

Envoy urges West to respect religious minority rights 2

Cleric: Corruption is leprosy to every system 2

Algeria football federation denies Carlos Queiroz link 15

Doc on Asghar Farhadi's "Salesman" premieres in Tehran 16



Syria moves to retake control over Golan Heights

See page 13

China, India say trade with Iran unfazed by U.S. sanctions

Beijing consistently opposes policies of unilateral sanctions and intends to continue its trade cooperation with Iran under its international commitments, the Chinese Commerce Ministry said on Thursday.

"Iran continues to be China's important trade partner in Asia. The two coun-

tries maintain regular trade relations. In 2017, bilateral trade grew by 19 percent in comparison to 2016 and amounted to \$37.1 billion," Gao Feng, the ministry's spokesman, said at a briefing, commenting on Iran's complaint against the United States to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). →4

'Iran's scientists uncrushed by decades of sanctions'

U.S. President Donald Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear agreement (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, JCPOA) in May would not affect Iran's scientific progress, vice-dean for research in the Faculty of Medicine at Tehran University of Medical Sciences has said.

Shahin Akhondzadeh made the remarks in a correspondence he sent to Nature, international journal of

science, published on July 18.

Trump's withdrawal from JCPOA attracted international condemnation, Akhondzadeh wrote. "As vice-dean for research in the Faculty of Medicine at Tehran University of Medical Sciences, I stand behind Iran's scientists, who have resolved to work even harder to maintain the country's scientific progress," he stated. →12

U.S. huge arms spending can't even secure its citizens: Zarif

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Thursday slammed the United States for destabilizing the world by exporting arms, noting that Washington "can't even secure its citizens" despite huge military spending.

"U.S. destabilizes the world with arms exports, draining budgets that could be

used for a brighter future. Yet its arms can't even secure its citizens: 35% of global military spending failed to stop 15 Saudis from murdering & injuring >9000 Americans on 9/11," Zarif tweeted.

He was referring to data on U.S. weapons exports from 1950 to 2017 by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) Arms Transfers Database. →2

Another racist law: Knesset declares Israel 'nation-state of Jewish people'

By staff and agencies

Israel's parliament on Thursday adopted a law defining the country as the nation-state of the Jewish people, provoking fears it will lead to blatant discrimination against its Palestinian citizens.

The legislation, adopted by 62 votes to 55, makes Hebrew the country's national language and defines the establishment of Jewish communities as being in the national interest.

The bill also strips Arabic of its designation as an official language, downgrading it to a "special status" that enables its continued use within Israeli institutions.

It stipulates that "Israel is the historic homeland of the Jewish people and they have an exclusive right to national self-determination in it". It also states that an undivided al-Quds (Jerusalem) is the capital of Israel.

"This is a defining moment in the annals of Zionism and the history of the state of Israel," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told the Knesset after the vote.

Palestinian members of the Knesset (unicameral national legislature of Israel) have condemned the bill.

"It has passed a law of Jewish supremacy and told us that we will always be second-class citizens," Ayman Odeh, the head of the Arab Joint List - an alliance of four predominantly Arab parties - said in a statement following the law's passage.

Ahmed Tibi, one of the legislators, said: "I announce with shock and sorrow the death of democracy."

■ Citizens with unequal rights
 Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority

in Israel, called the law a bid to advance "ethnic superiority by promoting racist policies".

"The Jewish nation-state law features key elements of apartheid, which is not only immoral but also absolutely prohibited under international law," said Hassan Jabareen, general director of Adalah.

"By defining sovereignty and democratic self-rule as belonging solely to the Jewish people - wherever they live around the world - Israel has made discrimination a constitutional value and has professed its commitment to favoring Jewish supremacy as the bedrock of institutions."

According to Adalah, there are currently over 65 Israeli laws that discriminate against Palestinian citizens in Israel and Palestinian residents of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) on the basis of their national belonging. →3

ARTICLE
Hanif Ghaffari
 Political analyst

A contemplation on Trump's meeting with Putin

Finally, the meeting between the presidents of the United States and Russia was held in Helsinki, Finland. At the end of the meeting, the two sides emphasized the need for having interaction with each other to resolve international crises.

It should be noted that those crises were mainly created by the United States, and the U.S. officials has played an important role in creating and sustaining them! On the other hand, Trump emphasized that, given the fact that the US and Russia possess 95 percent of the nuclear (and forbidden) weapons in the world, it is necessary for the two countries to interact and compromise in the field of international security! Regarding the recent meeting between Putin and Trump, there are some points that should be taken into consideration:

Firstly, the two-hour, and one-on-one visit between the presidents of the United States and Russia, led to no practical solution to the ongoing crises in the relations between the two countries. In other words, Putin and Trump merely emphasized the "necessity" of reforming and restoring inter-state relations, speaking optimistically about the resolution of existing crises.

It should not be forgotten that in the course of Putin and Trump's previous meetings, the two leaders expressed same statements about the relations between the White House and the Kremlin. However, many international experts and analysts believe that the intensity of the Moscow-Washington conflict is so high that holding such meetings can't help prevent the intensification of bilateral crises, and even prevent the US and Russia enter a new Cold War. It's not without a reason that people like former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev warned about the re-emergence of the Cold War in the international system.

The next point is about the U.S. is threatening approach towards Russia. This is an approach that has expanded and developed deep into Washington's foreign policy, and both the Democratic and Republican parties are committed to it. →7

ARTICLE
Syed Zafar Mehdi
 Journalist
 from New Delhi

Germany asks India to resist U.S. pressure, continue buying oil from Iran

In a direct rebuke to the United States, Germany has urged India not to buckle under the U.S. pressure and continue buying oil from Iran.

German minister of state for International Affairs Niels Annen, in an interview with Indian news portal News18, described the pressure being put by Washington on its allies to stop buying oil from Iran as "irritating".

"It will be India's sovereign decision. I am not a salesman for Iran but I have an impression that India is willing to continue buying oil from Iran and this will be a very important statement," he said.

Minister Annen said the efforts need to be taken to devise a financial mechanism to overcome the U.S. sanctions, adding that France has made a proposal in this regard.

Finding a suitable financial instrument to allow companies to continue oil deal with Iran, he said, "will be complicated but needs to be done."

The relations between Germany and the U.S. have been affected following Donald Trump's trade war against Europe. On Monday, after Trump called the European Union a "foe" with regard to trade, Germany's foreign minister Heiko Maas said Europe could not rely on the U.S. president.

Trump's trade war has resulted in realignment of political forces in Europe and Asia. China and Germany have decided to shake hands in their common trade war with the U.S.

And amidst the trade war, many countries, including Germany and China, have thrown their weight behind Iran and denounced America's bullying tactics and sabre-rattling after the U.S. pulled out of the Iran nuclear deal and embarked on an economic offensive against Iran.

However, some countries felt the heat. Among Iran's three biggest buyers of oil who account for about half of Iran's oil exports - China, India, and Turkey - India seemed to have come under the U.S. pressure. →7

Putin says nuclear deal should be preserved

POLITICS TEHRAN — Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday that the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, is an important document that should be preserved.

"The current task is to preserve this key agreement and prevent uncontrolled escalation of tensions in the Middle East," TASS quoted Putin as saying during a meeting with Russian ambassadors and permanent representatives.

This document "has the most important role for the global non-proliferation regime," he noted.

"There are examples of jointly reached agree-

ments that were derailed in an instant, I mean the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the Iran nuclear program," he said.

U.S. President Donald Trump announced Washington's exit from the nuclear deal on May 8 and said sanctions will be restored against Iran.

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

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



Women's National Classic Wrestling League kicks off

SPORTS TEHRAN — The first season of the Iran's Women's National Classic Wrestling League kicked off on Thursday in Tehran.

Café Kalleh Noor won the title, followed by Baghcheh Minoo and Golbahar.

The two-day competition, which was held at the Mohammad Bana Hall, brought nine teams together.

The Iran's Women's National Classic Wrestling League will be held in four seasons.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Cleric: Corruption is leprosy to every system

POLITICS TEHRAN – Tehran Friday prayer leader Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami called on the authorities to intensify fight against corruption, saying corrupt individuals, whoever they are, “must be dealt with decisively”.

“Corruption is leprosy to every establishment,” Khatami told worshippers in Tehran, saying corruption in the administrative system of the Shah regime led to its downfall.

The cleric further said the worst kind of corruption is to circumvent the law by doing something illegal and providing a legal cover for it.



Envoy urges West to respect religious minority rights

POLITICS TEHRAN – The West should learn from Iran how to observe rights of the religious minorities, Iran’s ambassador to Spain said, IRNA reported on Friday.

Speaking to the Spanish daily Expansion, Mohammad-Hassan Fadaeifard said religious freedom in Iran is much more than that in Europe.

Fadaeifard said some 600,000 followers of Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism in Iran have five lawmakers in the parliament and are enjoying legal rights, whereas there are no such special legal rights for religious minorities in European countries.

Respecting each other’s values is a prerequisite for peaceful co-existence of cultures and nations, the ambassador remarked.



Tehran: Israel’s nuclear espionage claims ‘laughably absurd’

POLITICS TEHRAN – Alireza Miryousefi, spokesman at Iran’s mission to the United Nations, has dismissed as “absurd” Israel’s claims that agents with the regime’s Mossad spy agency had stolen secret documents on Iran’s nuclear program from a site in southern Tehran, ISNA reported on Thursday.

“Iran has always been clear that production of weapons of mass destruction is against the country’s national values,” Miryousefi said after the New York Times reported details of Mossad’s purported operation.

“The idea that Iran would abandon such sensitive information in some random warehouse in Tehran is laughably absurd,” he added.



Two Basij forces martyred near Zahedan

POLITICS TEHRAN – Two members of Iran’s Basij forces have been killed in clashes with gunmen in Zahedan’s Corrin rural district, according to a report by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) in Sistan-Baluchestan.

According to the report, bodies of the two, named Alireza Shah-Bakhs and Parviz Shah-Bakhs, were scheduled to be buried on Friday in Shuru village, Tasnim reported on Thursday.

Iranian military forces along the southeastern border areas are frequently attacked by terrorist groups coming from Afghanistan and Pakistan.



U.S. JCPOA exit opportunity for Iran-Austria ties: envoy

POLITICS TEHRAN – The Austrian ambassador to Tehran has said that the U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal has provided opportunities for his country to develop new modes of cooperation with Iran.

President Rouhani and Austria’s head of state “jointly agreed that Iran has a universally endorsed, inseparable and independent right to enjoy economic benefits from the JCPOA as long as Iran itself fulfills its obligations from the pact,” said Stefan Scholz, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

The Austrian ambassador whose country took over the rotating EU presidency on July first pointed to the efforts by the 28-nation bloc to find ways to save the nuclear deal, saying his country is working hard first of all on putting the EU package together.



‘Impossible to reduce Iran’s oil revenue to zero’

POLITICS TEHRAN – Brian O’Toole, a former senior adviser to the director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), says U.S. plan to reduce Iran’s oil revenue to zero is “impossible” and that the world would not be with the U.S. in re-imposing sanctions on Tehran.

In 2013 there were rising sanctions as well as UN Security Council resolutions in place against Iran, O’Toole said while speaking at the Atlantic Council, IRNA reported on Friday.

But today the situation has changed, said O’Toole, voicing doubts about the Trump administration’s Iran policy.

Europe will abandon the U.S. in re-imposing the sanctions, he stated, adding that Turkey, Russia, China and India might do the same as they are big importers of Iran’s oil.

Zarif: If Europe appreciates nuclear deal it must be ‘prepared to invest for it’

POLITICS TEHRAN – In an interview with Euronews on Wednesday Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said if the European Union really appreciates the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran it must be “prepared to invest for it” now that the U.S. has quit the agreement and is seeking to reimpose sanctions on Iran.

The EU presented its package of proposals to Iran in early July. However, Iran said it contains “general” commitments and asked the bloc to be more specific on the details of cooperation.

In line with this purpose on July 6 the remaining countries party to the nuclear held a foreign ministerial meeting in Vienna to draw up the roadmap for cooperation with Iran as the U.S. was excluded. The meeting was chaired by EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini.

“We received a package that was not satisfactory. Now we are working with the Europeans. Work is underway as we speak so that we test the possibility. We have given Europe some time. We have seen a political commitment on the part of Europe. We have seen some technical measures put on the ground. But these are not enough. There are two very specific timeframes. One is the timeframe of the first batch of U.S. sanctions that will be in place in August and the other timeframe is the second batch of U.S. sanctions, which will be in place in November. And we will see how Europe is dealing with this and we will respond accordingly and we have a very specific plan.

“We see that under pressure from the U.S., under the psychological atmosphere that the U.S. has tried to create, some European companies have already started to withdraw. And that has to be confronted by the Europeans if they are interested indeed in preserving the deal. If that is the belief, if that is the appreciation of our partners in Europe, then they have to be prepared to invest for it. Iran should not be the only side in this deal that has been investing. We need to see banks opening accounts, we need to see SMEs coming to Iran, engaging with their partners in the private sector and so on and so forth.”

The Iranian chief diplomat who was a key figure in crafting the nuclear pact urged the European Union to withstand the bullying of the Trump administration seeking to decide for other countries.

“If they believe they can, in fact, continue to live with a global system, a new global



“We have come to the assistance of everybody who was under threat in the region. So, our friends and neighbors in the region have always felt that they do not receive any threats from Iran.”

system, in which one country will make the final decision and everybody else will have to follow, and sometimes you feel is not even one country, it’s an individual or group of individuals who are making decisions on their own personal interests or for their own personal interests and then expect everybody else to follow.

“Now you see particularly after meeting between President Trump and President Putin, that there are voices of concern in the U.S., that President Trump is not necessarily pursuing American national interests. Even, if he were perusing American national interests, are the people of Europe prepared to accept U.S. national interest dominating the decision-making process in the global economy? Are they prepared to accept this? Or are they prepared to stand against this? This is a question that European companies need to ask themselves, that

the European governments need to ask themselves.”

Zarif said there are “various possibilities” for cooperation between Iran and Europe.

“Europe is not only companies that have American shareholders. There are many European companies, many of them have no exposure in the U.S., many of them have no dealings with the U.S.”

The senior diplomat said the Middle East may face “greater tension” if the nuclear deal is aborted.

“More than Iran, this is the point that Europe makes. Because they believe that the JCPOA is an important non-proliferation document and without the JCPOA, there is room for greater tension in the region. We, on our side, believe that we have always relied for our security on our people. Our security is driven from within not from outside. But we have also shown that our people will

“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.”

Iran to sign friendship agreement with ASEAN, Singapore says

Iran will sign a cooperation treaty with Southeast Asia at an upcoming meeting that will also be attended by U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and North Korean officials, a Singaporean diplomat said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif will sign the document at a gathering of Association of Southeast Asian Nations foreign ministers starting on July 30 in Singapore, Ong Keng Yong, the city-state’s non-resident ambassador to Iran, said in an interview. “The ASEAN countries welcome anyone who wants to sign onto the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation,” said Ong, a former ASEAN secretary general.

The ASEAN meeting comes two months after the Trump administration pulled the U.S. out of an international nuclear agree-

ment with Iran, and moved to choke off the Islamic Republic’s oil exports.

Ong said he was unaware whether Zarif planned any meetings with Pompeo or other officials. “I’m only looking at his visit from our bilateral perspective,” he said.

The 10-member ASEAN bloc represents 630 million people and economies with a combined gross domestic product of around \$2.4 trillion.

The leaders of Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea and the U.S. are expected to attend the 13th East Asia Summit in November. Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong -- this year’s ASEAN host -- said last month that Trump had accepted his invitation to the gathering. (Source: Bloomberg)

U.S. huge arms spending can’t even secure its citizens: Zarif

➔ According to official statistics, the U.S. is the world’s biggest arms exporter. In the 1950s, the majority of U.S. arms went to Europe, Canada, Japan and Turkey. In the 1960s, Germany appeared to receive the largest amount of weapons, with Iran joining the list of recipients. Iran’s receipt of U.S. weapons reached an all-time high in the 1970s, right up to the fall of the U.S.-backed Shah and the Iranian Revolution in 1979, making Iran the biggest receiver of weapons that decade. Israel climbed to second on the list of recipients in the 1970s.

Back in March, a SIPRI report revealed that the U.S. had increased its arms sales by 25 percent over the

past five years, with the Middle East serving as the destination for around half of those weapons.

Washington supplied arms to as many as 98 states worldwide, accounting for more than a third of global exports, said the report, which also classified Saudi Arabia as the world’s second biggest arms importer.

Zarif used the SIPRI report to criticize Washington for taking advantage of the conflicts in the Middle East and flooding the troubled region with weapons.

“The U.S. pumps over half of its arms exports into our region. The vast majority goes to inexperienced and adventurer leaders who are engaged in war crimes,” Zarif said on his Twitter page back then.

Putin says nuclear deal should be preserved

➔ Russia opposes U.S. unilateral sanctions on Iran, Putin envoy says

Putin’s envoy Alexander Lavrentiev said on Thursday that the Russian president regards U.S. unilateral

sanctions on Iran as a violation of the JCPOA.

Lavrentiev made the remarks during his meeting with Saeed Iravani, deputy secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), in Tehran on

Thursday.

Lavrentiev visited Tehran to brief Iranians on a range of issues, including the summit between Putin and Trump in Helsinki, Finland, on July 16.

Iravani, for his part, expressed his

gratitude for the Russian president’s move to dispatch his special envoy to Iran after the summit and described it as a clear sign of the two countries’ commitment to strategic cooperation, according to Financial Express.

Trump’s request to meet Rouhani in Sept. 2017 contradicted his remarks: report

POLITICS TEHRAN – Iranian President Hassan Rouhani had said that U.S. President Donald Trump’s request to meet him during the UN conference in September last year did not match his remarks at the UN General Assembly, a Persian language newspaper reported.

According to Shargh, an informed source said that Trump requested eight times to meet with Rouhani but the Iranian

president said it is not appropriate to make harsh comments against a country in a formal speech and at the same time expect a meeting.

Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi announced on Wednesday that Rouhani had received eight requests from Trump for a meeting last year when he visited New York in September 2017.

In his speech at the 2017 UN General Assembly, Trump made a harsh attack against Iran.

Back in September 2013, Rouhani and former U.S. President Barack Obama talked shortly 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.

U.S. sends team to Turkey to discuss Iran sanctions

Relevant authorities are working to prevent Turkey from being negatively impacted by U.S. sanctions against Iran, the Turkish foreign ministry said on Friday after a U.S. delegation held talks in Ankara on upcoming sanctions.

In a statement following a visit by a U.S. delegation of Treasury and State Department officials, the ministry said Iran was an important neighbor for Turkey and that Ankara would continue to monitor the U.S. sanctions within this framework.

The delegation visited Ankara after tour-

ing India.

President Donald Trump in May pulled the United States out of a 2015 nuclear pact with Iran and ordered tough sanctions on Tehran. Washington has also asked its allies to cut imports of Iranian oil by November, a senior State Department official said last month - a call which Ankara has publicly resisted.

However, the other signatories to the accord, namely Russia, China, the UK, France and Germany have strongly objected to the

U.S. withdrawal and vowed to try to preserve the deal.

Washington has said it would be returning the sanctions in August and threatened the countries that maintain business with Iran despite the bans with “secondary sanctions.”

Late last month, Ankara said it remained determined to maintain trade ties with Iran. On Thursday, Britain’s Daily Express said South Korea would likely seek exemptions from Iran oil bans.

It cited Korean Foreign Minister Kang

Kyung-wha as saying during a breakfast seminar at Chatham House in London that she hoped that the bans against Iran “could be circumvented.”

Meanwhile, Japan’s media reported that the country’s oil distributors were preparing to suspend imports of the Iranian crude oil.

Nikkei cited Japanese banks as saying that they had notified oil distributors that they would stop settling Iran-related transactions starting this summer “unless there is progress in government negotiations.”

Another racist law: Knesset declares Israel 'nation-state of Jewish people'

1 → In Ma'alot-Tarshiha, a municipality in northern Israel which was created by linking the Jewish town of Ma'alot and the Palestinian town of Tarshiha, there was anger among Palestinian residents.

Early drafts of the legislation went further in what critics at home and abroad saw as discrimination towards Palestinian citizens of Israel, who have long said they are treated as second-class citizens.

Clauses that were dropped in last-minute political wrangling - and after objections by Israel's president and attorney general - would have enshrined in law the establishment of Jewish-only communities, and instructed courts to rule according to Jewish ritual law when there were no relevant legal precedents.

Instead, a more vaguely-worded version was approved, which says: "The state views the development of Jewish settlement as a national value and will act to encourage and promote its establishment."

Even after the changes, critics said the new law will deepen a sense of alienation within the Palestinian Arab minority.

Benny Begin, son of former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, the founder of Netanyahu's ruling Likud party, abstained from voting, warning of the party's growing disconnect from human rights.

"This is not a decision I expected from the Likud leadership," he said.

The American Jewish Committee, a group representing the Jewish diaspora, said it was "deeply disappointed," saying the law "put at risk the commitment of Israel's founders to build a country that is both Jewish and democratic".

Netanyahu has defended the law. "We will keep ensuring civil rights in Israel's democracy but the majority also has rights and the majority decides," he said last week.

