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Iran finalizes centrifuge rotor factory

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi has announced that a factory manufacturing rotors used for producing advanced centrifuge machines has been completed.

The rotor factory was completed in compliance with the order by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to swift-

ly make preparations for the enrichment of uranium up to a level of 190,000 SWUs, Salehi told the national television in an interview broadcast on Wednesday.

SWU is the standard measure of the effort required to separate isotopes of uranium during an enrichment process. 1 SWU is equivalent to 1 kilogram of separative work. **→2**

Europe underestimating its power, Zarif says

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that the European Union can do more to bring about peace and stability to the Middle East, and needs to back-up its commitments with actions.

In an exclusive interview with Euronews reporter Saied Jafari published on Tuesday, the 58-year-old chief diplomat he believes

Europe is selling itself short.

"What we need from the Europeans is both the political commitment, which they have made, now we need to see the measures in place on the ground, not simply in writing, not simply in words — in the banking sector, in the investment sector, in the energy sector, in the transportation sector, in the SME sector," he said. **→2**

IRICA, IRU discuss easing transit between Iran, Europe

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— In a meeting between head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Foroud Asgari and secretary general at World Road Transport Organization (IRU) Umberto de Pretto, the two sides discussed easing transit of goods between Iran and Europe, IRIB reported on Wednesday.

Referring to modernization of customs procedures in Iran and coverage of the

Convention on International Transport of Goods Under Cover of TIR Carnets in seven major customs centers in Iran, Asgari announced Iran's readiness to share its experiences in this sector with other countries.

Pretto, for his part, hailed Iran's developing activities in customs sector saying that Europe has always been satisfied with the results obtained in cooperation with Iran.

The reason for Iran's power outages: exports or infrastructure?

By Ebrahim Fallahi

Since starting of the summer, an intense heat-wave has been blanketing over most of the cities of Iran, leading to an over-usage of airconditioning appliances and a significant jump in electricity consumption among the household consumers. The situation has led to a series of daily power outages across the country which has affected many businesses and people adversely.

There are various factors and reasons which could contribute to electricity shortage in a country's power network. Lack of enough power plants, lack of feedstock for thermal or gas power plants, drought and etc., could be mentioned as some of such factors. But what is the reason for Iran's power shortage or better to say power outage? Which one of the above mentioned reasons is the case for Iran?

Are the country's power plants not generating enough energy? or maybe people are over-consuming electricity and they are the reason for this dilemma. Some may say the main reason for this power outages is that Iran is exporting electricity to the neighboring countries despite its domestic needs and this has led to the current situation. To find out the main reason for the current electricity situation in Iran let's take a look at the country's statistics regarding power generation, consumption and exports.

■ Power generation

According to the data released by Iran's Power Generation and Distribution Company (known as TAVANIR), the country's current installed power capacity stands at around 77,000 megawatts (MW), most of which is accounted for

thermal power plants.

Iran increased its electricity generation capacity to 76,302 MW, in the Iranian calendar year of 1395 which ended on March 20, 2017 and then added another 1,724 MW from mostly thermal power plants, by January 2018.

That means gas is the significant player in the country's power generation and drought, although important, could not be the reason for Iran's recent power outages.

According to Hamidreza Azimi, the deputy managing director for planning affairs in Thermal Power Plants Holding Company, natural gas power plants account for almost 75.5 percent of the country's generation capacity and considering Iran's abundant gas resources so lack of feedstock for the power plants couldn't be also accounted for as a reason. **→4**



ARTICLE

Hanif Ghaffari
Political analyst

Trump's campaign against Europe

Many analysts of the international affairs have recently had a special focus on US-EU relations! Some signals and speeches by the President of the United States which are addressed to the European authorities indicate the full opposition of the White House to the European Union. Over the past few days, there has been news about the specific talks between the President of the United States and some of the European Union's member states. Trump called on French President "Emmanuel Macron" to leave the European Union and thus build wider bilateral relations with the United States! On the other hand, Trump has officially asked the British Prime Minister "Theresa May" to sue the European Union rather than interacting with it. These are indications of the wide and extensive opposition of the United States to the United Europe. This confrontation can become a full-fledged dispute in the future. However, the European Union has not yet made a firm response to the United States, and it has adopted a policy of "having interactions with Trump," but this policy can't be adopted for a long time!

Regarding this newly raised dispute, there are some points that can't be easily ignored. Firstly, the European officials haven't yet understood the extent of Trump's hostility to the existence of the United European! This is while the trade war between Trump and the European Union has entered a new phase since the beginning of 2018. Some American economic analysts believe that based on his protectionist policies, Trump will impose new and wider tariffs on the EU, China, Canada and Mexico in the future. European officials are now faced with a president who sees "economic protectionism" as a major policy in the field of commerce, and in the future he will try to pursue this policy even more seriously.

Undoubtedly, there will soon be more economic disputes between America and Europe. In other words, the Trade war between these two will become more intense in near future. Furthermore, countries like China and Canada will also enter this confrontation with the United States. At their most recent meeting, European officials argued that they have the right to respond to Trump's actions. **→7**



ARTICLE

Syed Zafar Mehdi
Journalist
from New Delhi

Afghan-owned peace process only solution to war in Afghanistan

America's top military commander in Afghanistan, John Nicholson sent regional observers into a tizzy with his comments on Monday that the United States was ready to join direct negotiations with the Taliban. He later retracted his statement, apparently under pressure, saying his words were "mischaracterized."

So what does the U.S. actually want in Afghanistan? Is it in favor of direct talks with the Taliban or does it want the process to be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned? Is Trump frantically looking for an escape route from the 17-year-old war that has been a complete disaster or he wants to inflict more misery on the poor, hapless, and war-weary Afghans?

Just a few days ago, on an unannounced trip to Kabul, the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the Trump administration was prepared to "support, facilitate and participate" in peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. However, he hastened to add that the process will be Afghan-led.

Did the position of U.S. on Afghan peace process change so dramatically in less than a week or was Nicholson simply not aware of it when his tongue apparently slipped? "Our secretary of state, Mr. Pompeo, has said that we, the United States, are ready to talk to the Taliban and discuss the role of international forces," he said during a visit to southern province of Kandahar.

Taliban, who refuse to recognize the legitimacy of government in Kabul, have always insisted on holding direct deliberations with Washington. And Washington has insisted that the Afghan government should directly engage with the Taliban. Nicholson's statement, which he said was "mischaracterized", marks a significant shift in the U.S. policy in Afghanistan. It shows respect to the Taliban leadership and disrespect to the elected government in Kabul.

As expected, a spokesperson for Taliban's political office in Qatar was in a celebratory mood. "This is what we wanted and were waiting for — to sit with the U.S. directly and discuss the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan" he was quoting saying. **→6**

TENDER INVITATION NO.97/1007

IRAN ALUMINIUM COMPANY (IRALCO), Would like to invite eligible suppliers for the supply of **200 MT.** Magnesium Pure on tender basis.

Interested companies are allowed to send their competitive offer till

29-JULY-2018 based on our required instruction to following address:

NO.49, Mollasadra Ave., Vanak Square, Postal code: 1991614581 Tehran, Iran. Attention :Mr. Rahimi, Ms. Emadi

Tel : **+98 21 88049046-7** Fax : **+98 21 88049045**

For obtaining tender's documents and more information, please check: www.iralco.ir

Public Relations Department of Iran Aluminum Company



TENDER INVITATION NO.97/1006

IRAN ALUMINIUM COMPANY (IRALCO), Would like to invite eligible suppliers for the supply of **48 MT.** Al-Mn 80% on tender basis.

Interested companies are allowed to send their competitive offer till

29-JULY-2018 based on our required instruction to following address:

NO.49, Mollasadra Ave., Vanak Square, Postal code: 1991614581 Tehran, Iran. Attention :Mr. Rahimi, Ms. Emadi

Tel : **+98 21 88049046-7** Fax : **+98 21 88049045**

For obtaining tender's documents and more information, please check: www.iralco.ir

Public Relations Department of Iran Aluminum Company



TENDER INVITATION NO.97/1005

IRAN ALUMINIUM COMPANY (IRALCO), Would like to invite eligible suppliers for the supply of **10 MT.** Aluminum Nickel 80% on tender basis.

Interested companies are allowed to send their competitive offer till

29-JULY-2018 based on our required instruction to following address:

NO.49, Mollasadra Ave., Vanak Square, Postal code: 1991614581 Tehran, Iran. Attention :Mr. Rahimi, Ms. Emadi

Tel : **+98 21 88049046-7** Fax : **+98 21 88049045**

For obtaining tender's documents and more information, please check: www.iralco.ir

Public Relations Department of Iran Aluminum Company



TENDER INVITATION NO.97/1004

IRAN ALUMINIUM COMPANY (IRALCO), Would like to invite eligible suppliers for the supply of **40 MT.** Aluminum Titanium Borom (Al-Ti-B) on tender basis.

Interested companies are allowed to send their competitive offer till

29-JULY-2018 based on our required instruction to following address:

NO.49, Mollasadra Ave., Vanak Square, Postal code: 1991614581 Tehran, Iran. Attention :Mr. Rahimi, Ms. Emadi

Tel : **+98 21 88049046-7** Fax : **+98 21 88049045**

For obtaining tender's documents and more information, please check: www.iralco.ir

Public Relations Department of Iran Aluminum Company



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Cabinet reshuffle on Rouhani's agenda

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi confirmed on Wednesday that President Hassan Rouhani is considering some changes to his cabinet due to the fact that the country is facing new economic situation, a reference to the return of sanctions following the U.S. pullout from the 2015 nuclear agreement.

Vaezi said there would be some changes in the cabinet posts in the near future.

Rouhani has come under pressure by parliament and political factions to make changes to his economic team as the fall of rial against foreign currencies such as dollar and euro has sent prices high and causing public concern.



'IAEA inspection of Iranian university decided by SNSC'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Science Minister Mansour Gholami said on Wednesday that the inspection of one of Iran's universities by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was carried out upon a decision by the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC).

"Such decisions are made by the Supreme National Security Council, and all organizations are required to follow them," Gholami told reporters after a cabinet meeting, Tasnim reported.

On Monday, Fars reported that the IAEA's inspectors had made a visit to the Iran University of Science and Technology (IUST) in Tehran, quoting an IUST faculty member as saying that another inspection had been made at Sharif University of Technology.



EU has set up \$80b fund for SMEs doing business with Iran

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Mohammad-Hossein Adeli, the former secretary general of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), has said that the European Union has established an \$80 billion fund to give credit to small and medium enterprises doing business with Iran, the Persian language Hamshahri newspaper reported on Wednesday.

"European authorities are seriously interested in resisting U.S. restrictions on cooperation of European countries with Iran," Adeli said, the newspaper reported.

According to Adeli, who was the governor of Iran's central bank from 1989–1994, said Iranian companies can also apply for loans and budget from the fund.

Pointing to a recent summit held in Brussels on Iran-Europe cooperation in which he was present, he said European leaders stressed that they are determined to preserve their economic ties with Iran.



Tehran names new ambassadors in Helsinki, Dublin, Kiev

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani on Tuesday approved Iran's new ambassadors to Finland, Ireland and Ukraine who had been proposed by Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, IRNA reported.

Parvin Farshchi was named as Iran's new ambassador in Helsinki. She had served as deputy head of the Department of Environment (DoE). Farshchi is the second female Iranian ambassador since the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

Masoud Eslami will serve as Iran's new ambassador to Ireland. He had served as dean of the Foreign Ministry International Relations University.

Manuchehr Moradi was appointed as Iran's new ambassador in Kiev. He had served as Iran's ambassador to Kyrgyzstan.



IRGC soft war unit deputy chief named

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Brigadier General Jamalodin Aberoumand was named on Wednesday as deputy commander of the Soft War and Deepening of the IRGC's Domestic Affairs headquarters.

According to Mehr, the unit's duties and priorities are fighting poverty, construction, science, technology and knowledge-based sciences.

Aberoumand previously served as deputy coordinator for the IRGC. In another decree on Wednesday, Brigadier General Hossein Salami was appointed as the caretaker deputy coordinator for the IRGC.



Putin envoy to brief Iran on Helsinki summit: report

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Russia's special presidential envoy for Syria Alexander Lavrentiev was scheduled to pay a visit to Tehran on Wednesday to brief the Iranian leadership on the results of the recent Trump-Putin summit in Finland, Tasnim reported, citing a report by RBS news agency.

Lavrentiev is also reportedly scheduled to coordinate possible joint actions based on the agreements reached in the Finnish capital.

Ahead of the meeting, Ali Akbar Velayati, an international adviser to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, visited Moscow and held talks with Putin.

Iran finalizes centrifuge rotor factory, eyeing 190,000 SWUs target

I → Salehi, a nuclear physicist, added that while the factory could have taken seven or eight years to build, Iran began to develop it during the nuclear talks with world powers, but did not complete the facility until the order by the Leader on June 4 this year.

On that day, Ayatollah Khamenei ordered the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) to make preparations for the enrichment of uranium up to a level of 190,000 SWUs without any delay in the framework provided by the Iran nuclear deal. His order came as a response to the U.S. withdrawal from the agreement.

According to Salehi, the factory has the capacity to manufacture around 60 IR-6 centrifuges each day once the country starts to mass produce the new generation of centrifuges.

Back in June, Salehi said Iran had already developed the necessary infrastructure at the Natanz nuclear facility for enrichment of uranium up to a level of one million SWUs.

The Natanz nuclear complex in central Iran has been configured to accommodate 48,000 centrifuge machines, he said, explaining that the work to enhance the capacity of uranium enrichment and open new units for assembling the new generation of centrifuge machines had begun even before the conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the official name for the nuclear deal.

Commenting on Iran's uranium stockpile and the enrichment operation, Salehi said, "[Before the conclusion of the JCPOA] We used to have 550 tons we had imported from abroad. And we added to it 400 tons. Our uranium stockpile in the country is now something between 900 and 950 tons. So if today we had 190,000 SWUs [enrichment power], we would be able to run this 190,000 SWUs for



at least 3 years based on this raw material."

"We should render the situations so that this 190,000 SWUs would be able to operate stably. So we are working

rapidly on exploration and extraction so that we would be able to produce the raw material at a level that would ensure our self-sufficiency," he further said.

Salehi says the rotor factory has the capacity to manufacture around 60 IR-6 centrifuges each day once the country starts to mass produce the new generation of centrifuges.

Netanyahu acts like a beggar: Velayati

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Ali Akbar Velayati, a top foreign policy adviser to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, says Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu acts like a beggar by making travels to other countries to beg for others' help.

According to ISNA, Velayati said in an interview with Russia Today that Iran's presence in Syria would not be affected by the Israeli regime's objection.

"[Our] strategic policy helps the region's people, including the people of

Iraq, Syria and Lebanon and therefore is not the Zionist regime's concern," Velayati stated.

Last week, Netanyahu met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow. After the meeting, he said, "Our opinion is known that Iran needs to leave Syria."

According to Reuters, Netanyahu told Putin that Tel Aviv "won't take action against" the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and urged Moscow to "get the Iranians out."

"Definitely, what he keeps saying is not



something that others listen to," Velayati said, referring to Netanyahu's remarks.

"We do not care what he says. We pursue our own policy."

He also said the Russians have never told Iranian officials anything against Tehran's presence in Syria. Iran and Russia cooperate closely on many issues despite their differences, the top advisor added.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has also rejected Netanyahu's demand, saying on July 4 that Iran was one of the key players in the region, and that it would be "absolutely unrealistic" to expect it to abandon its interests in Syria.

Tehran to host gathering of diplomats abroad

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A gathering of Iranian ambassadors and heads of missions abroad is to be held in Tehran next week, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Wednesday. "The gathering will be held next week after the foreign minister and Foreign

Ministry executives as well as the heads of the Islamic Republic of Iran's missions abroad meet the Supreme Leader and visit the shrine of the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran," Qassemi said, the Foreign Ministry said in a report on its website.

President Hassan Rouhani, Parliament

Speaker Ali Larijani and Judiciary Chief Sadeq Amoli Larijani will also deliver speeches at the annual gathering, the spokesman added.

The latest regional and international developments as well as Iran's position on those developments within the framework of the plan for "targeted

promotion of diplomacy and foreign relations" will feature high in the event, Qassemi explained.

Several ministers will also deliver speeches on key regional issues as well as other specialized topics on which the participants exchange will views, he added.

Iranian military chief visits Pakistan-Afghanistan border

Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Mohammad Baqeri paid a visit to the Pakistan-Afghanistan Torkham border, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

Major General Baqeri was accompanied by an Iranian military delegation.

High ranking Pakistani military officials also visited important check posts between Pakistan and Afghanistan where the Pakistani army is fighting terrorist groups.

Baqeri praised Pakistan's efforts in the war against

terrorism.

He also visited the Peshawar Corps headquarters and met with Corps Commander Lieutenant General Nazir Ahmed Butt to discuss bilateral ties and military-to-military cooperation.

The general was also briefed about the efforts of the Pakistani army in the war against terrorism.

During his official three-day visit to Pakistan which started on July 15, the military chief met with Pakistan

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa and discussed a "wide range of issues of mutual interest".

He also met with President Mammoon Hussain to discuss bilateral ties as well as regional and international developments.

He held separate meetings with Foreign Minister Abdullah Hussain Haroon, Navy Chief Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Zubair Mahmood Hayat.

Tehran: Trump made 8 requests to meet Rouhani

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi announced on Wednesday that President Hassan Rouhani had received eight requests from his American counterpart, Donald Trump, for a meeting.

Speaking to reporters after a cabinet meeting, Vaezi said Trump's requests were made during President Rouhani's visit to New York for a United Nations General Assembly meeting in September 2017, Tasnim reported.

Vaezi's remarks came after the Foreign Ministry on Monday refused the prospect of any talks with the United States, suggesting President Donald Trump could possibly in the future decide to call Tehran for talks.

The remarks by Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi came after

Trump last week argued that with the United States increasing sanctions on Iran, "at a certain point they're going to call me and say 'let's make a deal,' and we'll make a deal."

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

Back in September 2013, Rouhani and former U.S. President Barack Obama talked over the phone during the 68th annual session of the UN General Assembly. It was the highest-level contact between the two countries in more than three decades.

Iran welcomes Muslim figures' call for three-month ceasefire in Yemen

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi has hailed a statement by a number of respectable political figures from Muslim countries to stop the ongoing war in Yemen for three months.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, from the beginning of this devastating war, called for an immediate end to the conflict and proposed a four-point solution to the crisis," Qassemi said on Tuesday.

Referring to the statement by the respectable figures, Qassemi stressed that Iran would always support any plan or proposal that could help end the war through dialogue.

The spokesman also hailed the political figures for feeling responsible in

this regard and expressed the country's readiness for any assistance in implementing the proposal.

Qassemi also called on the international community, especially all Muslim governments, to increase their efforts to stop the devastating war.

He finally referred to the four-point plan proposed by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to end the Yemen crisis, saying, "As stated in the proposal, the immediate ceasefire, dispatch of humanitarian assistance, initiation of political dialogue between all Yemeni parties and formation of a national inclusive government, are key components of achieving lasting peace in Yemen."

(Source: mfa.ir)

Europe underestimating its power, Zarif says Zarif urges Europe do more to bring peace to Mideast

I → "I believe generally Europe is underestimating its power and its influence, we believe that it should be more active in regional peace and security, in international peace and security as well as in promoting a greater cooperation and dialogue".

Zarif went on to say that Tehran has a good relationship with Russia and the Syrian government but blames the U.S. for supporting the so called Islamic State.

