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## Iran, Slovakia sign MOU to enhance cultural ties

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — Iran and Slovakia have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to enhance joint cultural activities.

The MOU was signed in Tehran on Saturday by Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Reza Salehi-Amiri, and Slovakia's Minister of Culture, Marek Madaric.

Salehi-Amiri hoped that the MOU would be a good start for deepening cultural and political ties, and said, "Based on the MOU, the two countries will agree to hold cultural weeks, and expand art and cinematic cooperation."

"Iran enjoys a deep history and heritage and Slovakia also has good potentials to collaborate with Iran," Salehi-Amiri added.

Also for his part, Marek Madaric said that the geographical distance between the two countries might be quite far, but culture can help reduce it.

He said that it is important for his country to have good relations with not only the European countries but also with the East as well.

He added that Iran's cinema is quite famous in his country but they would also like to know more about the contemporary art of Iran. **→16**

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**See page 2**

# Iran, Hungary agree on nuclear cooperation

## Rouhani calls for fact-finding committee to probe Syria chemical attack

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani suggested on Saturday that an international fact-finding committee should be formed to probe the allegations of chemical weapons attack in Syria.

The suggestion by Rouhani came one day after the U.S. launched cruise missiles at the Shayrat airfield in Syria from which President Donald Trump claimed a chemical weapons attack had been launched.

"Biased people should not be a member to this committee and it should not be headed by the U.S.," Rouhani insisted.

He added, "Neutral countries should investigate the issue and make it clear where the chemical weapons had come from and by whom and also whether there were chemical weapons."

The UN confirmed in 2013 that the Syrian government had turned over all its chemical weapons stockpiles and the claim of using chemical weapons should be investigated, Rouhani remarked. **→2**

## Iran makes notable progress in scientific publications worldwide

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Iran has advanced notably in terms of scientific publications and research output worldwide, director of the Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC) said, IRNA reported on Saturday.

"With advancement of 15 percent in terms of scientific publications Iran ranks first ahead of Russia, Malaysia, China, Turkey, India, and Poland respectively and is placed among top 25 countries with the most research output," Mohammad Javad Dehqani explained.

Compared to the year 2015 with submitting 43,111 document in Scopus, world's largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature, last year Iran has made a noticeable improvement of 15 percent by submitting 49,535 documents in Scopus citation database, Dehqani pointed.

Taking into account the fact that the database of the year 2016 is yet to be finalized and the database pertaining to 2017 are still new as the year has not finished yet Iran is ranked 14th with submitting 14,524 so far in 2017, Dehqani added.

"The ranking is not final yet and we'd have to wait for the ultimate results," he suggested.

The ISC president went on to say that Iran had a 1.5 percent share in scientific publication worldwide in 2011 which rose to 1.8 percent in 2016 and 2.1 percent in 2017; "we still have to wait for exact numbers for the current year."

"While Iranian are facing difficulties attending international conferences due to financial problems lately we are still keeping up with the latest development," he highlighted.

Scopus is the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature: scientific journals, books and conference proceedings. Delivering a comprehensive overview of the world's research output in the fields of science, technology, medicine, social sciences, and arts and humanities, Scopus features smart tools to track, analyze and visualize research.

## Murphy says S. Arabia has no intention to build nuclear arms

**By Javad Heirannia**

**TEHRAN** — Richard W. Murphy, the former U.S. ambassador to Syria and Saudi Arabia, says he does not believe that Saudi Arabia intends to build nuclear weapons as the Institute for Science and International Security has said Riyadh has accelerated research into nuclear programs to counter Iran.

Murphy says Riyadh is seeking nuclear program to diversify its sources of energy.

"In the long run it (Saudi Arabia) cannot afford to utilize its oil at an ever increasing rate for domestic consumption," Murphy tells

the Tehran Times.

Following is the text of the interview:

**■ The Institute for Science and International Security has said that the Saudi government has accelerated research into nuclear programs to counter Iran. The Washington DC-based group wrote since nuclear action was scaled back in Iran, it has increased in the Saudi kingdom. What is your opinion?**

A: Countering Iran is part of the explanation for the reported increase. I believe that Saudi Arabia is studying the possibility of en-

gaging in nuclear energy production as one way to diversify from its excessively heavy dependence on oil. In the long run it cannot afford to utilize its oil at an ever increasing rate for domestic consumption. This is eating into its revenue from the export of both crude oil and related oil products.

**■ What will be the reaction of the International Atomic Energy Agency to such a report?**

A: There is no evidence that Saudi Arabia intends to develop a program of nuclear weapons. **→13**

## Tehran Municipality develops ride-hailing app

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — After rather controversial ride-hailing applications of "snapp" and "tap30", Tehran Municipality has finally developed another application of the kind called "carpino".

Carpino, as introduced by paly store, is an application which "connects taxi drivers and passengers allowing them to experience a safe, fast and convenient ride at just a few taps of button" on smart phones.

However, long before the newly created application, snapp and tap30 have had attracted lots of passengers as they could simply find the nearest driver by selecting their location and destination on the map and commute easily and safely 24-7.

Paying by cash or credit cards, round trips, monitoring the trip route live, offering various discounts and offers, being notified about the drivers' information and the taxis' plate number prior to the trip and sharing it with others,

and finally rating the drivers after the trips are of the benefits of such apps.

The apps are currently available in provinces of Tehran and Alborz.

While the aforesaid apps proved to be convenient and were welcomed by the users they were believed to lack the necessary permits they were required to obtain from Tehran Municipality which is in charge of transportation.

Additionally the cheap prices and discounts offered by the applications have to some extent distorted the market for the transportation fleet affiliated with the municipality.

Despite all unconfirmed and false rumors going around the two applications the police announced that nary a complaint had been lodged against the drivers and the two apps kept on operating smoothly.

Finally, the municipality caved in to the pressure and developed a ride-hailing application



## EDITORIAL

**By Hassan Lasjerdi**

Tehran Times editor-in-chief

## Trump's dreams for the Levant land

The Friday U.S. missile attack on the Shayrat airfield in Syria can mark the beginning of a different political-security era in the burning Middle East.

The missile onslaught came as an apparent reversal from previous statements by U.S. officials who called the current Syrian government a "political reality" and saw the Syrian people the only decision maker of their country's future.

Now with the Tomahawk missiles hitting the airbase in the Syrian territory, the question arises as to whether any major shift has happened in the way the Oval Office looks at the Middle East. Or, the attack decision was just a short-lived, temporary one to achieve short-term goals.

There are strong hints to believe that Washington's approach to the Syrian crisis is altered now.

For a start, under President Donald Trump the U.S. has been seeking for some time to play a more prominent role in the beleaguered country in line with its own agenda. The suspected chemical weapons attack on rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhoun on Tuesday gave the U.S. the excuse to justify its direct intervention in the country.

Secondly, despite the ceasefire that laid the groundwork for the Astana talks and reignited hopes for a peaceful solution to the crisis, terrorist groups fighting in the battleground and enjoying the backing of certain Arab caliphates are trying to use diversionary attacks to level the playing ground in the Astana talks.

Thirdly, over the past weeks, the Syrian army has inflicted heavy losses on terrorist groups backed by the West, an indication that the Syrian army has the upper hand in battleground, what the U.S. is not happy with.

Fourthly, atop the agenda of the U.S.'s regional allies was to persuade Trump into oppressive actions in the region. The Khan Sheikhoun chemical weapons attack was the right moment for that to happen. **→13**

## Anti-war groups protest U.S. strikes against Syria

Protesters have taken to the streets in cities across the United States, as well as other countries, to demonstrate against the airstrikes in Syria ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump.

Protesters in New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, chanted slogans against Trump's controversial order and showed their support for the Syrian people.

Activists in New York had signs denouncing the bombing, including placards that read "Bombing Syria doesn't protect people, it KILLS THEM" and "NO! In the name of humanity, we refused to accept a fascist America." **→13**



© AFP



ELECTION COUNTDOWN



Former Popular Front's candidates urge unity

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Two former potential presidential candidates of the Popular Front of Revolution Forces urged unity after the candidates were cut down from 10 to 5.

Rostam Qassemi and Mohsen Rezaee, two former IRGC figures, in separate statements said the members of the front are required to oblige by the general choice to win elections, Nasim reported on Saturday.

On Thursday the front chose the custodian of Imam Reza shrine Hojjatoleslam Raeisi, former MPs Alireza Zakani and Mehrdad Bazrpash, Tehran Mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, and Imam Khomeini Relief Committee chairman Parviz Fattah as its latest shortlist of potential candidates.



231 members of student movement endorse Raisi candidacy

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — 231 members of a student movement signed a letter to Ebrahim Raisi on Saturday endorsing his presidential candidacy.

The signatories invited Raisi, who is currently custodian of the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS) in Mashhad, to a serious presidential race, Tasnim reported.

They said the current administration is failing the expectations of people and "real lovers of the system" by relying too heavily on foreign sources and neglecting domestic capabilities.



Raisi's fitness for presidency questionable: Karbaschi

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The secretary general of the Servants of Construction Party believes that Ebrahim Raisi's fitness for presidency is questionable.

Running a country and having to deal with public demands is much different from running a holy shrine where people devotedly donate their votive offerings, Qolamhossein Karbaschi told the Shargh daily in an interview published on Saturday.

The candidate should explain what programs he has for employment, an open political atmosphere, and what resources it can use, Karbaschi said.



Council election enrollments up 11%

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The number of people who have enrolled for candidacy in the May council elections has risen 11 percent compared to the previous round, according to the secretary of the election headquarters.

"The increase tells of an imminent high-turnout election," Ali Pourali Motlaq said on Saturday, ISNA reported.

According to Motlaq, some 300,000 people enrolled as candidates this year, whereas it had been 256,000 four years ago. Tehran, Qom, and Qazvin's increase rate was 21 percent each, he added.



Mirsalim: I have no doctrinal difference with Popular Front candidates

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Mostafa Mirsalim, head of the central council of the Islamic Coalition Party, said on Saturday that he has no doctrinal difference with the candidates of the Popular Front of Revolution Forces, Mehr reported.

Addressing a provincial conference of his party, Mirsalim said his candidacy was a decision of the coalition's central council and he will campaign as the representative of the coalition, stressing, "We believe one cannot handle the country single-handedly."



All Popular Front candidates are competitive: spokesperson

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — All the candidates of the Popular Front of Revolution Forces are competitive, the front's spokeswoman said on Saturday.

"Nobody believed Mr. Rouhani would win" during the previous election, Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi told Mehr.

The thing that would make a change in the status of a candidate is his discourse and how he manages to make himself a favorite candidate, she remarked.

Dastjerdi also said that the front will form a team to advise their final candidate during presidential campaigns.

# Report on collapse of Plasco building released



Findings implicate Tehran municipality, Mostazafan Foundation, and labor and housing ministries for the Plasco incident.

of Section 14 of Article 55 of municipal rules and relevant regulations.

It also said that the municipality had been systematically negligent in enforcing 22 of the national building regulations,

which addresses the safety of the building and maintenance operations.

"The Ministry of Labor had fallen short of enforcing its share of the job in technical inspection of the building's

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The government officially issued a report on the collapse of the Plasco building in central Tehran, holding several departments and state entities responsible for the tragic incident which resulted in the death of 16 firemen.

President Hassan Rouhani received the report on Wednesday, weeks after he issued an order mandating a committee, consisting of leading academics, to look into the event and draft a comprehensive report about the incident.

The report found that the owner of the building, Mostazafan Foundation, had been negligent in the face of warnings by authorities on the possibility of disaster, noting that enforcing regulations by the owner and the municipality had been possible in the Plasco building without affecting the businesses.

The municipality is equally implicated by the report for failing to effectively enforce the implementation

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif reiterated Tehran's position on Saturday that Iran is willing to deepen ties with the European Union countries.

During a meeting with Hungarian Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjen in Tehran, Zarif also welcomed expansion of relations with Hungary in various spheres. He called for boosting banking cooperation.

Semjen described the relations as "very good" and "growing".

Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani held a separate meeting with Semjen on Saturday. Larijani said the two countries should put a boost in economic cooperation on agenda.

The Majlis speaker also pushed for expansion of banking ties. He also said that Iran prioritizes cooperation with Hungary in the area of environment protection.

Semjen said that Hungary seeks to expand relations with Iran, adding there is no impediment to increase cooperation in the post-nuclear deal era.

Iran and the 5+1 group - the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia plus Germany - finalized the text of the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, in Vienna in July 2015. The agreement went into effect in January 2016.

## Rouhani calls for fact-finding committee to probe Syria chemical attack

**1 →** The president also said that the U.S. government considers itself the "police", "leader" and "judge" of the world" and took action by launching airstrike against Syria.

"Aggression against an independent country happened for what reason? The man who rules the U.S. claimed that he seeks to fight terrorists, but this action of the U.S. made all the terrorists happy," Rouhani noted.

A suspected chemical attack in the northern Syrian province of Idlib on Tuesday left at least 80 people killed and hundreds injured.

After a chemical attack on Ghouta, a Damascus suburb, in 2013, Barack Obama, the former U.S. president, threatened an air campaign against the Syrian government which was called off when the Syrian government accepted a U.S.-Russian

negotiated deal to turn over "every single bit" of its chemical weapons stockpiles for destruction and declared its intention to join the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Russia said on Wednesday that the chemical attack was caused when rebel chemical munitions workshops were hit by a Syrian airstrike.

Also in a phone conversation with Secretary of the Russian Security Council Nikolai Patrushev on Saturday, Iran's

Supreme National Security Council secretary Ali Shamkhani called for formation of an international committee to investigate the chemical attack in Idlib.

Shamkhani said actions such as the U.S. airstrike against Syria will harm the process of Iran-Russia-Syria cooperation in fighting terrorism.

Patrushev described the U.S. attack as a clear violation of the international law.

## Zarif: U.S. airstrike on Syria sets 'dangerous precedent'

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Saturday that the U.S. airstrike against Syria runs contrary to international law and is a "dangerous precedent".

"The terrorists will continue taking catastrophic actions if they feel that the U.S. embarks on action because of one accusation," he said during a meeting with Hungarian Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjen in Tehran.

Describing the U.S. action in launching airstrikes against Syria on Friday as a "mistake", Zarif also said the chemical attack in the northern Syrian province of Idlib on Tuesday was "painful".

"Syria was previously disarmed by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, but the terrorist were not. The Syrians had never had sarin gas, but the terrorists had," the foreign minister explained.

Zarif added that the Syrian government did not need to use chemical weapons.

The suspected chemical attack in Idlib left at least 80 people killed and hundreds injured.

Russia said on Wednesday that the chemical attack was caused when rebel chemical munitions workshops were hit by a Syrian airstrike.

On Friday, the U.S. launched cruise missiles at the Shayrat airfield from which President Donald Trump claimed a chemical weapons attack had been launched.

## Iran, Hungary agree on nuclear cooperation

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iran and Hungary signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Saturday to boost their cooperation in the field of nuclear technology, ISNA reported.

The MOU was inked during a meeting in Tehran between head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi and Hungarian Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjen.

In a press conference after the meeting, Salehi hailed the agreement and expressed hope that the two sides further increase cooperation in the future.

Semjen, for his part, said that relations between the two countries are expanding, adding that Tehran and Budapest are also involved in talks over expansion of relations in other fields such as tourism.

The MOU was signed after several rounds of consultations between the two countries.

Back in February 2016, Salehi said Iran and Hungary had discussed plans to design and develop a small nuclear reactor for Hungary.

The AEOI will "design and develop a 25-megawatt reactor for Hungary," Salehi told reporters after meeting his Hungarian counterpart in Budapest.

The project "requires a lot of scientific work to come up with such a design, certainly a number of years of hard work. We want to see if we can do this," he further said.



## Vacancy Announcement

The Mission of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in IRAN is

seeking to fill the following vacant position in Tehran:

### Legal Officer

#### Main responsibilities

- Provides support to Delegation on legal matters
- Performs basic research and reports on relevant legal national development as required
- Contributes to project/program implementation and reporting
- Disseminates at a basic level
- Develops & maintains network at general level
- In charge of specific projects/files of the structure mainly independently
- Fulfils other tasks on an ad hoc basis within the post's area of responsibility

#### Minimum required knowledge & experience:

- University degree (Law)
- 3 - 5 years work experience in a similar field
- Very good computer skills
- Fluent in spoken and written English and Farsi
- Excellent verbal and written communication and presentation skills
- Excellent analytical and reporting skills
- Ability to multi-task and work under pressure
- Ability to anticipate and plan, organized, autonomous, meets deadlines, team player, shows initiative, flexible
- Knowledge of humanitarian affairs, and working experience with an international organization is an asset

It should be noted that the position might require travelling (on mission) outside and inside the country.

All interested applicants should submit a letter of interest and a résumé in English to the following email address:

[teh\\_hr\\_services@icrc.org](mailto:teh_hr_services@icrc.org)

**ALL submissions MUST be received by the closing date of 19 April, 2017**

Please be informed that only shortlisted candidates will be notified for further process.



# U.S. warns Assad over using chemical weapons again

The United States says it has put Syrian President Bashar al-Assad on notice that it will take further military action if he uses chemical weapons again, while appearing to back away from wider military involvement in the Syrian conflict, less than 24 hours after launching Tomahawk missiles at a regime airbase.

"The United States will no longer wait for Assad to use chemical weapons without any consequences. Those days are over," the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, told a special session of the UN Security Council.

"The United States took a very measured step last night, Haley added. "We are prepared to do more, but we hope that will not be necessary."

However, the White House press secretary, Sean Spicer, refused to discuss any next steps – military or diplomatic – as the world struggled to understand Trump's policy on the Syrian foreign sponsored war.

Syrian warplanes were reported to have taken off from the airbase targeted by the U.S. missiles, suggesting that the military impact of the overnight attack had been minimal.

Spicer called the missile strike on the airbase "very decisive, justified and proportional" and entirely justified by "humanitarian purposes".

But he demurred on saying whether Assad had to leave power, despite secretary of state Rex Tillerson's insistence before the missile strike that diplomatic steps to oust Assad were already "under way".

"At a minimum," Spicer said, Assad had to agree "to abide by agreements not to use chemical weapons", but he did not say what, if any, further objectives the U.S. had in Syria, even as Trump came under renewed congressional pressure to present a comprehensive strategy for the U.S. in the Syrian conflict.

America's mixed signals on Assad are likely to unsettle or disappoint the Syrian opposition that initially viewed the strike as a glimmer of hope amid a relentless onslaught.

Trump's missile barrage suggested a reversal from his previous indifference to Assad's continued rule; the U.S. president now faces conflicting demands from Congress to escalate militarily – and from Russia to back down.

Humanitarians, meanwhile, are demanding evidence of a strategy to end the conflict peacefully.

The first big diplomatic test comes as Tillerson is scheduled to travel to Moscow next week for talks, which will include Syria.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon is attempting to revive a critical military communications hotline between the U.S. and Russia that has become the first geopolitical casualty of Trump's abrupt decision to attack Assad in Syria.

By shutting down the so-called deconfliction channel after the missile strike on Russia's Syrian client, Vladimir Putin has dared Trump to choose between attacking Assad and attacking Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh), Trump's priority.

The military channel is pivotal for ensuring U.S. and Russian pilots avoid accidentally colliding, confronting one another in midair or attacking each other's forces or proxies in north-eastern Syria. It also has a significant



cant political component, according to former defense officials: to ensure competing air wars in Syria do not accidentally spiral into a confrontation between two nuclear powers.

In the aftermath of the U.S. missile strikes, the Kremlin denounced them as an "act of aggression in violation of international law".

At a UN Security Council session, Russia's deputy envoy, Vladimir Safronkov, warned the "consequences for international stability could be extremely serious".

"It's not hard to imagine how much the spirits of the terrorists have been raised by this attack," Safronkov said.

The Russian defense ministry said it was beefing up its air defenses in Syria.

A Russian defense ministry spokesman, Maj Gen Igor Konashenkov, said a "complex of measures" would be carried out shortly to "protect the most sensitive Syrian infrastructure facilities".

The Russian navy was reported to be sending a frigate aimed with cruise missiles to Tartus, on the Syrian coast.

Konashenkov insisted that the effectiveness of the US strike was "very low", claiming that only 23 of the 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles reached the Shayrat airbase in the province of Homs. He said the strikes had destroyed only six MiG-23 fighter jets of the Syrian air force, which were under repair, but didn't damage other Syrian warplanes at the base.

