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# Iran, Turkey exchange views on Iraqi KRG



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Head of the Iranian Staff of Armed Forces Mohammad Baqeri (L) and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan pose for a photo in Ankara, August 16, 2017.

## Iran says welcomes mediation to restore Tehran-Riyadh ties

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi has said that the Islamic Republic welcomes any mediation by regional countries to mend the frosty ties between Tehran and Riyadh.

However, he said, Iran has so far not seen a clear signal by Saudi Arabia.

"Iran has seen no clear sign from Saudi Arabia to improve relations between the two countries," Qassemi said in an interview with Al Jazeera.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes any mediation between the countries of the region such as Saudi Arabia," he remarked.

It came after Iraqi satellite channel Alghadeer reported that Mohammed bin Salman, the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, had asked Haider al-Abadi to lead the mediation with Iran.

"During our visit to Saudi Arabia, they also asked us to do so, and we said that to [the] Iranian side. The Iranian side looked at this request positively," Alghadeer quoted Iraqi Interior Minister Qasim al-Araji as saying by on Sunday.

Araji also said that the improvement of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia would have a positive impact on the region.

Qassemi noted that the mediation of the Iraqi Interior Minister between Tehran and Riyadh is a positive action if it can establish the security and stability in the region.

He also expressed the hope that Saudi Arabia would end the war in Yemen.

## Turkish scholar: Iran and Turkey should cooperate to tackle common threats

**By Payman Yazdani**

**TEHRAN** — Bilgehan Alagoz, a lecturer at Marmara University Institute for Middle East Studies, says it is necessary that Tehran and Ankara to strengthen cooperation to tackle common threats.

Alagoz made the remarks in an interview with the Mehr news agency as General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri, Iran's armed forces chief of staff, started a three-day tour of Ankara on Tuesday for talks with senior Turkish military and political officials including President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Following is the text of the interview with Alagoz:

**■ What is the importance of General Baqeri's visit to Turkey?**

A: Turkey and Iran have always cooperated with each other when they perceive a common threat to their national securities.

It is certain that for the time being, there are many critical issues in our region, which affect Turkey and Iran directly. These issues are mostly relevant to security concerns of the two countries. In this context, visit of the chief of the Iranian armed forces to Turkey is noteworthy. I believe that security authorities of the two countries are aware of the importance of the intelligence sharing and creation of common policies against mutual threats. Therefore, I am hopeful about the outcomes of the visit of the chief of the Iranian armed forces chief to Turkey.

**■ Why is Turkey building a wall at border with Iran?**

A: Turkey and Iran are both struggling against PKK/PJAK terrorist activities for decades. History has proved us that border security is critical when it comes to pursue war on terror. This is why Turkey started to build a wall on its borders. Iranian officials have

declared that they have no problem about Turkey's construction on the border. There is mutual benefit. Once border security is provided, it would certainly have a positive impact on trade relations between the two countries. During the past years, PKK/PJAK not only attacked military bodies but also targeted transportation and border trade. For this reason, the wall, which is under construction on the Turkish-Iranian border, would not be a problem for Iran."

**■ A move by the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (KRG) to hold an independence referendum was expected to be discussed by General Baqeri and Turkish officials. Would you comment on this?**

A: Turkey has declared that a separate Kurdish state in northern Iraq is a red line for its national security. Turkey pays great attention to the territorial integrity of Iraq. In the early years of 2003 Iraqi War, **-13**

## Iran signs \$7b drilling deal with Turkey, Russia

**ANKARA (Reuters)** — Iran's Ghadir Investment Holding has signed a \$7 billion agreement with Turkey's Unit International and Russia's state-owned Zarubezhneft to drill for oil and natural gas in Iran, the Turkish company announced on Tuesday.

Unit said in a statement that the three companies had invested a total of \$7 billion for the drilling, which would take place at three oil fields and one large natural gas field in Iran.

The total reserves at the three oil fields stand at 10 billion barrels, and the fields will produce 100,000 barrels per day, the Turkish company said. It said the

natural gas field had a production capacity of 75 billion cubic meters per year.

The consortium will also be able to drill in other parts of Iran, the statement said.

The natural gas extracted from the drilling will be equal to 1.5 times the 50 billion cubic meters of gas Turkey imports annually, Unit said, adding that the reserves in this field would help meet Turkey's gas demands for the next 150 years.

Unit said all three companies had signed the agreement as equal partners, and added that this marked the first trilateral deal an Iranian company signed with foreign partners.

## We need to preserve nuclear deal: UN

**POLITICS** **d e s k** Stephane Dujarric, the spokesman for the UN secretary general, told reporters on Tuesday that it is necessary to preserve the Iran nuclear agreement, formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"We need to do whatever we can to preserve it," Reuters quoted Dujarric as saying.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres "considers the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action to be one of the utmost diplomatic achievements in our collective search for peace and security", Dujarric added.

Iran, the European Union, Germany and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the United States, Britain, France, China and Rus-

sia - finalized the text of the nuclear agreement on July 14, 2015. The deal went into effect on January 16, 2016.

Based on the deal Iran put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

However during the G20 summit in Hamburg in early July U.S. President Donald Trump called on countries not to do business with Iran, remarks which contravened the terms and spirit of the nuclear agreement.

"Trump used his presence in Hamburg during the G20 meeting in order to dissuade leaders of other countries from getting engaged in business with Iran," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said in an interview with CNN's Fareed Zakaria in New York on July 15. **-2**

## Shia neighborhood Al-Musawara totally flattened: Saudis

Saudi Arabia has completed the demolition of al-Musawara neighborhood in the Shia town of Awamiyah, says a local official.

According to Eastern Province's secretariat on Tuesday, the demolition of the neighborhood has been fully completed in preparation for the commencement of removal work.

Local reports claim that some 60 bulldozers were engaged in the operations.

Since May, Riyadh has imposed a deadly crackdown on Awamiyah -- the hometown of late prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, whose execution by the Al Saud regime sparked condemnation and protests throughout the Middle East. Saudi authorities call the clampdown a "security campaign" against the gunmen there, and used it as a pretext to launch almost daily attacks against the town, destroying residential areas, setting fire to buildings, and reportedly threatening the residents to either leave or face potentially deadly swoops.

Last week, foreign journalists witnessed the destruction wrought by Saudi forces on the town after they were permitted entry for the first time. Since July 26, they said, Saudi authorities have prevented emergency services from reaching the wounded and failed to provide humanitarian assistance to trapped Awamiyah citizens.

The residents also noted that an order had never been issued for people to leave Awamiyah while their only chance out of the town had been short periods coordinated with local volunteers and activists. Awamiyah, situated in Eastern Province, has long been a flashpoint between the Al Saud family and the inhabitants complaining of discrimination.

Stephane Dujarric, the spokesman for UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, recently said that the world body could not independently verify the reports coming out of Awamiyah, but all Riyadh's actions should be in line with its commitments to human rights.

This is while multiple human rights groups have voiced concerns over the situation in Awamiyah, and criticized Western countries for keeping mum on Saudi Arabia's atrocities there.

(Source: Press TV)



Lasjerdi (l), Ali Asgari (m, managing director of The Tehran Times and Mehr news agency) and Ghaderi (r)

## TehranTimes gets new acting editor-in-chief

Mohammad Ghaderi was officially introduced on Wednesday as the acting editor-in-chief of The Tehran Times.

Ghaderi, who doubles as head of the international desk of the Mehr news agency, replaced Hassan Lasjerdi, in the helm for more than two years.

Ghaderi, 34, a graduate from Imam Sadiq University, had served as the editor-in-chief of the Tabnak website.

### TENDER INVITATION NO. 96/1005

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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



IRGC denies report of ground operation in Syria

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps on Wednesday dismissed media speculation that its troops have been involved in a direct ground operation against Takfiri militants in Syria.

However taking severe revenge against terrorists for the killing of IRGC forces is on the agenda, IRGC director for public relations General Sharif told Tasnim news agency.



Rouhani calls for closer ties with Austria, France, Serbia, Uruguay

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — In separate meetings on Wednesday with newly-appointed ambassadors of Austria, Serbia, Uruguay to Tehran, President Hassan Rouhani called for expansion of cooperation with their respective countries.

Austrian Ambassador Stefan Scholz, Serbian Ambassador Dragan Todorovic, and Uruguayan Ambassador Dragan Todorovic separately delivered their credentials to Rouhani.

During the meeting, the Serbian ambassador delivered an invitation by his country's president Aleksandar Vucic to Rouhani for an official visit to Belgrade.

Tehran's Ambassador of Paris, Abolghassem Delfi, also met with Rouhani before starting his mission.



Parliament speaker hails Lebanese resistance against Israel

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian parliament speaker has lauded the Lebanese resistance movement for standing against the Israeli regime over the past decades.

In a message to Hezbollah chief Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah on Tuesday, Ali Larijani congratulated the 11th anniversary of Lebanon's victory in the 2006 war waged by Israeli regime against Lebanon, ICANA reported.

"No doubt, divine assistance, your wise guidance, and sacrifices made by Lebanon's resistance fighters have all led to this unprecedented victory in the contemporary history of Islamic resistance," he said.



Iran: Riyadh's hegemonic efforts sure to backfire

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Jaber Ansari has said efforts by Saudi Arabia to gain regional hegemony will naturally lead to reactions from neighbors.

Speaking to Jame Jam Online in an interview published on Wednesday, he underlined the necessity for the settlement of differences between Saudi Arabia and Qatar; however, he said, Tehran doesn't accept Riyadh's hegemonic policies against Doha.

"Iran believes that the two sides should move to deescalate tension and conflict through direct negotiations," he stressed.



Rouhani appoints new vice presidents, special aide

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Presidents Hassan Rouhani on Wednesday appointed two new vice presidents and an aide, IRIB reported.

He reappointed Sorena Sattari as vice president and head of the Department of Science and Technology. Also, Rouhani appointed Mohammad Ali Shahidi as vice president and chief of the Veterans' Affairs Organization.

He also repositioned Masoud Nili as his special aide for economic affairs and secretary of the economic coordination headquarters.



Russia throws weight behind Iran's missile program

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iran's defensive missile program is part of its "national interests," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says, asserting that the new U.S. sanctions against the Islamic Republic over its missile activities are "illegitimate" and only harm the nuclear deal between Tehran and the P5+1.

Speaking to reporters in a news conference on Wednesday, Lavrov said: "The missile program is Iran's internal affair. Iran is not prohibited from having it... The UN Security Council's resolution (2231) contains no legal bans on that score," according to Press TV.

# Iran, Turkey exchange views on Iraqi KRG

By Ariya Moghanloo

**TEHRAN** — Head of the Iranian Staff of Armed Forces Mohammad Baqeri held high-level talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Defense Minister Nurettin Canikli on Wednesday, discussing a range of regional issues including a referendum decision by the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

Baqeri arrived in Turkey on Tuesday for a three-day visit, the first of its kind since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, holding talks with his counterpart Gen. Hulusi Akar on Tuesday.

No details of the meeting have been given. On August 14, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said defense cooperation, regional developments, and border issues would be discussed.

Baqeri's visit comes only a week after Turkey started erecting a wall along its border with Iran in a bid to shore up border security and halt illegal smuggling.

As well as border discussions, Tehran and Ankara have voiced strong opposition to the Kurdistan Regional Government's announced decision to hold an independence referendum on September 25.

Iran and Turkey are both home to sizeable Kurdish populations, and fear of a spillover from the movement. Turkey has been more assertive, threatening to resort to coercion if the referendum plan is implemented.



Mohammad Baqeri (L) met Turkish Defense Minister Nurettin Canikli in Ankara, August 16, 2017.

"In that country (Iraq), which has been through so many problems, a referendum on independence can make the situation even worse," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told the state-run TRT Haber television news network on Wednesday. "God forbid, it could even bring it to civil war," he added.

High-level talks between Tehran and Ankara evidence restoration of close re-

lations after years of strain over a list of regional issues.

Speaking at the 53rd Munich Security Conference in Germany on February 19, Cavusoglu accused Tehran of pursuing a "sectarian policy" in the Middle East, days after Erdogan rapped its neighbor of promoting "Persian nationalism."

The comments drew a strong rebuke from Tehran. Foreign Minister Moham-

## Zarif says firm to activate economic diplomacy

By Mohammad Homaeifar

**TEHRAN** — Mohammad Javad Zarif, who has been re-nominated for the post foreign minister in President Rouhani's new cabinet, on Wednesday expressed his determination to activate economic diplomacy in order to boost national economy.

Zarif was in parliament to throw light on the Foreign Ministry's achievements during his first four-year term and also elaborate on his plans for a second term provided that he gets the go-ahead by the parliament.

He highlighted the need to harmonize the country's politics and economy within the Foreign Ministry in the pursuit of national interests.

Zarif further said he supports entry into regional and global markets, noting that attracting foreign investment and tourists and transferring technology into the country will be among the top priorities of the Foreign Ministry.

In order to succeed the government needs to provide the necessary conditions for the effective presence of its economy — especially the private sector — in global value chains, deepen economic relations with neighboring countries and emerging powers, facilitate agreements with European countries to expand cooperation in big economic projects, and focus on the potentials of new markets, he explained.

Zarif, 57, has held various significant diplomatic posts



since the 1990s. He was the permanent representative of Iran to the United Nations from 2002 to 2007.

He gained a B.A. in 1981 and M.A. in 1982 from San Francisco State University, both in international relations. Following this, he continued his studies at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver, from which he obtained a second M.A. in international relations in 1984 and a Ph.D. in international law and policy in 1988.

During his tenure as foreign minister, he led the nuclear talks with six world powers which produced the historic nuclear agreement — officially called the Joint

## Erdogan to visit Iran soon



**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Ebrahim Rahimpour announced on Tuesday that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan plans to visit Iran soon.

The announcement was made after Rahimpour's meeting with Turkish Foreign Ministry's Undersecretary Umit Yalcin in Tehran.

Rahimpour expressed hope that effective steps would be taken to reach objectives defined within the framework of the joint economic committee and the Iran-Turkey Supreme Council on Strategic Cooperation.

Relations between the two countries in various areas of politics, culture and economy have been expanded in the current year which would guarantee increase in interaction and cooperation, he explained.

He also said that Iran and Turkey share

common position on regional issues especially the territorial integrity in Iraq and Syria and solidarity among ethnic and religious groups in these two countries.

For his part, Yalcin said that the two countries have common stance on fighting terrorism and maintaining the territorial integrity of the regional countries.

Commenting on independence referendum in the Iraqi Kurdistan region, he said that Iraq's territorial integrity should be protected and the Kurdistan region should have "constructive cooperation and interaction" with Baghdad in this respect.

Massoud Barzani, the leader of Iraqi Kurdistan, tweeted on June 7 that an independence referendum is scheduled to be held on September 25, 2017. Iran and Turkey have denounced the move.

## U.S. religious freedom report biased: Tehran



**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Ministry announced on Wednesday that the 2016 International Religious Freedom Annual Report published by U.S. State Department is "unrealistic," "unfounded" and "biased".

In the report, released on Tuesday, it is claimed that religious minorities in Iran are persecuted for their faith.

"Iran considers this report unrealistic, unfounded and biased which has been prepared to serve certain political objectives," Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said.

Calling accusations leveled against Iran in the report as "unacceptable", he said the report portrays a "manipulated" and "political" image of religious freedom in Iran.

It is essential to avoid

mad Javad Zarif censured Ankara for being an "unthankful" neighbor with a "weak memory".

Zarif was referring to Iran being the first country to promptly condemn the July 2016 abortive military coup in Ankara.

From stark divergence over the Syrian conflict, the two, coupled with Moscow, came to broker the Astana initiative, a diplomatic push seeking a peaceful end to the bloodshed.

Five rounds of the UN-backed Syrian-Syrian negotiations have made possible a precarious ceasefire to take hold and "de-escalation zones" to be established. A sixth round is due to take place late August as Iran, Turkey and Russia are working out the details of the de-escalation areas.

The Saudi-led besiege of Qatar has also contributed to better ties between Tehran and Ankara which both took side with Doha in the row. On June 5, Saudi Arabia along with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt broke off ties with Qatar.

Qatar was demanded by the blockading nations to curtail its support for the Muslim Brotherhood, close a Turkish military base and downgrade its relations with rival Iran, among others.

Doha has resisted bowing down to the requests, importing food from Iran and Turkey. Iran has opened its airspace to Qatari airlines as well.

Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - on 14 July 2015.

Defending his performance before the parliament, Zarif said the nuclear deal was not the result of Tehran's trust in Washington, but rather every single part of it showed Tehran's "serious distrust" of Washington.

He also expressed gratitude to the parliament for supporting the nuclear talks and the final agreement.

The chief diplomat further praised the legislative body's approval of a motion to counter the United States' terrorist and adventurous acts in the region. The bill was passed in response to the recent non-nuclear sanctions that the U.S. Congress imposed against the Islamic Republic.

On Tuesday, President Rouhani went to the parliament to explain his priorities in his second term and to defend his cabinet picks.

Under Iranian law, the president have to present his full list of cabinet nominees to the parliament, which will consider their merits one by one before their appointments are made official.

"The government is resolute to bring about more structural reforms in its second four-year term," Rouhani said in his two-hour long speech.

The Iranian president also said that his administration would seek peace in the region through cooperation in political, economic, cultural, and security areas.

## We need to preserve nuclear deal: UN

**1 →** Also, last month the two houses of the U.S. Congress ratified non-nuclear sanctions against Iran. The sanctions were mainly targeted at Iran's missile capability.

The U.S. Treasury Department also imposed sanctions on six Iran-based satellite companies on July 28 after Iran launched Simorgh (Phoenix) satellite carrier rocket into space a day earlier.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani warned on Tuesday that Iran will quit the nuclear agreement "in hours" and return to the previous stage if sanctions are re-imposed on the country.



# Turkey warns Iraqi Kurdish referendum risks 'civil war'

Turkey warned Wednesday that plans by the leadership in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region to hold a referendum on independence could lead to civil war, in Ankara's strongest warning yet against next month's poll.

"In that country (Iraq), which has been through so many problems, a referendum on independence can make the situation even worse," Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told the state TRT Haber broadcaster. "God forbid, it could even bring it to civil war," he added.

Turkey has a substantial Kurdish minority which is sometimes estimated as making up around a quarter of its total population of just under 80 million.

Ankara has in recent years forged strong ties with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq but is extremely wary of any move towards independence by the region.

Turkish security forces in the southeast of the country are still fighting the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has waged a deadly three-decade insurgency.



The PKK initially aimed to carve out an independent Kurdish state in the southeast although its declared ambitions are now more focused on autonomy and rights.

Ankara is also concerned about the presence of the Syrian Kurdish militia People's Protection Units (YPG) in the border area, fearing an autonomous Kurdish re-

gion could also emerge in northern Syria.

## ■ 'Error and a threat'

Analysts have little doubt that the September 25 referendum would result in a 'Yes' for an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq.

But the result would be non binding and leave the approximately five million Kurds

of northern Iraq some way away from actual independence.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in June strongly criticized the referendum plan, calling it "an error" and "a threat" to Iraq's territorial integrity.

"The fundamental reason for our opposition to this referendum is the importance of preserving Iraq's territorial and political integrity," Erdogan's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said in a radio interview Wednesday, denying any ill will towards the Kurds.

Widely seen as the world's largest stateless people, most Kurds are spread between Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. But it is only in Iraq where they have achieved a recognized autonomy.

Iraqi Kurdish oil is exported through Turkey, a key economic lifeline for the region.

Iran has also opposed the referendum plan, which is expected to be discussed this week in talks in Ankara between the Turkish leadership and Iran's chief of staff General Mohammad Hossein Bagheri.

(Source: AFP)

## Suicide bombers kill 27, wound 83 in northeast Nigeria

A woman suicide bomber blew herself up and killed 27 others at a market in northeast Nigeria, two local officials said, in an attack bearing the hallmark of Boko Haram militants.

Two more suicide bombers detonated their devices at the gates to a nearby refugee camp, wounding many people, an emergency services official said.

In all, 83 people were wounded in the three explosions near the city of Maiduguri, epicenter of the long-running conflict between government forces and Boko Haram.

Nigeria's military last year wrested back large swathes of territory from the insurgents. But they have struck back with renewed zeal since June, killing at least 143 people before Tuesday's bombings and

weakening the army's control.

The group has waged an eight-year war to create an ISIL in northeast Nigeria, and provoked international outrage by kidnapping more than 200 schoolgirls known as the Chibok Girls in April 2014.

Its better-known faction, led by Abubakar Shekau, has mainly based itself in the sprawling Sambisa forest, and been characterized by its use of women and children as suicide bombers targeting mosques and markets.

A rival faction - based in the Lake Chad region, led by Abu Musab al-Barnawi and boasting ties to ISIL - has in the meantime quietly become a deadly force capable of carrying out highly-organized attacks.

(Source: A)

## Trump praises N. Korean 'wise' decision to halt missile test

U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday praised North Korean leader Kim Jong Un for a "wise" decision not to fire missiles towards the U.S. territory of Guam and for easing escalating tension between the two countries.

Reclusive North Korea has made no secret of its plan to develop a missile capable of firing a nuclear warhead at the United States to counter what it perceives as constant U.S. threats of invasion, and tension has been rising for months.

Trump warned North Korea last week it would face "fire and fury" if it threatened the United States, prompting North Korea to say it was considering test-firing missiles towards the Pacific island of Guam.

But North Korean media reported on

Tuesday Kim had delayed the decision while he awaited to see what the United States did next.

"Kim Jong Un of North Korea made a very wise and well reasoned decision," Trump wrote on Twitter.

"The alternative would have been both catastrophic and unacceptable!"

North Korea has long ignored warnings from the West and from its lone major ally, China, to halt its nuclear and missile tests which it conducts in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions.

The United States has been hoping China can press the North to rein in its weapons programs. The top U.S. general reiterated that in talks in Beijing this week.

