "I am sure that political decision making



Left to right: FM Zarif, First VP Jahangiri, Tehran Chamber chair Khansari

in the world is based on moving towards lawfulness, however certain countries'

capacities to counter the U.S. bullying is still questionable," the foreign minister

remarked.

Elsewhere, Zarif said that Iran reserves the right to take retaliatory action against the U.S. move in leaving the JCPOA.

"However, currently our choice is to apply a legal method and reach a strategy with our friends, partners and remaining parties to the JCPOA," the chief diplomat remarked.

"Within the framework of this lawfulness and based on the Iran-U.S. 1955 agreement, today Iran filed a legal complaint at the International Court of Justice against the U.S. over its illegal and unilateral sanctions. We hope that we can prove that the U.S. would not be able to easily violate law and act against the will of the international community," he said.

Iran and the U.S. signed the Treaty of Amity in 1955 which is still valid according to international law. The treaty consists of an introduction and twenty-three articles and emphasizes encouraging mutual trade and investments.

## EU activates law on protecting trade with Iran: Mogherini

European countries have activated a blocking statute that prohibits companies from complying with U.S. sanctions on Iran, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said on Monday.

"Today, the European Council has endorsed the update of the blocking statute annex on the nuclear deal with Iran," Mogherini told reporters in Brussels at a meeting with EU foreign ministers.

A blocking statute is a law enacted in 1996 to protect European entities "against the effects of the extra-territorial application of legislation adopted by a third country."

The bloc should have updated the law to include U.S. sanctions on Iran, requiring consent from the EU's 28 member states.

Mogherini said the European Parliament gave its go-ahead to the statute two weeks ago, providing companies legal cover to operate in Iran.

The law is due to go into effect on August 6, when the first set of U.S. sanctions against Iran kicks in. The statute will allow firms to recover damages from American measures

and nullify any court ruling against them.

The measure is the first practical step taken by the Europeans to persuade Iran to remain in the 2015 nuclear deal after Washington's withdrawal and its plan to reimpose sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

European officials were also quoted as saying that France, Britain and Germany were trying to activate accounts for the Iranian central bank with their central banks in order to open financial channels with the country.

Other European governments, including Austria and Sweden, have also said they would consider doing likewise, the Wall Street Journal reported.

Tehran has long complained that European banks' refusal to process Iran-related transactions is hindering companies from trade with the Islamic Republic.

While discussions with the related central banks have started, they have not bought into the option yet, the Journal reported.

Under pressure from the United States,

the European Investment Bank (EIB) has already balked at the EU proposal to do business in Iran.

EU diplomats, officials and sources at the bank have said the plan would imperil EIB's multi-billion-dollar funding, the bulk of which is rooted in the U.S.

Washington is also reportedly lobbying European banks in back channels to object to the plan, warning them of consequences if they invest in Iran.

On Monday, Mogherini implicitly admitted U.S. pressures, saying European governments had an uphill task to persuade firms to trade with Iran.

"It is a difficult exercise, because the weight of the U.S. in the global economy and the financial system is obviously relevant," she said.

Germany, France and the UK, as well as their EU counterparts reportedly lodged requests with the U.S. administration last month, seeking exemptions from sanctions for trade with Iran.

Washington, however, rebuffed the high-level European plea, the Financial Times reported on Monday.

A number of European companies such as French oil group Total and carmaker PSA have already announced their plans to wind down business in Iran.

Mogherini said while the Europeans "will continue to do all we can to try and prevent this deal from being dismantled," she was not sure the "efforts are going to be enough."

"It is predictable that many multinational corporations and large European and non-European banks may not be willing to continue economic cooperation with Iran under U.S. pressure and threat," said Massoud Khansari, chairman of Tehran's chamber of commerce.

Last year, Iran signed several credit agreements worth \$30 billion with Danish, Italian, Austrian, Chinese, and Korean banks, which are now exposed to U.S. sanctions, he said in remarks published Tuesday.

(Source: Press TV)

## India firm to help keep nuclear deal alive: Araqchi



Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Monday that India is determined to help keep the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the official name for the 2015 nuclear deal, alive.

"India is resolved to save the JCPOA," said Araqchi following a meeting with government officials during a trip to the Indian capital New Delhi on Monday.

"Considering America's recent move of quitting the nuclear agreement with Iran and its effect on relations with India, the subject of the JCPOA was an important part of our talks," Araqchi explained.

While stressing that Iran is one of India's reliable oil suppliers, he noted that New Delhi has also voiced its readiness to continue purchasing oil from Tehran.

He also noted that India and other states which cooperate with Iran must find ways

to secure Iran's interests on the basis of the nuclear accord.

In May, U.S. President Donald Trump announced that he would pull America out of the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran and re-impose the sanctions that the deal had envisaged to be lifted.

The sanctions would include a universal ban on Iran over buying or acquiring U.S. dollars which will come into force in August as well as restrictions over purchases of crude oil from the country and investing in its oil projects which will become effective by the start of November.

Saudi Arabia and some other OPEC member states are largely believed to be under pressure by the United States to increase their production in a push meant to prevent market shocks once Washington materializes its threat to cut off Iran's oil exports.

(Source: Press TV)

## Putin defends JCPOA in presser with Trump



**POLITICS** TEHRAN — In a joint press conference with his American counterpart Donald Trump in Helsinki on Monday, Russian President Vladimir Putin defended the Iran nuclear deal.

"We... mentioned our concern about the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA. Well, the U.S. — Our U.S. counterparts are aware of our posture," he said, briefing the press on the two leaders' meeting which had been held beforehand, according to a transcript of the presser published by Politico.

"Thanks to the Iranian nuclear deal, Iran began [to be the] most controlled country in the world, it's submitted to the control of IAEA, it effectively ensures peaceful nature of Iranian nuclear program and strengthens the non-prolifer-

ation regime."

Trump, however, speaking after Putin, reiterated his old accusations against Iran by calling for "placing pressure on Iran to halt" what he called its "nuclear ambitions".

In May Trump disrespected global calls for the preservation of the 2015 nuclear agreement and said that he would pull America out of it and re-impose the sanctions that the deal had envisaged to be lifted.

The sanctions would include a universal ban on Iran over buying or acquiring U.S. dollars which will come into force in August as well as restrictions over purchases of crude oil from the country and investing in its oil sector projects which will become effective by the start of November.

## Supreme Council for Economic Coordination tasks govt bodies to fight sanctions

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The Supreme Council for Economic Coordination has assigned different duties to governmental bodies to fight the looming U.S. sanctions and stabilize the economy, according to a report by Mehr news agency.

The council, which was established upon an order Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has so far held four meetings, bringing together heads of the three branches of government to "confront the economic wickedness of America."

Back in April, Ayatollah Khamenei said the U.S. Treasury Department has turned into an "economic war room" against Iran.

He said the economic war can be countered through reliance on domestic capabilities, calling on authorities to form a council to confront Washington's "ill will".

During the first meeting of the council, the Leader voiced support for the government in its efforts to revive the economy.

The council is headed by President Rouhani. It enables Rouhani's administration to receive the support of the judicial and legislative branches of the government.

## Drug money circulate in Western banks: Iranian interior minister

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli on Tuesday criticized Western countries for exercising double standards in fighting narcotics, saying the drug money circulate in Western banks.

Speaking at a congress on social ills, Rahmani Fazli said Western countries are only after their own benefits and do not take serious measures to fight illicit drugs trade in their own banks, Mehr reported.

Iran sits on a major drug route between Afghanistan

and Europe and the Persian Gulf Arab states. Iran shares about 900 kilometers of borders with the war-stricken Afghanistan. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime reported in October 2016 that as much as 90% of the world's heroin come from Afghan opium.

In a meeting with Executive Director of the UNODC Yuri Fedotov in March, Rahmani Fazli called for stopping adoption of "selective" and "political" strategies in fighting drug trafficking.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran supports Commission on

Narcotic Drugs, the International Narcotics Control Board and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime," he noted.

Iran has been a pioneer in fighting drug trafficking. According to official estimates, the fight against drug trafficking costs Iran about \$1 billion annually.

About 4000 Iranian security forces have been killed in clashes with drug traffickers over the past decades.

Just last month an Iranian border guard lost his life in the battle against drug smugglers in the southeastern province of Sistan-Balouchestan.



# Hamas warns of consequences as Israel tightens Gaza siege, halts fuel transfer

A young Palestinian man has died more than two months after being shot by Israeli military forces during clashes between a group of Palestinian protesters and Israeli forces in the southern part of the occupied West Bank.

The spokesman for the Gaza Ministry of Health, Ashraf al-Qidra, said in a statement that 20-year-old Sari Daoud al-Shawbaki passed away on Tuesday morning at St. Joseph Hospital in East al-Quds (Jerusalem), where he had been taken for medical treatment.

He had been shot and wounded in the neck during "The Great March of Return" protests on May 14. The gunshot wound caused him quadriplegia, also known as tetraplegia.

Shawbaki's death brings to 140 the number of Palestinians, who have been killed by Israeli forces ever since the "Great March of Return" began in the Gaza Strip on March 30.

A total of 14,811 Palestinians also sustained injuries, of whom 366 are reportedly in a critical condition.

On June 13, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Turkish and Algerian-sponsored resolution, condemning Israel for Palestinian civilian deaths in the Gaza Strip.

The resolution, which had been put forward on the behalf of Arab and Muslim countries, garnered a strong majority of 120 votes in the 193-member assembly, with 8 votes against and 45 abstentions on Wednesday.

The resolution calls on UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to make proposals within 60 days "on ways and means for ensuring the safety, protection, and well-being of the Palestinian civilian population under Israeli occupation," including "recommendations regarding an international protection mechanism."

It also calls for "immediate steps towards ending the closure and the restrictions imposed by Israel on movement and access into and out of the Gaza Strip."

■ **Hamas warns of consequences as Israel tightens Gaza siege, halts fuel transfer**

The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas has warned Israel of "dangerous consequences" as the regime tightens its inhumane siege on the Gaza Strip by blocking fuel shipments into the coastal enclave.

On July 9, Israel imposed sanctions on Gaza in what it described as a crackdown against Hamas. The regime closed the Kerem Shalom crossing, Gaza's main conduit for trade, to most merchandise, except for fuel, food and medicine.

The Israeli military said the closure would continue as long as Palestinian protesters send kites and balloons loaded with flammable material into the occupied lands.

The Israeli regime has announced the closure of the Gaza Strip's main commercial crossing, a move Hamas says amounts to a crime against humanity.

On Monday night, Israeli war minister' office announced in a statement that Avigdor Lieberman had decided to halt fuel transfer into Gaza from Tuesday morning until Sunday in response to what it called "terror attempts" by Hamas, which runs Gaza.

"Lieberman, in consultation with the chief of staff, has decided to close the Kerem Shalom crossing to imports of oil and gas until this Sunday," the statement read. "The crossing will continue to transfer food and medicine [shipments] that are individually approved."

The statement also noted that Israel had reduced the area where Gaza fishermen were allowed to fish, from six nautical miles to three.

In response, Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum condemned Israel's closure of the Kerem Shalom crossing as a crime against Palestinian people.

"The Israeli occupation's closure of the Kerem Shalom crossing and depriving Gaza from the most simple necessities of life is a crime against humanity that will be added to its list of crimes at the expense of the Palestinian people including those living in the Strip," he said in a statement.

"These vengeful measures reflect the degree of the oppression and the ugliness of the crime that Gaza is facing, that will have dangerous consequences for which the occupation will bear full responsibility," he added.



According to latest reports, the number of trucks, which carried food into the Gaza Strip last week, was the lowest in recent months.

Separately on Monday, Egyptian officials manning the Rafah border crossing with Gaza said it would not be operating on Tuesday in both directions, without providing reasons. The crossing has been open since late May.

Meanwhile, Tel Aviv is continuing its airstrikes against Gaza. On Monday, the Israeli air force hit two alleged Hamas positions in northern Gaza.

Two Palestinians have been injured after Israeli warplanes shelled an area in the northern part of the besieged Gaza Strip. The Israeli strikes came two days into a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas amid a major flare-up in Gaza over the weekend.

Israel says it has lost at least 2,500 acres of farmland, nature reserves and forests because of the fires caused by flaming kites and balloons.

Israel carries out regular air raids on Palestinians in Gaza under the pretext of hitting Hamas targets. The Gaza Strip has also been under an inhumane Israeli siege since 2007 and witnessed three wars since 2008.

Tensions have been running high near the Gaza fence since March 30, which marked the start of a series of protests, dubbed "The Great March of Return," demanding the right to return for those driven out of their homeland.

The Gaza clashes reached their peak on May 14, the eve of the 70th anniversary of the Nakba Day (the Day of Catastrophe), which coincided this year with the United States embassy relocation from Tel Aviv to occupied al-Quds (Jerusalem).

■ **'Collective punishment': Israel blocks fuel shipment to Gaza**

Israel has further tightened its blockade on the Gaza Strip, preventing gas and fuel deliveries through its only commercial crossing with the Palestinian besieged enclave a week after they announced the closure of the crossing.

The defense ministry announced late on Monday that fuel and gas deliveries will be suspended. The fishing zone enforced by Israel off the Gaza Strip will also be further reduced from six nautical miles to three.

■ **Incendiary kites**

Israel says it has no interest in engaging in another war with Hamas, but says it will no longer tolerate the flying of incendiary kites and balloons into Israel.

The UN and Gisha, the Legal Centre for Freedom of Movement, called Israel's latest measure an act of "collective punishment".

"There is no other way of describing this measure other than collective punishment. Pretending to know what Gaza needs and trying to 'manage the situation' harkens back to earlier iterations of the closure, is morally depraved and constitutes a willful act of hubris in a volatile situation," a spokesperson from Gisha said.

Palestinians in Gaza view the balloons and kites as legitimate resistance against Israel's more than decade-long blockade, which has caused widespread economic hardship.

■ **I am Palestinian in my heart, Maradona tells Abbas in Moscow**

Separately, soccer legend Diego Maradona once again reiterates support for Palestine, embracing Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas during a meeting in Moscow and telling him that he is Palestinian in his heart.

"In my heart, I am Palestinian," Maradona told Abbas during the meeting on Sunday, which followed the final World Cup game.

The Palestinian leader was in Russia at the invitation of President Vladimir Putin for talks on bilateral and regional issues.

The Argentinean public figure reiterated his long-standing support for Palestinians and expressed hope that Palestine will eventually become an internationally-recognized sovereign country.

On his Instagram account, Maradona wrote, "President Abbas has a country and has a right. I am Palestinian."

Maradona is famed for his pro-Palestinian stance, and opposition to Israel's deadly acts of aggression targeting Palestinians.

During Israel's last war against the blockaded Gaza Strip in 2014, which killed more than 2,000 Palestinians, he blasted the regime, saying, "What Israel is doing to the Palestinians is shameful. That is all...I love you all so much."

Reports also said back then that Maradona was in negotiations with the Palestinian Football Association over the possibility of coaching the Palestinian national team during the 2015 AFC Asian Cup.

In 2012, he had made headlines by saying, "I am the number one fan of the Palestinian people. I respect them and sympathize with them. I support Palestine without any fear." (Source: agencies)

## U.S. ready for direct talks with Afghan Taliban, general says

### 54 released from Taliban prison in Afghanistan

The United States is ready to join direct negotiations with the Taliban in an effort to end the 17-year-long war in Afghanistan, General John Nicholson, the top U.S. commander said, amid growing speculation about possible peace talks.

The comment follows increased diplomatic efforts to seek talks following unprecedented scenes of unarmed Taliban fighters mingling with Afghan security forces on the streets of Kabul and other cities during last month's surprise ceasefire.

Nicholson, who leads the NATO-led Resolute Support mission, said the United States recognized it had a key role to play.

"Our Secretary of State, Mr. (Mike) Pompeo, has said that we, the United States, are ready to talk to the Taliban and discuss the role of international forces," he said.

"We hope that they realize this and that this will help to move the peace process forward."

Earlier, the New York Times reported that President Donald Trump's administration had ordered diplomats to seek direct talks with the Taliban in a bid to jump-start negotiations.

Sohail Shahin, a spokesman for the Taliban's political office in Qatar, said he was still waiting for confirmation but welcomed signs of the new approach.

"This is what we wanted and were waiting for, to sit with the U.S. directly and discuss the withdrawal of foreign troops from Af-



ghanistan," he said.

He said that as a first step, he expected to see Taliban leaders removed from a United Nations black list in order to be able to travel. He also said the issue of international troops in Afghanistan would be a major issue and that the Taliban would be willing to discuss U.S. concerns.

U.S. officials have said that Trump has shown growing impatience with a lack of progress in Afghanistan, where the Taliban

control much of the country despite a more aggressive campaign of air strikes announced last year.

The insurgents have rejected talks with the government of President Ashraf Ghani, which they see as illegitimate and instead insisted that they would only talk with the United States.

Pompeo has said that while the overall peace process must be Afghan-led, Washington would be ready to join talks, a shift

from its previous position that only Ghani's government had legitimacy to talk with the Taliban.

He has also said the United States is willing to discuss the position of international forces in Afghanistan, which the Taliban have said must leave as a condition for negotiations.

Senior U.S. officials, including Pompeo and Alice Wells, the State Department's top diplomat for Afghanistan, have visited Kabul in recent weeks to try to smooth the way for talks.

■ **54 released from Taliban prison**

An Afghan official says at least 54 people, including security personnel and civilians, have been released from a Taliban prison in southern Helmand province.

Omar Zwak, spokesman for the provincial governor, said Tuesday the prisoners were freed after a commando unit raided the prison late Monday night in Musa Qala district.

Zwak said there were 32 civilians, 16 police, four soldiers and two military doctors who had been locked up by the insurgents.

He said security forces were still securing the area.

The Taliban did not immediately comment on the raid, but the insurgents are in control of the majority of the districts in Helmand, where they have increased their attacks against provincial officials and security forces.

(Source: agencies)

## Britain's May wins parliament vote after bowing to Brexit pressure

British Prime Minister Theresa May won a series of votes in parliament, keeping her over-arching strategy to leave the European Union just about on track after bowing to pressure from Brexit supporters in her party.

But by accepting the demands of hardline Brexit campaigners, she exposed her vulnerability in parliament, where both wings of her Conservative Party attacked each other, highlighting the deep divisions that have so far hampered progress in talks with the EU.

May has vowed to stick to her plan to negotiate the closest possible trade ties with the EU, saying her strategy was the only one that could meet the government's aims for Brexit, the biggest shift in Britain's foreign and trade policy for decades.

But even before the EU has had time to assess her vision for Britain's future ties with the bloc, her plans have come under fire from both camps in the Conservative Party. One pro-EU ex-minister called it the "worst of all worlds", while eurosceptics said the strategy kept Britain too close to the bloc.

On Monday, Brexit supporters targeted the government's so-called customs bill, hoping to toughen up her plans. But instead of facing them down and fuelling tensions, the government accepted their four amendments.

May's spokesman said the changes to the bill, formally called the Taxation (Cross-border Trade) Bill, did little more than put government policy into law. But by hardening the language to emphasize that the future collection of duties and taxes by Britain and the EU be on a reciprocal basis, some lawmakers feared that Brexit supporters may have made May's plan less sellable to the bloc. Parliament voted 318-285 to pass the bill. It will now go to the upper house of parliament before becoming law.

After a rowdy debate when Conservatives criticized members of their own party, junior Treasury minister Mel Stride told parliament: "We have had a full, robust and comprehensive debate today as is entirely appropriate for a bill of this importance, importance to our ability to continue after our departure from the EU as one of the world's great trading nations."

For now, May's plans appeared still largely on track.

■ **Not dead yet**

May denied a suggestion in parliament that her Brexit plan was dead, and her spokesman said the decision to accept those amendments were "consistent" with the white paper policy document ministers agreed earlier this month.

Where the government might struggle is explaining its acceptance of the demand that the EU must collect tariffs on Britain's behalf, if London is to do the same - a suggestion one expert said the bloc's negotiators were unlikely to accept.