"An absolute majority wants to ensure our state's Jewish character for generations to come."

Israel's Palestinian population comprises mainly the descendants of those who remained on their land since 1948, the time of the establishment of the modern state of Israel.

The fledgling state consolidated its control over Palestinian lands on the back of an ethnic cleansing campaign where hundreds of thousands were forced to leave their homes.

Those who remained have full equal rights under the law but say they face constant discrimination, citing inferior services and unfair allocations for education, health and housing.

The passing of a law in Israel that affords exclusive rights to Jewish people and removes Arabic as an official language has rippled through the country's Arab minority, who have decried the legislation as unabashedly racist.

There are roughly 1.8 million Arabs in Israel, making up about a fifth of the state's population. They are mostly Palestinians and their descendants who remained in place after the 1948 war between Arabs and Jews. Hundreds of thousands of others were displaced or fled.

Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has promised to ensure civil rights but says "the majority decides".



Many Israeli Arabs complain of prejudice in their access to services and education, even as racial discrimination is illegal. The "nation-state" bill was amended this week after a previous version appeared to legalize racially segregated communities. However, another contentious clause says "the state sees the development of Jewish settlement as a national value and will act to encourage and promote its establishment and consolidation".

EU leads criticism after Israel passes Jewish 'nation state' law

Meantime, the European Union (EU) has led a chorus of criticism after Israel passed a controversial law declaring that only Jews have the right of self-determination in the country.

Adding that the legislation would complicate a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, the EU joined Israeli Arab political leaders, Israeli opposition politicians and liberal Jewish groups in the United States in flagging up concern, with some saying the law amounted to "apartheid".

The legislation stipulates that "Israel is the historic homeland of the Jewish people and they have an exclusive right to national self-determination in it".

It also strips Arabic of its designation as an official language alongside Hebrew, downgrading it to a "special status" that enables its continued use within Israeli institutions.

"We are concerned, we have expressed this concern and we will continue to engage with Israeli authorities in this context," said a spokeswoman for the EU foreign affairs chief, Federica Mogherini.

"We've been very clear when it comes to the two-state solution, we believe it is the only way forward and any step that

would further complicate or prevent this solution of becoming a reality should be avoided," the spokeswoman added.

The law was also condemned by the Turkish foreign ministry, which said the legislation trampled on the principles of universal law and disregarded the rights of the Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Some of the strongest language was used by the head of the Israeli Arab Joint List group of parties, Ayman Odeh, who denounced it as "the death of our democracy".

He added: "[The Knesset] has passed a law of Jewish supremacy and told us that we will always be second-class citizens."

In a moment of ironic timing, the legislation was passed just hours before Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, welcomed a visit by Hungary's far-right leader, Viktor Orbán, who Israeli critics have accused of praising Nazi-era anti-Semitic collaborators.

The law was condemned by Yohanan Plesner, the head of the Israel Democracy Institute, who described it as "jingoistic and divisive" and an "unnecessary embarrassment to Israel".

The legislation, which will become part of Israel's "basic laws" that make up its quasi-constitution, was also condemned by the president of the Union for Reform Judaism, which represents the largest Jewish denomination in the U.S. "This is a sad and unnecessary day for Israeli democracy," said Rabbi Rick Jacobs.

"The damage that will be done by this new nation state law to the legitimacy of the Zionist vision and to the values of the state of Israel as a democratic - and Jewish - nation is enormous."

(Source: agencies)

S. Korea's Park given eight more years in prison

Disgraced South Korean president Park Geun-hye was convicted of charges including illegally receiving funds from the country's spy agency on Friday and given eight more years in prison, on top of her current term.

Park, the South's first female president, was impeached last year after huge street protests over a sprawling scandal, and was jailed for 24 years for corruption and abuse of power in April.

Friday's penalty - issued in her absence after she refused to attend the Seoul Central District Court - came after a separate trial for pocketing money from the National Intelligence Service (NIS) and improperly intervening in 2016 in the selection of her ruling party's parliamentary candidates.

The Seoul Central District Court gave Park six years for taking \$2.9 million from the spy agency, and two years for the electoral offence. The penalties apply consecutively, meaning the 66-year-old now faces a total of 32 years in prison.

"The accused received some three billion won over three years from the three NIS chiefs. Through this crime, the accused incurred a considerable amount of loss to the state treasury," said senior judge Seong Chang-ho at the Seoul Central District Court.

Three former NIS chiefs testified they had funneled the funds to Park on her orders, the court said.

The judge rebuked Park, who denied the charges, for being "un-cooperative" throughout the court hearing and questioning by prosecutors.

Park allegedly squandered the taxpayer money on maintaining her private house, financing a boutique where her secret confidante Choi Soon-sil - the central figure in the corruption scandal - had Park's clothes made and other private purposes, including massage treatment.

Choi was found to have taken advantage of her "long private ties" with Park to extort bribes worth millions of dollars from businesses including telecommunications giant Samsung and retail conglomerate Lotte.

She is serving a 20-year sentence for abuse of power, bribery and meddling in state affairs.

(Source: AFP)

Turkey, Netherlands agree to normalize ties

Turkey and the Netherlands have agreed to normalize ties, Turkey's foreign ministry said on Friday, restoring relations that have been strained since a 2017 diplomatic row.

The decision was reached in a phone call between Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and his Dutch counterpart, Stef Blok, the foreign ministry said.

"During this telephone conversation, the ministers agreed to normalize diplomatic relations between the Netherlands and Turkey," the ministry said in a statement. "To that extent, the ministers agreed to reinstate ambassadors in Ankara and The Hague shortly."

The Dutch foreign minister also said in a letter to parliament ambassadors for both sides would be reinstated.

The two governments fell out over the Netherlands' decision to bar Turkish officials from campaigning among the Turkish diaspora before Turkey's April 2017 constitutional referendum, when the Netherlands was holding its own elections.

The Netherlands said it had formally withdrawn its ambassador to Ankara in February due to the row. Following that decision, Turkey said diplomatic relations would be maintained on the Charge d'affaires level.

Cavusoglu said in an interview with private broadcaster NTV that Blok would visit Turkey within a couple of months.

(Source: Daily Star)

Britain using child spies in police operations

British authorities are deploying children as spies in covert policing and security operations, a new British parliamentary report revealed.

Some of the minors tasked with gathering intelligence are under 16, the report by a House of Lords review committee said.

The report, published last week, was produced in response to proposals brought forward by government officials to extend the amount of time a person under the age of 18 may be used as a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) from one month to four.

Lord Trefgarne, chairman of the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee, said the policy of using young people as a CHIS had caused "considerable anxiety" among committee members, and he expressed concern about relaxing current restrictions.

"We are concerned that enabling a young person to participate in covert activity for an extended period of time may expose them to increased risks to their mental and physical welfare," he said.

The report, released on July 12, does not specify how many people under 18 have been deployed as informants.

The Home Office, the ministry responsible for law and order within Britain, said covert operatives under 18 may have unique access to information, particularly with criminal gangs, but are used "in very small numbers".

"Given that young people are increasingly involved, both as perpetrators and victims, in serious crimes including terrorism, gang violence, county lines drugs offences and child sexual exploitation, there is increasing scope for juvenile CHIS to assist in both preventing and prosecuting such offences," Ben Wallace, a Home Office official, said in response to a request for clarifications from the committee.

"Much as investigators would wish to avoid the use of young people in such a role, it is possible that a carefully managed deployment of a young person could contribute to detecting crime and preventing offending."

Rights Watch UK, a charity focused on national security measures, said in a tweet on Thursday it was "gravely concerned" by the proposals and the broader use of children as spies.

"Under domestic and international law, decisions which affect children must be taken in their best interests. Their welfare must be the primary consideration. It is difficult to imagine any circumstance where it would be in a child's best interest to be used as an informant," the group said.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Trump invites Putin to Washington despite U.S. uproar over Helsinki summit

Days after Helsinki summit, Russia shows off Putin's 'super weapons'

The United States President Donald Trump has invited Russian President Vladimir Putin to Washington this autumn, the White House said, a daring rebuttal to the torrent of criticism in the United States over Trump's failure to publicly confront Putin at their first summit for Moscow's meddling in the 2016 election.

Four days after Trump stunned the world by siding with Putin in Helsinki over his spy agencies, the U.S. president asked national security adviser John Bolton to issue the invitation to the Russian leader, said White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders.

What happened at Monday's one-on-one between Trump and Putin with only interpreters present remained a mystery, even to top officials and the U.S. lawmakers who said they had not been briefed.

Trump's director of national intelligence, Dan Coats, said in response to a question at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado: "Well, you're right, I don't know what happened at that meeting."

The coveted invitation was sure to be seen as a victory by Putin, whose last official visit to the United States was in July 2007, when he spent two days at the Bush family compound.

Both Trump and Putin earlier on Thursday praised their first meeting as a success and blamed forces in the United States for trying to belittle its achievements, Trump citing discussions on counterterrorism, Israel's security, nuclear proliferation, cyber-attacks, trade, Ukraine, Middle East peace and North Korea.

In one Twitter post, Trump blamed the

media. "The Summit with Russia was a great success, except with the real enemy of the people, the Fake News Media."

A senior White House official said Bolton extended the official invitation to Putin on Thursday via his Russian counterpart. No date has been set and it was unclear whether it would be timed for the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in late September.

Rejection of Putin proposal

The week was one of the toughest for Trump since he took office 18 months ago as aides struggled with damage control and convincing Americans that the president did not favor Russian interests over his own country's. Forty-two percent of registered voters said they approved of Trump's overall job performance, according to a Reuters/Ipsos opinion poll taken after the summit.

Bolton on Tuesday laid out four talking points for the crisis-hit White House, according to one official: that Trump stress he supports the U.S. spy agencies, that there was never any Russian collusion with his campaign, that Russian meddling is unacceptable and the United States is doing everything it can to protect elections in 2018 and beyond.

With Trump under fierce criticism in the United States, the White House on Thursday rejected Putin's proposal that Russian authorities be present for the questioning of Americans it accuses of "illegal activities," including a former U.S. ambassador to Moscow.

It was the latest about-face in a week of multiple reversals. Critics complained that

Trump was given ample opportunity at a joint news conference on Monday to scold Putin over Russian interference in the election but instead accepted Putin's denials over the word of American intelligence agencies.

Trump on Tuesday said he misspoke during the news conference. On Wednesday, Trump answered "no" to a reporter's question on whether Russia was still targeting the United States, only to have Sanders say later he was saying "no" to answer any questions - not to the question itself.

Republican and Democratic U.S. lawmakers grappled with Trump's conflicting statements as they discussed ways to show their opposition to what they saw in Helsinki, including strengthening sanctions.

On Monday, Putin described the proposal when he was asked about the possible extradition of 12 Russian intelligence officers indicted in the United States on charges of interfering in the 2016 election by carrying out cyber-attacks on Democratic Party networks.

Putin indicated he would permit American law enforcement officials to observe questioning by Russian officials of the indicted Russians and vice versa for Russian investigations. He mentioned London-based financier Bill Browder, a onetime investor in Russia who said he exposed corruption there. Standing alongside Putin, Trump called the idea "an incredible offer."

Sanders on Thursday said, "It is a proposal that was made in sincerity by President Putin, but President Trump disagrees with it," a day after

(Source: agencies)

French president to fire aide caught beating protesters in May

French President Emmanuel Macron has decided to dismiss a top security aide after footage showing the assistant beating protesters at a May Day rally emerged.

The president's office said the decision to begin dismissal proceedings of Alexandre Benalla was taken after "new elements" were discovered in what is being described as the 38-year-old leader's first "scandal" since assuming power a year ago.

"New facts that could constitute misdemeanor by Alexandre Benalla were brought to the president's attention," an official at the presidential palace told Reuters news agency.

"As a result... the presidency has decided to start Alexandre Benalla's dismissal procedure," the official added.

Macron became the subject of public scrutiny when French paper Le Monde revealed his office learned of the

incident three months ago but failed to inform law enforcement authorities.

French authorities opened an investigation on Thursday over the May Day protests where Benalla could be seen wearing a police helmet and identification tag dragging a woman away and stomping on another protester's stomach.

Critics say the punitive measure taken against the bodyguard at the time, amounting to a 15-day suspension without pay, is lenient and accuse the president of trying to cover up the incident.

On a trip to southwestern France on Thursday, Macron declined to answer questions from reporters on the incident.

Asked if he had confidence in his security officer, Macron on Wednesday pointed at a member of his entourage and said, "He is my bodyguard."

A spokesman for the president however decried Benalla's behavior on Thursday as "unacceptable".

"[Benalla] had been given permission to witness the demonstrations only as an observer," Bruno Roger-Petit said in a video statement. "Clearly, he went beyond this."

Paris prosecutors also said Benalla has been detained for questioning in the assault inquiry, where he also faces charges of impersonating a police officer.

A source close to the inquiry said three police officers have also been suspended on suspicion they provided Benalla with surveillance footage of the May 1 demonstration in an attempt to prove his innocence.

"He is suspected of receiving material from the police he was not authorised to have," the Elysee said.

(Source: agencies)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	107776.6
IFX	1210.77

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	43,480 rials
EUR	50,790 rials
GBP	57,003 rials
AED	11,867 rials

Source: mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$68.18/b
Brent	\$72.65/b
OPEC Basket	\$70.38/b
Gold	\$1,225.15 /oz
Silver	\$15.40/oz
Platinum	\$823.70/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Tehran hosting 2 intl. exhibitions

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The 10th edition of International Iran Stone Exhibition (IRSE 2018) and the 7th International Exhibition of Elevator Industry, Escalators, Elevating Conveyors, Spare parts and Equipment became operational at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on Thursday, IRNA reported.

As reported, some 280 companies, 190 Iranian and 90 foreign ones, are taking part in IRSE 2018 to showcase their latest achievements and products in stone industry.

The foreign companies come from Germany, Italy, Taiwan, Turkey, Japan, China, Switzerland, Croatia and South Korea.

Some 220 Iranian and foreign companies from different countries including Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Turkey as well as some Asian countries participate in the elevator industry exhibition.

Both international events will wrap up on Sunday.



Copper cathode, anode output increase above 50% in spring

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Production of copper cathode and anode in Iran rose 50 percent and 56 percent respectively in spring (March 21- June 22, 2018), in comparison with the same season in the preceding year, IRNA reported.

Giant copper cathode production units in Iran could produce 53,233 tons of the product in the said time this year while their production of anode stood at 70,871 tons, the report said.

Italian markets rattled after Tria's future is thrown into doubt

Italian bonds and stocks fell on concern that Finance Minister Giovanni Tria, whose appointment brought a relative calm to the nation's markets, may be forced to step down.

Short-end Italian bonds, which have borne the brunt of recent political uncertainty, led the declines after La Repubblica reported that the country's populist leaders were united in battle against Tria over nominations for the leadership of state lender CDP. Five Star Movement leader Luigi Di Maio and League chief Matteo Salvini were said to have gone so far as to "threaten unofficially to use the weapon of seeking Giovanni Tria's resignation."

Italy's bond market had taken a breather in recent weeks after being roiled in May as Five Star and the League formed a coalition, but the latest slip shows that investors are still jittery. Tria's appointment at the end of May heralded a period of relative calm to the nation's assets, with yields sliding from a peak not seen since the euro-zone crisis.

Tria, who was a professor of political economy before he took on his current role, has assured investors that the country remains committed to the euro and vowed to block any moves that would push it toward an exit. He is also seen as a counterweight to the coalition's radical spending plans ahead of the country's budget, due before October.

"The conflict is not new news, but the prospect of Tria leaving the government is not a positive for BTPs and confidence in the new government," said Antoine Bouvet, a strategist at Mizuho International Plc. "He was very much the appointment aimed at calming markets earlier this year." (Source: Bloomberg)

U.S. auto tariffs would cut 6b euros from German GDP, DIHK says

United States tariffs on imported cars would slash around 6 billion euros (\$6.99 billion) off German economic output, the president of Germany's DIHK Chambers of Commerce told German television on Friday.

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration came under fire on Thursday for considering tariffs of up to 25 percent on imported cars and parts, a levy that could raise vehicle costs, hurting auto sales and industry jobs.

DIHK President Eric Schweitzer said on ZDF television that he took Trump's threats "very seriously" and added such tariffs would be "against international law". (Source: Reuters)

Construction of 7,800km of freeways underway in Iran

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Some 7,800 kilometers of freeways are under construction through 16 projects in Iran, according to Deputy Transport Minister Kheirollah Khademi.

The official, who is also the managing director of Iran's Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructures Company (CDTIC), put the current length of Iran's freeways at 17,000 kilometers, IRNA reported.

Khademi further said that over 5,000 heavy machines and 15,000 persons are working in

the freeway-construction projects.

The official said in early May that about 920 kilometers of freeways are projected to be constructed throughout Iran by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019).

He also announced that about 820 kilometers of freeways were constructed in Iran during the past Iranian calendar year.

Last month, deputy director of CDTIC said that construction of Iran's longest freeway is planned to be completed within the next two



years.

Seyed Hassan Mirshafi' said this freeway with the length of 700 kilometers will connect Natanz in the central province of Isfahan to Bandar-Abbas in the southern province of Hormozgan.

The first part of the freeway with the length of 60 kilometers from Sirjan in the south-central

province of Kerman to Bandar-Abbas is currently under construction with 2 trillion rials (about \$46.5 million) of investment made by the private sector, the deputy director added.

Constructing each part of the freeway will cost 880 billion rials (about \$20.4 million), he said and added that some governmental budget has been also allocated to this project.

South Pars daily gas output to rise 84mcm by Mar. 2019

ENERGY TEHRAN — Daily production of gas in Iran's South Pars gas field (in the Persian Gulf) will be increased by 84 million cubic meters (mcm) by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019), according to the managing director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of developing the field.

Mohammad Meshkinfam said the rise will come through putting six new platforms into operation by the mentioned time, Shana news agency reported.

POGC managing director also said that building platforms 13B, 13D, 14C and 24A of phases 13, 14 and 24 of South Pars development has already 90 percent

progress.

He said five platforms will be installed by the end of the first half of current Iranian year (August 22).

South Pars gas field, which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf, covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which, called South Pars, are in Iran's territorial waters. The remaining 6,000 square kilometers, called North Dome, are situated in Qatar's territorial waters.

The field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

EU to back European companies' cooperation with Iran: Italian MP

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Italian Member of Parliament Isabela De Monte announced that the European Union will support European companies who are doing trade with Iran against the snap back of unilateral U.S. sanctions on the Islamic country, ilfiriuli.it reported on Thursday.

"EU has prepared a package of practical

measures that will be implemented in August," she said, "this is the response we wanted to hear from Brussels, because defending the interests of our companies and our work is the priority."

The Italian MP referred to the remarks of the EU foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, who responded to a recent question of her about the measures could be taken to neutralize the effects

of U.S. sanctions on European companies in Iran.

According to De Monte, "Vice President Mogherini reiterated that the EU firmly intends to commit itself to continue the full and effective implementation of the Iranian nuclear agreement and that it is also determined to work to mitigate the potential negative impact of U.S. sanctions on European companies who have invested in Iran

after the signing of the agreement, and to take measures to safeguard the good performance of trade and economic relations between the EU and Iran that began after the lifting of sanctions."

Mogherini in her answer explained that this can be achieved by combining measures taken at national and European level such launching 'blocking statute', De Monte continued.

Dollar below one-year highs on Trump comments; yuan eyed

The dollar held below a one-year high on Friday after U.S. President Donald Trump expressed concern about a stronger currency, although a weakening Chinese yuan reduced risk appetite.

The dollar is poised for a second straight week of gains and has gained more than 5 percent in the past three months on expectations the U.S. central bank will keep raising interest rates in the coming months.

But in a CNBC interview on Thursday, Trump said a strong dollar puts the United States at a disadvantage and that the Chinese yuan "was dropping like a rock".

"The comments are more likely to, on the margin, stem flows into dollar assets given renewed uncertainty over the U.S. administration's dollar policy," ING strategists said.

Against a basket of other currencies .DXY, the dollar held at 95.19, just below the one-year high of 95.62 it reached in the previous session.

But risk appetite remained subdued after China allowed the currency to weaken by lowering its daily midpoint fixing. The People's Bank of China dropped the midpoint CNY=PBOC for a seventh straight trading day to 6.7671 per dollar on Friday, 605 pips or 0.9 percent weaker than the previous fix of 6.7066.

Friday's fixing was the lowest since July 14, 2017, and represented the biggest one-day weakening in percentage terms since June 27, 2016.

"The Chinese currency really seems like it might be in play again rather than just catching up with a stronger dollar," Rabobank strategists said in a daily note.

The Australian dollar AUD=D3 was barely changed at \$0.7364, recouping losses after dropping nearly half a percent in early trade.

The euro EUR=EBS weakened to \$1.1639 after Italian bond yields rose.

(Source: Reuters)

China, India say trade with Iran unfazed by U.S. sanctions

Also, India on Wednesday made it clear that its bilateral relations with Tehran stand on their own and are not influenced by its ties with any third country.

