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Iranian Cultural Week opens in Moscow **16**

Major petchem projects inaugurated



President Rouhani put three petrochemical plants into operation on Tuesday.

Tehran supporting new Iraqi government

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — In the statement on Tuesday, the Iranian Embassy in Baghdad said Tehran stands behind the new Iraqi government. Congratulating the opening of the new Iraqi National Parliament, the embassy called the event as a major success and an important step towards political and security stability in Iraq.

The statement read that Iran has always attached special importance to its relations with Iraq and emphasized continued cooperation and coordination in various political, security, economic and cultural areas despite the fact that some efforts are being made to create a negative atmosphere and hurt the relations between the two neighbors.

India allows state refiners to use Iran tankers, insurance for oil imports

India is allowing state refiners to import Iranian oil with Tehran arranging tankers and insurance after firms including the country's top shipper Shipping Corp of India (SCI) halted voyages to Iran due to U.S. sanctions, sources said. New Delhi's attempt to keep Iranian oil flowing mirrors a step by China, where buyers are shifting nearly all

their Iranian oil imports to vessels owned by National Iranian Tanker Co (NITC). The moves by the two top buyers of Iranian crude indicate that the Islamic Republic may not be fully cut off from global oil markets from November, when U.S. sanctions against Tehran's petroleum sector are due to start. **->4**

France partly to blame for Libya crisis: Italian minister

France is partly to blame for the crisis in Libya, Italy's Defense Minister Elisabetta Trenta said Monday (Sep 3), ruling out Italian military intervention there. "France, from my point of view, has a responsibility," the minister wrote on Facebook, evoking the military intervention in 2011 by France and other nations against the regime of Libya's

then leader Moamer Kadhafi. "It is clearly now undeniable that this country (Libya) finds itself in this situation because someone, in 2011, put their own interests ahead of those of the Libyan people and of Europe itself," the minister said. "France, from this point of view, is partly to blame," Trenta added. **->13**

ARTICLE
Masoud Hossein
 Head of the Sport Desk of the TehranTimes

Indonesia not successful Games for Iranian women

The Iranian women won just a gold medal in the 2018 Asian Games, one gold less than the previous edition, despite a twofold increase in numbers.

Iran took part with 57 sportswomen in the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon, South Korea, winning two gold, seven silver and seven bronze medals. Karate practitioner Hamideh Abbasali and shooter Najmeh Khedmati claimed two gold medals for the Persians.

In the Asian Games in Indonesia a total of 105 sportswomen represented Iran and seized one gold, 10 silver and seven bronze medals.

Women's Kabaddi made history in the Games, bringing an end to Indian supremacy in the sport.

Women's success in sporting events in recent years has grasped much attention in Iran.

It is hard to believe that just a few years ago Iranian women couldn't win a medal in the continent's event, however, today Persian female athletes proudly hold Olympic medal in hand.

Kimia Alizadeh became the very first Iranian woman to snatch an Olympic medal, taking bronze in a taekwondo event in Rio 2016.

Successful stories of such certainly have a positive impact on the Iranian women to push themselves further to meet the challenges ahead.

Additionally, having more number of women in the Games proves the popularity of sports among the diligent Iranian women despite the obstacles and limitations they face daily.

However, future is bright for women in Iran since the next generation of female athletes are coming into the fields.

At the moment, so many Iranian football, futsal, basketball and volleyball players have experienced the continent events.

Furthermore, Iranian wrestlers and weightlifters are allowed to compete at the international events and it can pave the way for more women to get engaged in any sport.

Cancer treatment startups provide great opportunities for better interaction with patients: Iranian researcher

By Setareh Behroozi

The young Iranian U.S.-based academic Ali Mohammadabadi who is studying on the thermal and mechanical evaluation of Focused Ultrasound systems in cancer treatment and enhanced chemotherapeutic drugs delivery at the University of Maryland, believes that startups in the field of cancer treatment provide opportunities to better interact with and educate people in terms of new cancer detection techniques, care coordination platforms, smartphone-assisted medications, and also the treatment of cancers.

"I do not intend to define the fight against cancer as a business project, but there are various startups need brilliant ideas," he said in an email

interview with the Tehran Times.

Unfortunately, many families in Iran have at least a few members who have had cancer. In addition, many others are concerned about cancer prevention and other health issues, he lamented.

"As a personal experience, I started my first startup in the field of new technologies (FuTech) nine years and currently developing a new startup to employ pulsed focused ultrasound (pFUS) and tumor-penetrating nanoparticles (TPNs) treatment for head and neck cancers," he asserted.

He named "Savor" as a simple and good example of new startups in the field of cancer which designs personalized nutrition profiles for cancer patients.

In quest of better, more beautiful life Born and grew up in Neyshabur, Ali Mohammadabadi, 37, inspired by his father working in the railways.

"There I'd got an idea of what I want my future career to be. I chose to be an engineer because I thought it would be a field that solves the world's biggest problems, like designing novel engines or creating clean energy," he said.

"I received Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Mechanical Engineering from reputable universities in Iran and abroad. Mainly, I focused on designing new materials and developing novel non-destructive testing methods to evaluate their properties and durability," he explained. **->10**

New Colombian president: Recognition of Palestine 'irreversible'

Colombia's new President Ivan Duque says he will not reverse his predecessor's decision last month to recognize Palestine as a sovereign state.

Duque told a local radio station on Monday that the decision made by Juan Manuel Santos in the last few days of his term in August was "irreversible" because "the president of the republic is the person designated by the constitution to manage foreign relations."

Any government governs until it is replaced by its successor administration; therefore, Santos's decision cannot be disputed and will stand, he argued.

The Colombian president, however, said that he would have preferred more debate on the issue, but that he respects the decisions his

predecessor made during his tenure.

"We would have benefited from more analyses [about the pros and cons of recognizing Palestine], but we should be part of the solution, not the problem," Duque said.

Duque said that he believed the so-called two-state solution is the best way out of the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"What we, the international community, should not do is be part of the problem, instead, we must be part of the solution. The solution is to form lasting peace, stability, and that the two-state solution will move forward," he said.

Santos handed a letter to Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki on August 3, saying that Colombia "decided to recognize Palestine as a free, independent and sovereign state."



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Bust of film critic Zaven Qukasian unveiled in Isfahan

Isfahan Mayor Qodratollah Noruzi (2nd L) and a number cultural figures of the central Iranian city unveil a bust of veteran film critic, author and filmmaker Zaven Qukasian (1951-2015) in the Jolfa neighborhood of his hometown on September 3, 2018.

The unveiling ceremony was part of the programs arranged by the organizers of the 31st International Film Festival for Children and Youth underway in the city.

Qukasian passed away in a battle with stomach cancer at the age of 64.

ARTICLE
Martin Love
 Political analyst from North Carolina

Overreach and arrogance are the curses of every empire

I have an acquaintance and occasional correspondent who was a famed U.S. Marine Corps pilot during the Vietnam War. At age 20 he began two years in Nam and logged over 800 combat missions in F-4B Phantoms and other aircraft. He won Distinguished Flying Crosses.

A few years later he got back, after a lapse working elsewhere, into aviation and began ferrying aircraft of all kinds across oceans to countries all over the world. He holds a number of aviation records and a little over three decades ago he was the second (and last) pilot to fly an aircraft under and through the legs of the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

He wrote me not long ago: "I delivered the last F-227 aircraft in November 1979 to Tehran. I was there for a week and while the natives were restless, they were really nice people. The aircraft was going to the Shah's sister. She paid for each plane in her fleet every month. But Iranians were wonderful. They just did not like what the CIA did to them in 1953.

By not responding now, the Iranians are winning. The world is not blind. The U.S. Empire is going to crumble far faster than anyone realizes. If Iran keeps standing, they will win. Iran is doing the right thing and Europe is waking up to the realization that they have a choice. They can honor their agreements like the JCPOA for mutual benefit, or they can let the neighborhood bully push them around. One day they will realize who their friend is and who is not."

This man has called wars the U.S. has gotten involved in, including Vietnam, "stupid". He is correct, of course. And even if many Iranians don't think right now that they are "winning" anything under harsh U.S. sanctions, I agree with this former Marine pilot's views.

He has a firm grasp of geopolitics, and he is a real American patriot condemning many U.S. actions in recent decades. He would advise Iran to "cool it", or stay cool. He is everything as a pilot and a real patriot dead Senator John McCain was not. **->7**

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Syria to expel Idlib terrorists with least humanitarian cost: Zarif

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Tuesday that the Syrian army and its allies will make their utmost efforts to reduce harms to civilians during the imminent military operations against the terrorists in Idlib.

“We are trying to have the expulsion of terrorists from Idlib done with the least humanitarian costs. We had talks in Turkey to this end and we also held talks in Syria with the high-ranking Syrian officials,” Zarif said, Fars reported. “God willing, we will have talks with the three guarantors of the Astana process until Friday to prevent any harm to the Syrian people,” he added.



Iran, Mongolia discuss relations

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Mongolian Deputy Foreign Minister Batmunkh Battsetseg met on Tuesday to discuss bilateral relations.

During the meeting which was held in Tehran, the two sides called for strengthening the currently good relations between Iran and Mongolia, the Foreign Ministry website reported.

They also exchanged views on a number of issues including the visits of Mongolian officials to Tehran, expansion of parliamentary relations and cooperation in various areas particularly in railway transportation, consular issues and animal husbandry.

The diplomats then held talks on holding a joint trade forum, increasing people-to-people contacts and expanding mutual exchanges in scientific, cultural, oil and energy fields as well as cooperation in international bodies.



Kosar fighter jet to join armed forces

POLITICS TEHRAN — Chief of the Iran Aviation Industries Organization has said the recently-unveiled Kosar fighter jet will soon join the Iranian air forces.

Abdolkarim Banitorfi said the production line has been launched for the advanced Kosar fighter jet, which was successfully test-flown on August 21 at the presence of President Hassan Rouhani, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

He described the manufacturing of Kosar jet as a turning point in the history of Iran’s aviation.

The general added that the fighter jet has been manufactured according to the needs of the Iranian armed forces.



Iran rejects claims of sending missiles to Lebanon

POLITICS TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Tuesday rejected a report by Fox News that accused Iran of smuggling arms into Lebanon.

“Broadcasting such fake news has become common these days and weeks, which shows that the psychological war by anti-Iran centers has been intensifying,” Qassemi said in a statement, ILNA reported.

Also on Saturday, Qassemi dismissed a Reuters report that Iran was sending missiles to Iraq, stressing that it is an “imagined, meaningless, and ludicrous” claim.

He said the claim only serves to spread Iranophobia in the region and negatively influence Iran’s foreign relations.



‘Inter-parliamentary meeting helping Iran-Russia ties’

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Ambassador to Russia Mehdi Sanai said on Tuesday that the meetings between the parliament speakers of Iran and Russia have greatly contributed to the development of large-scale projects and provincial cooperation.

Writing on his Twitter account, Sanai said Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani is set to visit Russia on Wednesday to meet his Russian counterpart as well as Russian lawmakers and attend a joint parliamentary commission, ILNA reported.

According to TASS, in the meeting, the two sides are to explore different avenues to broaden parliamentary as well as economic cooperation between the two countries.



Herat governor hails Iran’s hospitality to Afghan refugees

POLITICS TEHRAN — Mohammad Asif Rahimi, the governor of Herat, on Tuesday praised Iran’s kind hospitality to the Afghan refugees over the past forty years, saying Iran and Afghanistan enjoy friendly relations. “When the people of Afghanistan were displaced from their country, only four countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, let the distressed people in,” IRNA quoted Rahimi as saying.

He further said the people and government of Iran “have spared no efforts in supporting the Afghan refugees despite their own problems.” He added, “Such humanitarian, godly move is honorable.”

Trump eager to meet Rouhani in New York: Ayatollah Jannati

POLITICS TEHRAN — Assembly of Experts Chairman Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati said on Tuesday that U.S. President Donald Trump is eager to meet Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly which will be held from September 18-25.

Speaking at a session of the Assembly of Experts, Jannati said, “The Leader has repeatedly said that no official has the right to negotiate with the U.S. government and the cabinet members who will go to the United Nations should respect the Leader’s guidelines.”

On July 31, Donald Trump offered to meet Iran’s leaders with “no preconditions” and “any time they want”.

“I’d meet with anybody. I believe in meetings,” Trump told reporters at the White House.

In remarks on August 13, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said there will be no war between Iran and the U.S. and nor will be any negotiation between the two countries.

The Leader noted that as Imam Khomeini “banned talks with the U.S. and I also ban it”. He added that negotiation with the current U.S. administration is impossible. “Even if we were to negotiate with the U.S., we would never hold talks with the current



U.S. administration.”

‘Turn sanctions into opportunities’
Ayatollah Jannati went on to say that the U.S. and its allies intend to harm the Islamic Republic system, however, Iran will resist and turn the sanctions into opportunities.

Elsewhere, he dismissed claims that the Leader is responsible for the current economic problems in the country.

He said some talk in a way as if “Majlis and government” have no authority.

The top cleric said it is a “vicious plot” by the enemy to attribute problems to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

Despite all these claims, he said, Ayatollah Khamenei is seeking “implementation of plans in order to solve the country’s problems”.

He urged the Judiciary to immediately

bring to justice those culprits who have caused disruption in the foreign currency market and caused price rises.

The Assembly of Expert chief also said so long as officials do not take “revolutionary” decisions in management system such economic problems will persist.

Europe following U.S. policy on Iran’s missile program

He also said though the European Union has not exited from the 2015 nuclear agreement it is following the U.S. policy in regard to Iran’s missile defense program.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the ayatollah praised the resistance of the Yemeni people against the Saudi-led war against their country, saying, “The resistance of the Yemeni people against the infanticide and savagery by the Saudis is laudable.”

An airstrike from the Saudi-led coalition on August 9 struck a school bus in northern Yemen and killed dozens of people, many of them children.

According to the New York Times, the coalition said it had hit missile launchers and called the attack a “legitimate military operation,” but the attack and the justification for it were condemned and drew new attention to the tremendous human toll of the war in Yemen, especially on children.

MP: Iran ready to mass produce centrifuges

POLITICS TEHRAN — MP Mojtaba Zonnour, who heads the nuclear committee in parliament, said on Tuesday that Iran is ready to mass produce IR4, IR5 and IR6 centrifuges.

“We have IR4, IR5 and IR6 for mass production, but we do not take any action for the time being. We are moving within the framework of the JCPOA [the 2015 nuclear deal],” he told reporters on the sidelines of an open session of the parliament.

He noted that Iran will restart its nuclear activities if the Europeans fail to preserve the JCPOA after the U.S. exit from the agreement in May.

To keep the nuclear alive, the European Union trio – Germany, France and Britain which are signatory to the nuclear deal – are expected to present their package of



proposals before the second round of U.S. sanctions takes effect in early November.

The package is expected to facilitate bank transactions and oil trade with Iran.

Attack on embassies is wrong: MP

POLITICS TEHRAN — Alaeddin Boroujerdi, an Iranian lawmaker, has said that attack on foreign embassies is wrong.

“Security forces should provide embassies with security,” Alaeddin Boroujerdi, who sits on the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, told ISNA in an interview published on Tuesday.

He called attacks on embassies of the UK and Saudi Arabia in Tehran “wrong” and “unusual”.

In protest over sanctions during the Ahmadinejad Administration, a number of protesters attacked British embassy in 2011.

In 2015, weeks after Iran and the 5+1 group - the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia plus Germany clinched a nuclear deal, the British embassy in Iran was reopened.



Also, in January 2016, a group of protesters stormed the Saudi diplomatic missions in Tehran and Mashhad in protest to the execution of the pro-democracy cleric Nimr al-Nimr.

Iranians’ progress cannot be stopped, Rouhani says

POLITICS TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday that the Iranians’ progress cannot be stopped, expressing confidence that Iranians will overcome the problems resulting from the return of sanctions.

“Enemies impose problems on the people, but it is impossible that they subjugate Iran and the Iranians and take us back to the year before 1357 [the 1979 Islamic Revolution]. This is an illusion which cannot be realized,” Rouhani said during a ceremony inaugurating the Marjan, Damavand and Pardis petrochemical plants on the shores of the Persian Gulf.

Rouhani went on to say that the enemies have entered a new phase of plots against Iran.

“Those who sought to prevent our victory in the revolution

and the eight-year sacred defense, but failed today they have started to hatch new plots,” he stated.

Iran refers to the Iraqi war against Iran in the 1980s as sacred defense. Noting that the people are facing new economic problems with the return of sanctions, Rouhani said enemies can only succeed when the people lose their hope.

“Enemies will surely be defeated if we continue our efforts.” He added, “Enemies cannot reach their objectives and it is clear for us as a daylight.”

Elsewhere, he said that petrochemical and oil industries form the cornerstone of the fight against sanctions.

“Today, economic and psychological wars are being conducted against the Iranians and petrochemical and oil industries are in the frontline in these wars,” he remarked.

He said the development of petrochemical projects are the right step in line with creating jobs, implementing resistance economy and increasing national income.

U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew Washington 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.

Trump has asked countries to cut their oil imports from Iran by November.

Back in May, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that Washington will apply economic and military pressure against Iran and will impose “the strongest sanctions in history” on the Islamic Republic.

UK minister hails ‘useful conversations’ with Iran’s Araqchi

POLITICS TEHRAN — Britain’s Middle East Alistair Burt said on Monday that he had “useful conversations” with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi on the nuclear agreement and wider regional issues.

“Weekend in Tehran - I had useful conversations with Deputy Foreign Minister Araqchi on the nuclear deal & wider regional issues. I also continued to press the case strongly on our dual national consular cases,” Burt said on his Twitter account.

The two diplomats met in Tehran on Saturday and discussed “bilateral economic cooperation, the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA and mechanisms of monetary and financial deals between the

two countries despite the U.S. sanctions.”

The visit was the first by a UK minister after U.S. President Donald Trump pulled out of the nuclear agreement, which was struck between Iran and six world powers.

Britain and the two other European signatories (France and Germany) have been trying to keep the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), alive despite Trump’s hostility towards Tehran.

In a statement before his visit, Burt echoed London’s assertion to remain committed to the JCPOA, saying, “As long as Iran meets its commitments under the deal, we remain committed to it as we believe it is the best way to ensure a safe and secure future for the region.”

Netanyahu: Arabs turn to Israel to fight post-nuclear deal Iran

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu admitted on Monday that certain Arab states have turned to Israel to fight Iran after Tehran’s 2015 nuclear agreement with the 5+1 nations.

“The agreement with Iran was a bad agreement in every respect except for one - it brought us closer to the Arab world on a scale that we never knew, and one of our goals is that it continues,” he said, according to i24NEWS.

Netanyahu underlined that Israel and certain Arab states are “in the midst of a diplomatic flourishing” in the context of the JCPOA, the official name for the nuclear accord.

“Another important thing is, of course, the fact that there is a gradual normalization with leading countries in the Arab world,” he stated.

Back in August, the Israeli prime minister claimed that “many Arab countries now see Israel not as their enemy but as their indispensable ally” in pushing back against Iran.

Following Washington’s withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal on May 8, Netanyahu praised President Donald Trump for what he described as a “brave decision”.

The exit was welcomed by Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain. The triple Persian Gulf littoral sates also backed decision to reimpose sanctions on Tehran.

Tehran asks for technical, financial aid to continue drug fight

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Gholamhossein Dehqani called on all countries threatened by the danger of drug trafficking to help Iran continue its campaign against narcotics.

“The growing production of illicit drugs and activities of traffickers to transfer them outside the borders is a serious threat to the security of Iran and other countries,” Dehqani said in a meeting with Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Yuri Fedotov in Moscow on Tuesday.

“All countries which have used Iran’s efforts to prevent transfer of drugs to their lands are required to provide Iran with technical and financial aid,” he added.

Fedotov, for his part, underscored the UN’s willingness to further develop cooperation with Iran in the fight against drug trafficking, and said, “We intend to strengthen the UNODC’s office in Tehran by sending new work force there.”

In relevant remarks in March, Iranian Interior



Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli warned of the large amount of narcotics produced in Afghanistan, describing it as a threat to the entire world.

“Production of over 9,000 tons of drugs in Afghanistan is a serious alarm and warning to the international community and the world states are required to act upon their duties based on the principles of common

responsibility,” Rahmani Fazli said in a meeting with Fedotov in Vienna.

He added that increased production of drugs in Afghanistan means more damage to the regional states and increased transit and trafficking of narcotics to other parts of the world.

The Iranian police officials maintain that drug production in Afghanistan has undergone a 40-fold increase since the U.S.-led invasion of the country in 2001.

While Afghanistan produced only 185 tons of opium per year under the Taliban, according to the UN statistics, since the U.S.-led invasion, drug production has surged to 3,400 tons annually. In 2007, the opium trade reached an estimated all-time production high of 8,200 tons.

Afghan and western officials blame Washington and NATO for the change, saying that allies have “overlooked” the drug problem since invading the country more than 17 years ago.

(Source: Fars)

Hezbollah: U.S. can't set conditions for Syria war victors

Hezbollah says the U.S., whose pro-terror policies have faced defeat in Syria, is in no position to call for the withdrawal of Iranian advisors and allied Lebanese resistance fighters, who have emerged as "victors" of the war against terrorists in the Arab state.

Last week, Lebanon's al-Akhar daily reported that an American delegation, comprising security and intelligence officials, had visited Damascus in June and met President Bashar al-Assad's special security advisor, Ali Mamlouk.

During the four-hour meeting, the report added, the delegation had set three conditions for the pullout of U.S. military forces from Syria, including the withdrawal of Iranian advisors from southern Syria near the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, data on "terrorist groups" and a role in the oil business in eastern Syria.

Speaking on Monday, Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem described those conditions as "meaningless," stressing that it is the "victors" who are eligible to set out conditions, not the U.S. which has been defeated in Syria.

He also hailed the achievements made by the Syrian army and its allies against U.S.-backed Takfiri terrorists.

Hezbollah and the Syrian government are now in the stage of "successive victories for Syria and its axis. We have lifted this black cloud, victories will continue, and we will



achieve more," the Hezbollah official noted.

He further called on "all factions counting on America" to "reconsider" their ties with the "Great Satan" as it is not loyal to its friends.

"They are Saudi Arabia's allies, and tomorrow Saudi Arabia will see that the first strike it will get will be from America," Qassem said.

The Syrian army has managed to drive the terrorists out of most parts of the country and end Daesh's territorial rule with help

from Iran, Hezbollah and Russia.

It is now on the verge of fully liberating the southern parts near the occupied Golan, prompting serious concerns in Tel Aviv, which supports the terrorists operating there against Damascus.

Syria is now preparing for an operation to liberate Idlib Province, the last major militant stronghold.

At the request of Damascus, Iran has been

offering advisory military assistance to the Syrian army. Tehran says it will continue its anti-terror mission as long as the legitimate government in Damascus wants it to do so.

Hezbollah forces have also been assisting the Syrian government on the ground to clear areas bordering Lebanon from terrorist groups.

In turn, Russia has also been providing air cover to Syrian army operations. It has also military advisors in the Arab country and runs a number of military bases there.

On the opposite front, the U.S. - along with Israel and its other allies -- has been backing the militant groups fighting to topple the Assad government.

In an interview with the al-Alam News Network in June, Assad said the United States was an occupying power in Syria and that Damascus supported "any act of resistance, whether against terrorists or against occupying forces, regardless of their nationality."

Washington has deployed around 2,000 troops to Syria.