(Source: Daily Star)

## Sierra Leone mourns as floods kill more than 300

Sierra Leone entered a week-long mourning period for the victims of flooding that killed more than 300 people, with fears rising for at least 600 missing people.

Three days of torrential rain triggered mudslides on Monday in the Regent area of the Sierra Leonean capital, Freetown, and massive flooding elsewhere in the city, one of the world's wettest urban areas.

The exact death toll was unclear. Rescue workers recovered almost 400 bodies, Reuters reported, citing Freetown's chief coroner. A Red Cross official told the AFP news agency that the death toll was around 300 people on Tuesday evening.

Freetown's drainage system was quickly overwhelmed, leaving stagnant water pooling in some areas while creating dangerous waterways that churned down steep streets.

The United Nations said on Tuesday it was evaluating the humanitarian needs in the West African country of seven million people.

"Contingency plans are being put in place to mitigate any potential outbreak of waterborne diseases such as cholera, typhoid and diarrhea," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

He said the UN country team in Sierra Leone has mobilized and is "supporting national authorities in rescue operations, helping evacuate residents, providing medical assistance to the injured, registering survivors, and providing food rations, water and dignity kits to those affected."

He noted that the International Organization for Migration (IOM) released \$150,000 in emergency funds immediately following the flooding.

Radio journalist Gibril Sesay said he lost his entire family. "I am yet to grasp that I survived, and my family is gone," he said through sobs, unable to continue.

Ahmed Sesay, caretaker of a two-story house near the Guma Valley Dam east of the capital, said he was sleeping around 6:00 GMT when he felt a vibration.

"It was like an earthquake. I ran out of my quarters to the gate of the compound," he said. "The ground shook and I had to stay outside the compound until daybreak," Sesay added.

Sulaiman Zaino Parker, an official with Freetown's city council, said 150 burials took place on Tuesday evening and that many would be laid to rest in graves alongside victims of the country's last humanitarian disaster, the Ebola crisis, in nearby Waterloo.

## Russia says Venezuela crisis must be resolved peacefully

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Wednesday stressed the need to resolve the crisis in Venezuela peacefully and without external intervention.

"We are united in the need to rapidly overcome the disagreements that exist in that country exclusively in a peaceful manner, through national dialogue without any kind of pressure from the outside, without speaking of the unacceptable threats of military interference in the country's internal affairs," Lavrov said following talks with Bolivian counterpart Fernando Huanacuni Mamani.

Lavrov's comments came after U.S. President Donald Trump threatened a possible armed intervention in the South American country, prompting Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro to call for military exercises.

On Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump mentioned the possibility of a "military option" to resolve the crisis.

"Venezuela is a mess. It is very dangerous mess and a very sad situation," the U.S. leader said.

"The people are suffering and they are dying. We have many options for Venezuela including a possible military option if necessary," Trump said.

Caracas condemned Trump's statement, with Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez calling it "craziness." Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro also called for nationwide military exercises to fend off a possible "imperialist" invasion.

Washington took a harsh stance against Maduro and other Venezuelan officials following last month's Constituent Assembly elections, which are considered "illegitimate" by the U.S.

The U.S. also added eight Venezuelan officials to the sanctions list, which had already included Maduro himself, banning American citizens from doing business with those blacklisted.

(Source: RT)



## Ukraine denies selling North Korea nuclear missile engines

The Ukrainian government has denied supplying advanced missile engines to North Korea after a report said Pyongyang's latest ICBMs use motors produced in a factory in former Soviet state.

Kiev said the suggestion that advanced rocket engine might have been sold to North Korea by corrupt staff or managers at the Yuzhmash missile factor in the city of Dnipro was ill-informed and probably Russian propaganda.

"This information is not based on any grounds, provocative by its content, and most likely provoked by Russian secret services to cover their own crimes," said Oleksandr Turchynov, the chairman of Ukraine's Security and Defence Council said.

"Ukraine has always adhered to all its international commitments, therefore, Ukrainian defense and aerospace complex did not supply weapons and military technology to North Korea," the council said in a statement.

Michael Elleman, a missile engineer and analyst for the International Institute of Strategic Studies, said in a report published on Monday that two new long-range missiles unveiled by Kim Jong-un's regime this year appeared to be powered by a specially modified version of the RD-250, an engine previously used in Soviet ICBMs.

The RD-250 was designed and built by Yuzhmash, in the Ukrainian city of Dnipro, and Energomash, a Russian rocket building company, for use in Cold War era nuclear missiles. Russia bought the engine from Yuzhmash for use in Tsiklon-2 satellite carrying rockets at least until 2007.

Mr Elleman told the Telegraph that he stands by his analysis that North Korean engineers could not have produced an advanced engine of the kind seen in the tests in May and July.

"The only people who can modify it easily are people at Yuzhmash or Energomash," he said. "I talked to people that have visited Yuzhmash recently and they confirmed there is a single chamber version" like those seen in the North Korean test launches, Mr Elleman said. He declined to name the person who saw the modified engine.

Map: Guam in relation to North Korea

"I am not saying it definitely came from Yuzhmash. What we do know is that there is a single chamber version of the engine because it has been seen. And for all I know the redesign has been done by Russians," he said.

"What I do know is that the Koreans didn't do it. So we don't know where it came from, but we know it was modified and it was smuggled," he added.

North Korea tested two new long range missiles, the Hwangsong 12 and the Hwangson 14, in May and July this year.

The success of the long-range missiles, which experts believe could reach the US Pacific island of Guam and even the US West Coast, shocked the international community and sparked a diplomatic crisis between Pyongyang and Washington.

Mr Elleman told the Telegraph that the he did not believe the Ukrainian government knew about any illicit sale and that the engines could conceivably have come from stocks in either Russia or Ukraine that were fenced through front companies and smuggling rings.

Most experts believe North Korean rocket engineers have historically concentrated on reverse-engineering and adapting Soviet-era designs like the Scud missile to build their own models. Such models have had a haphazard success rate and only limited range.

However, Igor Sutyagin, a Russian military expert at the Royal United Services Institute, said he was sceptical about Mr Elleman's analysis.

"To be honest I would be a bit more careful about statements saying the North Koreans cannot do anything themselves. It is an underestimation of their capabilities," he said.

(Source: Daily Telegraph)



TOCHAL TELECABIN Recreational and Sports Complex

## Tender notice for BOT of Tochal new Ropeway lines and Tochal Ski resort development and equipping

Tenderers are invited for provision of design, build and operate a new ropeway (telecabin) lines and Tochal Ski resort on a BOT (Build Operate Transfer) basis for Tochal Complex, in Tehran, Iran.

Companies meeting the eligibility requirements below can contact Tochal Complex from **the date of issuance of this announcement** till 7 days (Working hours: 8 AM – 3 PM) for purchasing the tender documents at CEO office of Tochal Telecabin Company in Tochal Complex, Velenjak St., Tehran, Iran, Tel NO: +98-21-22421506, Email: tochal.ceo@gmail.com

### Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible in participation in tender, a tenderer should meet the following requirements:

- Experience in operation of ropeway projects
- Financial capability
- Experience in construction of ropeway projects

Owners' Corporation of Tochal Complex  
Tehran - Iran



NEWS IN BRIEF



**TEDPIX gains 45 points in a day**

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE)'s d e s k main index (TEDPIX) gained 45 points to end Wednesday's trade at 81,741, Tasnim news agency reported.

As reported, 725 million shares worth 2.7 trillion rials (about \$70.8 million) were traded through 44,000 deals in the stock market.

Also, IFX, the main index of Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), stood at 918 points on Wednesday, as 171 million securities worth 740 billion rials (about \$19.4 million) were traded during 24,000 deals.



**Iranian trade delegation to visit Ukraine in mid-Sep.**

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) plans to dispatch a trade delegation to Ukraine on September 11-14, the portal of ICCIMA announced.

In a meeting in Tehran early this month, Iranian Agriculture Minister Mahmoud Hojjati and Ukrainian First Vice Prime Minister Stepan Kubiv discussed ways to expand co-operation in the areas of economy and agriculture.

Also after a meeting with Ukraine's Ambassador to Iran Sergey Burdilyak in Tehran on Monday, Iran's National Petrochemical Company Managing Director Marziyeh Shahdaie said Ukraine could pave the way for the export of Iranian petrochemical products to Europe.



**Russia's Volgograd to host 1st exhibit of Iranian products**

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — An exclusive exhibition for d e s k Iranian goods kicked off in the Russian city of Volgograd on Wednesday, Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) of Iran reported.

Centered on economic capabilities of Iran's northern Mazandaran Province, the five-day exhibition covers a variety of areas including dairy products, aquaculture, food, crafts, carpets and construction materials.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by a handful of Iranian and Russian officials including Iran's ambassador to Russia.

## India bans gold exports above 22 carats to plug trade loopholes

India has banned the export of gold products with purity above 22 carats with immediate effect, a move that the industry sees as a way of curbing irregularities in the trade.

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade issued a notice limiting shipments of jewelry, coins and medallions to 22 carats or below, without giving a reason.

"The move may be to reduce round-tripping of jewelry and coins, wherein a trader can import the gold coins or jewelry at a lower import tax because of trade agreements with some countries and re-export the same stock without any value addition," said Ketan Shroff, joint secretary of the India Bullion and Jewellers Association Ltd. The exporters would benefit from not paying the 10 percent import tax currently levied on most inbound shipments of gold, he said.

Indian imports are said to have more than doubled last month from a year ago partly due to a jump in purchases from South Korea, with which India has a free-trade agreement. Importers have previously used free-trade treaties with countries such as Thailand and Indonesia to escape the import duty.

(Source: Bloomberg)

## UK unemployment falls again to lowest since 1975

Britain's unemployment labor market bucked tepid economic growth in the second quarter as the unemployment rate unexpectedly fell to its lowest since 1975, official data showed on Wednesday.

The unemployment rate in the three months to the end of June fell to 4.4 percent, against the average forecast for it to hold at 4.5 percent in a Reuters poll of economists.

But the figures on wage growth showed the challenge facing Prime Minister Theresa May and her government, with households feeling the strain of rising prices since last year's Brexit vote.

While inflation has eased slightly since May when it hit an almost four-year high of 2.9 percent, prices are still rising faster than wages.

The Office for National Statistics said workers' total earnings including bonuses rose by an annual 2.1 percent in the three months to June, compared with 1.9 percent in the period to May, but this was boosted by bonus payments in the financial sector.

Economists taking part in a Reuters poll had expected wage growth of 1.8 percent.

Overall wage growth in real terms fell by 0.5 percent.

Excluding bonuses - which analysts say gives a better picture of the underlying trend - earnings in nominal terms rose by 2.1 percent year-on-year, unchanged from May and against expectations for a 2.0 percent rise.

The Bank of England is watching wage growth closely as it gauges whether the increase in inflation is creating longer-lasting pressure on prices. It expects wages to rise by 2 percent this year before picking up in 2018 and 2019.

(Source: Reuters)

# Iran, Armenia agree to boost co-op on FTZs

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — In a meeting between d e s k Iranian President's Advisor Akbar Torkan and Armenian Minister of Economic Development and Investments Suren Karayan, the two sides mulled over expansion of cooperation on both sides' free trade zones (FTZs), IRNA reported on Wednesday.

Torkan, who is also the secretary of Iran's Free Trade, Industrial and Special Economic Zones Council, named Armenia Iran's bridge for transporting and exporting goods to Europe.

The two countries can even export their jointly manufactured products to other countries, he said.

He also underlined the capability of Iranian contractors in developing free trade zones in Armenia, in case the required infrastructure is provided by the country's government.

The Armenian minister, for his part, said that his government has always paid a specific attention to its economic and trade relations with Iran, adding that by manufacturing a wide range of products in their own free



trade zones and exporting them to Europe, Iran and Armenia can renovate the region's economic relations.

As reported, Iranian Ambassador to Yerevan Kazem Sajjadi was also present in the meeting.

## EAEU expects to sign free trade deal with Iran this year

**ASTANA (Sputnik)** — A temporary agreement on establishing a free trade zone between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and Iran may be signed in 2017, Chairman of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) Board Tigran Sargsyan said Monday.

The negotiations between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and Iran on a temporary free trade zone agreement are expected to be finished by the next

EAEU summit, scheduled for October 11.

"The decision has been taken to speed up the work to sign the agreement with Iran. We expect the document to be signed in 2017," Sargsyan told reporters following a meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council in Astana.

In June, the EEC, with is the bloc's main executive body, said that the EAEU

and Iran had finished working on the text of the temporary free trade zone agreement and that the sides will continue talks on liberalizing mutual market access and coordinating tariff obligations in the near future.

Earlier, the Iranian ambassador to Russia said that the country is interested in economic projects of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states, the EAEU and the Chinese

Silk Road.

In 2016, Russia and Iran agreed to pay for bilateral supplies of products in national currencies, stepping up economic cooperation.

The EAEU, comprising Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, is an international organization that encourages regional economic integration through the free movement of goods, services, and people within the union.

## Italian economy expands, boosting optimism on recovery

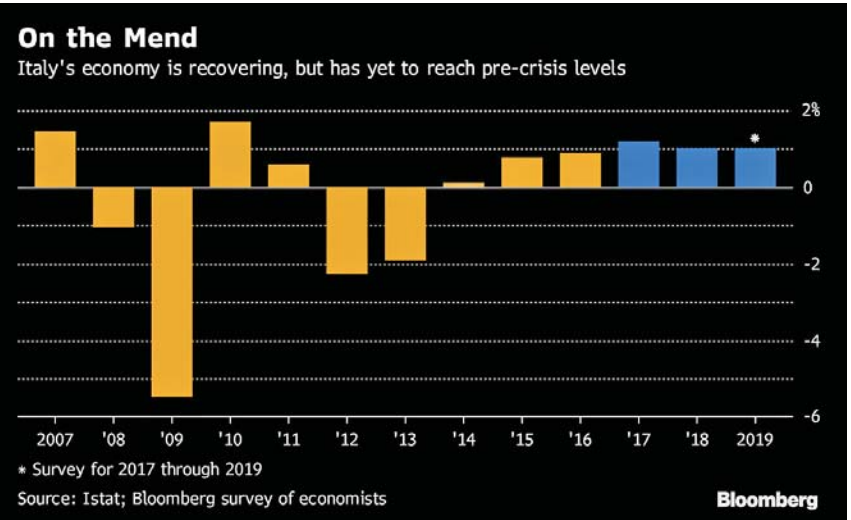
Italy's economic recovery extended for a tenth straight quarter, boosting optimism that growth can become sustainable this year amid a rise in industrial production.

Gross domestic product expanded 0.4 percent in the three months through June, the same as in the first quarter, Rome-based statistics agency Istat said in a preliminary report on Wednesday. That matched the median of 26 analysts' estimates in a Bloomberg survey.

The GDP performance "is the result of an increase in the added value of manufacturing and services," said Istat which will provide a detailed breakdown of the GDP performance on Sept. 1.

Should the economy keep rising at the same pace in the rest of 2017, Italy's GDP would grow an annual, workday-adjusted 1.5 percent this year, Istat also said.

Although still lagging behind euro-area peers, the Italian economic recovery looked more convincing this year with industrial output expanding a seasonally adjusted 1.1 percent in the second quarter and a rise in exports of Italian goods over



the same period despite the stronger euro.

In the three month through June, the euro region's economy expanded 0.6 percent from the previous quarter and was supported by continued growth in Germany, the European Union statistics office

Eurostat in Luxembourg said in a separate report on Wednesday.

**Widening 'gap'**

Italy's recovery "is being confirmed by this report though not at a pace that can convincingly relaunch investments and

## World living standards improve for the first time in 10 years

**By Stacey Yuen**

After 10 years of back-to-back slumps, global livability is finally showing an improvement, according to report released by the Economist Intelligence Unit on Wednesday. But terrorism, including several high-profile attacks in Europe, continues to threaten world living standards, a EIU statement on the report said.

The average livability score worldwide has fallen from 76.1 percent in 2007 to 74.8 percent today due to a combination of economic and political risks, the statement said. This year, the report registered a marginal average improvement in global scores: 0.06 percentage points.

Still, uncertainty due to perceived terror threats has resulted in lower scores for some cities. While Europe remains the region with the most livable cities, it saw a

decline in ratings in the wake of several terrorist attacks, including those on Manchester, London and Stockholm.

"European cities have been dealing with the aftermath of terrorist attacks, increased unease towards Brexit, and there is still a degree of unease towards migrant crisis," Stefano Scuratti, EIU consulting principal, told CNBC.

Sydney, Australia also dropped from seventh to 11th place in the past two years.

"There have been more episodes in Sydney of suspected events [of terrorism], and general unease towards the topic," said Scuratti on Sydney's downgraded position.

In comparison, Melbourne was able to retain its position at the top of the index for the seventh consecutive year, in part because people did not perceive it as under a high terrorism threat, he added.

According to Scuratti, the biggest surprise in this year's



core," said Christopher Peel, chief investment officer at Tavistock Wealth.

"The banking system is finally starting to show signs of having worked through the legacy of 2008-2009," he added.

Earnings drove some strong moves, while M&A speculation boosted Fiat Chrysler (FCHA.MI) and Exor (EXOR.MI), the investment fund which owns the carmaker, again.

Fiat and Exor jumped 4.2 and 2.6 percent, extending gains from Monday when a media report said a Chinese company may be interested in the carmaker.

Airlines Lufthansa (LHAG.DE) and Easyjet (EZJL) lifted

ratings was Singapore, a wealthy Southeast Asian city state which leaped 17 places to finish at number 35. That expectation-beating performance was largely due to improvements in education, Scuratti said.

Singapore displayed "very good performance in its education indicators," said Scuratti. "The indicators show that Singaporeans are very good at math, science and reading."

Several other Asian countries also outperformed, relative to other locations. Of the 12 cities that saw living standards improve, six were based in Asia, according to the EIU statement.

This year's overall global improvement, despite small, suggests that living standards are finally stabilizing, the EIU statement said.

(Source: cnbc)

1.4 to 2.5 percent again, continuing Tuesday's strong rally as they emerged as likely buyers of Air Berlin's (AB1.DE) assets when the German airline filed for insolvency.

Swedish healthcare firm Elekta (EKTA.ST) gained 2 percent after JP Morgan upgraded it to 'overweight'.

"We believe the potential of [radiation therapy] Unity has not been fully captured by the market; this is reflected in the c. 13 percent short interest in the stock," JP Morgan analysts said.

"Consensus momentum could swing in the next six to 12 months," they added.

Meanwhile second-quarter profit disappointment weighed on Swedish food retailer ICA (ICAA.ST), down 5 percent.

British builder Balfour Beatty (BALF.L) jumped 5.8 percent, leading construction stocks higher, after first-half profits were boosted by a rebound in construction in Britain.

Car insurer Admiral (ADML.L) dropped 8.4 percent after its profits rose just 1 percent in the first half.

Second-quarter results season was drawing to a close, with earnings expected to grow 15 percent from the second quarter last year, or 12.8 percent excluding the energy sector, Thomson Reuters data showed.

"Earnings and earnings expectations are rising as you're getting a global recovery," said Tavistock's Peel.



# IEA: OPEC must extend cuts to balance oil markets

It has long been the suspicion of many oil market analysts that the U.S. shale industry was likely too nimble for OPEC to really hammer it into oblivion. That proved to be the case after two years of low prices – shale production came off from peak levels, but held up through 2016.

That was long enough to force OPEC's hand. The deal that OPEC put in place late last year, taking a combined 1.8 million barrels per day (mb/d) off the market, really took the pressure off of shale producers. OPEC decided that it would sacrifice some production in order to boost revenues through higher prices. That threw a lifeline to shale producers, and shale output has made a swift comeback since last year.

Now, there is a growing expectation that OPEC can't keep its cuts going. The OPEC/non-OPEC coalition had hoped that the market would have balanced after six months of cuts, but they were forced to agree to a nine-month extension through the end of the first quarter of 2018. Few analysts, at this point, see the extension as sufficient, which raises the question of what happens after March of next year.

If OPEC really wants to balance the oil market, they would have to keep the cuts in place through 2018 at least. "They're going to have to dig in for the long haul," Neil Atkinson, head of the IEA's oil markets and industry division, told Bloomberg TV. "Re-balancing is a stubborn process."

The latest IEA report shows that OPEC's current production at 32.8 mb/d is higher than what the "call on OPEC" – the implied demand for OPEC's oil – for next year. In other words, the global market will be oversupplied next year given the current figures.

"If OPEC wants to keep oil prices in the \$50s and hit \$60, the organization will have to keep a lid on supply for several more years," Sarah Emerson, energy principal at ESI, told Bloomberg.

But, that just does not seem to be in the cards. The original six-month deal was relatively painless for a lot of OPEC members, save Saudi Arabia, who took on the biggest share of the reductions. Some of the participants, such as Venezuela and Mexico (a non-OPEC member), are suffering from declining production anyway. Countries like Russia tend to see their output dip in the winter. Iraq and the UAE did not even fully comply with the deal. Iran was allowed to increase from its baseline, and Nigeria and Libya were exempted entirely.

However, the nine-month extension is a trickier prop-



osition. Russia and Saudi Arabia see their production rise in summer months, which means the cuts are much more painful. More importantly, many predicted that compliance would falter as time goes on. Recent data suggests the group's resolve is fraying – OPEC's production in July rose to its highest point in 2017.

Even if they can hold things together until March 2018, there are much lower odds that they will extend again.

"In the end, the markets are going to win and it's going to be shale," Citi's Ed Morse told Bloomberg TV. "The OPEC position, even with Russia, is really not sustainable over a long period of time. They are losing revenue by doing what they have done. Yes, they may be having a little bit higher revenue than they otherwise might have. But, you've got the prices up, you've got the U.S. producers hedging through 2017 now, pretty much into 2018, and they can survive at a lower price. So they're going to win."

Morse also dismissed recent concerns over the Per-

mian, where companies like Pioneer Natural Resources reported higher gas-to-oil ratios in their production, suggesting wells are performing worse than expected. Morse said this is a "hiccup" and a "temporary problem," and that the Permian will grow "at a hefty rate this year and probably the same rate next year."

