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We will fight for JCPOA, German FM says

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas has said that his country along with other European powers will fight for the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, to keep it alive, even without the U.S.

Maas told German newspaper Passauer Neue Presse in an interview on Wednesday

that Donald Trump's decision to reimpose sanctions on Iran is a "mistake", warning about the isolation of the country that could lead to a "chaos".

"We still consider it a mistake to pull out of the nuclear agreement with Iran... Germany and the EU will fight to keep the deal alive, even without the USA," the senior diplomat stated. **→2**

‘Iran among top host countries for refugee students’

By Maryam Qarehgozlou

TEHRAN — Over the past 4 decades Iran has been faced with crowds of refugees due to the wars and conflicts in the region and currently Iran is among the countries with the highest refugee population and refugee students, deputy for international affairs department of the Ministry of Education said.

There are some 450,000 foreign national students studying at schools in Iran

of which 420,000 are Afghan nationals, Gholamreza Karimi told in an interview with the Tehran Times and Mehr news agency.

"Some 72 percent of foreign national students are studying at elementary schools, 19 percent at middle schools and 9 percent at high schools. Boys constitute 52 percent of the students and the rest are girl student," Karimi explained. **→12**

Iraq's Hakim urges support for Iran in face of U.S. sanctions

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Ammar al-Hakim, leader of the Iraqi National Wisdom Movement, reacted on Wednesday to U.S. sanctions move on the Islamic Republic, calling for all-out efforts to help Iran in the face of U.S. pressure, Tasnim reported.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is under pressure and sanctions which have targeted its economic and political establishment,"

Hakim said during a meeting.

He added, "I call on everyone to stand by the Islamic Republic of Iran during this crisis and help this country."

He said Iraq should act as "the airway" for Iran.

"Our religious and moral duty is to stand by the Islamic Republic of Iran because that country has stood by us in all of our crises," he stated. **→2**

Perils could actually herald positive change

By Martin Love

NORTH CAROLINA — Sometimes, more often than not, I write against the U.S. as it was and as it has been since. I was born right after Fat Man and Little Boy were thrown at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The public was told these two crimes against Japanese civilians, when Japan was already prepared to surrender, saved lives and shortened World War 2. It did neither. The war was already won in the Pacific. The U.S. in fact was sending a message to the USSR, which more than any country had defeated Nazi Germany: "Look what we can do to you if you don't behave." Hundreds of thousands of Japanese

perished to deliver what amounted, at bottom, to a threat to the USSR. And since then?

No doubt the U.S. government has done at least some good in isolated locations around the world, but on balance the idea and fact of "Empire" has gotten insanely out of hand since the turn of the century, and on balance the U.S. has caused more carnage and humiliation to others trying to maintain power and dominance than any other country in world history in the past century. Iran has suffered, beginning with the CIA and British coup against Mossadegh. But maybe, maybe the chickens are coming home to roost as the U.S. government as it has been,

may be becoming of late more isolated and reviled, and if you ever imagined you might live in "interesting times", they have arrived. And oddly enough, amid the dangers, there may be cause for some hope ahead. Consider that the geopolitical deck is getting reshuffled, at least slowly. Alliances and perceptions are changing. Currently, for examples, Turkey seems to be falling out with both the U.S. and the EU, the U.S. falling out with the EU, Canada and Mexico (and others), Saudi Arabia falling out with Canada, Turkey and Qatar, and tradition Western allies appearing incapable of getting along, among many other instances of discord. **→7**

‘Saudi-led coalition has failed to achieve any progress in war against Houthis in Yemen’

By Syed Zafar Mehdi

TEHRAN — The Saudi-led coalition's war in Yemen has triggered world's worst humanitarian crisis with thousands of deaths over the past three years and more than 22 million people in need of assistance. There are now reports about a major outbreak of cholera due to indiscriminate and heavy Saudi-UAE bombardment, with logistical and weapons support from the U.S.

Fatik al-Rodaini is a senior Yemeni journalist, human rights activist and founder of Mona Relief Charity based in Yemen. In a free-wheeling interview with Tehran Times, he spoke about the plight of Yemenis and why the world is not interested in Saudi's war in Yemen, the worsening situation in the port city of Hodeidah, the rising number of cholera cases, duplicity of the UN, and why the war is likely to continue.

Following are excerpts from interview:

■ Yemen is facing the world's worst humanitarian crisis with 22.2 million in need of assistance, and millions on the brink of famine. Why is the world not interested in the plight of Yemenis?

A. The world clearly knows what is happening in Yemen but it has chosen to ignore it. The first reason is that our voice as Yemenis is not very strong and cannot be heard by the outside world. The mainstream western media does not highlight out plight because it's not in their interest.

Secondly, the Yemeni embassies around the world refuse to give visas to foreign journalists to enter the country and report on the situation here. They are afraid of the truth. They don't want the world to know what is going on in Yemen.

We really need to raise our voices so that the world wakes up to our plight. People around the world need to pressurize their governments and

leaders to stop the war in Yemen. They need to push their governments to support humanitarian efforts in the war-ravaged country where millions are on the brink of famine.

It is important to note that the Saudi government has used its PR very effectively to hide its horrendous war crimes in Yemen. It has used money and influence to make sure the Western media does not show the true picture of war in Yemen.

■ At least 55 people were killed in the port city of Hodeidah last week in Saudi-UAE air raids, supported by the U.S. widely described as a 'massacre'. How is the situation there now? Do Houthi rebels maintain control over the city?

A. The situation in Hodeidah is very deplorable as people living there are extremely poor and suffering the consequences of Saudi-imposed war since past three years. **→6**



EDITORIAL

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EU dying silently as it plays in Trump's court

The paradoxical approaches taken by the European authorities is definitely one of its kind! Over the past months, Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, has repeatedly emphasized that the EU can no longer rely on the United States to secure its interests.

However, the German Chancellor held secret and hidden negotiations with the U.S. government and Trump to resolve Europe's economic and security problems and crises.

In other words, there is a significant difference between the speeches and actions of the European authorities regarding the EU's independence from Washington. Here are some points that need to be taken into consideration:

1. U.S. President Donald Trump is one of the main opponents of the existing structure in Europe! He has come to this conclusion that the collapse of the United Europe will provide the United States with great economic growth among its allies. The White House therefore monitors the simultaneous destruction of the Eurozone and the European Union as essential goals. This is the main reason for Trump's support for nationalist and anti-EU movements in Europe. Recently, Donald Trump has officially urged French President Emmanuel Macron to pull his country out of the EU to benefit from more U.S.-France ties! Also, the U.S. president has asked Theresa May, the British prime minister, to sue the European Union for making barriers in Brexit talks. Trump has gone even further, and warned Theresa May that she should choose between integrating in the European Economic structure and having economic relations with the United States! Together, these statements and stances show that Trump is working hard to achieve his main goal in Europe, which is the collapse of the European Union.

2. Although some may think that confronting the United Europe is the secret target of the U.S. President, Trump's behavior suggest that he has no reluctance to declare his opposition to the EU and the Eurozone. Trump believes that the collapse of the European Union will lead to an increase in his power and would intensify his dominance on the European players. **→7**



ARTICLE

Syed Zafar Mehdi
Journalist
from New Delhi

‘Talks’ between Taliban and U.S. an exercise in futility

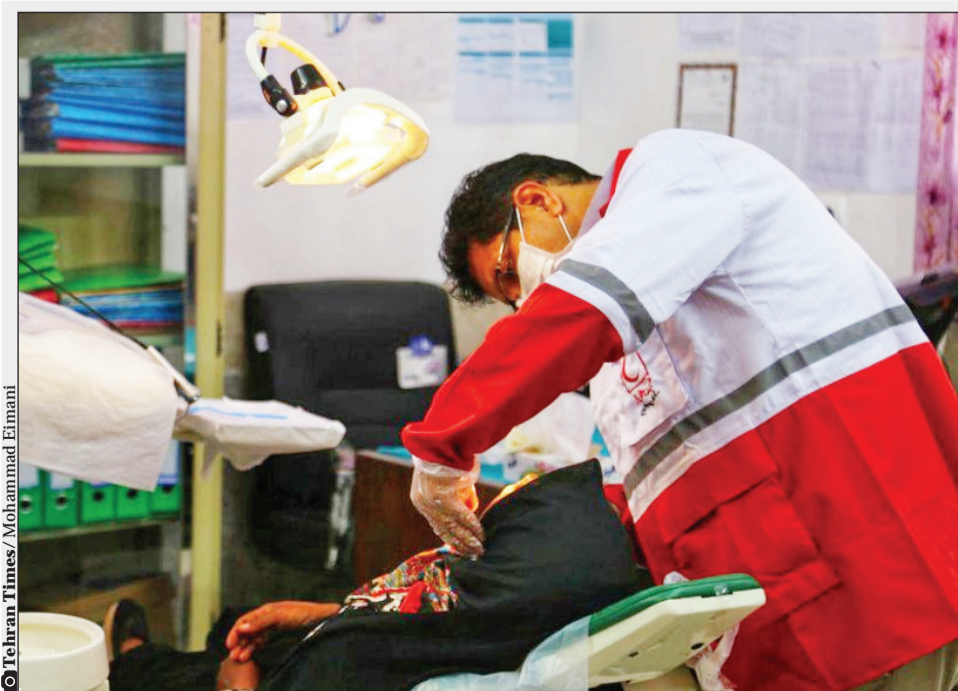
If reports in the Afghan and international media are to be believed, the first round of 'preliminary talks' between the U.S. and the Taliban were held last week in Doha. Alice Wells, Donald Trump's Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia and Mullah Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai, the head of Taliban's political bureau in Qatar, represented their sides in the talks, reports said.

The top U.S. military commander in Afghanistan, Gen. John Nicholson confirmed that the talks were held with "mid-level, senior-level Taliban leaders", adding that some international organizations, foreign governments and other interested parties were also involved. Ihsanullah Tahiri, spokesman for Afghan High Peace Council (HPC), a government body tasked with exploring channels of communication with the Taliban, also admitted that they had "knowledge of the meeting" but added that "its purpose was not to start direct U.S.-Taliban talks".

While the 'talks' have been reported widely, it is still not clear who the U.S. officials talked to. According to the Taliban spokesperson Zabiullah Mujahid, Nicholson's remarks are a "baseless claim" to divert attention from America's failures in Afghanistan and Trump's failed strategy. He categorically rejected reports that Taliban's political office in Qatar held talks with the U.S. officials.

Like the protracted U.S. war in Afghanistan, which has entered its 17th year, this issue is also shrouded in mystery. Last week there were reports that the Afghan government, on the instructions of the U.S. authorities, had evacuated more than 150 ISIS fighters from northern Afghanistan. In Yemen, the Saudi-UAE coalition, with logistical and military support from the U.S., has been recruiting Al-Qaeda fighters against the Houthi rebels. So, it should not come as a surprise if the U.S. officials actually talk to the Taliban and agree to make them part of the government in Kabul.

As seasoned experts have argued, the talks between the U.S. officials and the Taliban representatives, if they really took place, would seriously undermine the credibility of the Afghan government led by President Ashraf Ghani. **→6**



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Volunteer health practitioners dispatched to Sistan-Baluchestan

Volunteer health practitioners, including eight doctors, from the Red Crescent Society of the northern province of Golestan, have been dispatched to the underprivileged Nimrouz county in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan.

The Red Crescent Society dispatched 19 groups of volunteer health care providers to Sistan-Baluchestan on August 5.

Health practitioners, consisted of orthopedists, cardiologists, internists, neurologists, obstetricians and gynecologists, ophthalmologist, dentists and general surgeons, provide financially struggling individuals with free educational, health, medical and dental services.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Hatami: 12 years of talks breached by 'Great Satan'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Defense Minister Amir d e s k Hatami on Wednesday shrugged off U.S. President Donald Trump's calls for direct talks with Iran, reasoning that 12 years of nuclear negotiations which finally led to the 2015 nuclear pact was breached by "the Great Satan".

"Everyone should learn a lesson from their (Americans') irresponsible behavior and realize the depth of the Americans' hostility toward the great nation of Iran," Brigadier General Hatami said in a speech in the central province of Isfahan, Tasnim reported.

"It is clear that this time, the enemy's all-out war with the Islamic establishment is political, economic, cultural and psychological," the minister added.



Labor minister fails confidence vote

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Labor Minister Ali Rabiei d e s k on Wednesday failed to secure the parliament's vote of confidence on Wednesday following an impeachment over his management of the ministry and unemployment rate.

In the impeachment session before the cameras, 129 of the lawmakers voted in favor of Rabiei's dismissal from his post, 111 voted against, and 3 abstained, ISNA reported.

A number of lawmakers had earlier urged parliament to postpone the impeachment session. However, the parliament's presiding board on Tuesday said that the impeachment hearing would be held on Wednesday.

Rabiei survived a previous impeachment attempt back in March after a passenger plane crash as well as sinking of an Iranian oil tanker.



5 to 20 years prison sentence await economy disruptors: Tehran prosecutor

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Tehran Prosecutor Abbas d e s k Jafari Dolatabadi said on Wednesday five to twenty years in prison awaits those who disrupt national economy through profiteering, hoarding and other types of financial corruption.

Jafari Dolatabadi said in the event of a large-scale corruption, one could face "death penalty", ISNA reported.

He also said most of the 65 individuals who have been arrested were involved in foreign exchange market and cell-phone import cases.

The prosecutor warned import companies, which have received dollars from the government at the official rate of 42000 rials, will face severe punishment if they sell their imported goods at high prices.



Basij forces seize hoarded items

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Basij forces have seized lots d e s k of hoarded items, including cars, rice and building equipment in the past couple of days and delivered them to the Judiciary, Basij Chief Gholamhossein Gheybparvar said on Wednesday.

"When people are under pressure by high inflation, some have been hoarding and storing the basic necessities of people's lives, Gheybparvar said, Tasnim reported.

He also warned hoarders of severe punishment. One way to reduce pressure is through monitoring and inspection which is possible by coordination among relevant legal authorities, he added.



ICJ to rule in favor of Iran if not pressed by U.S.: attorney

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — An attorney has lauded Tehran's move to file a complaint against the United States for restoration of sanctions against Iran, saying if the International Court of Justice does not come under pressure by the U.S., it will rule in favor of Iran, ISNA reported.

"America and the international community should know that they must respect the rights of different sides in multilateral deals and United Nations resolutions, otherwise they would face consequences," Nabiollah Ahmadlou said.

"We hope the Islamic Republic of Iran would pursue its rights, and by using distinguished lawyers and experts, it would revive the rights of the Iranian nation," he added.



'Iran has successfully isolated America'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Despite 40 years of pressure, d e s k war and sanctions, Iran has succeeded to isolate the United States and foil its conspiracies, the Islamic Radios & Television Union said on Wednesday.

In a statement, the union said after failing in other spheres, Washington felt no choice other than returning economic pressure on the Islamic Republic, stressing that U.S. sanctions are doomed to failure, IRNA reported.

"Today, it is the Iranian nation that has managed to not only isolate America, but to create a world in which a widening gap between the U.S. and Europe has emerged," it added.

'International relations is not a beauty pageant', Iranian FM tells Trump

Zarif says world is 'sick and tired of U.S. unilateralism'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — In a tweet d e s k on Tuesday addressed to Donald Trump, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the world is "sick and tired of U.S. unilateralism".

"Tantrums & CAPPED TWEETS won't change the fact that the world is sick & tired of U.S. unilateralism," Zarif tweeted.

The Iranian foreign minister also said the world does not pay attention to "impulsive tweeted diktats" by Trump.

"Stopping U.S. trade and killing 100K U.S. jobs is fine with us, but the world won't follow impulsive tweeted diktats. Just ask EU, Russia, China & dozens of our other trading partners," Zarif remarked.

■ **'International relations is not a beauty pageant'**

In another tweet, Zarif said, "Reminder: International relations is not a beauty pageant, with tired clichés about a desire for WORLD PEACE. And it is not the first time that a warmonger claims he is waging war for 'world peace'."

On May 8, Trump withdrew unilateral



ally the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of

Action, and ordered restoration of sanctions against Iran.

Rouhani to attend Caspian Sea summit in Kazakhstan

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian d e s k President Hassan Rouhani is scheduled to visit Kazakhstan on Saturday to attend the summit meeting of the Caspian Sea littoral states.

In his visit Rouhani also plans to hold talks with Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Rouhani's most important program in the two-day visit is to participate in the Caspian Sea summit in which a number of important and strategic documents for cooperation will be signed by the five countries bordering the sea.

The president will also hold bilateral meetings with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and a number of other heads of state to discuss relations, presidential office media department chief Parviz Esmaeili said.

President will be accompanied by a number of cabinet members. Rouhani will return to Tehran on Sunday evening.



The summit will be attended by presidents of the five Caspian Sea littoral states - Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan.

The Caspian Sea is the largest enclosed water body on earth by area, variously classed as the world's largest lake or a full-fledged sea.

The Caspian Sea Convention determines the territorial rights of littoral states as well as other matters related to the sea.

North Korean FM Ri briefs Rouhani of Kim-Trump meeting

U.S. is 'unreliable', Rouhani says

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian President Hassan d e s k Rouhani said in a meeting with North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho on Wednesday that the U.S. is an "unreliable" country and cannot be trusted.

"The U.S. government's performance during the past years has been in a way that the world has realized that the U.S. as an unreliable country that does not abide its commitments," Rouhani stated.

Rouhani said in the current situation, the friendly countries should stand beside each other and expand relations.

"Tehran is determined to expand comprehensive international relations and cooperation (with the world) especially Pyongyang," the Iranian president remarked.

For his part, Ri said North Korea's strategic policy is to expand relations with Iran and counter unilateralism.

Ri also gave Rouhani a report about the meeting between North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and U.S. President Donald Trump in Singapore on June 11.

He described the U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal and re-imposition of sanctions against Iran as a wrong

action which runs contrary to international regulations.

U.S. President Donald Trump announced Washington's exit from the nuclear deal on May 8 and ordered restoration of sanctions against Iran.

The first batch of sanctions was snapped back on Monday, August 6. The second batch will be restored on November 4.

The North Korean chief diplomat was in Tehran on a two-day visit.

He met with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Tuesday.



to the people of Iran because we believe this is in the security interests of not only our region, but also of the world. If there is one piece of international agreements on nuclear non-proliferation that is delivering, it has to be maintained." The Washington Post quoted Mogherini as saying during a joint press conference with New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters.

Erdan criticized the European Union for trying to salvage the deal.

Iraq's Ammar Hakim urges support for Iran in face of U.S. sanctions



1 → "We, as Iraq's politicians, should play our role in the best possible way in order to reduce pressure via a co-operation between the international community and the Islamic Republic," Hakim added.

The Iraqi politician also described Iran

as a "strategic depth of Iraq", saying the two countries share 1,300 kilometers of borders as well as many mutual interests.

"I don't think the Islamic Republic is willing to [start] a war," he said, adding that the U.S. and regional countries also do not see their benefits in a war.

We will fight for JCPOA, German FM says



1 → "Nobody is saying the deal was perfect, but it is definitely better than having no deal at all."

"We will fight for it because it is in our interest in terms of security that there is security and transparency in the (Middle East)," the foreign

minister said.

He underlined that stability in the region is of high importance for Europe.

Maas also attacked those in the West who were pinning their hopes on regime change in Iran, warning that this could lead to "even bigger problems."

Trump indifferent to Iranians, international commitments: Zarif

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — By pulling out of the Iran d e s k nuclear deal, U.S. President Donald Trump showed that he is "indifferent" both toward the Iranian people and his country's international commitments, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday.

He showed his "opposition to the people of Iran" by first of all imposing sanctions on airplanes, Zarif told reporters on Wednesday.

"Even prior to the 6th of August when the first tier of sanctions were back, the first thing the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control did was to revoke the licenses for 200 airplanes which the people of Iran were going to use."

"So, the Americans have a lot of explaining to do to the Iranian people. They need very much to show that, in fact, with this condensed distrust that they have created over the past years and decades, what reason Iranian people

have to feel that they can talk to them."

The chief diplomat who was heavily involved in talks with other diplomats from the 5+1 nations and the European Union in crafting the nuclear agreement, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, said Trump's gesture for talks with Iran was just "a promotional show".

Zarif adding, "If it is about talks, we had two years of intense negotiations with the Americans, and the result of those intense talks was the JCPOA. And the government of Mr. Trump quit it. How can there be trust for a new agreement?"

Zarif in the meantime said his ministry is working hard to reduce the negative impacts of the sanctions by facilitating commerce with other countries.

"The duty of the economic department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to facilitate the operation both of the private sector and of the state sector. What this

department will do is that it will identify export facilities overseas, pave the ground for our private sector to get in contact with the private sectors of other countries, and will help the private sector reach its goals."

"Yet a noteworthy point is that today we are somehow very seriously different from the past in that the world is standing up against American sanctions. In other words, when in the past America imposed any sanctions, because it had been endorsed by some Security Council resolutions, other countries would not only swiftly enact those sanctions, but they also passed sanctions of their own. You see that for example when America in 2012 imposed oil sanctions, the EU imposed vaster oil sanctions. Now, by contrast, the EU is saying not only will it not abide, but it will be seeking those around the world who would accompany the EU, and in fact a world consensus has been formed against America's move," Zarif stated

Canada to ask allies to help cool Saudi dispute as the regime blocks its grain

Canada plans to seek help from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Britain to defuse an escalating diplomatic dispute with the House of Saud regime, sources said, as traders revealed the Saudi regime would no longer buy Canadian wheat and barley.

The Saudi regime on Sunday recalled its ambassador to Ottawa, barred Canada's ambassador to Riyadh and placed a ban on new trade, denouncing Canada for urging the release of rights activists. Riyadh accused Ottawa on Tuesday of interfering in its internal affairs.

One well-placed source said the Liberal government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau - which stresses the importance of human rights - planned to reach out to the United Arab Emirates.