The U.S. military insists all but one of the missiles reached their targets.

The U.S. was supported by its western allies and Turkey. France's president, François Hollande, and the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, said Assad bore "sole responsibility" for provoking the missile strike.

British defense secretary, Michael Fallon, said the strike was "wholly appropriate". He added that Britain would not be directly involved in any military action without parliamentary approval. Fallon said he had

been in "close discussions" with his U.S. counterpart, James Mattis, but stopped short of claiming to have been consulted on the decision.

The UN Security Council was convened on Friday to hear briefings on the situation in Syria and to hear arguments over the chemical weapons attacks and retaliatory missile strikes. No vote was scheduled on the competing resolutions on Syria currently before the council, and it was not expected to lead to an agreed course of action.

An opportunity for Russia and the U.S. to stop the slide toward confrontation will come on Tuesday, when Tillerson is due to make his first trip to Moscow as secretary of state. He has signaled that the missile strikes had limited objectives – to deter the use of chemical weapons – and that the U.S. priority remained fighting ISIL first, and dealing with political transition later.

In the days before Tillerson's visit there are expected to be urgent efforts to repair the suspended deconfliction channel.

The Pentagon would not address whether its air strikes on ISIL had already been reduced in response, nor if it had anticipated Russia's move to abandon the channel before Mattis, the defense secretary, briefed Trump on options for the missile strike. But the Pentagon left little doubt it wanted Moscow to reopen military-to-military communications.

Whatever the tactical military advantages of opening the deconfliction channel, it also had a substantial political component.

The aftermath of the strikes saw congressional pressure, even from Democrats normally opposed to Trump, for the White House to escalate its involvement in Syria's brutal civil war. Several legislators pressed Trump to deliver a strategy to guide future U.S. action and welcomed a renewed debate for congressional authorization of future strikes, a measure that failed in 2013 when Barack Obama proposed it. (Source: The Guardian)

## Britain's Boris Johnson cancels Moscow visit over Syria

British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has cancelled a scheduled visit to Moscow due developments in Syria where a suspected poison gas attack in a rebel-held area prompted the United States to launch missile strikes on a Syrian airbase.

"Developments in Syria have changed the situation fundamentally," Johnson said in a statement on Saturday.

The foreign secretary, who was due to travel to Moscow on Monday, called Rus-

sia's defense of the Syrian government in the wake of the suspected chemical attack 'deplorable'.

He said his priority was "to continue contact with the U.S. and others" to build international support for a ceasefire.

Johnson said he had discussed his plans "in detail" with U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, adding that Tillerson would still visit Moscow as planned following the G7 summit on April 10-11 to "deliver that

clear and co-ordinated message to the Russians".

Johnson also called on Russia, a key ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, to do "everything possible to bring a political settlement in Syria ... to ensure that the shocking events of the last week are never repeated".

"We deplore Russia's continued defense of the Assad regime even after the chemical weapons attack on innocent ci-

vilians," he said.

Johnson expressed his support to the U.S. for Friday's missile barrage.

Russia, alongside Iran, condemned Friday's U.S. strike, denouncing it as a "flagrant violation of international law and an act of aggression".

The U.S. said on Saturday that the strike was "fully justified", adding it was "prepared to do more" if necessary.

(Source: agencies)

## Bolivia UN envoy on Syria attack: 'History teaches us' U.S. lies to justify wars

"Now the U.S. believe that they are investigators, they are attorneys, judges and they are the executioners," the Bolivian Ambassador to the United Nations Sacha Llorenti said.

Lambasting the United States' aggression against Syria, Llorenti compared the basis for the unilateral move to former United States Secretary of State Colin Powell's infamous 2003 presentation to the body, when fraudulent evidence of an alleged Iraqi weapons program was presented to justify the U.S. war on Iraq.

Holding up an enlarged photo of Colin Powell's "weapons of mass destruction" speech, Llorenti made an impassioned plea to hold the U.S. to account for unprovoked attack on Syria, noting the U.S. history of imperialist interventions in other nations, including Latin America.

"Now the United States believe that they are investigators, they are attorneys, judges and they are the executioners. That's not what international law is about."

The Andean nation currently holds a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

"I believe it's vital for us to remember what history teaches us and on this occasion (in 2003), the United States did affirm, they affirmed that they had all the proof necessary to show that Iraq had weapons



of mass destruction but they were never found ... never were they found," the Bolivian envoy told the emergency Security Council meeting.

On Feb. 5, 2003, U.S. Secretary Powell presented fabricated "proof" that Saddam Hussein's government in Iraq was developing weapons of mass destruction, including deadly nerve agents. The presentation has since been widely discredited, as no evidence of a weapons program was ever discovered. Powell himself expressing regret over what he termed "a great intel-

ligence failure" — a failure that originated in his own exaggerated and doctored interpretation of intercepted Iraqi communications.

The U.S. launched dozens of tomahawk cruise missiles at the Shayrat air base in Homs. The Russian Defense Ministry claims that only 23 of 59 missiles reached the intended target, with the remainder landing in nearby villages. Syrian media sources are reporting that nine civilians died in the attack, four children.

The attack was a response to an alleged

Sarin gas attack on the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhoun. The incident claimed 89 lives, including 33 children and 18 women, according to local opposition authorities.

Syrian government representatives have denied that it would use such weapons, stating that the alleged proof of a Syrian military role is, in fact, propaganda fabricated by opposition groups like Al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra).

Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said that Putin considers the strikes to be "aggression against a sovereign state in violation of international law, and under a false pretext."

Arguing that the U.S. acted unilaterally and in flagrant violation of the United Nations charter, the Bolivian envoy called for a closed-door meeting of the UN Security Council.

"The United States was preparing once again and carried out a unilateral attack," Llorenti said. "The missile attack, of course, is a unilateral action. They represent a serious threat to international peace and security."

United States Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley denied the request. The U.S. holds the presidency of the Security Council this month.

(Source: Tele SUR)

## Russia accuses Britain of 'colonial hypocrisy' over Syria

### Moscow warns of serious consequences from U.S. strike on Syria

Russia accused Britain of "colonial hypocrisy" after Britain voiced support for the United States air strikes in Syria during a tense emergency meeting of the United Nations (UN) Security Council.

The warships USS Porter and USS Ross in the Mediterranean Sea launched dozens of Tomahawk missiles at the Syria Shayrat air base.

Matthew Rycroft, Britain's ambassador to the UN, said Syrian President Bashar al-Assad had been "put on notice" after Donald Trump ordered cruise missile strikes on a Syrian air base in response to a chemical attack on the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhoun that killed at least 72 people, including 20 children.

Rycroft criticized Russia for giving Assad "everything he could have dreamed of" in its continued support for his government.

His comments provoked a furious response from Russia's UN representative, Vladimir Safronkov.

"Stop putting forward these unprofessional arguments and accusations against my country", he said. "These are not diplomatic. These are lies. Don't even try to get into fights in the Arab world. Nothing will work and nothing will be achieved."

"All Arab countries recall your colonial hypocrisy."

■ **Russia warns of serious consequences**

Meanwhile, Russia warned that U.S. cruise missile strikes on a Syrian air base could have "extremely serious" consequences.

"We strongly condemn the illegitimate actions by the U.S. The consequences of this for regional and international stability could be extremely serious," Vladimir Safronkov told a meeting of the UN Security Council on Friday.

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev charged that the U.S. strikes were one step away from clashing with Russia's military.



Russia's Defense Ministry responded to the attack by calling in the U.S. military attaché in Moscow to say that at midnight Moscow time (5 p.m. EDT) it would close down a communications line used to avoid accidental clashes between Russian and U.S. forces in Syria, Interfax news agency said.

Washington has long backed rebels fighting the Syrian government in a multi-sided foreign sponsored war that has killed more than 400,000 people and driven half of Syrians from their homes since 2011. (Source: agencies)

## Trump's options for North Korea include placing nukes in South Korea

The United States National Security Council has presented President Trump with options to respond to North Korea's nuclear program — including putting American nukes in South Korea or killing North Korean Leader Kim Jong-un, multiple top-ranking intelligence and military officials told NBC News.

Both scenarios are part of an accelerated review of North Korea policy prepared in advance of Trump's meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping this week.

The White House hopes the Chinese will do more to influence Pyongyang through diplomacy and enhanced sanctions. But if that fails, and North Korea continues its development of nuclear weapons, there are other options on the table that would significantly alter U.S. policy.

The first and most controversial course of action under consideration is placing U.S. nuclear weapons in South Korea. The U.S. withdrew all nuclear weapons from South Korea 25 years ago. Bringing back bombs — likely to Osan Air Base, less than 50 miles south of the capital of Seoul — would mark the first overseas nuclear deployment since the end of the Cold War, an unquestionably provocative move.

Two military sources told NBC News that Air Force leadership doesn't necessarily support putting nuclear weapons in South Korea. As an alternative, it's been practicing long-range strikes with strategic bombers — sending them to the region for exercises and deploying them in Guam and on the peninsula as a show of force.

Another option is to target and kill North Korean Leader Kim Jong-un and other senior leaders in charge of the country's missiles and nuclear weapons and decision-making.

A third option is covert action, infiltrating U.S. and South Korean special forces into North Korea to sabotage or take out key infrastructure — for instance, blowing up bridges to block the movement of mobile missiles. The CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), which would oversee such operations, told NBC News it could offer "no guidance" on this option.

Last year, South Korea announced the creation of a special operations unit called Spartan 3000 to operate behind enemy frontlines inside North Korea.

Trump has already indicated he's open to unilateral action if China fails to rein in its ally, telling the Financial Times over the weekend, "If China is not going to solve North Korea, we will."

But on Wednesday, Gen. John Hyten, commander of U.S. Strategic Command, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that "any solution to the North Korea problem has to involve China." He said that while his job was to present "military options" to the White House, he finds it "hard ... to see a solution without China."

Still, military exercises and simulations focused on North Korea have been getting larger and more complex in recent years. In 2017 alone, these exercises have included;

And last month, the Army announced that it would permanently station its version of the armed Predator —called Gray Eagle — on the Korean Peninsula. That follows an exercise last summer in which hunter-killer Reaper drones practiced the mock destruction of North Korean mobile missile launchers.

(Source: NBC News)



## Exports via Shahid Rajaie port grew 44% in a year

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The value of exported goods from Iran's southern port of Shahid Rajaie grew 44 percent during the past Iranian calendar year 1395 (ended March 20, 2017), IRNA reported.



As Alireza Dashtani, an official in Hormozgan Province Customs Administration, told reporters on Saturday, during the said time, 44 million tons of various goods, at the value of \$11.141 billion, were exported from Shahid Rajaie.

The value of imports into this port stood at \$18.65 billion, showing 12 percent annual increase.

## More intl. companies qualified to bid for IPC

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A second list of international companies qualified to bid for Iran's new model of oil and gas projects, known as Iran Petroleum Contract, is going to be released within the next few days.

The National Iranian Oil Company is preparing a new list of companies eligible for participating in the oil tenders and the approved candidates will be notified after finalizing the list, deputy oil minister Karim Zobeidi told ISNA on Friday.

"Most of the candidates are Russian companies and their names will be announced next week," Zobeidi said.

The official said although NIOC has not yet received any document from BP but the British company has not been eliminated from the potential bidders' list.

In January, NIOC announced that 29 international companies were prequalified to bid for the country's oil and gas projects based on the new model of contracts.

According to Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, Anglo-Dutch Shell, France's Total, Italy's Eni, Malaysia's Petronas, Russia's Gazprom and Lukoil, Austria's OMV, Germany's Wintershall, as well as companies from Spain, Poland, China, Japan, India and some other countries were among the companies prequalified for IPC.

## Pertamina to import 16 percent more crude oil, considering Iran

Indonesia's State-owned energy company Pertamina plans to increase its crude oil imports by 15.96 percent to 155.39 million barrels in 2017.

The crude oil will mostly come from the company's operations in overseas fields, said Pertamina Integrated Supply Chain (ISC) senior vice president Daniel Purba.

Currently, the company has overseas operations in Iraq, Algeria and Malaysia.

"From Algeria and Malaysia we produce around 1 million barrels per month," Daniel said at a press briefing in Jakarta on Friday.

In 2016, Pertamina received 43,700 barrels of oil equivalent per day (boepd) from Iraq, while in Algeria and Malaysia it received 41,130 and 35,770 boepd. However the production in Iraq had to be refined in Shell's facilities in Singapore as Pertamina does not have suitable refineries.

"We will also decide whether we can import crude oil from Iran after the suitability test results come out next week," he added.

The company also aims to get 181.35 million barrels of crude oil supply from domestic suppliers including from internal production units. The domestic crude supply target is an increase of 2.69 percent from 176.6 million barrels in 2016.

"We will increase the production capacity of our refineries, in Cilacap, we usually produce 100,000 barrels per day, but we can make full utilization and produce 120,000 barrels per day," Daniel said.

From the crude oil Pertamina will produce 253.57 million barrels of fuel including gasoline, diesel and avtur (airplane fuel), while the total fuel demand in 2017 is expected to be 405.2 million barrels. *(Source: The Jakarta Post)*

## Norway gives Statoil, Aker BP permits to drill in Barents seas

The Norwegian Petroleum Directorate has said that it had granted two new drilling permits, one to Statoil to drill in the Barents Sea and another to Aker BP to drill in the North Sea in Norwegian waters bordering the UK shelf.

The Petroleum Directorate issued a permit to Statoil to drill a wildcat well in a production license in the Barents Sea. Statoil is operator of the license and holds 50 percent of the interest, with Eni Norge AS owing 30 percent and Petoro AS the remaining 20 percent. The well will be drilled about 25 km (15.5 miles) south-east of the Snohvit field, which was the first offshore development in the Barents Sea, according to Statoil's website.

The new drilling permit issued to Statoil is contingent upon the operator securing all other permits and consents required by other authorities prior to commencing drilling activities, the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate (NPD) said.

In a separate statement, the NPD said it granted Aker BP a drilling permit to drill a wildcat well in a production license in the central part of the North Sea bordering the UK shelf. This permit also hinges on operator Aker BP, which holds 65 percent of the license, securing all other authorizations. The other shareholder in the North Sea license is Lundin Norway AS with 35 percent.

Statoil and Lundin have recently decided to allocate more funds to Arctic drilling, especially since the oil price rise has been accompanied by a major discovery for Lundin and a likely future major discovery for Statoil. *(Source: oilprice.com)*

# Mining projects worth over \$1b to come on stream by Sept. 22

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Head of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization Mehdi Karbasian announced that 24 mining projects worth over \$1 billion will be put into operation during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (ending on September 22), Mehr news agency reported on Saturday.

Iran's worth of minerals and mining exports stood at \$6 billion in the past Iranian calendar year (which ended on March 20), IRNA

quoted Deputy Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Jafar Sarqini as saying on April 4.

Underlining the role of mines in the prosperity of national economy, the official also announced that mines have created 12,500 job opportunities and mining industries account for creation of 6,500 jobs in the country during the past year.

The share of mining sector in Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) will be increased to 1.5 percent in the Sixth National Development Plan (2016-2021) from the current

## India's oil imports from Iran top 500,000 bpd in 2016/17: trade

India's Iran oil imports jumped to a record high in 2016/17 topping half-a-million barrels per day (bpd) as refiners boosted purchases after lifting of some Western sanctions against Tehran last year.

India, Iran's biggest oil buyer after China, was among a handful of countries that continued to deal with Tehran despite Western sanctions over its nuclear program.

Refiners shipped in about 541,000 bpd of Iranian oil in the fiscal year to March, a growth of about 115 percent over the previous year, ship tracking data obtained from sources and data compiled by Thomson Reuters Oil Research & Forecasts showed.

Iran was India's second biggest oil



supplier - a position now belonging to Iraq - before economic sanctions aimed at Iran's nuclear program hampered its trade relations, forcing the South Asian nation to tap alternative suppliers.

Purchases by Indian refiners, including Reliance Industries that resumed imports last year after a multi-year lay-off, helped

## Trump economy starting to look like same-old, same-old

When President Donald Trump entered the White House in January, he promised to rip up the script of a sluggish economy and deliver stronger growth and job creation.

Despite these promises, the U.S. economy is starting to look like reruns of two of the past three years, when growth struggled out of the gate and had to scrape and claw just to return to a 2% annual growth rate for the year.

"Soft" data like consumer and business confidence have been strong and the financial sector's outperformance raised hopes for the year. But there are growing doubts these tailwinds can persist.

"I wonder how long these things keep up if the economy doesn't deliver the goods," said Robert Brusca, chief economist at FAO Economics.

"Hard data" like estimates of first-quarter GDP growth and March jobs data are consistent with a slowdown.

The latest incarnation of the Atlanta Fed's GDPNow tracker forecasts GDP growth of just 0.6%.

Congress doesn't seem likely to deliver fiscal stimulus this year.

"We've had a lot of false dawns. It is not clear [that] we're not having another one. This could set us back to the same-old,



Congress doesn't seem likely to deliver Trump's hoped-for fiscal stimulus this year.

same-old," Brusca said.

Even with the rough spots, most economists think the Fed will push ahead with two more quarter-point rate hikes this year.

Rob Martin, economist at Barclays, was more concerned, saying the March jobs data was "a weak report with no silver linings in the details."

"Should that weakness persist or should Congress disappoint expectations and fail to implement a meaningful stimulus, our expectation would be disappointed, as would those of [Fed] members," he said.

This would push the central bank back "toward their more dovish predilections," he added. *(Source: The MarketWatch)*



Head of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization Mehdi Karbasian

figure of 1.1 percent, Sarqini told IRNA on March 24.

Mining and minerals sector has all neces-

sary qualities specified by "Resistance Economy" and is of high value added, the official highlighted.

Iran regain some of the lost market share.

Imports from Iran could ease in this fiscal year as state-refiners have agreed to cut their annual imports deal with Iran by a fifth to put pressure on Tehran to award the Farzad B gas field to an Indian consortium.

Iran, in turn has decided to cut the credit period on oil sales to 60 days from 90 days and cut freight discounts from 80 percent to 60 percent.

India imported 18.7 percent less oil from Iran in March at about 526,000 bpd oil compared to the previous month, data showed. Volumes were however 4 percent higher than a year ago.

Overall, India's oil imports rose 4.7 percent in March from the previous

month, and by about 4.9 percent from a year ago.

In March Iraq emerged as the second biggest oil supplier to India, a position it ceded to Iran the previous month. Saudi Arabia continued to be the top oil supplier to India in March.

In the first quarter of this year India's oil imports from Iran surged by about 92 percent to 573,400 bpd as some OPEC producers had cut supplies, the data showed.

Iran was exempted from an OPEC deal to reduce output by 1.2 million bpd starting Jan. 1, a victory for Tehran which argued it needs to regain the market share it lost during sanctions. *(Source: Reuters)*

## Oil price hike in Mexico causes 400% inflation increase compared to 2016

The increased price of gasoline in Mexico is causing inflation to increase in the North American country, according to a new report by Prensa Latina, which cited data from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography.

The government increased gasoline prices on January 1st. Right after the change, inflation began its upwards journey. In March, the peso inflated in value by 0.61 percent – four times the rate of inflation during the same month last year.

Oil-related products have increased in price by as much as 17.09 percent, when calculated on an annual basis.

Mexico is in the midst of an oil sector liberalization that will allow foreign companies to operate in the nation's lucrative oil and gas sector for the first time. The process required a 20 percent price hike in fuel prices at the beginning of the year. The sudden jump caused violent protests that led to 600 arrests and one police officer's death.

On New Year's Day, when the policy took effect, the cost of a gallon of standard-grade unleaded fuel was \$2.95, up 14 percent from the price of \$2.60 on December 31st. The price of premium fuel rose by up to 20 percent,



according to the LA Times.

Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto had promised that fuel prices would go down with the energy sector reforms, so the increases have made it easy for opposition parties to spark protests.

The Mexican economy is already hurting from 2.5 years of low oil prices caused by a supply glut, though its price hedging strategy has prevented the effects of the market downturn from being as bad as it has been for countries with similar economic compositions. Last year, the country earned a record \$6.4 billion from contracts brokered with large banks, including JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs, and Citigroup. *(Source: oilprice.com)*

# What is happening to the British economy?

Business surveys say it is surging, output data suggest stagnation. The FT assesses the conflicting indicators on the UK's economic health in the first three months of the year.