If this turns out to be true and U.S. shale doesn't miss a beat, then production will grow substantially, up to almost 10 mb/d, according to EIA estimates. If that is the case, OPEC might throw in the towel next year and return to full production, at which point, prices could very well crash again.

While many will claim this is a "win" for shale, this will be cold comfort to actual shale drillers that will once again have to suffer through another bout of low prices.

"We expect the total liquids balance to return to a more pronounced surplus over 2018, bringing with it a return to stock builds and a firm lid on prices," JBC Energy wrote in a recent note.

(Source: oilprice.com)

## Dutch airports to be powered by renewable energy from 2018



The Royal Schiphol Group has announced that all of its business units are set to run on sustainable power from the beginning of 2018.

From 2020, all of the power will come from new Dutch wind farms run by energy company Eneco. While the new wind farms are built, the power will come from other sustainable sources in the Netherlands.

The clean energy will supply Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, Rotterdam The Hague Airport, Eindhoven Airport and Lelystad Airport and amount to 220 gigawatt hours annually for the next 15 years. According to the business, 70 million passengers passed through its Dutch airports in 2016, an increase of 8.9 percent.

"For our new energy contract, we wanted nothing but sustainable power generated in the Netherlands," Jos Ni-

jhuis, president and CEO of the Royal Schiphol Group, said in a statement on Tuesday. Nijhuis went on to state that aviation "can and must be made more sustainable."

Dutch authorities have ambitious plans when it comes to the environment and renewable energy. Central government wants to slash greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050 and, in the shorter term, wants to switch to 16 percent sustainable energy by 2023.

"For the energy transition, it is crucial for the business sector – which is by far the largest energy consumer – to embrace sustainability," Jeroen de Haas, the Eneco Group's CEO, said.

"Pioneers such as Royal Schiphol Group are consciously choosing new, sustainable forms of production and are therefore setting the tone for others," de Haas added. (Source: CNBC)

## Libya's biggest oil field is reopening for business



Libya's biggest oil field, Sharara, is increasing production and the Zueitina port is again allowing tankers to load, paving the way for the OPEC nation's crude output to rebound.

Production at Sharara increased to 230,000 barrels a day Tuesday from 200,000 barrels on Sunday, according to a person familiar with the matter. Workers who had been kept from some areas because of security threats were provided with additional protection, the person said, asking not to be identified because the information is confidential. Also Tuesday, the Zueitina port resumed loading operations, Merhi Abridan, head of the Zueitina Worker's Union, said by phone.

Libya wants to boost crude production as much as possible because it's still exempt from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' agree-

ment to cut supplies through March. Output climbed to a three-year high of 1.02 million barrels a day in July, the third consecutive monthly gain, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

The supply gains from Libya have contributed to restraining crude prices in 2017, with Brent oil futures in London down about 10 percent since the start of the year.

Aframax Atlas Voyager, which was set to complete loading 370,000 barrels of crude from Zueitina after loading from Ras Lanuf port, will be allowed to finish its cargo, Abridan said by phone on Tuesday. Workers were promised their demands will be met, he said. They include getting 20 months of back pay, health insurance, annual leave, overtime and more port maintenance.

(Source: Bloomberg)

## Oil edges up on falling U.S. crude stocks

Oil prices edged up on Wednesday, lifted by declining U.S. crude inventories, although markets were still restrained by excess supply.

Market focus was turning to the release of official U.S. Energy Information Administration data later on Wednesday for a further update on inventories.

Brent crude futures were at \$51.14 per barrel at 1010 GMT, up 34 cents, or 0.66 percent, from their last close.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$47.82 a barrel, up 27 cents, or 0.56 percent.

U.S. crude inventories fell by 9.2 million barrels in the week to Aug. 11 to 469.2 million, industry group the American Petroleum Institute said on Tuesday.

That compared with analyst expecta-

tions for a decrease of 3.1 million barrels.

"The market took this as a mildly bullish report," said William O'Loughlin of Australia's Rivkin Securities.

If the API data is confirmed by the U.S. government later on Wednesday it would represent a seventh consecutive week of a decline in stocks, one of the key metrics for OPEC and other oil producers which have curtailed output to boost prices.

A dip in Libyan output due to security breaches at a major field was also supporting Brent.

More broadly, analysts said ample supplies were preventing prices from moving much higher.

"Excessive supply ... is continuing to weigh on oil prices ... Not a lot has changed despite the OPEC and Russia

efforts recently. While these producers have tried to limit their oil output, U.S. shale oil continues to rise," said Fawad Razaqzada, an analyst at futures brokerage Forex.com.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries together with non-OPEC producers such as Russia have pledged to restrict output by 1.8 bpd between January this year and March 2018.

Offsetting much of that effort, however, U.S. oil production has soared by almost 12 percent since mid-2016 to 9.42 million bpd.

"OPEC and Russia still face an uphill battle in reducing the global supply surplus in the face of growth in output elsewhere and less than compliant behavior in their midst (Iraq, UAE)," said French

bank BNP Paribas.

On the demand side, analysts see a gradual slowdown in fuel consumption growth.

In the United States, energy consultancy Wood Mackenzie said gasoline demand was already peaking due to improving fuel efficiency and the rise of electric vehicles.

In China, state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) said gasoline demand would likely peak around 2025 and outright oil consumption would top out around 2030.

This means that oil demand from the world's two biggest consumers may soon stall, while consumption has already peaked in Europe and Japan.

(Source: Reuters)

## OPEC's oil-glut fight could last years

When OPEC and Russia first embarked on their strategy to clear a global oil glut, it was expected to succeed within six months. It now looks like the battle could last for years.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and its partners plan to wrap up their production cuts next spring, already nine months later than originally expected. Yet oil prices are faltering again as data from the International Energy Agency show world inventories could remain oversupplied even after the end of 2018. ESI Energy LLC predicts that, rather than months, draining the surplus may take years.

Oil prices have lost 10 percent in London this year as the production cuts that OPEC, Russia and other partners started in January fail to disperse a world surplus. The producers will meet in November to decide whether further action is needed beyond spring 2018.

The cutbacks have been undermined amid recovering output from OPEC members exempt from the deal -Libya and Nigeria- and as U.S. shale producers prove they can keep drilling despite lower prices. Shale output will hit a record next month, the U.S. government forecasts.

As a result, OPEC's current production - about 32.8 million barrels a day in July - is higher than the amount needed for most of next year, the IEA's latest report showed on Aug. 11. Instead of fulfilling its goal to reduce oil inventories to their five-year average, OPEC would potentially expand them further.

The longer-term outlook also poses problems, according to consultants ESI Energy. Over the next five years, U.S. production will continue to expand while growth in oil consumption slows, ESI predicts. New demand for petrochemical products, a key driver, will be met by products derived from gas.

### ■ Overhang falling

"If OPEC wants to keep oil prices in the \$50s and hit \$60, the organization will have to keep a lid on supply for several more years," said Sarah Emerson, energy principal at ESI in New York.

Still, the cutbacks by OPEC and Russia have shown some signs of success. Global inventories declined in the second quarter, bringing them closer to their five-year average, said the IEA, which advises most of the world's major economies on energy policy. A discount on immediate crude supplies has turned into a premium, suggesting markets are tightening.

"The inventory overhang is falling, the re-balancing process is underway," said Giovanni Staunovo, an analyst at UBS Group AG in Zurich. "Stocks are obviously still high, but from a supply-demand perspective we were in deficit in the second quarter."

The prospect of OPEC facing a longer struggle than expected dovetails with the views of some oil-industry bosses. Total SA Chief Executive Officer Patrick Pouyannet and Weatherford International Plc head Mark McCollum said at a conference in Istanbul last month that better times might not return until the end of the decade.

### ■ Discipline question

If OPEC is facing a challenge spanning years, the question is whether its members have the discipline.

Their adherence to the pledged cutbacks slipped to 75 percent in July, the lowest since the accord began, as Venezuela, Iraq and the United Arab Emirates drag their heels in making required reductions, according to the IEA. Iraqi Oil Minister Jabbar al-Luaibi has said repeatedly the country is expanding production capacity and eager to use it.

"With Iraq looking to push up volume all the time," the outlook for 2019 is "tricky," said Michael Barry, director of research at consultants FGE in London. "The pressure on the deal will remain."

As the production cuts erode OPEC and Russia's oil revenues, and U.S. shale production continues to thrive, their course of action increasingly looks like a losing battle, according to Citigroup Inc.

"They are losing revenue," Citigroup's Global Head of Commodities Research Ed Morse said in a Bloomberg television interview. OPEC's position "is not sustainable over a long period."

(Source: Bloomberg)

## Foreign oil eyes 44 billion barrels in Cuba

One of the few foreign energy companies with a presence in Cuba is now seeking funding for a 2018 exploration drilling campaign for Block 9, which is expected to hold over 44 billion barrels of in-place potential oil reserves.

Melbana Energy, an Australia-based oil and gas explorer, has announced a funding round to finance its 2018 exploration program for Block 9 – an onshore deposit in Cuba that the company fully owns on a production-sharing basis with the government.

Melbana is one of few energy companies with a presence in Cuba, and the ASX-listed company said it already has commitments for \$1.41 million (A\$1.8 million) from a placement of 178 million fully paid ordinary stock. It has also offered its existing shareholders a 1 for 2 pro-rata entitlement to the tune of \$3.76 million (A\$4.8 million).

Melbana will use the proceeds to fund the preliminaries around its drilling program in Cuba but will not go into drilling itself, the company said.

Block 9, according to Melbana's website, has in-place potential oil reserves of between 1.18 and 44.15 billion barrels, with the chance of discovery in the various leads and prospects that comprise the block standing between 14 and 32 percent. The best-case reserve scenario estimates the in-place resources of the deposit at 12.7 billion barrels.

Recoverable resources at the deposit are seen at 637 million barrels of crude, with the initial drilling targets, the Alameda-1 and Zapato prospects, accounting for 200 million barrels. Alameda-1 alone contains three prospective drilling targets with estimates potential resources of more than 2.5 billion barrels and recoverable reserves of some 130 million barrels.

(Source: oilprice.com)



## Russia’s military exercises: Could they turn into war?

By Keir Giles

In Russia and neighboring Belarus, preparations are under-way for Zapad -- a major military exercise to be held in September.

The two countries’ Western neighbors are worried. Zapad is Russian for “West,” and of all the different major exercises in the Russian military calendar, it causes the most excitement and concern because it is the one that most closely resembles practice for invading those neighbors.

As a result, this regular event receives a lot more attention than other Russian manoeuvres of similar size. Held every four years, the exercise can even develop its own mythology: Much of the Western coverage said that the 2009 exercise ended with a simulated nuclear attack on Warsaw, Poland, even though there is no evidence at all from unclassified sources to suggest this was the case.



What happens during this year’s Zapad exercise is important. The United States, NATO and especially the front-line states bordering Russia will be watching closely to learn what they can about the latest Russian capabilities and military procedures.

An additional cause for concern is that Russia has previously used the fact of large numbers of troops being on the move for major exercises to launch real military operations -- against both Georgia and Ukraine.

### ■ Military adventure.

In Poland, Lithuania and especially Ukraine, some fear this year’s Zapad could provide cover for preparing another Russian military adventure.

But unlike those exercises, Zapad is not a purely Russian undertaking. It is run in cooperation with Belarus.

Belarus finds itself in the difficult position of being officially an ally of Russia’s but not sharing Moscow’s antagonism toward the West and wanting instead to remain neutral in the confrontation between Russia and NATO.

But at the same time, the country shares NATO’s concern about the danger of inadvertent conflict in the region, and is looking for ways to avoid inflaming the situation.

Belarus is pushing for openness to the West during the exercises -- which will also help ensure that Russia does not take the opportunity to deviate from the exercise scenario to launch some kind of unfriendly action.

The authorities in Minsk have invited military observers and defense attachés from a large number of NATO and non-NATO countries as well as from international organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Red Cross to observe portions of the exercise.

And Belarus is running its own program of advance briefings for NATO and Western countries on how the exercise is to run, in parallel with information that Russia is providing.

Various theories have been put forward for how Russia might exploit Zapad to gain some kind of military advantage. At the most extravagant, these theories include mounting an actual military attack on Russia’s NATO neighbors, and the United States and other countries have made small temporary increases in the number of troops and defensive assets in place in the Baltic States as a precaution.

At the less dramatic end of the scale, another suggestion is that Russian troops taking part in the exercise on the territory of Belarus could remain there at the end of the exercise.

There has been little public discussion on what the “staying behind” option might actually look like. While major Russian units remaining on Belarusian territory seems a remote prospect, another possibility that has been put forward is Russian military equipment being left there without troops, as part of pre-positioning for possible future Russian military action launched against neighbors such as Lithuania or Poland, or the so-called Suwalki gap, from Belarus itself.

### ■ A defensive measure

A move such as this could be portrayed by Russia as a defensive measure in response to NATO’s placement of a small number of additional troops in the Baltic States and Poland under the “enhanced forward presence” program -- the argument would be that NATO has prepositioned its forces in the front-line states, so Russia is now doing the same.

But this too would require cooperation and agreement from Minsk, which does not fit with Belarus’ track record of resisting attempts at increasing the amount of Russian military infrastructure in the country.

At the same time, Russia has good reason at the moment to play down conflict instead of launching new military adventures. With a strong interest in rolling back sanctions imposed by the United States and Europe, Moscow could choose to act calmly to defuse anti-Russian rhetoric and undermine those who warn of the Kremlin’s aggressive intent.

As a result, Russia is currently mixing threatening language designed to intimidate the West with another, contradictory message: that those who fear a Russian military threat are “hysterical,” “living in the last century,” and hankering for the Cold War.

With the current level of Western alarm at possible developments of the upcoming exercise, if it comes to an end with no incident, then Moscow can quite readily say, “We told you so.”

(Source: CNN)

# Saudi suppression of Shiites threatens Canadian arms deal



## The war in Yemen only added to Canadian concerns about the wisdom of backing Saudi Arabia.

Canada is in the midst of a crucial review of its arms sales to Saudi Arabia after the press released video of the Saudi Arabian National Guard using Canadian-built armored vehicles to suppress Shiite unrest in the kingdom. At stake is a \$15 billion arms deal signed in 2014. How Canada responds could be a harbinger for the United States and the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia’s key arms suppliers.

Canada has long supplied infantry fighting vehicles for the Saudi Arabian National Guard, the elite Praetorian Guard that defends the royal family from its enemies. Canadian regulations on arms exports stipulate that weapons supplied by Canada to other countries cannot be used against the buyers’ civilian populations. Ottawa signed the \$15 billion deal, one of its largest, to deliver a new generation of infantry fighting vehicles for the National Guard with the explicit assurance to the Canadian Parliament that the weapons would not be used against civilians.

In 2011, King Abdullah had deployed the National Guard, equipped with an earlier generation of Canadian armor, to prop up the Khalifas, Bahrain’s minority Sunni royal family, which faced a majority Shiite population demanding profound political changes that would have made the island kingdom the first democratic government in the Arabian Peninsula. The Saudi intervention was the first instance of an Arab Spring rebellion being stymied and underscored the Saudi royal family’s determination to lead the counterrevolution against reform in the Arab world.

Canada’s conservative Canadian government at the time argued that the Saudi Arabian National Guard was not directly implicated in killing Bahraini civilians as the reform movement was crushed. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who took office in 2015, inherited the 2014 arms deal and the tensions over Saudi use of Canadian weapons.

### ■ Trudeau’s government

Trudeau’s government has portrayed itself as more inclined to promote human rights than had its predecessor. It also governs a Canadian public that, like those in most Western countries, is

more skeptical about Saudi Arabia and is more inclined to question the wisdom of supporting an absolute monarchy that propagates Wahhabism. The war in Yemen only added to Canadian concerns about the wisdom of backing Saudi Arabia. After 2½ years, the Saudi campaign is a quagmire and has had and continues to have horrendous consequences for the Yemeni people.

Under King Salman, Saudi Arabia has become more sectarian than ever. A long-simmering conflict with the kingdom’s minority Shiite community in oil-rich Eastern Province has escalated under Salman. The

epicenter of the conflict is the oasis of Qatif, especially Awamiya, an old city with a historic core from the Ottoman Empire that was built before the Saudis conquered it from the Turks early in the 20th century. It was the hometown of the Shiite cleric Nimr al-Nimr, whom the government executed in January 2016 for allegedly supporting Iran and violence. His execution led to the rupturing of diplomatic ties between Riyadh and Tehran.

The old city has since been all but destroyed after fierce clashes between the Saudi Arabian National Guard and Shiite activists this year. Video shows

widespread damage and destruction. Riyadh does not dispute the intensity of the clashes. The Saudis have promised to rebuild the area with a modern urban environment. The Shiites are understandably skeptical. Successive Saudi kings have failed to improve life for the Shiite population.

The National Guard is responsible for order in Eastern Province. It has been the sinecure of one branch of the House of Saud since the 1960s. Prince Mitab bin Abdullah was given command of the force in 2010 by his father, King Abdullah, and has remained in charge under Salman. He is one of the most powerful members of the family. His National Guard will not hesitate to use extreme force to crush unrest.

The National Guard has always been regarded as more loyal to the monarchy than the regular military is. It recruits among the conservative tribes of the Nejd, the kingdom’s Sunni heartland. Abdullah has carefully courted these tribes as a base. The National Guard also provides protection for the holy cities of Mecca and Medina and is the defender of the Wahhabi order.

The Globe and Mail, a Canadian newspaper, obtained photographs of the Saudi Arabian National Guard using Canadian-sold vehicles in Qatif. Under pressure from the media and public, Trudeau said the government is investigating the situation. It is likely weighing the potential loss of some 3,000 jobs in Ontario against its human rights record. Thus, there is widespread suspicion the government will try to avoid a clear decision.

A Trudeau decision to halt the sale to the Saudi Arabian National Guard would represent a major humiliation for the kingdom, especially for the National Guard. It would also energize the growing opposition to arms sales to Saudi Arabia in Washington and London. The Saudi-led war in Yemen has created a humanitarian catastrophe and has led to widespread opposition to all arms deals with the kingdom. The U.S. Congress only narrowly approved an arms sale for the Royal Saudi Air Force in June. All eyes are now on Ottawa.

(Source: Al Monitor)

## Why North Korea walked back its threat on Guam

### Signs of a conflict with the U.S. may have been overblown

By Krishnadev Calamur

North Korea’s apparent walk back of its threat to fire missiles near the U.S. territory of Guam could mean military tensions with the United States have been diminished — or at least postponed.

Or it could indicate that much of the seeming escalation in tensions between the two sides last week was more rhetoric than reality to begin with. State media reported Tuesday that Kim Jong Un, the North Korean leader, made the decision following a meeting with military commanders, but he reserved the right to fire the Hawsong-12 near Guam if the U.S. grows “more reckless.”

The move comes after a week marked by bellicose rhetoric from both sides. It began last weekend when the UN Security Council unanimously voted to tighten sanctions on North Korea for its tests last month of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) capable of reaching the U.S. (though South Korea’s vice-defense minister said the North still lacks the technology for its ICBMs to re-enter the Earth’s atmosphere, adding Pyongyang was still “at least one to two more years” way from that). Then came reports that U.S. intelligence agencies had assessed that North Korea had miniaturized a nuclear warhead that could be fitted onto the ICBMs.

President Trump responded saying any North Korean threat “will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen.” North Korea’s responded, warning it planned to strike near Guam as soon as mid-August, and was merely waiting for Kim to give the go-ahead. Trump, however, doubled down, saying if Pyongyang threatened U.S. interests and allies “things will happen to them like they never thought possible.” He then said U.S. military solutions were “locked and loaded,” adding he hoped Kim “will find another path.”

The remarks led to concerns the two countries were one errant comment away from a conflict — possibly involving nuclear weapons. Trump has previously said that while the U.S. was open to diplomacy, two-plus decades of talks with North Korea had not persuaded the country to renounce its nuclear-weapons or missile programs. In fact, North Korea has repeatedly been found cheating on its international obligations, part of the reason why the Obama administration did not talk with the North.

Still, it emerged that despite the president’s comments, the Trump administration had been engaged in regular back-channel diplomacy with Kim’s regime at the UN. The two sides—represented by Joseph Yun, the U.S. envoy for North Korea policy, and Pak Song Il, the North Korean diplomat at the UN mission — had been discussing U.S. citizens detained in North Korea as well



## There might be another reason for North Korea’s rationale to apparently back off its threat: Its threats aren’t unusual.

as relations between the two countries. Meanwhile, Rex Tillerson, the U.S. secretary of state, and James Mattis, the defense secretary, in an op-ed in The Wall Street Journal said the U.S. wanted a diplomatic solution to the tensions, and insisted the U.S. wasn’t seeking regime change in the North.

### ■ The escalating rhetoric

What also emerged was that amid the escalating rhetoric, there was little evidence of a parallel increase in U.S. military preparedness. As Defense News pointed out:

In Yokosuka, Japan, the U.S. Navy’s forward-deployed ready aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan sits peacefully pier-side, along with the U.S. 7th Fleet command ship Blue Ridge. On the Korean Peninsula, the State Department has not advised American citizens to leave the country and U.S. military family members are not being evacuated. No Marines are being loaded on amphibious ships; no sailors have been recalled off leave to prepare for emergency operations; and no ballistic missile defense ships have been sortied to North Korea, the waters off Japan or to Guam, three sources said.

Nor were there signs that the U.S. was flying B-1 bombers, stationed at the Andersen Air Force Base on Guam, over the Korean peninsula. Those flights have long been a source of irritation for North Korea — and Major Phil Ventura, a spokesman for Pacific Air Forces, said in an email that the last B-1 mission that went into Korean airspace was August 7, one day before Trump’s remarks about “fire and fury.”

