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'Only way to rebalance oil market is stopping sanctions on Iran'

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** – Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said the only way to rebalance the oil market is to stop the sanctions on Iran. "Trump blamed OPEC for rising oil prices in his speech at the UN, but the real reason is Trump himself and his sanctions on Iran," IRNA reported on Tuesday quoting Zanganeh as saying. According to the oil minister, the United States is trying to reduce Tehran's oil revenue to zero and this has made the

markets to tighten and consequently resulted in higher oil prices. The official further stressed the negative impacts of the U.S. sanctions on Iran, saying that China and Europe's economies will be severely damaged by the situation. Oil prices have extended a rally this year on expectations the sanctions on Iran will test OPEC's ability to replace the shortfall, despite a June agreement among the group to pump more after pressure from Trump.



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Tehran felicitates new Iraqi president on election

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – President Hassan Rouhani on Wednesday sent a message to Barham Salih, Iraq's newly-elected president, to offer his congratulations on his election as president by Iraq's legislators. "I am very pleased to offer my sincerest congratulations on the vote of confidence of the Iraqi people's representatives to

Your Excellency as the President of the brother and neighboring country of Iraq," Rouhani said in his message. Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi also in a separate message welcomed Salih's election and expressed hope that age-old, strong and brotherly relations between Tehran and Baghdad will further expand during Saleh's tenure.

Trump says Saudi king wouldn't last 'two weeks' without U.S. support

U.S. President Donald Trump told supporters that Saudi Arabia and its King would not last "two weeks" in power without American military support and appeared to call on the country to pay more for its own defense. "And how about our military deals where we protect rich nations that we don't get reimbursed. How about that stuff?

That's changing too folks," Trump told a campaign rally in Southaven, Mississippi, on Tuesday. "We protect Saudi Arabia. Would you say they're rich? And I love the King ... King Salman but I said 'King, we're protecting you. You might not be there for two weeks without us. You have to pay for your military,'" Trump said. →13

ARTICLE
Hanif Ghaffari
Political analyst

A contemplation on Trump's speech to the UN General Assembly

Undoubtedly, the president of the United States is the main loser of the UN General Assembly in New York. Donald Trump's remarks to the UN General Assembly meeting raised the laughter among the audience, and this was followed by the regret of many American analysts. They noted that Trump's presence at the White House means the "international isolation of the United States." The fact is that Trump's speech to the United Nations General Assembly had kind of domestic function. Regarding the decreasing popularity of Trump and the Republicans in some of the major American states (which put them on the brink of defeat in the Congress elections) and the escalation of the international community's opposition to the US government, made the US President to use the UN tribune to deliver just another speech for the American citizens. Applying terms such as the "stronger U.S." and the "safer World" reminds us of the 2016 presidential race. Trump tried to revive these abstract concepts on the verge of the US mid-term elections in the minds of American voters. Therefore, in analyzing his remarks, his audience should not be limited to the international players and members of the United Nations General Assembly.

Another point which should be taken into consideration here is about Trump's attempts to move forward in the hearts of paradoxes: On the one hand, he uses the worst terms addressing our country, and speaks of economic sanctions on Iran. On the other hand, he doesn't conceal his interest in negotiating with Iran! In a similar approach, he addresses raises disagreements in NATO through the application of protectionist policies towards the European Union and China. The US president also claims that ISIL was destroyed in Syria and Iraq (by the United States)! However, the existing evidences indicate that the United States had supported ISIL and the terrorist and Takfiri groups to the last moment of their life; the groups that were created by no one but the former US government. →7

Use of dollar in trade declining, Zarif says

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Tuesday that the use of dollar in trade is declining and this has been caused by the U.S. adoption of sanctions against other countries. This behavior of the U.S. has led to decline of dollar in the international financial system, he said during a speech at the UN on multilateralism and the JCPOA, the official name for the nuclear deal between Iran and great powers. He said that the U.S. exerts pressure on countries and that is why they are starting to use non-dollar currencies in bilateral trade. Elsewhere, he pointed to the U.S. act in threatening other countries in case they trade with Iran, saying the move is contrary to multilateralism.



"I have been working in this organization since 1982... and I have not seen that a member to the [UN] Security Council asks other members to violate a resolution," he said. He noted that such act will discredit the international diplomacy.

Indian govt 'red-flags' visit of Iranian clerics to Kashmir: report

By Syed Zafar Mehdi
TEHRAN – In a startling development, the government of India is reportedly monitoring the speeches delivered by religious leaders at mosques and congregations in Kashmir. According to a report published in The Hindu, New Delhi has "red-flagged the visit of Iranian clerics" to Jammu and Kashmir amid reports of "fiery speeches" given by them at congregations and mosques. The report says the immediate trigger for the decision seems to be the posters of slain Kashmiri militant commander Burhan Wani that appeared during a Muharram procession in Kashmir recently. The report quotes Imran Raza Ansari, an influential Shia cleric and politician based in Kashmir, saying that the poster of Wani was

flashed by "two men associated with the Hurriyat Conference", referring to the conglomerate of separatist organizations in the Kashmir valley. "This should not have happened. We were mourning Imam Hussain (as) ... this is the first time that such a thing happened. Wani's posters appeared as there were attempts to politicize the mourning. That is not the mandate," he is quoted saying. Ansari further says that the clerics from Iran "regularly visit Kashmir valley" but no cleric gave any "fiery speech" during the month of Muharram. "They have schools in Kashmir and Kargil ... the Iranian clerics do come. But this Muharram, no one came ... the posters of Burhan Wani were flashed in one of the daayras (rally). There were 48 others," he says. J&K Governor Satya Pal Mallik is quoting

saying that the "inquiries" have been ordered regarding the visit of the Iranian clerics to Kashmir. The report also quotes an unnamed senior government official saying that they were "watching the speeches being given by religious leaders including those by Shia leaders". "Since they come here for religious sermons, they are easily given visas. We are checking if they violated visa provisions," the official is quoted. This Muharram, a poster of Wani had appeared in one of the processions in interior areas of Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. The pictures of it were shared widely over social media. Wani, who gave fresh impetus to the armed movement against India in Kashmir, was gunned down in an encounter with Indian forces in July 2016 in Kashmir. →6

ARTICLE
Syed Zafar Mehdi
Journalist
from New Delhi

Parliamentary polls another test for Afghan democracy

The campaigning for October 20 Afghan parliamentary polls quietly kicked off last week. Originally slated for 2015, the election has been repeatedly deferred due to the fragile security environment and national unity government's lack of preparedness. After a lot of dilly-dallying, the people in Afghanistan will finally exercise their franchise at more than 21,000 polling booths across the country to elect members of the new parliament. It will be another watershed moment in the history of this war-torn, nascent democracy, where security situation continues to deteriorate and institutions of government remain in disarray. The list of candidates, which has been trimmed to 2,565 after the disqualification of 35, will be competing for 249 seats in the lower house of the Afghan parliament. Many former parliamentarians are running again, most of them embroiled in large-scale corruption cases. However, the good news is the participation of young and educated men and women – journalists, activists, entrepreneurs. In a country where corruption, poor governance, and warlordism have become a norm, the participation of youth in democratic processes inspires hope and confidence. The young parliamentary candidates have spoken extensively about the need of overhauling the system, combating corruption, rebuilding institutions, establishing rule of law, countering violent extremism and making their country politically and economically sovereign. It is time to pass the baton to the youth. But, will the transition be smooth? Will the government be able to facilitate free and fair elections? Will the armed insurgents allow people to vote? The questions are too many. With less than a month to go, fears about violence and irregularities have cast an ominous shadow over these elections, which come less than a year before the presidential polls. Taliban and its affiliate groups have always opposed the democratic processes in Afghanistan and have repeatedly issued threats against those participating in elections. With ISIS now trying to gain foothold in the war-ravaged country, the league of anti-democratic forces has swelled. →6



Beach Kabaddi held in Urmia

SPORTS **TEHRAN** – The 10th edition of the Iran beach Kabaddi championship was held in Urmia in northwest Iran. Beach Kabaddi is basically a combative sport, with four players on each side; played for a period of 15 minutes with a five-minute break. The core idea of the game is to score points by raiding into the opponent's court and touching as many defense players as possible without getting caught on a single breath.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



'Americans after wreaking havoc in Iran'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Yahya Rahim Safavi, a top military adviser to the Leader, has said U.S. leaders are seeking to wreak havoc in Iran through supporting anti-Islamic Republic groups, including the Monafiqeen (Mojahedin-e Khalq – MEK) and monarchists.

Using some Arab countries' financial resources, the Americans are waging a psychological war against Iran by creating feelings of insecurity in the Iranian society, ISNA on Wednesday quoted Rahim Safavi as saying.

He added the U.S. and the Zionist regime and some other countries do not dare to attack Iran due to the defense capabilities of the Islamic Republic, which has the greatest military power in the region.



Terrorists to face Iran's next retaliatory move soon: Hatami

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Defense Minister Amir Hatami on Wednesday hailed a recent missile attack by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) on Daesh positions inside Syria, saying the terrorists will soon face Iran's next retaliatory move, Mehr reported.

The IRGC's timely attack came right after the Supreme National Security Council decided on Iran's response to the terrorist attack in the city of Ahvaz, as was demanded by the nation, Leader of the Islamic Revolution and all top military officials, Hatami said.

On Monday morning, the IRGC Aerospace Force fired six mid-range ballistic missiles at the bases of Daesh in an area east of the Euphrates in Syria in retaliation for the Ahvaz terrorist attack.



New ministers to be named next week

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi told reporters on Wednesday that the Rouhani administration will introduce its new ministers to the parliament next week.

President Rouhani has called on the parliament to stop impeaching some ministers and give his administration time to reshuffle cabinet and name younger ministers.

Lawmakers have voiced determination to impeach Industry and Trade Minister Mohammad Shariatmadari as well as Transport and Urban Development Ministers Abbas Akhoundi.

The post of economy and labor ministers are vacant.



MP: Iran pursuing case of diplomat detained in France

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has said Iran is following up on the case of the Iranian diplomat detained in France.

"I believe the act is a political game aimed at creating a new show in order to affect the relationship between Iran and European Union," Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh said, the YJC reported on Wednesday.

He added Iran and the EU are trying to prevent such impact on their relations.

Earlier, Iran rejected France's allegations about the involvement of an Iranian diplomat in an alleged bomb attack on a meeting of the notorious anti-Iran terrorist group, the Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO), near Paris.



Putin backs European financial transactions with Iran

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that he is firm to support the new mechanism proposed by Europe to ease financial transactions with Iran.

Speaking at the international conference on "Russian Energy Week", the Russian president said the new initiative used by Europe for creation of a new mechanism to ease financial transactions with Iran paves the grounds to ignore the U.S. economic sanctions although it is a very late decision, according to IRNA.

"Taking a late measure is much better than sitting idly by," Putin said.

There is no doubt that this is a right decision, the Russian president underlined. He added that the U.S. measures against Iran will be harmful to global economy.



VP: ICJ rulings cannot be violated

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – The vice president for legal affairs on Wednesday dismissed doubts on whether the International Court of Justice's ruling on Iran's lawsuit against the U.S. would be enforced.

Speaking to reporters after a cabinet session, La'ya Joneidi hailed the top UN court's ruling that the U.S. should ensure that sanctions against Iran do not impact humanitarian aid or civil aviation safety, Tasnim reported.

"If we say that the rulings handed down by this court have no guarantee to be implemented, then we should conclude that the international law is worthless," she remarked.

U.S. has desperately failed in its anti-Iran bid, Rouhani says

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that the U.S. is seeking to undermine Iran's "independence" and "democracy," yet Washington has "desperately failed in its anti-Iran bid."

Speaking at a cabinet meeting in Tehran, Rouhani strongly criticized the U.S. government's hostile policies which threaten Iran's independence, saying only Iranians – and not the White House – have the right to determine Iran's fate, ISNA reported.

Pointing to his recent trip to New York to attend the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the president said, "What I felt during this trip was that the Americans, despite all the loud noise they made by imposing sanctions against Iran, are seeking only temporary pressure on Iran to gain a small political achievement inside the U.S."

He said the U.S. has failed and will fail to achieve its goals, praising Iran's diplomats for their considerable successes at the UN which led to more isolation of the Trump administration in the world.

America is isolated in today's world and no one has accepted or will accept its policies, he remarked.

"Today, the world public opinion is in favor of Iran. Even inside America, many politicians and people consider Iran as being on the right path and do not approve of the U.S. government's measures," Rouhani said.

"An overwhelming majority of the countries throughout the world supported BARJAM (the Persian acronym for the 2015 nuclear agreement) and praised Iran's decision to save the deal, while condemning the U.S. sanctions against Iran as an illegal act," the president stated.

Rouhani further said the U.S. government's violation of



international commitments, its opposition to some international institutions – including Human Rights Council and the International Criminal Court (ICC) – and its withdrawal from some trade deals were criticized by all states at the UNGA.

ICJ orders lift of sanctions on Iran

Zarif: ICJ ruling makes it imperative for the world to counter malign U.S. unilateralism

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – In a victory for Tehran against Washington, the International Court of Justice on Wednesday ordered the United States to halt the unilateral sanctions it recently reimposed on "humanitarian" supplies to Iran.

The Hague-based court, which is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, announced its ruling regarding the July lawsuit brought by Tehran against Washington's decision to reimpose unilateral sanctions following the U.S. exit from the 2015 nuclear deal.

Iran's lawsuit said the sanctions violate the terms of the 1955 Treaty of Amity between Iran and the U.S. It also called on the court to order Washington to immediately suspend the measures.

According to the verdict, Washington "shall remove by means of its choosing any impediments arising from the measures announced on May 8 to the free exportation to Iran of medicines and medical devices, food and agricultural commodities" as well as airplane parts.

The court further said that sanctions on goods "required for humanitarian needs... may have a serious detrimental impact on the health and lives of individuals on the territory of Iran."

U.S. sanctions on aircraft spare parts also



had the "potential to endanger civil aviation safety in Iran and the lives of its users," it added.

UN top court ruling is a 'victory for rule of law'

Following the ICJ verdict, Iran's foreign minister called on the international community to collectively fight U.S. unilateralism.

"UN top court rules that US must comply with obligations violated by re-imposing sanctions on Iranian people when exiting #JCPOA. Another failure for sanctions-addicted USG

and victory for rule of law. Imperative for int'l community to collectively counter malign US unilateralism," Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry also released a statement saying it "sees eye to eye" with the ICJ which has ruled against sanctions on Iran.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran's Foreign Ministry sees eye to eye with the International Court of Justice with regards to its ruling, and the tribunal regards itself as having the

preliminary competence to look into Iran's lawsuit against the U.S. and, hence, has foiled efforts by the U.S. government and its lawyers to dismiss the court's competence and shirk its legal responsibilities.

"... [Today] the world public opinion and all independent countries have more assurance and are determined to show off their resolve to respect international agreements, observe international law and respect governments' responsibilities with regards to the preservation and implementation of the JCPOA," the Foreign Ministry stated.

"The injunction issued by the International Court of Justice showed once again that it is the U.S. government that is becoming more and more isolated due to its wrong and extremist policies and, as a result, excessive demands from other countries. Hence, the U.S. should drop its wrong habit of, and inappropriate addition to imposing unfair and illegal sanctions against people and citizens, and turn into a responsible member and an ordinary country of the international community. In this path, the international community and independent countries shoulder a heavier responsibility to foil the illegal attempts of this country, which has a long history of renegeing on its commitments and non-compliance with its international obligations."

Zarif assures Trump will not get a better deal

POLITICS **TEHRAN** – Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that he assures U.S. President Donald Trump that he will not get a better deal than the 2015 nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"We have a hundred and fifty pages document which is the deal and which was negotiated word by word not only by Iran and the United States but by six other powers. Having negotiated that deal and having been involved in this process for a very long time I can assure President Trump that the U.S. will not get a better deal," he told BBC in an interview aired on Wednesday.

On a possible meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani, Zarif said, "Nothing is impossible but the outcome of Mr. Trump summit with President Rouhani would be a 'photo opportunity' and a 'two page document'."

The chief diplomat added, "International relations is about respecting obligations. The United States negotiated a deal. What happened in the United States when President Trump came into office was not a revolution. It was simply a change of administration. And the nuclear deal is not a personal deal between myself and John Kerry or President Obama and President Rouhani. It is an international agreement between seven countries and the European Union which is included in a Security Council resolution."

Commenting on European's efforts to preserve the JCPOA after Washington's withdrawal in May, he said that support from Europe to preserve the 2015 nuclear deal in the face of U.S. pressure "has been better than expected".

"[British] Prime Minister May as well as [French] President Macron and almost anybody else said that we are committed and we are committed to see that Iran enjoys the economic dividends of the deal and the Europeans probably made better commitments than expected," Zarif stated.

He added, "Then it was to translate those political com-



mitments into mechanisms and I believe those mechanisms are going to be in place. The next task which is very important and difficult is to see if those mechanisms work. We are going to be a little bit more patient. It does not mean that our patience will never run out, but we are going to be a little bit more patient to see."

Back in May, Trump withdrew his country from the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers. Since then, the remaining parties to the deal, including France, Germany, the UK, Russia, and China, are trying to convince Tehran to remain in the multilateral agreement.

Under the agreement, Iran is obliged to put limits on its nuclear agreement in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

Twelve reports by the International Atomic Energy Agency have verified Iran's compliance. The five other major powers to the deal—Britain, China, France, Germany, and Russia—have stuck by it.

To circumvent renewed U.S. sanctions, the European Union announced plans during the UN General Assembly week to create a new financial entity to facilitate transactions with Iran—a move that could also challenge U.S. domination of the international financial system. It will be open to "oth-

er partners in the world," EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said, after meeting Zarif.

She later noted the EU's initiative to facilitate payment to/from Iran could be in place before November, when the U.S. is to re-impose the second batch of its anti-Iran sanctions.

While in New York for the UN summit last week, the Iranian president did not shut the door for a possible negotiations with the U.S. but he insisted that Washington must first cherish the nuclear agreement.

"I don't believe there are any challenges in the world that can't be resolved," he told reporters. "There is no dead end. There is always a way forward."

Rouhani said it would be easier for both countries to go back to where they were six months ago—when the diplomatic channel was open, before the U.S. abandoned the nuclear deal—than to go back six years.

Iran says will not talk with U.S. because it is not 'reliable'

In an interview with The New Yorker published on Monday, Foreign Minister Zarif said Iran will not sit for talks with the U.S. as long as it sees no reliability and realism on the other side.

"I'm not ruling out the prospect of talks provided the necessary conditions for talks, and that is reliability," Zarif said in response to a question about the possibility of bilateral talks between Tehran and Washington.

"Reliability is different from trust. Reliability is that when you sign something you are bound by it," the chief diplomat noted. He then cited an old Latin idiom, Pacta sunt servanda, which means "treaties shall be complied with", and described it as the basis of international relations.

"Otherwise everything will fall apart... We are waiting for some sense of realism," Zarif added.

Zarif further noted that the relationship between Iran and Washington needs to be based on some foundations, and the nuclear deal could be the one if the U.S. had remained in it.

U.S. ending 1955 treaty with Iran after UN top court ruling

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced on Wednesday that the United States would be terminating a 1955-era treaty of amity with Iran that regulates economic and consular ties between the two countries, calling it a move that was "39 years overdue."

Ties between the two nations have been

strained for decades but have come to a head since the Trump administration moved to pull out of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

The move to end the treaty comes after the United Nations' top court on Wednesday ordered the United States to lift sanctions on "humanitarian" goods to Iran that U.S. President Donald Trump re-imposed after

pulling out of the nuclear pact.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) unanimously ruled that Washington "shall remove by means of its choosing any impediments arising from the measures announced on May 8 to the free exportation to Iran of medicines and medical devices, food and agricultural commodities" as well

as airplane parts, Judge Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf wrote.

The court said sanctions on goods "required for humanitarian needs... may have a serious detrimental impact on the health and lives of individuals on the territory of Iran."

(Excerpt from CBS News)

Russia completes delivery of S-300 system to Syria

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu says his country has completed the delivery of an S-300 surface-to-air missile system to Syria, irrespective of Israeli authorities' strong opposition that it will pose a serious "challenge" to the Tel Aviv regime.

"We have embarked on a number of activities aimed at strengthening the air defense systems of the Syrian Arab Republic in order to ensure better protection for our military personnel. We have completed the delivery of S-300 complexes. This includes 49 pieces of equipment: illuminating laser radiolocators, defense priority systems, control vehicles and four missile launchers. The work was completed a day ago. We have delivered the whole system to Syria," Shoigu said at a Russian Security Council meeting chaired by President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday.

The Russian defense minister added that it will take three months to train Syrian specialists to use the S-300 air defense missile system. Last month, Moscow vowed to bolster Syria's air defense capabilities by deploying the modern S-300 surface-to-air missile system to the Arab country.

The announcement came in the wake of the accidental downing of an Il-20 reconnaissance aircraft with 15 servicemen on board by Syria's S-200 air defense systems which were at the time responding to a wave of Israeli strikes on state institutions in Latakia.

Moscow held Israel responsible for the September 17 incident, saying the regime's pilots had intentionally used the Russian plane as cover to conduct air raids, effectively putting it in the cross hairs of the Syrian air defenses.

On Friday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov confirmed that Russia had begun delivering the S-300 surface-to-air missile system to Syria.

"The delivery started already and as President (Vladimir) Putin said, after that



[downing] incident ... the measures that we will take will be devoted to ensuring 100 percent safety and security of our men," he told a news conference at the United Nations.

Moscow's decision to supply the air defense system to Syria has raised worries in Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu criticized Russia's decision as "irresponsible," saying Tel Aviv "will continue to do what it has to do to defend itself."

■ **'Israel won't stop ops in Syria despite S-300 delivery'**

Israeli minister for military affairs Avigdor Lieberman has expressed Tel Aviv's discontent over Russia's delivery of an S-300 surface-to-air missile system to Syria, stressing the move will not deter the Israeli regime from military operations in the war-ravaged Arab

country.

"I cannot say that we are pleased with the deployment of the S-300. However, this is the very topic where we have no way out. There is no way not to make decisions," he said.

Lieberman further stated that it was important for Moscow and Tel Aviv to restore normal ties despite their disagreements over the recent downing of a Russian Il-20 reconnaissance aircraft off the coast of Syria's western province of Latakia.

"I think the most important thing for us today is...to return the working relationship to normal. It is today the most important task — to return to normal operation, coordination, to more actively use the "hot line" to prevent conflict situations. We need to work," he commented.

The Israeli minister for military affairs asserted that the Tel Aviv regime "has conducted more than 200 strikes against designated targets in Syria over the past two years, and not a single Russian soldier received a single scratch."

"At the time when the Syrian air defenses opened fire, Israeli planes were already in our airspace," Lieberman alleged.

■ **Syrian army, allies inflict losses on Daesh in Tulul al-Safa region**

Meanwhile, Syrian government forces, backed by allied fighters from popular defense groups, have dealt heavy blows to Daesh Takfiri terrorists in Tulul al-Safa hilly region, which lies in Syria's southwestern province of Sweida.

Syria's official news agency SANA reported that a number of caves, which the extremists used as militant hideouts, in addition to weapons caches were destroyed in the process.

■ **Report: Fateh al-Sham agrees to leave Idlib under pressure from Turkish intelligence service**

Additionally, members of foreign-sponsored and Takfiri Jabhat Fateh al-Sham militant group, formerly known as al-Nusra Front, have reportedly agreed to withdraw from the demilitarized zone in the northwestern Syrian province of Idlib under pressure from the Turkish intelligence service.

Syria's pro-government al-Watan daily newspaper reported that Turkish intelligence agents have held several meetings with the leaders of the terror outfit, and vowed that the Syrian army would not carry out a military operation in Idlib.