U.S. forces maintain significant presence in the country's north, where they back Kurdish militants operating against the Syrian government.

The Russian military has repeatedly reported that the U.S. uses the areas under its control in Syria to provide support to Takfiri terrorists.

(Source: Press TV)

UN sees "moment of truth" for Syria political process

Trump tweets to warn about attacking Idlib

Talks between major powers this month on setting up a committee to lead constitutional reform in Syria will be a "moment of truth" for a credible political process, UN envoy Staffan de Mistura told reporters Tuesday.

De Mistura will hold separate sets of talks next week, one involving Russia, Turkey and Iran, and the other including the United States and Saudi Arabia, to discuss the makeup of the committee.

He said it must not be allowed to become a "long, winding process about the process" but could be the entry point into Syrian government reforms leading to elections after the war.

--- Trump & Idlib

U.S. President Donald Trump has claimed that attacking militant-held Idlib would be a "humanitarian mistake" for Tehran and Moscow.

"The Russians and Iranians would be making a grave humanitarian mistake to take part in this potential human tragedy. Hundreds of thousands of people could be killed. Don't let that happen!" claimed the U.S. president in a tweet on Monday.

His tweet followed the latest visit to Damascus by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to meet Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and other top officials from the war-ravaged country.

Trump's comment follows similar remarks by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley.

Tehran is set to host an upcoming summit with Russian and Turkish leaders over the situation in Syria on September 7.

Upon arrival in the Syrian capital earlier on Monday, Zarif asserted that "Terrorists operating in the remaining parts of Idlib must be cleansed, and the region be returned to the people of Syria."

Last week, Iranian Defense Minister Amir Hatami visited Damascus, where he signed a "defense and technical agreement."

The Syrian army, meanwhile, is gearing up for a major offensive to retake the last terrorist stronghold, but it is facing threats of being hit by the U.S. and its allies.

Yria 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.

(Source: agencies)

UN to gather Yemen conflicting sides in Geneva

The sides to the Yemeni conflict are to convene in Geneva for the first time since 2016 under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) in an attempt to revive stalled peace talks.

Representatives from Yemen's running government, which is allied to the popular Ansarullah (Houthi) movement, and the country's former regime, backed by the House of Saud regime, are to participate in the talks in the Swiss city on Thursday.

UN envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths will be supervising the talks and is likely to shuttle between the two sides, as face-to-face meetings between them are unlikely.

Khaled al-Yamani, the foreign minister of the former regime, told AFP that the chances of face-to-face negotiations between the two sides "are slim to none."

The news agency reported that the talks would likely focus on a prisoner exchange deal and the fate of the Yemeni port city of al-Hudaydah, which has been under escalated Saudi regime-led military attacks since June.

One United States diplomat, meanwhile, said the negotiations "are really not intended to be talks or negotiations but consultations that demonstrate the capability of the UN to bring the sides together," along with "confidence building measures."

The two sides last held marathon negotiations - also organized by the UN - in Kuwait, trying unsuccessfully to hammer out a "power-sharing" accord.

The former Yemeni government resigned in 2015 as the country was experiencing political turmoil.

The head of that government, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, fled to Riyadh after resignation. There, he encouraged Saudi plans to launch military attacks on Yemen, where the Ansarullah movement had taken over state matters in the absence of a functioning government.

A Saudi regime-backed coalition soon invaded Yemen in an attempt to reinstall the former, Riyadh-friendly officials to power despite their resignation.

Thousands have been killed in the Saudi-led invasion, and the country has been pushed close to the edge of famine. A cholera outbreak, resulting from the devastation of Yemen's health infrastructure, has also claimed more than 2,000 lives.

■ **UAE: Hudaydah assault to rage on**

Meanwhile, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), an ally of the House of Saud regime in the invasion, took a defiant tone on Hudaydah, the port city that takes in much of international aid to the war-stricken country. The Saudi regime-led offensive on the city threatens to tip Yemen over the brink of famine.

"In order to shorten the war, pressure should be continued on al-Hudaydah," said Emirati Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash.

The Ansarullah, meanwhile, have reportedly offered to let the UN supervise aid operations at the port.

■ **U.S. blocking war crimes probe**

Separately, Yemeni Minister of Legal Affairs Abdulrahman Ahmed al-Mukhtar said that "U.S. aggression" had blocked the UN Security Council (UNSC) and International Criminal Court (ICC) from mounting a war crimes investigation into an August 9 Saudi regime-led attack that killed at least 40 children, among others.

During the strike, Saudi regime-led warplanes hit a school



bus with an American 227-kilogram, laser-guided Mark 82 bomb in the town of Dhahyan in Yemen's northern province of Sa'ada, killing a total of 51 people, among them 40 children, and leaving nearly 80 others wounded.

Speaking at a press conference on Monday, Mukhtar said, "We, in the Republic of Yemen, recognize that it is impossible for the Security Council to adopt a resolution to refer war criminals to the International Criminal Court."

The U.S., which holds a veto power at the Security Council, has been supporting the Saudi regime-led coalition by providing arms, bombing coordinates, aerial refueling, and a commando contingent.

■ **Spain cancels €9.2mn deal to sell Saudis 400 precision bombs**

Elsewhere, the Saudi regime-led coalition's recent slaughter of Yemeni children has prompted the Spanish defense ministry to cancel a €9.2-million deal to sell Saudis 400 precision bombs. The Spanish Ministry of Defense announced on Monday that it will return the 9.2 million euros already paid by the House of Saud regime to buy 400 Spanish-made precision bombs amid fears that they could be used to target the innocent people of Yemen, the El Mundo reported.

The arms deal had been negotiated and finalized by former Spanish defense ministers Pedro Morenés Eulate and Maria Dolores de Cospedal.

However, the recent deadly attack on a bus carrying Yemeni students, which killed 51 people including 40 children, prompted incumbent minister Margarita Robles to revise all arms deals with the regime. The recent decision to freeze the bomb sale contract is said to be the first stage of the revision process.

The Amnesty International says Spain is the fourth country on the list of major arms exporters to Riyadh. In one of the most recent contracts, the Spanish state-owned shipbuilder Navantia signed a €1.8-billion deal to sell five small warships to Saudi Arabia.

The deal was signed in April by the Saudi regime Crown

Prince and Defense Minister Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) after his meeting with his then Spanish counterpart Cospedal in Madrid.

The Spanish defense ministry's decision to halt the arms deal it had earlier signed with Riyadh would open the door to the possibility that Spain would join countries such as Sweden, Canada, Finland, Norway, Belgium or Germany, which have suspended their arms exports to the Saudi regime-led coalition.

According to media reports citing the Amnesty International, between 2015 and 2017, Spain reportedly exported 1.2 billion euros worth of military equipment to the coalition.

"There is extensive evidence that irresponsible arms flows to the Saudi Arabia-led coalition have resulted in enormous harm to Yemeni civilians. But this has not deterred the USA, the UK and other states, including France, Spain and Italy, from continuing transfers of billions of dollars' worth of such arms. As well as devastating civilian lives, this makes a mockery of the global Arms Trade Treaty," the Amnesty said.

Other reports said ever since the House of Saud regime Arabia launched the military operation in Yemen in 2015, its purchases of Spanish ammunition have nearly tripled, rising from €34.7 million in 2016 to €90.1 million in 2017.

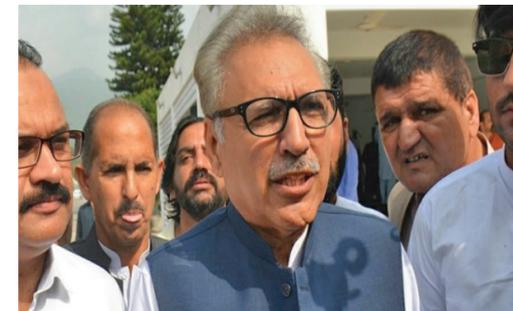
The European Parliament has urged its member states to halt these sales on numerous occasions, admitting that the alliance led by Saudi Arabia violates international humanitarian law by using this weaponry in attacking the civilian population and bombing hospitals, markets and schools.

The House of Saud regime and its allies launched the war on Yemen in March 2015 to reinstall its former Riyadh-allied government. The military aggression has so far killed over 14,000 Yemenis and put millions on the verge of famine. It has also caused a deadly outbreak of cholera.

European countries like France and Britain have provided billions in weapons to the Saudi regime military amid international calls to halt their arms deals.

(Source: Press TV)

Pakistan elects new president from ruling party



Pakistani lawmakers elected a nominee from Prime Minister Imran Khan's party to the ceremonial office of president Tuesday, further cementing its hold on power.

Arif Alvi will replace President Mamnoon Hussain, who completes his five-year term on Sept. 9. Pakistan's elections oversight body will certify the result Wednesday.

The president is elected by lawmakers from the National Assembly, the Senate and four provincial assemblies.

Alvi, a senior member of Khan's party from the southern Sindh province, faced little challenge from Aitzaz Ahsan, from the opposition Pakistan People's Party, and Maulana Fazlur Rehman, a pro-Taliban, anti-U.S. radical extremist. The opposition failed to unify behind a single candidate.

Tuesday's election came two weeks after Khan, a former cricket star and longtime politician, was elected prime minister. His Tehreek-e-Insaf party won the most seats in July's national elections and joined with independents to form a government.

Alvi won 212 votes in the upper and lower houses of parliament, while Ahsan got 81 and Rehman secured 131, according to the Election Commission. Alvi also got the most votes in the four provincial legislatures.

(Source: AP)

Jalaluddin Haqqani, founder of Afghan militant network, dies

The founder of the Haqqani Network, one of Afghanistan's most effective and feared armed groups, has died after a long illness, their affiliates the Afghan Taliban announced on Tuesday.

The Taliban statement said Jalaluddin Haqqani had been ill and bed-ridden for several years.

"If his Excellency Haqqani Sahib has departed us physically, his ideology and methodology continue to endure," it said.

Haqqani, who founded the network in the 1970s, relinquished operational leadership of the group some years ago to his son Sirajuddin Haqqani, who is now deputy leader of the Afghan Taliban.

Afghan Defense Ministry spokesman Mohammad Radmanish said the death was not

expected to mean any major change for the Haqqani Network.

"Operationally, his death will not have an impact on the group," he said, adding that Haqqani's role in recent years was ideological rather than practical.

Haqqani rose to prominence as a guerrilla leader in the United States-backed campaign against Soviet forces occupying Afghanistan but later allied himself with the Taliban, fighting American troops after the Taliban were removed in 2001.

His group became known for complex, well-organized attacks on both Afghan and U.S. military as well as civilian targets and high-profile kidnappings.

The U.S. and Afghan officials have said the group, based in Pakistan's North Waziristan

region, and considered close to al-Qaeda, operated with the support of Pakistani intelligence services. That charge is rejected by Pakistan, which has pointed to the network's early links to the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency).

With Sirajuddin Haqqani, who has a \$5m U.S. bounty on his head, in operational charge, it was not immediately clear what direct impact Jalaluddin Haqqani's death would have on the armed movement.

With hopes for peace talks raised by last June's unprecedented ceasefire, news of the death of one of the most notorious rebel commanders comes at a sensitive time for both the Taliban and Kabul's western-backed government.

(Source: Al Jazeera)



Typhoon brings heavy rain, powerful winds to western Japan

Heavy rain and crashing surf were striking western Japan as a powerful typhoon neared its Pacific coast Tuesday, disrupting train service and air travel.

Typhoon Jebi, heading north, was forecast to make landfall later in the day and cross the main island of Honshu. The Japan Meteorological Agency said it had sustained winds of 160 kilometers per hour (100 miles per hour) with gusts to 215 kph (130 mph).

More than 600 domestic flights have been cancelled, according to Japanese broadcaster NHK. High-speed bullet train service was suspended between Osaka and Hiroshima cities.

In Osaka, the Universal Studios Japan theme park and U.S. consulate were both closed. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe cancelled a scheduled trip to Kyushu, Japan's southernmost main island, to oversee the government's response to the typhoon, Kyodo News service said.

(Source: AP)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	137983.8
IFX	1568.71

Sources: tse.ir, ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	48,720 rials
GBP	54,010 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: isna.ir

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$71.14/b
Brent	\$79.24/b
OPEC Basket	\$75.74/b
Gold	\$1,194.20/oz
Silver	\$14.26/oz
Platinum	\$777.70/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



TEDPIX adds 2,726 points in a day

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE)'s main index (TEDPIX) gained 2,726 points to end Tuesday's trade at 137,983, IRNA reported.

As reported, 2.561 billion shares worth 6.192 trillion rials (about \$147.4 million) were traded through 138,820 deals in the stock market.

The first market's index fell 2,176 points while the second market's index added 4,621 points on Tuesday.

Also, IFX, the main index of Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), rose 41 points to 1,568 on Tuesday, as 782 million securities worth 3.254 trillion rials (about \$77.4 million) were traded.



CBI pays €5.5b to supply basic goods since March

ECONOMY TEHRAN — According to the latest announcement of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) the bank has paid €5.5 billion for supplying basic goods since the beginning of the present Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2018), IRNA reported.

The measure has been taken to encounter the recent unprecedented sharp depreciation of rial against the U.S. dollar.

The increase in prices of basic goods outstrips that of people's income i.e. purchasing power has decreased.

Dollar shifts up through the gears, EM currencies skid again

A rebound in Chinese shares and a rally in Italian bonds bolstered Europe's spirits on Tuesday, though the pressure remained firmly on emerging market currencies as the dollar shifted up through the gears again.

Asian stocks had reversed earlier losses helped by a 1.3 percent late spurt from Shanghai, though Europe moved back into the red as gains for Italian and Spanish bank shares faded and the major London, Frankfurt and Paris bourses faltered.

Italian government bond yields fell back from three-month highs, with investors encouraged by soothing comments from Italian ministers on forthcoming budget proposals.

Well-placed sources told Reuters that Rome's Economy Minister Giovanni Tria was pushing the governing coalition to keep next year's budget deficit below 2 percent of output. Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini had said on Monday that it would not breach the European Union's 3 percent limit.

"I would say the overall price action is quite encouraging and Salvini's comments yesterday gave the market another push," Commerzbank rates strategist Christoph Rieger said.

In currency markets, it was all about the dollar and submerging emerging markets again as the prospect of higher U.S. interest rates compounded long-running global trade jitters.

The greenback made ground across the board. India's rupee and Indonesia's rupiah slumped to new lows in Asia and the Turkish lira, Mexican peso, South African rand and Russian rouble all skidded again.

Major FX pairs such as the euro and yen were knocked back too. The euro fell 0.4 percent to a 10-day low at \$1.1564 while the yen dropped to 111.525 per dollar having been higher during Asian trading.

"The general sentiment is that the dollar has not done too badly out of the trade war concerns, with the dollar's might signal a fresh escalation in the trade conflict," said Kenneth Broux, an FX strategist at Societe Generale in London.

The public comment period on a U.S. proposal for new tariffs on Chinese goods is set to end on Thursday, after which U.S. President Donald Trump can follow through on plans to impose levies on \$200 billion more of Chinese imports, though it is unclear how quickly that will happen.

What is sure though is that the concerns are starting to take their toll.

Manufacturing surveys published on Monday showed mounting stress on factories across Europe and Asia as the outlook for global trade dims. Emerging market currencies are coming in for special punishment though.

(Source: Reuters)

Major petchem projects inaugurated in Assaluyeh

ENERGY TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani on Tuesday officially inaugurated three major petrochemical projects in Assaluyeh petrochemical zone in southwestern Bushehr province, Shana reported.

As reported, these projects will increase Iran's annual capacity of petrochemical production to 65.5 million tons from the current 62 million tons.

The third phase of developing Pardis Petrochemical Company was one of the inaugurated projects which was implemented at the cost of €502 million secured from the income of the first and second phases of the company.

This phase will make Pardis the largest producer of urea and ammonia in the Middle East with an annual production capacity of 5.265 million.

Rouhani also inaugurated Marjan Petrochemical Complex, a producer of methanol, with the annual capacity of 1.65 million tons.

Construction of this complex was started some six years ago and \$914 million has been invested for this project, as reported by Tasnim news agency.

The first phase of the power plant of Damavand Petrochemical Company with the capacity of 1,900 MW was the third project inaugurated by the president.



President Rouhani inaugurated third phase of developing Pardis Petrochemical Company in Assaluyeh on Tuesday

The port city of Assaluyeh is home to a number of petrochemical complexes which receive gas and gas condensate feedstock from the giant South Pars gas field, which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf.

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

India allows state refiners to use Iran tankers, insurance for oil imports

1 → President Donald Trump ordered the reimposition of economic curbs after withdrawing the United States from a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers. No one trading with Iran will do business with America, he said.

"We have the same situation (as most Western shippers) because there is no cover, so we cannot go (to Iran)," an SCI official told Reuters.

New Delhi turned to the NITC fleet after most insurers and reinsurers had begun winding down services for Iran, wanting to avoid falling foul of the sanctions given their large exposure to the United States.

SCI had a contract until August to import Iranian oil for Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL), two sources



familiar with the matter said.

Eurotankers, which had a deal with MRPL to import two Iranian oil cargoes every month, has also said it cannot undertake Iranian voyages from September, the sources said.

The sources spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not allowed to talk to

the media about commercial deals.

"The shipping ministry has given refiners permission to buy Iranian oil on a CIF (cost, insurance and freight) basis," a government source said.

Under a CIF arrangement, Iran would provide shipping and insurance, enabling

Indian refiners to continue purchases of the country's oil despite the non-availability of cover from Western insurers due to the restrictions imposed by Washington.

The move would benefit Indian Oil Corp (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) and MRPL, which plan to lift Iranian cargoes during the rest of the fiscal year ending on March 31.

India wants to continue buying oil from OPEC member Iran as Tehran is offering almost free shipping and an extended credit period.

State refiners, which drove India's July imports of Iranian oil to a record 768,000 barrels per day, had planned to nearly double oil imports from Iran in 2018/19.

(Source: Reuters)

Railroads network to be expanded by 530km

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran will inaugurate 530 kilometers of railroads by the end of the present Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019), Deputy Transport Minister Kheirollah Khademi announced.

The official, who is also the managing director of Iran's Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructures Company (CDTIC), mentioned completion of building 1,000 kilometers of railroads to connect five centers of provinces to the national railway network as one of the major development measures taken over the recent years, IRIB reported on Tuesday.

In late June, Khademi announced that over 3,410 kilometers of railways are under construction throughout Iran, adding that construction of 5,000 kilometers of railways is also under study.

CDTIC managed to build 516 kilometers of railroads

in the country during the past Iranian calendar year, he said.

He further informed that 10 railway stations were inaugurated in the country during the past year.

The official put the cost of constructing those stations at over 350 billion rials (about \$8.33 million).

Attraction of foreign investment and technology to the projects for development of Iranian railway is one of the objectives of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI).

In late May, Maziyar Yazdani, the deputy head of RAI for infrastructure and technical affairs, said that none of the European companies that are cooperating with Iran in railway infrastructure projects have so far reacted to the U.S. decision for leaving the nuclear deal and they are still continuing their cooperation with the RAI.



"We have replacements for all foreign companies in case of withdrawal under pressures from the U.S. sanctions", he added.

Australia's central bank on hold as economy set to seal 27 years without recession

Australia's central bank entered its third year of policy stability on Tuesday, and a change seems no nearer even as its commercial cousins nudge up their home loan rates to protect profit margins.

The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) ended its September board meeting with rates held at an all-time low of 1.50 percent and signalling a steady policy ahead.

Even though the status quo decision was widely expected, the Australian dollar bounced more than a quarter of a U.S. cent to reverse early losses as Governor Philip Lowe sounded staunchly upbeat about the A\$1.8 trillion economy.

"In the first half of 2018, the economy is estimated to have grown at an above-trend rate," Lowe said.

"Business conditions are positive and non-mining business investment is expected to increase."

Still, the bank was in no hurry to hike, given wage growth and inflation remain uncomfortably low.

An added reason for caution was a recent increase in mortgage rates by Australia's No.2 lender Westpac.

Westpac's move had led interbank futures to push back the chance of a hike to early 2020 as traders wagered other banks would follow suit, leading to a de-facto tightening in the market.

However, Lowe did not acknowledge Westpac's move in his short statement while repeating average mortgage rates

were still lower than a year ago. He also appeared comfortable about a slowdown in the housing market, saying there was still competition in the market for good-quality borrowers.

"The RBA is cautious by nature, reluctant to take risks, and that is a sound approach in the current climate," said Callan Pickering, APAC economist for global job site Indeed.

Pickering cited mortgage rate hikes by Westpac as one reason for the RBA to stay on the sidelines.

"Even if the economy was in a strong spot, why would the RBA bother hiking when the banks are doing it for them?"

Upbeat economy

Second-quarter gross domestic product (GDP) figures due on Wednesday are seen likely to show the economy notched up its 27th year without a recession, with expectations cemented by data out earlier.

Government spending, which accounts for almost a quarter of annual GDP, rose 1 percent in the second quarter.

Other data showed net exports added around 0.1 percentage points to GDP in the quarter, thanks in part to strength in rural goods, energy and tourism.

A median of 16 analysts polled by Reuters forecasts GDP growth of 0.7 percent in the June quarter from the March quarter when it rose 1.0 percent. Annual growth likely slowed to a still-solid 2.8 percent, from a surprisingly rapid 3.1 percent the previous quarter. (Source: euronews)

European stocks fall as trade, emerging market turmoil knock confidence; WPP down 7%

European stocks moved lower Tuesday, amid fears of a crisis in emerging markets and trade tensions between the U.S. and China.

The pan-European Stoxx 600 slipped half percent, with most sectors and major bourses in the red.

Europe's basic resources index led the losses, with automotive stocks close behind, as fears lingered of a trade war between the world's two largest economies. President Donald Trump reportedly said over the weekend that he is prepared to impose tariffs on additional \$200 billion worth of imports from Beijing as soon as a public comment period ends on Thursday.

Continental banks were among the few sectors in the black, up 0.12 percent amid a flurry of ratings upgrades. Italy's UBI Banca was the top sectoral performer, after J.P. Morgan Cazenove upgraded the stock to "overweight." Shares rose 4.28 percent.

Looking at individual stocks, French telecommunications group Iliad soared to the top of the pan-European benchmark after Chief Executive Xavier Niel said in an earnings call that the firm would look to remain independent in the event of consolidation in France's telecoms market. Niel's comments came after disappointing numbers showed the company had lost 200,000 mobile subscribers in the second quarter. Shares rose 9.3 percent nonetheless.

Meanwhile, advertising giant WPP led

Europe lower on Tuesday, after releasing financial results for the first half of the year. The firm unsettled investors after it said the cost of returning to sustainable growth would result in a cut to its 2018 margin outlook. Newly appointed Chief Executive Mark Read is tasked with guiding the world's biggest advertising company through a period of unprecedented change following the acrimonious departure of Martin Sorrell. Shares of WPP were down 6.58 percent.

Emerging markets

On Monday, Argentine President Mauricio Macri announced "emergency" measures to try to balance next year's budget, including new taxes on exports and steep cuts to government spending. The Argentine peso dipped more than 3 percent lower on the news, and is expected to face further pressure over the coming days.

Meanwhile, Turkey's central bank promised it would take steps to combat "significant risks" to price stability at its next monetary policy meeting. The signal is likely to heighten expectations of an interest rate hike later this month. The lira was slightly lower on the news, adding to losses of more than 40 percent against the dollar this year.