"We have good communication and

coordination with Russia and with Syrian government and we will continue to do so. Our objective here is very clear, that is our objectives and the objective of the Russian Federation and that is to fight against terrorism and extremism".

"Now if President Trump wants to take credit for it, he should take credit for supporting Daesh which has been what the U.S. and its allies have been doing all along. The fact that U.S. arms, U.S. weapons have been

found in the hands of ISIS and other extremist organizations is documented, is documented by Western sources. So I think we should look at the realities, those who fought terrorism, those who fought extremism are Syrian people and those who work with Syria people."

The remarks come as Iran has filed a suit against the U.S. saying that Washington's decision in May to impose sanctions after pulling out of a nuclear deal, violates a 1955 treaty between the two countries.



Trump backs off siding with Russia over U.S. intelligence

‘Big results will come’ with Putin: Trump

The United States President Donald Trump said on Wednesday he got on well with Russian President Vladimir Putin at their summit in Finland and “big results will come”.

“So many people at the higher ends of intelligence loved my press conference performance in Helsinki. Putin and I discussed many important subjects at our earlier meeting. We got along well which truly bothered many haters who wanted to see a boxing match. Big results will come!” he said on Twitter.

“While the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) meeting in Brussels was an acknowledged triumph, with billions of dollars more being put up by member countries at a faster pace, the meeting with Russia may prove to be, in the long run, an even greater success. Many positive things will come out of that meeting,” he tweeted.

Meanwhile, blistered by bipartisan condemnation of his embrace of a longtime U.S. enemy, President Donald Trump backed away from his public undermining of American spy agencies, saying he simply misspoke when he said he saw no reason to believe Russia had interfered in the 2016 U.S. election.

Rebuked as never before by his own party, including a stern pushback from usually reserved Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, the U.S. president sought to end 27 hours of recrimination by delivering a rare admission of error.

“The sentence should have been, ‘I don’t see any reason why I wouldn’t, or why it wouldn’t be Russia’” instead of “why it would,” Trump said on Tuesday of the comments he had made standing alongside Vladimir Putin on the summit stage in Helsinki.

That didn’t explain why Trump, who had tweeted a half-dozen times and sat for two television interviews since the Putin news conference, waited so long to correct his remarks. And the scripted cleanup pertained only to the least defensible of his comments.

He didn’t reverse other statements in which he gave clear credence to Putin’s “extremely strong and powerful” denial of Russian involvement, raised doubts about his own intelligence agencies’ conclusions and advanced discredited conspiracy theories about election meddling.

He also accused past American leaders, rather than Russia’s destabilizing actions in the U.S. and around the world, for the souring of relations between two countries. And he did not address his other problematic statements during a week-long Europe tour, in which he sent the NATO alliance into emergency session and assailed British Prime Minister Theresa May as she was hosting him for an official visit.

“I accept our intelligence community’s conclusion that Russia’s meddling in the 2016 election took place,” Trump conceded on Tuesday. But even then he made a point of adding, “It could be other people also. A lot of people out there. There was no collusion at all.”

Moments earlier, McConnell felt the need to reassure America’s allies in Europe with whom Trump clashed during his frenzied trip last week.

With no if’s or but’s, the GOP (Grand Old Party) leader declared, “The European countries are our friends, and the Russians are not.”

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said Trump was trying to “squirm away” from his comments alongside Putin. “It’s 24 hours too late and in the wrong place,” he said.

By dusk, hundreds of activists, led by attorney Michael Avenatti and actress Alyssa Milano, staged a protest near the White House, with chants of “traitor!” echoing along



Pennsylvania Avenue.

Trump still maintained that his meetings with NATO allies went well and his summit with Putin “even better.” But this reference to diplomatic success carried an edge, too, since the barrage of criticism and insults he delivered in Brussels and London was hardly well-received.

Later on Tuesday, Trump tweeted, “The meeting between President Putin and myself was a great success, except in the Fake News Media!”

On Capitol Hill, top Republican leaders said they were open to slapping fresh sanctions on Russia, but they showed no sign of acting any time soon.

“Let’s be very clear, just so everybody knows: Russia did meddle with our elections,” said House Speaker Paul Ryan, another steady Trump political ally. “What we intend to do is make sure they don’t get away with it again and also to help our allies.”

In the Senate, McConnell said “there’s a possibility” his chamber would act, pointing to a bipartisan measure from Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., and Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., to deter future Russian interference by ordering sanctions against countries if they do.

Both parties called for Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and other officials to appear before Congress and tell exactly what happened during Trump’s two-hour private session with Putin. Pompeo is to publicly testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 25.

Schumer also urged the Senate to take up legislation to boost security for the U.S. elections and to revive a measure passed earlier by the Judiciary Committee to protect Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation into Russian election interference.

But minority Democrats have few tools to enforce anything.

In the House, Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi staged a vote on Tuesday in support of the intelligence committee’s findings that Russia interfered in the 2016 election. But even that largely symbolic measure was blocked party-line by Republicans.

Senators had floated a similar idea earlier, and Republican

Jeff Flake of Arizona said he was preparing a bipartisan bill. But The No. 2 Republican, Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, said sanctions may be preferable to a nonbinding resolution that amounts to “just some messaging exercise.”

Trump’s meeting with Putin in Helsinki was his first time sharing the international stage with a man he has described as an important U.S. competitor - but whom he has also praised a strong, effective leader.

Standing alongside Putin, Trump steered clear of any confrontation with the Russian, going so far as to question American intelligence and last week’s federal indictments that accused 12 Russians of hacking into Democratic email accounts to hurt Hillary Clinton in 2016.

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.

“He just said it’s not Russia. I will say this: I don’t see any reason why it would be,” Trump said. That’s the part he corrected on Tuesday.

White House officials did not elaborate on how Trump came to issue the clarification, but administration aides described being stunned by his initial remarks Monday. GOP leaders, outraged by Trump’s comments in Helsinki, found out about his attempts to quell the outrage the same way everyone else did, as one aide put it, by watching and learning.

After his walk back, Trump said his administration would “move aggressively” to repel efforts to interfere in American elections.

“We are doing everything in our power to prevent Russian interference in 2018,” he said. “And we have a lot of power.”

Fellow GOP politicians have generally stuck with Trump during a year and a half of turmoil, but he was assailed as seldom before as he returned from what he had hoped would be a proud summit with Putin.

Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul emerged as one of the president’s few defenders. He cited Trump’s experience on the receiving end of “partisan investigations.”

(Source: AP)

Obama gives Trump sharp rebuke in Mandela address

Without ever mentioning the United States President Donald Trump by name, former U.S. President Barack Obama on Tuesday took aim at “strongman politics” in his highest-profile speech since leaving office.

Obama urged people around the world to respect human rights and other values now under threat in an impassioned address marking the 100th anniversary of anti-apartheid leader Nelson Mandela’s birth.

His speech to a cheering crowd of thousands in South Africa countered many of Trump’s policies, rallying people around the world to keep alive the ideas that Mandela worked for including democracy, diversity and tolerance.

Obama opened by calling today’s times “strange and uncertain,” adding that “each day’s news cycle is bringing more head-spinning and disturbing headlines.” These days “we see much of the world threatening to return to a more dangerous, more brutal, way of doing business,” he said. He targeted politicians pushing “politics of fear, resentment, retrenchment,” saying they are on the move “at a pace unimaginable just a few years ago.”

He attacked “strongman politics,” saying that “those in power seek to undermine every institution ... that gives democracy meaning.”

He spoke up for equality in all forms, saying that “I would have thought we had figured that out by now,” and he even invoked the World Cup-winning French team and its diversity. He warned that countries that engage in xenophobia “eventually ... find themselves consumed by civil war.” And he noted the “utter loss of shame among political leaders when they’re caught in a lie and they just double down and lie some more,” warning that the denial of facts – such as that of climate change – could be the undoing of democracy.

But Obama reminded the audience that “we’ve been through darker times. We’ve been through lower valleys,” and he closed with a call to action: “I say if people can learn to hate, they can be taught to love.”

He received a standing ovation.

The U.S. under Trump has withdrawn from the 2015 Paris climate agreement and the Iran nuclear deal while trying to undercut the Affordable Care Act or “Obamacare.”

Obama’s speech drew on his great admiration for Mandela, a fellow Nobel Peace Prize winner whom America’s first black president saw as a mentor. When Obama was a U.S. senator he had his picture taken with Mandela. After Obama became president he sent a copy of the photo to Mandela, who kept it in his office.

Obama also made a point of visiting Mandela’s prison cell and gave a moving eulogy at Mandela’s memorial service in 2013, saying the South African leader’s life had inspired him.

Many South Africans view Obama as a successor to Mandela because of his groundbreaking role and his support for racial equality in the U.S. and around the world.

(Source: AP)

Russia supplies N. Korea with 200-400 tons of oil products a month

Russia supplies North Korea with between 200 and 400 tons of oil products per month, Russia’s ambassador to North Korea, Alexander Matsegora, was cited as saying by RIA news agency on Wednesday. North Korea relies on imported fuel to keep its struggling economy functioning.

Quotas set by the United Nations allow over 60,000 tons of oil products from Russia, China and other countries to be delivered to North Korea per year, Matsegora was quoted as saying in January. A summit between the leaders of Russia and North Korea is “on the agenda”, Matsegora added.

The Kremlin said last month that Russia had invited North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to travel to the country, adding he could visit as part of an economic forum due to be held in the far eastern city of Vladivostok in September.

(Source: Reuters)

Knesset revokes Israel PM’s power to declare war alone

The Israeli parliament (Knesset: unicameral national legislature of Israel) strikes down a law passed earlier this year, which would enable the regime’s prime minister and minister of military affairs to declare war on their own.

The lawmakers on Tuesday rescinded the law, which had cleared the Knesset in late April, with 77 votes to 16.

The legal amendment would allow the duo to forgo a full-cabinet approval before ordering war or a major military operation that could lead to war. It would enable them to take such decisions in “extreme circumstances,” without specifying those situations.

The clause, which has replaced it, now says that such a decision has to be made “by as wide a panel as possible.”

Lawmaker Ofer Shelah of the Yesh Atid party hailed Tuesday’s vote, saying that it was “inconceivable that a decision to go to war could be in the hands of one person, without consultation with cabinet members.”

The Israeli regime has a long history of waging wars and occupying sovereign states. The regime, under hawkish Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has escalated its attacks against the Gaza Strip to a scale unprecedented since its last war against the Tel Aviv-blockaded Palestinian territory in 2014.

Tel Aviv has also been conducting sporadic aerial assaults against Syria in what is widely viewed as an attempt to support the terror groups operating against Damascus.

Israel has, meanwhile, been threatening Lebanon with a new military offensive in recent months.

Creeping annexation

Separately, the Knesset approved with 56 votes to 48 a law extending the jurisdiction of Israel’s Administrative Court to the occupied West Bank.

The Jerusalem Post called it the “latest push for de facto annexation” of the Palestinian territory, which Israel occupied back in 1967. Israeli Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked said, “The Knesset today has made an important statement – the residents of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) are indistinguishable from other Israeli citizens.”

Since the occupation, Israel has built hundreds of settlements across the land against the international law, which forbids construction on occupied land.

(Source: Press TV)

Nicaragua: Pro-Ortega forces take opposition stronghold Monimbo

Pro-government gunmen and police took control of an opposition stronghold in Nicaragua after a deadly confrontation with demonstrators demanding the resignation of President Daniel Ortega.

Police and paramilitaries attacked Monimbo neighborhood in the city of Masaya on Tuesday amid international condemnation of the violent repression of protests in the Central American country.

At least two people were killed, according to Vilma Nunez, head of the Nicaraguan Centre for Human Rights. Dozens were reportedly wounded.

More than 280 people, the vast majority of them civilians, have been killed in political unrest since protesters took to the streets in mid-April over now-scrapped pension reforms.

Ortega’s forces seized Monimbo after several hours of fighting and “excessive use of force”, secretary of the Nicaraguan Association for Human Rights Alvaro Leiva told AFP news agency.

“They are shooting at houses in an irresponsible way. The message is that anyone who pops their head out will be killed. It’s a message of terror,” said Alvaro.

Managua’s outspoken auxiliary bishop Silvio Jose Baez tweeted: “They’re attacking



Monimbo! ... Daniel Ortega halt the massacre! To the people of Monimbo I beg you, save your lives!”

Demonstrators reportedly fired home-made mortars from behind barricades but were outgunned by the automatic weapons used by pro-government forces.

A group of journalists who attempted to enter Monimbo were reportedly shot at by the pro-government gunmen to prevent them from entering the neighborhood.

Nicaragua’s national police confirmed the death of one officer at the hands of “armed terrorists”, but made no mention of civilian casualties.

Vice President Rosario Murillo, Ortega’s wife, said on Monday it was necessary to “clean” Monimbo and Masaya. She described the opposition as “coup plotters, few in number, malignant, sinister, diabolical, satanic and terrorists”.

Police commissioner Ramon Avellan told

reporters he would fulfill an order by Ortega to remove roadblocks that protesters have used to protect themselves “at whatever cost”.

Monimbo has symbolic value as a historic opposition stronghold. In the 1970s, its residents rose up against Anastasio Somoza, who Ortega helped overthrow in the Nicaraguan revolution in 1979. In the recent protests against Ortega’s rule, Monimbo has again become a center of unrest.

International criticism of Ortega has mounted in recent days.

On Monday, United Nations Chief Antonio Guterres called for an immediate halt to violence. The United States State Department issued a statement condemning attacks “by Daniel Ortega’s para-police against university students, journalists, and clergy across the country”.

On Sunday, at least 10 people were killed in areas in and around Masaya, including Monimbo, in raids by pro-government paramilitaries.

The violence came a day after 200 university students were freed from a besieged church in Managua after a 16-hour ordeal in which two were killed.

(Source: agencies)

First direct Ethiopia-Eritrea flight in 20 years takes off

Ethiopian Airlines conducted the first direct passenger flights between Addis Ababa and Asmara, reconnecting Eritrea and Ethiopia after a 20-year military standoff.

The carrier said flight ETO312 to Asmara departed Bole International Airport on Wednesday after a ceremony inaugurating the historic flight. “This day marks an unique event in the history of Ethiopia and Eritrea,” the airline’s chief executive Tewelde GebreMariam said at the ceremony.

Overwhelming demand saw the African aviation giant operate two flights within 15 minutes of each other.

“The fact that we are taking two flights at a time shows the eagerness of the people,” said GebreMariam.

Wednesday’s development is the latest positive step taken by the neighboring countries in the last two weeks.

On July 9, Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed arrived



in Eritrea’s capital Asmara to sign a landmark agreement with President Isaias Afwerki, formally ending the “state of

war” between their nations.

A week later, Isaias visited Ethiopia to reopen Eritrea’s embassy in Addis Ababa. The newly appointed reformist Abiy first instigated the peace overtures and restoration of relations in April.

Ethiopia and Eritrea expelled each others’ envoys at the start of the 1998-2000 border war, which killed about 80,000 people. Once a province of Ethiopia, Eritrea seceded in 1993 after a long independence struggle. A row over the demarcation of their shared border triggered the conflict.

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

(Source: agencies)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	107776.6
IFX	1210.75

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	\$66.77/b
Brent	\$71.65/b
OPEC Basket	\$71.90/b
Gold	\$1,225.45 /oz
Silver	\$15.49/oz
Platinum	\$812.20/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Why investors in oil companies don't care about crude's collapse

Crude prices are down yet European oil companies are weathering the slump, signaling a change in fortunes for last year's laggards. While benchmark Brent crude has fallen about 9 percent over the past week, the Stoxx Europe 600 Oil & Gas index has retreated just 4 percent. The reason? Oil companies' discipline during the 2014-2016 crash proved to investors they can now easily withstand such crude-price corrections.

"Oil companies have done a good job adjusting their budgets to the lower oil-price environment and their shareholders are now benefiting from that," said Ahmed Ben Salem, an analyst at Oddo Bhf. "The resilience is mainly linked to the fact that oil companies have an oil cash breakeven as low as \$50 per barrel and their budget and share-buyback plans are based on \$60."

Crude's collapse forced European oil giants to slash spending, reduce costs and delay projects, a strategy that's now made them less sensitive to short-term price fluctuations. Brent has tumbled from a recent three-year high on concern that an escalating trade spat between the U.S. and China will curb demand and as Saudi Arabia pledges to lift output to record levels.

Investors have also been encouraged by a buoyant outlook for second-quarter earnings, which start to roll in next week. Analysts expect the European oil sector to report the highest profit growth among 10 industries. The biggest companies are also set to deliver the highest free cash flow in almost a decade, according to Goldman Sachs Group Inc.

"Oil stocks are decoupling from oil owing to the strong free cash flow," said Christyan Malek, head of EMEA oil and gas research at JPMorgan Chase & Co. "Robust" earnings, crude above \$70, and exploration and production project delivery underpin continued outperformance in shares, he said.

Last year, investors were slow to believe in the profit recovery. Although the price of Brent rose 18 percent, oil stocks were one of the few declining sectors in Europe, with a loss of 2.2 percent.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Oil prices fall on U.S. stock rise, higher supply

Oil benchmark Brent crude hit a three-month low on Wednesday after a rise in U.S. crude inventories highlighted increasing global supply and concerns over weak demand.

Brent fell 93 cents to a low of \$71.23 a barrel, its weakest since April 17, before recovering slightly to around \$71.45 by 0900 GMT.

U.S. light crude was down 60 cents at \$67.48, not far off Tuesday's one-month low of \$67.03 per barrel.

Oil markets have fallen over the last week as Saudi Arabia and other members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and Russia increased production and as some supply disruptions eased.

"The correction in the oil price represents something of a convergence between fundamentals and physical realities," said David Reid, lead crude market analyst at consultancy JBC Energy.

"We expect a fairly rapid lengthening in the (global oil supply) balance," Reid added.

The U.S. oil market has been tight this year but data on Tuesday from the American Petroleum Institute showed an unexpected rise of over 600,000 barrels in crude inventories.

Analysts had forecast a decline of 3.6 million barrels in U.S. crude stocks for the week through July 13.

Data from the U.S. government's Energy Information Administration is due at 10:30 a.m. EDT (1430 GMT) on Wednesday.

"Oil is trading lower this morning on the back of the API release, and price action later today will largely depend on what the EIA release," said ING commodities strategist Warren Patterson.

"A number broadly similar to the API could put some further pressure on the market later this afternoon."

Investors have also begun to worry about the impact on economic growth and energy demand of the trade dispute between the United States and its trading partners, including China.

Trade tension between the United States and China could drag on the global economy, BMI Research said.

"The economic outlook is broadly positive, but a number of headwinds are emerging, not least a stronger dollar, rising inflationary pressures and tightening liquidity," BMI said. "Slowing trade growth will weigh on physical demand for oil."

Kansas City Federal Reserve Bank President Esther George said on Tuesday uncertainty over U.S. trade policy could slow the economy, even if recently imposed tariffs are too small to have a big impact.

Trade policy was a "significant" downside risk to the outlook for economic growth, George said.

(Source: Reuters)

Britain seeking finest solutions to expand trade ties with Iran

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Director of the Department for International Trade at the British Embassy in Tehran Keith Wellings told IRNA on Wednesday that his country is looking for the best options to improve its ties with Iran in the framework of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The British government, as its European allies, has vividly announced its tendency in continuing its cooperation with Iran despite the U.S. decision of pulling out from Iran nuclear deal, he said.

"Although U.S. withdrawal from JCPOA

has harmed the deal's dynamicity, trade with Iran will be continued with no change," Wellings added.