### ■ The 'hard' data

We already have output data for January and February for industrial sectors and construction. Industrial production and manufacturing output fell in both months, leaving these sectors 0.9 and 1.2 per cent below their December peaks. The detailed subsector data also looks weaker, although some of this was caused by one-off factors such as a warm February pushing down demand for gas and sharp drops in pharmaceutical output. For the much larger services sector, only the January figures have been published. These were also disappointing, mainly because of weaker figures from the retail and distribution sector and after a strong end to 2016. James Warren, research fellow at the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, said: "A key component of the moderation has been relatively weak retail sales in the first two months of this year". All in all, the initial evidence suggests output dipped modestly across the whole economy.

### ■ The 'soft' survey data

The survey data are mixed but generally stronger than the hard data. Purchasing manager surveys for March have painted a picture of strong activity across the economy, but with most sectors weakening a little from the start of the year. Manufacturing and construction activity dipped in March but remained high. The services sector improved and beat economists' expectations but fell from back from the end of last year. Business confidence, according to European Commission sentiment indicators, is well above its long-term average in all sec-

Official output data points to a slowdown in the first months of 2017



tors of the economy and has improved since the end of last year, suggesting the hard data might improve.

### ■ The 'all-important' consumer

Household spending accounts for more than 60 per cent of the UK economy and provides some of the strongest evidence of slowdown. In the most recent three-month period — from December to February — the volume of retail sales was down 1.4 per cent compared with the previous three months as consumers tightened their belts faced with higher prices in the shops. Store-buying accounts for only about a third of consumer spending, however, and other elements look stronger. Car sales hit record levels in March — partly because of tax changes — and data from spending on Barclaycards showed consumers economized on expensive purchases in favor of "experiences" such as going out to pub, restaurant, cinema and theatre.

### ■ Britain's property 'obsession'

House price growth slowed in March, according

to major mortgage lenders Halifax and Nationwide. According to the Halifax, house prices have fallen so far in 2017 and the annual rate of house price growth fell from 6.5 per cent in December to 3.8 per cent in March. The Nationwide figures recorded 0.7 per cent growth so far this year but that price growth fell from 4.5 to 3.5 per cent between February and March. Kallum Pickering of Berenberg Bank said "Historically, house prices and household consumption have tracked each other closely," so any slowdown in the property prices suggests economic growth is also likely to be faltering.

### ■ Trade and exports

Optimism among exporters has risen to a two-decade high, according to the CBI employers' organization, with orders at their highest for three years. Both export and import values and volumes have risen — once "erratic" items like oil and aircraft are excluded — since the EU referendum. However, there has been little narrowing in the trade gap which was £8.7bn in February, close to the £9.1bn average of the past year. There are hopes that the fall in the value of the pound will boost exports, but few expect this to fully offset weaker household spending.

### ■ The aggregate UK picture

After rapid growth at the end of 2016, the data so far imply the economy expanded about 0.5 per cent in the first quarter of the year. That is in line with expectations of the Bank of England and Office for Budget Responsibility, who expect growth will slow further, as the year progresses and household finances are squeezed by rising prices and slow or non-existent wage growth. *(Source: Financial Times)*



# Iranian light crude's weekly price up \$1.21

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The price of Iran's light crude oil in the week ended on March 31 rose \$1.21 to stand at \$48.78 per barrel, IRNA reported.

Meanwhile, Iran sold its heavy crude oil at \$49.17 per barrel in the mentioned week, up 54 cents from its preceding week.

The country's heavy oil price was reported \$51.71 on average since the beginning of 2017 until March 31.

Meanwhile, with 79 cents rise from its preceding week, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)'s basket price stood at \$49.45 per barrel in the mentioned week.

Last week Shana reported that the price for Iranian oil witnessed an almost \$12 rise in the first half of the first Iranian calendar month Farvardin (March 21-April 4) compared to the same period last year.



Although oil markets have been experiencing some up and downs lately but due to the positive effects of the

OPEC, non-OPEC pact, the current prices are still way higher than those of the same time last year.

## Iran will cut benefits on oil sales to Indian state refiners

Iran will cut some benefits to Indian state-run refiners on crude purchases after the South Asian country decided to reduce the amount of oil it buys from the Persian Gulf nation, people with knowledge of the matter said.

National Iranian Oil Co. will cut the credit period on crude oil sales to 60 days from 90 days for refiners such as Mangalore Refinery & Petrochemicals Ltd. and Indian Oil Corp., the people said, asking not be identified as the matter isn't public yet. Iran will also reduce the discounts it offers on the shipping of crude to 60 percent from 80 percent, they added.

Iran's crude sales to India more than doubled in 2016 after the lifting of sanctions over its nuclear program. India is Iran's second biggest customer and the emerging center of global oil demand.

India in turn, is using the supply glut to put pressure on Tehran for securing

development rights to the Farzad-B gas field in the Persian Gulf, which was discovered by an Indian consortium led by ONGC Videsh Ltd. about a decade ago. Iran and India were aiming to conclude an agreement on developing the field by February. The South Asian nation, which stood by Iran during the sanctions, is seeking to invest as much as \$20 billion in Iran's energy industry and ports.

### Cutting purchases

Indian state-run refiners told Iran last month that they would cut oil purchases by 3 million tons during the financial year that started April 1, the people said. MRPL and Indian Oil will reduce imports by 1 million tons each, while Hindustan Petroleum Corp. and Bharat Petroleum Corp. will cut purchases by about half a million tons each, according to the people.

India's overall oil imports from the Persian Gulf nation touched 19.8 mil-

lion tons during April-December last year, compared with 12.7 million tons in the 2015-16 financial year, according to oil ministry data.


Iran's Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said "there are many other customers" if India decides to cut imports, the state-run Islamic Republic News Agency reported on April 5. Reuters earlier reported Indian state refiners will cut oil imports from Iran by a fifth.

India's Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said April 6 that it's up to the state refiners to decide on Iran crude volumes.


MRPL spokesman Prashanth Baliga couldn't comment immediately, while an Indian Oil spokesman declined to comment. National Iranian Oil Co's public relations office in Tehran didn't respond to an email and two calls seeking comment.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Second Announcement



N.I.O.C  
1395.5499



National Iranian  
Drilling Company

Public Renewed Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tenderers

TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	DESCRIPTI ON	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
139,485	4,882,000,000	184,088,000,000	“casing pipes 9-5/8	1,480,574	Tender No :pfp/azd/95/006 Indent No:48-22-9522021	1

Brief discription of subject:  
National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address pasdaran Blev., Airport Saqare, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase its requirements from qualified and interested tenderers through one-stage public tender ( semi-pressed) upon following terms and conditions:  
A) Qualitative evaluation of tenderer:  
  
The evaluation is based on article ( J ) implementing regulations of the law of tenders and also carried out base on worksheets qualitative evaluation inquiry in the tender doucments. Minimum acceptable point of quality is 60.  
  
B) Preparation of tender documents:  
Purchasing of documents:  
  
In order to receive the tender documents, 510,000 Rials should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.  
Receiving of documents:  
Tenderers must be obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum 2 week after the date of second publication in person at the following address: Hall No.:316,3 th floor, Foreign Procurement Dept.(DRILLING PROJECTS) National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN  
B) jomhouri street .yaghma alley nioc 8th building floor no : 04 room no 428 –tehran.-iran.  
Note 01: only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and receive tender ducments from foreign procurment department in due date will be known as tenderer from tender committee  
Note 02:the tender would be held in a tight period so the participants . should hand over all prequalification documents along with all envieopes (A.B.C)before closing date.  
  
C) Delivery of call quality evaluating:prequalification documents and envelopes (A.B.C)shoud be submitted before closing date: Tenderers shall submit the completed documents including qualificaion worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 45 days from last day of document received deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thffloor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN.  
D) Tender Guarantee:  
Type of guarantee:  
A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activites licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.  
B) The original cash deposit receipt paid to National Iranain Drilling Company.  
Duration of credit guarantee:  
This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.  
  
More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. [WWW.NIDC.IR](http://WWW.NIDC.IR)  
[Foreign Procurement Dept. \(DRILLING PROJECTS\)](#)  
[National Iranian Drilling Company](#)



In the Annual Ordinary General Assembly:

## TMICO Distributes 450 Rls. Dividend, Closes Fiscal Year Successfully



Tosee Meli Investment Company (P.J.S)

Balance Sheet  
For the Fiscal Year Closing on Dec. 20, 2016

Assets	Note	Dec. 20, 2016	Dec. 20, 2015	Liabilities and Owner's Equity	Note	Dec. 20, 2016	Dec. 20, 2015
Current assets:		Million rials	Million rials	Current liabilities:		Million rials	Million rials
Cash balance	3	40,785	13,169	Trade and nontrade payables	15	202,947	167,247
Short-term investment	4	8,647,763	7,548,945	Payable tax	16	-	-
Trade and nontrade receivables	5	1,397,333	2,173,880	Payable dividend	17	2,227,190	1,810,600
Down payments	7	3,749	928			-	-
Total current assets		10,089,630	9,736,922	Total current liabilities		2,430,137	1,977,847
Non-current assets				Non-current liabilities			
Long-term receivable accounts	9	3,850	2,435	End-service reserve	20	3,276	2,115
Long-term investments	10	461,725	430,855	Total non-current liabilities		3,276	2,115
Intangible assets	12	7,051	6,816	Total liabilities		2,433,413	1,979,962
Fixed tangible assets	14	195,950	204,220	Owner's equity:			
Total non-current assets		668,576	644,326	Capital	21	4,500,000	3,000,000
				Increase of capital underway	22	-	1,483,565
				Legal reserve	23	392,104	300,000
				Cumulative dividend		3,432,689	3,617,721
				Total owner's equity		8,324,793	8,401,286
Total assets		10,758,206	10,381,248	Total liabilities and owner's equity		10,758,206	10,381,248

Tosee Meli Investment Company (Public Joint Stock) distributed 450 rials dividend to shareholders, closing fiscal year successfully.

The Ordinary Annual General Assembly of Tosee Meli Investment Company (P.J.S) was held in the presence of more than 94 percent (94%) of its shareholders.

As headed by Mr. Abbas Naeimi, the meeting was supervised by Messrs. Abolfazl Khorasani and Mehdi

Sameti. It should be noted that Mr. Ali-Akbar Vaselehchi was appointed as the secretary of the meeting.

The meeting was held in the presence of representatives of Bourse Organization and Azmoudeh-karan auditing Institute.

In the Annual Ordinary General Assembly, after reading the report of the Board of Directors by Mr. Pejman Sha'banpour (managing director of the com-

### Tosee Meli Investment Company (P.J.S)

#### Consolidated Profit and Loss Account

For the Fiscal Year Closing on Dec. 20, 2016

	Note	Dec. 20, 2016	Dec. 20, 2016	Dec. 20, 2015
		Million rials	Million rials	Million rials
Income obtained from investments	27		1,282,092	1,547,618
Income obtained from sales of investments	27		479,769	575,711
Income obtained from participation bonds and dividend of deposits	27		138,282	128,996
Total incomes			1,900,143	2,252,325
Added (reduced):				
Sales, general and administrative costs	28		(49,431)	(44,462)
Operational profit			1,850,712	2,207,863
Added (reduced):				
Financial costs	30	(11,409)		(15,769)
Net of other incomes and non-operational costs	31	2,769		(6,695)
			(8,640)	(22,464)
Net profit			1,842,072	2,185,399
Operational profit of each share	39		411	528
Non-operational profit of each share	39		(2)	(5)
Base profit of each share	39		409	523
			Cumulative Dividend Turnover	
Net profit			1,842,072	2,185,399
Cumulative dividend in the beginning of year		3,617,721		4,882,322
Stock dividend	17	(1,935,000)		(3,450,000)
			1,682,721	1,432,322
Preferential dividend			3,524,793	3,617,721
Profit appropriation:				
Legal reserve	23		(92,104)	-
Cumulative dividend in the yearend			3,432,689	3,617,721

Since constituent components of comprehensive profit and loss account is limited to the profit of the year, total consolidated profit and loss has not been presented.

Briefing notes are inseparable part of financial statements.



pany), consolidated financial statements of the Group and main company, pertinent to the fiscal year closing Dec. 20, 2016 were approved. While validation of the transactions, subject of Article 129 of the Commercial Law, Hoshyar Behmand Auditing Institute was selected as auditor and legal inspector for the fiscal year of 2017. It is worth mentioning that Ettela'at and Donya-e-Eqtasad Persian dailies were appointed as widely circulated papers for publishing upcoming advertisements of the company.

### Generalities and History of Company

Tosee Meli Investment Company has started its second-decade activity in Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE). The main activity of the company according to its articles of association is as follows:

Making investment in stocks of company, investment funds or investing in other bonds and securities with right of voting, investing in stocks of investment companies, institutions with the aim of gaining profit,

Investing in other stocks and securities that is not eligible for voting and/or is unable to select manager or control publisher to the owner of securities

Benefitted from able and competent Board of Directors and the most experienced manpower, the company has managed to fulfill its obligations and duties in the best form possible. The senior management of the company believes that shareholders are the chief and main assets of the company and has tried to defend their inalienable rights in the best form possible.

Given the above issue, the management of company spares no efforts to defend its shareholders logically within the framework of rules and regulations.

The company owes its success to the unflinching and unsparing support of its shareholders.

TMICO Closes Fiscal Year with Excellent Performance, Dividing 450 Rls. (DPS)

Managing Director of the company Pejman Sha'banpour was the first speaker who expounded on the activities and performance of his company and said: "Despite many ups and downs experienced by the company in the past years, the company managed to resolve almost all problems."

With its accurate and precise prediction, the company managed to handle many of risks successfully.

Winning profit of 409 rials (dividend per share, DPS) by the company is a symbol of materialization of predicted 100% budget, he said, adding: "VETOSEM has allocated six percent of value of investment market to itself."

Winning score 100 and first rank in transparency of financial statements, materializing 96 percent objectives of portfolio of company, desirable share of leading industries in the basket of investments, etc. are of the salient advantages of this company, the managing director opined.

(By: A.Saeidi)



## The European art of the deal

By Harold James

It has been almost a decade since the 2008 financial crisis, and the confrontational politics that emerged in its aftermath remain ubiquitous in the West. But, despite similarities between the United States and the European Union, differences in how they address social, economic and fiscal issues have recently been thrown into sharp relief. Since President Donald Trump's surprise election victory, the U.S. has seemed to be competing with the EU over which side's politics are more contentious and dysfunctional. In each case, many potential players can subvert the political process. Trump is learning this in his confrontations with Congress, the courts, and state governments. In Europe, domestic political forces routinely clash with constitutional courts and supranational bodies. And every time a national – or even regional – election is held in one of the EU's 28 (soon 27) member states, Europeans become paralyzed by fear of a disruptive outcome.

To address this state of affairs, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker recently issued a white paper outlining five possible paths forward – from doing nothing to pursuing systematic reforms to complete European integration once and for all. The U.S., too, is facing a challenge of political disunity, if not disintegration.

The central problem for both is not just fake news or “alternative facts,” though misinformation does flood into most debates on both sides of the Atlantic. Rather, politics itself has become operationally dysfunctional. When citizens and politicians come to regard politics as a zero-sum game, and resort to brinkmanship and other bad-faith tactics, malaise sets in.

Both European and American debates have been replete with posturing and tests of will, turning politics into a game of “chicken.” In chicken, two drivers race toward a cliff (or toward each other); the loser is the first driver to swerve away in the face of imminent catastrophe. But if neither driver concedes, both are destroyed.

In Europe, countries have threatened to crash out of the eurozone unless the European Central Bank or other European governments underwrite their unsustainable debt; and European policymakers have threatened to cut off support to certain countries unless they implement reforms. In this game, each side believes that its threatened action would be so damaging that the other side must swerve.

The Trump administration behaved similarly in the lead up to the debacle over its attempt to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare”). The administration pressed Congress by using tactics that were almost identical to those employed by the warring parties in Europe's debt crisis.

### ■ Impending conflict

At first, the administration claimed that an impending conflict would not necessarily be bad, because differing opinions are inevitable; or, in the words of White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer, “diversity makes our nation strong.” At the start of the eurozone crisis in 2010, the EU, too, worried about its diversity, and how to reconcile differences between north and south, or center and periphery.

As the effort to repeal Obamacare proceeded, however, Trump refused to entertain any alternatives: the health care “debate” was framed as a binary choice between passing a protean bill that satisfied no one and maintaining the status quo. In offering no “Plan B,” Trump's approach resembled that of German Chancellor Angela Merkel in the eurozone crisis, when she took a hard line that allowed for no alternatives to the German position.

Finally, there was Trump's apparently unshakable confidence that he would win, and that the bill to replace Obamacare would be enacted. Spicer's claim that “We're going to get this done” echoes Merkel's famous mantra in defense of her policy to welcome Syrian refugees: Wir schaffen das “We can do it.”

But beyond these rhetorical similarities, the European policymaking approach is very different from that of the Trump administration. And it is telling that, during Europe's long struggle since the financial crisis, it has avoided any spectacular collapses, with the exception of the United Kingdom's Brexit referendum.

Europe's conflicts have always been resolved with some sort of compromise. And even though critics often caricature the EU's internal negotiating process as overly lengthy and tedious, it has undoubtedly produced positive results. Reforms that have improved energy-policy coordination, or helped to create a banking union, have proven to be far more robust than they may have seemed at first. European-style multilateralism depends on constantly tweaking existing arrangements, which makes it the opposite of Trump-style unilateralism.

Constitutional government, too, is based on a process of bargaining and adjusting. At the heart of the U.S. Constitution – that was shaped by the American Founders' experience with British imperial overreach – is a belief that many people, working through consensus, are wiser than one person. Trump will have to learn sooner or later that consensus building is inherently frustrating, and that the solutions produced by political bargaining are usually neither clear nor simple.

Europe, for its part, reached this realization in the 1950s, when it discovered that integration would require a series of bargains to preserve large areas of national policymaking autonomy. Europe does not have an uncontested leader to impose policy preferences on everyone else. But, unlike Trump, European leaders today can realistically issue assurances such as, “We can do it,” precisely because they understand that tradeoffs are necessary and inevitable.

In 2017, Europe may learn two more important lessons. First, a member state's exit from the EU need not be a destructive gambit in a game of chicken, if the country's departure removes tension points and preserves the foundation for future bargaining. And, second, Trump's dysfunctional administration is a model of how not to govern, and voters could punish those, like French National Front leader Marine Le Pen, who continue to emulate it.

(Source: The Daily Star)

# Trump told Obama not to attack Syria; now he does just that

Donald Trump, who as a private citizen warned President Obama in 2013 not to launch an attack on Syria, did just that on Thursday.

Trump also failed to articulate any new strategy for ending the civil war in Syria, vaguely calling on “all civilized nations to join us in seeking to end the slaughter and bloodshed” in that country.

But this much is true: The chemical attack that left more than 70 people dead and hundreds more sickened was a gruesome and egregious violation of international norms.

In a brief address to the nation, Trump spoke with emotion about the dozens of Syrians killed this week in Idlib province apparently by sarin gas mixed with chlorine. “Even beautiful babies were cruelly murdered in this very barbaric attack,” the president said. “No child of God should ever suffer such horror.”

An impulsive, emotional reaction is not a good way to make a decision about the use of force. And rarely has an American president seemed more inclined to impulsive responses than this one. But Trump was right when he said: “It is in the vital national security interest of the United States to prevent and deter the spread and use of deadly chemical weapons.”

That statement echoes former President Obama's explanation four years ago for why he planned military action – strikingly similar to the action Trump took on Thursday.

Obama never carried through with that threat, partly because of resistance



in Congress. That diplomatic solution seemed to offer a way to solve the problem without resorting to military force.

Meanwhile, the more important and far more difficult question is what the new administration's strategy will be in Syria. Trump has repeatedly promised to reduce U.S. involvement in overseas

conflicts and promote an “America First” agenda instead. What's more, he has hinted that he believes Assad ought to remain in power, at least for the time being, and that the U.S. should expend its resources fighting the radicals of Islamic State (ISIL). But now, only 11 weeks into his term, he's already being dragged in, forced to face realities and complexities

he had apparently not anticipated.

Back in February, Trump learned suddenly that rewriting the healthcare laws was “complicated.” Now he's learning the same about foreign policy. Let's hope he can find a strategy more effective than his predecessor's to help bring this brutal war to an end.