The B1s are part of the continued U.S. bomber presence in the region since 2004. Ventura said the missions are scheduled weeks in advance: Sometimes they are scheduled to support an exercise; at other times, the schedules of U.S. partners play a role, he said. But two recent flights — on July 7 and July 29 — were carried out as “deliberate, direct responses to North Korean aggression” after Pyongyang’s launch of ICBMs.

Perhaps most significant in the reduction of tensions, though, is China’s role. Beijing wields much influence over North Korea — though it says the West overstates its influence — and through the crisis it urged restraint. It also took steps to ban the import of iron, lead, and coal from North Korea in line with the new UN sanctions. China accounts for more than 90 percent of trade with North Korea — and though the sanctions have been criticized as inadequate — the restrictions are expected to cost the North about \$1 billion annually.

But there might be another reason for North Korea’s rationale to apparently back off its threat: Its threats aren’t unusual. As The Wall Street Journal pointed out:

Two years ago, during another August standoff, North Korea issued a 48-hour ultimatum to South Korea to switch off loudspeakers blaring propaganda critical of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un across the demilitarized zone that separates the two countries, following the explosion of a land mine there that maimed two South Korean soldiers. North Korea threatened to use force to stop the broadcasts.

South Korea ignored the deadline, and days later, North Korea expressed regret for the land mine, dismissed several senior officials and put inter-Korean relations back on what it called a “track of reconciliation and trust.” South Korea shut off its loudspeakers.

In March last year, also during U.S.-South Korea military exercises, Pyongyang threatened to attack Seoul’s presidential palace unless it received an apology from then South Korean President Park Geun-hye. No apology was forthcoming, and the threat never materialized.

Ultimately, though the threat of conflict has reduced in the short term, the North Korean statement did not completely rule out the use of military force near Guam, saying the U.S. must “at once arrogant provocations against [North Korea] and unilateral demands and not provoke it any longer.” That’s an apparent reference to next week’s long-planned U.S.-South Korea military exercises. North Korea usually reacts in anger at such exercises, calling them an act of war. Last year it conducted a nuclear test soon after the joint exercises. Any similar action this time would almost certainly result in international condemnation — or worse.

(Source: The Atlantic)



# Hack or leak: Who really stole the DNC files?

Lack of forensics leads to muddy waters indeed.

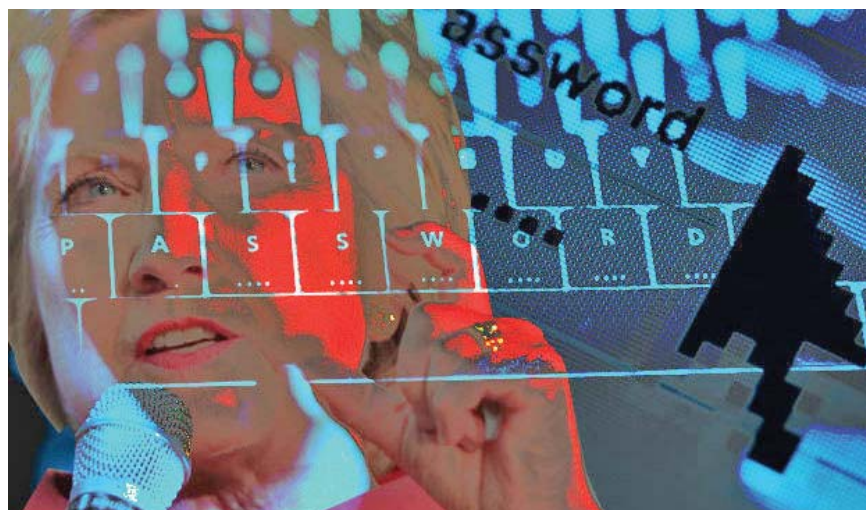
By Philip Giraldi

Congress and Special Counsel Robert Mueller are looking into whether there was Donald Trump campaign collusion with the Russian government to “influence” the results of the 2016 presidential election. Stupidity and naivete will probably be revealed in abundance, but collusion to alter the outcome of an election—and thereby damage American democracy—is unlikely to be demonstrated.

The mantra in Washington, both within the media and the inside-the-beltway establishment, is that Russia actively “interfered” in the election and may have changed the outcome, but that is largely speculative. Since the line between possibly influencing or favoring a certain outcome and interfering has been rather difficult to discern, Russiagate has evolved into a seemingly never-ending inquiry that will likely produce nothing in terms of indictable criminality among the Trumpsters. The Russians for their part will likely be seen to have engaged important individuals in a foreign country to advance their own interests—something governments worldwide do.

Indeed, the process itself seems to be backwards. Unlikely to be revealed is how the whole affair became a national-security issue in the first place. Who exactly stole the files from the DNC server and the emails from John Podesta? It would seem to me that appreciating how the theft of the documents took place is crucial to understanding what has come to be called Russiagate. Demonstrate exactly what occurred and many of the other pieces will inevitably fall into place.

At this point, all that is clearly known after more than a year of huffing and puffing is that last summer files and emails pertaining to the election were copied and then made their way to WikiLeaks, which published some of them at a time that was damaging to the Clinton campaign. Those who are blaming Russia believe that there was a hack of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) server and also of John Podesta's emails that was carried out by a Russian surrogate or directly by Moscow's military intelligence arm. They base their conclusion on a statement issued by the Department of Homeland Security on October 7, 2016, and on a longer assessment prepared by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence on January 6.



Both government appraisals implied that there was a U.S. government intelligence agency consensus that there was a Russian hack, though they provided little in the way of actual evidence that that was the case and, in particular, failed to demonstrate how the information was obtained and what the chain of custody was as it moved from that point to the office of WikiLeaks. The January report was particularly criticized as unconvincing, rightly so, because the most important one of its three key contributors, the National Security Agency, had only moderate confidence in its conclusions, suggesting that whatever evidence existed was far from solid.

Leaked reporting in the mainstream media subsequently provided some clues regarding what was behind the alleged intelligence community judgement. A hacker identified as Guccifer 2 might have broken into the system on behalf of Russia and there were reportedly traces of electronic fingerprints in the alleged intrusion that were characteristic of Russian intelligence hacks. Both of those assertions have been separately challenged and it has been observed that they are somewhat speculative. There are also reports that intercepted Kremlin phone conversations involving high level officials expressed considerable joy at the Trump victory, suggesting that Moscow was closely monitoring and possibly playing some role in the electoral process.

An alternative view that has been circulating for months suggests that it was not a hack at all, that it was a deliberate whistleblower-style leak of information carried out by as yet unknown parties that may have been provided to WikiLeaks for possible political reasons, perhaps to express disgust with the DNC manipulation of the nominating process to favor Hillary Clinton.

There are, of course, still other equally non-mainstream explanations for how the bundle of information got from point A to point B, including that the intrusion into the DNC server was carried out by the CIA, which then made it look like it had been the Russians as perpetrators. That explanation has some plausibility due to the fact that the agency does indeed have cyber-capability to do just that when it goes around the globe and invades foreign information systems. It could also have easily come up with a credible role player who might have pretended that the information came from a dissident Democrat for passage to Assange.

And then there is the hybrid point of view, which is essentially that the Russians or a surrogate did indeed intrude into the DNC computers but it was all part of normal

**If Congress were seriously interested in determining who did what to whom, it would have started with the theft of the information. The inquiry should have begun with the DNC server or servers where the information that was stolen was stored, but, oddly, the FBI was not allowed access.**

intelligence agency probing and did not lead to anything. Meanwhile and independently, someone else who had access to the server was downloading the information, which in some fashion made its way from there to WikiLeaks.

Both the hack vs. leak viewpoints have marshalled considerable technical analysis in the media to bolster their arguments. The hack school of thought has stressed that Russia had both the ability and motive to interfere in the election by exposing the stolen material while the leakers have recently asserted that the sheer volume of material downloaded indicates that something like a higher speed thumb drive was used, meaning that it had to be done by someone with actual physical direct access to the DNC system.

What the many commentators on the DNC server issue choose to conclude is frequently shaped by their own broader political views, producing a result that favors one approach over another depending on how one feels about Trump or Clinton. Perhaps it would be clarifying to regard the information obtained and transferred as a theft rather than either a hack or a leak, since the two expressions have taken on a political meaning of their own in the context of Russiagate. I am not qualified to judge the technical analyses that have been done on the theft, but I would like to suggest that the



**Those who are blaming Russia believe that there was a hack of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) server and also of John Podesta's emails that was carried out by a Russian surrogate or directly by Moscow's military intelligence arm.**

bottom line is that we (the American people and government) have no idea who actually stole the material in question.

If Congress were seriously interested in determining who did what to whom, it would have started with the theft of the information. The inquiry should have begun with the DNC server or servers where the information that was stolen was stored, but, oddly, the FBI was not allowed access. So whatever forensic insights that might have been ob-

tained from the actual computers has never been collected or developed by federal law enforcement, which perforce relied instead on an assessment made by a DNC contractor, CrowdStrike, whose co-founder Dmitri Alperovitch is a prominent critic of the Russian government. CrowdStrike ran its own investigation and inevitably blamed the Russians.

If the FBI had moved quickly to do a forensic examination on the computers, information retained in the system presumably could have told investigators exactly who logged in and at what times. With that in hand, questioning of the individuals identified could have begun. Also, a thorough investigation would include obtaining a list of all those individuals who theoretically had access to the information that was stolen under the assumption that someone might have been using an associate's password. Yet there is no indication that any questioning of those with access to the DNC system has occurred or is even being contemplated.

A good investigation would also examine possible motive. Back in July there was little doubt that Hillary Clinton would win the election and it is far-fetched to think that the Russians would in even their wildest imaginings think that they could change the result. But that is not to say that they would not have been interested in weakening the Clinton presidency by surfacing evidence of a scandal. Nor is there any motive for then CIA Director John Brennan to do a hack and blame it on Moscow since he would have known that the information being released would damage his candidate, Hillary Clinton—but he might have thought that promoting the Russian connection would do

even worse damage to Trump. It seems to me that likely motive also includes two other plausible possibilities: that someone took the information to sell it to a party who has not yet been identified, or that someone stole the information to get even either with the Democratic establishment or with individuals running the primaries and the convention.

As there would have been only a limited market for the Clinton papers and their sale would be tricky and require developing contacts desirous of obtaining such information, revenge would seem to be the more likely explanation. But even there we know nothing as no names have surfaced as part of whatever has been passing for an investigation. DNC staffer Seth Rich, who was killed in a still unexplained “robbery attempt” in Washington on July 10, 2016, has been identified as a potential suspect by conservative media, but that possibility has been strenuously rejected by his family and others, and it does not appear that there has been any FBI follow-up on his case.

I honestly believe that we the public will never know who stole the Clinton and Podesta emails unless Julian Assange of WikiLeaks chooses to come clean on the issue, which is unlikely. In fact, Assange, who has denied that it was the Russians, might not know whom he was dealing with. If a sophisticated intelligence agency was somehow involved it could have used its own recruited assets as interlocutors, pretending to be who they were not. A well-constructed cover story could have easily fooled Assange. A capable spy agency would also have run its operation replete with red herrings while using cut-outs to break the transmission belt of the information so the theft could not plausibly be traced back to it, or to its sponsoring government.

The fact that more than a year of inquiry has gone by without anyone inside the DNC IT system being investigated suggests that whatever happened has been buried so deep that it will never surface. Even now, it might pay some dividends for the FBI to examine the DNC server, but there is virtually no pressure from anyone to make that happen. Certainly the FBI has given no indication that it has a clue about what took place and is content with attributing it to the Russians, particularly since that seems to be the conventional wisdom. Blaming the theft and what happened subsequently on Moscow is both convenient and comforting because no American constituency gets offended and it means you don't really have to annoy anyone but Vladimir Putin.

(Source: American Conservative)



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## Trump isn't going to invade Venezuela, but what U.S. is planning could be much worse

By Andrew Korybko

Trump was more aggressive than usual yesterday when he said that he's not ruling out a “military option” in Venezuela, and the international media went haywire speculating that the President was considering an invasion. Nothing justifies what Trump said, but taking aside all moral considerations, his statement shouldn't have been surprising, and interestingly enough, it might even backfire on him.

All U.S. Presidents routinely restate the rhetoric that “all options are on the table” when dealing with the crises that their country provoked abroad, which in this case is the Hybrid War on Venezuela that seeks to attain proxy control over the world's largest oil reserves in the Orinoco River Belt and smash the socialist-multipolar ALBA grouping.

Venezuela's preexisting socio-political vulnerabilities and institutional weaknesses were exploited by the U.S.' economic machinations against the country in order to trigger a Color Revolution against the government. When that failed, the regime change movement transformed into an urban insurgency and recently expanded its operations by staging a terrorist attack against a military base in the central part of the country.

It's very likely that the situation will devolve into an externally triggered “civil war” with the eventual intent of sparking a military coup attempt against President Maduro, but the odds of the U.S. directly intervening in this scenario are slim. Rather, Trump's threatened “military option” probably relates to the “Lead From Behind” role that the U.S. is slated to play in using Colombia as its regional partner for funneling weapons and other forms of assistance to the “moderate rebels” in Venezuela just as it used Turkey to do vis-a-vis Syria for the past six years.

Additionally, it can be confidently assumed that the CIA is hard at work trying to engineer its desired military coup, though the chances of its success are unlikely unless the Hybrid War becomes a full-fledged externally triggered “civil war” like in Syria. These two interconnected reasons explain what Trump

**Trump's comments therefore put the U.S.' regime change proxies in a bind because they're now caught in a dilemma between supporting what the world at large perceives to be a threat to invade their country or to support its legitimate leader whom they've been rioting against for months already.**

leader whom they've been rioting against for months already. The average anti-government supporter can be presumed to be equally against Maduro, a speculated U.S. invasion of their country, and the “oppositions'” riots, wanting only to hold snap elections in the hope of peacefully carrying out regime change.

They've been backing the “opposition” up until this point, however, because they saw them as the “least-bad” option available, but Trump's implied military threat essentially exposes them in acting as the tip of the spear in a possible invasion, seeing as how the chaotic “civil war” conditions in which the U.S. could conventionally intervene in Venezuela would be due to their intensified Hybrid War actions.

This fact should rightly give pause to self-identifying “patriotic opposition” members and prompt them to reconsider their “least-bad” normative assessment that they previously gave to the “opposition”. If they engage in some serious self-reflection, they'll see that it's actually President Maduro who's the “least bad” of the two, and that the best way to achieve their objective of regime change is to begrudgingly wait until the next democratic vote is scheduled to be held.

Continuing to throw one's weight behind the “opposition” at this point is tantamount to openly supporting the steps that are needed to create the conditions for Trump's media-hyped “military options” against their country, up to and including a “humanitarian intervention”. It's not known what proportion of the “opposition” satisfies the “patriotic” criteria that these points would apply to, but if their numbers are large enough, then their passive “defection” from the anti-government movement's ranks in response to Trump's threat could deal a blow to the regime change effort.

On the other hand, and approaching the subject from a cynical angle as the “devil's advocate”, it might not tangibly change much at all if the U.S. already has its mind dead-set on escalating the Hybrid War on Venezuela to a Syrian-like level, though it would nevertheless represent an important moral victory for the legitimate government by further exposing the “opposition's” treasonous connivance with the U.S..

In any case, regardless of what Trump really meant in his “military options” comment and despite whatever the “patriotic opposition” members decide to do, all indications suggest that Venezuela is at a fateful turning point and that the coming weeks will decide its future for what might end up being the years to come.

(Source: The Duran)



# A new strategy for Afghanistan: Change course, quit the fight

By Daniel L. Davis

It has been reported in recent days that President Trump has angrily rejected the latest recommendation from his national security staff for a new Afghan war strategy. Secretary of Defense James Mattis, in other venues, has claimed the reason for the delay is that forming strategy is "hard work." Carrying out any plan involving the use of lethal military power is unquestionably hard to carry out, but despite the secretary's protestations to the contrary, forming a strategy on the long-running, failing war is not as challenging as claimed. There is, however, a solid option for the commander in chief, which apparently no general has offered: military withdrawal.

During a Pentagon press conference, Mr. Mattis responded to questions on the delay of the Afghan war strategy by stating, "Seriously, this is hard and anyone who says otherwise is someone who has not had to deal with it." The argument was

a straw man. No one would ever suggest it was easy.

Mr. Trump has said he intends to pursue a "foreign policy based on American interests, (and) will embrace diplomacy. The world must know that we do not go abroad in search of enemies." That is the approach American voters chose last November, and it's the right course of action. If Mr. Mattis wants Mr. Trump to approve his plan, it must embody the spirit of the president's declared foreign policy.

## ■ Current Afghan policy

This new plan should be based on a sober, rational analysis of the strategic environment that surrounds current Afghan policy and an examination of why it is now failing.

In response to the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, President George W. Bush told the nation he was responding to the attacks by ordering the military to conduct "carefully targeted actions," which he said were "designed to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations, and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime."

Words are important. The president's order to "disrupt" the use of Afghanistan "as a terrorist base of operations" were fully accomplished. The objectives of his administration were sound, militarily attainable, and improved the security of the nation. By the summer of 2002, the mission had been a complete success. The president should then have ordered the withdrawal of the military. Instead, he changed the objectives and expanded the mission. Since that time, America has suffered 15 full years of strategic failure.

There is, however, a military and diplomatic mission the current president could order that is attainable, compatible with his foreign policy philosophy, and will enhance the security of the nation: a near-term military withdrawal.

Mr. Trump has the responsibility to change course again, narrowly focusing our military mission to "disrupt" any future use of Afghanistan as a base of terror operations. He does not need a single American troop on the ground in that country to accomplish that objective.

Mr. Trump should direct his secretary of defense to produce a strategy that reflects that fact. Any plan that merely modifies current policy will fail to achieve that goal.

## ■ Maintaining global intelligence

Maintenance of a robust global intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capability is key to keeping the president informed of the presence of any terror cell, on the territory of any nation, plotting to attack American interests. Should any future threats to U.S. security be identified operating on Afghan soil, American forces in the region aboard ships or global attack assets could be used to attack and destroy them.

Military withdrawal does not mean the abandoning the region. It means establishing a realistic match between ways, ends and means; assigning the military missions that it is fully capable of accomplishing; and putting a stop to the practice of sacrificing the lives of U.S. troops in pursuit of the unattainable.

(Source: The Washington Times)

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# I had a baby after having weight loss surgery

By Alicia Robertson

Alicia Robertson, 29, underwent gastric bypass surgery in September 2014. Not long after that, she found out she was pregnant.

Before bariatric (aka weight loss) surgery, my highest recorded weight was 296 pounds. I had tried dieting, but it was never enough, and exercise was a real struggle: I have an autoimmune disorder that affects my back and causes pain. (If you have lower back pain, one of these 9 treatments can help.) You sometimes hear horror stories about people who can't eat anything and have a miserable experience after bariatric surgery, but that wasn't me. I felt amazing! I lost weight pretty quickly and steadily. I did very well staying away from the "no-no" foods, and most of what I did eat I tolerated very well.

Then, six months later, I found out I was pregnant.

I hadn't intended to get pregnant. I already had two children at the time—my oldest was almost 5, and my youngest was almost 3—and I was on the mini pill. It's true that the mini pill, statistically speaking, is only so effective, but most other contraceptives weren't an option. The mini pill had worked for me the past, so I thought it would again. Obviously, it didn't.

While many women have successful pregnancies after bariatric surgery, doctors usually advise waiting at least 18 months after surgery before you conceive. In the beginning, your body is in rapid weight-loss mode, and that was certainly the case for me. By the time I took a positive pregnancy test, I'd lost 100 pounds.

## ■ Here I grow again

After the initial shock wore off, I started to get pretty scared. Would I lose the baby due to malnutrition or issues with caloric intake? After bariatric surgery, your daily calorie intake is highly restricted: I was only eating 500-600 calories a day. While some people imagine that it's hard to eat so little, after weight loss surgery it's actually difficult to eat that much. My appetite had plummeted, plus it's hard from a mental standpoint since you know that you're supposed to be losing weight.

After I got pregnant, eating was even more challenging. During the first trimester everything made me want to throw up, plus I was also dealing with something gastric bypass patients call the "foamies." It's like the acid that sometimes comes before you throw up, but it just continues to kind of foam in



**If you've been able to eat enough calories to sustain a healthy pregnancy, continue to eat that way and you should be able to nurse.**

the back of your throat, sometimes for 30-40 minutes, with no throwing up.

My OB had me immediately start seeing a nutritionist once a month who was familiar with bariatric surgery and pregnancy, just to make sure that I was getting enough to sustain a healthy pregnancy. Since I could only eat a very small quantity of food at a time, she had me add some foods to my diet that were very dense in calories, like heavy cream, coconut oil, and butter. By the time I was 18 weeks I had lost about another 12 pounds, but once I got the hang of eating what I needed for the baby, my weight stabilized.

While most women are advised to gain about 25 pounds during pregnancy, my doctor said I should try to avoid gaining or losing at this time. I managed to do that—toward the end of my pregnancy I regained the 12 pounds that I lost early on, but nothing more. But my body did change shape, which was emotionally challenging: As I watched it happen, I remember thinking, "Well, this isn't the direction I wanted my stomach to go."

But there were also positives. During my last pregnancy I was close to 300 pounds, so I never had that cute pregnant look. This time around, I had

that perfect little baby bump.

## ■ Prenatal care(ful)

From a medical standpoint, most of my prenatal care ended up being pretty standard. I did meet with a perinatologist in the beginning, just to have baseline information on the pregnancy in case something came up later. It never did, so I kept having regular OB visits.

One notable change was that my blood sugar had to be monitored in a different way. During my other pregnancies I had the typical oral glucose tolerance test, which involves drinking 50 grams of sugar in five minutes. But after bariatric surgery, an influx of sugar (or fat) into your digestive system causes dumping syndrome—a condition that causes your bowels to get rid of everything in them very quickly. You get sweaty, your heart races, you feel dizzy, and your stomach cramps—it's horrible and painful. You just want to lie down and die.

To avoid that, my OB skipped the glucose tolerance test and instead gave me an A1C blood test, which doesn't involve drinking any sugar. Then she rechecked it at 26 weeks and also had me do a fasting glucose test.