"The key is to work with allies and friends in the region to cool things down, which can happen quickly," said one source, who declined to be identified because of the sensitivity of the situation.

Another source said Canada would also seek help from Britain. The British government on Tuesday urged Canada and the Saudi regime to show restraint.

The office of Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland did not respond to requests for comment.

European traders said on Tuesday that Saudi Arabia's main wheat-buying agency has told grains exporters it will no longer accept Canadian-origin wheat and barley.

The dispute looks set to damage what is a modest bilateral trade relationship worth



nearly \$4 billion a year. Canadian exports to Saudi Arabia totaled about \$1.12 billion in 2017, or 0.2 percent of the total value of Canadian exports. Much of that was tanks, armored personnel carriers and motor vehicles.

The House of Saud regime has ordered roughly 15,000 Saudis studying in Canada to leave.

The first source said Canada shared the view of foreign policy experts who believe the Saudi regime reaction reflected internal

strains inside the kingdom, where 32-year-old Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (MBS) is trying to push through domestic reforms.

The source said Canada had no regrets about speaking out on human rights in Saudi Arabia.

"What we did was in line with other countries, with what we do for families of Canadians and in line with what we have done in the past," said the source.

The previous Conservative government

also had challenges with Riyadh over human rights.

Garry Keller, who was chief of staff to ex-Conservative Foreign Minister John Baird, said the government needed to look at how it could help businesses that might be affected.

"The United Arab Emirates are going to want to maintain relationships with Canada. ... They are the best interlocutor for Canada in the region," he said.

(Source: Daily Star)

Malaysia's Najib pleads not guilty to money laundering as charges pile up

Malaysia's former Prime Minister Najib Razak pleaded not guilty to money laundering charges slapped on him on Wednesday, as the country's new government looked for answers to how billions of dollars went missing from a state fund IMDB (IMalaysia Development Berhad) during his term.

Najib and his wife, Rosmah Mansor, were barred from leaving Malaysia after his decade in power ended in a shock election defeat in May, and the new Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, re-launched an investigation into IMalaysia Development Berhad.

Dressed in a grey suit, Najib appeared calm as three charges of money laundering were read out at the Kuala Lumpur high court. He pleaded not guilty, and was granted bail.

Najib has also pleaded not guilty to three charges for criminal breach of trust and one charge for abuse of power that were leveled against him last month.

The money laundering charges relate to electronic transfers amounting to 42 million ringgit (\$10 million) from SRC International, a former IMDB unit, into Najib's personal bank account.

The offense carries a penalty of up to 15 years in jail and a fine of not less than 5 times the value of the proceeds of any illegal transfers, or five million ringgit, whichever is higher.

Najib was accompanied by his children as he arrived at the courthouse in a four-car motorcade. He left after the proceedings without speaking to the media.

"SRC, at the time of the so-called happening, was no longer a part of IMDB. So it's got nothing to do with IMDB...."



Najib's lawyer Muhammad Shafee Abdullah told reporters outside the court.

SRC, created in 2011 by Najib's government to pursue overseas investment in energy resources, was a unit of IMDB until it was moved to the finance ministry in 2012.

When asked if he thinks the case was a witch hunt, Shafee said: "My client and I hope that's not the case".

High Court Judge Mohamad Nazlan Mohd Ghazali said a decision on when the trial begins, and on a gag order issued last month to stop public discussion of the case, would be made on Friday.

Probe reopened

The scandal at IMDB fully erupted in 2015 after media reports that hundreds of millions of dollars from IMDB

were diverted to his personal accounts.

Najib has consistently denied any wrongdoing, maintaining that those funds were donations from a Saudi royal, and that the bulk of them had been given back.

Reopening the investigations into IMDB after Najib lost power, Malaysian anti-graft officers have revealed how their earlier investigations were obstructed by Najib's government.

SRC has been the initial focus of Malaysian investigators as all the suspicious transactions involving it went through Malaysian entities, unlike other IMDB-related transactions that went through foreign banks and companies.

Money allegedly siphoned off from SRC represents only a small fraction of the billions of dollars misappropriated from IMDB, according to lawsuits filed in the United States courts by the Department of Justice (DOJ) which investigated the scandal.

DOJ has alleged that an estimated \$4.5 billion was misappropriated from IMDB by high-level officials of the fund and their associates. IMDB is being investigated by at least six countries, including Singapore, Switzerland and the United States, over alleged money laundering and graft.

Earlier this week, Indonesia handed over to Malaysia a \$250 million superyacht that had been impounded following claims by the U.S. Department of Justice that it was purchased by fugitive Malaysian financier Low Taek Jho with funds siphoned off from IMDB.

(Source: Reuters)

Hamas: indirect Gaza truce talks with Israel “in advanced stages”

The United Nations and Egyptian-mediated talks on a deal to tamp down tensions between Israel and the Gaza Strip are in "advanced stages," a senior member of the Palestinian Hamas group said on Wednesday.

The remarks were echoed by a top Israeli lawmaker, suggesting a possible breakthrough after four months of confrontations and clashes that stirred mutual threats of war.

Gazans launched weekly border protests against Israel on March 30, their anger exacerbated by a grinding Israeli-Egyptian blockade and funding cuts by Hamas's rival, the Western-backed Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas.

The Israeli army has killed at least 158 Palestinians, while a Gaza sniper killed an Israeli soldier, and Israel has lost tracts of forest and farmland to fires set by incendiary kites and helium balloons flown over the frontier. There have also been several, mostly bloodless shelling exchanges.

Neither Hamas nor Israel, which last fought a war in 2014, appears keen on another full-blown conflict. But public demands by either side for a detainee release by the other appear to have been a stumbling block in securing a long-term truce.

"We can say that actions led by the United



Nations and Egypt are in advanced stages and we hope it could yield some good from them," Khalil al-Hayya, deputy Hamas chief in Gaza, told Al Jazeera television.

"What is required is for calm to be restored along the border between us and the Zionist enemy (Israel)."

Israel has played down prospects for a comprehensive ceasefire, speaking in terms of a more limited quid-pro-quo.

In return for calm in Gaza, Israeli officials said on Sunday they would reopen a commercial border terminal that had been shuttered in response to the fire damage, and expand a Palestinian fishing zone.

Avi Dichter, the committee of the Israeli parliament's foreign affairs and defense committee, struck a cautiously upbeat note on Wednesday. "I very much hope that we are on the brink of a new day on the matter of

Gaza," he told reporters. Neither the United Nations nor Egypt have publicly detailed their proposals for Gaza, beyond saying they should bring extensive economic relief for its 2 million Palestinians, many of them plagued by unemployment and failing public utilities.

Hayya said foreign donors were collecting "hundreds of millions of dollars" for electricity, water, health and job-creation projects in Gaza, but that these "require stability."

Israel wants to recover the bodies of two soldiers killed in the Gaza war, and two of its civilians who wandered into the enclave, in exchange for any far-ranging truce deal with Hamas.

For its part, Hamas demands that Israel free Palestinian security prisoners - a proposal that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right coalition partners balk at.

"We want to free our brave prisoners and we have no objection to beginning now," Hayya said. "Let it be a prisoner swap deal, (Palestinian) prisoners in return for Zionist soldiers."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called off a trip to Colombia this week to attend to the Gaza truce talks, and was due to convene his decision-making security cabinet on Thursday to discuss the negotiations.

(Source: Daily Star)

Pakistan inches towards gov't formation as MPs officially notified

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) officially notified successful candidates in the July 25 elections, which is a major step towards the government formation.

President of Pakistan will now summon the first session of the National Assembly or Lower House of the parliament for the oath taking ceremony of the members-elect.

The members will elect speaker and deputy speaker after taking oath and later the house will elect the country's new prime minister.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf or PTI, which emerged the largest party in the elections, has formally nominated its chief Imran Khan for the prime minister.

Shehbaz Sharif, the president of the opposition Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the younger brother of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, will contest against Imran Khan. Shehbaz is the joint candidate of the opposition parties.

The ECP posted results of the National Assembly and four provincial assemblies on its website.

Notification of Imran Khan on two seats out of five seats he had won has been withheld due to cases pending with the ECP over violation of code of conduct.

Pakistani laws allow an individual to contest election on more than one seat but the member-elect can keep only one

seat in the lower house, so Khan will have to leave four seats.

Some defeated candidates have moved the courts for recounting of the votes.

Notification regarding successful candidates nominated for reserved seats in the National Assembly will be issued on Saturday. According to the constitution, there are 342 seats in the National Assembly out of which 272 are directly elected, while 60 are reserved for women and 10 for religious minorities. Reserved seats are distributed among the parties on the basis of the number of elected members in elections on general seats.

(Source: Xinhua)

UN urges Myanmar to speed Rohingya returns, grant citizenship

The United Nations aid agencies called on Myanmar on Wednesday to improve conditions in Rakhine (Arakan) state for the safe return of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh and provide a clear pathway to citizenship for those eligible.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UN Development Program (UNDP) said in a joint statement that they needed full access to Rakhine state and were still awaiting permission for international staff to be based in the town of Maungdaw following requests made on June 14.

There was no immediate response from the Myanmar authorities to a Reuters request for comment.

The United Nations signed an outline deal with Myanmar in early June aimed at eventually allowing hundreds of thousands of Rohingya in Bangladesh to return safely and by choice. But the secret agreement, seen by Reuters, offers no explicit guarantees of citizenship or freedom of movement throughout the country.

The UN agencies said that substantial progress was urgently needed in three key areas: "granting effective access in Rakhine State; ensuring freedom of movement for all communities; and addressing the root causes of the crisis."

More than 700,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar's western Rakhine state after a military crackdown that started in August last year in response to attacks by ARSA (Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army/Harakah al-Yaqin/Faith Movement), a Rohingya armed group, on security posts.

Myanmar has rejected accusations of ethnic cleansing and dismissed most accounts of atrocities, blaming Rohingya "terrorists". It says it is ready to accept back those who fled.

The Rohingya, who regard themselves as native to Rakhine state, are widely considered as interlopers by Myanmar's Buddhist majority and are denied citizenship.

The UN said that Rohingya remaining in Rakhine are under local orders that severely restrict their freedom of movement, preventing them from reaching job, school and health care, and called for these to be lifted.

(Source: Reuters)

35,000 to run in Syria local polls: commission

Almost 35,000 candidates are to contest town council elections next month, in Syria's first local polls since war broke out in 2011, a leading newspaper reported on Wednesday.

"The candidacy committees from the provinces accepted 34,553 candidacy requests for the local administration elections... from more than 55,164 requests," said Suleiman al-Qaed, who heads the Higher Judicial Committee for Elections, quoted in Al-Watan.

The elections are set for September 18.

Qaed told the paper that 18,478 seats were up for grabs, a slight increase from the roughly 17,000 seats open in 2011.

"A large number of villages were transformed into municipalities, which is what explains the increase in the local seats that are being competed for," Qaed said.

But some provinces submitted no requests at all, including eastern Deir al-Zor, northeast Hasakeh, and Deraa in the south, according to Al-Watan.

Syrian government forces control the western half of Deir al-Zor province and its capital city, but in Hasakeh they only hold a few positions in Qamishli and Hassakeh cities.

Syrian government troops recaptured all of Deraa province, typically seen as the "cradle" of Syria's foreign backed insurgency, last month.

That has put Syria's government in charge of just under two-thirds of the country, while jihadists, rebel forces and Kurdish militia hold the rest.

State news agency SANA has reported the government would open special centers in Hama city so people from areas outside the Syrian government control - northwest Idlib and northern Raqqa - could still register as candidates.

The country last held parliamentary elections in 2016. A presidential vote in 2014 renewed President Bashar Assad's rule for another seven years.

The new local councils are expected to have increased responsibilities.

"There will be much more work for the new council," said the current secretary-general of the Damascus provincial council, Bashar al-Haffar.

"It will oversee the task of setting development plans, suggesting investment projects, and making practical decisions appropriate for the reconstruction phase," said Haffar.

With government troops are comfortably in control of much of the country, Syrian President Bashar Assad said last month that his top priority would be "reconstruction".

Seven years of foreign sponsored war in Syria have made public services like water and electricity unavailable in many areas and wrecked civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and schools.

(Source: AFP)

Turkey's president to meet Merkel in Germany next month

Germany's government says Chancellor Angela Merkel will meet Turkey's president when he makes a state visit next month and discuss the two countries' differences.

The German president's office said Recep Tayyip Erdogan will come to Berlin on Sept. 28-29, a trip that comes after a difficult period in German-Turkish relations.

Merkel spokeswoman Ulrike Demmer said on Wednesday the chancellor will meet him and "all the important issues, including differences, will be addressed." She added that details of the visit have yet to be worked out.

Turkey's detention of German citizens for what Berlin considers political reasons in the aftermath of the failed 2016 coup attempt in Turkey has been a major irritant in relations. Foreign Ministry spokesman Rainer Breul said seven are currently in detention.

(Source: AP)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	131521.6
IFX	1499.65

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	48,796 rials
GBP	54,387 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$68.49/b
Brent	\$74.23/b
OPEC Basket	\$72.27/b
Gold	\$1,211.55/oz
Silver	\$15.38/oz
Platinum	\$830.35/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Non-oil exports to Indonesia rise 86% in a quarter on year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— The value of Iran’s non-oil exports to Indonesia during the three-month period from March 21 to June 21 stood at \$250 million, increasing 86 percent compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to Iran’s commercial attaché to Indonesia.

Anvar Kamari also announced that Iran’s weight of non-oil exports to Indonesia rose 52 percent during the mentioned quarter on year, Shata reported on Wednesday.



Forex shops resume operation

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— Foreign currency exchange shops officially became operational on Wednesday as part of Central Bank of Iran (CBI)’s new foreign currency package implemented since Tuesday, ISNA reported.

The exchange shops, activities of which had been prohibited for five months based on the government’s forex policies at the time, are presently allowed to do specific transactions and provide particular services, under the framework of CBI’s newly implemented package and via registering required documents.

As reported, at permitted exchange shops, the offered foreign currencies are traded one percent higher than the rates traded at the foreign currency secondary market, where the rates are estimated based on supply and demand.

CBI’s new package is an effort to make a link among domestic financial markets including the banks, insurance companies, and the capital market and to control foreign currency rates via the secondary market.

China defends Iran business ties after Trump threat

China’s business ties with Iran are open, transparent and lawful, its foreign ministry said on Wednesday, after U.S. President Donald Trump said companies doing business with Iran would be barred from the United States.

New U.S. sanctions on Iran have taken effect despite pleas from Washington’s allies.



Trump decided this year to pull out of the agreement, ignoring pleas from the other world powers that had co-sponsored the deal, including Washington’s main European allies, Britain, France and Germany, as well as Russia and China.

Beijing has cultivated close commercial links with Tehran, especially in the energy sector.

“China has consistently opposed unilateral sanctions and long-armed jurisdiction,” the Chinese foreign ministry said in a faxed statement to Reuters, responding to questions on the new U.S. sanctions and Trump’s threats on firms doing business with Iran.

“China’s commercial cooperation with Iran is open and transparent, reasonable, fair and lawful, not violating any United Nations Security Council resolutions,” it added.

“China’s lawful rights should be protected.”

China, Iran’s top oil customer, buys roughly 650,000 barrels a day of crude oil from Tehran, or 7 percent of China’s total crude oil imports. At current market rates, the imports are worth some \$15 billion a year.

State energy firms CNPC and Sinopec have invested billions of dollars in key Iranian oil fields such as Yadavaran and North Azadegan and have been sending oil to China.

European countries, hoping to persuade Tehran to continue to respect the nuclear deal, have promised to try to lessen the blow of sanctions and to urge their firms not to pull out.

(Source: Reuters)

Iranian oil exports to China, India surge in July despite U.S. sanctions

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian crude oil loadings to China and India increased significantly in July compared to the previous month despite U.S. threats, a Platts survey showed.

According to Platts data, Shipments to china were 799,452 barrels per day (bpd) in July, up from 722,100 bpd in June.

Last week, a news report said Chinese officials has rejected U.S. requests to cut imports of Iranian oil but added that China’s imports

might not rise further than current levels.

Flows to India in July rose despite some Indian refiners saying they would reduce their reliance on Iran. Iran’s oil exports to India rose by more than 40,000 bpd from June to 706,452 bpd in July.

Exports to Japan also surged to a seven-month high as refiners rushed to secure as many cargoes as possible before U.S. sanctions are re-applied.

Japanese officials visited Washington last

Intl. auto expo running in Mashhad

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The 18th edition of International Exhibition of Automobile and Relate Industries (Iran Motor Show 2018) kicked off on Tuesday at the northeastern city of Mashhad, IRNA reported.

Over 100 Iranian companies along with 30 foreign exhibitors from different countries are participating in this year’s event at Mashhad’s international exhibition center.

Various specialized forums in different fields including stock exchange, manufacturing and spare parts, as well as a classical cars exhibition and test drives are also planned to be held on the sidelines of this exhibition.

The exhibitors will showcase their latest



achievements and products in different fields like car manufacturing, distribution and sales, spare parts, automotive related software, machinery and related industries, motorcycles as well as insurance during this four-day event.

U.S. sanctions threat hurts Russian banks, rouble

The rouble weakened and shares in Russia’s top lenders Sberbank and VTB fell on Wednesday after the Kommersant daily said they could be banned from operating in the United States under proposed U.S. sanctions legislation.

Kommersant published what it said was the full text of a draft U.S. law outlining possible penalties against Russia. The document here cited potential restrictions on the operations of several state-owned Russian banks in the United States.

Republican and Democratic U.S. senators introduced the legislation earlier this month to impose stiff new sanctions on Russia and combat cyber crime, the latest effort by lawmakers to punish Moscow over its alleged

interference in U.S. elections and its activities in Syria and Ukraine.

The measure’s prospects are unclear. It would have to pass both the Senate and House of Representatives and be signed into law by President Donald Trump.

Shares in Russia’s largest lender Sberbank (SBER.MM) dropped to 195 roubles on the Kommersant report, their lowest since mid-April, before pairing losses to 197.2 roubles as of 0940 GMT, down 2.2 percent on the day.

Shares in Russia’s second-largest bank VTB (VTBR.MM) were down 1.8 percent, underperforming the benchmark stock index MOEX that declined 1.1 percent to 2,287.9 .IMOEX.

Chinese exports accelerate even as Trump escalates trade war

China’s exports surged more than expected in July despite U.S. duties and its closely watched surplus with the United States remained near record highs, as the world’s two major economic powers ramped up a bitter dispute that some fear could derail global growth.

In the latest move by President Donald Trump to put pressure on Beijing to negotiate trade concessions, Washington is set to begin collecting 25 percent tariffs on another \$16 billion in Chinese goods on Aug. 23.

Wednesday’s Chinese data provide the first readings of the overall trade picture for the world’s second-largest economy since U.S duties on \$34 billion of Chinese imports came into effect on July 6.

All the same, China’s exports for July rose a bigger than expected 12.2 percent year-on-year, showing little tariff impact for now and beating June’s 11.2 percent rise and analysts expectations in a Reuters poll for 10 percent growth.

Of more direct consequence in the Sino-U.S. trade war, China’s surplus with the United States shrank only marginally to \$28.09 billion last month from a record \$28.97 billion in June. Washington has long criticized China’s trade surplus with the United States and has demanded Bei-

jing cut it.

Those demands could get even more strident if the yuan’s sharp drop in recent months raises the ire of the United States, which has in the past repeatedly criticized Beijing for manipulating its currency to gain an unfair trade advantage.

Economists say China appears to be taking a more hands-off approach to the yuan, which marked its worst 4-month fall on record between April and July and has provided some reprieve for exporters in the face of the rising trade tensions.

ANZ senior China economist Betty Wang said Beijing will likely resist using its closely managed currency as a tool in the trade war.

“Currency devaluation, which may have helped exports to some extent, has been largely market-driven in our view and is not a preferred policy tool by Chinese policy makers as part of the retaliation measures,” Wang said.

China’s trade with the U.S. also continued to rise in July despite the tariffs, with exports up 11.2 percent year-on-year, and imports increasing 11.1 percent.

Analysts still expect a less favorable overall trade balance for China in coming months given it’s early days in the tariff brawl.

(Source: Reuters)



week seeking an early exemption to continue to buy Iranian crude but U.S. officials have refused to comment on the talks.

The U.S. government is pushing countries to cut Iranian oil imports to zero, but major customers such as China and India

are expected to find ways to continue deals despite the sanctions.

Flows to Europe in July fell to 465,450 bpd from 485,768 bpd as demand from France, Spain, and Turkey fell while interest from Italy and Greece grew steadily.

Turkey sticks with Iranian gas despite U.S. sanctions, energy minister says

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Turkey’s energy minister said on Wednesday that his country will continue to buy natural gas from Iran despite U.S. sanctions, Reuters reported.

The Turkish minister’s comments come a day after President Donald Trump threatened that anyone trading with Iran will not do business with America.

As reported, Fatih Donmez said Turkey would continue to buy gas in line with its long-term supply deal with Tehran, adding that planned talks in Washington could lead to a solution for the issue.

Iran is a key supplier of Ankara’s natural gas and oil purchases.

“A delegation of ours is in the United States right now and negotiations are be-

ing held on a series of matters including the sanctions issue,” Donmez told broadcaster A Haber. “I think a good outcome will emerge from this dialogue.”

Donmez further noted that Turkey’s long-term supply contract with Iran was valid until 2026 and Ankara was set to buy the 9.5 billion cubic meter of the contract amount.

“We will be continuing this trade as we can’t possibly leave our citizens in dark,” he said describing the sanctions as “unilateral”.

“Even European Union (EU) is extremely annoyed by this. We are conducting legitimate trade here,” he said. “And this is important for us in terms of supply security as well.”

India’s economy is elephant that’s starting to run, IMF says

India is on track to hold its position as one of the world’s fastest-growing economies as reforms start to pay off, according to the International Monetary Fund.