In Asia, MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares, excluding Japan, was down 0.3 percent on Monday.

(Source: cnbc)

China says its funding helps Africa develop, not stack up debt

China is helping Africa develop, not pile up debt, a top Chinese official said on Tuesday, as the government pushes back against criticism it is loading the continent with an unsustainable burden during a major summit in Beijing.

President Xi Jinping pledged \$60 billion to African nations at Monday's opening of a China-Africa forum on cooperation, matching the size of funds offered at the last summit in Johannesburg in 2015.

A wave of African nations seeking to restructure their debt with China has served as a reality check for Beijing's ties with the continent, though most of its countries still see Chinese lending as the best bet to develop their economies.

"If we take a closer look at these African countries that are heavily in debt, China is not their main creditor," its special envoy for Africa, Xu Jinghu, told a news conference.

"It's senseless and baseless to shift the blame onto



Chinese President Xi Jinping and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa attend the 2018 Beijing Summit Of The Forum On China-Africa Cooperation - Round Table Conference at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China September 4, 2018.

China for debt problems."

As it pushes forward with Xi's pledge, China will use feasibility studies to select projects that help African countries achieve sustainable development and steer clear of debt or financial woes, she added.

"We need to take into account the fluctuations of the international economic situation, which has raised the cost of financing for these African countries, and most of them depend on exporting raw materials, the price of which, on the international market, has been falling," said Xu, adding that the overall debt burden had built up over a long time.

China has denied engaging in "debt trap" diplomacy, and Xi also said government debt from Chinese interest-free loans due by the end of 2018 would be written off for the poorest African nations.

(Source: Reuters)

Oil prices jump as Gulf of Mexico rigs evacuated

Oil prices rose sharply on Tuesday after the evacuation of two Gulf of Mexico oil platforms in preparation for a hurricane.

U.S. light crude CLC1 rose \$1.31 a barrel from Friday's close to a peak of \$71.11, its highest since mid-July, before easing to around \$71.00, up \$1.20, by 0900 GMT. U.S. markets were closed on Monday for Labor Day.

Benchmark Brent crude LCOc1, which traded on Monday, was up \$1.00 at \$79.15 a barrel.

Anadarko Petroleum Corp said on Monday it had evacuated and shut production at two oil platforms in the Gulf of Mexico ahead of the approach of Gordon, which is expected to come ashore as a hurricane.

Global oil markets have tightened over the last month, pushing up Brent prices by more than 10 percent since the middle of August. Investors anticipate less supply from Iran as U.S. sanctions on Tehran begin to bite.

"With ship-tracking data now pointing at a reduction in Iranian exports, renewed strife in Libya, and Venezuelan export availability hobbled by an accident at the key Jose terminal, the list of bullish headlines is getting longer," said Michael Dei-Michei, head of



research at Vienna consultancy JBC Energy. Barclays bank said on Tuesday oil markets had changed since 2017, when worries about rising supply were more evident.

"U.S. producers are resisting temptation and exercising capital discipline, OPEC and Russia have convinced market participants they are managing the supply of over half

of global production, the U.S. is using sanctions more actively, and several key OPEC producers are at risk of being failed states," Barclays said.

"Prices could reach \$80 and higher in the short term," Barclays said. For 2020, it said it expected Brent to average \$75 a barrel, up from its previous forecast of \$55.

Harry Tchilinguirian, oil strategist at BNP Paribas, struck a similar tone, warning of "supply issues" into 2019.

"Crude oil export losses from Iran due to U.S. sanctions, production decline in Venezuela and episodic outages in Libya are unlikely to be offset entirely by corresponding rises in OPEC+ production," Tchilinguirian said. BNP Paribas expects Brent to average \$79 in 2019.

While U.S. sanctions are forcing many Western companies to cease trading with Tehran, two of its biggest customers have said they will continue to buy Iranian crude.

India will allow state refiners to import Iranian oil if Tehran arranges and insures tankers. And Chinese buyers are shifting most of their Iranian oil imports to vessels owned by National Iranian Tanker Company. (Source: Reuters)

Russian oil firms strong enough to withstand \$15b extra taxes: Gov. officials

Russian oil companies currently generate a lot of cash, so they will be able to shoulder a cumulative \$14.75 billion (1 trillion Russian rubles) in extra taxes under the oil tax reform that Moscow will be implementing over the next six years, the head of the tax department at Russia's finance ministry, Alexei Sazanov, told Reuters in an interview published on Monday.

Last month, Russia's President Vladimir Putin signed into law a bill that would phase out Russia's crude oil export duty by 2024, which is expected to increase export netbacks for oil producers. Another oil-related law introduces the so-called 'negative excise duty', or excise refund for refiners, aimed at stimulating refinery upgrades and higher light oil product output.

At the beginning of June, Russia's Finance and Energy Ministries said that they had agreed with the domestic oil companies to begin phasing out in 2019 crude oil export duties by 5 percentage points annually over the next six years, from 30 percent now to zero as of 2024.

To cushion the impact on refineries from the rise in crude oil prices and a disappearing indirect subsidy, the Russian government will be refunding refineries with the negative excise duty. Those refunds will be based on the amount of crude oil that the refineries process, the light products they supply to the Russian market, and the distance to the markets.

The exact levels of the negative excise duty as well as some other parts of the new tax reform are still subject to discussions and minor changes, Sazanov told Reuters.

According to the official, Russia's oil industry expects to see \$29.5 billion (2 trillion rubles) in combined free cash flow this year, which are "huge figures." The new tax regime is not expected to affect Russian oil production, which held steady at nearly post-Soviet highs in August at 11.21 million bpd, after a big boost in July from June after OPEC and its Russia-led non-OPEC partners agreed to ease the cuts to offset supply disruptions. (Source: oilprice.com)

Outages at Norwegian gas fields to cut supply up to 4 weeks

Unplanned works on fields and systems pumping Norwegian gas to other European countries will reduce Norway's outbound gas flows for up to four weeks, which, according to traders, will further boost natural gas prices in Europe.

According to Norwegian gas operator Gassco, two unplanned events are currently reducing day-ahead and within-day supplies and may continue to do so for up to four weeks.

On Sunday, an outage affecting the fields delivering gas into the SEGAL pipeline system occurred, and according to Gassco data as of Monday morning local time, unplanned corrective maintenance on fields delivering into the SEGAL system will reduce gas availability by 5.8 million cubic meters for a period of between one and two weeks.

This outage adds to an outage at the Asgard field, where a compressor failure requires unplanned works and flows would be reduced by 8.6 million cubic meters for between three and four weeks. (Source: oilprice.com)

Prices at the Dutch TTF gas hub have been moving up on the news of the outage, a European gas trader told S&P Global Platts on Monday.

In the UK, wholesale gas prices rose slightly on Friday, with the Norwegian outage at Asgard contributing to the rise along with rising exports and withdrawals from storage. Prices further rose on Monday morning UK time, as planned maintenance at some UK sites and unplanned outages at others combined to push prices up.

This summer, natural gas prices in the UK surged to the highest for a summer season, with Europe's natural gas market the most bullish in years as higher-than-expected summer demand and a tighter market drive natural gas price futures to levels last seen during this past winter's supply crunch.

The past winter season in Europe was one of the coldest this decade, sending gas demand soaring and the level of natural gas stored in tanks across Europe dropping to below average levels. (Source: oilprice.com)

Oil prices are unlikely to rise above \$80 this year, Oman minister says

Oil prices are unlikely to break out of the mid-\$70 level, Oman's oil and gas minister told CNBC Monday, adding that he thought prices were currently "fair."

"I think for the rest of this year we should see stability between \$70 and the high 70s (dollars a barrel), or low 70s to high 70s," Mohammed bin Hamad Al Rumhy, said.

"Because this is the wish of all of us who are cooperating with OPEC to provide the market with enough crude to make sure that the consumers are not impacted and we think that the current price is a fair price," he told CNBC's Hadley Gamble in Muscat, Oman.

He said current oil prices, around the \$70-\$80 mark per barrel, "will enable us to sustain our investment, and continue the business that will give us a guarantee of some form that the future is brighter than when



the price was in the \$30s and \$40s a few years ago." Asked whether he agreed with analyst expectations

that oil prices could rise to \$90 a barrel, he answered, "I don't think so."

Oman is the largest non-OPEC producer in the Middle East and it was severely affected by the oil price slump that took hold in 2015. It signed up to a late-2016 deal between OPEC and non-OPEC producers, notably Russia, to curb oil output in a bid to support prices.

The agreement continues and has worked to stabilize markets, with prices currently around the mid-\$70 mark, although the U.S. has criticized increasing prices. Prices have also come under pressure from the U.S.'s decision to re-impose sanctions on major OPEC oil producer Iran — which will stifle its oil industry and curb its supply, potentially causing prices to rise higher. (Source: CNBC)

Libya leads OPEC oil output to 2018 high

OPEC crude production rose in August to the highest level this year as a recovery in Libyan output helped to offset a cut in Iranian exports due to U.S. sanctions.

The group's 15 members, which now include the Republic of Congo, collectively produced 32.74 million barrels a day last month, an increase of 420,000 barrels a day from July, according to a Bloomberg News survey of analysts, oil companies and ship-tracking data.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies agreed in June to increase combined output by 1 million barrels a day to meet consumer demand and prevent a sharp rise in prices. That followed U.S. President Donald Trump urging the group to act in order to prevent further rises.

Libya was the biggest contributor to the rise in output across the group, pumping 970,000 barrels a day last month compared to 660,000 barrels a day in July. The country's biggest oil field, Sharara, has restarted following a kidnapping, a person familiar with the situation said on Sunday. Even though Libya's recovery boosts OPEC's combined oil output, the country remains an unreliable supplier as civil strife continues to disrupt its petroleum industry.

The second-largest production increase came from Iraq and the United Arab

Emirates: each raised daily oil output by 80,000 barrels last month.

Iran suffered the biggest output drop across the group, of 240,000 barrels a day, pushing its production down to 3.5 million barrels a day. Even though sanctions don't officially take effect until November, Iran is already seeing customers flee as the U.S. imposes penalties on buyers after Trump quit a 2015 nuclear accord with the country.

Top exporter Saudi Arabia increased its production by 20,000 barrels a day in August from a revised level of 10.37 million barrels a day a month earlier. The country had indicated it would make a much larger output boost in July, but held back after it wasn't able to find enough buyers to justify pumping crude at record levels.

Russia, which is cooperating with OPEC along with several other non-members, kept pumping at near post-Soviet records last month as it reaped the benefits from the June deal to ease output caps. The country produced an average of 11.21 million barrels a day of crude in August, according to data emailed Sunday by the Russian Energy Ministry's CDU-TEK unit. Volumes were little changed from July, when output soared to just shy of a peak in 2016. (Source: Bloomberg)

China will buy more LNG, but wants it smoother, less lumpy

China appears set to once again boost its purchases of liquefied natural gas (LNG) for the northern winter, but unlike last year's rush, this time the process is likely to be more organized and stable.

In recent weeks there have been several indicators that China is planning on increasing the use of natural gas in winter heating, replacing boilers that use more polluting coal. Curbing winter air pollution has been a major aim of the authorities in Beijing, but they were stung by criticism last year that the switch to natural gas was made too quickly and the resulting shortages left some people without adequate heating.

A sign that Beijing is putting more effort into ensuring sufficient natural gas supplies came last week when Vice-Minister of Finance Liu Wei was quoted by the Communist Party newspaper as saying that gas supply agreements must be in place when converting coal-fired boilers to the cleaner fuel.

These comments were followed by an announcement by state-owned oil and gas major Sinopec that it is putting in place a range of measures to boost winter natural gas supplies, including increasing purchases of spot LNG cargoes and boosting distribution.

It's often a challenge with China to work out exactly how official pronouncements will translate into real world action, but in all likelihood China is going to increase LNG imports in coming months. (Source: Reuters)

This will come on top of an already strong year so far, with both official customs data and vessel-tracking data compiled by Thomson Reuters showing impressive gains.

China imported about 4.55 million tons of LNG in August, the highest since January, according to the shipping data.

Imports for the first eight months totaled 32.2 million tons, up 46.4 percent from the same period last year.

Customs data for the January to July period shows imports of about 28.05 million tons, up 47.6 percent from the same period in 2017.

In addition to the surge in import volumes, the data show that China's LNG purchases haven't shown as much of the seasonal swings of past years, with a strong winter peak followed by lulls in spring and summer, before picking up in autumn.

In the 2017-18 winter, imports in December and January were some 72 percent higher than those in July 2017.

However, imports in July this year, were only 17.4 percent below the previous winter peak months of December and January, indicating that LNG demand has remained robust throughout the year so far.

There was a hotter-than-usual summer in China, which boosted electricity demand for air-conditioning, but this had more of an impact on coal demand, given limited power generation from natural gas. (Source: Reuters)

For the first time, solar is contracting, but China's giants are doubling down

The top solar manufacturers in China are boosting production capacity, betting higher output will help them seize a bigger chunk of the global market that is set for its first-ever annual contraction.

JinkoSolar Holding Co., which has lost almost half its market value this year, is ramping up cell and panel capacity and targeting higher-quality production. Qian Jing, vice president of the world's largest panel maker, said in an email. GCL-Poly Energy Holdings Ltd., Tongwei Co. and LONGi Green Energy Technology Co., which have all plunged at least 45 percent over the same period, also announced expansion plans.

The push for growth comes even as global solar prices have tanked after China cut domestic subsidies to rein in record growth in 2017 and integrate existing capacity into the grid. Since the release of its '531 Policy', named after the date of the plan, Goldman Sachs Group Inc. and others cut estimates for solar capacity additions in China, the world's largest market, and Bloomberg NEF forecast that panel prices may slump 34 percent this year.

"As long as these producers are able to get financing, they should keep expanding," said Han Qiming, a Shanghai-based analyst at SWS Research Co. "That will give them a chance to grab more market share and achieve greater scale of operations."

JinkoSolar will raise cell capacity by 40 percent, and panels by 20 percent, by the end of this year from levels seen in the second quarter, according to a results presentation in August. Tongwei will more than triple its polysilicon capacity by year-end and double cell capacity. GCL-Poly plans to raise polysilicon capacity at its new Xinjiang plant to 50,000 tons from a proposed 40,000 tons, while LONGi seeks to triple its annual wafer capacity to 45 gigawatts by 2020.

While the fallout from China's clampdown has hurt manufacturers from Asia to Europe, there are good reasons not to cut back. Raising output will allow them to pare unit costs and boost sales while less efficient suppliers get squeezed, according to BNEF analyst Jiang Yali. This could help them to weather the slump of more than 20 percent in panel and polysilicon prices since China's plan was announced, BNEF data showed.

The outlook for demand is also getting a boost as European Union this month ended anti-dumping measures on China's photovoltaic products, which were in place since 2013. The EU said the decision was made after considering the needs of producers and those importing solar panels, as well as the bloc's renewable energy targets.

"There's not been a change in our capacity utilization rates after the 531 plan," Qian said, adding that JinkoSolar has been running at full capacity. "Continuous strong demand from overseas more than offset headwinds from the unfavorable domestic policy shift." (Source: Bloomberg)

Solar deals could mark renewables shift in Philippines

Eight solar projects worth a total of \$1.65 billion have been given the go-ahead in The Philippines.

And the projects could be the start of a government shift away from coal and diesel generation to renewables.

The Philippine Board of Investments' approval of the eight deals marks an enormous opportunity to replace imported-coal and diesel models with indigenous alternatives, according to Sarah Jane Ahmed, energy finance analyst at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analytics (IEEFA).

She highlights how the Philippines continues to lag global trends toward power-sector modernization, which are gaining momentum around rapidly-declining costs and technological advances in renewable energy, energy efficiency and distributed storage.

But she adds that the government "is in a position to change the longstanding status quo, which disproportionately puts fuel-price and foreign-exchange risk on consumers, while utilities and power generators remain insulated from market changes. As a result, power suppliers have no incentive to transition away from coal and diesel or to hedge against price-change and currency risks.



"Solar, wind, run-of-river hydro, geothermal, biogas, and storage are competitive, viable domestic options that can be combined to create a cheaper, more diverse and secure energy system," she said, adding that this could save The Philippines up to \$2.2 billion annually in its current account deficits as well as \$200m per year in diesel subsidies.

In March, Manila Electric Company (Meralco) received the country's lowest wind electricity generation bid ever on a new 150 MW wind turbine project in the Rizal province, for PhP3.50 per kWh. Solar is competing similarly, with Meralco having contracted for a PhP 2.99-per kWh, 50MW capacity plant.

In comparison, coal-fired power generation costs upwards of PhP 3.8-5.5 per kWh while the 'true' cost of imported diesel-fired power ranges from PhP 15 to PhP 28 per kWh.

Rooftop solar costs PhP2.50 per kWh (without financing expenses) to 5.3 per kWh (with financing expenses), utility-scale solar power can cost as little as PhP 2.99 per kWh, wind is PhP3.5 per kWh, geothermal is PhP3.5-4.5 per kWh, and run-of-river hydro costs PhP3-6.2 per kWh.

Ahmed estimates that of 8 GW of solar installations planned by 2030 in The Philippines, 35 percent will come from rooftop solar, with an investment value of \$2.8bn. (Source: renewableenergyworld.com)

UNRWA and Trump's attempt to erase the Palestinian people

By Neve Gordon

President Donald Trump appears to enjoy experimenting on human beings.

First came the separation of young children from their parents. In May 2018, Trump ordered the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) to send all adults caught crossing the border to federal jail to await trial, while transferring their children to either foster care or detention centers. Most of these children have been kept in what are essentially cages, and some have even been given psychotropic drugs without parental consent.

The assumption is that pain, agony and suffering alter human behavior, and that traumatizing a large group of children and their parents serve to deter other people, even those fleeing life-threatening conflict zones, from trying to enter the U.S. The moral perspective is that the end justifies the means, even if the means include cruel and inhuman policies.

Now comes Trump's latest experiment, this time with education, medical care, and famine. Adopting warped rhetoric, this experiment is presented as part of a groundbreaking Israeli-Palestinian peace plan.

The idea is to cut all funding to the United Nations Relief Works and Agency (UNRWA), which, for the past 70 years, has been providing lifesaving assistance to more than five million Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip, West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

UNRWA's spokesperson, Chris Gunness, spelled out the repercussions of such actions: "Let there be no mistake," he said, "this decision is likely to have a devastating impact on the lives of 526,000 children who receive a daily education from UNRWA; 3.5 million sick people who come to our clinics for medical care; 1.7 million food insecure people who receive assistance from us, and tens of thousands of vulnerable women, children and disabled refugees who come to us."

Indeed, if the funding gap is not covered by other countries, Trump's decision will have a devastating impact on the lives of millions of Palestinians. This experiment seems to have two distinct - if related - goals.

First, Trump apparently wants to see if a policy of destruction and anti-humanitarian intervention can be used as a peacemaking device in this protracted conflict.

This is an inversion of parts of the Oslo paradigm, where the European Union and other international players decided to spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year on Palestinian state-building projects. Even though Oslo's goal may never have been the creation of an independent Palestinian state, Palestinian life was still considered to have some value.

As it turns out, the idea informing the 1993 peace accords was to transfer control of a number of institutions and policies - such as education, healthcare, and food security - to the Palestinians in order to free Israel from the responsibility of managing the daily lives of the population it had colonized. And, while Israel abdicated responsibility for the Palestinian people, it continued to retain its hold over most of their land.

Trump's current idea, by contrast, is to simply force a "peace process" by destroying all of the institutions that modern states use to manage their population while bringing the inhabitants to the brink of social death. Therefore, it is no coincidence that at exactly the same moment that Trump is cutting all funding from UNRWA, he has also decided to cut aid to the Palestinian Authority. The strategy is straightforward: the Palestinians must first be reduced to what Italian political theorist Giorgio Agamben has called bare life in order to force them to accept the "great deal" that President Trump intends to offer them.

The experiment's second goal is to erase Palestinian refugeehood. It is important to remember that UNRWA was set up to assist the 700,000 Palestinian refugees after the creation of Israel in 1948. Whether these Palestinians fled or were forcibly expelled from their towns and villages may be a point of contention, but there is no argument that, after the war had subsided, Israel refused to allow the Palestinians to return to their homes, thus violating article 11 of United Nations Resolution 194. This is how Israel created the refugee problem.

Today, the descendants of these refugees number over five million people and it was always assumed that their status would be resolved through the creation of a Palestinian state. Since it is extremely unlikely that a viable Palestinian state is a component of Trump's "peace deal", the strategy now endeavors to erase the vast majority of Palestinian refugees from the historical and contemporary record.

Parroting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's accusation of "fictitious" Palestinian refugees who threaten Israel by perpetuating the right of return, Trump is currently claiming that only the people born and who had actually lived in Mandatory Palestine before the 1948 war - people who are now more than 70-years old - can be considered refugees. Their descendants cannot.

The logic here, too, is clear. If the funding to the agency that feeds millions of refugees is stopped, then they will no longer be considered refugees, thus paving the way for a deal on Israel's terms. Stopping U.S. funding, in other words, merely attempts to reinforce the deranged post-truth reality that has become Trump's trademark: in this case, that refugees are not refugees.

While, the notion that property rights can be abrogated after one generation would seem anathema in Trump's business world, actually, viciously attacking the downtrodden fits perfectly with his modus operandi. His world view is perhaps best expressed in a recent tweet posted by his ally Netanyahu:

"The weak crumble, are slaughtered and are erased from history while the strong, for good or for ill, survive. The strong are respected, and alliances are made with the strong, and in the end, peace is made with the strong."

From Cambodia to China and all the way to Europe, the 20th century saw its share of experiments on humans, all of which had horrific consequences. Tragically, Trump is no student of history. He is trying hard to present his introduction of new experiments as the pursuit of a peace deal, but as Gideon Levy recently wrote in Ha'aretz, it is actually a declaration of war against the Palestinian people.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

'The claim by Trump is absurd': Canadian FM

U.S. President Donald Trump has recently been unsparing in his words about Canada. But Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland says that even if "liberal democracies around the world are under attack," her country must still work with Trump's White House.

By Matthias Gebauer & Christoph Schult

Strengthening democracy is not exactly a controversial position. But how can that be done now that the U.S., the largest Western power, has left the club?

A: I would disagree with the premise. We cannot and must not say the U.S. has ceased to be a liberal democracy. It is still one of the largest liberal democracies worldwide. Canada is and will always be extremely close to the United States. The U.S.-Canada relationship goes far beyond any current dispute with the White House because our people are closely connected on a daily basis. We know them to have a vibrant and strong democracy.

A: There are clearly issues where we -- and this is true of Germany as well -- hold a view the current White House does not share. We disagree with some of Donald Trump's decisions, especially the withdrawal from the Paris Agreement to fight climate change. We will work more closely with our European partners now. But at the same time, we continue telling our American friends that the door is open to come back to the agreement.

Currently, your government is negotiating with Washington on a new free trade agreement, to which Mexico will also be a party. Yet Trump has called Canada's steel industry a national security threat. How are negotiations possible against such a background?

A: The claim by Trump that Canada poses a threat to U.S. national security is absurd given the fact that under U.S. law, Canada is part of the U.S. defense-industrial complex. Still, we are encouraged by the progress Mexico has made in negotiations over a new free trade agreement and are optimistic that Canada can join that deal.