The assertion was made by Minister of State for External Affairs VK Singh while replying to a question on whether India will continue its economic relations with Iran in terms of both oil imports and investment in Chabahar port in the wake of the U.S. sanctions against the Persian Gulf country.

(Source: Agencies)



IN THE NAME OF GOD
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 97-04/141

First Announcement

Tender Holder:
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Two-Stage Tender:
Supplying HEVC HEAD END equipment system (Terrestrial Telecommunication Administration) according to the tender documents

Deadline of Receiving Documents:
As of publishing second announcement of advertisement latest by the business hour dated on **Wednesday July 25, 2018.**

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

Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participating in Tender:
The amount of **USD 55,995** which should be in the form of extendable bank guarantee

Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:
The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted within one main envelope marked with tender number no later than **15 p.m. on Saturday August 25, 2018** and submitted to the Secretariat of Commission of Tenders.

Time and Place of Opening Envelopes
The date of opening envelopes A&B is at **8:30 a.m. on Monday August 27, 2018** in the office of Vice President of IRIB Planning and Financial Resources and opening of envelope C will be after technical evaluation. It should be noted that bidders should hold license from the authorized bodies.

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

Public Relations Dept. of IRIB

Oil prices rise, but still set for weekly drop on oversupply, trade worries

Crude prices rose on Friday, but were still set for a weekly drop on concerns about oversupply and the ongoing trade conflict between the United States and China, the world's two biggest oil users.

Brent oil had climbed 27 cents, or 0.4 percent, to \$72.85 a barrel by 0655 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was up 29 cents, or 0.4 percent, at \$69.79 a barrel.

However, both benchmarks are on track for their third weekly loss, after big declines on Monday, with Brent set to decline 3.3 percent and WTI to fall by 1.8 percent.

Prices have been dragged down by worries about oversupply as some production returned after outages, while trade tensions between the United States and China stoked fears of damage to their economies and their demand for commodities. Although, markets edged up on Friday in the wake of Saudi Arabia moving to ally some fears of oversupply.

"Risk sentiment is wobbling, which I believe is attributed to PBOC pushing the RMB complex lower via the fix," said Stephen Innes, head of trading APAC at OANDA brokerage. "Markets are now nervous, not only about



a trade war, but also a currency war."

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) on Friday reduced its mid-point for the yuan for the seventh straight trading day to the lowest in a year.

The yuan then retreated to a near 13-month

low though it rebounded later in the day.

U.S. President Donald Trump said in an interview on CNBC television that he was concerned that the Chinese currency was "dropping like a rock" and the strong U.S. dollar "puts us at a disadvantage".

Lower oil demand in the United States and China caused by an economic slowdown from their trade war would likely weigh heavily on oil markets.

The U.S. accounted for about a fifth of global oil demand in 2017, while China consumed around 13 percent, according to the BP Statistical Review of Energy.

There was some support for prices based on comments from Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, that it would cut crude shipments.

The country expects exports to drop by roughly 100,000 barrels per day in August as it works to ensure it does not push oil into the market beyond customers' needs, the kingdom's OPEC Governor Adeb Al-Aama said.

"Despite the international oil markets being well balanced in the third quarter, there will still be substantial stock draws due to robust demand and seasonal factors in the second half," Al-Aama said in a statement.

He also said concerns that Saudi Arabia and its partners are moving to substantially oversupply the market are "without basis". (Source: Reuters)

S.Korea LNG imports set to ease from record as power firms guzzle less gas

South Korean imports of liquefied natural gas are set to ease from record levels racked up in the first-half of the year, with appetite for the fuel from utilities seen fading as a raft of nuclear power stations come back online.

The country's imports of the commodity jumped nearly 16 percent year-on-year to a record 22.7 million tons in the first six months of 2018, according to customs data in mid-July, boosted by demand from power firms as around half the nation's 24 nuclear plants were shut for maintenance.

But with an average of only six reactors expected to be offline over the rest of the year, analysts say shipments of LNG into the world's No.3 importer of the fuel are likely to decline.

"(LNG) demand in the second-half won't be as strong as in the first-half because nuclear run rates will rise," said Yang Ji-hae, an analyst at Samsung Securities.

South Korea mainly consumes natural gas for heating and cooking, although it has been pushing to use the fuel more in power generation as it looks to switch away from coal and nuclear.

Gas power generation made up 29.1 percent of the country's overall electricity output in January-May, up from 20.4 percent last year, according to Reuters calculations based on data from Korea Electric Power Corp. That compares to the share of nuclear power at 20.8 percent, down from typical levels of around 30 percent.

State-run Korea Gas Corp (KOGAS) sold 19.7 million tons of gas in the January-June period, up 18.5 percent from last year, data from the country's sole wholesaler shows.



For power generation, 8.7 million tons of gas were sold during that period, up almost 31 percent on-year.

Nicholas Browne, senior gas analyst at energy consultancy Wood Mackenzie, said that full-year 2018 LNG imports were expected to be similar to last year, with South Korean buyers already storing gas ahead of winter.

"They are... filling storage in the traditional shoulder months, even if current spot prices are relatively high at \$10/mmBtu. It likely means that KOGAS anticipates prices will head higher in the winter," Browne said.

LNG spot prices LNG-AS have averaged \$10.03 per million British thermal units (mmBtu) so far this July, up from \$5.59 per mmBtu in the same month last year.

South Korea imported 37.6 million tons of LNG in 2017, customs data showed. KOGAS brings in around 32 million tons of LNG a year, with the rest purchased by private gas companies and utilities.

Yang at Samsung Securities said demand for gas from the power sector would drop in the second-half, although she added that gas would "benefit from the country's energy policy in the mid-to-long term".

(Source: Reuters)

Higher oil prices are threatening the future of a once-burgeoning financial sector

Higher oil prices this year have reduced the need for energy-exporters in the Middle East to raise funds through the Islamic bond market — threatening the growth of a niche finance sector that has been struggling to gain wider traction.

Oil prices have stayed above \$60 per barrel so far this year. That's expected to persist: S&P Global Ratings has revised upward its forecast for oil to an average \$65 per barrel this year from the \$55 per barrel it projected earlier.

As the key commodity inched higher in its price, global issuance of Islamic bonds fell 15.3 percent year-over-year to \$44.2 billion in the first six months of this year, according to S&P. The agency said it expects 2018 to end with \$70 billion to \$80 billion in total volume — coming off 2017's three-year high of \$97.9 billion.

Islamic bonds, also called sukuk, are debt instruments that comply with Sharia principles. Sharia is an Islamic law that prohibits earning interest on loans and bars funding activities involving alcohol, pork, pornography or gambling.

Oil-exporting Arab countries were among the largest sukuk issuers last year. Saudi Arabia, for one, issued a sovereign sukuk worth \$9 billion — the largest ever Islamic bond.

But higher oil prices have resulted in "a decline in financing needs in some of the (Persian Gulf Cooperation Council) countries," said Mohamed Damak, senior director of financial services research and global head of Islamic finance at S&P Global Ratings, in a conference call last week.

The Persian Gulf Cooperation Council is



made up of six Arab nations: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Those countries were forced to diversify their revenue sources when oil prices slumped and stayed at multi-year lows from 2015 to 2017.

In addition to current higher oil prices, the better fiscal discipline that the countries now have — from cutting spending and subsidies when oil revenue fell — has given them fewer reasons to replicate last year's large sukuk deals, Mohamed said.

The decline in sukuk issuance adds to challenges confronting Islamic finance, which has seen growth slowing despite efforts to expand the sector outside its traditional markets in the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

The industry has seen some new participants outside Muslim-majority countries in recent years, but their presence hasn't helped Islamic finance gain much wider traction.

In fact, the industry's growth has been slowing for five straight years, according to the latest Global Islamic Finance Report released this month. In 2017, the size of the Islamic financial services industry increased 6 percent from the prior year to \$2.431 trillion, slowing from 2016's 7 percent growth, the report said. (Source: CNBC)

Raab promises to inject 'renewed energy' into Brexit talks

The UK's new Brexit secretary arrived in Brussels on Thursday for a potentially bruising negotiating debut, with the EU side raising the pressure over deadlocked talks on the Northern Ireland border. Dominic Raab met his EU counterpart, Michel Barnier, on Thursday while managing to manage the fallout from an unruly fortnight of politics in Westminster and an unusually difficult set of preparatory talks in Brussels this week.



EU diplomats are increasingly alarmed that Downing Street inflexibility, the resignation of several leading Brexiters, including Raab's predecessor David Davis, and an "out of control" House of Commons is making it even harder to agree a "backstop" to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland. Speaking before a dinner with Barnier, Raab promised to inject "renewed energy, vim and vigour" to talks.

Barnier, meanwhile, called for the two sides to "urgently agree" the backstop plan — indicating he intended to make Ireland a higher priority than discussions about future relations.

European leaders have resisted public criticism of Prime Minister Theresa May's plan for a free-trade area for goods between the UK and EU, outlined in a white paper last week.

But with concern rising over the prospects of any agreement being possible, both sides are stepping up their no-deal planning. Barnier has expressed concern to colleagues that UK legislative amendments, covering customs in Northern Ireland, contradict past negotiating commitments made by Britain. The provisions, proposed by Brexiters and backed by the government on Monday, made it unlawful for Northern Ireland to be separated from the UK's customs territory — a key provision of the EU's backstop.

The EU side is also alarmed that British negotiators remain unwilling to discuss Northern Ireland-specific provisions for the backstop, even after the release of London's long-awaited vision for future UK-EU relations. "If they can't discuss anything unless it covers the whole UK, that is a very serious problem," said one EU diplomat. British officials, in turn, say the commission's aim to resolve the backstop before future UK-EU relations "simply won't work".

(Source: Financial Times)

LNG terminal poised to boost struggling Canadian gas producers

A liquefied natural gas terminal in British Columbia will "re-focus people on Canadian gas," giving a boost to stocks like Tourmaline Oil Corp. and ARC Resources Ltd., according to the manager of more than C\$500 million (\$377 million) in assets for Bank of Nova Scotia.

A C\$40 billion Canadian LNG project led by Royal Dutch Shell Plc appears to be ramping up, although a final decision hasn't been announced. Scotiabank's Jennifer Stevenson expects the project to go ahead, prompting investors to reevaluate struggling Canadian gas producers.

"That will make people look at Western Canadian gas economics in a new light because we have yet another place of egress," said Stevenson, portfolio manager at 1832 Asset Management, a unit of Scotiabank. Stevenson manages C\$319 million in energy funds and co-manages another C\$268 million in resource funds.



Stevenson's Dynamic Energy Income Fund has returned 6.3 percent this year and 18 percent including dividends in the 12 months to June 30, according to Scotiabank. That compares with gains of 4.8 percent and 12 percent in the S&P/TSX Composite Energy Index over the same periods. Tourmaline lost 15 percent in the past year while ARC Resources lost 17 percent.

On another front, liquids-rich producers like Tourmaline and ARC have "amazing netbacks," or gross profits per barrel, because they provide condensate to heavy-oil producers, which use it to dilute their crude so it can move through pipelines, she said. And Stevenson is bullish on big oil-sands players like Suncor Energy Inc. and Canadian Natural Resources Ltd., calling them "money-printing machines."

Oil-sands producers benefit from relatively low costs and slow production declines compared with their shale peers, she said. Stevenson believes investors will start treating these companies more like industrials than commodity producers.

"This is a free-cash-flow generating business with annual dividend increases," she said. "That dividend is sustainable way down the commodity price curve, and I think that allows a new type of investor to come in and say, 'OK, this is more like an industrial business than a commodity play.' That helps the share price over time."

Besides the oil-sands majors, Stevenson said international players like Shell, ConocoPhillips and Chevron Corp. also fit this profile. Stevenson is "structurally positive" on oil prices and sees West Texas Intermediate trading around \$70 despite short-term volatility prompted by U.S. President Donald Trump's threat to release crude from the nation's Strategic Petroleum Reserve. WTI prices traded around \$68 Wednesday after falling below \$65 in June.

"There's always going to be volatility on short-term noise, but the underlying fundamentals of supply versus demand are really strong," she said.

(Source: Bloomberg)



Vacancy Notice

The Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Iran intends to recruit

"National Project Coordinator"

For further information, please consult the detailed job description posted on UNFPA Iran website:

<http://iran.unfpa.org/vacancies>

All applicants should apply using above web-link no later than 31st July 2018.

Notice:

- "There is no application, processing or other fee at any stage of the application process"
- "UNFPA does not solicit or screen for information in respect of HIV/AIDS or disabilities and does not discriminate on the basis of HIV/AIDS status or disabilities"

UNFPA is the lead UN agency for delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

In the Name of God



Shahid Tondgooyan Petrochemical Company

Call for Identify Resources

Shahid Tondgooyan Petrochemical Company (STPC) intends to identify the following chemical suppliers which are qualified.

Subject:

ROW	CHEMICAL NAME	(CONSUMPTION RATE (TON/YEAR)
1	ISOPHTHALIC ACID	5000
2	TITANUM DIOXIDE	600
3	ANTIMONY (III) OXIDE	110
4	ANTIMONY (III) ACETATE	150
5	HYDROBROMIC ACID	250
6	Cobalt Acetate	60
7	CMB	600
8	Terminol 66	Up to process condition
9	SHELL OIL	Up to process condition

General Conditions of Suppliers & Specialized Degree Necessary:

1. Have at least 2 years relevant experience to chemical
2. License agency or distribution agency
3. Business cards
4. Submit the bid bond for tenders

Place & Deadline of Receive Evaluation Forms:

Legal & Contracts Affairs, Phase # 1, (STPC), Site # 4, Petrochemical Economic Special Zone (PESZ), Bandar Imam Khomeini, Khuzestan Province, Iran, 06152172045

It shall be given latest by 16:00 pm on 29/Jul./18

Place & Deadline of Submission Evaluation Forms Document:

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When will the Saudis learn that Trump is toxic?

By David Hearst

If the penny, or cent, has not dropped by now, it never will: Donald Trump presents a greater danger to his allies than he does to his foes. He imperils America as a world power.

In 48 action-packed hours, he has threatened to pull out of NATO (telling the organization's leaders that if they did not meet their two percent spending targets by January, he would "do his own thing"), told German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who grew up in East Germany, that she was "captive to Russia" (in fact, Russian gas meets only nine percent of Germany's needs) and stabbed his current host Theresa May in the back by telling the Sun that the Brexit deal which split her cabinet and her party will not work, and that her nemesis Boris Johnson would make a good prime minister. At a press conference hours later, he decried the paper's report as "fake news", and said the U.S.-UK relationship is "the highest level of special".

With Trump at the helm, demonstrations are superfluous. He is doing a great job wrecking America all by himself.

Don't get me wrong, I am no fan of the institutions on which America depends. I hold no cards for NATO, whose eastern expansion is the primary factor behind the emergence of nationalist Russia. Still less do I support a German-dominated eurozone whose austerity response to the banking crash in 2008 laid waste to significant sections of the south European economy.

Persian Gulf leaders have gambled that they can buy the service of a man such as this. Their efforts to insert themselves and their plans on the truly blank page of Trump's mind, and that of his son-in-law Jared Kushner, attempting to influence whom he hires and whom he fires, are now a matter of public record.

■ The unholy cabal

In successive reports by Middle East Eye, the New York Times, the New Yorker, the BBC, The Washington Post and the Associated Press, we now know from emails written by the key players of this unholy cabal, that Tom Barrack, Trump's billionaire friend, offered to exchange inside information on top cabinet appointments with Yousef al-Otaiba, the Emirati ambassador to Washington; that the Emiratis successfully lobbied to get Rex Tillerson, the U.S. secretary of state, sacked; that Israeli, Saudi and Emirati officials pushed Trump to strike a bargain with Putin - to trade Iran's presence in Syria in exchange for lifting the sanctions imposed on Russia over Ukraine.

All these trades were greased by substantial amounts of money, principally in arms deals. But the money for Trump was never enough. He always came back for more, for Syria, and the latest humiliating demand for Saudi to raise oil production.

Trump's attitude to his donors is contemptuous. "They wouldn't be there except for the United States. They wouldn't last a week. We are protecting them. They have to now step up and pay for what is happening," he told French President Emmanuel Macron, speaking about Saudi Arabia.

This is not a man who repays loyalty. It's a man who tosses his closest mates under a bus, first his former national security adviser Michael Flynn, now his former lawyer, Michael Cohen, who is under criminal investigation for alleged bank fraud, campaign finance violations, and tax issues. Cohen created a non-disclosure agreement with Stormy Daniels, with whom he facilitated a \$130,000 payment to cover an alleged affair with Trump. The White House has denied an affair.

The penny about Trump has dropped with Cohen, who said: "I will not be a punching bag as part of anyone's defense strategy. I am not a villain of this story, and I will not allow others to try to depict me that way."

It's crystal clear, too, now that all the foreign powers who homed in on Trump, either during his election campaign or afterwards, had an agenda to which the U.S. president was the key.

Correctly reading that America was a power in retreat, they seized on the opportunity to fill the vacuum and attempt to become the dominant regional power themselves.

The war in Yemen, the siege of Qatar, the "deal of the century" which will impose a settlement on the Palestinians without some of their fundamental, and internationally recognized rights, and finally a war against Iran are all part of the same plan, conceived and implemented by the same group of people - Saudi Arabia, the Emirates and Israel.

When I wrote four years ago that Israel's attack on Gaza was by Saudi royal appointment, the Saudi ambassador to the UK, Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf, replied in Al-Arabiya in person.

"It is hard to believe that such utter rubbish, such baseless lies, could be written by someone who purports to be an editor of any kind," the prince wrote.

Today, the Saudis do not even attempt to deny their security relationship with Israel, or their hand in a plan which clearly and explicitly denies the Palestinians, East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state, nor any exercise, however token, of the refugees' right of return - two internationally recognized demands.

"Be assured," the ambassador wrote in 2014. "We, the people and government of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, will never, ever give up on them, we will never do anything to harm them, we will do all we can to help them in their rightful claim to their own homeland and the return of lands taken illegally from them."

Well, that is exactly the pledge that King Salman and his son, Mohammed, are now betraying.

■ Helsinki next

Having shaken NATO, insulted Merkel, and put a large spanner in the works of May's Brexit plan, Trump moves on to Helsinki to meet Vladimir Putin. Here you can be assured Trump will be at his most obsequious.

For Putin, the occasion will present a delicious irony. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, the president of the Russian Federation will be striding to shake the hand of the president of the United States as an equal, not someone to be talked down to, or preached at.

The wheel of fortune has turned. There must be a Russian Orthodox god in heaven after all, Putin must be thinking.

For the Middle East, the lesson of Trump is obvious. However much you pay him, he will use you for his purposes and then discard you. Merkel has realized this. May has too: this is a man with whom you should sup with a very long spoon.

(Source: Middle East Eye)

Remembering Mandela: His long walk to freedom showed we can change the world

By Stefan Simanowitz

"I've dreamt about this moment for more than half my life," Janey Halim, a long-time anti-apartheid activist, whispered to me as Nelson Mandela approached us down the line.

The year was 1993 and I was a recent graduate, in South Africa to work for the African National Congress (ANC) as it transitioned from liberation movement to political party and ultimately, to government.

Although he had been expected, news that Mandela had arrived at the shabby headquarters of the ANC Western Cape caused great excitement. I hurried from my office and watched from the open corridor that overlooked the car park as his small entourage emerged from their Mercedes. Our regional head, Tony Yengeni, was there to open the car door. I looked down as a pair of polished shoes appeared, followed by well-pressed trousers and then, finally, the man himself.

Looking relaxed and elegant, Mandela was ushered into the building. On the first floor, staff and volunteers hurriedly formed ourselves into rag-tag line, our eyes fixed on the stairwell at the end of the corridor. For each of us, Mandela represented something deeply personal: the embodiment of hopes and struggles that we scarcely dared to speak aloud.

And then he appeared. Taller than I had imagined. Aged 75 at the time, he was slim with a powerful, dignified presence. He started making his way down the row of activists, speaking to each in turn.

For me, Madiba, as he was affectionately known, had been part of my consciousness for almost as long as I could remember. As a child visiting South Africa, I would lie on my fold-out bed on the balcony of my grandparents' flat looking out across the dark ocean at the dimly burning lights of Robben Island and think of him. At school, I had done projects on apartheid and for so many years I had marched and protested and campaigned.

■ Mandela would be released

In 1990, when news broke that Mandela would be released, I went straight to Trafalgar Square in London to celebrate, and the following day I stayed glued to the TV screen for the first glimpse of him. Today, his face is one of the most recognizable in the world, but



back then it had been 24 years since the last photograph of Mandela had been published. Few people knew what Mandela looked like, let alone what kind of man he had become.

And now here he was, standing before me, his hand outstretched.

"This is Stefan who works in our press office," said Tony Yengeni. "He is from London." "Ah, from England," said Mandela fixing his smiling eyes on me and shaking me warmly by the hand. "What brings you to our country?" I explained briefly how my parents were originally from Cape Town and how I had been active in the anti-apartheid movement. "Thank you for being here," he said, pausing for a photo before moving down the line. I did not see him again for almost a year.