The \$2.6 trillion economy was described by Ranil Salgado, the IMF’s mission chief for India, as an elephant starting to run, with growth forecast at 7.3 percent in the fiscal year through March 2019 and 7.5 percent in the year after that. The nation accounts for about 15 percent of global growth, according to the Washington-based fund.

Key risks flagged by the IMF in its annual Article IV assessment of the economy include higher oil prices, tightening global financial conditions and tax revenue shortfalls. Authorities should take advantage of stronger growth to bring down debt levels, simplify the consumption tax system and continue to gradually tighten monetary policy, it said.

After a shock cash ban in late 2016 and a disruptive nationwide sales tax last year, India’s economy is once again gaining momentum. Growth reached the fastest pace in seven quarters in January through March, and high frequency indicators from purchasing

It weakened 1.1 percent to 64.17 RUBUTSTN=MCX to the dollar, the level last seen on June 19. Versus the euro, it eased 1.0 percent to 74.39, its weakest since July 20. EURRUBTN=MCX.

“The rouble is hit by the sanctions theme. Even though there will be no real action until September, the signal is already there,” said a dealer at a major Western bank in Moscow.

Reports of new possible sanctions also sparked a sell-off in Russian treasury bonds, known as OFZs, sending their prices lower and lifting their yields. Yields in 10-year OFZ bonds jumped to 7.97 percent, their highest since June 19 RU10YT=RR.

(Source: Reuters)

managers’ surveys to auto sales data show the economy is likely to grow above 7 percent.

****Growth rebounds

The government is due to release gross domestic product data on Aug. 31 for the three months ended June. A high growth rate may not necessarily resonate with voters in elections next year as they continue to face issues such as unemployment and farm distress.

There are other risks. The rupee has plunged 7 percent against the dollar this year, the worst performer among major Asian currencies, threatening the inflation outlook. The Reserve Bank of India delivered its second straight interest rate hike last week as policy makers seek to maintain economic stability against a global backdrop of trade tensions and high oil prices.

Read: Animal Spirits Suggest India’s World-Beating Growth Has Momentum

Continuing structural reforms would be key to high growth, Salgado said in a conference call. Further rationalization of the goods and services tax would give maximum benefits, and labor reforms would be an incentive for companies to expand, he added.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Italy to defend interests on budget but not make ‘foolish’ demands: PM



Italy will negotiate with the European Commission over next year’s budget, defending its interests but not be “foolish” in its demands, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said on Wednesday.

“We will negotiate with the European Commission with a serious, reasonable and courageous programme that will protect our interests,” Conte told a news conference.

“We will be very serious, rigorous, but we will not be unreasonable and foolish in our demands,” he added.

His remarks helped calm markets which fear the government’s ambitious plans for tax cuts and higher spending could push up Italy’s debt, which is the highest in the euro zone after Greece’s as a proportion of national output.

The government was due to meet on Wednesday to discuss the 2019 budget, which will be drawn up next month and must be presented to the Commission for approval in October.

Conte said the cabinet was working as a unit and dismissed reports EU Affairs Minister Paolo Savona was working on a plan of public investments worth 50 billion euros which Italy would insist should not be included in its deficit calculations.

“There is no plan A, B or C, there is a single budget that the government is working on ...the contribution of minister Savona is fundamental but it is part of shared framework,” he said.

The 81-year-old Savona was originally chosen by the anti-establishment coalition for the key role of economy minister, but was vetoed by the head of state due to his critical views on Italy’s membership of the euro zone.

Conte spoke shortly after Economy Minister Giovanni Tria warned in a newspaper interview that the economy was slowing and next year’s budget deficit would be higher than previously targeted.

(Source: Reuters)

Oil dips on weak China imports, but Iran sanctions, weak U.S. stocks support

Oil prices dipped on Wednesday after China reported relatively weak import data, although the market remained well supported by falling U.S. crude inventories and the introduction of sanctions against Iran.

Front-month Brent crude oil futures were at \$74.50 per barrel at 0651 GMT, down 15 cents, or 0.2 percent, from their last close.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$69.15 per barrel, down 2 cents.

China's July crude oil imports recovered slightly in July after falling for the previous two months, but were still among the lowest this year due to a drop-off in demand from the country's smaller independent, or "teapot", refineries.

Shipments into the world's biggest importer of crude came in at 36.02 million tons last month, or 8.48 million bpd, up from 8.18 million bpd a year ago, and just up on June's 8.36 million bpd, data from the General Administration of Customs showed.

However, July imports were still the third-lowest so far this year.



Singapore-based brokerage Phillip Futures said on Wednesday that an escalating trade dispute between the United States and China has "unnerved investors on the prospect of

lowered global oil demand growth."

Markets were still supported by the introduction of new U.S. sanctions against Iran on Tuesday, which initially target Iran's

purchases of U.S. dollars - in which oil is traded - metals trading, coal, industrial software and its auto sector.

From November, Washington will also target Iran's petroleum sector.

Iran is the third-largest producer among the members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). It shipped out almost 3 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude in September, equivalent to around 3 percent of global demand.

Beyond the sanctions, the oil market was focusing on the U.S. market, where the American Petroleum Institute said on Tuesday that crude inventories fell by 6 million barrels in the week to Aug. 3 to 407.2 million.

Official U.S. fuel storage data is due to be released later on Wednesday by the Energy Information Administration (EIA).

In terms of production, the EIA on Tuesday slightly cut its 2018 expectation for average 2018 U.S. crude output to 10.69 million bpd, down from its previous estimate of 10.79 million bpd. (Source: Reuters)

Why Saudi oil production suddenly dropped

As if oil market participants haven't had enough conflicting market forces to digest over the past week, reports that Saudi Arabia's crude oil production surprisingly dropped in July by around 200,000 bpd from June further confounded the market and sent oil prices rising on Monday.

Last week, several surveys of OPEC's crude oil production in July showed that the cartel is pumping at high rates, and Saudi Arabia is nearing its production record. But on Friday, Saudi sources and OPEC sources told news agencies that the Saudi oil production was not even close to record figures—and it actually dropped last month compared to June.

The Saudis pumped 10.29 million bpd in July, Saudi sources told S&P Global Platts on Friday. On the same day, two OPEC sources told Reuters that Saudi Arabia's crude oil production in July was 10.29 million bpd.

According to OPEC's secondary sources, the ones the cartel uses to calculate quotas and compliance, Saudi Arabia's oil production had jumped in June by 405,400 bpd compared to May, to reach 10.420 million bpd.

The numbers leaked by Saudi and OPEC sources on Friday are in stark contrast with many of the surveys.

Some of the Platts survey participants think that Saudi Arabia may have trouble placing its barrels on the market, and demand for Saudi crude may not have been as robust as the Kingdom had expected.

"I think what they're trying to do is, there's a story in the market that the Saudis and the UAE and Kuwaitis and Russians were all vastly increasing production well ahead of any cutbacks from Iran, and I think they are trying to change the narrative," a Platts survey participant said.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Venezuela dodges oil asset seizures with export transfers at sea

Venezuela's state-run oil company PDVSA has limited the damage from an unprecedented slump in crude exports by transferring oil between tankers at sea and loading vessels in neighboring Cuba to avoid asset seizures.

But the OPEC member nation is still fulfilling less than 60 percent of its obligations under supply deals with customers.

Venezuela has been pumping oil this year at the lowest rate in three decades after years of underinvestment and a mass exodus of workers. The state-run firm's collapse has left the country short of cash to fund its embattled socialist government and triggered an economic crisis.

PDVSA's problems were compounded in May when U.S. oil firm ConocoPhillips (COP.N) began seizing PDVSA assets in the Caribbean as payment for a \$2 billion

arbitration award. An arbitration panel at the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) ordered PDVSA to pay the cash to compensate Conoco for expropriating the firm's Venezuelan assets in 2007.

The seizures left PDVSA without access to facilities such as Isla refinery in Curacao and BOPEC terminal in Bonaire that accounted for almost a quarter of the company's oil exports.

Conoco's actions also forced PDVSA to stop shipping oil on its own vessels to terminals in the Caribbean, and then onto refineries worldwide, to avoid the risk the cargoes would be seized in international waters or foreign ports.

Instead, PDVSA asked customers to charter tankers to Venezuelan waters and load from the company's own terminals or from anchored PDVSA vessels acting as floating storage units.

(Source: Reuters)

U.S. stands to lose more from Chinese LNG tariffs as China diversifies energy security strategy

Liquefied natural gas (LNG) is a better weapon in the hands of China than in those of the U.S. because of China's more diversified energy security strategy, a Chinese expert said Tuesday as heightened trade tensions between the world's number one and number two economies now threaten the LNG trade.

The comments came as China launched countermeasures on Friday with proposed tariffs on \$60 billion worth of U.S. goods, including a 25 percent tariff on imports of U.S. LNG.

Jin Lei, an associate professor at the China University of Petroleum, told the Global Times that while both sides stand to lose in an LNG spat, the U.S. stands to bear the brunt of the damage if China turns LNG into a weapon.

The sector had previously been untouched by the trade war, and the commodity was excluded from the initial round of Chinese retaliatory tariffs on \$50 billion worth of U.S. goods following U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to place import tariffs on Chinese goods.

Fu Chengyu, former chairman of Chinese State-owned oil major and major LNG importer Sinopec, said in April that he believed China-U.S. LNG trade would not be affected by the trade war, because LNG trade and investment could play a significant role in reducing the U.S. trade deficit with China.

However, China's newly proposed tariffs mean things have taken a turn. Although the tariffs have yet to take effect, China's procurement of U.S. LNG came to a stop in July, Reuters reported.

"China has vowed to hit back with both quantitative and qualitative measures to respond to U.S. tariffs, and LNG really is the qualitative hit," Jin said. "For China, years of diversification means that disruption to its supply would be limited. But for the U.S., China's halt in purchasing will affect prices, disrupt export procedures and strangle the nascent U.S. LNG export industry, which is still fledgling in the process of becoming an export power."

LNG exports are a key component in Trump's energy dominance ambitions.

"The situation would affect China, but it would affect U.S. LNG exporters more, as the damage of losing a big meaningful buyer such as China would prove to be more difficult to handle," Jin said.

More than just a buyer, China can also store a sizable amount of natural gas and it has the capacity to receive it, thanks to a large-scale revamp of related infrastructure following a 2017 winter gas shortage that left some households in the freezing cold. Sinopec said on Tuesday it has newly added 55.6 billion cubic meters of underground gas storage capacity.

Such disruptions will significantly undermine President Trump's plan to make the U.S. an energy exporting power, which banks on the country's successful energy revolution, according to Jin.

In 2017, the top LNG exporters to China were Qatar and Australia, customs data showed.

Li Li, director of research at industry consultancy ICIS, said LNG trade is highly centralized in a few countries and a tariff would result in a lose-lose situation for both China and the U.S.

(Source: globaltimes.cn)


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NEWS IN BRIEF



U.S. airstrike kills dozen Afghan security forces

INTERNATIONAL **d e s k** At least a dozen Afghan security forces were killed in a U.S. airstrike during intense fighting with the Taliban at the outskirts of Kabul, Afghan officials said on Tuesday, reviving debate over the accuracy of U.S. airstrikes in the war-ravaged country.

The incident took place in the district center of Logar province, about 50 miles south of Kabul, late on Monday, officials said. Shamshad Larawi, a spokesman for the provincial governor, said that American airstrikes, because of misunderstanding, targeted an Afghan police outpost.

Lt. Col. Martin O'Donnell, a spokesman for U.S. forces in Afghanistan, confirmed that the strike had been carried out and said the killing of Afghan forces was being investigated.

In the first half of this year, U.S. forces dropped nearly 3,000 bombs across Afghanistan, almost double the number for the same period last year and more than five times the number for the first half of 2016, according to officials.

The UN mission in Afghanistan has documented 149 civilians killed and 204 injured by airstrikes in the first six months of this year, a 52 percent increase from the same period last year.



Pakistan to decide on IMF bailout by September

INTERNATIONAL **d e s k** The biggest challenge for the new government in Islamabad, experts say, will be economy. Imran Khan-led government will inherit a flailing economy that needs to be revived, and speculation is rife that Pakistan will approach International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the bailout.

"By the end of September, we should make our decision," said Umar, a close aide of Khan, hinting that Pakistan was exploring other options as well, including loans from friendly countries like China.

His remarks came a week after the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo voiced concerns over any IMF bailout being used to repay Chinese loans to Islamabad. "There's no rationale for IMF tax dollars — and associated with that, American dollars that are part of the IMF funding — for those to go to bail out Chinese bondholders or China itself," Pompeo told CNBC.

Pakistan has gone to the IMF many times since 1980s. The last time was in 2013, when Islamabad got a \$6.6 billion loan to tackle a similar crisis. According to analysts, Pakistan needs a loan of around \$12 billion to revive the flailing economy.



Students, journalists protest against Bangladesh govt

INTERNATIONAL **d e s k** Journalists in Bangladesh have gave a 72-hour ultimatum to the Sheikh Hasina government to arrest miscreants responsible for attacks on media persons while covering the protests by students over road safety, according to media reports.

Thousands of students brought Dhaka to a standstill after two teenagers were killed by a speeding bus on 29 July. A large number of journalists and photojournalists also gathered in front of the Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka on Tuesday morning and formed a human chain in protest against the attacks, Bangladeshi newspaper Daily Star reported.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina warned on Sunday that a "third party" could sabotage the protests and put the safety of demonstrators at risk. "That's why I request all guardians and parents to keep their children at home. Whatever they have done is enough," she said.

Human Rights Watch, a global rights watchdog, condemned the government action against the protestors and journalists covering the protest. "Instead of prosecuting those responsible for unlawfully attacking student protesters demanding road safety, Bangladesh authorities are arresting students and targeting activists and journalists who are highlighting the abuses," it said in a statement on Tuesday.

Authorities should order an immediate investigation into reports that renowned photographer and activist, Shahidul Alam, was beaten while in custody, the statement added.



Russia dismisses claim of interfering in India election

INTERNATIONAL **d e s k** The Russian embassy in New Delhi has strongly dismissed reports that Moscow may interfere in elections in countries like India and Brazil through their media.

The embassy, in a statement, termed the UK social media expert's claim as "false" and said "it would never do anything against interests of the friendly Indian nation."

The reaction came after Philip N Howard, an Oxford University social media expert, made a stunning claim during a hearing of the U.S. Senate intelligence committee on foreign influence on social media that Russia may interfere in Indian general election next year.

Russia, which is facing U.S. sanctions after Washington accused it of interfering in its 2016 presidential elections, stressed it had not interfered in the politics of other nations, including the U.S. "This blatantly false and unfounded assertion is a phoney attempt to drive a wedge between Russia and her Brics partners (India and Brazil) following the success of the recent summit meeting of the group in Johannesburg," the embassy said in a statement.

Moscow and New Delhi share a strong defence partnership as former needs the latter for military spare parts and certain technologies like nuclear-powered sub-marines. The multilateral cooperation between the two countries extends to BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. The growing bonhomie between them, analysts say, is raising concerns in Washington.

Ceasefire violations along India-Pakistan border touch new high this year

INTERNATIONAL **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — In a latest case of ceasefire violation, the Pakistani border rangers allegedly fired on Indian Army posts along the border in Jammu and Kashmir's Gurez sector on Monday night, leaving at least four Indian soldiers dead, according to reports in Indian media.

It comes just few days before the Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf (PTI) assumes power in Islamabad. In his victory speech, Khan had expressed his desire to improve ties with India and resolve the dispute over Kashmir.

But the latest incident is likely to cast a shadow over the relations between the two estranged neighbors once again, say analysts. However, it remains to be seen how the Indian side retaliates this time.

This is not the first time India and Pakistan have been embroiled in border skirmishes and military confrontation. The ties between the two nuclear-armed neighbors have worsened in recent years with the intermittent exchange of small-arms and mortar fire along the border. The ceasefire accord the two countries signed in 2003 has been repeatedly violated by the two sides.



Several villages are situated along the border in the disputed Kashmir region, some of them in close proximity of the fencing. According to India's Home Ministry, almost 600 villages are situated within five kilometers of the international border on the Indian side, and about 450 are prone to

cross-border attacks.

According to conservative estimates, more than two thousand such violations have taken place since 2011 alone, which have often sparked political, diplomatic and military tensions between them.

According to government data released

last week, this year has already seen more ceasefire violations along the Line of Control (LoC), which divides the two countries, than whole of last year.

Subhash Bhamre, India's deputy minister for defence, informed the Indian parliament last week that there have been 942 ceasefire violations along the LoC this year until July 23. In all of 2017, there had been 860 violations.

The international border has been similarly violent, with 490 instances of cross-border firing until June this year, compared to 111 last year. The data also shows increase in the number of civilians who died because of ceasefire violations and cross-border firing incidents. Following the border skirmishes, New Delhi and Islamabad have often indulged in accusations and counter-accusations and summoning each other's envoys.

Security and strategic affairs experts believe both parties are equally responsible for frequent border flare-ups, putting lives of people living along the border at greater risk. Both sides, they say, have failed to holistically weigh the causes and consequences of recurring ceasefire violations and failed to take steps in order to prevent them.

‘Talks’ between Taliban and U.S. an exercise in futility

1 → According to reports, during the talks between the two sides, no representative from the Afghan government was present, which makes the whole exercise futile.

Even Ryan Crocker, the former U.S. envoy to Afghanistan, remarked that these talks would delegitimize the Afghan government, which has already been pushed on the backfoot. "This may lead somewhere, but I don't think it's going to lead anywhere good for the Afghan government itself," he said. Crocker's views have been echoed by many veterans and observers in the U.S. and Afghanistan.

The U.S. government had earlier maintained that it will support the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process with the Taliban because the people of Afghanistan have given mandate to the government in Kabul, not Washington. The volte-face of the U.S. in this case is not particularly surprising since the hawks in Washington are known to take unilateral, foolhardy decisions.

President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan has repeatedly stated that only an Afghan-led peace process could bring stability to the war-ravaged country. He has been vigorously wooing the Taliban to come to the negotiating table, even offering them political role in Kabul if agree to shun violence and accept the Afghan constitution. But the insurgent group has been adamant on negotiating only with the U.S.

The U.S.-Taliban talks in Qatar have put Ashraf Ghani-led government in Kabul in a difficult position. By side-stepping the Kabul government and initiating direct talks with the insurgent group, Washington has shown utter disregard to President Ghani's offer of Afghan-led talks with the Taliban. If these preliminary talks succeed, they could lead to direct negotiations between the Taliban and the U.S. government, which means the Afghan government would be pushed to the sidelines.

Chris Kolenda, the U.S. military veteran who had been part of talks with the Taliban during the Obama administration as well, told Daily Beast that the U.S. representatives



were able to "vigorously challenge" the viewpoints of Taliban representatives. "They said that if an inclusive government, after a political settlement occurs in Afghanistan, wants international forces to be in the country to train Afghan security forces, the Taliban said they would be OK with that, because they'll have participated in that decision," he said, suggesting that the U.S. government and the Taliban were looking for a 'marriage of convenience' in Afghanistan in future, raising another big question mark on America's flawed Afghanistan policy and its so-called 'war against terrorism'.

But will these talks produce the desirable results? Waheed

“Saudi-led coalition has failed to achieve any progress in war against Houthis in Yemen”



out by Saudi-led coalition on water tanks, wells, and other water sources have made the situation grim, resulting in diseases like cholera.

■ According to a new investigative report, Saudi-UAE military coalition battling Houthi rebels in Yemen - with U.S. logistical and weapons support - have entered secret deals with al-Qaeda and recruited hundreds of the group's fighters. Does that puncture U.S. claims of fighting the terror group?

A. Indeed. The U.S. war machinery has never been sincere in its so-called 'war against terrorism. By allying with terror groups like Al-Qaeda, the U.S., Saudi Arabia, UAE and others involved in the Yemen war stand exposed. It will now give rise to other radical groups in the country and the region.

■ The Saudi-led coalition was responsible for more than half of child casualties in Yemen last year, UN report said in June.

Yet there are no sanctions imposed on Saudi or UAE by the world body. Isn't it duplicity?

A. It is of course duplicity. We saw in the news that UN had put the Saudi-led coalition in a draft version of the UN's annual blacklist for grave crimes against children in Yemen. The draft version mentioned that the Saudi airstrikes led to killing and maiming of Yemeni children, with 683 child casualties attributed to it. In the draft it was verified that out of the 552 children killed (398 boys, 154 girls), the majority - 370 - were attributed to the coalition, which was also blamed for 300 child injuries. But, for some unspecified reasons, the world body later shelved the report and removed the name of the Saudi-led coalition from its blacklist. That is how treacherous they can be.

■ The UN special envoy for Yemen has said he will be inviting the warring sides for talks in Geneva, in a bid to end the devastating

civil war. Do you think it will materialize?

A. Yes, that will be helpful to some degree, if that really happens. But, both sides must be ready to make concessions. Otherwise, talks will fail as the previous talks held between the two sides in Kuwait and Geneva failed.

■ Yemeni resistance fighters are portrayed as "Iran proxy fighters" by the international media even when the U.S. State Department has admitted in leaked cables that Houthis are not Iran's proxy and they received neither funding nor weapons from Iran. Do you think it's a mere excuse for the Saudi-led alliance to continue war in Yemen?

A. Yes, it is a mere excuse for the Saudi-UAE coalition, supported by the U.S., to continue the war in Yemen, because they just want to put pressure on Iran, the country that has refused to be bullied by the U.S. The fact is that the Saudi government does not want the corrupt and tyrant government in Yemen to be overthrown by the people of Yemen.

■ Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu has expressed his interest to join the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. Is it because of Tel Aviv's cozy relationship with Riyadh and the fact that Saudis have failed to militarily overpower Yemeni rebels?

A. Saudi and its allies have failed to achieve any progress in the war against Houthis in Yemen. If Netanyahu wants to join the war in Yemen, it will obviously benefit Riyadh, which shows they have got shared interests.