In light of Washington's withdrawal from the Iran deal and the sanctions the U.S. has imposed against all companies that con-



tinue to do business with Tehran, Germany has proposed an international payment system that is independent from the U.S. dollar. Do you support this idea?

A: First of all, Canada stands for the fact that international deals are valid once they have been agreed upon, regardless of whether a new government comes into power. We also, of course, inherited some deals from our predecessors which we didn't like that much. But Canada's word has to be good and reliable.

How long can you withstand the diplomatic and economic pressure coming from Riyadh?

A: Canada believes that engagement is the most effective path for productive relations with other countries. For Canada, this engagement will always include speaking

for human rights. Sometimes, we have been criticized by those who say that it is inappropriate to comment about human rights issues in other countries and that we need to be concerned about our own failings. That is right. In Canada, for example, the treatment of indigenous people is far from being solved. We have no problem with being criticized for that. Likewise, if we see a human rights problem in another country, we will take the liberty to speak up about it.

How worried are you by the fact that an increasing number of Canadians are supporting the conservative politician Doug Ford, the so-called "Canadian Trump"?

A: Mr. Ford won the elections to become premier of my province. In the two meetings I have had with him since the elections, he

has been supportive of our government's approach to the NAFTA negotiations with the U.S. and Mexico. Nevertheless, I am a liberal and Mr. Ford is not, so there are issues on which we disagree. One is climate change. My government thinks that there should be a cost on pollution. Another point is my strong belief in an open society, openness to both trade and immigrants. Diversity is a strength. One of the most worrying things we are seeing right now is the argument that diverse societies are impossible and that people can only live in their own ethnic tribes.

In Canada, rumors have been making the rounds that you might one day succeed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

A: Well, I am older than he is, and he is fantastic.

(Source: Speigle)

Merkel should become the president of the European Commission

By Denis MacShane

Whatever happens on Brexit this time next year, Europe will have a new leadership. New MEPs, a new president of the European Council and European Central Bank. A new high representative for foreign policy. New commissioners and above all a new president of the European Commission.

This leadership team has no easy task ahead of them. The EU will be politically unbalanced. Britain will have left unless Theresa May suspends the Article 50 process to allow a new consultation. Growth is faltering. Italy is in the grip of populists with collapsing economic growth. Spain, under a minority socialist government, has little weight in Brussels. The eastern European illiberal clerical nationalists like Jaroslaw Kaczynski in Warsaw and Viktor Orban in Budapest make headlines but do not want to leave the EU and lose all the transfer payments and foreign direct investment that come with full EU economic integration.

So who is going to run the EU? The European Parliament will see elected more small populists representing xenophobic, anti-capitalist, regional and single issue parties. President Macron's hopes that his En Marche! Party would find allies across Europe to create a pan-European political movement have faded. He is on just 34 per cent in current opinion polls, with French economic growth lower than when the socialist François Hollande left office 15 months ago.

The conventional wisdom is that Europe is about to fall under the control of right-wing nationalist, populist and xenophobic political parties. In reality the right is divided on most key issues other than verbal abuse of Brussels. Viktor Orban or Austria's Sebastian Kurz can smile and shake hands with Italy's Matteo Salvini but turn a deaf ear to the Italian rightist's demand that Austria-Hungary take a fair share of refugees currently in Italy.

Poland's government is ferociously anti-Russian and the country's prime minister has just announced he wants to see more state control of the Polish economy in the best manner of Jeremy Corbyn.

Left-leaning parties like Spain's Podemos, Left Par-



Merkel has the weight, the authority, the proven government record, international reputation and status, and more political experience and skills than all of today's European politicians put together

(France) under Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Syriza in Greece; as well as Greens and smaller, radical anti-establishment parties or regional identity parties in Catalonia can win a number of MEP seats under the single-round nationalist proportional system. So, the European Parliament 2019-2024 will not likely be controlled by a single ideological grouping.

But what of Germany? Berlin has already inaugurated a Brussels rumor factory with suggestions that Merkel would like to see a German chosen as successor to Jean-Claude

Juncker as president of the European Commission. The German mentioned was the economics minister, Peter Altmaier, Merkel's fixer-in-chief. But Brussels already has its fair share of Germans. The secretary general of the commission is German. So is the secretary general of the European Parliament. The president of the center-right federation, the European People's Party, is a German. So is the secretary general of the Party of European Socialists. The chief official running Brexit negotiations for Michel Barnier is German.

So another German transfer of a middle-rank politician to Brussels might overload the German-filled boat. Now Berlin says Manfred Weber, an MEP from the right-wing CSU Bavarian party, can run for the post. He is president of the European People's Party and best known for backing Viktor Orban against more moderate European center-right politicians who dislike the Hungarian strongman's disdain for European values and democracy. All Berlin has done is say Weber can seek the EPP nomination. Even if he obtains that and becomes a so-called Spitzenkandidat it is no guarantee that other EU government heads will back a German rightist who has never held a ministerial job.

There is a German alternative however, and this is the question being asked in Berlin. Might Angela Merkel herself seek to be the first woman president of the commission? She has the weight, the authority, the proven government record, international reputation and status, and more political experience and skills than all of today's European politicians put together.

A deal with France's President Macron could see a French central banker installed as president of the European Central Bank to reform the economic policy of the Eurozone in favor of growth and jobs with other key posts being allocated on regional, political and gender balance.

Merkel always says her last great challenge is to restore confidence in and purpose to the European Union. She is the one German who could lead post-Brexit Europe and make presidents Trump, Putin and Xi sit up and realize the EU is now getting serious.

(Source: Independent)

Myanmar must pay for crimes it is committing

The jailing of two reporters is an attempt to halt scrutiny of army atrocities.

Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo worked meticulously last year to unpick events that led to the slaughter of 10 Rohingya men in the village of Inn Din in the Myanmar province of Rakhine. This was one of many massacres committed after the army sealed the province off and began a systematic campaign of terror which has driven the majority of the Muslim population into Bangladesh. The report published by Reuters after the arrest of its two reporters was unprecedented. It provided a detailed record of the kind of planning, incitement to violence, and murderous brutality that led a UN investigation team last week to recommend that Myanmar's army leadership

should be tried for genocide.

For doing their job and with exceptional courage, the two Reuters journalists were sentenced by a court in Yangon on Monday to seven years in prison. Allegedly, they had breached the colonial-era official secrets act. But the charges and the trial were both travesties of justice, designed to intimidate the press and discourage further scrutiny of the army campaign against minority Rohingya Muslims. One police witness even admitted in court that the two men were the victims of a set-up. The journalists had been given documents by the police, and were then arrested. Once again, Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's de facto head of government, has watched silently while injustice is committed on her watch. In the years

since she was released from house arrest, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate's fall from international grace has been spectacular. Her failure to speak out against war crimes committed by the army, or to defend the principles of a free press and the rule of law, are a betrayal of all the friends and allies who campaigned tenaciously for her release. The UN fact finding mission has named the top army commanders most responsible for alleged war crimes. It said there was sufficient evidence against them to warrant prosecution for the "gravest crimes under international law". The investigators did not implicate Myanmar's civilian leadership directly, noting that it has little influence over the army. But their verdict on Aung San Suu Kyi was nevertheless damning. She has failed to

use her moral authority to halt the bloodshed. "Through their acts and omissions, the civilian authorities have contributed to the commission of atrocity," the UN report said.

UN investigators have provided ample grounds for the Security Council to refer the culprits to the International Criminal Court. Beijing should abstain from voting, as it did in the case of Sudan, to allow investigations to go ahead. Most international sanctions on Myanmar were lifted to encourage democracy to flourish. Instead, both the army and civilian leadership have fanned the flames of Buddhist nationalism and failed to live up to their side of the bargain. It is high time for international pressure to be put back on.

(Source: FT)

'U.S. using Dollar as Weapon against Iran, Turkey, Russia'

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — An independent economic researcher from Los Angeles said the U.S. is trying to use the power of the Dollar as a weapon to punish all antagonistic countries, including Iran, Turkey, Russia and other nations that are acting independently of Dollar Hegemony and the Washington Consensus.

"...because the dollar essentially rules over all other national currencies, and because any oil traded on earth must utilize dollar pricing and trading, then targeting the currency of any nation deemed by Washington and London as being antagonistic to the Washington Consensus and dollar hegemony becomes very easy," Pye Ian told Tasnim in an interview.

He added, "Also, seeing that so much of global finance is conducted digitally across markets and exchanges, rather than with physical cash, gold or barter, then 'weaponizing' the dollar as a lever against the fiscal health of an emerging market nation or its currency becomes that much easier as well. Thus, the pandemic of seeming currency crises stretching from Iran to Turkey to Russia, Argentina, Venezuela, Zimbabwe and elsewhere ... are not coincidental occurrences."

Pye Ian is an independent economic and geopolitical researcher as well as a strategic planning and business development advisor. His articles and analyses on international affairs, economic trends and cultural topics have been published in various mainstream and alternative press sources. Ian's wider intellectual interests are reflected in his writings on the convergence of foreign affairs, political philosophy, history, global finance and energy policy. He has undergraduate degrees in economics and political science from the University of California and a Master's degree in finance from Cambridge University.

Following is the full text of the interview:
■ The U.S. dollar made new record high against rial in Iran on Monday. The U.S. dollar jumped to as much as 129,000 rials in the open market in the Iranian capital city of Tehran. What is your take on this? What are the main reasons behind this?

A: Since the end of World War II, the U.S. dollar has served as the global reserve currency, replacing the British Pound sterling, which had served as global reserve throughout the 19th and half of the 20th centuries. The Pound had, in turn, replaced the Dutch guilder, which was the de facto reserve currency in Europe in 17th and 18th centuries.

Being the reserve currency, especially in an era where the most important industrial commodities in world history — namely oil and natural gas — are almost exclusively priced and traded in said currency, affords immense economic, financial, and thus ultimately political, power. Add to this the modern technological realities of how money is so digitally conjured, traded, saved, invested, and even erased, and those power parameters multiply in scope.

From the end of World War II until August 15th, 1971, the dollar was also linked to physical gold in order to lend it further credence



as reserve currency. However, Washington ended that arrangement 47 years ago so that it could print money out of thin air indefinitely and without fiscal or certainly political restrictions, thereby rendering America's deficits and overall debt levels as seemingly irrelevant, considering that the dollar then became 'core money', and the U.S. the 'core bank'. This entire arrangement, however, relied upon sustaining confidence and the perception of solvency and sanctity in the eyes of all international market participants, peoples and governments.

Hence, because the dollar essentially rules over all other national currencies, and because any oil traded on earth must utilize dollar pricing and trading, then targeting the currency of any nation deemed by Washington and London as being antagonistic to the Washington Consensus and dollar hegemony becomes very easy. Also, seeing that so much of global finance is conducted digitally across markets and exchanges, rather than with physical cash, gold or barter, then 'weaponizing' the dollar as a lever against the fiscal health of an emerging market nation or its currency becomes that much easier as well. Thus, the pandemic of seeming currency crises stretching from Iran to Turkey to Russia, Argentina, Venezuela, Zimbabwe and elsewhere ... are not coincidental occurrences.

These nations are on the hit lists of Anglo-American governments and their critical financial arms, which can essentially shift the apparent 'value' of a currency positively or negatively overnight against the US dollar with several trading key strokes, thereby altering the perception (keyword) of said currency — and thus of its nation's wider economic health — to fit a desired political outcome. That outcome could entail anything from strong-arming a nation into abiding by Atlanticist trading or geopolitical mandates, to outright stoking riots and other unrest within a nation en route to collapsing its government and national stability entirely.

The latter aims are clearly why the Iranian rial is being targeted and has been for many years. Washington has even been on record stating so. Triggering hyperinflation is a currency war tactic in achieving what overt military measures cannot in the immediate

sense.
■ Is Iran's economy collapsing? What might future hold about the Islamic Republic's economy?

A: The western Atlanticist intent is for Iran's economy to outright collapse via damaging the rial enough — and ideally, in a vacuum away from any mitigating circumstances afforded by any Iranian ally's economic assistance — to where domestic and international business cannot be conducted. Whether Iran's economy outright collapses, a la where Venezuela's economy is headed, is contingent upon the Iranian government uniting on a war footing (because Iran is, essentially, at war in the economic arena against transatlantic powers) to reign in inefficiencies, debts, petty internal inconsistencies and inefficient information exchanges, while seeking to functionally unlink as much as possible from U.S. dollar reliance. Using bilateral currency exchanges with partner and allied nations such as China, Russia, Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and others, as well as mobilizing non-dollar oil, gas and mineral trading — perhaps via the petro-yuan out of Beijing, or the petro-ruble out of Moscow, or both — affords not only sustainability internally, but a model for other nations to utilize for divorcing from dollar hegemony. Eurasian nations are already working on these non-dollar imperatives; Iran should take a further active role in them partly in order to incubate itself.

■ How much do you think the government is responsible for this? What should the government do to control the market?

A: Many argue that the Iranian government is responsible for Iran's economic troubles without having an awareness of the martialized details of dollar-based modern international finance, some parameters of which I referenced above. In truth, the Iranian government — or ANY government outside of the U.S. itself, for that matter — could literally do everything 'by the book' as far as efficient economic management, the nurturing of innovation, the suppression of debt and external borrowing, the regulation of damaging speculative attacks, the spiking of productivity and of resource, material, manufactured and even intellectual property exports

are concerned, and said government would STILL experience troubles so long as they do not fully control their nation's monetary and currency platforms. I.E. Dollar-linkages spell susceptibility to currency attacks, sanctions and other means of economic warfare. The prudently run Russian economy, where the debt-to-GDP ratio is less than 13% (whereas U.S. debt-to-GDP is over 105%, the UK's is over 88%, and Japan's - under U.S. tutelage for decades now — is at a staggering 253%), serves as an example of how sober economic custodianship isn't enough to defend against dollar-based currency wars, as Washington has also been targeting the ruble.

That said, Iran's isn't a lost cause. If anything, Iran is a case study in how to potentially respond. Atlanticist policymakers over-estimate the amount of time required for stripping Iranian oil from global markets in order to supposedly collapse Iran's economy while underestimating Iran's ability and agility — especially hand in hand with said Eurasian partners — to circumvent the damage that said currency wars and sanctions are intended to inflict. By transparently and efficiently managing internal Iranian economic affairs in unprecedented fashion, judiciously deploying the usages of both non-dollar currencies, as well as the rising role of physical gold and silver bullion, for natural resource pricing, trading and receipt recycling, and by further integrating economically and thus politically with Russia, China, Turkey, the Central Asian 'Stan and Caspian nations, and eventually, a rising number of Persian Gulf Arab states (which will increasingly lean eastward as well), Iran will not only protect itself against said onslaughts, but will further abet a multipolar power paradigm while indirectly weakening said dollar hegemony, which requires replete international adherence in order to properly function.

The alternatives to said means of economic and political mobilization are either extreme, extended economic distresses for Iran in isolation, or outright state collapse, which is, in fact, the Atlanticist West's ultimate intent. Seeing that no particular form of government is enough to 'keep Iran in line' with Atlanticist hegemonic global aims, decisions have already been made to occupy, dissect and resource appropriate Iran into subservience and compliance. What we see as having resulted in Libya, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria is clearly what is intended for Iran, but more so, because a nation of over 80 million proud citizens, with thousands of years of uninterrupted history, is much harder for Empire to be able to dismantle than are nations which are remnants of recent empires such as the Ottoman.

Iran's government and wider citizenry must familiarize themselves as rapidly as possible with the means and mores of global finance, which is effectively married to the latest in technological advancements, for both the sake of national sovereignty and defense, as well as for sustainability and economic growth.

Overreach and arrogance are the curses of every empire



It is, in any case, hard for anyone not in Iran to know what's happening there now. Some Iranian leaders are suggesting that the current economic problems are not so much the result of U.S. sanctions, but rather in part at least the result of internal problems (that can eventually be addressed) inside Iran with economic adjustments of some sort.

This may be the case. One would hope so. But what about my pilot friend's outright assertion that the US empire will "crumble" sooner rather than later? We know of no "empire" in all of human history that has not eventually "crumbled", including even Persia's vast Achaemenid Empire more than 2000 years ago. And what caused that? Over reach. The Persians, for one thing, were defeated by the Greek city states, particularly Athens.

Currently, we are witnessing the Zionist state going hog wild against the Palestinians, apparently greenlighted by the subservient Trump Administration. Part of this aggression is Israel cheering on Trump's evisceration of funding for UNWRA, which has been supporting Palestinians with basic human necessities since 1950.

But guess what? Even some Zionist commentators in the Israeli press are now saying this is a huge mistake, because SOMEONE is going to have to continue provide millions of Palestinians with the means to survive, and the burden may well fall more on Israel going forward.

Sure, the Zionists would like to see the Palestinians disappear and have been trying to make them disappear since 1948, but if the Zionists literally make conditions even worse in the West Bank, Gaza and beyond, and the world knows now how bad conditions are, they will be fast tracked to the ICC in The Hague for crimes against humanity. And BDS is working. Just this week a music festival in Israel lost almost all its foreign performers, to cite just one example of BDS success. The Zionists are now overreaching on steroids, to their eventual downfall.

And the same might be said about the U.S., which has been in overreach mode since the Vietnam War. And quite much more since the Iraq invasion in 2003, to the point where about \$7 trillion in debt back then has grown to \$22 trillion since, not to mention an estimated \$200 trillion by one economist's estimates in unfunded liabilities. Never before in history has any country amassed so much debt.

The ONLY reason the U.S. dollar has not become mostly worthless is because it remains the world "reserve" currency and to date most all petroleum has been priced in dollars, the so-called "Petrodollar". President Richard Nixon in the early 1970s suspended all spending discipline when he cut the U.S. dollar's ties to any gold standard. And now the world is moving away from the dollar, led by Russia, and this trend is irreversible.

But monetary issues are not necessarily the primary problem facing the U.S. Negative world public opinion is, particularly since Trump abandoned the JCPOA. Over reach is what has and will cause the "crumbling" of the U.S. "empire", and good riddance the sooner the better, even for a majority of U.S. citizens if not for the entrenched, blind denizens of Washington.

Democrats' collective from Kerry to Al Gore attack on Trump

By Hanif Ghaffari

TEHRAN — In recent days, many of the American Democrats have intensified their verbal and political attacks on President Donald Trump. Former Secretary of State John Kerry implicitly stated that he would not rule out running for president in 2020. Kerry was the Democratic nominee for president in 2004 but ultimately lost the election to former U.S. President George W. Bush. He had also emphasized on the critical situation of the United States following the presence of Trump at the White House.

Also Al Gore, the former vice president and Democratic presidential candidate, publicly called for President Donald Trump to resign. Moreover, former U.S. President Barack Obama challenged the existing policies in the United States during John McCain's funeral, without naming Trump. Delivering his eulogy, Obama said: "So much of our politics, our public life and our public discourse can seem small and mean and petty, trafficking in bombast and insult and phony controversies and manufactured outrage."

In front of the thousands gathered, including leaders from both sides of the political aisle — but excluding Trump, who was expressly not invited, Obama continued: "It's a politics that pretends to be brave and tough but in fact is born of fear."

The fact is that one of the main goals of the American Democratic Party leaders in their recent political attacks on Trump is winning the U.S. mid-term elections and the conquest of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Right now the republicans hold the majority of the Congress, and many members of the party, while opposing Trump's policies, are not willing to confront him and stand up against the White House. But the Democrats, on the other hand, are trying to provide the ground for their victory in the 2020 presidential elections by explicitly criticizing, and even resisting to some of Trump's decisions.



Democrats such as John Kerry, believe that if the Republicans fail in the Congress midterm elections and lose their dominance on the House of Representatives and Senate, it will be difficult for Trump to win the 2020 presidential elections.

However, if the democrats fail this time against Republicans, just like the way they did in 2016, and lose seats in the House of Representatives and the Senate, Trump will not have a difficult way to win the next presidential election. Many American think-tanks and analysts believe that the mid-term elections this year (2018) will turn into a rigorous opposition between Trump's supporters and opponents.

It should be noted here that Democrat candidates for the presidential election in 2020 are not yet introduced. As John Kerry has announced, this is supposed to be after the Congress elections. Bernie Sanders, Joe Biden and John Kerry are considered as possible candidates for the next U.S. presidential elections.

However, some Democrat leaders believe that they should introduce a new figure for this battle.

Finally, it should be stated that the closer we get to the mid-term elections' competitions in November, we will see an increase in the verbal and political attacks of Democrat figures against Trump and his administration and companions at the White House. Some analysts believe that if the Republicans fail in the mid-term elections, we will see a crackdown between the traditional Republicans and Trump.

Of course such a gap exists at the moment, but the leaders of the Republican Party and the affiliated news sources are refraining from fully disclosing it. However, it seems that in case the Republicans lose the congress, it would difficult for the Republican leaders to keep on playing this game! Under such circumstances, Trump is going to be considered as the main accused of the republican' defeat, and is to blame by the remarkable figures in the party.

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How gut bacteria may help you diet and stay healthy

Studies in mice have revealed that animals with a lower calorie intake are likely to have less excess weight, stay healthier, and live longer. New research looks at why this may be, suggesting that it is due to gut bacteria and their influence on the immune system.

A study led by Prof. Mirko Trajkovski, from the University of Geneva in Switzerland, has been looking into how calorie-restricted diets can influence weight and overall health status.

More importantly, however, the scientists have been interested in finding out why restricting caloric intake can render a person healthier.

The study, conducted in mice and whose results were published in the journal Cell Metabolism, suggest that the populations of bacteria found in the gut have an important role to play when it comes to dieting and health outcomes.

In the future, the scientists hope that their findings may eventually lead to better treatments for people living with obesity.

Gut bacteria and toxic molecules

The researchers worked with mice, whose feeding they controlled for a period of 30 days, so that their caloric intake was restricted by 40 percent.

After this period, the team noticed that the mice's bodies were promoting the production of beige fat, a kind of fat tissue that is easily converted into energy, thus also leading to weight loss.

A new study finds how shifting meal times can affect your weight loss efforts.

In order to see what role gut bacteria might play in the process of becoming healthier following a calorie-restricted diet, the scientists transferred some of these bacteria from the dieting mice to a group of mice bred not to have gut microbiota.

So, Prof. Trajkovski and team transferred the microbial communities from the dieting mice's ceca — that is, the first sections of their large intestines — to the guts of the mice raised in sterile conditions.

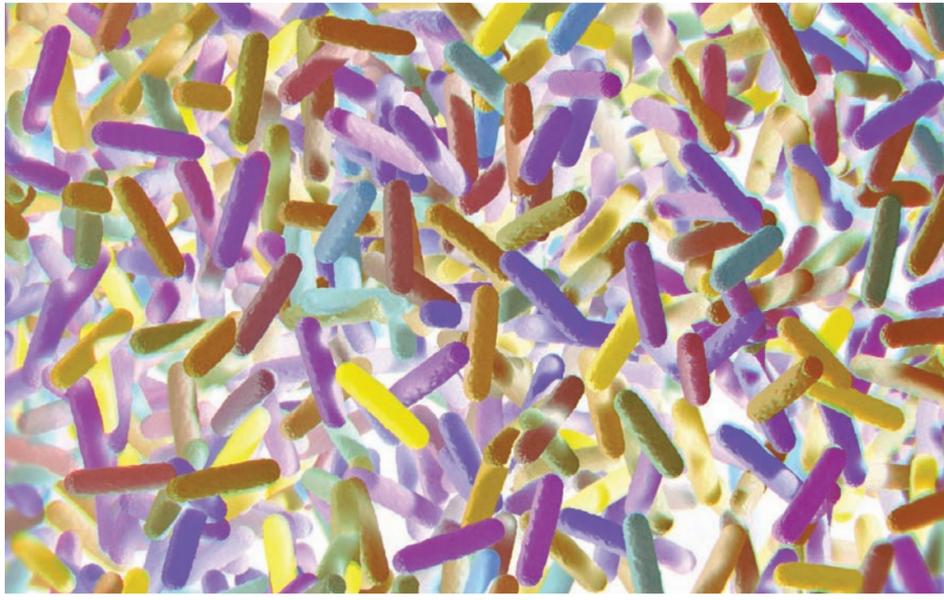
The researchers found that simply performing this microbiota transfer allowed the mice to become leaner and produce more beige fat, despite staying on their regular diets.