The British official named banking issues as the main challenge on the way of boosting Iran-Europe trade which should be coped with as soon as possible.

As Wall Street Journal reported on Monday, 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

Tehran collects 58% of Iran's tax revenues in a year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Some 58% of Iran's tax revenues was collected in Tehran Province during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2018), director general of Tehran's Tax Department announced.

Mohammadreza Nouri put the total taxes collected in Tehran Province at 560 trillion rials (above \$13 billion) during the past year and said the target figure was materialized by 106 percent in this way, IRNA reported.

According to the data released by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), tax income rose 14.1 percent during the last Iranian calendar year to reach 1.15 quadrillion



The reason for Iran's power outages: exports or infrastructure?

➡ Electricity exports & consumption

Iran exchanges energy with its neighbors namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Iraq, as well as the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic among which Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan are sole importers of Iran's electricity.

According to Iran's energy ministry, Iraq has been the country's top electricity importer followed by Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nakhjavan, Armenia and finally Azerbaijan.

As reported by ISNA, according to the latest data by Iran Grid Management Company (IGMC), on average Iran has been exporting about 100 MW of electricity to its neighbors while importing about 300 MW during the last two weeks.

For instance, on July 16, some 119MW of electricity was exported from the country while 406MW was injected to Iranian grids by the neighboring countries. The peak of household consumption for this mentioned day was reported to be 54,251 MW while the industries consumed 6498 MW. Considering the aforementioned data, the country's total electricity consumption in this specific day stood at 60.749 MW added by 100 MW of the exports the figure for the total consume electricity will reach around 60.850 MW.

Now let's go back to the data for the country's electricity

China may boost Iranian oil purchases once U.S. sanctions step into force: report

Washington's "comprehensive" package of sanctions against Tehran are expected to kick in this November, but officials say the main target, Iranian crude oil exports, will likely simply be diverted from one group of buyers to another.

A senior U.S. energy official has told The Wall Street Journal that Washington expects China to buy up much of the oil others won't due to the threat of U.S. sanctions. Beijing, according to the official, will likely make the purchases through the same bank it used during the previous rounds of sanctions to get around U.S. penalties.

This includes the Bank of Kunlun Co, Ltd,

a bank affiliated with the China National Petroleum Corp with limited exposure to the global financial system. The U.S. has threatened to sanction "everybody, including China" if they purchase Iranian oil once sanctions step into effect.

The official's sentiment is a major step back from the bold U.S. policy objective of reducing Iranian oil exports "to zero" following President Trump's withdrawal from the Iranian nuclear deal in May.

An Iranian oil official confirmed to the WSJ that Tehran was in talks with Beijing on diverting its oil sales to China. "We don't have any problem selling our oil [to China],

the official said.

The WSJ's report comes amid a growing reluctance by Western companies to buy Iranian oil and a hesitation by banks to finance energy deals in anticipation of U.S. sanctions.

China and the U.S. are in the midst of a trade spat, with President Trump imposing tariffs on some \$34 billion of Chinese goods earlier this month, prompting Beijing to retaliate. Beijing is already the largest buyer of Iranian oil and Tehran's largest trading partner and has criticized Washington's withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in May.

ECB's bond-buying may have cut income inequality, but only a bit: research

The European Central Bank's 2.6 trillion euro bond purchase scheme may have reduced income inequality, fresh research by ECB economists showed, disputing critics who argue that lavish stimulus mainly benefited the wealthiest of households.

Pushing up economic growth, the stimulus fueled job creation, benefiting households among the poorest 20 percent of people by compressing income distribution and temporarily halting a widening of the gap between rich and poor, the paper, which is not necessarily the ECB's opinion, argued.

Critics of the ECB scheme, devised to generate inflation, argue that it robs the poor and ordinary savers while benefiting the wealthy with ample financial assets and households with big mortgages.

"The reduction in unemployment and in income inequality is particularly marked in those countries, such as Spain, where the initial unemployment rate is higher," the paper argued. "The effect can mostly be ascribed to the disproportionately large drop in the unemployment rate of low-income households."

Still, the bond purchases have done little to reduce wealth inequality and the researchers argue that even in the case of incomes, the impact is small compared with the historical trend for rising inequality.

The National Security Council did not respond to the WSJ regarding this alleged hole in the U.S.'s Iran strategy.

This week, Iran filed a lawsuit against the U.S. in the International Court of Justice over the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions, citing violations to the 1955 Treaty on Iranian-U.S. political and economic relations. Also this week, Tehran pledged to secure more of the Indian market for its oil supplies. On Monday, an Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said President Trump's aspirations to completely block Iranian oil exports would be impossible to achieve.

(Source: Sputnik)



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.

rials (about \$26.7 billion).

Iranian government earns budget from various sources including the revenues and offering capital assets and divesting financial assets to the private sector.

According to Head of National Tax Administration Kamel Taqavinejad, the share of tax revenues in Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) has reached eight percent.

The official said the figure should reach 11 percent by the end of the country's Six Five-Year National Development Plan (March 2021).

President Hassan Rouhani's economic strategy is to significantly reduce the government's dependency on oil and instead collect tax more systematically.



structure in any industry, Iranian energy ministry needs to know that only boosting the generation capacity is not an indication of growth, the country's power distribution and transmission systems must be upgraded accordingly.

Something that if was considered carefully in the ministry's grid management, with all the generation capacity and resources that the country has, we wouldn't be facing such outages and their consequent problems.

The overall effects of monetary policy on income inequality are modest, compared to its observed secular trend," the paper, published by the ECB as a "Discussion Paper", suggested.

Quantitative easing, as the bond-buying program is known, is set to run until the end of the year. But the ECB is expected to hang on to its pile of bonds for years, which should help hold borrowing costs at rock-bottom levels to keep the recovery going.

The paper also argued that while low rates do hurt the value of simple savings products, the owners of such assets were compensated for their loss through a healthier economy that improved household purchasing power by pushing employment to record highs.



"Monetary policy in recent years benefited most households and did not contribute to an increase in wealth, income or consumption inequality," the paper argued.

(Source: Reuters)



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NEWS IN BRIEF

**Iran, Pakistan
pledge to enhance
military ties to boost
regional stability**

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** - In a bid to enhance bilateral defense ties, Pakistan and Iran are seeking to jointly manufacture defense equipment, Iran's top military official said during his visit to Pakistan this week.

General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri, head of the Iranian armed forces, made these remarks following his meeting with Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain in Islamabad on Tuesday. He arrived in Islamabad on Monday on an official visit.

According to reports, the two sides discussed issues of mutual concern and pledged to further strengthen bilateral defense ties. Iran and Pakistan share 1000-kilometer long border.

Among the issues that came up for discussion during the meeting include military education, pilot training, military drills and contacts between the two countries' defense industries, according to reports.

General Baqeri said that Iran and Pakistan should enhance their military ties to boost regional stability. The two countries, he stressed, are working to jointly manufacture defense equipment.

He also said that the United States seeks to create instability and undermine security in the region.

During his visit, General Baqeri also held talks with the chief of Pakistani naval staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi. The two officials discussed ways to boost maritime cooperation between the two countries and increase joint naval exercises.

**India's top court
asks government
to enact law against
mob lynching**

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** - India's Supreme Court has asked the government to enact a new law to deal with the rising number of cases related to mob violence and lynching.

There has been an alarming spike in cases of mob lynching in India in past few years, causing deaths of more than two dozen people this year alone, mostly from the minority Muslim community.

A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra on Tuesday asked the Parliament to enact a law to punish the offenders and stem the violence. "Horrendous acts of mobocracy cannot be allowed to become a new norm," the bench said. "It has to be curbed with an iron hand."

The ruling was in response to a number of petitions seeking direction on containing violence by cow-protection vigilante groups representing radical Hindu groups who have been targeting Muslims on suspicion of eating beef.

This year, a report published in The Times of India said, there have been 13 incidents of mob lynchings, resulting in the deaths of 27 people, often in isolated areas and other crimes following fake rumours spread via WhatsApp, a messaging application.

**UN human rights
chief hits back at
India over Kashmir
human rights**

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — Denying any collusion with Pakistani activists in preparing the first-ever report on the human rights situation in Kashmir, across the dividing line, UN human rights commissioner has said he is "deeply disappointed" by the reaction of the Indian authorities.

Referring to the official response from New Delhi, the UN human rights commissioner Zeid Raad Hussein's spokesperson said that they were "deeply disappointed by the reaction of the Indian authorities, who dismissed the report as 'fallacious, tendentious and motivated' without examining it and responding to the very serious concerns about the human rights situation in Indian-administered Kashmir and Pakistan-administered Kashmir as laid out in the report".

He said that the UN human rights chief's office was "disturbed by the sustained attempts to distract and divert the focus away from the human rights violations on both sides of the Line of Control".

The report released on July 14 focused mainly on the "human rights situation" in India's Jammu and Kashmir from July 2016 to April 2018 based on "allegations of widespread and serious human rights violations were received, notably excessive use of force by Indian security forces that led to numerous civilian casualties".

**Despite rejection
of his offer, Ghani
hopeful Taliban will
join peace talks**

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — Despite the Taliban rejecting his offer to extend the ceasefire and join peace talks with the Afghan government, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani is still hopeful that the militant group will come to the negotiating table.

In an interview with RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan in Kabul on Monday, Ghani said the Taliban can still be persuaded to join the talks and their opposition to peace talks was not "a full rejection".

"It's like when you ask someone's hand in marriage and the family of the bride says no several times [before relenting]," Ghani said. "In reality, it is likely that we will get a positive answer."

The Afghan government and the Taliban observed an unprecedented three-day ceasefire on the festival of Eid this year. Although the Afghan government unilaterally extended the ceasefire, the militant group turned down the offer.

Taliban has in the past refused to engage directly with the Kabul government, denying its legitimacy. The group has offered to hold talks directly with the U.S. government. There were reports this week that the U.S. was willing to hold direct talks with the Taliban, but the statement was later retracted.

Taliban, ISIS face off in Afghanistan, 20 Taliban fighters killed in latest ISIS attack

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — With contrasting agenda, goals and modus operandi, the Taliban and ISIS are facing off in a battle for control of Afghanistan, even as the security situation in the war-ravaged country deteriorates.

In the latest round, an ISIS suicide bomber killed at least 20 Taliban militants, including a senior commander, in northern Sar e Pul province on Tuesday. The deadly attack took place when the Taliban fighters were attending a prayer ceremony at the house of a local Taliban commander, according to sources. The latest attack comes after a series of pitched battles between the two rival militant groups in northern Afghanistan's Sar e Pul and Faryab where both seek the upper hand. While the Taliban has been a potent armed opposition force in Afghanistan since mid-1990s, ISIS has gained foothold in the strife-torn country in past few years.

"Two ISIS fighters entered a Taliban commander's house where a (prayer) ceremony was underway and opened fire," Zabihullah Amani, a spokesman for the Sar-e-Pul governor, told a news agency. Though ISIS controls less territory compared to the Taliban, the group has intensified its activities in eastern and northern parts of the country, besides Kabul. It has claimed responsibility for many suicide attacks in Kabul this year, including the one that targeted journalists in April. It also claimed responsibility for the attack on a Kabul election booth in April that left 69 people dead and attack on the members of Sikh community in eastern Jalalabad city that killed at least 19 people.

Last month an ISIS suicide bomber blew himself up in eastern Afghanistan when the Taliban and the Afghan government were observing three-day ceasefire on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr. At least 25 people were killed in that attack.



ISIS-Khorasan, named after the region that once included Pakistan and Afghanistan, are challenging the Taliban for supremacy and influence in Afghanistan. The paths of two groups diverge vastly, especially in their ideological leanings and worldly ambitions. While the Taliban seeks to bring Islamic caliphate to Afghanistan, ISIS has global ambitions that are not limited to the borders of Afghanistan.

According to observers, after beating the humiliating

retreat in Iraq and Syria, the group now seeks to use Afghanistan as a battleground to extend their 'empire' to other neighboring countries.

According to government estimates, ISIS fighters in Afghanistan numbered around 3,000 in 2017, but it is impossible to guess the exact figure as the militants keep moving from one group to the other. Most of the ISIS fighters have defected from the Taliban to join ISIS.

Afghan-owned peace process only solution to war in Afghanistan

1 → The group has repeatedly demanded lifting of travel embargo on Taliban leaders by UN and unconditional withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan. So will the U.S.-led coalition concede to the demand that foreign forces must withdraw from the battle-scarred country?

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who has faced blistering criticism at home and abroad for failing to contain violence, has been desperately wooing the Taliban to join Afghan-led and Afghan-owned talks. A breakthrough was expected when the two parties observed an unprecedented three-day ceasefire on the festival of Eid this year. But, all hopes were dashed when the insurgent group refused to extend the ceasefire and went back to the frontlines of war.

Ghani, however, has not given up. On Monday, in an interview with RFE/RL, he dismissed the Taliban's rejection of his offer of peace talks, suggesting that the insurgent group can still be persuaded to come to the negotiating table. "It's like when you ask someone's hand in marriage and the family of the bride says no several times [before relenting]," said the economist-turned-president, sounding clearly over-optimistic. He strongly favors talks that are Afghan-led and Afghan-owned.

The government in Kabul, which depends heavily on the funding from its international



partners, has been rendered weak and inefficient. Critics believe that the Ashraf Ghani government, which was formed as a result of power-sharing dealbrokered by then U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry in 2014, does not take its own decisions. A shadow of Washington hangs overhead.

So, although Nicholson has retracted his statement, if the U.S. actually plans to hold direct talks with the Taliban, the legitimacy of the Ashraf Ghani-led government in Kabul, which is already under fire, will be further eroded. The general sense in Afghanistan is that the peace process should be Afghan-led and

Afghan-owned. Americans cannot talk to the Taliban on behalf of the people of Afghanistan.

Why Afghans cannot trust Americans is pretty clear. America has never been the well-wisher of Afghanistan. It invaded Afghanistan in 2001 not to overthrow the Taliban regime and bring peace to the war-torn country, but it basically sought to neutralize the masterminds of 9-11 attack, who the hawks in Washington believed were hiding in the mountains of Afghanistan. Then, on the pretext of 'war against terrorism', Americans turned Afghanistan into another Iraq, another killing field, another failed experiment. And the innocent blood

continues to flow in the streets of Afghanistan.

Today, after 17 years of war and trillions of dollars, the government in Kabul controls 229 of Afghanistan's 407 districts, and the Taliban controls and yields influence in 59. The remaining 119 districts are contested, according to the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). This is the legacy of America and its allies in Afghanistan.

But, importantly, the involvement of America in Afghanistan did not begin in 2001. They fought against Russians in Afghanistan in 1980s and played a key role in the birth of the Taliban. Most of the top-notch Taliban and Al Qaeda leaders were on the payroll of CIA before the tables turned.

Since 2001, Americans have been fighting against the same 'warriors' they once patronized. They did same in Iraq, supporting Saddam Hussain in all his horrendous war crimes and eventually getting him killed. They did exactly the same to Osama Bin Laden, who was once a close ally of CIA in Afghanistan.

So, the idea of America-led direct talks with the Taliban inspires no hope. The devil cannot be trusted. For the final political settlement, the peace process has to be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned and important regional players like India, Pakistan, Iran, Russia and China must be roped in. Otherwise, it is an exercise in futility.

‘Rohingyas lived in open-air prison in Myanmar and now live in impoverished conditions in Bangladesh’

By Syed Zafar Mehdi

Nay San Lwin is the media coordinator for Free Rohingya Coalition, the global network of Rohingya activists. In an interview with Tehran Times, he talks about the challenges facing Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and possibilities of their repatriation. Following are the excerpts:

■ What is the exact number of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh presently? How are they dealing with myriad challenges facing them, especially monsoon flashfloods?

A. There are over a million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh presently and over 200 local and foreign NGOs, INGOs, and UN organizations supporting them. A few thousand refugees moved to the place where they would be safe from flashfloods. Unfortunately about a dozen refugees got killed just a few weeks ago and about three thousand shelters were destroyed but I hope it won't happen again as the agencies there are working very hard to protect them from the threat posed by flashfloods.

■ When did the genocide and exodus of Rohingya Muslims actually begin? What has the world community done for them, especially the United Nations? The UN chief recently visited Bangladesh and confessed that nothing could have prepared him for the "scale of the crisis and extent of suffering" he witnessed there.

A. The genocide and exodus of Rohingya Muslims began in 1978. It is a four decade long slow genocide. The UN described Rohingyas in 1992 as the "most persecuted minority" in the world. It has been now 26 years. The situation gets worse day by day. The fresh wave of exodus of persecuted Rohingyas from Myanmar's Rakhine state started in October 2016 after crackdown by Myanmar security forces. More than 200,000 of them fled to Bangladesh that time. And then in August last year, more than 720,000 Rohingya refugees fled to Bangladesh to escape persecution, murder, arson and rape.

The UN chief visited Bangladesh a few weeks ago and met refugees in Cox's Bazar camps. But we want to see solution of this crisis rather than visits by high-profile dignitaries. These dignitaries come and sympathize with the refugees but that's not enough. We want permanent solution.

■ Many countries have sent relief supplies for Rohingya refu-



gees in Bangladesh but that is certainly not enough. What should the world do to find a solution to this humanitarian crisis?

A. The refugees in Cox's Bazar camps are just depending on aid agencies. Bangladesh doesn't recognize them as refugees. They call them forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals. In my opinion, they must be recognized as refugees. Then they will have the rights of the refugees. The international community has urged the Bangladesh government to recognize them as refugees and give them rights of refugees and also find permanent solution to this crisis. The most important thing is to drag all the criminals responsible for this crisis to the International Criminal Court (ICC), restore their citizen and ethnic rights, and ensure their safety and security when they are repatriated.

■ According to aid agencies, it can also be termed a 'children's emergency' since many children in Cox's Bazar camps are suffering from severe malnutrition and other health issues. What do you think?

A. These children have fled open-air prison in Myanmar. The entire situation in these camps in Bangladesh should be termed emergency. The situation is gradually improving but lot more needs to be done. As the funding is also an issue to provide best service for the refugees, we don't want to blame anyone. Finding permanent solution is the most important demand of these people. I think the international community should focus on these children by collaborating with UNICEF.

■ UN refugee agency has said that the repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Rakhine state in Myanmar must take place in safe and dignified conditions. Do you think that is possible?

A. To repatriate these people, first of all, the Rohingya homeland has to be protected. They need international protection. Safe, voluntary and dignified return is just a talk. It isn't going to work at all. The Rakhine state is not safe for Rohingyas at all. It hasn't been safe since 1978. Rohingyas have been experiencing mass exodus since 1978. The exodus and mass killing is being repeated again and again. They were living in an open-air prison in Rakhine and now they live in impoverished conditions in refugee camps. We Rohingya activists demand "Protected Return to Protected Homeland". This has to be implemented as a permanent solution to this crisis.

■ Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi has refused to take moral responsibility for the persecution and exodus of Rohingya refugees, yet she hasn't been stripped of her Nobel Peace Prize. Isn't it hypocritical?

A. Even if we demand, Nobel Prize committee is not going to take away her Nobel Peace Prize. Everyone knows she is complicit in the genocide of Rohingya Muslims. What we can do is extend our solidarity with Rohingyas. And we seek solidarity from all conscientious citizens of the world. People should raise their voice for these ill-fated, persecuted people.

■ Do you think this crisis will be resolved in the near future?

A. All members of UNSC should unite to take action against those responsible for the plight of Rohingya Muslims, especially the Myanmar government. The action of UNSC can lead to a permanent solution of this crisis. All countries, including the members of ASEAN, must impose sanctions against Myanmar and extremist Buddhists who are complicit in this genocide must be booked under law.