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

(Source: agencies)

Trump tax avoidance claims: New York authorities launch 'vigorous investigation' into story on president's finances

New York state tax authorities are investigating allegations that Trump participated in "dubious tax schemes" including "instances of outright fraud" that increased his wealth by hundreds of millions of dollars.

A New York Times investigation uncovered a "vast trove of confidential tax returns and financial records" which the newspaper said showed the president and his siblings set up a fake corporation to disguise millions of dollars in gifts from their parents.

Trump is said to have received the equivalent of at least \$413m (£318m) from his father Fred C Trump's property empire, with much of the money allegedly accumulated through tax evasion.

The state's Department of Taxation and Finance said it was "reviewing the allegations in the NYT article and is vigorously pursuing all appropriate avenues of investigation".

The White House called the Times report "misleading" but did not deny or address the details of the story.

Spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the Internal Revenue Service had "reviewed and signed off on these

transactions" decades ago.

Trump has long portrayed himself as a self-made billionaire who turned a "very small" \$1m (£770,000) loan from his father into a vast fortune.

"My father gave me a very small loan in 1975... and I built it into a company that's worth many, many billions of dollars," he said during the presidential campaign.

But the Times investigation, based on interviews with Fred Trump's former employees and advisers and more than 100,000 pages of financial documents, paints a vastly different picture.

By the age of three, the future president is said to have been earning \$200,000 (£153,000) a year in today's money from his father's empire. He was a millionaire by the age of eight and was receiving the equivalent of \$1m a year by the time he left university, documents reportedly show.

Trump's parents are said to have transferred well over \$1 billion (£770m) in wealth to their children, which could have generated \$550 million in tax under the 55 per cent rate then imposed on gifts and inheritances.

According to the Times, the Trumps paid only \$52.2 million tax, about five per cent.

The evasion was allegedly achieved in part through the systemic undervaluation of the business empire of Fred Trump, a prolific property developer who transferred most of his assets to his four living children before he died in 1999.

In tax returns, the properties — which included 25 apartment complexes with 6,988 flats — were valued at \$41.4m. Over the next decade, they were sold off for more than 16 times that amount.

Following the publication of the story late on Tuesday, New York City mayor Bill de Blasio said: "I've directed NYC's Department of Finance to immediately investigate tax and housing violations and to work with NY State to find out if appropriate taxes were paid."

The Times, citing tax experts, reported it was unlikely Trump could face criminal prosecution because the alleged actions were past the statute of limitations.

However, there is no time limit on civil fines for tax fraud. (Source: The Independent)

Turkish troop convoy enters Syria rebel zone

A Turkish military convoy entered rebel-held northwestern Syria early Wednesday, an AFP correspondent reported, as the deadline for establishing a buffer zone between rebel and government forces draws closer.

At least 40 vehicles, including trucks and armored personnel carriers, were seen moving slowly south along a main highway under the cover of darkness.

The troops they were carrying are expected to be deployed at "observation posts" Turkey has already set up in rebel-held areas of Idlib and Aleppo provinces.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based activist group, said the vehicles were heading to Turkish monitoring posts, including in the southwestern parts of Idlib.

There was no word from Turkey on any reinforcements to the area. It last sent a similar troop column into northern Syria just over a week ago. Wednesday's convoy entered as the deadline for implementing a Turkish-Russian accord on the future of Syria's last major rebel bastion draws closer.

Last month, Moscow and Ankara agreed to set up a demilitarized zone ringing rebel



territory to avert a threatened government offensive.

All factions in the zone must withdraw

heavy weapons by Oct. 10, and radical groups must leave by Oct. 15. It will then be monitored by Turkish troops and Russian military police.

(Source: AFP)

UAE recruiting Africans for war on Yemen

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia's key partner in the ongoing Riyadh-led invasion of Yemen, has reportedly been recruiting tribesmen from northern and central parts of Africa to fight in the war.

The campaign features Emirati envoys "seducing" the tribesmen across a vast area spanning southern Libya as well as entire Chad and Niger, who earn a living by herding as well as human and material smuggling, the Middle East Monitor (MEMO) press monitoring organization reported on Wednesday.

"This campaign is supervised by Emirati officials who gained material profits in collaboration with human traffickers," the report added.

An awareness campaign has been launched by Chadian activists, led by campaigner Mohamed Zain Ibrahim, to warn

the tribesmen against joining the Saudi-led war.

"The Arabs of the Persian Gulf region, especially the UAE and Saudi Arabia, have never bothered to get to know the Arabs of the desert, and today they are asking for their support and seducing them to fight by their side in Yemen!" MEMO cited Ibrahim as telling pan-Arab Arabi21 electronic newspaper.

The envoys offer potential mercenaries such incentives as sums ranging from \$900 to \$3,000, in addition to acquiring UAE citizenship in return for their applying for jobs in Emirati security companies.

Ibrahim said the job opportunities were "an actual military recruitment campaign to gather mercenaries for the Yemeni war and use them to fight the people of Yemen, who are Arabs and Muslims as well, and all that for a bunch of dollars."

"A delegation of Emirati people in business visited Niger in January 2018, where they met Arab tribal leaders and recruited 10,000 tribesmen living between Libya, Chad, and Niger," MEMO said.

The Emirates has been contributing heavily to the 2015-present war, which seeks to reinstall Yemen's former Saudi-allied officials.

In addition to their own forces, both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi have deployed thousands of militants across the violence-scarred country to intensify the invasion.

The Emirati side began beefing up its contribution in June, when the coalition launched a much-criticized offensive against al-Hudaydah, Yemen's key port city, which receives the bulk of its imports.

(Source: Press TV)

Barham Salih elected new president of Iraq



Iraqi lawmakers have elected veteran Kurdish politician Barham Salih president of the country.

Lawmakers met on Tuesday to elect a new president after a dispute between the two main Kurdish parties delayed the vote on Monday. The two largest Kurdish parties each put forward a candidate for lawmakers to choose.

Salih from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) party was declared as the next president after he defeated Fuad Hussein from the Kurdistan Democratic Party Party (KDP) following two rounds of voting. Salih won a large majority in the second round.

The vote went to a second round where Hussein withdrew his candidacy twice which was rejected on both occasions. For the first time, the two largest Kurdish parties each put forward a candidate.

The new president must be elected with two-thirds of the vote in parliament, which is 220 votes. If no one candidate meets this threshold, a runoff vote will be held.

The presidency has been reserved for the Kurds since Iraq's first multi-party elections in 2005, held two years after the US-led invasion.

Under an unofficial agreement dating back to the 2003, Iraq's presidency, a largely ceremonial role, is held by a Kurd, while the prime minister is Shia Muslim and the parliament speaker is Sunni.

Iraq held elections in May. Lawmakers must next elect a new president and task the leader of the largest bloc to form a government as prime minister.

The country's main political alliances led by Muqtada Sadr's Sairoon bloc and the Fatah Alliance led by commander Hadi al-Amiri are expected to cooperate to form a new government.

Incumbent Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has also announced that he is not seeking to serve a second term in office.

Millions of Iraqis voted on May 12 in their first parliamentary election since the defeat of the ISIL (Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group, but a contentious recount process delayed the announcement of final results until last month.

The Iraqi politics has long been vulnerable to the differences lying along the country's major ethnic and sectarian fault lines.

Any new government has to move quickly to address the country's chronic woes, including the poor quality of basic services as well as political and economic mismanagement. It would also have to face the mammoth task of rebuilding the country following three years of struggle against Daesh.

(Source: Press TV)

U.S. to offer cyberwar capabilities to NATO allies

The Pentagon says the U.S. is offering to put its cyber-warfare capabilities to use on behalf of its NATO allies.

Senior Pentagon official Katie Wheelbarger says the U.S. would conduct offensive or defensive cyber operations if asked to do so by its allies.

The principal deputy assistant defense secretary for international security affairs says the plan is intended in part as a way for the U.S. to show its commitment to NATO.

Officials planned to announce it in the coming days as U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis attends a meeting of NATO defense ministers in Brussels on Wednesday and Thursday.

The move reflects growing concerns by the U.S. and its allies over Russia's use of cyber operations to influence elections in America and elsewhere.

(Source: AP)

Attacks on Afghan checkpoints kill 9 police

At least nine Afghan police officers were killed in attacks by insurgents on checkpoints in three different parts of the country, provincial officials said Wednesday.

Wali Ahmad Sarih, police spokesman in southern Nimroz province, said Taliban fighters attacked a checkpoint late Tuesday, killing four police and wounding two others. He said four insurgents were killed and six wounded in the ensuing gun battle.

Aziz Ahmad Azizi, spokesman for the governor of southern Kandahar province, reported a similar attack in which the Taliban killed three police and wounded six, also late Tuesday.

Meanwhile, in another attack carried out by insurgents in northern Faryab province, two policemen were killed and two others wounded, said Karim Yuresh, spokesman for the provincial police chief.

Yuresh said Taliban fighters targeted a police checkpoint Tuesday night and the ensuing battle continued till early Wednesday in the Khoja Sabezposh district. Six Taliban insurgents were killed and around 10 others were wounded in the fighting, he said.

The Taliban, who have seized districts across Afghanistan and carry out near-daily attacks, claimed the assault in Kandahar and Faryab, and are known to be active in Nimroz province.

(Source: AP)

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	185559.3
IFX	2114.71

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	48,620 rials
GBP	54,560 rials
AED	11,430 rials

Source: isna.ir

COMMODITIES

WTI	\$75.39/b
Brent	\$85.62/b
OPEC Basket	\$83.28/b
Gold	\$1,199.95/oz
Silver	\$14.70/oz
Platinum	\$835.20/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



Trade between Iran, Turkey stands at \$5.2b

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The value of trade between Iran and Turkey stood at \$5.2 billion in the first half of 2018, Iran's commercial attaché in Turkey told IRNA on Wednesday.

Alireza Jafarbeyglou put the value of Iran's exports to Turkey at \$3.8 billion and Turkey's exports to Iran at \$1.4 billion during the six-month period.

Iran-Turkey trade stood at over \$11 billion in 2017 and the two countries are planning to reach the figure of \$30 billion.



Six-month petchem production at 27.5m tons

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran produced 27.5 million tons of petrochemical products during the first half of current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), according to production control director in National Petrochemical Company (NPC).

Qodratollah Farajpour said the figure shows two percent increase compared to the first half of the previous year, IRIB reported on Wednesday.

The NPC director noted that this rise has occurred despite overhaul operation in a number of high-capacity production units during the first half of this year which made some halts in production of these units.

Italy may offer concessions to EU on deficit aims

Italy's populist government will offer some concessions to fend off European Union pressure about its public finances, committing to reduce its budget deficit targets in 2020 and 2021, while sticking to its guns for next year, Corriere della Sera newspaper reported.

The government will maintain its plan for a shortfall of 2.4 percent of gross domestic product for 2019, while reducing the targeted gap to 2.2 percent and 2 percent for the two successive years respectively, according to Corriere. The government had originally said it would aim for 2.4 percent for all three years.

Newspaper la Repubblica reported a similar change of position, a day after government officials said they were determined to follow through on their original plans. Deputy Premier Luigi Di Maio said the government will present its budget plan to Parliament on Wednesday, aiming to fund election pledges to cut taxes, create a minimum income for the poor and effectively lower the retirement age.

The euro snapped five days of losses, gaining as much as 0.4 percent to 1.1594 against the dollar after the report.

Italy already has the region's biggest debt in absolute terms and its pledges to breach EU rules requiring deficit reduction have fueled fears of a renewed crisis and sent the country's bond yields soaring. The spread between benchmark Italian and German bonds reached the highest in more than five years this week after the EU rebuffed Italy's spending goals. (Source: Bloomberg)

Turkey inflation surges to nearly 25 percent in Sept, highest in 15 years

Turkish inflation surged to nearly 25 percent in September from a year earlier, official data showed on Wednesday, hitting its highest in 15 years and sharpening focus on whether the central bank will be able to deliver another hefty rate hike.

The size of the increase - prices jumped by 6.3 percent from a month earlier - far outpaced expectations and underscored the deep impact of a currency crisis on the economy and consumers.

The lira has lost nearly 40 percent of its value this year against the dollar, hit by concerns about President Tayyip Erdogan's influence over the central bank and a rift with Washington.

That sell-off has pushed up prices of everything from food to fuel and eroded confidence in what was once a high-flying emerging market. "The central bank will need to react to this," said Inan Demir, senior emerging markets economist at Nomura. "This is not something that could be ignored and they will have to hike at their next meeting." (Source: Reuters)

Transit of commodities via railway up 50% in 6 months on year

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Transit of goods through Iran's railway network rose 50 percent during the first six months of current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), compared to that of the previous year, Hossein Ashouri, the deputy head of Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI), announced, IRNA reported.

As RAI has previously announced, transit of goods via Iran's railway network is planned to reach three million tons in the

current Iranian calendar year (which ends on March 20, 2019).

Some 1.58 million tons of goods have been transited via Iranian railways in the past calendar year, registering a record in this field.

The data released by Iran's Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization (RMTO) and also Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) prove that the transit of goods via Iran has been experiencing an increasing trend in the past Iranian calendar year.



This trend which indicates importance of the country in regional trade is anticipated to continue in the current calendar year through some underway development plans.

In this due, development of transit via railway is on the agenda of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways.

Development of railway network in the border areas is a good opportunity for elevating transit which plays some significant role in bringing more income for the country and also more employment, according to Ebrahim Mohammadi, the previous deputy head of RAI for operation and traffic.

TIEE 2018 to host 180 foreign exhibitors in mid-Oct.

ECONOMY TEHRAN — To be hosting 180 foreign exhibitors from 10 different countries, the 18th edition of Tehran International Industry Exhibition (TIEE 2018) is due to be held on October 13-16 at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds, IRIB reported.

As reported, 380 domestic companies along with participants from other countries will be showcasing their latest innovations, products and services in the Middle East's biggest industry event.

The four-day exhibition features various areas including industrial tools and equipment, large and small industries production lines, industrial automation and technical and engineering services.

Getting to know about new advancements and achievements in various fields of industry, exchanging knowledge, technical



know-how and up-to-date technology among the participants, acquaintance of exhibitors and visitors with the latest achievements and finally establishing direct communication between producers and consumers, creating investment opportunities, job opportunities, marketing and expanding exports have been mentioned as some of the main goals of this exhibition.

Stock market issues 115 trading codes for foreign investors in H1

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Some 115 trading codes were issued for new foreign investors in Iran's stock exchange market during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), Iranian Central Securities Depository and Settlement Funds Company (known as SAMAT) has announced.

In this way, the number of trading codes held by the foreign investors has reached 1,190, Tasnim news agency reported.

Also, 534 new trading codes have been issued for Iranian investors over the mentioned six months, increasing the number of trading codes to 10,483 million in the stock market.

There are currently over 10,376 individual investors and 106,000



institutional investors in Iran's stock exchange market.

Presence of new shareholders in Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) rose 40 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1396 (ended on March 20), compared to its preceding year, as the former head of TSE, Hassan Qalibaf-Als, has previously announced.

Fishery exports at over \$80m since March

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The value of Iran's fishery exports since the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 21) stands at over \$80 million, according to Hassan Salehi, the head of Iran's Fisheries Organization.

The official said that the figure shows a 20-percent increase from the fishery exports in the same time span of the past year, IRIB reported on Wednesday.

Salehi also said that fishery exports are anticipated to reach \$550 million-\$580 million by the yearend (March 20, 2019).

He has previously announced that the value of Iran's annual fishery export is planned to rise at least 10 percent in this year.

The official has put the country's fishery exports at 125,000



tons valued at \$500 million in the past calendar year.

He said shrimp accounted for the main part of the exports in the past year while over 16,000 tons of shrimp valued at \$100 million were exported.

Salehi also said that fishery output is planned to rise 8-10 percent to 1.25 million tons in this year.

He had previously put the fishery output at 1.15 million tons in the past year and the fishery consumption per capita at 11.2 kilograms, indicating 500 grams rise year on year.

Infrastructures required for boosting the fishery output have been provided in the country over the past three years and related plans have been approved by domestic and foreign investors, the official said, adding, "If the banking barriers for trade with Europe are removed we will have no concern in terms of production."

Tehran hosting intl. water-wastewater, fishery exhibits

ENERGY TEHRAN — The 14th edition of Iran's International Water and Wastewater Exhibition and also the 3rd edition of Iran's International Fisheries Industry Exhibition (IFEX 2018) kicked off at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on Wednesday and will wrap up on October 7, IRIB reported.

The water and wastewater exhibit, which was inaugurated in the presence of Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, is hosting 216 Iranian companies besides 28 foreign ones from 12 countries including Italy, China, Germany, Austria, Turkey, Denmark, Spain, the Netherlands,



Britain, Greece, the U.S. and France.

Several workshops are also being held on the sidelines of the event.

IFEX 2018 is hosting 86 Iranian and foreign exhibitors showcasing their latest products and achievements in fishery industry.

Over 1.07m TEUs loaded, unloaded at Shahid Rajaei port

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Over 1.07 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of commodities were loaded and unloaded at Shahid Rajaei Port, in south of Iran, during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), according to the director general of Ports and Maritime Department of Hormozgan Province.

Allah-Morad Afifpour put the exported and imported commodities at 804,14 TEUs and transited goods at 197,377 TEUs during the mentioned time span, IRNA reported.

In late February, the third phase of the development plan of Iran's biggest container port, Shahid Rajaei port, was launched in the presence of President Hassan Rouhani and Transport and Urban Development



Minister Abbas Akhoundi.

Upon the completion of this phase within three years, using 8.6 trillion rials (about \$204.7 million), the port's capacity will be increased to eight million TEUs, the Head of Ports and Maritime Organization Mohammad Rastad said.

India's rupee sinks to record lows. Its central bank isn't expected to save it

The rupee's plunge into record-low territory this year is unlikely to slow — even if India's central bank hikes its rate this week, according to experts carefully watching the Reserve Bank of India.

Analysts largely expect India, Asia's third-largest economy, to raise its benchmark rate by 25 basis points at its meeting this week, with more increases to come this and next year. But while an interest rate hike would normally be expected to support a currency, the rupee "is in for continued losses ahead," according to Prakash Sakpal, vice president of research at Dutch bank ING.

"Even if it hikes by 25 (basis points) as expected that's unlikely to help the currency ... The RBI will have to do more, though that looks unlikely on the grounds of on-target inflation and stress in the financial sector," he said.

Sakpal predicted the central bank will merely match the three U.S. Federal Reserve rate hikes this year without giving the rupee any leeway to gain against the dollar.

The rupee hit a series of record lows against the dollar in the past two months, weakening to about 73 rupees against the greenback. That marked a decline of more than 14 percent since the start of this year, earning it the status of the worst-performing in the region — alongside the Indonesian rupiah and Philippine peso.

India's currency depreciation has been attributed to rising oil prices — it's a major crude importer — and a widening current account deficit. Experts say that broader global concerns, which rose to the forefront in the emerging currencies sell-off following economic troubles in Turkey and Argentina, have



also weighed on investor sentiment.

Shashank Mendiratta, an economist covering South Asia and India at ANZ, added: "While higher interest rates may help, a single rate hike is unlikely to suffice. It will require a series of rate hikes as has been the case in Indonesia."

Inflation and the rupee

Experts cautioned that a balance in monetary policy has to be struck, to prevent slowing growth and rising inflation.

Inflation, a key concern for India's central bank, slipped below the 4 percent target in August. It's affected by currency movements because if the rupee weakens, then foreign goods would cost more in rupee terms — resulting in an increase in prices.

With oil prices weighing on India, if interest rates are hiked and

the rupee strengthens, then the cost of imported oil will be less.

Currently, a 10 percent rise in global crude oil prices will lift headline inflation figures by between 20 and 30 basis points according to the RBI, DBS Economist Radhika Rao noted. A rupee that has depreciated by around 5 percent could also prop up inflation, by 20 basis points, she said.

"These reasons will provide sufficient justification to the central bank to tighten policy levers in October," Rao concluded.

But ANZ's Mendiratta said that the current inflation level will not be sufficiently compelling for the RBI to raise rates.

"Though the combination of higher oil prices and a weak Rupee have raised concerns on the inflation path, the recent soft readings suggest that the RBI can afford to wait and watch. Stabilising the Rupee by raising interest rates does not seem to be high on the agenda," he told CNBC.

Mendiratta added that a rate hike is also unlikely because government and corporate bond yields are likely to move higher.

ING's Sakpal cautioned that the central bank has to strike a balance given that he expects India's growth to moderate from now until 2019. The country's GDP growth is expected to go past 7 percent this year, but the downside to raising rates may be a slowdown in economic growth.

"The RBI will have to strike a proper policy balance to prevent slow growth and high inflation trends from intensifying further ... Hence, I am not expecting the rupee to budge from its underperforming Asian currency status in the near-term," he said.

(Source: CNBC)

Saudi Arabia, Russia agreed in Sept. to lift oil output, told U.S.

Russia and Saudi Arabia struck a private deal in September to raise oil output to cool rising prices and informed the United States before a meeting in Algiers with other producers, four sources familiar with the plan said.

U.S. President Donald Trump has blamed the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) for high crude prices and called on it to boost output to bring down fuel costs before the U.S. congressional elections on Nov. 6.

The deal underlines how Russia and Saudi Arabia are increasingly deciding oil output policies bilaterally, before consulting with the rest of OPEC.

The sources said Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih and his Russian counterpart Alexander Novak agreed during a series of meetings to lift output from September through December as crude headed towards \$80 a barrel. It is now over \$85.

"The Russians and the Saudis agreed to add barrels to the market quietly with a view not to look like they are acting on Trump's order to pump more," one source said.

"The Saudi minister told (U.S. Energy Secretary Rick) Perry that Saudi Arabia will raise output if its customers asked for more oil," another source said.

Originally, the two countries had hoped to announce an overall increase of 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) from Saudi-led OPEC and non-OPEC Russia at a gathering of oil ministers in Algiers at the end of September.

But with opposition from some in OPEC, including Iran which is subject to U.S. sanctions, they decided to defer any formal decision until a full OPEC meeting in December.

■ Perry looped in

Since then, Reuters has reported that Ri-



yadh planned to lift output by some 200,000 bpd to 300,000 bpd from September to help fill the gap left by lower Iranian output due to the sanctions.

Russian output rose 150,000 bpd in September.

"I would expect Russia's oil production will hover at around 11.4 to 11.6 million bpd until the end of 2018 and may increase further to 11.8 million bpd later on in 2019," a source at a major Russian oil company said.

Russian produced 11.36 million bpd in September, up from 11.21 million bpd in August, Energy Ministry data showed.

Perry was made aware of the Saudi-Russia plan to lift output before the Algiers gathering, meeting with Falih three times in September and Novak once. The three did not meet together.

Perry's spokeswoman Shaylyn Hynes did

not comment on details of the talks but said the energy secretary, "continues to be engaged with leaders from other major oil producing nations and remains confident in their ability to boost output if needed".

She said Perry had in recent meetings "impressed upon his counterparts that keeping supply up is important for the global economy".

Oil prices rose to \$85 a barrel this week as buyers of Iranian crude wound down their purchases to meet the terms of U.S. sanctions on Tehran.

Sources said Riyadh would help fill that shortfall because buyers needed replacement supplies. Saudi Arabia has spare capacity to produce oil at a higher rate and holds a large volume of crude in storage.

At the same time, Saudi Arabia is keen to maintain unity among the so-called OPEC+ alliance, a group comprising OPEC states,

Qatar's energy minister defends OPEC, says it has not manipulated oil prices

Qatar's energy minister has defended OPEC's oil market strategy, saying a deal between the oil producing group and non-OPEC producers is not aimed at manipulating oil prices.