It was nine days before the election and, although the ANC knew the Western Cape was not a winnable province — in the end we lost to the National Party by almost 40 percent — it was decided Mandela should come to Cape Town for some final meetings and a rally. I was responsible for arranging the media, first at a photo-call with schoolchildren in Green Point Stadium, then at a political meeting at Grassy Park and finally at a stadium event in Athlone.

Arriving at Greenpoint Stadium on that sunny morning, I was there to meet him and his team. When he saw me, Mandela smiled

and, without missing a beat, asked: "How is England?"

But a day that had started brightly ended in tragedy when a stampede in Athlone Stadium resulted in the deaths of three people and more than a dozen injuries. As news of the calamity filtered out, one of my seniors was concerned about how it might play out in the media. "I can see the headlines now," he lamented. "They'll be asking how the ANC can run the country when we can't even organize a rally."

But Mandela's concern was not with the media impact. His only thoughts were with those killed and their families. He immediately changed his evening plans in order to visit the injured in hospital. He had no need for spin doctors to instruct him as to what would appear to be the right thing to do. He knew it instinctively.

After polls had closed on election day Mandela was in reflective mood. "I should be jumping for joy but I just feel a stillness," he reportedly told a friend. "There is so much responsibility. So much to do."

A week after the election, I was in Pretoria for Mandela's inauguration, a day which he dedicated to "all heroes and heroines in this country and the rest of the world who sacrificed in many ways and surrendered their lives so that we could be free. Their

dreams have become reality. Freedom is their reward." On that heady day in 1994, it felt as if anything was possible: that together, people really could change the world.

■ Mandela's most enduring legacies

And perhaps that is one of Mandela's most enduring legacies. Through his integrity, courage and strength he showed by example what a single individual can achieve, and in so doing he instilled the belief that injustice, whether large or small, can be defeated.

Over the next two decades, I saw Mandela from afar several times. I watched as he and the Queen danced at the party he threw at the Albert Hall in 1996, and again at his 90th birthday celebration in Hyde Park in 2008. In 2010, I was back in South Africa to mark the 20th anniversary of his release. Aged 91, he was too frail to come to the commemoration outside the gates of Victor Verster Prison, but he did make a brief appearance in parliament.

Speaking that day outside the prison gates, Cyril Ramaphosa, then deputy president, told a small crowd that "as Mandela walked through these gates we were also being set free."

But the significance of his release was felt far beyond South Africa's borders. In a newly post-Cold War world that was undergoing a rapid and uncertain period of transformation, Mandela's release gave a renewed sense of hope and optimism. As the writer Breyten Breytenbach wrote at the time: "Perhaps there is now a little more sense to our dark passage on Earth."

Although it did not come as a surprise, news of Madiba's death in December 2013 nonetheless hit me with an unexpected force. I felt an immense void — both personally and for the world.

Delivering the annual Mandela Lecture on Tuesday, Barack Obama drew on Mandela's legacy to remind his audience that the "struggle for basic justice is never truly finished" and urge them not to give into cynicism. "We've been through darker times. We've been through lower valleys," he said. "I believe in Nelson Mandela's vision ... I believe in a vision of equality and justice and freedom."

(Source: Newsweek)

Libya needs its old constitution if it wants to survive

By Edward P. Joseph

Alarmed by Libya's continued instability and fed up with its fractiousness, Western powers are pressing the country to hold new elections. Last month, French President Francois Macron brought four Libyan leaders together to Paris, and with the backing of the United Nations, the European Union, and twenty observing countries, got them to accept an eight-point declaration. That declaration plans a target date of December 10, 2018, as the date for the national poll.

Unfortunately, even if these four figures spoke for all Libyans — and clearly they do not — and even if the daunting security risks could be surmounted, Libya faces another overarching impediment to elections. The fact remains that there are no ground rules either for the election or the aftermath when elected officials attempt to take office and govern. Without an agreed and viable constitutional mechanism, holding elections in Libya could reignite conflict and potentially seal the country's division. Instead of trying to cobble together an agreement on a new draft, the way forward is to go back to Libya's original, successful constitution, first drafted in 1951.

The impulse to hold elections in Libya is understandable. The country is beset with three rival governments, two parliaments, one loosely-organized army, and a multitude of militias. A massive legitimacy deficit hangs over these institutions and the officials who lead them. Furthermore, Libyan national institutions are essentially defunct, and functioning civil institutions exist mainly at the municipal and local levels.

Underneath the institutional paralysis lies a mass of divisions — between Tripoli and the East, between areas that have oil and gas and those that don't, between more Islamist-leaning and more secular-leaning tendencies, and between tribes and between personalities. And much of the country is insecure, parts are in outright conflict, and extremists including ISIS are present. With a deadly suicide attack last month on Libya's election commission, ISIS made clear its intention to sabotage elections. Furthermore, other key embassies and delegations from the United States and the European Union have decamped from Tripoli to neighboring Tunisia.

■ Loosely-organized Libyan Army

Meanwhile, fighting rages in the nearby Eastern city of Derna between forces loyal to General Khalifa Haftar, commander of the loosely-organized Libyan National Army, and various Islamist groups including several Salafist extremists. Taking advantage of the LNA's preoccupation in Derna, a militia commander launched an attack on two of Libya's main exporting terminals, inflicting damage that, with lost exports, will run into the tens of billions of dollars and take years to repair.

The relatively quiet urban core of Benghazi — Libya's second city that was the notorious site of the fatal attack on the American diplomatic compound in 2012 — is a heap of destruction.

Haftar, one of the four figures invited to Paris, stands in opposition to the UN-recognized government in Tripoli. Haftar derives political legitimacy through the support of the elected parliament in the East, and military effectiveness in part through the support of Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, both of which have participated in the aerial bombing of targets in Derna and other locations.

In short, the very reasons that make it imperative to hold an election in Libya are the same as those that make it challenging, foolhardy even, to go forward unprepared. These are violence and insecurity, bitter regional and per-



sonal divisions, the collapse of governance, the presence of extremists and the involvement of outsiders, and the tussle over resources. Indeed, it was the absence of agreed ground rules that helped turn the elections of 2014 into the spark for the country's civil war.

A constitutional Assembly elected earlier that year in a paltry turnout was to have submitted a draft for a national referendum before elections were held. But no draft or referendum was forthcoming. Despite this, the international community pushed for elections in June 2014 even though disillusioned and frightened voters stayed home. Candidates from Islamist-leaning factions that lost power challenged the results and the Supreme Court, acting without an accepted constitutional mandate, invalidated the election.

In response, the newly-elected, more secular-leaning Parliamentarians fled Tripoli and set up their assembly in the East of the country, reviving the historic cleavage between the Eastern region of Cyrenaica, and Gaddafi's chosen power center of Tripolitania. Tensions between Tripoli and the East mounted as several hundred prominent leaders, political activists, and members of the security forces and others in the Eastern cities of Benghazi and Derna were assassinated by Islamic extremists prompting General Haftar to launch his military campaign, dubbed 'Operation Dignity.'

Given this bitter history, it is critical this time to get a broad-based agreement on the constitutional basis for elections, as well as the rules for governance after elected officials take office. Without a framework for power-sharing and power-wielding, spoilers will remain outside the process, setting the stage for more chaos and instability in the run-up or aftermath of the poll in December.

The current, disputed draft constitution, meant to be adopted by September under the Paris plan, requires a constitutional referendum by two-thirds of voters. Aside from imposing additional security and logistical burdens, the referendum is unlikely to generate much public support given the minimal consultation conducted by the woefully unrepresentative Drafting Assembly. Moreover, even if the draft could survive a poll, parliament would then have to pass a new electoral law.

The situation is optimal for current leaders — satisfied with the status quo and wishing to remain in office — to string out their disputes. Corruption and thefts by benefactors of the status quo are swallowing Libyan Central Bank reserves and putting the otherwise wealthy country on the verge of bankruptcy. Efforts by the head of the UN mission in Libya, Ghassan Salame, to break the political impasse so far have failed.

■ Modern Libya's first constitution

History offers a better solution. Modern Libya's first con-

stitution, originally drafted in 1951 and amended in 1963, was the product of a successful, evolutionary process in which Libya's three traditional regions voluntarily ceded power to form a highly Federalized state under a monarch. The 1951 constitution's preamble captures the consensual nature of the endeavor: "We the Representatives of the people of Libya from Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Fezzan ... agree to form a union..." Libya's first elections, with British police on-hand to assist with security, were held successfully the next year.

The constitution served Libya well until the 1969 coup led by then-Colonel Gaddafi which revoked the letter and cooperative spirit of the document. In place of the balanced, regional construct, Gaddafi introduced highly centralized rule from Tripoli, leaving a legacy of suspicion in Benghazi and the East about domination from the western part of the country. The events since 2014 have only accentuated these anxieties.

A strong legal argument can be made that, in the wake of the 2011 revolution, it is the 1963 constitution that Gaddafi inactivated that is still in force. The primary technical challenge to restoring the constitution is supplanting the role of the king with a modern, interim variant. Pre-Gaddafi Libyan law provides for a ready solution—a "Sovereign Council" designed to replace the king under emergency conditions. Using this device, Libya's 1951/1963 constitution could set the basis for the election of a new Sovereign Council to perform the duties of the King.

The Council would inherit the powers to decide who among elected parliamentarians should form a government, when parliament should be dissolved, and would make key appointments in the security and financial sectors. The interim Sovereign Council would, temporarily, supplant the need for a President, thereby removing the most contentious power squabble from the landscape. In time, as stability returns and interim institutions mature, a new constitution could be drafted and put to public referendum, followed by elections for a new parliament and President or — if Libyans so chose — a king.

Of course, it is up to Libyans — not outsiders — to decide on whether and how to revive their historical constitution. Given the specter of illegitimacy that hangs over most Libyan institutions (including the Constitution Drafting Assembly), the UN could turn to the officials who actually provide the bulk of services to their citizens — the country's mayors. These leaders, along with heads of tribes, could meet in a National Convention and agree to revive the dormant-but-legitimate constitution.

Unlike the alien and opaque process that produced the current draft constitution, returning to Libya's democratic-monarchical roots would be an authentic step that rekindles a sense of ownership in the political process. By reviving the original constitution, the National Convention would be reminding Libyans of their obligation to change governments by a constitution, and not by coups d'états. It would also serve as a reminder of the country's capacity to overcome differences and forge functioning and unifying institutions according to law.

Libya and its international backers face an array of formidable challenges in organizing elections this year. The best way, perhaps the only way, to overcome them is to re-engage Libyans in the process of setting the rules for the poll. Given the bleak alternatives available, reaching back to Libya's successful origins would provide the best chance for the country to elect its way out of the current crisis.

(Source: The National Interest)

Daniel Kovalik: Independent Kurdish state, an excuse for U.S. to appropriate oil-rich eastern Syria

TEHRAN (FNA) — University professor and author, Daniel Kovalik, says that forming an independent Kurdish state is just a pretext for the US to annex one-third of Syria which is rich in oil and other resources.

In an exclusive interview with FNA, professor Kovalik said he believes that Former US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is accurate in his statement about US intentions to stay in Syria indefinitely.

The American professor also added that the idea of an independent Kurdish state is just a pretext to be used by the US to annex for itself the oil-rich parts of Syria.

Daniel Kovalik is a human rights lawyer, peace activist and a professor of international human rights at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law. He has also authored two books about American foreign policy, the most recent of which is titled "The Plot to Attack Iran: How the CIA and the Deep State Have Conspired to Vilify Iran", where he talks about the current state of affairs between the United States and Iran. Professor Kovalik has also shared his expert comments on many international news outlets such as RT, Press TV and TeleSUR English.

FNA has conducted an interview with Daniel Kovalik about the Syrian crisis and the most recent developments surrounding the issue.

Below you will find the full text of the interview.

■ Multiple places in Syria came under attack by the United States and its allies, namely Britain and France, based on a video footage of an alleged gas attack in Syria's Douma released by the White Helmets. Who are the White Helmets? How can their unverified video be presented as justification for a large scale attack on Syria?

A: The White Helmets is a very controversial group which is lauded as a life-saving organization in much of the West, but seen by others as a supporter of terrorist groups in Syria. It is clear that the White Helmets receive huge amounts of funding from the US State Department as well as from the UK, and some believe that this group was actually created by the British MI6 as a means to promote anti-government and pro-rebel propaganda. Given



all of this, it is of course inappropriate to simply accept their unverified video as a justification for a large scale attack on Syria. And, a number of people, including respected British journalist Robert Fisk, have indeed questioned whether there was any chemical attack in Douma at all. Moreover, CBS News has reported that the US State Department itself has suspended funding to the White Helmets in light of the fact that it has serious questions as to whether the White Helmets' account of events in Douma was in fact true. This may be the beginning of the end for any credibility the White Helmets have ever had.

■ We have seen the Israeli regime and the so-called US-led coalition targeting Syrian Arab Army (SAA) and its allied forces many times. What do you think is the reason for such moves?

A: The US and Israel have been bent on regime change in Syria for some time now as both countries wish to rid the region of one of its last independent and secular states. Meanwhile, it is clear that the US and Israel, if they cannot topple the Syrian government, and it now appears that they most likely cannot, are content to keep the war in Syria going by supporting the terrorist groups while at the same time pretending to fight them. And that is best explained in the words of Obama when he said the goal

is to merely "contain" these terrorist forces; not destroy them altogether. In this way, the war continues at a slow boil. As we saw in the NATO attack on Libya and its aftermath, the Western powers are promoting chaos in Northern Africa and the Middle East to prevent any independent state from being able to exert influence there. This is a quite cynical policy which is leading to the death and suffering of millions. It appears that Syria is a country now targeted for the West's project of sowing chaos.

■ Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, Saudi Arabia has been actively supporting terrorists in the country. These terrorists are now losing ground every day. What do you think would be the implications of such failure for the Saudi foreign policy?

A: Unfortunately, I do not see Saudi Arabia's foreign policy changing, even in the face of defeat, as long as the Western powers, and especially the US, continue to support the Saudi regime politically and militarily. Inexplicably, the US has decided that Saudi Arabia is an indispensable ally in the Middle East, despite its being a retrograde monarchy and despite its support for terrorism throughout the world, including its support for the 9/11 attacks on the US. As long as the US continues to partner with Saudi Arabia, I fear that Saudi Arabia will be able to act with complete impunity throughout the world.

■ The so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have received tremendous amount of arms and support from the United States, initially with the stated aim to fight Daesh (ISIL or ISIS). But apparently, the US is now preparing the ground to establish an independent Kurdish state in Syria. What do you think the US is seeking to achieve by disintegrating Syria?

A: It is clear that the US has now decided to take advantage of the disintegration of Syria – disintegration which it helped bring about – to take over a large portion of that country. The US now controls one-third of Syrian territory, and it happens to be the richest part of Syria in terms of oil and other resources. Former US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was quite candid that the US plans to stay in Syria indefinitely, and I believe that is true. In short, the US plans to effectively annex one-third of Syria for itself, and it is going to use the pretext of an independent Kurdish state to do so. Moreover, the US is planning to use Kurdish troops to help secure the borders of the area it is annexing. All of this is already well in progress.

■ The US announcement on its plans to recognize a Kurdish state in Syria has seemingly provoked Turkish invasion on the Kurdish areas. What are Turkey's objectives in its military intervention and how do you think this recent development would affect the process of reaching peace in Syria?

A: It is clear that the Turkish government's goal in Syria, as journalist Patrick Cockburn has recently pointed out, is to try to wipe out the Kurdish population which it has always viewed as a threat to its hold over Turkey. In short, this is a genocidal project which Turkey has been carrying out for years, often times with the US support. Meanwhile, Turkey's aggression on Syria is a huge impediment to peace in Syria and indeed threatens a wider conflict involving numerous states, including the US, Russia, Iran and Israel. This is truly a very dangerous situation. As commentator Stephen Gowans has noted, what is occurring in Syria now can indeed be characterized as a World War. While that war is contained in a small area, it involves so many states that it is nonetheless a World War, and one that may not be contained for much longer.

Germany asks India to resist U.S. pressure, continue buying oil from Iran

➔ A few weeks ago, a day after the U.S. ambassador to UN Nikki Haley visited New Delhi, media reports said that India's oil ministry had ordered refiners to prepare for drastic reduction or zero import of Iranian oil from November when the 180-day wind-down period ends.

New Delhi had initially said they do not recognize unilateral sanctions imposed by Washington, and only recognize UN sanctions. However, everyone was taken by surprise with these developments.

Many seasoned regional observers and politicians criticized the Narendra Modi-led BJP government. A senior Communist Party of India (CPIM) leader Sitaram Yechury took to Twitter to blast the government. "India had stated only sanctions by the UN would be acceptable not by individual countries. What is India's foreign policy under Modi about? Following US diktats, and betraying India's interests," he asked.

Narendra Taneja, a leading energy expert, said Indian companies should continue to import oil from Iran. "Buying oil is a commercial activity and Indian oil importers should continue to import from Iran if ships are available from international ship-owners and oil shipments can find insurers," he said.

Stung by public backlash, Indian government later said that it will take a "considered and considerate" view based on "national interest" and find a way to secure its energy needs.

"We have a special strategic relationship with U.S. We have a historic, cultural and civilizational relationship with Iran," India's Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said in an interview with a leading Indian daily. "Iran is also a factor in India-Afghanistan because of its geographic proximity. Our economic interests are tied to both. The government will take a comprehensive view."

On Tuesday, Indian foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale held discussions with a high-level U.S. delegation on the issue of implementing US sanctions against Tehran. The meeting took place a day after Gokhale held talks with Iran's deputy foreign minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi.



According to sources, no final decision has been taken yet on importing oil from Iran. A report in The Wire said, India is awaiting the results of the negotiations between Tehran and European capitals to devise a financial payment mechanism.

Meanwhile, General VK Singh, India's Deputy Foreign Minister, responding to a question on the impact of US-Iran tensions over India in parliament, said India will have independent ties with Iran.

Speaking in the lower house of parliament, the minister

said India's ties with Tehran are not dependent on a third country. "Both sides are engaged in developing a long-term partnership in energy deepening of trade and investment cooperation and an early and full operations of Shahid Beheshti Port at Chabahar", he added.

India is Iran's second largest buyer of crude oil. Iran's share in India's import volumes stands at 10.4 percent in the current financial year. If India decides to cut oil imports from Iran, it will have to buy oil from other countries at a higher price, which is likely to draw outrage in India.

A contemplation on Trump's meeting with Putin

➔ After the recent meeting, we were witnessing widespread criticism against the President of the United States (in the domestic political atmosphere of the U.S.). The Democrat senator Chuck Schumer, and Nancy Pelosi the Minority Leader of the United States House of Representatives, and even some Republican senators like Lindsey Graham have explicitly condemned the visit.

"President Trump's weakness in front of Putin was embarrassing, and proves that the Russians have something on the President, personally, financially or politically," said Pelosi.

Even before the visit, the U.S. senators and 18 Democratic members of the House committee on foreign affairs have called on

Trump to call off the meeting with Putin. "Unfortunately," the House group wrote, "due to your constant expressions of sympathy for Vladimir Putin, your conflicts of interest, and your attacks on our closest allies, we do not have confidence that you can faithfully negotiate with the Russian leader, and we urge you to cancel the meeting."

Obviously, much of the equations and bilateral relations between the United States and Russia, aren't formed during the meetings between Trump and Putin, but on the political and internal scene of the two countries. American Democrats and traditional Republicans have repeatedly shown resistance to any reform regarding relations with Russia. Even during Obama's presidency, U.S.-Russian threats against each other

reached their peak.

The third point here is about Russia's red lines in the international system. Today, the Russians are following specific goals and patterns that they are not willing to put aside or ignore under any circumstances.

The most important of these goals is the revival of Moscow as a pole in the international system. Obviously, the Russians are not willing to merge themselves into U.S. policies, and thus they will maintain their cautious approach in their negotiations with the Trump government. Meanwhile, any deal between the U.S. and the Russians will be hard to form, since the two sides will not interact with each other in an atmosphere based on trust. Moreover, in this equation, we should consider other variables such

as «NATO» and «EU». Of the 29 NATO members, 26 are the EU member states, namely the countries that are basically trying to highlight the «Russian threat» around themselves.

This is one of the main reasons for the negative attitude of European countries towards Putin and Trump's summit. Some NATO members also believe that Trump intends to use this meeting with the Russians as a leverage to put more pressure on members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, so that they would be forced to meet the White House demands. However, the US-Russia relations can't be analyzed and interpreted regardless of the role which NATO and the European Union play in today's political and economic equations.

Afghanistan War: The fallacy of sunken costs



TEHRAN (FNA) — A new report from the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan says 1,692 civilians were killed across Afghanistan in the first six months of 2018 – the highest death toll for a half year.

The report comes at a time when US military operations across the war-torn country have grown in every possible way - from their budget to their size, to their pace of operations, to the geographic sweep of their missions and airstrikes.

All this means that, on any given day, there is no US military operation that doesn't leave behind at least a number of casualties among Afghan civilians. The attacks are deadlier and leave fewer survivors overall. It is particularly noteworthy that this increase in deaths is also seen as being driven at least in part by a substantial rise in suicide attacks. That includes some very large scale attacks attributed to ISIL in recent weeks.