Seven realities about Iran in Iraq and Syria

TEHRAN (FNA) - Ali Akbar Velayati, a top aide to Iranian Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, giving a conference in Russia on Friday, ruled out the possibility of an immediate withdrawal of Iranian military advisors from Iraq and Syria.

He said they would leave those countries only if the governments there wanted them to. Velayati went on to say that under international law the rightful positions of Iran's military presence in Syria are coordinated with the Syrian government as well as the Russian government. This was in response to a question about the United States and Israel demanding a pullout of all Iranians from Syria.

On balance and amid escalating lies by U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, here are a few realities:

1- A record high percentage of Iraqis and Syrians say it was Iran which helped them defeat the terrorist groups of ISIL and Al-Qaeda. Though Iran has only a small number of forces in Syria, they have become an increasingly contentious issue because of Israel's anger – and for good reasons. Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu was in Russia recently to push Vladimir Putin on the idea of forcing them out of Syria. This is also said to be a topic of discussion in the Putin-Trump summit on Monday.

2- There are still remnants of ISIL and Al-Qaeda in Iraq and Syria. Iranian forces are there at the invitation of the central governments – unlike the U.S. forces and their regional allies. Velayati's comments are likely intended to make it clear that Iran's presence in Syria and Iraq is not contingent on American or Russian permissions, but



rather on the Syrian government and Iraqi government's invitations.

3- America needs more war and chaos, not fewer, because it gives Washington a perfect excuse to sell arms to its Arab allies, plunder the region's resources, build new illegal military bases, protect Israel, and contain the rising influence of Iran and Russia. The U.S. wants to get Iran out of the picture because it is standing in its way. On the other hand, Iran keeps telling the United Nations that there is no military solution to the Syrian conflict.

4- Historically, America's Arab allies have contributed more to the region in terms of instability and chaos than they would like to admit. Together with the United States,

Britain, and France, the Saudis are trying to steal the wealth of Yemen from its people and they are facing considerable resistance. The illegal war is not a proxy war with Iran. It is uprooting Yemen's sovereignty and the ability of Yemenis to resist this long-term campaign of basically robbing their country of its natural resources and its ability to maintain independence from the U.S. and Riyadh that unfortunately the rest of the Middle East has already been facing since the 9/11 attacks in the U.S.

5- Iranian military advisers are not in Syria and Iraq to take over their energy resources. To the contrary, they are sacrificing their lives to protect these resources for the people. President Trump may have announced he

intends to help Iraq (although it's not clear with what sums and means), but he has already gotten into a quarrel with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi when he said the United States should have taken over Iraq's oil fields back in 2003.

6- Trump's claim that Iranian forces destabilize Iraq is dead wrong. Iran has important trade agreements with Iraq and has been using its influence there to soothe tensions. Examples to corroborate this claim are galore, with the last one being its mediation efforts to negotiate an end to Kurdistan's independence bid or its positive role in the start of coalitions among factions that have won the recent elections in the country. Iran is training the Iraqi army and volunteer Shi-ite-Sunni forces and is Iraq's most important partner in the war on terror. Iran is also Iraq's most important trade partner (some \$6 billion worth of goods, not including oil). Iran has a presence and influence in the Kurdish region as well, especially in its Eastern part that shares a border with it and sees in Iraq a bridge to Syria and a vital trade pass to other Arab states. So it is ridiculous to claim that Iran is destabilizing Iraq.

7- After so many years of war and bloodshed in Iraq and Syria, terrorism attacks and violent crime rates are actually at historical lows, with the suicide bombing rate back to its level from the early 2004. ISIL attacks have been declining too since 2018 – long before Trump's "surge" to "liberate" Raqqa. The remaining militants of ISIL are now heading to Afghanistan with the U.S. aid. Thanks to the sacrifices of Iranian military advisors, there is no new ISIL or Qaeda "surge" in Iraq and Syria. They are losing on all fronts.

Capriciousness about international agreements is an old Washington's tradition

TEHRAN (FNA) — On Monday, July 16, negotiations between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin concluded with a joint press conference in Helsinki. The comments by the two revealed, as expected, no major deals were reached, but that some fairly vague plans for improved cooperation were agreed upon.

There were disagreements, with President Putin faulting Trump for the withdrawal from the P5+1 nuclear deal with Iran, and urging Trump to be more decisive in pushing Ukraine toward peace talks with its eastern neighbors. President Trump brought up the issue of election interference, and accepted Putin's denial. He praised Putin as a strong leader and competitor. He also defended his decision to attend the summit despite calls by US lawmakers to cancel it.

That the summit's end was met by furious condemnations from both sides of the aisle in Washington is not the subject of this write-up. That both the Republicans and Democrats called the talks "one of the most disgraceful performances by an American president in memory," and went even farther, not only faulting Trump for his weakness at the summit, but declaring that weakness to be "proof" that Russia has something on him and is threatening to release it, is also not that much important to talk about.

What's important is that despite the good and the dialogue of the Helsinki Summit, the Warfare State will still continue to find new enemies to justify its endless wars and occupations in the heartlands of the Muslim world.

For instance, on Sunday night, one day before the summit in Helsinki, US airstrikes (upon an earlier order from Trump) killed at least eight civilians in eastern Syria. The airstrikes against villages in the eastern Deir Ezzur province also wounded dozens of others – on the



pretext of targeting an area where ISIL is believed to have a presence. The strikes targeted the town of al-Hajeen and nearby villages.

That's not all. On the same night, Israeli warplanes attacked the al-Nayrab air base near the Syrian city of Aleppo. Media reports citing opposition sources say the strikes targeted warehouses at the site, killing at least 22 people. This is the third Israeli strike in Syria in the past week, and the deadliest in quite some time.

Therefore, debunking the false mainstream narrative about Trump's "good intentions" and irrespective of the rapprochement rhetoric during the Helsinki press conference, America's war on Syria and Yemen, and its military support for Saudi Arabia and Israel to invade and attack neighbors will continue apace.

Just like his predecessors, Trump has also sold his soul

to the Warfare State in pursuit of position, power and pelf, and no joint press conference with Putin will change that. There is no turning back. Trump didn't sell arms to Saudi Arabia worth \$110 billion only later to rally the GOP troops on Capitol Hill and his base for peace, or some kind of rapprochement with Russia, or an end to Washington's arrogant Imperial hegemony in the Middle East.

No doubt that the Warfare State and its skills and Zionist-Saudi assigns will continue to find new excuses and "regional threats" to escalate their wars in the Middle East. The signal for that is how Trump backtracked on almost everything Obama had signed with the international community, including the Iran nuclear deal and Paris Agreement, and then the imposition of Muslim travel ban, separation of migrant children from parents, recognizing Jerusalem Al-Quds as the Israeli capital, launching trade war and threatening Iran and the European Union with sanctions.

Make no mistake. It's not just Trump. The US has always broken its treaties, pacts and promises. The US has long been one and will always be an unreliable international partner, even before Trump pulled out from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Paris Agreement on climate change, and the Iran nuclear deal. History is dotted with treaties that the US has signed but not ratified, signed and then unsigned, and even refused to sign after pushing everyone else to sign.

Capriciousness about international treaties is an old US tradition. It started with America's very creation: hundreds of treaties signed with Native American tribes that were either broken or not ratified. No future treaty and agreement between Trump and Putin can break with that tradition.

Trump's Campaign against Europe

However, some European authorities, including Theresa May, believed that amid the existing disagreements raised between Brussels and Washington, EU leaders should attempt to negotiate and hold talks with Trump. Obviously, the British Prime Minister's views can't be accepted by other European players, and that's because now Britain is on the brink of leaving the European Union, and this country has now become a symbol of inconsistency in this block.

The next point here is about Trump's presidential campaign slogans and his approach to the European Union. In the course of the 2016 presidential elections in the United States, Trump had expressed his opposition to the "existence of the United Europe." Trump's particular support for "Brexit" and beyond that, his support for nationalist and far-right extremists in European countries, indicated the full opposition of the US President with the European Union and the Eurozone. The evidences suggest that the relations between Trump and the nationalist groups and the opponents of the United Europe remain strong. Thus, the conflict between the White House and the United Europe is a kind of fundamental conflict, one that will continue until the collapse of the United Europe or the end of Trump's time at the White House. Trump publicly calls for the destruction of the United Europe, and he



doesn't hesitate to express this opposition to this block. On the one hand, he intends to support the nationalist and anti-EU alliances, which will pave the way for the economic weakening of Europe, and, on the other hand, he's after increasing the security costs of Europe under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Thus we can see that there's a full consistency between US economic and security policies.

Another point to be taken into consideration is about the specific approach

taken by the European officials towards the US government and the president of this country. Europeans simply compromise with Donald Trump. This is while such an approach hadn't been to their benefit so far. Ironically, it made Trump and his government even more motivated in this regard. The recent suggestion by the US president to Emmanuel Macron well indicates this fact.

EU member states, under the policies of politicians such as Theresa May, Emma-

nuel Macron, and even German Chancellor "Angela Merkel, have not yet used their capacities to confront the Trump's government's actions and policies. It has reached a point where the British prime minister has asked other European countries to be silent against Washington regarding the imposition of tariffs on steel and aluminum imported from Europe.

Finally, it should be noted that Trump doesn't basically follow the confrontation with the United Europe in the form of a "hidden strategy", but he explicitly declares it publicly and before the media. This reflects the serious conflict between Washington and the European Union during the presidency of Donald Trump. But it seems that the EU and the Eurozone officials do not understand this simple truth, or maybe they intentionally close their eyes on it. Undoubtedly, this could bring economic, political and even hard security shocks to Europe in the future. Hence, Europe needs to get out of the phase of interacting with Trump as soon as possible, and take the policy of confronting with the President of the United States.

If the European Union delays in this regard and continue to be optimistic about its future relations with Washington, it will face repeated and synchronous security and economic tensions, which, of course, dealing those will be beyond the power of the European officials.

All countries must defend Iran against U.S. sanctions: Finnish economist



TEHRAN (Tasnim) — A Finnish political economist and author deplored the U.S. sanctions due to be re-imposed on Iran in November as "illegal and illegitimate" and said all countries should stand up to defend Tehran against Washington or else they could become the next victim.

"The defense against the U.S. sanctions assault on Iran is the most crucial challenge to the world," Jon Hellevig said in an interview with Tasnim News Agency.

"All countries must rise to Iran's defense, otherwise, any country can become the next victim," he said, adding, "We must understand that the assault on Iran is just a major offensive in the U.S. quest to establish absolute world hegemony, therefore an assault on Iran is an assault on everybody, most notably so, on Russia and China."

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 US be able to carry out this threat at all?

A: Well, if the U.S. would be able to cut off Iranian oil exports, then it would be the beginning of the end of the free world. The defense against the U.S. sanctions assault on Iran is the most crucial challenge to the world. All countries must rise to Iran's defense, otherwise, any country can become the next victim. We must understand that the assault on Iran is just a major offensive in the U.S. quest to establish absolute world hegemony, therefore an assault on Iran is an assault on everybody, most notably so, on Russia and China. Of course, there is also the subplot, to carve out a regional Middle East hegemony for Israel, but that basically serves the same goal of establishing an absolute Anglo-Zionist world hegemony.

In order to establish its absolute world hegemony, the United States would have to knock out either Russia or China, when one would be taken out, then the other one would be encircled, too. I see Iran as the last line of defense. If the U.S. hegemon would succeed in conquering Iran and occupy it with its forces, then Russia would become very vulnerable.

But it is more than the geopolitical military pressure, it is about destroying the U.S. sanctions weapon of mass destruction once and for all. For this to happen, China and Russia must be ready to go all out to neutralize the sanctions assault on Iran, even if this would mean short-term serious economic damage to themselves. If it is not done, then the U.S. hegemon will take out Russia's and China's trading partners one by one, and ultimately these two countries themselves. A strong stand by Russia and China would also help countries like India to show strength in opposing the illegal and illegitimate sanctions.

■ 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 US\$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: It is quite clear that should Iran block oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz, then it would send the oil price through the roof. This, in turn, would crush the global capital markets, with enormous consequences for the world economy. Not least would it affect the U.S. and European bubble economies. At the same time, we must certainly note that the blocking of the Strait of Hormuz could also lead to a military intervention by the United States and its vassal states. This would have the same effect on the global economy but could lead to even worse consequences for the whole of mankind. A military intervention like that could lead to unimaginable war escalations.

Iran has no other choice than to work with its partners to neutralize the sanctions' effects and to stand militarily firm.

■ 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 role of the European Union is a wild card here. It is clear from all that has happened in world geopolitics in the last 20 years, that the European Union and its member states are junior partners in the U.S. New World Order hegemony project. Now, it is therefore surprising why they have raised this challenge to the United States. We cannot know if they are serious or just wagging their tongues. It is possible that this reflects a rift within the U.S.-led Western elites. Perhaps between a pro-Israel lobby and on the other side a transatlantic lobby led by the other half of the U.S. Deep State.

Whatever, it is clear that the EU can do only so much because all major EU corporations are so tightly integrated into the US-led trade and financial systems. Through their leverage on the Western financial institutions, the U.S. can easily cut off financing to any European corporation which challenges their sanctions.

But any signals of real political will to stand up against the U.S. sanctions by the EU will be welcomed. There has been talk that the EU would enact a blocking statute which would forbid EU companies from complying with the extraterritorial effects of US sanctions, allow companies to recover damages arising from such sanctions from the person causing them, and nullify the effect in the EU of any foreign court judgments based on them.

Jon Krister Hellevig is a Finnish lawyer and businessman who has worked in Russia since the early 1990s. Hellevig was a candidate in the European parliament election in 2014. He is the managing partner of the Moscow-based law company Hellevig, Klein & Usov.

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Iran bans imports of foreign handicrafts

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran has banned the import of foreign-made handicrafts in a bid to push up sales of domestically-made counterparts.

The import suspension of non-Iranian handicrafts has been declared to the Iran Customs Administration, the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization deputy director Pouya Mahmoudian said on Tuesday.

“Supplying foreign handicrafts such as Turkish, Chinese, and Indian ones to the Iranian market has always been one of the main concerns and challenges for the country’s handicraft producers and exporters.”

The decision was made following two months of negotiations and joint meetings with the Trade Promotion Organization; the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade; and the Iran Customs Administration, she added.

According to data compiled by the CHHTO, Iran exported \$280 million worth of handicrafts during the past Iranian calendar year, ended on March 20.

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

NEWS IN BRIEF



Major handicrafts exhibit underway in Saqqez

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — A major sales exhibition of handicrafts opened to the public on Tuesday in the western Iranian city of Saqqez, Kordestan province.

The event is dedicated to artisans who are native to the provinces of Kermanshah, Ilam, Zanjan, Hamedan, West Azarbaijan, East Azarbaijan and Kordestan, CHTN reported.

A total of 35 stalls have been set up for the four-day event, which is organized under the auspices of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization.



Mashhad to hold culinary festival

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — The city of Mashhad, north-eastern Khorasan Razavi province, will host a gastronomy festival from September 2 to 6.

“The art of Iranian cooking” will be the main theme of the event embracing various cuisine-associated workshops and talent competitions, CHTN reported.

It will be running concurrent with a major tourism fair at the Mashhad International Exhibition Company and under supervision of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization.



Isfahan hosting handicrafts packaging exhibit

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Tens of packaging designs for handicrafts have been put on show in the UNESCO-registered Imam Square of Isfahan.

The exhibit features over 300 inexpensive packaging boxes which have been produced by six firms, CHTN reported.

In January, Fereydoun Allahyari, Isfahan’s tourism chief, initiated a campaign for designing elegant packs for handmade products.

“We should cater for the tastes of abundant international travelers who come to visit Isfahan,” he said.

Over the past couple of years, several officials, experts and artisans had warned about Persian handicrafts, which neither enjoy appropriate packaging nor branding.

The exhibit will be running through July 20.



ROUND THE GLOBE

Historic City of Vigan

Established in the 16th century, Vigan is the best-preserved example of a planned Spanish colonial town in Asia.

Its architecture reflects the coming together of cultural elements from elsewhere in the Philippines and from China with those of Europe and Mexico to create a unique culture and townscape without parallels anywhere in East and South-East Asia.

An important trading post before the colonial era, Vigan is located at the river delta of Abra River, along the northwestern coastline of the main island of Luzon, in the Province of Ilocos Sur, Philippine Archipelago. The total area of the inscribed property is 17.25 hectares.

There is, however, a noticeable difference between Vigan and contemporary Spanish colonial towns in Latin America in the Historic Core (known as the Mestizo district), where the Latin tradition is tempered by strong Chinese, Ilocano, and Filipino influences. As its name implies, this district was settled by affluent families of mixed Chinese-Ilocano origin. The area contains the historic footprint of the entire town and consists of a total of 233 historic buildings tightly strung along a grid of 25 streets.

The two-storey structures are built of brick and wood, with a steeply pitched roof reminiscent of traditional Chinese architecture.

Vigan is unique for having preserved much of its Hispanic colonial character, particularly its grid street pattern and historic urban lay out.

(Source: UNESCO)

Cheshmeh-Ali still dried out despite promises

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Despite repetitive promises by Tehran subway authorities, Cheshmeh-Ali is still struggling to return to its heyday, when its popular pool was chock-full of inflow-water.

Literally meaning ‘Spring of Ali’, Cheshmeh-Ali is a popular tourist destination in southern Tehran where months of its sudden dryness has prompted voices of dissatisfaction over the fate of the ancient site.

It became subject of debate between the Tehran City Council and cultural heritage officials, in one hand, and the Tehran subway authorities on the other hand.

Tehran Urban & Suburban Railway Operation Co., blamed for blocking water by carving underground tunnels, had previously given a pledge that the flow would be resumed as of July 6.

In this regard, Ali Emam, the CEO of Tehran Urban & Suburban Railway Operation Co., said on Wednesday that the flow has recently been reestablished, adding that it will be increasing by the coming ten days, YJC reported.

His comments were soon criticized by Tehran City Council member Hassan Khalilabadi who explained: “I myself inspect the site twice a day... unfortunately, its water flow is still halted... and I don’t know why Mr. Emam proclaims that it is restored,” Fars reported.

“Subway authorities should make it clear to the representatives of people at the City Council that how a rail route is being designed that has caused drought conditions for this



People swim in a natural pool in Cheshmeh-Ali, a historical site in southern Tehran, July 1, 2017.

vital and ancient spring. They should also clarify what plans and actions they have taken so far or will follow in this regard,” Tehran City Council member Ahmad Masjed-Jamei said in June.

During the summertime, Cheshmeh-Ali and its surroundings are occupied by hundreds of locals who came for swimming and having fun. Its pool overlooks 19th-century rock-carved relief which was commissioned

by the Qajar king Fath Ali shah who reigned from 1797 to 1834.

Cheshmeh-Ali also contains an archaeological site estimated to date from the 4 millennium BC.

Iranian-Italian mission on Pasargadae extended for 3 years

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — An Iranian-Italian cooperative mission on Pasargadae, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in southern Iran, has recently agreed on extending the cooperation for another three years, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

The agreement was made between Iran’s Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization and the Superior Institute for Conservation and Restoration (Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione e il Restauro), which is a body of Italy’s Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism.

The ISCR experts and Iranian technicians have worked side by side on the preservation of the Tomb of Cyrus the Great and encircling ruined palaces in Pasargadae.

The Institute has considerable expertise in the fields of conservation, restoration and management of cultural heritage by holding specific educational courses and implementing joint projects.