The government won the vote on the tariffs amendment with a narrow majority of three lawmakers. Junior Defence Minister Guto Bebb resigned his position after deciding to vote against the government, the 10th Conservative to quit over May's plan.

The government's acceptance of the amendments did little to ease the tensions in May's party, which is at war with itself over the Brexit plans. In one of the rowdiest debates in parliament on Brexit so far, pro-EU Conservative lawmaker Anna Soubry said: "The only reason that the government has accepted these amendments is because it is frightened of somewhere in the region of 40 members of parliament, the hard no-deal Brexiters, who should have been seen off a long time ago."

The battle over the amendments is unlikely to be the last that May and her team will have to face, and may have spurred the government's move to bring forward parliament's mid-year summer break to Thursday rather than next week.

May had to fight hard to get the agreement of Cabinet ministers at her Chequers country residence earlier this month for her vision for Britain's future ties with the EU. It was then undermined by the resignations of Brexit minister David Davis and Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson.

They and other eurosceptic Conservatives say the plan to keep close trade ties with the EU - which is only a starting point for a second phase of talks with Brussels - betrays her promise of a clean break with the 27-nation bloc after Brexit.

From the other wing of May's party, pro-EU former Education Minister Justine Greening called on Monday for a second referendum, saying it was the only way to break the stalemate in parliament over the best future relationship with the bloc.

Greening branded May's plan as "a fudge I can't support. It's the worst of both worlds".

May's spokesman said there would be no second referendum under any circumstances, and restated her position that the Chequers plan was the only way to deliver a Brexit that worked in the best interests of the country.

May said she was sticking with her plans.

## More migrants take sea route to Spain than Italy this year: UN

The number of migrants arriving in Spain by boat is surging, the UN said Tuesday, and it has now surpassed Italy as the top destination for Mediterranean crossings.

So far this year, 50,872 migrants have crossed the Mediterranean to Europe - less than half the number that made the treacherous journey during the same period of 2017, according to the UN migration agency.

But while the overall numbers have fallen dramatically, Spain has seen landings on its shores nearly triple, IOM said.

"As we have predicted for several weeks now, Spain has become the most active route of African migrants and people using Africa as a stepping stone into Europe," agency spokesman Joel Millman told reporters in Geneva.

Spain "surpassed Italy this past weekend," he said. In all, 18,061 migrants have arrived in Spain since January, compared to 6,500 during the first half of 2017, with nearly 10,000 of those arrivals registered in June alone.

At the same time, arrivals in Italy total 17,827 since the beginning of the year - compared to 93,237 during the same period last year.

The dramatic drop of Italian arrivals came after a controversial deal reached between Rome and the Libyan coastguard a year ago.

The numbers have fallen further since Italy's new populist government pushed the issue to the forefront of the EU agenda last month by refusing to open the country's ports to a number of NGO migrant rescue ships operating in the Mediterranean.

Spain has opened its ports to several rescue ships run by charities which were turned away from Italy.



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	107780.6
IFX	1209.65

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	43,420 rials
EUR	50,866 rials
GBP	57,509 rials
AED	11,823 rials

Source: mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$68.02/b
Brent	\$71.78/b
OPEC Basket	\$63.50/b
Gold	\$1,240.25 /oz
Silver	\$15.76/oz
Platinum	\$825.00/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



**Aluminum production by major companies rises 11% in 3 months yr/yr**

ECONOMY

**TEHRAN** — Iran’s major aluminum producers produced 91,379 tons of aluminum during the three-month period from March 21 to June 21, which shows 11 percent growth from the figure of the same period of time in the past year, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

As reported, these major companies produced 30,432 tons of aluminum during the Iranian calendar month of Khordad (May 22 – June 21), 13 percent more than the figure for the same month last year.

Aluminum production by the country’s major producers rose by 9.7 percent year-on-year during the first two months of the Iranian calendar year (March 21-May 21).

As reported by ILNA, production of aluminum by these major companies was 55,568 tons in the two-month period of the preceding year.



**Prices of imported goods not allowed to be increased above 17%**

ECONOMY

**TEHRAN** — Managing director of Iran Chamber of Guilds announced that each business unit is permitted to increase the prices of imported goods between seven to 17 percent, Tasnim news agency reported on Tuesday.

According to Ali Avazpour any further rise in the prices of the imported goods is illegal and would be supervised and sued by General Inspection Organization and Suspending Organization of Iran.

IME laying a proper ground to support Iranian products

➔ He says: “Of course, capital market is not charged with standardizing and grading the products, but when it clarifies the quality characteristics of the commodities, it provides some comparison factors for the consumers which can encourage them to buy domestic products.”

And according to IME Managing Director Hamed Soltaninejad, production of high-quality products and offering them by the producers on one side and encouraging demand of the consumers on the other side cannot be expected without offering required support and incentives.

He names discovery of fair prices through free supply and demand in the IME as one of the most important encouraging approaches in this due.

And as being strongly suggested by him and other capital market directors and experts, enough attraction and security should be provided for domestic investors so that they make investment in the way of ‘supporting Iranian products’.

UK watchdog paints gloomier long-term picture for public finances

Britain’s budget watchdog on Tuesday outlined a gloomier picture for the government’s finances in the long term, reflecting recent pledges to increase health spending without tax hikes or spending cuts to pay for it.

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) stuck to its view that the public finances are likely to come under significant pressure from an aging population.

“The long-term outlook for the public finances is less favourable than at the time of our last (fiscal sustainability report) in January 2017,” the OBR said in its report.

This was “more than explained” by the government’s health spending announcement in June.

Last month Prime Minister Theresa May announced a 4 billion pound (\$5.3 billion) boost for the National Health Services, to be funded in part by a “Brexit dividend” that the Institute for Fiscal Studies says does not exist.

Finance minister Philip Hammond has indicated that taxpayers will need to foot some of the bill.

(Source: Reuters)

U.S. plans for wiping Iranian oil is an illusion: First VP

ENERGY

**TEHRAN** — Iranian First Vice President Es’haq Jahangiri said on Monday that The U.S.’s attempts for halting Iranian oil exports to the world markets is an illusion, Shana news agency reported.

“The world needs Iranian oil and we are also able to take necessary steps for selling our oil,” Jahangiri said.

Speaking in a meeting between Iranian

businessmen and foreign trade representatives in Tehran, the official noted that the U.S. strategy is to start a trade war with Iran just like they have started it with other nations like China and Russia.

Jahangiri further mentioned the government’s plans and programs for withstanding the sanctions, saying, “Hopefully we will lead our economy [out of this situation] with the help and support of our neighboring coun-



tries and the countries that we have good relations with.”

Iran’s first vice president also announced on July 10 that the country plans to sell as much oil as it can in face of U.S. sanctions.

“Required measures have been taken by Iranian foreign policy officials and those from the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) to ease related banking transactions”, Fars news agency quoted him as saying.

European governments explore financial channels for Iran

➔ Officials involved in discussions said the option of central banks activating Iranian central bank accounts—or reactivating some which have been dormant for years—is one of several that European governments are actively exploring. The three European governments laid out their plans to Iran during discussions earlier this month among foreign ministers and senior officials in Vienna. Officials said they are still trying to iron out details.

Other European governments, including Austria and Sweden, have also said they would consider doing likewise, the officials said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has demanded some measures be put in place before the first set of U.S. sanctions is reimposed on Aug. 6.

After the July 6 Vienna meeting, Mr. Zarif said he was encouraged by European, Russian and Chinese work on Iran’s key concerns: opening financial channels to Iran and allowing Iran to continue exporting oil.

“Moving in right direction on concrete steps for timely implementation of commitments,” Mr. Zarif said at the time on Twitter.



France, Germany, Britain, Russia and China—the countries that negotiated the 2015 nuclear deal alongside the U.S. and Iran—pledged in Vienna to protect “economic operators” for investing or carrying out “commercial and financial activities,” a reference to possible central bank payment channels, according to European officials.

U.S. launches five WTO challenges to retaliatory tariffs

The United States launched five separate World Trade Organization dispute actions on Monday challenging retaliatory tariffs imposed by China, the European Union, Canada, Mexico and Turkey following U.S. duties on steel and aluminum.

The retaliatory tariffs on up to a combined \$28.5 billion worth of U.S. exports are illegal under WTO rules, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said in a statement.

“These tariffs appear to breach each WTO member’s commitments under the WTO Agreement,” he said. “The United States will take all necessary actions to protect our interests, and we urge our trading partners to work constructively with us on the problems created by massive and persistent excess capacity in the steel and aluminum sectors.”

Lighthizer’s office has maintained that the tariffs the United States has imposed on imports of steel and aluminum are acceptable under WTO rules because they were imposed on the grounds of a

national security exception.

Mexico said it would defend its retaliatory measures, saying the imposition of U.S. tariffs was “unjustified.”

“The purchases the United States makes of steel and aluminum from Mexico do not represent a threat to the national security,” Mexico’s Economy Ministry said in a statement.

“On the contrary, the solid trade relationship between Mexico and the U.S. has created an integrated regional market where steel and aluminum products contribute to the competitiveness of the region in various strategic sectors, such as automotive, aerospace, electrical and electronic,” the ministry added.

Lighthizer said last month that retaliation had no legal basis because the EU and other trading partners were making false assertions that the U.S. steel and aluminum tariffs are illegal “safeguard” actions intended to protect U.S. producers.

(Source: Reuters)

UK employment hits record high as job creation continues

UK employment rose to a record high in the three months through May after the economy created jobs at a stronger-than-expected pace.

The number of people in work rose by 137,000, taking the employment rate to 75.7 percent, the highest since records began in 1971, the Office for National Statistics said Tuesday. Unemployment held at a 43-year low of 4.2 percent.

Pay growth eased during the period, with wages excluding bonuses rising by 2.7 percent, as forecast. However, the slowdown may do little to ease concerns among Bank of England policy makers about inflationary pressures building in the labor market.

Money markets are pricing in an about 80 percent chance of an interest-rate hike in August, a move also expected by more than 70 percent of economists in the latest Bloomberg survey. The pound rose following the labor-market data and was at \$1.3261 as of 9:34 a.m. London time, up 0.2 percent on the day.

The figures point to healthy demand for labor as the economy picked up from a snow-blighted first quarter. The number of vacancies rose to the highest since records began in 2001 and inactivity -- those neither in work nor looking for a job -- dropped by 86,000 to an all-time low of 21 percent.

“It’s clear that the labor market is still growing strongly,” said Matt Hughes, a senior statistician at the ONS.

With wage growth running ahead of inflation, households are enjoying a return to real spending power after a year-long pay squeeze. They may not be out of the woods just yet though, with a report tomorrow forecast to show inflation picked up again in June.

In May, private-sector pay growth picked up to 2.8 percent, but the public sector saw a slowdown. Unemployment fell to 4 percent in the month. Earnings growth including bonuses slowed to 2.5 percent between March and May.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Japan, EU sign free trade pact amid worries about Trump

Japan and the European Union signed a wide-ranging free trade deal on Tuesday that both sides hope will act as a counterweight to the protectionist forces unleashed by U.S. President Donald Trump.

The ambitious trade pact, which creates the world’s largest open economic area, comes amid fears that a trade war between the United States and China will diminish the role of free trade in the global economic order.

“There are rising concerns about protectionism, but I want Japan and the EU to lead the world by bearing the flag of free trade,” Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said at a news conference after the signing ceremony.

The United States this month imposed 25 percent tariffs on \$34 billion of Chinese

goods to lower the U.S. trade deficit, and China quickly retaliated with an increase in tariffs on U.S. goods.

The Japan-EU trade deal is also a sign of shifting global ties as Trump distances the United States from long-time allies like the EU, NATO and Canada.

“We are sending a clear message that we stand against protectionism. The EU and Japan remain open for cooperation,” European Council President Donald Tusk, who speaks for the 28 EU national leaders, told reporters.

The deal removes EU tariffs of 10 percent on Japanese cars and 3 percent on most car parts. It would also scrap Japanese duties of some 30 percent or more on EU cheese and 15 percent on wines, and secure access to large

public tenders in Japan.

Europe’s food sector is one of the biggest winners from the deal, which should allow it to capitalize on Japanese demand for high-quality cheese, chocolates, meats and pasta.

Japanese car and car parts makers are also expected to increase their sales to Europe, where they have lagged behind European rivals.

However, Japan’s dairy industry is expected to lose market share to European products once tariffs of up to 40 percent on some cheese imports start falling.

Japan and the EU also agreed on Tuesday to establish a regular dialogue on trade and economic policy, with the first meeting to be held before year’s end.

The dialogue will be chaired by Japan’s trade

and foreign ministers and the European Commission’s vice-president for competitiveness, both sides said in a joint statement.

Both Japan and the EU, having seen Trump pull back from free trade relationships, are keen to show they remain committed to removing barriers they say hamper growth, analysts said.

“Trade liberalization and market openness continue to march ahead in Asia-Pacific,” said Ajay Sharma, the regional head of global trade and receivables finance at banking and financial services provider HSBC.

EU accords with Singapore and with Vietnam were at the ratification stage, while deals with Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand were being negotiated, he added.

(source: Reuters)

IBM is experimenting with a cryptocurrency that’s pegged to the U.S. dollar

IBM has teamed up with financial technology start-up Stronghold to launch a cryptocurrency that’s pegged to the U.S. dollar.

The tech giant has put its weight behind a so-called “stablecoin,” a digital token that, in principle, is tied to an existing government-backed currency, in order to reduce the volatility associated with virtual currencies.

In this case, the cryptocurrency, called “Stronghold USD,” is backed by Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation-insured U.S. dollars, IBM said Tuesday, with reserves being held by blockchain-focused asset manager Prime Trust.

IBM said it will experiment with the virtual greenback to explore ways of helping banks and other financial institutions process payments faster and more securely. The aim of stablecoins is to reduce the volatility that is commonplace in the cryptocurrency market.

But it follows much controversy surrounding a well-known stablecoin known as tether, which has been accused of being used to prop-up the price of bitcoin during last year’s spike in value.

Tether is also a contentious subject in the cryptocurrency



world due to concerns surrounding its U.S. dollar reserves. The fear is that Tether Limited, the company behind the tether coin, does not hold enough dollars to account for the number of tokens in circulation.

The move marks a further push by the decades-old IT powerhouse into the world of cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology. Blockchain networks are the virtual ledgers on which cryptocurrency transactions

are recorded.

Earlier this year, IBM teamed up with environmental tech start-up Veridium to turn carbon credits — tradable instruments aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions — into digital tokens. The company also uses blockchain firm Stellar’s digital tokens, lumens, to enable faster payments between a consortium of banks.

IBM said Stronghold’s stablecoin will rely on the platform developed by Stellar, which was co-founded by former Ripple executive Jed McCaleb in 2014.

Big Blue’s blockchain is different to the original one that underpins bitcoin. Whereas the bitcoin blockchain is public and allows anyone to participate, IBM’s only allows a certain number of trusted parties to use it.

The entire cryptocurrency market is currently worth more than \$270 billion, according to industry website CoinMarketCap. It has seen a significant downturn since the start of the year, with the world’s best-known digital currency, bitcoin, falling steeply from its record high near \$20,000 late last year to around \$6,700 as of Tuesday.

(Source: CNBC)



# Oil prices fall for second day on oversupply concerns

Oil prices fell for a second day on Tuesday as worries about possible disruptions to supply eased and as investors focused on potential damage to global growth from the festering Sino-U.S. trade spat.

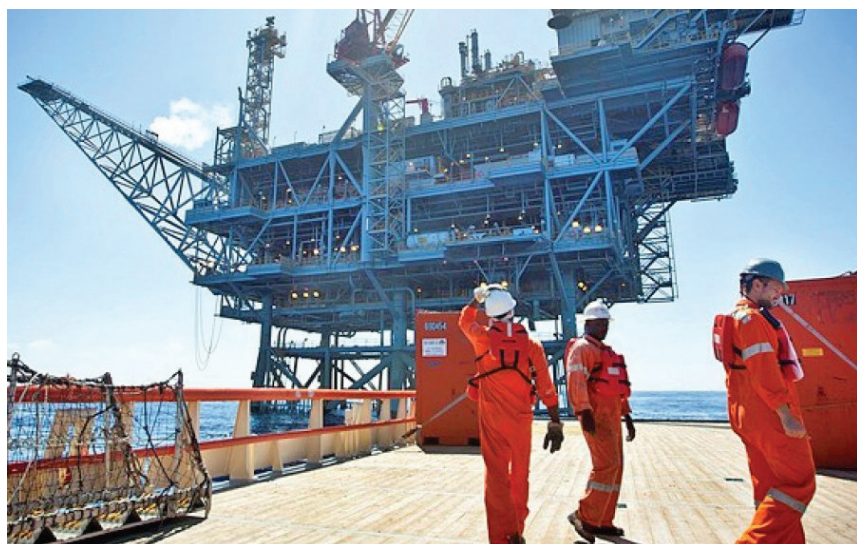
Brent crude futures had dropped 12 cents, or 0.2 percent, to \$71.72 a barrel by 0614 GMT after spending most of the day in positive territory. They fell 4.6 percent on Monday, at one point touching their lowest since mid-April.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate futures were down 17 cents, or 0.3 percent, at \$67.89. They declined 4.2 percent on Monday.

"It is growth fears all around and more about concerns that ... trade worries will come back and bite," said Michael McCarthy, chief market strategist at CMC Markets in Sydney.

"(Oil trading) volumes are abysmal and there is very little commitment at current levels."

China is still confident of hitting its economic growth target of around 6.5 percent this year despite views that it faces a bumpy second-half as a trade row with the United States intensifies, the state planning agency



said on Tuesday.

The remarks came a day after China reported slightly slower growth for the second quarter and the weakest expansion in factory

activity in June in two years, suggesting a further softening in business conditions in coming months as trade pressures build.

Meanwhile, an oil worker strike in Nor-

way intensified on Monday when hundreds more walked out in a dispute over pay and pensions after employers failed to respond to union demands for a new offer.

The strike, which began last Tuesday, has had a limited impact on Norway's oil production so far, but some drillers warned of possible contract cancellations if the dispute goes on for a month or more.

While Libyan ports are reopening, output at the country's Sharara oilfield was expected to fall by at least 160,000 barrels per day (bpd) after two workers were abducted by an unknown group, the National Oil Corporation said on Saturday.

U.S. oil output from seven major shale formations is expected to rise by 143,000 bpd to a record 7.47 million bpd in August, the U.S. Energy Information Administration said in a monthly report on Monday.

Production is expected to climb in all seven formations, with the largest gain of 73,000 bpd seen in the Permian Basin of Texas and New Mexico. All shale regions except for Appalachia are at a high, according to the data.

(Source: Reuters)

## Investment in energy fell again in 2017, raising fresh concerns about security, climate change

The amount of money flowing into the energy sector fell for a third straight year, raising concerns about the world's ability to provide enough power and tackle climate change, the International Energy Agency reported on Tuesday.

On the whole, governments and businesses plowed \$1.8 trillion into the infrastructure, equipment and resources that keep the world running. That means global energy investment fell by 2 percent from 2016 after adjusting for inflation, and the IEA warned the trend does not appear to be reversing.

At the same time, governments are shouldering more of the burden of investing in the energy sector, the Paris-based advisor to energy-consuming nations said in its annual report. State-owned enterprises now account for 40 percent of all investments in energy, and about 95 percent of spending in the power sector can be chalked up to regu-

lation or depends on some kind of subsidy.

That investment includes spending on power plants, electric grids, new oil and gas wells and systems to make buildings more energy efficient.

The electricity sector attracted the most capital for the second year in a row, generating an estimated \$750 billion. However, overall investment still slumped 5 percent from the previous year, as a sharp drop in spending on power plants offset an uptick in dollars flowing to the electric grid.

Governments and investors spent an all-time high \$300 billion on networks that deliver electricity from power plants to homes and businesses, up a modest 1 percent from last year. The spending is largely geared toward updating transmission and distribution lines and integrating smart technology to prepare for a world with more electric vehicles and renewable energy.