The UN report says over half of the casualties from suicide bombings were from ISIL attacks, underscoring the group's growing influence in the country and the fact that America's longest war not only failed to defeat the Taliban but paved the way for the emergence of ISIL. This comes amid reports of the US government considering a full strategy review for the Afghan war, as nearly a year after President Trump's announced escalation, things are still going poorly. With no real chances for a military victory, officials in Washington are hoping to try to get back to the negotiating table.

By and large, this makes no sense at all. American forces are still operating - alongside local forces. None of this should be surprising, since in Afghanistan and across the rest of the Middle East region, America's occupying forces are regularly engaged in a wide-ranging set of missions including special reconnaissance and small-scale offensive actions, unconventional warfare, counter-terrorism, and security force assistance (that is, organizing, training, equipping, and advising regional troops and proxies). And every day, almost everywhere, US forces are involved in various kinds of direct military attacks and unrestrained military expansion, mainly in Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.

This questions or criticizes the proposed US talks with the Taliban. This is also hardly a foregone conclusion. If anything, US military occupation is likely to expand, not contract, in Afghanistan. That's why even the Taliban says it is in no mood to sit for talks with the Americans for any peace deal. They know and the whole world knows that America's war aims in Afghanistan have been, and remain, riddled with contradictions and illusions that the War Party can exploit. This includes offering convoluted, incomplete or unconvincing answers to essential questions: Why are they in Afghanistan?

On that question, the fact remains that the nation-building experiment has also failed. America's longest war can and will end if the US withdraws its warmongering generals and troops from the war-torn country.

Evidence backs this assessment. Americans have provided billions of dollars to enable the Afghans to defeat the Taliban - on top of Pentagon spending on the war itself. Fighting has increased and the Taliban is nowhere to be defeated. ISIL has also increased its presence there leading to the highest levels of armed clashes and suicide attacks. Worse still, according to the Pentagon's own estimates, the government controls only 57.2 percent of the country's districts, which hold about 64 percent of the population. The rest are contested or under Taliban and ISIL control.

And we haven't even talked about a recent United Nations report that says the land under drug production in Afghanistan is up 10 percent in 2018 over the year before. And Afghanistan remains the world's leading producer of opium, providing 80 percent of the global output. Drug plantation and production has grown over 40 fold since the US invaded the country.

Indeed, one wonders why the US still insists that this war is winnable in a place where there appears to be no dearth of havens for terrorists and where America's longest war in history is the perfect environment which births and fosters local and foreign terrorist groups. It's the fallacy of sunken hopes and costs, if the United States is honest about its stated objective in Afghanistan. There are good reasons to believe that the US never invaded to defeat terrorism in that country, but to establish a permanent presence in there to advance its plans against Iran, Russia and China.

Drone attacks and UN burden: Current state of suspended animation cannot last

TEHRAN (FNA) — A two-year probe by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Drones in London has revealed that the number of military operations facilitated by the British government in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Pakistan and Somalia has been growing without any public scrutiny.

The probe suggests that the British government is complicit in killing civilians and risks being prosecuted over illegal drone operations. The major probe should do the next best thing: There are many other governments that are also directly involved in murdering innocent civilians and committing crimes against humanity that are yet to be prosecuted. These governments include many NATO members plus Israel, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and a host of others.

In violation of International Law and UN Charter, and together with the United States, they have been launching indiscriminate military operations and drone attacks against innocent civilians or assisting each other with intelligence, personnel, money and logistics in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Gaza, and without international scrutiny. They are yet to be prosecuted for killing civilians and they are yet to be held to account in The Hague. ➔13

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Global study of world's beaches shows threat to protected areas

A first-of-its-kind survey of the world's sandy shorelines with satellite data found that they have increased slightly on a global scale over the past three decades but decreased in protected marine areas, where many beaches are eroding.

Erosion in protected marine areas could threaten plant and animal species and cultural heritage sites. Worldwide, the study found that 24 percent of Earth's sandy beaches are eroding, a coastline distance of almost 50,000 miles.

The view from space provided researchers with a more accurate picture of just how much of Earth's shorelines are beaches. They found that about a third (31 percent) of all ice-free shorelines are sandy or gravelly. Africa has the highest proportion of sandy beaches (66 percent) and Europe has the lowest (22 percent).

Identifying sandy beaches

A team of scientists and engineers from the Netherlands used machine learning to "teach" their classification software to accurately identify sandy beaches from images taken by Landsat satellites from NASA and the U.S. Geological Survey. This allowed them to quickly and automatically examine 30 years of data and determine how many of Earth's beaches are sandy instead of rocky or icy, and how those sandy beaches are changing with time.

"It only took about two months' calcula-



tion time to generate this data set of annual shorelines between 1984 and 2016 for the entire world," said Arjen Luijendijk, a coastal development expert at Deltares, an inde-

pendent research institute studying deltas, river basins and coasts.

The "alternative of taking aerial images, placing the images in world coordinates, and

About 24 percent of sandy beaches worldwide are eroding, while 27 percent are growing.

sometimes manually detecting shorelines, takes weeks or months to capture a coast longer than 50 miles."

The team found that many of the world's non-protected beaches are undergoing change too, but not uniformly. About 24 percent of sandy beaches worldwide are eroding, while 27 percent are growing.

The average increase

Globally, all of this averages out to a slight average increase over the last 30 years, meaning that our sum total of sandy beaches is increasing slightly.

The researchers were able to break down these results by continent to find that beaches in Australia and Africa are experiencing more erosion than growth, a process scientists call accretion. The opposite is true for all other continents. Asia is experiencing the highest rate of overall accretion, they discovered. This is most likely due to artificial coastline development in China and land reclamation, or draining land and making it suitable for human use, in places such as Hong Kong and Singapore.

"At this point we think the continental differences in beach erosion and accretion are largely influenced by human interventions along the coast," Luijendijk said. "Our next steps will focus on distinguishing the human impact from the natural dynamics and trends."

(Source: eurekaalert.org)

Iron-rich minerals on Mars could contain life's fatty acids, team claims

A little stream in the south of England could guide the way towards finding evidence for ancient life on Mars, in the form of fatty acids preserved in an iron-rich mineral called goethite.

Researchers from Imperial College London ventured to the county of Dorset on the UK's south-coast to sample an acidic stream running into St Oswald's Bay, which is close to the famous Durdle Door limestone rock formation. The acidity of the stream, which has a pH of 3.5, is believed to be similar to water that flowed on early Mars during its Hesperian epoch over three billion years ago.

The stream flows over sandstone beds dating back to the Cretaceous period. During that distant era, forest fires deposited charcoal into the sands. Bacteria were able to live on the charcoal, using sulfate to decompose it and produce the iron-sulfide mineral known as pyrite, or 'fool's gold'. Fast forward to the present day and the water in the stream is oxidizing the pyrite, producing a weak sulfuric acid that gives the water its pH, while a variety of iron-sulfate minerals precipitate out onto the stream bed, including a mineral called jarosite.

Organic matter

Jarosite excels at trapping organic matter, particularly



acids, which are among the most common type of organic compound produced by life. Over time, the water turns jarosite into another mineral called goethite.

In dry conditions, such as on Mars, goethite dehydrates into yet another iron-rich mineral called hematite, which is what gives Mars its rust-red color.

The Imperial College researchers – Jonathan Tan, James Lewis and Mark Sephton – found that the goethite in the stream contained an abundance of well-preserved fatty ac-

ids. Based on that abundance, and assuming that ancient Mars hosted a microbial biomass similar to that found in the Dorset stream, the researchers estimate that there could be at least 28.6 billion kilograms of fatty acids locked up in iron-rich rocks on the Red Planet.

Chains of carbon atoms

The significance of finding fatty acids made of long chains of carbon atoms on Mars should not be understated for they would be an unambiguous biomarker, says Sephton, who is a Professor of Organic Geochemistry and Head of Imperial's Department of Earth Science and Engineering.

"If you just throw carbon atoms together in a non-biological fashion, then there are 50,000 other possible isomers that the carbon atoms could form before they get to a chain of 18 carbon atoms," he tells *Astrobiology Magazine*.

The Sample Analysis at Mars (SAM) instrument suite on NASA's Curiosity rover works by baking samples of dirt and rock to evaporate organic molecules to make them easier for the on board Gas Chromatograph Mass Spectrometer (GCMS) to detect. SAM also carries nine sealed 'wet chemistry' cups, each filled with a mix of chemicals.

(Source: space.com)

Two fungal species — one pathogenic, one benign — are actually the same

Two species of yeast, one of which is used in the biotechnology and food industries to make bioethanol and sourdough bread, while the other causes yeast infections, have been found to be one and the same, according to research. And, the researchers report, fungi from both settings are similarly resistant to antifungal drugs.

The "authors note in the discussion that this suggests that working with this species in an industrial setting may pose a risk of infection to some individuals, that is those who are immunocompromised," writes Christina Cuomo, the group leader for the Fungal Genomics Group at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard who was not involved in this study, in an email to *The Scientist*.

Clinically, the yeast goes by the name of *Candida krusei* and is responsible for 2 percent of invasive candidiasis infections globally. This species is naturally resistant to the first line of treatment against yeast infections usually employed by doctors: fluconazole.

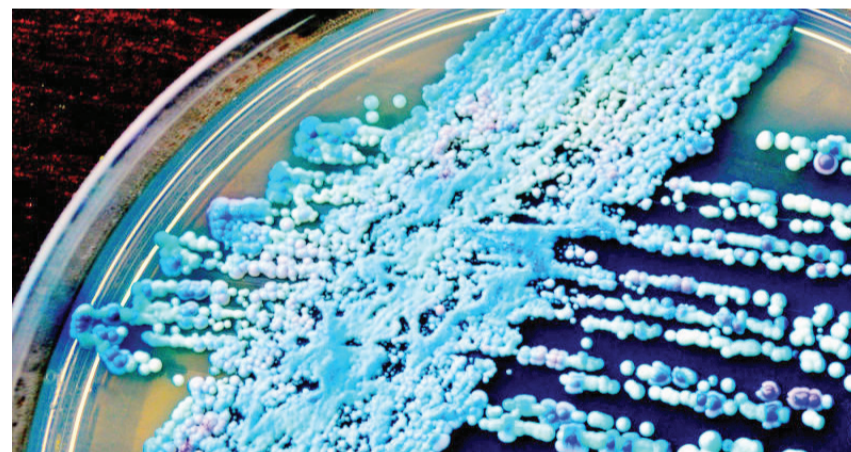
The frequency of infections

The "frequency of infections with non-albicans *Candida* species that are naturally

resistant to antifungal drugs such as fluconazole are on the rise," writes Anja Forche, who studies a different species, *C. albicans* at Bowdoin College and was not involved in this research, in an email to *The Scientist*. In immunocompromised individuals who fall victim to yeast infections, fluconazole use leaves behind only resistant species such as *C. krusei*.

"It is important to study *C. krusei* because population increase, climate change, and closer ties than ever between countries, makes the spread of fungi and the emergence of novel fungal pathogens ... and its spread across the globe, an ever present possibility," writes Erwin Lamping, who studies *C. krusei* at the University of Otago in New Zealand and was not involved in this work, in an email to *The Scientist*.

In 1980, Cletus Kurtzman, known as the father of modern yeast taxonomy, and his colleagues claimed that *C. krusei* was merely the asexual form of a known sexual species, *Pichia kudriavzevii*. The latter is considered safe by U.S. Food & Drug Administration standards and is traditionally used to make a number of fermented foodstuffs and craft beers.



The biotechnology industry also uses the yeast to make bioethanol and other chemicals used in the laboratory.

Nevertheless, for decades, scientists have considered them different species. "Candida is simply an old name for any yeast species that doesn't have a sexual cycle or where you can't observe a sexual cycle," says coauthor Kenneth Wolfe, a professor of genomic

(Source: the-scientist.com)

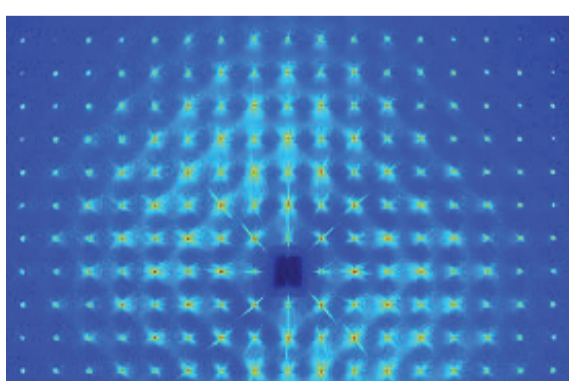
Scientists answer long-held questions about relaxor ferroelectrics

The properties of a solid depend on the arrangement of its atoms, which form a periodic crystal structure. At the nanoscale, arrangements that break this periodic structure can drastically alter the behavior of the material, but this is difficult to measure. Recent advances by scientists at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Argonne National Laboratory are starting to unravel this mystery.

Using state-of-the-art neutron and synchrotron X-ray scattering, Argonne scientists and their collaborators are helping to answer long-held questions about a technologically important class of materials called relaxor ferroelectrics, which are often lead-based. These materials have mechanical and electrical properties that are useful in applications such as sonar and ultrasound. The more scientists understand about the internal structure of relaxor ferroelectrics, the better materials we can develop for these and other applications.

The dielectric constants of relaxor ferroelectrics, which express their ability to store energy when in an electric field, have an unusual dependence on the frequency of the field. Its origin has long been a mystery to scientists.

Relaxor ferroelectrics can also have exceedingly high piezoelectric properties, which means that when mechanically strained they develop an internal electric field, or, conversely, they expand or contract in the presence of an external electric field. These properties make relaxor ferroelectrics useful



in technologies where energy must be converted between mechanical and electrical.

Non lead-based materials

Because lead is toxic, scientists are trying to develop non-lead-based materials that can perform even better than the lead-based ferroelectrics. To develop these materials, scientists are first trying to uncover what aspects of the relaxor ferroelectric's crystal structure cause its unique properties.

Although the structure is orderly and predictable on average, deviations from this order can occur on a local, or

nanoscale level. These breaks in the long-range symmetry of the overall structure play a crucial role in determining the material's properties.

This shows the asymmetry of the butterfly-shaped scattering, which Argonne scientists found was strongly correlated with piezoelectric behavior.

"We understand the long-range order very well, but for this experiment we developed novel tools and methods to study the local order," said Argonne senior physicist Stephan Rosenkranz.

Scientists from Argonne and the National Institute of Standards and Technology, along with their collaborators, studied a series of lead-based ferroelectrics with different local orders, and therefore different properties.

Using new instrumentation designed by Argonne scientists that is able to provide a much larger and more detailed measurement than previous instruments, the team studied the diffuse scattering of the materials, or how the local deviations in structure affect the otherwise more orderly scattering pattern.

Previous researchers have identified a certain diffuse scattering pattern, which takes the shape of a butterfly, and associated it with the anomalous dielectric properties of relaxor ferroelectrics.

(Source: phys.org)

Neurons can carry more than one signal at a time: new study

New research shows that neurons in the brain can carry two signals at once, using a strategy similar to multiplexing in telecommunications. The results may explain how the brain processes complex information from the world around us, and may also provide insight into some of our perceptual and cognitive limitations.

Back in the early days of telecommunications, engineers devised a clever way to send multiple telephone calls through a single wire at the same time. Called time-division multiplexing, this technique rapidly switches between sending pieces of each message.

New research from Duke University shows that neurons in the brain may be capable of a similar strategy.

In an experiment examining how monkeys respond to sound, a team of neuroscientists and statisticians found that a single neuron can encode information from two different sounds by switching between the signal associated with one sound and the signal associated with the other sound.

The "question we asked is, how do neurons preserve information about two different stimuli in the world at one time?" said Jennifer Groh, professor in the department of psychology and neuroscience, and in the department of neurobiology at Duke.

"We found that there are periods of time when a given neuron responds to one stimulus, and other periods of time where it responds to the other," Groh said. "They seem to be able to alternate between each one."

The results may explain how the brain processes complex information from the world around us, and may also provide insight into some of our perceptual and cognitive limitations.

(Source: Science Daily)

Geologists have finally defined a new chapter in Earth's history

After years of debate, the current geological epoch has finally been cut into three sections.

While some geologists clearly think it's a justified change, others feel the move was premature and deserved further discussion.

The International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) recently ratified the division of the Holocene into the Meghalay, Northgrippian, and Greenlandian ages after siding with arguments that there were clear signs of a global change in the geological record.

This is the crux of the issue: scientists describe our planet's history according to important events affecting our planet's chemistry. Depending on which events are deemed the most impactful, the periods can be further broken down into smaller stages.

For example, a spike in iridium levels laid down in rock strata across the planet roughly 66 million years ago aligned with the end of the reign of the dinosaurs. This was enough to convince geologists to close the chapter on a period known as the Cretaceous and open a new one called the Paleogene.

Right now we're in a period called the Quaternary, which is itself divided into two epochs – the Pleistocene and today's Holocene.

The Holocene stands out as a time of warming following the end of the last glaciation event just over 11,500 years ago, when the stage was set for agriculture and civilization to develop.

Until now, our epoch has had no further subdivisions. Signs of a global drought that kicked off roughly 4,200 years ago have forced a rethink on whether that should continue to be the case.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Upgraded very large telescope captures Neptune in stunning detail

A newly released image of the planet Neptune shows just how far telescope technology has come in recent years. This view of Neptune is almost impossibly clear compared with past attempts, thanks to a recent upgrade to the Very Large Telescope (VLT) at the European Southern Observatory (ESO) in Chile. You can actually make out cloud patterns on Neptune with the upgraded VLT, which is something even Hubble can't do.



You're probably thinking this image doesn't look all that clear. Indeed, there are crisper snapshots of the outermost planet, but those came from NASA's Voyager 2 during its 1989 flyby. There are no spacecraft in orbit of Neptune, so the only way to get new images of the gas giant is to capture them from 2.9 billion miles away on Earth.

Until now, Hubble was the best way to look at Neptune, but the planet is rather small and dim compared with most of the objects Hubble surveys. The comparison image below shows how much better the new VLT is for observing objects like Neptune compared with Hubble.

The Very Large Telescope consists of four separate 8.2 meter (27 foot) mirrors. That's a lot of surface area to scan the sky, but Earth's atmosphere distorts celestial objects. That's why space telescopes like Hubble and the upcoming James Webb are so important. The ESO developed a new adaptive optics mode based on laser tomography to counteract that. The system consists of MUSE (Multi Unit Spectroscopic Explorer) and an optical unit called GALACSI.

Using adaptive optics with the VLT is like giving it eyeglasses that correct for atmospheric distortion. In order to correct the blur, you need to know how much the atmosphere is distorting light. The VLT projects four high-intensity lasers into space, which act like an artificial star.

(Source: extremetech.com)

Iranian scientists claim to develop cure for epilepsy

SOCIETY TEHRAN — A team of Iranian scientists has claimed to produce an effective cure for epilepsy using three medicinal herbs, ISNA reported on Friday.

"Medications used to treat epilepsy such as phenobarbital have side effects and should be taken regularly for life," the project manager Reza Mazloum Farsibaf, has said.

Common side effects of phenobarbital include dizziness, drowsiness, problems with memory or concentration, irritability, aggression, confusion (especially in children or older adults), loss of balance or coordination, headache, tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, or constipation as your body adjusts to the medication.

According to WebMD today, most epilepsy is treated with medication, however, drugs do not cure epilepsy and they can just control seizures very well. About 80% of people with epilepsy today have their seizures controlled by medication at least some of the time. Of course, that means that 20% of people with epilepsy are not helped by medication.

However, as Farsibaf and his team claim, the new medication, called Fenosh, can help the patient to get rid of their disease for good.

Farsibaf has explained that the drug is made up of three herbal medicines, but he didn't elaborate on the type or name of the medicines.

"Almost all medications used for treatment of epilepsy are chemical-based and they normally fail to be effective after some time and doctors are forced to either replace them with another drug or increase the dose," he noted.

The project manager also noted that laboratory studies (in vitro) and tests on animals, has shown that the experimental drug is considered safe and effective.

Trials have shown that the medication will cure all types of epilepsy within 6 to 12 months, he highlighted, adding that after obtaining necessary permits from Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences the clinical trials are being carried out and are nearing the end.

He said that the medication, which is believed to have no side effects, will be mass-produced by the next [Iranian calendar] year (starting March 21, 2019).

World Health Organization reported that epilepsy, a chronic disorder of the brain that affects people of all ages, has affected approximately 50 million people worldwide. The disease is one of the most common neurological diseases globally.

Nearly 80% of the people with epilepsy live in low- and middle-income countries and about three-fourths of people with epilepsy living in low- and middle- income countries do not get the treatment they need.

Sadly in many parts of the world, people with epilepsy and their families suffer from stigma and discrimination.

Should the Iranian scientist manage to develop the cure for epilepsy successfully they would do a great service to the world.

'Iran's scientists uncrushed by decades of sanctions'

➔ "After the imposed war in 1980-88 and decades of Western sanctions, Iran has made remarkable advances in research, ranking 17th in the world in 2012. The JCPOA did not have much impact on scientific productivity,

in part because many U.S. sanctions remained in place. These continued to affect the purchase of books, journals, lab equipment and materials; the payment of publication charges; membership of scientific bodies; and travel to conferences and meetings. Furthermore, the U.S. treasury department clamped down on publication in U.S. journals of papers from Iranian government scientists.