■ Do you see the war in Yemen ending anytime soon? Do Yemenis have any reason to be hopeful?

A. I think the war will continue as long as Saudi and its allies fighting in Yemen have interests. People in Yemen are tired of the war and they want peace with dignity. They want to lead normal lives again.

EU dying silently as it plays in Trump’s court

1 → Hence, the President of the United States is trying to manage the EU’s collapse from an economic and commercial perspective. It should not be forgotten that during the 2016 presidential campaigns, nationalist and anti-EU movements were Trump’s only supporters in Europe, and other politicians affiliated with the Social Democratic or Conservative movements in Europe (which currently hold the power) wished that the Democrats and Hillary Clinton could win the election.

Europe is now facing a phenomenon called «Trump». In spite of this, the way European authorities try to deal with the White House is still based on a kind of deterrent idealism. Unlike countries such as China and Canada, which have given a strong response to imposing tariffs on imported steel and aluminum, European authorities have not yet taken a determined decision against the United States and the Trump government. On the other hand, European leaders continue to resolve the differences between themselves and the Trump government on the through negotiation. It is as if the European leaders have not yet realized the deep opposition of Trump with the EU and the Eurozone. They are still trying to reduce the U.S. president’s «conflicts» with the EU to some sort of «superficial disagreement», which is exactly what



the president of the United States and his entourage want!

Undoubtedly, the current retreat of the EU authorities before Trump and their failure to enter the phase of «confrontation with the White House» should be interpreted as «EU’s quiet suicide». The continuation of this process will lead to further pressures on the European Union, and subsequently, the position of nationalist and anti-EU groups

within Europe will be strengthened. Besides, we should take this fact into account that with the advent of more than one hundred far-right representatives to the European Parliament during the 2014 parliamentary elections, the process of «collapse of the United Europe» has actually begun. Right now in countries such as Austria, Italy, Sweden, and even France and Germany, nationalist groups have been able to politically strengthen

in their position, and even find way to the top of political equations of some of these countries. The most important factor that can save Europe from current crises is to strengthen the Europe’s independence in the international system. The symbol and objective example of the strengthening of such an independence is «standing against the United States». But that’s exactly what the European authorities have forgotten!

It seems as if European officials hesitate to consider the significant presumption of «Trump’s opposition to the United Europe» in their behavioral and verbal calculations. They are still thinking and deciding in the phase of «interacting with the White House», and they are even willing to give their NATO Ally some advantages. But if the EU doesn’t enter the phase of «confronting the U.S.» and merely try to control Trump’s decisions and policies, its destiny will be nothing but collapse and destruction. This confrontation calls for putting an end to the Europeans’ play on the U.S. ground; a precondition that has not yet been fulfilled by EU member states. Eventually, the Green Continent is at one of the most critical periods of its political, economic and security life. Indeed, how can we imagine that Europe, by continuing its current submission to the United States, can get out of the existing crises?!

Trump goes from threatening Iran to threatening the world

Donald Trump and his advisers have a consistent record of confronting and threatening Iran, most prominently by withdrawing from the nuclear deal. But on Tuesday, Trump expanded the threats against Iran to all those who do business with the country, declaring on Twitter they “will NOT be doing business with the United States.”

If taken literally, this would mean a new front in America’s economic battle with the Europeans, who have remained in the nuclear agreement—not to mention many other countries around the world determined to do business in Iran.

The Iran sanctions have officially been cast. These are the most biting sanctions ever imposed, and in November they ratchet up to yet another level. Anyone doing business with Iran will NOT be doing business with the United States. I am asking for WORLD PEACE, nothing less!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) August 7, 2018

There’s already discord among the United States and the other parties to the accord—China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the European Union—over a range of issues beyond the Iran deal. These include trade and tariffs (China and the EU), defense spending (EU members of nato), climate change (China, Russia, and the EU states), and sanctions (Russia). While the Trump administration might view these issues as distinct from the Iran nuclear issue, these countries and their publics will almost certainly see them as part of a larger confrontation with the United States over how Trump views the world. It’s also not clear the U.S. can get other countries—including its allies—to do its bidding. U.S. companies and the largest foreign firms will leave Iran under the threat of sanctions, but smaller firms and those with limited U.S. exposure could continue to seek opportunities in the Islamic Republic, ensuring the U.S. sanctions won’t have the intended impact, and certainly won’t be “the most biting sanctions ever imposed.”

“I think that the easiest way for them to circumvent the sanctions comes from the way in which we’re implementing them, which is by dividing our own partnership,” said Richard Nephew, the former deputy coordinator for sanctions policy at the U.S. State Department who was on the U.S. team that negotiated the Iran deal, in a conference call. “The fact that we are not working with Europe but rather confronting Europe means that we won’t have an EU-wide system of sanctions that we’re working with them. Instead it’s going to be all about who has benefit in the United States and who doesn’t, who has economic interests in the United States and who doesn’t. And that’s a bad way to have sanctions work, especially with our closest partners. And I think it’s going to just breed loopholes, even amongst some of our closest allies.”

Barack Obama’s administration succeeded in putting together coordinated international sanctions on Iran. Those restrictions sunk Iran into a recession and ultimately drove it to negotiations with the international community that resulted in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as the Iran deal is formally known. Trump’s sanctions, strong though they are, are unlikely to have the same impact, primarily because they don’t have the same kind of international cooperation. But Trump administration officials have met with their counterparts from more than 20 countries to discuss the sanctions, working to build a coalition against Iran. “What I can tell you very specifically is that we have made it very clear that we’re going to aggressively enforce this executive order and the other authorities that we have pursuant to statute,” a senior administration official said in a background call to reporters Monday. “We will work with countries around the world to do so, but make no mistake about it, we are very intent on using these authorities.”



France, Germany, and the U.K. have criticized the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA. They say, and indeed Trump administration officials concede, that Iran is complying with the accord. The Trump administration says the Obama-era agreement does not go far enough to stop Iran’s regional meddling, its missile program, and the threat it poses to Israel. The deal’s other signatories—including China, Russia, and the EU—say the JCPOA was meant only to address the threat of Iran’s nuclear program, which it did.

The U.S. sanctions that were announced Monday targeted Iran’s industrial sector, transactions involving U.S. dollars, Iranian rial, and the issuance of Iranian sovereign debt. The strictures also punish Iran’s civil-aviation sector and, more significantly, auto manufacturing. Iran’s economy, long hobbled by international sanctions, will almost certainly be adversely affected—though the most severe U.S. sanctions, which target Iranian oil exports, will go into effect in November. The United States says the goal of its sanctions is to pressure the Iranian regime into talks with the U.S. on all issues, including the nuclear program; its political and military involvement in Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, and Iraq; its threats against Israel; its ballistic-missile program; and its dismal human-rights record. But Iran says it will not talk

to the United States while under sanctions and while the U.S. is outside the JCPOA.

The EU, which wants to preserve the nuclear deal, has come up with its own so-called blocking mechanisms that would penalize European companies that comply with the U.S. sanctions. But EU officials concede that there is little they can do to compel the largest European companies, whose business operations span the globe and which rely heavily on the U.S. dollar for the international transactions, to defy the Trump’s administration’s measures. Ultimately, the prospect of a loss of access to the U.S. market is far more daunting than the potential loss of Iranian consumers. But what the EU could do is encourage its smaller firms that have limited exposure to the U.S. to do business in Iran. Although those firms will be unable to provide the financial windfall that the JCPOA promised the Islamic Republic, they will allow the EU to say that it is keeping with the spirit of the agreement, which ensured economic and political benefits to Iran in exchange for a freeze on its nuclear program.

Meanwhile, although the JCPOA might have provided Iran with limited economic benefits, the U.S. withdrawal from the accord has provided the Islamic Republic with the sort of political benefit it could have hardly dreamed of. For possibly the first time since the 1979 Islamic revolution that mostly cut Iran off from the West, the world’s powers, with the exception of the United States, say they believe Tehran is in compliance with its commitment to an international agreement—while it is the U.S. that has violated it.

Then there are those countries that aren’t party to the JCPOA, but have significant interests in Iran: India, which relies heavily on the Islamic Republic for its energy needs; Turkey, a regional power with deep business and cultural relations with Iran; and Japan, a net-energy importer that relies heavily on Iranian supplies. Many of these countries are likely to seek waivers from the United States to continue their dealings with Iran. Jarrett Blanc, the Obama-era State Department coordinator for the nuclear deal, said on the same conference call as Nephew that Iran’s future business dealings will likely lie outside Europe.

“The Europeans have a role to play here, but it’s by no means the largest role,” he said. “And that’s part of the reason why I think it’s very difficult for those of us and those of you on the outside to really track what’s going on, because whatever negotiations are taking place now between, for example, Tehran and Beijing, Tehran and New Delhi, are going to be more opaque to us than conversations that are taking place with Europe.”

But Trump administration officials maintain that their goal is to end all Iranian oil imports. “We are not looking to grant exemptions or waivers,” a senior administration official told reporters Monday, “but we do and are glad to discuss requests and look at requests on a case-by-case basis.”

How that fits in with the president’s tweet Tuesday morning is unclear, but, in the president’s words, “the Iran sanctions have officially been cast.”

(Source: The Atlantic)

Perils could actually herald positive change



1 → While one cannot disagree with some moves Trump has made, including the appearance at least of Trump’s suggestions to reduce tensions with Vladimir Putin and the Russians, a suggestion which may literally threaten his Presidency, his greatest failings are, of course, his Middle East policies where the Zionists have been setting the agenda, particularly with regard to Iran. He can tweet and tweet idiotically, endlessly send out messages that he often contradicts the next day, but as long as he protects the super-rich oligarchs and permits the Zionists’ to control him, and allows the U.S. Military Industrial Complex to do its worldwide murder and to loot the U.S. Treasury, he will be allowed to carry on, and meanwhile the Democratic opposition, which claims to be more “sane”, really is not yet and its intentions though cast differently are just as inimical – until something breaks. And something will break. Perhaps it will be the faux health of the U.S. economy and its perilous finances. Perhaps it will be an overwhelming preponderance of breaks with allies like the EU that make it impossible for the U.S. government to maintain its desired status quo. Perhaps even some kind of revolution in the U.S. is brewing. No one is happy with the stance of Washington against Iran except the warmongers, and Neocons, and that includes many Americans. Do not be deluded: those who are pulling Trump’s strings with regard to the Middle East would like nothing more than for Iran to fall apart and be drowned in chaos of the sort that ensued in Assad’s Syria until recently. If Iranians were fully aware of this, they would hang tough through the sanctions and threats until they abate, and if Iran can manage somehow, they will abate.

And Americans are wising up through all the propaganda, at least at the margin, because they see that Republican Party domination in Washington of late is dismantling, or wants to dismantle, not only protections of free speech and the free press, but also environmental protections and cherished social programs like Medicare and Social Security – at the behest of greedy corporations and other “elites”. Iranians must be aware that the American PEOPLE, by and large, have no ax to grind with Iran. In fact, even such media pundits as Geraldo Rivera of Fox news have lately questioned why Iran, and not Saudi Arabia, has been demonized by Washington. He went on to suggest that Iran ought to replace the Saudis as an “ally” of sorts in the Middle East...but of course that goes against the Zionists’ grip on foreign policy. And one must note that Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the Labor Party in the UK, attacked so viciously of late by Zionist zealots even in his own party, is actually gaining support among Jews in the UK even though he has long been a champion of human rights, has supported relief for the long-suffering Palestinians and claimed he would endorse Palestinian statehood. Grand it would be if Corbyn becomes Britain’s Prime Minister, which is a real possibility.

Just this week, another promising development. The state of Michigan is likely to send the very first Muslim woman to the U.S. House of Representatives in November. This is Democrat and attorney Rashida Tlaib, 42, daughter of Palestinian immigrants who just won a primary election. Representing part of Detroit and Dearborn, she may be joined by a couple other Muslim candidates in Congress come November.

In any broad survey of the geopolitical landscape, which is being reshuffled like never before in decades, the one clear takeaway is the necessity for not just Iranians, but all people distressed by narrow and desperate U.S. imperialists, to maintain solidarity and cool heads whatever the pains as something better and new may be born not merely in the U.S., but worldwide.

Germany reaches first deal with Spain to return migrants

The German government has agreed with Madrid that it can send back to Spain migrants who have already applied for asylum there, a spokeswoman for the interior ministry said on Wednesday, in what is the first deal of its kind.

The move comes after a dispute between Chancellor Angela Merkel’s conservatives and their Bavarian allies over returning migrants that nearly split them and brought down the government.

Interior Ministry spokeswoman Eleonore Petermann said the two EU countries had signed the deal on Monday that would, from Saturday, enable them to send such migrants back to Spain within 48 hours. Spain did not require anything in return, she added.

A Spanish government spokeswoman said the deal was part of the agreements reached in the last European summit on migration in late June. She said Spain accepted Germany’s demand to send back asylum seekers who got to Germany from Spain.

Spain has become the new main entry point for asylum-seekers fleeing Africa. Around 19,000 asylum-seekers arrived in the first five months of this year, almost as many as in all of 2017, eclipsing for the first time the numbers flowing through north Africa to Italy. More than 1.6 million migrants have arrived in Germany since mid-2014, provoking tensions and propelling the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) into the national parliament.

German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, leader of Christian Social Union (CSU) – the Bavarian sister party to Merkel’s Christian Democrats (CDU) – is keen to show he is taking action to reduce immigration as his party faces a tough October regional election in which the AfD is expected to fare well.

Germany is seeking similar deals with Italy and Greece. The discussions with those countries are still going on, Petermann said, adding that both Italy and Greece had made counterdemands.

Merkel is due to meet Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez at the weekend and migration will feature in their talks, a spokeswoman for the German government said.

Sanchez pushed migration up the agenda shortly after he took office in June by accepting the Aquarius, an NGO boat carrying 629 migrants that was blocked from docking in Italy and Malta, and says Spain is committed to a joint European response to illegal migration.

(Source: Reuters)

Prisoners’ rights violations in Bahrain

TEHRAN (FNA) - Amnesty International has once again blasted Bahrain for denying vital medical care to jailed pro-democracy activists, saying the cruel and inhumane practice is putting the prisoners’ lives at risk. According to the rights group:

- Bahraini authorities have for over a year deliberately subjected four elderly prisoners of conscience, Hassan Mushaima, Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, Abdel-Wahab Hussain and Abdel-Jalil al-Miqdad, to ill-treatment.
- They are frail and suffering the severe disabilities that come with serious chronic illnesses such as hypertension and diabetes.
- That anyone can bring themselves to treat people with such cruelty is unbelievable.
- The activists have been imprisoned solely for taking part in peaceful protests.
- They should not have been arrested, tried or imprisoned.
- They shouldn’t be subjected to this ill-treatment that is now endangering their lives.

- And they must be released immediately and unconditionally.

However, it’s not just these four men who were put on unfair trial for leading the 2011 peaceful anti-regime protests and sentenced to life in prison. The Bahraini authorities have also imprisoned and tortured hundreds of other pro-democracy leaders and activists over the past years. This equally violates international law and standards on prisoner treatment and constitutes cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment.

The situation is so bad that Human Rights Watch and UN rights experts have also called on Bahrain to halt its crackdown on activists and restrictions on freedom of expression. In their numerous reports they state that Manama has continued to respond to the peaceful demonstrations with lethal force, killing scores of people and arresting hundreds more. Bahraini authorities have further detained human rights campaigners, broken up major opposition political parties, revoked

the nationality of several pro-democracy activists, and deported those left stateless. Little wonder the European Parliament has also stepped in. The European Parliament lawmakers have also called on Bahrain to immediately put an end to persecution of all human rights activists in the country. The EU even adopted a resolution to call on the Bahraini regime “to immediately release all human rights defenders imprisoned for their activities,” and in particular Nabeel Rajab, who has been sentenced to five years in prison for denouncing on Twitter the torture in Bahrain’s prisons and the Saudi Arabia-led coalition airstrikes in Yemen.

To be sure, the time is right for the international civil society to urge Manama to observe international laws and guarantee human rights for prisoners, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, suspend military trials for civilians, and officially revoke death sentences.

Bahrain is also expected to end its highly

repressive political order and let a just system representing all Bahrainis be established. This includes ending widespread discrimination against the Shia majority in the country, not responding to the demonstrations with lethal force, not detaining and torturing human rights campaigners, not breaking up major opposition political parties, and not revoking the nationality of pro-democracy activists and deporting them, particularly those who are peacefully calling for the country to become a republic.

The world has once again focused its attention to Bahrain. The hope is that the international community will use all its political, diplomatic, and economic means at the United Nations to stop the unelected regime from denying the existence of basic human rights for the majority of its citizens, where fear tends to be the order of the day. Fear of imprisonment, fear of torture, fear of death, fear of losing citizenship, family, property, and means of livelihood.

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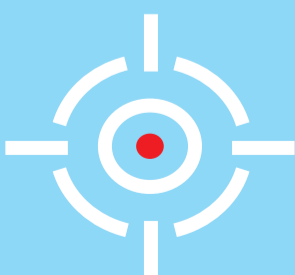
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What are the most curable cancers?

Although there is no cure for cancer yet, detecting and treating the disease at an early stage can significantly improve a person's outlook. The cancers with the highest 5-year relative survival rates include melanoma, Hodgkin lymphoma, and breast, prostate, testicular, cervical, and thyroid cancer.

Cancer is a disease that causes cells to grow and multiply uncontrollably in certain parts of the body. It may start in one part of the body and then spread to other areas. As a result, cancer can have a severe impact on the surrounding tissues and organs.

Despite substantial investment and years of research worldwide, cancer remains the leading cause of death in the United States. The National Cancer Institute estimate that doctors will diagnose 1,735,350 new cases across the U.S. in 2018 and that 609,640 people will die from cancer in this year.

Successful treatment may remove all signs of cancer from a person's body. Doctors describe this as being in remission. However, cancer can return after remission, sometimes many years later.

Curing cancer would mean completely eradicating the condition without it coming back. Although this can happen for some people, there is currently no specific cure for cancer.

Many factors influence the likelihood of successful cancer treatment, including the type of cancer.

To understand the difference in outlook between cancer types, researchers often use a statistic called the 5-year survival rate. This figure refers to the percentage of people who survive for 5 years after the diagnosis of cancer.

The 5-year survival rate does not indicate whether or not treatment has removed all signs of cancer, but it is useful for comparing the relative severity of different types of cancer. It is important to remember that many other factors influence survival, such as how early the doctors detect the disease.

To provide a more accurate estimate of the outlook for cancer, doctors can also refer to 5-year relative survival rates. Relative survival rates compare people with a specific disease to those in the general population without the disease. They take into account the fact that other factors can impact on survival.

In this article, we look at the seven types of cancer that have the highest 5-year relative survival rates. These survival rates are primarily for cancers that doctors have diagnosed at an early stage.



Successful treatment may remove all signs of cancer from a person's body. Doctors describe this as being in remission. However, cancer can return after remission, sometimes many years later.

■ **Breast cancer**

The 5-year relative survival rate for stage 0 and 1 breast cancer is 99–100 percent. Therefore, people with this stage and type of cancer are almost 100 percent as likely to survive for at least 5 years as people without the condition.

The stages describe the size and location of the tumor. Stage 0 refers to the growth of abnormal cells in the breast tissue or lobules within the breast. At this stage, doctors do not consider it to be cancerous, but it can indicate very early signs of cancer.

In stage 1 breast cancer, tiny tumors are present that: are typically less than 2 centimeters (cm) in size have not spread to a different area of the body.

Doctors can isolate and treat these types of breast cancer before they develop into more severe forms of cancer.

■ **Prostate cancer**

Prostate cancers have a 99 percent 5-year relative survival rate at stages 1 and 2. Prostate cancers either grow very slowly or do not grow at all, and they are very treatable. Prostate cancers that are not increasing in size may not require treatment if doctors do not consider them to be harmful.

■ **Testicular cancer**

The 5-year relative survival rate for testicular cancer is 99 percent for localized tumors, which are those in the testicles, and 96 percent for regional tumors, which have spread to tissues or lymph nodes close to the testicles. In the early stages of testicular cancer, doctors can remove either one or both of the testicles to treat the condition.

Testicle removal is an effective form of treatment. However, it is significantly less

beneficial when cancer has spread.

■ **Thyroid cancer**

Thyroid cancer has a 5-year relative survival rate of 98–100 percent at stages 1 and 2. The thyroid is a gland in the neck that produces hormones to support healthy bodily functions.

Most thyroid cancers grow slowly, which allows more time for treatment to take place. Even when cancer spreads into surrounding tissues in the throat, removing the thyroid gland can be an effective method of eradicating it.

■ **Melanoma**

Melanoma has a 5-year relative survival rate of around 92 and 97 percent at stages 1A and 1B respectively.

Melanoma is a cancer of the skin, and it has a high survival rate because it is easy to detect in this part of the body. It is often possible to identify and treat melanoma in the early stages of its progression, which increases a person's chance of survival.

However, without early detection, melanoma can spread beneath the surface of the skin and become more difficult to remove.

■ **Cervical cancer**

Cervical cancer has a 93 percent 5-year relative survival rate at stages 0 and 1A. Early detection allows doctors to treat the abnormally developed cells before they can grow or spread to other areas of the body. Even at the later stages of cervical cancer, the cancerous cells grow at a very slow rate. As a result, treatment can still be effective.

■ **Hodgkin lymphoma**

Hodgkin lymphoma has a 5-year relative survival rate of around 90 percent at stages 1 and 2.

The high relative survival rate of Hodgkin lymphoma is due to it responding well to radiation treatment. This means that the survival rate remains high for people who have more advanced forms of this cancer. However, other types of lymphoma do not respond as well to treatment.

■ **Takeaway**

There is currently no cure for cancer. However, successful treatment can result in cancer going into remission, which means that all signs of it have gone. The early detection and treatment of cancer can significantly improve the chances of remission and a person's outlook.