Meanwhile, spending on the plants that

generate power — especially from coal, hydropower and nuclear fuel — had the biggest drag on overall investment.

Spending on these generating stations fell by 10 percent last year. Half of the drop was due to falling investment in coal-fired plants in China and India, the two emerging economies that drive global economic growth.

Investment in natural gas-fired plants rose 40 percent, and mostly came from the United States and the Middle East-North Africa region. However, final investment decisions — an indicator of future construction — dropped by 23 percent last year.

Capital flows into renewable power fell by 7 percent, with growth in solar and wind power offset by declines in hydropower and nuclear energy. Nuclear power is not strictly considered renewable energy, but the two are linked because they both generate electricity without emitting planet-warming emissions like carbon dioxide.

In Europe alone, IEA estimates the retirement of nuclear power plants has offset 40 percent of the low-carbon power generation from renewables since 2010.

While spending to generate power is falling, investment to help buildings, vehicles and industry use energy more efficiently continues to rise. The world spent \$236 billion on energy efficiency in 2017, up 3 percent from the previous year, largely on heating, cooling and lighting improvements in buildings.

However, the IEA warns these investments are slowing down, partly due to lackluster implementation of energy efficiency policies.

Investment also picked up in oil and gas exploration and production as the recovery in oil prices continued. Spending in the sector rose 4 percent to \$450 billion last year, and IEA expects it to tick up another 5 percent this year to \$472 billion.

(Source: CNBC)

## Fitch economist blows lid off U.S.' dependence on Russian oil

Russia doesn't view the U.S. as a potential key purchaser of the its oil, while Washington has expressed a keen interest in putting a damper on exorbitant oil prices by pushing OPEC to boost its output, which seems especially relevant ahead of the U.S. midterm elections.

The U.S. purchases approximately eight billion dollars' worth of Russian oil, which is about three percent of Russia's total production, Dmitry Marinichenko, head of natural resources and raw materials group at the rating agency Fitch, told Sputnik.

According to the economist, the American market can't be billed as a priority for Russia, whereas the major destination of Russian oil flow has recently become China.

"So, it's hardly possible to speak about any new trends with this regard," he remarked.

On July 16, it emerged that the U.S. is floating the possibility of a dip into its emergency oil reserves if the prospective global oil output is not sufficient to propel prices down, with the suggestion coming in the run-up to the U.S. midterm elections slated for November 6.

Late last month, OPEC and its partners, led by Russia, agreed to ramp up oil production by about one million barrels per day, or one percent of global supply, with the U.S. exerting pressure on them in a bid to put an end to the high oil prices. OPEC's plan, however, comes amid speculation about the future of the oil market at large, with Iran being squeezed away from it by the U.S. In June, Washington threatened to slap penalties on countries that fail to curb oil trade with Iran by November 4.

(Source: Sputnik)

## Iraqi protests threaten oil production

At least five people have been killed since the beginning of protests in southern Iraq's oil hub earlier this month, as security forces respond with a hard hand while thousands continue to take to the streets over rising unemployment and chronically lacking public services.

Demonstrations began in the key oil center of Basra and have since expanded to a number of provinces, prompting the Iraqi government to impose a state of emergency.

Apart from insisting that companies hire locals, the protesters are also demanding a significant improvement in basic services, such as water supply, and their anger, while towards the government initially, is now being rerouted to the oil companies of Basra.

Basra is home to Iraq's biggest oil fields, and their exports make up more than 95 percent of the country's state revenue. But now it's time to answer to a public that is seeing very little benefit from this largesse.

(Source: oilprice.com)

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## Black Lives Matter is still here — and avoiding the mistakes of their predecessors



The fifth anniversary of the founding of Black Lives Matter (BLM) makes me think back 50 years, not five. Shortly before he was killed, Martin Luther King lamented that the gains of the civil rights movement had come at “bargain rates” because it cost America nothing to integrate lunch counters and buses or give Blacks the right to vote.

King knew that the real fight — against systemic forces such as the criminalization of African-Americans—lay ahead. As a 10-year-old growing up in Memphis, Tennessee, I did not understand—I just saw what looked like visible progress until King was killed, and it seemed like the progress not only stopped, it rolled back.

The young activist started at 26 and was dead at 39. Richard Nixon’s nefariously designed “war on drugs” came next, fueling the over-policing and mass incarceration of Black bodies.

Fifty years later, we are in the middle of another attempt to reckon with our national failure to achieve real and sustainable progress toward racial justice.

Five years ago, a group coalesced around the leadership of Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi and Black Lives Matter came into being. National awareness of issues around policing in America has grown significantly since then because BLM and other community-based organizations are forcing America to take a clear look at what we are really doing in the name of “policing” in Black and brown communities.

Their public actions are visible. They were leaders in making sure that America knew the names Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Tanisha Anderson, Mya Hall, Walter Scott, Sandra Bland. They have disrupted our everyday lives by making us focus on the everyday lives of people who live with policing based on pro-active racial profiling.

■ **Community-based movements**  
They have led in redefining leadership of community-based movements by recognizing and addressing gaps in movement spaces and leadership for women, queer, and transgender people and those who have moved the work forward in the background with little or no recognition.

This has given the movement brilliant leaders and strategists. It is one of the foundations of sustainable community-based power. Some of their work is visible, some is not. After many Americans were shocked by the video of a police officer throwing a girl from her desk in a South Carolina classroom, the ACLU wanted to expand its work fighting the school-to-prison pipeline by challenging a South Carolina law that made it a crime to “disturb schools.”

This law was used to charge a girl in the classroom with a crime for simply standing up and demanding that the officer stop physically abusing her classmate.

The ACLU was interested in litigation challenging provisions of this law. BLM activists put us in contact with the young woman who was physically abused by the officer. They set up a community meeting on a Sunday where community members came to talk about what was happening to their children in school.

The people who came to share their stories included the family of our client in the lawsuit, Niya Kenny. BLM activists helped connect the legal challenge to sustained organizing in the community and provided mentorship and support for our client and the young woman assaulted by the officer.

As a result of the ACLU lawsuit, the state of South Carolina repealed the challenged provisions of the law. No child in South Carolina will be charged with a crime for “disturbing” their classroom. Niya Kenny has drawn on the courage she showed in her classroom to continue fighting to make a difference in the community. She is now working with the same BLM activist who organized that first meeting, advocating for Black girls and encouraging their leadership.

■ **Fighting for racial justice**  
The lawsuit and victory for South Carolina’s children would not have happened in this way without BLM. Today, we continue the fight for racial justice — whether challenging racist stop-and-frisk laws or elevating the stories of Black and brown people targeted by 911 vigilantes — and remain inspired by BLM’s work.

As I look back, I see similarities between the civil rights movement 50 years ago and BLM today. At both points in history, the leadership was intelligent, charismatic and powerful, but today there is an emphasis on a much broader base of leadership. BLM’s decentralized movement goes far beyond the impact of a few major leaders — and that is the way Ms. Khan-Cullors, Ms. Garza and Ms. Tometi planned it.

Constrained by the prevailing social mores of the larger society, the movement of the mid-20th century kept too many on the margins. Take for example the treatment of Black queer activists like Bayard Rustin, who was the mastermind behind King’s March on Washington but, due to homophobia, was relegated to obscurity. Likewise, visionary Black women like the legal scholar Pauli Murray battled misogyny within the movement that couldn’t have existed without them.

Today, there is much to learn from the way that BLM has pushed past mere discussions about diversity and inclusion to take concrete action on these principles internally and in their work. Learning from the shortfalls of the fifties and early sixties, BLM activists are keenly alert to “bargain basement” gains and politics of respectability that won’t address core issues of racism in America.

Five years is but a minute in the fight for racial justice, but with BLM’s still unfolding narrative, I’m already compelled to stay for the whole movie — it looks like it could be special.

(Source: Newsweek)

# NATO summit: The important issues

By Paul R. Pillar

Most press coverage of the NATO summit meeting was about Donald Trump’s political theater, for which NATO itself was merely a backdrop. Journalists who said their heads were spinning after hearing Trump’s everything-is-fine press conference at the conclusion of the meeting, which sounded like a 180-degree reversal from his insults and threats of the day before, could have saved themselves a headache by realizing that there is no way to make diplomatic sense of any of this. It was just Trump doing one of his usual things. That thing is to bemoan how supposedly awful was the state of affairs before he came along, to use his own disruptive rhetoric —sprinkled with falsehoods — to create a crisis atmosphere, and then later to claim that he resolved problems that none of his predecessors had been able to resolve. The claim is made even if nothing material was achieved — as is true regarding military spending by NATO members, who do not appear to have made new commitments beyond what they had already made pre-Trump. In these respects, the Trumpian theater in Brussels is similar to the one surrounding the summit meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jung Un.

Some of Trump’s themes in the insults-and-threats phase of this performance, and especially his bashing of Germany, served specific political purposes back home. The hyping of dangers from immigration in Europe dovetails, of course, with his exploitation of the immigration issue in the United States, an issue that, as Trump accurately remarked at the press conference, had helped to elect him. Trump’s charge that Germany is “totally controlled” by Russia (supposedly because of trade in natural gas) is an example of the familiar Trump technique of accusing others of the very transgressions about which he is politically vulnerable.

Meanwhile, the entire performance achieved Trump’s objective of seizing media attention and setting the agenda of public discussion. The motivation for the performance had little to do with issues of diplomacy, the state of the North Atlantic alliance, or national security. The chief intended audience was his political base back home, in addition to his own ego.

■ **Unanswered Questions:**  
Looking beyond the political theater, however, there are important unresolved questions about NATO, its role and purpose today, and its place in advancing U.S. interests. The questions never were adequately addressed in the early 1990s, that histori-



## If there is a persuasive case for NATO’s continued existence, it does not depend primarily on levels of military spending.

cal turning point when the Cold War ended, Germany was reunited, and Western leaders decided that NATO would not go the way of the Warsaw Pact and dissolve, but instead would endure and expand.

Trump’s success in setting the agenda made the issue of military spending by the allies — dovetailing with another of Trump’s campaign themes, the idea of foreigners free-riding on the back of the United States — sound as if it were the single, overriding measure of the health of NATO. But that raises the question: exactly what difference would military spending — at two, four, or any other percent of GDP — make to the security of either Europe or the United States? Amid all the attention the past couple of days to spending levels, the near-silence on this fundamental question was deafening.

The nightmare scenario during the Cold War was of Red Army tank divisions, from a starting point in East Germany, pouring through the Fulda Gap in an invasion of the West. Back then, the different levels of Western military spending by West Germany and other European allies might have made a major difference in the strength of NATO’s defense against such an assault, and thereby potentially a decisive difference in whether

such an attack would be deterred and, if not deterred, defeated. But the today the strategic map of Europe looks far different. Russian troops have repaired to Russian territory, hundreds of miles to the east.

It is hard to envision how, say, an immediate increase in Germany’s military spending to two percent of GDP would make a meaningful change in that vulnerability. Presumably any difference would rest on convincing the Russians that a wider European war—touched off by the tripwire of small NATO forces in the Baltic republics — would be costlier than it otherwise would be. But the credibility of such deterrence involves the same uncertainties about will, and not just capabilities, that the eastward expansion of NATO always has entailed. Would German decision-makers be willing, in an effort to save Riga, to respond in a way that would endanger Berlin?

Where Russia has used military force outside its boundaries, in Ukraine and Georgia, such uncertainties are all the greater. The willingness to take risks to save Tbilisi are no greater than with Riga. Such uncertainty was a good reason the idea of signing up Ukraine and Georgia to the North Atlantic Treaty did not gain traction.

If there is a persuasive case for NATO’s

continued existence, it does not depend primarily on levels of military spending. NATO has value as an institutionalization of Western standards that are more political than military. The prospect of NATO membership—like the prospect of membership in the European Union—has been an incentive to prospective members to conform to those standards. NATO is the main instrument for U.S. influence in the security affairs of Europe. The alliance also is the main institutionalization of European support to the security of the United States—bearing in mind that the one invocation of the mutual security obligation in Article Five of the North Atlantic Treaty involved the Europeans coming to the support of the United States — after the 9/11 terrorist attacks — rather than the other way around. It is this sense of political goodwill and solidarity that is the main value of NATO to the United States today. It is this sense that Trump, with a fusillade of insults and attacks that one senior European diplomat described as “beyond belief”, has done so much to damage.

■ **Impact of military spending:**  
Military spending and military forces are relevant to some out-of-area NATO activities , but again, fundamental questions need to be addressed as to the net effect of those activities on the security of either Europe or the United States. Exhibit A is the endless war in Afghanistan , which long ago passed the point of contributing to that security. Among other NATO operations, a small force in Iraq helped to clean up a U.S.-made mess that never should have been made in the first place, and a regime-changing operation in Libya left another mess that persists today.

The main security-related problems in Europe today, legitimately identified as concerns for NATO, cannot be addressed by spending for bigger rather than smaller armed forces. Greater military spending also would mean fewer resources for other sorts of expenditures that would be better suited to dealing with some of those problems, especially the problem of handling migrants in ways that are fair and humane while not compromising the stability and cohesiveness of domestic society.

One of the biggest current worries among leaders of European NATO members is a growing split between those members who adhere to the liberal democratic values that undergird the alliance and those, such as the hardline nationalist regimes in Hungary and Poland, that are straying from those values. Trump’s injection of his own headline nationalism gives even more reason to worry.

(Source: National Interest)

# MBS is on a make or break mission

By Nic Robertson,

We may think we know a lot about Saudi Arabia’s Mohammed bin Salman, one year after he was elevated to Crown Prince. After all, the past 12 months have seen him blitz world capitals, wooing politicians, business leaders and populations alike promoting his vision for modernizing his country.

In London alone, he lavished a cool \$1 million on advertising during a three-day trip, according to a source with knowledge of the visit. The U.S. got a two-week version of the same charm offensive.

But much remains unknown about the Crown Prince, who has staked his leadership and potentially his country’s stability on bringing power to his family. Failure could be dangerous for us all.

Front and center right now is the war in Yemen. He owns it, and the key battle that could turn the tide of the conflict in Saudi Arabia’s favor is raging in the port city of Hudaydah.

Not long after his father took the throne in January 2015, MBS, as he is known, initiated the desert kingdom’s fightback against Houthis who had routed Yemen’s elected government just over Saudi Arabia’s long, porous southern border.

MBS was (and still is) defense minister, so any Saudi blood lost would be on his hands. He would be measured by the course and outcome of the war.

Soon after he green-lighted the confrontation, a border guard was killed in Najran, the first member of the Saudi forces to die in the conflict.

Traced up there from a nearby town and met the guard’s family. MBS arrived soon after. Winning the war was important for him, but so was keeping Saudis on side with his grander plans.

Over the intervening years the conflict has escalated, several thousand Yemenis have been killed, a third of the country’s population is short of food, and Houthi-fired missiles frequently scud over hundreds of kilometers of desert to be shot down near the Saudi capital.

The lives of Riyadh’s more than 7 million people are in MBS’s hands, but the region as a whole is at risk.

But the war in Yemen is only one of the tensions facing MBS.

Saudi’s image is so sullied by Osama bin Laden and the 9/11 attackers, 15 of whom were Saudi, and decades of laws limiting basic freedoms -- most notably those that affect women -- that his message has struggled to find wide traction, no matter how intensive his charm offensive has been. Yet he needs the outside investment and faith in his abilities to realize his so-called Vision 2030, a gargantuan dream of a supercharged Saudi future, propelled out of its fossil-fuel dependence and into a diversified global marketplace employing the country’s burgeoning youth population.

Locking up hundreds of Saudi’s business elite, along with a fair few of his own relatives, including other Saudi princes -- albeit in a fancy hotel -- several months ago and accusing them of corruption didn’t do him any favors when he hit the boardrooms. And the stories that stuck in people’s minds were the ones his public relations teams couldn’t suppress.

One of them is his reputation as a big spender. The PR gurus



couldn’t squelch the talk of his supersized yacht, or rumors that he owns the world’s largest chateau and near-priceless pieces of artwork, or explain away his sudden billion-dollar spat with tiny neighbor Qatar.

In his shoes, the criticism of his free spending undoubtedly feels unfair.

He is allowing women to drive and letting them go to sports stadiums, allowing music to be played on streets, permitting outdoor performances and, perhaps very significantly, marginalizing the kingdom’s religious police. And Saudis are no longer forced to go to prayer five times a day.

Critics say the changes are merely cosmetic, and note that the government has arrested a number of women in recent weeks who have demanded further reforms.

But the atmosphere does seem more relaxed now than there was a year ago. As a friend there said recently as we were out walking the streets, he is no longer made to feel guilty, like he is being a “bad” Muslim.

He -- as was the case with almost everyone else I’ve talked with there since MBS became King in waiting -- wants the 32-year-old to succeed.

A few months ago, there were rumors of an attack on MBS’ palace that turned out later to be palace guards shooting down a rich kid’s drone.

In the hours spent waiting for the facts to emerge, my friend told me, his biggest fear was that MBS was the target of a coup aimed at stopping his reforms. “He has to succeed,” my friend told me. “We can’t go back.”

More than any other Saudi before him -- with the excep-

tion of the nation’s founding father, King Abdul Aziz Al Saud, also known as Ibn Saud -- MBS may be the most fearless leader the country will get.

He has shaken up the sclerotic body politic of Saudi government, and after several reshuffles, has invigorated and energized it.

Ministers and royals I’ve talked to describe MBS as a workaholic, consuming spreadsheets late in the night, calling ministers to his office and to account way after their bedtime.

His speed is obvious, the reasoning less so. The quicker he goes, the bigger the chance of a misstep.

For every minister forced from office, for every disenfranchised conservative cleric, for every rich royal hauled in for corruption and fleeced of allegedly ill-gotten billions, for every businessman shaken down, more potential enemies are created. The risks of a fall are as apparent to MBS as they are to the rest of the kingdom and the region.

Failure on any significant front could trigger turmoil, from an ugly internal power struggle to an unintended showdown with Iran, either of which in a worst-case scenario could lead to surge in global gas prices.

In such circumstances, Saudi Arabia would go from being a potential force for long-term stability to a cause of regional -- and even global -- liability.

For now, MBS is keeping his footing, and the country’s tribes -- through whom his power traditionally flows -- are either being bypassed or cutting him enough slack to pull his vision off.

(Source: CNN)



# ‘Impact of Islamic philosophers on western philosophy is huge’

➡ In philosophy graduate schools it is far more common to expect students to know Latin, Greek, German, French rather than Arabic or Persian. Still, there is a rise of work in English on Islamic philosophy as witnessed by the Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy and the Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy.

■ Are there any institutes in the west and especially in the U.S. that focus on Islamic philosophy?

A: Yes, all the great western universities have been sites for fruitful philosophical work on Islam. There is the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies at the Oxford, there is the Centre of Islamic Studies at Cambridge University, at Harvard University there is the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Institute for Islamic Studies there is Islamic Studies at Yale University, Islamic Studies at the University of Chicago Divinity School, and much, much more.

■ Which fields of Islamic philosophy are taught in the U.S.?

A: If you are at a university with a serious commitment to the history of ideas, you would rightly expect to have courses that show how deeply Islamic philosophy influenced the west, and embodies work that is valuable for its own sake. The ground covered would include theism, naturalism, the analysis and



critique of Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, the soul, causation, the role and nature of science, virtue theory.

■ What was the impact of Islamic philosopher on western philosophy especially in the middle age?

A: Huge. As the various translation projects got underway in Spain and in Southern

Europe, it became obvious that Christian as well as Jewish philosophy had much to gain and to question by the enormous sophistication of Islamic philosophy.

The encounter between western and Islamic philosophy in the middle ages was perhaps the most momentous engagements of intellectual cultures in the

history of ideas.

Agreed, that the advent in the west of Jewish, then Christian philosophy meeting up with Greco-Roman philosophy was titanic, and the encounter in the Enlightenment between western philosophy and Chinese and Indian philosophy was massive. But in the exchange between Islam and the west the encounter was of special significance because it was an encounter between philosophers who had a shared background in Plato, Aristotle, and to some extent Plotinus, they also carried out philosophy in the context of cultures which shared strong positions on the significance of divine revelation and different views on the relationship between faith and reason.