The effect of pollution on outdoor artefacts and the territorial information systems for risk prevention are amongst courses it has held for Iranian counterparts.

Situated in about 50km north of Persepolis, itself a World Heritage, Pasargadae was the capital of the Achaemenid Empire under Cyrus the Great who reigned mighty Persian Empire from 559 to 530 BC.



People visit tomb of Cyrus the Great in Pasargadae

11 ways to save money when booking travel

By Kristin Wong

Earlier this year, Brian Kelly flew Singapore Airlines’ new first-class suite on its A380 airbus, taking off with a glass of Dom Perignon and 50 square feet of legroom. The market rate for his flight from Sydney to Singapore was over \$3,000. Mr. Kelly’s cost?

“150,000 points and \$72,” he said. “So while not the best redemption in terms of the value I got per point, the flight itself was one of my most memorable ever. It actually has both a seat and a bed.”

Mr. Kelly is perhaps better known as The Points Guy, the guy with the website that tells you how to maximize your travel dollars. As founder and chief executive, Mr. Kelly knows a thing or two about traveling on the cheap, so we asked him and a handful of other experts for their best advice on how to cut the cost of booking travel, from flights to hotels to car rentals.

■ Get a big credit card bonus

Blogs and online forums refer to it as travel hacking, stacking, or credit card churning, but the idea is the same: sign up for credit cards with big bonuses and cash back programs to earn points redeemable for free travel.

“I always advise travelers to understand their credit and their financial situation before getting into it,” Mr. Kelly warned, adding that travelers shouldn’t sign up for these cards unless they understand how credit works in the first place. Namely, revolving a credit card balance can cost you in interest in fees, making your “free” travel rather costly. “If you’re not in the right place, don’t sign up for a credit card. You could be hurting yourself in the long run,” he added.

■ Fly on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday

Like any other industry, airline flight prices depend on supply and demand. Prices are cheaper when there’s less demand, and that’s typically during the week, said James Filsinger, president and chief executive of Yapta, a website that tracks airfare and hotel prices.

“Instead of flying with the masses on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday or Monday, travel on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday and you’ll find that prices are lower,” he said. “Essentially, do your best to ‘zig’ when the rest of the travel population ‘zags,’ and you’ll find that travel is not as costly.”

For the same reason, flights are usually cheaper on holidays, but significantly more expensive on the days before and after the holiday. You can save a considerable amount of cash flying on Thanksgiving, for example, instead of the Tuesday before. Of course, the downside is that you will have to travel on a holiday, but the upside is beating the crowds.



■ Track your flight and get price drop alerts

On the other hand, airline fare pricing is a science that can be tough to predict, said Mr. Kelly. “Between availability, airline revenue managers, when you’re traveling and more, there are so many moving parts to airfare that you can’t really focus on one too much.”

A better option: find tools to do the work for you. Online tools like Yapta, Hopper and Google Flights allow you to search for flights, then keep track of them through their interface or even via email alerts. If a flight drops or increases in price, you’ll get a notification.

■ Mix and match airlines and airports

When booking your round-trip flight, search for two separate one-way tickets, too, possibly on different airlines. “Instead of buying a round-ticket on one carrier, piece together two one-way tickets on two different carriers,” said Scott Steinberg, the founder of SELECT CITY, an online travel magazine. “Sometimes, the overall price is less expensive for two one-way tickets instead of one round-trip ticket,” he added. Many flight search sites like the ones we’ve mentioned will automatically do this for you, or let you switch between area airports if a flight into one and out of another is less expensive.

This might also come in handy if you need to cancel just one leg of your flight. For example, if you’re flying to London, but your departure date changes, it may be cheaper to pay a cancel fee for your one-way departing ticket than to cancel and rebook your entire round-trip flight.

■ Try an airline’s home (or international) website

Some overseas airlines list cheaper flight prices if you use their country’s version of the website. “Particularly, Norwegian Air is famous for offering discounts as high as 30 percent when you book through the foreign version of its website,” Mr. Kelly said.

“If you’re booking a one-way flight from Oslo to New York, you can often find get major discounts by selecting Norway as your home country rather than the U.S.”

You may have to ask Google to translate your page, but if you can navigate the website and book your ticket, this is

a relatively easy way to save.

■ Take advantage of long layovers

Layovers will often make your flight cheaper, but the downside is, well, a layover. One way to use this to your advantage is to turn a longer layover into a bonus trip. For example, if you’re flying to London and flights with layovers in Dublin are cheaper, search for the flights with the longest layovers to see if the prices are similar. If you have a 14-hour layover in Dublin, that could be enough time to grab a hotel, head to Temple Bar and return to the airport in the morning.

■ Call the hotel directly for the best prices

Even if you use a website or app to find a discounted rate on lodging, most hotels prefer you to call them directly when you book, and offer even lower prices for booking directly. “With OTAs (online travel agencies) spending so much on paid search and bidding on hotels brand words, it’s a fight to get in front of the guests,” said Matt Barba, an innkeeper at Deer Path Inn in Lake Forest, Ill.

“Hotels appear to be doing all they can to entice guests to book direct, so take advantage of it.”

For example, Mr. Kelly said that some hotels offer best price guarantees, so if you find a cheaper price than the one the hotel advertises on their own website, they will match it.

■ Beware of big events

Hotel prices will soar if there’s a conference or other event in town, so check to see what’s happening in your destination city before you etch your plans in stone.

“If there are big events going on like a sporting event or trade show, or if it’s during peak holiday season, prices may be higher than usual,” said Thomas Wrobel of Trivago, an online travel search tool. “Sometimes only shifting your travels by a few days could make a big difference.”

■ Negotiate car rental upgrades

If you’re going to book a rental car, start by booking the cheapest car you can find online. “Then try to negotiate for a free upgrade when checking in at the car rental counter,” said consumer expert Andrea Woroch, a consumer expert for KTLA television in Los Angeles. “Also, check deals available through the travel portal of your warehouse club membership.”

■ Skip the rental car insurance

Car rental insurance can jack up your bill quite a bit, and the good news is, your existing car insurance policy might come with some form of coverage for rentals.

While there are exclusions, chances are, your credit card probably comes with a policy that can make up for anything your personal auto insurance doesn’t cover.

Most cards cover theft, damage to the car, and towing, but they might not include injury or property damage.

(Source: The New York Times)

Largest study of its kind shows eating fat is the only cause of weight gain

Researchers have found that among the three major food groups, fat is the only cause of weight gain in the long run.

In the most comprehensive study yet of its kind, researchers at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland and the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing, China concluded that only fat causes mice to gain excessive weight over a long period of time.

The findings of the study could potentially put a nail in the coffin on the long-standing controversial debate on which among the several diets in the world is the best for avoiding excessive weight gain.

Food is made up of the three macronutrients, such as carbohydrates, protein, and fat. The goal of the study was to see which among these macronutrients caused weight gain in mice.

The research published in the journal Cell Metabolism examined a total of 30 different diets, each one having different proportions of carbohydrates, protein, and fat.

Conducted on laboratory mice

The scientists conducted the study on laboratory mice. Each of the mice was made to eat a single diet for three months. This is equivalent to nine years for humans.

Over the course of the study, the researchers made more than 100,000 measurements of changes in both body weight and body fat in the mice using micro MRI machines.

The researchers concluded that among



the food groups, only fat caused weight gain in mice. Lead author John Speakman, chair

of zoology at the University of Aberdeen, says that the amount of carbohydrates and

Sugar and fat, a combination found commonly in baked goods and pastries, were also found to not have any impact more than fat alone.

protein in the diet did not induce weight gain in the subjects.

The researchers also found that even carbohydrates that contain 30 percent of calories from sugar, which is widely believed to induce weight gain, did not have an effect. Sugar and fat, a combination found commonly in baked goods and pastries, were also found to not have any impact more than fat alone.

Low amounts of protein

They also found that diets with very low amounts of protein (5 percent or less) did not cause the mice to eat more. This suggests that there is no such thing as a protein target.

The researchers believe that dietary fat has this impact on weight gain because it stimulates the reward centers in the brain, causing the mice to eat more when they eat fat.

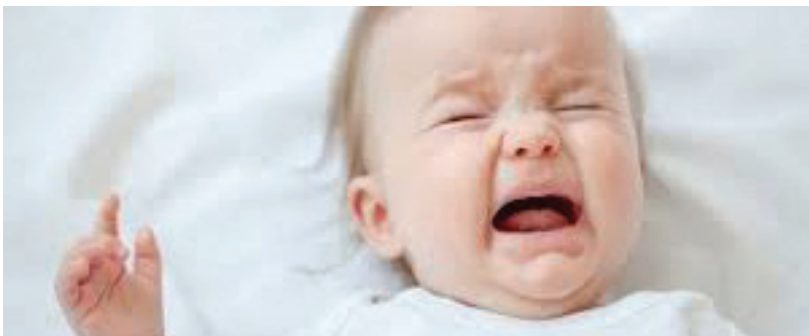
The study was conducted on mice, which is its biggest limitation.

However, mice are often used in laboratory experiments in instances where human studies pose a challenge because mice and humans have similar physiologies and metabolism patterns.

Speakman says it is unlikely that a study of this scope and kind will be done on humans because it is difficult to subject humans to such a controlled diet for extremely long periods of time. Research done on mice may be the best scientific evidence humans may have for now.

(Source: Tech Times)

Babies' cries may foretell their adult voices, a study shows



The next time you hear a baby cry, take a good listen. It might tell you something about how its voice will sound decades later as an adult.

Research has already shown that the pitch of a person's voice stays basically the same during adulthood and that how we sound as adults may be determined before puberty. A recent study indicated that the pitch of a boy's voice at age 7 can mostly predict what he will sound like as an adult.

So when do our voices start emerging? One group of researchers hypothesized that differences in pitch would emerge very early — even in babies who haven't yet learned how to speak.

Now, their new research — published last week in the journal Biology Letters — indicates that the pitch of babies' cries at 4 months old may predict the pitch of their speech at age 5. In fact, the researchers said, the differences identifiable in babies' whines can explain 41 percent of the differences in voice pitch that appear by age 5.

Taken together with previous studies, they said, this suggests a discovery that may be surprising: that a "substantial proportion" of the difference between how we sound in adulthood may be traceable back to the time we spend in utero. Indeed, they said, that would explain why there are differences in baby screams so soon after birth.

"In utero, you have a lot of different

things that can alter and impact your life — not only as a baby, but also at an adult stage," said Nicolas Mathevon, a professor who studies animal behavior at the University of Lyon in France and was one of the authors of the study.

"This explains a lot, but not all," he added. "It's only half the story I would say." As for the rest? "We don't know," he said.

Carolyn Hodges, an assistant professor of anthropology at Boston University who was not involved in the study, said research had shown that voice pitch affects our impressions of a person's physical and social dominance, attractiveness and trust, which can have real-world consequences.

"There aren't many studies that address these questions, so that makes this research especially intriguing," she said, noting that it "suggests that individual differences in voice pitch may have their origins very, very early in development."

To conduct their study, the team of five bioacoustic researchers recorded the voices of 15 French children — six girls and nine boys — from 4 to 5 years old. In each case, they had recordings of what they called "mild discomfort cries" that were obtained when the same children were from 2 to 5 months old.

Previous research has shown that although adult human voices range significantly based on sex, there are no sex differences in the pitch of babies' cries or the speech of children before puberty.

(Source: The NYT)

New blood test can detect deadly skin cancer better than a biopsy



It's a world first. A newly developed blood test is capable of the early detection of melanoma, with over 80 percent accuracy.

It could help save thousands of lives, according to the Australian Edith Cowan University Melanoma Research Group scientists who developed the test.

Melanoma is the most deadly form of skin cancer, claiming 59,782 lives around the world in 2015. Australasia, North America and Europe are the regions most susceptible to the disease.

There's good news. If caught early, the survival rate for melanoma climbs to 95 percent. But if you miss that early window, your chances will plummet to below 50 percent. This is what the blood test is designed to help prevent.

"While clinicians do a fantastic job with the tools available, relying on biopsies alone can be problematic. We know that three out of four biopsies come back negative for melanoma," said cancer researcher Pauline Zaenker.

Biopsies are invasive

The "biopsies are quite invasive, with a minimum of 1cm by 1cm of skin excised from the patient. They are also costly, with previous research showing that the Australian health system spends AUS\$201 million on melanoma each year with an additional AUS\$73 million on negative biopsies."

The blood test, called MelDX, works by detecting the antibodies the body produces as soon as melanoma develops. The team

analyzed 1,627 different types of antibodies, and narrowed them down to a combination of 10 that indicate the presence of melanoma in the body.

They then took blood from 104 people with melanoma and 105 healthy controls, and found that MelDX was capable of detecting melanoma with 81.5 percent accuracy.

More specifically, it was able to detect the cancer in 79 percent of the patients with melanoma; and has a false positive rate in only 16 percent in healthy patients.

Current diagnostic techniques

That's not a perfect result, but it does provide a starting point before other, more invasive tests are embarked on; in conjunction with current diagnostic techniques, it could improve early diagnosis - and therefore people's chance of survival.

The next step, the researchers said, will be to take MelDX to clinical trial, which is currently being organized, and which could help refine the test.

"We envision this taking about three years. If this is successful we would hope to be able to have a test ready for use in pathology clinics shortly afterwards," said Melanoma Research Group head Mel Ziman.

The "ultimate goal is for this blood test to be used to provide greater diagnostic certainty prior to biopsy and for routine screening of people who are at a higher risk of melanoma, such as those with a large number of moles or those with pale skin or a family history of the disease."

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Materials processing tricks enable engineers to create new laser material, team finds

By doping alumina crystals with neodymium ions, engineers at the University of California San Diego have developed a new laser material that is capable of emitting ultra-short, high-power pulses -- a combination that could potentially yield smaller, more powerful lasers with superior thermal shock resistance, broad tunability and high-duty cycles.

To achieve this advance, engineers devised new materials processing strategies to dissolve high concentrations of neodymium ions into alumina crystals. The result, a neo-

dymium-alumina laser gain medium, is the first in the field of laser materials research. It has 24 times higher thermal shock resistance than one of the leading solid-state laser gain materials.

Neodymium and alumina are two of the most widely used components in today's state-of-the-art solid-state laser materials.

Neodymium ions, a type of light-emitting atoms, are used to make high-power lasers.

Light-emitting ions

Alumina crystals, a type of host materi-

al for light-emitting ions, can yield lasers with ultra-short pulses. Alumina crystals also have the advantage of high thermal shock resistance, meaning they can withstand rapid changes in temperature and high loads of heat.

However, combining neodymium and alumina to make a lasing medium is challenging. The problem is that they are incompatible in size. Alumina crystals typically host small ions like titanium or chromium. Neodymium ions are too big -- they are normally hosted

inside a crystal called yttrium aluminum garnet (YAG).

"Until now, it has been impossible to dope sufficient amounts of neodymium into an alumina matrix. We figured out a way to create a neodymium-alumina laser material that combines the best of both worlds: high power density, ultra-short pulses and superior thermal shock resistance," said Javier Garay, a mechanical engineering professor at the UC San Diego Jacobs School of Engineering.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

Red Planet Mars will soon approach its closest point to Earth

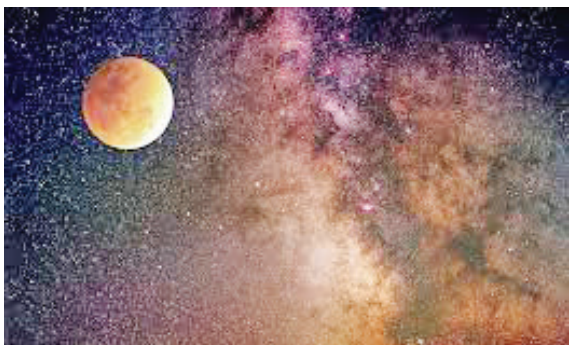
The Red Planet is more of a salmon color these days.

That's because a global dust storm has enveloped Mars.

But our Solar System neighbor still is brighter and larger in the night sky this summer as it approaches perigee — its closest proximity to Earth. On July 31 it will be just 35.8 million miles away, the nearest since 2003. The next closest approach won't be until 2035.

You can look for it in the southeast sky after 10 p.m. Or you can visit the Astronomical Society of Kansas City's Powell Observatory in Louisburg, Kan. The observatory will stay open later with extra telescopes on July 21 and 28 and on Aug. 4.

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Mars will also be in opposition on July 27, meaning it and the sun be will on exact opposite sides of Earth.

The dust storm on Mars is a particularly strong one and has caused the rover Opportunity to put itself in sleep mode.

Roger Venable, coordinator of the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers, tells Sky and Telescope it is "unique in the history of Martian dust storms."

But commenter Anthony Barreiro posted: "I am less distressed at not being able to see the surface features than I am entranced that we are witnessing a global weather event from a distance of 0.41 AU (astronomical unit)."

As you look toward Mars, keep in mind that more space craft — extensions of human endeavor — are hurtling toward it.

(Source: kansascity.com)

Flying train that travels at 400 miles per hour unlikely to take flight

It's a bird, it's a plane, it's a flying ... train? One Russian engineer thinks airborne locomotives could outspeed conventional land travel and free up room below.

Inventor Dahir Semenov devised four variants of an electric flying train that travels at more than 400 miles an hour and could transport up to 2,000 passengers, a futuristic endeavor he said could improve the efficiency of existing public transport. But experts say his ideas, while "optimistic," aren't likely to take flight any time soon.



The flying vehicle would still travel by rail, albeit several hundred feet off the ground. The ultralight mega-train car is magnetically attached to a current collector, or an electronic arm that anchors the train to the rail as it flies, tilting its wings to smoothly navigate turns, engineering firm Dahir Insaat said.

Norman Garrick, engineering professor at the University of Connecticut and sustainable transportation expert, told NBC News that future method of travel will likely improve upon existing technology rather than experimental designs that would likely take years of refinement before human use.

"A lot of what is needed is not about necessarily new objects because we have a lot of objects that work," he said. "It is a matter of how we manage those kinds of things."

Several countries have already increased the speed and efficiency of traditional train travel. In Japan, South Korea and Russia, high-speed trains criss-cross entire regions connecting major cities in half the time it would take a car. China's Fuxing bullet train is the fastest in the world, topping out at 248 miles per hour.

(Source: Newsweek)

Plastic chemical linked to smaller prefrontal cortex, reduced cognitive ability in rats

Adult rats that had been exposed before birth and during nursing to a mixture of chemicals found in a wide range of consumer products have a smaller medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC) and perform worse on an attention-switching task than rats not exposed to the chemicals early in life. These findings, published in JNeurosci, demonstrate a long-term influence of endocrine-disrupting compounds on brain development.

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Phthalates -- chemicals used in plastics belonging to the same class as Bisphenol A (BPA) -- can potentially interfere with hormones important for the developing brain.

Although previous studies have identified associations between phthalate exposure and developmental disturbances, little is known about the neurobiology underlying these relationships.

Janice Juraska and colleagues fed pregnant rats a daily cookie laced with human level doses of a chemical mixture based on data obtained from pregnant women. The researchers found both male and female adult offspring of these rats had fewer neurons and synapses in their mPFC and a specific deficit in cognitive flexibility.

(Source: Science Daily)

Researchers discover incredibly rare asteroid binary in near Earth orbit

When scientists discovered the asteroid 2017 YE5, they first thought they'd found an ordinary NEO (near-Earth object) that passed within 16 lunar distances on June 21, 2018. This close approach — the closest YE5 has been in 170 years — gave us an unprecedented look at the small asteroid and allowed us to discover it isn't one asteroid at all: It's two. They rotate around a common center.