(Source: Medical News Today)

Spider venom may help treat a serious form of epilepsy

According to a new study carried out in Australia, a protein found in spider venom could help scientists design an effective medication for the treatment of a rare form of epilepsy.

Dravet syndrome “is a severe form of epilepsy” that typically appears during the first 12 months of life.



Seizures, which increases in temperature and bright lights can sometimes trigger, can be frequent.

Children with Dravet syndrome also tend to have developmental delay, speech impairment, sleep disturbances, and a number of other symptoms.

The condition is resistant to current treatments and, sadly, children who are affected often die before they reach adulthood.

Recently, a team of researchers from the University of Queensland (UQ) and the Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health, both in Australia, set out to find answers in an unusual place: spider venom.

■ **Spider venom and epilepsy**

The researchers were led by Prof. Glenn King, from UQ, whose research focuses on harnessing various types of venom to be used medicinally. In fact, his UQ laboratory houses “the most extensive collection of venoms in the world.”

Prof. King explains why spider venom might help children with Dravet syndrome, saying, “About 80 percent of Dravet syndrome cases are caused by a mutation in a gene called SCN1A. When this gene doesn't work as it should, sodium channels in the brain, which regulate brain activity, do not function correctly.”

Specifically, the mutation in the SCN1A gene alters a subunit of fast-spiking inhibitory interneurons. When these inhibitory neurons fire, they dampen down neural activity. However, if they are not fully functioning, the brain is more susceptible to hyperexcitability, which increases the chance of seizures.

The researchers investigated the effect of a spider venom peptide on a mouse model of Dravet syndrome. They demonstrated that this molecule, called Hm1a, zeroed in on the exact receptors that are affected in this condition.

“In our studies, the peptide from spider venom was able to target the specific channels affected by Dravet, restoring the function of the brain neurons and eliminating seizures.”

They recently published their findings in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America.

(Source: Science Alert)

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10-day foreign arrivals in Khorasan Razavi nearly doubles y/y



A view of the Ghasr International Hotel in Mashhad

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – The number of international travelers to Iran’s northeastern Khorasan Razavi province has nearly doubled in a ten-day period ending August 1 compared to the same period last year.

“Some 60,000 foreign travelers and pilgrims accommodated in hotels and other hospitality units during the first ten days of month Mordad which shows 93 percent of year-on-year growth,” Yousef Bidkhori, the provincial tourism chief, told IRNA.

Some 31,000 of foreign tourists stayed in hotels and guesthouses of province during the same period last year, the official added.

Khorasan Razavi attracted some 28.5 million travelers and pilgrims including some 1.7 million foreign nationals during the first 11 months of the past Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2017), according to data compiled by the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization.

Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi province, is deemed as the holiest city in Iran as it hosts the shrine of the eighth Shia Imam, Imam Reza (AS).

Lut Desert’s World Heritage base renovated



TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – A refurbishment project has been recently completed on the World Heritage base of Iran’s UNESCO-registered Lut Desert in a bid to encourage tourism, IRNA reported.

The project touched upon interior spaces, exterior surfaces, roofing tiles, landscaping and sanitary facilities with the aim of receiving the visitors well, the report said.

Lut Desert boasts rich magnificent scenery and unparalleled serenity. Seven years of satellite temperature data analyzed by NASA has shown that the desert was the hottest spot on Earth.

ROUND THE GLOBE

‘Forts and Castles, Volta, Greater Accra, Central and Western Regions’

“Forts and Castles, Volta, Greater Accra, Central and Western Regions” is a collective designation by the UNESCO of European-style fortifications and outposts.

These fortified trading posts, founded between 1482 and 1786, and spanning a distance of approximately 500 km along the coast of Ghana between Keta in the east and Beyin in the west, were links in the trading routes established by the Portuguese in many areas of the world during their era of great maritime exploration.



A view of St. George's d'Elmina in Ghana

The castles and forts were built and occupied at different times by traders from Portugal, Spain, Denmark, Sweden, Holland, Germany and Britain. They served the gold trade of European chartered companies. Latterly they played a significant part in the developing slave trade, and therefore in the history of the Americas, and, subsequently, in the 19th century, in the suppression of that trade.

The property consists of three Castles (Cape Coast, St. George's d'Elmina and Christiansborg at Osu, Accra), 15 Forts (including Good Hope at Senya Beraku; Patience at Apam; Amsterdam at Abandzi; St. Jago at Elmina; San Sebastian at Shama; and Metal Cross at Dixcove) and two sites with traces of former fortifications (Frederiksborg at Amanful, Cape Coast and Augustaborg at Teshie, Accra).

The castles and forts constituted for more than four centuries a kind of ‘shopping street’ of West Africa to which traders of Europe’s most important maritime nations came to exchange their goods for those of African traders, some of whom came from very far in the interior.

(Source: UNESCO)

Meybod: Open-air museum of ancient watermills

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – Some 50 kilometers north of Yazd, central Iran, lies the sprawling mud-brick city of Meybod, whose tourism officials are planning to internationally promote it as the “city of watermills”.

Meybod seeks UNESCO status for long being a cradle of watermills and for its cultural evolution of water supply through the millennia, ISNA reported.

Meybod Governor Hossein Fallah said on Tuesday that the city embraces 22 historical watermills some of which have been or are to be restored while some are forgotten in the course of time.

“Three of its watermills including the “double stone watermill of Mohammad-Abad” have been prioritized to be fully restored in close collaboration with the private sector in a bid to become tourist destinations,” the official explained.

Iran is situated in an arid and semi-arid region where, due to inequitable distribution of surface water, its people have been enduring extreme hardship to meet water demands for millennia.

Construction of dams, qanats (underground aqueducts), cisterns and yakhchals (ice houses) date back to the ancient times in Iran with the aim of countering fluctuation of yearly seasonal streams and ensuring to have better conditions for utilization of water.

An initiative pursued by ancient Iranians was to tap into water’s concealed powers to rotate the stones of watermills.



Man-carved tunnel leads to the double stone watermill of Mohammad-Abad in central Iran



View over Meybod, an oasis city in Iran's Yazd province

Watermills were typically constructed in accordance with the then design requirements for instance they featured dome-shaped roofs with high-enough vestibules to allow camels or other livestock to move back and forth with ease in order to convey grains or flour. The watermills as their names implies were connected to river flows, springs, qanats or other water sources usually trough man-made ditched canals.

Though watermills or windmills have lost their utility, however, there are still intact or restored specimens across the country. In a recent move, the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization has commenced documentation of an ancient chain of vertical-axis windmills, which can be found in eastern parts of the country.

Iran’s “city of the mouthless” to get more attention!

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Shahr-e Yeri, a unique archaeological site in northwest Iran, is set to be turned into a national heritage base, a privilege that may bring more attention to the ancient city sometimes referred to as the “city of the mouthless”.

Situated near Pirazman village of Meshkin Shahr, in Ardabil province, Shahr-e Yeri is one of the earliest inhabitants in the country.

“The decision of establishing a national heritage base in Shahr-e Yeri was made after it faced many problems followed by [giving] warnings about inappropriate situation of

the historical site,” ISNA reported.

The site embraces an Iron-Age fortress, three prehistorical temples and tens of carved stones on which mouthless faces are depicted, all stretched across 400 hectares of several small hills.

During its heyday bodies of the dead were buried with special ceremonies and rituals in compliance with religious beliefs... however, majority of the tombs found empty of skeletons due to illegal excavations, according to the Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies.

Shahr-e Yeri was inscribed on the list of National Heritage Sites in 1931.

Ancient Roman library discovered during parking lot construction

Archaeologists have identified Germany’s oldest public library, which may also be the oldest library in the Roman Empire’s north-west provinces. Niches in the walls appear to have stored up to 20,000 scrolls.

The library’s remains were unearthed in the middle of Cologne. The Romans founded the city in 50 A.D. back when Germany was a Roman province called “Germania.” Researchers think the library dates to the middle of the second century, around the same time Romans built the Ephesus library in 117 CE. (Ephesus is located in modern-day Turkey).

The ancient library’s walls emerged during construction for a parking lot (in Europe, discovering relics during construction is very common). At first, researchers thought the building—which archaeologists estimate was 65 feet long and 30 feet high—might be a community hall. But they weren’t sure what all the little nooks in the walls were for.

“It took us some time to match up the parallels—we could see the niches were too small to bear statues inside. But what they are are kind of cupboards for the scrolls,” says Dirk Schmitz from the Roman-Germanic Museum

of Cologne, according to The Guardian. “They are very particular to libraries—you can see the same ones in the library at Ephesus.”

It’s difficult to determine literacy rates in ancient times, let alone how many people would’ve made use of Cologne’s library. And in fact, the idea that the Roman Empire had “public” libraries at all is a little controversial. T. Keith Dix, a classics professor at the University of Georgia, has suggested Roman state libraries may have been for well-connected authors in the empire.

(Source: history.com)



4 tips for protecting your trip during hurricane season

By Justin Sablich

With some parts of the world still recovering from last year’s brutal hurricane season, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is predicting a slightly-above average stretch this year.

Planning well in advance for potential disruptions is essential, even if you’re not traveling to a high-risk area like Florida or the Caribbean, said Justin Tysdal, travel insurance expert and chief executive of Seven Corners, a travel insurance firm.

“As we’ve learned in recent years, some of the most unsuspecting places can also be cause for concern, including Houston, Texas and New York.” Here’s what you need to know to protect your travel plans this hurricane season.

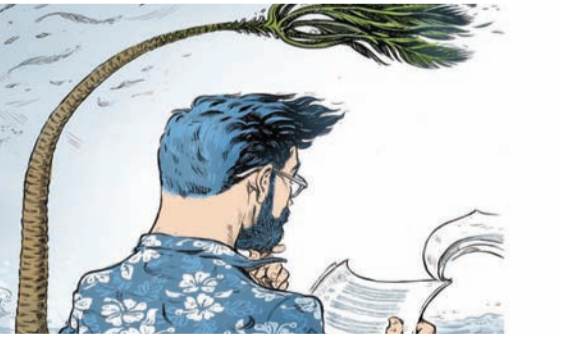
■ **Check your hotel and airline policies**

Many hotels in high-risk areas have some sort of hurricane policy, but they vary in what they cover and how they work.

A hotel with a hurricane guarantee often offers either a full refund or will let you rebook within a year with no extra fees attached should you have to cancel. But it’s important to know exactly how it works ahead of time, as some depend on the timing of the storm. Other hurricane policies only reimburse after the fact and if other criteria is met, such as the storm making landfall qualifying as a “direct impact” to the hotel or if the storm winds are considered “hurricane-force.”

Airlines will often rebook your flight without an extra charge for storm-related cancellations, but they are not required to do so by law. In cases of partial reimbursements from a hotel or airline, having travel insurance could close any gaps.

“Remember that a travel insurance plan is designed to reimburse you for nonrefundable trip costs. So, if a hotel or airline offers only a partial refund, a travel insurance plan



As soon as a hurricane is named, it’s too late to purchase travel insurance, so planning well in advance for potential disruptions is essential.

will pay the remaining part of your expense, as long as you bought insurance for the full nonrefundable cost of your trip,” Mr. Tysdal said.

■ **Don’t delay**

As soon as a storm has a name, it’s too late to purchase travel insurance, Mr. Tysdal said. “Think of it as buying auto insurance after you have wrecked your car. Once the risk is definite, it’s not insurable.”

Timing is also a factor regarding what types of travel insurance you can purchase, which will affect how much coverage you have. The most comprehensive plan will include a Cancel For Any Reason (CFAR) option, which can only be

purchased within 20 days of your initial trip deposit date.

“It is the only way to guarantee you will be able to cancel your trip for a reason other than a trigger specifically listed in the policy. If a traveler cancels with CFAR, they can recoup 75 percent of their trip investment and take their trip another time,” Mr. Tysdal said.

■ **Cruises may require extra coverage**

If you’re taking a cruise and have concerns about hurricane-related disruptions, there’s even more to think about.

Even if it looks like your cruise will be smooth sailing, think about how you are getting to your cruise departure point, as a flight delay or cancellation because of a storm may lead to you missing your boat. Make sure your insurance policy has a Missed Connection benefit, which will cover additional transportation costs should you need to join your cruise at another port.

“We recommend selecting a plan with at least a \$1,000 Missed Connection benefit. This covers the unexpected cost if you miss your cruise departure due to a flight or weather delay or other triggers listed in the policy,” Mr. Tysdal said. “The insurance company may also cover accommodations and meal expenses while you are catching up to your cruise.”

■ **Secure important documents**

Most travelers carry important documents like their passport and driver’s license with them on vacation, but in an emergency evacuation situation, there’s a chance these can be damaged or lost. Leaving copies of these documents — along with your flight and hotel information and any insurance-related documents — with someone you trust before your departure will make life easier for when you return home.

“You can also store them on the cloud or in an email to yourself, so you can access them online in case you lose the physical copies,” Mr. Tysdal said.

(Source: The New York Times)

Top-performing soil microbes could be key to sustainable agriculture: study

Beautiful things can happen when plants surround themselves with the right microbes. A study on *Acmispon strigosus*, a plant in the pea family, showed a 13-fold growth increase in plants that partnered with a highly effective strain of the nitrogen-fixing bacteria *Bradyrhizobium*.

The ability of plants to use beneficial microbes to boost their growth is not lost on agronomists. Some breeders think understanding the traits that enable crops to recruit top-performing microbes is key to the future of sustainable agriculture.

A roadblock in capitalizing on the beneficial work of microbes is the complex genetic and environmental factors that govern their role in plant growth. Left unattended, plants don't always recruit beneficial microbes, instead surrounding themselves with a mix of both helpful and ineffective bacteria. Attempts to manage the microbial populations plants encounter in the soil -- by inoculating with beneficial strains--have largely failed.

Combinations of microbes
"It is very difficult to predict which combinations of microbes will be successful under field conditions, since the microbes that are beneficial to plants in the lab do not always compete successfully against microbes that already exist in the field," said Joel Sachs, a professor of evolutionary ecology at the University of California, Riverside and member of the University's Institute for Integrative Genome Biology.

A "promising alternative is to breed plants



that are better at managing their own microbial partners, an advancement that will be passed down to future generations."

In a study in *New Phytologist*, Sachs' team has advanced our understanding of how plant genetics and environmental factors affect

microbial soil populations in the field. The paper's first author is Camille Wendlandt, a graduate student in Sachs' research group.

The researchers investigated whether *Acmispon strigosus* (the pea plant) changes how it associates with different strains of

nitrogen-fixing bacteria when its environment changes.

Surprisingly, they found that changing the plants' environment by fertilizing the soil did not change how plants associated with microbes. Instead, the researchers found that genetic variation between the pea plants was most important in explaining whether plants invested in relationships with the most beneficial microbes. In other words, some variants of the plant are better than others at developing these beneficial partnerships.

Variants of pea plant
The variants of pea plant that were best at investing in beneficial microbes also had very high growth benefits, in contrast to other pea plant variants that did not invest as much and gained less growth benefit.

The "fact that the traits that govern these partnerships vary between plants of the same species and are heritable shows that they can be selected for by breeders," Wendlandt said.

"Ultimately, we hope that agronomists will use this research to develop plant varieties that make the most of the soil microbes they encounter. This could reduce reliance on chemical fertilizers, which are expensive for growers and can pollute the environment."

Future work in the lab will focus on whether the pea plants still show genetic differences when they interact with much more complex microbial communities, similar to what they encounter in field soils.

(Source: eurekalert.org)

The researchers investigated whether *Acmispon strigosus* (the pea plant) changes how it associates with different strains of nitrogen-fixing bacteria when its environment changes.

Electromagnetic waves are 1m times stronger around Jupiter's moon Ganymede

The electromagnetic waves around Jupiter are much, much stronger around two of its moons. Around Europa, electromagnetic wave activity is 100 times stronger. And around Ganymede - the largest moon in our Solar System - it jumps to a massive 1 million times stronger.

Around planets with a magnetic field, something strange and wonderful happens. Energetic electrons become trapped in the magnetosphere, spiraling along the lines of the magnetic field, generating waves in the plasma. These waves are also responsible for auroras.

The waves can be recorded and converted into sound using radio technology. Around Earth, they sound like a cross between birdsong and whalesong. The type of wave is known as a chorus wave for this reason.

The gas giant's diameter
Jupiter's chorus waves are intense. The gas giant's diameter is over 11 times that of Earth, but its magnetosphere is a massive 20,000 times stronger. And, tucked inside that magnetosphere are several of its moons - including Europa and Ganymede.

Both of these moons are special. Ganymede, which is larger than Mercury, at around two-thirds the size of Mars, generates its own magnetosphere.

Europa has a magnetic field too. But it doesn't generate it alone. NASA scientists think that it's induced by an interaction between Europa's liquid ocean and Jupiter's magnetosphere.

Now, by studying data collected by Jupiter probe Galileo in the 1990s, researchers have determined that



these two moons increase the strength of chorus waves.

"It's a really surprising and puzzling observation showing that a moon with a magnetic field can create such a tremendous intensification in the power of waves," said geophysicist Yuri Shprits from the University of Potsdam.

Strong plasma waves in the vicinity of Ganymede have been known about for some time. They were first

detected during a Galileo flyby in 1996, and subsequently analyzed by physicist Don Gurnett of the University of Iowa and his team.

What was not known was whether these plasma waves were a transient phenomenon, or a permanent feature.

Luckily, Galileo made a number of Ganymede flybys during its time around Jupiter between 1995 and 2003, and the team was able to study these data.

The wave activity
They found that when the probe moved past Ganymede, the electromagnetic wave activity was amplified by up to 6 orders of magnitude - 1 million times - compared to the median activity at corresponding distances from Jupiter. For Europa, the wave activity was 100 times more powerful.

These measurements were consistent across the flybys - indicating that this activity is likely permanent and ongoing.

As for why it's occurring, it can't be ruled out that the magnetospheres have absolutely nothing to do with it. However, Jupiter's moons Callisto and Io both orbit within Jupiter's magnetosphere. Neither have magnetospheres of their own, and neither produce a spike in chorus wave strength.

The science is absolutely fascinating, but it will also be useful in planning future missions. Here on Earth, chorus waves play a role in producing "killer" electrons, which can cause damage to spacecraft.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Novel compounds turn old cells young again in promising new anti-aging research

A new study from researchers at the University of Exeter has shown how three specifically designed compounds can target the mitochondria in older human cells, effectively rejuvenating those cells and making them act young again to reverse key signs of aging.

One of the fundamental biological mechanisms that defines aging is called cellular senescence. As we get older more and more of our cells become senescent, meaning they no longer replicate yet still remain metabolically active.

"As human bodies age, they accumulate old (senescent) cells that do not function as well as younger cells," says Lorna Harries, one of the authors on the new study. "This is not just an effect of aging - it's a reason why we age."

A great deal of work is currently being

done by researchers around the world hunting for ways to both clear senescent cells from the body, and reverse the process of senescence. Last year the University of Exeter team revealed a novel technique that successfully rejuvenated older senescent cells, making them return to behaving like younger cells again.

Now, a new study from the same team has focused on the specific mechanism that causes this rejuvenating effect, revealing that when a tiny quantity of hydrogen sulfide is delivered directly to the mitochondria in cells it can effectively rescue those cells from their senescent state.

An alternative fuel
"Our compounds provide mitochondria in cells with an alternative fuel to help them function properly," explains Matt Whiteman, another author on the

new study. "Many disease states can essentially be viewed as accelerated aging, and keeping mitochondria healthy helps either prevent or, in many cases using animal models, reverse this."

Three particular compounds were developed by the team to directly target the mitochondria in senescent cells. Each of the compounds demonstrated a remarkable 40 to 50 percent reduction in cellular senescence, meaning almost half of the aged cells that were treated reverted into behaving like younger cells.

The researchers note that this work is not about developing some kind of miracle drug that extends our lifespan, but rather it focuses on the intimate processes that underly aging in the hopes of developing treatments that can extend our health span. However, this work is still

some time away from practical clinical application. While current research has demonstrated positive effects in human cell models, a great deal of work needs to be done to test the compounds in live organisms and prove they are safe to deploy in human subjects.

The "compounds developed at Exeter have the potential to tweak the mechanisms by which this aging of cells happens," explains Harries. "We used to think age-related diseases like cancer, dementia and diabetes each had a unique cause, but they actually track back to one or two common mechanisms. This research focuses on one of these mechanisms, and the findings with our compounds have potentially opened up the way for new therapeutic approaches in the future."

(Source: newatlas.com)

Corn variety grabs fertilizer from the air, scientists find

A variety of corn from Oaxaca, Mexico, has aerial roots that harbor nitrogen-fixing bacteria, allowing the corn to suck nitrogen straight from the air.

Plants need three things to grow: air, water and nutrients. Farmers usually take care of the last bit by fertilizing their fields. But now scientists have found a type of corn that seems to thrive on air and water alone.

"This has been sort of the holy grail, you know, if only I could grow corn and not put 200 pounds of nitrogen on it," Allen Van Deynze is a plant breeder at the University of California, Davis, and part of a team that analyzed this one corn's unusual ability.

The corn variety hails from Oaxaca, Mexico, where it typically grows in nitrogen-poor soils. Nitrogen is needed for proteins, DNA and the chlorophyll that let plants perform photosynthesis. But the Oaxacan corn does well despite the bad soil, and with little or no fertilization.

The plants pull off this trick via thick,



red, aerial roots that protrude from its stem -- above the ground -- that ooze out a clear goo packed with sugars.

Nitrogen-fixing bacteria
That slime is the perfect habitat for nitrogen-fixing bacteria: a sugar-rich, oxy-

gen-poor environment where the microbes transform nitrogen gas into a soluble form the corn plant can use.

It's an above-ground version of the nitrogen-fixation you might usually think of as happening in the underground roots of legumes, like peas and beans.

The researchers demonstrated the corn plants' talent by exposing them to labeled isotopes of nitrogen. And they were able to track the movement of the distinctly identifiable nitrogen atoms from the air, to the root, and into the plant.