"OPEC is not trying to manipulate the price, it's trying to bring the market to balance," Qatar's Minister of Energy and Industry Mohammed Bin Saleh Al-Sada, told CNBC on Wednesday.

President Donald Trump has argued that OPEC and non-OPEC producers' late-2016 deal to curb production, made in a bid to support prices and balance oil market supply and demand dynamics, is hurting consumers. He has called on OPEC's de facto leader Saudi Arabia, and Russia, to raise output.

Al-Sada said low oil prices do not necessarily have a positive impact on global economic growth, however.

"When OPEC took the measure to restrict the production from its end, as well as some allied (oil producing) countries, it was meant to shave the extra excessive stock which was at a record high that was depressing the oil price. That depression of the oil price led to what? (Did it) lead to a better world economy?," he told a panel moderated by CNBC's Geoff Cutmore at the Russian Energy Week in Moscow.



"In fact, there was the worst record for the global economy during that downturn in the oil price," he said.

"Now during the journey of the recovery in the oil price looks what happened - the balance (in the market) between supply and demand has taken place, the world economy is at its best now," he added.

The deal between OPEC and non-OPEC producers including Russia has led oil prices to rise as the balance between global oil supply and demand has become more balanced. The deal (and more specifically, the price rise) has drawn criticism from Trump, however, who said OPEC and Russia were manipulating oil prices and markets. He has called on them to increase production and bring down oil prices.

Excessive stock and low oil prices would create difficulties for producers, Qatar's energy minister said.

(Source: CNBC)

Over 20 ministers to attend Russian energy week hosted in Moscow

The second annual Russian Energy Week (REW) will open in Moscow on Wednesday to promote the Russian energy industry and improve international cooperation in energy during four-day discussions set to be attended by over 20 ministers and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

More than 6,000 guests from over 70 countries are expected to attend the forum, with energy industry leaders coming from Austria, the United Kingdom, Germany, China, Libya, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and France, among others.

The Russian president will attend the forum on the first day and deliver a welcoming address during the plenary session called Sustainable Energy for a Changing World, which will also be attended by Saudi Energy Minister Khalid Falih, Royal Dutch Shell CEO Ben van Beurden, Total CEO Patrick Pouyanne, and Enel CEO Francesco Starace. On the sidelines of the event, Putin will also hold talks with OPEC Secretary General Mohammad Barkindo and may briefly talk with Falih, according to the Kremlin.

The main challenges faced by the energy sector will be discussed by such high-profile speakers as Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak, Qatar Energy Minister Mohammed Sada, Bahraini Oil Minister Mohamed Khalifa, and Hungarian Foreign Minister



Peter Sziijarto over the course of four days.

In the framework of the REW, the OPEC chief will present the latest OPEC report - the World Oil Outlook (WOO) 2018 - which provides a detailed analysis of various factors affecting the global oil market with a medium- and long-term outlook until 2040.

Another interesting session called "Russia-Africa Energy Roundtable" will be devoted to the development of Africa and its energy cooperation with Russia, as Russian companies are able to offer vast experience in developing, constructing, and commissioning energy facilities. The African continent will be represented by Equatorial Guinea Minister of Mines and Hydrocarbons Gabriel Obiang Lima, Libyan National Oil Corporation (NOC) Chairman Mustafa Sanalla, South Sudan Petroleum Minister Ezekiel Lol Gathkoth and Sierra Leone's Energy Minister Alhaji Kanja Ibrahim Sesay, as well as others.

(Source: Sputnik)

After lean years, Big Oil is under pressure to spend

Executives at the world's biggest oil and gas companies are under growing pressure to loosen the purse strings to replenish reserves, halt output declines and take advantage of a crude price rally after years of austerity.

With oil at a four-year high of \$85 a barrel, exploration departments are urging company boards to drill more, wages are creeping higher, service companies say rates will have to rise and some investors say Big Oil must start growing again soon.

For the heads of companies such as BP (BP.L), Chevron (CVX.N) and Royal Dutch Shell (RDSA.AS) who have pledged to stick to lower spending after slashing budgets by as much as 50 percent since 2014, the pressure may become hard to resist.

As in previous oil price cycles, there are concerns about the strength and duration of the business cycle, now in its 10th year of growth after the 2008 financial crisis.

Unlike previous oil price cycles, there is the prospect, eventually, of an end to growth in oil demand as the world shifts to cleaner energy.

But there are already signs some cost cuts implemented after oil slumped from \$115 a barrel in 2014 to \$26 in 2016 are being rolled back.

Shell, for example, said last month its teams in the UK North Sea will switch to a less tiring rota of two weeks offshore then three weeks onshore. During the austerity years, teams spent three weeks offshore then four onshore.

More frequent rotations mean more ships and helicopters will need to be chartered. Shell says the change will increase costs slightly but is convinced it will make its North Sea operations more cost effective and productive.

More generally, salaries across the oil and gas sector have edged up about 6 percent so far in 2018 after declining in the previous three years, according to a survey published by Rigzone www.rigzone.com.

At one major firm, senior managers who had been meeting by video conference for several years are now getting flights approved for face-to-face gatherings, according to an executive at the company.

The boards of large oil firms are facing more internal requests to invest in new projects and acquisitions, and to beef up staff,

according to senior executives present at such discussions.

"There is lots of pressure from all the units to get more money," said an executive at a large European oil company.

■ Long-cycle investments

New project approvals are picking up. Shell and its partners this week gave the green light to LNG Canada, one of the largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects in recent years.

"Shell's motivations for the project are clear: without this project, the company's upstream, LNG contract portfolio and LNG production was set to go into decline early next decade," Wood Mackenzie www.woodmac.com analyst Dulles Wang said.

Typically, after a period of lower capital spending, or capex, and low prices comes an era of rapid investment as oil recovers and supplies tighten.

During the lean years, companies cut back sharply. Now, they generate as much cash as in 2014 and are vowing to remain thrifty to focus on higher dividends, buying back shares and reducing debt. But in an industry where reserves and production decline naturally as oil is pumped from fields, continued investment is considered critical.

"We are likely in need of more long-cycle investments given the persistent and accelerating base declines observed in global conventional and offshore projects," said a source at an investment firm with large stakes in big oil companies.

Although some companies such as BP (BP.L) were able to stem production declines thanks to technology and lower costs, a drop in new production has taken a toll on the longer-term outlook for many companies.

Oilfield decline rates doubled from 3 percent in 2014 to 6 percent in 2016. For the big oil firms, rates went from 1.5 percent to just over 2 percent during the same period, according to Morgan Stanley.

"I expect capex rises due to a significant drop in reservoir life. Some capex will be used to reinvigorate existing wells," said Darren Sissons, partner at Campbell Lee & Ross Investment Management www.clrm.com/site/home, adding that increases would be cautious initially.

■ Reserve life

Spending by the world's top seven oil companies is expected to rise to a combined \$136 billion by 2020 from \$105 billion in 2017,

according to analysts at Morgan Stanley and Jefferies.

Starting from the middle of next year, boards will change their tone to prepare shareholders for higher spending from 2020, Morgan Stanley analyst Martijn Rats said.

"New project awards will likely already accelerate in 2019, but for major developments, capex in the first year tends to be limited. From 2020 onwards, capex is likely to go higher."

Boards are not blind to the pressure. Many companies have defined a range for spending, while committing to the lower end. Shell, for example, has a "soft floor" and a "hard ceiling" for spending of \$25 billion to \$30 billion per year.

For some companies such as Italy's Eni, which is developing major gas projects in Egypt and Mozambique, boosting costs may be unavoidable.

"(Oil companies) proved themselves in a low oil price environment, but at some point they do need to start re-spending on new projects to keep getting oil out of the ground," said David Smith, fund manager of the Henderson High Income Trust here.

Patrick Pouyanne, chief executive of French oil company Total, conceded this week that while it aimed to stick to its spending range of \$15 billion to \$17 billion a year beyond 2020, capex could rise to \$20 billion.

"Our view is that the majors' capex is probably 5 to 10 percent or so too low if they are to maintain their current reserve lives," said Jonathan Waghorn, co-manager of Guinness Asset Management's www.guinnessfunds.com global energy fund.

The pressure to increase spending also comes at a time oil services companies are slowly increasing rates, saying their sacrifices to help Big Oil weather the slump should now be rewarded as crude prices rise.

"Current investment levels, particularly in the international market, are clearly not sustainable to meet either medium-term demand or long-term reserves replacement needs," Paal Kibsgaard, Chief Executive Officer of Schlumberger, the world's largest oil services provider, told a conference last month.

He said the international production base needed double-digit growth in investment for the foreseeable future just to keep production at current levels.

(Source: Reuters)

Oil rises towards 4-year high as Iran sanctions loom

Oil traded above \$85 a barrel and near a four-year high on Wednesday, supported by expectations that U.S. sanctions on Iran will tighten supply and strain the ability of Saudi Arabia and other producers to pump more.

Crude exports from Iran, OPEC's third-largest producer, are already falling as the U.S. sanctions kicking in on Nov. 4 deter buyers. The drop in exports is reducing the impact of an OPEC production increase agreed in June.

Brent crude, the global benchmark, was up 38 cents at \$85.18 a barrel at 0833 GMT. It reached \$85.45 on Monday, its highest level since November 2014. U.S. crude was up 24 cents at \$75.47.

With Iranian exports expected to fall further, analysts say there may not be enough spare production capacity in the short term to meet demand, potentially requiring large withdrawals from storage.

"Iran is the main supportive factor and is a test to the spare capacity of Saudi Arabia," said Olivier Jakob, analyst at Petromatrix.

"The fact that Saudi Arabia has been timid in its reaction has reinforced the notion there is limited spare capacity available."

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, plus allies including Russia, have been limiting supply since 2017 to get rid of a glut. They partially relaxed the cut in June, under pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump to cool prices.

OPEC has so far ruled out any further production increase, beyond delivering the boost agreed in June, despite prices rallying further and more pressure from Trump.

Russia's energy minister, Alexander Novak, said on Wednesday the market has more or less stabilized but many uncertainties remain, including the sanctions on Iran, and could push prices higher.

Nonetheless, a strong dollar, which makes oil imports more expensive for countries using other currencies, as well as an industry report showing rising inventories in the United States limited the rally.

U.S. crude inventories rose by 907,000 barrels in the week to Sept. 28 to 400.9 million, the American Petroleum Institute said on Tuesday, ahead of Wednesday's official supply report due at 1430 GMT.

(Source: Reuters)

Japan transfers excess renewable power between regions for first time

Japan transferred excess renewable energy supplies between two of its electricity regions for the first time since a major shakeup of its power sector, the country's grid monitor told Reuters.

The transfer of excess solar power supplies from the island of Kyushu to Japan's main island of Honshu signals an increase in flexibility in the country's previously regionalized electricity grid as the market opens up to competition.

Kyushu Electric Power Co transferred up to 1.125 gigawatts on Monday to five utilities including Kansai Electric Power and Chubu Electric Power after approval from the grid monitor known as OCCTO, an OCCTO spokeswoman told Reuters.

It was the first transfer since OCCTO was set up in 2015 to monitor the country's electricity grid after the government stripped big power utilities of their regional monopolies and opened the \$70 billion retail power market to hundreds of new entrants.

The reforms came in the aftermath of Japan's 2011 Fukushima disaster, when an earthquake and tsunami led to nuclear meltdowns and widespread power outages, and included a government-mandated boost to renewable energy supplies.

Solar power has grown particularly fast on the island of Kyushu, where Kyushu Electric operates, because of plentiful sunshine and available land.

The old regional monopolies, which were left in control of the main transmission grids, however, complained that renewables could lead to grid instability and said interconnections between their networks could not cope with large transfers.

Kyushu Electric, Japan's fifth-biggest utility by sales, told Reuters last month the recent restart of nuclear reactors could also lead to possible restrictions on the purchase of renewable energy this autumn.

Monday's transfer helped Kyushu Electric avoid having to cut third-party supplies of solar energy, a company spokesman said.

The government changed regulations in 2015, allowing the old utilities to restrict supplies of renewable energy from their solar or wind farms if they deem it necessary to maintain grid stability.

The orders can be made at short notice and without having to pay compensation, however restrictions can only be made after first curbing hydro and fossil fuel power output or transferring excess supplies.

(Source: Zawayia)

Cuba to build renewable energy farms with Indian assistance

Cuba is set to build a bioelectric plant, which will use waste from the country's sugar mills, and a 50-megawatt wind farm to provide power to the western province of Artemisa and the eastern city of Holguin, respectively.

Cuban Minister of Energy and Mines Raul Garcia Barreiro, said Tuesday the bioelectric energy generation facilities would be installed on Nov. 30, with the other one set for construction later in 2018.

Garcia Barreiro, who is currently visiting India, held meetings with the interim Director General of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) Upendra Tripathy, and executives of Indian companies who work with the renewable energy technology at the headquarters of the company National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), in the capital of India.

The ISA which is holding its first general assembly in India during Oct. 2-5, was launched with France at the United Nations Conference on Climate Change COP21 in 2015 in Paris, to promote the use of solar energy. Cuba is a founding member country of the ISA.

Over 40 countries have ratified the agreement and 68 countries have signed the framework of the alliance. The goal of ISA is to install 1,000 GW of solar energy by 2030 and mobilize US\$100 billion in financing to achieve the target.

The Cuban delegation presented the progress made by the island in the implementation of its policy and prospective development. Cuba aims to increase the use of clean energy in the country to 24 percent of its power generation by 2030.

They also stressed the business opportunity for Indian companies, mainly in investments in bioelectric and solar photovoltaic, and wind farms in Cuba.

(Source: telesurtv.net)

NEWS IN BRIEF



India Russia to make defense, business deals

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN — During Russian President Vladimir Putin's much-anticipated visit to India on Thursday, the two countries are all set to sign a deal worth more than \$5bn on the delivery of Russian S-400 missile systems to New Delhi, according to the Kremlin.

President Putin, who will fly to New Delhi on October 4, will oversee the agreement during his two-day visit, top Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov told reporters on Tuesday.

The US has imposed sanctions on Russia for its annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea, which means any country that engages in defense or intelligence sharing with Russia could also be subject to sanctions.

According to sources, India seems interested in not only military deals with Russia but also wants to have geopolitical gains. In the 'tourism segment' of President Putin's India program, there is a mention of Crimea, which indicates that India is open to business and visits to Crimea, thereby granting indirect legitimacy to Russia's claims on Crimea.

"It is a big gain for President Putin," says a source who is tracking his visit closely.



Afghanistan, Pakistan vow to improve ties

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN — Afghan envoy to Pakistan Omar Zakhilwal called on Pakistan's minister of state for interior affairs Shehryar Khan Afridi on Tuesday and discussed bilateral relations between the two countries.

During the meeting, the two leaders agreed that Pakistan and Afghanistan share cultural and historical ties and expressed Islamabad's desire to resolve outstanding issues and work together for regional peace and stability.

"Today had a delightful conversation with Pak State Min for Interior, energetic & foresighted PTI leader @ShehryarAfridi. Among other things we agreed on immediate steps to ease up the follow of people at all crossing points. Looking forward to our constructive future engagement," he tweeted.

The relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan frayed during the previous government in Islamabad headed by Nawaz Sharif. Kabul has repeatedly accused Pakistan of providing sanctuary to militant groups that attack Afghanistan, including Haqqani Network. Pakistan has rejected the charges.

Since the formation of new Pakistani government led by Imran Khan, there have been a series of overtures and the two countries have expressed desire to bury the hatchet and open a new chapter in their bilateral ties.



Ghani says no to 'foreign mercenaries'

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN — Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, reacting to recent remarks made by Blackwater founder Erik Prince, has said that Afghan security forces have enough capability and have managed to save the country from "collapse".

Prince, the founder of security company Blackwater, in an interview to Afghan news channel TOLO news, said the Afghan war will end "in few months" if his plan to send in few thousand contracted mercenaries to Afghanistan was implemented. According to Prince, 3,600 "contracted veteran mentors" from Blackwater will be deployed to Afghanistan — 36 for each Afghan unit and for two to four years at a time.

In a strong reaction, President Ghani said he will not allow "foreign mercenaries" to operate in Afghanistan. "You should know that the work which is done by Afghans cannot be done by any foreign mercenary and foreign mercenaries will never be allowed in this soil," Ghani said, addressing a conference in Kabul. Afghanistan's chief executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah's office also denounced the plan, saying it was not applicable in the country. "The plan to privatize the war in Afghanistan is not a working plan and is not applicable," said Omid Maisam, his spokesman.

Afghan parliament also reacted to the plan to privatize the Afghan war, saying it is not in Afghanistan's favor. "The question is that how a private company will be able to ensure security in Afghanistan? This is certainly concerning," said Rauf Ibrahim, the parliament speaker.



Indonesia earthquake death toll surges

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN — The death toll from the devastating earthquake and tsunami on the island of Sulawesi in Indonesia has reached 1,347, according to the country's disaster management agency, as rescue teams scramble to search for survivors.

Authorities and aid workers struggled to reach the affected areas to help the survivors, four days after the devastating earthquake struck Palu, a small city about 1,500km northeast of Jakarta, and other parts of Sulawesi Island, less than two months after a deadly earthquake struck Indonesia's Lombok island. Some remote areas have been largely cut off after Friday's 7.5 quake triggered massive tsunami waves, destroying roads and bridges, and breaking all communication lines.

More than 65,000 homes have been damaged and at least 60,000 people have been displaced and are in need of emergency help, according to the government. About 1,700 homes in one Palu neighborhood were swallowed up, with hundreds of people believed buried, the national disaster agency said.

President Joko Widodo, who visited the region over the weekend, said there are many challenges hampering rescue efforts. He called for reinforcements in the search for survivors, saying everyone had to be found.

UN chief urges India to put pressure on Myanmar to resolve Rohingya crisis

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN — Voicing serious concern over the plight of Rohingya refugees living in the ramshackle camps in Bangladesh under appalling conditions, United Nations chief Antonio Guterres has urged India to put pressure on Myanmar and support Bangladesh.

Guterres, who was on his maiden visit to India, said he had never seen a community so discriminated in the world as Rohingyas, urging the Indian government to "help these people".

"What can India do? Support Bangladesh in helping these people because there is a huge humanitarian problem," he said on the sidelines of a seminar in New Delhi late on Tuesday. "Second, to put pressure on Myanmar, the military in Myanmar for reconciliation and create conditions for these people to go back. These people will not go back in present circumstances," the UN secretary general said.

Guterres further said that to keep Rohingyas in such a "discriminatory situation" is "an invitation for terrorist groups" to exploit the situation. "There should be accountability to those crimes," he said, referring to the atrocities unleashed on Rohingya refugees by Myanmar regime.

Rohingyas, he asserted, do not have access to healthcare and education and there was a deep-rooted feeling of racism against them in the Myanmar society. Recalling his visit to Myanmar as the High Commissioner for Refugees, he said at that time the president of Myanmar had asked him to resettle Rohingyas in some other countries.

"To make them refugees is not my role. My role is to solve the problem of refugees. This shows how deeply-rooted is the negative perception of the Rohingyas. This was intensified by some hate speech by some monks on social media. There are over one million people in Bangladesh. They were people burnt, raped," he said.

Guterres said "even if there was a provocation, the reaction of the armed forces was brutal," calling for political reconciliation so that the repatriation of Rohingyas could be facilitated.



India, as a neighbor of Myanmar, can play an important role in resolving the Rohingya crisis, believe experts. In July, Indian home minister Rajnath Singh, during his visit to Bangladesh, had pledged help in the safe, speedy and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees to their homes.

India's foreign minister Sushma Swaraj, during her visit to Myanmar in May this year, had also offered to help in safe, speedy and sustainable return of Rohingyas. However, India has chosen not to put pressure on Myanmar government in resolving this crisis.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh has delayed the planned relocation of some of the Rohingya refugees to an inlet in Bay of Bengal, according to news reports. The Bangladesh Navy has been building a facility for the refugees forced out from Rakhine province of Myanmar following a brutal campaign by the country's military one year ago.

As per conservative estimates, there are around 905,000 Rohingya refugees presently in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar, although some human rights bodies have put the figure higher.

The exodus of Rohingyas from Rakhine state started in October 2016. Almost 200,000 of them fled to neighboring Bangladesh that time and settled in Cox's Bazar. However, in August last year, more than 720,000 Rohingya Muslims fled to Bangladesh en masse to escape persecution, murder, arson and rape.

The savagery in Rakhine was described by the United Nations as "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing".

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Indian govt 'red-flags' visit of Iranian clerics to Kashmir: report

1 → Meanwhile, the news has drawn anger and outrage among Kashmir's Shia community and clergy, who see it as part of a larger design to intimidate people.

"Iranian clerics come here on invitations and they give speeches but not "fiery speeches", said a young cleric based in Kashmir, wishing anonymity. "It is nothing but an intimidating tactic to bully us, but it won't work. They have already banned our processions in main city, now they cannot stop our clerics from giving sermons."

Pertinently, in Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, the government's ban on Muharram processions (Muharram 8 and 10) is in place since 1990, when the armed rebellion against Indian rule gathered momentum. Despite repeated pleas



by Shia leaders, the ban has not been lifted.

Each year, police impose curfew-like restrictions on Muharram 8 and 10 in parts of Srinagar city, including Lal Chowk, the nerve-center of Srinagar. Iron barricades and spoils of concertina wires are put up at every entry point. The fully-armed police personnel do not even allow pedestrian movement as tough restrictions are enforced.

However, as a mark of protest against the ban, mourners take out peaceful mourning procession in the main city every year. Each time, they are intercepted by massive contingents of heavily-armed police and paramilitary personnel. They fire tear smoke canisters, resort to baton charge and brutally manhandle the mourners participating in these processions.

Parliamentary polls another test for Afghan democracy

1 → Even though the Taliban and ISIS have been engaged in a bitter, bloody conflict, both groups have vowed to disrupt elections.

On Tuesday, at least 13 people were killed and 25 others wounded in a deadly suicide attack at an election campaign rally in eastern Nangarhar province. Provincial governor's spokesman Ataullah Khogyani said the bomber had detonated his explosives at a rally by parliamentary candidate Abdul Nasir Mohmand in the outskirts of provincial capital Jalalabad. The attack was claimed by ISIS.

Security remains a critical issue and observers fear more such attacks in coming days as the armed opposition groups up the ante. According to Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission (IEC), five candidates have been killed in the attacks so far — two in Kabul, one each in eastern Nangarhar, southern Kandahar, and northern Parwan province. And there are fears violence will escalate.

According to news reports, a total of 54,000 Afghan security personnel will be protecting polling centers on election day, but that does not guarantee violence-free elections. Suicide bombers are trained to carry out complex attacks at crowded places as we have seen in the recent past.

The UN Mission in Afghanistan has also expressed concern over violence ahead of the parliamentary elections. "The UN Mission in Afghanistan is concerned by the level of violence early in the campaigning period for



the 20th of October parliamentary elections including intimidation and attacks against candidates, their agents and supporters," UN Secretary-General Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq said during a press briefing on Tuesday.

According to the recent SIGAR report, almost 56.3 percent of Afghanistan's districts are currently under government control and at least 30 percent of districts are contested,

which shows the resurgence of insurgents and helplessness of the Afghan government.

On Eid al Fitr this year, the Afghan government and the Taliban had observed an unprecedented three-day ceasefire. But, after the ceasefire ended, it was business as usual. In July, Taliban overran two districts in eastern Afghanistan and in August, the strategic city of Ghazni fell to the Taliban. The control was regained but the psychological

damage was done.

If security is one issue, the other equally disquieting issue pertains to fairness and transparency. Elections in Afghanistan have always been marred by allegations of vote rigging and manipulation. To minimize the risk of irregularities this time, 22,000 sets of biometric identification systems would be used, according to reports. However, so far, only 4,400 have been delivered by Germany.