(Source: LAT)

**An impulsive, emotional reaction is not a good way to make a decision about the use of force.**

## It's nearly impossible to stop terrorists from using trucks as weapons



By Adam Taylor

Nice, Berlin, London and now Stockholm. Over the past year, terrorist attacks using vehicles have become a sad fact of life in Europe. Such attacks are obviously appealing to would-be mass murderers: In most European nations, a truck is far easier to acquire than a firearm or explosives, and sometimes even deadlier. Groups such as the Islamic State (ISIL) and al-Qaeda have taken note, specifically suggesting that a car could be a good weapon to harm civilians.

For authorities, the attacks represent a major problem. Guns and explosives can be banned, but motor vehicles are vital for many city-dwellers. So how do you protect a city from an attack like this? There is one commonly used solution, but it's far from perfect.

Since the 1990s, many cities in North America and Europe have been installing physical obstacles designed to stop vehicles driving close to the site of a likely terror target. These measures actually predated the rise of the modern vehicle attack — instead, they were largely designed to tackle car bombs, like those used to attack U.S. embassies in East Africa in 1998.

### ■ Jersey barriers

When they were first installed in Washington, they were often crude: huge concrete blocks known as “jersey barriers” placed around monuments and government buildings. They served a purpose but didn't look great. As the headline on a story by Benjamin Forgey, The Washington Post's architecture critic at the time, put it in 1998, “Does safe have to mean ugly?”

Since then, a number of developments have made these obstacles more subtle. Permanent protective bollards,

sleeker in design, are believed to have prevented a number of terrorist attacks: One example is the 2007 Glasgow Airport attack, where a car filled with propane canisters was blocked from driving into the terminal by bollards, likely preventing serious injury to civilians.

In the United States, crash and attack-resistant bollards are now installed outside “military and governmental buildings and domestic structures and areas of higher security levels,” according to the National Institute of Building Sciences. Similar measures are taken in countries like Britain, where many bollards and barriers are designed to stop a seven-ton truck traveling at 50 mph.

The design of these obstacles is often thoughtfully integrated into their environment. These days, they are often disguised as flower pots, decorative walls or even sculptures — the artful bronze bollards outside New York City's Financial District are an obvious example. Bollards that slide into the ground, hidden from view until needed, are also common. The aim is to provide security without making a city feel like a fortress.

However, while these obstacles have proliferated outside government buildings and other high-profile areas, they have left other areas exposed.

Jon Coaffee, a professor of Urban Geography at the University of Warwick in England who studies the impact of terrorism on urban areas, says that in U.S. cities like Boston, he can easily see where “so-called hostile vehicle mitigation measures” had been installed. “Equally there are many potential targets that are undefended,” Coaffee wrote in an email. “The key question raised by the Stockholm incident, as was raised recently in London, is can we or should we seek to secure all crowded locations in a city?”

### ■ Soft targets

Groups such as the Islamic State (ISIL) have exploited this, encouraging attacks on so-called “soft targets” that are at best weakly protected. The attack in Nice, France, took place upon a beachfront promenade; in Berlin, it was a Christmas Market; in Stockholm, a shopping center. Even in the London attack, which targeted the (well-protected) center of Britain's political world at Westminster Palace, most of the carnage took place on the adjacent bridge.

The abundance of soft targets means that protecting them all is difficult, if not impossible. After the attack in Germany, Berlin Police Chief Klaus Kandt told reporters that bollards and other

obstacles could not completely prevent an attack. “There are an almost unlimited number of soft targets, that's simply the fact, so there are many possibilities to kill people with a truck,” he said.

However, the Berlin attack highlighted another way legislation may help. The 40-ton Scania PRT truck used in the attack is thought to have deployed its brakes when the attack occurred, thanks to an advanced emergency braking system now mandated by the European Union on heavier trucks. German government officials have said that the technology may have “saved lives,” Süddeutsche Zeitung reported in December.

(Source: The Washington Post)

**In most European nations, a truck is far easier to acquire than a firearm or explosives, and sometimes even deadlier.**

In the Name of God



Shahid Tondgooyan Petrochemical Company

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2	TITANIUM DIOXIDE	600
3	ANTIMONY (III) OXIDE	110
4	ANTIMONY (III) ACETATE	150
5	HYDROBROMIC ACID	250
6	Cobalt Acetate	60
7	CMB	600
8	Therminol 66	Up to process condition
9	SHELL OIL	Up to process condition

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

#### Place & Deadline of Receive Evaluation Forms:

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

It shall be given latest by 16:00 pm on **16/Apr/17**

#### Place & Deadline of Submission Evaluation Forms Document:

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

It should be submitted latest by 16:00 pm on **26/Apr/17**

#### Contacts:

You can contact any of the addresses below:

Email: [Moradpour.a@stpc.ir](mailto:Moradpour.a@stpc.ir)

Tel: 061 521 – 72045 Fax: 061 521 – 72043



# Resumption of Iran-PGCC talks possible

By Mina Ahmadi

Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Jarollah recently has announced that he is hopeful that talks between Iran and the Persian Gulf Arab countries would get started soon.

Following the attack on the Saudi Arabia embassy in Tehran, in January 2016, relations between Tehran and Riyadh soured and under the pressure from Saudi Arabia five other members of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council including Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates chilled their diplomatic ties with the Islamic Republic though Oman stopped short of doing so, only expressing regret over the attack.

On March 27, Jarollah underscored that Kuwait expects the consultations between Tehran and Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) to resume after political messages having been exchanged between the two sides.

He said that Kuwait had communicated Iran's response and written message to senior officials of the Persian Gulf Arab states.

Late in January, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Khalid al-Hamad al-Sabah visited Tehran to deliver the Kuwaiti Emir's letter to the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on relations between Iran and the Persian Gulf Arab countries.



Now the Islamic Republic is responding to the call in a bid to create cordial relations with Persian Gulf littoral states.

In the Middle East plagued with religious and ethnic conflicts and interference by foreign forces, the Islamic Republic of Iran has always tried to deal with regional issues, including terrorism and extremism, by creating collective mechanisms and amending regional cooperation.

## ■ Cordial relations

The President Hassan Rouhani's February visits to Oman and Kuwait in the present

critical situation in the region has indicated that the trio are determined to expand cordial relations in the two sides of the Persian Gulf strategic waterway.

President Rouhani's day-long visit to the two regional states were made upon official invitations of Sultan of Oman Qaboos bin Said al Said and Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Sabah Ahmad Jaber al-Sabah.

The Sultan of Oman and the Emir of Kuwait have always been calling for broadening relations with Iran and have always tried to form a collective mechanism with Iran's help to discuss regional peace and security and meet common concerns and threats in the region, including terrorism and extremism, with the participation of Iran and other regional countries.

Undoubtedly, President Rouhani visits demonstrate a will on the two sides of the Persian Gulf to mend fences and resume ties that has appeared to become increasingly sour, following developments over last year.

President Rouhani's visits on February 15 to Oman and Kuwait were widely welcomed by the people, officials and mass media of the regional states and this has indicated that the provocative policies of those trans-regional countries have apparently resulted in an opposite way and that the regional people and governments are interested to have expanded cooperation.



Meanwhile, the Emir of Kuwait gave great significance to the views discussed by President Rouhani which were inspired by an Islamic brotherhood spirit.

The Kuwaiti Emir also said he was satisfied with Tehran's constructive approach to ease tensions among neighboring Arab countries.

## ■ Saudis in Yemen quagmire

In spite of the far-reaching support of the Western allies, the Saudis are stuck in Yemen in a quagmire similar to that being experienced by the US in Afghanistan.

On January, Iranian Foreign Ministry dismissed the recent "insulting" claims by Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir against the Islamic Republic, saying such allegations are aimed at distorting the existing realities in the Middle East.

"It is Saudi Arabia, which has been the breeding ground for the emergence and growth of terrorism in the region over the past years," Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi said.

He added that Saudi Arabia has been carrying out an inconclusive act of military aggression against Yemen and committed war crimes against the defenseless people of the impoverished country for nearly two years.

Jubeir's justifications for Al Saud's brutal attacks against Yemeni women, children and civilians show that Riyadh has suffered a heavy defeat against the Yemenis' strong determination to advance their objectives in the region.

Qassemi emphasized that the Saudi foreign minister's ceaseless blame games cannot erase the history of creation and spread of extremism and deviant schools of thought in Saudi Arabia with the support of Al Saud.

Saudi Arabia has been incessantly

bombing Yemen since March 2015. Based on latest tallies, the war has claimed the lives of over 11,400 Yemenis, including women and children. It has also taken a heavy toll on Yemen's infrastructure.

For long, the Middle East has witnessed several conflicts between different factions and ethnic and religious groups. The terrorism and extremism, though remain to be effective tools in the hands of big powers to control the region, currently is spilling over to other parts of the globe, from Paris to Ohio, providing big powers a pretext to deploy forces in the region and go on with their threats.

Under such an atmosphere and in the absence of any regional constructive pattern to foster trust and cooperation in the region, there is a need for a player to step in and bring together all other regional players to create peace and stability.

Here, the bigger picture for Iran's engagement with the Persian Gulf Arab states gradually starts showing up; an engagement based on a doctrine advocating a belief that the destiny of the regional nations, their security and any attempts to protect their interests are blended and interwoven.

It is up to the regional nations to put in place collective mechanisms and address common issues as well as common threats.

Iran has always followed to achieve a win-win policy in its ties with other regional players. The security Iran is trying to establish is, against all the Iranophobia propagated in the region, is going to benefit all the countries and not solely the Islamic Republic, IRNA wrote.

President Rouhani's visit to Oman and Kuwait, in a broader sense and examined from a broader perspective, is going to put an end to the idea that Iran is a regional or global threat; that Iran is not an enemy.

## The Ultimate Deal: On the two-state solution

By Henry Siegman

Reactions by the international commentariat to Trump and Netanyahu's joint press conference on 15 February focused largely on Trump's pronouncements, specifically on what seemed to be his abandonment of America's long-standing bipartisan support for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. 'I'm looking at two-state and one-state and I like the one that both parties like,' he said. 'I can live with either one.' Given his ignorance of international affairs in general and the Middle East in particular, he probably had no idea of the implications of what he was saying. He declared that Palestinians will 'have to acknowledge Israel, they're going to have to do that,' entirely unaware that that is exactly what they have already done, not once, but on three separate occasions: at the request of Reagan and his secretary of state, George Shultz, in 1988; in 1993, in the context of the Oslo Accords; and again in Gaza in 1998, with Bill Clinton in attendance. Trump is probably also unaware that Netanyahu's government has never recognized the Palestinian right to national self-determination and statehood in any part of Palestine, even though this right has been affirmed repeatedly by the UN Security Council (e.g. Resolution 242 in 1967 and Resolution 1515 in 2003) and by the International Court of Justice (in 2004).

The Palestinians never withdrew their recognition of Israel, but they have refused to endorse Israel's decision to define its national identity in religious and ethnic terms, a demand that no country has the right to impose on other countries. Israel would never agree to such a demand by Palestinians or for that matter by any Christian country.

Far less attention has been paid to what Netanyahu said at the press conference, although it was more revealing of prospects for a two-state solution than anything Trump said. In reply to a reporter who asked whether he still supports a two-state solution, Netanyahu said he considers the terms 'two-state' and 'one-state' to be superficial 'labels,' and that he prefers dealing with 'substance'. 'There are two prerequisites for peace,' he said. 'First, the Palestinians must recognize the Jewish state ... Second, in any peace agreement, Israel must retain the overriding security control over the entire area west of the Jordan River.'

Unlike Trump, Netanyahu is very much aware that Palestinians have recognized the State of Israel. But like Trump, Netanyahu lies shamelessly. And like Trump, who turned viciously on Obama after the outgoing president extended to him entirely undeserved consideration, Netanyahu is a total ingrate. He never acknowledged that the Palestinians recognized Israel's legitimacy not only within the borders assigned to it in 1947 by the UN Partition Plan but also including territory assigned to the Palestinians and confiscated by Israel following its War of Independence in 1948, in defiance of Resolution 242 prohibiting the acquisition of territory as a result of war.

It was not an Israel-basher but a former prime minister and president, Shimon Peres, who noted in an interview in Israel's Yediot Ahronot that 'before Oslo, the Palestinian state's size should have been according to the 1947 map, the UN map. In Oslo, Arafat moved from the 1947 map to the 1967 one. He gave up on 22 per cent of the West Bank. I don't know any Arab leader who would give up 2 or 3 per cent.' Actually, Peres misspoke. Arafat did not give up 22 per cent of the West Bank but 22 per cent of Palestine, which is fully 50 per cent of the West Bank territory the UN Partition Plan recognized as the legitimate patrimony of the Palestinian people. And Peres might also have added that he knew no Israeli leader, including himself, who would give up any part of his country's territory. But it is Palestinian leaders who are accused by Israel of refusing to make concessions for peace, a lie US administration consistently repeats to imply a non-existent equivalence between Israeli and Palestinian resistance to a two-state agreement. (End of Part One)

## Saudi Arabia wants to disappear history and deny religious pluralism

By Catherine Shakdam

It is with utmost concern that the Baqee Organization learnt of Saudi Arabia's plans against its own Shia Muslim community as it is preparing to demolish yet another religious historical site in the name of absolutism and intolerance.

"We worry the kingdom will desecrate further holy sites and historical relics just as the forefathers of Wahhabism did when they laid waste to the Baqee cemetery in the holy city of Medinah."

While such developments will likely be lost in the deluge of violence and recent calls for war that have inundated all of our TV screens, the Baqee Organization must stress on the links that exist in between Terror, Extremism, and the need to safeguard our historical religious heritage.

Should we allow for regimes such as that of Saudi Arabia to disappear our historical treasures for they speak of a belief system Wahhabism rejects, we stand to lose ourselves all completely to the demons of violent absolutism.

Religious freedom cannot be separated from our right to experience History. The day we fail to recognize that our very sense of self is tied to those memories, those traditions expressed in arts and in stones we stand to lose ourselves altogether.

Our humanity is multitude and should be preserved as such.

The Baqee Organization calls now for the United Nations and all state actors to intervene in preventing yet another crime against History to be carried out.

The region has lost too much of its religious history already for any of us to stand to lose more.



Saudi Arabia's propensity to wield its axe against those treasures it views as lesser is troubling since it denotes of a genocidal streak.

If we bear in mind that few today can remember of the thriving Christian community of Najran south-west of Saudi Arabia - formerly known as the Hijaz, we may want to reconsider our cavalier position towards those sites that still exist.

Our future, and our very ability to oppose Terror will very much depend on our resolve against Saudi Arabia's religious intolerance.

UN rapporteurs have urged Saudi Arabia to immediately halt a planned demolition of an entire 400-year-old neighborhood inhabited by the kingdom's Shia Muslim minority.

The UN experts warned that the so-called development plan for the historic neighborhood of al-Masora in the village of Awamia in the eastern province of Qatif threatens the historical and cultural heritage of the area with irreparable harm.

They said such a move would lead to forced eviction of 2,000 to 3,000 people from their businesses and residences.

"The area is of importance not only to local people and the entire cultural landscape of

Awamia, but also has national significance for the history and cultural heritage of Saudi Arabia," said the UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Karima Bennouna.

"The planned demolition would erase this unique regional heritage in an irreversible manner," she pointed out.

Masora is considered a historical model of a walled village, including mosques, farms and farmers markets, places of worship for Shia Muslims, 'Hussainiyats', and businesses. It has been of great interest for researchers and experts in the fields of heritage and archaeology.

The UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty, Philip Alston, warned about the ramifications of the demolition on the standard of living of Masora residents.

"If implemented, the plan will remove people from the areas where they live and work, resulting in loss of livelihood and difficulty in securing housing," he said.

The experts also raised concerns over the lack of "any meaningful consultation" with the residents, and the absence of less damaging alternatives, like restoration.

"The Saudi authorities must take all necessary steps to guarantee cultural rights, including the right to the enjoyment of and access to cultural heritage, and the right to an adequate standard of living, including housing, in accordance with international human rights laws and standards," the UN experts said in a statement.

"They must halt all ongoing demolition works that do not meet these standards and cancel any planned in the future," the statement said.

Citizens of Qatif and other oil-rich regions of eastern Saudi Arabia have for long lamented about discrimination against them. International rights campaigners have also called on Riyadh to stop the persecution of members of the Shia community, saying they should enjoy more freedom in expressing their religious beliefs.



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**UN rapporteurs have urged Saudi Arabia to immediately halt a planned demolition of an entire 400-year-old neighborhood inhabited by the kingdom's Shia Muslim minority.**



# America's momentous entry into World War I

By Tim Goeglein

One hundred years ago, April 6, 1917, the United States entered World War I. More than 53,000 Americans lost their lives on the battlefields in that horrific European conflagration. Disease alone added another 60,000 wartime deaths. More than 204,000 others were wounded, many of them maimed with terrible disfigurements. In total, some 15 million people lost their lives in World War I.

The late entry of the United States into the war — it had been raging since 1914 — was a major inflection point in 20th century history. While America's involvement in the war indisputably assured the Allied victory over Imperial Germany by November 1918, it left a road of ruination, blood and destruction that even today is difficult to internalize.

Not only did those bloody battlefields soak up American lives en masse but also they reminded a restive America that President Woodrow Wilson, who had been first elected in 1912, was not infallible.

Despite an almost obsessive zeal, he was unable to gain passage in the United States Senate of the Treaty of Ver-

sailles even as he was being lionized across Europe as a colossus of victory. That failure in the Senate prevented the United States from entering the League of Nations, which the president viewed as his own legacy of international diplomacy and a fitting close to the war.

## ■ Global efforts

Wilson said he wanted "peace without victory," and just as the war came to its close that November, congressional elections were underway. The president unsuccessfully appealed to the American people to support his global efforts and to return a Democratic Congress to Capitol Hill. Republicans made up the new majority in both houses, and Wilson soon found himself eager to lead with few willing to follow.

Against the best counsel of his closest advisers, Wilson traveled to the Paris peace conference anyway. Everywhere he went he was the subject of standing ovations and sizable crowds, an utter disjunction from how he was viewed at home.

Wilson returned to Washington and lobbied for the Versailles Treaty, which contained his vaunted idea of a League of Nations. Almost all aspects of the treaty reflecting what became known as "Wilsonism" were eviscerated and the

Senate twice rejected the act that would have formally ratified the treaty.

Just two days after his powerful speech to a joint session of Congress, in the early morning hours of Good Friday, April 4, 1917, the House of Representatives passed the resolution 373 to 50. Wilson signed the resolution, which would direct 50,000 Americans to their demise.

Wilson had supreme confidence that America needed to get into the European conflict and leverage the country's strength to bring it all to a decisive and victorious close. The United States was much larger than any nation in Europe with the exception of Russia. Just as America entered the war, the Russians withdrew amid revolution and revolt.

## ■ European wars

While the overwhelming majority of the American people believed that European wars were not the business of America, the United States retained its right to trade with any nation at war. But when Germany violated the neutrality of Belgium and propelled itself into unrestricted submarine warfare, it was broadly viewed as a violation of international law.

In March 1917, Wilson was inaugurated for a second

term, and less than a month later, he came to Capitol Hill asking for the war resolution. He said, in essence, the war had already come to America because of Germany's intransigence.

One of the most important benchmarks was reached in August 1918, when plans were firmly in place to use the American First Army as a single unit. At 11 A.M. on the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918, the Great War ended.

Less than two miles from the White House is the R Street home where President Wilson moved after leaving office, the victim of a massive stroke suffered in 1919. For a month after being stuck down, only his doctor and wife were permitted to see him. Wilson never fully recovered.

In 1913, Woodrow Wilson told a friend from Princeton that it would be a real irony if his administration had to deal in any significant manner with foreign affairs. But during the Wilson presidency, the Great War had in part propelled and codified the upward trajectory of United States of America as the most powerful and dominant nation in the world.

(Source: The Washington Times)

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# Tired of being fatigued

## Don't accept regular fatigue as part of aging

Weariness, tiredness, lack of energy. There are many ways to describe those times when you are so fatigued you can't do anything. Often you bounce back after a quick rest or a good night's sleep, but if fatigue is occurring more often and lasting longer, it could be a sign of something more serious.