This pathway allows the corn to obtain up to 80 percent of its nitrogen straight out of the air. The details are in the journal *PLOS Biology*.

Van Deynze says early plant breeders may have inadvertently got rid of corn's nitrogen-fixing proficiency long ago. "When early man made some selections for bigger ears, higher yield, perhaps they lost this ability along the way. And we have the opportunity perhaps to bring it back."

(Source: Scientific American)

Curiosity rover begins its 7th year on Mars still going strong

It was a crazy idea on the face of it -- sending a \$2.5 billion robot to another planet with a complex rocket sled contraption to get it safely to the surface. It worked, though, and Curiosity began its exploration of the red planet six years ago. As the rover begins its seventh year on Mars, let's look at how it got there and where it's going.

Curiosity is simply the payload of a mission known as the Mars Science Laboratory, which had been in the planning phase all the way back in 2004. This spacecraft contained the rover and its landing apparatus, which was responsible for the most accurate landing Martian landing of any known object. MSL launched from Earth on November 26, 2011, and the landing took place on August 6, 2012.



Most of the discoveries we've made about Mars since that 2012 landing are thanks to Curiosity. Early on in the mission, NASA reported that Curiosity had gathered compelling evidence of an ancient stream bed -- a place where water flowed on the currently dry planet. It would go on to gather even more evidence of an ancient, watery Mars. This caused scientists to reassess their ideas about the planet's evolution. There may even be a lot of water locked up in the Martian soil today.

Curiosity also discovered important substances on Mars that indicate it could have supported life in the past. After drilling into rocks in Gale Crater, the rover reported the presence of water, carbon dioxide, oxygen, sulfur dioxide and hydrogen sulfide. That was all before Curiosity reached its true target on Mars -- Mount Sharp. It started climbing the slopes in 2014, discovering high levels of organic molecules, which is more evidence for past life on the planet.

(Source: extremetech.com)

Coral could be adapting to rising water temperatures, team says

"Most studies compare corals from different reef locations, whereas this is the first study to compare the same coral species from the same location over time," Keisha Bahr, a co-author on the study, said in a press release. "Re-running a 48-year-old experiment using the same coral species, same experimental setup, and the same observer allows us to directly test changes in coral temperature tolerance over the last half century."

The coral was able to improve its ability to withstand warmer waters either because the algae that live inside it changed or because natural selection has allowed only the most temperature-tolerant corals to survive over the past half-century, according to the researchers.

Warmer waters threaten coral by causing bleaching. Coral bleaching is when algae, which has a symbiotic relationship with the coral and lives in it, leaves because the water is too warm, according to the National Ocean Service. The coral will then turn completely white. This doesn't mean the coral is dead, but it is subject to disease and is under stress since algae are coral's main source of food.

A study published in *Science* in January found that 31 percent of coral reefs were affected by bleaching in 2016, and the risk of bleaching has increased by 4 percent every year since the 1980s. The study also found that the time between bleaching events is less than half than before, which leaves less opportunity for the coral to recover.

Despite the results of the new study, the scientists say it's not enough to ensure the survival of coral reefs, which support more species of animals than any other marine environment, including an estimated 1 to 8 million undiscovered species.

(Source: Newsweek)

Massive glowing planet discovered just drifting beyond the Solar System

Astronomers have discovered a massive planet with a strange glow just outside the solar system, where it is just drifting without any kind of orbit.

There are many mysterious things about the rogue planet, which was discovered using the National Science Foundation's Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array telescope in New Mexico.

The planet is considered to be a rogue one because it does not have an orbit around a parent star, unlike the planets of the Solar System. The rogue planet is also 12 times bigger than Jupiter, the largest planet in the Solar System, with a magnetic field that is 200 times stronger.

SIMP is "right at the boundary between a planet and a brown dwarf, or 'failed star,' and is giving us some surprises that can potentially help us understand magnetic processes on both stars and planets," said Melodie Kao, who helmed the study while she was still a graduate student at the California Institute of Technology. She is now at Arizona State University as a Hubble Postdoctoral Fellow.

Brown dwarfs are objects in space that are too big to be considered as planets, but are not big enough to sustain nuclear fusion of hydrogen within their cores, which is the process that powers stars. They also have strong auroras, similar to the northern lights that can be seen on Earth.

SIMP was first detected in 2016 as one of five brown dwarfs, but it was later believed to be something else after astronomers collected more data to identify its age. It is now believed to be 200 million years old, and 20 light-years away from Earth. After being determined to be much younger and smaller than initially thought, SIMP may be classified as a planet, and not a brown dwarf.

The rogue planet also features a surface temperature of 1,500 degrees Fahrenheit, compared to negative 234 degrees Fahrenheit on Jupiter and 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit on the sun.

(Source: Tech Times)

Trump administration lifts ban on bee-killing chemicals and GMO crops in wildlife refuges

Donald Trump 's administration reversed an Obama-era policy banning genetically modified (GMO) crops and use of bee-killing insecticides in protected wildlife refuges.

The policy reversal will affect more than 50 wildlife refuges across the country out of a total 560 which covers approximately 150m acres (607,000 sq km).

Jamie Rappaport Clark, CEO of charity Defenders of Wildlife, told Reuters: "Industrial agriculture has no place on refuges dedicated to wildlife conservation and protection of some of the most vital and vulnerable species".

In 2014, the National Wildlife Refuge System issued a memorandum announcing it would phase out GMO seeds and a certain category of chemicals that was thought to kill off critical bee populations in those protected areas.

Some of the refuges already allow limited agricultural activities and farming, particularly if growing a certain crop in the area would improve the ecosystem of the refuge.

However, the new policy, outlined in a memo by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, does not ban farmers from planting so-called "biotech" crops like corn or soybeans engineered to resist insects and weeds, as the previous ban did.

The Obama-era ban had also prohibited the use of neonicotinoid pesticides, or neonics, which research has shown contribute to killing wild bees and other pollinating insects crucial to the refuge ecosystem.

The use of these pesticides will be made on a case-by-case basis according to the Fish and Wildlife memorandum.

U.S. Interior Department Secretary Ryan Zinke has continuously worked to expand hunting rights on these protected lands and Fish and Wildlife is overseen by his agency.

Fish and Wildlife Service Deputy Director Greg Sheehan said in the memorandum the policy reversal "was needed to ensure adequate forage for migratory birds, including ducks and geese – favored and hunted by sportsmen on many of the nation's refuges," Reuters reported.

Mr Sheehan also argued the bee-killing pesticides and GMO crops were necessary to "maximize production" of farming done in refuges.

He said in the memorandum: "Normal human expansion in our nation will continue to eliminate wildlife habitats that have previously been relied upon for successful wildlife restoration. Therefore, our professional wildlife managers will need to work more diligently than ever to ensure that those remaining important places have the best available food resources and other important conditions to ensure [wildlife] can persist."

Ms Clark said Mr Sheehan and the Trump administration's decision "an insult to our national wildlife refuges and the wildlife that rely on them."

The move is just one of many Mr Trump has made to dismantle the environmental legacy of Mr Obama. In June 2017, Mr Trump began the process of withdrawing the U.S. from the Paris Agreement on climate change, signed by nearly 200 countries in 2015 to curb carbon emissions and contain global warming to 2 C.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also repealed the Clean Power Plan, which if implemented would have reduced carbon emissions of U.S. power plants by nearly a third by 2030. (Source: The Independent)

LEARN ENGLISH

Finding the perfect present

A: Bill. Bill! You got to help me!

B: What's wrong? Slow down or you are going to give yourself a heart attack.

A: Tomorrow is Christmas and I haven't bought my mom anything! I'm such a bad son!

B: Take it easy! Let's go to the mall, **window shop** a little and see if there is anything she might like.

A: That's just it! I don't know what to get her! Last year I got her a ring that was two sizes too big and a pair of shoes five sizes too small! I'm not good at getting presents for people.

B: That's where you're making a big mistake! You can't just guess peoples' likes or sizes! Especially with clothes or jewelry. **On top of that**, I think that you should get your mom something that shows how much you love her. At the same time, you should show her that you took the time and effort to look for something that she would really like!

A: Yeah you're right. **When it comes down to it**, I can be pretty **tacky**.

B: Yeah **tell me about it**. I know! Your mom is trying to learn Spanish right? Why don't you get her a gift certificate for this great website I saw called Spanish Pod?

A: Now that's a great idea!

■ Key vocabulary

window shop: examine the shop windows

on top of: in addition to something else

when it comes down to it: when I look at what the whole situation amounts to

tacky: looking cheap, having bad taste

tell me about it: I agree; I understand

■ Supplementary vocabulary

voucher: a form or check indicating a credit against future purchases or expenditures

shop till you drop: to shop until one is exhausted

gift card: a plastic card with a certain amount of money on it used to make purchases at select stores or restaurants

last-minute shopping: shopping done just before the deadline

wrack your brain: to think really hard for ideas until it feels like you have put your brain through the torture of "the rack"



‘Iran among top host countries for refugee students’

1 → “Tehran province ranks first in the number of foreign national students as more than 100,000 students are studying at schools in Tehran. Provinces of Isfahan and Khorasan Razavi, with 50,000 to 100,000 students come in second place and provinces of Fars, Kerman, Sistan-Baluchestan, Qom and Alborz with 20,000 to 50,000 are the areas with the third highest population of foreign national students.”

It is important to note that in other countries refugees are kept in special camps away from the city, but in Iran refugees are welcomed in the cities to live with Iranian citizens mostly because of the cultural and religious commonalities we have with Iraqi and Afghan refugees, he added.

Up to the year 2015 documented students who amounted to 300,000 could enroll at schools in Iran, however, following a decree issued by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in May 2015, all foreign nationals, even those who have no identification and are living in Iran illegally, are allowed to attend schools now.

“The decree which was issued for humanitarian reasons made us to enroll all foreign national students regardless of their status,” Karimi said stating that, this increased the number of students by 110,000 and now all students who have a health permit from Ministry of Health and a statement from Interior Ministry can attend schools.

“These students are not required to pay any tuition fee charges and we always emphasize on the fact that no students should be forced to drop out of school.

There are some schools which are solely allocated to Afghan national students and Afghan teachers also teach the students,



however, they are required to implement the curriculum subjects taught at other Iranian schools, he explained, adding that but in general most Afghan students are studying at schools along with Iranian students.

Karimi also noted that this year school directors will have to complete courses on cross-cultural studies, especially those who have more Afghan national students at their schools, “so that to avoid challenges we are facing currently”.

Elsewhere in his remarks Karimi mentioned the expenses spent on foreign national students saying that annually Iran's government spend some 10 trillion rails (nearly \$240 million) on foreign national students' education but international entities financial support barely covers 2 percent of such a considerable expenditure.

Iran, Iraq, Syria to join hands against SDSs

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — A plan on combating sand and dust storms (SDS) is scheduled to be prepared in a collaborative initiative with three countries of Iran, Iraq and Syria under the auspices of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the current Iranian calendar year (ending on March 20, 2019), head of national working group on SDS has said.

“An international agreement with neighboring countries can convince them to take action toward tackling SDS and take steps to halt the external SDS hotspots affecting Iran,” IRNA quoted Mohammad Ali Tahmasebi-Birgani as saying on Tuesday.

Since the [Iranian calendar] year 1376 (March 1997- March 1998), a number of memorandums of understanding have been signed with Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Qatar and Bahrain, but nearly all have not been efficient, he regretted, adding, so, “we have decided to pursue the issue through international conventions to ensure the implementation.”

The budget needed for implementing the plan will be paid partially by the three countries, he highlighted.

“Studies and researches on the origin of external SDS sources hitting the southwestern part of the country is scheduled to be conducted this year, in cooperation with the Meteorological Organization,” he highlighted.

As sand and dust storms put many Iranian specially those residing southwestern areas of Iran to considerable inconvenience, Iran has proposed a draft of a resolution on combating sand and dust storms to turn it into a global issue which can garner international support to tackle its detrimental effects, at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly which closed on December 22, 2017.

The UN General Assembly adopted the resolution, which has recognized the negative effects of sand and dust storms on the citizen's health and considered it as an obstacle to achieve sustainable development goals and has called for urgent measures.

The resolution has also underlined the need for increased technical support and capacity building for addressing the issue and assign UN Environment Program (UNEP), World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and WHO to provide the necessary support to the affected countries.

Following Iran's incessant efforts to foster international support to fight sand and dust storms representatives from more than 40 countries convened in Tehran on July 3-5, 2017 to look collectively into dust and sand storms.

The meeting entitled “International Conference on Combating Sand and Dust Storms: Challenges and Practical Solu-



Particulate matters (PM) concentration peaked at 12 times the safe levels in city of Zabol in the southeastern Sistan region on Tuesday morning. (Photo by Marziyeh Noori/Tehran Times)

tions” was hosted by Iran's Department of Environment and Foreign Ministry.

Along with the meeting, Erik Solheim, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and UN Environment Executive Director, had a trip to Ahvaz, Khuzestan province, Tahmasebi-Birgani stated, adding that during the trip, he said that “the UN's priority to eliminate SDS in Iran goes to Ahvaz and the issue will also be raised at the UN General Assembly in New York”.

■ Plan on combating SDS to implement within 3 months

The national plan on combating SDS is currently drawn up to some extent, and it will be fully prepared by June 22, 2019, Tahmasebi-Birgani said.

Studies on eliminating SDS sources, have been carried out on some 89,000 hectares of the country and some 320,000 hectares of areas are currently under research, he said, adding that it was partially conducted by the Forest, Rangeland and Watershed Organization and Ministry of Agriculture and Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz.

Pointing to the priorities of the plan to combat SDS in four provinces of Khuzestan, Kerman, Sistan-Baluchestan and Hormozgan, he noted that “so far, studies on eliminating SDS in Khuzestan province have been completed, while in other provinces will be fully conducted by the end of this year.”

After being approved by the provincial working group on combating SDS, the plan needs to be approved by the national working group, it is scheduled to be implemented in Khuzestan province on [Iranian calendar month of] Aban

Based in Morocco, ISESCO coordinate among the specialized agencies of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in the fields of education, science and culture, as well as among Member States.

Karimi explained that Iran became a member to the organization I 1992 and that ISESCO has two regional offices in Tehran and Sharjah.

The organization aims to promote unification of Islamic countries by the means of culture, education and sciences, he added.

Moreover, every year ISESCO choses Capitals of Islamic Culture, he noted adding that, Isfahan in 2006 and Mashhad in 2017 became Capitals of Islamic Culture.

Karimi went on to say that currently Qom is planning on becoming a nominee for Capitals of Islamic Culture in 2025.

■ Teaching Persian worldwide

Inquired about teaching Persian at other schools worldwide Karimi highlighted that in association with Saadi Foundation, an Iranian foundation focusing on expanding the Persian language and literature abroad affiliated to the Ministry of Culture, the Education Ministry is trying hard to strengthen Persian language worldwide.

Currently Persian Language is an optional course for foreign students in other countries who can learn it on Saturday and Sunday, he added.

■ Pay more attention to international collaboration

He finally pointed out that the country's current financial state should not impede international cooperation in educational fields.

It is necessary to pay more attention to the significance of the international collaboration, he concluded.

(October 23- November 21), he stated.

He also explained that earlier on January, a total fund of \$150 million from the National Development Fund has been earmarked to counter dust storms and devise a system to prevent power cuts in the southwestern province of Khuzestan.

Some \$100 million out of this amount is planned to be allocated for elimination of SDS sources and 50 million dollars to the utility projects, he added.

He further announced that so far, some 1.05 trillion rials (nearly \$25 million) have been provided to the provincial management and planning organization of Khuzestan province nearly 10 days ago (July 30).

■ Water channels not environmentally assessed

Elsewhere in his remarks, Tahmasebi-Birgani said that according to the plan on containing SDS hotspots in southern and eastern Ahvaz approved by the president following severe sand and dust storms on March 2017, the rehabilitation of vegetation and dried wetlands in the areas suffering severe sand and dust storms have become priority this year.

To do so, an idea of transferring water by channels to SDS sources such as dried wetlands around Ahvaz was suggested, which have not been environmentally assessed, he also added.

In addition to supplying water to moisturize lands prone to dust generation and providing water right of local wetlands around Ahvaz, the water channels have been proposed to be used for irrigation of Shadegan palm trees, he further explained.

■ Khuzestan suffering SDSs

Currently, over 700,000 hectares of the lands in province of Khuzestan are prone to dust generation, some parts are due to sandstone erosion and the rest constitute the main hotspots, he concluded.

The early signs of sporadic SDS in southwestern regions, especially Khuzestan Province, was appeared in 2005. This challenge showed its strength and reached a degree that in late January the concentration of fine dust was recorded as 20 times above the standard range in some cities of the province.

According to Iran Meteorological Organization, SDS is fed by external hotspots in Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Although most of these sand and dust storms arise from external sources but one cannot neglect the internal hotspots which, as estimations show, account for about 30 percent of the problem.

Excessive water withdrawal, dam building projects and not granting the water right of wetlands are listed as the main causes for turning wetlands and once fertile grounds and pastures in the province to internal SDS hotspots.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Varna University of Management, Allameh Tabataba'i University to exchange faculty, students

Iran's Allameh Tabataba'i University (ATU) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Bulgaria's Varna University of Management within the framework of the European Union's Erasmus Plus Program to exchange student and faculties, ISNA reported on Sunday.

According to the scientific and international cooperation department of ATU, to develop the international scientific cooperation and to strengthen training courses, the two universities inked an MOU to exchange faculties and students through the Erasmus Plus program.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-phobe, -phobic, -phobia”

■ **Meaning:** fear or dislike

■ **For example:** If he is really a **technophobe**, he may be better off with a film camera.

PHRASAL VERB

Jog along

■ **Meaning:** to continue in the same way as usual

■ **For example:** We were jogging along comfortably and enjoying our work.

IDIOM

Cash in your chips

■ **Explanation:** to sell something, either because you need the money or because you think the value is going to fall.

■ **For example:** Andy cashed in his chips as soon as business started to slow down.

تبادل استاد و دانشجو بین دانشگاه‌های علامه و وارنا بلغارستان

دانشگاه علامه طباطبائی در قالب برنامه اراسموس پلاس با دانشگاه وارنا بلغارستان قرارداد تبادل استاد و دانشجو امضا کرد.

به گزارش ایسنا و بر اساس گزارش مدیریت همکاری های علمی و بین المللی دانشگاه علامه طباطبائی، در راستای توسعه همکاری های علمی بین المللی این دانشگاه و تقویت دوره های آموزشی، دانشگاه علامه طباطبائی و دانشگاه وارنا بلغارستان در قالب برنامه اراسموس پلاس کمسیون اروپائی، قرارداد تبادل دانشگاهی امضا کردند.

Syrian soldiers discover Israeli-made arms in militant weapons cache in Homs

Syrian government forces have found various types of weapons and munitions, some of them Israeli and European-made, inside a weapons cache belonging to foreign-sponsored Takfiri militants in the country's central province of Homs as they continue to make territorial gains in battles against the extremists.

Syria's official news agency SANA reported that Syrian army troops made the discovery during clean-up operations in Houla region, which is located northwest of the provincial capital city of Homs, on Wednesday.

The ammunition included general-purpose PK machine guns, KPV-14.5 heavy machine guns, Western-made FN FAL sniper rifles as well as Israeli-built assault rifles and grenades.

Meanwhile, a so-called monitor group says Syrian government forces are making progress in the battles against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists in the southwestern province of Sweida.

The Britain-based so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said the battles are raging in the eastern and northeastern desert regions of the province as army soldiers are pushing to flush ISIL Takfiris out of their last strongholds



in southern Syria.

The Observatory added that four pro-government fighters were killed overnight when an ISIL terrorist launched an attack. Local residents later managed to catch the terrorist involved in the act of terror, and hanged him.

■ Syrian soldiers hunt down terrorists in Hama, cut off their supply routes

Elsewhere in Syria's west-central province of Hama, government forces destroyed terrorist fortifications in the northern countryside of the province and cut off their supply routes towards the southern sector of Idlib province.

Syrian army artillery units shelled militant positions in Lahaya village and al-Latamina

town, situated about 35 kilometers north of Hama, which the Takfiris were using to monitor, attack and infiltrate into army posts.

Scores of terrorists were killed and injured in the process. Their military hardware and weapons were destroyed as well.

Separately, Syrian troops thwarted a terrorist attack on the outskirts of al-Hayat village in the western coastal province of Latakia, dealing heavy blows to militant ranks.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri terrorist groups wreaking havoc in the country.

On May 21, the General Command of the Syrian Army and Armed Forces announced in a statement that complete security was restored to Damascus and its countryside after al-Hajar al-Aswad district and al-Yarmouk camp were totally purged of ISIL terrorists.

The development was preceded by flushing the Takfiris out of the towns of Yalda, Babbila and Beit Sahem on the southern outskirts of Damascus.

(Source: Press TV)

Italy's PM Conte sees no rush for Libyan election

Italy's Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said on Wednesday that it is not vital for Libya to vote this year, signaling doubts about a French-led push to hold elections in December to stabilize and unify the North African country.

Italy and France are competing for influence in war-torn Libya, an oil and gas rich country which has been staging area for people smugglers who have sent hundreds of thousands of people on rickety boats toward Europe in recent years.

The nation splintered following the 2011 NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)-backed revolt that toppled Muammar Gaddafi, and since 2014 has been divided between competing political and military groups based in Tripoli and the east.

Italy has close relations with authorities in Tripoli and is the only Western country to have reopened its embassy in the Libyan capital, home to a United Nations-brokered transitional government. France is seen as closer to military

commander Khalifa Haftar, who is aligned with a rival government based in the east.

Seeking to end the turmoil, French President Emmanuel Macron hosted a conference in May where rival Libyan factions agreed to work constructively with the United Nations for a national election by December 10.

But after visiting Washington last month, Conte said he would organize a separate conference, with the endorsement of the United States President Donald Trump.