## ■ Birth day and beyond

I have very fast deliveries—my first two kids came very quickly, and my third was exactly the same. My delivery was very normal. No complications at all. A lot of people are concerned that you can't nurse after you've had gastric bypass because you won't be able to consume enough calories to produce milk, but that's the furthest thing from the truth. If you've been able to eat enough calories to sustain a healthy pregnancy, continue to eat that way and you should be able to nurse. My son is actually still nursing at 19 months old.

A lot of pregnant women, even those who haven't had bariatric surgery, use the "Well, I'm pregnant, I can eat whatever I want" excuse. But bad eating habits are really hard to break after pregnancy. For me it was no different, and I had to retrain myself and start being extra cautious about what I eat again.

It isn't always easy, but I'm adjusting to life as a mom of three and I'm glad that I put in the work to protect my health. I'm now about 150 pounds lighter than I was pre-surgery, and I feel great.

(Source: prevention.com)

## Learn to live with it: Becoming stress-free

By A. Parthasarathy

People the world over believe that stress comes from external sources.

One complains of a nagging wife or hysterical husband. Another finds fault with the demands of work or the exploitation of management. Someone else grumbles at summer being too hot or winter being too cold.

Everyone thus lives with the belief that factors outside themselves produce stress -- so their entire focus is on correcting the external world. Yet despite our best efforts to fix these external factors, the problems remain unsolved and our minds continue to be consumed by stress.

Pleasure or pain, joy or sorrow, peace or stress -- these are not found in external objects or beings. They are found in the relationship you have with those things.

For example one person finds pleasure in smoking cigarettes. Another detests them. One man may go to his lawyer to divorce his wife while another waits, desperately wanting to marry her. A cigarette produces pleasure to one, pain to another. The same lady produces joy for one, sorrow for another.

In life, be it with business or family, relationships matter. Lack of a proper relationship leads to frustration and builds up stress. Ironically, people take utmost care to choose the "right partner," but fail to set up the "right relationship" with that person -- and lose peace and harmony in the process.

It is not whom or what you meet in life that matters but how you meet it.

Your relationship with the world is entirely dependent on the nature of your inner personality. Your inner personality comprises two things: the mind and the intellect.

The mind desires and feels.

The intellect reasons, judges and decides.

When the intellect loses control over the mind's desires, you become disturbed. Stress is the mental agitation caused by unfulfilled desires. Thus the fundamental requirement for a stress-free life is to develop a strong intellect and control desires.

Intellectual strength is distinct and different from



**Intellectual strength is distinct and different from intelligence. Intelligence is mere storage of information. The intellect is developed by individual effort through exercising one's faculty of questioning and reasoning.**

intelligence. Intelligence is mere storage of information -- knowledge acquired from external sources and educational institutions, from teachers and textbooks. Any amount of intelligence cannot, per se, develop your intellect. The intellect is developed by individual effort through exercising one's faculty of questioning and reasoning.

With the lack of development of the intellect, people fail to understand that every human being is distinct and different from another -- that each is governed by his or her own singular nature.

Therefore, we should assess the nature of each human individually. But few follow this practice in life. Without making individual assessments you are not

able to relate to others properly. As a result, you expect one to behave differently from one's fundamental nature.

How can you expect a hysterical boss to conduct himself in a calm and composed manner at office? How can you expect a nagging wife to be understanding and accommodating at home? How can you expect bubbling teenagers to be mature and objective?

Since you fail to assess their individual characters you find them all faulty in their behavior. You attribute these "faults" to those who helplessly express their inner nature. You do not realize that you err in expecting them to conduct themselves differently from their basic quality and character.

You expect the impossible.

Your erroneous hopes and expectations cause you stress. All grumbling tantamount to, "Oh! Why is a lily not an oak?"

Assessment does not stop with human beings alone. You need to assess the nature of the country you live in, the community you associate with, the company you work for, etc.

A typical example of a wrong assessment is complaining about the weather. Every morning people are either elated over its brightness or depressed by its dullness. The fluctuations of the weather should affect the weather vanes, not humans. Yet people turn schizophrenic over the routine changes in weather. They complain of cold during winter, heat in summer or wetness all through the monsoon. The grumbling never ends.

When something goes wrong in the external world and it can be corrected, do so. If, however, it is not possible to correct it, you must learn to live with it. If you do not, you will feel disappointed -- and therefore, stressed.

Remember: You make yourself, you mar yourself. You are the architect of your fortune. You are the architect of your misfortune.

Learn to look at persons, beings and things, environments and situations, as what they are and not what you would like them to be. Doing so will help you appreciate the wondrous phenomenon of nature.

And become free from stress.

(Source: verywell.com)

## Fish oil: friend or foe?

By Howard LeWine

News out of Seattle is sure to fuel confusion about fish oil supplements. Take this email I got yesterday from a friend. "Ok, I give up. Should I take them? Throw them away? June 29 — Fish oil may prevent breast cancer. Fish oil may increase risk of prostate cancer."

First, the latest news. A study by scientists at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle linked eating a lot of oily fish or taking potent fish oil supplements to a 43% increased risk for prostate cancer overall, and a 71% increased risk for aggressive prostate cancer. Their report was published online in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute.



They came to this conclusion by looking at blood samples of men taking part in the Selenium and Vitamin E Cancer Prevention Trial. That trial, dubbed SELECT, found that selenium supplements did nothing to prevent prostate cancer, while vitamin E supplements slightly increased prostate cancer risk. Blood samples from men who had developed prostate cancer over the course of the trial had more omega-3 fats than those of men who didn't develop prostate cancer.

## ■ Omega-3s in balance

What's so special about fish oil? It's loaded with omega-3 fatty acids. These must come from food, since our bodies can't make them.

The two key omega-3 fatty acids are docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA). Fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, and sardines are rich in these omega-3s. Some plants are rich in another type of omega-3 fatty acid, alpha-linolenic acid, which the body can convert to DHA and EPA. Good sources of these are flaxseeds, chia seeds, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, and canola oil.

Omega-3 fatty acids play important roles in brain function, normal growth and development, and inflammation. Deficiencies have been linked to a variety of health problems, including cardiovascular disease, some cancers, mood disorders, arthritis, and more. But that doesn't mean taking high doses translates to better health and disease prevention.

Fish oil supplements have been promoted as easy way to protect the heart, ease inflammation, improve mental health, and lengthen life. Such claims are one reason why Americans spend more than \$1 billion a year on over-the-counter fish oil. And food companies are adding it to milk, yogurt, cereal, chocolate, cookies, juice, and hundreds of other foods.

The report from the Fred Hutchinson researchers is just the latest to sound a warning about too much omega-3 fatty acids. In May 2013, for example, Italian researchers reported in the New England Journal of Medicine that omega-3 fatty acid supplements did nothing to reduce heart attacks, strokes, or deaths from heart disease in people with risk factors for heart disease.

This work follows similar warnings about vitamin E supplements, beta carotene supplements, and other high-dose dietary supplements.

Evidence linking fish oil and cancer has been all over the map. Some research suggests diets high in fatty fish or fish oil supplements might reduce the risk of certain cancers, including prostate cancer.

Other research shows no such association.

## ■ Take home message

How food, and its component molecules, affect the body is largely a mystery. That makes the use of supplements for anything other than treating a deficiency questionable.

Despite this one study, you should still consider eating fish and other seafood as a healthy strategy. If we could absolutely, positively say that the benefits of eating seafood comes entirely from omega-3 fats, then dawning fish oil pills would be an alternative to eating fish. But it's more than likely that you need the entire orchestra of fish fats, vitamins, minerals, and supporting molecules, rather than the lone notes of EPA and DHA.

The same holds true of other foods. Taking even a handful of supplements is no substitute for wealth of nutrients you get from eating fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

What should you do if you currently take fish oil? If your doctor prescribed them—they are an approved and effective treatment for people with high blood triglyceride levels—follow his or her instructions until you can have a conversation about fish oil.

If you are taking them on your own because you believe they are good for you, it's time to rethink that strategy. If you don't eat fish or other seafood, you can get omega-3s from ground flaxseed or flaxseed oil, chia seeds, walnuts, canola oil, and soy oil. One to two servings per day can help you avoid a deficiency of omega-3s.

Experts will surely remain divided on their opinions about fish oil supplements for the general population. And don't expect any clarity about what to do any time soon. I expect other studies with flip-flopping results in the future.

Following food author Michael Pollan's simple advice about choosing a diet may be the best way forward: "Eat food. Not too much. Mainly plants."

(Source: health.harvard.edu)



## Some 360,000 Iranian expats toured home in 3-month span

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — A total of 360,200 of expatriate Iranians visited home as sightseers during the first three months of the current Iranian year (March 21 – June 21), a tourism official says.

In the same period, the country also hosted some 1.1 million inbound travelers from Iraq, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, India, China and Germany, Mizan Online quoted Hassan Gerami as saying on Tuesday.

For instance, 246,700 tourists from Iraq, 227,500 from the Republic of Azerbaijan, 156,200 from Afghanistan and 133,392 from Turkey visited Iran, Gerami explained.

In 2016, over 5.5 million foreign travelers from the Middle East, the Americas, Europe and South and East Asia set foot in Iran, fetching close to \$8b in revenues.

Back in May, First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri described Iranians living abroad as "precious opportunities" for Iran, saying, "In terms of knowledge, they have occupied lofty ranks in the world. Also, in terms of money, they are very powerful and can help most sectors in the country."

## Iran to host IORA summit in winter

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Iran is set to host a high-profile meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) in the coming winter, a tourism official announced on Tuesday.



Picture depicts a logo for the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

Iran sees the hosting of the IORA summit a favorable opportunity to promote its tourism goals and widening cooperation with the IORA member states such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Mehr news quoted Mirhadi Qareseyyed-Romiani as saying.

The event will take place either in the port city of Chabahar or on Kish Island in the Iranian month of Bahman (January 21-February 19, 2018), the official added without providing more details.

Besides the goal of maximizing the potential for trade, investment and economic cooperation in the region, the IORA also aims to address non-traditional issues, such as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, human trafficking, drug trafficking, illegal migration and piracy.

The inter-governmental organization is comprised of 21 states whose shores are washed by the waters of the Indian Ocean including Australia, Bangladesh, Kenya, Madagascar, Oman, Tanzania, Thailand, UAE and Yemen.



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Stari Ras and Sopocani

Stari Ras and Sopocani is a serial property consisting of four separate components located in the Raška region of southern Serbia: Sopocani Monastery, Djurdjevi Stupovi Monastery, Holy Apostles St Peter and St Paul Church (St Peter's Church), and the archaeological site of the Medieval Town of Ras.

The impressive collection of three ecclesiastical monuments dating from the 10th to the 13th centuries eminently illustrates the birth of artistic activity in medieval Serbia, which attained the highest standards in the art and culture of the Byzantine Empire and the regions of Central and Southeastern Europe.

The unique architectural complex formed by numerous structures in Stari Ras (Old Ras), situated at a crossroads of eastern and western influences, testifies to the period from 12th to the early 14th centuries when the ancient town was the first capital of the Serbian state.



A view of the Sopocani monastery in Serbia

The frescoes in the Sopocani Monastery church, dating from about 1270-1276, are among the finest in Byzantine and Serbian medieval art. These exceptional paintings represent the work of the best artists of that period who were unable to work in the territory of the Byzantine Empire and found refuge at the court of the Serbian king.

At Sopocani these artists introduced a refined spirit of antiquity to the prevailing medieval conventions. St George's Church in the Djurdjevi Stupovi Monastery, founded in 1170-1171, is the earliest example of a distinctive new regional architecture that blended Romanesque and Byzantine styles.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Iran handmade carpet expo to open next week

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — The 26th Iran Handmade Carpet Exhibition will open its doors to the public at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on August 23.

A total of 730 carpet producers are set to participate in the exhibit, which will run till August 29. Covering over 30,000 square meters, the expo includes 14 halls, IRIB reported on Tuesday.

The showcase will also include nomadic rugs and carpets as well as a patchwork of the antique ones, said Hamid Kargar, the head of Iran's National Carpet Center.

Several craft workshops in the arenas of designing, spinning, weaving, conservation and washing have been embedded on the sideline programs of the event, the official said.

"Iran exported \$89 million of hand-woven carpets during the first four months of the present Iranian calendar year (March 21- July 22, 2017), showing an increase of 3.7 percent in terms of value," Kargar added.



An Iranian nomad weaves a carpet with keeping an eye on a pattern in an undated photo.

## London museum to hold course on Iran's national heritage

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — The Victoria and Albert Museum in London is set to hold a short course on the art history of Iran that will take a peek into its rich national heritage from the time of Achaemenid Persian Empire (c. 550-330) to the modern Islamic Republic.

The course will draw fully from the V&A's unique and extensive Iranian collections such as luster tilework, silver-inlaid metalwork, and enormous knotted pile carpets, with



Detail showing an embossed Iranian pottery at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London

object-viewing sessions and store visits throughout the Museum, the museum website says.

"While surveying the art history of Iran, the course will also provide thoughtful analysis of the Museum's collecting history in the nineteenth century, when 'Persian Art' was pursued vigorously."

Dr. Moya Carey, the Iran Heritage Foundation curator for the Iranian collections at the V&A, will lead the course, which will be held from January 10 to March 21, 2018.

## Saudi Arabia to resume building mammoth Mecca hotel: sources

**DUBAI (Reuters)** — Saudi Arabia is set to restart work on one of the world's largest hotel projects, the \$3.5 billion Abraj Kudai in Mecca, where a financial squeeze halted construction in 2015.

When completed, the Abraj Kudai is meant to have about 10,000 rooms, 70 restaurants, several helipads and a section reserved for the Saudi royal family.

Renewed plans for the government-funded project signal Riyadh is again willing to spend on strategic economic development projects such as tourism and are a boost for Saudi Binladin Group, the company leading the construction.

Saudi Binladin, one of the country's big-

gest construction conglomerates, has been hit hard by a slump in the building sector after low oil prices slashed Saudi Arabia's export revenues and forced the government into austerity policies.

Sub-contractors have been asked to submit pricing proposals to Saudi Binladin by mid-September, sources familiar with the matter, who declined to be named, told Reuters.

"With a clearer grasp on its finances, the government has allocated a portion of its budget toward completing key projects," an executive in the Binladin group told Reuters.

A spokesman for the group could not

be reached for comment, and the Ministry of Finance declined to comment.

Saudi Binladin Group is estimated by bankers to have debt of around \$30 billion and earlier this year its creditors agreed to extend a 4 billion riyal (\$1.1 billion) Islamic credit facility to pay for building work at Mecca's Grand Mosque.

"The Ministry of Finance is taking a lead role in the hotel project ... This is positive for the banking sector," one Saudi banker told Reuters.

Saudi state finances have strengthened somewhat this year because of moderately higher oil prices and cost-cutting. The state budget deficit shrank to 46.5 billion riyals

(\$12.4 billion) in the April-June period from about 58.4 billion riyals a year ago, Ministry of Finance data showed on Sunday.

The government is keen to create jobs and reduce its dependence on the oil sector by developing industries such as tourism, particularly Islamic tourism.

The annual haj pilgrimage attracts about 2 million pilgrims to Mecca and the government's economic reform plan envisages boosting that number to 2.5 million by 2020.

A planned opening date for the Abraj Kudai has not yet been confirmed, but one source said it would take at least 2-1/2 years to complete.

## North Korea aside, Guam faces another threat: climate change

By Mike Ivesaug

**HONG KONG (The New York Times)** — The island of Guam made rare headlines recently when North Korea, responding to blustery language from President Trump, threatened to fire four ballistic missiles into waters near the American territory's shores. Some Guam residents told reporters that they worried what might happen if North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-un, were actually to follow through.

Scientists in Guam, however, say they have at least one other major threat in mind: climate change.

"We know that it's serious," said Austin J. Shelton III, a marine biologist and the executive director of the Center for Island Sustainability at the University of Guam. "Some of the impacts are here, and a lot more are coming."

Like other Pacific islands, Guam may be affected in the coming decades as climate change prompts shifts in weather, temperature and oceanic acidity, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Experts said in interviews that the primary consequences may include people suffering heat stress because of an increase in heat waves, a rise in the intensity of tropical storms, and the damage or destruction of Guam's exceptionally biodiverse coral reefs.

A key concern is how reef damage could affect a \$1.4 billion tourism sector that, according to the Guam Visitors Bureau, accounts for 60 percent of Guam's annual business revenue and nearly a third of its nonfederal employment.

A 2007 study by the University of Guam Marine Laboratory estimated the economic value of Guam's coral reefs to be \$2 million per square kilometer, or 0.4 square mile, and nearly \$15 million per square kilometer at a 2,153-foot area known for its diving and snorkeling sites.

It said that reefs were valuable not only as tourist attractions, but also because they functioned as natural breakwaters that absorbed wave energy and protected against beach loss and coastal erosion.

The reefs already experience periodic bleaching, and they could become more vulnerable because many have



Visitors to the Fish Eye Marine Park in Guam on August 11, 2017.

been overfished and can no longer support enough of the algae that helps reef ecosystems recover from bleaching, said Peter Houk, a coral reef specialist at the marine laboratory.

"Do these tourists want to return if they don't see a live reef?" he said. "I don't know the answer to that."

Another concern is how climate change could affect operations at Guam's military installations, including Andersen Air Force Base, a crucial staging ground for United States Air Force bombers that operate in East Asia. Analysts say that concern could grow if the Pentagon follows through with plans to move thousands of Marines to Guam from Okinawa, Japan, turning the island into even more of a strategic military hub.

A 2012 study by the American Security Project, a re-

**A key concern is how reef damage could affect a \$1.4 billion tourism sector that, according to the Guam Visitors Bureau, accounts for 60 percent of Guam's annual business revenue and nearly a third of its nonfederal employment.**

search group in Washington, said that Guam's military installations were among the five most vulnerable American ones worldwide to coastal erosion, extreme weather, rising sea levels and other projected climate change impacts.

"Obviously you can't run a war from a base that's without power and water" after a major storm, said Andrew Holland, the group's director of studies. He noted that when the last super typhoon hit Guam, in 2002, gasoline tanks exploded and much of the island was without electricity for weeks.

The Pentagon said in a 2014 report that climate change posed an immediate threat to national security. And in June, the House Armed Services Committee passed an amendment to the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act that would require the secretary of defense to submit a report on how climate change could affect American military installations and combat requirements over the next 20 years.

There are a number of climate adaptation studies underway in Guam, both civilian and military, said Victoria Keener, a research fellow at the East-West Center in Honolulu who works on applied hydrology and climatology projects in the Pacific islands.

The adaptation work includes research, overseen by a local climate change task force, on coastal infrastructure in tourist areas, Dr. Keener said, as well as a Pentagon-financed study to explore how climate change may affect the island's freshwater resources.

Dr. Keener said that, because Guam is not particularly low-lying, it probably would be less vulnerable to the effects of rising sea levels than an island such as Kwajalein Atoll, in the Marshall Islands, where the defense contractor Lockheed Martin is building a \$915 million radar system for the United States Air Force.

But Guam's topography is no guarantee that its climate adaptation projects would be effective over the long term, she added.

"Climate change adaptation: It's a new field," she said, "and you really don't know how well you're preparing for things until 20 years, 30 years down the road."



# The key to drought-tolerant crops may be in the leaves

A solution to help farmers to grow crops in dry areas or during stretches of drought may depend on breeding and cultivating plants that protect themselves with a thicker layer of leaf wax, a new study shows.

Sarah Feakins, a scientist at USC who has studied leaf wax in the context of climate change, teamed up recently with researchers at Texas A&M University to research and develop drought-resistant crops. During tests with growing winter wheat, a type harvested for yeast-based breads and other such products, the team found that the cultivars in a high and dry area of Texas generated more protective wax on their leaves as a measure to protect themselves against more extreme conditions.

The results mimicked what scientists have found in leaves in natural ecosystems: Those that survive in dry climates have higher concentrations of wax.

## ■ Depends on innovation

"Water conservation depends on innovation, and in this case, we are hoping to find one solution by identifying the traits in this important food crop that would enable the wheat plants to tolerate drought and still produce plenty for harvest," said Feakins, a co-lead author of the study and an associate professor of earth



sciences at the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences.

All plants produce wax that helps their leaves repel water and shield the plant from insects and the elements, said Feakins, who has studied climate history of the Earth through the geochemistry of

leaf wax in sediments.

Feakins said this latest study marks the first time she has applied her expertise to agricultural production. The United States is currently the top exporter of wheat in the world, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research

Service. Winter wheat is largely grown for bread products and ingredients, such as all-purpose flour.

## ■ Different ideas

For the study, the researchers grew test plots of winter wheat in two different areas of Texas: the high plains of Amarillo and a farming area known as Winter Garden, Uvalde.

At each location, scientists grew 10 cultivars, or plant varieties, of winter wheat that received regular irrigation and another 10 cultivars that received 13 percent to 25 percent less irrigation. The team compared the leaf wax of all the plots to gauge their drought tolerance.

The plot set to receive 25 percent less irrigation in Winter Garden ended up receiving 13 percent less because of greater-than-expected rainfall. But a similar plot grown with 25 percent less water in the most arid area, Amarillo, generated 50 percent more paraffin on its leaves than the other cultivars in all the other plots, which enabled the plants to tolerate their dry conditions.

"We see a strong effect in the higher and drier location," Feakins said. "We see the plants adapt to their environment and to better protect their leaves, allowing them to respond well to reduced irrigation."

(Source: EurekAlert)

**All plants produce wax that helps their leaves repel water and shield the plant from insects and the elements, says Feakins**

## Stem-cell therapy work could solve hairy problem, banish baldness for good

Stem cells may have a part to play in regrowing everything from teeth to eyeballs, and now researchers at UCLA are working on something that would be welcomed by people suffering from a very common problem — regrowing hair in bald people. In new research, they describe a new way to activate the stem cells in the hair follicle to make new hair sprout. Such a breakthrough could potentially be used to develop drugs for promoting hair growth in people with either baldness or alopecia.