"Men may chalk up fatigue to aging, but there is no reason you should battle ongoing fatigue," says Dr. Suzanne Salamon, a geriatric physician with Harvard-affiliated Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. "Everyone gets tired sometimes, and your endurance may decline with age — you may not move as fast and sometimes tire quicker — but you should never be too fatigued to enjoy an active lifestyle."

### ■ The feel of fatigue

Fatigue can affect you in several ways. You may have less energy to exercise. You may have trouble concentrating, staying alert, and remembering things. You may anger easily and become more socially isolated.

If fatigue appears suddenly or becomes more frequent, it could be related to several common medical conditions or lifestyle changes, according to Dr. Salamon. You should consult your doctor to see if you have any of the following issues.

- **Anemia.** This occurs when your blood has too few red blood cells or those cells have too little hemoglobin, a protein that transports oxygen through the bloodstream. The result is a drop in energy levels.

- **Heart disease.** Heart disease can cause the heart to pump blood less efficiently and lead to fluid in the lungs. This can cause shortness of breath and reduce the oxygen supply to the heart and lungs, making you tired.

- **Hypothyroidism.** An underactive thyroid gland can cause fatigue along with other symptoms such as weight gain, weakness, dry skin, feeling cold, and constipation.



**Keep naps to about 20 to 30 minutes, as studies have suggested that napping for 40 minutes or longer can have the opposite effect and leave you feeling groggy rather than refreshed.**

- **Sleep problems.** Sleep apnea is characterized by pauses in your breathing, often lasting several seconds, or shallow breathing, while you sleep. It is common among older adults and those who are overweight. Another sleep-related issue is an overactive bladder or enlarged prostate, which forces repeated nighttime bathroom trips. Either of these can disturb your sleep enough to leave you feeling tired the next day.

- **Medication.** Certain medications can make you feel tired, such as blood pressure drugs, antidepressants, anti-anxiety drugs, and antihistamines. "People react to medications differently and they often end up taking more as they get older," says Dr. Salamon.

Check with your doctor, especially if you have added a new medication or recently increased your dosage. "Sometimes it helps to take certain medicines, which

may cause fatigue, at night rather than in the daytime," she says.

Low-grade depression or anxiety. Mental health issues often drain energy levels. "You may suffer from depression or anxiety and not even know it," says Dr. Salamon.

### ■ Fatigue warning signs

These clues suggest that your fatigue may stem from an underlying problem:

- Waking up exhausted, even after a good night's sleep
- Not feeling motivated to begin the day
- Inability to do activities you enjoy
- Sudden bouts of exhaustion that go away and then return
- Shortness of breath

### ■ Get a boost

When normal, everyday fatigue strikes, there are ways to boost your energy levels, says Dr. Salamon. For example:

- Drink a cup of coffee or tea. A little caffeine can jump-start your day, she says. "You don't need more than that, but it can offer a mental and physical lift, especially if you have trouble with morning fatigue."
- Go for a 30-minute walk. "If you can't get outside, walk around your house in bouts of 10 to 15 minutes, two to three times a day," says Dr. Salamon.

- Take a nap. A midday nap can help overcome tiredness later in the day. Keep naps to about 20 to 30 minutes, as studies have suggested that napping for 40 minutes or longer can have the opposite effect and leave you feeling groggy rather than refreshed. Also, don't nap too late in the day.

A medical checkup can identify issues that may cause fatigue.

### ■ Could you have chronic fatigue syndrome?

Severe fatigue could be a sign of chronic fatigue syndrome, a mysterious disorder characterized by profound fatigue that does not improve with rest and may get worse with physical or mental activity. Your doctor can help diagnose and suggest possible treatments.

(Source: [health.harvard.edu](http://health.harvard.edu))

## Should you avoid drinking fruit juice?

By Shereen Lehman

Question: I've been reading a lot of websites that say not to drink fruit juice, and it's just as bad as sugary soda. Is that true?

Answer: I don't think comparing fruit juice to soda is fair, at least not if you're talking about 100-percent fruit juice because it can be high in vitamins and minerals. And I don't think you need to avoid fruit juice, but if you're trying to lose weight, you'll need to keep track of the number of servings and calories.

Some people believe fruit juice is bad for your health because it's high in a natural sugar called fructose, or 'fruit sugar.' But fruit juice isn't like sugary soft drinks that have no nutritional value beyond the sugar. Fruit juice contains the same nutrients that are found in whole fruit -- it just doesn't have all the fiber.

Fiber is important. It helps to slow down the digestion and absorption of the natural sugars found in the fruit. It fills you up and keeps you feeling full longer. But fruit juice doesn't have the fiber, so it doesn't have the same effect as eating the whole fruit. Without the fiber, it's easier to take in more calories without realizing what you're doing.

### ■ No fiber, but still nutritious

Most people don't consume enough fruits and vegetables, so drinking fruit juice can add a serving or two of fruit to your daily total as long as you choose 100-percent fruit juice. Those other 'fruit drinks' that contain only a small amount of fruit juice and lots of added sugar or high fructose corn syrup don't count as a serving of fruit.

Six ounces -- or 3/4 cup -- of 100-percent fruit juice counts as one serving of fruit. Most of us need one to two cups of fruit every day (along with about two to three cups of vegetables). Enjoy drinking fruit juice, but eat some whole fruit too -- for the fiber.

### ■ Fruit juice is available at your local grocery store.

There will be several varieties, and they'll be available in large bottles and single serving containers. The large containers or more economical, but single-serving packages are convenient and are good for brown bag lunches.

### ■ Tips for buying the healthiest fruit juice

When you shop for fruit juice, be sure to look for the words 100-percent fruit juice on the label. You should also peruse the ingredients list, which is especially important if you're buying juices such as pomegranate, acai or other exotic fruit juices -- they're frequently blended with apple or grape juice to cut costs. It's not that apple or grape juice is bad -- but you're paying more for the little bit of exotic superfood fruit and not getting much of it.

For the freshest (and healthiest) juice, buy a high-speed blender and make it at home. High-speed blenders pulverize the fruit so you keep the fiber that's lost in most store-bought juices.

(Source: [verywell.com](http://verywell.com))



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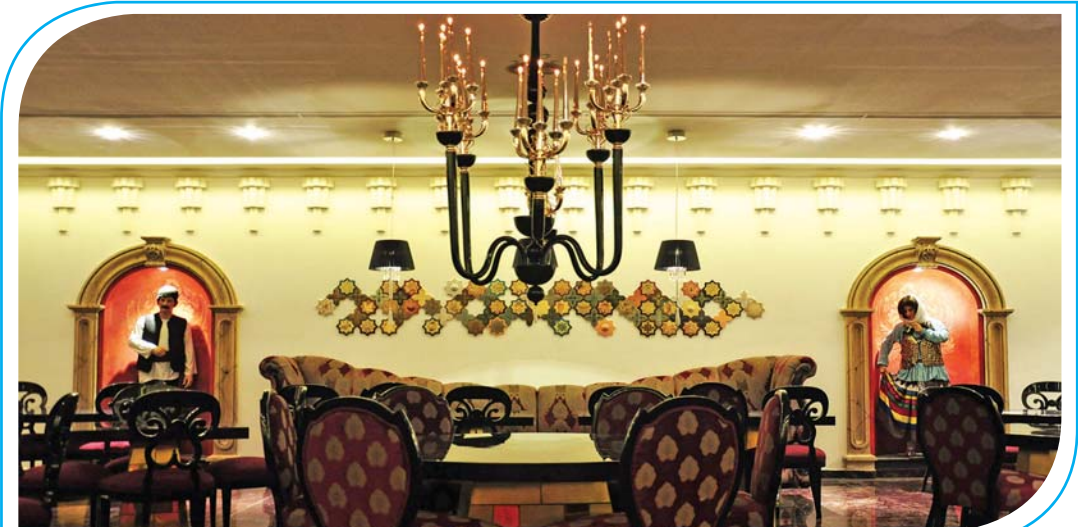


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## Iranian tourist visits to Russia up by 72% in 2016

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Roughly 67,000 Iranians visited Russia in 2016, a solid growth of 72 percent compared to a year earlier, Russia Beyond the Headlines reported on April 5.

Russians expect around 100,000 Iranians to visit the country this year, the report added, noting most travelers (about 95 percent) are usually interested in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The next popular destination is the Golden Ring.



The number of foreign tourists in Russia increased in 2016 by 7 percent, with the largest growth in arrivals by Iranians, said Russian Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinsky earlier in March, addressing the opening ceremony of the international tourism fair “Intourmarket-2017”.

On March 28, Iran and Russia inked a visa-free agreement for tourist groups, as the two countries are taking steps towards broadening bilateral tourism ties.

Based on the agreement tour groups of 5 to 50 people heading to Russia from Iran or vice versa will be granted a visa-free stay of up to 15 days.

Last December, Tehran’s ambassador to Moscow said Iran-Russia interactions in the tourism sector has led to a sharp rise in the number of visits to the two countries over the past two years.

## Greek tourism improves its competitiveness

At least one sector in the Greek economy has improved its performance over the last 12 months, as Greece climbed seven spots in the World Economic Forum’s Tourism Competitiveness Index for 2017.

Greece this year ranks 24th among 136 countries, earning 4.51 points out of seven (with 7 being the top mark). Still, it ranks below three rival European countries (Spain, Italy and Portugal) but above Cyprus and Turkey.

The WEF report highlights the negative impact of Greece’s low charges on the country’s tourism revenues, although the low cost of holidays in this country has brought it up to 22nd spot on this criterion, one of Greece’s comparative advantages.

The report says the rise of Greece from 31st to 24th position has been “impressive” and is attributed to the country’s “excellent efforts to make the most of its natural resources,” the reduction in accommodation prices for foreign tourists and the drop in airport charges. On the negative side there is the lack of incentives for foreign direct investment and tourism enterprises’ low degree of technological readiness.

(Source: ekathimerini.com)



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Aranjuez Cultural Landscape

The Aranjuez Cultural Landscape in Spain is a singular entity of complex and historic relationships between nature and human activity, the sinuous watercourses of the rivers and the geometrical design of the landscape, urban and rural life, and between the forest wildlife and the refined architecture.

The Tagus and Jarama rivers are the two main arteries of the Aranjuez Cultural Landscape, an extensive area (2,047.56 ha) in the south of the Autonomous Community of Madrid. The surrounding buffer zone is located within the municipal boundaries of Aranjuez (16,604.56 ha).



A view of the Royal Palace of Aranjuez in Spain

Aranjuez bears witness to various cultural exchanges over a span of time that had a significant influence in the development of its landmarks and the creation of its landscape, thereby becoming a model for its culture’s use of its territory.

The process of transformation dates back to the reign of Philip II when, with the influence of the Crown and the wealth of nature as the determining elements, Aranjuez was established as a Real Sitio (Royal Site) in the sixteenth century. The Royal Commands of Ferdinand VI, Charles II, and Isabella II marked its evolution in the 18th and 19th centuries. This landscape survived during the 20th century when it was opened for the enjoyment of the public.

(Source: UNESCO)

# ‘Cost-effective, quality medical tourism services atop agenda’

By Afshin Majlesi

**TEHRAN** — A significant new element of a growing trade in healthcare has involved the movement of patients across borders in the pursuit of medical treatment and health; a phenomenon commonly termed “medical tourism.”

However, according to the World Health Organization, no agreed definition of medical tourism exist; as a result methods applied by countries vary substantially. Some countries count foreign patients’ visits to hospitals whereas others count the entry of individual patients into the country.

In a recent interview with the Tehran Times, Vahidreza Mohebpour, who presides over the health tourism department the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, asserts that Iran yields considerable benefits to international health-care seekers, offering affordable yet quality treatment services.

“Cost-effective, high quality, and adequate services have always been the very items on top of our tourist patients’ agenda when it comes to select a target country for its medical services,” he said.

In what follows, a full text of the interview has been given:

**■ Q: What kinds of medical services do the country provide most for foreign travelers?**

**A:** We offer different kinds of medical services such as eye surgeries and services, cardiovascular surgeries especially pediatric heart surgery, bone marrow transplantation, gynecologic and obstetric surgery, oncologic services, cerebrospinal surgery, orthopedic surgery (total knee & total hip replacement, etc.) and urologic surgery, and so many other services.

In addition, there are many kinds of services for outpatient tourists such as cosmetic, infertility and sterility services.

**■ Q: Why do many across the globe select Iran as their medical tourism destination?**

**A:** Being selected is at the mercy of the reputation of our specialists

— Offering lower prices also has added to the reasons why we are chosen for that matter.

— Cost-effective, high quality, and comprehensive services have always been the items on top of agenda when it comes to select a target country for its medical services.

— High-tech equipment is also another reason.

— Hospitals meeting required quantitative and qualitative standards offer the services.

— It will not take long at all from



the time they are placed on the waiting list to the time they are visited by a doctor.

— As every tourist cares for the degree of security in the target country, Iran provides them with high security, which is adequate to be trusted.

**■ Q: How many foreigners and from which countries received medical services in the past Iranian calendar year?**

**A:** In order to collect the data and also providing plans in line with both qualitative and quantitative development in health tourism services in Iran, a system called “Health Tourism System” has been set up in which all hospitals are obliged to enter the information of every single international patient.

Therefore, we have a report of 105,000 patients; however, the number of patients admitted in all the hospitals is much higher than reported. Considering the fact that a large number of health tourists are visited by “day clinics” and also “infertility clinics”, and there is no record of their patients’ information, the total number is estimated to be more than 300,000.

Accordingly, all “day clinics” and “infertility clinics” have been informed recently and are required to keep a record of all corresponding information in Ministry of Health system.

Countries with most patients receiving medical services include Iraq, Azerbaijan,

Oman, and other neighboring countries. The highest percent belongs to Iraq with more than 62% of the whole, and Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and the Persian Gulf states are the others.

**■ Q: How do you compare the status quo with that of the past?**

**A:** As the “health tourism electronic system” has recently been applied to all hospitals, the numbers are not so precise for they have not been collected as I said before. Then the statistics were all just estimated in the past years and consequently are not reliable. For instance, in 1390 (the Iranian calendar year ended in March 2012), which was the year before hospitals recorded the information, the number of health tourists was estimated to be about 30,000.

**■ Q: What goals do the country pursue to promote medical tourism?**

**A:** Iran could make use of its potentials in the field of health tourism and achieve the goals and visions of “Iran in 1404” (The 2025 Outlook Plan), through increasing emphasis on the strength points and introducing them as its unique capabilities, comprehensive planning and operational requirements of field units and provide leadership in this industry.

Although the service sector comprises 46% of Iran’s GNP, the sector still suffers lack of supportive programs, and health tourism constitutes a small portion of the market.

**■ Q: How the trend was changed following the implementation of the nuclear deal known as the JCPOA?**

**A:** Regarding the issue of health tourism, by creating a suitable platform for improving international relations after the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, co-operative contract with neighboring the countries, and also performing targeted programs and multilateral cooperation with the respective organizations, in order to provide international patients with some facilities to enter the country, all of them have a crucial role in increasing the amount of foreign patients.

By promoting those international relations, the policymaking process of Ministry of Health has been progressed in this regard. There are many important measures that have been done in order to organize hospitals and other health centers, such as designing the health tourism electronic system for recording the information of international patients, standardization of more than 100 hospitals, codification of “International Patient Department’s instruction” for “hospitals”, “day clinics” and “infertility clinics”. Another important measure was holding the 5th educational course on health tourism.

Finally, it is expected that because of proper planning, high degree of security, and peaceful foreign policy, the number of health tourists will quickly and sharply increase in the future.

## Archaeologists dispatched to newly-unearthed site in southeast Iran

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization has dispatched a cluster of archaeologists to the outskirts of Fahraj in Kerman Province, where a wave of recent tremendous sandstorms discovered vestiges of what believed to be an ancient site.

“A team of archaeologists has been dispatched to Fahraj in order to determine whether the site was used to be a necropolis or an inhabitation,” CHTN quoted Mohammad Vafaei, the director of the CHTHO provincial department, as saying on Saturday.

The CHTHO officials have yet to confirm the antiquity of the site until the surveys conclude whether the area or the excavated objects are of historical value.

Vafaei added it is premature to label the region as ‘historical’ without studying it first.

Previously, Fahraj Governor Gholamreza Nejat-Khaleqi announced that some 5,000 square meters of the site and its relics have been unearthed in a district called Negin Kavir.

Law enforcement forces have cordoned off the area, letting archeologists to dig up and determine the exact age of the site, Nejat-Khaleqi added.

Big, sprawling Kerman Province is something of a cultural melting pot, blending various regional cultures over the course of time. It is also home to rich tourist spots and historical sites including bazaars, mosques, caravanserais and ruins of ancient urban areas.



Vestiges of an ancient city is seen after being unearthed by a massive sandstorm in Fahraj, Kerman Province on April 4, 2017.

## How to make your hotel room healthier

By Shivani Vora

**D**id you know that your hotel room has the potential to make you sick? “Hotel rooms can be a hotbed for germs, and the lighting and poor circulation in some make for an unhealthy environment,” said Deepak Chopra, a doctor who specializes in alternative medicine and an author who is also on the advisory board of Delos, a wellness real estate firm that is focused on creating healthier indoor environments.

But no matter where you hang your hat for the night, Dr. Chopra said it was possible to make your stay healthier.

Here, he offers his advice on how:

**■ Reduce contact with germs**

Bedspreeds are notorious for holding germs, which is why many hotels use duvets with removable covers that are easy to launder. If your property doesn’t have duvets, request upon check-in that your bedspread be laundered. You can also reduce your exposure to germs by



using antibacterial wipes to wipe down commonly used objects, such as television remotes, doorknobs and telephones.

**■ Improve air circulation**

Paint, furniture and cleaning products degrade the quality of the air inside because they are often made with toxic materials such as formaldehyde.

And poor indoor air quality can cause headaches and fatigue. If weather permits, Dr. Chopra said, opening a window in your hotel room to allow for circulation can improve air quality. Or, choose a hotel that uses nontoxic cleaning products — the property’s reservations desk should be able to tell you if that’s the case.

**■ Use a dawn simulating alarm clock**

While the hotel’s alarm clock will wake you, Dr. Chopra said that waking to sudden loud noise was a stressful way to begin your day.

He suggested traveling with a dawn-simulating alarm clock, which gradually transitions your room from a dim glow to full brightness and helps you wake up more naturally. “You can buy one of these alarm clocks for less than \$30, and they are big in improving sleep quality,” he said.

**■ Maximize natural light**

Light is the primary driver that aligns the body’s biological clock and sleep-

wake cycle, Dr. Chopra said. “You want to rely less on artificial lighting and more on natural light, which can help improve your energy, mood and sleep when you travel,” he said.

A simple way to get more natural light is to request a hotel room with a window that opens out to a street, rather than another building. Also, keep the curtains in your room open during the day so that natural light can stream in. Come nighttime, unplug the alarm clock and other electronics that emit sleep-disrupting artificial light.

Watch the in-room snacks

Those tempting goodies in your room’s minibar can sometimes be loaded with sugar and artificial ingredients. “Eating these processed and sugary foods is hard on digestion and can cause your energy levels to drop,” Dr. Chopra said.

He advised traveling with healthy snacks such as whole fruits and raw and roasted nuts.

(Source: The New York Times)



# Scientists discover the ‘beautiful’ secret of how memories are made

Scientists have discovered the secret of how memories are made -- the brain makes two copies of every event, in a discovery they described as “beautiful”.

Researchers said even they were surprised when they realized the secret of how recollections are created and stored.

They found that the brain “doubles up” by simultaneously making two memories of events.

One is for the present and the second is for the long-term, they found.

It had been thought that all memories start as a short-term memory and are then slowly converted into a lifetime version.

Experts said the findings from MIT in the U.S. and a team from Japan were “beautiful and convincing”.

### ■ Personal experiences

Two parts of the brain are involved in collecting and storing personal experiences.

The hippocampus collects short-term memories while the cortex retains long-term memories.

That discovery was made in the 1950s after the case of man whose hippocampus was damaged as a result of epilepsy surgery.

Scientists decided then that memories must be formed in the hippocampus and then moved to the cortex where they are “banked”.

The new experiments, by the Rik-



en-MIT Center for Neural Circuit Genetics, carried out on mice, have established a very different theory.

They involved watching the way memories were formed as brain cells responded to a shock.

Light was then beamed into the brain to control the activity of individual neurons, switching memories on and off.

The results, published in the journal Science, found that in fact, memories were formed simultaneously in the hippocampus and the cortex.