Conte told journalists in Rome on Wednesday that the Italy conference will most likely be held in November.

"Italy's primary interest is to stabilize Libya and to hold the presidential and political elections with appropriate guarantees. We are in no hurry to have the vote tomorrow, or in November or in December," Conte told journalists in Rome.

Asked whether he had received any feedback from Ma-

cron over his agreement with the U.S. president, Conte answered that his "agreement with Trump is not to the detriment of any specific European country".

More than 640,000 migrants have landed on Italian shores since 2014 on boats mostly hailing from Libya. Numbers have fallen off sharply over the past year, but the new anti-establishment government led by Conte is supporting the Libyan coast guard to try to halt the exodus from its shores.

Libya is a former Italian colony less than 300 km from the Italian island of Lampedusa, and Italy's state-controlled oil company Eni is the biggest foreign oil producer in Libya.

"Trump has recognized a matter of fact: Libya has a strategic relevance for Italy due to historic and geopolitical reasons. The flow of migrants coming from the Libyan coast targeted mainly Italy," Conte said.

(Source: Reuters)

Britain: Johnson accused of making 'hate crime more likely'

British former Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has been accused of making "hate crime more likely" by using Muslim women, who wear the niqab (a garment of clothing that covers the face which is worn by a small minority of Muslim women/face veil), to further his political cause.

Sayedda Warsi, the senior Muslim Conservative member of the House of Lords, wrote a scathing critique in the Guardian on Wednesday, criticizing Johnson for his Islamophobic article in the Daily Telegraph.

Johnson has come under heavy fire after he compared Muslim women, who wear the niqab, to bank robbers and letterboxes in an article in the Daily Telegraph.

"So, as much as Johnson thinks he's being

his usual clever self, he's helping to create an environment in which hate crime is more likely," she added.

Warsi also argued there is a pattern in which Muslim women are an easy way to make and further an argument that will enhance the interests of certain politicians in some sections of the media, party and society.

The senior Tory peer also said that the former foreign secretary had set a precedent for other right-wing lawmakers and that his refusal to apologize would inspire others alike to use such derogatory remarks and inflammatory attacks without fearing any action being taken by the party.

"An apology is now due," Warsi demanded



and said if the apology would not come it will give a message that "you can get away with Islamophobia."

"If my party follows up on a demand for an apology with real action then these

comments would eventually become rare," she added.

Previously, Johnson faced calls from Prime Minister Theresa May and Conservative party chairman Brandon Lewis to apologize for incendiary remarks.

Furthermore, the Muslim Council of Britain wrote a public letter urging the Tories to address the growing problem of Islamophobia in the party and to respond to serious concerns regarding this issue.

Johnson resigned as foreign secretary last month over disagreements with Theresa May and her Chequer's Plan that sets out Britain's relationship with the European Union after Brexit.

(Source: Anadolu)

Israeli regime to construct three new settlements in Negev desert

Israeli officials have approved plans for the construction of three new settlements in the Negev desert irrespective of the international outcry against Tel Aviv's land expropriation and settlement expansion policies in occupied Palestinian territories.

The so-called West Jerusalem Local Planning and Building Committee approved plans for the building of the settlements in the Negev desert on Tuesday, Palestinian's official news agency Wafa cited a report broadcast by English-language i24NEWS television network.

The report added that the plans need the endorsement of the Board for Planning and Building Committee, before they could be submitted to the cabinet.

Around 250 settlers units are scheduled to be built in the planned Daniel settlement, while another 450 units will be built in Ir Ovot settlement.

Less than a month before the United States President Donald Trump took office, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 2334, calling on Israel to "immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem (al-Quds)".

About 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 illegal settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent Palestinian state, with East al-Quds (Jerusalem) as its capital.

The last round of Israeli-Palestinian talks collapsed in 2014. Among the major sticking points in those negotiations was Israel's continued settlement expansion



on Palestinian territories.

Trump backtracked on Washington's support for a "two-state solution" earlier this year, saying he would support any solution favored by both sides.

"Looking at two-state or one-state, I like the one that both parties like. I'm very happy with the one both parties like. I can live with either one," the U.S. president said during a joint press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington on February 15.

■ UN school funding cuts anger parents, students in Gaza

Elsewhere, a group representing students' parents organized a protest in Gaza on Wednesday, against proposed reduction to services at schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

Men, women and children marched arm-in-arm to the UN headquarters. The UNRWA is looking into cost-cutting measures due to a financial crisis.

The relief agency, which helps Palestine refugees across the Middle East, is searching for alternative revenue streams after the U.S. government withdrew around \$305 million in funding.

(Source: agencies)

Saudi regime air raids kill more civilians in northwest Yemen

The House of Saud regime warplanes have carried out fresh strikes against targets in southwestern Yemen, killing seven civilians, mostly women and children.

The attacks targeted Amran Province's Harf Sufyan District on Wednesday, Yemen's al-Masirah television reported, adding that three children and two women were among the victims.

Separately, Yemeni sharpshooters killed five Saudi regime-backed militants in the kingdom's southwestern border region of Jizan during counter-attacks against the aggressors.

The mercenaries were advancing on the al-Doud and Dukhan mountains in the region.

Two military vehicles belonging to the militants were also destroyed in missile and mortar attacks by the Yemeni army in Jizan.

Separately, Yemeni forces fired three ballistic missiles at the positions of Saudi regime-backed militants in al-Jawf and Ma'rib provinces as well as in the country's west coast.

Footage released by al-Masirah showed scenes from the retaliatory operations.

The poorest nation among Arab states has been under incessant attacks by a Saudi regime-led coalition for more than three years.

The invaders seek to bring back Yemen's former Riyadh-allied officials, and defeat the popular Ansarullah (Houthi) movement.

The invasion has fallen short of its objectives, while killing thousands and turning Yemen into the scene of the world's worst humanitarian disaster.

The United States provides the coalition with bombing coordinates, aerial refueling, and arms.

(Source: Press TV)

NATO probes airstrike killing 15 Afghan police officers in Logar

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) has launched a probe into the deaths of some 15 Afghan police officers who were killed in a United States air strike in eastern Afghanistan.

Logar provincial council Chief Hamidullah Hamid on Tuesday said that "foreign forces" had bombed two police checkpoints and killed "about 15 police."

Interior Ministry Spokesman Nasrat Rahimi, confirmed the incident saying that over nine police officers were killed and 14 more injured during the aerial bombardment of the Azra district of the province.

Afghan forces battling Taliban "called in air support but unfortunately foreign forces mistakenly bombed their positions," Rahimi added.

NATO's mission in Afghanistan confirmed that air strikes had been carried out "in defense of Afghan forces" and by their request in Azra district without referring to casualties.

"We are looking into the matter further," said Resolute Support spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Martin O'Donnell.

In July, fourteen members of a family, including three children, were killed in an airstrike in the northern Afghanistan province of Kunduz.

■ Afghanistan: 14 civilians killed in U.S. aircraft airstrike

Elsewhere, fourteen members of a family, including three children, were killed in an airstrike in the northern Afghanistan province of Kunduz on Thursday, Afghan officials stated on Friday.

The deaths occurred in the Chahar Dara district during a battle against the Taliban involving the U.S. and Afghan airstrikes, according to reports.

The U.S. invaded Afghanistan in 2001 with the express aim of toppling the Taliban. Now, some 17 years on, the militant group rules supreme in the war-torn country and the U.S. has shown interest more than ever in negotiating with the militants.

Recently, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group has taken advantage of the lawlessness in Afghanistan and stepped up its terror attacks in the war-torn state after losing its bases in Iraq and Syria.

(Source: Press TV)

UN chief tells Zimbabwe's leaders to resolve election crisis

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has told Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa during a telephone conversation that he must rein in his security forces after six people were killed in election violence, a UN spokesman said Tuesday.

Guterres also spoke by phone with opposition leader Nelson Chamisa to urge him to turn to the courts -- and not the streets -- if he plans to challenge Mnangagwa's election victory.

"In his two calls, the secretary-general made clear that he counted on the president of Zimbabwe to ensure that the security forces show maximum restraint," said UN spokesman Farhan Haq.

"He also encouraged the opposition to pursue their electoral grievances through legal channels."

Guterres spoke by phone with the leaders on Monday after violence marred elections that were the first held since Robert Mugabe was forced out of the presidency last year.

The presidential and parliamentary vote on July 30 was meant to turn the page on the Mugabe era and bring Zimbabwe back to the international fold after decades of sanctions.

Electoral results showed Mnangagwa won the presidential vote by a narrow margin, but the opposition Movement for Democratic (MDC) has accused him of rigging the result.

The UN spokesman said Guterres wanted to ensure that "all of the participants in the election will abide by the result and channel any grievances through the proper electoral process."

He described the phone conversations as "constructive" and suggested that both sides had agreed to his appeal to step away from the violence.

"Our hope is that the reassurances provided by the leaders will be borne out by their supporters," said Haq.

Six people were killed when soldiers opened fire on demonstrators protesting the election result.

On Tuesday, 27 MDC supporters were released on bail after being accused of fomenting election violence.

The European Union, United States, Canada and Switzerland earlier issued a joint statement calling on Zimbabwe's defense forces to act with restraint and protect human rights.

(Source: AFP)

First Announcement



Permit No. 1397/2130

Invitation for prequalification

TENDER NO. : 31-90202-53-002

National Iranian South Oilfields Company (NISOC) intends to purchase the following goods

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	Quantity
01	LINE PIPE API 5L GR X52 4 IN. WT 6.02 MM	1,000LE
04	LINE PIPE API 5L GR X52 4 IN. WT 7.14 MM.	200LE
05	LINE PIPE API 5L GR X52 4 IN. WT 9.53 MM.	400LE

Vendors who intend to participate in the A/M tender are requested to send their resume & tendency letter via fax / mail to the following address no later than 14 days after the second announcement. The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide a bid bond of EUR 11,621/ Rls 595,000,000 in favor of NISOC. Iranian vendors shall submit their resume Acc. to forms Nos. 01, 02 and 03 which are available at : www.shana.ir and www.nisoc.ir

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex
Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran
Tel. No.: 061 341 23589 Fax No.: 061 3445 7437

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Real Madrid plan several tributes ahead of 2019 Bernabeu Trophy



AC Milan will be the visitors to the Estadio Santiago Bernabeu on August 11, yet it's the 2019 edition of the Bernabeu Trophy which is at the top of Real Madrid's agenda with several tributes being planned a year in advance.

Cristiano Ronaldo's desire to find a new challenge in his illustrious career was met with surprise in the Spanish capital, however, after nine seasons of incredible service he was allowed to depart for Juventus.

The Portuguese international will arrive in Turin as the Ballon d'Or holder and there is hope within the Bianconeri that he is the talent that can finally make the difference in their Champions League efforts.

Whilst replacing his goals could prove almost impossible for Los Blancos, there is no bitterness at the departure, and Ronaldo will be invited back to Madrid with Juventus set to be asked to take part in the 2019 Bernabeu Trophy.

This is a tradition for the pre-season friendly match with Raul Gonzalez having previously returned with Al-Sadd in 2013, whilst Hugo Sanchez returned to take part as the coach of Pumas.

Iker Casillas was also the subject of such an offer in both 2017 and 2018, however Porto have been unable to fit the fixture into their schedule in either season and thus the goalkeeping great is still awaiting his return to the club.

Due to the time-frame before the new season and how far in advance these matches need to be arranged, Juventus simply couldn't be the opponents in 2018.

Relations between Ronaldo and Florentino Perez had been cold for many months leading up to his exit, but there now seems to be warmth on either side with the European champions determined to honour one of their all-time greats.

(Source: Marca)

Jordi Cruyff named new Chongqing coach

Chongqing Lifan have appointed Jordi Cruyff as their new head coach, the Chinese Super League side announced on social media on Wednesday.

The 44-year-old replaces Paulo Bento at the helm after the former Portugal coach was fired last month following a dismal run of form that saw Chongqing drop towards the relegation zone.

Cruyff takes over a team that is in 14th place in the 16-team league and is just two points above 15th placed Dalian Yifang. The bottom two teams are demoted at the end of the season.

(Source: Reuters)

Chelsea target Kepa pays £71m contract release clause



Chelsea target Kepa Arrizabalaga has paid his release clause of £71m to La Liga, which allows him to leave Athletic Bilbao and clears the way for a transfer to the Premier League.

The deal would be a world record for a goalkeeper, surpassing the fee, believed to be up to £66.8m, that Liverpool paid for Alisson in July.

Spaniard Kepa, 23, is being brought in as a replacement for Thibaut Courtois.

Courtois has not reported for training and is being linked with Real Madrid. The Belgium international, 26, was due at Chelsea's Cobham training ground on Monday, following his involvement at the World Cup. Courtois has been a Blues player since 2011, when he signed from Belgian club Genk, and was loaned to Atletico Madrid from 2011 to 2014. In Spain a player must buy himself out of his contract.

This is usually done by depositing the amount of the buyout clause with La Liga - Spain's equivalent of the Premier League - to release the player from his contract. The league then passes the money to the selling club.

Kepa is Spain's number two behind Manchester United's David de Gea and has one international cap.

He has spent the past two seasons in Bilbao's first team, making 53 La Liga appearances.

In January, he signed a new long-term contract with Bilbao until 2025, amid interest from Real Madrid.

Kepa is the second major signing to leave Bilbao this year, after Manchester City signed French defender Aymeric Laporte for £57m in January.

(Source: BBC)

Brain injury expert calls for ban on heading in football

Heading a football should be restricted in the professional game and banned for those under the age of 18, according to one of the world's leading experts on brain injuries.

Dr Bennet Omalu discovered the brain disease chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE).

The condition has long-term effects and is caused by repeated head trauma.

"It does not make sense to control an object travelling at a high velocity with your head," Dr Omalu said.

"I believe, eventually, at the professional level we need to restrict heading of the ball. It is dangerous."

Speaking to BBC Radio 5 live's Phil Williams programme, Omalu added: "No child under the age of 18 should be heading the ball in soccer."

"Kids under the age of 12 to 14 should play a less contact form of soccer which we should develop for them. Kids between 12 and 18 can play but should not head the ball."

"I know this is difficult for many people but science evolves. We change with time. Society changes. It is time for us to change some of our ways."

An inquest into the death of former England and West Brom footballer Jeff Astle ruled he died from brain trauma caused by heading heavy leather footballs.

He died in 2004, aged 72, after suffering with Alzheimer's for almost 10 years following his 16-year football career.

On Wednesday, his daughter Dawn repeated calls for the game to investigate possible links between CTE and the heading of footballs.

"This is fact now. We are not just assuming other players may have died of the same illness as Dad, this is now fact," said Dawn.

Her latest comments come after the death of Rod Taylor, a former wing-half with Portsmouth, Gillingham and Bournemouth, who died in April having suffered from the condition.



Several high-profile ex-players have also been diagnosed with dementia, including 1966 England World Cup winners Nobby Stiles, Martin Peters and Ray Wilson, Liverpool legends Ron Yeats and Tommy Smith and Celtic's European Cup-winning captain Billy McNeill.

Speaking about the effect heading a football has on the head, Omalu said: "The human brain floats like a balloon inside your skull so when you head the ball you suffer brain damage. You damage your brain when you head the ball."

"Playing soccer would increase your risk of suffering

brain damage when you are much older and developing dementia and CTE."

There have been a number of moves across professional sport to combat head injuries.

For example, concussion substitutes have been introduced to county cricket this summer, allowing teams to replace a player who has concussion or suspected concussion, while rugby union chiefs introduced an eight point action plan to make the sport safer in March.

(Source: BBC)

Mourinho and Pogba's frosty relationship a puzzle Man United must solve



Jose Mourinho described Paul Pogba as "the Eiffel Tower" during his second spell at Chelsea but at Manchester United it has, at times, felt like the Portuguese coach has been determined to tear him down.

It has not always been the case. Mourinho described the Frenchman as "phenomenal" after his two goals helped United fight back from 2-0 down to win 3-2 against Manchester City at the Etihad in April.

During the World Cup, the United manager said Pogba had been "very good" in his "mature" performance against Belgium in the semifinal. There are plenty of other examples.

But there are also enough examples of Mourinho singling out Pogba for criticism.

Sources have told ESPN FC the 25-year-old has felt particularly victimised since he lifted the World Cup, with Mourinho suggesting more than once during the tour of the U.S. that Pogba's form improved in Russia because he was free from distractions and able to focus on football.

Pogba, according to sources, would consider a move away from Old Trafford if he was given the choice. Some reports have gone further and suggested he is actively looking to engineer a transfer to either Barcelona or Juventus with the help of agent Mino Raiola.

Sources have told ESPN FC that Pogba is upset at claims he is just looking for a pay rise while United are insistent they will not entertain offers.

Raiola and executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward have a good relationship. Woodward made it his business to formally meet the self-styled super agent when he took over from David Gill in 2013. Deals involving the pair -- Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Henrikh Mkhitaryan are two others -- have been described as "complicated" but only because Raiola and his team of lawyers are particularly diligent and want to get the best deal for their player.

The process of re-signing Pogba in 2016 took two months with Woodward and Raiola spending hours and hours in meetings discussing everything from the playing contract to image rights.

Privately, Woodward admitted afterwards his experience as a tax advisor in the 1990s had helped understand the intricacies of Raiola's demands and get the deal over the line in the face of strong competition from Real Madrid.

Woodward is a fan of Pogba -- bringing his back to the club had been an ambition since he took the job -- and is likely to understand his position.

(Source: Eurosport)

Usmanov accepts Kroenke bid for Arsenal



Arsenal shareholder Alisher Usmanov says he will accept rival Stan Kroenke's bid to buy him out for £550m and take full control of the club.

American billionaire Kroenke owns 67% of Arsenal through his company KSE and announced on Tuesday he had made an offer to buy up the rest of the shares.

Usmanov has confirmed he has agreed to part with his 30% stake in the club.

"I have decided to sell my shares in Arsenal, which could be the best football club in the world," he said.

Despite his shareholding, Usmanov is not part of the board or the decision-making at Arsenal. The metal magnate made a £1bn bid to buy the Emirates outfit in May 2017 but this was rejected by Kroenke.

Kroenke's offer to shareholders values the Gunners at £1.8bn. Acquiring Usmanov's shares for £550m means remaining shareholders would be legally obliged to sell theirs to Kroenke. The KSE statement to the London Stock Exchange said taking the club private will help to further Arsenal's "strategy and ambitions".

"KSE's ambitions for the club are to see it competing consistently to win the Premier League and the Champions League, as well as the major trophies in the women's senior game and at youth level," it added.

Arsenal have a new manager in charge

this season after Unai Emery took over from Arsene Wenger, who had been Gunners boss for 22 years.

In Wenger's final season, Arsenal finished sixth in the Premier League as they missed out on the Champions League but qualified for the group stages of the Europa League. The Gunners start their Premier League campaign against champions Manchester City on Sunday.

■ A 'dreadful day' for Arsenal fans' reaction

While Kroenke says taking sole ownership will benefit the club, the Arsenal Supporters' Trust (AST) called the news "a dreadful day" for the Gunners.

"Stan Kroenke taking the club private will see the end of supporters owning shares in Arsenal and their role upholding custodianship values," said an AST statement.

AST added that by becoming the 100% owner, Kroenke would be able to take "detrimental actions" such as paying "management fees and dividends without any check or balance".

It added: "The AST is also extremely concerned to note that this purchase is being funded by a loan."

"The AST is wholly against this takeover which marks a very sad day for Arsenal football club."

(Source: BBC)

Argentina tried to hire Pep Guardiola after World Cup exit - AFA president

Argentina explored the possibility of appointing Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola but found it was financially impossible, the president of the country's football association has said.

Argentina parted company with Jorge Sampaoli last month after a disappointing World Cup campaign, with Lionel Scaloni and Pablo Aimar taking over on an interim basis.

AFA president Claudio Tapia confirmed that Guardiola had been approached to lead a new long-term project.

"You have to have a fat wallet," he told TyC Sports. "It was impossible. At the time we made enquiries, but you need to have a big economic backup."

"It is very difficult. We would have needed to mortgage the whole [of the AFA] to pay for him, and even that might not have been enough."

"We were prepared to make an effort. We analysed it, we knew he was expensive, but we did not think so much. But yeah, we made some research, we tried to talk but it stayed there."

Tapia named Tottenham Hotspur's Mauricio Pochettino, Atletico Madrid's Diego Simeone and River Plate's Marcelo Gallardo as potential candidates for the job, but stressed that a final decision would not be made until December.

"We have to talk to everyone," he said. "Pochettino is a



great manager, Simeone is a great manager, Gallardo is a great manager, but we do not have to hurry."

"We have to give them the arguments to seduce them that they want to coach Argentina. It does not have to be an emergency."

"We have to make a very important decision and we must take it with the necessary conviction. There are more managers, not only these three names."

Guardiola has said on several occasions that he believes Argentina must be coached by an Argentine.

"A Brazilian must manage Brazil and an Argentine must manage Argentina," he told ESPN Brasil last year. "People think that because I have won in Barcelona that I would go [to coach Argentina]."

"But Brazil and Argentina have very good coaches. They must be coached by their own."

Meanwhile, the AFA president said Lionel Messi should be "left alone" following Argentina's World Cup round-of-16 exit amid fears that the 31-year-old could retire from international football.

"Messi is a human being -- he is normal and common like any of us," he said. "It was mistake saying that it was Messi's team. Football is a team game, and we have to understand that we have to help him."

"There is not a single player who wins a World Cup or a football game. We must leave him alone and help him."

"I have not talked to Leo. Let's leave him alone. We wanted him to save us and it was a mistake. It cannot happen again. He alone will decide if he is going to be a part [of Argentina's future] or not, but today he needs tranquility."

(Source: ESPN)

Ghoddos reaches agreement with Huesca: report

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Ostersunds FK midfielder Saman Ghoddos has reached an agreement to join Huesca, aftonbladet.se reported.