After analyzing the composition and behavior of these microbiota, Prof. Trajkovski and team observed that they produced fewer toxic molecules known as lipopolysaccharides (LPS).

However, when the researchers tried to boost LPS levels so that they would reach their usual levels, they noticed that the mice with higher LPS saw fewer health benefits, despite dieting.

A drug to simulate caloric restriction?

The researchers point out that LPS actually trigger an



“It may one day become possible to treat obese people with a drug that simulates caloric restriction. We are currently investigating the precise changes in bacterial communities, and we are also testing other compounds that reduce LPS production and signaling

immune response as they activate a protein known as toll-like receptor 4 (TLR4).

In the recent study, they noticed that mice that had been genetically engineered not to express TLR4 actually enjoyed similar health benefits to the ones seen by the rodents on the calorie-restricted diet.

“Clearly the immune system not only combats infections, it also plays a key role in regulating metabolism,” notes Prof. Trajkovski.

Without activated TLR4, the mice not only produced more beige fat and thus saw more weight loss, but they also reacted better to insulin. These rodents' livers were also more

effective at processing sugar and fat, and the mice became better at adjusting to colder temperatures.

“This is turning into an entirely new field of research,” Prof. Trajkovski says.

After identifying these mechanisms, the team decided to test the effectiveness of two different compounds: one aimed at reducing LPS production, and the other aiming to block TLR4.

Both of these drugs were effective in mice and induced a similar health outcome as that produced by calorie-restricted dieting.

(Source: medicalnewstoday.com)

Eating red meat and cheese can help heart health, scientists claim

The question of whether eating red meat is good for your health or not has been heavily debated for quite some time.

However, recent research suggests that regularly consuming unprocessed red meat and cheese can reduce your risk of an early death by improving the wellbeing of your heart.

Researchers from McMaster University in Canada conducted a study of more than 218,000 adults from more than 50 countries around the world, dividing them into five categories according to their diets.



The study concluded that eating a moderate amount of dairy and meat every day as part of a balanced diet can drastically reduce one's chances of a premature death.

The research team presented their findings at the European Society for Cardiology conference in Munich, explaining that people should also be careful about the amount of refined carbohydrates that they include in their diets.

“People who consumed a diet emphasizing fruit, vegetables, nuts, legumes, fish, dairy products and meat had the lowest risks of cardiovascular disease and early death,” said Dr. Andrew Mente, principal investigator at the university's Population Health Research Institute.

“Thinking on what constitutes a high quality diet for a global population needs to be reconsidered.”

“For example, our results show that dairy products and meat are beneficial for heart health and longevity. This differs from current dietary advice.”

According to the NHS, the government currently recommends that people who eat more than 90g of red and processed meat a day should cut down their intake to 70g at most.

Eating an excessive amount of red and processed meat, including beef, pork and veal, can supposedly increase your risk of developing bowel cancer in future.

Consuming a decent amount of unprocessed meat and dairy isn't enough on its own to ensure a healthy heart, though, as Professor Jeremy Pearson, associate medical director at the British Heart Foundation, explained.

(Source: The Telegraph)

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'Entrepreneurship soon becomes Iran's leading economic powerhouse'

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — The entrepreneurship will be turned into Iran's leading economic source of power in the near future, vice president for science and technology Sourena Sattari announced on Monday, ISNA reported.

He made the remarks during the opening ceremony of the 35th World Conference on Science Parks and Areas of Innovation, which is currently underway in Isfahan.

The oil economy is being replaced by the knowledge economy in recent decades in Iran, he explained.

He called technological infrastructures of the cities as one of the main factors to boost knowledge economy.

"We have already 4.5 million university students and 49 million internet users in Iran," Sattari said.

The smartphone penetration in Iran is very high in Iran with regard of good human resources, which lead to an appropriate ecosystem in the country, he said.

He called a good ecosystem the one which turns Iran into a large science and technology park.

He highlighted the important role of cities as the main infrastructures of education and economy development.

The 35th World Conference on Science Parks and Areas of Innovation is organized by the International Association of Science Parks and Areas of Innovation (IASP).

With the theme of "Towards Sustainable Cities and Communities: Fostering Innovation Ecosystems", the event opened on September 2 and will end on September 5 at the Isfahan Science and Technology Park.

The IASP 2018 World Conference will explore the role of Software Technology Parks and Area of Innovations in the formation of the innovation ecosystem and the sustainable development of cities.

Over 5,000 knowledge-based companies operating in Iran's sci-tech parks

TECHNOLOGY TEHRAN — Over five thousand knowledge-based companies are active in Iran's science and technology parks, Science Minister Mansour Gholami said on Monday, ISNA reported.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the 35th World Conference on Science Parks and Areas of Innovation, he announced that 43 science and technology parks have so far been established across the country.

Incubator centers at the science and technology parks support innovative ideas in the field of technology, he said, adding, the science and technology parks have created 43 thousand jobs, which are directly connected to scientific achievements.

These parks provide the opportunity for university students to find ways to deal with economic and social problems, he said.

With the theme of "Towards Sustainable Cities and Communities: Fostering Innovation Ecosystems", the event will be running until September 5 at the Isfahan Science and Technology Park.

SOCIALLY SAFE

Privacy tips for older adults

Going online lets you keep learning, connect with friends and family and play games. Just as you fasten your seat belt before driving, take precautions before using the internet to be safer and more secure. The first step is to: take safety measures, think about the consequences of your actions and connect knowing you have taken steps to safeguard yourself when online.



STOP. THINK. CONNECT. in partnership with Cyber-Seniors, wants to make sure everyone has a safe and enjoyable experience while online. We have a few tips that will help as you learn how to use new technology.

Personal Information Is Like Money. Value It. Protect It.

- Lock your devices, like your tablet and phone: You lock the front door to your house, and you should do the same with your devices. Use strong passwords or passcodes to lock your tablet and phone. Securing your devices keeps prying eyes out and can help protect your information in case your devices are lost or stolen.

- Think before you act: Ignore emails or communications that create a sense of urgency and require you to respond to a crisis, such as a problem with your bank account or taxes. This type of message is likely a scam.

- When in doubt, throw it out: Clicking on links in emails are often how bad guys get access to personal information. If an email looks weird, even if you know the person who sent it, it's best to delete.

- Make your password a sentence: A strong password is a sentence that is at least 12 characters long. Focus on positive sentences or phrases that you like to think about and are easy to remember (for example, "I love country music."). On many sites, you can even use spaces!

- Unique account, unique password: Having separate passwords for every account helps to thwart cybercriminals. At a minimum, separate your work and personal accounts and make sure that your critical accounts have the strongest passwords.

- Write it down and keep it safe: Everyone can forget a password. Keep a list that's stored in a safe, secure place away from your computer.

Share With Care

- What you post will last forever: Be aware that when you post a picture or message online, you may also be inadvertently sharing personal details with strangers about yourself and family members — like where you live.

- Post only about others as you would like to have them post about you: The golden rule applies online as well.

- Own your online presence: It's OK to limit who can see your information and what you share. Learn about and use privacy and security settings on your favorite websites.

(Source: staysafeonline.org)

Cancer treatment startups provide great opportunities for better interaction with patients: Iranian researcher

The new method of using TPNs compared to traditional cisplatin delivery platforms in treating cancer will result increase the number of cancer survivors

1→ Nearly everyone experiences a turning point in the life which changes the purpose of life. For Ali, it was losing a loved one to cancer which was very difficult and painful for him.

Traveling around the world from China to the United States to find an approach which his expertise in engineering could help in the cancer treatment, Ali ends up in pursuing a PhD at the school of medicine at the University of Maryland, where he could combine his engineering background and biological sciences.

"We had significant achievements in this field including several publications on the enhanced drug delivery, filed patents, innovatively designed components and the first Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved clinical trial to open Blood-Brain Barrier (BBB) using focused ultrasound that dramatically alters the landscape of drug delivery to the brain for many diseases such as tumors, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases.

Greater efficacy using TPNs

"Depending on the type and stage of cancers, different treatment approaches are available, including surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. Conventional surgery for resection of the tumor core is still common practice, but advances in robotic and laser surgeries have allowed for a less invasive



Use of targeted tumor-penetrating nanoparticles (TPNs) and adjuvant pretreatment with pulsed focused ultrasound (pFUS), could potentially have an impact on the clinical outcome for patients treating their cancer

'We could show that our proposed strategy of using TPNs compared to traditional cisplatin delivery platforms will allow for improved penetration and delivery of chemotherapeutic agents leading to greater efficacy and a reduction in toxicity compared to free cisplatin'

treatment of tumors. However, when tumors grow in less accessible locations, surgical intervention is limited.

Radiotherapy is employed as an adjuvant treatment along with surgery and chemotherapy for locally advanced tumors. The toxicity of radiation is still a critical issue because of serious side-effects (e.g., chronic aspiration, xerostomia, hypothyroidism, and dysphagia). Concurrent chemotherapy-radiotherapy remains an effective part of a multimodality treatment approach for locally advanced cancers. Different chemotherapy agents, mainly cisplatin, have been used, but they have severe toxic-side effects which often limit their application," he explained.

Most standard chemotherapeutic drugs, including cisplatin, have shown (i) limited penetration in tumor tissue and (ii) rapid drug clearance, which necessitate higher doses to achieve even marginal cytotoxic effects, Mohammadabadi said.

Strategies that can provide well-dispersed, sustained

concentrations of cisplatin locally in the tumor microenvironment, such as the use of targeted tumor-penetrating nanoparticles (TPNs) and adjuvant pretreatment with pulsed focused ultrasound (pFUS), could potentially have an impact on the clinical outcome for patients, he added.

"We could show that our proposed strategy of using TPNs compared to traditional cisplatin delivery platforms will allow for improved penetration and delivery of chemotherapeutic agents leading to greater efficacy and a reduction in toxicity compared to free cisplatin. This development in treating cancer will result in a large and rapidly increasing number of cancer survivors," he explained.

Treating cancer via interdisciplinary method

"Cancer prevention and treatment are broad fields that cross various disciplines. In general, interdisciplinary studies promote the application of different theories, concepts, and ways of thinking about problems," he said.

"In the case of cancer treatment using TPNs and pFUS, we will need medical science to plan and employ the treatment and also engineering background to design the working parameters and build

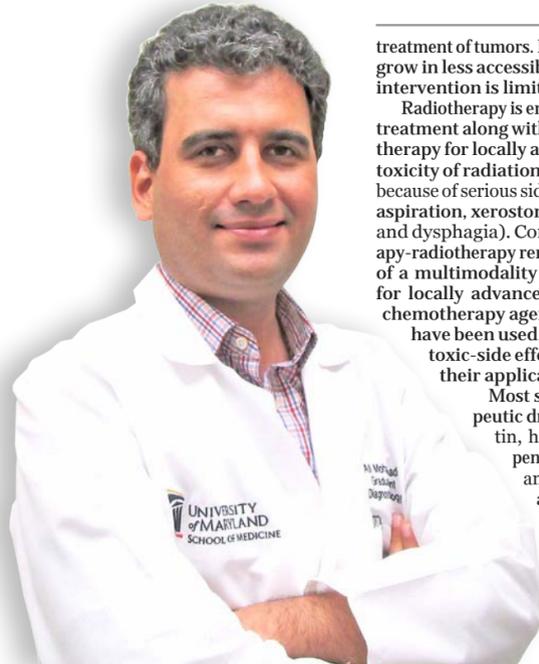
the required TPNs and pFUS instruments. In addition, we need to consider the role of other interdisciplinary sciences such as statistics, computerized imaging and behavioral analysis in the pre and post-treatment interventions," he added.

Large-scale strategies needed

"If we could examine the factors contributing to the possibility of novel cancer treatment in Iran, we will find out that most of these studies can be done in Iran. I believe the main obstacles against the growing of these techniques in our country are lack of self-confidence and teamwork," he said.

"We also need to notice that the public investment in research and innovation is more important than ever because to do any kind of research, scientists need financial support which helps them to run studies, to pay their assistants and to subsidize lab equipment. We need large-scale and long-term strategies to create internationally booming research within the healthcare industry," he said.

Ali Mohammadabadi concluded the interview with a quotation from the American businessman Ray Kroc (1902 – 1984) which is said "Luck is the dividend of sweat. The more you sweat, the luckier you get".



What does "going public" mean?



Going public refers to a private company's initial public offering (IPO), thus becoming a publicly traded and owned entity. Businesses usually go public to raise capital in hopes of expanding. Venture capitalists may use IPOs as an exit strategy (a way of getting out of their investment in a company).

The IPO process begins with contacting an investment bank and making certain decisions, such as the number and price of the shares that will be issued. Investment banks take on the task of underwriting, or becoming owners of the shares and assuming legal responsibility for them. The goal of the underwriter is to sell the shares to the public for more than what was paid to the original owners of the com-

pany. Deals between investment banks and issuing companies can be valued at hundreds of millions of dollars, some even hitting \$1 billion.

Going public does have positive and negative effects, which companies must consider. Here are a few of them:

- Advantages - Strengthens capital base, makes acquisitions easier, diversifies ownership, increases prestige.

- Disadvantages - Puts pressure on short-term growth, increases costs, imposes more restrictions on management and on trading, forces disclosure to the public, makes former business owners lose control of decision making.

(Source: investopedia.com)

Social media users urged to give up for a month

Thousands will quit social media for a month this September, as experts say cutting down on its use is vital for your health.

Thousands of people are enjoying their last day on social media for a month as the first ever 'Scroll Free September' campaign is set to begin.

The initiative is being led by the RSPH and follows similar ones like Dry January and Stoptober, which encourage people to pause their drinking and smoking habits.

More than 2,000 people have officially pledged to quit the 'Big 5' social media apps on 1 September - Facebook,

Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and YouTube.

Organizers predict tens of thousands - perhaps even hundreds of thousands - will take part in some way across the month.

Shirley Cramer CBE, chief executive of RSPH, says they were first alerted to issues with social media after commissioning a report into how young people were using the apps.

Platforms, including Facebook, say they are trying to introduce measures to improve users' wellbeing.

The 2017 #StatusOfMind report highlighted a range of potential negative effects of social media, including anxiety,

depression, negative body image, cyberbullying, poor sleep and what is termed 'FOMO' (the fear of missing out).

She said: "When used in the right way, social media can have a lot of real positives for mental health and well-being, including improving social connectivity and providing a source of emotional support.

"There are a whole load of issues around social media though and we need to manage our social media better and that's why it's urgent now.

(Source: news.sky.com)

Day 31-80: The startup checklist



Wouldn't it be great if there was a start-up cheat sheet for budding business owners? Well, now there is!

With the help of some of the country's top start-up businesses, we've compiled an essential checklist of the key tasks and activities that need to be considered in the first 100 days of starting any business.

As most people aren't familiar with the steps to start a business, this checklist covers everything you need to know pre-launch and post-launch; from market research to domain names and business banking. If you've got a business idea, then this checklist will help ensure your start-up hits the ground running...

Get social

Bikmo founder David George believes it's important to get your "social real estate" in order earlier rather than later. "Once you choose your brand, get your social handles and say hello to the world. Even if you're not going to start communicating now, you will be soon and it's a chance for people to find you."

Get a business bank account

You'll need to set up a business bank account to deposit payments, pay suppliers and staff, and complete all of the other financial transactions involved in the everyday running of a business. Banks such as RBS offer good deals for small businesses.

(Source: startups.co.uk)

Scientists pioneer a new way to turn sunlight into fuel

A new study used semi-artificial photosynthesis to explore new ways to produce and store solar energy. They used natural sunlight to convert water into hydrogen and oxygen using a mixture of biological components and human-made technologies.

The quest to find new ways to harness solar power has taken a step forward after researchers successfully split water into hydrogen and oxygen by altering the photosynthetic machinery in plants.

Photosynthesis is the process plants use to convert sunlight into energy. Oxygen is produced as by-product of photosynthesis when the water absorbed by plants is 'split'. It is one of the most important reactions on the planet because it is the source of nearly all of the world's oxygen. Hydrogen which is produced when the water is split could potentially be a green and unlimited source of renewable energy.

Producing and storing solar energy

A new study, led by academics at St John's College, University of Cambridge, used semi-artificial photosynthesis to explore new ways to produce and store solar energy. They used natural sunlight to convert water into hydrogen and oxygen using a mixture of biological components and human-made technologies.

The research could now be used to revolutionize the systems used for renewable energy production. A new paper, published in Nature Energy, outlines how academics at the Reisner Laboratory in Cambridge developed their platform to achieve unassisted



Team of researchers not only improved on the amount of energy produced and stored, they managed to reactivate a process in the algae that has been dormant for millennia.

solar-driven water-splitting.

Their method also managed to absorb more solar light than natural photosynthesis.

Katarzyna Sokól, first author and PhD student at St John's College, said: "Natural photosynthesis is not efficient because it has

evolved merely to survive so it makes the bare minimum amount of energy needed -- around 1-2 per cent of what it could potentially convert and store."

Artificial photosynthesis has been around for decades but it has not yet been successfully

used to create renewable energy because it relies on the use of catalysts, which are often expensive and toxic. This means it can't yet be used to scale up findings to an industrial level.

The Cambridge research is part of the emerging field of semi-artificial photosynthesis which aims to overcome the limitations of fully artificial photosynthesis by using enzymes to create the desired reaction.

Reactivating the process

Sokól and the team of researchers not only improved on the amount of energy produced and stored, they managed to reactivate a process in the algae that has been dormant for millennia.

She explained: "Hydrogenase is an enzyme present in algae that is capable of reducing protons into hydrogen. During evolution this process has been deactivated because it wasn't necessary for survival but we successfully managed to bypass the inactivity to achieve the reaction we wanted -- splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen."

Sokól hopes the findings will enable new innovative model systems for solar energy conversion to be developed.

She added: "It's exciting that we can selectively choose the processes we want, and achieve the reaction we want which is inaccessible in nature. This could be a great platform for developing solar technologies. The approach could be used to couple other reactions together to see what can be done, learn from these reactions and then build synthetic, more robust pieces of solar energy technology." (Source: Science Daily)

Colossal Antarctic iceberg has started to move at a shocking speed: study

For a year, not a lot happened. In July 2017, the world's sixth-largest iceberg on record tore free from its Antarctic moorings after months of dramatic anticipation, in which the world watched a gigantic chasm split the Larsen C ice shelf in two.

But then, this colossal broken shard of ice basically hunkered down. Satellite images revealed that over a year later, the iceberg -- A68 -- despite being buffeted by ocean currents, tides, and winds, was effectively grounded on the shallow seabed of the Bawden Ice Rise.

After a long period of ice-bound inactivity, A68 has suddenly begun to drift again, with satellite imagery adjusted for brightness temperature (in purple) showing one edge of the giant iceberg swinging northwards in a movement that began in July this year, but which has rapidly picked up speed since then.

"You can see at between 7-12 July 2018 the weather conditions and ocean currents conspire to swing the trillion tons of the giant iceberg A68 in an anticlockwise direction," polar oceanographer Mark Brandon from the Open University in the UK explains on his blog.

The satellite imagery

What isn't for sure is where A68 is headed, or how far it might drift along its current trajectory. From his analysis of Sentinel-1 SAR satellite imagery, Brandon says that wind is pushing the sea ice to the north of the iceberg further north, and at a rate faster than A68's rotation.

If this keeps up, Brandon expects the iceberg to move into a vast patch of open water and young ice to the west of where A68 currently is, where ice slicks are forming in "intense" sea ice generation.

"My guess is that A68a will continue



rotating as it is now around that western point, until what is currently the northern edge collides with the Larsen C ice front," Brandon writes.

"It has a spectacular amount of momentum and it's not going to (be) stopped easily."

Readings from an automatic weather station operated by researchers from Utrecht University in the Netherlands show calm winds and unremarkable air temperatures in the period where the rotation began.

Measurement of air pressure

One strange blip in the data however is the stations' measurement of air pressure, which appears to show a patch of frenetic spikes lasting at least a week.

"Basically something odd was happening ... what I do know is it takes a lot of energy to get a trillion tons of ice moving."

An alternative possibility is that gradual melting processes helped to shift the iceberg from where it was effectively anchored on the Bawden Ice Rise seabed.

"It might have been shaken loose by winds or ocean currents, or it might be that the natural thinning process (from both melting and the flow of the ice) has lifted the bottom of the iceberg off the seabed," glaciologist Martin O'Leary from Swansea University in the UK explained to Earthar.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Seismologists say sensors on new bridge to record earthquake data

A replacement bridge under construction at the nation's second-busiest port isn't just a crucial route for cargo trucks and Southern California commuters -- it's a concrete-and-steel science experiment for engineers and seismologists.

The new bridge, which will stretch 8,800 feet (2,680 meters) over the Port of Long Beach, is being built with about 75 seismic sensors that will measure the forces imparted on the span when one of several nearby faults set off an earthquake. It will replace the Gerald Desmond Bridge, though it's unclear if it will retain that name.

"New bridges don't come along very often, so it's exciting," said Dr. John Parrish, head of the California Geological Survey. His agency's Strong Motion Instrumentation Program will be among those crunching the information the sensors capture that will be added to the state's database of earthquake knowledge.

Quake sensors

California's bridges and other infrastructure have been outfitted with quake sensors called accelerometers since the 1970s. The eastern span replacement of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge that opened in 2013 has more than 200.

But the building of the new Long Beach span, south of Los Angeles, marks the first time the sensors have been incorporated into the design of a California bridge from Day One, said Duane L. Kenagy, an engineer and the port's interim deputy executive director.

The original bridge has taken a "pretty good beating" since it was built in 1968, Kenagy said. Evidence of that is the netting -- called "diapers" -- recently placed underneath to capture hunks of concrete



that regularly break away. The roadway is "reaching the end of its natural life" but is considered safe for traffic until the new bridge opens, he said.

About 15 percent of all containerized cargo entering the U.S. travels over the span every day, and it's a key artery for motorists traveling between the city of Long Beach and San Pedro, a working-class waterfront neighborhood on the southern edge of Los Angeles.

The cable-stayed vehicle

Its nearly \$1.5 billion replacement is historic for the built-in seismology and because it's the first cable-stayed vehicle bridge in California.

Cable-stayed bridges are distinct from more common suspension bridges in that the main span deck is entirely supported by cables connected to the twin 515-foot (157-meter) towers. It makes for a particularly sturdy design that's been tested to withstand powerful earthquakes or a terrorist bombing.

"You just can't knock one of these things down by knocking out one or two cables," Parrish said. The design, popular in Asia and parts of Europe, is catching on in the U.S. as larger construction machinery and new high-tech materials make them cheaper and easier to build.