"In the face of Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA, I hope that the international scientific community will support Iran's efforts to contribute further to international science," he concluded.

LEARN ENGLISH

Aliens!

A: Oh honey, this is so romantic! I have never seen so many stars before! It's beautiful!

B: See that **constellation** there? That's Orion! And the very bright star? Well, it's not a star since it doesn't **blink**. That's actually Venus. A: What's that big flashy one?

B: I don't know... I think it's a **UFO**!

C: Greetings **earthlings**. I come **from afar**, from a distant **galaxy** known only to a few.

A: Why are you here? Where did you come from?

C: We have been observing you for the last three thousand years. We have seen the amazing capacity that humans have to create such **wonders** as the Taj Mahal or **masterpieces** such as the Hefner symphony. Unfortunately, your intelligence and creativity does not come without consequence. Your **ambition** and desire for more will be your **downfall**, and we are here to save your planet from you. B: You think you have us **figured out**? What gives you the right to come and judge us? Who are you to **play God** with our fate?

C: Silence human! It is that **belligerent** attitude that has caused years of pain and **anguish** among yourselves! Now you will pay the price!

Key vocabulary

constellation: a particular shape formed by a group of stars

blink: produce light every several seconds

UFO: unidentified flying object

earthlings: human beings that live on earth

from afar: from a long distance

galaxy: any of numerous large-scale collections of stars, gas, and dust that make up the visible universe.

wonder: a monumental human creation that is amazing

masterpiece: wonderful pieces of work

ambition: the desire to achieve more

downfall: something that brings failure

figure out: completely understand; comprehend

play God: decide the fate of someone or something

belligerent: angry, aggressive, wanting to fight

anguish: very strong and terrible physical or mental pain; torment

Supplementary vocabulary

hoax: an event when people do something to play a joke on or fool others

astronomy: the study of the stars and space

supernatural: unable to be explained by science

flying saucer: a name for a UFO

188,000 ha under cultivation of medicinal plants in Iran

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Medicinal plants are cultivated on some 188,000 hectares of lands in Iran, said an official with the Ministry of Agriculture.

Javad Mirarab made the remarks on the sidelines of the first national festival of Gilan province's medicinal plants held in the Islamic Azad University of Astara on July 19-20, IRNA reported on Thursday.

The festival aimed at commercializing medicinal plants in the city of Astara, with attendance of university professors, business and government officials and foreign participants. Presenting the modern knowledge and experiences, also the latest scientific achievements in cultivation, harvesting and export of medicinal plants in the climatic conditions of Gilan province and Astara were also among the objectives of the event.

Out of 188,000 hectares under cultivation of medicinal herbs, some 107,000 hectares of lands are growing saffron and some 20,000 hectares are producing Damask rose, Mirarab explained.

According to the sixth five-year national development plan (2016-2021), a total of 100,000 hectares area of land across the country is allocated for the cultivation of medicinal plants, he said, adding that in-



Increased production of medicinal herbs is also among the major policies of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Last year, nearly 7 trillion rials (about

\$163 million) has been allotted to production of medicinal plants, he stated.

He went on to say that exports of the aforesaid medicinal plants brought \$450

million for Iran last year, and saffron with a value of \$325 million constituted the largest share of exports.

Some 780 hectares of farm lands in Gilan is under cultivation of medicinal herbs, and some 540 hectares are growing borage, he mentioned.

The Ministry of Agriculture supports the knowledge-based companies and investors of medicinal plants sector, he concluded.

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

Global herbal market size is estimated approximately \$72 billion which is predicted to reach \$7 trillion by 2050. Medicinal plants are used in various industries which are worth around \$80 billion.

Europe is the largest herbal product market valued at \$7.5 billion and has 40% market share. China has the highest number of medicinal plants and also is the leader in export of medicinal plants globally having 15% sharing global export under this category.

\$1.1m earmarked for rehabilitation of buses in Tehran



SOCIETY TEHRAN — Tehran Municipality has allocated a total budget of 50 billion rials (nearly \$1.1m) to rehabilitate Tehran's bus transport fleet, Tehran bus operating company's director general has said.

A weekly meeting is organized to be held aiming at reducing emissions produced by buses in the capital, Mehr quoted Peyman Sanandaji as saying on Wednesday.

It is scheduled that all busses running in Tehran would receive vehicle inspection certificates by September 23, he stated.

In the aforesaid meeting a budget of 50 billion rials (nearly \$1.1m) is anticipated to be allocated for renovating clunker buses in public transportation system, he further added.

Referring to the meeting held with the Industrial Development & Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO), he said that an agreement has been reached at the meeting [regarding rehabilitation of the old public transport system].

According to a law approved by the cabinet relating to purchasing new buses, it has been planned that some 50 percent of the total costs of buses must be covered by the government, and the rest will be paid by the owner, Sanandaji explained, adding that owners can also receive loans which will cover 30 percent of the buses' total price.

Since July 17, bus owners can register on the Ministry of the Interior's website so that the public transport buses rehabilitation process goes into effect, he concluded.

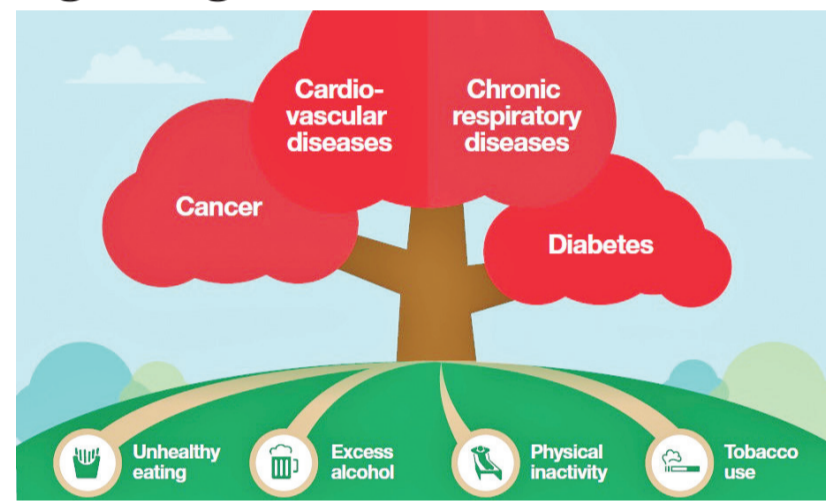
Tehran is fed up with air pollution, which occurs when harmful or excessive quantities of substances including gases, particulates, and biological molecules are introduced into Earth's atmosphere.

Among numerous reasons behind air pollution the transport sector, mainly buses operating on fossil fuels, can be deemed as one of the guilty parties.

Globally transportation accounts for about 21 percent of greenhouse gasses. The International Energy Agency (IEA) has predicated that transport sector emissions of carbon dioxide will increase by 92 percent between 1990 and 2020. Most importantly the age of the transport fleet, the technology used within it and the extent to which such vehicles are maintained as well as the availability of appropriate fuel can decide the amount of emission attributed to the transport sector.

According to news pieces quoted from various health or environmental officials over 70 percent of pollutants in Iran's capital, Tehran, is produced by clunker buses. In a press conference held on January 13 in Tehran, deputy environment chief Masoud Tajrishi said that some 97 percent of buses in Tehran are old.

Prevention and control of NCDs high on agenda: minister



SOCIETY TEHRAN — Prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is high on agenda for the Ministry of Health and "we" should educate and empower people to decrease the diseases, Health Minister Hassan Qazizadeh-Hashemi has said.

With regard to the fact that the NCDs are among the most serious health conditions worldwide, their prevalence and the economic costs they incur on each nation, controlling them must be a high priority, IRNA quoted Qazizadeh-Hashemi as saying on Thursday.

Necessary arrangement to address NCDs are made in the country, however, universities of medical sciences should be determined to implement the plans, he highlighted.

He went on to say that some 15 percent of the expenditures in health sector are relating to diabetes, while by launching control and prevention plans public health status will increase and the costs will drop.

The minister further regretted that one-fourths of Iranians are suffering high blood pressure which is shocking.

"If we succeed in controlling the disease we have done a great service to the country," he suggested.

As per the figures published on World Health Organization website, NCDs kill 41 million people each year which is equiva-

lent to 71% of all deaths globally.

Each year, 15 million people die from a NCD between the ages of 30 and 69 years and over 85% of these premature deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries.

Cardiovascular diseases account for most NCD deaths, or 17.9 million people annually, followed by cancers (9.0 million), respiratory diseases (3.9million), and diabetes (1.6 million). The four aforesaid diseases account for over 80% of all premature NCD deaths.

Tobacco use, physical inactivity, the harmful use of alcohol and unhealthy diets all increase the risks of dying from a NCD.

Detection, screening and treatment of NCDs, along with palliative care, are key components of the response to NCDs.

IraPEN is the Islamic Republic of Iran's adaptation of WHO's PEN (package of essential non-communicable) disease interventions for primary health care. IraPEN was launched in 2014 by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, to provide universal health coverage, including access to NCD prevention and care, and mental health services.

Within the framework of IraPEN health workers show Iranians how to deal with their conditions, provide access to affordable medicines, and guidance on practicing healthy habits, like regular exercise and healthy diet to control their blood sugar.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

11 state-run cochlear implant centers active in Iran

Eleven governmental cochlear implant centers are currently active in Iran, said the head of the department of hearing health affiliated with the Ministry of Health.

Out of the 11 governmental cochlear implant centers active in the country, 4 are located in Tehran, Fars quoted Saeed Mahmoudian as saying.

Cochlear implantation costs about 400 million rials (nearly \$9,000) in Iran, which is partially paid by the government and charitable foundations, he said. Also, cochlear implant for people struggling financially will be done at lower costs, he added.

۱۱ مرکز دولتی کاشت حلزون در کشور وجود دارد

رئیس اداره سلامت گوش و شنوایی وزارت بهداشت از وجود ۱۱ مرکز دولتی کاشت حلزون در کشور خبر داد.

به گزارش خبرگزاری فارس، سعید محمودیان اظهار داشت: در حال حاضر ۱۱ مرکز دولتی کاشت حلزون در کشور وجود دارد که چهار مرکز آن در تهران است.

محمودیان گفت: هزینه کاشت حلزون بالغ بر ۴۰۰ میلیون تومان است که در حال حاضر بخشی از آن توسط دولت و بخشی توسط بنیادهای خیریه پرداخت می‌شود. همچنین درمان برخی از افراد که عدم تمکن مالی دارند با هزینه اندکی صورت می‌گیرد.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"chiro-, cheiro-"

■ **Meaning:** hand

■ **For example:** Much of the day in the life of a **chiropractor** is spent seeing patients.

PHRASAL VERB

Horse around/about

■ **Meaning:** to play roughly; horseplay

■ **For example:** Stop horsing around, you'll break something!

IDIOM

In cahoots with someone

■ **Explanation:** to work in close partnership, usually conspiring to do something dishonest

■ **For example:** There was a rumor that the Mayor was in cahoots with a chain of supermarkets.

Syria moves to retake control over Golan Heights from terrorists

The government of the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has started operations to evacuate terrorists from areas near the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights through yet another surrender deal.

A group of buses arrived in Syria's south-western Quneitra Province on Friday to transfer anti-government terrorist groups that agreed to lay down arms earlier this week, the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported.

The deal, brokered by Russia this week, would see the terrorists hand over the territory they control in Quneitra in exchange for a safe passage to northern Syria for those who refused to live under government control.

Quneitra is a thin, crescent-shaped province wedged between the buffer zone with Israel to the west and the Syrian province of Dara'a to the east. The area bears a critical strategic significance as it borders Jordan, Lebanon and the Israeli-occupied side of the Golan Heights.

Since June 19, the Syrian army has been conducting a major counter-terrorism operation in both Dara'a and Quneitra provinces.

The operation has already led to the liberation of more than 90 percent of Dara'a and several key areas in Quneitra, even though as many as 140,000 people are believed to be still living there, according to the United Nations.

Israel has been on high alert in recent days as Syrian government forces advanced against foreign-backed terrorists near the Golan Heights.

The regime seized 1,200 square kilometers of Golan from Syria in 1967 and later annexed it - a move that the international community still refuses to recognize.

While Damascus has been able to retake large parts of the country through similar deals with the terrorists, it remains to be



seen whether it can keep negotiating evacuation deals as it moves further north, where the situation is way more complicated due to the presence of Turkish forces, Kurdish militants and 2,000 United States troops on the ground.

U.S., allies scramble to evacuate White Helmets

Meanwhile, the U.S. and its Western allies are reportedly closing in on an agreement for a two-stage evacuation process to transfer hundreds of White Helmet "volunteer" aid workers out of Syria.

Two officials familiar with the plans said on Thursday that the U.S., Britain and Canada were putting the finishing touches on a deal that would first place the workers in Syria's neighboring countries and would then take them to third countries, including Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and possibly Canada.

The White Helmets was founded in Tur-

key in 2013 by former British MI5 officer James Le Mesurier.

Since its establishment, the group has received at least \$55 million from the British Foreign Office, \$23 million or more from the U.S. Office of Transition Initiatives and untold millions from Qatar.

Both Damascus and Moscow have accused the volunteer group of having staged the suspected chemical weapons attack in the town of Douma in Syria's Eastern Ghouta region on April 7.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad described the White Helmets as "a branch of al-Qaeda and al-Nusra" militant groups and a "PR stunt" by the U.S., Britain and France.

With war over, life trickles back into Syria's Harasta

Elsewhere, the Syrian government has undertaken a fast-paced and determined reconstruction push in the city of Harasta in the capital Damascus' suburbs which

was in the hands of the terrorists for the past few years.

The city lies in the Damascus countryside of Eastern Ghouta, which was liberated back in March after months of Russia-backed counter-terrorism operations.

Given its proximity to the capital, Eastern Ghouta soon became a prime bastion of the foreign-backed terrorists, when they began their campaign of bloodshed and destruction against the country in 2011. They kept a grip on the countryside for some five years.

Most of the residents of the city of 250,000 left after the start of the war, leaving behind only 15,000.

Domestic and international media outlets have, however, been reporting how the citizens have been trickling back to reclaim their businesses and properties.

On Thursday, AFP said the returnees had begun dumping the rubble from their damaged houses onto main streets before it could be taken away by government vehicles.

Adnan Wezze, who heads the town council running Harasta since the recapture by the government, said authorities were working fast to demolish buildings "at risk of collapse, because they present a public safety threat".

About the yet-unclaimed structures, he said if the owners were not present, "their rights are still protected. We've requested proof of property even before areas are designated as development projects."

"No resident of Harasta will lose his rights - whether they're here or in exile," the official added.

Many urban hubs across Syria, particularly around Damascus, have been hard-hit by hostilities, and President Bashar Assad said this month that rebuilding would be his "top priority," according to AFP.

(Source: agencies)

Merkel insists U.S. ties key to Germany despite Trump tensions

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, vowing to stay in office despite challenges at home and abroad, said she would work on Germany's "under pressure" relationship with the United States but that Washington could no longer be relied on to deliver world order.

In a wide-ranging news conference, Merkel described Germany's relationship with the United States as "crucial", even after the United States President Donald Trump last week accused Berlin of being a "captive" of Russia due to its energy reliance.

Merkel, 64, is facing criticism at home and abroad as she tries to hold together her fractious coalition dogged by fighting over immigration policy while also dealing with Trump and a raft of foreign policy challenges including Brexit.

Last week, Trump said Germany was wrong to support an \$11-billion Baltic Sea pipeline to import even more Russian gas while being slow to meet targets for NATO



(North Atlantic Treaty Organization) spending - a decision he described as "a horrific thing".

Asked about her working relationship with Trump, Merkel said: "One can say that the values, or our usual

framework, are under strong pressure at the moment."

"However, the transatlantic working relationship, including with the U.S. president, is crucial for us and I will carry on cultivating it," she added.

Merkel, a conservative who grew up in Communist East Germany, welcomed Trump's invitation to Russian President Vladimir Putin to meet in Washington this autumn and said it should become normal again for the U.S. and Russian leaders to meet.

But she added that she had been right to say a year ago that Europe could no longer rely on the United States to impose order on the world, and that it needed to take matters close to home into its own hands.

"We can't rely on the superpower of the United States," Merkel said, describing possible U.S. tariffs on imported cars as "a real threat to the prosperity of many in the world".

(Source: Daily Star)

U.S. officials cancel West Bank visit after Palestinian protest

American officials have been forced to cancel a visit to a Palestinian bureau and a nearby town in Israeli-occupied West Bank after protests by Palestinian factions.

The officials from the United States Consulate General in al-Quds (Jerusalem) were expected to visit the offices of the Palestine Securities Exchange offices in the city of Nablus in northern West Bank and tour the town of Sebastiya.

On Thursday, however, Nasr Abu Jish, a senior official with the Palestinian People's Party, told the Palestinian Ma'an news agency that the visits had been called off after representatives of various Palestinian factions protested outside those offices.

Abu Jish said the Palestinians were opposed to the visit because of the United States administration's "bias" in favor of Israel as well as "attempts to impose the 'Deal of the Century' on them."

The Deal of the Century is the namesake of an initiative by the U.S. President Donald Trump to end decades of conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. It is yet to be unveiled.

According to an Israeli intelligence website, the initiative envisages the establishment of a Palestinian state with limited sovereignty over around half of the West Bank and would also designate the town of Abu Dis, east of al-Quds, as the capital of Palestine.

Trump's son-in-law and his senior adviser Jared Kushner and Jason Greenblatt, the president's special adviser for international negotiations, are reportedly the main architects of the plan.

Trump's era has been marked by unprecedented pro-Israeli moves, which saw him recognize al-Quds (Jerusalem) as Israel's "capital" late last year.

Following the move, the Palestinian Authority

stopped recognizing Washington's role in "peace" negotiations. It has also been boycotting the U.S. administration officials ever since.

The ruling Fatah faction has also voiced opposition to visits by any representative of the U.S. administration to the West Bank.

The Fatah party, which is headquartered in the West Bank, meanwhile, said in a statement that it would take "legal and popular action" against any Palestinian institution that defied the boycott of the U.S. administration officials.

"Receiving any representative of the U.S. administration is rejected and is a deviation from the national will," it said.

The Nablus protest, the party said, took place against Trump's plan and "all conspiracies being concocted against the Palestinian cause."

Palestinians demolish homes in East al-Quds not to see settlers move in

Elsewhere, two Palestinian families have demolished their homes in a village on the outskirts of the Israeli-occupied East al-Quds (Jerusalem), saying they would rather destroy them than face the prospect of Israeli settlers moving in.

Locals said the two families watched as bulldozers demolished their four homes in the Beit Hanina neighborhood on Thursday while friends and neighbors watched on a hillside as dust rose into the air.

Witnesses said that two mechanical diggers smashed through the ceilings, walls and floors of the two buildings for two hours in the area.

The families argued they had bought the plots in good faith and believed they were the rightful owners.

The demolition came after Israel's Supreme Court ruled in January that the land on which the homes were constructed had

been under Jewish ownership since 1974 and that documents presented by the Palestinian families to support their claims had been forged.

Tel Aviv has been occupying the West Bank, including East al-Quds (Jerusalem), since taking the Palestinian territory by force in 1967. Ever since the occupation, it has been building settlements throughout the land in a move condemned by the United Nations and considered illegal under international law, which bans construction on occupied territory. More than half a million Israelis live in over 230 illegal settlements built over the past decades.

The continued expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestine territories has created a major obstacle to the efforts to establish peace in the Middle East.

The Palestinian Authority wants the West Bank as part of a future independent Palestinian state with East al-Quds (Jerusalem) as its capital.

Israeli airstrike kills young Palestinian man in southern Gaza Strip

Meantime, at least one Palestinian man lost his life and three others sustained injuries when an Israeli fighter jet launched an airstrike against an area in the southern part of the Gaza Strip as Tel Aviv continues with its acts of aggression against the impoverished coastal sliver.

The spokesman for the Gaza Ministry of Health, Ashraf al-Qidra, said in a statement that 22-year-old Abdel-Karim Radwan succumbed to his severe injuries at the European Gaza Hospital on Thursday afternoon.

Local sources, requesting anonymity, said the Israeli aircraft fired a missile at a group of young people near Sufa area, which is located southeast of the border town of Rafah. Four young Palestinian men were

injured as a result and one of them later died from his injuries.

The Israeli military later confirmed it had carried out the airstrike, claiming that it targeted members of the Hamas resistance movement who were about to launch incendiary balloons over the border into occupied territories.

Nearly 145 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces ever since the "Great March of Return" began in the Gaza Strip on March 30.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Source: Press TV)

Tourist boat capsizes in Missouri killing 13

At least 13 people have died after a boat carrying tourists sank during stormy weather in the United States state of Missouri, according to local police.



The vessel was carrying 31 people when it capsized on Thursday in Table Rock Lake, near the town of Branson, leaving another seven people hospitalized and six others missing, Stone County Sheriff Doug Rader told reporters late on Thursday.

Two bodies were located by a search team on Friday morning. Four people remain missing.

Emergency crews responded to the incident shortly after 7pm (00:00 GMT), with divers deployed to assist in the search for those still missing, Rader said.