■ What is your suggestion for introducing the better of the Islamic philosophy in the west?

A: I hope you will forgive me, but I highly recommend as a starting point a book that Chad Meister and I commissioned: Islam: A Philosophical Investigation by a young, rising philosopher, Imran Aijaz, who teaches now in the United States at the University of Michigan. I believe that his book, just published, is a great venue for all those interested in engaging Islamic philosophy today, enhancing the communication between Islam and the west.

## U.S. not able to isolate Iran, stop its oil exports: Italian analyst



**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — A prominent political expert based in the Italian city of Milan referred to Washington's plans to re-impose sanctions against Tehran in November and said the Trump administration is not able to isolate the Islamic Republic or block its oil exports.

"The U.S. will not be able to isolate Iran and stop (its) oil exports," Federico Pieraccini said in an interview with the Tasnim News Agency, referring to recent threats by the U.S. to cut Iranian oil exports to zero.

Pieraccini is an independent freelance writer and political expert based in Milan, Italy. He specializes in international affairs, conflicts, politics, and strategies. He has covered conflicts in Ukraine, Libya, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq.

The following is the full text of the interview:

■ The Trump administration recently threatened to cut Iranian oil exports to zero, saying that countries must stop buying its oil from Nov. 4 or face financial consequences. Washington later softened its threat, saying that it would allow reduced oil flows of Iranian oil, in certain cases. Since oil is a strategic product and countries around the world always demand it, would the U.S. be able to carry out this threat at all?

A: The U.S. will not be able to isolate Iran and stop (its) oil exports. (Iranian President Hassan) Rouhani said that if Iran cannot export oil, no other country in the Persian Gulf will be able to. To give an example, Indian private companies said they would stop imports from Iran. Immediately, Indian officials confirmed that state imports of oil from Iran will increase, balancing the diminishing imports from private companies.

Another good example is China. Beijing didn't even bother to take into consideration the U.S. threats and continues to increase its imports from Iran. Iran is one of the biggest oil and gas producers in the world with a huge potential for development and China is the number one world importer of oil.

European companies seem to have decided to obey Washington's diktat and are moving away from investments in Iran. They don't really have a choice since they totally depend on the U.S. banking system and the U.S. dollar. This situation should be seen by Europe as a great opportunity for further Eurasian integration since foreign countries will inevitably substitute European investments.

■ Iran is perceived to have threatened to block oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz, a key Persian Gulf waterway, in retaliation for U.S. efforts to reduce Iranian oil sales to zero. Analysts say that crude oil prices could jump as high as U.S. \$250 a barrel if Iran goes through with its threat to close the strait. What do you think? In your opinion, what other measures can Iran do to counteract U.S. pressures?

A: We are very far away from an Iranian blockade in the Strait of Hormuz. I believe Rouhani signaled out this possibility more as a warning to third countries than to the U.S. or Saudi Arabia. The reason is embedded in your question about oil prices. Foreign countries importing oil don't want an increase in the price, so Iran's threats should be taken into consideration.

China, like other countries, has every interest in putting pressure on the U.S. to not implement these destructive measures. Iran also has the opportunity to bridge even closer ties with Qatar and Yemen, thereby creating a difficult situation for Saudi Arabia in the region. The KSA is already in a precarious situation being involved in almost every disruptive event or war in the Middle East. More than one analyst believes that the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz could be the definitive blow to the elite in Riyadh, not Tehran.

I doubt that Mohamad Bin Salman (MBS) is 100% behind Trump's decision to sanction countries doing business with Iran. In any case, never doubt the aggressiveness of Israel and Trump against Iran, so no cards are off the table. Trump has shown to be unpredictable and a menace even to his closest allies.

■ As you know, Trump's threat is part of his walking away from the Iran nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). He also plans to reinstate anti-Tehran sanctions from November 4. In the meantime, the European Union has put forward a package of economic measures to offset the U.S. pullout from the JCPOA. What do you think about the EU's role in reducing Washington's pressures against Tehran?

A: The EU would like to continue doing business with Iran. Reality shows us that Europe doesn't have the guts or the economics to stand up to the U.S. decision. Europe is highly dependent on some key aspects of the financial system such as banks and the use of the U.S. Dollars, all controlled by the U.S.

Washington has the ability to create more than a headache for any European country that continues to work and invest in Iran. What Europe should do is to use this occasion to de-dollarize and move away from the U.S. financial world order. Instead, Europe is just obeying their masters overseas and as seen with Russian sanctions, shooting itself in the foot, just to please the U.S.

This is happening while Trump is imposing tariffs and threatening to pull out of the World Trade Organization and even NATO. Europe is facing a political uprising we have not seen in decades. Sanctions on Russia and the loss of trade with Iran are making the situation even worse for political leaders in Europe. This tendency can clearly be seen with the political results all over Europe, from Italy to Spain, even in Germany with Merkel on the verge of losing grip on the government after 14 years of absolute reign.

As long as European countries continue appeasing the U.S. instead of taking into account their own national interests, things will only get worse. Iran is one of the key elements in the Eurasian integration process that is transforming the world. Europe is losing an excellent opportunity to diversify its energy imports and start being part of the Eurasian revolution, alongside with Russia, China, India, and Iran.

## West seeking to undermine Iran, Russia's sovereignty: Russian analyst

**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — A Russian geopolitical analyst and author said the west is trying to undermine Iran and Russia's sovereignty through economic and political pressure, calling on Tehran and Moscow to remain united in the face of western plots.

"The West is interested to undermine the sovereignty of the IRI through a chain of events and economic/political/diplomatic pressure. The same, they do against Russia. So it is also another reason why we must be united in one front," Leonid Savin told the Tasnim News Agency.

Savin is the head of the Administration of the International Social Movement "Eurasian Movement". He is also the editor-in-chief of "Geopolitika" magazine as well as Geopolitika.ru. Furthermore, Savin, the author of several books on geopolitics, is the director of the social-political research programs in Russia's Institute of Economics and Legislation.

Following is the full text of the interview:

■ Senior Iranian official Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati has conveyed a message from Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei to Russian President Vladimir Putin during a meeting in Moscow. Following the meeting, Dr. Velayati described his discussions with the Russian president as "highly constructive, transparent and friendly." Iran's Leadership has long viewed relations with Moscow as "strategic," he said. What does "strategic cooperation" with Russia mean?

A: Strategic issues are not obvious, as it may seem. For example, Russia has many different strategies that were released in form of doctrinal documents. However, they are only on paper and the most important thing is their practical realization. In the strategy of national security released after 2008, we can read that Russia can use military power to protect Russian citizens abroad, but this option was never used.

Theoretically, there are frames for practical implementation in Syria and Ukraine, but in reality military works in another way.

But Iran and the region of Western Asia also marked in a few latest doctrinal papers of the Russian Federation. Russia pays a lot of attention to this area, especially for security. And it is one of the reasons for Russian military presence in Syria. Cooperation in Oil/gas sector, but also nuclear energy is also an important line for cooperation with Iran. And of course, attempts to build a multipolar world order



without the hegemony of the U.S. is one of the geopolitical goals of Russia that was also confirmed in strategic papers and personally by statements of Russian officials.

In this context, Russian-Iranian cooperation is very important. Any initiatives in trade, business, culture, and tourism that will bring our countries closer to each other more will be appreciated.

■ Velayati also quoted Putin as hailing the oil cooperation between Iran and Russia, saying Russia has announced readiness to make investment as high as \$50 billion in Iran's oil and gas industry, and that Russian firms could replace the western companies that have left Iran. Do you believe that it is time that Russia, Iran and China should form a separate economic front against U.S. hegemony?

A: Yes, it is possible and it is an imperative. This triangle also can form a new Eurasian orbit and add to it more actors who have suffered from Western influence and are looking for an alternative. For example, Turkey and Pakistan. We see that the U.S. is interested to impose more sanctions against Iran and it has started many anti-Iranian projects in the EU too. The West is interested to undermine the sovereignty of the IRI through a chain

of events and economic/political/diplomatic pressure. The same, they do against Russia. So it is also another reason why we must be united in one front.

■ As you know, this year's NATO meeting comes ahead of Trump's direct meeting with Putin in Helsinki, Finland, on Monday. What do you think about this meeting?

A: The NATO military alliance is slowly nearing its end and it needs fresh blood (new members) as well as the justification of its own existence. Now we can see more bureaucracy and budget (military companies) interests there that focus on Euro-Atlantic security. But the Helsinki meeting has nothing to do with the NATO summit. Firstly, Russia has enough strong army and its logistics and infrastructure are far better than the NATO. Secondly, Putin and Trump will discuss bilateral relations and Syria. What I can say from previous observation is that Donald Trump is unpredictable. He can tell and propose some good ideas, but then change his mind. So let see what people around him would say. I think it is the reason Trump finally supported NATO - Mattis, Bolton and other high ranked decision makers still follow old clichés. And unfortunately, there are many Russophobes and many Iranophobes.

## Let's hope Ocasio-Cortez has real guts

➡ she is no longer an "activist" (whatever that is exactly unless it simply denotes a person willing to tell the unvarnished truth) and that she is henceforth willing to "learn and evolve" (read "revise") her former postures. While stating that she remains a supporter of the "two state" solution in Palestine, she clearly was a bit flustered when her interrogator, Margaret Hoover, asked her what she meant by the term "occupation" with respect to the illegal Zionist presence in the West Bank and the blockade of Gaza. She then said she "may not use the right words" to characterize the situation, and for her the entire matter is one of "human rights" and her own humanitarian concerns. She added that she firmly believes in Israel's "right to exist" except that, just maybe she may believe, which went unstated, not under the kind of policies promoted by the current Israeli government.

Ocasio-Cortez's "evolution" is sadly predictable since her recent success, however undesirable this is too many of those who remain "activists". She is no doubt surprised that she did win, and loves all the media attention, but going forward no one knows whether she will remain or become a steadfast advocate and voice for sanity with regard to Middle East matters. But she so far remains a person whose views are at least healthier and more honest than most all her future, potential colleagues in Washington. Still,



many wonder: what if she were a candidate willing to hold firm to her views when she was an "activist" even at the potential cost of her losing the election in November? No other candidate I am aware of has yet been willing to threaten their chances of election success by literally continuing to tell the unvarnished truth about "Israel" (and other concerns) and its blatant apartheid in Palestine.

And make no mistake, telling the truth about Israel is literally the cornerstone of truth telling generally about so many issues affecting the U.S.: the widening gap between rich and poor in the U.S., the maddening and overwhelming influence of rich, selfish oligarchs on U.S. foreign and domestic policies, the precarious U.S. economy (where economic "growth" over the past decade has

not been organic but merely the result of vast money printing by the Federal Reserve bank that has pumped up financial markets like never before), the lack of affordable health-care for many Americans, the out of control spending for the benefit alone of the Military Industrial Complex and the enormous fiscal debts, and so much more that literally, some believe, threaten the future of a very divided U.S. population.

Still, young Ocasio-Cortez is worth watching, and so are a handful of other rare candidates for the U.S. Congress who are willing to tell more of the truth about the Mideast than ever before in recent decades. If, miraculously, enough pressure via truth telling is brought to bear to substantially change attitudes about the Zionist state in the U.S., and ultimately foment policy changes, however marginally, then this will, in turn, bring about changes even in attitudes about Iran and more revulsion against U.S. sanctions on Iran and the abrogation of the JCPOA in May.

But change remains highly contingent on Iran's leadership also addressing the desires of its own citizens for reform and avoiding gross instability inside Iran, which has been the primary aim of the Neocon infested Trump administration since inception. One cannot stress this enough, this requirement that Iran's leadership show wisdom and flexibility. Patience remains key as always, too.



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## Relief foundation, ICT Ministry join hands to support job creation

**TECHNOLOGY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — In collaboration with the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Ministry, Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation provides budget for ideas leading to job creation through crowdfunding, the ICT website reported.

Crowdfunding is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the internet.

According to an agreement signed between Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation and ICT Ministry on Monday, the foundation, which provides facilities for financially struggling people, plans



ICT Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi (R) and Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation's Director Parviz Fattah sign an agreement on Monday

to attract crowdfunding for job creation.

The ICT Ministry provides infrastructures and facilities for the donation-based crowdfunding for three years, the website reported.

Identified in four types of reward-based, debt-based, litigation, donation-based, crowdfunding combines the best of crowdsourcing and microfinancing, bringing together various individuals who commit money to projects and companies they want to support.

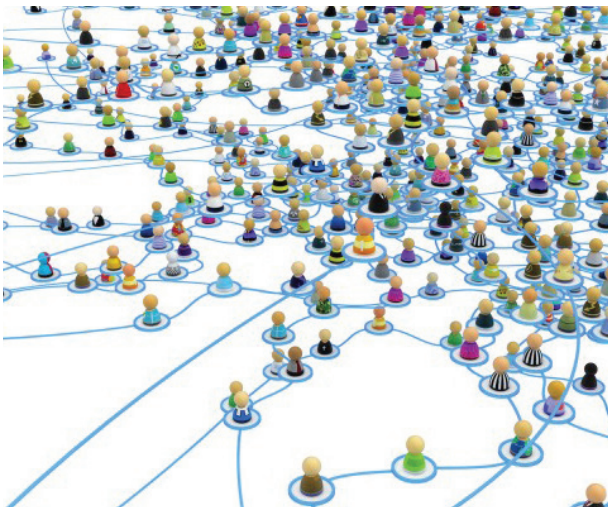
It's a young and quickly growing market and it's transforming how people behave with their money. It's also transforming the ways businesses raise capital.

On May 27, Parviz Fattah, head of Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation, announced that the foundation has allocated some 40 trillion rials (nearly \$950 million) to job creation for 200,000 individuals in the country for the current Iranian calendar year (March 2018-March 2019).

Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation is a charitable organization, founded in March 1979, after the Islamic Revolution, to provide support for families who are struggling financially. The aim is to help such families regain financial stability. Boosting job creation is one of the primary objectives of the foundation.

## SOCIALLY SAFE

## Create a smaller social network for safety



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

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

Social networking means opening up and sharing information online with others, but there's some information you should never share online. Protecting yourself from sharing Too Much Information (TMI) can save you from identity theft and even protect your physical safety.

Bigger isn't always better. There's more to social networks than MySpace, Facebook and Twitter. Self-forming communities often form around very narrow topics and these can easily get lost on the bigger sites. You may be better served creating a smaller, more focused network using tools aimed to help narrow or smaller groups such as Ning, or Meet Up.

By narrowing your purpose and using tools appropriate for smaller groups, you can keep unwanted solicitations, invites to connect, applications and spam to a minimum. You'll also find you build closer relationships amongst community member.

(Source: networkworld.com)

# Over 300 companies to attend ELECOMP 2018

**TECHNOLOGY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Over 300 companies will offer their achievements and services to visitors at the 24th Iran International Exhibition of Electronics, Computer & E-commerce (ELECOMP 2018), which will be held from July 28 to 31 in Tehran.

ELECOM Trends is a new section at this edition of the exhibition, ELECOMP executive director Mehdi Heydari said on Monday, Mehr reported.

ELECOM Trends will focus on internet of things (IoT), smart city and artificial intelligence (AI), he said.

In comparison to the ELECOMP 2015, the number of startups has increased from 70 to 350, Heydari announced.

"A total of 45 game developer companies will also attend ELECOM Games, which will be held on the sidelines of the event," he said.

Those who are active in startups can benefit from consultants during the event in a section



named 'accelerating chamber', he added. "We estimated that about 20 foreign

companies will attend the event," he said. From 50 to 70 startups from seven coun-

tries will attend ELECOM stars of ELECOMP 2018, head of Iranian ICT Guild Organization Mohammad Baqer Asna-Ashari said in early June, IRNA reported.

**■ ELECOMP 2018**  
ELECOMP is the biggest event in the Iranian electronics and computer market. Since its first edition in 1995, the event has been providing a unique opportunity for businesses to increase their share of this huge and ever-growing market, according to ELECOMP website.

A hall is dedicated to electronic government as a place in which state-run organizations can introduce their services to the visitors.

One of the major sections of the event is the startup competition dubbed "ELECOM Stars", in which startup companies compete for a finance by Iran's ICT Guild Organization.

The first ELECOMP hosted about 100 startups and the number rose to 450 in last year's exhibition.

## Tehran to host intl. congress on smart technology in mid-Aug.



**TECHNOLOGY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The international congress on smart technology (IC-Tech 2018) will be held on August 14 and 15 in Tehran.

IC-Tech 2018 aims to explore technological achievements of researchers about information technology, introduce national and international IT innovations, exchange comments and new ideas, and exchange information between professors and industry managers in the field of information technology.

E-commerce, information technology security, computer networks, educational

technology (e-learning), artificial intelligence, information systems, and information and communication technology in the industry are some of the themes of the event.

Foreign experts including Elder Tuzmukhametov from Russia, Forhad Rabbi from Australia, Javier Gabas, Miquel Estapé Valls and Josep Miquel Pique from Spain will make speech during the event.

Youngho Baik from South Korea, Massimiliano Mandanrini from Italy, Andreas Constantinides from Greece, Mustafa Kumot from Turkey, and Alex Bojovschi from Melbourne are also amongst speakers.

## Knowledge-based companies can attend brain mapping festival free of charge



**TECHNOLOGY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Knowledge-based companies active in the field of brain mapping can attend the 2nd brain mapping research and technology festival free of charge, ISNA reported on Sunday.

Organized by the National Brain Mapping Laboratory (NBML) of Iran, the festival will be held on October 10 and 11 in Tehran.

The festival aims to promote modern technologies in the field of brain mapping.

The event will be held concurrently with the 2nd symposium on brain

mapping.

The symposium aims to promote cognitive sciences in the field of brain mapping as well as updating recent achievements and information in this field.

NBML is established to facilitate the development and growth of neuroimaging and brain modulation fields, fulfillment of (at least a part of) research and technical requirements in these fields in the country and provide related knowledge-based and up-to-date services.

# Which European countries have the most construction startups?

New research has revealed where in Europe has the most startups across numerous sectors, including construction.

Taking a closer look at the startup industry in Europe, card processing specialists, Paymentsense, has conducted research to find out which countries have seen the most significant rise in startups between 2013-2017.

The data has been mapped out across Europe allowing users to uncover the industries that each country specialises in and how fast those industries are growing.

Paymentsense analysed 30 European countries and ranked each one of them based on how many new businesses have been registered in that five-year period and which business types have been the most popular in these countries.

Top 10 European countries for construction startups  
In terms of construction, France is home to the most, with some 265,452 startup companies operating in the country's construction industry.

The UK follows closely behind with 227,519, and Poland claims third with 220,235 construction industry startup companies.

The rest of the top 10 is as follows:

- Italy 182,680
- Turkey 180,790
- Spain 169,734
- Germany 120,004
- Czech Republic 64,576
- Slovakia 63,778
- Netherlands 63,580

Among all these countries, the UK has seen the biggest growth in the number of startups across all industries between 2013 and 2017 at 5.09%, followed by Romania and Portugal.

## A checklist for your startup

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

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

### ■ Start your revenue stream

According to a National Venture Capital Association survey, 82% of small businesses get their backing from self-funding. So if you're coming up empty finding angel

investors to contribute to your business fund, you're not alone.

Fortunately, there are ways you can develop multiple streams of revenue to get your business up and running without going into deep debt. Bootstrapping is a popular way to fund yourself, but it doesn't mean you have to eat ramen and live in your car to see your startup become a reality.

Start generating revenue as soon as possible. At the early stages of a startup there is never enough money -- resist the temptation to wait until things are "perfect." Oh, and get your lawyer to create any customer contract forms necessary.

(Source: smallbiztrends.com)



What all of them have in common is a business-friendly environment that gives founders the possibility to grow and nurture their company over time. When looking at what type of start-ups have dominated Europe in the last few years, wholesale and retail have the largest presence with 3.7mn new businesses started up. Guy Moreve, Chief Marketing Officer at Paymentsense, commented: "It's fascinating to see how Europe has changed in recent times. A number of

countries are now placing more emphasis on technology which has helped create a 'golden era' for tech startups.

"In order to thrive a business in your respective country, make sure you analyse the market you're addressing -- what works best and what doesn't; It's also worth looking at the legal and environmental conditions in order to make sure your business idea is a success."

(Source: constructionglobal.com)

## What is startup benchmark?

The process of benchmarking your business to evaluate your current success can be quite involved, requiring the collection, analysis and comparison of mounds of data on everything from your recent sales growth to production capacity. However, you may want to start the process by simply sitting down, looking around and asking yourself if your business seems to be where it should be right now. Your gut-level intuition of how the business is doing may be more valuable than even the most detailed analysis.

Then take a look at your sales. You probably won't have to consult any fi-

nancial statements or even think for more than a second or two to recall your business' sales for the most recent month and year. Sales revenue is the most common measure of a business' size and level of success. However, don't stop after you look at your total sales figure. Break that figure down as much as you can.

Looking at your sales by lines of business, product lines, individual products, varieties of individual products and price points of individual product varieties can be far more useful than just knowing that sales are up.

(Source: entrepreneur.com)



# Hungry plants could learn a thing or two from nitrogen-fixing bacteria

Nitrogen is a vital nutrient for plants, and although there's plenty of it drifting around in the air, they can only pull it out of the ground – hence the need for artificial fertilizer. But now, researchers at Washington University in St Louis have engineered bacteria that can efficiently suck nitrogen out of the air, and the long-term goal is to develop crops that can do the same.

About 78 percent of the Earth's atmosphere is made up of nitrogen, but the legume family is among the very few plants that are able to tap into that rich resource (known as nitrogen fixing). The vast majority rely on absorbing the nutrient through their roots, but soil can often be lacking, requiring fertilizer to be spread onto crops.

Developing plants that can essentially "fertilize" themselves through the air could be a huge boon to agriculture and the environment. In a recent study, researchers engineered soybean plants to have more nitrogen-carrying proteins, which kicked the plants into overdrive. Another technique, infusing seeds with nitrogen-fixing bacteria, could be applied to almost any plant.

## ■ Nitrogen-fixing genes

Similar bacteria were the focus for the new study. The WUSTL researchers set out to isolate the nitrogen-fixing genes in cy-



anobacteria. In particular, they focused on a species known as *Cyanothece*, which uses a circadian rhythm to photosynthesize during the day and fix nitrogen at night.

**In a recent study, researchers engineered soybean plants to have more nitrogen-carrying proteins, which kicked the plants into overdrive. Another technique, infusing seeds with nitrogen-fixing bacteria, could be applied to almost any plant.**

## Earth's neighboring exoplanet Ross 128 b has perfect conditions to support life: study

Ross 128 b, an exoplanet that orbits a small red dwarf star, is one of the nearest exoplanets to Earth. Now, scientists reveal that it has conditions that make it a perfect world to host life.

Diogo Souto, from the Observatório Nacional in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and colleagues reported that just like Earth, the planet is likely a rocky and temperate world, which means it can potentially have liquid water on its surface.

For the study published in *Astrophysical Journal Letters*, the researchers looked at the chemical composition of the planet's host star.

In their infancy, stars are enveloped by a disk of gas and dust that later form into planets. The star's composition influences the elements in the disk and thus, the main influencer of the structure and composition of the resulting planets.

The researchers were able to determine that the star is abundant in iron, magnesium, oxygen, aluminum, calcium, carbon, potassium, and titanium.

## ■ The ratio of the core

The researchers were also able to estimate the mass ratio of the core and mantle layers of Ross 128 b using the planet's iron and magnesium levels. Planets with radii that is 1.7 times larger than that of Earth's tend to have a gaseous envelope, which limits their odds for habitability. Planets with smaller radii tend to have rocky surfaces and Ross 128 b falls into



this category.

"Mass-radius modeling of Ross 128 b indicates that it lies below the pure-rock composition curve, suggesting that it contains a mixture of rock and iron, with the relative amounts of each set by the ratio of Fe/Mg," the researchers wrote in their study.

The researchers also made temperature measurements, which revealed that the planet likely has a temperate climate. Souto and colleagues found that the temperatures near the surface of the host star are around 3,000 degrees Celsius.

They were able to determine the amount of energy that Ross 128 b receives using the exoplanet's radius and orbital distance from the star.

"Although Ross 128 b is not Earth's twin, and there is still much we don't know about its potential geologic activity, we were able to strengthen the argument that it's a temperate planet that could potentially have liquid water on its surface," Souto said.

(Source: *Tech Times*)

## Thawing permafrost microbiomes fuel climate change, team claims

A new study could lead to more accurate predictions or the rate of global warming from greenhouse gas emissions produced by thawing permafrost in the next 100 years.

The study of the microorganisms involved in permafrost carbon degradation links changing microbial communities and biogeochemistry to the rise of greenhouse gas emissions.

It was led by Australian Center for Ecogenomics researchers in the UQ School of Chemistry and Molecular Biosciences Dr. Ben Woodcroft, Ph.D. student Caitlin Singleton, Professor Gene Tyson and international colleagues.

"As global temperatures rise, large amounts of carbon sequestered in perennially frozen permafrost are becoming available for microbial degradation," Dr. Woodcroft said.

## ■ Greenhouse gas emissions

"Until now, accurate prediction of greenhouse gas emissions produced from thawing permafrost has been limited by our understanding of permafrost microbial communities and their carbon metabolisms."

Using sequencing techniques pioneered by Professor Tyson, over 200 samples from intact, thawing and thawed permafrost sites in northern Sweden were examined.

DNA sequences of more than 1500 microbial genomes all new to science and involved in complex biochemical networks were recovered.

The research, which included new metagenomics software run on UQ supercomputers, also implicated a number

Researchers on the team, from left: Himadri Pakrasi, Michelle Liberton, Deng Liu and Maitrayee Bhattacharyya-Pakrasi

The team determined which genes were responsible for this biological clock, and spliced them into another cyanobacteria species, *Synechocystis*, to see if it could pick up the nitrogen-fixing ability. And sure enough, it did.

## ■ Bugs upped their games

After the removal of oxygen, which is produced through photosynthesis and interferes with the nitrogen fixation, and the addition of 35 new genes, *Synechocystis* was able to fix nitrogen at a rate of about two percent that of *Cyanothece*. Not great, but it's a start. But the bugs upped their game when the team removed some of the added genes: with only 24 *Cyanothece* genes, *Synechocystis*' nitrogen fixing increased to over 30 percent of *Cyanothece*'s rate.

"This means that the engineering plan is feasible," says Himadri Pakrasi, lead researcher on the study. "I must say, this achievement was beyond my expectation."

The research is a step towards the team's ultimate goal of finding a way to genetically engineer plants that are able to fix nitrogen. Doing so could increase the yield of crops and reduce the need for fertilizer, which can be environmentally costly to produce and hazardous once it leaches into natural waterways.

(Source: *newatlas.com*)



of these entirely new lineages in the production of greenhouse gases.

Ms Singleton said permafrost stores around 50 per cent of the total global soil carbon (or 1580 billion tons).

The "Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report estimated that between 30 and 99 percent of near-surface permafrost could disappear by 2100," she said.

"Northern permafrost wetlands contribute a significant portion of global methane emissions, particularly as collapsing permafrost can create the perfect anaerobic conditions for methane-producing microorganisms (methanogens), and their metabolic partners, to thrive.

"This is important as methane is a potent greenhouse gas – 25 times more efficient at trapping the sun's radiation in our atmosphere than carbon dioxide."

She said that as permafrost thaws, methane emissions increase, causing a positive feedback loop where increased atmospheric warming caused more thawing.

(Source: *sciencedaily.com*)

## Plastic pollution has infested pristine Antarctic fjords, scientists find

In the middle of the last century, mass-produced, disposable plastic waste started washing up on shorelines, and to be found in the middle of the oceans. This has since become an increasingly serious problem, spreading globally to even the most remote places on Earth. Just a few decades later, in the 1970s, scientists found the same problem was occurring at a much less visible, microscopic level, with microplastics.

These particles of plastic are between 0.05mm and 5mm in size. Larger pieces of plastic can be broken down into microplastics but these tiny bits of plastic also come from deliberate additions to all sorts of products, from toothpaste to washing power.

Now, with major global sampling efforts, it has become clear that microplastics are dispersing all over the world – in the water column, sediments, and marine animal diets – even reaching as far south as the pristine environments of Antarctica.

While this plastic problem has become more prevalent, one of the most pristine ecosystems on Earth, the fjords of the Western Antarctic Peninsula, have been revealed by retreating glaciers.

## ■ Narrow inlets created

Tucked between islands and the mainland, the coast along the Western Antarctic Peninsula has long, narrow inlets created by glaciers. During the last 50 years, these fjords have physically changed, due to reduced sea ice cover and because nearly 90% of glaciers have retreated in this region. These processes have exposed the ocean floor of



many of the fjords for the first time.

The potential for microplastics to impact this environment and its marine life is huge – and we're now working to figure out the depth of the effect that microplastic pollution is having on the newly colonised habitats. Any microplastics recovered in the Southern Ocean, particularly in newly formed ecosystems, raise alarm. They not only indicate that the area has been affected, but that plastic pollution is increasingly ubiquitous too.

In November 2017, our multidisciplinary UK-Chile-U.S.-Canada research team – known as ICEBERGS – joined the RRS James Clark Ross (an ice strengthened research ship) and headed to Antarctica's northernmost fjords. Our goal was, and still is, to gain a better understanding of how the environment and organisms evolve in newly emerging and colonizing habitats in Antarctica. We are particularly interested in the marine ecosystems on the ocean floor, so

have been looking at areas such as Marian Cove and Børgen Bay on the Western Antarctic Peninsula, where communities have only developed in the last few decades—due to the retreating glaciers.

## ■ Marine ecosystems

Thriving marine ecosystems can act as climate regulators. When ice retreats, new, pristine fjordic habitats are revealed and phytoplankton blooms occur. These help to counteract climate change because they take carbon dioxide gas out of the atmosphere.

New productive seabed habitat also becomes available for the diverse shallow water fauna that eat this algae, and store the carbon long term. Not counteracting climate change, however, is the fact that new open water absorbs heat faster, in contrast to ice that would have reflected it.

The animals colonizing the exposed fjords face challenging conditions. The sediment and fresh water flowing in the glacier melt runoff make it very difficult for many organisms to survive. And, if exposed to them, microplastics can be a serious concern for many marine animals, especially filter-feeding organisms (for example krill, and other zooplankton).

As these creatures filter water to obtain food, they may ingest microplastics which can clog and block their feeding appendages, limiting food intake. Ingested microplastics may be transferred to the circulatory system too, which can cause an increased immune response.

(Source: *Newsweek*)



## Public Relations, a Linking Bridge between Customers and Bank Capabilities: CEO

Chief Executive of Refah Kargaran Bank Dr. Mohammad Ali Sahmani said that public relations should play as a linking bridge between meeting customers' demand and capabilities of the bank.

In this regard, public relations burden the great responsibility in the field of clarifying truth and facts in order to materialize economic objectives of the bank properly, he maintained.

Moreover, the public relations should be able to link

between requirements of customers on the one hand and also capabilities and potentials the bank on the other hand.

Turning to the issue of transparency and presentation of accurate and precise information to customers, he said, "Refah K. Bank is after introducing its transparency to customers."

The public relations should establish very close relationship with media companions expertly, the issue of which should be taken into serious consideration, CEO of the bank concluded.

## There may be more than quadrillion tons of diamond hidden below Earth's surface

There may be more than a quadrillion tons of diamond hidden 100 miles below the surface of the Earth, far deeper than any drilling expedition has ever reached, according to a study.

Scientists from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the US and colleagues said the findings are unlikely to set off a diamond rush.



The ultradeep cache may be scattered within cratonic roots - the oldest and most immovable sections of rock that lie beneath the center of most continental tectonic plates, they said.

Shaped like inverted mountains, cratons can stretch as deep as 200 miles through the Earth's crust and into its mantle; geologists refer to their deepest sections as "roots."

In the study published in the journal *Geochemistry, Geophysics, Geosystems*, scientists estimate that cratonic roots may contain one to two percent diamond.

Considering the total volume of cratonic roots in the Earth, the team figures that about a quadrillion tons of diamond are scattered within these ancient rocks, 90 to 150 miles below the surface.

"This shows that diamond is not perhaps this exotic mineral, but on the (geological) scale of things, it is relatively common," said Ulrich Faul, a research scientist in MIT.

"We can't get at them, but still, there is much more diamond there than we have ever thought before," Faul said.

The researchers came to the conclusion after puzzling over an anomaly in seismic data.

For the past few decades, agencies such as the U.S. Geological Survey have kept global records of seismic activity - essentially, sound waves travelling through the Earth that are triggered by earthquakes, tsunamis, explosions, and other ground-shaking sources.

(Source: *News 18*)

## A humble seaweed just changed what we know about Antarctica as the 'isolated continent'

Large algae seaweeds known as kelp have been able to float some 20,000 kilometers (12,427 miles) from the southernmost reaches of the Indian and Atlantic oceans all the way to the shores of Antarctica – a trip previously thought to be impossible.

Not only is it an incredible journey, it's the first hard proof that Antarctica isn't as isolated as scientists thought it was. This has implications for climate change, Antarctic wildlife, and even floating aeroplane debris.

The international team of scientists who spotted the 'foreign' kelp have now put together a computer model showing how the seaweed might have made its impossible journey.

It could significantly improve our understanding of how conditions on the Antarctic continent might change in the future. "This is an unequivocal demonstration that marine species from the north can reach Antarctica," says one of the team, Crid Fraser from the Australian National University (ANU).

"To get there, the kelp had to pass through barriers created by polar winds and currents that were, until now, thought to be impenetrable."

The kelp was discovered washed up in spots including the shore of King George Island, with the seaweed now the holder of the farthest biological rafting event ever put on record.

Based on the most up-to-date analysis of ocean currents and westerly winds, plant-life like the kelp would be expected to be pushed in the opposite direction rather than drifting south. It turns out that Antarctic storms are the missing part of the equation.

The large waves whipped up by storm events are enough to override the default patterns and bring kelp drifting to the edges of Antarctica, the new models showed (see the video below). As each big wave passes, the kelp surfs forward a little bit.

(Source: *sciencealert.com*)

## How glacial biomarkers can hone the search for extraterrestrial life

Detecting biomarkers in glacial lakes on Earth could pave the way for astrobiologists to detect evidence for life on other worlds, and also unravel the properties of the environments in which that life lived.

High in the Andes Mountains in Chile, unrelenting ultraviolet (UV) radiation blasts the nutrient-poor waters of Laguna Negra and Lo Encañado, two lakes fed by rapidly melting glaciers. In this hostile and remote environment, researchers are trialing life-detection technology to see if we can use it on other planets.

Understanding these lake systems will help scientists to interpret biomarkers in ancient lakes both on Earth or other planets. Although the organisms themselves are long dead, the traces and history of their deaths are encoded in the biomolecules that litter the lakes' sediments.

The implications of these biomolecules extend far beyond the boundaries of these lakes: they could help scientists to recreate the evolutionary history of extraterrestrial life. The scientists' findings were described in a recent article in *Astrobiology*.

"Once a microbe dies, different physiochemical factors – such as humidity, temperature, oxygen, or the presence of metals – affect the degradation or chemical alteration of its structures and molecular components," says lead author Victor Parro, based at the Centro de Astrobiología, in Madrid, Spain.

"These high-altitude lakes in the Andes mountains are interesting for astrobiology because they are exposed to high levels of ultraviolet radiation," says Lewis Dartnell, an astrobiologist at the University of Westminster, in London, who was not involved in the research. "Understanding how microbial life in the lake copes with these UV levels is important for the search for life beyond Earth – on Mars, for example, where there are believed to have once been crater lakes but also very high UV levels."

(Source: *space.com*)



## Schoolmaster charged with sexual harassment gets 10 years jail

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — The schoolmaster who had been charged with sexual misconduct at a private school in western Tehran was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment, Abbas Jafari-Dolatabadi, the Tehran prosecutor general, has said.

In addition to imprisonment he was sentenced to flogging and is banned from taking any posts for two years, however, the convict can still appeal against the sentence, IRNA quoted Jafari-Dolatabadi as saying on Tuesday.

On May 27, some 40 parents filed a complaint against a schoolmaster who has allegedly displayed some sexually harassing behaviors at a private school in district two of Tehran. The schoolmaster was soon detained and the school is shut down, maybe for good.

## Iran to use fire detection sensors, surveillance drones to fight wildfires

**ENVIRONMENT** **TEHRAN** – Iran will use surveillance drones as well as fire detection sensors to timely detect forest fires and speed up extinguishing process, the commander of the forest protection unit of the Forests, Range, and Watershed Management Organization has said.

Surveillance drones detect forest fires by using a color index. The index is based on methods for vegetation classification and has been adapted to detect the tonalities of flames and smoke.

From now on, surveillance drones are used to control and monitor forests throughout the country, IRNA quoted Qasem Sabz'ali as saying on Monday.



Referring to increasing wildfires in the country's forests and rangelands due to climate change, he noted that using modern technology and early detection systems is essential in order to detect and prevent further environmental disasters.

"Some 2,000 forest fire incidents are reported daily to the forest protection units across the country," Sabz'ali said.

"Over 95 percent of wildfires occur in the forests are caused by humans in Iran, of which 70 percent are unintentional," he regretted.

Any individual contributing to wildfires will be severely punished by the protection forces, while public participation will play a significant role in this manner, he highlighted.

Last year, a total of 100 billion rials (nearly \$2.3 million) have been spent on extinguishing wildfires in the forests and rangelands nationwide, Sabz'ali added.

He explained that about 120 million rials (about \$2,800) are spent per hour for aerial firefighting (a method to combat wildfires using aircraft), and last year, nearly 700 flight hours have been spent to combat wildfires.

## LEARN ENGLISH

### This Is Your Captain Speaking

A: And the next thing you know; we're running towards the... Oh...did you feel that?  
B: Yeah, don't worry about it; we're just going through a bit of **turbulence**.  
C: Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. It looks like we've hit a **patch** of **rough** air, so we're going to have a bit of a **bumpy** ride for the next several minutes, and...  
A: This why I hate flying... Oh!  
C: At this time, I'd like to remind all of our passengers to **fasten** their seat belts and remain seated until the fasten seat belt sign is turned off. Please ensure that all **cabin baggage** is carefully **stowed** under the seat in front of you. I'll be back to update you in a minute.  
A: Did you hear that? Oh my God! Brent!  
B: Don't worry about it. This is totally normal. It happens all the time.  
C: Ah, ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain again. We've got quite a large patch of rough air ahead of us, so for your safety, we will be **suspending** in-flight service. I would ask all in-flight crew to return to their seats at this time. I would also like to ask that all our passengers **refrain** from using the **lavatory** until the seat belt sign has been switched off We can expect...  
■ **Key vocabulary**

**turbulence:** sudden, strong movement of air especially that causes a plane to move up and down  
**patch:** small area  
**rough:** having or causing sudden violent movements  
**bumpy:** having sudden up and down movements  
**fasten:** do up; connect one part with another  
**cabin baggage:** suitcases and luggage that travels inside the plane with the passengers  
**stow:** put something in a place where it is safe, but can be accessed easily  
**suspend:** stop something for a short time  
**refrain:** avoid doing  
**lavatory:** room with a sink and toilet, chiefly on an airplane or train

■ **Supplementary vocabulary**  
**overhead bin:** place above the seat in an airplane where you can store luggage  
**carry-on:** cabin baggage  
**table tray:** a table that folds down from the seat in front of you on an airplane  
**life jacket:** piece of clothing that you wear to stay floating in water  
**oxygen mask:** a mask worn over your mouth and nose so you can breathe

# ‘Rangelands on the verge of degradation in Iran’

**ENVIRONMENT** **TEHRAN** — In recent years, soil erosion, climate change, drought spells, overexploitation as well as over-grazing have led to the degradation of many rangelands in Iran, an official with the Department of Environment has said.

According to Safeopedia, rangelands are open areas of land that are used for farming or hunting. Farm animals and wild animals roam and graze on rangelands. They are distinguished from pasture lands by the fact that they maintain native vegetation rather than what has been established by humans. Rangelands include many different climates and also contain land that cannot be grazed.

Grazing is an important use for rangelands, but rangelands are not defined by grazing. Rangelands are defined as areas where the native plants are predominantly grasses or grass-like plants and where there is an absence of woody plants.

"Rangelands in Iran constitute over 52 percent of the total surface area, which are home to some 7,000 plant species, IRNA quoted Ali Moridi as saying on Sunday.

"Provision of forage supplement for livestock, production of pharmaceutical and industrial products as well as conservation of herbal and animal genetic resources are the main functions of rangelands," Moridi said.

"If rangelands are not managed properly in the country, undoubtedly, no rangeland will remain within the next few years," he regretted.

Recognizing rangelands carrying capacity is of great importance in preventing damages caused by land use change or intensive grazing, however, carrying capacity of Iranian rangelands is not fully identified yet, he regretted.

He also noted that excessive grazing is the main cause of depleting rangeland vegetation



and accelerating soil erosion in the country.

"Iran has a mean soil loss rate of 16 tons per hectare per year," he stated.

According to Eurostat website, approximately 11.4 % of the European Union (EU) territory is estimated to be affected by a moderate to high level soil erosion (more than 5 tons per hectare per year).

However, Science Direct wrote that that erosion of agricultural soils in the United States is responsible for loss of an average of 30 tons per hectare per year, about eight times greater than the rate of soil formation in the human lifetime.

Moridi went on to say that erosion, whether caused by wind or earth flows, depletes rangeland vegetation and leads to floods, in general, natural environment and its components

are all links in the chain and interconnected, so tearing each one results in destruction of another.

He explained that once the rangeland vegetation fades away, the soil cannot absorb rainfall water effectively and reduced infiltration rate will cause the soil surface to puddle and result in greater flooding potential.

Moridi warned that in the event of a flood, as the amount of sediment carried into a reservoir is at its highest during floods, wetlands or a dams located in downstream will suffer serious damage.

According to a research conducted by scientists at the University of Florida in 2006 titled "Effect of urban soil compaction on infiltration rate", a decrease in infiltration rate will result in increased runoff volume, greater flooding

## Persian medicine foundation inaugurated

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian traditional medicine foundation was officially inaugurated on Monday, July 16, with the aim of promoting healthy lifestyle and self-care throughout the country.

The foundation's target is both universities and the public and is opened with the object of promoting and ensuring public health, IRNA quoted head of the foundation Mohammad Reza Shams Ardakani as saying.

He added that it is supposed to "build a bridge" between Iran and the international community to introduce Iranian traditional medicine.

Referring to people's freedom to choose different kinds of treatment, Ardakani noted that a valid approach in health care system is required to be trusted by people.

The foundation attempts to bring together all those who are authorized to work in this area, he highlighted.

He also added that most people working in this area are those who are graduated in medicine and acquired expertise in Iranian traditional medicine [by taking especial courses].

Meanwhile, Hossein Rezaeizadeh, head of the faculty of Iranian traditional medicine at Tehran University of Medical Sciences, for his part, said that "In addition to lifestyle modification and self-care education, conducting interdisciplinary research in related issues is among main focuses of the foundation."

He went on to say that interdisciplinary studies in the field of Iranian traditional medicine is not fully organized in Iran; therefore, the foundation plans to take action toward coordinating the aforesaid studies and produce educational content.

Rezaeizadeh highlighted that benefactors



should also help to invest in this sector.

The foundation's policies are completely in harmony with those of Ministry of Health in the field of Iranian traditional medicine and there are no contradictions, he stated.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he referred to the issue of Iranian traditional medicine branding and said that international branding of Iranian medicine is of great significance.

Mentioning attaris (shops selling medicinal plants) he explained that Ministry of Health is primarily concerned with the fact that they are involving in [illegal] treatment of the patients and writing prescriptions.

In this regard, the Ministry holds traditional medicine training courses for shop owners with the help of provincial governors, he concluded.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), traditional herbal medicines are naturally occurring, plant-derived substances with minimal or no industrial processing that have been used to treat illness within local or regional healing practices. Traditional herbal medicines are getting significant attention in global health debates.

Medicinal plants still form the basis of traditional or indigenous health systems and are reported by WHO to still be used by a majority of populations in most developing countries including Iran.

## Iran attending 24th session of FAO Committee on Forestry

**ENVIRONMENT** **TEHRAN** — Iran is participating in the 24th session of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Committee on Forestry (COFO 24), being held in Rome, Italy, from July 16 to 20, IRIB reported on Tuesday.

The 24th session of COFO and the 6th World Forest Week will explore the contributions that forests can make to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Head of Iran's Forests, Range, and Watershed Management Organization Khalil Aqaei, heading the Iranian delegation, has explained that over the course of the event Iranian officials are scheduled to meet with FAO officials and discuss issues related to fighting forest pests and tree diseases as well as efforts needed to be exerted to combat desertification.

Mentioning the fact that some 14 million hectares of Iran is covered with forests, Aqaei explained that schemes to protect and restore forest are high on agenda.

### Forests and the Sustainable Development Goals

According to FAO website the Committee on Forestry will examine what contributions forests can make to achieving the SDGs and other internationally agreed goals; explore ways and means to accelerate progress, in particular, towards Goal 15; discuss actions for implementing the policy recommendations of the Committee on World Food Security regarding the contributions of forests to food security and nutrition; review opportunities and challenges for urban and peri-urban forestry; consider the implementation of FAO's climate change strategy and specific tasks related to forest resilience, health and forest fires; and provide strategic direction for the future work of FAO in forestry.

potential and reduced groundwater recharge within watersheds.

Referring to rangelands of Fars province, Moridi noted that Zagros forests are located in this province, which can face destruction in case of launching any project without the assessment of the environmental consequences.

Grazing intensity is different throughout the country; in some areas it is 2 or 3 times more than the carrying capacity of the areas which result in total disappearance of plant species severe soil erosion, he regretted.

"In line with drought, erosion has also given rise to dust particles formation as currently sand and dust storms keep hitting different parts of Khuzestan province," he stated.

The Department of Environment does not play a direct role in rangelands conservation, but it will always have full supervision on rangelands, also provincial departments of environments must be careful while implementing plans in rangelands to prevent probable damages, he remarked.

According to the law, the Forest, Rangelands and Watershed Organization is the responsible body for the rangelands in the country, he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he mentioned that all projects are subjected to environmental impact assessment according to the law, however, grazing the livestock is not considered as a project and cannot be environmentally assessed by the Department of Environment.

"Given the current conditions of rangelands in the country, all projects must be assessed regarding the ecological carrying capacity of each area, otherwise taking any actions is a betrayal to the environment as it can have many irreparable consequences," he concluded.



A view of Arasbaran Forest in East Azarbaijan

Forests and trees contribute to human livelihoods far more than is commonly known, playing crucial roles in food security, drinking water, renewable energy and rural economies. They provide around 20 percent of income for rural households in developing countries - notably more in many areas - and fuel for cooking and heating for one in every three people around the world.

Unfortunately time is running out for the world's forests, whose total area is shrinking by the day, warns a new FAO report urging governments to foster an all-inclusive approach to benefit both trees and those who rely on them.

Halting deforestation, managing forests sustainably, restoring degraded forests and adding to worldwide tree cover all require actions to avoid potentially damaging consequences for the planet and its people.

Clear legal frameworks regarding forest tenure rights, applauds the growing trend in local governance, and calls for effective partnerships and private sector engagement to pursue sustainable development goals. Given that deforestation is the second leading cause of climate change after burning fossil fuels it is of key importance that all countries corporate responsibility for zero deforestation.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

## Ministry of Justice to increase citizenship right clinics in Iran

Ministry of justice will set up citizenship right clinics in all provinces of the country in cooperation with provinces municipalities and city councils, deputy head for Ministry of Justice department of human rights and international affairs has said.

Currently, the aforesaid clinics have achieved good results in 10 provinces of the country, as well as Qazvin, Yazd, Alborz, East Azerbaijan, West Azerbaijan, Isfahan, Gilan, Fars and Lorestan, IRNA quoted Mahmoud Abbasi as saying on Sunday.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “-hood”

- **Meaning:** condition or state
- **For example:** One of the joys of **adulthood** is having the ability to define oneself.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Hole up

- **Meaning:** to hide somewhere for a period of time
- **For example:** The gunmen are still holed up in the town.

## IDIOM

### Butter wouldn't melt in someone's mouth

- **Explanation:** when someone looks completely innocent, but that they are capable of doing unpleasant things.
- **For example:** The boy who stole the purse looked as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth.

## کلینیک های حقوق شهروندی افزایش می یابد

معاون حقوق بشر و امور بین الملل وزیر دادگستری گفت: برای راه اندازی کلینیک های حقوق شهروندی در شهرهای مختلف با شورای عالی استان ها در چارچوب تفاهم نامه همکاری در حال رایزنی هستیم و قرار است با همکاری شوراهای شهر و شهرداری ها این مراکز افزایش یابد.

محمود عباسی روز یکشنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار اجتماعی ایرنا با بیان اینکه در ۱۰ استان کلینیک های حقوق شهروندی فعالیت دارد، اظهار داشت: این کلینیک ها در استان های قزوین، یزد، البرز، آذربایجان شرقی، آذربایجان غربی، اصفهان، گیلان، فارس و لرستان به نتایج و دستاوردهای مطلوبی دست یافته اند.



# ‘Shameful’: U.S. lawmakers blast Trump over Putin summit

Russian establishment chalks up Trump summit as a win for Putin

Donald Trump returned late Monday from his European tour to face ire in Washington, where U.S. intelligence officials and senior Republicans were denouncing the president as “shameful” and “disgraceful” after he refused to challenge Russian leader Vladimir Putin over interference in American elections.

Republican Senator John McCain said Trump’s seeming acceptance of Putin’s denial was a historical “low point” for the U.S. presidency and the Helsinki summit between the two leaders a “tragic mistake.”

“Today’s press conference in Helsinki was one of the most disgraceful performances by an American president in memory. The damage inflicted by President Trump’s naivete, egotism, false equivalence, and sympathy for autocrats is difficult to calculate,” McCain said in a blistering statement.

“No prior president has ever abased himself more objectively before a tyrant.”

Taking direct issue with the president who appointed him, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats said U.S. spy agencies have been “clear” and “fact-based” in their assessment that Moscow interfered in the presidential race two years ago - an assessment that Trump refused to endorse in Helsinki.

Coats added that Russia remains behind “ongoing, pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy.”

Trump stunned U.S. political allies and foes alike with his answer to a question about Russian hacking and interference in the 2016 election which saw him defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton.

Putin “just said it is not Russia. I will say this: I don’t see any reason why it would be,” Trump said.

That came three days after the U.S. Justice Department indicted 12 Russians for hacking Democratic Party computers, the latest in a series of actions taken by the U.S. government since late 2016 in retribution for what intelligence agencies say was a broad plan to support Trump’s election campaign directed by Putin himself.

Yet Trump appeared to take Putin’s word in dismissing that conclusion.

“I have great confidence in my intelligence people. But I will tell you that President Putin was extremely strong and powerful in his denial today.”

Trump also appeared to embrace Putin’s offer to have Russian investigators work together with US prosecutors on the case of the 12 just indicted.

“I think that’s an incredible offer.”

Astonished Republicans and Democrats uniformly condemned Trump, with harsh criticism coming even from hosts on Fox



News - a network normally friendly to the president.

“The president must appreciate that Russia is not our ally,” said Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan.

“There is no moral equivalence between the United States and Russia, which remains hostile to our most basic values and ideals,” he said.

Senior Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said Trump’s answer on meddling “will be seen by Russia as a sign of weakness.”

Bent on forging a personal bond with the Kremlin chief, Trump headed into the summit blaming the “stupidity” of his predecessors for plunging ties to their present low.

“This is shameful,” said Senator Jeff Flake, a fellow Republican and staunch critic of the president.

“I never thought I would see the day when our American president would stand on the stage with the Russian president and place blame on the United States for Russian aggression.”

The language used by Democrats was much harsher, including accusations of “treason.”

“For the president of the United States to side with President Putin against American law enforcement, American defense officials, and American intelligence agencies is thoughtless, dangerous, and weak,” said Chuck Schumer, the senior Democrat in the Senate.

Democratic California Representative Jimmy Gomez charged: “To side with Putin over U.S. intelligence is disgusting; to fail to defend the U.S. is on the verge of treason.”

Congressman Adam Schiff, the senior Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said Trump had given Putin “a green light to interfere in 2018.”

Democratic Senator Chris Murphy was blunter: “This entire trip has just been one

giant middle finger from President Trump to his own country. Just jaw dropping,” he wrote on Twitter.

Coats’ statement was seen as an uncommonly brusque pushback by the U.S. intelligence community against the White House. Retired spy chiefs were more direct however.

Coat’s predecessor, James Clapper, called Trump’s acquiescence to Putin “an incredible capitulation,” while former CIA chief John Brennan labeled it “nothing short of treasonous.”

## ■ A win for Putin

Meanwhile, Russia’s political and media establishment heralded talks between the Russian and U.S. leaders in Helsinki as a victory for Vladimir Putin in breaking down Western resolve to treat Russia as a pariah.

“The West’s attempts to isolate Russia failed,” read the headline on a report on Monday’s summit meeting in state-run newspaper Rossiiskaya Gazeta.

In Moscow, there was a recognition that the summit did not produce any breakthroughs on issues such as Syria, Ukraine or arms control. The Kremlin, in the run-up to the summit, had played down expectations of major progress.

Instead, the focus was on the symbolism of the leader of the world’s biggest superpower sitting down one-on-one with Putin after four years of international isolation triggered by Russia’s 2014 annexation of Ukraine’s Crimea region.

“It’s funny to recall the nonsense from Obama et al about Russia being a weak ‘regional power’,” Alexey Pushkov, a member of the upper house of the Russian parliament, referring to former U.S. President Barack Obama.

“The attention of the whole world is focused today on Helsinki and it’s crystal clear to everyone: the fate of the world is being decided between Russia and the United

States, the leaders of the two major powers of our planet are meeting,” Pushkov said in a Twitter post on Monday.

## ■ MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Asked by reporters in Helsinki how the talks had gone, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said: “Magnificent... Better than super.”

The opportunity for Putin to present himself as an equal to the U.S. president was a major objective for the Kremlin as it prepared for the summit, according to people close to the Russian foreign policy establishment.

Putin has based a large part of his domestic appeal - both to ordinary people and the elites - on a narrative about restoring the international heft that Russia lost when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

A post-summit news conference in Helsinki with Trump and Putin was “everything the Kremlin realistically could have hoped for,” said Mark Galeotti, a Russia scholar at the Institute of International Relations Prague.

“Putin gets to look like the urbane grown-up, and presents Russia as peer power to USA,” Galeotti wrote on Twitter.

Russia’s rouble currency was up 0.4 percent against the dollar in Monday trading. Market analysts said the fact the summit happened was a positive for Russian assets, offsetting the negative effect from a drop in oil prices.

Kremlin officials, speaking in private before the summit, acknowledged that it has been difficult to figure out how best to deal with a U.S. leader who is mercurial and flouts political etiquette.

Putin aides have voiced frustration too that their attempts to repair U.S.-Russia relations were being blocked by Trump’s opponents in the United States. Trump’s domestic critics allege his 2016 election campaign colluded with Russia, something both Trump and Russia deny.

In a new departure, Putin waded directly into that U.S. domestic debate. Standing alongside Trump in Helsinki, Putin said he had evidence that \$400 million dollars in unlawfully acquired cash may have been funneled to the election campaign of Trump’s defeated opponent Hillary Clinton.

“Having been twinned with Donald Trump by the media for a long time, Putin has now clearly decided to cast his lot with him,” said Dmitry Trenin, a former colonel in the Russian army who is now director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, a think tank.

On the evidence of their news conference in Helsinki, Trenin wrote on Twitter, Putin is “now vocally supporting his U.S. counterpart against his domestic foes.”

(Source: agencies)

## Japan, EU sign trade deal to eliminate nearly all tariffs

The European Union and Japan signed a landmark deal on Tuesday that will eliminate nearly all tariffs on products they trade.



The ambitious pact signed in Tokyo runs counter to the United States President Donald Trump’s moves to hike tariffs on imports from many U.S. trading partners. It covers a third of the global economy and markets of more than 600 million people.

“The EU and Japan showed an undeterred determination to lead the world as flag-bearers for free trade,” Abe said at a joint news conference with European Council President Donald Tusk and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.

Tusk praised the deal as “the largest bilateral trade deal ever.” He said the partnership is being strengthened in various other areas, including defense, climate change and human exchange, and is “sending a clear message” against protectionism.

The leaders did not mention Trump by name, but they did little to mask what was on their minds — highlighting how Europe and Japan have been pushed closer by Trump’s actions.

The agreement was largely reached late last year. The ceremonial signing was delayed from earlier this month because Abe canceled going to Brussels over a disaster in southwestern Japan, caused by extremely heavy rainfall. More than 200 people died from flooding and landslides.

The measures won’t kick in right away and still require legislative approval. But they will bring Japanese consumers lower prices for European wines, pork, handbags and pharmaceuticals. Japanese machinery parts, tea and fish will become cheaper in Europe.

The deal eliminates about 99 percent of the tariffs on Japanese goods sold to the EU. About 94 percent of the tariffs on European exports to Japan will be lifted, rising to 99 percent in the future. The difference reflects exceptions on such products as rice, which enjoys strong political protection from imports in Japan.

Overall, European farmers will benefit, Juncker said, though European consumers will be able to more easily buy luscious Kobe beef and famous Yubari melons.

The EU said the trade liberalization will help raise European exports of chemicals, clothing, cosmetics and beer to Japan. Japanese will get cheaper cheeses, such as Parmesan, gouda and cheddar, as well as chocolate and biscuits.

The imported wine and cheese could hurt sales by Japanese wineries and dairies, but Japanese consumers have historically coveted such European products.

The major step toward liberalizing trade has been discussed since 2013.

Apart from its deal with the EU, Japan is working on other trade agreements, including a far-reaching trans-Pacific deal. The partnership includes Australia, Mexico, Vietnam and other nations, although the U.S. has withdrawn.

Abe praised the deal with the EU for helping his “Abenomics” policies, designed to wrest the economy out of stagnation despite a shrinking population and cautious spending. Japan’s growth remains heavily dependent on exports.

(Source: CNBC)

## Amnesty: U.S.-led coalition in denial over civilian deaths in Raqqa

**13 →** Sean Ryan, spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition, officially known as the Combined Joint Task Forces - Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), tweeted at the time that Amnesty’s report “underscores human tragedy of war and brutality of Daesh...”

An OIR spokesman told Al Jazeera in an email on Tuesday that the coalition “is willing to consider all new evidence in its evaluation of civilian casualty allegations”.

### ■ Investigate allegations

In the June 5 Amnesty report, 112 civilians belonging to four families in Raqqa were interviewed. They recalled the horrors they witnessed and family members killed during the offensive launched jointly with the Kurdish-backed so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

The coalition admitted to 23 civilian deaths from more than 30,000 artillery rounds and several thousand air strikes - a figure Amnesty International says is “neither accurate, credible, nor serious”.

The rights group said the coalition killed hundreds and injured thousands of civilians during its offensive.

“The artificially low number of civilian casualties the coalition acknowledges stems in part from poor investigation procedures that fail even to involve on-the-ground research,” Amnesty said in its statement on Tuesday.

According to the rights organization, the SDF noted in a letter to coalition “mistakes” and “unsuccessful air strikes” that resulted in “huge human and material losses” on the ground.

Amnesty said its researchers spent weeks in Raqqa conducting field investigations, which included visiting attack sites and interviewing witnesses.

It called on coalition members to investigate allegations of violations.

### ■ U.S.-backed militants ‘create platform’ for talks with Syrian government

Meantime, the political arm of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a United States-backed coalition of mainly Kurdish militants holding a grip on northeastern Syria, says it is devising a negotiating team for potential talks with the central government in Damascus.

On Monday, the so-called Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), which is linked to the SDF umbrella militant group, held a gathering in the northern town of Tabqa for a two-day meeting, with local Kurdish



officials and Syrian domestic opposition figures in attendance.

Leading SDC member Hekmat Habib told the AFP that one of the meeting’s aims was “to create a platform to negotiate” with the Syrian government.

“This platform will represent all areas in the autonomous administration and all areas held by the SDF,” he said, without providing further details.

The militants are allied with the U.S. and French troops deployed to Syria and control much of the country’s north and east.

In June, the SDC said it was ready for “unconditional” peace talks with the government.

The Kurdish militants in northern Syria have been a source of tensions between the U.S. and Turkey. Ankara wants the U.S. to stop supporting and arming the Kurds, but Washington rejects that call.

Last month, Turkey and the U.S. reached a deal that envisages the withdrawal of Washington-backed Kurdish militants from Manbij, in an agreement that observers say could push the Kurds towards the Syrian government.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said in early June that his government has two options in dealing with the SDF issue: first, negotiations and second using force against the Washington-backed militants.

“The first one: we started now opening doors for negotiations, because the majority of them are Syrians, supposedly they like their country, they don’t like to be puppets to any foreigners. If not, we’re going to resort... to liberating those areas by force,” he told Russia’s RT television network.

Several days later, a delegation from Syria’s domestic opposition made a rare visit to Qamishli, most of which is held by Kurdish forces linked to the SDF.

Syrian media reported that the Kurds had expressed readiness to hand over control of the Eastern Euphrates to the government after Washington withheld its support for the Kurdish militants in the northern Syrian cities of Manbij and Afrin.

The Syrian government has given a degree of authority to the Kurdish regions to run their own affairs in face of a foreign-backed militancy. The U.S., however, has used the vacuum to establish a foothold in those regions with the help of the militants.

The U.S. angered Turkey by announcing a plan for the formation of a Kurdish militant force in Syria near the Turkish border, prompting Ankara in January to launch a cross-border military operation inside Syria with the declared aim of eliminating the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG/Yekineyên Parastina Gel) militants, an SDF offshoot, particularly in the Afrin region.

Turkish troops captured Afrin in March, claiming that they had killed scores of YPG militants until then.

Earlier this year, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had threatened to push its Afrin offensive against the YPG militants eastward to Manbij, where the U.S. forces are stationed, risking confrontation between the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) allies.

However, Washington agreed to withdraw the U.S.-backed Kurdish militia from Manbij. This clearly paved the way for Turkish troops to capture the volatile town in a move seen in line with the same US-Turkey deal which was sealed in June.

Ankara views the YPG as a terrorist organization linked to the homegrown Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) militant group, which is seeking independence from Turkey through militancy for decades now.

### ■ Syrian government seizes strategic hill overlooking Golan Heights

Elsewhere, Syrian government troops have regained control of a strategic hill overlooking the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, state-media and rebels said on Monday.

Troops loyal to President Bashar al-Assad took control of the al-Haara hill on the second day of an offensive aimed at retaking the remaining pockets of opposition in Quneitra province along the border with Israel.

(Source: agencies)

## HRW urges Myanmar to address illegal land confiscations

Myanmar’s government “should promptly address illegal land confiscations, compensate aggrieved parties, and reform laws to protect people against future abuses”, Human Rights Watch (HRW) has said in a new report.

Over the past 30 years, the Myanmar government and military officials have seized vast swaths of land from farmers “while providing them no or inadequate compensation”, the rights group said the 33-page report released on Tuesday.

“Widespread land confiscations across Myanmar have harmed rural communities in profound ways for decades,” said Phil Robertson, HRW’s deputy Asia director.

Land confiscation in Myanmar became a major issue under the previous military government, with estimates of as many 800,000 hectares or more of land seized from farmers and other civilians without compensation. Farmers who protested the lack of compensation or refused to leave confiscated land often faced criminal prosecution.

Dozens of farmers in southern Shan State, as well as the Ayeyarwady and Yangon regions described their loss of livelihoods, access to healthcare and children’s education in HRW’s report.

The rights organization criticized the land reforms carried out by Aung San Suu Kyi’s government in recent years as ineffective, saying thousands of farmers’ claims remained unresolved.

“Hundreds of farmers across Myanmar, fed up waiting for the return of their lands or receiving compensation, have been prosecuted for organizing and participating in public protests against the government or for trespassing by farming the land they claim,” the report said.

HRW called on Myanmar’s government “to stop arbitrarily arresting land rights activists” and immediately release all those who were awaiting trial for peacefully protesting land seizures.

It also urged donor countries not to be “fooled by the flurry of proclaimed land reforms”.

“The Myanmar government needs to provide redress for victims of past unlawful confiscations and ensure that new laws safeguard the rights of farm families in the future,” said Robertson.

Myanmar government spokesman Zaq Htay could not be reached for comment.

(Source: agencies)



## Usain Bolt may play football in Australia

Eight-time Olympic champion Usain Bolt is in talks for a trial to play football in Australia, a club says.

The Jamaican former sprinter, 31, is negotiating a six-week stint with the Central Coast Mariners, a team in the country's A-League competition. Mariners chief executive Shaun Mielekamp said the club had spent four months pursuing Bolt, and a season-long deal could follow. Football agent Tony Rallis said a deal had been agreed "in principle".

Mr Rallis, who has been involved in the deal, told local Sky Sports Radio that negotiations continued over Bolt's pay.

"The owner of Central Coast Mariners has put his hand deep in his pocket and guaranteed 70% of the salary," Mr Rallis said.

News Corp Australia reported that a "multi-million dollar" deal had been proposed.

Bolt has previously trained with clubs in Germany, Norway and South Africa. The 100m and 200m world record holder, who retired from athletics last year, has previously spoken about his interest in becoming a professional footballer.

Bolt is a fan of Manchester United and one of its former assistant managers, Mike Phelan, is now at the Mariners.

A Football Federal Australia spokesman told the BBC that it would not assist in funding Bolt's trial.

Mr Mielekamp said the club was optimistic that the trial could be extended. "If all goes well, who knows? He may be lighting up the A-League this season," he told the local Seven Network on Tuesday.

Mr Mielekamp said the club had received positive reports about Bolt's performance when he trained with German club Borussia Dortmund and Norwegian side Stromsgodset.

(Source: BBC)

## Blind returns to Ajax after four years at Man United

Dutch international Daley Blind has completed a return to Ajax Amsterdam from Manchester United on a four-year contract, the clubs said on Tuesday. Ajax confirmed they struck a deal for an initial 16 million euros (14.15 million pounds), which could rise up to 20.5 million euros with performance-based add-ons.

"To play for the biggest club in the world with such a history meant a lot to me," Blind, capped 54 times by the Netherlands, wrote on Twitter. "I want to thank everyone, the managers, coaches, the medical department, everyone who helped me to settle in so quick at the beginning, of course my team mates and last but definitely not least the fans."

The 28-year-old, who came through the Ajax academy and played over 100 senior matches for the club, arrived at United in 2014 but was not a first-team regular under manager Jose Mourinho. Able to play in midfield or defence, Blind won the FA Cup with United in 2016, and the League Cup and Europa League titles the following year.

Blind made 90 Premier League appearances in four years at Old Trafford but was limited to only seven last season.

(Source: Goal)

## FC Barcelona reports record revenues

Revenues at La Liga winner Barcelona hit a record €914m (£809m) in the 2017-18 season, the club has said.

The Spanish football giant also said it was on track to achieve revenues of €1bn by 2021.

Barcelona received a world record transfer fee of £200.6m from Paris St Germain for Brazilian Neymar in 2017.

Since then the Catalan club has twice broken its transfer record on the signings of Ousmane Dembele (£96.8m) and Philippe Coutinho (£106.4m). Operating profits at the club were €32m, while the net profit was £13m. "The board has valued the final balance of the year positively, and it's in line with the strategic plan of the club to reach €1,000m of income in 2021," the club said.

As well as reclaiming the La Liga title from rivals Real Madrid during 2017-18, the club also won the Copa del Rey for a fourth successive season.

But they were knocked out of the Champions League by Italy's Roma at the quarter-final stage.

(Source: BBC)

## Real Madrid to put total trust in Courtois

Not since Iker Casillas was in his prime have Real Madrid enjoyed a custodian in the sticks who is free from gossip or criticism, and the club hope Thibaut Courtois will be exactly that.

Current first choice Keylor Navas has been a mainstay en route to three consecutive Champions League crowns but the Costa Rican's time in between the sticks has featured constant talk of club bosses wanting to oust him.

Stepping in ahead of Navas seems set to be Courtois, a deal which may happen sooner rather than later given Chelsea's valuation of 35 million euros for the player.

Out of contract in 12 months' time, and able to pre-agree a free transfer in just over six months' time, the goalkeeper represents a genuine bargain in today's market and could be announced this week.

Not only will Courtois allow Madrid to boast having one of the top three or five shot-stoppers in the world, the Belgian's signature follows their tradition of plucking the World Cup's best performers and putting them on the Bernabeu stage.

James Rodriguez arrived four years ago and Mesut Ozil before that, making the 2018 Golden Glove winner the latest in a clear theme under club president Florentino Perez's watch.

At 26, Courtois has many of his best years ahead of him and already boasts seven years of experience in the upper echelons of the game, three at Atletico Madrid and four with Chelsea.

Should Los Blancos pull this move off, there is a sense that they will simply throw Courtois the gloves and allow him to get to work without any fear of losing his place.

(Source: Marca)

# Why Russia 2018 was the best World Cup - statistically

Four simple words, used variously as a statement or a question across the country during a baking June and scorching July: "Best World Cup ever?"

The 2018 edition of international football's ultimate gathering was not the most-anticipated tournament in the game's long history, for a variety of reasons, but perhaps that was a good thing.

Because from the moment hosts Russia smashed five goals past Saudi Arabia in the opening game, there was barely any let-up in drama and excitement. The group stage, the knockout stage, even the final - so often a cagey procession to extra time in recent World Cups - delivered what they needed to.

In a football world of plenty, the relative infrequency of World Cups - held only every four years - means the tournament retains a fascination and cultural heft that easily outweighs the now technically superior club game.

There are, it seems, certain obligatory ingredients to a memorable World Cup, so let's see how 2018 really measured.

### ■ There needs to be drama

Unlike a league season, the World Cup does not have the time for a slow-burning narrative to take shape.

It needs short, sharp hits of drama from the very start. 2018 did not disappoint, with the 3-3 draw between Spain and Portugal on day two immediately, and rightly, adopted as a tournament classic. Cristiano Ronaldo's late free-kick to ensure Portugal took a point capped a day of drama, with winning goals for Uruguay against Egypt in the 89th minute and Iran against Morocco in the 95th.

Overall there were nine winning goals (plus four defeat-avoiding equalisers) scored in the last minute or injury time of games, more than any previous edition of the World Cup and just one fewer than the five tournaments from 1998-2014 combined.

Late goals are the football equivalent of snapping that bit of plastic off an old cassette tape to prevent it being recorded over. They seal in the drama for good.

The formula for this is delicate.

If too many big sides exit early it can make the conclusion of the tournament a bit underwhelming (see: World Cup 2002) but no-one wants to see all the favourites cruise through to the latter stages untroubled.

As it was, reigning champions Germany going out in the



group stage, and then Spain, Argentina and Brazil stumbling in the knockout stage was just about right.

The Germans managed to be both uninspiring and particularly unlucky, their total of 72 shots surpassed by only five teams in the tournament, four of whom played four more games than Joachim Low's team.

At least Manuel Neuer ended the tournament as the only goalkeeper to make two dribbles, including one particularly unsuccessful one in the opposition half against South Korea. Redefining the position indeed.

### ■ Superstars need to emerge

We went into 2018 wondering which of Ronaldo or Lionel Messi would finally dominate a World Cup.

Ronaldo's hat-trick against Spain was electrifying but also a false dawn, while Messi could not carry a reeling Argentina team who started with a different formation in all four of their games as they searched in vain for a func-

tional combination. It seems extraordinary, given their club exploits, but neither Ronaldo nor Messi has ever scored in a World Cup knockout match.

The baton of superstardom was supposed to pass to Neymar, but despite ending the World Cup with the most shots (26) and the second-most chances created (23) it was the fact he was the second most-fouled player (26 times in five matches - just behind Eden Hazard with 27 in six) that stood out. Yes, the Brazilian was targeted, but his ostentatious horizontal suffering left many with strong feelings of distaste.

Instead, it was France's teenage hero Kylian Mbappe who enjoyed a breakthrough. Two goals against Argentina in the last 16 saw him become the first teenager since Pele to score twice in a World Cup game, and he followed that by becoming the youngest player since Pele to score in a World Cup final.

(Source: BBC)

## Wenger names biggest regret as becoming a 'prisoner' at Arsenal



Arsene Wenger has compared his 22-year spell at Arsenal to that of a willing prisoner while discussing his biggest career regrets.

Wenger is without a club for the first time since 1996 having stepped down as Gunners manager in May. Unai Emery was soon appointed as his successor.

The final seasons of his long tenure were littered with protests against his employment as the club slide down the table, with his final campaign concluding with a worst-ever finish of sixth.

In a wide-ranging interview with RTL, Wenger spoke of his biggest mistakes and regrets.

"Perhaps staying at the same club for 22 years," he replied. "I'm someone who likes to move around a lot, but I also like a challenge. I've been a prisoner of my own challenge at times."

"[I want forgiveness from] all the people who I've made suffer. In my line of work, we are constantly making decisions that punish people, while making others happy. When you work with a 25-man squad, it's basically making 14 people unemployed every Saturday or Tuesday."

"Also, the players for whom I never

managed to find the key to helping them reach their potential."

Former players Thierry Henry and Patrick Vieira are both enjoying coaching careers since hanging up their boots. Vieira moving from a coach at Manchester City to manager at New York City FC and now Nice.

Henry on Monday quit his Sky Sports punditry gig to focus fully on his aim of becoming a manager, having three years ago left his role with Arsenal Under-18s after Wenger asked him to not pursue media duties at the same time.

Wenger is confident Henry and Vieira will prove to be successful managers but has warnings for the pair and the sacrifices which need to be made.

"I regret having sacrificed everything I did because I realise I've hurt a lot of people around me. I've neglected a lot of people. I've neglected my family, I've neglected many close ones."

"Deep down though, the obsessed man is selfish in his pursuit of what he loves. He ignores a lot of other things. But it's a bone to chase at the same time."

(Source: Daily Mail)

## No wrongdoing in ex-Barça player's liver transplant, says governing body



Spain's National Transplant Organization (ONT) has concluded that a liver transplant performed on the former Barcelona FC soccer player Éric Abidal, from a living donor, was carried out "in accordance with the law." The announcement comes after the ONT - in conjunction with the Clinic hospital in Barcelona and the Catalan Transplant Organization (OCATT) - examined "every single one of the processes within the area of its competencies, that's to say, from a clinical and healthcare point of view."

The investigation was launched after news reports surfaced earlier this month that there may have been irregularities with the transplant, which was performed in 2012 on the then-player after he was diagnosed with a tumor. Abidal's cousin was apparently the living donor. The legality of the process was thrown into doubt, however, after wiretapped phone conversations of then-Barcelona FC president Sandro Rosell emerged, in which he and a person with whom he is talking appear to suggest that the liver that Abidal received was paid for illegally by the club, and that his cousin was not, in fact, the donor.

In the wake of the allegations, Abidal

strenuously denied that there had been any wrongdoing, and published a photo of himself and his cousin in hospital purportedly after the procedure had taken place. Rosell - who is currently in prison ahead of a trial for money laundering and criminal organization offense - also issued a statement from jail earlier this month in which he denied any wrongdoing, and claimed that his words had been taken out of context.

In a statement released today, the ONT stated that the data it has "confirms that the liver transplant performed on Éric Abidal was carried out according to the current legislation and with good clinical practices." The ONT added that "contrary to what has been published in some news stories," Abidal "was on the waiting list for a deceased donor liver transplant."

"Given the progression of his illness, the medical team considered the option of a liver transplant from a live donor, which under no circumstance excluded the possibility of a transplant from a deceased donor should the opportunity have arisen," they explain.

(Source: El Pais)

## France welcomed by hundreds of thousands of supporters

Hundreds of thousands of ecstatic French fans celebrated the return of their World Cup winning football team on Monday, jumping and chanting "We Are The Champions" as their bus paraded down the Champs Elysees before a special presidential reception.

"Les Bleus", a dynamic, young team that won an open, fast-paced final 4-2 with Croatia in Moscow, appeared at the Elysee palace, where they burst into a spontaneous rendition of the "La Marseillaise" national anthem with President Emmanuel Macron and his wife.

"Thank you for having made us proud," Macron told the players in the presidential palace's gardens. "Never forget where you come from: all the clubs across France that trained you."

French media spent the day lauding the team's accomplishments. More than 300,000 people filled the Champs Elysees, the area around the Arc de Triomphe and the Place de la Concorde on Sunday night, partying into the early hours, singing the Marseillaise, setting off firecrackers and blaring horns until the sun rose.

"We had so much fun last night, the city was full of joy, so much celebration," a woman dressed in red, white and blue who had made her way out to Charles de Gaulle airport told BFM TV. "All we want is a wave from the players."

Newspapers hailed a second World Cup for France, after their first victory on home soil in 1998.

"History Made" declared sports daily L'Equipe. Photos



of superstars Kylian Mbappe, Antoine Griezmann and Paul Pogba, as well as shots of the team holding aloft and kissing the trophy in the pouring rain, dominated coverage.

The victory has helped foster 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.

France has suffered years of tension and self-examination since a series of attacks by Islamist gunmen during 2015 that left more than 140 dead, including 89 killed in the Bataclan theatre in Paris. In some small way, the World Cup has helped lift the nation as it remains wary of the threat.

When France won its first World Cup 20 years ago, with

Zinedine Zidane 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 put 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.

### ■ Metro stations

For Macron, who became president last year at the age of 39, leading his political movement to victory against the odds, the success is also likely to have positive repercussions after a slump in the polls amid a host of economic reforms.

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

On Monday morning, the after-effects of Sunday night's frenetic revelry 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)



# Iran, Qatar football Presidents meet in Moscow

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — President of the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) Mehdi Taj and Qatar Football Association (QFA) President Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al Thani met in Moscow on the sidelines of the 2018 World Cup final on Sunday. The Presidents discussed on areas of mutual interest while stressing on the importance of building the relationship between the two associations and developing it for future gains.

QFA and FFIRI have already signed a cooperation agreement in Doha in December 2017. Qatar's Persian Gulf neighbor Iran has already shown interest in helping the country to host the prestigious competition.

Qatar 2022 organizers are preparing to host a 32-team World Cup and Iranian islands of Kish and Qeshm have hotels aplenty that could accommodate the fans.

Iran looks forward to closer cooperation with the QFA in various areas in football, which is aimed at strengthening the Qatari-Iranian relations.

The QFA has recently signed a series of co-operation agreements with the Oman Football Association (OFA), Uzbekistan Football Federation (UFF), Korea Football Association (KFA), Japan Football Association (JFA), Iraq Football Association (IFA), Football Association of Maldives (FAM), Football Federation of Sri Lanka (FFSL) and the Czech Republic.



The QFA has also inked several agreements with its Yemeni, Palestinian, German, Italian, Pakistani, and Kyrgyz counterparts, which demonstrates Qatar's openness and attempt to build good relationship across all continents through football.

## League Organization must apologize to Esteghlal's fans: Official



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Esteghlal's board member Hassan Zamani has said the Iran Football League Organization must apologize to Esteghlal's fans after awarding Super Cup to Persepolis. Following Esteghlal's withdrawal from Super Cup, the Iran Football League Organization announced Persepolis reclaimed the title for the second successive year.