(Source: phys.org)

Governor Says FOREX Policies, Top Priority of CBI

Governor of central Bank of Iran Abdol-Reza Hemmati said that formulation of foreign exchange policies is the top priority of Central Bank of Iran, Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Speaking in 29th Islamic Banking Conference, Hemmati introduced FOREX policies as the main and top priority of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) and placed special emphasis on the necessity of correcting banking system and controlling liquidity growth.

As held at the venue of IRIB Conferences Center, CBI governor said that these types of conferences should move towards applicability, so that constructive views and



opinions of experts should be used optimally in line with moving the country towards boom and prosperity."

Elsewhere in his remarks, he emphasized on usury-free banking and said, "Islamic Republic of Iran is of the first country which has vowed to fight against usury."

Effective steps should be taken in order to execute Islamic Banking through promotion of Islamic rules and law, he maintained.

He pointed to the sublime recommendations of Leader of the Islamic Revolution and said, "organizing FOREX Market, controlling inflation rate, modifying FOREX policies and also controlling liquidity growth are of the main policies that should be taken by the central bank seriously."

Preventing waste of foreign exchange

should be taken into consideration due to the exertion of restrictions by US government for the transfer of Iran's oil assets, he reiterated.

New Islamic tools should be used in monetary policies of the country, he said, adding, "in this regard, Central Bank of Iran (CBI) welcomes all constructive viewpoints of concerned experts wholeheartedly."

In the end, CBI Governor Abdol-Naser Hemmati pointed to the banking interest rate and added, "CBI has not issued the order of increasing interest rate, so that the bank has taken effective steps in order to regulate the Foreign Exchange Market."

SINA Bank Unveils New Banking Services in E-Banking Field

New services of SINA Bank in the field of electronic banking dubbed 'e-banking' were unveiled in the presence of CEO and members of the Board of Directors of the bank, Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Chief Executive of the bank Eng. Pishro was the first speaker in the inaugural ceremony of these services who pointed to the fast-paced developments in the information technology (IT) field and added, "with the developments taken in this sector, we are witnessing the significant change of expectations especially in young

generation in such a way it is expected that all banking services will be made possible without any reference to the branches of the bank personally."

He reiterated, "many requirements that Central Bank of Iran has raised in the field of corporate banking and anti-money laundering are not executable using traditional tools."

Certainly, not only whatever implements in the field of information technology (IT) is not considered as a cost, but also it is regarded as a necessity, he said, adding,

"SINA Bank has suitable infrastructural programs with this approach in order to play a leading role with the current developments as a pioneering bank."

Eng. Pashmchi Deputy CEO of the bank for IT and Communications services of the bank who said, "with the implementation of strategic programs over the past years, the bank has taken effective steps in line with the development and growth, so that the bank presently owns one of the most diversified portfolios in the field of electronic banking."



How primordial black holes formed just after Big Bang

Primordial black holes that formed just after the Big Bang may have emerged as the result of quantum fluctuations as the universe was inflating, a team of cosmologists has suggested.

In a study published in Physical Review Letters, researchers from Europe and China have proposed a new way for primordial black holes to exist and, if correct, would mean all of these hypothetical objects have roughly the same mass.

A major mystery about the universe currently facing scientists is how black holes were able to form shortly after the Big Bang. Traditionally, we think of black holes as forming from massive stars collapsing in on themselves. This happens at the end of a star's lifetime, often billions of years after it first formed.

But what we call 'primordial' black holes -- which emerged just after the Big Bang -- would not have had long enough to grow that big. So where could they have come from?

Dong-Gang Wang, from Leiden University, and colleagues from the

University of Science and Technology of China, have now proposed a new theory for their existence. They say that after the Big Bang, there were small perturbations from random quantum fluctuations in the universe. Within these perturbations, they identified a resonance effect that makes primordial black holes possible.

A familiar example is a playground swing, which acts as a pendulum. Pushing a person in a swing in time with the natural interval of the swing (its resonant frequency) makes the swing go higher and higher (maximum amplitude), while attempts to push the swing at a faster or slower tempo produce smaller arcs. This is because the energy the swing absorbs is maximized when the pushes match the swing's natural oscillations.

(Source: Newsweek)

Gas-sensing drones map clouds of harmful pollution from the air

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) floating through the air can lead to a long list of health problems for humans, in both the long and short term. Knowing where they are and in what concentrations would therefore be an invaluable capability, and one that a team of Rice University scientists is making great headway on with their autonomous gas-sensing drones.

Volatile organic compounds are gases that can arise from household products like hairspray and glue, the exhaust pipes of cars, and dangerous leaks and explosions. When inhaled by humans, these can cause irritation in the eyes and nose, fatigue, nausea and headaches, while on the more extreme side long-term exposure has been linked to cancer.

The Rice University researchers, together with colleagues from the Baylor College of Medicine and Houston nonprofit Technology For All, are looking to harness the power of drones to keep tabs on airborne VOCs. More specifically, they hope to automatically detect those rising into the atmosphere via leaks, explosions and accidents.

Their autonomous drones are dubbed ASTRO, or Autonomous, Sensing and Tetherless Networked Drones, and use high-resolution mobile laser-spectroscopy to detect airborne gases in real time.

The plan is to put fleets of ASTRO drones in the air, which would form a network of gas-sniffing machines that use an onboard suite of sensors and transmitters to communicate with one another. Together, they would create a 3D model of aerial pollution with a particular focus on VOC signatures that are most harmful to humans, which could then be relayed to the local residents.

(Source: New Atlas)

Planet Nine possibly exists but invisible to existing telescopes: astronomers

Circumstantial evidence points at the existence of Planet Nine, the hypothetical planet that some astronomers think lies in the outer region of the Solar System beyond Neptune.

Scientists think that the existence of this world could explain the strange looping of the trans-Neptunian objects or TNOs at the edge of the star system. Unfortunately, no telescope has so far been able to spot this elusive world.

California Institute of Technology astronomer Michael Brown said there is a reason to believe that if the ninth planet does exist, it could be essentially invisible to existing observatories.



In 2016, Brown and colleague Konstantin Batygin predicted that Planet Nine weighs five to 20 times more than the Earth's mass and that it follows an elliptical orbit up to 1,000 times the distance between the Earth and the sun.

Planets twice as far away as Earth appear 16 times dimmer since the intensity of sunlight weakens by a factor of four going out and by another four times coming back.

This means that at an orbital distance of 600 astronomical units (AU), a body could be 160,000 times dimmer than Neptune, which orbits 30 AU away from the sun. At 1,000 AU, the elusive Planet Nine would appear more than a million times weaker.

Brown and colleague, Carnegie Institution for Science astronomer Scott Sheppard, now spearhead the search for the planet using the Subaru telescope in Hawaii. Researchers use Subaru's wide field of view to survey potential search area.

The efforts, however, do not guarantee the discovery of the planet as it could remain hidden amid the light pollution of the Milky Way. It may also be invisible in the glare of a bright star.

(Source: Tech Times)

Governments 'not on track' to meet climate targets, says UN official

UN climate change chief Patricia Espinosa says summer's heatwaves, wildfires and droughts will 'create a bigger sense of urgency' for discussions in Bangkok

A top UN official has warned that urgent action is required to avoid the "catastrophic effects" of climate change ahead of important negotiations taking place in Bangkok.

After heatwaves and extreme weather swept the world this summer, there is hope among climate experts that leaders will be galvanized to act.

Patricia Espinosa, head of the executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), said governments are not doing enough to meet their climate targets.

Specifically, she said they are unlikely to hit the ambitious goal of the agreement to cap temperature increases not only below 2C, but closer to 1.5C.

"1.5 is the goal that is needed for many islands and many countries that are particularly vulnerable to avoid catastrophic effects. In many cases it means the survival of those countries," Ms Espinosa told Reuters.

"With the pledges we have on the table now we are not on track to achieve those goals."

The Paris agreement set out grand ambitions to move the world away from fossil fuels and avert the worst consequences of climate change.

However, the plan was vague on details, and after the US and now Australia have distanced themselves from the agreement there is more pressure than ever to take decisive, binding action.

The week-long session in Thailand's capital was hastily arranged in May after talks held in Bonn stalled and failed to produce tangible outcomes.

Countries must decide the rules that will govern the Paris climate agreement, and without this "negotiating text" the UN climate change conference held in Poland at the end of the year will have no basis.

Ms Espinosa said she hoped a draft text for this rule book will emerge from the Bangkok talks. This can then ideally be agreed on by government ministers at the December meeting in Katowice, Poland.

"This is a process that has been ongoing for some time," she said. "One of the reasons why this is so complex is because we are talking about... many different areas. One of those areas that countries need to take action on is to reduce their emissions."

The discrepancy between the impact climate change has on rich and poor nations has been a major sticking point in talks.

To address this, richer nations have pledged \$100 billion to the developing world to aid in its transformation to tackle climate change.

"There is a clear view that the \$100 billion is only one part of the broad transformation of our societies that we are talking about... There is also a need to mobilize private financing," said Espinosa.

She added that heatwaves, droughts and wildfires from the Arctic to Australia should give new impetus to the talks in Thailand.

Though these events are still ongoing throughout much of the world, scientists have already been able to identify the "fingerprint" of climate change on them. Preliminary evidence suggests that without steadily rising temperatures, such events would have been less intense and less likely to happen in the first place.

Bangkok itself is a low-lying city that is likely to feel the effects of a changing climate very soon.

One World Bank report concluded that nearly 40 per cent of the capital will be inundated by rising waters by 2030 due to heavy rainfall and changing weather patterns.

"It really does make the evidence clear that climate change is having an impact on the daily lives of people," said Espinosa.

"I do believe that this will create a bigger sense of urgency." (Source: The Independent)

LEARN ENGLISH

Animal Rights

A: You should have seen the T.V. show that was on last night, the topic it covered was really interesting; animal rights.

B: Do you really believe in that? If they are going to focus on something, they should do it on **civil rights**.

A: Yes, but we can't deny that animals are **vulnerable, defenseless**, and are completely **at the mercy** of human beings. B: I understand your point, but we continue to have **transgressions** against human rights. If so much attention wasn't devoted to the topic of animals, we would then concentrate more on saving a human being instead of protecting a koala.

A: You can't compare **apples and oranges**; I believe that both topics are important and that we can't ignore them, the mistreatment of animals can cause a great environmental imbalance. I believe that governments should prohibit activities like **poaching**. B: Well, you are right on that point. This is the reason that I don't buy leather and I try to buy **synthetic** products.

B: At least you're **doing your part**. My contribution is to have a pet in the house that I treat like a member of the family.

A: As long as you don't treat it better than your wife, it's fine.

Key vocabulary

civil rights: the rights people have

vulnerable: easily hurt or harmed

defenseless: defenseless

at the mercy of: in a position where you can be harmed

transgression: something that is not allowed

apples and oranges: an unfair comparison of two different things

poach: to illegally hunt protected animals

synthetic: not natural

do your part: to help accomplish a goal

Supplementary vocabulary

biodegradable: capable of being decomposed by natural means

famine: a severe shortage of food

biosphere: the part of the earth's surface and atmosphere inhabited by living things

cloning: a general term for the research activity that creates a copy of some biological entity

Tehran to host international conference on advanced radiotherapy

SOCIETY TEHRAN — The international conference on perspectives of advanced radiotherapy in middle income countries will be held in Tehran on September 26-28, IRNA reported on Monday.

The conference is organized by the Iranian Society of Clinical Oncology (ISCO) in scientific collaboration with the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ES-TRO), under auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which benefits from a world-class faculty in the field of radiation oncology.

"Some 90,000 Iranians are diagnosed with cancer annually," Ahmad Ameri the secretary of the conference said.

"Annual statistics reporting from the Iranian Cancer Association shows the death rate from cancer in Iran is 0.73 percent, while the global average is 0.58 percent and also in developed countries is less than 0.50 percent," he added.

Stomach, lung, breast, colon and prostate constitute the five most common cancers in Iran, he highlighted, adding that, late detection is the main reason behind the high rate of cancer related deaths, while air pollution and unhealthy food consumption are also other culprits.

"The incidence of cancer in people aged 75 or younger is nearly 13 percent and the likelihood of death in patients before the age of 75, is 8 percent," he lamented.

Radiation and surgery are the main kinds of cancer treatments, and chemotherapy and immunotherapy are also anti-cancer treatments. However, some patients need a combination of treatments, including surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy, he explained.

"Although radiotherapy has been greatly developed in recent years, our country has been lagging behind this technology due to outrageous sanctions", he stated.



Perspectives of Advanced
RADIO THERAPY
in middle income countries

He went on to explain that by reducing sanctions over the past few years, we have succeeded in importing some of the radiotherapy devices into the country, but lack of proper knowledge has become a major concern for the ISCO, especially since these devices have been purchased by the private sector. Consequently, the aforesaid congress will be held to improve the knowledge needed to provide the patients appropriate treatment.

Also, since the administration of radiation is under the auspices of the IAEA, the

conference was welcomed and financially supported by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Also, the American Medical Physics Association, the Iranian Medical Physics Association, Iran's Atomic Energy Agency and the Cancer Research Center are other scientific partners, he concluded.

In July, Ali Motlag, head of the cancer department at the Ministry of Health, said that cancer is increased in Iran by a rate of 177 per 100,000 and 140 per 100,000 among males and females, respectively.

Moreover, Maryam Hazrati, deputy health

minister for nursing, said that some 82 percent of deaths in Iran are linked with the main types of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including cardiovascular diseases (like heart attacks and stroke), cancers, chronic respiratory diseases (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma) and diabetes.

According to World Health Organization (WHO), cancer is the second leading cause of death globally, and was responsible for 8.8 million deaths in 2015. Approximately 70% of deaths from cancer occur in low- and middle-income countries.

'Climate change main cause of recurrent droughts in Iran'

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Climatic change along with changes in precipitation patterns are the main reasons behind recurrent droughts haunting different parts of the country, head of National Disaster Management Organization has said.

Esmail Najjar, made the remarks on a meeting held on Monday to address the impacts of drought and climate change in order to provide tackling solutions, with the representatives of responsible bodies and governor officials of the drought ridden provinces, in attendance and under the chairmanship of the minister of interior.

"Water scarcity causing many problems in social, security and economic sectors, has led to some conflicts between the neighboring provinces in recent years, he regretted, adding, so that measures must be taken in this regard to prevent the problems from increasing in the coming years.

To do so, related officials and the responsible bodies of the issue must take urgent action to provide executive and managerial solutions compatible with the current condition, he stated.

"The Ministry of Energy's presented a report on drinking and non-drinking water supplies methods in different regions of the country during the meeting, also, the Ministry of Agriculture presented a report on transportation, distribution and consumption of agricultural water, the cultivation pattern of this year and the coming years, which were the most important subjects discussed in the meeting", he further explained.

Najjar also serving as deputy interior minister referring to the plan and budget



organization report on allocation of budget to the drought tackling plans and programs, water shortages solutions and increasing water use efficiency, said that sharing the views of governor officials and providing a report on drought impacts on the people's lives have been among the other objects of the meeting.

Pointing to the necessity of public training in preventing the possible damages caused by water scarcity, he added that training the people is one of the most important priorities of the National Disaster Management Organization this year.

In order to reduce the damages caused by the water shortages, improving water consumption patterns and eliciting people's participation are of great importance, he concluded.

In July, environmental official Mohammad Mojabi told ISNA that renewable water resources have drastically decreased to less than 100 billion cubic meters from 132 bcm

over the past 50 years.

Groundwater resources are also in a bad condition, he lamented, adding that out of 609 aquifers in the country 309 are depleted

and water withdrawal is not allowed anymore in these aquifers.

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

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

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

Over 1,500 houses built for families with disabled members

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Over a thousand and a half houses have been inaugurated for the families with two or more physically challenged members, labor ministry's caretaker has said.

"Some 1,573 families having two or more members with disabilities under the Welfare Organization's coverage have been given houses," Tasnim quoted Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey as saying.

Out of 1,573 free housing units, 217 have been inaugurated in the province of Lorestan, 201 in Kerman, 160 in South Khorasan, 132 in Fars, 118 in Khorasan Razavi, 113 in Kordestan, 107 in North Khorasan, and the rest in other provinces of the country, he explained.

"A total budget of 106 billion rials (nearly \$2.4 million) has been allocated for the construction of housing units," he stated, adding that some 390 billion rials (about \$8.8 million) has been earmarked for granting house loans.

The government has taken many measures to provide medium living conditions for underprivileged people, he concluded.



Majlis [the Iranian parliament] approved both general outlines and details of a bill on rights of persons with disabilities on January 2018. Development of disability-friendly cities, free transportation, health insurance, free education, job creation, housing loans, and less working hours are some of the articles of the law which are hoped to improve such groups' living conditions in the near future.

First Announcement

Permit No. 1397.2690

N.I.S.O.C

Invitation For Prequalification

TENDER NO.: **08-21-9540002**

National Iranian South Oilfields Company intends to purchase the following goods

Description	Quantity.
CASING 5 IN., 18 PPF, API GRADE N80 SEAMLESS, "VAM FLUSH JOINT" RANGE 3, (MAX LEN:40.5 FT),	01 Items including 2000 LE.

Vendors who intend to participate in the A/M tender are requested to send their resume & ten-dency letter via fax/ mail to the following address not later than 14 days after the second an-ouncement. The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide a bid bond of Euro 55,745 / Rls 2,671,468,200 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 DEPT
Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site) Bldg NO 104, Ahvaz, Iran
Tel.fax No.: **+98-61-34457437**
Tel. No.: **+98-61-34124644**

Public Relations
www.shana.ir
www.nisoc.ir
<http://iets.mporg.ir>

روزنامه: تهران تایمز نوبت اول ۹۷/۶/۱۴ نوبت دوم: ۹۷/۶/۱۷

New Colombian president: Recognition of Palestine 'irreversible'

I→ In November 2012, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voted to upgrade Palestine's status from a non-member observer entity to "non-member observer state" despite strong opposition from Israel.

The Palestinian national flag was also hoisted for the first time at the UN headquarters in New York in September 2015.

However, Palestinian efforts for statehood have been hampered due to Israel's illegal settlement activities in the occupied lands and Washington's latest anti-Palestinian measures, among them the U.S. President Donald Trump's recognition of al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the "capital" of Israel and relocation of the embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Israel occupied the West Bank and East al-Quds (Jerusalem) during the Six-Day War in 1967. It later annexed East al-Quds (Jerusalem) in a move not recognized by the international community.

Israeli troopers kill another Palestinian over alleged stabbing attack in West Bank

Elsewhere, Israeli soldiers have fatally shot a Palestinian following an alleged stabbing attack in the occupied West Bank, the military says.

According to a statement released by the Israeli military on Monday, the incident occurred in the vicinity of Kiryat Arba, a hardline Israeli settlement, near the southern West Bank city of al-Khalil (Hebron) earlier in the day.

The Israeli army added that the victim, while "wielding a knife," had approached an Israeli military checkpoint in the area when he was shot dead by the Israeli live fire. It



further identified him as Wael al-Jabari, 27. No Israelis were hurt in the incident, the army added.

The Israeli military regularly opens fatal fire on Palestinians, accusing them of attempting to carry out stabbing attacks against its forces.

Human rights groups have repeatedly criticized Tel Aviv for its shoot-to-kill policy as a large number of the Palestinians killed at the scene of attacks did not pose serious threats to Israelis.

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

The Gaza clashes reached their peak on

May 14, the eve of the 70th anniversary of the Nakba Day (the Day of Catastrophe), which coincided this year with the United States embassy relocation from Tel Aviv to occupied al-Quds (Jerusalem). Israeli fire has so far taken the lives of more than 170 Palestinians since March 30.

The Gaza Strip has also been under an inhumane Israeli siege since 2007, causing a decline in living standards as well as unprecedented unemployment and poverty. Tel Aviv has waged three wars on the coastal enclave since 2008, including the 2014 offensive, which left more than 2,200 Palestinians dead.

Gaza scholarship students plead for Rafah exit permit

Separately, a group of Palestinian students from Gaza has issued a desperate plea

for help as they face the prospect of losing their scholarships in Europe due to a long waiting list for leaving the besieged enclave.

The fourteen students successfully obtained European visas to study at various universities in Hungary, but have not been able to receive exit permits to leave the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing.

If the permits are not issued by the end of the week, they face the likelihood of joining the 56 percent of graduates who are currently unemployed in Gaza.

Since 2007, a land, air and sea blockade has been enforced on Gaza by Israeli and, partially, by Egyptian authorities in response to Hamas coming to power - imposing strict limitations on the movement of both people and goods.

Patients are often denied medical treatment in hospitals outside Gaza and hundreds of Palestinian students are prevented from pursuing education abroad.

The Rafah crossing has been open since May - the longest period of time Egyptian authorities have allowed it to remain open from both sides in recent years.

However, due to thousands of Palestinians trying to make the crossing, the group of students faces several months' wait.

In December 2017, authorities in Gaza announced a registration system to apply for exit permits through Rafah, citing "increasing numbers of people wishing or expected to travel".

"The system aims to regulate the movement of travel of citizens and foreigners through the Rafah crossing under the crisis ... and provides equal opportunities for registration of travel," Gaza authorities stated on a website.

(Source: agencies)

Texas Democrat Beto O'Rourke shakes up Senate race with Cruz

If elections were decided by viral videos and fawning media profiles, Democrat Beto O'Rourke would win Texas' Senate race in a landslide.

Video of the candidate defending NFL players' right to protest during the national anthem had been viewed by millions even before NBA star LeBron James called it a "must-watch." Another of O'Rourke, a three-term congressman, cruising through a Whataburger parking lot on a skateboard is almost as popular, increasing the onetime punk rocker's already considerable street cred.

National magazines are suggesting he could be a Democratic vice-presidential pick in 2020 - or even a White House contender, a la a young Barack Obama. Sure, O'Rourke may lose to incumbent Republican Sen. Ted Cruz, the argument goes, but just staying competitive in Texas, which hasn't elected a Democrat to statewide office in nearly a quarter century, would still further boost his political star.

The White House is taking notice. President Donald Trump tweeted that he plans to stage "a major rally" for Cruz in October. Help from the president was long unthinkable in a race that for months looked like a Cruz cakewalk.

The hype machine powering O'Rourke has brought in piles of campaign cash and generated excitement nationally. But it also risks eventual backlash. Voters have often punished candidates for getting too big for their political britches - especially if they haven't won anything yet. O'Rourke need only look to his opponent for an example of a politician whose ambitions irked voters he needed.

Still, the Democrat seems eager to test a Trump-era theory that, with such an outsized personality in the White House, voters may no longer want their politicians to stay humble.

O'Rourke has largely welcomed the spotlight. His stance on anthem protests landed him an appearance on Ellen DeGeneres' TV show this week. O'Rourke also hasn't disavowed descriptions of himself as "Kennedy-esque," given his boyish good looks. He livestreams constantly and, in March, when he appeared on HBO's "Real Time with Bill Maher," the crowd in Los Angeles cheered so much that the host crowded, "It's like when the Beatles came to America."

"You can't control it," O'Rourke spokesman Chris Evans said of the attention. He disputed the idea that national praise could hurt back home, saying it's "hard to say we're not focused on Texas" since O'Rourke just spent 34 days of the congressional summer recess campaigning without leaving the state.

O'Rourke himself has shrugged off questions about whether too much attention could create unrealistic expectations. "The whole thing is not something he's talked about, really," Evans said.