The incident occurred around the time local weather warnings were issued due to powerful thunderstorms rolling through the area. Video footage captured from the lake's shore showed two amphibious vessels, known as duck boats for their ability to operate on land and water, struggling to move through waves.

One of the boats made it safely to shore, according to Rader. Rick Kettels, owner of a local business on the shores of the lake, told AFP news agency the storm appeared out of nowhere.

Local authorities opened Branson City Hall on Thursday evening to victims of the incident and relatives of those affected. The National Transportation Safety Board was to send a team early on Friday to investigate the incident, the agency said.

Branson, Missouri, is a vacation destination popular for its theatres and country music.

The company Ripley Entertainment owns the capsized boat. A spokeswoman for the company said in a statement that the company would "do all we can to assist the families who were involved and the authorities as they continue with the search and rescue".

The winds on Table Rock Lake in Missouri picked up abruptly and dramatically as a thunderstorm rolled over the area.

The storm was part of a larger batch of severe weather that battered many parts of the United States on Thursday, from Minnesota to Arkansas. At least 33 tornadoes were reported. The majority of those were in Iowa, with other locations also being battered by large hail and strong straight-line winds as well. In many instances, the storms arrived suddenly, with little or no warning.

In Branson, which is just to the east of Table Rock Lake, the weather at 6:50pm was almost perfect for a pleasure boat ride, with gentle winds of just 9 kilometers per hour. However, just 20 minutes later, the winds were gusting to 86 km/h, and still increasing. By 7:30pm, winds of 102 km/h had been reported.

The severe weather had been forecast, but the sudden increase of winds still caught locals unawares.

(Source: agencies)

Drone attacks and UN burden: current state of suspended animation cannot last

Worse still, drones have become a normal part of the unlawful business of gathering intelligence and murdering civilians outside of those armed conflicts, and the United Nations is not doing anything about it. This is while there is no UN authorization for the bombings of Syria and Yemen and such attacks are set to increase in the future.

This kind of indifference and approach towards the international violations of the United States and its allies leaves an expanding oversight and accountability gap on the part of the UN. It makes the UN vulnerable to criminal liability in the US-led unlawful strikes that violate International Law.

It is time for the UN to wake up to the catastrophe in the Middle East. In the starkest possible terms, through its silence and inaction, and because of its inability to stop the lucrative global arms trade and implement the arms trade treaty, the world body is part of the problem.

The UN can and should exert concerted pressure on the US and a handful of NATO allies to suspend future licences for arms transfers to countries directly engaged in the Syria and Yemen conflicts. Such pressure in the past by the international civil society and human rights groups managed to finally draw the line for some Western governments, but that was not enough. Many past arms suspensions have often been short-lived and reversed when the pressure abated - and, crucially, arms under current deals are still being shipped to the Persian Gulf.

The UN can still make a difference though, because public opinion in the West still supports an end to the wars and arming Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the UAE. A growing legal and moral quandary now faces Western supplier countries that still pour weapons into the conflicts in the Middle East. Under the arms trade treaty, the UN has an obligation to force these Western supplier countries to halt the supply of their weapons as they are being used for serious violations of international human rights or humanitarian law.

The world body should also exert pressure on the US and its allies to stop their illegal drone attacks and end their wars of attrition in Syria and Yemen. The US-led coalition should not be allowed to further undermine the treaty's object and purpose, which includes reducing human suffering.

Endangering human life and murdering civilians for profit should be a universal crime. The burden rests with the UN and the world legal community and with the human-rights lobbies and non-governmental organizations. They can either persist in averting their gaze from the egregious impunity enjoyed by the notorious war criminals and lawbreakers led by the United States, or they can become seized by the exalted standards to which they continually hold other UN member states.

The current state of suspended animation cannot be allowed to last forever. If the courts and lawyers of the UN and those in The Hague refuse to do their duty, we shall be all put to shame.

U.S. foreign, defense chiefs to travel to Delhi for high-level talks

The United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis will travel to the Indian capital, New Delhi in September for high-level talks that were twice postponed this year, the Indian foreign ministry announced on Friday.

Political and military ties between the two countries have expanded in recent years but trade differences have arisen since the U.S. President Donald Trump took office in 2017.

New Delhi, which has sought to counter China's ex-

panding economic and military weight in the region, has also felt a lack of enthusiasm from Washington for ties that had been touted earlier as a "defining partnership".

Pompeo and Mattis will hold talks with India Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj and Defense Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sept. 6 in what is known as a 2+2 dialogue to drive political and military ties, the foreign ministry said.

The talks were set for this month in Washington but Pompeo had to travel to North Korea, forcing a postponement. They

were originally delayed from April while Pompeo went through confirmation hearings following the sacking of Rex Tillerson.

U.S. diplomats said this month Washington valued ties with India and that Pompeo and Mattis were ready to travel to New Delhi in a bid to placate India.

The United States has emerged as a top arms supplier to India as New Delhi modernizes its Soviet-era military, selling more than \$15 billion of weapons over the past decade.

(Source: Reuters)

Tokyo 2020 Olympics ticket prices unveiled

The organizers of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics unveiled domestic ticket prices for the Games on Friday ranging from less than \$18 up to \$2,760, the top rate for a place at the opening ceremony.

Tickets for many events start at the symbolic price point of 2,020 yen (\$17.96) but these are only for group sales, while the cheapest individual tickets will go on sale for 2,500 yen (\$22.23).

More than half of all tickets will be sold for less than 8,000 yen (\$71.15), according to organisers. The cheapest tickets are to be found for sports such as soccer, hockey and the marathon.

The Tokyo prices are roughly in line with those for the London Olympics in 2012 but are more expensive than Rio 2016, although fluctuating exchange rates make comparisons difficult.

At London 2012, the most expensive opening ceremony tickets cost \$2,618 at today's exchange rate.

As in previous Games, athletics is the most expensive event with the highest priced tickets coming in at 130,000 yen (\$156.12).

Tickets will go on sale in Japan in spring 2019. The pricing strategy for tickets to be sold internationally has not yet been announced.

(Source: Reuters)

Arbitration court overturns UEFA ban on AC Milan

The Court of Arbitration for Sport on Friday overturned a decision by European soccer body UEFA to ban AC Milan from next season's Europa League competition, saying the Italian club's finances had improved after a recent ownership change.

UEFA said last month that AC Milan did not meet a break-even requirement under its Financial Fair Play regulations, adding the club had not provided sufficient evidence of its financial stability.

Since then, U.S. hedge fund Elliott Management has taken control of the indebted soccer club from Chinese businessman Li Yonghong and promised to inject 50 million euros to help stabilise its finances.

Li bought the Serie A club last year from former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi with the help of Elliott, but then failed to repay the fund.

In a statement, the court said that UEFA was not able to consider some important elements at the time of its decision, "in particular that the current financial situation of the club was now better, following the recent change in the club's ownership".

It referred the case back to UEFA to "issue a new proportionate disciplinary measure on the basis of the current financial situation of the club".

(Source: Eurosport)

Fabregas begs Hazard to stay at Chelsea

Chelsea midfielder Cesc Fabregas has urged team mate Eden Hazard not to leave the Premier League club amid reports that the Belgium forward is bound for Real Madrid.

During the World Cup in Russia, Hazard revealed he was considering leaving the club he had joined from Lille in 2012 but Fabregas has begged him not to go.

"I think he's our best player," Fabregas said of his team mate after reaching Perth ahead of Monday's friendly against Perth Glory.

"We are a top club, we want to be a top team, we want to win things, and for that you need your best players. Eden is one of them."

"He's a player that we all love to play with, especially me. For us, he's our most important player."

"Everyone loves him -- the fans, the club, the players, and we need him. He knows that," the Spaniard added.

Monday's match is Chelsea's first under new coach Maurizio Sarri, who has promised an attacking brand of football and Fabregas cannot wait to see how it unfolds.

"It's a way of football that I believe in, that I really like, that I grew up in this system," the 31-year-old said.

"For the type of player like myself, we can take a lot of advantage."

(Source: Mirror)

Fabinho backs Liverpool to challenge Man City for title

New Liverpool midfielder Fabinho says the club have the depth and talent to challenge champions Manchester City for the Premier League title this season.

Liverpool's 84 league goals was bettered only by City last season but defensive inconsistency cost them dear as they finished fourth in the league and were beaten by Real Madrid in the Champions League final.

In addition to Brazilian Fabinho, manager Juergen Klopp has also added fellow midfielder Naby Keita, forward Xherdan Shaqiri and goalkeeper Alisson Becker to the squad.

"We have a very good team and we will be able to fight for the title ... I understand we have excellent players. We have an excellent manager and a very good group," Fabinho was quoted as saying by The Telegraph.

"I understand City are the champions and produced excellent football last season, but we will do our best to get the title from them and make everyone here happy."

Fabinho, who joined Liverpool on a long-term contract from AS Monaco in May, said he liked the club's style of play and hoped they would continue it for the upcoming season.

"When I became aware of Liverpool's interest I was very excited. I tried to focus on the end of the season with Monaco, but when you are aware of Liverpool's dimension is interested in your services, obviously it touches you," he said.

"I tried to play my best for my team, trying to come second in the French league, but obviously you think about it."

(Source: Reuters)

Ronaldo 'accepts two-year suspended prison sentence

Cristiano Ronaldo has paid the Spanish tax man £12.1million and accepted a two-year suspended prison sentence.

It appears the 33-year-old Juventus forward is wasting no time clearing debts and cutting all ties with Madrid and Spain following his transfer from Real to Juve. There are also suggestions he plans to pull his business interests out of the capital.

Spanish radio station Cadena Cope reported that Ronaldo has deposited the £12.1m and will also pay a further £4.7m in fines and costs. He will never have to serve the prison sentence because first offences for administrative crimes involving terms of two years or less are not custodial in Spain.

One of the primary reasons for leaving Spain has always been his anger at tax authorities for taking him to court for fiscal fraud and just one week after his departure to Italy he has wiped his debt with the treasury.

The player is also understood to have put his £4.8m Madrid mansion in the exclusive 'La Finca' neighbourhood on the market and is seriously contemplating closing all his business interests in the Spanish capital.

It is a dramatic cutting of ties that could include abandoning a hotel project in the city's emblematic avenue 'Gran Via'.

Ronaldo, in a joint venture with Portuguese company Pestana, had gained a building license earlier this year to convert one of Gran Via's historic buildings into a 160-room luxury hotel with roof-top bar but Portuguese media now say that project could be shelved.

Ronaldo has always protested his innocence against claims he wilfully deceived the Spanish treasury by not declaring image-rights earnings between 2011 and 2014.

He was furious at being treated like a criminal despite the fact he voluntarily made attempts to put his tax affairs in order in 2014 by making an extra payment of £5m.

He felt the prosecution's accusation was a result of a difference of interpretation of Spain's complicated tax laws on image rights and should not have resulted in criminal proceedings. He was determined to leave Spain last summer but ended up staying because Real Madrid refused to lower



his €1bn (£890m) release clause.

With the prospect of a new contract he then settled on staying in Spain and paying his tax debt, with the help of a new signing bonus, but when Madrid's contract offer arrived in January it did not meet his expectations.

This summer they were willing to bring his release clause down and with Juventus paying Real Madrid £100m he was able to leave. He will earn significantly more in Italy, not least because the tax situation will be far more favourable in Italy.

A new fiscal law allows tax contributors moving to Italy to pay as little as €100,000 (£89,000) in taxes on earnings made outside of the country -- something that will be of huge benefit because of his vast commercial income from

around the world.

Ronaldo earned £365,000-a-week at Real Madrid but is expected to take home closer to £500,000-a-week during his three-year deal with Juventus. According to Forbes, he earned an incredible £36million in endorsements on top of his Real Madrid wage in 2017. His fortune reached an estimated £306m as a result.

The head of the Spanish League, Javier Tebas, said this week: 'His net earnings will be higher in Italy than in Spain despite being paid the same gross salary. [On that basis] it was difficult for Madrid to compete with what Juventus were giving him.'

(Source: Daily Mail)

Neymar: I am staying at Paris Saint-Germain and want to win with them



Neymar has told ESPN Brasil he will stay at Paris Saint-Germain amid continuing speculation linking him with a move to Real Madrid.

Brazil star Neymar, who moved to PSG from Barcelona for a world-record fee of €222 million last summer, is reported to be a long term target for Madrid president Florentino Perez.

But he said he was targeting more trophies with the Ligue 1 champions and described speculation about his future as "invented."

"Yes, I will stay in Paris. I have a contract with PSG. The speculation? The majority of it is invented by the press," he said.

"I have a contract and people know the objective, the reason why I went to PSG. I want to win with this club and I hope this season will be wonderful."

Earlier this month, Madrid issued a statement denying that they were interested in making a move for Neymar.

Meanwhile, Neymar said Brazil's elimination from the World Cup against Belgium had been hard for him to take.

"My sorrow was big, it was a very tough

sadness -- the biggest I have had in my career. It has passed now, though," he said. "Now I have to think ahead, rest, and appreciate the time with my family, my girlfriend and do the things that make me happy."

"We take positive things from the World Cup. Of course the sadness is much greater because we knew we had the team and quality players [to win]. But for things that happens in football, we could not."

Addressing criticism that he had been guilty of diving during the tournament, Neymar said he would not change the way he played and was fouled "all the time."

"As for what they said about me, I have to take it playfully," he added. "I have always been like this, an athlete who always took things well."

"The way I play is always the same. It was not today that I started to be targeted. I started aged 17, suffering many fouls, many hard tackles. It is part of the game. My football is about dribbling and beating the opponent. I cannot say to him: 'Just let me score.'"

(Source: ESPN)

Tour director calls for calm after Alpe d'Huez incidents



Tour de France director Christian Prudhomme has called for calm after a number of incidents tarnished the 12th stage up to the iconic Alpe d'Huez on Thursday.

Italian Vincenzo Nibali sustained a fractured vertebra when he crashed about four kilometres from the top of the 13.8-km climb after being hit by what appeared to be either a spectator or a police motorbike.

The 2014 champion believed he may have touched a motorbike but television footage suggests he came into contact with a spectator on the right side of a narrow road that lacked barriers to protect the riders.

Defending champion Chris Froome, who has often been subjected to negative treatment from Tour de France fans, was booed all the way up to the summit and one spectator ran alongside the Briton before slapping him on the shoulder. The four-times champion's Sky team mate Geraint Thomas, who extended his overall lead with a stage victory, was also jeered at the podium ceremony, while Frenchman Romain Bardet narrowly avoided a collision with a fan lying on the road.

"I'm calling for serenity," Prudhomme told French radio station France Info on Friday

before the start of the 13th stage, a 169.5-km ride from Bourg d'Oisans to Valence.

Sky are quite unpopular in France, where their domination -- winning five of the last six Tours -- is reminiscent to that of disgraced Lance Armstrong's U.S. Postal team in the early 2000s.

Froome has often had to fend off doping allegations since he won his first Tour in 2013 and was cleared of an offence days before the start of this year's race after he was found to have excessive levels of an asthma drug during one stage at last year's Vuelta.

"I firmly condemn these incidents," added Prudhomme, who insisted that most of cycling fans were non-violent.

"Then we know it's always a bit special at Alpe d'Huez or on the Mont Ventoux. I want the fans to respect the riders. In cycling, you can support a rider without booing the others."

Prudhomme believes that the eight months the International Cycling Union (UCI) took to deal with Froome's salbutamol case intensified suspicion surrounding the Briton.

(Source: BBC)

Why Liverpool's record-breaking Alisson is the 'Keeper of the future'

It has stood for 17 years. But the 53m euros (£32.6m) Juventus paid Parma for Gianluigi Buffon in 2001 is no longer a world record fee for a goalkeeper.

Implicit in the length of time it lasted is the confidence Juventus had in Buffon becoming an all-time great. A once-in-a-lifetime talent. But as the game grew richer and richer, the longevity of the record has been the cause of some surprise.

If anything, it symbolised the enduring undervaluation of the goalkeeping position. Undervalued it is no more.

Liverpool's decision to invest up to 75m euros (£66.8m) in Alisson looks an expensive one, because it goes against the conventional wisdom. This is the kind of money clubs are supposed to invest in goalscorers. Not goalkeepers.

But, judging by Alisson's performances for Roma last season, it seems entirely fair. The Brazil international wasn't just considered the best player in his position in Serie A, but the best in any position, such as his influence on Roma's play and results.

Alisson didn't just stop goals. He set them up. He played defence-splitting passes, inch-perfect long balls, completed more dribbles than a whole host of outfield players, and embarrassed opposition strikers with backheels under pressure and a 'sombbrero' against Croton.

At no point did Alisson's tricks cause a quick intake of breath or create a sense of panic. His actions were not frivolous. They were essential. The right decision under the circumstances.

Watch Alisson perform any of the skills listed above and you will not see a showman with a professional death wish, but a self-assured goalkeeper who has earned the complete



trust of his team. "He's the goalkeeper of the future," Roma manager Eusebio di Francesco said. The evolution of the species in his position.

At least that is how Alisson is perceived in Serie A, where he distinguished himself as the most convincing interpreter of the sweeper-keeper role Italy has seen since Manuel Neuer made that style the benchmark by which goalkeepers are now judged.

Alisson rushed off his line and cleared the ball 41 times this season. To put that into perspective, the next best goalkeeper in Italy when it comes to sweeping was Pepe Reina -- he managed 20. Alisson proved crucial in enabling Roma to play with an aggressive high line in defence.

For all the attributes that mark Alisson out as a thoroughly modern goalkeeper, it is the old-fashioned stuff that makes him a traditionalist's favourite as well. Tall and broad shouldered, he has an imposing frame and can seem like

a magnet for the ball.

Alisson made 109 saves last season and was the only goalkeeper in Serie A with a shots saved percentage of 79% or higher. Limit that to attempts inside the box and his record is the best in Italy over the past five years.

More impressively, Opta's advance metrics show that given the quality of chances Alisson faced, the average goalkeeper would have conceded 36.31 goals. Alisson is no ordinary goalkeeper. He allowed just 28; a difference of eight, the biggest in Serie A.

As Roma and Edin Dzeko did not score as freely as they had done the previous season, his interventions assumed greater significance. Some were jaw-dropping.

Alisson's first Champions League game of the season set the tone for the rest of the campaign. Roma were out-played by Atletico Madrid but held out for a 0-0 draw thanks to a goalkeeper who made nine saves.

In October, he had to tell the pundits in the Sky Italia studio to leave the comparisons with Gordon Banks alone. Adam Masina, now of Watford, thought he had scored for Bologna, just as Pele believed he had netted for Brazil against England at the 1970 World Cup. But Alisson was able to dive and flick the ball up and over, stopping a certain goal.

Roma goalkeeper coach Marco Savorani deserves a great share of the credit in the blossoming of Alisson.

Savorani was also behind Wojciech Szczesny's progression. The former Arsenal goalkeeper came on leaps and bounds under his guidance, so much so that Juventus chose him to be Buffon's successor.

(Source: BBC)

Ashkan Dejagah on Tractor Sazi's radar

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran national football team captain Ashkan Dejagah has caught the eye of Iranian football club Tractor Sazi.

The 32-year-old midfielder was an unused substitute at the 2018 World Cup in Russia, where Team Melli narrowly finished third in Group B.

Dejagah is not fully fit after suffering knee injury in Nottingham Forrest's training in February. He made his debut as a sub for the championships side in their 2-0 defeat to his former club Fulham at Craven Cottage but was forced to undergo surgery on his injured knee.

Dejagah has previously linked with Tehran giants Esteghlal and Persepolis.

Tractor Sazi have completed the signing of two players, who have already played in English Premier League.

English midfielder Harry Lee Forrester and Irish Anthony Stokes have already experienced playing in Aston Villa and Sunderland respectively.

Dejagah, who has also played in Fulham from 2012 to 2014, is a target for ex-Real Madrid coach John Toshack.

The Welshman is going to make a splash in the summer transfer window.

The local media reports suggest that the former Wolfsburg midfielder is weighing up the offer.

Dejagah made his professional debut for Hertha BSC against VfL Bochum in the



opening match of the 2004-05 Bundesliga season, playing the last five minutes in a 2-2

home draw in his only first team appearance that year, thus becoming the youngest

player to ever play for the club since it was founded in 1892.

Iran B down Chinese Taipei White at William Jones Cup

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran B basketball team brushed aside Chinese Taipei White 102-56 at the 2018 William Jones Cup in Taiwan on Friday.

In the match held at the Xinzhuang Gymnasium in New Taipei City, Mohammad Torabi led the Iranian team with 18 points, while Chen Yu-jui was top scorer of Chinese Taipei White with 13 points.

Iran B, who have defeated LSU-Atletas from Lithuania 76-48, Japan B 78-61,

Chinese Taipei Blue 87-75, South Korea 80-69 and lost to 3D Global Sports 77-67 so far, will play Indonesia on Saturday.

Iran B sit second in Team Standing with 11 points, one point behind 3D Global Sports.

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

Algeria football federation denies Carlos Queiroz link

S P O R T S TEHRAN — The president of the Algerian Football Federation (FAF), Kheireddine Zetchi, said he has not contacted Iran current coach Carlos Queiroz.