The election commission has earmarked over 5,100 polling centers across the country and there will be 21,000 polling stations, each of them with one biometric device.

Past elections resulted in deeply contentious results — in 2009, 2010, and 2014 — with candidates accusing each other and the government of that time of manipulation and vote rigging. In 2014 presidential elections, Ashraf Ghani and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah publicly argued over election results, before the compromise formula was worked out to form a coalition government.

The upcoming election would be another litmus test for democracy and democratic institutions in Afghanistan, provided the U.S. and its allies abstain from interfering in it and the insurgent groups allow people to vote peacefully.

Before November's ministerial meeting on Afghanistan in Geneva, which the United Nations has termed "crucial moment" for the Afghan government, successfully parliamentary elections would be ideal. But, in case of Afghanistan, predictions hardly work.

Any U.S. strike to take out Russia missile system could trigger WWII: analyst

Any attempt by the United States to take out Russian cruise missile systems would lead to a larger military confrontation between the two nuclear powers, says an analyst.

"This is a very extreme situation that could lead to World War III," American writer and academic James Petras told Press TV on Tuesday after Washington's ambassador to NATO warned Russia to halt development of a banned cruise missile system or the U.S. would seek to destroy it before it becomes operational.

"At that point, we would be looking at the capability to take out a [Russian] missile that could hit any of our countries," Kay Bailey Hutchison told a news conference in Brussels on Tuesday.

Washington claims Moscow is violating a Cold War treaty

and developing a ground-launched cruise missile which could empower Russia to launch a nuclear strike on Europe at short notice. Russia has repeatedly denied any such violation.

"The U.S. and Israel have decided that the Russian defense system is subject to attacks particularly be the Israelis with the US support," Petras said.

If the Russian missile systems come under attack by the Israelis, Russia will retaliate at a minimum by shooting down Israeli planes that intrude into Syria, he pointed out.

That could prompt Israel to further retaliate, forcing Russia to bomb the Israeli lunch pads, he noted. "If Russia retaliates against Israeli aggression, the U.S. has claimed that it would intervene on behalf of Israel."

"This would lead to a conflict that involves the U.S. and

Russia, and this could lead to a nuclear confrontation that would spread throughout the Middle East."

Russia's foreign ministry said in a statement that it viewed Hutchison's statement as dangerous.

"It seems that people who make such statements do not realize the level of their responsibility and the danger of aggressive rhetoric," foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said, according to TASS news agency.

The accusations over the Russian missile system are likely to further strain relations between Washington and Moscow, which are already at a low over Ukraine, the bombing campaign in Syria and allegations of Russian meddling in U.S. elections.

(Source: Press TV)

Delivery of S-300 to Syria to prevent Israel from assisting terrorists: Anzour

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Mohammad Fatemizadeh

TEHRAN — Russia's Ilyushin-20 military aircraft was shot down in western Syria with Russian S-200 by Syrian air defense forces and all 15 crew of the plane were killed.

The Russians pointed finger at Tel Aviv, after which the Zionist authorities handle the incident in any form they had. In this connection, the prime minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, sent the Russian Army Air Force commander, Major Nurkin, to Russia to provide the "documentation" to Tel Aviv on the incident, and after meeting with a number of Russian officials, last Friday returned to Tel Aviv.

The Zionists, for whatever purpose they did, did not know what the consequences would be for Tel Aviv. After the incident, the Russians were reluctant to announce the S-300 system to Damascus.

Syrian Deputy Parliament Speaker Najdat Anzour sat with the Mehr News Agency to discuss some of country's the recent issues.

■ Following the downing of the Russian plane in Syria, caused indirectly by the Zionist regime, Russia announced the delivery of the S-300 system to Syria. What are the reasons behind this shipment?

A: This is a natural change, within the framework of a solid and historic relationship between the allies fighting terrorism, especially between Syria and Russia. Such actions, which are among the most important collaborations, must be taken.

We also naturally understand the complexity of regional and international relations; in particular, the goal of every axis of



resistance that fight against terrorism is to restore the balance of international relations by maintaining stability and defeating the policy of creating chaos under the control of the Americans.

Therefore, we are convinced that this development within the framework of relations is a huge transformation that greatly weakens the Zionist regime's ability to cooperate directly with the terrorist groups in Syria.

On the other hand, it directly restricts the enemy's ability to target Syria's sci-

entific and research centers and private and traditional factories; when attacking these centers, the enemy claims that they belong to Hezbollah or Iran, and this is a ridiculous claim.

Iran and Hezbollah do not need factories in Syria. And naturally, the enemy seeks to target the complementary relationship between the elements of resistance from Iran to Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. This weapon (S-300) returned the Defense Forces to the Syrian Armed Forces that it had before 2011, and can greatly increase its ability.

■ Israel has said that Russia's action is dangerous and will increase tensions in the region. What are possible reactions of Israel and the United States if Kremlin carries out the plan?

A: Every response and reaction from Tel Aviv are still failing, because their information has failed to assess the strength of the army and the Syrian people and leadership. To the extent that their research has signaled the fall of the Syrian government in less than a year, now the enemy's government is seeking to rectify its policy mistakes.

On the other hand, the enemy's axis is shaking. Meanwhile, the continuing unity between China, Russia, Iran and resistance's allies is strengthening. Naturally, Iran is now overwhelmed than other countries. But after establishing the stability in Syria, Iran's situation will also be much better, and all the efforts of the United States and Israel will lead to failure.

■ What changes will the delivery of S-300 missile system to Syria bring about as far as the balance of power in the region is concerned?

A: Naturally, the United States and Israel are afraid of this move. Because their air forces were the factor behind their resistance to the countries of the axis of resistance, and when this unit fails, the balance of power is shaped much more with our interest in the field.

On the other hand, we need to increase our power in other fields, including economics, culture, education and media, and create a comprehensive development in dealing with Western plans and their mercenaries in the region, especially Israel.

Vital Nassib border crossing to open soon

By Amir Hussain Rajabi Memar

The Syrian transport ministry has announced the re-opening of the Nassib border crossing with Jordan on Saturday after seven years of civil war.

Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said that whenever Damascus and Amman could agree on the details, they would make progress on issues of mutual concern.

The re-opening of the border following successful military operations in Daraa province, has strategic implications.

Daraa's liberation from Takfiri terrorists in the summer paved the way for a return to calm and the restoration of Damascus's rule in Syria's south. Any commercial and economic activity without security on the roads and at border crossings is not possible. Expressing the interest of the Jordanian Foreign Minister in opening the country's shared borders with Syria reflects the fact that Jordan, which during the years of the internal crisis in Syria had been a source of terrorist support, ended up being on the



wrong side of the conflict.

The resumption of Jordan's economic ties with Syria may mark the nascent end of the crisis. Jordan and Syria are moving toward normalizing economic relations.

The Nassib route, known as the southern gate of Syria, is the latest border crossing that starts from Aleppo in northern Syria and extends to the south of the country. It plays an important role in the transit of goods and services between Jordan, Syria and beyond.

The side effect is also the boom of local businesses on both sides of the border, especially in Syria. It will allow Syrians to return to normal live after years of crisis and economic woes.

Perhaps, apart from all the effects of the reopening of Nassib route, the psychological effect may be the most important part of it. As an important link in the West-Arab axis, Jordan played a big role in the financing and training of the terrorists in Syria, and also helped provide medical services.

With such a background, Jordan had to close its borders with Syria, but now Amman must rebuild its relationship with Syria and try to compensate for past mistakes, particularly its destructive role against Syria.

Who is violating arms trade treaty in Yemen?

TEHRAN (FNA) — The Middle East is still filled with violence and terror, because warmongers can easily buy arms from the most significant violators of Arms Trade Treaty in the world and use them against whoever comes their way.

In Yemen, for instance, American weapons sales to Saudi Arabia are a serious violation of International Law and Arms Trade Treaty. They contribute to serious human rights violations, where the Saudi-led bombing campaign is systematically hitting civilian targets including schools and hospitals - in contravention of the rules of war.

As reported by Oxfam, the UK government has also switched from being an "enthusiastic backer" of the Arms Trade Treaty to "one of the most significant violators".

The message rings out loud and clear:

The US and Britain still license billions of dollars of arms sales to Riyadh. The Saudis are leading a brutal military operation in which US and UK-supplied aircraft, bombs and missiles are playing a major role. The British and American military officials are also in the command and control centre for Saudi airstrikes, and have access to lists of targets, playing a key role in choosing them - even school buses that carry children.



One side-effect of the chaos resulting from this illegal campaign is that the local franchises of Al-Qaeda and ISIL are now thriving as never before.

Worse yet, the Saudi-led campaign has claimed thousands of lives and triggered a humanitarian catastrophe that the UN has placed in the same class of severity as that in Syria.

Among the dead are many women and

children, as documented by Save the Children, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, International Committee of the Red Cross, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

These organisations are now calling on the UK and US governments to suspend their illegal arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Some have even launched formal legal challenges in courts to halt the sales on those grounds.

But to no avail.

The response from the British and the American governments has been thoroughly cynical. They "shamelessly and disingenuously" deny any evidence of Saudi violations, simply ignoring the world's leading human rights organisations, who have been documenting such violations from day one.

This is not surprising. For decades, the regime changers have provided arms to their regional vassals capable of being used for external aggression and internal repression. They play lip service to the global Arms Trade Treaty, and expect others to believe they have in their own investigations found nothing untoward, concluding that the arms sales should continue.

The Anglo-American military alliance with one of the cruelest and most anti-democratic regimes in the world shows British and American complicity in the horrors of Yemen. It is the most overt manifestation of the criminal relationship between London, Washington and Riyadh in recent years.

Expect no immediate suspension of British-American arms sales to the Saudis, much less an international investigation of their use in Yemen or a call from the United Nations to end the war.

(SANA) quoted a military source as saying on September 16.

Earlier, Israeli had revealed that it has launched more than 200 air attacks against targets in Syria over the past year and a half.

It came as Syrian forces, backed by Iran and Russia, continue to reclaim much of southern parts of the country and are poised to soon launch an offensive in Idlib, one of the last remaining areas outside of Damascus' control.

Encouraged by the Syrian army's gains and the somewhat improving economic conditions in the country, over 13,000 Syrian refugees have returned home so far this year from Lebanon alone, with thousands more also returning from other neighboring countries.

Syria has been gripped by civil war since March 2011 with various terrorist groups, including Daesh (also known as ISIS or ISIL), currently fighting against the central government.

In the meantime, Iran and Russia have remained close allies of Syria and support its legitimate government in the face of foreign-backed militancy.

(Source: Tasnim)

Israel's provocations in Syria not to go unanswered: Russian envoy

Russian Ambassador to Iran Levon Jagarian slammed the Israeli regime's air strikes against Syria and said such provocative measures will not go unanswered anymore.

Speaking to the Tasnim News Agency, Jagarian pointed to a military deal between Russia and Syria about the purchase of the S-300 missile defense system, saying that the delivery of the advanced system to the Arab country has started.

"This was not our choice; we had to do this," he said, adding, "Our President, Mr. Putin, in a telephone conversation with Israeli Prime Minister (Benjamin) Netanyahu explained the reasons for this decision by Russia."

The ambassador went on to say that the decision has its roots in the casualties inflicted on Russia as a result of the Israeli attacks in Syria, adding, "After all, we have lost our military forces."

"We will transfer our radio-electronic equipment and we have informed Israel of it," Jagarian said, adding, "We are transparent; these provocative acts of Israel will no longer go unanswered."

Last month, Israel launched missiles at a target near the Syrian capital of Damascus.



"Our air defenses responded to an Israeli missile attack on Damascus international airport and shot down a number of hostile missiles," the state-run Syrian Arab News Agency

A contemplation on Trump's speech to the UN General Assembly



1 → Even now, the White House remains to be the main shelter of the Takfiri groups in the West Asia region. Trump also said that Saudi Arabia and the UAE were trying to put an end to the Yemeni war, without revealing the destructive role of Washington in waging this war and killing the innocent people in Sana'a, Aden, and elsewhere. Trump knows well that he has to officially announce Washington's defeat in West Asia sooner or later. It's not without a reason that he called the U.S. military presence in West Asia useless about a month ago! Trump is now setting the ground for directing the US, and the international public opinion for America's defeat in Yemen and Syria.

Donald Trump's recent speech to the UN General Assembly identifies his deep desperation, and beyond that, it suggests the "the isolation of the United States" in the international system; and this isolation will continue in the future.

U.S. desperately seeking to drum up animosity toward Iran: analyst

An analyst says the U.S.'s allegation of Iran fomenting violence in the Iraqi city of Basra is merely a "desperate" attempt to "drum up animosity" towards the country after Washington lost the "united front" of its allies against the Islamic Republic by scrapping the 2015 nuclear agreement.

In an interview with Press TV, E. Michael Jones, editor of the Culture Wars online magazine, said the U.S. is desperately seeking to pin the blame for "everything that is going wrong in the Middle East" on Iran.

"What about the tsunami in Indonesia? Was Iran behind that? What about the attack in Ahvaz? If Iran is the main sponsor of terrorism, why is it the victim of terrorism? And if it is the victim of terrorism, who is responsible for that attack?" asked Jones.

Washington earlier this week closed its consulate in Basra following a rocket attack, citing security "threats," which it blamed specifically on Tehran.

Iran rejected those claims as "unjustifiable," with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif telling the CNN on Sunday that Washington "needs to look at its own policies" for what is happening in Iraq.

Jones further called Washington's claims as "desperation on the part of the [U.S.] administration to drum up animosity toward Iran when the whole united front that they had before is crumbling."

The analyst further highlighted ongoing European Union efforts to save the Iran nuclear deal after Washington ditched its allies and unilaterally left the international document, saying the 28-nation bloc is now finding ways to blunt the impact of American bans on the Islamic Republic in defiance of Washington.

"The U.S. is obviously isolated," said Jones, adding that everything the Americans have done since their pullout from the Iran has only "increased their isolation."

"They are losing their credibility around the world, it's like the boy who cries wolf too many times," he said.

U.S. threats, Jones said, "are not being listened to" any more, said Jones, adding, "The more threats they make, the more people get upset with them, and the more people stop listening to them."

(Source: Press TV)

The bankrupt Saudi discourse

After the series of defeats suffered by Saudi diplomacy, some had hoped that Riyadh would seize the opportunity at the UN General Assembly to stand in favor of the Kingdom's genuine national interests and turn a new page with the rest of the Arabs in order to avoid further damage and minimize losses. Instead, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir chose to use the UN platform to attack Qatar again, accusing it of harboring terrorists, an allegation no longer believed by the naïve, let alone the bright.

Unconsciously, Al-Jubeir echoed U.S. President Donald Trump's statement that the Persian Gulf States would not have survived without America's security support, instead of rejecting such a claim and expressing Saudi Arabia's character as one of the biggest and strongest Arab countries. The Saudi minister could have challenged Trump's statement, and those like it, but opted instead to express his anger at Qatar, claiming that the government in Doha would have fallen within a week if not for the presence of the U.S. Al-Udeid Air Base. He omitted to explain how Qatar had actually survived for several decades before the base was established.

Hence, nobody is surprised by Saudi Arabia's insistence that Qatar must be mentioned in the U.S. as a "sponsor of terrorism", as if the Americans know nothing or have forgotten all about the unprecedented attacks in September 2001. Al-Jubeir obviously thinks that directing accusations against Qatar systematically will erase the collective U.S. condemnation of Saudi Arabia's creation and nurturing of the conditions for extremism and terrorism.

I am not seeking to defend Qatar as much as I hope that Riyadh will wake up from its delusion and begin to create common ground with neighboring countries to mobilize the Arab states to confront all threats, regardless of the source.

In short, the Saudi discourse is flawed by imbalance, and it is bankrupt because it divides rather than brings people together. Saudi Arabia's continued hostility towards Qatar is a cause for concern, as Riyadh should be courting the government in Doha.

(Source: Middle East Monitor)

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Fatty liver disease affects over 30% of population

HEALTH TEHRAN – Hepatic steatosis or non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), an important non-communicable disease, has affected 30 percent of the population in Iran, member of the research center for gastroenterology and liver diseases at University of Tehran has said.

"Prevalence of NAFLD is higher among female than male," IRNA quoted Mehdi Saberi Firouzi as saying on Wednesday.

The liver normally contains some fat; an individual is considered to have a fatty liver (hepatic steatosis) if the liver contains more than 5 to 10 percent fat, he said, adding, despite its dangerous side effects, there are no warning signs and symptoms in the early stages.

Although NAFLD is associated with obesity and excessive calorie intake, some 10 to 20 percent of the patients are in normal weight range, he noted, adding that some 30 percent of the people in the country are diagnosed with the disease so far.

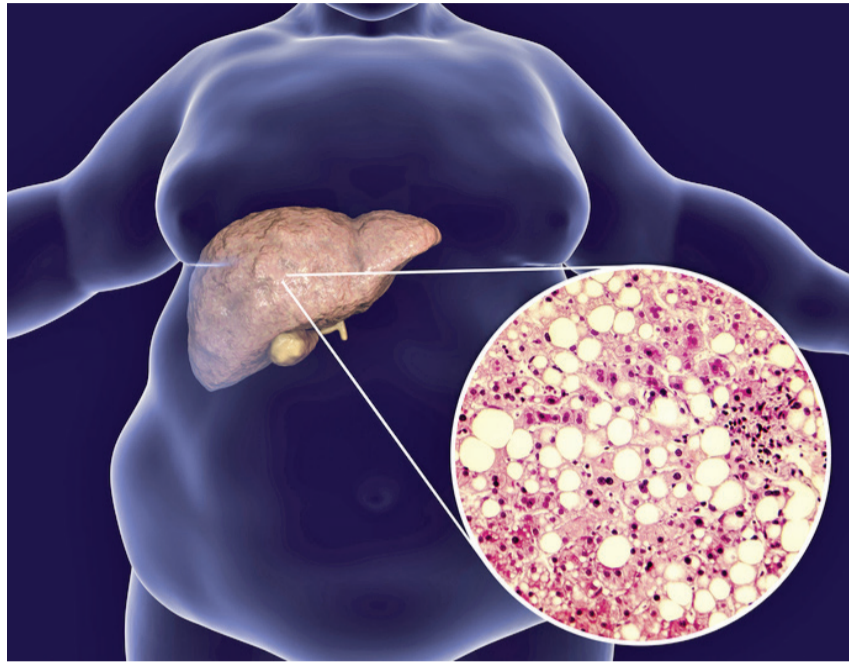
The disease can affect children as well as adults, as it is increasingly recognized in children, he regretted.

Criticizing the lack of adequate physical activity among children, he highlighted that "Obesity, overweight and lack of physical activity can cause fatty liver among children."

He went on to say that unfortunately today, children are at higher risk of developing the disease due to excessive sitting and use of electronic devices such as mobile phones, tablets and TV.

Saberi Firouzi further said drinking eight glasses of water a day, avoiding deep fried food and fast food, reducing the consumption of carbohydrates, including sugars, bread and pasta, increasing vegetables and fruits intake, and taking rich sources of vitamin C, are the most effective ways to prevent and treat fatty liver.

In July, an official with the Ministry of Health Zahra Abdollahi said that obesity has affected 20 percent of the students in the country, as consumption of fast food and carbonated beverages have risen which are the major causes of obesity and overweight.



Although NAFLD is associated with obesity and excessive calorie intake, some 10 to 20 percent of the patients are in normal weight range some 30 percent of the people in the country are diagnosed with the disease so far.

Moreover, Ali Motlaq, head of cancer department at the Ministry of Health told IRNA that physical inactivity in the country affects about 60 percent of the population, and over 60 percent of the people are suffering obesity.

He also noted that fruit and vegetable consumption among Iranians accounts for a rate of 15 to 20 percent.

■ Hepatic steatosis or NAFLD
Hepatic steatosis is a buildup of excessive fat in the liver that can lead to liver damage resembling the damage caused by alcohol abuse, but that occurs in people who do not drink heavily. The liver is a part of the digestive system that helps

break down food, store energy, and remove waste products, including toxins.

The fat deposits in the liver associated with NAFLD usually cause no symptoms, although they may cause increased levels of liver enzymes that are detected in routine blood tests. Some affected individuals have abdominal pain or fatigue. During a physical examination, the liver may be found to be slightly enlarged.

NAFLD is a very common disorder, occurring in about 25 percent of the global population. Its prevalence is increasing along with the rising prevalence of obesity in industrialized societies, and it is now the most common chronic liver disorder in

Western countries, including the United States. NAFLD is more prevalent in individuals of Hispanic, Native American, or Asian than in individuals of European or African.

Between 7 and 30 percent of people with NAFLD develop inflammation of the liver (non-alcoholic steatohepatitis, also known as NASH), leading to liver damage. Minor damage to the liver can be repaired by the body. However, severe or long-term damage can lead to the replacement of normal liver tissue with scar tissue (fibrosis), resulting in irreversible liver disease (cirrhosis) that causes the liver to stop working properly. Signs and symptoms of cirrhosis, which get worse as fibrosis affects more of the liver, include fatigue, weakness, loss of appetite, weight loss, nausea, swelling (edema), and yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes (jaundice). Scarring in the vein that carries blood into the liver from the other digestive organs (the portal vein) can lead to increased pressure in that blood vessel (portal hypertension), resulting in swollen blood vessels (varices) within the digestive system. Rupture of these varices can cause life-threatening bleeding.

NAFLD and NASH are thought to account for many cases of cirrhosis that have no obvious underlying cause (cryptogenic cirrhosis); at least one-third of people with NASH eventually develop cirrhosis. People with NAFLD, NASH, and cirrhosis are also at increased risk of developing liver cancer (hepatocellular cancer).

NAFLD is most common in middle-aged or older people, although younger people, including children, are also affected. It is often considered as part of a group of conditions known collectively as the metabolic syndrome; in addition to NAFLD, the metabolic syndrome includes obesity, type 2 diabetes or pre-diabetes (insulin resistance), high levels of fats (lipids) such as cholesterol and triglycerides in the blood, and high blood pressure (hypertension). However, a person with NAFLD may not have all or any of the other conditions that make up the metabolic syndrome, and individuals with some or all of those conditions may not have NAFLD.

Mediterranean diet promotes anticancer bacteria in the breast

Diet can influence microbe colonies not only in the gut, but also in other body parts, such as the female breast in mammals. The influence is strong enough to create conditions that are pro- or anticancer.

The Mediterranean diet is rich in fish, nuts, fruits, and vegetables, as well as olive oil.

So concluded researchers from the Wake Forest School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, NC, after having compared the effects of Western and Mediterranean diets on the microbes and biologically active compounds in the mammary glands of monkeys.

In a paper on the work, which will soon appear in the journal Cell Reports, they suggest that their findings could open a new avenue for breast cancer prevention and treatment.

In the United States, breast cancer is by far the most common cancer in women. In 2015, there were 125 new cases of breast cancer per 100,000 women.

For the next most common cancer, that of the lung and bronchus, there were 58 new cases per 100,000.

■ The breast microbiome
Recent studies have found that the human mammary gland, similarly to the gut, has its own specific microbiome, or unique population of microbes.

Further investigation also found that breast cancer tumors contain lower levels of Lactobacillus bacteria species compared with non-cancerous growths, suggesting that they could be "a negative regulator of breast cancer."

Scientists uncover more evidence that low levels of vitamin D and obesity are linked to a higher risk of breast cancer.

Women's breast cancer risk is known to vary with diet. A healthful diet, such as the Mediterranean one — which is rich in fruits, nuts, vegetables, legumes, fish, and olive oil — reduces the risk, whereas a typical Western diet high in fat, processed foods, and candy increases it.

However, while there is evidence that diet has a major impact on the diversity of gut microbes, it has not been clear whether this might also be true of the breast microbiome.