"We found that hair follicle stem cells practice a distinct type of metabolism, and that if you fiddle with it genetically or pharmacologically, you can control the rate at which these cells wake up to make new hair shafts," Bill Lowry, a professor of molecular, cell, and developmental biology at UCLA, told Digital Trends.

Hair follicle stem cells generate hair over an individual's lifetime. These remain dormant much of the time, but activate quickly when a new hair cycle prompts growth.

When they don't activate, baldness occurs. In small animal studies, the team was able to identify two drugs that influence hair follicle growth when applied to the skin.

## ■ Cellular-signaling pathway

One drug is named RCGD423, and works by activating a cellular-signaling pathway that transmits information from outside the cell to the cell's nucleus. The other drug, called UK5099, works by forcing the production of lactate in hair follicle stem cells, thereby accelerating hair growth.

"We showed that drugs that promote production of a particular metabolite can accelerate hair follicle stem cell activation in mice," Lowry said. "We are pushing forward toward the clinic to determine if this same approach is viable for human hair in patients with thinning due to stress, age, chemotherapy, [and] hormone imbalance."

There is still more work to be done before that point can be reached. As of now, the experimental drugs have not been tested in humans, nor approved as safe by



the Food and Drug Administration. Researchers are optimistic that it will reach that point. "We are considering starting a new company to support the ongoing development of new compounds that could be drugs for testing in a clinical trial," Lowry said.

(Source: Digital Trends)

## Scientist looks to wood pulp to make lighter auto parts

The global push among carmakers to make ever lighter vehicles is leading some auto suppliers in Japan to turn to what seems like an unlikely substitute for steel - wood.

Japanese researchers and auto component makers say a material made from wood pulp weighs just one fifth of steel and can be five times stronger.

The material - cellulose nanofibers - could become a viable alternative to steel in the decades ahead, they say, although it faces competition from carbon-based materials, and remains a long way from being commercially viable.

## ■ Reducing vehicle weight

Reducing the weight of a vehicle will be critical as manufacturers move to bring electric cars into the mainstream. Batteries are an expensive but vital component, so a reduction in car weight will mean fewer batteries will be needed to power the vehicle, saving on costs.

"Lightweighting is a constant issue for us," said Masanori Matsushiro, a project manager overseeing body design at Toyota Motor Corp.

"But we also have to resolve the issue of high manufacturing costs before we see an increased use of new, light-

er-weight materials in mass-volume cars."

Researchers at Kyoto University and major parts suppliers such as Denso Corp, Toyota's biggest supplier, and Dai-kyoNishikawa Corp, are working with plastics incorporated with cellulose nanofibers - made by breaking down wood pulp fibers into several hundredths of a micron (one thousandth of a millimeter).

## ■ Wood fibers treated

Cellulose nanofibers have been used in a variety of products ranging from ink to transparent displays, but their potential use in cars has been enabled by the "Kyoto Process", under which chemically treated

wood fibers are kneaded into plastics while simultaneously being broken down into nanofibers, slashing the cost of production to roughly one-fifth that of other processes.

"This is the lowest-cost, highest-performance application for cellulose nanofibers, and that's why we're focusing on its use in auto and aircraft parts," Kyoto University Professor Hiroaki Yano, who is leading the research, told Reuters in an interview. The university, along with auto parts suppliers, are currently developing a prototype car using cellulose nanofiber-based parts to be completed in 2020.

(Source: Reuters)

## BSI's Two New Products Unveiled

Two new products of Bank Saderat Iran (BSI) were unveiled in the field of e-banking and services area entitled "ATM" and "Scanner", the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Dr. Azizian IT Affairs Manager of the bank was the first speaker who pointed to the macro policies of country based on the resistance economy and said: "In tandem with the general policies of the country, Economist Magazine, which is regarded as one of the most important periodicals in the world, named the current



year 2017 ad "Weightless Economy" which is focused on increasing quality of management and planning instead of spending on the physical infrastructures."

Given the above issue, BSI has made all its utmost efforts to promote software-based hardware capabilities and potentials, he maintained.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he pointed to the capabilities of current Automated Teller Machine (ATM) and said: "The new version of ATM is of fund payment-free ATMs that enjoys all specifications of similar ATMs available at the market."

## EN Bank Celebrates 16th Establishment Anniversary Gloriously

In a glorious ceremony, EN Bank (Eqtesad-e Novin) Bank, Iran's Five Private Bank, held its 16th foundation anniversary in the presence of members of the Board of Directors, industrious staff and personnel as well as chief executives of companies affiliated to this prestigious bank, Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Eng. Mohammad Sadr-Hashemi Founder of EN Bank was the first speaker

who expounded on the activity and performance of his bank and said: "As the first private bank in the country, giant steps were taken by EN Bank, so that this bank was initiator for establishment of other banks in the country."

Given the above issue, private banks have sponsored construction operation of many projects in the country, he said, adding: "EN Bank is considered as one

of healthiest, most acclaimed and most transparent bank in banking network over the years. Despite many ups and downs, the bank has managed to introduce itself as a legitimate bank, observing pertinent rules and regulations."

Relying upon the assistance of the Almighty God, the senior management of the bank will make all its utmost efforts to materialize most economic objectives, he ended.



## RAZI Insurance Co. Launches Training Courses

Branch offices of RAZI Insurance Company launched training courses, Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

At the initiative taken by the Development and Training Center of RAZI Insurance Company, the training courses were held at the branch offices and Central Headquarters of the company in line with materializing strategic policies and objectives of the company and also increasing technical knowhow and knowledge of insurance experts of the company.

The training course for the issuance and instruction



of civil liability insurance in Qazvin branch of RAZI Insurance Company was instructed by Mr. Vahid Ghods and Ms. Sahar Ostad Aqaei.

The training course of "Fire Insurance" in Tehran Eastern Branch was instructed by the manager of the branch office Mr. Amirpour and Ms. Fatemeh Kamran.

With due observance to the said issue, insurance experts of the company launched necessary training courses in various provinces of the country, the Public Relations Dept. of the company ended.

## Siemens to construct eHighway on German autobahn

Siemens first revealed its eHighway concept back in 2012, where a hybrid diesel/electric truck moving down a stretch of road could raise its specially-developed pantograph to meet overhead power lines and roll along on electric power only. Last year the eHighway project moved from testing to a live install on a 2 km stretch of public roads outside Stockholm, Sweden. Now Siemens has announced similar plans for a 10 km stretch of Germany's A5 autobahn.



The first eHighway field trial on a public highway in Germany has been commissioned by the German state of Hesse, and is due for completion by the end of next year. It will run from the Zeppelinheim/Cargo City Süd interchange at the Frankfurt Airport and the Darmstadt/Weiterstadt interchange - which adds up to 10 km (6.2 mi) of federal highway.

The planning, construction and maintenance of the system will be down to Siemens, while overall project management will be the responsibility of Hessen Mobil, the body that oversees road and transport management in the state.

The "system will be used for real transport networks, and prove the practicality of climate-neutral freight transport in the urban region of Frankfurt," said Hessen Mobil's Gerd Riegelhuth.

As with previous eHighway installations, the overhead lines will supply electricity to the electric drive of a hybrid freight truck. When running under said lines, the truck will operate on electricity only, with the hybrid diesel engine kicking in when leaving the eHighway and operating on roads without overhead power lines.

Siemens reports that the system is potentially twice as efficient as ICE-only trucking solutions, while also reducing local air pollution.

(Source: New Atlas)

## New study shows how well we beat back climate change in the 80s

With the current discussion over climate change ranging from dystopian to denial, it's worth remembering that humanity can take actions that over time resolve tough environmental problems. A new study takes a look at the Montreal Protocols, signed in 1987, and finds that its implementation allowed us to successfully close the hole in the Earth's ozone layer.

Like many widespread movements, the Montreal Protocols had humble beginnings almost a decade prior. In 1973, two scientists at the University of California, Irvine began to study the effects of chlorofluorocarbons, also known as CFCs and its commercial name, freon, on the environment.

A colorless gas first developed in the 1890's and perfected in the 1920's, freon had grown to be a part of every day life. It replaced toxic ammonia in refrigeration systems, allowing refrigerators to become a common sight in homes. By the 60s, CFCs were common ingredients in everything from fire retardants to deodorant spray cans.

But F. Sherwood Rowland and Mario Molina, the scientists seen above, found that when CFC gases mixed with solar radiation they eat away at the ozone layer, a region of the Earth's stratosphere that absorbs deadly ultraviolet radiation. The two pushed their findings on to whoever would listen, often attacked by industry groups who had built entire economies around CFCs.

The aerosol industry tried to claim that Rowland was a secret Russian agent bent on destroying capitalism.

But by 1985, the science was indisputable. British scientists had discovered what Rowland and Molina said was coming: a hole in the ozone layer had been found in the South Pole.

(Source: Popular Mechanics)

## NASA, ESA spacecraft track solar storm through space

Our sun is active: Not only does it release a constant stream of material, called the solar wind, but it also lets out occasional bursts of faster-moving material, known as coronal mass ejections, or CMEs.

NASA researchers wish to improve our understanding of CMEs and how they move through space because they can interact with the magnetic field around Earth, affecting satellites, interfering with GPS signals, triggering auroras, and -- in extreme cases -- straining power grids.

While we track CMEs with a number of instruments, the sheer size of the Solar System means that our observations are limited, and usually taken from a distance.

However, scientists have recently used data from 10 NASA and ESA (European Space Agency) spacecraft in the direct path of a CME to piece together an unprecedented portrait of how these solar storms move through space -- in particular, narrowing down the changes in speed that happen as CMEs travel through the Solar System beyond Earth's orbit.

This new set of observations adds key information to the models needed to track how material moves and changes throughout space in the Solar System -- crucial to understanding the medium through which our spacecraft travel, as we venture farther and farther from home.

(Source: eurekalert.org)



## Belgian town cooks giant omelet amidst egg scare

A Belgian town honored its 22-year-old tradition of making a giant omelet on Tuesday amidst an egg contamination scare, cooking 10,000 eggs in a pan four meters wide.



Millions of chicken eggs have been pulled from European supermarket shelves as a result of the scare over the use of the insecticide fipronil, which is forbidden in the food chain and can cause organ damage in humans.

Hundreds of people gathered in the eastern Belgian city of Malmedy undeterred by the scare and the president of the local branch of the giant omelet fraternity, Benedicte Mathy, said she was confident Tuesday's dish was safe to eat.

Under a timid Belgian sun and with music playing they tucked into the giant omelet cooked over an open fire by "The World Fraternity of Knights of the Giant Omelet", which was created in 1973.

(Source: Reuters)

## Wayward alligator found in swimming pool at New Jersey motel

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP) — An alligator has been found in a swimming pool at a motel at the New Jersey shore.

The 3-foot-long (0.91-meter-long) alligator was discovered Tuesday morning at the Bayview Inn & Suites in Atlantic City.

Authorities say it's not clear where the alligator came from, how it got into the pool or how long it had been there.

Animal control workers safely lifted the alligator from the pool. It was taken to an undisclosed site.

## LEARN ENGLISH

### The Office - Out Of Control Spending

A: OK, so now the last point on our agenda. Jill, let's **go over** the profit and loss statement.

B: Great. Well, the main issue here, as you can see, is that our expenses are **through the roof**.

A: Let's see... These numbers are **off the charts**! What's going on here!

B: Well, um, sir, the company **expenditures** on entertainment and travel are **out of control**. Look at these bills for example. Just this month we've paid over twenty thousand dollars for hotel charges!

A: OK, thank you. I'll **look into** it.

B: The list **goes on and on**. Here, this is a bill for five thousand dollars for spa treatments!

A: Thank you; that will be all. I'll **take care of** it.

B: Look at this one sir, eight thousand dollars were spent in one night at a place called "Wild Things"?!

A: OK, I get it!! Thank you for your very thorough analysis!

#### ■ Key Vocabulary

**go over:** revise, check

**through the roof:** suddenly very high

**off the charts:** very high

**expenditures:** amount of money spent on something

**out of control:** not in control

**look into:** investigate, try to get information about something

**go on and on:** continues

**take care of:** do something about

#### ■ Supplementary Vocabulary

**revenue:** amount of money paid to a business

**cash flow:** the movement of money into and out of a business

**the bottom line:** the net profit; the amount of money a business makes after expenses

**finances:** the amount of money you have and how well it is organized

**income:** the amount of money a person or a company makes

**assets:** things of value that are owned by a company

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Have an idea?  
Be in touch!

lifestyle.tehrantimes@gmail.com

# Iran's National Museum of Science and Technology seeking perfection

By Maryam Qarehgozlou

TEHRAN — Museums of science and technology are modern and dynamic which do not correspond to regular museums.

The "do not touch" sign which normally appear in other museums has lost its meaning in museums of science and technology as one can freely touch and conduct experiments they have only read about at the museum.

Not unlike other museums of the kind, there exists interactive experiments, covering many areas of knowledge in the Iranian National Museum of Science and Technology (INMOST). Even the visitor can participate in experiments that resulted in the current scientific knowledge.

Affiliated with Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, INMOST opened in 2010.

According to Seifollah Jalili, the museum chairman, INMOST "is not just a museum to showcase artifacts, it is a platform to create a culture of developing science and innovation to build a quality life for mankind."

"To do so, we need people who are well-educated in science and technology and our museum would facilitate that," Jalili remarked.

#### ■ Galleries

INMOST is comprised of 6 galleries of surgical instruments, indigenous technologies, science center, Morse to mobile, renewable energies, and astronomical instruments.

The gallery of surgical instruments demonstrates the advance of surgery in the Islamic civilization by reconstruction and demonstration of some of these instruments and their usage over time. Morse to mobile exhibition tries to show



the process of evolution of communication from the beginning till now. The science center is related to practical objects that led to easy learning of scientific concepts (physics, mechanics, etc.)

Indigenous technologies gallery is pertaining to Iranian and Islamic scientists' inventions and tries to show how they use the technologies for daily life. Renewable energy gallery aims to demonstrate technologies in nuclear energy, Iranian scientists' ability in this field and introduce nuclear martyrs. Astronomical instruments gallery is also filled with reconstructed instruments belonging to ancient Iranian astronomers and introducing some basic astronomical theories.

#### ■ Activities

INMOST also holds hundreds of educational and scientific workshops, conferences, and festivals annually.

Mobile exhibitions, displaying scientific instruments, are being held in Tehran and other cities all year round. So far some

10 to 15 mobile exhibitions in association with universities and industrial centers are held across Tehran in subway stations and Azadi sport complex. Moreover some 15 mobile exhibitions were held nationwide in 15 province.

The 7th annual INMOST conference under the theme of "museum, science and society" is also scheduled to be held in January 2018 with Iranian and foreign experts in attendance.

SAR conferences are seasonal (spring, summer, autumn, winter), conducted by Iranian National Museum of Science and Technology. SAR is inspired by TED conferences. In SAR conferences, short speeches (18 minutes tops) are delivered which cover a diverse range of topics. Sciences, technology, health, education, entertainment, design and arts are some of the major topics of interest for SAR conferences. Speakers are being selected from those who have unique and notable experiences, new and innovative ideas and

those who propose challenging problems.

Science for all festival is an annual event which is composed of two non-competitive and competitive sections which will be held in November. This year's competitive section theme revolves around families' readiness for earthquake.

The festival audiences are common people, schoolchildren, students, families and so on. Therefore, any individual or group, of all ages, educational, professional and institutional can attend it.

#### ■ An uphill struggle

According to Jalili the INMOST's current building does not meet the standards of a museum of science and technology and that as per a memorandum of understanding has been signed with the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology and Tehran Municipality and a new site is earmarked for construction of a building that will live up to the necessary requirements.

"The new museum is projected to finish within five years and countries such as Finland and France have proposed to help Iran to come up with a modern design," Jalili highlighted.

Jalili also mentioned shortcomings stemming from lack of attention to the museum in the country.

These museums would create equal opportunities for the public to educate and learn, the museum chairman said, suggesting that setting up such museums might carry high costs but once they get off the ground they'll become lucrative and provide employment.

Jalili also explained that the museum is trying to gain international cooperation. "We've negotiated and inked a memorandums of understanding with Norway, Finland, and France and we are planning on expanding international ties."

## Fish mistaking plastic debris in ocean for food

Fish may be actively seeking out plastic debris in the oceans as the tiny pieces appear to smell similar to their natural prey, new research suggests.

The fish confuse plastic for an edible substance because microplastics in the oceans pick up a covering of biological material, such as algae, that mimics the smell of food, according to the study published on Wednesday in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B.

Scientists presented schools of wild-caught anchovies with plastic debris taken from the oceans, and with clean pieces of plastic that had never been in the ocean. The anchovies responded to the odors of the ocean debris in the same way as they do to the odors of the food they seek.

The scientists said this was the first behavioral evidence that the chemical signature of plastic debris was attractive to a marine organism, and reinforces other work suggesting the odor could be significant.

The finding demonstrates an additional danger of plastic in the oceans, as it suggests that fish are not just ingesting the tiny pieces by accident, but actively seeking them out.

Matthew Savoca, of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and lead author of the study, told the Guardian: "When plastic floats at sea its surface gets colonized by algae within days or weeks, a



process known as biofouling. Previous research has shown that this algae produces and emits DMS, an algal based compound that certain marine animals use to find food. [The research shows] plastic may be more deceptive to fish than previously thought. If plastic both looks and smells like food, it is more difficult for animals like fish to distinguish it as not food."

Plastic debris in the oceans, ranging from the microscopic to large visible pieces, is recognized as a growing problem as it does not readily degrade and hundreds of thousands of tones are dumped in the sea annually. Larger pieces have been found in the intestines of whales and seabirds, where they are thought to

be potentially fatal, while the smallest pieces have been detected in the guts of even juvenile fish and molluscs. Numerous species of fish eaten by humans have been found to contain plastic, and the effect of eating these on human health is still unknown.

Efforts to reduce marine plastic have so far had little effect: microbeads widely used in cosmetics and other products have been banned in the US, the UK and other countries, but they only solve part of the problem, which is mainly caused by dumping of plastic rubbish. There could be more plastic than fish in the sea by 2050, campaigners have warned.

Scientists have struggled to understand exactly how the massive increase in plastics may be affecting the behavior of fish and marine ecosystems, and how to contain the problem.

A previous paper published in the journal Science that alleged juvenile fish were attracted to microplastics "like teenagers after junk food" was withdrawn earlier this year after controversy. The scientists involved in that paper, who have no relation to the authors of today's study, were suspected of having exaggerated their data or failed to carry out the purported experiments properly. The new paper did not draw on that publication.

(Source: The Guardian)

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ↔ ج

### Clean air law ratified

The clean air law aiming to combat air pollution all over Iran has been ratified by the Guardian Council - a supervisory body who vets legislations to determine their constitutionality.

Given the persistent and choking air pollution causing great discomfort to city dwellers, the Department of Environment put forward the clean air bill to the parliament (Majlis).

General outlines of the bill were approved on October 23, 2016 by Majlis.

However, the council found some ambiguities about it. So, the bill was returned to Majlis to be reconsidered and finally it was approved on August 1, said Mohammad Mojabi, a top official at the Department of Environment.

Eventually, Majlis will circulate the law to the administration to be officially come into force, he noted.

The clean air law covers all regions across the country including free zones, special economic energy and industrial zones as well, he announced.

### ENGLISH PROVERB

#### Virtue is its own reward

■ **Explanation:** You should not expect praise for acting in a correct or moral way.

■ **For example:** Bill: If I help you, will you pay me? Fred: Virtue is its own reward.

### PHRASAL VERB

#### work off

■ **For example:****Meaning:** Exercise to remove stress or weight

■ **For example:** She goes to the gym to work off her anger.

### ENGLISH IDIOM

#### walk all over someone

■ **For example:****Explanation:** If one person walks all over another, they treat them very badly or unkindly, especially by showing no consideration for their cares or needs

■ **For example:****For example:** You must learn to defend yourself. Don't let him walk all over you!



# Far right welcomes Trump's Charlottesville reaction

White supremacists have welcomed U.S. President Donald Trump's insistence on blaming "both sides" for deadly violence in Charlottesville, Virginia last weekend.

The praise for the Republican leader drew concern and condemnation from across the political spectrum, including from senior figures within his own party.

Trump's presidential campaign last year enjoyed broad far-right backing, and the Trump administration includes several figures linked to far-right and neo-Nazi groups.

Tensions are high after a white supremacist mowed down a crowd of anti-racists on August 12 in Charlottesville, killing anti-fascist protester Heather Heyer and injuring dozens - some severely.

Trump initially blamed "many sides" for the violence and avoided calling out the far-right by name.

After an outcry, he specifically condemned white supremacy two days later.

By Wednesday, however, Trump again criticized "both sides" including anti-fascist protesters, who he described as the "alt-left", a term popularized by the far-right.

## ■ 'Trump cares about truth'

In his now defunct neo-Nazi blog, the Daily Stormer, Andrew Anglin praised



Trump's reaction with the anti-Semitic headline: "Trump Finally Gives Half-Assed Charlottesville Statement to Whining Jew Media".

"I knew Trump was eventually going to be like meh, whatever," Anglin wrote. "Trump only disavowed us at the point of a Jewish weapon. So I'm not disavowing him."

Others also read Trump's reaction as

made out of political expedience rather than genuine ill-feeling.

Neo-Nazis on Twitter and the 4Chan forum celebrated what they saw as a coded message of support from Trump.

The U.S. president earned praise from white supremacist ideologue, Richard Spencer, and from former KKK leader, David Duke.

Responding to a tweet by far-right

polemicist Ann Coulter, which praised Trump for standing up to the media, Spencer wrote: "Trump cares about the truth".

Duke wrote on the social media platform: "Thank you President Trump for your honesty and courage to tell the truth about Charlottesville and condemn the leftist terrorists in BLM/Antifa".