Some Texans think the campaign might want to, though. "Most voters in Texas still don't know who Beto O'Rourke is. If the first thing they know about him is he's like Obama, then that's going to turn off more voters than it attracts," said Brandon Rottinghaus, a political science professor at the University of Houston.

Ironically, O'Rourke could ask Cruz about this problem. He arrived in the Senate and immediately laid the groundwork for a presidential campaign that saw him finish second to Trump in the 2016 primary. Cruz then alienated much of his base by refusing to endorse Trump at that year's Republican National Convention, and though he's since embraced the president, some Texas conservatives say they're still wary, seeing what happened at the convention as putting personal ambition over party.

Florida Republican Sen. Marco Rubio has also run into issues with political ambition clashing with his day job, and just ask former North Carolina Democratic Sen. John Edwards, who was already fading before word of his affair and a child with his mistress broke, about the pros and cons of being dubbed the second coming of Bill Clinton.

Texas Democrats, meanwhile, have been down this road before. Wendy Davis staged a marathon state Legislature filibuster in the name of abortion rights, rocketed to national stardom and launched a 2014 gubernatorial bid. Like O'Rourke, Davis was a strong fundraiser and the toast of liberals from Hollywood to Brooklyn. Largely unable to define herself beyond the abortion issue, which resonated nationally but not at home, Davis eventually lost by 20-plus points to Republican Gov. Greg Abbott.

Bob Radnich, a retiree who lives near the Texas-Mexico border and donned an Uncle Sam costume to hold up a "Stand with Wendy Davis" sign on a street corner in 2014, is now backing O'Rourke - but trying to keep realistic expectations. "He's a real star," Radnich said. "But we have to get the people to vote."

Cruz's internal polling is starting to show a much tighter race, those close to his campaign say. But during Texas' primary in March, when Democrats angered by Trump notched their highest mid-term primary turnout since 2002, Cruz still netted 1.3-plus million votes. O'Rourke got less



than 650,000, and only about 1 million total Democratic Senate ballots were cast between him and two-little known primary opponents.

Even if O'Rourke wins over those Democratic primary voters who didn't support him, he's looking at a 300,000-plus vote deficit. And, the more stories written about O'Rourke, the more energized Republicans may be to turn out to vote. That's what Cruz is counting on.

"In Texas, there are a lot more conservatives than liberals," Cruz said following a recent campaign stop. "So, my task politically between now and Election Day is very simple, turn out conservatives."

Cruz has tried to paint O'Rourke as the preferred candidate of non-Texans. But 68 percent of O'Rourke's contributions during the Senate race have come from in-state donors compared to just 39 percent for Cruz, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

That feeds into O'Rourke's promises to concentrate on representing Texas full-time and championing having visited all of its 254 counties during his campaign - in contrast to Cruz, who hit all 99 lowa counties on his way to winning that state's 2016 caucus.

Too much national hype, however, could make such promises sound hollow.

"If people perceive him as being an ambitious climber then they might think twice," Rottinghaus said. "He looks like a politician instead of a grassroots-inspired movement, and that's problematic for voters who want to invest in something different."

(Source: Reuters)

Venezuela government denies facing migration crisis

Venezuela's Vice President Delcy Rodriguez has said migration flows from the country is "normal", and that the situation is being used as a tool to justify foreign intervention in the country.

The United Nations' migration agency said the exodus of citizens out of Venezuela is nearing a "crisis moment" comparable to the situation of refugees in the Mediterranean.

"There has been an intent to convert a normal migratory flow into a humanitarian crisis in order to justify an international intervention in Venezuela," Vice President Rodriguez told a news conference on Monday. "We will not allow it."

She criticized foreign agencies for using numbers on Venezuelan emigration provided by other countries.

According to the United Nations, nearly 2.3 million Venezuelans are currently living abroad and more than 1.6 million have left since 2015.

President Nicolas Maduro said in a televised broadcast on Monday that opposition protests and the United States financial sanctions had led some Venezuelans to "try

their luck" in other countries but many were reconsidering that decision.

"More than 90 percent are regretting it, of this group that isn't more than 600,000 Venezuelans who have left the country in the last two years, according to confirmed, certified serious figures," he said.

Images of Venezuelans leaving the country on foot have raised alarms through the region as countries such as Ecuador, Peru and Chile seek to prepare for the growing influx of migrants.

On Monday, 13 countries in Latin America met in the Ecuadorean capital, Quito, to discuss regional strategies for managing the flow of migrants, with conclusions to be announced on Tuesday.

"We need to make the crisis visible and channel economic aid" to host countries and migrants, Ecuador's acting Foreign Minister Andres Teran said while inaugurating the two-day meeting.

The meeting will seek humanitarian solutions to help Venezuelan migrants who risk being left without work or being exploited by employers, or becoming victims of sexual exploitation, human trafficking



and xenophobia, Teran said.

Governments initially welcomed the migrants with open arms, remembering Venezuela's role in welcoming those fleeing dictatorships and conflicts in the past.

But the exodus has ballooned this year, stretching social services, creating more competition for low-skilled jobs and stoking fears of unrest.

In the past weeks, both Ecuador and Peru announced tighter entry rules for Venezuel-

ans, requiring them to carry valid passports instead of national ID cards.

Ecuador also declared a state of emergency in three northern states which receive up to 4,200 Venezuelans daily.

"Migrants are in need of help," Rodriguez of the Venezuelan Observatory said. "They need to be regularized, we know that many are being exploited. They are not identifiable, so if they die or they are killed, it is not easy to know who they were."

"We also know of children that are being sold and are victims of trafficking, Venezuelan women are also being stigmatized, as many resort to prostitution," he added.

Monday's meeting was attended by senior officials from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Uruguay, according to the Ecuadorean Foreign Ministry.

Colombia, Peru and Ecuador asked on Thursday for international aid to manage the migration surge that is overwhelming public services.

(Source: agencies)

France partly to blame for Libya crisis: Italian minister

I→ Earlier Italy's parliamentary speaker Roberto Fico called the situation in Libya "a serious problem which France has left us".

Trenta said that it was necessary to move forward "together" to secure peace in Libya.

The Italian press on Monday suggested that special Italian forces could be sent to intervene in Libya, a possibility which Trenta ruled out.

Fighting has been raging between rival militias in the southern suburbs of the Libyan capital Tripoli in recent days, following a failed ceasefire.

The Libyan capital has been at the center of a battle for influence between armed groups since the ouster and killing of dictator Qaddafi in 2011.

The United Nations mission to Libya (UNSMIL) has invited the "various Libyan parties" to Tuesday talks for "urgent dialogue". (Source: AFP)

New Yorker drops Steve Bannon from festival after outcry

The New Yorker magazine has cancelled plans to interview former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon to its annual festival next month after numerous panelists announced they would drop out if he remained.

David Remnick, the United States-based magazine's editor-in-chief, announced the reversal on Twitter on Monday after the festival's lineup was met with immediate backlash.

"I've thought this through and talked to colleagues - and I've re-considered," Remnick, who has repeatedly denounced U.S. President Donald Trump and his administration, wrote in a statement of his decision on Bannon.

"There is a better way to do this. Our writers have interviewed Steve Bannon for The New Yorker before, and if the opportunity presents itself I'll interview him in a more traditionally journalistic setting as we first discussed, and not on stage," he said.

The move came after several panelists said they would not share a platform with Bannon, whose influence was seen as having driven Trump's travel ban on majority Muslim countries and his reaction to the killing of a protester by a white supremacist in Charlottesville, Virginia last year.

"If Steve Bannon is at the New Yorker festival I am out," wrote comedian and Hollywood producer Judd Apatow. "I will not take part in an event that normalizes hate."

"Bannon? And me? On the same program? Could never happen," added actor Jim Carrey.

Since leaving the White House last year, Bannon has continued to champion right-wing causes, including supporting British anti-Islam activist Tommy Robinson, who was freed from prison last month after winning a legal challenge over contempt charges.

He has also announced plans to set up a foundation in Europe, called "The Movement", to spark a populist right-wing revolt. Bannon is scheduled to appear September 15 at The Economist's "Open Future" festival in New York City.

According to The Economist, festival attendees will "discuss the most urgent issues of our time and remake the case for liberal values". At least one guest already plans to drop out.

Several activists, filmmakers, writers and journalists condemned the New Yorker's invitation to Bannon, claiming the magazine was providing him with a platform to propagate white-nationalist views.

The New Yorker's reversal, however, was also criticized by conservative commentators.

The New Yorker caused a wave of controversy Monday after announcing that former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon would headline the 19th annual New Yorker Festival.

The New Yorker Festival's 19th edition will take place from October 5 to 7 and will include anti-gun activist David Hogg, actress Emily Blunt and writers Haruki Murakami and Zadie Smith. (Source: agencies)

Macron plugs holes in cabinet as popularity sinks

French President Emmanuel Macron was forced to make two quick changes to his cabinet Tuesday after a second popular minister resigned in a week, the latest setback as the centrist leader battles record-low ratings. Macron was already seeking a replacement for environment minister Nicolas Hulot, whose shock decision to quit last week caught France's political establishment off guard.

Hulot, a star TV presenter who enjoyed the highest ratings of any in Macron's cabinet, accused the president of not moving fast enough on key green pledges, including France's reliance on nuclear energy.

His resignation was a blow for Macron, who famously responded to U.S. President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the 2015 Paris climate deal with a pledge to "make our planet great again."

His office announced that parliament speaker Francois de Rugy, a former Greens party member who jumped ship to Macron's Republic on the Move party last year, would fill Hulot's shoes.

Rugy got a cautious welcome from environmental advocates. "He has a history of commitment to the environment, particularly with his anti-nuclear stance. The fear is that without any change on the part of Emmanuel Macron or (Prime Minister Edouard Philippe) there is little chance Francois de Rugy will do any better than Nicolas Hulot", said Jean-Francois Julliard, the head of Greenpeace France.

Earlier Tuesday, Sports Minister Laura Flessel, a popular fencing champion overseeing preparations for the 2024 Olympics in Paris, also stepped down.

Unlike Hulot, Flessel cited "personal reasons" for her decision, with a source close to the minister denying any link to tensions over state funding for the Games.

She will be replaced by Roxana Maracineanu, a silver medalist in backstroke at the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney.

The cabinet shuffle - which maintains Macron's pledge for an equal number of men and women - comes as he attempts to rebound from his lowest approval ratings since taking office in May 2017.

An Ifop poll Tuesday showed his ratings at just 31 percent, down 10 points since July.

His popularity had already taken a hit before the holidays after one of his top security aides was caught on film roughing up protesters while wearing a police helmet during a Paris demonstration. (Source: AFP)

Mourinho accepts one year sentence in Spanish tax case: El Mundo

Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho has accepted a one-year prison sentence as part of a deal to settle a Spanish tax evasion case, El Mundo newspaper reported on Tuesday, although he is unlikely to actually serve any jail time.

Spanish law states that a sentence of under two years for a first offence can be served on probation.

Mourinho's representatives were not immediately available for comment. Manchester United and the Spanish tax agency both declined to comment.

Spanish prosecutors filed a claim against Mourinho last year on two counts of tax fraud dating back to when he coached Real Madrid. Mourinho left Real Madrid in 2013 to manage English club Chelsea for a second spell before signing with United in 2016.

Spanish tax authorities had said the Portuguese manager owed 3.3 million euros. Prosecutors said he had failed to declare revenues from his image rights in his Spanish income tax declarations from 2011 and 2012, "with the aim of obtaining illicit profits".

They said Mourinho had already settled a previous claim relating to his Spanish taxes after a 2014 inquiry, which resulted in a penalty of 1.15 million euros. But tax authorities later found that some of the information presented in that settlement was incorrect, the prosecutors said.

The Mourinho settlement comes amid a lengthening list of tax fraud cases involving soccer stars in Spain.

In June, former Real Madrid player Cristiano Ronaldo reached a similar deal with the Spanish tax authorities to serve two years in prison and pay a 18.8 million euro fine in a tax evasion case.

(Source: Reuters)

Denmark pick futsal players to avoid Euro 2020 expulsion

Denmark have named a second-string squad including futsal players for this week's matches against Slovakia and Wales after contract negotiations with first-team regulars reached deadlock.

If the Danish Football Association (DBU) had failed to name a squad, the team, who are ninth in the world rankings and reached the last 16 at this year's World Cup, could have been thrown out of the 2020 European Championship.

Danish newspaper Ekstra Bladet reported that the squad includes players from the national futsal team, a five-a-side soccer game played mainly indoors on small hard courts.

Denmark are scheduled to play Slovakia in a friendly on Wednesday and Wales in a Nations League group stage match on Sunday. Coach Aage Hareide will not be in charge of the team as the DBU does not want him to manage a side he did not pick himself. The dispute is chiefly over the rights of players, including Tottenham Hotspur midfielder Christian Eriksen, to make individual sponsorship agreements with companies competing with national team sponsors. The players' travelling conditions are also an issue. The players union on Tuesday made a second offer to extend their existing contracts which would have postponed further negotiations until after the two games.

The DBU was not immediately reachable for comment, but rejected the same offer on Sunday.

The DBU last year had to cancel a World Cup qualifying match for the women's national team against Sweden, also due to a contract dispute.

(Source: Daily Mail)

Sharapova beaten by birthday girl Suarez Navarro in New York

Spain's Carla Suarez Navarro celebrated her 30th birthday in style at the U.S. Open on Monday by beating Russian Maria Sharapova 6-4 6-3 to book her place in the quarter-finals.

Sharapova, the 2006 champion, had never lost a night session match in New York prior to her first Grand Slam meeting with Suarez Navarro. "Thank you so much guys," Suarez Navarro said court-side after being wished happy birthday by the crowd. "It's the first time I've played this year at night. I'm very happy because I played a good match."

Five-times Grand Slam champion Sharapova paid the price for 38 unforced errors and won less than half of her first serve points while committing eight double faults.

"I didn't take care of the chances that I had," the Russian told reporters. "By chances, I mean the balls that were a little bit shorter. I hesitated to move forward. The balls where I did attack, I made unforced errors, especially on that inside-out forehand today." With her most potent weapon not firing, Sharapova succumbed in one hour and 31 minutes under the floodlights at the Arthur Ashe Stadium, allowing 30th seed Suarez Navarro to record just her second career victory over the Russian in six attempts.

(Source: Eurosport)

Ex-Juve midfielder Marchisio joins Russian club Zenit

Former Juventus midfielder Claudio Marchisio has joined Zenit St Petersburg. The Italy international, 32, left Juventus in August, when they terminated his contract, ending a 25-year association with the Serie A club. Marchisio played 389 times for the Bianconeri, winning seven league titles and four Coppa Italia.

"I had no doubt about signing for Zenit," said Marchisio, who has signed a two-year deal with the Russian club.

"I like the club, I like the ambition. After leaving Juventus, I promised that I would not sign for any other Italian team, but I still wanted to find a place that shares my values."

The Turin-born player, who suffered a serious knee injury in April 2016 that ruled him out for six months, made 20 appearances last season for Juventus.

He has won 55 caps for Italy since making his debut in 2009.

(Source: BBC)

Three years without any football - can Pakistan recover?

For three years football ground to a halt in Pakistan. No national fixtures, no funding.

Until last month, Pakistan had not been in action since March 2015 - a goalless World Cup qualifier against Yemen.

That led to an all-time low Fifa ranking of 201 out of 201 countries. The likes of Bermuda and Ethiopia rank higher.

How did it happen and who is taking on the onerous task of lifting the Green Shirts out of the doldrums?

A fall and an awakening

Matters deteriorated for the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) following the June 2015 re-election of Syed Faisal Saleh Hayat as president, which was accompanied by accusations of vote-rigging.

Rival camps and infighting led to a Lahore High Court-appointed administrator overseeing footballing matters in the country. But that fell foul of Fifa's stipulation that a governing body cannot be under the control of "undue third party interference". Fifa gave the PFF two years to put its house in order.

Fans, former players and referees staged street protests, urging the government to intervene to resolve the PFF impasse and later to lift the Fifa ban imposed in October 2017.

The Pakistan Premier League, which has been operating since 2004 in a 12-team format, also ground to a halt in 2015, with the PFF unable to run the game or produce fixtures because of a separate dispute.

Club academies were unable to function, player development and club progression stopped and potential income was lost. The impasse lasted three years, but the loss to current and developing players may be felt for years to come.

After years of stagnation, however, football in Pakistan received a boost when Fifa lifted the sanction it imposed on the country last year. As of March 2018, the PFF was once again free to run the game following the ramifications of the contested re-election result and internal disputes.

And in August, Pakistan returned to the international fold at the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia, where they narrowly failed to progress from their group as one of the



best third-placed teams.

Fielding an under-23s team, which included three senior players, Pakistan won their first match at an Asian Games in almost 44 years - a 2-1 win over Nepal.

New Pakistan head coach Jose Antonio Nogueira, a 52-year-old Brazilian who previously coached Saudi Arabian side Al Ahly, as well as Sierra Leone and St Kitts & Nevis at international level, will have been heartened by what he saw.

But he knows the real test will come at the South Asian Football Federation Championship held in Dhaka from 4-15

September. India - who are the current champions - Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldives and hosts Bangladesh will also contest the title.

"I have a good plan for Pakistan. To build football in Pakistan is very important. It stopped for a long time so now we need to start again," said Nogueira.

"I'll stay in Pakistan for a minimum of three years to review the development of football and young players in order to turn them into a force in Asia."

(Source: BBC)

Joachim Löw hoping to turn the page after World Cup debacle



As a smiling Joachim Löw emerged from a limousine on Monday afternoon in Munich, he stopped to sign each and every autograph requested by the fans lining the streets. His players duly followed suit.

Interaction with their supporters was one of the many aspects of the Germany set up that Löw admitted fell far short of expectations in Russia when he finally spoke about the tournament last week, three months after Germany's early exit.

As his first post-Russia 2018 squad gathered in Bavaria, his players - many of whom were among the under-performers in the summer - offered the coach their backing and expressed their own desire to move on.

"Of course the situation is different but it brings nothing to talk about the past months," forward Marco Reus said at the team hotel.

"We have met here today and have two important games ahead of us. A signal can be made directly against the world champions that we are to be reckoned with again."

The new Nations League format, which seeds national teams across Europe into groups, includes home and away fixtures and will, at least partly, replace friendlies. Germany are grouped with France and the Netherlands and will face each opponent, home and away, by November.

After the opener against France in Munich on Thursday, Löw takes his team to Amsterdam on October 13 and Paris three days later. The home return with the Netherlands, November 19 in Gelsenkirchen, concludes the group phase. Germany also face Peru in a friendly this Sunday.

When the draw was made in January, Löw called it: "Super interesting. The Netherlands and France are neighbors with a long culture and history of football." But the World Cup experience has turned up the heat on the 58-year-old despite the backing of his superiors. And the threat of relegation from the top tier of the Nations League means all eyes will be on the long-serving boss.

But perhaps that will draw some attention from the players, who bear responsibility of their own for their limp World Cup exit. Striker Timo Werner, who failed to find the net in Russia, is still backing the man who gave him his international debut.

"Löw is a great coach," said the RB Leipzig man. "He knows what the mistakes were and that is to his credit."

But all the autographs and talk of the future won't mean as much to Löw's rejuvenation as a win over the reigning world champions on Thursday.

(Source: DW)

Real to face Guadalajara or Asian champions in Club World Cup



European champions Real Madrid will face either Mexican side Guadalajara or the eventual Asian champions in this year's Club World Cup semi-finals following the draw made on Tuesday amid uncertainty over the future of the competition.

Fifa president Gianni Infantino has ambitious plans to expand the tournament from 2021 onwards, staging it every four years rather than annually and increasing the number of teams from seven to 24.

Those plans have yet to be approved by the Fifa Council and in the meantime, it is uncertain if the tournament - which this year will be staged in the United Arab Emirates in December - will continue its current form in 2019 and 2020.

Only four of this year's participants were known on Tuesday with the Asian, African and South American club championships all at the quarter-final stage. Real, winners for the last two years, and the eventual South American champions received byes to the last four. Oceania champions Team Wellington will meet Al Ain, champions of the host nation, in a preliminary match for the right to play the African champions in the second round. The winners of that game will face South America's Libertadores Cup champions. Guadalajara, the champions of CONCACAF, were drawn against the Asian champions in the other of the two second-round ties with

a match against Real Madrid as the prize. The competition has been dominated by European teams since it was re-launched in its current form in 2005, reflecting the fact the best South American and African players are based in Europe rather than their own continents. Although it is often felt that European sides regard the cup as little more than an exotic mid-season diversion, it creates huge interest in South America where fans long for the chance for their team to appear on the world stage. Real Madrid director Emilio Butragueno dismissed any suggestion it would be a walkover for his team.

"It's never win easy to win any tournament, that's the truth," he told Reuters.

"Obviously, we have every confidence in our players but last year, the final was very even and the semi-finals were very difficult," he said, remembering a 2-1 win over Al-Jazira in the semi-final and 1-0 win over Gremio in the final.

"Our opponents are always very highly motivated. They are young players who see this tournament as a chance to get themselves known around the world."

Former Argentina midfielder Esteban Cambiasso, who took part in the draw, said that South America could benefit after moving the Libertadores final from June to November.

(Source: Mirror)

Federer 'happy match was over' after exiting US Open in 'uncomfortable' New York heat

Roger Federer said he was "happy the match was over" after playing in "uncomfortable" conditions during his shock fourth round US Open defeat.

The 37-year-old Swiss - a five-time champion at Flushing Meadows - was beaten 3-6 7-5 7-6 (9-7) 7-6 (7-3) by world number 55 John Millman.

Their match finished just before 01:00 local time but temperatures still hit 30C with high humidity levels.

"I felt I couldn't get air. There was no circulation at all," Federer said.

"It's uncomfortable. Clearly you just keep on sweating more and more and more and more as the match goes on. You lose energy as it goes by."

"At some point also I was just happy that the match was over, I guess."

Tournament organisers kept the roof - which was completed in 2016 - on the Arthur Ashe Stadium open on Monday, but world number two Federer believes its installation has reduced air circulation on the court.

"I think just that makes it a totally different US Open," said the 20-time Grand Slam champion.

"Plus conditions maybe were playing slower this year on top of it. You have soaking wet pants, soaking wet everything. The balls are in there, too. You try to play. Everything gets slower as you try to hit winners."



Federer's defeat to Australian Millman marked the first time he has lost to a player ranked outside of the top 50 at the US Open.

Brisbane-born Millman said he "felt like a deer in the headlights to begin with" and had also struggled in the heat, calling the tournament conditions "pretty brutal".

"I'm not usually much of a sweater. I mean, I was dripping," said the 29-year-old. "The conditions for the majority of this tournament have been pretty brutal."

"I found it pretty tough early on to hold onto the racquet. It's kind of moving around in your hands."

"Roger is my hero"

Millman - the only unseeded player left in the last eight of the men's draw - will play two-time champion Novak Djokovic in his first Grand Slam quarter-final on Wednesday.

He admitted to feeling "a bit guilty" after beating Federer, who he described as his "hero".

"I always was of the opinion that I was in the fourth round for a reason. I've never played anyone's reputation," said Millman.

"I felt a little bit guilty today because he didn't have his best day, and that's for sure. I have so much respect for him, what he's done for the game."

Millman lost in straight sets to Djokovic at Queen's in June, but said he has "the belief" he can defeat the Serb in New York on Wednesday.

"I'll have to improve a lot on the last time I played him. He's an incredible player. I think he's in some really good form right now, too," he said.