This is why, says senior study author Dr. Katherine L. Cook, an assistant professor in the Wake Forest School of Medicine, the scientists "decided to test the hypothesis that diet can impact mammary gland microbiota populations."

■ Implications for mammary gland health

The scientists decided to carry out the study in macaque monkeys because they are a good model for breast cancer, and it is possible to closely control their diet for long periods — something that is very difficult in human studies.

For 31 months, 40 female adult monkeys ate either a Mediterranean or Western diet. After this time, the monkeys that ate the Mediterranean diet had 10 times the level of Lactobacillus in their breast tissue as that measured in those that ate the Western diet.

The Mediterranean diet-fed monkeys also had higher levels of compounds produced from bile and bacterial activity that are consistent with a lower risk of breast cancer.

(Source: Medical News Today)

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Foreign arrivals in Ardebil province up 53% in H1



Large parts of Ardebil province are green and forested.

TOURISM TEHRAN — The number of international tourists visiting Iran's Ardebil province rose sharply by 53 percent in the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21) from a year earlier, provincial tourism chief has said.

Ardebil hosted 292,826 foreign travelers from neighboring and European countries and the U.S. in the six-month period that shows 53 percent year-on-year increase, CHTN quoted Nader Fallahi as saying on Tuesday.

"A total of 191,076 foreigners arrived in the province during the same period last year," he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the official announced that 56,172 domestic travelers stayed in the province in the period that indicates a 24 percent year-on-year slump.

Sprawling on a high, windswept plateau, Ardebil is well-known for having lush natural beauties, hospitable people and its silk and carpet trade tradition, it is also home to the UNESCO-registered Sheikh Safi al-Din Khanegah and Shrine Ensemble.

Philippines to rein in visitors to Boracay island, strained by tourism

MANILA (Reuters) — The Philippines will limit the number of visitors setting foot on its most treasured island resort each day when it reopens to tourists on October 26 after a six-month rehabilitation effort, an environment official said on Wednesday.

Boracay, located off the northern tip of the central island of Panay, is famed for its sugary white sands, turquoise waters, lively nightlife and abundant water sports, which attracted nearly 2 million domestic and foreign visitors last year.

But in April, President Rodrigo Duterte ordered the closure of the island, calling it a "cesspool", because of sewage dumped into the sea and buildings constructed too close to the shore.

About a third of the 600 to 700 resorts on Boracay, about 308 km (192 miles) from Manila, the capital, were operating without permits, authorities found.

Just 19,000 tourists will be allowed on the island on any given day, with the number of workers capped at 15,000 daily, the environment official, Sherwin Rigor, said in a television interview.

Only half of the island's 12,000 existing hotel rooms will be allowed to open each day, he added, to ensure the number of guests on the tiny 10-sq-km (4-sq-mile) island is below its "carrying capacity" of 55,000.

Rigor, who is an undersecretary at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, added that authorities would ban beachfront parties, and activities such as eating, smoking and drinking there.

The closure of Boracay, which earns the Philippines more than a billion dollars in tourism revenue every year, weighed on gross domestic product in the second quarter. Growth slowed to a near three-year low of 6 percent in April-June.

Dutch archaeological show opens in Tehran

HERITAGE TEHRAN — On Tuesday, the Netherlands ambassador to Tehran cut the ribbon on an extensive Dutch archaeological show at the National Museum of Iran, where couple of months ago, hosted a Louvre show widely deemed as a new wave of cultural diplomacy between Iran and the West.

Yvette Daoud underlined that collaboration between Dutch and Iranian museums is an example of a successful diplomacy between the two countries that can bring thousands of visitors to the history and civilization of the two countries, IRNA reported.

The Dutch envoy attached great importance to cultural exchange as a way to deepen mutual esteem, saying "We believe that strengthening cultural exchanges is advantageous because they lead to a better understanding of nations."

Another speaker at the opening ceremony, Iran's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism deputy director Mohammad-Hassan Talebian, underlined cultural exchanges among countries, noting "We believe broadening museum relations is a top way to strengthen relations between nations and to promote peace in the world."

Loaned by Drents Museum, the event has put on show 331 objects including stone tools, jewelry, and natural human mummies in three sections of archeology, pottery and paintings, the latter is dedicated to artworks of the 18th to the 20th centuries.

Titled "Dutch Archaeology and Art", the exhibit will be running through April 6, 2019.

Drents Museum, in return, is showcasing some 200 Iranian antique items in an exhibit titled "Iran - Cradle of Civilization".

"These treasures have long been hidden from the Western world. Many of them have never been exhibited in the Netherlands before, and have even never been on show outside Iran before," according to the Drents Museum website.

This year, the National Museum of Iran also showcased other loan collections including ones from Armenia and South Korea.

The Louvre show, which wrapped up on July 30, pulled in over 250,000 nationwide visitors since its opening date on March 5. It put on show some 50 works including 2,400-year-



A woman visits "Dutch Archaeology and Art", on loan from Drents Museum, at the National Museum of Iran on October 2, 2018.

"We believe that strengthening cultural exchanges is advantageous because they lead to a better understanding of nations."

old Egyptian sphinx, a bust of Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius and drawings by Rembrandt and Delacroix and other artifacts linked to Greek, Egyptian and Mesopotamian culture, as well as objects from ancient Iran.

In parallel, the Louvre played host to "The Rose Empire Masterpieces of 19th-Century Persian Art", which showcased a vast collection of Qajar-era (1785-1925) objects at France's Louvre-Lens art museum from March 28 to July 22.

Tabriz to host JICA workshops on tourism development, historical urban landscape

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Japan International Cooperation Agency is scheduled to hold two workshops on the key themes of tourism development and historical urban landscape in the Iranian city of Tabriz which is currently holding the title of 2018 Islamic Tourism Capital.

The workshops will be set up in collaboration with East Azarbaijan province's office of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, CHTN reported.

"Upon consultations with top JICA officials last year, JICA specialized teams in the arenas of tourism and cultural heritage will hold training sessions for stakeholders and activists," Morteza Abdar, the provincial tourism chief, said.

The first workshop will sharpen focus on JICA's objectives and manners in tourism development by providing examples of

sustainable development projects. And the second will touch upon urban planning and conservation of historical urban texture, the official explained.

Last December, JICA picked Tabriz to have a round of cultural heritage and tourism studies on the ancient Silk Road. Tabriz has long been a gateway to Europe and East Asia since antiquity, said Akira Uhara, JICA senior expert for national heritage and tourism.

Soaked in history and culture for millennia, Tabriz hosts abundant historical, natural and religious sites, including Jameh Mosque of Tabriz, the Arg of Tabriz and UNESCO-registered Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex.

Tabriz was named the capital of Islamic tourism for 2018 by the vote of the inter-governmental Organization of Islamic Cooperation in 2015.



A view of Elgoli Park, a popular tourism destination in Tabriz

How to actually eat like a local while traveling

By Rebecca Holland

When looking for restaurant recommendations at home, we rely on friends, magazines and review sites. Yet when abroad, we fantasize about a mystical "local," someone who will guide us to the best meal of our lives, preferably somewhere "authentic" and "off the beaten path." Though we would never expect this of a stranger on the street at home, we expect it abroad from citizens just like us.

Chicago, where I live, has a fantastic food scene. That doesn't make every Chicagoan an expert. If you asked 100 random people where to eat, you would receive dozens of different answers.

If we don't expect locals in our own city to be food experts, there's no reason to assume locals everywhere else are.

But if the all-knowing local doesn't exist, and we don't want to resort to overpriced, chain restaurants, how can you actually find the best local food while traveling? Here are some tips.

Do your preliminary research

Before you go, do some research on the types of cuisine your destination is known for, its local ingredients and its most beloved dishes. Then do a quick search for places to eat, keeping in mind that review sites aren't always accurate (more on this later). Eater is usually a reliable source, and places like Bon Appetit, Saveur, Roads & Kingdoms, and of course, The New York Times' Food section are all good options that use locals or experienced international journalists who have gone through these steps for you.

Curiosity Magazine, a publication I started specifically to help travelers find their way and get advice like this, hires exclusively local writers eager to share their local food culture with visitors. Local food blogs, which you can often find with a quick Google search, are also great resources. If you see a few places showing up again and again in a variety of publications and sources, that's a good sign.

Sign up for a food tour

Food tours are one of my favorite things to do while traveling. They give an outsider a great overview of the must-eats in a city, and are easy to find. Ask your hotel concierge, search the web for vacation packages that include food tours, check with a travel agent, or check with a local or regional tourist office. Sure, the portions are small and you'll wander around amid a group of tourists, but you'll also learn something and try a variety of foods in an effortless way. Most importantly, your guide is a local who obviously loves food. Ask where she eats when not working and you'll get plenty of tips to



Everyone says you should follow the lead of locals when traveling, but actual suggestions on how to do that tend to be vague.

try once the tour is over.

Trust bar and restaurant staff

"Bartenders know best" is my motto for drinking around the world. Bartenders work with and drink with other bartenders, who work and drink in other bars. Whether you're looking for a dive bar or a fancy cocktail, your bartender — whether it's at a hotel bar or a restaurant you stumbled into — will point you in the right direction.

The same goes for your restaurant server, who works all night with people in the food world. The advice from your bar and wait staff is some of the best you'll get. Tip accordingly.

Don't (blindly) trust online reviews

I spent a few years living in Rome and was always baffled with some of the top-rated restaurants on sites like TripAdvisor or Yelp. "This is the best pizza I've ever had in my life," someone would write about a mediocre restaurant outside the Vatican, while my favorite (and very popular among locals) pizza spot was way down around No. 200.

But keep in mind that TripAdvisor reviews are written by tourists, not locals. Maybe it is the best pizza that person has ever had, because he's on vacation and atmosphere matters

when it comes to taste. That doesn't mean it's the best pizza in Rome. Reviews can help you pin down suggestions in a region, or if you have specific dietary needs or preferences, but that's about it. If you must read, look past the stars. If someone has given a place a two-star rating because of "a misplaced fork," or something else you know wouldn't be an issue for you, disregard the review. Service speeds, for example, are cultural, and prone to bias. Look for reviews from locals, especially those who comment on certain dishes. "This Bolognese is as good as my grandma's." That's what you're looking for.

Don't shy away from street food, especially when there's a crowd

Street food is usually cheap and widely available, and can give you insight into the local food culture. Just as with hot dogs in Chicago, most people can tell you where to go. However, while street food can be delicious, it can also carry the risk of food-borne illness. Watch how it's prepared and handled, and follow our tips. If you're skeptical — either of the location or the ingredients, or in a country where food-borne illness is a common problem for travelers — don't risk it. If you see lines of locals waiting outside a street cart though, that's a good sign that turnover is high and food is popular and good.

At restaurants, make note of long lines of tourists waiting for the No. one rated place on TripAdvisor, but also look for crowds of locals spilling out into the streets, and eating happily at local restaurants or cafes where the lines are long before the doors even open. There are a few food experiences worth waiting for, but for the most part a comfortably crowded spot beats a long line any day.

Ask the right locals, not just any local

If you're going to do it, let's talk about how to do it right. Keep in mind that, especially when visiting a non-western country, American tourists will often be pointed toward the most "western" place, which also tends to be the most expensive. The intentions are often good — avoidance of funky flavors or spice, for example — but the results are often disappointing.

Instead, get specific. Ask where to try a certain type of food. This is where your preliminary research comes in. Discuss your price range and the atmosphere you're looking for, and convince them you really, truly do want to try local dishes, regardless of ingredients. Plus, there's always a chance you'll get lucky and run into the local who is passionate about and really does know a lot about food, and then you're in for a treat.

(Source: The New York Times)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Island of Goree

The Island of Goree in Senegal testifies to an unprecedented human experience in the history of humanity. Indeed, for the universal conscience, this "memory island" is the symbol of the slave trade with its cortege of suffering, tears and death.

The painful memories of the Atlantic slave trade are crystallized in this small island of 28 hectares lying 3.5 km off the coast from Dakar. Goree owes its singular destiny to the extreme centrality of its geographical position between the North and the South, and to its excellent strategic position offering a safe haven for anchoring ships, hence the name "Good Rade".



Thus, since the 15th century it has been prized by various European nations that have successively used it as a stop-over or slave market. First terminus of the "homeoducs" who drained the slaves from the hinterland, Goree was at the center of the rivalry between European nations for control of the slave trade. Until the abolition of the trade in the French colonies, the Island was a warehouse consisting of over a dozen slave houses. Amongst the tangible elements that reflect Goree's universal value are, notably, the Castle, a rocky plateau covered with fortifications which dominate the Island; the Relais de l'Espadon, former residence of the French governor; etc...

The Island of Goree is now a pilgrimage destination for the African diaspora, a foyer for contact between the West and Africa, and a space for exchange and dialogue between cultures through the confrontation of ideals of reconciliation and forgiveness.

(Source: UNESCO)

Secondary forests have short lifespans, researchers find

Secondary forests only last an average of 20 years. The finding presents a major problem for large-scale restoration policy, which often focuses on commitments to restore a certain number of hectares by a given year. But the benefits of restoration depend on those forests persisting. It takes much longer than 20 years for a secondary forest to absorb large amounts of carbon, or to provide habitat for many forest species, research shows.

The finding presents a major problem for large-scale restoration policy, which often focuses on commitments to restore a certain number of hectares by a given year. But the benefits of restoration depend on those forests persisting. It takes much longer than 20 years for a secondary forest to absorb large amounts of carbon, or to provide habitat for many forest species, research shows.

The ephemerality of secondary forests in southern Costa Rica, is one of the first studies to look at how long secondary forests persist.

Secondary forests

"This work is important because all of our hopes and needs for tropical secondary forests rely on those forests recovering for long periods of time," said Missouri Botanical Garden Scientist Leighton Reid, who was the lead author of the paper. "Species conservation,



carbon storage, and other benefits require forests to grow old, and in southern Costa Rica, they aren't."

Reid and his collaborators used aerial photos of secondary forests in Costa Rica from

1947 to 2014 for their research. Using those photos, they found that secondary forests grew for an average of only 20 years before they were converted to another land use, typically agriculture. A total of 85 percent of secondary

A total of 85 percent of secondary forests were re-cleared before reaching the age of 54, the study found.

forests were re-cleared before reaching the age of 54, the study found.

Riparian forests and larger forest fragments had lower risks of reforestation than other secondary forests, research showed.

Reid said he hopes this study will lead to stronger restoration commitments.

"Currently, countries are making large-scale commitments with no long-term vision.

Restoring old forests

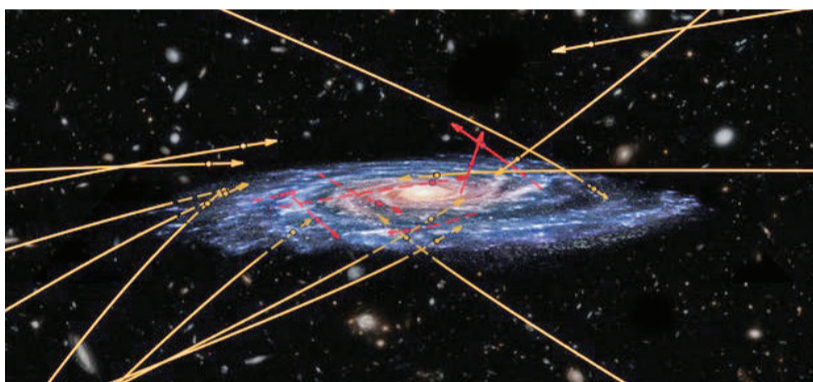
There is a great opportunity for an ambitious, progressive country to commit to restore a million hectares of 100-year old forest by 2120, instead of a million hectares of zero-year old forest by 2020," he said.

The study focused on Costa Rica because data was available at a high resolution over a long period of time. It was also an interesting case study because of its Payments for Ecosystem Services program and because it is among the countries that made a major restoration commitment under the Bonn Challenge.

The research has the longest time scale, 67 years, and the greatest spatial resolution, 10 meter resolution, of any studies that have looked at secondary tropical forest persistence. Two previous studies only went back as far as 1985 and used lower resolution data.

(Source: Science Daily)

Hypervelocity alien stars could be invading the Milky Way, team finds



Astronomers have discovered a population of incredibly fast-moving stars bearing down on the Milky Way. It is possible that these newly found "hypervelocity" stellar bodies were created in another galaxy, before being hurled out into intergalactic space on a collision course with the Milky Way.

Our galaxy is populated by over a hundred billion stars, most of which reside in a dense disk located on the galactic plane, and in a bulge surrounding the galactic center, at the heart of which lies a supermassive black hole. The remainder of the stars are distributed in the stellar halo, or sphere, that surrounds our galaxy.

ESA's Gaia mission was launched on the December 19, 2013, with the ambitious goal of creating a precise three-dimensional map detailing the positions and characteristics of roughly one billion stars, located both within our galaxy, and beyond.

Following the second data release in April this year, a team of astronomers from Leiden University, Netherlands, seized the opportunity to identify a rare breed of stellar bodies known as hypervelocity stars. These are the some of the fastest moving stars known to science, and travel so swiftly that they are able to break free of the Milky Way's powerful gravitational influence, and escape into intergalactic space.

Gravitational interactions

Prior to taking flight, hypervelocity

stars are thought to reside close to the galactic center. Over time, gravitational interactions with the supermassive black holes thought to reside at the heart of most large galaxies catapult the unlucky stars outward at phenomenal speeds.

To date, only a few hypervelocity stars have been discovered, yet they are a valuable tool for astronomers attempting to reveal some of the mysteries surrounding our enigmatic galaxy. Scientists can glean many insights from analyzing the runaway behemoths, such as discerning the types of stars that orbit near the heart of the Milky Way.

The April data release included super detailed observations of the seven million brightest stars scrutinized by the Gaia satellite. Of these seven million, the authors of the new paper were able to identify 20 that were likely travelling fast enough to escape the Milky Way's oppressive hold.

Excitingly, 13 of the candidate stars were travelling not away from, but towards the Milky Way. Two of the fastest stars were estimated to be travelling at the speed of 700 km per second (435 miles per second).

There are a number of possible origins for the runaway stars. Arguably the least exciting explanation is that the stellar bodies once resided in the Milky Way's extended galactic halo, and were subsequently shifted inward by an interaction with a nearby dwarf galaxy.

(Source: New Atlas)

Europe fires to worsen even if climate goals met: study



Even reaching the most optimistic goals in the Paris climate treaty will still increase the area of southern Europe devastated by forest fires each year by at least 40 percent, researchers warned Tuesday.

Following two years of often deadly blazes across Portugal, Spain, southern France and Greece, scientists at the University of Barcelona said more woodland areas could be lost to the flames if the targets laid out in the 2015 climate deal were missed.

The agreement aims to limit global temperature increases to "well below" 2.0 degrees Celsius — and to 1.5C if at all possible.

In the first study of its kind, the team tested computer models of how much worse fires would get if global temperatures were to rise 1.5C, 2C, or 3C by the end of the century.

A lot of fires

"It's relevant because there are a lot of fires in this area, for instance, in Greece this year or last summer in Portugal," Marco Turco, from the university's Department of Applied Physics and lead study author told AFP. "These are examples of things to come in the future."

Turco and the team found that the area of southern Europe lost each year to fire would increase between 40-54 percent, even if temperature rises were limited to 1.5C — the most ambitious goal in all climate change mitigation efforts.

Were temperatures to climb 2C above the preindustrial benchmark, the area destroyed by fire was projected to increase

between 62-87 percent, and for 3C it could grow by as much as 187 percent as climate change-induced droughts produce more combustible material.

Southern Europe currently loses around 4,500 square kilometres—three times the area of Greater London—each year to fire.

In July, nearly 100 people perished in blazes at coastal resorts near Athens, the country's worst fire in modern history.

The government of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras came in for thunderous criticism after a combination of tactical errors by emergency responders and poor infrastructure trapped hundreds of holidaymakers in the path of the flames.

Our planet heats up

Scientists have consistently predicted that extreme weather events such as wildfires, drought, superstorms and flooding will become more frequent and severe as our planet heats up.

Turco said his study highlighted the importance of trying to stick to 1.5C rises — something some studies already suggest may be beyond reach.

Ultimately, in seaside regions where holiday homes predominate, people may wish to reconsider buying a property that could become increasingly prey to fire as the century progresses.

"In these areas the climate has meant that people have to be really careful considering these future scenarios," Turco said.

(Source: phys.org)

EGFI to Take Part in Upcoming Berne Union Meet

Arash Shahraeini Member of the Board of Directors of the Export Guarantee Fund of Iran (EGFI) said that his Fund will take part in the Annual Meeting of Berne Union in Paris in early Nov., the Public Relations Dept. of the Export Development Fund of Iran reported.

US unilateral sanctions and EU positions with regard to sanctions imposed on Iran are of the subjects that will be put atop agenda of the Fund, he maintained.

The Fund tries to defend Iran's positions and high capacities of EU for continuation of doing trade and business ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Shortly after US pullout from JCPOA, representative of the European Union (EU)



in May announced that EU will continue its trade and business transactions with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In this regard, EU Foreign Policy Chief Federica Mogherini unveiled the package to support European companies doing business with Iran.

Maintaining banking relations and granting finance and export credit for domestic projects are of the subjects that have been reiterated in the package posed by EU, he said, adding, "some of Iran's expectations in this package have been met which was announced last week. Europe has devised mechanism for doing business with Iran which will be put into force until before Nov. 4."

In this new mechanism, a single-purpose company has been designed for settlement of account with Iran and is expected to settle

Iran's oil revenues through this company with goods and services required in the country.

In this regard, China and Russia work on similar mechanism, he opined.

Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Export Guarantee Fund of Iran (EGFI) have been tasked with following up the case in Berne Union meet, Shahraeini opined.

In conclusion, he said, "unfortunately, some public guarantee funds in Europe, which are mainly running under the public sector, have created some restriction in this respect, so that Iranian Foreign Ministry is expected to demand the case officially from EU and force these funds to develop cooperation and cover risk of trade activities with Iran."

IRANCELL Displaying Latest Achievements in IRAN TELECOM 2018

The 19th International Exhibition of Telecommunications (Iran Telecom 2018) was inaugurated by Communications and Information Technology (ICT) Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi in Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds today.

In this prestigious exhibition, IRANCELL will showcase its latest products, services and achievements, Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

TELECOM Exhibition 2018 is considered as the most prestigious event which is held every year in Iran in the

field of communications and information technology (ICT). Like previous years, IRANCELL displays its latest achievements to the public in Hall No. 27.

The event, sponsored by the Telecoms Ministry, Iranian Telecommunication Industries Syndicate (IT IS) and Telecommunications Company of Iran (TCI), is running this year under the theme "New Achievements, Opportunities Ahead", bringing together a bulk of domestic and international players in the ICT sector, the report added.

Some 130 Iranian firms from the private sector and

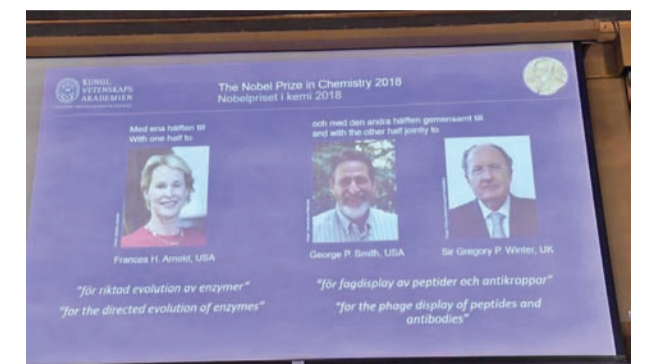
16 companies from the public sector as well as 20 foreign companies, from China, Russia and Poland, are participating in the event along with representatives from prominent telecom research centers presenting achievements related to telecommunications and information technology.