There's nothing unusual about binary pair asteroids; about 15 percent of all known asteroids are binary pairs. Asteroids, like planets, are also capable of retaining very small moons if the parent body is above a certain size, though these captures may be unstable and persist only until the pair encounter a larger asteroid that perturbs their relationship. Only four equal mass NEOs are known to exist, including 2017 YE5.

Researchers discovered this contact binary by combining the resources of multiple Earth observatories. First, the team at Arecibo (already planning to observe the asteroid) spoke to astronomers at Goldstone, who had picked up on the pair's unusual properties. They then teamed up with researchers at Green Bank to run a series of tests in which Arecibo would send the initial signal and Green Bank would return it.

Pluto is much larger than Charon, but Charon is large enough to pull Pluto's barycenter out from the planet.

The Goldstone images taken on June 21 also show a striking difference in the radar reflectivity of the two objects, a phenomenon not seen previously among more than 50 other binary asteroid systems studied by radar since 2000.

(Source: extremetech.com)

Iran dispatches aircraft to contain Hour al-Azim wildfire

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** – The National Disaster Management Organization of Iran has sent aircraft to extinguish the wildfire hitting the Iraqi part of Hour al-Azim wetland.

Hour al-Azim, a transboundary body of water shared between Iran and Iraq, has been hit by wildfire originated mainly in the Iraqi part of the wetland since July 2.



The smoke rising from the raging fire in Hour al-Azim wetland is threatening people's health in southern cities of southwestern province of Khuzestan, ISNA quoted Kiamars Hajizadeh, director general of disaster management department of Khuzestan province, as saying.

Therefore, in coordination with the Armed Forces Chief of Staff and the Iranian Embassy in Iraq a helicopter is dispatched to the region to put out the fire, Hajizadeh explained.

He went on to say that the helicopter has already been dispatched to the lands burning in fire in Hour al-Azim, in addition, it is planned to send an airplane to Iraq in case of continued wildfire.

The airplane for aerial firefighting (spraying water on burning lands) is already prepared, he concluded.

The wildfire belching out choking smoke involved many cities of Iran, including Ahvaz, Howeyzeh, Mahshahr, Susangerd, Bostan and even Shadegan in the province.

Occasionally, fire also breaks in canebrakes in Iranian parts of the wetland located in Khuzestan, but it is soon extinguished by Iranian forces. Also as the wetland is filled with water in Iran the fire cannot spread and extinguishes within a few hours.

Residences to be built for nurses in underprivileged areas

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** – Some residences for nurses and midwives will be set up in underprivileged areas in 30 cities nationwide, Maryam Hazrati, deputy health minister for nursing has said.

"In some cases, nursing workforce were not able to provide services in some areas of the country as they had no places to stay," she said, IRNA reported on Tuesday.



To facilitate their stay while working in underprivileged areas, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between the nursing department and social affairs directorate of the Ministry of Health to establish some residences for nursing and midwifery workforce, Hazrati explained.

"According to the MOU, some 50 percent of the budget required to set up residences is partially paid by the universities affiliated to the Ministry of Health and the rest will be provided by benefactors," she concluded.

LEARN ENGLISH

Groundbreaking Research

A: We've been over this a thousand times. The data is **irrefutable**! Look, we've done **extensive research**, built studies, and read the literature, and there is conclusive evidence to support my theory!

B: Horowitz, I beg to differ. Even in your most recent study, the **investigative approach** was **flawed**! You know as well as I do that the collection of data was not systematic, and there is a large margin of error. To draw a **definitive conclusion** based on that data would be misleading.

A: That is **preposterous**!

B: You are trying to **single-handedly** solve one of the world's greatest mysteries, and yet you are **oblivious** to the fact that you are wrong!

A: I am not wrong! The chicken came first!

B: No! The egg came first!

■ **Key vocabulary**

irrefutable: correct; not able to be proved wrong

extensive research: very full and complete study to find information

investigative approach: way of looking for information

flawed: having errors or mistake

definitive conclusion: a final judgment that is not able to be changed

preposterous: crazy, foolish, or silly

single-handedly: do something on your own, without help

oblivious to: unaware or don't know

■ **Supplementary vocabulary**

associated with: linked or connected with

circumstantial evidence: a collection of facts that implies or suggests something to be true, but does not prove it

indicate: show something to be true

a compelling case: an argument that is capable of making people believe that point of view

determine: find out if something is true

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Lake Urmia likely to revive in 10 years; building our hopes up?

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** – Chief of West Azarbaijan province's Department of Environment, Parviz Arasteh, has said that Lake Urmia will be revived within the next 10 years, but is he building our hopes up?

Lake Urmia, was once gloriously shining like a turquoise in northwest Iran, but within 20 years the lake went down the pan as a result of countless dam construction, unfitting agricultural practices, water-inefficient irrigation systems, shortsighted decision making, and not allocating water right of the wetland.

While Arasteh explained that in 1999 the volume of water was at 30 billion cubic meters, now as per the data published on Iran Environment and Wildlife Watch website on April 8, the lake is stretching over some 2,200 square kilometers and the volume of water is measured at some 2 billion cubic meters.

In order to maintain the lake ecological balance the lake surface area should increase to twice its current size to almost 4,300 square kilometers and the volume of water should be at 14.5 billion cubic meters, Arasteh said, Khabaronline reported on Tuesday.

"And the restoration will hopefully happen within the next 10 years," he added.

However, Arasteh explained that some parts of the lake, stretching over 500 square kilometers cannot be restored anymore and



might be landscaped and become a park.

Elsewhere in his remarks the provincial environment chief highlighted that some illegal wells dug around the lake basin are shut down for good.

"There were over 40,000 illegal wells around the lake basin which played a significant role in lake's disappearance.

"This year [starting on March 21] some 320 million cubic meters of water was discharged

to the lake and now out of 5,700 square kilometers of the lake total surface area some 2,250 is covered with water."

However, just like any other official Arasteh criticized the limited budget allocation as one of the weak points of the lake's restoration program.

"So far we have only received 35 percent of the proposed budget for lake's restoration," he said.

Tehran councilor proposes to set up 'water entity'

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** – Tehran city councilor Zahra Nejad Bahram has proposed establishment of an entity especially to address water scarcity problem in the metropolis.

An institute for water is required to be set up in Tehran due to the increasing water shortage in the country, she said, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

Officials including the minister of energy, the Tehran city council chairman, the mayor of Tehran, the deputy Interior minister, and the governor general of Tehran would be members of the proposed institute, she suggested.

Earlier this month Tehran's governor general Mohammad Hossein Moqimi said that average precipitation level in Tehran has decreased by about 24 percent, and consequently the groundwater level in Tehran has declined significantly and accordingly, all citizens must consume water more responsibly.

In September 2017, chief of the Department of Environment Issa Kalantari said that full restoration of the lake requires an annual budget of 20 trillion rials (nearly \$460 million but "right now we are short of some 17 trillion rials (nearly \$395 million) per annum."

Masoud Tajrishi, deputy environment chief, told the Tehran Times in December 2017 that in 2016 instead of the pledged 12 billion rials (nearly \$300,000) budget only 3 billion rials (nearly \$75,000) was actually allocated to the lake's restoration plan.

In February, Tajrishi regretted that the government has not allocated budget to the project in the current Iranian calendar year (March 2018-March 2019) and this could do irreparable damage to the lake's restoration program.

"Unlike building a road [or other construction projects in general] Lake Urmia restoration program or other environmental programs of the kind cannot be postponed; they have to keep going on uninterruptedly and continually," he said.

Theoretically speaking Lake Urmia's restoration might not be beyond belief but it heavily relies on the decisions we make today, meaning whether or not the government is willing to invest on a long-term program to save the future generation from the negative consequence of a degraded ecosystem.



Saeed Pourali Iranian professor of cross-cultural environment management at the Phoenix University Excessive has told Khabaronline in early July that groundwater and surface water withdrawals, along with continuous droughts, has reduced groundwater levels, resulting in depletion of rivers, lakes and wetlands.

In addition to climate change, lack of proper use of modern sciences coupled with lack of attention to warnings by officials about water shortage have aggravated the situation, he added.

Meat and dairy companies to surpass oil industry as world's biggest polluters, report finds

Meat and dairy companies are on track to be the world's biggest contributors to climate change, outpacing even the fossil fuel industry, according to a new report.

To arrive at this conclusion, non-profit organizations the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and GRAIN conducted an analysis of the planet's 35 largest meat and dairy companies.

They found that broadly speaking the companies were being secretive about their emissions data and few had set hard targets intended to deal with their pollution.

If these industries continue down their current path, the authors of the report warned that the livestock sector could be responsible for 80 per cent of the allowable greenhouse gas budget by 2050.

"There's no other choice. Meat and dairy production in the countries where the top 35 companies dominate must be significantly reduced," said Devlin Kuyek, a researcher at GRAIN.

"These corporations are pushing for trade agreements that will increase exports and emissions, and they are undermining real climate solutions like agroecology that benefit farmers, workers and consumers."

When taken together, the world's top five meat and dairy corporations are already responsible for more emissions than ExxonMobil, Shell or BP.



Meat and dairy consumption is concentrated in a small number of countries, and the top livestock companies mirror this trend.

China, the US, the EU, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Australia and New Zealand are collectively responsible for over 60 per cent of global meat and dairy emissions – about twice the rest of the world on a per capita basis.

ENGLISH IN USE

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A ← → €

Iran proposes to set up clinic in Armenia

Iran has proposed to establish a clinic in the Armenian capital, Yerevan, in a bid to expand cooperation in the field of health sector between the two countries.

In a meeting between Iranian Ambassador to Armenia Seyyed Kazem Sajjadi and Armenia's Minister of Health Arsen Torosyan, the Iranian official also proposed signing a memorandum of understanding between two clinical centers of the two sides to promote medical ties, ISNA reported on Monday.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-an, -ian”

■ **Meaning**: something belongs to a group, place, etc.

■ **For example**: Learn how to cook **Mexican** food!

PHRASAL VERB

Hook into something

■ **Meaning**: to connect to a computer, telephone, television system

■ **For example**: The sales force can hook into a central computer and find out the latest product information.

IDIOM

Buy a lemon

■ **Explanation**: something, especially a car, that is unsatisfactory, constantly gives trouble or stops running after a short time.

■ **For example**: The car I bought was a real lemon. It broke down two weeks later.

پیشنهاد راه اندازی کلینیک ایرانیان در ارمنستان

سفیر کشورمان در ارمنستان در دیدار با وزیر بهداشت این کشور با تاکید بر توسعه همکاری در زمینه گردشگری سلامت، پیشنهاد راه اندازی کلینیک ایرانیان در ایروان را ارائه کرد.

به گزارش ایسنا، سید کاظم سجادی سفیر ایران در ارمنستان در دیدار با وزیر جدید بهداشت این کشور بر توسعه همکاری‌ها در حوزه گردشگری سلامت تاکید کرد و همچنین برای فراهم کردن مقدمات امضاء تفاهنامه خواهرخواندگی میان یک مرکز درمانی تخصصی در ایران با یک مرکز درمانی تخصصی در ارمنستان اعلام آمادگی کرد.

Yemen to allow UN supervision if Hudaydah assault ends: Ansarullah chief

The leader of Yemen's Ansarullah (Houthi) movement says he will not reject the United Nations' supervisory role in Hudaydah if the House of Saud regime-led coalition ends its weeks-long aggression against the Red Sea port city.

In an interview with French daily Le Figaro published on Tuesday, Abdul-Malik Badreddin said he had informed Martin Griffiths, the UN special envoy for Yemen, about his readiness to place Hudaydah under the world body's supervision.

"We told the UN envoy, Martin Griffiths, that we are not rejecting the role of supervision and logistics that the UN wants to hold in the port, but on the condition that the aggression against Hudaydah stops," he said.

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

The Saudi regime-led coalition claims that the Ansarullah are using Hudaydah for weapons delivery, an allegation rejected by the fighters.

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

On the diplomatic front, Griffiths has reportedly been pushing for a deal in which the Ansarullah movement place the Hudaydah port under the supervision of a UN-monitored committee.

The UAE (United Arab Emirates), however, dismisses such an arrangement, under



which Hudaydah would remain under the control of the Ansarullah and their allied forces, demanding their unconditional withdrawal.

"It is strange to demand that the Yemenis pull out of their city of Hudaydah for handing it over to the United Arab Emirates, which is committing an act of aggression against us. Such a demand violates international conventions," the Ansarullah chief said.

"It is as if the United Kingdom called on the French to abandon Paris or another city and give it up to the British. It is not logical," he added.

He further censured France for "contributing to Arab-led aggression" in Yemen by selling weapons to the aggressors.

"In Yemen, France should support peace,

not war," he added. "Many Western countries consider wars in the light of their economic interests, to the detriment of human rights."

Hudaydah is a major lifeline to more than 20 million Yemenis, most of whom are in need of humanitarian assistance due to a deadly Saudi regime-led war on the country launched in March 2015.

The Saudi regime-led war has killed and injured over 600,000 civilians, according to the latest figures released by the Yemeni Ministry of Human Rights.

Besides France, the United States and Britain have also been providing the House of Saud regime with military equipment during the military campaign, drawing strong criticisms from the international community and prominent human rights groups.

■ 35k families displaced by Saudi regime attacks on Hudaydah: UN

Meantime, the Saudi regime's ground and air attacks on Yemen's Hudaydah have displaced some 35,000 families so far, says the UN.

"As of 13 July, approximately 35,000 displaced households have been verified, and 20,000 of them have received RRM assistance," said the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on Monday.

It added that the Saudi regime coalition's continued airstrikes and artillery attacks in the Tuhayata and Zabid districts are still displacing families and disrupting basic services.

OCHA noted that the situation in the port city has slightly improved and that some people have returned to their homes.

"More civilians are moving within the city compared to previous weeks; shops and bakeries have reopened and water supply has improved following repairs to the main water pipeline," it said.

"However, roads leading to airport, sea port and the Sana'a-Hudaydah road remain blocked by sand and concrete barriers," it added.

The UN health agency has also warned over the "critical" conditions of civilians in Hudaydah, stressing that military operations in the key port city threaten over 70 percent of the population who are in need of relief aid.

Earlier in the day, local tribes have gathered in the capital Sana'a to voice their support for the Yemeni army and allied fighters from the Houthi movement in their fight for Hudaydah.

(Source: agencies)

Philippines could breach U.S. sanctions if Russia arms deal proceeds

The Philippines is at risk of breaching sanctions imposed by the United States if it proceeds with the purchase of grenade launchers from a blacklisted Russian firm, a deal which could test its longtime security alliance with Washington.

A senior Philippine general familiar with the deal said Manila had agreed in October last year to a 400 million peso (\$7.48 million) purchase of 750 RPG-7B rocket propelled grenade launchers from Russia's state-owned Rosobornexport, but the transfer had yet to be completed.

The U.S. sanctions were imposed last year against any country trading with Russia's defense and intelligence sectors.

The law is designed to punish Russia for its 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, its support for Syria's government and alleged meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Russia has donated assault rifles and trucks to the Philippines but the grenade launchers would be Manila's first purchase of Russian weapons. The Philippines has long relied on the United States as its main source of military hardware and support.

If it goes ahead, the deal could add strain to a nearly 70-year-old security alliance that Washington has described as "ironclad", despite Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's



disdain for the relationship with the former colonial power.

Duterte wants closer ties with China and Russia and has ordered the army and police to engage with countries which do not impose conditions on weapons sales. Some U.S. legislators campaigned to block sales of 26,000 assault rifles to the Philippines in May 2017 because of human rights concerns over an anti-narcotics campaign that has killed thousands of Filipinos.

Duterte scrapped that deal, as well as the purchase of \$233 million worth of Canadian helicopters, over concerns

by the sellers about how they would be used.

A U.S. State Department official said foreign governments and private sector entities had been put on notice that "significant transactions with any of the 39 listed entities will result in sanctions". Rosobornexport was blacklisted in April.

American allies who buy weapons and equipment from Russia, the world's second-largest arms exporter, would also be penalized and could see the transfer of those arms disrupted.

The State Department official declined to say what specific sanctions the U.S. could impose on the Philippines if it goes ahead with the deal with Rosobornexport, while a spokesman for the Treasury Department said it "does not telegraph sanctions or comment on prospective actions."

A senior Philippines defense official, who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to media, told Reuters the United States has not officially notified Manila about the restrictions on Rosobornexport.

"It's still a go until we are informed," he added.

The army general familiar with the deal declined to comment on possible sanctions.

(Source: Reuters)

Tech leaders call for autonomous weapons ban

Thousands of the world's pre-eminent technology experts called for a global ban on the development of lethal autonomous weapons, warning they could become instruments of "violence and oppression".

More than 2,400 individuals and 150 companies from 90 different countries vowed to play no part in the construction, trade, or use of autonomous weapons in a pledge signed on Wednesday at the 2018 International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence in Stockholm, Sweden.

Elon Musk, CEO (chief executive officer) of SpaceX and Tesla, and representatives of

Google's DeepMind subsidiary were among supporters of the pledge.

"The decision to take a human life should never be delegated to a machine," a statement said. "Lethal autonomous weapons - selecting and engaging targets without human intervention - would be dangerously destabilizing for every country and individual."

Autonomous weapons, also known as killer robots, are capable of identifying, targeting, and killing a person without any human input in its decision-making process.

The United States, Russia, China, Israel, South Korea and Britain possess partially

autonomous weapons systems such as armed drones, according to Human Rights Watch.

The group is a founding member of the global Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, and has called for a pre-emptive ban arguing such weapons would contravene international humanitarian law governing the use of force.

Independent of Wednesday's pledge, 26 countries have publicly expressed support for a ban including Brazil, China, Cuba, Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, Venezuela and Zimbabwe. United Nations officials are scheduled to meet next month to discuss future policy in line with the UN's Convention on Certain

Conventional Weapons, which seeks to restrict or prohibit the use of specific arms.

Max Tegmark, president of the Future of Life Institute, praised supporters of the pledge for "implementing a policy that politicians have thus far failed to put into effect".

"AI [artificial intelligence] has huge potential to help the world - if we stigmatize and prevent its abuse. AI weapons that autonomously decide to kill people are as disgusting and destabilizing as bioweapons, and should be dealt with in the same way," Tegmark said.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Two buildings collapse in Noida, India, several feared trapped

At least three people have been killed and several others are feared trapped after a building collapsed onto another structure in the suburb of the Indian capital, New Delhi, officials said.

"There were at least three families living in the old building that collapsed upon an under-construction building," Arun Kumar Singh, chief fire officer, told Al Jazeera on Wednesday.

"We have dragged out three dead bodies from the debris," he added. "It's very difficult to say at the moment how many people are actually trapped under the rubble."

The National Disaster Response Force, a federal rescue agency, along with the police began the search and rescue

operation on Tuesday night, with officials saying that it would take several hours to clear the debris.

As the operation continued on Wednesday, more than 100 emergency workers used cranes, sledgehammers and chain saws to sift through the damage in Greater Noida's Shahberi village, nearly 40km east of New Delhi.

Drills were being used to remove metal rods to reach those trapped and a dog squad was at the site smelling for signs of life.

The cause of the collapse was not immediately known, but a probe has been ordered into the incident by the district magistrate.

At least three people, including the property developer Ganga Sharan Dwivedi, have been detained by the police

over charges of death due to negligence.

"Strict action will be taken against those responsible," Avnish Kumar, a Greater Noida police officer, told AFP news agency.