Black Lives Matter (BLM) is a US-based civil liberties organization demanding equal rights for African Americans and an end to police brutality.

## ■ Anger and concern

From the Centre-right to the left, Trump's behavior and comments have attracted condemnation on Twitter.

During his address on Wednesday, the U.S. president referred to "very fine people" on both sides of the divide.

Activist and writer Shaun King said Trump's speech was an "an open embrace of white supremacy".

"As expected, white supremacists loved the off-script press conference Donald Trump just gave. loved it."

Senior Democrat and senate minority leader, Chuck Schumer, said Trump's purported neutrality was indicative of his sympathies.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Britain seeks Brexit without borders for Northern Ireland

Britain has said there should be no border posts or immigration checks between Ireland and the British province of Northern Ireland after Brexit, in a paper that attempts to resolve one of the most complex aspects of its departure from the European Union.

Some 30,000 people cross the 500-km (300-mile) border every day without customs or immigration controls; negotiators must work out new arrangements without inflaming tensions in a region that suffered decades of bloody turmoil before a peace deal in 1998.

As part of a series of papers that Prime Minister Theresa May hopes will push forward talks with the EU, the government on Tuesday outlined its vision for a "frictionless" customs system, which drew criticism from some in Brussels.

Wednesday's publication drew heavily on those proposals as a solution for Northern Ireland that would not involve "physical border infrastructure and border posts".

"The paper provides flexible and imaginative ideas and demonstrates our desire to find a practical solution that recognizes the unique economic, social and cultural context of the land border with Ireland, without creating any new obstacles to trade within the UK," Northern Ireland minister James Brokenshire said in a statement.

The government said reaching an agreement with the EU that there should be no border infrastructure was top of Britain's list of priorities.

May also said Britain would consider stepping in to replace some EU funding for peace projects in Northern Ireland after it leaves the bloc in March 2019, to prevent

a resurgence of violence between pro-British Protestants and Catholic Irish nationalists.

Commenting on an advance briefing of the position paper, the Irish government said it was "timely and helpful" and that it hoped enough progress could be made to move talks forward.

"Protecting the peace process is crucial and it must not become a bargaining chip in the negotiations," it said.

But Senator Mark Daly, deputy leader of Ireland's opposition Fianna Fáil party, said the proposals for a frictionless border appeared "more like fiction, and clueless on this island".

"It will be a smugglers' charter," he told BBC Radio Four.

Northern Ireland sold 2.7 billion pounds (\$3.5 billion) of goods into Ireland in 2015, according to official figures, and many businesses have complex supply chains that involve crossing the border multiple times during the production process.

## ■ No immigration checks

Britain said it wanted to maintain the Common Travel Area (CTA), a pact that allows free movement between the United Kingdom and Ireland for British and Irish citizens, with no need for passport controls and "no question of new immigration checks operating between Northern Ireland and Ireland".

That would mean EU citizens wishing to enter Britain could do so by traveling legitimately to Ireland and crossing the border unchecked - something that is likely to antagonize the many Britons for whom controlling

immigration was a key reason for backing Brexit.

The government said control over migration from the EU into Britain could be exercised by restrictions on access to the British social security system and labor market. Further details would be set out in a future document on immigration.

Britain also wants to introduce new 'trusted trader' arrangements to help larger companies and make smaller firms exempt from customs processes.

It rejected the idea of an effective customs border in the Irish Sea that separates England, Wales and Scotland from Ireland and Northern Ireland as "not constitutionally or economically viable".

## ■ Negotiating phase

The border is one of three priority issues that the EU is insisting must be dealt with during the opening rounds of talks before moving on to Britain's future relationship with the bloc.

But Britain said it did not make sense to seek final agreement on Northern Ireland by October before moving ahead to the future relationship, because the two issues were inextricably linked.

The first two rounds of divorce talks in Brussels have made limited progress and Britain is keen to push them forward by publishing documents outlining its vision for future ties.

Tuesday's proposals on customs arrangements ideas met with scepticism among some of Britain's current EU partners, with one EU official describing the idea of an invisible border as 'fantasy'.

9Source: Daily Telegraph

## U.S.-Japan conduct air drills as North Korea watches next move by 'Yankees'

Japanese jets conducted air maneuvers with U.S. bombers southwest of the Korean peninsula on Wednesday as North Korea considered whether to fire missiles towards the U.S.-administered territory of Guam.

Reclusive North Korea has made no secret of its plan to develop a missile capable of firing a nuclear warhead at the United States to counter what it perceives as constant U.S. threats of invasion.

It has ignored warnings from the West and from its lone major ally, China, to halt its nuclear and missile tests which it conducts in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

The exercise in the East China Sea involved two U.S. Air Force B-1B Lancer bombers flying from Andersen Air Force Base on the Pacific island of Guam and two Japanese F-15 jet fighters, Japan's Air Self Defense Force said in a news release.

"These training flights with Japan demonstrate the solidarity and resolve we share with our allies to preserve peace and security in the Indo-Asia-Pacific," the U.S. Air Force said in an announcement.

The U.S. aircraft, which were designed to carry nuclear bombs and later switched to conventional payloads, have flown several sorties in East Asia over recent weeks. In addition to air drills with Japanese fighters, the bombers have also exercised with South Korean aircraft.

North Korea regards the U.S. exercises with South Korea and Japan as preparations to invade it.

The exercises also upset China, which says they do nothing to ease tension.

On Wednesday, a senior Chinese military officer reiterated China's position on the need to maintain peace and stability to the United States' top general, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Joseph Dunford, China's Defence Ministry said.

Song Puxuan, commander of China's Northern Theatre Command, stressed to Dunford that the North Korean nuclear issue must be resolved politically through talks, the ministry added, without saying where the two met.

The command is based in China's northeastern city of Shenyang and has responsibility for a swath of northern China, including the border with North Korea.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has delayed a decision on firing missiles towards Guam and U.S. officials have since taken a gentler tone, but tension in the region nonetheless remains high.

The North Korean threats had prompted U.S. President Donald Trump to say the U.S. military was "locked and loaded" if North Korea acted unwisely. Those words in turn prompted a warning from China for both sides to tone down the rhetoric.

North Korea has often threatened to



attack the United States and its bases in the region and it is likely to be infuriated by the current maneuvers and annual U.S.-Japanese drills next week.

In his first public appearance in about two weeks, Kim on Monday inspected the command of North Korea's army, examining the plan to fire four missiles aimed at landing near Guam, the official KCNA news agency reported.

"He said that if the Yankees persist in their extremely dangerous reckless actions on the Korean peninsula and in its vicinity, testing the self-restraint of the DPRK, the latter will make an important decision as it already declared," KCNA said.

DPRK stands for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, North Korea's official name.

Wednesday's air exercise took place close to Japanese-controlled islets in the

East China Sea which are also claimed by China. The uninhabited territory is known as Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China.

While the United States has declined to take sides in the dispute over the tiny islands, it nonetheless has said it would defend them from attack under its security alliance with Japan.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, in a telephone conversation with Sigmar Gabriel, Germany's minister for foreign affairs, said tension on the Korean peninsula was showing some signs of easing but had not passed.

The parties involved should "make a correct judgment and wise choice by taking a responsible attitude toward history and people", Wang said, according to a statement on his ministry's website.

(Source: Reuters)

## Turkish scholar: Iran and Turkey should cooperate to tackle common threats

1→ Turkey and Iran created a platform for Iraq's neighboring foreign ministers in order to discuss their security concerns due to lack of stability in Iraq. Today both of the countries are in the same position regarding Iraq's future. It is certain that there is no life to an independent Kurdish state in our geography if Turkey and Iran remain resistant."

■ Can the visit to Turkey by the senior Iranian commander affect the developments in Syria?

A: Turkey and Iran have had a great division regarding their policies toward Syria. However, it became certain that instability in Syria creates direct threat both for Turkey and Iran. Thus, the two countries started a new diplomatic approach, which focuses to eliminate security gaps regarding Syria. Turkey struggles against ISIS and PKK/YPG/PYD simultaneously and is determined to protect its borders from these terrorist organizations. For Turkey, an independent Kurdish state in

northern Syria has no difference from an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq in terms of national security concerns. Therefore, Turkey wants Iran to adopt the same position. If Iran declares that it will pursue the similar policy towards PYD/YPG, Turkey would not hesitate to cooperate with Iran in Syria. In this vein, it is certain that the visit of Iranian armed forces chief of staff will have positive outcomes for further cooperation."

## China urges India to protect peace after border altercation

China on Wednesday urged India to protect the peace and stability of their border after Indian sources said soldiers of the two Asian giants were involved in an altercation in the western Himalayas.

Troops from the two countries have been embroiled in a seven-week standoff on the Doklam plateau in another part of the remote Himalayan region near their disputed frontier.

On Tuesday, a source in New Delhi, who had been briefed on the military situation on the border, said soldiers foiled a bid by a group of Chinese troops to enter Indian territory in Ladakh, near a lake called Pangong.

Some of the Chinese soldiers carried iron rods and stones, and troops on both sides suffered minor injuries in the melee, the source said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said she did not know details of the most recent incident.

"But what I can tell you is that Chinese border forces have consistently and always dedicated themselves to protecting peace and tranquillity on the China-India border region and we have always patrolled on the Chinese side of the line of control," Hua told a daily news briefing.

"We urge the Indian side to scrupulously abide by relevant agreements, protocols and rules between the two countries and earnestly respect the 1959 line of control and earnestly protect the peace and stability of the border region."

China says the Line of Actual Control was set in 1959 but India disputed that and the two sides went to war three years later. They have since been unable to agree where the dividing line between them lies.

China's Defense Ministry has yet to comment on the matter.

The two sides have frequently accused each other of territorial intrusions, but clashes are rare.

An Indian official briefed on the matter also said "flag meetings", or ceremonies involving Chinese and Indian soldiers at five points along the frontier usually held on the Aug. 15 anniversary of India's independence, were canceled on Tuesday.

The official said the event was marked more informally, with troops from both sides exchanging sweets at several places, including the Doklam area, where the stand-off has lasted almost two months.

The Doklam plateau is far to the east of Ladakh, in another part of the their 3,500-km (2,175-mile) unmarked mountain border.

China has repeatedly asked India to unilaterally withdraw from the Doklam area, or face the prospect of an escalation. Chinese state media have warned India of a fate worse than its crushing defeat in a brief border war in 1962.

(Source: Xinhua)

## Philippine police kills 32 in drugs war's bloodiest day

Philippine police killed 32 people in dozens of anti-drug operations in a province north of the capital, Manila, in the single deadliest day of President Rodrigo Duterte's unrelenting war on drugs.

About 109 petty criminals, including street-level drug peddlers were arrested and dozens of guns seized in police operations across Bulacan province from Monday night until Tuesday afternoon, said provincial police chief, Romeo Caramat.

"We have conducted 'one-time, big-time' operations in the past, so far, the number of casualties and deaths, this is the highest," Caramat told a news conference.

He defended police action and said the deaths were during shootouts, and were not executions, as activists have often alleged.

"There are some sectors that will not believe us, but we are open for any investigation. All we can say is that we don't have any control of the situation. As much as possible, we don't want this bloody encounter"

Thousands of people have been killed in the anti-drugs campaign, Duterte's signature policy, since it was launched on June 30 last year, most users and small-time dealers from poor neighborhoods.

The intensity of the crackdown has alarmed the international community, and activists and human rights groups say police have been executing suspects and planting drugs and guns at crime scenes. Police and the government officials reject that.

Police also deny involvement in thousands of murders by mysterious gunmen, blaming them on gang turf wars, drug dealers silencing informants, or vigilantes targeting drug users.

"There were 32 killed in Bulacan in a massive raid, that's good," Duterte said in a speech.

"Let's kill another 32 every day. Maybe we can reduce what ails this country."

Police conducted 49 sting drug operations in Bulacan that resulted in about 20 armed encounters, Caramat said. Ten other gunfights ensued when police tried to serve arrest warrants to suspects who fought back.

He said 93 of those held were wanted for other crimes, as well as drugs offences.

Bulacan has been a major target in the drugs war, with some 425 people killed and 4,000 offenders arrested, according to Caramat, making it the second-biggest hot spot in the crackdown outside of the Manila area.

Political opponents of Duterte have filed a complaint with the International Criminal Court (ICC) accusing the president and top aides of crimes against humanity, arguing they failed to address allegations of widespread police abuses that have been brought to their attention.

Duterte has welcomed the ICC complaint, and said he was willing to rot in jail to protect Filipinos.

He has often complained about human rights groups criticizing and undermining his campaign and on Wednesday said he would instead investigate them, or worse.

"If they are obstructing justice, shoot them," he said.

(Source: Reuters)



## Barcelona crisis: Messi unconvinced after Neymar exit

Barcelona's crisis appears to be worsening with Lionel Messi furious over their transfer activity this summer, reports claim.

Barcelona have endured a nightmare start to the season on the back of a troubling summer over at the Nou Camp.

The Catalan giants were easily swatted aside by Real Madrid in the Spanish Super Cup on Sunday night, slumping to a 3-1 defeat on home soil.

The absence of Neymar was particularly felt, with Barcelona still reeling from his decision to join Paris Saint-Germain in a stunning, world-record £198million transfer.

Manager Ernesto Valverde remains on the lookout for reinforcements with Liverpool's Philippe Coutinho and Borussia Dortmund's Ousmane Dembele spearheading his wish list.

But Spanish outlet Diario Gol claim the dressing room heavyweights - including Messi - are despairing at the current state of affairs.

It is said Neymar's decision has taken them by surprise and Barcelona's best players are furious that they were unable to cling on to the Brazilian.

Additionally, Messi does not think Coutinho and Dembele are up to scratch.

Both players have forged fine reputations at their current clubs but neither has convinced Barcelona's No10 they can handle life at the Nou Camp.

He supposedly thinks Dembele in particular would not be the best Neymar replacement, considering him to be 'light years away' from being anywhere near the quality of the PSG star.

The signing of Paulinho has also not set well with Valverde's squad. There is said to be genuine bewilderment at their decision to pay £36.5m for the former Tottenham flop.

However, the Brazil international is the latest bizarre signing from Barcelona in recent years.

(Source: Express)

## Serena eyes 'outrageous' Australian Open return

Serena Williams aims to defend her Australian Open title next year, with the American saying the rapid return to action would only give her around three months to prepare after giving birth to her first child.

The 23-time grand slam winner announced her pregnancy in April and will be on maternity leave for the rest of the year. The 35-year-old is engaged to Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian.



'It's the most outrageous plan,' Williams told Vogue magazine. 'I just want to put that out there. That's, like, three months after I give birth. I'm not walking anything back, but I'm just saying it's pretty intense.'

'If I lose and I lose again, it's like, "she's done". Especially since I'm not 20 years old. I'll tell you this much: I won't win less. Either I win,

or I don't play.'

The American added that she could have a few new tricks up her sleeve after analysing her game on television over the last few months.

'I learn by watching. Or I watch old matches of myself on the Tennis Channel,' she added.

'I hit amazing shots and these girls are running them down and hitting winners, and I'm beginning to see why. It's because I have patterns.'

Williams is one grand slam shy of Australian Margaret Court's long-standing record of 24 major titles.

(Source: Daily Mail)

## Neymar becomes goodwill ambassador for world's disabled

Neymar, fresh from his first win with Paris St. Germain and his world-record signing for the club, became a goodwill ambassador for Handicap International on Tuesday, pledging to work for millions who are "less visible" but deserve equality.

The Brazilian forward, whose 222 million-euro (\$259.72 million) signing from Barcelona this month doubled the world-record transit fee, mounted a huge statue of a chair outside the U.N. in Geneva that symbolizes landmine victims.

He kicked a soccer ball to fans standing below and into the U.N. grounds. Surrounded by his parents, Neymar Santos Senior and Nadine Santos, he wore a black baseball cap and Handicap International black t-shirt with the inscription "Repair Lives".

"I would like to begin by thanking you all for what you do for the least visible in the world, so they become more visible.

I have to say that I am very pleased to be here and to be the new ambassador," the 25-year-old told a news briefing.

I hope this will be a very successful partnership and that we will be able to help a large number of people," he said. "Millions want their rights, they want to be treated better. That's what we are here for and that is what our aim is."

Neymar, asked what work or field visits he planned, replied:

"Obviously the practical part of this partnership still has to be discussed. I know that my image is very powerful and can help."

The charity was founded in 1982 to assist 6,000 Cambodian refugees who had lost limbs and later co-founded the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) in 1992 which won the Nobel Peace Prize.

(Source: Reuters)

# How the Premier League became a global playground



really began to accelerate.

The majority of the 602 players registered that year were still English, but the number of different nationalities featured across the season had almost doubled.

Arsenal's Dutchman Dennis Bergkamp thrilled supporters with his finesse and technique, scoring 16 league goals on his way to winning the PFA Player of the Year award.

Former Italy striker Gianluca Vialli replaced former Netherlands midfielder Ruud Gullit as manager of Chelsea, illustrating a growing appetite for foreign leadership.

### ■ 2002/03

On Boxing Day 1999, Vialli became the first boss to field an entirely non-British starting XI in the history of English football.

By the 2002/03 season, 77 nationalities were represented in the 20 squads, and there were more foreign recruits (58%) than homegrown players.

## Sharapova awarded main draw wildcard at U.S. Open



Former world number one Maria Sharapova will make her first grand slam appearance in over 18 months after she was awarded a main-draw wildcard for the upcoming U.S. Open, organizers said on Tuesday.

The 30-year-old Russian, who returned from a 15-month doping ban earlier this year, was denied a wildcard at the French Open, then missed the grass-court season, including Wimbledon, with a thigh injury.

Sharapova tweeted on Tuesday: "Thank you, @usopen. This is so so special. #goosebumps".

Sharapova tested positive for the drug meldonium in 2016, which had been added to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)banned substances list in January of that year.

The winner of five grand slam titles, including the 2006 U.S. Open, said she was unaware of the change.

"Her suspension under the terms of the tennis anti-doping program was completed and therefore was not one of the factors weighed in our wild card selection process," the United States Tennis Association (USTA) said in a statement.

"Additionally, Sharapova has volunteered to speak to young tennis players at the USTA National Campus about the importance of the tennis anti-doping program and the personal responsibility each player has to comply with the program's requirements."

Sharapova's U.S. Open preparations have been disrupted by an arm injury suffered during her first-round win over Jennifer Brady at the Stanford Classic earlier this month.

The world number 148 was forced to withdraw from the Rogers Cup and this week's Cincinnati Open as a precautionary measure before the final grand slam of the year.

Other wildcard recipients on the women's side were Americans Taylor Townsend, Kayla Day, Sofia Kenin, Ashley Kratzer, Brienne Minor and France's Amandine Hesse.

The U.S. Open runs from Aug. 28 to Sept. 10 at the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center at Flushing Meadows, New York.

Both the men's and women's singles champions this year will earn \$3.7 million.

(Source: Reuters)

## Arsenal risk losing Sanchez for free, Wenger says



Chelsea, won't be fit for the visit to Stoke as he recovers from a muscle strain.

The Chilean is in training and could return for the Gunners' visit to Liverpool next weekend.

Wenger also insisted that the ongoing Sanchez situation bears no comparison to that of Diego Costa at Chelsea.

The Spain striker has missed the beginning of the sea-

## German FA boss Reinhard Grindel pledges to end collective punishment



The head of the German football association has called for dialogue with fan groups, to resolve growing differences over a number of issues. Reinhard Grindel wants to end collective punishments for fan violence.

In a statement issued by the German football association (DFB) on Wednesday, its president, Reinhard Grindel, struck a conciliatory tone with the fans, saying that supporters as a whole should not be punished for the behavior of a few.

The DFB president also praised the fan groups who help create the sort of atmosphere in German football stadiums that is the 'envy of the entire world.'

"The DFB acknowledges this explicitly, and we are grateful for this," Grindel said.

At the same time he invited representatives from hardcore "ultra" fan groups, who often cause trouble, to meet with the FA to discuss about how to end the strife that has seen some of them declare "war" on the DFB over a number of issues, including collective punishments. However, he also noted that his offer of dialogue was not with-

at least one Premier League team.

It meant the division was more attractive than ever and, perhaps unsurprisingly, over 65% of players registered that year were foreign.

Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo scored 31 league goals to lead Manchester United to the 2007/08 title, but his time in English football would soon be up.

Since his \$132 million transfer to Real Madrid in 2009, Spanish clubs have dominated Europe's premier club competition.

### ■ 2012/13

The bubble — so often predicted to burst — just kept ballooning as the TV broadcasting deals got bigger and bigger and billionaire owners scrambled to grab a piece of the action.

In 2012/13, Premier League squads featured players from 82 nations around the world — from Antigua and Barbuda all the way to Zambia.

Liverpool's Uruguayan Luis Suarez pushed United's Dutchman Robin van Persie all the way for the golden boot, while just 22% of the 27 permanent and caretaker coaches were English.

### ■ 2017/18

Now, 25 years on, the Premier League continues to have by far the highest proportion of foreign players.

According to UEFA's most recent Club Licensing Benchmark Report, the Cypriot First Division has the next highest proportion of expatriate players (57.1%), followed by the Belgian Pro League (57.1%) and Liga NOS in Portugal (55.6%).

After 9,756 games and over 25,000 goals, 113 different nations have been represented. The world's Premier League indeed.

(Source: CNN)

son and is currently at his family home in Brazil as he tries to force through a move to Atletico Madrid, having been told by manager Antonio Conte he isn't part of his plans.

Wenger said: 'I don't think there is any comparison at all because we want him [Sanchez] to be with us and Chelsea does not necessarily want that.'

The Frenchman also confirmed he will support potential plans to close the summer transfer window before the Premier League kick-off from next year.

Some club chairman and a number of managers are keen on the idea and Wenger added his support.

He said: 'I think for the regularity of the season it is better. As well for psychological comfort of the manager and the focus, it is better to start the season with everyone on the train and we stay on the train.'