Special packages have been offered for IRANCELL customers in this edition of exhibition, based on which, customers of the company can receive special discount for shopping IRANCELL modem and SIM card, the Public Relations Dept. of the company concluded.

3 scientists awarded chemistry Nobel Prize

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences said Wednesday the three researchers who were awarded this year's Nobel Prize in chemistry "harnessed the power of evolution" to develop enzymes and antibodies that have led to new pharmaceuticals and biofuels.

Frances Arnold of the California Institute of Technology was awarded half the prize for conducting the first directed evolution of enzymes, leading to more environmentally friendly manufacturing of chemicals, including drugs, and in the production of renewable fuels.



George Smith of the University of Missouri and Gregory Winter of the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge, England, share the other half of the prize. Smith developed a new way to evolve proteins and Winter used the method for evolving antibodies with the aim of producing new drugs.

The first drug based on this work is used against rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis and inflammatory bowel disease, the academy said.

(Source: Washington Times)

Spooky skull-shaped dead comet to zip past Earth on Nov. 11

A comet that, in certain lights, resembles a human skull will zip right past Earth just in time for Halloween.

Scientists have been observing the space rock from the Infrared Telescope Facility in Hawaii. It is expected to safely flyby Earth on Nov. 11.

The comet was first discovered back in October 2015 by the Panoramic Survey Telescope and Rapid Response System or Pan-STARRS-1, part of Near-Earth Object Observations Program funded by NASA. The space rock called Asteroid 2015 TB145 is more likely a dead comet, which has already shed its volatiles after repeated close encounters with the Sun.

Scientists also found that it only reflects about six percent of light, slightly higher than a typical comet that reflects about 3 to 5 percent of light.

"That suggests it could be cometary in origin — but as there is no coma evident, the conclusion is it is a dead comet," explained Vishnu Reddy, a research scientist from the Planetary Science Institute.

Asteroid 2015 TB145 will fly by the Earth at a distance of about 25 million miles. Its first observed flyby happened on Oct. 31, 2015, prompting scientists at NASA to call it the "Great Pumpkin."

First radar images captured by the National Science Foundation's Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico revealed that the Halloween comet is about 2,000 feet in diameter and completes its rotation every five hours.

NASA classified the comet as "potentially hazardous" but, despite its appearance, it likely will not crash into the Earth and cause the apocalypse any time soon. The space agency made the classification because of Asteroid 2015 TB145's size and proximity to the Earth, but scientists have already mapped its trajectory in case it comes dangerously close.

(Source: Tech Times)

Sloths have a super weird metabolic ability nobody has ever seen before

There's no denying that sloths are weird creatures. They risk their lives every time they poo, their organs are stuck to their bones, and finding a mate looks like a nightmare.

Now we can add an extra feature to the sloths' repertoire: their metabolism is so weird, scientists have never seen it before in the animal kingdom.

Most mammals have something called a thermoneutral zone. It's the temperature range which is similar enough to our body temperature to keep us comfortable, without using much energy.

On either side of this zone (too hot or cold) we use a lot of energy trying to keep our core temperature comfortable.

Not all animals operate this way, though. Reptiles, for one, don't have such a zone. Instead, because metabolism works faster in hotter temperatures, they try to conserve energy when cold, and use lots of energy when hot.

Which brings us back to sloths. Researchers already knew there was a strong link between sloth body temperature and the temperature of the environment.

In general, the hotter the environment, the more hyper the sloth; this has led sloth metabolism to be likened to that of reptiles.

An "increase in temperature should, theoretically, result in an increase in metabolic rate. However, nobody really knows," the researchers wrote on the Sloth Conservation Foundation (SCF) website.

"Considering the sloths limited energy supply and the potential knock-on effects of a warming climate, we designed an experiment to find out."

The researchers from the SCF, Swansea University and Queen's University Belfast in the UK, monitored eight adult three-fingered sloths (*Bradypus variegatus*) in a metabolic chamber.

They worked out the resting metabolic rate, and then increased the temperature slowly from 21 to 34 degrees Celsius (69 to 93 Fahrenheit) — all temperatures that sloths would experience if they were in their jungle habitat.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Wood chips supersedes green grass in Tehran

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — While planting grass in green spaces has been banned due to the high costs and water consumption, a new design of wood chips is piloted in the capital to be implemented in other areas, YJC reported on Wednesday.

Mulching wood chips around the trees has led to 60 percent reduction of evapotranspiration and has decreased the irrigation costs by four times, Ali Nozarpour, mayor of district 22 of Tehran Municipality has said.



In July, Tehran Municipality announced that planting grass in 22 districts of Tehran is banned due to water scarcity, while other plant species which require less water, resistant to pests and compatible with the city's climate must be used as alternatives.

At the same time Tehran city councilor Nahid Khodakarami announced a ban on irrigating Tehran's green spaces from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. saying that considering Tehran's water scarcity, keeping the grass green is not a priority but growing some plants compatible with the capital's climatic characteristics makes more sense.

A project has been prepared on a new design of wood chips to be mulched over the open spaces and parks, which is piloted in western part of the capital and is planned to be implemented in other areas, as well, Nozarpour explained.

In order to rejuvenate the trees and providing right conditions for growth, thousands of trees are pruned throughout the capital, and the discarded tree branches are thrown away, he said, adding, given the implementation of this project, the pruned branches went through the recycling process and used for environmental purposes.

He went on to say that the pruned branches are chipped into wood chips, and colored naturally by iron oxide which causes no harm to the environment.

The project has played a significant role in beautification of open spaces in the capital, as a wide range of open spaces can be adorned by Iranian traditional patterns and colors, he further explained.

It is noteworthy to say that the project is being implemented in cooperation with Iran's state prison organization to provide employment to the prisoners in the country, he concluded.

Department of Environment opposes water transfer from Persian Gulf

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — With regard to the environmental conditions of the Persian Gulf, the Department of Environment (DOE) has taken a firm stand against water transfer from this body of water, deputy environment chief, Masoud Tajrishi, has said.

Mahmoud Shayan, a board member of Bank Melli Iran has said that the project of water transfer from the Persian Gulf to central provinces will complete by next year, Mehr news agency reported on September 30.

Shayan explained that a consortium of nine Iranian banks have invested some \$428 million in the project so that water of the Persian Gulf can be transferred to central provinces of Kerman, Yazd, and Isfahan through a pipeline.

He also added that desalination facilities are in place in the aforesaid provinces and that the project will come to fruition within next 10 months to provide the regions, which are suffering water shortage, with water.

However, Tajrishi told IRNA news agency on Wednesday that no requests have been submitted to the DOE regarding [environmental assessment of] water transfer from Persian Gulf and that DOE is adamantly opposed to this project.

"Even the Ministry of Energy would not permit water transfer from the Persian Gulf," he stated.

The Persian Gulf water has a warmer temperature than other seas and this make it more vulnerable to any changes, Tajrishi said, adding that, oil tankers plying the Persian



Deputy environment chief Tajrishi told IRNA that no requests have been submitted to the Department of Environment regarding [environmental assessment of] water transfer from Persian Gulf and that DOE is adamantly opposed to this project.

Gulf, its high level of salinity and evaporation as well as its shallow depth have made this ecosystem sensitive to exploitations.

In order to conduct such projects the Ministry of Energy should first issue a permit and

most important the Department of Environment should assess the possible environmental impacts of the project, Tajrishi highlighted, restating, under no circumstances is the DOE issuing any permit for water transfer from

the Persian Gulf.

He further explained that water transfer project from sea of Oman is already underway to provide the northern parts of provinces of Sistan-Baluchestan, Kerman and also Yazd province with drinking water and also water for industrial purposes.

In May, Parvin Farshchi, deputy head of the DOE for marine affairs, said that Iran is weighing up the option of transferring water from Sea of Oman to drought-ridden provinces of Sistan-Baluchestan, Hormozgan and Khorasan Razavi.

Farshchi also explained that each marine environment has its distinguishing characteristics and this is why we said no to water transfer schemes from the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea. She also stated that Sea of Oman is different from the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea, in that it is deeper and unlike the Caspian Sea which is in fact an enclosed inland body of water and the Persian Gulf which is partially enclosed by land Sea of Oman is connected to the Indian Ocean.

Iran is located in an arid and semi-arid area and is facing water shortage caused by low precipitation, temperature rise and climate change. Low precipitation rate and drought in Iran has urged the responsible organizations to look for new water resources. Almost all experts believe that facing water challenge is not the mere discovery of new resources, rather, refining water consumption patterns as well as recycling water should be taken into account.

Insurance coverage for Iranian traditional medicine

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iranian traditional medicine services will be covered by the insurance companies, head of the Iranian traditional medicine department at the Ministry of Health has said.

Currently there are 56 health centers and clinics offering Iranian traditional medicine services in the country, ISNA quoted Mahmoud Khodadoust as saying on Wednesday.

Following the meetings and agreement with the Iranian Health Insurance Organization, the cost of treatment in the Iranian traditional medicine centers, will be covered by the organization, he highlighted.

Referring to websites illegally selling herbal medicines and filling prescriptions without doctor's order, he said that in this regard, through correspondences with the Iranian Cyber Police and the Ministry of Culture and Islamic

Guidance, illegal websites have been announced officially.

"At the same time, we announced the legitimate websites and centers for the provision of herbal medicines, through the ministry's website," he said.

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

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



Cost of cigarettes must rise to reflect environmental damage from tobacco industry, WHO says

The price of a packet of cigarettes should rise to reflect the wide-ranging environmental damage caused by the tobacco industry, from deforestation to water pollution, a major report has recommended.

Backed by the World Health Organization (WHO), the study found the industry's carbon footprint was comparable to entire countries.

Tobacco farms accounted for the loss of around 5 per cent of forests in parts of Asia and Africa, it stated.

The UK was among the countries singled out for criticism along with several other western nations which were condemned for "literally burning poorer countries' resources".

Cigarette production and consumption have seen dramatic growth in recent decades with around six trillion cigarettes manufactured annually for an estimated one billion smokers.

Tobacco production is often more environmentally damaging than that of essential commodities such as food crops, the study by the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control found.

But while the health implications of smoking are well known, the cost to the planet is

often overlooked.

The report's authors accused tobacco firms of having been "quick to capitalize on weaker regulatory frameworks and growing populations" in lower income countries to shift the environmental and social burden overseas.

They were also skeptical about the level of carbon emissions multinational tobacco firms said were linked to cigarette production, noting that these totals were significantly lower than those recorded by scientists working on the study.

"Tobacco transnationals based in high income countries are literally and metaphorically burning the resources and the future of the most vulnerable people on our planet," said Dr Nicholas Hopkinson of the National Heart and Lung Institute at Imperial College London, who co-authored the report.

Annual tobacco production contributes almost 84 million tons of carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions to climate change — around 0.2 per cent of the global total, the report found. This is equal to the emissions of Peru or Israel and more than twice that of Wales.

More than 20,000 square miles of land

is taken up around the world to accommodate tobacco farms, which use more than 22 billion tons of water, meaning a person smoking a pack of 20 cigarettes a day for 50 years is responsible for 1.4 million liters of water depletion over their lifetime.

Additional environmental and social costs of the industry include soil depletion, high levels of pesticide use and child labor, the study said.

In China, the world's top cigarette consuming country, 2.5 trillion cigarettes are produced each year using millions of tons of water and thousands of square miles of arable land. At the same time, China is experiencing severe water shortages and nearly 134 million people suffer from undernourishment.

"The environmental impacts of cigarette smoking, from cradle to grave, add significant pressures to the planet's increasingly scarce resources and fragile ecosystems," said Professor Nick Voulvoulis, from the Centre for Environmental Policy at Imperial College, who co-authored the report.

In the UK, which has very little domestic tobacco production, smoking cigarettes "is

done entirely at the expense of other nations' resources and environmental health", the report said.

Almost 90 per cent of all tobacco growing is concentrated in the developing world, but the authors noted that most of the profits from the industry end up in developed countries.

Governments are being urged to respond to the problem by increasing taxes on cigarettes and rolling tobacco, taking into account the cost of damage to ecosystems and carbon pricing to address climate change.

Fines should also be imposed to punish companies whose tobacco contributes to deforestation or water pollution, the authors said. A ban on single-use filters used with rolling tobacco and the elimination of unnecessary packaging was also recommended.

"As well as the death and disease caused by active and passive smoking, the public need to be aware of the environmental impact of the tobacco industry," said Dr Hopkinson. "Cigarettes should be thought of as an unethical product, not just as one that is harmful to individual consumers."

(Source: The Independent)

LEARN ENGLISH

Making A Sandwich

A: Welcome to our show! Today, I am going to show you how to make the perfect mouthwatering sandwich! Are you ready? Let's get started!

A: Let's start with the basics: bread. Bread is an important ingredient here. You need to remember one thing, choose the bread according to the following criteria: freshness, crumb and color. If you want a closed sandwich I recommend you first toast your bread in a toaster or oven, or grill it slightly until it gets a light brown color.

A: Now that our bread is ready, let's talk about the ingredients! Of course, each person's palate is different, but I'm going to give you a few tips that you'll be able to use when turning any sandwich into the perfect sandwich. I would strongly recommend you put fresh vegetables in your sandwich.

A: Do not **undervalue** them as they play a big role in forming the taste and will make the sandwich more **refreshing** and light. The best choices here are evident- cucumbers, tomatoes, onions, sweet pepper or chili, lettuce and, of course, herbs- you can't go wrong with them. As for eggplants, mushrooms and asparagus, I would recommend you first grill them slightly with a little **touch** of olive oil.

A: Last but not least, we have a wide variety of condiments that we can add to our perfect sandwich. We can be **subtle** and just add a touch of salt and pepper, or we can combine mustard sauce, mayonnaise, ketchup or even caviar to achieve a stronger flavor! It's always a good idea to cut your sandwich in triangles or **manageable** pieces to avoid all your ingredients falling out and staining your shirt!

A: That's all the time we have for today, but join us next time where we'll be going over how to make the perfect lasagna! Till next time!

Key vocabulary

undervalue: to put too low a value on
refreshing: to provide new vigor and energy by rest, food, etc.
touch: a slight quantity or degree
subtle: so slight as to be difficult to detect or describe
manageable: that can be managed or controlled

Supplementary vocabulary

panini: originally an Italian style sandwich made with a small loaf of bread

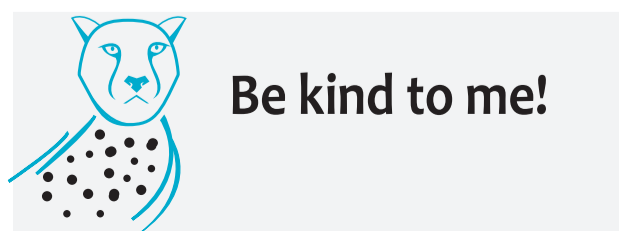
deli: a store where you can buy sandwich meats and bread

cooking show: a show which teaches people how to cook

wheat bread: a dark brown bread considered to be healthier to eat

pickles: a cucumber which has been fermented in a vinegar solution

(Source: irlanguage.com)



ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Genetically modified food to be labeled in Iran

Iran's Food and Drug Administration has obliged food manufacturers and importers to label food products as containing or not containing ingredients which are derived from genetically modified organisms (GMO), head of Iran's Food and Drug Administration has said.

Gholam Reza Asghari noted that GMO labels will be affixed to all genetically modified products, including soybean oil and corn oil, as of the beginning of the net Iranian calendar month of Mordad (July 23), Tasnim reported on Friday.

تراریخته‌ها در ایران برچسب گذاری می شوند

دکتر غلامرضا اصغری در گفت‌وگو با خبرنگار سلامت خبرگزاری تسنیم، اظهار داشت: سازمان غذا و دارو تمام شرکت های تولید کننده و وارد کننده مواد غذایی را موظف به برچسب گذاری تمامی محصولات تراریخته یا با منشاء تراریخته، کرده است.

معاون وزیر بهداشت درباره برچسب‌گذاری محصولات تراریخته توضیح داد: از اول مردادماه لوگوی محصولات تراریخته باید کنار لوگوی سازمان غذا و دارو برای روغن‌های سویا و ذرت و هر محصول با منشأ تراریخته قید شود.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ferous, -fer”

■ **Meaning:** bearing, containing or producing
■ **For example:** The **herbiferous** bowl contained fresh basil from my pantry.

PHRASAL VERB

Lark about/around

■ **Meaning:** to have fun by behaving in a silly way
■ **For example:** The kids are larking about in the steam-filled room.

IDIOM

Chase rainbows

■ **Explanation:** trying to get something that will never be obtained
■ **For example:** She's trying to get into Oxford, but I think she's chasing rainbows.

Trump says Saudi king wouldn't last 'two weeks' without U.S. support

➔ Trump has previously called on a number of other allies -- including NATO nations, Japan and South Korea -- to shoulder more of the costs of defense.

Trump's first official overseas trip as President was to Saudi Arabia, where he gave a landmark speech to scores of Muslim leaders.

The visit marked a strengthening of ties between the two allies -- relations between the kingdom and the Obama administration began to sour over Barack Obama's landmark 2015 nuclear deal with Iran. Just over a year into Trump's presidency, the U.S. withdrew from the agreement, reinstating economic sanctions and drawing praise from Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf allies.

During that trip, Trump signed a nearly \$110 billion defense deal with King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, which signaled a renewed U.S. commitment to its alliance with Saudi Arabia. Then-Secretary of State Rex



Tillerson said the deal was part of a \$350 billion package of economic and defense investments between the two countries over the next 10 years.

The Trump administration has also defended Saudi Arabia's involvement in the war in Yemen, despite repeated criticism from the United Nations and international rights groups.

Last month, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo certified to Congress that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were working to reduce civilian casualties in Yemen, despite multiple reports of a spike in the number of civilian deaths this summer.

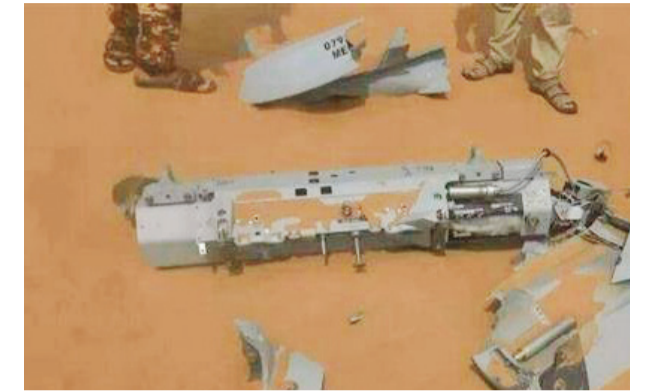
King Salman's nearly three-year rule has seen a freezing of diplomatic relations with Iran, the Saudi intervention into Yemen's war, an arrest sweep of high-profile Saudi businessmen and princes, as well as a series of social and economic reforms.

His son, the young Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, is widely seen as the main driver behind those moves.

(Source: CNN)

Yemeni forces shoot down Saudi reconnaissance drone in Najran

Yemeni army forces, supported by allied fighters from Popular Committees, have intercepted and targeted a Saudi unmanned aerial vehicle as it was flying in the skies over the kingdom's southwestern border region of Najran.



An unnamed Yemen military source said Yemeni air defense forces and their allies shot down the drone as it was on a reconnaissance mission near al-Khazra border crossing on Tuesday evening, the Houthi Ansarullah movement said in a statement. Separately, a barrage of Saudi missiles and artillery rounds rained down on residential areas in the Monabbih district of Yemen's northwestern province of Sa'ada.

There were no immediate reports about possible casualties and the extent of damage caused.

Moreover, scores of Saudi-sponsored militiamen loyal to Yemen's former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi were killed when Yemeni soldiers and their allies targeted their gatherings south of Kilo 16 district in the western Yemeni province of Hudaydah.

Earlier on Tuesday, Yemeni troops and Popular Committees fighters fired a domestically-developed Zelzal-2 (Earthquake-2) ballistic missile and several mortar shells at the positions of Saudi mercenaries in the Boqa' desert of Jizan, leaving several militiamen dead and injured.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched a devastating military campaign against Yemen in March 2015, with the aim of bringing the government of Hadi back to power and crushing the country's popular Ansarullah movement.

Some 15,000 Yemenis have been killed and thousands more injured since the onset of the Saudi-led aggression.

More than 2,200 others have died of cholera, and the crisis has triggered what the United Nations has described as the world's worst humanitarian disaster.

(Source: agencies)

Putin urges end to Washington political infighting

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that the United States should bring a halt to internal political infighting which he said was poisoning U.S. relations with Russia.

Putin has previously said allegations of Russian meddling in the U.S. presidential election have been fabricated by domestic opponents of U.S. President Donald Trump as a way to undermine Trump's presidency.

Putin also called Sergei Skripal, a former Russian double agent poisoned in Britain, a scumbag who had betrayed Russia.

Skripal and his daughter Yulia were found slumped on a public bench in the English city of Salisbury in March. Britain says they were poisoned with a nerve agent administered by Russian intelligence officers.

Russia denies involvement in the affair, which has deepened its international isolation.

"I see that some of your colleagues are pushing the theory that Mr Skripal was almost some kind of human rights activist," Putin said at an energy forum in Moscow when asked about the case.

"He was simply a spy. A traitor to the motherland. He's simply a scumbag, that's all," Putin added, in remarks that drew applause from parts of the audience.

The Russian leader, a former intelligence officer himself, said the Skripal scandal had been artificially exaggerated, but said he thought it would fade from the headlines at some point and that the sooner it quietened down the better.

Putin said Moscow was still ready to cooperate with

Britain when it came to investigating what happened, an offer London has so far declined to take up.

British officials say the poisoning was carried out by Russia's GRU military intelligence agency almost certainly acting with the approval of Russian officials. Russia has denied that.

'One of oldest professions'

Putin also dismissed the allegation that Russia was responsible for the accidental poisoning of Dawn Sturgess, a Salisbury-area woman who British police said died after coming into contact with the nerve agent Novichok which her partner had found in a discarded perfume bottle.

"What, did some guys rock up and start poisoning homeless people over there?" said Putin, repeating a description of Sturgess and her partner used by some Russian state media. "What rubbish."

Skripal had served time in a Russian prison for selling information to Britain, and Moscow had agreed to release him as part of a spy swap, said Putin, suggesting Russia therefore had no motive to kill him.

"We didn't need to poison anyone over there. This traitor Skripal was caught, he was punished and did five years in prison. We let him go, he left the country and he continued to cooperate there and consult some intelligence services. So what?"

The two Russian men Britain accuses of jettisoning to England to try to murder Skripal said in a TV interview last month that they were innocent tourists who had visited the city



of Salisbury to see its cathedral.

London says their explanation is so far-fetched as to all but prove Russia's involvement, while investigative website Bellingcat has published a picture of a decorated Russian military intelligence colonel it named as Anatoly Chepigina who resembles one of the two men Britain caught on CCTV.

Putin said spy scandals were nothing new.

"Did problems between intelligence services start yesterday?" quipped Putin.

"As is well known, espionage, like prostitution, is one of the world's oldest professions."

(Source: Reuters)

End divisions or put Brexit at risk: Theresa May

British Prime Minister Theresa May appealed to her Conservative Party on Wednesday to unite behind her plan to leave the European Union, warning critics their arguments could put Brexit in jeopardy.

On the final day of her party's annual conference, May sought to rally members by addressing their concerns that the Conservatives are becoming increasingly directionless under the weight of Brexit, urging them to look to a brighter future.

Dancing onto the stage in the city of Birmingham to ABBA's "Dancing Queen" and a standing ovation, May poked fun at herself after her dance moves were mocked on a trip to Africa and after last year's conference when her speech was disrupted by a coughing fit, a stage intruder and a collapsing background set.