Researchers said the cortex's long-term memory did not seem to be used in the first few days after memories were formed, when it was “immature or silent”.

When scientists turned off the short-

term memory, the shock event was forgotten.

Yet the mice could be made to remember by manually switching the long-term memory on.

Prof Susumu Tonegawa, the director of the research center, said: “This is contrary to the popular hypothesis that has been held for decades.

“This is a significant advance compared to previous knowledge, it’s a big shift.”

He said the discovery was “surprising”.

### ■ Long-term memory

The study also found the long-term memory never matured if the connection between the hippocampus and the cortex was blocked - suggesting that over time, the balance of power shifts to the cortex.

Dr. Amy Milton, who researches memory at Cambridge University, said the study was “beautiful, elegant and extremely impressive”.

She told the BBC News website: “I’m quite surprised.

The “idea you need the cortex for memories I’m comfortable with, but the fact it’s so early is a surprise.

“This is one study, but I think they’ve got a strong case, I think it’s convincing and I think this will tell us about how memories are stored in humans as well,” she said.

(Source: The Telegraph)

**Researchers said even they were surprised when they realized the secret of how recollections are created and stored.**

## The mucus-shooting worm-snail that turned up in the Florida Keys

It’s bright orange and yellow and about as long as your finger. It lives underwater in a limestone tube with an opening at the tip about as wide as a pencil eraser. It glues its home to hard surfaces and stays for the rest of its life. It’s a species of worm-snail that may never have been seen before, and somehow it turned up in an artificial reef in the Florida Keys.

On land, its table manners would not seem so polite. It shoots strings of mucus from its mantle — a footlike appendage hanging out of the tube’s opening — in slow motion, like some warped, weirdo, saltwater version of Spider-Man. It releases the strings into the current, forming a snotty web that it holds on to with its equivalent of a toothy tongue, trapping plankton and other ocean debris. Then it reels in whatever it has trapped, along with the snot.

In a study in PeerJ, scientists have identified this new species of worm-snail.

They’ve named it Thylacodes vandyensis after the General Hoyt S. Vandenburg, a sunken, retired naval ship where tens of thousands of the snails live. If they spread elsewhere, the worm-snails could damage the region’s living coral.



The Vandy, as divers have nicknamed it, is among a number of large, retired ships sunk in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary to provide new homes for ocean creatures and alternative diving spots.

### ■ Artificial reefs

Researchers like Rüdiger Bieler, a curator at the Field Museum in Chicago and the lead author of the paper, monitor these artificial reefs to see what’s settling in. In 2014, during two 20-minute dives, he and his colleagues

found three of these worm-snails. Now there are thousands.

Dr. Bieler thinks the worm-snails could indicate what kind of marine life is settling into the reefs. To make a terrestrial comparison: “Are we getting the native butterflies back, or are we just seeing feral cats?” he wonders. “It’s a new species, but we’re still not 100 percent sure where it’s coming from.”

The closest relatives of the previously undescribed worm-snails are native to the Pacific Ocean. He speculates that these mollusks stowed away on a ship before taking advantage of the uninhabited artificial reefs: “There’s this brand-new real estate where there are non-local species, few predators and very little competition.”

Monitoring these creatures on the Vandy could help prevent their spread to natural reefs, where they could do great damage. Similar worm-snails found in the Pacific and the Red Sea have been found to slow coral reef recovery by killing coral tissue and chasing off fish with a bioactive compound in their mucus.

“When you have them in the living reef,” Dr. Bieler said, “there’s always this kind of death zone around them.”

(Source: The NYT)

## Cows want to be outside as much as they want food

How ardently do cows desire going out to pasture? Quite a lot, it seems.

A new study shows that the animals are as motivated to get their feet into clover as they are to eat.

As detailed in a paper in the journal Scientific Reports, researchers came up with a scheme to measure how driven cows were to either access food, or go out to pasture. The team, led by Marina von Keyserlingk and Daniel Weary at the University of British Columbia, steadily increased the amount of force it took for a cow to open a door, which led to either food or pasture.

The scientists found that the majority of the 22 cows they studied pushed equally hard to get to food or to access the outdoor areas. They noted that the cows at the British Columbia research farm, were much more interested in going outside at night, compared to the day. Once outside, many of them laid on the ground to sleep. (Von Keyserlingk says it may be uncomfortably hot during the day — the study was conducted in the summer — and that the cows prefer to stay inside where it is cooler in the daytime.)

That’s significant, since fewer than

5 percent of cows in the United States spend a majority of their time in pasture, and “80 percent never see a blade of grass,” von Keyserlingk says.

### ■ Cows out of pasture

Surveys of dairy farmers suggest that many would like to let their cows out to pasture, but worry that it would reduce the amount of milk they produce, Weary says. However, work done by the group shows that animals who spend the night outside produce the same amount of milk. Thus, letting Holsteins out in the evening is any easy way to improve the well-being of cows

without sacrificing milk production, Weary says.

James Drackley, a professor of animal sciences at the University of Illinois who wasn’t involved in the research, says it’s a “well-controlled and well-interpreted study” but notes that it doesn’t tell us anything about the welfare of cows who don’t get to go outside. There are many valid reasons for keeping cows indoors, he says — for example they prefer cooler conditions than humans, and being outside exposes them to inclement weather and predators.

(Source: Newsweek)

## ALMA captures explosive star birth

Star birth can be a violent and explosive event, as dramatically illustrated in new ALMA images.

Around 500 years ago, a pair of adolescent protostars had a perilously close encounter that blasted their stellar nursery apart.

Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA) have examined the widely scattered debris from this explosive event, gaining new insights into the sometimes-fierce relationship among sibling stars.

Shortly after starting to form some 100,000 years ago, several protostars in the Orion Molecular Cloud 1 (OMC-1), a dense and active star factory about 1,500 light-years from Earth just behind the Orion Nebula, latched onto each other gravitationally and gradually drew closer.

Eventually, two of these stars either grazed each other or collided, triggering a powerful eruption that launched other nearby protostars and hundreds of giant streams of dust and gas into interstellar space at speeds greater than 150 kilometers per second. This cataclysmic interaction released as much energy as our Sun

emits over the course of 10 million years.

Today, the remains of this spectacular explosion are visible from Earth.

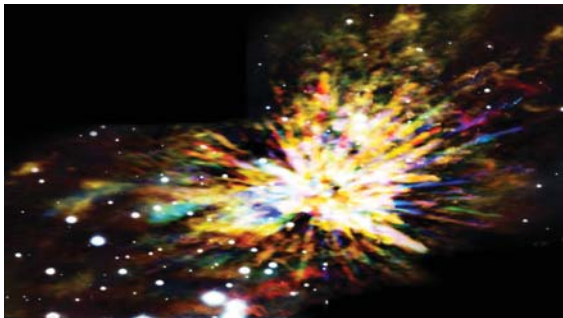
“What we see in this once calm stellar nursery is a cosmic version of a 4th of July fireworks display, with giant streamers rocketing off in all directions,” said John Bally with the University of Colorado and lead author on a paper published in the Astrophysical Journal.

Groups of stars such as those in OMC-1 are born when a cloud of gas hundreds of times more massive than our Sun begins to collapse under its own gravity. In the densest regions, protostars form and begin to drift about randomly. Over time, this random motion can dampen, which allows some of the stars to fall toward a common center of gravity, usually dominated by a particularly large protostar.

If these stars draw too close to each other before they drift away into the galaxy, violent interactions can occur.

### ■ Short-lived explosives

According to the researchers, such explosions are ex-



pected to be relatively short lived, with the remnants like those seen by ALMA lasting only centuries.

“Though fleeting, protostellar explosions may be relatively common,” said Bally. “By destroying their parent cloud, as we see in OMC-1, such explosions may also help to regulate the pace of star formation in these giant molecular clouds.”

(Source: EurekAlert)

## Samand Production Line Launches in Semnan

The production line of Samand has been officially opened in Iran's north central province of Semnan.

The line established by hard-working engineers of Iran Khodro Company (IKCO) as well as public sector investors was inaugurated in an official ceremony

The inaugural ceremony was attended by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani as well as Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade, Mohammad Reza Ne'matzadeh

and other state and provincial officials.

The line is expected to produce 20 vehicles each day during the first phase of its operation.

Farda Automobile Manufacturing Co. from private sector has signed an agreement with IKCO to produce 6,000 Samand vehicles in the current year.

With a hefty investment (amounting to billions of dollars) of FAMC and close cooperation of IKCO, the production line of Samand has been estab-

lished on a plot of land with an area of 50 hectares in the city of Semnan. IKCO's plant in Semnan (Iran Khodro Semnan) has been ceded to the private sector.

As one of IKCO's bestselling vehicles, Samand is highly popular in Iran and some of the regional export markets of the company. Produced in two classes of B and C, different models of Samand are currently sold inside and outside of the country.

## Smartbe is a ‘self-propelling’ stroller, but could you really go hands-free?

A New York City startup is hoping parents with newborns will go gaga for its unique take on the baby stroller.



For starters, the Smartbe intelligent stroller comes with a built-in electric motor that means you can go hands-free along the street. Slopes are no problem, with the motor powerful enough to take the Smartbe uphill and strong enough to stop it rolling away on the way down.

Sure, a hands-free stroller may sound a bit on the scary side considering your precious baby is strapped inside, but the Smartbe's built-in sensors ensure the machine stays close to the user at all times – walk forward and it'll automatically move forward; stop and it'll immediately come to a halt.

For absolute peace of mind, the Smartbe, which the team says fulfills all U.S. and European safety regulations, also comes with a cut-out cord that connects the user to the stroller. Whether you pull the cord or it disconnects for another reason, the stroller will stop right where it is.

The Smartbe also offers an assist-propelled mode where the motor helps it along as you push, useful if you're walking up a hill or carrying heavy bags.

Of course, you can also use it as a simple manual machine while continuing to make use of its other functions, many of which are controlled by the product's smartphone app. These features include a built-in baby rocker, temperature control, an electric feeding bottle warmer, a wireless speaker, and an anti-theft sensor. It also incorporates a webcam so you can check on your baby if you're in another room.

As you'd expect, its creators have also taken care to design a comfortable, easy-to-handle product with the kind of features you'd expect to see with any high-end stroller. For example, the Smartbe includes three different canopies offering protection from the sun, rain and insects, and also an adjustable handlebar and assisted folding.

(Source: Digital Trends)

## Oldest mammalian blood cells found in tick stuck in amber

Scientists have discovered what appears to be the oldest known mammalian blood cells, clocking in at an estimated 15 to 45 million years old.

Described in a paper published in the Journal of Medical Entomology by George Poinar Jr., a professor at Oregon State University, the cells tell a story older than mankind: one of cleaning and self-preservation. Between 15 and 45 million years ago, two primates were engaged in the societal act of checking each other for ticks. Having found one, one tossed it off the other's back, accidentally sending it into tree sap. Some several million years later, here we are.

“Fortunately,” Poinar says, the “parasites were different enough in texture and density from the erythrocytes that the sugars, terpenes, and other components in the resin made them as conspicuous as if they had been stained.” Every aspect of the tick was available to be studied, which allowed Poinar and his team to identify even the various growth stages of life the tick went through before meeting its untimely demise in the amber.

Found in the Dominican Republic, there are three possible options for where the tick and its stolen blood cells were once residing: Poinar has narrowed it down to canines, rabbits, or primates. But the find speaks to precisely how old mammals are as animals, and the primal urges that have continued in a straight line precisely to this era.

(Source: Popular Mechanics)

## Puffins that stick with their soulmate have more chicks

The first long-term study of its kind of 12 breeding pairs of Atlantic puffins – called soulmates, as they are monogamous and mate for life – has found that pairs that stay close throughout their long migrations are more likely to have chicks that survive the following spring.

The puffins were tagged with tiny geolocators at their breeding colony on Skomer Island off the coast of Pembrokeshire, south-west Wales. They were then monitored for six years on their migrations, which can be from a few hundred miles or up to thousands of miles from Labrador Island off the coast of Canada.

“It requires a lot of patience. They're quite shy,” study author Annette Fayet of the University of Oxford told IBTimes UK. “We have to be very patient and spend a lot of time on the colony to catch just a few. We handle them for just 10 minutes or less and fix the tag as quickly as possible.”

These tags allowed the first look at puffin pair behaviour away from the breeding colonies, which had been largely a mystery.

“We think that it is something about flying together that leads to this effect. If a pair was doing badly one year but then they followed similar routes, then when they came back they would do better,” she said.

The puffins who stuck close together tended to return to the colony at the same time. Being exposed to the same environmental conditions, such as daylight length, temperatures and so on, could help to synchronize the birds' return to the colony.

(Source: IBT)



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# At U.S.-China summit, Trump presses Xi on trade, North Korea; progress cited

The United States President Donald Trump pressed Chinese President Xi Jinping to do more to curb North Korea's nuclear program and help reduce the gaping U.S. trade deficit with Beijing, even as he toned down the strident anti-China rhetoric of his election campaign.

Trump spoke publicly of progress on a range of issues in his first U.S.-China summit – as did several of his top aides – but they provided few concrete specifics other than China's agreement to work together to narrow disagreements and find common ground for cooperation.

As the two leaders wrapped up a Florida summit overshadowed by U.S. missile strikes in Syria overnight, Xi joined Trump in stressing the positive mood of the meetings while papering over deep differences that have caused friction between the world's two biggest economies.

Trump's aides insisted he had made good on his pledge to raise concerns about China's trade practices and said there was some headway, with Xi agreeing to a 100-day plan for trade talks aimed at boosting U.S. exports and reducing China's trade surplus with the United States.

Speaking after the two-day summit at Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson also said that Xi had agreed to increased cooperation in reining in North Korea's missile and nuclear programs – though he did not offer any new formula for cracking Pyongyang's defiant attitude.

Trump had promised during the campaign to stop what he called the theft of American jobs by China. Many blue-collar workers helped propel him to his unexpected election victory on Nov. 8 and Trump is under pressure to deliver for them.

The Republican president tweeted last week that the United States could no longer tolerate massive trade deficits and job losses and that his meeting with Xi "will be a very difficult one."



On Friday, the unpredictable Trump not only set a different tone but also avoided any public lapses in protocol that Chinese officials had feared could embarrass their leader.

"We have made tremendous progress in our relationship with China," Trump told reporters as the two delegations met around tables flanked by large U.S. and Chinese flags. "We will be making additional progress. The relationship developed by President Xi and myself I think is outstanding."

"And I believe lots of very potentially bad problems will be going away," he added, without providing details.

Xi also spoke in mostly positive terms. "We have engaged in deeper understanding, and have built a trust," he said. "I believe we will keep developing in a stable way to form friendly relations ... For the peace and stability of the world, we will also fulfill our historical responsibility."

"Well, I agree with you 100 percent," Trump replied.

China's official Xinhua news agency said Xi had encouraged the United States to take part in the "One Belt, One Road"

plan, Xi's signature foreign policy initiative aimed at infrastructure development across Asia, Africa and Europe, seen in some policy circles as a partial answer to the pivot to Asia strategy of Trump's predecessor Barack Obama.

Xi also hailed military to military exchanges and said China and the United States should "make good use of the dialogue mechanism to be established between the two countries' joint staffs of the armed forces", although Xinhua did not give further details.

Chinese state media on Saturday cheered the meeting as one that showed the world that confrontation between the two powers was not inevitable and established the tone for the development of U.S.-China relations.

But in a sign that rough spots remained, Tillerson afterwards described the discussions as "very frank and candid."

"President Trump and President Xi agreed to work in concert to expand areas of cooperation while managing differences based on mutual respect," he said.

After the meeting, Trump took Xi on a walk around the manicured grounds of

his lavish Spanish-style complex. Trump could be seen chatting and gesturing to Xi, who did the same.

Tillerson said Trump had accepted Xi's invitation to visit China and that they also agreed to upgrade a U.S.-China dialogue by putting the two presidents at the head of the forum.

U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said the Chinese had expressed an interest in reducing China's trade surplus as a way of controlling their own inflation. "That's the first time I've heard them say that in a bilateral context," he said.

Ross declined to say whether the United States was ready to designate China a currency manipulator, however, referring to an upcoming report in which that issue would be addressed.

Although Trump during the presidential election campaign had pledged to label China a currency manipulator on the first day of his administration, he has refrained from doing so.

The highly anticipated U.S.-China summit was upstaged by U.S. missile strikes overnight against a Syrian air base from which Trump said a deadly chemical weapon attack had been launched earlier in the week. It was the first direct U.S. assault on the Russian-backed government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in six years of foreign instigated war.

The swift action in Syria could be interpreted as a signal especially to defiant nuclear-armed North Korea – and by extension, its ally China – as well as other countries like Iran and Russia of Trump's willingness to use military force. North Korea is developing missiles capable of hitting the United States.

Tillerson said Xi agreed with Trump that North Korea's nuclear advances had reached a "very serious stage."

He said Trump also raised U.S. concerns about China's activities in the South China Sea. Beijing is building and fortifying islands in pursuit of expansive territorial claims in the strategic waterway.

(Source: Reuters)

## Swedish police arrest man over truck attack which killed four

Swedish police have arrested a man they suspect rammed a hijacked truck into a crowd in central Stockholm, killing four people and wounding more than a dozen in what they called a terror crime.

While police declined to comment on the identity or possible motive of the man, who was detained in a northern Stockholm suburb, Swedish public radio, citing unnamed sources, said he was from Uzbekistan.

"The person in question has been arrested as the culprit ... in this case the driver," police spokesman Lars Bystrom said of the attack, adding that the authorities were not ruling out the possibility that he had accomplices, although only one person had been taken into custody.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack and police said security at Sweden's borders had been heightened and traffic restricted on the Oresund Bridge linking Denmark and Sweden.

Vehicles have been used as weapons in Nice, Berlin and London in the past year in attacks claimed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group.

The attack stunned Sweden, which has so far been largely immune from any major incidents of this kind.

Police declined to comment on a report by public broadcaster SVT which said a bag containing a home-made bomb had been found in the truck. It said the bomb may have partly exploded, burning the driver.

The truck, hijacked on Drottninggatan (Queen Street) in central Stockholm, ploughed through crowds before ramming into the Ahlens department store. The driver escaped in the ensuing chaos, with people fleeing from the area.

Local authorities in the capital, where flags flew at half-mast on buildings including the parliament and royal palace, said that 10 people including a child were still being treated in hospital on Saturday. Two adults were



in intensive care.

A gaping hole in the wall of the store showed the force of the impact from the truck, which was removed overnight for examination by forensics experts, and dozens of people gathered there to pay their respects and leave flowers.

Crown Princess Victoria was among them, laying a bouquet of red roses. "I feel an enormous sadness, I feel empty," she told Aftonbladet TV, urging Swedes to unite in their grief.

In a nearby open-air market, owners returned to abandoned fruit and vegetable stalls after a defiant message from the country's prime minister.

"You will not defeat us, you will not govern our lives, you will never, ever win," Prime Minister Stefan Lofven, who described the assault as a terrorist attack, said late on Friday.

### ■ Open society

The attack was the latest to hit the Nordic region after shootings in the Danish capital Copenhagen killed three people in 2015 and put the country on high alert and

would do that.

In Spain's capital, Madrid, the government on Saturday dismissed ETA's disarmament as a unilateral affair and warned that the group – which it denounces as a "terrorist" organization – could expect "nothing" in return.

"It will not reap any political advantage or profit," said Inigo Mendez de Vigo, Spain's culture minister and its government spokesman.

"May it disarm, may it dissolve, may it ask forgiveness and help to clear up the crimes which have not been resolved," he said.

A government source told the Reuters news agency that Madrid did not believe the group would hand over all its arms, while Spain's state prosecutor has asked the High Court to examine those surrendered for murder weapons used in unre-

solved cases.

Anger among Basques at political and cultural repression during the Spanish dictatorship of General Francisco Franco led to the founding of ETA in 1959.

Following Spain's return to democracy in the 1970s, the Basque region gained more autonomy and the group's continued bombings and assassinations caused public support to wane.

One year after its last deadly attack, the killing of a French police officer near Paris in March 2010, ETA announced it was renouncing violence.

The group chose not to disarm in 2011 when it called its truce, but has been severely weakened in the past decade after hundreds of its members were arrested in joint Spanish and French operations and weapons were seized.