'You spend your whole summer on the transfer market, we had 10 weeks. People will adapt. When there are just 3-4 days to go, everyone comes out of the bushes, says we are alive, we are here and we want to buy.'

(source: Daily Star)



# Persepolis remain a surprise club in AFC Champions League



Persepolis' status as one of the best-supported teams in Asia has never been in question, but it remains a surprise a club of the size and stature of the Islamic Republic of Iran giants have not made a bigger impact on the continental scene.

Founded in 1963, Persepolis have long been a set-up that showcased the best of Iran's talent on the continental stage, with former AFC Player of the Year award winners Ali Daei, Ali Karimi, Khodadad Azizi and Mehdi Mahdavia calling the club home at one time or another in the late 1990s.

But even their unquestioned talents were incapable of steering Persepolis to the continental title that has continued to elude them.

The Tehran-based outfit's appearance in the quarter-final of the 2017 AFC Champions League is their first since the competition was launched in 2002, with Persepolis' last showing in the latter stages of a continental club championship coming 16 years ago.

That was in the Asian Club Championship, a competition in which Persepolis were regular participants at the business end without ever advancing to the final, with the club losing semi-finalist in 1997 and 1998 before missing out again in 2001.

East Asian opposition ended Persepolis' hopes on each of those occasions, as eventual champions Pohang Steelers from Korea Republic ended Iranian dreams in 1997 before China's Dalian Wanda did the same a year later.

In 2001, it was Suwon Samsung Bluewings who would claim Persepolis' scalp before winning the first of two successive Asian Club Championship titles.

The dawn of the AFC Champions League era, however, signaled a shift in fortunes for Persepolis. The club qualified for the inaugural competition but were unable to progress beyond the group phase, and it took until 2009 for Persepolis to return to the competition as the club were replaced as one of the dominant forces in Iranian football by the likes of Sepahan and Saba Battery.

Their return to the competition in 2009 ended in the Round of 16 at the hands of Uzbekistan's Bunyodkor while two seasons later they finished bottom of the group. There was further frustration in 2012 when Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad eliminated them in the Round of 16 again.

Persepolis were absent from the competition in 2013 and 2014 before once more falling in the Round of 16 in 2015 at the hands of Al Hilal from Saudi Arabia and again missed out on an AFC Champions League appearance in 2016.

This season, however, the club ended their quarter-final hoodoo to set up their meeting with Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli in the last eight of the competition as Persepolis enter uncharted territory.

Branko Ivankovic's team claimed a second place finish in Group D behind Al Hilal, with Mehdi Taremi's goals powering his team towards the knockout phase of the competition.

Persepolis kicked off their campaign with a 1-1 draw with Al Hilal, but better was to come a week later, Taremi scored twice in the final 10 minutes to give Persepolis all three points in their meeting with Al Wahda from the United Arab Emirates.

On Matchday Three, Taremi was on the scoresheet again, but it was not

enough to prevent his team from falling to a 3-1 loss at the hands of Qatar's Al Rayyan.

That result dictated the complexion of what remained of the group phase for both clubs as, with Al Hilal clearly establishing themselves as the most likely group winners, the battle was on between Persepolis and Al Rayyan for second place.

The pair shared a 0-0 draw on Matchday Four before another scoreless draw for Persepolis with Al Hilal threatened the Iranian side's grip on second place, only for Al Rayyan to succumb to a surprise 5-1 defeat at the hands of an Al Wahda side that had not picked up a victory previously.

Despite that win, Persepolis' fate still hinged on the outcome of Al Rayyan's meeting with Al Hilal, with Ivankovic and his team needing to defeat Al Wahda and hope the Saudi side would not lose against their rivals from the United Arab Emirates.

Persepolis picked up the win needed against Al Wahda thanks largely to a hat-trick from Taremi while Al Hilal edged Al Rayyan in a seven-goal thriller to take the clubs from Saudi Arabia and Iran into the last 16.

A second place finish in Group D set up a meeting with Qatar's Lekhwiya in the next phase of the competition, with the two teams playing out a 0-0 draw in the opening game that left the second leg a winner-takes-all affair.

In the end, the outcome was decided in the cruelest fashion for the club from Doha, who were eliminated thanks to an own goal by Spanish defender Chico Flores, but it was enough to seal an AFC

Champions League quarter-final spot for Persepolis for the first time in the club's history.

Branko Ivankovic has a long history with Iranian football having first moved to the nation to work as Miroslav Blazevic's assistant when his Croatian compatriot took over at the helm of the Iran national team in 2001. Ivankovic succeeded his former boss as Iran coach after the country narrowly missed out on qualifying for the FIFA World Cup finals in Japan and Korea Republic in 2002. He successfully secured qualification for the nation in German in 2006. The 63-year-old then worked in his native Croatia as well as in Saudi Arabia and China before returning to Tehran to take over as Persepolis coach in April 2015.

Striker Mehdi Taremi follows a long line of top class attacking players who have passed through the ranks of Persepolis while also showcasing their talents for Iran's national team on the Asian stage. The 24-year-old netted six goals in eight games during the group phase and Round of 16 in the 2017 AFC Champions League to sit in second position on the competition's scoring charts. Taremi can play as an out-and-out striker or on the left side of the attack, as he often does for the national team in support of Sardar Azmoun, and his eye for goal has seen him attract attention from overseas.

Persepolis will face Al Ahli of Saudi Arabia in the ACL quarter-final first leg on August 22 at the Seeb Sports Complex in Muscat, Oman and play the Saudi Arabian team on September 12 at the Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi, the UAE.

(Source: AFC)

## AFC Champions League quarter-final: The danger men

Kuala Lumpur: Goals aplenty rained in during the first four months of the 2017 AFC Champions League and, ahead of the four quarter-final fixtures, the-AFC.com takes a look at eight danger men who will be looking to fire their clubs towards continental glory.

### ■ Omar Abdulrahman (Al Ain)

The 2016 AFC Player of the Year has added more goals to his game this year and leads the scoring charts with seven in total.

A last-minute winner against Bunyodkor in the group stage and a brace in the Round of 16 clash with Esteghlal are among the highlights, while six assists is further evidence that the playmaker is determined to make amends for Al Ain's final defeat last year.

### ■ Alan (Guangzhou Evergrande)

Following the departure of Paulinho to Barcelona, Guangzhou will look ever more to their joint-top scorer Alan to fire them deeper into the tournament.

The Brazilian began the tournament in superb fashion, netting three in three games including crucial strikes against Suwon Samsung Bluewings and Kawasaki Frontale as the two-time champions advanced with an unbeaten record.

### ■ Omar Al Soma (Al Ahli)

Syrian forward Omar Al Soma has not played since Matchday Five but late goals at Zobahan and Al Ain were vital in Al Ahli's qualification from the group stage.

With goals so far including a 20-yard left-foot volley, a rocket of a free-kick and a close-range header, Al Soma is without doubt a threat anywhere in and around the 18-yard box, something that will be of concern to quarter-final opponents Persepolis.

### ■ Hulk (Shanghai SIPG)

Brazilian powerhouse Hulk has bagged six goals to date including three from outside the penalty area to help Shanghai SIPG advance to the last eight for the second successive year.

It was at the same stage in 2016 that Hulk made his AFC Champions League bow in a 5-0 defeat to Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors, but his stunning form in the current campaign is evidence that his influence will be far greater this time round.

### ■ Omar Khribin (Al Hilal)

The second Syrian on our list, Omar Khribin made his loan spell at Al Hilal permanent in the summer months after the forward's late winner against Al Rayyan confirmed top spot in Group D.

He was again on the scoresheet against Esteghlal Khouzesan in the last 16 as Khribin proved he has the ability to step up when it matters most.

### ■ Yu Kobayashi (Kawasaki Frontale)

Yu Kobayashi's goals against Suwon Samsung Bluewings and Guangzhou Evergrande gained invaluable points for Kawasaki Frontale early in the tournament during a run of four successive draws.

The Japanese international scored two more in the Round of 16 against Muangthong United and now leads an ever improving side into the quarter-finals on the back of four wins on the bounce.

### ■ Mehdi Taremi (Persepolis)

Mehdi Taremi has scored more than half of Persepolis' goals in the 2017 AFC Champions League to help the Islamic Republic of Iran side progress to the quarter-finals for the first time.

At 2-2 in their final Group D game with Al Wahda, Persepolis were heading for the exit door until Taremi netted twice to complete his hat-trick and create history for the Iranian champions.

### ■ Rafael Silva (Urawa Red Diamonds)

The most lethal of our eight featured players, Rafael Silva has produced an incredible return of five goals from just eight shots.

Usually deployed from the bench, the Brazilian frontman scored the only goal of the game in the one match he started – a 1-0 victory over Shanghai SIPG – and the striker will surely be pushing for a place in the first 11 against Kawasaki Frontale.

(Source: AFC)

## Women claim 9th place at Asian Volleyball Championship

Shifting to high gear in the latter part of the game, Iran served a sweet revenge to Australia in a 5-set thriller, 19-25, 25-18, 20-25 25-22, 15-10 to snatch the 9th place at the 19th Asian Senior Women's Volleyball Championship on Wednesday.

Iran's timely victory came sweeter as they not only managed to return the favor to Australia, a team that dealt them a 4-set loss in their Pool G match-up, but also salvage the best spot outside the Top 8 of the 14-team field.

Though failing to qualify in the quarter-final, Iran head coach Mirmostafa Shojaei was satisfied of their final ranking given the short preparation time he had to squeeze in when he took over the program.

"I came to coach Iran just two months ago, and I changed four or five players in favor of the young ones," said Shojaei. "I think our team will be good next month in Thailand for the World Championship Asian Qualifier Pool B."

Down 2 sets to one, the Iranians suddenly found vigor with Maedeh Borhani and Mahdieh Khajehkolaei



providing the big lift as their combined 29 points completed the turn around to finish their campaign on a winning note.

Mina Roosta was also pivotal their final match as her service aces in the second frame allowed Iran to erase a 14-16 disadvantage en route to stealing the set –which proved to be the much-needed boost for the team in

surviving the Aussies.

Now with more time to implement his system, Shojaei sets sight of forming a competitive team that can compete against the top-tier squads of the region.

"Our goal is to be one of the top four teams in Asia so we inject young players," said the mentor. "In our point of view, we will have our best team in the next three or four years."

Australia head coach Shannon Winzer, on the other hand, looks to instill consistency in her wards heading forward after crashing to 10th spot.

"Our game is a good reflection of how we played in the entire tournament, very inconsistent," said Winzer.

And to do that, Winzer hopes to continuously expose the Australian volleyballers in either professional or international competitions.

"Our goal in next Asian Championship would be inside the top 8 and for us to do that is to increase the number of players we can send overseas to improve their skills," she bared.

(Source: asianvolleyball)

## Iran sitting volleyball team to play Russia

Russia men's national sitting volleyball team is going to play a friendly fixture against Iran as part of preparations for the 2017 ParaVolley Europe Sitting Volleyball Championships.

Head coach of Iran's national sitting volleyball team Hadi Rezaei announced on Tuesday that the friendly match will be played in October.

Rezaei said the Islamic Republic of Iran Paralympic Committee (IRIPC)

had received two request letters from Germany and Russia for friendly matches with Iran men's national sitting volleyball team.

The German men's national sitting volleyball team is currently in Tehran, and playing games against Iran's national under-21 sitting volleyball team as well as a number of sports clubs, he added.

Rezaei further noted that the

Netherlands had also asked for an international friendly match in Tehran, but Iran could not provide a response because it is too busy with the demonstration games against Germany and Russia.

The 2017 ParaVolley Europe Sitting Volleyball Championships for Men and Women will take place in Porec, Croatia, from November 4 to November 12.

(Source: Press TV)



## Meysam Majidi joins Al-Shamal of Qatar

Former Esteghlal defender Meysam Majidi joined Al-Shamal SC of Qatar.

The 30-year-old Iranian player has signed a one-year contract with Al-Shamal SC for an undisclosed fee.



Majidi started his playing career at Aluminium Arak in 2007 and has also played at Shensa, Aluminium Hormozgan, Esteghlal Khuzestan, Esteghlal and Saba.

Al-Shamal SC was founded in 1980 and first competed in the first tier of Qatari football in 1986. Its football team currently competes in the first tier of football, the Qatari Stars League.

The club initially only fielded teams in handball and football, but in 1982 branched out to volleyball. In the following years, the club established teams in other sports, including table tennis and basketball.

(Source: Tasnim)



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“Three Sisters” to raise funds for underprivileged university students

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Hassan Majuni’s troupe, which is currently performing Russian playwright Anton Chekhov’s “Three Sisters” in Tehran, will give a benefit performance for underprivileged university students on Friday.



All the money that will be raised by the performance will be donated to the Arasteh Charity Foundation, a non-governmental organization that supports poor and needy university students.

The troupe will perform the play at the Samandarian Hall of Tehran’s Iranshahr Theater Complex until August 25.

Saeid Changizian, Fariba Jeddikar, Hossein Omid, Mehdi Bajestani and Milad

Shajareh are the main members of the cast for the play, which is about three sisters Olga, Masha and Irina, who grew up in a cultured and educated family in Moscow but now they have to live in a small, boring town.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Tehran to host Iran Game League

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Tehran’s Milad Tower will be hosting the 3rd edition of the Iran Game League (IGL) 2017 from September 4 to 14, Iran’s National Foundation for Computer Games announced on Wednesday.

Interested gamers can apply for different fields, including console games, smartphone games and PC games on www.evand.com/events/igl2017.

Female gamers are also allowed to participate in the league.



Seoul festival to screen Iranian shorts

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Four Iranian films will go on screen at the 9th Seoul International Extreme-Short Image and Film Festival, which will be held in the Korean capital from September 12 to 17.

The films are “Pet Man” by Marzieh Abrarpaidar, “From Hasaka with Love” by Mohammad Farahani, “Limbo” by Qasideh Golmakani and “Fan” by Ali Delkari.

“Deadpool 2” stuntwoman who died is motorcycle racer S.J. Harris

**VANCOUVER (Reuters)** — The stuntwoman who died on the film set of “Deadpool 2” in Vancouver on Monday was S.J. Harris, a 40-year-old from New York, a spokesman for the province of British Columbia’s coroners service said on Tuesday.

Local media identified Harris as a professional motorcycle road racer. She died after she appeared to lose control of her motor bike, which then crashed through the window of a building across the street during filming of the 20th Century Fox superhero movie.

Harris began riding in 2009 and received her race license in May 2013, CBC television reported. She started competing in 2014, racing in the American Sportbike Racing Association’s Championship Cup Series.

A 2015 article in “Black Girls Ride” magazine described Harris as “the first African American female road racer.”

“Deadpool 2” was her first role as a stunt performer in a film, according to Deadline Hollywood.

“Deadpool” star Ryan Reynolds said on Monday that actors and crew were “heartbroken, shocked and devastated” at the death of a driver in a motorcycle stunt that went wrong.

“Deadpool 2” is a sequel to the 2016 R-rated comedy “Deadpool,” from movie studio 20th Century Fox, a unit of Twenty-First Century Fox Inc..

Comedy “1st Born” billed as first Iranian-American production

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Ali Atshani plans to make a comedy project titled “1st Born”, which will be the first co-production between Iran and America, the Hollywood Reporter announced on Tuesday.

Atshani, renowned for movies such as “The President’s Cellphone”, “Wish Bone”, “Banana Peel”, and “Negar’s Role” will use a cast and crew from both the U.S. and the Middle East.

Val Kilmer, the star of movies “Top Gun” and “Batman Forever”, has signed on to act in “1st Born”.

The film is about a newlywed couple, Iranian-born Ben and his American Kate, who are living in California. When the couple’s first pregnancy faces complications, both sides of their family must come together — a rather complicated notion as Ben’s father Hamid is anti-American Iranian politician, while Kate’s father Biden (Kilmer) is an American politician who takes a hardline stance against Iran.

The film will be produced at Hollywood’s LA Independent Film and Entertainment. Sam Khoze is producing with a team including producer Edwin Avanes and associate producer in Iran Puria Naserbakht. Khoze, Tarek Zohdi and Medhi



Filmmaker Ali Atshani (R) directs Mehran Rajabi in a scene from “Paradise”.

Alimirzai wrote the script for the project, which its shooting is scheduled to begin in Los Angeles in August.

Among Atshani’s credits is also “Paradise”, a co-production between Iran and Germany.

Art Bureau honors maestro Majid Entezami

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Seventy-year old maestro Majid Entezami who has composed music for over 80 movies was honored for his lifetime achievements by the Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization on Tuesday.

A large number of musicians, cineastes and cultural figures attended the honoring ceremony held at the Andisheh Hall of the bureau in Tehran, delivering speeches about Entezami who is the son of veteran actor Ezzatollah Entezami.

The honoring ceremony was an emotional experience for Entezami when he thanked his wife, Azarnush Sadr-Salek, who is also a prominent harpist and pianist.

“I express my thanks to someone who has been beside me over all these years,” Entezami said.

He also expressed regret over the death of some recently-deceased musicians and said, “We lose many of our artists and easily ignore the issue; we have not realized the value of music



Majid Entezami speaks during a ceremony held by the Art Bureau in Tehran on August 15, 2017 to honor the composer for his lifetime achievements. His wife, Azarnush Sadr-Salek, is also seen beside him.

yet.”

In his brief speech, musician Mohammad Sarir praised Entezami for his

efforts to create a professional character that is independent of his father’s place in cinema.

Indian police arrest four after Game of Thrones leak

**NEW DELHI (Reuters)** — Indian police have arrested four people on suspicion of leaking an unaired episode of HBO’s hit series “Game of Thrones”, police in the city of Mumbai said on Tuesday.

The wildly popular fantasy drama is already the most pirated show on television and has been bedeviled by repeated leaks of episodes before they air.

According to police, three of the accused work for Prime Focus Technologies, a Mumbai-based company that processes the series for Indian streaming website Hotstar. The fourth is a former employee.

The leaking of the episode on August 4, titled “The Spoils of War”, was separate from a recent hack on HBO. That hack included the theft of proprietary information, such as programming.

“We received a complaint from Prime Focus Technologies regarding the leaking of episode 4, series 7,” Akbar Pathan, deputy commissioner of police in the Mumbai cyber crime unit, told Reuters.



A scene from the latest season of “Game of Thrones”. (Macall B. Polay/Courtesy HBO)

“In the investigation it was revealed that four persons were involved.”

The four have been charged with criminal breach of trust and computer-related offences. They appeared in court and were remanded until August 21.

Emmy Award-winning Game of Thrones, which has a huge following in South Asia, is distributed in India by Star India, a subsidiary of Twenty-First Century Fox Inc.

Pink to get Vanguard award at MTV Video Music Awards

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — Pop star Pink has been chosen to receive the 2017 Vanguard Award, MTV’s equivalent of a lifetime achievement honor for video music, the U.S. cable and satellite television channel said on Tuesday.

Pink, 37, known for her powerhouse

vocals and acrobatic live shows, is being recognized for her impact on music, pop culture, fashion and philanthropy over the course of her 17-year career, the Viacom Inc unit said in a statement.

The “Don’t Let Me Get Me” Philadelphia-born singer has released six studio

albums since her debut in 2000, and won three Grammys and six MTV Video Music Awards.

She is also a UNICEF ambassador for children’s nutrition worldwide and supports causes ranging from autism to human rights.

Michael Moore leads audience of Broadway play to Trump Tower

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Michael Moore has led the audience of his Broadway play to Trump Tower to protest President Donald Trump’s comments about the deadly violence in Charlottesville, Virginia.

On Facebook, Moore urged people to join him at the tower following Tuesday night’s performance of his one-man show “The Terms of My Surrender” to “nonviolently express our rage.”

After the play, the 63-year-old Oscar-winning filmmaker, commentator and liberal activist is seen on a Facebook Live video leading a group of people on buses to the tower, where the president is currently staying for the first time since his inauguration. Moore was joined by actor Mark Ruffalo.

During the bus ride, Ruffalo, using a bullhorn, led the group in chants including “No Trump, no KKK, no fascist USA” and encouraged people on the street to join them at the tower. Hundreds of

demonstrators have been gathering there since Trump arrived Monday night.

Earlier Tuesday, during an impromptu news conference in the building’s lobby, Trump declared that “there is blame on both sides” for the violence in Virginia, appearing to once again equate the actions of white supremacist groups and those protesting them.

Moore described the president’s comments as “just awful, disgusting.”

White nationalists, neo-Nazis and other far-right extremists assembled last Saturday to protest a decision by the city of Charlottesville to remove a statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee. Heather Heyer, 32, was killed when a man plowed his car into a crowd of counter-protesters.

Outside Trump Tower Tuesday night, Moore and Ruffalo held a candlelight vigil and urged the crowd to never forget Heyer and make sure she didn’t “die in vain.”

Pink will receive the honor at the MTV Video Music Awards show in Los Angeles on Aug. 27, where she will perform her latest single “What About Us.”

She joins previous Vanguard recipients including Rihanna, Kanye West, Beyonce and Michael Jackson.

Daniel Craig confirms he will return as James Bond

**LONDON (Reuters)** — British actor Daniel Craig has confirmed he will reprise the role of James Bond one last time, ending months of speculation.

Craig made the revelation during an appearance on the U.S. TV program “The Late Show” on Tuesday. Asked by host Stephen Colbert whether he would return as James Bond, Craig responded: “Yes”, to cheers from the audience.

Craig has appeared four times as the spy with a taste for martini: in “Casino Royale”, “Quantum of

Solace”, “Skyfall” and “Spectre”.

Eon Productions, the company that runs the movie franchise, said on its website that the 25th Bond movie would be released in U.S. cinemas on November 8, 2019, with a traditional early release in Britain and the rest of the world.

Asked by Colbert whether he would appear in any further Bond movies after that one, Craig said no.

“I think this is it. I just want to go out on a high note and I can’t wait,” he said.



Daniel Craig poses for photographers on the red carpet at the German premiere of the new James Bond 007 film “Spectre” in Berlin, Germany on October 28, 2015.

(Reuters/Fabrizio Bensch)