It was a warm welcome for a leader whose fragile position at the helm of her party has come under further pressure after the EU rejected parts of her so-called Chequers plan and critics stepped up calls for her to ditch her strategy on Brexit, Britain's most far-reaching policy shift for more than 40 years.

With just six months before Britain is due to exit the EU, she has so far weathered the Brexit storm, shrugging off a barnstorming speech by her ex-foreign minister Boris Johnson that did little to hide his leadership ambitions.

On Wednesday, May was keen to show she was in charge of the Brexit talks.

"If we all go off in different directions in pursuit of our own vision of the perfect Brexit, we risk ending up with no Brexit at all," she said, a rebuff to eurosceptic lawmakers who have published their alternatives plan for leaving the EU.

"And there's another reason why we need to come together. We are entering the toughest part of the negotiations...If we stick together and hold our nerve, I know we can get a deal that delivers for Britain."



She also tried to return to the message she gave when she was appointed prime minister in 2016, promising to help those who feel "left behind" and pledging to end her government's austerity push after nearly a decade of spending cuts.

And in another rallying cry for unity, she repeatedly attacked the main opposition Labour Party, saying their policies, including a renationalization of mail, rail and utilities, would mean increased taxes and business flight.

Hard-left Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, she said, would "outsource our conscience to the Kremlin".

Unity?

Her words were aimed at easing the growing frustration of some Conservatives who openly say their party is meandering without substantive new ideas, unable to set an agenda amid their divisive feuds over how to depart the EU.

The heat she faces from some in the party was underlined less than an hour before

her speech when Conservative lawmaker James Duddridge said he had submitted a letter calling on her to resign. Forty-eight such letters are needed to trigger a vote of confidence in the leader.

Her spokesman declined to comment on Duddridge's move.

But Wednesday's speech seemed to have gone down well among the party faithful.

Jeremy Hunt, her foreign minister, said on Twitter: "Congratulations Theresa May for a remarkable speech delivered with humor and passion. Firmness of purpose, clarity and conviction - EU friends do not underestimate!"

Pro-Brexit party activist Paul Whitehouse told Reuters: "She did enough to rally the grassroots and that will be momentum enough for cracks to be paved over to a certain extent."

Taking a swipe at hardline eurosceptic Johnson, May said she was making decisions on Brexit in the "national interest" - a nod to her argument that her former foreign secretary's alternative Brexit proposals would

tear the United Kingdom apart by placing Northern Ireland under EU customs rules and thereby detaching it from the rest of Britain.

"It is no surprise that we have had a range of different views expressed this week," May said. "But my job as prime minister is to do what I believe to be in the national interest."

With no agreement with the bloc over the terms of divorce or a future trade relationship, the last day of the conference marked the beginning of what some officials predict will be a frenzied couple of weeks of diplomacy between London and Brussels as the two sides try to pin down a deal.

May and her team face weeks of difficult conversations with Brussels, especially after Hunt offended some in the bloc by comparing the EU to the old Soviet Union in asserting that the EU was trying to "punish" any member seeking to leave it.

"Brexit fans have their backs to the wall," said Franziska Brantner, European affairs spokeswoman for Germany's Greens party. "Blaming the EU won't help them."

At home it won't be any easier.

May faces challenges from her own party and from the small party propping up her minority government, Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party, which has repeated that it will not accept a border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

In her speech, May stuck to her plan, but did not call it by its moniker - Chequers - named after the prime ministerial country residence where she hashed out the proposals in July.

"So this is our proposal. Taking back control of our borders, laws and money. Good for jobs, good for the Union. It delivers the referendum, it keeps faith with the British people."

(Source: Reuters)

Israel lays siege to Palestinian Bedouin village ahead of demolition

The Israeli military has laid siege to a Palestinian Bedouin village it plans to demolish, two days after the regime's evacuation deadline for the residents expired.

Large numbers of Israeli forces surrounded Khan al-Ahmar, located east of the occupied Jerusalem al-Quds, on Wednesday morning, the Palestinian Information Center news website and network reported.

"Several military vehicles have arrived in the village since the early morning hours and surrounded the Bedouin community," it said, citing locals.

In August 2017, Minister for Military Affairs Avigdor

Lieberman announced that the Israeli regime would evacuate the entire community within several months.

Israel's Supreme Court has twice ruled in favor of demolishing the entire village, first on May 24 and again on September 5, when it rejected the residents' appeals against the decision and said a temporary injunction that had put the move on hold would expire within seven days.

Tel Aviv then gave Khan al-Ahmar's families a week, ending on October 1, to leave.

The regime says the village was built illegally, but Pal-

estinians say the demolition plan is part of Israel's forcible displacement policy to make room for its settlement construction activities on occupied land.

The United Nations has urged Israel not to demolish the village, home to 180 Palestinians, adding that the planned move violates international law.

Since 1967, Israel has been leading construction activities in territories, which it occupied during a six-day war.

The international law bans construction on occupied territory.

(Source: Press TV)

Niger says cholera epidemic has killed at least 68 people

Niger's public health ministry says at least 68 people have died in a cholera epidemic that began in July.

The ministry this week said it has registered more than 3,690 cases of the disease, which is caused by contaminated food or water and can kill within hours if untreated.

The epidemic has spread in the central Maradi region and has also affected the northern Tahoua, eastern Zinder and southwestern Dosso regions.

The UN children's agency and World Health Organization have estimated that only 37 percent of the population in the Maradi region has access to clean drinking water and only 10 percent has access to basic sanitation.

Niger's heavy rainy season from June to September allows the disease to spread easily.

(Source: AP)

Kremlin confirms: Russia to sign India S-400 deal shortly

Russian President Vladimir Putin will on Thursday visit India to personally oversee the signing of an important deal between Moscow and New Delhi for the purchase of five Russian S-400 missile defense systems, the Kremlin has confirmed.

"The president is leaving for India on October 4," Putin's top



foreign policy aide, Yuri Ushakov, said on Tuesday.

"The key feature of this visit will be the signing of the agreement to deliver S-400 air defense systems," he said. "The value of the contract will be more than 5 billion dollars."

India's highest security authority approved the \$5.43 billion military deal last month.

U.S. opposes deal

The United States has voiced its dissatisfaction with that military procurement. In August, a senior Pentagon official said that the U.S. might impose sanctions against India if the purchase occurred.

Under its current unilateral sanctions against Moscow, Washington could impose bans on third countries if they transact with the Russian defense or intelligence sectors.

The U.S. opposition to India's military transactions with Russia is based on a domestic bill enacted in 2017 and titled the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, or CAATSA.

Target countries subject to secondary U.S. sanctions argue that extraterritorial bans as such are effectively a breach of their sovereignty and contrary to international law.

India has, however, signaled that it will ask Washington for a special waiver from the sanctions, though a U.S. official last week suggested there was no guarantee such waivers would be issued.

(Source: Press TV)

Croatian court rejects perjury charge against Luka Modric

A Croatian court has rejected a charge of perjury against Luka Modric, recently named as the best football player in the world. Croatian prosecutors have accused him of giving false testimony at the trial of an ex-executive of his former club Dinamo Zagreb.

It related to Mr Modric's transfer to Tottenham Hotspur in 2008. A Zagreb criminal court rejected the accusation against Mr Modric, although its ruling can be appealed.

The trial involved Dinamo chief executive Zdravko Mamic and three officials, all sentenced to prison over embezzled funds from player transfers - though Mamic fled the country to Bosnia.

It is thought the embezzlement cost Dinamo Zagreb more than €15m (£13.1m; \$16.7m), and the state €1.5m.

That verdict is being appealed. Croatian media report that the Zagreb municipal criminal court said the perjury charge against Mr Modric was "premature" because the verdict in the corruption trial itself was not yet final.

The corruption charge centres around precisely when he signed an annex to his contract which established the terms for future transfer fees. The reprieve comes weeks after Mr Modric was voted as the best men's player of the year at the Fifa awards, in recognition of his performance at both club level and at the World Cup. Croatia came second in the global summer tournament, losing to France in the final.

Mr Modric was also awarded the golden ball - a World Cup award for the best player of the tournament.

Prosecutors claimed Mr Modric falsely said he had signed it in July 2004, but had actually signed it in 2008 when he had already left the club. They alleged the player changed his testimony in favour of Mamic.

(Source: BBC)

World chess gets first new president in over two decades

The World Chess Federation elected its first new president in more than two decades on Wednesday, choosing former Russian deputy prime minister Arkady Dvorkovich as its head after an election marred by mud-slinging and recriminations.

Dvorkovich takes over from Russian businessman Kirsan Ilyumzhinov who had headed the federation since 1995, but was suspended in July for having allegedly violated the organisation's code of ethics, something he denied.

Dvorkovich's path to victory was smoothed after rival Nigel Short, a British grandmaster, withdrew his candidacy earlier on Wednesday and endorsed the Russian against the only other contender, Greece's Georgios Makropoulos.

The vote took place in the coastal resort of Batumi in Georgia.

(Source: Reuters)

United's Valencia apologises for Mourinho Instagram fail

Manchester United skipper Antonio Valencia apologised for liking an Instagram post that called for manager Jose Mourinho to be sacked after Tuesday's goalless draw against Spanish side Valencia in the Champions League.

Defender Valencia said he had liked the post by a supporter, which also contained his pictures, but had not read its caption which read: "It's time for Mourinho to go".

"Yesterday, I liked a post on Instagram without reading the text that accompanied the picture," Valencia said on Twitter on Wednesday. "These are not my views and I apologise for this. I am fully supportive of the manager and my team mates. We are all giving our everything to improve the results," the Ecuadorian added. British media reports have said Valencia has fallen out with Portuguese Mourinho who is under heavy criticism after the club's worst start to a season since 1989-90.

United have 10 points from seven Premier League matches and sit in 10th place, nine points behind leaders Manchester City. They have also been dumped out of the League Cup by second-tier Derby County.

Mourinho's apparent rift with record signing Paul Pogba has led to the Frenchman being demoted as vice-captain to further fuel media speculation that the manager is losing his influence at Old Trafford.

The 20-time English champions host Newcastle United in the league on Saturday.

(Source: Eurosport)

AIBA bans ex-president CK Wu and former executive director Ho Kim for life

Amateur boxing's governing body has issued life bans to ex-president CK Wu and former executive director Ho Kim.

The International Boxing Association (AIBA) made the ruling after a report documented what it describes as "gross negligence and financial mismanagement of AIBA affairs and finances".

Wu and Kim have both denied any allegations of wrongdoing. AIBA will seek "ratification" of its decisions at its congress in Moscow in November.

Wu was in charge of the AIBA for 11 years before being provisionally suspended in October 2017. He stepped down a month later, with he and AIBA issuing a joint statement saying they would "withdraw and terminate all related pending procedures before civil courts and AIBA disciplinary commission".

Wu was replaced as AIBA president by Gafur Rakhimov, who has been described by the US Treasury Department as "one of Uzbekistan's leading criminals".

Earlier this year, International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach said he was "extremely worried" about AIBA's governance and finance procedures.

Despite that, AIBA said it was "confident" the sport will be at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

Meanwhile, Franco Falcinelli has been suspended from AIBA's executive committee for what the organisation describes as "offending conduct".

(Source: BBC)

Man United owners, the Glazer family, still backing Jose Mourinho - sources

Manchester United's owners, the Glazer family, believe Jose Mourinho can still restore an air of calm at Old Trafford and kickstart the team's season, sources have told ESPN FC, despite growing concerns within the club over the manager's inability to halt the worrying slump in form.

United's winless run in front of their own supporters at Old Trafford now dates back to the opening weekend of the Premier League season following Tuesday's 0-0 draw against Valencia in the Champions League.

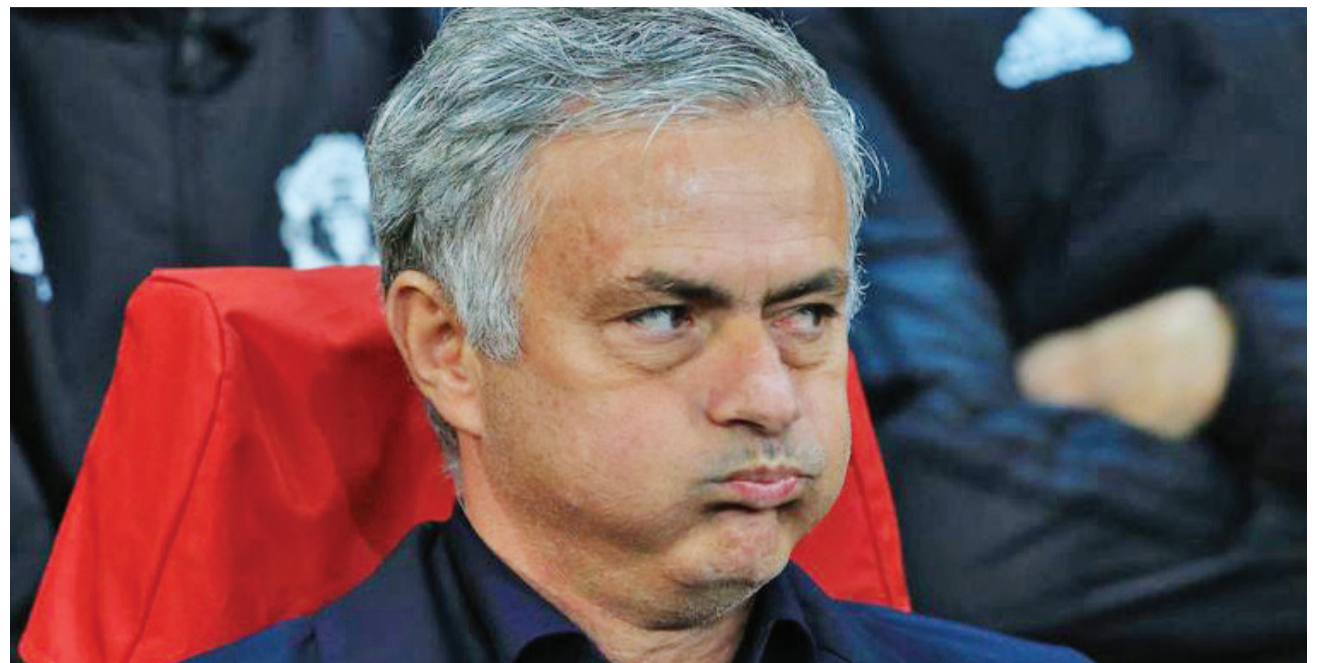
That stalemate also extended United's sequence without a win to four games in all competitions -- a run that includes last week's Carabao Cup third round elimination at the hands of Championship outfit Derby County following a penalty shootout.

With the club's poor form coinciding with some senior players becoming unhappy with Mourinho's man-management, and the public confrontation between the Portuguese coach and midfielder Paul Pogba in front of the cameras at training last week, pressure has intensified on the former Chelsea manager to inspire a turnaround in the club's fortunes on the pitch.

But while the Glazers are aware of the tension around the club, both inside and outside the dressing room, sources have told ESPN FC that there is no current mood to dismiss Mourinho and search for a new manager.

The Florida-based owners, who are in daily contact with executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward, are determined to uphold their reputation for giving managers time to turn difficult situations around at Old Trafford.

Despite dismissing David Moyes just nine



months into his six-year contract as United manager in April 2014, the Glazers persevered with the Scot long after many senior players had lost faith in the former Everton manager, choosing only to confirm his sacking after qualification for the Champions League became a mathematical impossibility.

And Louis van Gaal was sacked in May 2016 -- two days after winning the FA Cup -- despite strong calls for the Dutchman to be dismissed halfway through a campaign in

which United once again failed to qualify for the Champions League. The Glazers' current position on Mourinho is, according to sources, partly due to a lack of suitable, and available, candidates to replace him should he depart.

Zinedine Zidane is available after resigning as Real Madrid coach during the summer, but the likes of Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino and Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri would prove almost impossible to prise from their jobs in mid-season.

Results will ultimately decide Mourinho's fate, however, and a defeat at home to struggling Newcastle United on Saturday would do little to improve his prospects.

The Glazers believe that the manager's track record has earned him the right to navigate the team through its current difficulties, but a further downturn in results would remove any cushion that Mourinho currently enjoys at Old Trafford.

(Source: ESPN)

Cristiano Ronaldo again denies rape allegations, calls it an 'abominable crime'



Cristiano Ronaldo again denied allegations that he raped a woman at a Las Vegas hotel room in 2009, writing on Twitter on Wednesday that it is an "abominable crime" and that the claim is being made "by people seeking to promote themselves at my expense."

According to a civil lawsuit filed in state court in Las Vegas last week, Kathryn Mayorga, who was then 24, alleged Ronaldo raped her in his hotel room in the city, then was coerced into signing a nondisclosure agreement in 2010 in an out-of-court settlement in exchange for \$375,000.

It asks for general damages, special damages, punitive damages and special relief, each in excess of \$50,000, along with interest, attorney fees and court costs.

"I firmly deny the accusations being issued against me," Ronaldo wrote on Twitter. "Rape is an abominable crime that goes against everything that I am and believe in. Keen as I may be to clear my name, I refuse to feed the media spectacle created by people seeking to promote themselves at my expense."

"My clear conscious will thereby allow me to await with tranquillity the results of any and all investigations.

Police have reopened their investiga-

tion into the incident at Mayorga's request. On Tuesday, Mayorga's attorney, Larissa Drohobycz, said Mayorga would not give interviews because she is "emotionally fragile."

A German magazine, Der Spiegel, first reported the filing of Mayorga's lawsuit last week, and Ronaldo's Berlin-based lawyer, Christian Schertz, threatened to sue the publication because the report violated Ronaldo's personal rights "in an exceptionally serious way."

Ronaldo, who joined Juventus in July after nine years with Real Madrid, appeared to deny the allegations in a video posted on Instagram hours after the suit was filed by calling them "fake news."

"You want to promote by my name," he said. "It's normal. They want to be famous, to say my name, but it is part of the job. I am a happy man and all good."

Drohobycz, who said she did not represent Mayorga in 2009, acknowledged her client accepted the settlement money.

Mayorga, now 34, told Der Spiegel that she decided to come forward with the allegations because of the #MeToo movement that has seen victims speak out against sexual abuse.

(Source: ESPN)

Real Madrid aren't in 'crisis' despite five-hour scoring drought, CSKA defeat



The sky is falling. Real Madrid have two defeats and one draw in their last three games. They have gone 329 minutes without scoring; if you frame it as being more than five hours (which it is), the run sounds even worse.

The last time they went this long before celebrating a goal was in 2007, when Fabio Capello was in charge and David Beckham had yet to move to Los Angeles.

Furthermore, Real failed to score in a Champions League game for the first time in nearly two years, a run of 29 games, and they enabled the opposing goalkeeper, Igor Akinfeev, to keep a clean sheet for only the second time in his last 12 years of Champions League appearances.

After his bright start to the season, Karim Benzema is regressing to what he is, a non-scoring center-forward.

Luka Modric looks exhausted and drained, kinda like a 33-year-old who put his body through the ultimate emotional and physical strain in the summer and is now sweating on both a new contract (his deal expires in 2020, hence the summer links to Inter) and, until Wednesday morning, a possible charge for perjury.

Julen Lopetegui is on the proverbial

hot seat and lacks both the gravitas and stone-faced icon status of his predecessor, Zinedine Zidane.

(While we're at it, the last guy to replace a Champions League winning manager at Real Madrid, Rafa Benitez, got bounced out of the job halfway through the season).

That's the Chicken Little scenario after Tuesday's 1-0 defeat at CSKA Moscow. And sure, the headline "CRISIS" was all over the Madrid press. But let's take a step back, shall we?

Real Madrid were admittedly awful against Sevilla a week ago. They didn't sparkle against Atletico Madrid on Saturday either, mainly because playing a Diego Simeone side in a big game is usually as much fun as a trip to the dentist: You endure the pain or you get an anesthetic. It was a case of the latter in the Madrid derby and even then, it took a couple Jan Oblak specials to keep them out.

And then came Tuesday night. They went a goal down inside of 90 seconds thanks to a collective brain fart that began with Toni Kroos, continued through Raphael Varane and Dani Carvajal and ended with Keylor Navas.

(Source: Soccer.net)

Vettel needs Suzuka surprise to stay in title race

Sebastian Vettel may need to rely on a stroke of luck at the Japanese Grand Prix on Sunday if the German wants to keep alive his diminishing hopes of claiming a fifth Formula One title.

Even victory at Suzuka may be a case of "too little, too late" for the Ferrari driver, with Lewis Hamilton sitting 50 points clear and just five races remaining.

The simple mathematics mean the Briton, who has won five of the last six races for Mercedes, including Russia last weekend, does not even need to register another victory this season to claim a fifth world title of his own.

"Maybe the next couple of tracks are better suited for us, we will know when we get there," said Vettel, who has five wins to Hamilton's eight this year and finished third in Sochi and at the previous grand prix in Singapore.

"We need to keep pushing and try. Who knows what will happen in the next races.

"It takes one DNF (did not finish) and then all of a sudden things look different," he told reporters after Sochi. "Ideally two -- which I'm not wishing on Lewis but you never know what happens."

Ferrari team boss Maurizio Arrivabene likened the sweeping, high-speed Suzuka circuit to Silverstone, the British Grand Prix venue where then-championship leader Vettel won in July.



"If it goes well, we will know that, despite the difficult situation in terms of the classification, we still have the right tools with which to fight all the way to the very end," the Italian said.

Even then, there remains a sense that Ferrari are simply clutching at straws.

RED BULL ASSISTANCE

Hamilton won in Japan last year, while Vettel failed to finish, with Red Bull's Max Verstappen and Daniel Ricciardo claiming second and third.

This time, Vettel will be hoping the Red Bulls can get

back into the mix to his advantage.

The former champions showed impressive speed in Russia, despite engine penalties dropping the cars to the back of the grid, with Verstappen climbing up from 19th to the race lead until a late pit stop saw him finish a creditable fifth.

Although Suzuka is expected to again suit the Red Bulls, Mercedes have won the last four races in Japan, three courtesy of Hamilton, and will be favourites to extend that run.

It is a position the German team have enjoyed for most of the season yet once again they are taking nothing for granted. "Suzuka will be another challenging weekend for us," declared Mercedes F1 boss Toto Wolff, whose team are 53 points clear of Ferrari in the constructors' standings.

"It's a track that shows some similarities to Silverstone, where we didn't perform as strongly this year as we had done in previous seasons.

"So we're going to Japan knowing that we all have to be at our very best if we want to claim the win."

Sunday's race could also mark a happier home coming for Honda, after the difficult McLaren years, as engine partners to Toro Rosso.

The Japanese manufacturer also absorbed engine penalties in Russia to position themselves better with an upgraded power unit for their home race.

(Source: Reuters)

Carlos Queiroz invites 28 players for Bolivia friendly

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran national football team head coach Carlos Queiroz has named his 28-man list for the friendly match against Bolivia.

Team Melli will play Bolivia on Oct. 16 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

Iran will play the South American football team as part of preparation for the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

Team Melli have been drawn in Group D along with Yemen, Iraq and Vietnam.

The competition will be held in the UAE from January 5 to February 1.