(Source: agencies)

## Clinton, Democrats see hypocrisy in Trump's Syria posture

The United States President Donald Trump has received bipartisan praise for his decision to order a missile strike on a Syrian airfield on Thursday, but liberals were quick to accuse him of hypocrisy for seeking to restrict refugee admission from the conflict he condemned after the attack.



Hillary Clinton, a day after calling for the U.S. to destroy Syrian airstrips to prevent President Bashar Assad's forces from dropping chemical weapons on his people, criticized Trump for his executive order limiting the intake of refugees, warning that "we cannot speak in one breath of protecting Syrian babies and in the next close American doors to them."

Speaking at an event in Houston, her second public appearance in as many days, the former Democratic presidential nominee acknowledged the difficulty of the six-year war in Syria that has left half a million people dead and triggered a flood of refugees fleeing the conflict. Clinton said the attack on Syria's air base "needs to be followed by a broader strategy to end Syria's civil war and to eliminate ISIS (ISIL) strongholds on both sides of the border."

The Trump administration has long maintained that the executive order, which was subject to a temporary restraining order by a federal judge last month, was about protecting the United States from terrorist groups that "have sought to infiltrate several nations through refugee programs." Officials have also emphasized that the order allows refugees U.S. admission on a case-by-case basis.

But Clinton's comments were reflected in the words of some other Democrats, including Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut and Rep. Seth Moulton of Massachusetts, a former Marine.

(Source: U.S. News & World Report)

## Trump's dreams for the Levant land

➔ Fifthly, Trump's snap decisions, driven by his intrinsic impulsiveness, and the radical military figures in his cabinet all indicate that an aggressive thinking is ruling Washington.

Sixthly, people familiar with the issue argue that rivalry between world powers in the Syrian territory and an increasingly tangible Russian presence in the country have upset U.S. allies in the region. The missile attack, the experts say, was partially aimed at soothing the concerns voiced by regional actors. So, the move should have come as the warning shot to the Kremlin.

On the downside, there are analysts who argue that the U.S., in launching the surprise attack, played into terrorists' hands, leaving them with more leverage in the negotiation table.

Last but not least, what the U.S. is doing in Syria now is a replica of what it did in Libya where its Air Force pounded defense strongholds.

To come up with a conclusion, the attack can be conceived of as a confrontation with Russia and an insult to the Kremlin, behind which Trump's future dreams for Moscow are camouflaged.

## Anti-war groups protest U.S. strikes against Syria

➔ The demonstrators also expressed their resentment against Washington's warmongering policy and said bombing Syria would create even more conflict, not resolution.

At least two people were arrested in New York City while another four were rounded up in Jacksonville, Florida.

Anti-war demonstrations have been planned for 50 cities across the U.S. for the weekend.

In London, the British anti-war campaign group Stop the War Coalition took to the streets of Westminster to protest the U.S. airstrikes.

In a message posted to the group's Facebook page, the organization said, "The Stop the War Coalition condemns Donald Trump's decision to launch attacks against Syrian targets."

"As well as deepening the tragedy of the Syrian people, this utterly irresponsible act threatens to widen the war and lead the West into military confrontation with Russia," another message read.

(Source: Press TV)

## Murphy says S. Arabia has no intention to build nuclear arms

➔ There is every reason to believe that allies of Saudi Arabia will seek assurances from the Saudis that Saudi Arabia does not intend to develop nuclear weapons and that they will support involvement of the IAEA as further reassurance that nuclear weapons are not being developed.

■ Some Saudi and Western experts argued that Iran has large reserves of oil and gas and it did not need nuclear energy. Will they use such argument for Saudi Arabia with much more fossil fuels and less population?

A: I am sure that this argument will be heard from those suspicious of Saudi intentions.

## ETA 'gives' France authorities list of weapons caches

The armed Basque separatist group ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna/Basque Country and Freedom) has formally given authorities in France information about the location of its arm stashes, according to an independent verification panel.

ETA says its initiative will bring the final curtain down on a decades-long armed campaign to gain independence for the Basque country straddling the Spanish-French border.

"This information [about the arms caches] was immediately conveyed to the relevant French authorities, who will now secure and collect ETA's arsenal," the International Verification Commission (IVC), which is in charge of verifying the disarming process but is not recognized by either France or Spain, said in a statement on Saturday.

The panel said it "believes that this

step constitutes the disarmament of ETA".

The commission's spokesman, Ram Manikkalingam, a former adviser on the Sri Lanka peace process, told reporters in the French city of Bayonne that the panel had received the list of caches via "the artisans of peace" – a French civil society group headed by an environmentalist, Txetx Etcheverry.

French police are on standby to take possession of the weapons, officials told AFP news agency.

Inactive for more than five years, ETA had said it would hand over its arms, a historic step following a decades-long violent campaign that claimed more than 800 lives, mostly in Spain.

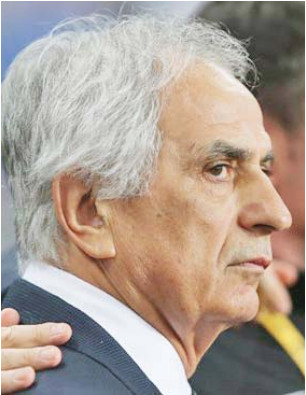
Disarmament is the second-to-last step demanded by France and Spain, which want ETA to formally disband. The organization has not said whether it



## Halilhodzic: We're still a long way from Russia

Japan have enjoyed great success on the Asian stage in recent years, regularly getting the better of their continental opponents in FIFA World Cup™ qualifying competitions. Their performances at the world finals have been increasingly less impressive of late, however. Knocked out in the last 16 at South Africa 2010, the Japanese were eliminated in the first round at Brazil 2014, finishing last in Group C, behind Colombia, Greece and Côte d'Ivoire.

With a view to restoring the national team's fortunes, the Japanese Football Association called on the services of Vahid Halilhodzic, the man who took Algeria to the Round of 16 in 2014. FIFA.com spoke exclusively to the Bosnian coach about his tenure with the Samurai Blue so far.



"Japan have had some bad results in recent times, not least in the World Cup," began Halilhodzic. "They've brought me to change that, and I hope to take the team to Russia.

"Unfortunately for us, we started the qualifiers with a home defeat against the United Arab Emirates, a game in which there were some contentious decisions. The atmosphere in the stadium

were packed. Naturally, everyone was very disappointed with the defeat, though the team has made up for it since then. We've managed to lift morale and we've got our cohesion back, despite the problems we've had. Things are back to normal now and we're in a good position in the qualifiers."

Though Japan look well placed to reach Russia 2018 following wins over UAE and Thailand in March, Halilhodzic is refusing to get carried away: "We're in a very tight group and there are four teams who can make the World Cup. Our remaining matches will be very tough and we need to prepare as well as we can."

Japan and Saudi Arabia are tied at the top of the group on 16 points, three clear of Australia, and Halilhodzic believes anything can still happen: "We haven't made sure of our place yet. We're three points ahead of Australia and we've got three very hard matches to come. We've got to go to Saudi Arabia, who are joint top with us and have a very fine team. We're in a good position but there's still a lot of work to be done. We have to keep on going till the end."

### ■ Play it again, Vahid

The 64-year-old Halilhodzic coached two national teams in Africa before heading to Asia for a totally different challenge, one he is enjoying: "The Japanese are respectful, serious people who like to see a job well done. That attitude has really helped me with my work and with implementing my coaching methods.

"Though I've come across a few hurdles at a regional and national level in general, I try to get them to do more tactical and fitness work to offset that. The skill levels are high but I want more in terms of fitness. If we're going to reach the 2018 World Cup, Japanese football as a whole has to progress."

Comparing the African teams he has worked with to Japan, the former Yugoslavia forward said: "I've coached in Africa, where the players are physically strong, which allows them to impose themselves on the pitch. North African players are extremely good on an individual, technical level, but when it comes to discipline, Japan has the edge. I've not had any problems with the players here, in that respect. Every country and every region has its strong and weak points, or their own unique approach to the game, to be more exact."

Halilhodzic is looking to reach the World Cup for a third consecutive time after steering Côte d'Ivoire to South Africa 2010 and Algeria to the Round of 16 four years later in 2014: "My main objective is to get to Russia 2018. It's not an easy task and no one will be making it easy for us. I'm trying to take a different team to the world finals for the third time in a row. If we do get to Russia, I hope to go further than I did with Algeria in Brazil. I had an amazing experience with Les Fennecs in the home of samba."

(Source: FIFA)

## Jurgen Klopp advice to Reds: 'Forget they have to play like Liverpool'

Jurgen Klopp has told his team to "forget they have to play like Liverpool" as mounting injuries threaten the Reds' top-four hopes this season ahead of an away trip to Stoke.

Star forward Sadio Mane was ruled out for the remainder of the season on Friday and Liverpool could be without Philippe Coutinho against the Potters this Saturday due to illness.

With Daniel Sturridge also unlikely to start up front, the German manager has tipped his side to change their style in light of a potential lack of options up front.

"I feel confidence in this moment because I know about football and I know what is possible," Klopp told multiple outlets in the UK.

"The only thing we have to forget, if you want, is that we are Liverpool and have to play like Liverpool.

"We have to be a real challenge for them. That is what we have to be. We can be this.

"That is how most of the teams are playing against us -- to defend as good as possible and then use the situations to create with this. That is how we will play, 100 percent.

"You can win football games with each line-up. That is the nice thing about this game."

Coutinho has yet to fully recover from an illness that forced him off early in the 2-2 draw with Bournemouth.

The Brazil international was substituted midway through the second half at Anfield after vomiting at half-time and has not yet returned to training.

"We all know about his quality, there is no doubt about that, and it's good to have him back but difficult to put him straight back," said Klopp.

(Source: Soccernet)

# Man City's Pep Guardiola takes aim at Chelsea over reported tunnel spat

Pep Guardiola aimed a small dig at Chelsea following an alleged tunnel row after Manchester City's 2-1 defeat at Stamford Bridge this week.

A source confirmed to ESPN FC that there was a heated exchange in the tunnel following Chelsea's victory that knocked City out of the Premier League title race on Wednesday night.

It has been reported that backroom staff of both clubs were involved in a heated exchange of views, which the source said was started by a member of Chelsea boss Antonio Conte's coaching staff.

Speaking at news conference ahead of City's game with Hull City on Saturday, Guardiola tried to play down the incident, although he did say that his teams are polite when they win.

"Yes, the tunnel at Chelsea is so tight. So tight. Come on, it was nothing," the City boss said. "We congratulate Chelsea for the victory -- we are so polite in our defeats. And especially we are so polite when we win, especially that."

Conte also refused to be drawn about what happened in the aftermath of the match, which keeps his side seven points clear at the top of the table.

"The respect is always important. I think this is the most important thing in football," he told a news conference. "I think there is a winner and there is a loser. And both must accept the final result and show respect.

"I didn't see anything because I was in the changing room, to stay with my players. I didn't see. It's not important what happened in the tunnel. The most important thing is what happened on the pitch. I think a lot of people enjoyed this game, Chelsea against City, this is the most important thing for us."

Guardiola said after the game that the defeat killed his side's hopes of winning the Premier League but City still have to secure a top-four finish and Champions League



football for next season.

The City boss said it was frustrating not to be involved in the title race but added his side still have a lot to play for.

"Now the situation is clear -- eight games left in the league and the [FA Cup] semifinal. That is our target for the end of the season," he said. "It was in the past. We could talk about the performance against Arsenal in the first half and we should not be optimistic, football every game is completely different. My feeling is during the season we made really good things.

"I was expecting from the beginning of the season to fight for the Premier League until the end. OK, we are a little bit disappointed, but I am quite happy with the way we made good things in this season. Of course we are not stable in other things. We want to improve for this part of the season and especially for next season."

City are without a win in their last four Premier League games and come up against a Hull side that have improved massively since the appointment of Marco Silva in January.

Hull moved out of the bottom three in midweek with a 4-2 win over Middlesbrough and Guardiola praised the impact of their manager.

"I know him from the Champions League when he was manager in Greece and I was at Bayern Munich, he's making an outstanding job," Guardiola said. "Not only great results. I like the way they play. I liked the way they played when we were there, now they play with a lot of talent -- not just long balls, a lot of quality."

(Source: Soccernet)

## NBA: Charlotte eligible for 2019 All-Star game, says commissioner



The National Basketball Association said on Friday it will consider Charlotte, North Carolina, as the host for its 2019 All-Star game after the state replaced a law viewed by the league as discriminatory against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said in a statement the league's board decided on Thursday that Charlotte is eligible for the 2019 midseason game.

The NBA had stripped North Carolina of the 2017 All-Star game, moving it to New Orleans.

The league objected to a state law passed in March 2016 that required transgender people to use bathrooms matching the sex on their birth certificate rather than their gender identity and limited LGBT people's protection against discrimination.

Last week, state legislators in Raleigh passed a law that repealed the bathroom measure. But they also banned cities from enacting their own anti-discrimination protections for LGBT people until 2020 and permanently blocked local legal protections for transgender people in restrooms.

Earlier this week, the National Collegiate Athletic Association said it will consider allowing North Carolina to host championship games, including its popular and lucrative men's basketball tournament.

Silver said anti-discriminatory policies held by the NBA need to be displayed at hotels, businesses and organizations that the NBA works with during All-Star game week in Charlotte.

If those requirements are met, Silver said, Charlotte is expected to host the All-Star weekend.

"With our deep roots in North Carolina, we believe an All-Star Game in Charlotte could be a powerful way to display our values of equality and inclusion," he said.

Last July, when the NBA moved the 2017 All-Star game from Charlotte, it said the city could host the 2019 game if there was an "appropriate resolution to this matter."

After a year of boycotts by corporations, conventions and concerts, elected officials in North Carolina said the revised measure addressed discrimination concerns while still protecting safety and privacy in government restrooms.

(Source: Reuters)

## Nike unveils the pro hijab for female Muslim athletes



Continuing their amazing empowering Arab female athletes campaign, Nike unveils their first product aimed at Muslim women, a sports hijab.

Today, there are more women in sports than ever before. A movement that progressed slowly in the Muslim World because of the many social and religious barriers that women face when pursuing careers as athletes. In the London Olympics 2012, several hijabi women made it pretty far in several sport events, denoting a cultural shift in the region, one that would have more Arab and Muslim women going into (and onto) fields they had never previously gone.

Earlier this year, Nike released a brilliant short film titled, "What Will They Say About You?" featuring several female Arab athletes. The film's core themes were centered around the societal reactions to them choosing careers in sports. Aiming to empower women in the region, the film urges Arab women to pursue their paths despite what people say about them, a barrier most Arab women are only too familiar with.

The film was very well-received and

emotionally moving by all accounts. Nike has decided to continue on the women's empowerment path, and are about to launch their latest product aimed specifically at Muslim women, the Nike Pro Hijab.

Conceived about 13 months ago, the Nike Pro Hijab is made out of very breathable material that will allow more airflow than the traditional hijab, and it will stay on while you're moving which is a challenge with the regular veil. Maybe with this product, Muslim women will feel more included in the sports world, especially that the faces of the campaign are two hijabi athletes who are pretty successful in their respective sports.

The Nike Pro Hijab won't hit the stores until Spring 2018, but it has already been seen being worn by figure skater and Nike athlete, Zahra Lari from the UAE, who was one of the athletes featured in, "What Will They Say About You?," as well as Egyptian mountaineer, Manal Rostom. Starting March 8th, the product will be seeded to other athletes worldwide for a trial run before it is launched.

(Source: cairoscene.com)

## Rummenigge promises Bayern Munich won't move for Christian Pulisic

Bayern Munich CEO Karl-Heinz Rummenigge has told WAZ they have not made any contact over signing Christian Pulisic, Julian Weigl or Ousmane Dembele and played down the prospect that they will make further signings from Borussia Dortmund.

In recent years Bayern have signed Robert Lewandowski, Mario Gotze and Mats Hummels from BVB, but Rummenigge has said not to expect any more deals imminently.

Asked if Bayern planned to make Pulisic, Dembele or Weigl their next signing, Rummenigge replied: "I read those rumours too. But I have to note that fewer and fewer of them are true. I can guarantee you today that we have not contacted one of those players and will not contact them.

"We've got a totally relaxed and business-like

relationship with Borussia Dortmund. Last year, the transfer of Mats Hummels, Mario Gotze and Sebastian Rode were handled in all calmness and in total agreement. Without stress. This relationship will not change."

When pushed to confirm that Bayern would not sign any of the trio, Rummenigge added: "Yes, none of them. Besides: Why should BVB sell them?"

That hasn't stopped Bayern looking elsewhere in the Bundesliga for talent with Hoffenheim's Niklas Sule and Sebastian Rudy to join in the summer.

Bayer Leverkusen duo Julian Brandt and Benjamin Henrichs have also been linked with a move to the Allianz Arena, but Rummenigge denied that Bayern target their competitors in order to weaken them.

"We fundamentally don't buy players to weaken another club but to strengthen ourselves," he said. "And where do you find players that make Bayern Munich better? At good clubs who are at the top. It's our job to consider them."

When asked if Julian Nagelsmann could be lined up as a long-term replacement for Carlo Ancelotti, Rummenigge was less certain.

Nagelsmann, 29, has caught the eye after leading Hoffenheim to third place in the Bundesliga and masterminded a 1-0 win against Bayern in midweek.

"I cannot give you a serious answer," he said. "I just know that we are totally satisfied and happy with Carlo. I wish him to remain a long-term coach of FC Bayern."

(Source: Soccernet)



# Tehran hosts 1st international run race

By Marjan Golpira

**TEHRAN** — One runner had his hands up in the air crossing the finish line, another male runner was limping and dragging his left foot to get to the line, yet another international runner had his young children joining him towards the end of the finishing line while his wife was cheering him.

This is what one would witness on the very first Tehran 2017 1st international run race, otherwise called Persian Run, which was held on Friday in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

A total of 700 national and international participants took part in the competition, out of which 500 were men and 200 women.

International runners were from more than 40 countries, including the UK, Canada, the Netherlands, France, Ireland, and many more.

The event attracted people across all ages; the oldest male participant was a serious Iranian athlete, an 85-year-old Gholamreza Shahdooz who had a record in triathlon as well other field of sports, and the youngest a 13-year-old Iranian boy who was in the race with his father by his side.

Although Iran's track and field federation, the organizer of the event, had men and women run together at first, later the decision was changed and men ran the event separately in the morning, 40 km (marathon) and 21 km (half marathon) around 7:00 and 10 km at 8:00, while women competed against each other in the evening of the same day for 10 km.

Segregation of men and women was not well-received by participants of the event as some couples had planned to do the run together.

The cross cultural event was geared to bring people from various nationalities and countries together and bridge the gap of as misunderstanding among them.

As the head of Iran's track and field federation who was also the head of the organizer, Majid Keyhani put it this way, "the Persian Run is a unique opportunity for foreign participants to exchange cultural views with Iranians and discover real Iran."

Iran under sanctions was isolated for decades. After the JCPOA, (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) or known as Iran deal in 2016, the country opened up doors to opportunities never possible before.

Iranian minister of Youth Affairs and Sports



Masoud Soltani reaffirmed that Iran and P5+1 deal had positive impacts on Iran's sports as well as other areas.

"After the deal, we received a positive reaction from the international sports community as they pleasantly accepted Iran's request to host a few international sports events particularly in the past few months such as this Persian run race today, freestyle wrestling two months ago and Greco-Roman wrestling last month."

What surprised many was that the top three runners in each category in men's section were all from Iran and no international participant was able to win any

medal. One reason that crosses mind is unfamiliarity of international participants with the route.

I Run Iran t-shirt was given to each participant of the race. A T-shirt many can look back in the future with pride and say they were among the pioneers of the very first Tehran run race in 2017 in Iran.

The Persian run race is expected to be an annual event held in Tehran from this year on, except that it will be in May, and not in April, as the country observes 13 days of holiday each year during the New Year which falls normally in March 20/ or 21, one of the officials with Iran sports federation said.

## Iranian female Para athletes break down barriers

Paralympic champions Javanmardi-dodmani, Nemati pave the pathway toward equality in their country and the world.

Sareh Javanmardidodmani said she enjoys the "inner peace and focus" when on the shooting range. But something else makes the sport "more charming" for the Iranian Paralympic champion.

"Competing next to men in mixed 50m pistol SH1," she said. "Despite all the difficulties I faced, I still claimed the gold medal while the other medallists were both men. Having this gold medal around my neck represents the impressive capabilities of women in shooting."