Huesca will play in the Spanish league for the first time next season.

The 24-year-old winger was voted the Allsvenskan Player of the Month for July after his good performances in the last month.

Ghoddos has been also linked with move to English teams Wolves, QPR, Fulham, Swansea City, West Bromwich Albion, Brighton & Hove Albion, Manchester City and LaLiga outfit Celta Vigo.

French trio Bordeaux, Amiens and Rennes have also shown interest in signing Ghoddos.

Chinese clubs had already made huge contract offers to the Swedish-born Iranian footballer.

Ghoddos has hit ten goals in 20 games for Ostersunds so far this season.

He won two caps for Sweden in friendlies before switching to his parents' home country last year.

The former Syrianska star has since won 11 caps for Carlos Queiroz's Iran side and scored one goal.

Ghoddos represented Iran national football team in three matches against Morocco, Spain and Portugal as a substitute in the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

The attacking midfielder helped Swedish club Ostersunds to the Europa League last 32 and was voted Sweden's top striker in 2017.

He is under contract with ÖFK until 2020.



Athletes safe after explosion in Iran's Olympic Academy: top official



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** - The head of Iran's national Olympic committee, Reza Salehi Amiri, says all athletes are safe after explosion at Iran's National Olympic Academy.

On Tuesday evening, three people were killed in an explosion at Iran's National Olympic Academy in the capital Tehran.

The victims of the explosion were three

workers trapped in the engine house of the complex, Tehran's fire department spokesman Jalal Maleki said.

The blast was heard in the vicinity of Seoul Street in the north of Tehran.

"All Iranian athletes, who are preparing at Iran's National Olympic Academy for the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia, are safe," Salehi Amiri said.

Blackhawks legend Mikita passes away at 78



Hall of Famer Stan Mikita, a two-time NHL MVP with the Chicago Blackhawks, died on Tuesday. He was 78.

Mikita, the all-time leading scorer in franchise history, had been battling a form of dementia since 2015.

"With great sorrow, the Mikita family announces that Stan passed away on Tuesday August 7, 2018

at the age of 78," the Mikita family said in a statement distributed by the Blackhawks.

"He was surrounded by his loving family whom he fiercely loved. Details of planned services will be released when they become available. We respectfully ask for privacy at this time."

(Source: Reuters)

Mes Sungun Varzaghan storm into semi-finals



Islamic Republic of Iran's Mes Sungun Varzaghan convincingly booked themselves a spot in the AFC Futsal Club Championship Indonesia 2018 semi-finals after securing an emphatic 8-3 win over FC EREM of Kyrgyz Republic on Wednesday.

The opening minutes of the match were highly entertaining as both sides took on an aggressive approach from the first blow of the whistle.

Ali Asghar Hassanzadeh opened the scoring within the first minute of the game but Mes Sungun's had no time to enjoy the lead as Dilshat Kadyrov scored the equaliser from a kick in set-piece just moments after the restart.

Sangsefidi etched his name on the score-sheet in the third minute when a set-piece split Erem's defence and a string of passes between Farhad Fakhim and Mortteza Ezzati led to Sangsefidi laying the finishing touch.

Shortly after, Erem responded with a run that ended with Akbar Kazemi outmaneuvering Mes Sungun goalkeeper Saeid Momeni but his effort flew to the right.

Daniyar Abduraimov's charges continued with their man-to-man marking, but they lacked discipline in defending and Mes Sungun punished them heavily with Saeid Taghizadeh and Abolghasem Oruji etching their names on the scoreboard in the fifth and seventh minutes respectively.

In the 12th minute, Alireza Askari dispossessed defender Pavel Taku and easily shot through Kirill Ermolov, courtesy of Farhad Fakhim's assist before Taghizadeh scored his second a minute later to give Mes Sungun a five-goal advantage going into the break at the Gor Amongragra.

Less than 10 seconds into the second half,

Askari displayed marvellous footwork when he dribbled past the Erem backline and let loose a right-footed strike to score his second.

The pace of the game then slowed down as both sides became more clinical in their movement and in the 33rd minute, a superb pass from Taku found Baigazy Uulu un-manned in front of the box, who then made no mistake to find the back of the net, before Taku himself scored in similar fashion just moments later to reduce EREM's deficit.

Stung by the two goals, Mes Sungun began experimenting with different players donning the power player jersey, looking to solidify their spot in the semi-finals, while Erem too introduced their fifth attacking member, Emil Kanetov.

However, Erem eventually fell to an own goal by Maskat Alimov in the 37th minute when he deflected Aksari's shot.

In the semi-finals on Friday, Mes Sungun will face either Nafit Al Wasat or Vamos FC, who meet later on Wednesday.

■ FC EREM Head Coach Daniyar Abduraimov:

"The team is stronger now, and the tournament has served as a new experience for me, personally. I also think that the level of the tournament increases annually and wish that in the future, my team would go further, with a last four finish."

■ Mes Sungun Varzaghan Head Coach Hamid Bigham Tabrizi:

"We have reached our target, and very soon, we will reach our goal. Altogether, it was expected to have such a result. We will now plan for our semi-finals match."

(Source: the-afc)

Arsenal must win Premier League under Unai Emery - Jens Lehmann



Former Arsenal goalkeeper Jens Lehmann says the Gunners must win the Premier League under Unai Emery for the club's coaching change to be considered a success -- but that it's Tottenham who remind him of the "old" Arsenal he used to play for.

Emery was brought in to replace Arsene Wenger after his 22-year reign ended with a sixth-place finish in the league last season. Lehmann was part of Wenger's coaching staff last year but was let go as part of the backroom changes.

"This won't happen in Premier League," Lehmann told Bild when asked if asking if defending champions Manchester City are about to build a Bayern Munich-style dynasty in England. "The quality gap is not as big as in the Bundesliga."

"I see a lot of potential at Chelsea, who have a new manager in Maurizio Sarri. Usually, Chelsea have a successful first year under a new sporting leadership. I expect them back in the title. Liverpool, just like Tottenham, must win something someday. And my ex-club Arsenal also have a new manager and must win the trophy with Unai Emery."

"If it's not their goal to win the league, why all the changes in the club? The Arsenal squad is not worse than those of the other teams."

Lehmann also gave a surprising compliment to Spurs by comparing them to the youthful Arsenal sides that he was a part of between 2003 and 2008.

"Having played for Arsenal, you don't really like the local rival Tottenham that

much," Lehmann said. "Regardless, I must admit: They remind me a bit of the 'old' Arsenal I played in. Many young and interesting players. But Spurs and [Harry] Kane must make use of the current momentum they have before it collapses one day. It appears they right now don't know how to win trophies. But it's must if you want to be a big side."

Lehmann also said Arsenal's new goalkeeper Bernd Leno still has a lot to prove as he tries to topple Petr Cech as the Gunners' No. 1.

"Bernd is a good keeper, no doubt about that," he said. "The question is: Can he show more than he did in the past? He must take more risks and continue his development. He does that - good. He fails to do so? Arsenal will look at a new keeper in one or two seasons."

The former Germany international also questioned Liverpool's decision to spend £65 million on Alisson, saying the Brazil goalkeeper hasn't proven that he's among the world's best.

"Alisson is certainly a good man, but not a world-class keeper you'd expect for this price. He has not given any proof of it," Lehmann said. "I see many keepers playing at his level. He's 25 now and made 100 professional appearances so far, 50 of them coming for Roma last season."

"I am always interested to see whether those players can actually become world class. You must ask yourself why they only played 50 matches in six years as a pro."

(Source: SoccerNet)

Iran, Iraq football federations ink agreement

IRNA — A memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been signed between the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) and the Iraq Football Association on Wednesday.

The MoU has been signed with the aim of strengthening the mutual relationship and to cooperate together for the further development of the sport in the two countries.

President of the FFIRI, Mehdi Taj, and his Iraqi counterpart Abdul-Khaliq Masoud met together in Arbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Iran Football Federation has also previously signed MoUs with football associations and federations such as Norway, Japan, Italy, Belarus, the UAE and the Netherlands.

Iran to participate at 2020 ICF Canoe Polo World Championships

MNA — Iran men's national team has been qualified to take part in the 2020 ICF Canoe Polo World Championships in Italy following their successful performance at this year's tournament in Canada.

The 2018 ICF Canoe Polo World Championships was hosted by Canada from July 31 to August 5, in which the Iranian men's national team took the Asian title after finishing 11th.

According to the rules issued by the International Canoe Federation, teams placed first to twelfth will be qualified to take part in the next round of the tournament.

The Iranian squad was grouped with UK, Switzerland and Brazil in the preliminary round, beating UK and Brazil and ending in a tie with Switzerland. In the second round, Iran was grouped with Australia, France, Netherlands and Spain to compete for the first twelve rankings. Iran lost all four matches in the second group and was placed eleventh after defeating New Zealand, losing to Denmark and gaining victory against Australia.

Coached by Ashkan Sayadi, the Iranian men's team comprised of Mohammad Reza Jamshidiyan, Shayegan Kheirollahi, Ramin Ghiyasvand, Mohamad Ali Molaei, Mohammad Yazdani, Ali Ghadami and Mohammadsedigh Heshmatian.

Nigerian Alhaji Gero joins Iran's Esteghlal

TASNIM — Nigerian striker Salisu Abdullahi "Alhaji" Gero joined Iran's Esteghlal football team on Wednesday.

After Mame Thiam's departure, the Blues signed the striker to strengthen their frontline.

Alhaji Gero, who has most recently played in Östersunds in the Allsvenskan, Sweden's top flight, has joined Esteghlal on a three-year contract for an undisclosed fee.

Gero made his debut for the Nigeria national under-20 football team at the eight-nation tournament in South Africa.

Esteghlal have recently signed contracts with Iraqi attacking midfielder Humam Tariq Faraj Naoush and German midfielder Markus Neumayr.

Former world champion Nicholas Bett killed in car crash at age 28

Kenya's Nicholas Bett, the 2015 world champion in the 400-meter hurdles, was killed in an early-morning car crash Wednesday in the country's famed high-altitude training region, police and his coach said. Bett was 28.

Bett had only just returned home from the African championships in Nigeria on Monday.

Nandi County police commander Patrick Wambani said Bett was killed in the crash on the road between Eldoret and Kapsabet, two of Kenya's famed distance-running training towns in the Rift Valley region in the west of the country.

Bett's Toyota Prado SUV hit bumps in the road and rolled, his coach, Vincent Mumo, told The Associated Press. Mumo said the accident happened around 6 a.m.

Bett won gold in the 400 hurdles at the 2015 world championships in Beijing, a breakthrough victory in that event for Kenya, a powerhouse in middle- and long-distance events.

He also won bronze medals at the African championships in 2014 in the 400 hurdles and 4x400-meter relay.

Athletics Kenya said it sent condolences to Bett's family. Bett's twin brother, Aron, is also an athlete and was part of the Kenyan 4x400 team that won gold at last week's African championships. Nicholas Bett didn't run on that team. (Source: ESPN)

Beijing 2022: Design the mascots!

Beijing 2022 has launched a global design competition for the mascots of the 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, inviting people from around the world to come up with original designs for these important ambassadors of the Games.

At a ceremony held in Beijing's Olympic Park, Secretary of the CPC Beijing Municipal Committee and Beijing 2022 President Cai Qi declared the design competition officially open.

Mascots are among the most memorable symbols of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. Beijing 2022 looks forward to receiving creative design proposals from across the globe that embody Olympic and Paralympic values, affirm the vision of the 2022 Games, and reflect Chinese culture.

Designers can submit proposals to Beijing 2022 from October 20-31, in person or by mail. Beijing 2022 is expected to unveil the winning designs in the second half of 2019.

The launch ceremony for the design competition was held as part of an event to mark the 10-year anniversary of the Olympic Games Beijing 2008. The anniversary celebration also coincided with China's 10th National Fitness Day, providing a fitting setting to look ahead to Beijing 2022 while celebrating the legacies of Beijing 2008.

The ceremony and the celebrations took place in the plaza between the "Bird's Nest" National Stadium and the "Water Cube" National Aquatics Center. These two iconic Beijing 2008 venues will be used for Beijing 2022, serving as the Opening and Closing Ceremonies venue and the curling venue, respectively.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

“The Season of Warm Breezes” named best film at Portuguese festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — “The Season of Warm Breezes” by Iranian filmmaker Hossein Rigi has won the award for best international short or medium length film at the Filmes do Homem - Melgaço International Documentary Film Festival in Portugal.

The film competed with 13 other films such as “The Last Tape” by Cyprien Clement-Delmas and Igor Kosenko from Germany and “90 Seconds in North Korea” by Ranko Paukovic from the Netherlands, the organizers have announced.

Produced at Iran’s Documentary and Experimental Film Center, “The Season of Warm Breezes” is about a Baluchi teacher who tries to fight illiteracy in her village in southeastern Iran.

“Impreza” (“The Celebration”) by German filmmaker Alexandra Wesolowski was selected as best international feature length film at the festival, which was held in Viana do Castelo from July 30 to August 5.

In “Impreza”, the whole family is preparing for Danuta’s and Maciej’s golden wedding. In honor of this occasion Alexandra, their German niece, visits Warsaw. Right away politics engross their conversations and it soon becomes clear that all Polish relatives support the measures taken by the right-conservative PiS government. All of a sudden Alexandra is left alone with her liberal views and regarded as a victim of Western propaganda.

“Bostofrio, où le ciel rejoint la terre” by Paulo Carneiro won the award for best Portuguese film.

The film shows Carneiro in search for discovering his grandparents’ history.

The Melgaço International Documentary Film Festival intends to promote and disclose social and ethnographic cinema.



A scene from “The Season of Warm Breezes” by Hossein Rigi

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Iran selected as special guest of Turin book fair 2020

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iran will be the guest country of the Turin Intentional Book Fair in 2020, Iran Cultural Fairs Institute (ICFI) director Amir-Masud Shahramnia has said.



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Turin Intentional Book Fair

“Italian city of Turin has been selected to win the title of UNESCO World Book Capital in 2020, and the organizers of the Turin book fair would like Iran to be the guest of honor in that year,” Shahramnia has told the Persian service of Tasnim in a report published on Wednesday.

The president of the Turin book fair met the Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, during the Tehran book fair in May and the issue was discussed at the meeting, he said.

“The decision was made for 2019, but the organizers have asked Iran to be the guest country in 2020 since Turin has been selected the World Book Capital in 2020,” he added.

He said that more details about the issue will soon be published. The 2019 edition of the Turin book fair will be running from May 9 to 13.

“Whole to Part” crowned best at Italian filmfest

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Vahid Hosseini-nami’s short film “Whole to Part” was named as best film at the 19th Lucania Film Festival in Italy, the organizers announced on Sunday.



A scene from “Whole to Part” by Vahid Hosseini-nami

The short tells the story of a gigantic iron statue of a despot which is removed from the town square. The statue is melted and the steel enters people’s life in form of different objects. Despotism enters people’s life in smaller scale and continues its existence.

“The Theory of Sunset” by Roman Sokolov from Russia won the award for best short animation and the award for best short documentary went to “Carmen” by Natalia Preston from Germany.

The festival was held in Lucania from August 1 to 5.

China denies entry to Disney’s Winnie the Pooh film

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Walt Disney Co’s (DIS.N) request to show “Christopher Robin”, a movie that features the honey-loving bear Winnie the Pooh, has been denied by authorities in China, a source familiar with the matter said on Tuesday.

It is unclear why the Chinese government denied entry to the film. Chinese authorities do not provide reasons to Hollywood studios when they reject their movies, the source said.



Stuffed Winnie the Pooh and Eeyore characters are seen at the world premiere of Disney’s “Christopher Robin”, in Burbank, California, U.S., July 30, 2018. (Reuters/Danny Moloshok)

In “Christopher Robin”, the eponymous hero, now an adult, reunites with friend Winnie the Pooh and others such as Eeyore the donkey and Piglet. The characters were created by English author A.A. Milne.

The government in Beijing has censored online images of Winnie the Pooh after some opponents likened the bear’s appearance to President Xi Jinping and have used Pooh as a symbol of resistance.

China, the world’s second-largest film market, also limits the number of foreign-made films allowed into the country at 34 a year. It typically favors action-heavy blockbusters such as “Avengers: Infinity War” and “Black Panther”, two of four Disney films that have played in China so far this year.

Disney’s “A Wrinkle in Time”, which debuted around the world in March, has not been released in China.

Tehran museum denies rediscovery of more Picasso pieces



A view of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMCA) has denied the rediscovery of 10 more Picasso artworks among its collection.

In a story published on August 3, the Art Newspaper, a journal of record for the visual arts world based in London and New York, quoting Mattijs Visser, the Dutch architect and curator at the TMCA, claimed that ten Picasso arts have been rediscovered at the museum during its renovation process.

However, the museum strongly denies the report and asked Visser for corrections to the story.

A restoration project has commenced in the museum to return the museum to its former glory since May 2018, and its Western works alongside local art will go on show in an exhibition curated by Visser.

The exhibition named “Portrait, Still-Life, Landscape” will open at the museum on February 21, 2019 and will be running until April 20.

The exhibit will display a selection of over 400 works from the strong collection, which includes modern European and American paintings, drawings and sculptures, by artists such as Andy Warhol, Mark Rothko and Marcel Duchamp.

CTV buys Canadian rights for “Roseanne” spin-off “The Conners”

NEW YORK (Reuters) — CTV has bought the Canadian rights for “The Conners”, a spin-off of “Roseanne”, the show that was canceled by U.S. network ABC in May after its creator sparked widespread outrage by tweeting a racial slur.

Canada’s CTV, owned by BCE Inc, will air “The Conners” starting Oct. 16, CTV said in a statement on Tuesday.

“Roseanne” was canceled by Walt Disney Co’s ABC after its creator Roseanne Barr sparked widespread anger with a tweet comparing black former Obama admin-

istration adviser Valerie Jarrett to an ape. Barr later apologized for making a bad joke.

In June, ABC ordered a 10-episode spinoff of “Roseanne” called “The Conners” that will air without any involvement of Barr. “Roseanne”, which ran originally from 1988 to 1997 featuring a blue-collar family with parents struggling to get by, was revived and aired on ABC.

The revival was ABC’s biggest hit of the 2017-2018 season, drawing more than 18 million viewers on average, according to Nielsen.

“The Hunchback of Notre Dame” coming to Tehran theater



Elham Shakib acts in a scene from Fyodor Dostoyevsky “Crime and Punishment” by director Iman Afsharian at Tehran’s Masudieh Theater on October 14, 2015. (Dddgar.ir)

A R T **TEHRAN** — An Iranian troupe plans to perform a concert theater based on Victor Hugo’s romantic novel “The Hunchback of Notre Dame” in Tehran.

The concert theater will begin on August 19 at Baran Theater, director/playwright Elham Shakib told the Persian service of FNA on Wednesday.

“There is no dialogue in performance and the story will be narrated through song and music,” she added.

She noted that almost everybody has

read the story of “The Hunchback of Notre Dame” or has watched it in several animated movies produced from the story.

Her cast, which is composed of actor-singers, has been rehearsing over the past 45 days. Ashkan Sadeqi stars as the hunchback of Notre Dame and Hesam Mokhtari, Mahmud Qana’atpisheh and Raisa Avanesian are other main members of the cast.

The music for the performance is based on French and Iranian compositions, Shakib said.

Tying herself in knots, Serbian skin artist boggles senses

SMEDEREVO, Serbia (Reuters) — Armed with makeup brushes and pencils, skin artist and illusionist Mirjana Kika Milosevic gets to work on her own torso, sketching elaborate knots and making chunks of her flesh disappear, earning her videos millions of views on YouTube.

The self-taught makeup artist, 36, from Smederevo, an industrial town 70 kilometers south of Belgrade, now earns enough through her art to dedicate herself fully to it.

Milosevic started several years ago by

painting a hole on her thigh and posting photos on Instagram - leaving viewers puzzling over whether it was real or not. After huge interest she decided to do more.

“Ever since I was a kid, I liked to draw on unusual surfaces and avoided drawing on paper,” she said.

Her illusion “Knotted Body” has received more than 12 million YouTube views and she has created illusions for Disney and the horror film character Chucky.

Angelina Jolie wants divorce finalized by end of 2018

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Angelina Jolie on Tuesday sought to move forward with her long and sometimes bitter divorce from Brad Pitt, which has yet to be finalized after almost two years.

Jolie’s attorney filed papers in Los Angeles Superior Court saying the actress wanted a judgment “returning the parties to single status during calendar year 2018.”

The document also said that Pitt has “paid no meaningful child support since separation” and said that although informal arrangements had been made with him, payments “had not been regularly sustained.”

Jolie filed for divorce in September 2016, ending two years or marriage and a 10-year romance that had made the pair one of Hollywood’s most glamorous and powerful couples. They have six children for whom she is seeking primary custody.

Mindy Nyby, a spokeswoman for the actress, said on Tuesday that the court filing was intended “to provide closure



Cast member Brad Pitt and actress Angelina Jolie pose at the premiere of “The Tree of Life” at LACMA in Los Angeles, California, U.S., May 24, 2011. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

to the marriage in a way that clears a path toward the next stage of their lives

and allows her and Brad to recommit as devoted co-parents to their children.”

Pitt’s representatives declined to comment. A source familiar with the matter, who was not authorized to speak publicly, said that “Brad is someone who fulfills his commitments.”

The divorce filing, citing irreconcilable differences, triggered a bitter custody dispute during which Pitt was investigated and cleared of child abuse. Final custody arrangements have yet to be agreed.

The “Moneyball” actor said in an interview last year that he had quit drinking, was undergoing therapy and that he and Jolie had decided to abandon “vitriolic hatred” and work together to sort out their issues.

Pitt has kept a low profile in the past two years, while Jolie has recently been filming a sequel to fairytale drama “Maleficent” in London and directed a 2017 film about the 1970s Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia in which more than one million people died. Their eldest son Maddox was adopted from Cambodia in 2002.