Building collapses are common in India, especially during the monsoon season from late June to September, when heavy rains weaken the foundations of structures that are poorly constructed.

At least 18 people died in May when a flyover collapsed in northern India, crushing vehicles and passengers under tons of concrete.

The worst collapse in recent decades killed at least 72 people in Mumbai in 2013.

(Source: agencies)



A 2016 deal between Turkey and the European Union sharply reduced the flow

of refugees into the bloc, after thousands died crossing from Turkey to Greek islands a few miles offshore.

From January to May this year at least 26 migrants died trying to cross to Europe from Turkey, according to coast guard statistics.

Mediterranean arrivals to the bloc, including refugees making the longer and more perilous crossing from north Africa to Italy, stood at 172,301 in 2017, down from 362,753 in 2016 and 1,015,078 in 2015, according to data from the United Nations.

(Source: Daily Star)

Buses enter militant-besieged towns in Syria's Idlib to evacuate civilians

Dozens of buses have arrived in Kefraya and al-Foua, both in Syria's northwestern Idlib Province, as part of an evacuation deal to get locals out of the towns, which have long been besieged by foreign-backed militants.



Syrian state TV reported on Wednesday that 88 buses and several ambulances were ready to evacuate civilians from Kefraya and al-Foua, which have been encircled by terrorists since March 2015.

A pro-Damascus commander said a total of 6,300 people were expected to be evacuated from the area.

Militant sources said Iran had negotiated the deal with the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (Organization for the Liberation of the Levant/Levant Liberation Committee/Tahrir al-Sham/HTS) terrorist group, under which all residents would be evacuated from Kefraya and al-Foua.

"We now are working on the logistical arrangements," said a source familiar with the negotiations.

The Syrian government and its allies usually seek to secure such evacuation deals with the militants to decrease civilian casualties in the wake of a military operation.

The fresh evacuation builds on a deal, known as the "Four Towns Agreement," reached last year between the Syrian government and militants. The agreement, however, was never fully implemented.

In April 2017, thousands of Kefraya and al-Foua residents were bussed out to government-held areas in a swap that granted, in exchange, safe passage to hundreds of people living in two militant-held towns near Damascus, Madaya and Zabadani.

However, the evacuation of some 7,000 Kefraya and al-Foua residents in return for the release of 1,500 militant prisoners did not go through.

A militant source familiar with the fresh talks told Reuters that more than 1,500 civilian and militant prisoners would be released under the latest evacuation deal.

It added that the deal also includes the release of 34 prisoners held by Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement, which has been helping the Syrian army - along with Iran and Russia - in its counter-terrorism fight.

Meanwhile, the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that the evacuation deal was reached on Tuesday between Russia and militant supporter Turkey.

The Britain-based monitoring group said that the deal "provides for the total evacuation" of Kefraya and al-Foua to a territory in nearby Aleppo Province.

■ Syrian army advances in Dara'a

Additionally on Wednesday, Syrian fighter jets pounded terrorist positions across the Hawz al-Yarmouk region on Dara'a's western outskirts.

Reports said a terrorist commander was killed in the town of Nawa in western Dara'a.

Since June 19, the Syrian army has been conducting a major counter-terrorism operation in Dara'a, which also borders Jordan and the Golan Heights.

Dara'a militants have been handing over their heavy weapons to Syrian government forces and leaving the region in negotiated surrender deals mediated by Russia.

The Syrian military has so far liberated more than 90 percent of Dara'a Province from the grip of Takfiri elements.

(Source: Press TV)

Turkish opposition leader fined record sum for defamation of Erdogan, family

Turkey's main opposition leader was fined on Wednesday for defaming President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his family over claims about international money transfers.

Erdogan has dismissed the allegations by Republican People's Party (CHP/Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) chairman Kemal Kilicdaroglu, saying in November last year that his family "haven't sent a dime abroad".

Officials at the presidency could not immediately be reached for comment.

The president, who was re-elected three weeks ago and assumed sweeping new executive powers, had vowed to take Kilicdaroglu to court, saying he would "pay the price".

Kilicdaroglu has since been ordered to pay Erdogan moral damages in several court cases, but Wednesday's ruling ordering a 359,000 lira (\$75,000) payment to the president and his close circle marked the largest sum yet.

Separately, authorities also launched an investigation into Kilicdaroglu after he posted a cartoon on social media in which Erdogan's face was drawn onto several animals, with the caption "Land of Tayyip", Anadolu said.

The cartoon was a reference to a similar one used to mock Erdogan by students from Turkey's Middle East Technical University during their graduation ceremony earlier this month. Four students were arrested in relation to the cartoon for "insulting the president".

Insulting the president is a crime punishable by up to four years in prison in Turkey, and Erdogan's lawyers have filed more than 1,800 cases against people on such accusations.

Human rights groups say the Turkish government has grown increasingly intolerant of opposition voices since a failed coup in July 2016. Authorities have detained and formally charged 77,000 people suspected of links to the putsch, the interior minister said in March. They have also shut down about 130 media outlets.

Rights groups and Western allies have warned that Erdogan was using the abortive putsch as a pretext to muzzle dissent, but the government has said the measures were necessary.

(Source: Anadolu)

Boat carrying 160 migrants sinks off Northern Cyprus coast, 16 dead

Sixteen people died when a boat carrying around 160 migrants sank off the coast of northern Cyprus and rescuers were searching for at least 30 other people, Turkey's state news agency Anadolu said on Wednesday.

It said 101 migrants had been rescued by Turkish and northern Cypriot coast guards, helped by commercial boats in the area.

Tolga Atakan, transport minister in northern Cyprus, a breakaway state recognized only by Turkey, was quoted by Turkish newspaper Hurriyet as saying the coast guard was still

searching for 30 people and that it was not immediately clear how many people had been on the boat.

Hurriyet, without citing sources, said the boat had been detected by radar on Tuesday night but sank early on Wednesday morning. Turkey's coast guard was not immediately available for comment.

In 2015, Turkey became one of the main launch points for the dangerous sea leg for more than a million migrants seeking to reach the European Union, many fleeing conflict and poverty in the Middle East and Africa.

Liverpool agree world record fee for Roma’s Brazilian keeper Alisson



Liverpool have agreed a fee of about £66.8m for Roma goal-keeper Alisson.

The Premier League club are now expected to hold talks with the Brazil international.

The 25-year-old has been at Roma for two years, and played 37 Serie A games last season, after starting his career at Brazilian side Internacional.

Liverpool’s bid, which is 70m euros, would overtake the current record for a keeper - 53m euros paid by Juventus to Parma for Gianluigi Buffon in 2001.

The Premier League record for a keeper is the 40m euros Manchester City paid Benfica for Ederson in June 2017.

Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp was forced to defend goalkeeper Loris Karius last week after another mistake - this time in a pre-season friendly against Tranmere.

The 25-year-old German spilled a free-kick that allowed the hosts to score in Liverpool’s 3-2 win at Prenton Park.

Karius was at fault for two goals in Liverpool’s 3-1 defeat by Real Madrid in the Champions League final, but it was later found that he had concussion.

Alisson played all five games, keeping three clean sheets, as Brazil were knocked out at the quarter-final stage of the World Cup by Belgium.

(Source: BBC)

Pires hails new manager Emery as Arsenal’s ‘best signing’

Arsenal made their best signing of the transfer window when they appointed Spaniard Unai Emery as their new manager, the Premier League club’s former winger Robert Pires has said.

The north London outfit chose Emery, a former Sevilla and Paris St Germain boss, to succeed long-serving manager Arsene Wenger in May and the 46-year-old has already signed five new players as he overhauls the squad.

“The best signing for me is Unai Emery, the manager. Of course I believe in the players, and especially the new players,” Pires, who played under Wenger for six years between 2000-06, told Sky Sports News.

“He won in Spain. He won in France. He has a lot of experience and I hope for him and Arsenal that he is successful with the club.”

Uruguay international Lucas Torreira and teenager Matteo Guendouzi became Arsenal’s latest arrivals last week, while long-serving midfielder Jack Wilshere left the club earlier this month to join league rivals West Ham United.

Emery took charge of his first match in Saturday’s 8-0 win over fifth-tier side Boreham Wood but will face sterner tests against Spain’s Atletico Madrid and former club Paris St Germain in a pre-season tournament in Singapore next week.

The Spaniard has been tasked with improving on Arsenal’s sixth-placed league finish and their run to the Europa League semi-finals last season. The Gunners also suffered a shock third round exit in the FA Cup.

(Source: Reuters)

Sturridge ready to stay and fight for more game time at Liverpool

Striker Daniel Sturridge wants to stay at Liverpool and fight for a starting role under manager Juergen Klopp at the Premier League club, the 28-year-old has said.

Sturridge has been hampered by a spate of injuries during the last few years with the England international passing the 10-goal mark only once over the last four seasons, scoring 13 in the 2015-16 season.

He was loaned out to West Bromwich Albion in January but failed to make an impact at the Hawthorns outfit, failing to score in six appearances for the relegated club.

Local media reports linked Sturridge with a move away from Liverpool but manager Klopp said this week that the striker still has a future at Anfield.

“I see myself staying at Liverpool, hopefully being part of the team week in, week out,” Sturridge told the Daily Mirror.

“Pre-season is going well, so for me it’s keeping my head down and building on that. I’m excited about the season ahead and it feels great to be back.”

Sturridge, who was left out of Gareth Southgate’s England team for the World Cup, has played in all three of Liverpool’s pre-season friendlies so far.

Liverpool continue their pre-season fixtures against Blackburn Rovers on Thursday before heading to the United States to face Borussia Dortmund, league rivals Manchester City and Manchester United in the International Champions Cup.

(Source: Goal)

Lionel Messi needs Argentina, Pekerman to replace Sampaoli - Carlos Tevez

Carlos Tevez has urged Lionel Messi not to retire from international football in the wake of Argentina’s disastrous World Cup campaign.

Messi struggled under the weight of expectation in Russia as Argentina crashed out in the round of 16, leading to rumours he could retire from international football for a second time. But Tevez wants him to stay on and believes more could be done to get the best out of his country’s star man.

“I think Leo has to think about himself,” Tevez told ESPN. “He has to think that, if there is not a project that makes him happy and in which he feels comfortable, it is very difficult to take the responsibility of leading Argentina to become champions by himself. “We are wasting a lot of time not having him happy and not being able to give him a hand to achieve that target. I think we are wrong in not being able to help him feel comfortable.

“As a player and as an Argentine I tell him that we need him, that he try to rest, that he keep a cool head and that we need him. We need him because he is the soul of Argentina and, as long as he continues playing football, it has to be that way because he is Argentina’s biggest idol and he has to take that responsibility. “Now [I tell him] to rest, keep a cool head and try to be well, then we need him to take charge and on the pitch.”

The fallout from the World Cup debacle saw Jorge Sampaoli leave his role as Argentina manager -- and the Argentine Football Association (AFA) are favouring Peru boss Ricardo Gareca as a potential replacement.

However, Tevez says Jose Pekerman, who led Argentina to the quarterfinals at the 2006 World Cup, deserves another chance in charge.

“I think that the closest we were of winning a World Cup was with Jose [Pekerman],” Tevez added. “When I felt closest to winning the World Cup was with Jose. If we had beaten Germany [in the 2006 quarterfinals], we knew we were going to be champions and we lost on penalties.

“Jose’s era has taught me a lot from when I was a kid, I am



very grateful to him, to Hugo Tocalli, to professor [Gerardo] Salorio to [Eduardo Julio] Ortasun... because today I am what I am because they put a grain of sand in what I was. I will always be grateful to them because they taught me a lot.

“They taught me to be a professional at 14 years old and

today I continue at 34. It is essential to start as a child. From my personal experience, I think Jose is the man who can do it [be Argentina manager] quietly because he knows what is being talked about “

(Source: ESPN)

Faster, Higher, Hotter: Tokyo weather prompts 2020 fears



As the two-year mark approaches for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, Japan is being scorched by an intense heatwave that has prompted fears of similar extreme weather when the sporting showpiece takes place in the country. More than a dozen people have died as temperatures soared above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) for the first time since 2013, and the thermometer hit 43 Celsius during an Olympic Stadium media tour on Wednesday.

The opening ceremony will be held at the venue on July 24, 2020, a time of year when Tokyo records average temperatures of around 25 Celsius, which combined with severe humidity will create tough conditions for athletes and spectators alike.

Earlier this year, experts warned of the risks of heatstroke at the Games, which runs until Aug. 9, with conditions reaching levels at which sporting activities would normally be halted. The issue is one Tokyo 2020 organizers are taking seriously as they consider a raft of counter measures to battle the extreme heat.

These include increased shelter and cooling fans provided for spectators, and the installation of a ‘Wet Bulb Globe Temperature’ device designed to provide constant feedback to assess levels of heat stress at each venue. The data provided will help organizers adjust conditions for supporters depending on the weather.

The scheduling of events, set to be an-

nounced later on Wednesday following an International Olympic Committee (IOC) meeting with Games organizers in Lausanne, will also be designed with the protection of athletes and supporters in mind.

■ Heat policy a priority

Tokyo 2020 organizers also told Reuters that they were looking to establish guidelines on whether a scheduled event would be allowed to go ahead if they were worried by the danger posed of extreme temperatures. Speaking at the stadium media tour, officials from the Japan Sports Council (JSC) said solutions for tackling heat would be a priority for the Olympic Games.

While beams for the stadium’s inner roof — made with wood supplied from all 47 prefectures — are meant to project warmth and hospitality, JSC official Keiji Kato explained they were also designed to circulate air to keep spectators cool.

Mist fans would also be installed, Kato added.

Outside the stadium, Japan has had a long-standing love affair with the marathon but spectators will likely need to wake up very early to watch the races in Tokyo, with organizers likely to schedule a dawn start for safety reasons. Yet on Wednesday, despite the heat, there were still several joggers braving the conditions to run the circuit around Tokyo’s Imperial Palace, with the most committed of them admitting they had struggled.

(Source: Eurosport)

Four years on from 2014, Mario Götze faces yet another decisive season



Every year it’s hard to believe how young Mario Götze still is. Most players who scored the winner in a World Cup final four years ago wouldn’t have just turned 26 this summer, but he isn’t most players. And on the anniversary of that day (July 13, 2014) in the Maracana Stadium, it’s clear that that goal has haunted Götze more than it has helped him.

After flourishing under Jürgen Klopp in Borussia Dortmund’s most recent glory years, Götze had all the skills to become one of the all-time greats. Scoring the goal to win Germany the World Cup in Brazil appeared destined to take him there. But now, as the 2018-19 Bundesliga season approaches, Götze has changed. He has waded not glided through his post World Cup years, and now the weight of expectation once again is bearing down on him.

“He has to know: This is a hugely decisive season for him,” Borussia Dortmund CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke told the mass-circulation daily Bild recently. “I think [Lucien] Favre will give him huge support. The rest is up to Mario.”

■ Summer of stories

In a documentary released this summer, Götze gave a telling insight into his life all the way up to not being nominated for the 2018 World Cup. It made clear how tough the incessant expectation on Götze has been,

but also how important his relationship with his head coach is. Klopp was clearly more than just a coach for Götze and since then, perhaps that has been what has really been missing.

In his three years at Bayern Munich, that connection with Pep Guardiola didn’t seem to spark. Despite fleeting moments of quality, Götze struggled to find his place in Guardiola’s team and injury hindered him further. The second half of the 2016-17 season was wiped out by a rare metabolic disorder, and coming off what for Dortmund was a disappointing 2017-18, including a mid-term coaching change, Götze now faces another decisive moment.

“It’s not a lack of desire,” Watzke continued. “He’s very professional and he does everything. Yet, you still get the impression that something is missing. And only the player, in collaboration with the coach, can solve that.”

Perhaps newly hired Favre is the man to unleash Götze’s quality again - there were fleeting signs of it last season. Perhaps not being a part of Germany’s disastrous World Cup squad will have been exactly what he needed this summer. But perhaps the best way of looking at the attacking midfielder is to try to forget about his past.

(Source: DW)

Vettel, Mercedes both hungry for home success

Sunday’s German Grand Prix could be Sebastian Vettel’s last chance to win on home soil but Lewis Hamilton will be doing all he can to deny Ferrari’s Formula One championship leader that particular pleasure.

Hockenheim is also home for Hamilton’s employers Mercedes and after Vettel beat the Briton at Silverstone a week ago, there is plenty of desire to get one back on a rival who grew up in nearby Heppenheim.

Regardless of the expected clash between the title contenders, the weekend will still be special because the race was not on the calendar last year and its future remains uncertain.

Hockenheim’s contract expires after this year’s race and, despite the sport’s commercial rights holders Liberty Media saying how keen they are to keep historic venues, the two sides appear at odds.

“We would like to have a contract which will take the risk from us. This is the basic point... we cannot continue in the same way,” Hockenheim-Ring marketing director Jorn Teske said in May.

“A lot of people might want a risk-free contract but that’s not our business model,” Formula One’s commercial managing director Sean Bratches said in response.

Hockenheim was already alternating with the Nuerburg before that circuit pulled out for financial reasons and there are no obvious permanent replacements.



All of which makes this year’s gathering in the Rhine valley a standout for the fans, who have been bringing with them a party atmosphere since the Michael Schumacher glory days.

“I saw my first Formula One race here in 2000, and since there are always friends and family here, Hockenheim is something very special for me,” Vettel remarked.

■ Fourth win

The German, whose only home win to date was with Red Bull at the Nuerburging in 2013, leads his fellow-four times world champion by eight points, while Ferrari are 20 clear in the constructors’ standings.

Hamilton won at Hockenheim in 2016 and will be going for a fourth German GP win to rival Schumacher’s record tally.

“Going to Hockenheim always feels like coming home; it’s only about a 90 minute drive from the Daimler headquarters in Stuttgart,” Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff said.

“We will fight hard to not only put on a good show for our friends and fans in Hockenheim, but also get the result that they will be hoping for.”

Sunday also marks the second half of the season, even if the natural divide comes with the August break that follows Hungary the weekend after Germany.

Mercedes have dropped important points in the last three races through misfortune and mechanical problems, and have work to do if they are to claim both titles for the fifth year in succession.

While they have taken five poles from 10 races, the champions have only converted three into wins — all for Hamilton — and scored 61 points from the recent triple-header compared to 98 for Ferrari.

Red Bull (65) have also out-scored Mercedes in that period, and claimed more fastest laps (five) this season than any other team, despite lacking power on the fast straights. They will fancy their chances in Hungary, if not Hockenheim.

“In the end, pace normally tells over the course of a season, and if we bring it to bear in the next 11 races, we will muscle our way back into a title race that is very much ours to win,” Mercedes technical head James Allison said.

(Source: Reuters)

Esteghlal General Manager Eftekhari resigns

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Reza Eftekhari has announced his resignation as General Manager of Esteghlal football club on Wednesday.

Eftekhari, who was appointed as Esteghlal GM in August 2016, stepped down as his role. He has been the target of considerable fan dissatisfaction due to his side's failure to challenge for the Iran Professional League title.

Furthermore, Esteghlal have yet to extend the contracts of Senegalese striker Mame Baba Thiam and Uzbek iconic midfielder Server Djeparov.

Defensive midfielder Omid Ebrahimi has left the team for Qatar's Al Ahli and the Blues are yet to really make an eye-catching transfer in the summer transfer window.

On Tuesday, the Iran Football League Organization also awarded Iran's Super Cup title to Esteghlal arch-rivals Persepolis after they withdrew from the match.

Reza Eftekhari has different experiences in the Iran Football Federation. He was General Secretary from 1995 to 1998 and the manager of the national team in the World Cup 1998. Also he was the second vice-president and the head of the Pro League Organization from 2006 to 2007.