When the 32-year-old made history by becoming the first Iranian female Para athlete to win Paralympic gold in the sport, she continued a trend being seen in Iran.

Four years ago, her archery compatriot Zahra Nemati became the first ever Iranian female to win a Paralympic or Olympic gold.

Nemati was the only female Paralympian to claim gold of the 10 Iran took at London 2012.

At Rio 2016, three of Iran's eight gold medals were won by women.

For Javanmardidodmani, her achievement not only signifies the empowering nature of sport for Iranian women and girls, but also simply females in a male-dominated sport. Seven of the 12 shooting medal events in Rio were won by women.

She did not recognise the challenges of being a woman in shooting Para sport until she lined up at competitions.

"There were more recognised male athletes from different parts of the world that I could not even think of winning a medal," she said. "I tried to prove to myself and to my country that nothing can exclusively



be at the possession of any group. I demonstrated that a woman can keep up with men and compete at the same level with them and win medals. When I started mixed 50m pistol SH1, I heard that Korean male athletes have the world records. But I showed at different competitions from Incheon 2014 to Rio 2016 that a woman can achieve medals also."

The Paralympic champion left Rio 2016 also with gold in the women's 10m air pistol SH1, an event she took bronze in London, joining Nemati as role model in their country.

Referring to Nemati as a "dear friend," Javanmardidodmani said she is inspired by the Para archer's competitiveness to compete not only alongside Para athletes but also able-bodied archers, breaking down a sort of a double-barrier.

Masoud Ashrafi, Secretary General

of the National Paralympic Committee (NPC) of Iran, spoke with a wide smile recalling the iconic image of Nemati carrying the Iranian flag during the Olympics Opening Ceremony in Rio.

"This was very eye catching and very, very special for Iranian people especially females because they saw how important their role can be," Ashrafi said. "This itself was quite telling not only at a national level but an international level. Models like Zahra, Siamand Rahman and Sareh would be good ambassadors to promote sport and Paralympians."

Ashrafi said it has been the NPC's goal to increase the number of female participants at the Paralympic Games. The nation saw seven females participate at London 2012 to 23 at Rio 2016, an increase Ashrafi explained was part of a four-year programme that they tweak

each Paralympic cycle.

"In my view females in Iran are more in need of using something like sport for motivation and progress in life," he said. "In general for disabled and male and females it is very important to have a motivation tool and sports is a very good motivator. We want to help stop the progression of their condition but also give them a lot of aspiration and hopes for future. Iranian females are less willing to come forward, but we can demonstrate that this would be a good platform for them. And Zahra and Sareh are good role models for that."

Nemati had no doubts that she has seen Iranian females feeling more confident competing in sports alongside male athletes.

"Certainly! Especially considering that there have been a bunch of recent success of female athletes at international events and also the progresses achieved for women in Para sport. I can see this happening currently," Nemati said.

Javanmardidodmani also acknowledged that she is not the only athlete in her country paving a way toward equality. She mentioned Iranian Olympic shooters such as Najmeh Khedmati, Mahlagha Jan Bozorg and Elahe Ahmadi raising the profile of women in the sport.

"I see all these athletes as pioneer shooters in Iran, and they are motivating more people in a way I have never seen in the past" she said. "After every competition I attend, more women come to me and express their enthusiasm about shooting and they ask about how they can start shooting in Iran. Seeing Iranian women highly keen in shooting makes me excited."

(Source: Paralympic.org)

## Gowdin Mensha linked with Persepolis

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Nigerian striker Gowdin Mensha has been reportedly linked with a move to Persepolis football team.

The 27-year-old player joined Paykan in the summer of 2016 with a one-year contract and has scored 12 goals for the Tehran-based team in the Iran Professional League current season.

Mensha started his career in Spain, playing for several clubs in the third and fourth division before moving to Malta to play for Balzan and Mosta.

According to Iranian media, the Reds have also reached an agreement with Sepahan free agent defender Shoja Khalilzadeh and the player will join Persepolis on a two-year contract.

Furthermore, Persepolis has negotiated with Naft Tehran defender Igor Prahic.

The 29-year-old Croatian defender has also played in Padideh.

## AFC Champions League 2017 Matchday Four: West Zone preview

Kuala Lumpur: After taking a three-week break at the midway point of this season's AFC Champions League Group Stage, the 16 remaining West Zone teams return for Matchday Four and a crucial round of fixtures that kick off on Monday.

### ■ Group B

The top two sides in Group B will go head-to-head on Monday as Esteghlal Khouzeestan travel to Lekhwiya, while third-placed Al Fateh will look to close the gap on the leaders when they face bottom side Al Jazira.

Iranian champions Esteghlal Khouzeestan have yet to lose on the continent but will face their toughest task yet in Doha, where they meet another unbeaten side in Lekhwiya after the pair drew 1-1 three weeks ago.

Al Fateh secured a first-ever AFC Champions League victory by seeing off Al Jazira 3-1 last time out and will know a win in Abu Dhabi would put them in a strong position with two group games remaining, while defeat for Al Jazira would confirm their elimination.

### Lekhwiya (QAT) v Esteghlal Khouzeestan (IRN)

Venue: Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium, Doha

Kick-off: April 10, 18:30 UTC+3

### Al Jazira (UAE) v Al Fateh (KSA)

Venue: Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium, Abu Dhabi

Kick-off: April 10, 19:45 UTC+4

### ■ Group D

Group D is shaping up to be a three-way battle for the top two positions as just two points separate table-toppers Al Rayyan and third-placed Persepolis, while Al Wahda prop up the standings and are in desperate need of a win against second-placed Al Hilal.

After suffering a 3-1 defeat to Al Rayyan three weeks ago, Persepolis will host the Qatari side in the reverse fixture on Monday knowing that victory this time out would see them leapfrog their opponents.

Al Wahda travel to Riyadh to face Al Hilal on the back of picking up their first point in Group D with a 2-2 draw against the Saudi side in mid-March and will be aware that anything but a win would all but end their continental campaign.

### Persepolis (IRN) v Al Rayyan (QAT)

Venue: Azadi Stadium, Tehran

Kick-off: April 10, 19:00 UTC+4:30

### Al Hilal (KSA) v Al Wahda (UAE)

Venue: Prince Faisal Bin Fahd Stadium, Riyadh

Kick-off: April 10, 20:00 UTC+3

### ■ Group A

After moving into pole position in Group A with a 2-0 victory over Lokomotiv three weeks ago, Esteghlal will look to at least maintain their two-point lead at the top the standings ahead of the return fixture in Tashkent on Tuesday.

Lokomotiv currently prop up the table but would move level with their opponents if they could make it two home wins from two in the continental competition.

Elsewhere, Al Taawoun and the United Arab Emirates' Al Ahli are on four points apiece after the pair played out a scoreless draw in Dubai in mid-March and both will be aiming to solidify a top-two position ahead of the return clash in Buraidah.

### Lokomotiv (UZB) v Esteghlal (IRN)

Venue: Lokomotiv Stadium, Tashkent

Kick-off: April 11, 16:00 UTC+5

### Al Taawoun (KSA) v Al Ahli (UAE)

Venue: King Abdullah Stadium, Buraidah

Kick-off: April 11, 19:05 UTC+3

### ■ Group C

Finally in the West, top spot is up for grabs in Group C as 2016 AFC Champions League runners-up Al Ain host Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli on Tuesday with the Emiratis currently two points adrift of their table-topping opponents.

The sides played out an entertaining 2-2 draw in Jeddah last month as both remained unbeaten at the midway point of the group stage.

Hot on their heels are Zobahan, who won 2-0 at Bunyodkor on Matchday Three and would give themselves a real chance of progressing to the knockout stage by completing a double over the Uzbek side, who could reignite their slim last 16 hopes with victory.

### Zobahan (IRN) v Bunyodkor (UZB)

Venue: Foolad Shahr Stadium, Isfahan

Kick-off: April 11, 20:00 UTC+4:30

### Al Ain (UAE) v Al Ahli (KSA)

Venue: Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain

Kick-off: April 11, 19:35 UTC+4

(Source: the-afc)

## Marta signs on with Orlando Pride

Five-time FIFA Women's World Player of the Year Marta is returning to the USA to continue her club career after signing with National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) side Orlando Pride on Friday. The Brazil captain has agreed to a two-year contract, with an option for a third year, with the Florida-based outfit.

The 31-year-old, who had spells in the USA with Los Angeles Sol, Gold Pride and Western New York Flash of the old Women's Professional Soccer (WPS) from 2009 to 2011, joins Orlando after a recent stint in Sweden with Rosengård.

One of women's football's most recognisable faces,

Marta brings a wealth of experience to the Pride. Not only was she honoured women's world player of the year for five consecutive years from 2006 to 2010, she has appeared in four FIFA Women's World Cup™ tournaments and the last four editions of the Women's Olympic Football Tournament with Brazil.

Her many individual achievements include winning the adidas Golden Ball as the best player at both the FIFA U-19 Women's World Championship Thailand 2004 and FIFA Women's World Cup China 2007, as well as the adidas Golden Shoe as the top scorer at China 2007 with seven goals.

(Source: FIFA)





# Fajr festival to highlight films by masters of world cinema

**A R T TEHRAN** — A lineup of films by d e s k leading figures of world cinema is scheduled to be screened in a special program during the 35th Fajr International Film Festival in Tehran.

Twelve films have been selected for the program titled "Masters of Cinema", the organizers announced on Saturday.

"I, Daniel Blake", British director Ken Loach's acclaimed drama that won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film festival and the Prix du public at the Locarno International Film Festival last year is one of the films.

Among the films is also "Afterimage", a Polish film directed by Andrzej Wajda about the charismatic painter Wladyslaw Strzeminski who opposed social realism and maintained his own artistic freedom while battling his physical limitations and Stalinist tenets.

American filmmaker Terrence Malick's documentary "Voyage of Time", a screen journey that begins with the Big Bang and glimpses Earth's eventual end, is another entry to the category.

"Exile", a Cambodian-French documentary by Rithy Panh that is about the effects of forced displacement will also be screen in the section.

The program also includes French director Catherine Cadou's documentary "Kurosawa's Way", in which eleven major filmmakers from Europe, Asia and America talk about Akira Kurosawa and explore ways that he influenced their own work.

The lineup also consists of "Graduation" by Romanian director Cristian Mungiu, "The Unknown Girl" by Jean-Pierre Dardenne and Luc Dardenne from Belgium, "Salt and Fire" by Werner Herzog from Germany, "Death in Sarajevo" by Danis Tanovic from Bosnia, "Frantz" by Franois Ozon from France, "The Whispering Star" by Sion Sono from Japan and "Spoor" by Agnieszka Holland from Poland.



A poster for British director Ken Loach's acclaimed drama "I, Daniel Blake", which will be screened in the Masters of Cinema section at the 35th Fajr International Film Festival in Tehran

In addition, "Ferrari" by Alireza Davudnejad and "I Want to Dance" by Bahman Farmanara, both from Iran, are among the films. The festival will be held in Tehran from April 21 to 28.

## Iranian films lineup for Cinema Invisible

**A R T TEHRAN** — Twenty-d e s k three Iranian movies are scheduled to go on screen in the various sections of the 6th Festival Cinema Invisible, which will be held in New York on April 22 and 23.

"A Bottle of Milk" by Amir-Reza Amjadi, "Building No. 13" by Amir Gholami, "Temptation" by Armin Mahmudi, "Stains" by Sara Kuzechian and "The Fountain Pen" by Armin Keshvaripur are among the films competing in the short category.

"Skipper Soleiman" by Saadat-Ali Saeidpur, "Masoumeh" by Sona Moqaddam,

"Kayeh" by Keyvan Mohseni and "Meels and Felts" by Leila Khalilzadeh will be screened in the documentary section.

Short animations, including "Junk Girl" co-directed by Mohammad Zare' and Shalaleh Kheiri, "Mouse and Cat" by Ahura Shahbazi, "For Freedom" by Ahmad Khoshniat, "The Switchman" by Mehdi Khorramian and "The Empty Page" by Siavash Khodai, will also go on screen.

The Festival Cinema Invisible is an independent event that screens films from Persian-speaking nations and Middle Eastern countries.

## Short films from Iran competing in Indian festival

**A R T TEHRAN** — A d e s k large number of Iranian short films are competing in the 9th International Children's Film Festival underway in the Indian city of Lucknow.

"Father and Son" by Masud Nuri, "Night Night" by Golnaz Moqaddam, "The Wind Suddenly" by Edris Samani, "Smiley" by Shahin Hekmatkhah, "What About Me" by Sahra Asadollahi, "Anaa" by Asal Qarib, "The World Upside Down" by Media Kiasat, "Balloon" by Saeed Karami, "Noruz"

by Mohammad-Hadi Khosrokiani are among the films.

Also included are "Remain Rain" by Hossein Zeynali, "Ziba" by Mojtaba Kuhkan, "Just This Once" by Mohammad-Hassan Shahmohammadi, "The Knit Doll" by Ezzatollah Parvazeh and "Impressions of Life" by Ehsan Masum.

The festival, which will end April 13, is a non-commercial, non-profit-earning organization working purely for the promotion of educational films and the art of filmmaking.

## Accused mobster tied to Boston art heist pleads guilty to gun charge

**HARTFORD, CONN. (Reuters)** — An 81-year-old accused mobster who prosecutors believe may hold some of the last remaining clues needed to solve the largest art heist in U.S. history pleaded guilty on Thursday to illegally selling guns, but did not say a word about the missing art.

Robert Gentile admitted to illegally selling a loaded firearm to a convicted killer, the result of what his lawyer calls a Federal Bureau of Investigation sting operation aimed at pressuring him into providing details on paintings stolen from Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in March 1990.

The accused mobster, who appeared in Hartford federal court in a wheelchair, wearing an untucked T-shirt and rolled-up khaki pants, made his plea after U.S. District Judge Robert Chatigny first held a hearing to determine if he was competent.

«It's good, it's good. I know what's happening,» Gentile told the judge. He also bemoaned the two years he has spent in custody since his 2015 arrest, telling prosecutor John Durham: «You should feel sorry for me and my wife.»

Gentile has repeatedly denied knowing the whereabouts of any of the art valued at an estimated \$500 million taken in one of the longest unsolved high-profile crimes in Boston and did not address the matter during the hearing.

But during a polygraph test performed as part of the Gardner investigation, Gentile had an intense reaction when he was shown images of the missing paintings, while he remained calm when shown unrelated artwork, according to a law enforcement source briefed on the test.

Gentile's attorney, Ryan McGuigan, disputed the validity of the test. An FBI spokesman in Connecticut did not respond to a request for comment.

He is due to be sentenced on Aug. 25, and could face up to almost six years in prison, though McGuigan said he was looking for half that.

The Gardner heist was carried out by two men dressed in police uniforms who apparently overpowered a night security guard who had buzzed them in. None of the 13 stolen artworks, which include Rembrandt's «Storm on the Sea of Galilee,» and Vermeer's «The Concert,» has been recovered.

At a 2015 hearing, prosecutors said Gentile was secretly recorded telling an undercover FBI agent he had access to at least two of the paintings and could sell them for \$500,000 each.

A 2012 search by the FBI of Gentile's home turned up a handwritten list of the stolen art, its estimated value and police uniforms, according to court documents.

## Iran, Slovakia sign MOU to enhance cultural ties

**➔** He added that Iran's cinema is quite famous in his country but they would also like to know more about the contemporary art of Iran.

The minister hoped that the MOU would provide an opportunity to boost bilateral relations.

## “Nervous” One Direction singer Harry Styles releases debut solo single

**LONDON (Reuters)** — A “nervous” Harry Styles unveiled his debut solo single on Friday, the singer's first own music release since hugely popular boy band One Direction announced it was taking a break.

With rock ballad “Sign of the Times”, the 23-year-old follows in the footsteps of One Direction bandmates Niall Horan and Louis Tomlinson in putting out solo material in the last year.

Speaking on Britain's BBC Radio 1 Breakfast Show with Nick Grimshaw, Styles, who stars in upcoming World War Two drama “Dunkirk”, said he was “nervous” before introducing the track.

“It's a bit weird. I feel like I've been hibernating in the studio for so long,” he said. “You hear it in



British singer Harry Styles from the band One Direction arrives to attend the presentation of the Burberry Autumn/Winter 2014 collection during London Fashion Week February 17, 2014. (Reuters/Olivia Harris)

## Serialized documentaries ineligible for Oscars in rules shakeup

**NEW YORK (Reuters)** — Multi-part documentary series will be ineligible for the Oscars, organizers said on Friday as part of a new list of awards rules, just a few months after ESPN's serialized “O.J.: Made in America” won the Oscar for best feature documentary.

The change will affect any multi-part and limited series documentaries that would have attempted to qualify for next year's Oscar, a spokesperson for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences said.

Documentaries that are shown on TV or released on DVD before a qualifying run in theaters will be ineligible.

“O.J.: Made in America” is an eight-hour documentary that was shown as a film with intermissions at major film festivals and limited theaters, thus qualifying for Oscar contention. It was also shown across five installments on ABC and ESPN television networks.

The film, an exploration into the 1995 murder trial of former U.S. football star O.J. Simpson, won the best documentary Oscar in February over “13th”, “I Am Not Your Negro”, “Fire at Sea” and “Life, Animated”.

The Academy regularly updates its rules on Oscars eligibility and campaigning.

Other new rules this year included Academy members no longer being allowed to attend any lunches or dinners for a film contending for Oscars that does not include a screening. The Academy said the new rules were



Ezra Edelman and Caroline Waterlow hold their Best Feature Documentary Oscars for O.J.: Made in America, at the 89th Academy Awards, Hollywood, California, U.S. February 26, 2017. (Reuters/Lucas Jackson)

part of “the continuing effort to address the issue of excessive campaigning and keeping the attention on the movies themselves.”

Voting for the best animated feature film category will also now be open to all active Academy members, as opposed to a craft-based group. Disney's “Zootopia” won the category this year.

Last month, the Academy announced new protocols for its live televised awards ceremony after a backstage envelope mix-up by a PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) accountant led to “La La Land” wrongly being named best picture instead of “Moonlight”, in the biggest blunder in Oscar history.

Starting next year, the Academy said PwC will place a third accountant in the Oscars show control room, who will be able immediately to notify the director should a mistake be made.

## Politics pierces the nostalgia at Rock Hall of Fame induction

**NEW YORK (Reuters)** — Late rapper Tupac Shakur and 1960s protest singer Joan Baez were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame on Friday on a night where nostalgia was mixed with calls to political action.

Former Journey frontman Steve Perry reunited on stage with his “Don't Stop Believin'” bandmates for the first time in 25 years to screams and hugs of joy, while Roy Wood of Electric Light Orchestra turned up for the New York ceremony 45 years after leaving the English band.

But one of the strongest moments came from Baez, 76, who linked her lifelong record of social activism and non-violence with a rallying call for resistance today.

“Let us together repeal and replace brutality and make compassion a priority. Let us build a great bridge, a beautiful bridge, to welcome the tired and the poor,” Baez told the Hall of Fame audience.

Baez then played an acoustic version of the traditional spiritual “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”, and ended with the hope that the song's band of angels were “coming for to carry me, you, us, even Donald Trump, home.”

Baez enjoyed a new round of fame this week with a protest song called “Nasty Man” about U.S. President Donald Trump. It was her first songwriting effort in 25 years and has been viewed some 3.3 million times since it was posted on her Facebook page on Tuesday.

Emotions ran high for the induction of Shakur, the Harlem-born rapper who was



The 32nd Annual Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony - Show - New York City, U.S., 07/04/2017 - Inductee Joan Baez with presenter Jackson Browne. (Reuters/Lucas Jackson)

gunned down at age 25 in a 1996 drive-by shooting in Las Vegas that has never been resolved.

Shakur, whose songs about social and racial injustice still resonate today, was only the 6th rap act to be inducted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in its 30-year history.

Fellow rapper Snoop Dogg recalled he and Shakur in the early 1990s as “two black boys struggling to become men.”

“Tupac's a part of history for a reason - because he made history. He's hip hop history. He's American history,” Snoop said.

“Tupac, we love you. You will always be right with us. They can't take this away from you homie,” he said, accepting the statuette on Shakur's behalf.

British progressive rock group Yes, and Seattle-based grunge band Pearl Jam were also among the 2017 inductees, who were chosen by more than 900 voters drawn from the music industry.