"But why not? I think it's a disservice to who I am if I go out there and don't have that belief."

(Source: BBC)

Xavi: Azadi stadium a great place to play in



Al Sadd captain Xavi Hernandez believes that his side have taken an important step towards the semi-finals of the AFC Champions League, following the 3-1 win away victory over Esteghlal in the first leg of the quarter-finals.

Speaking exclusively to the-AFC.com, Xavi expressed his satisfaction with the team's performance at the Azadi Stadium, adding that Al Sadd were much better than their hosts.

"I think we did well but there's one more game," said the 38-year-old World Cup winner. "It could be just 90 minutes or it could even go to extra time. We don't know; in football, we never know."

"At least, we did a really good job in Tehran. It was a very good performance and I think we were much better than Esteghlal, especially in the second half. Also, in the first half, we could have scored at least one goal."

What made things even better for Xavi was the atmosphere at the Azadi Stadium. "It was an amazing atmosphere, one of the best that I have seen in my career. All the spectators were incredible."

"It was a great place to play football in. I was really enjoying the experience; it's something I really liked."

The former Barcelona star is playing in his first proper AFC Champions League campaign this year as Al Sadd were knocked out at the play-off stage in 2016 and 2017.

After finishing second in Group C, Al Sadd edged past Al Ahli in the Round of 16 and then put one foot in the semi-finals with the win over Esteghlal in Tehran.

The 13-time Qatari champions have not reached the AFC Champions League semi-finals since 2011 - the year they became the last West Asian team to lift the trophy.

With the team hitting top form going into the business end of the competition, Xavi is confident that they are ready to go all the way.

"We now have a very good team. This season, we signed good players, such as Gabi, Jung (Woo-young) and a number of Qatari players as well," he said.

"I think we can compete with the rest of the teams in Asia for the AFC Champions League title."

If he does go on to win the title, Xavi will become

the first player to complete the AFC Champions League - UEFA Champions League double, having won the European competition on four occasions during his time at Barcelona.

While the midfield maestro believes that Al Sadd are favourites to go through to the semi-finals, he also sounded a word of caution.

"With a good result in Tehran, I think we are the favourites but as I mentioned, we never know what will happen in football."

"Esteghlal have a good team as well and they will come here to compete, for sure, because Iranian teams are really strong."

"But I think we are confident," he added. "We are improving a lot, especially in this season. We had a really good pre-season and we have big dreams when it comes to this competition."

"We did really well and put a big step forward in Tehran but it needs one more game."

(Source: the-afc)

Federation waiting for decree on Saudi Arabia-Iran football

IRNA — Iranian football federation's senior adviser said that football federation is seriously pursuing the right of Iranian teams to take part in international competitions.

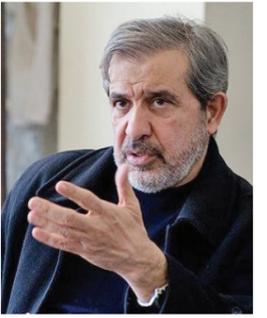
Hamid Reza Asefi noted that Iranian teams' competitions at international competitions have always been one of the priorities of the football federation that has been pursued and is not really a matter for the federation to ignore for a moment.

Referring to the federation's efforts to change the Persepolis and al-Duhail of Qatar match, he pointed out, "Fortunately, a good result was achieved that, by changing the time football players, could participate their religious ceremonies during the mourning and night of the Tasooa."

Speaking about the confrontation of Iranian teams with Saudi teams in the AFC Champions League held on neutral pitch, Asefi stated, "We have taken this issue seriously because the conditions are unusual and, of course, unfair."

"As this case has been referred to the High Court of Sports, naturally, this court is a higher pillar, and we have to wait," said Asefi pointing out that the events of the Iranian and Arab teams are on the agenda of the AFC Championship Committee.

"To this end, we await for CAS ruling. However, keeping track of the case is still on our agenda because we want to use all our capacities and capabilities to achieve the desired outcome."



Alireza Marzban reaches agreement with Naft Masjed Soleyman

TASNIM — Former Paykan coach Alireza Marzban has reached an agreement with Naft Masjed Soleyman to take charge of the team.

Marzban will replace Abdollah Veisi, who has recently resigned from his post in the Masjed Soleyman based football team due to financial issues.

The 60-year-old coach started his career in 2000 as assistant coach of German football team Eschborn.

Marzban has also worked as Persepolis and Sepahan as assistant coach. In 2014, he was appointed as head coach of Padideh and has also worked at Khooneh Be Khooneh, Siahjamegan and Paykan. Naft Masjed Soleyman sit one place above bottom in IPL table.

Iran name team for FIVB Volleyball World Championship



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran volleyball head coach Igor Kolakovic has invited 14 players for the upcoming 2018 FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship.

Iran are in Pool D along with Bulgaria, Poland, Cuba, Finland and Puerto Rico.

Team Melli will hold a training camp in Slovenia ahead of the competition.

Squad:

Saeid Marouf, Mohammadtaher Vadi, Amirhossein Tokhteh, Mohammad Mousavi, Milad Ebadipour, Farhad Ghaemi, Mohammadjavad Manavinejad, Morteza Sharifi, Ali Shafiei, Saman Faezi, Amir Ghaffour, Saber Kazemi, Mehdi Marandi and Mohammadreza Hazratpour.

The 2018 FIVB Volleyball Men's

World Championship will be held in Italy and Bulgaria from 9 to 30 September 2018.

For the first time the tournament will be jointly-hosted by more than one country. The tournament will take place in six Italian cities (Bari, Bologna, Florence, Assago, Rome and Turin) and three Bulgarian cities (Ruse, Varna and Sofia).

6 Asian Games stars who can shine at UAE 2019

After a memorable football tournament at the Asian Games, we look at some of the talents on show at Indonesia 2018 who may be ones to watch at January's AFC Asian Cup in the UAE.

The 2018 Asian Games' football competition saw Korea Republic defeat Japan 2-1 in extra-time in an exciting climax at Pakansari Stadium in Cibinong, and eyes now turn to the biggest event in the continental game: the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

Here are six players who stood out in Indonesia and will aspire to rise to even greater heights for their countries in the UAE in January. Let us know in the poll below who you think will be the one to watch.

Nguyen Quang Hai (Vietnam)

The Golden Boy of a young and exciting generation of Vietnamese footballers, attacking midfielder Quang Hai rose to particular prominence at the 2018 AFC U23 Championship where his five goals helped lead his nation to a runners-up finish in China PR.

The 21-year-old continued his fine form in Indonesia over seven months later, scoring the only goal in an impressive 1-0 win over eventual runners-up Japan to secure top spot in Group D.

Quang Hai was part of the Vietnam side that then eliminated Bahrain and Syria to ultimately finish in fourth place, although his memories of the tournament will remain bitter sweet after missing a penalty in the shootout for the bronze medal against the United Arab Emirates.

Hwang Ui-jo (Korea Republic)

Korea Republic have struggled to find an out-and-out goalscorer to truly replace veteran striker Lee Dong-gook, but the performance of Hwang Ui-jo at the 2018 Asian Games suggests coach Paulo Bento might have a have a strong candidate for the role at UAE 2019.

A tournament-leading nine goals for the Gamba Osaka man was impressive and his form this year in Japan - 14 goals in 27 appearances - also suggests Hwang Ui-jo is approaching his prime.

Lee Seung-woo, Son Heung-min and Hwang Hee-chan



are just some of the stars who packed a stellar Korea Republic side in Indonesia, but Hwang Ui-jo's rise and, importantly, goals could be a defining moment for the Taeguk Warriors in their bid to end their 58-year AFC Asian Cup drought.

Wei Shihao (China PR)

China PR's desire for success in football is well known, with a passionate fan base eager to see their team rise up the rankings. One such starlet that some of those hopes are pinned on is exciting midfielder Wei Shihao, who was again among the goals at the Asian Games.

The 23-year-old from Anhui scored in each of China's four games in Indonesia, continuing on from a fine individual campaign at the 2018 AFC U-23 Championship in January.

Having broken into the senior national team at the end of 2017, Wei continues to go from strength to strength and can be expected to be in Marcello Lippi's reckoning for UAE 2019.

Kim Yu-song (DPR Korea)

Last season's AFC Cup top goalscorer Kim Yu-song has carried his hot form in front of goal into this year's continental competitions. The 4.25 SC player was DPR Korea's leading scorer at the Asian Games and fired the side to a quarter-final finish.

Kim also has a knack for scoring at vital moments: a

crucial brace against Saudi Arabia to ensure DPR Korea avoided group elimination and netting in both knockout stage rounds.

The 23-year-old has also maintained his form in continental club competition with five goals in six games in this year's AFC Cup. Should DPR Korea look to progress past the group stage of UAE 2019, Kim's form in front of goal could be a big factor.

Mohamed Al Shamsi (United Arab Emirates)

From scoring goals to denying them, United Arab Emirates custodian Mohamed Al Shamsi was undoubtedly one of the standout 'keepers from the 2018 Asian Games, helping his side to an impressive bronze medal finish.

Named best goalkeeper in the United Arab Emirates top flight last season, Al Shamsi was in superlative form in Indonesia.

Not only did the Emirati prove an excellent shot-stopper, but also a penalty shootout specialist with crucial saves against the hosts in the Round of 16, DPR Korea in the quarter-finals and Vietnam in the bronze medal play-off.

Ikromjon Alibaev (Uzbekistan)

There are plenty of players to get excited about in the young White Wolves side that turned out at the 2018 Asian Games.

Drawn from the 2018 AFC U23 Championship-winning, the likes of midfielder Odiljon Xamroboev, full-back Akramjon Kamilov and playmaker Javokhir Sidikov all burnished their growing reputations.

Nevertheless, it was Ikromjon Alibaev - one of the overage players in the squad - who proved to be one of the standouts. The Lokomotiv midfielder was the second highest scorer in the competition, with an impressive five goals from five games, without shirking his defensive duties.

Still only 24, Alibaev could prove a vital asset for the White Wolves in their AFC Asian Cup 2019 campaign.

Now that you've read about some of the stars from the 2018 Asian Games, let us know in the poll below who you think will have the biggest impact at the 2019 AFC Asian Cup!

(Source: the-afc)

USA Gymnastics chief steps down after nine months in charge

USA Gymnastics chief executive Kerry Perry has resigned just nine months after taking up the role.

She had been criticized for her handling of the fallout from the Larry Nassar abuse scandal.

Former team doctor Nassar was jailed for life after being found guilty of abusing more than 250 athletes including Olympic champion Aly Raisman. Perry's exit also comes after senior

coach Mary Lee Tracy quit on Saturday, just three days into her role.

Appointing Tracy to a senior coaching role angered some victims, after the coach made comments in 2016 where she described Nassar as "amazing".

"I want to thank Kerry for her leadership under very difficult circumstances," Karen Golz, chair of USAG said.

"In the wake of horrific events that have impacted our athletes and the

entire gymnastics community, USA Gymnastics has made progress in stabilising itself."

The Nassar criminal case had already resulted in former USGA chief executive Steve Penny leaving in March 2017.

USGA is yet to appoint an interim CEO, with a search committee to find a permanent replacement for Perry also due to be set up.

(Source: BBC)



Vietnam's Park ready for next challenge

Vietnam fell short on penalties to miss out on a bronze medal finish at the recent 2018 Asian Games, but head coach Park Hang-seo has his sights already set on the ASEAN Football Federation (AFF) Cup later in November.

The Southeast Asian lost 4-3 to the United Arab Emirates in a penalty shoot-out after a 1-1 draw in regulation time, but the Vietnam U-23 squad and Park have received nothing but praise from their fans.

"We lost the bronze medal match in the penalty shoot-out but received much support and encouragement from the people of Vietnam," said Park.

"Korea Republic also gave us a lot of attention, and I want to give my deep thanks to all."

Vietnam held a formidable record of not conceding a goal leading up to making their first Asian Games semi-final since the country's unification to set up a meeting with Korea Republic.

The match was a showdown many were anticipating as Park, a former Korea Republic international himself, had previously coached the U-23 Taeguk Warriors to a bronze finish in the 2002 Asian Games.

Despite losing 3-1 to the eventual gold medalists, Park commended Kim Hak-bum's charges.

"It was the most difficult match. It was psychologically burdensome to defend against Korea Republic's powerful offence." Eight months ago in China PR, Vietnam claimed a second place finish at the 2018 AFC U23 Championship, and coupled with yet another historic milestone at the Asian Games, the 59-year-old drew a lot of accolade for leading the young squad to back-to-back successes.

Park, however, shared the compliments with his supporting staff. "It has not been attained by myself alone," expressed Park. I was supported by many Vietnamese people and coaching staff. I feel happy and pleased just to be with the Vietnamese players.

"I received praise and encouragement from the Vietnamese people for better-than-expected outcomes from the AFC U23 Championship and Asian Games. It's true that I feel psychologically burdened, but I will prepare for the AFF Cup to produce a good result."

(Source: the-afc)

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“Dressage”, “Animal” win Golden Gazelles at Sydney Iranian filmfest

CULTURE TEHRAN — “Dressage” and “Animal” won Golden Gazelles for best feature and short films during the closing night at the 7th edition of the Persian International Film Festival in Sydney on Sunday, the organizers announced.



Negar Moqaddam acts in a scene from “Dressage” by Puya Badkubeh.

Producer Ester Harding, actress Andrea Demetriades and sound designer David White, all from Australia, and Iranian actor Fereydoon Mehrabi were the jury members.

“Dressage” by Puya Badkubeh is about Golsa, a young girl who, along with her friends, robs a corner shop. But while evaluating the booty, they are dismayed to realize that they forgot to take the security camera footage. One of them must return to the crime scene and retrieve it. The vote falls on Golsa, who bravely completes the mission. Her friends’ behavior makes her think, and she hides the hard drive somewhere in secret. But her accomplices and their well-to-do families, worried about their social standing, put more and more pressure on Golsa.

Co-directed by the Ark brothers, Bahman and Bahram, “Animal” is about a man who attempts to cross a frontier disguised as a ram. The festival is also scheduled to be held in Melbourne from September 6 to 9.

Willem Dafoe plays tormented genius Van Gogh in Venice biopic

VENICE, Italy (Reuters) — With his ginger beard, straw hat and a sad, wounded expression, Willem Dafoe looks uncannily like a Vincent Van Gogh self-portrait, as he plays the artist in a biopic that premiered at the Venice Film Festival on Monday.



Actor Willem Dafoe attend a photocall for the film “At Eternity’s Gate” competing in the Venezia 75 section of the 75th Venice International Film Festival in Venice, Italy, September 3, 2018. (Reuters/Tony Gentile)

“At Eternity’s Gate” begins with the impoverished Van Gogh in Paris in the 1880s where his paintings are, at best, ignored and, at worst, derided as incompetent.

It follows him to the south of France, in and out of mental asylums, and ends with his death a couple of years later, at 37, with a bullet in his stomach that, in this film, is not the suicide that historians have speculated was the cause of death.

The movie is directed by Julian Schnabel, who made “The Diving Bell and the Butterfly” and is himself an artist who recreated some of Van Gogh’s work for the film and helped Dafoe learn how to handle a paintbrush.

“There’s a lot of painting in the movie. I had to know how to paint,” Dafoe told Reuters.

“Julian is a great artist and he’s a great teacher, and to have him there teaching me how to see in a new way was thrilling.”

Dafoe portrays Van Gogh as a deeply lonely man who takes solace in nature and his work: “I paint to stop thinking,” he says at one point. Although he suffers blackouts and bouts of anger, his Van Gogh does not come across as mad, but certainly as someone suffering mental torment.

“He saw the value (of suffering),” Dafoe said. “He thought sickness can heal us. He appreciated it, but that’s much different than the normal idea of people thinking that he’s just a ‘mad genius.’”

Now revered as one of the greatest painters, Van Gogh famously died before his true artistic value had been recognized.

“Maybe God gave me a gift to paint for people are aren’t here yet,” he says in the film.

Talking to a priest in a psychiatric hospital, he says: “Jesus also was totally unknown during his life... Jesus wasn’t discovered until 30 to 40 years after he died.”

Asked whether Van Gogh saw himself as a Christ-like figure, Dafoe, who played the lead role in Martin Scorsese’s “The Last Temptation of Christ”, said:

“In his letters he wrote far too much about Christ to not have identified somewhat ... He had a way of seeing that was very personal, very clean, very connected to things eternal, and he wanted to share that.”

Culture ministry seeks to establish national guild of Iranian artists

By Manijeh Rezapoor

TEHRAN — Iran’s Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance is seeking to establish a national guild of artists, the new director of the ministry’s Visual Arts Office, Hadi Mozaffari, said on Tuesday.

“The union will help artists to pursue their rights in their relations with individuals and art organizations, and we need to take steps forward to help establish such a union,” Mozaffari said in a press conference at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art.

“The union would have several duties to carry out, the first of which would be to recognize the artists and grant their certificates,” he said.

He also noted that the Iranian Artists Forum and different art associations have promised to help in the establishment of the artists union.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mozaffari voiced his objections to the high number of art festivals held annually in the country and said that the festivals were established to be creative and influential, and after all these years those events that have not fulfilled their major goals need to be either merged or eliminated.

“There is no creativity in some of the events and they have turned into invariant frames repeated annually,” he lamented.



Visual Arts Office director Hadi Mozaffari speaks at a press conference at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art on September 4, 2018. (Mehr/Asghar Khamseh)

Movies from Iran line up for Busan festival



A scene from “Gold Carrier” by Turaj Aslani.

A R T TEHRAN — Several Iranian films will be competing in the different sections of the 23rd Busan International Film Festival, which will be held in the South Korean city from October 4 to 13. “Gold Carrier” by Turaj Aslani will be competing in New Currents, a section dedicated to promising Asian filmmakers, the organizers have announced.

Movies from Japan, Sri Lanka, Korea,

Kyrgyzstan and several other countries will compete in the category.

“3 Faces” by Jafar Panahi, “Sly” by Kamal Tabrizi and “Rona, Azim’s Mother”, a co-production between Iran and Afghanistan by Jamshid Mahmudi, will be screened in A Window on Asian Cinema.

“Everybody Knows” by Asghar Farhadi has been selected for the World Cinema competition.

2 Iranian movies to compete in Calgary festival



Ali Mosaffa and Hedyeh Tehrani act in a scene from “Orange Days” by Arash Lahuti.

A R T TEHRAN — The Iranian films “Orange Days” and “3 Faces” will be competing in the Calgary International Film Festival in Canada.

Directed by Arash Lahuti, “Orange Days” tells the story of Aban, the only female contractor in the cutthroat and male-dominated orange harvesting in-

dustry, who enters a competition to win a large contract.

“3 Faces” by Jafar Panahi is about a story about a relationship between popular Iranian actress Behnaz Jafari and a provincial girl who lives with a dream of being an actress.

The festival will be held in Calgary from September 19 to 30.

Iranian Cultural Week opens in Moscow

CULTURE TEHRAN — The Iranian Cultural Week opened during a special ceremony at the Maly Theater in Moscow on Monday.

Iranian Ambassador Mehdi Sanai, Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) director Abuzar Ebrahimi-Torkaman and a number of Russian officials attended the opening ceremony, which began with the reading of a message from Russian Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky by one of his assistants.

In the message, Medinsky expressed his hope that cultural relations between the two countries would be expanded in the future.

The organizers honored Vitaly Naumkin, the director of the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences, and Mikhail Borisovich Piotrovsky, the director of the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, for the efforts



A number of the organizers are seen during the opening ceremony of the Iranian Cultural Week at the Maly Theater in Moscow on September 3, 2018. (ICRO)

they have made to promote Iranian art and culture in Russia.

A lineup of movies by Iranian filmmakers is scheduled to be screened during the cultural week. The lineup includes “Track 143” and “Breath” by Narges Abyar, “Mermaid” by Masud Aqababajani, “Season of Narges” by Negar Azarbaijani and “Rana Silence” by Behzad Rafiei.

An exhibition of Persian handicrafts also opened as part of the programs for the cultural week. Yelena Titova, director of the All-Russian Museum of Decorative, Applied and Folk Art in Moscow, was also among the guests during the opening ceremony.

Traditional music and theatrical performances and art exhibitions are underway during the festival, which will run until September 9.

The cultural week is also underway in Ufa, the capital city of the Republic of Bashkortostan, Russia, at the same time.

Jeff Goldblum wants to pick your brains in lobotomy movie “The Mountain”

VENICE, Italy (Reuters) — Jeff Goldblum is charismatic as ever in “The Mountain”, where he plays a smooth-talking doctor with an effective way of rendering people with psychiatric problems “innocuous” - a term he uses as a euphemism for his devastating medical procedure.

Set in the 1950s, Goldblum’s Wallace Fiennes is based on real-life lobotomist Walter Freeman, an evangelist of the operation that consisted of hammering spikes into patients’ brains through their eye sockets to sever their prefrontal cortex.

Fiennes befriends Andy, a troubled young man played by “Ready Player One” star Tye Sheridan, who becomes his assistant and photographer as he travels from hospital to hospital. The doctor spends his free time drinking.

“I’m drunken and picking up women for distraction - not necessarily for their wholesome benefit ... and it’s not so nice,” Goldblum told Reuters in an interview at the Venice Film Festival where the movie is in competition for the Golden Lion.

A far cry from the blockbuster “Jurassic Park” franchise, “The Mountain” is a slow-paced film that writer-director



Actor Jeff Goldblum signs autographs at the screening of the film “The Mountain” competing in the Venezia 75 section of the 75th Venice International Film Festival in Venice, Italy, August 30, 2018. (Reuters/Tony Gentile)

Rick Alverson made deliberately obtuse to force viewers to “wrestle” with to find its true meaning.

“It’s an anti-utopian film. It’s a consideration of the Western, and in this case particularly American, impulse to lunge unbridled into a future without consideration of the ramifications,” Alverson said.

Set in 1954, the movie is a meditation of the end of the all-powerful white male in America with relevance for the Trump era, he told Reuters.

Abu Dhabi postpones unveiling of \$450 million da Vinci painting

ABU DHABI (Reuters) — Leonardo da Vinci’s “Salvator Mundi”, a painting that courted controversy after Saudi Arabia’s crown prince was named as its alleged secret buyer, will not be unveiled on schedule, Abu Dhabi’s Department of Culture and Tourism said on Monday.

The portrait of Christ, which became the most expensive painting ever after a sale by Christie’s auction house, was scheduled to be on display at a new branch of the Louvre in Abu Dhabi from Sept. 18. The authorities did not specify a reason for the delay.

The Abu Dhabi state-linked newspaper, The National, reported the museum might wait until the first anniversary of its opening in November to unveil the painting, which was purchased last year for \$450.3 million by an unidentified buyer.

A report in the Wall Street Journal said that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was identified as the buyer of the painting in U.S. intelligence reports, according to people with direct knowledge of the information, even as the 33-year-old son of the king pushes ambitious economic reforms that include austerity measures.



Visitors are seen at the Louvre Abu Dhabi after it was opened to public in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, November 11, 2017. (Reuters/Satish Kumar)

A Saudi official denied that report at the time, and a document seen by Reuters showed that Saudi Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan, a relative of the crown prince who subsequently became the kingdom’s first culture minister, had been authorized to make the purchase on behalf of the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism.

The painting, only recently rediscovered, was the last da Vinci left in private hands and fetched more than four times Christie’s pre-sale estimate of about \$100 million.