■ Squad:
• Goalkeepers:
Alireza Beiranvand (Persepolis), Amir Abedzadeh (Maritimo), Rashid Mazaheri (Zob Ahan), Hossein Hosseini (Esteghlal)

• Defenders:
Rouzbeh Cheshmi (Esteghlal), Majid Hosseini (Trabzonspor), Morteza Pouraliganji (Kas Eupen), Pejman Montazeri (Esteghlal), Milad Mohammadi (Akhmat Grozny), Sadeq Moharrami (Dinamo Zagreb), Vouria Ghafouri (Esteghlal), Armin Sohrabian (Esteghlal), Mohammad Reza Khanzadeh (Al Ahli), Ehsan Haji Safi (Tractor Sazi)

• Midfielders:
Saeid Ezatolahi (Reading), Omid Ebrahimi (Al Ahli), Ashkan Dejagah (Tractor Sazi), Saman Ghoddos (Amiens), Ahmad Nourollahi (Persepolis), Masoud Shojaei (Tractor Sazi), Vahid Amiri (Trabzonspor), Ali Karimi (Esteghlal)

• Strikers:
Sardar Azmoun (Rubin Kazan), Alireza Jahanbakhsh (Brighton and Hove Albion), Ali Gholizadeh (Charleroi), Mehdi Taremi (Al Gharafa), Karim Ansarifard (Free agent), Mehdi Torabi (Saipa)



Three Iranians shortlisted for Best Beach Soccer Player of the Year

TEHRAN — Three players from Iran national beach soccer team have been shortlisted for the Best Player of the Year award.

The shortlist for the Best Player of the Year and Best Coach of the Year awards has been unveiled by Beach Soccer Worldwide (BSWW), featuring 50 players and 12 coaches from the six different confederations.

The Best Player of the Year and Best Coach of the Year will be awarded in the coming Beach Soccer Stars 2018 Gala, to take place in Dubai on the 10th of November.

Peyman Hosseini, Mohammad Ahmadza-

deh and Mohammad Moradi are three Iranian players on the list. The captains and coaches of all the National Teams of all the beach soccer competitions will cast their votes to decide the winner.

The voting will also decide the Best Goalkeeper and the five players shaping the dream line-up, the so called Best 5 Stars.

During the Beach Soccer Stars 2018 gala other awards will be given, including Best Women's Player, Rising Star of the Year, Best Goal of the Year, Best Event of the Year, etc.

(Source: beachsoccer.com)

Iran's women earn two wins at FIBA 3x3 U23 World Cup

Iran's women earned two successive victories in Pool D of the first-ever FIBA 3x3 U23 World Cup 2018 on Wednesday.

The Iranian team defeated Sri Lanka 21-5 and then beat Andorra 21-11 in its second match.

Iran will play Russia and Malaysia on Friday.

The finalized rosters of the 20 men's and 20 women's teams participating at the first-ever FIBA 3x3 U23 World

Cup 2018, in Xi'an, China. With the action set to begin on Wednesday, October 3, all rosters have been trimmed to 4 players.

Pool action takes place from October 3 to October 6, with the top two teams from each pool in both women's and men's categories, earning a direct ticket to the Quarter-Finals. The Knock-Out Rounds - culminating with the

finals - will be held on October 7.

Women's Category

Pool A: China, Hungary, Romania, Germany, Uganda

Pool B: Ukraine, Netherlands, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Belarus

Pool C: France, Mongolia, Japan, Czech Republic, Argentina

Pool D: Russia, Andorra, Iran, Sri Lanka, Malaysia

(Source: FIBA)

Semi-final - 1st Leg: Kashima Antlers 3-2 Suwon Samsung Bluewings

Kashima Antlers staged an incredible comeback to beat Suwon Bluewings 3-2 in the first leg of their 2018 AFC Champions League semi-final on Wednesday.

Suwon stunned the hosts by taking an early 2-0 lead but Kashima pulled one back soon after and scored two late goals to clinch an unlikely victory.

There was a sensational start as Suwon took the lead in the second minute of the game through an own goal. Yeom Ki-hun's low corner was touched goalwards by Koo Ja-ryong and it came off Atsuto Uchida's shoulder before crossing the line. Unbelievably, it was 2-0 to the visitors just four minutes later. A poor

defensive clearance saw the ball fall to Dejan Damjanovic and the striker surged toward goal before beating Kwoun Sun-tae from a narrow angle at his near post. But the hosts hit back in the 21st minute with another own goal. When Serginho crossed from the right wing, Jang Ho-ik headed into his own net under pressure from Yuma Suzuki.

Suzuki then had a fine opportunity to level the score in the 30th minute but headed narrowly wide from Ryota Nagaki's corner.

There was drama on the stroke of half-time when the ball broke for Yeom Ki-hun in the Kashima penalty area. The midfielder's low shot was on target but Kwoun Sun-tae

got down and managed to keep the ball out in an unorthodox manner.

After a scrappy start to the second half, Suwon almost regained their two-goal lead in the 65th minute but Kwoun Sun-tae scrambled to push out Im Sang-hyeob's overhead kick. The hosts began to pin Suwon back as the game entered the closing stages but the visitors' defense was resolute as Kashima struggled to create opportunities.

With nine minutes remaining, Serginho sent in a powerful long-range shot that Shin Hwa-Yong beat out.

But two minutes later, the scores were level. Substitute Daigo Nishi sent in a perfect

low cross from the right to allow Serginho to stroke the ball home at the far post.

Another substitute almost scored for Kashima as Koki Anzai drove in from the left and rattled the crossbar with a powerful shot in the 87th minute.

And in the third minute of added time, the ball dropped to Uchida after a free-kick into the Suwon box and the full-back's shot was deflected into the net.

With just one goal separating the teams, the tie is still in the balance before the sides meet again for the second leg in Suwon on October 24.

(Source: the-afc)

Al Sadd coach Ferreira slams Persepolis

Al Sadd coach Jesualdo Ferreira slammed Persepolis for playing "wrestling... not football" during the first leg of their AFC Champions League semi-final at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium.

Despite dominating the proceedings for much part of the game, it all came down to an Ali Alipour penalty to break the deadlock in the 86th minute, as Persepolis won 1-0.

In the end, Sadd were punished for their lack of penetration in front of the goal as Persepolis' narrow win put them in the driver's seat ahead of the return leg at the Azadi Stadium in Tehran on October 23.

Alipour won a penalty after being fouled by Sadd goalkeeper Saad al-Sheeb, who had replaced injured Mishal Barshim, just inside the box. The home players protested the referee's decision but it was a right call as the foul occurred just inside the box.

After a prolonged delay, Alipour picked himself up and made no mistake in finding the bottom corner from the spot to signal celebratory scenes from their small pocket of away fans.

There was late drama to the heated contest as well after an Al Sadd goal in the injury time was ruled out. In what seemed like a contentious call from the Sri Lankan referee Dilan Perera, Persepolis goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand threw the ball in front of him to kick it down the field but Sadd forward Akram Afif intercepted the ball mid-air which resulted in the ball bouncing into the post. Even as Afif started his celebratory lap, the referee ruled the effort as a foul.

Despite that misfortune, Sadd and Ferreira will look back at the match as a missed opportunity and have a huge task

in front of them in Tehran in three weeks' time.

For Sadd, who are chasing their third Asian title and first since 2011, they would need a repeat of their quarter-final win against Esteghlal in Tehran last month, where they stunned the massive, raucous crowd with a 3-1 scoreline.

Ferreira said Sadd must believe they can still turn it around in the second leg. "The team must believe in its potential. There will be an opportunity to score in Tehran and now we are thinking of only one outcome: that is to win the return leg," he said.

The Portuguese manager was also critical of the physical game employed by Persepolis. "The Iranian team is a very difficult team. They were playing wrestling and this is not football. We fought a lot over the course of the match. Now we have no choice but to win the return leg, so that we can maintain our chance to compete for the title. We realise how difficult it is to achieve this goal but are determined to achieve it," Ferreira added.

There was no doubt that Sadd were the quality side at least on the paper. They had won 10 of their last 14 home games, scoring over 2.5 goals per game and failing to score just twice. But last night it was a different story as they failed to capitalise on a dominating start.

Sadd enjoyed much of the possession with captain and midfield maestro Xavi playing in a free role, while Jung Woo Young and Gabi were employed as wide midfielders. But the mobility failed to translate into penetration as Sadd's prolific striker and tournament top-scorer Baghdad Bounedjah was kept silent by a resolute backline marshalled by captain Jalal Hosseini.

Esteghlal advance to Hazfi Cup Round of 16

TASNIM — Esteghlal football team booked a place in Round of 16 of Iran's Hazfi Cup on Tuesday.

In a match held at the Behnam Mohammadi Stadium, Esteghlal edged past Naft Masjed Soleyman 1-0 in front of about 7,000 spectators.

Rouhollah Bagheri scored the winner in the 96th minute after the game ended in a goalless draw in regular time.

Esteghlal will face Saipa in Tehran's Azadi Stadium in Round of 16.

The Hazfi Cup is the Iranian football knockout cup competition, run by the Iranian Football Federation.

Esteghlal is the title-holder and most decorated team with seven titles.

Sport minister to visit Jakarta

IRNA — Iran's Ambassador to Indonesia Valiollah Mohammadi said on Tuesday that Minister of Sports and Youth Masoud Sultani is to attend Para-Asian Games in Indonesia.

He said that the exact time for his travel is not clear yet, but the embassy is ready for his presence in Indonesia.

The ambassador made the remarks at the airport where he was to receive Iranian Para-Asia sport caravan, who were arriving in Jakarta.

The third Para-Asian Games is to be held in Jakarta from October 6 to October 13, 2018, by participation of 2,880 athletes from 41 countries in 18 sport fields.

Iran is participating by 209 athletes in 13 sport fields.

Iran hosting Asian chess solo championship

IRNA — The Asian Chess Confederation session was held at the Batumi Stadium in Georgia on Tuesday on the sidelines of the World Olympiad.

During this meeting, various issues, including the hosts of the tournament in 2019, were discussed and decided upon.

The Iranian Chess Federation is hosting the Asian Solo Championships on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution victory.

"We hope that such a hosting will make our country's chess players no longer spending to face powerful Asian opponents and face them in our own country," Mehrdad Pahlavanzadeh, Chess Federation president said.

WNBA president Borders to step down

WNBA president Lisa Borders is stepping down from her position, the league announced Tuesday.

Borders is leaving to become the first president and CEO of Time's Up — an organization that insists on safe, fair and dignified work for women.

Borders will remain with the WNBA until Nov. 1. NBA deputy commissioner Mark Tatum will oversee the league on an interim basis. The search for a new president will get underway immediately.

"We are extremely grateful for Lisa's leadership and tireless commitment to the WNBA," NBA commissioner Adam Silver said in a statement. "This is a natural transition for Lisa knowing what a champion she is for issues involving women's empowerment and social justice and fortunately for us, she leaves the league with strong tail winds propelling it forward."

Borders has served as president since 2016. Under her guidance, the league had its highest TV ratings in four years this past season. In 2017, the WNBA recorded its highest regular-season attendance in six years. "It has been an honor and my absolute privilege leading the WNBA and being part of what it stands for," Borders stated. "I want to thank Adam for giving me the opportunity and support to help grow this league. I am most proud of the W players for their amazing talents on the court and their dedication to making an impact in their communities. I look forward to continuing my support for the W in my new role with Time's Up. I will always be the W's biggest advocate and fan."

Borders is the third executive to leave the WNBA in the last six months. Former chief operating officer Jay Parry departed in April, and senior vice president of league operations Ann Rodriguez left in September.

(Source: Reuters)

Larestan lose at Asian Women's Club League Handball

TASNIM — Larestan of Iran lost to Kazakhstan's Kaysar Club at the 2018 Asian Women's Club League Handball Championship opener on Wednesday.

The Iranian handball club were defeated 42-25 in its opening match.

Larestan will play Indian T-Sports Club on Thursday. The 2018 Asian Women's Club League Handball Championship is the third edition of the competition held from October 3 to 9 at Universal Sports Complex, Dostyk in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

It was organized by the Kazakhstan Handball Federation under the aegis of Asian Handball Federation.

It was the official competition for women's handball clubs of Asia crowning the Asian champions.



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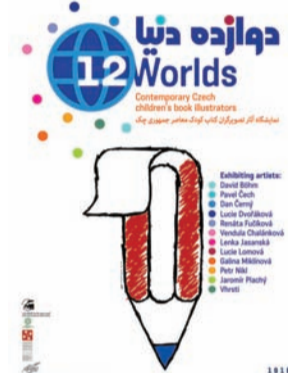
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“12 Worlds” to display works by Czech artists in Tehran

A R T TEHRAN – “12 Worlds”, an exhibition of works by a group of 12 Czech children’s book illustrators, is scheduled to open today at the Iranian Museum of Graphic Design in Tehran.



A poster for “12 Worlds”.

the Embassy of the Czech Republic.

Works by David Bohm, Pavel Cech, Lucie Dvorakova, Renata Fucikova, Vendula Chalankova, Lucie Lomova, Petr Nikl and several other artists have been selected for the exhibition, which is being curated by Radim Kopac, the museum announced on Wednesday.

The illustrators have all been highly lauded and honored with awards at international events.

“12 Worlds” has already been exhibited in the Irish capital of Dublin in January and March of 2018.

The exhibit has been organized in collaboration with

Iran, Hungary libraries sign MOU

A R T TEHRAN – The National Library and Archives of Iran (NLAI) and the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to enhance bilateral cooperation.

The MOU was inked by Istvan Monok, the director general of the Hungarian library, and INLA deputy director Fariborz Khosravi, the INLA announced on Tuesday.



Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences CEO Istvan Monok (L) and NLAI deputy director Fariborz Khosravi sign an MOU in Tehran on October 2, 2018. (NLAI)

Based on the MOU, the two sides agreed to begin joint cooperation to establish an online database to introduce the cultural heritage of the two countries, and also to exchange experts.

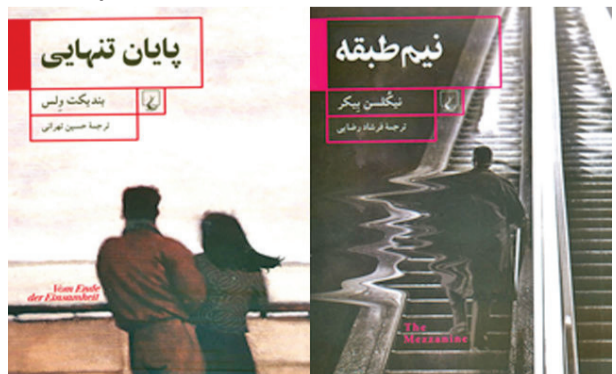
Monok’s assistant, Dora Kalydy and a number of his colleagues also accompanied him during the visit to Tehran.

They also attended an exhibition of photos and documents on cultural relations between the two countries that opened at the library on Tuesday.

Novels from Western literature appear in Persian bookstores

A R T TEHRAN – German-Swiss novelist Benedict Wells’ book “The End of Loneliness” (“Vom Ende der Einsamkeit”) and American writer Nicholson Baker’s novel “The Mezzanine” have recently been published in Persian.

Baker’s first novel, “The Mezzanine”, has been translated into Persian by Farshad Rezaei.



Front covers of the Persian versions of “The End of Loneliness” (L) and “The Mezzanine”.

Hossein Tehrani is the translator of “The End of Loneliness”, which is an international bestseller translated from German into English by the award-winning translator Charlotte Collins. The novel also won the European Union Prize for Literature in 2016.

Both books have been published at Qoqun, a major publishing house in Tehran.

“Bomb, A Love Story” nominated for APSA Best Original Score Award

A R T TEHRAN – The music director Peyman Maadi for Iranian actor-director Peyman Maadi’s “Bomb, a Love Story” by the celebrated Greek composer Eleni Karaindrou was nominated for Best Original Score Award at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards, the organizers announced on Wednesday.

Maadi, an APSA Academy member, is also the writer of the screenplay for the film, whose story is set in 1988 at the height of the Iran-Iraq War as Tehran is bombed relentlessly. The days that pass are full of foreboding, and yet love, affection, hope and life itself manage to sweep away the fear of death from those surrounded by it.

Karaindrou, who has been hailed by Time magazine as “Greece’s most eloquent living composer”, will contend for the Best Original Score Award with Harry Gregson-Williams for “Breath” from Australia, Hildur Guðnadóttir and Jóhann Jóhannsson for “Mary Magdalene” from Australia and the United Kingdom, Ryan Cayabyab for “The Portrait” from the Philippines and Omar Fadel for “Yomeddine” from Egypt.

Japanese musician Ryuichi Sakamoto will preside over the APSA Music on the International Film Jury.

The Iranian House of Cinema has also submitted two feature films, “Astigmatism” and “Orduckly”, (“Ordakli”), and two documentary films, “Iran’s Lady Qods”



Left to right, a combination photo shows scenes from “Bomb, a Love Story”, “Breath”, “Mary Magdalene”, “The Portrait” and “Yomeddine”. (APSA)

and “Finding Farideh”, to the APSA.

The APSA is scheduled to announce

the nominees in the feature narrative competition during an exclusive event at

the Brisbane City Hall on October 17, and winners will be awarded on November 29.

Art university named after Mahmud Farshchian to open in Tehran

A R T TEHRAN – A university of Iranian-Islamic art named after the master of Persian miniature Mahmud Farshchian will open in Tehran on October 22.

The Farshchian University of Iranian-Islamic Arts has been established by the Islamic Azad University, and Bahman Namvar-Motlag will be the dean of the academic center, the university announced on Wednesday.

A building located on Nazari Street near the University of Tehran has been allocated to the university.

The university has been established to prevent the traditional Iranian-Islamic arts from sinking into oblivion, Namvar-Motlag said.



“Ashura Evening” by master of Persian miniature Mahmud Farshchian.

“This university is our final hope to preserve the Iranian-Islamic arts,” he noted.

Farshchian was born in Isfahan in 1930, a city renowned for its art and skilled artists, and studied painting under the supervision of Haj Mirza Aqa Emami and Isa Bahadori. He later traveled to Europe where he studied painting and conducted research in museums for several years.

Farshchian’s masterpieces have been hosted by numerous museums and exhibitions worldwide. He is recognized as the most important modernizing influence in the field of miniatures. His name has been registered on Britain’s list of 2000 Outstanding Intellectuals of the 21st Century, and collectors feel it a great honor to possess one of his creations.

Half of “Last Jedi” haters were bots, trolls, activists, study says

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — How much did movie fans hate “Star Wars: The Last Jedi”?

Perhaps not as fiercely as social media might suggest, according to a U.S. academic study which found that half of negative tweets about the 2017 movie came from bots, trolls or political activists, some of whom may be Russian.

“Star Wars: The Last Jedi”, which focused on ageing Jedi Luke Skywalker’s reluctance to be drawn back into the battle against the dark side in the sci-fi saga, prompted criticism online after its December 2017 release.

Many lashed out at key roles given to women and actors of color in the movie, while others were dismayed at the apparent death of Skywalker, played by Mark Hamill.

The Disney movie took \$1.3 billion at the global box-office, compared to \$2 billion for 2015’s “Star Wars: The Force Awakens”.

A study by University of Southern California (USC) research fellow Morten Bay, released on Monday, analyzed the language, Twitter handles and IP addresses of more than 1,200 tweets sent to “Last Jedi” director Rian Johnson’s Twitter handle in the seven months after the film’s release.

“Overall, 50.9 percent of those tweeting negatively was likely politically motivated or not even human,” Bay wrote. He said they appeared to be using the debate around “The Last Jedi”

“To propagate political messages supporting extreme right-wing causes and the discrimination of gender, or race.”

“A number of these users appear to be Russian trolls,” Bay added in the paper, called “Weaponizing the Haters: The



People dressed in costume wait for arrivals at the European Premiere of “Star Wars: The Last Jedi”, at the Royal Albert Hall in central London, Britain December 12, 2017. (Reuters/Hannah McKay)

Last Jedi and the strategic politicization of pop culture through social media manipulation.”

Disney did not respond to a request for comment on the research but Johnson said on Twitter that the overall findings were “consistent with my experience online.”

“This is not about fans liking or not liking the movie - I’ve had tons of great talks with great fans online and off who liked and disliked stuff, that’s what fandom is all about. This is specifically about a virulent strain of online harassment,” Johnson tweeted on Tuesday.

Bay compared his findings to other studies around attempts to influence Americans through social media platforms.

Bay said the likely objective was to increase “media coverage of the fandom conflict, thereby adding to and further propagating a narrative of widespread discord and dysfunction in American society.”

A U.S. Senate panel has been examining reported Russian efforts to influence U.S. political public opinion before and after the 2016 election of President Donald Trump.

China hits movie star Fan Bingbing with huge fines for tax evasion

BEIJING (Reuters) — China has ordered A-list movie star Fan Bingbing to pay about 884 million yuan (\$129 million) in overdue taxes and fines, state news agency Xinhua said on Wednesday, as a crackdown on tax evasion in the entertainment industry gathers momentum.

The 37-year-old actor, whose June disappearance touched off wild speculation about her whereabouts, has appeared in the “X-Men” and “Iron Man” film franchises, attracting more than 62 million online followers in China.

Xinhua said an investigation by Chinese tax authorities found Fan had split her contract to evade taxes of 7.3 million yuan (\$1.1 million) over payments for her role in “Air Strike”, a film due to be released this year.

Fan and companies she represented also evaded 248 million yuan (\$36.11 million) in additional taxes, Xinhua said, but gave no details regarding this figure.

The tax bureau in the eastern coastal province of Jiangsu delivered its judgment to Fan on Sunday, levying fines of more than 596 million yuan (\$86.78 million) for tax evasion and assessing overdue taxes of more than 288 million yuan (\$41.93 million), Xinhua said.

In a letter posted on her official account on China’s Twitter-like Weibo, Fan said she fully accepted the authorities’ decision and would overcome “all difficulties” to pay the penalties.

Reuters could not immediately reach Fan or a representative to seek comment. Xinhua said police had put a “restriction” on Fan’s agent for attempting to conceal and destroy evidence during



Fan Bingbing poses on a pier for the film “355” at the 71st Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France May 10, 2018. (Reuters/Eric Gaillard)

June investigations.

Fan dropped off the radar in June, amid reports that she was involved in the investigation, a vanishing act that prompted reports she had been detained.

Reuters was unable to contact Fan or her agent for comment on those reports.

On Wednesday, the South China Morning Post said Fan was released two weeks ago from “residential surveillance” at a “holiday resort” in Jiangsu used to investigate officials and transferred to authorities in Beijing for further investigation, citing unnamed sources.

Since June, China has been investigating tax evasion in its film and television industry, following reports that some of its most famous actors, Fan among them, have been accused of signing so-called “yin-yang” contracts.

The State Administration of Taxation (SAT) said companies and individuals in the industry who voluntarily “rectify their behavior” and pay back taxes evaded prior to December 31 will be exempt from administrative punishment and fines, Xinhua said.

Tom Hardy brings out Marvel’s darker side in new movie “Venom”

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — In the new movie “Venom”, British actor Tom Hardy tries to keep Venom’s bad behavior under control. “Venom” is being released by Sony Pictures, which owns rights to several Marvel characters that are not owned by Disney.

Hardy said “Venom” has similarities to several classic monster movies.

“There’s an element of original ‘Ghostbusters,’ a slightly ‘80s retro vibe to it, which I enjoyed, and a bit of ‘Teen Wolf’ and ‘American Werewolf in London’ vibe to it,” Hardy said.

The star said he also received input from his 10-year-old son on how to play the role.

“My son’s a massive fan of Marvel and Venom, and he was very clear about what I

can and can’t do,” Hardy said at the movie’s red-carpet premiere, adding “It’s very odd being told what to do by your son who’s 10 and him being right.”

“Venom” co-stars fellow British actor Riz Ahmed as villainous corporation owner Carlton Drake and Michelle Williams as Brock’s former friend. It is the first time Oscar-nominated Williams has starred in a superhero movie.

Venom was created by comic book writer Todd McFarlane, who invented the new character after he struggled to draw Spider-Man.

“Venom is a byproduct of me wanting to draw a blue and red Spider-Man costume,”

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“Venom is a byproduct of me wanting to draw a blue and red Spider-Man costume,”



Cast member Tom Hardy attends the premiere for the movie “Venom” in Los Angeles, California, U.S., October 1, 2018. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

McFarlane said. “Thirty years later, you’ve got a big movie!”