Eftekhari has worked as head of Iran's Futsal Organization as well.



Iran's Morteza Sharifi joins Italian Bluvolley Verona



TASNIM — Iranian national volleyball team outside spiker Morteza Sharifi joined Italian volleyball club Bluvolley Verona. Sharifi stole the show during the 2018 Volleyball Nations League (VNL) with Team Melli.

BluVolley Verona is a professional volleyball team based in Verona, Italy.

The club plays in Serie A1 of the Italian Volleyball League. In season 2017/18 club is named Calzedonia Verona.

Sharifi is reunited with his compatriot Mohammad Javad Manavinejad in the team.

"I have also had offers from other clubs, but I opted to join Bluvolley immediately. Verona is one of the most beautiful cities in Italy, and has a team with many strong players," the 20-year-old player said.

"Playing with Manavinejad is fantastic, I'm here to grow and become main player for the Iranian national team ahead of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. The Italian championship is the most difficult in the world, but I cannot wait to start this new adventure," he added.

William Jones Cup: Iran beaten by 3D Global Sports

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran B lost to Canadian basketball team 3D Global Sports 77-67 at the 2018 William Jones Cup in Taiwan on Wednesday.

It's the first loss for Farzad Kouhian's men in the competition.

Iran have already defeated LSU-Atletas from Lithuania

76-48, Japan B 78-61 and Chinese Taipei Blue 87-75 in this event.

Vahid Dalirzahan and Salar Monji led Iran with 15 points and Terry Thomas was top scorer of the Canadian team with 32 points.

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 competition is being played in 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.

Refereeing and VAR at the 2018 FIFA World Cup: A new era for football

A few days after Argentinian referee Nestor Pitana signalled the final whistle, FIFA looks back extremely satisfied with how the referees performed at the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™ and how the historic implementation of Video Assistant Referees (VARs) contributed to the resounding success of refereeing at the tournament.

"We said we wanted this to be the best World Cup ever and it's been the best World Cup ever. A crucial role in this achievement was played by the referees who excelled with performances of the highest standard," said FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

Following the fundamental decision to use VARs at the World Cup, FIFA is extremely happy with the overwhelming acceptance of VAR by players, coaches, fans and the media.

FIFA's Deputy Secretary General (Football), Zvonimir Boban, who oversaw the entire



VAR project, underlined the importance of the revolutionary use of video technology to football.

"As said by the FIFA President, VAR is not changing football, it is cleaning

football, and this was our overriding aim when we started the VAR project together with The IFAB. The extensive preparation, both before and during the tournament, coordinated and guided by the chairman

of the FIFA Referees Committee Pierluigi Collina and FIFA's Director of Refereeing, Massimo Busacca, has produced outstanding results and I am proud to have been part of this team."

The implementation of VAR represented a huge talking point during the World Cup, generating fantastic debate about football and its rules.

"It is great that there has been such widespread discussion, but only fully understanding the Laws of the Game and VAR procedures gives credibility to these discussions," added Boban.

Building on the success of refereeing and the use of VAR at the World Cup, FIFA will continue its efforts to improve and develop overall standards of refereeing and assist all member associations and leagues wishing to implement VAR in their competitions.

(Source: FIFA)

Milad Mohammadi should pick Rangers over Celtic



Glasgow Rangers manager Steven Gerrard reportedly wants Milad Mohammadi at Ibrox, with Celtic boss Brendan Rodgers also claimed to be interested.

Glasgow Rangers manager Steven Gerrard wants to bring Milad Mohammadi to Ibrox in the summer transfer window, according to The Scottish Sun, which has also claimed that Celtic boss Brendan Rodgers is interested in the 24-year-old.

Mohammadi is a very versatile footballer who can operate as a left-back, winger, wing-back or right-back, and the Iran would be a good signing for Ibrox club Rangers or Celtic.

Rangers and Celtic are the two biggest clubs in Scotland, and the 24-year-old may be in a dilemma if he gets offers from both the Gers and the Hoops.

The Akhmat Grozny left-back, though, should choose Rangers mainly because he will have a better chance of establishing himself in the starting lineup.

Rangers manager Steven Gerrard has yet to settle on his best XI, and the Liverpool legend will give every player an equal chance to impress him.

Given the versatility of Mohammadi and his experience of playing for Iran at the 2018 World Cup in Russia this summer, he will have a good chance of getting into the Rangers team than in the Celtic side.

After all, Celtic manager Brendan Rodgers has a settled starting lineup, and the former Liverpool manager will sign players only who can give him options from the bench.

(Source: HITC)

Iran cruises to four golds on opening day of Asian Junior C'Ships

Iran kick-started the 2018 Asian Junior Championships by putting five wrestlers into the opening day finals and collected an impressive four of five gold medals. In their fifteen matches, Iran went 14-1 and collected ten wins without surrendering a single point.

Pouya NASERPOUR (IRI), the 2014 cadet world bronze medalist sparked Iran's gold medal parade by thumping Vijay VIJAY (IND), 8-0, grabbing the 55kg gold medal.

In route to his first continental championship, Naserpour outscored his opponents 24-0 while picking up three technical superiority victories.

At 63kg, Bahram MAROUFKHANI IMCHEH (IRI) hooked Iran's second gold medal by coming out on top of the back and forth battle over Kamol KUZIEV (UZB), 7-3.

Maroufkhani Imcheh commanded the early 5-0 lead, but conceded a takedown and a step out, ending the first period with a two-point lead. The Iranian wrestler closed out the extremely slow-paced second period with a takedown, ultimately scooping up the 7-3 victory.

Mohammadhadi SARAVI (IRI) added a third gold medal to Iran's collection, blasting Maimaiti KAISAIER (CHN), 9-0 in the 87kg finals.

Savari only needed just over four minutes to pick up the technical superiority win over his Chinese opponent. This marked the third time on the day that the Iranian wrestler picked up a shutout victory and the second time on the day where he collected a 9-0 technical superiority victory.

Amin MIRZAZADEH (IRI) capped off the first day of com-



petition with a 2-1 win over India's Aryan PANWAR in the 130kg finals, giving Iran their fourth gold medal of the day.

The final gold medal went to India's Sajan SAJAN (IND) who denied Iran their fifth gold medal by stopping Shayan Hossein AFIFI (IRI), 3-0 in the 77kg finals.

RESULTS

- 55kg GOLD - Pouya Mohammad NASERPOUR (IRI) df. Vijay VIJAY (IND), 8-0
- BRONZE - Arslan ABDURAKHMANOV (KAZ) df. Hiromu KATAGIRI (JPN), 8-7
- BRONZE - JEONG Yeongwoo (KOR) df. BORONOV Azamat (KGZ), 12-6
- 63kg

- GOLD – Bahram MAROUFKHANI IMCHEH (IRI) df. Kamol KUZIEV (UZB), 7-3
- BRONZE - Tilek ASSEMBAYEV (KAZ) df. Seydilla TAZAYEV (TKM), 6-1
- BRONZE - Eldiir SATAROV (KGZ) df. Delin WANG (CHN), 8-0
- 77kg GOLD - Sajan SAJAN (IND) df. Shayan Hossein AFIFI (IRI), 3-0
- BRONZE - Temirlan BEKTURDIEV (KGZ) df. Shoma YAMASAKI (JPN), 2-1
- BRONZE - Seunghwan LEE (KOR) df. Daler ROZIKOV (TJK), 10-0
- 87kg GOLD - Mohammadhadi Abdollah SARAVI (IRI) df. Maimaiti KAISAIER (CHN), 9-0
- BRONZE - Kumar SUNIL (IND) df. Hiroto TOYOMURA (JPN), 8-0
- BRONZE - Sanzhar TEMIRBEK (KAZ) df. Meder ABYKEEV (KGZ), 9-0
- 130kg GOLD – Amin Mohammadzaman MIRZAZADEH (IRI) df. Aryan PANWAR (IND), 2-1
- BRONZE - Anton SAVENKO (KAZ) df. Xiaonan LIANG (CHN), 8-0
- BRONZE - Azmuddin VAKHOBOV (TJK) df. Akimichi SAKAI (JPN), 8-0

(Source: United World Wrestling)

Iran's women's fail to book a place at Sitting Volleyball World quarters

Press TV — The Iran women's national sitting volleyball team has failed to get through to the quarterfinal round of the 2018 World ParaVolley Sitting Volleyball World Championships in the Netherlands, after losing its preliminary round match to Italy.

On Tuesday, the physically-challenged Iranian sportswomen, who had slumped to a 0-3 (15-25, 17-25 and 18-25) loss against China the previous day, lost to their Italian opponents 1-3 (26-28, 25-23, 15-25 and 22-25) in the eastern Dutch city of Arnhem.

Meanwhile, the Iran men's national sitting volleyball team is scheduled to face Russia on Wednesday evening.

The Iranian team, which routed Japan 3-0 (25-8, 25-9 and 25-16) at the start of its campaign at the prestigious tournament on July 15, 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 2018 World ParaVolley Sitting Volleyball World Championships began on July 15, and will finish on July 22, 2018.

Paykan sixth at Asian Women's Club Volleyball C'ship

TASNIM — Iran's Paykan finished in sixth place at the 2018 Asian Women's Club Volleyball Championship on Wednesday.

Paykan lost to Garuda VC from Indonesia 3-0 (27-25, 25-18, 25-19) in fifth-placed match.

The Iranian team suffered five defeats and registered one win in the competition.

Supreme Chonburi from Thailand will face Japan's NEC Red Rockets in the final match, while Jiangsu Zenith Steel from China play Kazakhstan's Altay in the third-place match.

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.

Ghana's Philemon Akomeah linked with Sepahan

PLDC — Ghana International Philemon Akomeah has been linked with a move to Iranian football club Sepahan.

The Iranian team is closing in on signing Akomeah, 23, in the ongoing summer transfer window.

According to footballghana.com, he has reached an agreement with the club over his possible switch.

Philemon has been without a club after ending his stay with Northern Cypriot side Mormenekse FC; however, he was previously playing for Telecom Egypt FC and Turkish side Malatyaspor.

Sepahan is going to win Iran Professional League under guidance of Amir Ghalenoei after four years.

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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

» Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807

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Zip Code: 1599814713

Managers’ foreign trips at culture ministry subject to approval by minister

C U L T U R E **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Managers and assistants at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance must obtain the minister’s approval for their foreign trips based on the organization’s new policy to deal with conditions facing Iran after the U.S. decision to return the sanctions.

The travel restriction was announced in a circular sent to the ministry’s satellite organizations on Tuesday. The circular was arranged after President Hassan Rouhani’s recent speech, in which he asked the governmental managers to decrease the costs in their organizations and to increase their efforts to cope with the economic climate in the country.

In the circular, which contains nine articles, senior executives have been ordered to work at least 12 hours a day and to be transparent in their expenditures.

Madrid center to display works by Iranian artists

A R T **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — An exhibition of works by Iranian artists will open today in the Casa de Cantabria in Madrid.

Paintings, calligraphy works, photos and handicrafts on Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Imam of the Shia Muslims, will be showcased at the exhibit.



A poster for an exhibition of Persian art in the Casa de Cantabria

Organized by Iran’s cultural office in Madrid in collaboration with the Casa de Cantabria, the exhibit will be running until July 26.

The exhibit has been organized to mark the birthday of Imam Reza (AS), which falls on July 25 this year.

Iranian, foreign musicians to give jazz concerts in Tehran

A R T **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A number of Iranian and world jazz musicians will give concerts during a festival opening on July 28 at Tehran’s Niavaran Cultural Center.

Saazbuzz, a Tehran-based cultural institute, is the organizer of the program entitled “Jazz Nights”.

The first night performance will begin with Italian musician Carlo Maver Trio, followed by a performance by Iranian musician Sardar Sarmast.

Kiavash Sahebnaasq Quartet will give their performance the next night and Arshid Azarin Trio will perform afterwards.

The program will come to an end with a performance by Nguyen Le Trio from France on July 31.

A poster for the 4th edition of “Jazz Nights”

Two Eds better than one: Two Ed Sheerans seen in Berlin but real Ed stays away

BERLIN (Reuters) — Fans of British singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran could not believe their eyes when they came to the unveiling of his wax figure in Berlin’s Madame Tussauds and saw him - or at least what they believed to be him - emerging from a limousine.

The waxwork museum had Nico Eckl, Ed Sheeran’s best-known lookalike, unveil the model of the chart-topping musician on Tuesday since the real Sheeran couldn’t come due to concerts, the museum said.

“We had him drive up in a limousine and hoped that the fans would go berserk and that is exactly what happened,” said Nina-Kristin Zerbe, the spokeswoman of Madame Tussauds.

“The people shouted, wanted pictures with him,” Zerbe said.

Venezia Classici to screen Ebrahim Golestan’s “Brick and Mirror”

A R T **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The 75th edition of the Venice International Film Festival plans to screen UK-based Iranian filmmaker Ebrahim Golestan’s “The Brick and the Mirror” (1964) in its Venezia Classici, a section dedicated to restored classics from world cinema, the organizers have announced.

The film is about Hashem, a cab driver who finds an infant child in the back seat of his cab one night after he gives a ride to a young woman. He and his girlfriend, Taji, try to cope with this unwanted child. Hashem insists on getting rid of the child, Taji on keeping him. By the end, Hashem gets rid of them both.

Masterpieces such as “The Night of the Shooting Stars” (1982) by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani and “Il Posto” (1961) by Ermanno Olmi, selected by Italian director Salvatore Mereu, will also be reviewed in the section.

“The Ascent” (1976) by Larisa Shepitko, “The Place without Limits” (1977) by Arturo Ripstein, “Adieu Philippine” (1962) by Jacques Rozier and “Some Like It Hot” (1959) by Billy Wilder will also be screened.

Also included are “Street of Shame” (1956) by Kenji Mizoguchi, “The Night Porter” (1974) by Liliana Cavani and “Love, Thy Name Be Sorrow” (1962) by Tomu Uchida.



A scene from “The Brick and the Mirror” by Ebrahim Golestan

Since 2012, Venezia Classici has been presenting the world premieres of a selection of the best restorations of the classics.

A lineup of documentaries about cinema, which has been selected by Alberto Barbera and Stefano Francia di Celle, will also be screened in the Venezia Classici section.

The 75th Venice International Film Festival will be held from August 29 to September 8.

Stéphane de Gérando to stage projection mapping on Azadi Tower

A R T **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The French composer and multimedia artist Stéphane de Gérando is scheduled to stage a projection mapping performance on Tehran’s Azadi Tower tonight.

The performance entitled “The Labyrinth of Time and Azadi Tower” will begin at 9 p.m., the Azadi Art and Cultural Complex announced during a press conference on Wednesday.

The program has been organized in collaboration with the Embassy of France.

“It is an honor to be with you here,” De Gérando said at the press conference.

“Iran enjoys a unique culture and kind people,” he added.

He said that the projection mapping has been designed at the Music Museum of Iran and the University of Tehran.

“This performance intends to represent the concept of unexpectedness,” he noted.

Gérando was trained as an orchestra director at the Conservatoire National de Région de Paris and is also musical director of icarEnsemble and has recently recorded with the Philharmonic Orchestra of Radio-France.

His multimedia works have been staged on numerous sites across the world.



Cardi B crowns break-out year with leading 10 MTV VMA nominations



Donald Glover, also known as Childish Gambino performs “Terrified” at the 60th Annual Grammy Awards show in New York, U.S., January 28, 2018. (Reuters/Lucas Jackson)

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Rapper Cardi B earned a leading 10 nominations on Monday for the MTV Video Music Awards (VMA), reflecting a break-out year that has seen her become one of the industry’s most successful and sought-after performers.

The New York singer, 25, earned nominations in all the top categories, including both best artist and best new artist, as well as best video, collaboration and choreography mostly for her work with Bruno Mars on “Finesse.”

Cardi B, who shot to fame in August 2017 with her brash female empowerment song “Bodak Yellow,” led a VMA contenders field that included Drake, Camila Cabello, Beyonce and husband Jay-Z.

Performing as The Carters, the power music duo earned eight nominations for their “APES**T” video, which was shot inside the Louvre in Paris against the backdrop of some of the world’s most famous art works.

Childish Gambino, the music stage name of actor Donald Glover, earned seven nominations for his hard-hitting video “This Is America” about black identity and police brutality.

Cardi B and Bruno Mars, The Carters, and Childish Gambino will face off for the top prize - video of the year - against Ariana Grande’s “No Tears Left to Cry,” Camila Cabello’s “Havana,” and Drake’s “God’s Plan.”

Monday’s nominations reflected the popularity of rap, which in 2017 surpassed rock as the most dominant music genre in the United States, and R&B.

Pop singer Taylor Swift managed only three nominations, all in technical categories, for “Look What You Made Me Do,” despite her album “Reputation” being the biggest seller in the United States in 2017.

Britain’s Ed Sheeran got four nominations, including song of the year, for his romantic ballad “Perfect”, which was a worldwide hit.

The fan-voted, youth-oriented VMA awards ceremony with a reputation for irreverence and outrageous stunts will be broadcast live on MTV from New York City on Aug. 20.

TV streaming services overtake pay-TV in Britain: Ofcom



Kurt Cobain’s daughter says time for U.S. to get over mental health taboo

DUBLIN (Reuters) — Kurt Cobain’s daughter said on Tuesday the United States should overcome its taboo about mental health and addiction almost a quarter of century after her rock star father took his own life.

Frances Bean Cobain was speaking in Ireland at the launch of a new exhibition of the Nirvana frontman’s belongings. Cobain died in 1994 aged 27 from a self-inflicted gunshot while struggling with heroin addiction.

“There is an association that is shameful and it shouldn’t be,” Frances Bean said, who has also struggled with addiction.

“It’s taboo ... despite the fact that it is present in our society every single day. And I think that in Europe it is a little less taboo, I think in America it is very, very frowned upon,” she told Reuters.

Frances Bean, Cobain’s sister Kim, and mother, Wendy O’Connor, attended the opening of the exhibition at the Museum of Style Icons in Newbridge, 50 km (30 miles) southwest of Dublin.

From his sketches and drawings to clothing and a car, “Growing Up Kurt Cobain” displays dozens of Cobain’s personal items, some of them never seen before by the public.

Fans of Cobain, who popularized grunge rock in the early



Kurt Cobain’s daughter Frances Bean Cobain poses for a photograph at the opening of “Growing Up Kurt” exhibition featuring personal items of Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain at the museum of Style Icons in Newbridge, Ireland, July 17, 2018. (Reuters/Clodagh Kilcoyne)

1990s, can see the striped green sweater he wore in the video for Nirvana’s 1991 hit “Smells Like Teen Spirit” and his MTV Video award for the same song.

The singer’s childhood drawings of cartoon characters, handwritten lyrics and powder-blue 1965 Dodge Dart car are also on display.

“It felt like the right time to show who Kurt really was as a child growing up. To go back to his roots of being a child, where he was happiest,” Cobain’s sister Kim Cobain said.

The small museum in County Kildare held the exhibition in part because its owner knows Cobain’s family. The museum also has outfits worn by the likes of Audrey Hepburn, Elizabeth Taylor and Grace Kelly on display, and has previously hosted exhibitions dedicated to Michael Jackson and Prince.

Asked about what Cobain would have made of the current political climate in the United States, Frances Bean said she would like to think he would have taken a stand.

“The violation of basic human rights that seems to be a prevalent theme in our country right now ... I would like to believe that Kurt wouldn’t have stood for that or accepted that,” she said.