The 2018 Super Cup was scheduled to be played on July 20 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium between Iran Professional League

champions (Persepolis) and Hazf Cup titleholders (Esteghlal).

Esteghlal announced they would not play Persepolis on July 20 since they are in Turkey at that time.

"The Iran Football League Organization must apologize to millions fans of Esteghlal for their decisions. We've already announced that we cannot play on July 20," Zamani said.

"We never had a problem playing Persepolis but we could not play at that time since we are in Turkey until July 22," he added.

## Iran B earn third successive win in William Jones Cup



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran B basketball team earned their third successive win at the 2018 William Jones Cup in Taiwan on Tuesday. Farzad Kouhian's men defeated 87-75 Chinese Taipei Blue in the competition's Day 3.

Mohammad Yousof Vand led Iran with 30 points and Liu Cheng was Chinese Taipei Blue's top scorer with 15 points.

The Iranian team, consisting of youth players, started the competition with a LSU-Atletas from Lithuania 76-48 and

then beat Japan B 78-61.

The 2018 William Jones Cup is the 40th staging of William Jones Cup, an international basketball tournament held in Taipei, Taiwan.

The men's tournament is being held from July 14 to 22 with participation of 11 teams.

The tournament will follow a single round robin format.

The U.S. are the most decorated team with 15 titles and the Philippines and Iran have won five titles each.

## Look back - Look ahead: IR Iran

There was success, disappointment and lessons learned as the five Asian teams concluded their 2018 FIFA World Cup campaigns. They will all now turn their attention to AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019. Islamic Republic of Iran went into the 2018 FIFA World Cup as the second-highest ranked Asian nation, behind Australia. And unlike the Socceroos, Team Melli ended the campaign with a far enhanced reputation.

Managerial stability, with Carlos Queiroz entering his eighth year at the helm, was rewarded with a solid tactical performance in Russia as IR Iran came to within inches of advancing to the round of 16 despite being drawn into the proverbial "Group of Death" alongside the last two European champions, Spain and Portugal in addition to Morocco.

### World Cup Summary

A dogged defensive display against a Morocco side, ranked five places lower than Team Melli in the pre-World Cup June FIFA rankings, was cause for concern. Nevertheless, the job was ultimately done in the dying seconds thanks to an own goal from substitute Aziz Bouhaddouz.

With three points in the bag, IR Iran set out to further strengthen their position by attempting to sneak a draw against heavy-favourites Spain. This time, Team Melli were the ones to be narrowly edged as Diego Costa's deflected effort separated the sides at the final whistle.

Victory against Portugal was now a must, and Queiroz's men saved their best performance until last as Karim Ansarifard's late penalty cancelled out Ricardo Quaresma's wonder strike. For a second, the whole nation thought they had got the all-important victory as Mehdi Taremi was sent one-on-one with the Portuguese goalkeeper with just seconds to go on the clock, but his effort from close distance ended into the side netting. One point, and one goal was all that separated IR Iran from progressing to the knock-out stages for the first time in their history. Nonetheless, the four points collected marked their best-ever World Cup tally, and no other Asian team collected more points in Russia 2018. Promising signs going into the AFC Asian Cup in six months' time.

### Aftermath

Queiroz and his players were treated to a heroes welcome upon return to Tehran, and deservedly so, having exceeded expectations and got the nation's first World Cup win since 1998.

### Top Prospect for AC2019

Queiroz's decision to leave Persepolis captain Seyed



Jalal Hosseini out of the World Cup squad caused a stir prior to the competition, but the Portuguese coach's foresight was vindicated after the other Hosseini, Esteghlal's Majid Hosseini, 14 years his namesake's junior, put in top performances against Spain and Portugal in Russia.

As centre-back veterans Hosseini and Pejman Montazeri enter the twilight of their careers, Team Melli's future at the back is secured with the presence of 22-year-old Hosseini beside 26-year-old Morteza Pouraliganji, who was one of the team's best performers at the World Cup.

Having made his name four years earlier in Australia, Sardar Azmoun may be the most globally recognisable name in IR Iran's squad, but it is worth remembering the Rubin Kazan striker is still just 23 and could well take his game to the next level in the UAE after a solid, if not unspectacular World Cup campaign.

### What Comes Next?

"We have had a good football year, and the Asian Cup is

ahead of us. Based on my negotiations with Queiroz, and the current atmosphere, we can win the Asian Cup," the words of Mehdi Taj, the President of the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) are as strong a statement as they come.

Tested against some of the World's top sides in Russia, IR Iran showed their defensive strength, conceding just two goals in their three matches, but they have also shown profligacy in front of goal. Their two goals scored in Russia were an own-goal following a corner kick against Morocco and a spot-kick against Portugal.

With an abundance of attacking talent in the form of Azmoun, Taremi, Ansarifard and Alireza Jahanbakhsh, and with the likes of Ali Alipour and Kaveh Rezaei and Morteza Tabrizi also impressing for their club sides, IR Iran will look to improve their attacking performance as they look to come back from neighbouring UAE with a fourth continental title.

(Source: the-afc)

## Persepolis win Iran's Super Cup

**PLDC** — Following Esteghlal's withdrawal from Iran's Super Cup, Persepolis football team were awarded a 3-0 win.

On Monday, the Iran Football League Organization had decided to postpone the match but they changed their minds one day later.

The match was originally scheduled for July 20 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium in Tehran but Esteghlal announced it would not participate in the match.

Esteghlal are currently holding a camp in Turkey ahead of new season of Iran Professional League.

Persepolis have won Iran Professional League last season, while Esteghlal claimed Hazfi Cup.

The Iran Super Cup is regarded as the curtain raiser for a new league campaign since the competition's creation in 2005.

## Paykan earn first win at Asian Women's Club Volleyball C'ship

**TASNIM** - Iran's Paykan seized their first win at the 2018 Asian Women's Club Volleyball Championship on Tuesday.

The Iranian team, who had suffered four defeats in their previous matches, beat CMFC from Chinese Taipei 3-1 (24-26, 20-25, 25-22, 13-25).

Paykan will face Indonesian Garuda VC on Wednesday for fifth place.

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.

## Iran brush aside Germany in World ParaVolley

**Press TV** — The Iran men's national sitting volleyball team have thrashed Germany in consecutive sets at the 2018 World ParaVolley Sitting Volleyball World Championships in the Netherlands.

The Iranian team, which had routed Japan 3-0 (25-8, 25-9 and 25-16) at the start of their campaign against Japan the previous day, further asserted their dominance at the prestigious tournament and notched up a 3-0 (25-20, 25-9 and 25-13) win over Germany at a Pool B match in the southeastern Dutch city of Venlo on Monday evening.

The Iran men's national sitting volleyball team are scheduled to face Russia on Wednesday evening.

Separately, the Iran women's national sitting volleyball team slumped to a 0-3 (15-25, 17-25 and 18-25) loss against China on Monday.

The Iranian sitting volleyball players had earlier brushed aside their Slovenian counterparts in straight sets (25-10, 25-12 and 28-25).

The 2018 World ParaVolley Sitting Volleyball World Championships began on July 15, and will finish on July 22, 2018.

## Ali Karimi joins Iran's Esteghlal

**TASNIM** — Iran's Esteghlal football team completed the signing of Sepahan midfielder Ali Karimi.

The 23-year-old defensive midfielder has joined the Iranian giants as Omid Ebrahimi's replacement.

Ebrahimi has recently signed a contract with Al Ahli of Qatar. Karimi started his playing career in Sepahan in 2012 and joined Dinamo Zagreb in 2016.

He joined Esteghlal's training camp in Turkey Sunday night. Esteghlal is preparing for the new season of Iran Professional League as well as two vital matches against Al Sadd of Qatar in the AFC Champions League quarter-final.

## Jahanbakhsh capable of playing on big stage



Alireza Jahanbakhsh's World Cup performances for Iran proved he is more than capable of stepping up to play on the big stage.

The Iranian international has the ability to play anywhere along the front three and is equally capable of playing with both feet.

Tottenham Hotspur is edging closer to signing Brazilian starlet Malcom from Bordeaux with the 21-year-old keen to make the switch from Ligue 1 to the Premier League.

However, despite the apparent interest from Spurs, no formal bid has been made by the North London side and, considering the rife competition for the youngster's signature from around Europe, other alternatives should be considered.

This is where Iranian World Cup star Jahanbakhsh comes into the mix. The talented 24-year-old forward could be the perfect alternative to Malcom if Spurs miss out on signing the Brazilian starlet.

(Source: Tbrfootball.com)



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■ Managing Director: Ali Asgari  
■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895  
editor@tehrantimes.com  
» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000  
» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450  
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Zip Code: 1599814713



## Ford hangs painting by Iran's Ahmad Vakili

**A R T** TEHRAN — The Ford Motor Company, the American multinational automaker headquartered in Michigan, has purchased a painting by the veteran Iranian artist, Ahmad Vakili, to hang it at the office of one of its managers.



A painting by veteran Iranian artist Ahmad Vakili has been purchased by the Ford Motor Company.

The artwork has been acquired by Ford Executive Services manager Diana Ehrstin from an exhibition by Iranian artists at Tara Gallery in Los Angeles, the Iranian director of the gallery, Homa Taraji, said in a press release published on Tuesday.

The painting created in 2013 depicts a large grain field in Iran's Lorestan Province.

## Istanbul gallery to showcase tree-themed works by Iranian, French artists

**A R T** TEHRAN — The 7 Art Gallery in Istanbul will be playing host to an exhibition of works by a group of Iranian artists and the French artist Gerard Cottin.



A poster the Tree exhibition at Istanbul's 7 Art Gallery

"Choosing the tree as the theme of the exhibition shows how much greenery is important for artists," the public relations team for the exhibit said in a statement published on Tuesday.

"This exhibition will travel to Turkey to serve as an envoy that seeks to attract more attention to the trees whose death would lead the world toward extinction," it added.

Some of the artworks have been created exclusively for the exhibition, which will be held from July 19 to August 1.

Among the Iranian artists are Mojdeh Mahdavi, Yalda Fakhimi, Golnaz Hosseini, Marzieh Nakhjavan, Sogol Bayegani and Mehrnush Saravi.

## Boxer Mayweather, George Clooney lead world's highest paid entertainers

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — American boxer Floyd Mayweather was named the world's highest-paid entertainer on Monday on a list that saw actor George Clooney take the No. 2 spot with the highest annual pay of his career.

Reality star Kylie Jenner, 20, came in third on the annual Forbes Celebrity 100 list, largely thanks to her booming cosmetics line that Forbes said put her on track to become the youngest self-made billionaire in the United States.

Forbes compiled its 2018 list estimating pre-tax earnings from June 2017-June 2018, before deducting fees for managers, based on data from Nielsen, touring trade publication Pollstar, movie database IMDb, and interviews with industry experts and celebrities themselves.

Mayweather pulled in some \$285 million in the period, largely thanks to his August 2017 comeback fight win over mixed martial arts champion Conor McGregor.

Oscar-winning star Clooney earned an estimated \$239 million after selling the Casamigos tequila company he co-founded to British spirits company Diageo in June 2017. Forbes said the sale gave Clooney the best annual earnings of his 35-year career in film and television.

Forbes said entertainers on its 2018 Celebrity 100 list earned a combined \$6.3 billion before tax, up 22 percent from last year's list. Many of the highest earners came from celebrities leveraging their brands through side ventures and through their social media presence.

"There's never been a more lucrative time to be famous than now, with 11 superstars earning \$100 million or more over the past year," Zack O'Malley Greenburg, senior entertainment editor at Forbes, said in a statement.

# Tehran exhibition displays documents on cultural ties between Iran, Oman

**A R T** TEHRAN — An exhibition displaying a collection of historical documents on cultural and political relations between Iran and Oman opened at the National Library and Archives of Iran (NLAI) on Monday evening.

The exhibit was inaugurated during a special ceremony by NLAI deputy director Fariborz Khosravi and the director of Oman's National Records and Archives Authority, Hamad bin Mohammad Aldhouyeni, the NLAI announced.

Part of the collection features the oral history of the Omani Civil War in Dhofar during the 1960s and 1970s, which ended with the defeat of the rebels by support from Iranian and British forces.

"Most of the Iranian troops and commanders who were sent to Oman at that time have died or are in their old age, therefore collecting the oral history of the event could be interesting for people in both countries," Khosravi said at the ceremony.

He asked Oman to compile a bibliography of the rare Persian manuscripts preserved at its National Records and Archives Authority.

For his part, Bin Mohammad Aldhouyeni said that Oman is ready to collaborate with Iran in organizing mutual cultural meetings and exhibitions.

He along with a number of colleagues paid a visit to various sections of the NLAI.



NLAI deputy director Fariborz Khosravi (R) and the director of Oman's National Records and Archives Authority, Hamad bin Mohammad Aldhouyeni (R), cut a ribbon to launch an exhibition of a collection of historical documents on cultural and political relations between Iran and Oman at the NLAI in Tehran on July 16, 2018. (NLAI)

## Chinese, Iranian cultural officials meet in Tehran



The deputy director of the Culture, History and Study Commission of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Ye Xiaowen (L), and Cinema Organization of Iran director Mohammad-Mehdi Heidarian meet in Tehran on July 15, 2018.

**A R T** TEHRAN — Cinema Organization of Iran director Mohammad-Mehdi Heidarian met Ye Xiaowen, the deputy director of the Culture, History and Study Commission of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), in Tehran on Sunday.

The expansion of cultural relations and collaboration on joint film projects were discussed at the meeting, the organization announced in a press release published on Tuesday.

"We have seen good development in filmmaking industry and a rapid growth in the number of theaters in China over the past decade," Heidarian said.

He added, "As you know our country has reconstructed its theaters over the past 40 years and has made efforts to give a different meaning to cinema as a cultural topic in the world.

"Cinema is not just for entertainment. It's a good reason for cultural cooperation, and

I believe the culture and civilization of the East has a great number of topics to present to cinema. I think Iran and China can offer good film productions, which would be useful for the world," he stated.

"The Silk Road and some historical issues are very good topics to be turned into animated movies and/or films in collaboration between Iranian and Chinese filmmakers," he said.

Ye Xiaowen is visiting Iran at the head of a Chinese delegation, which has been assigned to discuss cultural issues and plans to preserve historical sites.

He said that the culture industry is a good channel to introduce cultural products of a country to the world.

He said that Iranian films have won numerous international awards, adding that China needs to learn much from Iran about cinema.

Xiaowen also noted that his country is eager to collaborate with Iran on joint film projects.

## China big-budget movie pulled after box office flop

**SHANGHAI/BELJING (Reuters)** — A Chinese blockbuster hopeful, backed by Alibaba Pictures Group and with a reported budget of over \$100 million, has been abruptly pulled from cinemas in the country after sinking on its opening weekend at the box office.

The move highlights the challenges being faced by China as it looks to promote home-grown productions to rival imported blockbusters from Hollywood. The country has seen several big-budget films flop though some lower-cost ones have done well.

The latest disappointment "Asura" had been billed as one of China's biggest-budget movies after the \$150 million U.S.-China co-production "The Great Wall". That 2016 movie, starring Matt Damon, also failed to impress at the box office.

"Asura", a fantasy epic based on Tibetan mythology, was yanked from cinemas by producers after it brought in a meager 49.46 million yuan (\$7.41 million) and got a lowly rating of 3.1 on local movie review site Douban.

In a statement posted on the film's official social media platform, the producers said the movie was pulled from Sunday night and apologized to viewers who would not be able to see the movie that had been six years in the making.



Director Zhang Peng (R) and actors Wu Lei (2nd L) and Zhang Yishang attend a promotional event for the movie "Asura" in Shenyang, Liaoning province, China July 2, 2018. REUTERS/Stringer

Asura is something of a warning for Chinese producers about the perils of big-budget movie making.

Even as the fantasy movie flopped, another unexpected film with a budget reportedly of around \$15 million struck a chord.

"Dying to Survive", the real-life story of a Chinese cancer patient arrested for importing drugs from India, has made over \$350 million, according to box office tracker EntGroup.

China, which is on track to overtake the North America film market, has become an increasingly important region for global producers looking to pump up their box office returns, despite a quota on imported films and strict censorship.

## Iranian cinema under spotlight at Poland New Horizons festival



A scene from "Invasion" by Shahram Mokri.

**A R T** TEHRAN — The 18th New Horizons International Film Festival in Poland has put its spotlight on Iranian cinema by "Iran: Iran", a program that will review a large number of movies from Iran.

A lineup of Iranian films in different genres selected by Polish programmer Ewa Szablowska will be screened during the festival, which will take place in Wroclaw from July 26 to August 5, the organizers have announced.

"Taking a look at Iran this year, we will see surreal thrillers, intricate allegories, genre cinema, experimental films in the field of visual arts and documentaries showing a world that might seem stranger than fiction," Szablowska has written in a statement.

The lineup contains "Asphyxia" by Fereidun Jeirani, "Atomic Heart" by Ali Ahmadzadeh, "Disappearance" by Ali Asgari, "Dressage" by Puya Badkubeh, "Invasion" by Shahram Mokri and "Kupal" by Kazem Mollai.

Also included are "The Pig" by Mani Haqiqi, "One, Two, One" by Mania Akbari, "Root Canal" by Samira Eskandarfar and "The Broker" by Azadi Moqaddam.

The festival also plans to organize "We Only Live Twice", an exhibition of video arts by Iranian artists working in the field of expanded cinema.

The Iranian artists are Arash Nassiri, Bahar Nurizadeh, Puya Razi, Mohammad Shirvani, Maryam Tafakkori, Tala Vahabzadeh and Rambod Vala.

In addition, Polish photographer Aneta Grzeszykowska has been invited to present "Iranian Film Stills", a photography project completed in Iran, on the sidelines of the exhibition.

The festival has also invited the Iranian media artist, Amir-Ali Qasemi, to deliver a speech on the subject "Iran. Making Space for New Media" at the BWA on July 30.

In the Masters Section, "24 Frames" by Abbas Kiarostami and "3 Faces" by Jafar Panahi will be screened.

## "Mamma Mia!" sing-along returns with star-studded sequel premiere

**LONDON (Reuters)** — Amid olive trees and plenty of ABBA tunes, the musical world of "Mamma Mia!" took over a London theater on Monday for the film sequel's world premiere with Oscar winner Meryl Streep and pop diva Cher among the attendees.

Ten years after the movie version of the hit theater musical, "Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again" sees old faces return and new ones join the ABBA sing-along set on a picturesque Greek island where stars belt out tracks by the hugely popular Swedish band.

The plot follows on from the first film, which grossed over \$600 million at the box office, but this time has flashbacks explaining how Meryl Streep's character Donna arrived in Greece.

While fans have highly anticipated the sequel, ABBA founding members Benny Andersson and Bjorn Ulvaeus said they were not so keen on the idea at first.

"We were kind of protective of the first one because we were very proud of it, it was very good and it became kind of a cult movie ... and we thought what's the point of risking ... taking away from that legacy, so we were reluctant," Ulvaeus told Reuters.

But the film writers' idea of making the movie a sequel and prequel at the same time helped change their minds, he said.

"I laughed out loud many times when I



Meryl Streep attends the world premiere of "Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again" at the Apollo in Hammersmith, London, Britain, July 16, 2018. (Reuters/Hannah McKay)

read (the script's first draft). It was funny, it was moving so we said go ahead and here we are."

Chanting "Waterloo", "Super Trouper" and "Dancing Queen", fans cheered as Streep, Pierce Brosnan, Colin Firth, Amanda Seyfried and Christine Baranski - who starred in the 2008 film - arrived.

The sequel's cast additions include Lily James, who plays the younger Donna, and Cher, who portrays Donna's mother.

"I don't know what I was expecting but I walked onto the set and I just thought everyone's just having fun," Cher said.

Like the first film, the sequel has plenty of colorful and comic scenes. It also has touching moments, cast members said.