The Portuguese has been reportedly a nominee to replace Rabah Madjer.

The Algerian football federation parted company with Madjer in early July following a poor run of results that saw the national team lose to Iran, Saudi Arabia, Cape Verde and Portugal in their last

four friendlies.

"We are negotiating with two coaches. The name of the future coach will be announced in early August," Zetchi said.

"personally, I did not contact Carlos Queiroz and I don't know who has contacted him," the FAF president added.

Former Japan coach Vahid Halilhodzic and Morocco head coach Herve Renard are reportedly candidates to take charge of Algerian football team.

Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic eyes ACL title

Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic hopes his team can end Iran's AFC Champions League drought.

Iran drew plaudits for its performances at the World Cup, and one of its biggest clubs, Persepolis, is looking to end the nation's AFC Champions League drought.

In one of the toughest groups in Russia, Iran pushed the likes of Spain and Portugal before narrowly finishing third. Continentally, an Iranian club last won the title — then the Asian Club Championship — in 1993, when PAS Tehran tasted success.

But, league champion Persepolis, led by former Iran coach Branko Ivankovic, is into the quarterfinals, facing Al-Duhail in the last eight. Esteghlal is also through and meets Al-Sadd.

Ivankovic is wary of his team's Qatari opponent, but hopes Persepolis can move into the semifinals. "Our opponents have shown that they might even be the best



team in the whole of Asia so far so the game will not be easy. In spite of this, we are still going for the victory," he told Omnisport.

Ivankovic has led Persepolis to back-to-back Persian Gulf Pro League titles, as well as the 2017 Iranian Super Cup. The 64-year-old former Croatia assistant said that a variety of factors had led to his team's consistent success.

"This is the third year already that we have been on top of the league, which is hard to do, because one of the hardest things is to achieve continuity, maintain this level of focus and concentration," Ivankovic said.

"The key to success is mainly hard work. There is no success without hard and persistent work. Other main thing is selection of players which is done based on quality, knowledge, eagerness, mentality and character."

(Source: Sportstarlive)

Iran Greco-Roman land Asian Junior team title

Iran capped off their Greco-Roman domination at the Asian Junior Championships by picking up two gold medals on the second day of competition at the I.G. Sports Complex in New Delhi, India.

On Tuesday, Iran inserted five wrestlers into the finals and grabbed four gold medals. Today, they followed that up by placing four additional wrestlers into the finals, winning two gold medals. In total, Iran placed nine of ten wrestlers in the Greco-Roman finals and took home an impressive six gold medals.

Hosein FOROUZANDEH GHOJEHBEIGLOU (IRI) and Amin KAVIYANINEJAD (IRI) were the two Iranian heroes who closed out the Greco-Roman portion of the tournament with gold medals. Both wrestlers used shutout victories to claim their second age-level continental championships.

Sajjad IMENTALABFOUMANI (IRI) was the lone Iranian who didn't make the Greco-Roman finals. Though he did not make the finals, he did save Iran's quest for ten medals, fighting back after a heartbreaking semifinal loss to win two straight matches and seal his spot in the third-place match. In the bronze medal bout, Imentalabfoumani blanked India's Malkit HOODA (IND), 7-0 and finished in third place.

Overall, Iran finished with 30 wins and only suffered four defeats. More impressive, they shutout twenty opponents and finished sixteen bouts with technical superiority victories.

RESULTS

TEAM SCORES
GOLD - Iran (225 points)
SILVER - Kazakhstan (147 points)
BRONZE - Kyrgyzstan (135 points)
Fourth - India (129 points)
Fifth - Uzbekistan (117 points)



■ **-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

■ **-60kg**
GOLD - Galym KABDUNASSAROV (KAZ) df. Ali Reza Ayat Ollah NEJATI (IRI), 10-2
BRONZE - Kazuki YABE (JPN) df. Hassan Mohammed M WADDAN (KSA), 10-0
BRONZE - Turabek TIRKASHEV (UZB) df. Talastan KANZHARBEK UULU (KGZ), 9-0

■ **-63kg**
GOLD - Bahram MAROUFKHANI IM-

CHEH (IRI) df. Kamol KUZIEV (UZB), 7-3
BRONZE - Tilek ASSEMBAYEV (KAZ) df. Seydylla TAZAYEV (TKM), 6-1
BRONZE - Eldiir SATAROV (KGZ) df. Delin WANG (CHN), 8-0

■ **-67kg**
GOLD - Merey BEKENOV (KAZ) df. IBRAGIMOV Khalmurat (KGZ), 9-0
BRONZE - Makhmud BAKHSHILLOEV (UZB) df. Xin HUANG (CHN), 3-2
BRONZE - Sajjad Ali IMENTALABFOUMANI (IRI) df. Malkit HOODA (IND), 7-0

■ **-72kg**
GOLD - Amin Yavar KAVIYANINEJAD (IRI) df. Bek Sultan NAZARBAEV (KGZ), 9-0
BRONZE - Bakhtovar KHASANOV (TJK)

df. Jueun JEONG (KOR), 9-0
BRONZE - Nao KUSAKA (JPN) df. Alijon KHUSEYNOV (UZB), 9-1

■ **-77kg**
GOLD - Sajjan 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

■ **-82kg**
GOLD - Hosein Jahanbakhsh FOROUZANDEH GHOJEHBEIGLOU (IRI) df. Azat SALIDINOV (KGZ), 5-0
BRONZE - Stanislav RYLSKIY (KAZ) df. Yudai SASAKI (JPN), 9-0
BRONZE - Inseob KIM (KOR) df. Muzafarbak KOMILJONOV (UZB), 7-6

■ **-87kg**
GOLD - Mohammadhadi Abdullah 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

■ **-97kg**
GOLD - Temur Mirzo MAMAJANOV (UZB) df. Vahid DADKHAH GHASEM ABADI (IRI), 3-1
BRONZE - SHERIMBEKOV Daniyar (KGZ) df. Akira YAMANAKA (JPN), 5-0
BRONZE - Viresh KUNDU (IND) df. Jeongyul KWON (KOR), 14-5

■ **-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)

Amirhossein Fathi named Esteghlal's acting president

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Amirhossein Fathi has been named as acting president of Esteghlal football club on Wednesday.

Fathi replaced Reza Eftekhari in Tehran-based football team. Eftekhari, who stepped down as General Manager of Esteghlal on Wednesday, was the target of considerable fan dissatisfaction due to his side's failure to challenge for the Iran Professional League title.

Under leadership of Eftekhari, 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.

Alireza Faghani invited to Uzbekistan

PLDC — Iran international referee Alireza Faghani and his assistants Reza Sokhandan and Mohammad Mansouri have been invited to Uzbekistan to officiate a match in the country's league.

In the 2018 World Cup, Faghani officiated four matches, namely Germany and Mexico, Serbia and Brazil, Argentina and France and Belgium and England and was fourth official of Uruguay and France match.

The Uzbekistan Football Federation has sent a letter to the Iranian federation and requested its counterpart to issue permission for the refereeing group to officiate in the country.

Faghani has previously officiated a football match in Thailand league.

Iran's Tractor Sazi sign two new players



TASNIM — Tractor Sazi football club of Iran have signed two new players for the new season of Iran Professional League (IPL).

Tractor Sazi are going to strengthen for the upcoming season under guidance of former Wales coach John Toshack.

The Tabriz-based football team have signed English player Harry Lee Forrester. The 27-year-old midfielder has joined Tractor Sazi on a two-year contract. Forrester has played in Aston Villa, Kilmarnock, Brentford, Doncaster Rovers, Rangers and AFC Wimbledon. Tractor Sazi has also penned a two-year contract with Irish striker Anthony Stokes.

The 29-year-old player has previously played for Falkirk, Sunderland, Sheffield United, Crystal Palace, Hibernian, Celtic and Apollon Smyrni.

Tractor Sazi finished in 10th place last season, 30 points behind champion Persepolis.

Hossein Mahini extends contract with Persepolis

PLDC — Hossein Mahini has signed a new contract which will keep him at Persepolis until 2021, the club confirmed.

Mahini, who had one year left on his current contract, has extended his contract for two more years.

Mahini has helped Persepolis win Iran Professional League back-to-back title. The 31-year-old winger has made 23 appearances for Iran national football team.

Mahini's extension is a big boost for Persepolis ahead of new season of the Iran Professional League since the Reds are not allowed to sign new player until January.

Ali Daei AFC Asian Cup top scorer

Iran's Ali Daei is the all-time top scorer in the AFC Asian Cup in all his participation.

Team Melli legend Daei leads this race with an impressive total of 14 AFC Asian Cup goals.

Daei was the top scorer in his maiden continental appearance in 1996, netting eight goals; a record for any player in a single AFC Asian Cup tournament. Half of Daei's goals in 1996 came in one match, against Korea Republic in the quarter-final as Iran won 6-2. He is one of just four players to have bagged four in one game to date. Four years later in Lebanon, Daei added three more goals, all in the group stage.

The iconic striker took his overall tally to 14 in 2004 when he was 35 years old. A goal against Thailand and a brace against Bahrain ensured the Iranian would hold this record for many years to come.

Daei's nearest chaser is Korea Republic's Lee Dong-gook who has 10 AFC Asian Cup goals to his name. Although Lee is still active at club level with Jeonbuk Hyundai Motor, the 39-year-old is unlikely to be part of the Taeguk Warriors' setup for UAE 2019. (Source: AFC)

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Doc on Asghar Farhadi's "Salesman" premieres in Tehran

A R T TEHRAN – "About the d e s k Salesman", a documentary on Asghar Farhadi's Oscar-winning drama "The Salesman", premiered at Tehran's Charsu Cineplex on Wednesday.

Directed and produced by Vahid Sedaqat and Tahmineh Monzavi, the documentary shows how the idea of "The Salesman" began to form and how the various stages of production were completed.

Farhadi, actor Farid Sajjad-Hosseini and a number of film critics attended the premiere of the documentary.

In a brief speech made before the screening, Farhadi said, "Many words are said about my style of filmmaking, and this documentary clarifies the issue and shows that I do not do anything unusual or strange."

"Some wildly exaggerated claims have been made about my style of filmmaking, but this documentary shows that it is accessible and every individual can find his or her own method," Farhadi said.

Film critic Shahrokh Dolku also attending the screening and talked about the documentary.

He said, "Making documentaries about the great films by great filmmakers is something common in the world. Some are made to attract larger audiences and some are educational purposes, yet those are the best types."

"I always wanted to see how Farhadi makes his films and I know that the ways to deal with the actors and crew is of high significance. Therefore, 'About the Sales-



Director Asghar Farhadi (C) and actor Farid Sajjad Hosseini (R) attend the premiere of "About the Salesman", a documentary by Vahid Sedaqat (L), at Tehran's Charsu Cineplex on July 18, 2018.

man' gives us this opportunity to learn things from Farhadi and to discover a part of his secrets and mysteries," he added.

"About the Salesman" also shows top film critics such as Godfrey Cheshire, Peter

Bradshaw, Fabio Ferzetti, Philippe Rouyer, Michel Ciment, Mehrzad Danesh and Hushang Golmakani commenting about the acclaimed movie.

"The Salesman" won the Oscar for best

foreign-language film in 2017. In 2016, Farhadi won the award for best screenplay for this movie at the 69th Cannes Film Festival. It also brought Shahab Hosseini the Palme d'Or for best actor.

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Photo

■ An exhibition of photos by Bahram Bajelan is currently underway at Fereshteh Gallery

The exhibition titled "Landscape" will run until August 3 at the gallery located at 1671 near Sadr Bridge, Shariati Ave.

■ Photos and sets of installation art by Elaheh Zakavi, Masumeh Shasti, Maheno Shirzadi, Banafsheh Arshi and Hajar Karbalai are on display in an exhibition at Saye Gallery.

The exhibition named "Distortions" will continue until July 25 at the gallery that can be found at No. 21, 13th Alley, Sanai St. of Karim Khan Ave.

■ Idea Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of photos by Jila Dejam.

The exhibit will be running until July 26 at the gallery located at 26, 18th St. off Sanai St., Karim Khan Ave.

■ An exhibition of photos by Arman Golestaneh is underway at Golestan Gallery.

The exhibit runs until July 25 at the gallery located at 34 Kamasai St. in the Darus neighborhood.

■ Photos by Arya Tabandepur are on display in an exhibition at Mohsen Gallery.

The exhibit titled "Corruption, Retooling, Connection" will run until August 8 at the gallery located at 42 East Mina Blvd., Naji St., off Zafar St.

Painting

■ Paintings by Aisan Mohammad are on display in an exhibition at the Shalman Gallery.

The exhibit name "Beyond the Grays" runs until July 25 at the gallery located at 27 Kavusi Alley, West Rudbar St., off Mirdamad Blvd.

■ Shokuh Gallery is showcasing a collection of paintings by Delaram Qaemi in an exhibition entitled "The Echo of Peace".

The showcase will run until July 25 at the gallery that can be found at 19 Amir Nuri Alley, North Salimi St. near Andarzgu Blvd.

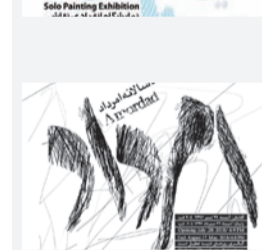
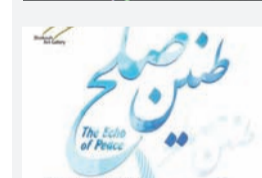
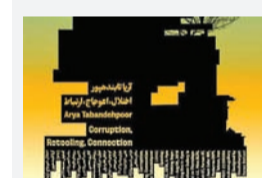
■ An exhibition of paintings by a large number of artists, including Hanibal Alkhas, Hossein Zenderudi, Kurosh Shishegaran and Manuchehr Motabar, is currently underway at Afrand Gallery.

The exhibit will continue until August 17 at the gallery located at 48 Jalal Hosseini St., Jahan Ara St., off Jalal Ale-Ahmad Highway.

Drawing

■ Drawings by Mojtaba Yadolahi are on view in an exhibition at Seyhun Gallery.

The exhibition titled "Living inside Death" will run until August 2 at the gallery located at No. 11, 4th St., Vozara Ave.



Intl. festivals line up for "Everybody Knows"



Javier Bardem and Penelope Cruz act in a scene from "Everybody Knows" by Asghar Farhadi.

TEHRAN – Oscar-winning director Asghar Farhadi's latest film "Everybody Knows" will be screened at five international festivals, which will be held across the world, Farhadi announced on his Telegram channel on Thursday.

The film will first be screened in August at the 24th Sarajevo Film Festival, where Farhadi will preside over the jury of the official competition.

CPH PIX in Copenhagen will be next festival to screen the movie. The festival will be held in the Danish capital from September 27 to October 10.

"Everybody Knows" will open the International Antalya Film Festival in Turkey on September 28.

The film, which has been shot entirely in Spanish on the Iberian Peninsula, will go on screen at the Morelia International Film Festival, which will take place in

Mexican city from October 20 to 28. In November, the Stockholm International Film Festival in Sweden will host the film.

Starring Javier Bardem and Penelope Cruz, the film is about Laura, who lives with her husband and children in Buenos Aires. When they return together to her native village in Spain for a family celebration, an unexpected event changes the course of their lives.

The 71st Cannes Film Festival in May was inaugurated with a screening of the movie. However, it failed to win any awards.

Last week, the film also had a screening during the 15th Golden Apricot Yerevan International Film Festival in Armenia, where Farhadi was the president of the jury in the official competition.

"The Crown" offers fans glimpse of new cast as royals

LONDON (Reuters) — Fans of "The Crown", one of the most expensive television series ever produced, have been given a sneak peak of actress Helena Bonham Carter as Princess Margaret in the third season of the drama that chronicles Britain's royal family.

On the official Twitter page of the hit show, producers of the Netflix drama on Wednesday released a photo of Bonham Carter as Queen Elizabeth's younger sister staring haughtily at a cigarette holder.

Bonham Carter, who has starred in films such as "Big Fish", "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" and "Harry Potter", takes over the role from British actress Vanessa Kirby, who portrayed the younger Margaret in the first two seasons of the drama.

It is not the first time Bonham Carter, 52, has played a member of the British royal family. In "The King's Speech", she played the late Queen Mother, mother of Elizabeth and Margaret.

A picture of "House of Cards" actor Ben Daniels as photographer Antony Armstrong-Jones, who was married to Margaret from 1960 to 1978, was also released.

A new cast is taking over for seasons three and four, covering the period 1964



Netflix displays a costume from "The Crown" series at an exhibition promoting the company's shows for Emmy consideration in Los Angeles, California, U.S., May 6, 2018. (Reuters/Lisa Richwine)

to 1976, as the characters age. The release of the latest photos comes after a first look at Olivia Colman as Queen Elizabeth on Monday. In that picture, the actress, known for television series "Broadchurch" and "The Night Manager", is seen dressed in a pink jacket and pearl necklace drinking from a tea cup.

"The Crown" kicked off with the 1947 marriage of the young Princess Elizabeth, played by Claire Foy, before she became queen, and Prince Philip, played by Matt Smith. In the new series Tobias Menzies will play Philip.

Marzieh Borumand opens children's play "Toranj"



Marzieh Borumand cuts the ribbon for the premiere of "Toranj" at the IIDCYA in Tehran on 19, 2018. (IIDCYA)

TEHRAN – Marzieh Borumand, the director of the popular puppet series "Grandmother's Home" and "School of Mice", attended the premiere of the children's play "Toranj" in Tehran on Thursday.

A production by the Arian Theater Troupe, the play will be on stage for several weeks at the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA), the institute announced.

Afsaneh Zamani is the director of the play that she co-wrote with Shirin Khanjari. It tells the story of Toranj, a sad little girl who cannot attend a big party since she is not grown up enough.

Surrounded by a number of children and their parents, Borumand made the opening speech before the play went on stage and invited people to go and watch more plays.

"It is so good to watch plays on stage. It is also so good to watch the plays more

carefully and both enjoy them and think about the message that each play carries for us," she told the audience.

"Over fifty years have passed since I was a university student and IIDCYA's first theater troupe was formed and I was a member of the troupe."

"The first play for children was staged here at this hall and I was one of the actors. And I am happy after all these years this hall is still active for children with the efforts made by its directors," she said.

She next cut the ribbon for the premiere of the play.

Actor Nader Soleimani, whose daughter Barsing is one of the actors in the play, also attended the premiere.

Behnaz Behdust, Maryam Ashuri, Mehrnush Shariati, Marzieh Naderi and Parnia Asgharzadeh are the other actors in the play.

Shinobu Hashimoto, scriptwriter for Akira Kurosawa, dies at 100

TOKYO (Variety) — Shinobu Hashimoto, a prominent scriptwriter, director and producer, best known for his work with Akira Kurosawa, died in Tokyo Thursday from pneumonia. He was 100.

During the war years Hashimoto studied scriptwriting under Mansaku Itami, a writer and director who was the father of actor/director Juzo Itami.

A Hashimoto script based on the Ryunosuke Akutagawa short story "In a Grove" caught the attention of Akira Kurosawa, who adapted it for his 1950 film "Rashomon." After the film won the Golden Lion at the 1951 Venice Film Festival Hashimoto quit his job as a company employee and devoted himself full-time to writing.

He worked on "Ikiru", "Seven Samurai", "Throne of Blood", and other films for Kurosawa, concluding with the 1970 drama "Dodes'ka-den." Hashimoto also scripted for other directors, including Masaki Kobayashi ("Harakiri," 1962) and Kihachi Okamoto ("The Sword of Doom," 1966).

Widower of Thorn Birds author Colleen McCullough wins legal battle over her estate

SYDNEY (Reuters) — The widowed husband of Australian author Colleen McCullough, whose 1977 best-selling novel The Thorn Birds became a smash hit television miniseries, has won a bitter legal dispute over her estate after a court found in his favor on Friday.

Ric Robinson, who had been battling McCullough's executor over whether the author intended to leave her estate to him or to the University of Oklahoma, where she had been a board member, was the sole beneficiary, according to written summary of a judgment made in Sydney.

"Colleen McCullough intended to bequeath her entire estate to her husband," the summary of New South Wales Supreme Court Justice Neil Rein's judgment said.

Australian media have put the value of McCullough's estate at A\$2.1 million (\$1.54 million).

McCullough, who died on Australia's Pacific outpost of Norfolk Island in 2015, turned to writing after working as a neuroscientist and scored almost immediate success with The Thorn Birds, a family drama set on a sheep station.

Paperback rights sold for a then record \$1.9 million and it was made into one of the most-watched miniseries of all time, starring Richard Chamberlain and Rachel Ward.



Barrister for Selwa Anthony, Kim Morrissey, is seen leaving the Supreme Court, Sydney, Australia, July 20, 2018. (AAP/Peter Rae/via Reuters)

The book sold 30 million copies worldwide. Six months before her death McCullough had written a will bequeathing her estate to University of Oklahoma. Three months later she changed her mind, awarding it to Robinson - a descendant of Bounty mutineer Fletcher Christian - instead.

McCullough's executor, Selwa Anthony, had argued that Robinson pressured the author to make the change, but the court found the newer version reflected her wishes.

Neither Robinson nor Anthony were present at the Sydney courtroom where the judgment was delivered, the Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported.