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PERSPECTIVE
Mahmood Monshipouri
Francisco State University
and the University of
California, Berkeley

Trump: Heading for another crisis in the Middle East

For all the drama and bluster of US President Donald Trump's tough new stand on the nuclear deal with Iran, nothing has thus far fundamentally changed other than Trump's refusal to recertify the deal: repudiating it without actually pulling out of the deal. Those who look for a coherent or comprehensive strategy will be disappointed, for the US President has passed the buck to Congress. Moreover, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that since his tenure in office began, President Trump has yet to fulfill his key campaign promises. His threat to withdraw from Obama Care (ACA), NAFTA, Paris Climate Change Accord, and now the Iran deal has added more uncertainty to American politics and world affairs.

Looming over all this has been growing dissension within his own administration and party as well. He has overridden advice from his close aides, such as Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Secretary of Defense James Mattis, and White House Chief of Staff John Kelly, who have objected to his decision to withdraw from the Iran agreement, formally the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Unable to forge a consensus on decertifying the deal, President Trump has turned the final decision over to the US Congress. The latter is not expected to decertify it, but perhaps it will apply new sanctions on Iran totally unrelated to the JCPOA. If Congress re-imposes further sanctions, Iran will seriously consider the option of withdrawing from the deal, complicating the future of JCPOA.

The implications of President Trump's decision could be profound, and it is hard to see how US national security interests will be effectively served given that Iran has remained in full compliance based on ongoing International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reports over the last two years. **-27**

Tehran mayor hopes for Korean firms' investment in Iran

Tehran Mayor Mohammad Ali Najafi on Friday expressed hopes for South Korean companies' investment in the country, especially in the construction, manufacturing and energy sectors.

He was in Korea to attend the OECD Champion Mayors' forum jointly hosted by the Seoul Metropolitan Government and OECD.

"I met with a dozen Korean industries to talk about business opportunities... We expect their participation in our city transportation projects, such as the construction of

metro lines and other infrastructure," he said in a media interview.

On Wednesday, Najafi and Seoul Mayor Park Won-soon signed a memorandum of understanding to expand economic cooperation and cultural exchanges between the two cities.

"I believe that mayors have the responsibility in the world today to bring improvement to the people in a way that all walks of life can benefit from it... In that regard, I hope that Seoul and Tehran will continue to expand comprehensive cooperation."

Najafi also said he expects Iran's 2015 nuclear accord with world powers will not collapse despite President Donald Trump's refusal to recertify that Tehran is complying with it. "Many things he said were never realized, including the threats he made against North Korea," he said.

Najafi noted five other world powers which signed the deal are still committed to it. "We should wait and see," he said. "If they (U.S.) do, we will (determine) the matter to our own interest."

(Source: Yonhap)

Pollution linked to 9 million deaths worldwide in 2015, study says

The fatal effects of pollution are seen across our planet.

In 2015, nearly one in six deaths, an estimated nine million worldwide, was related to pollution in some form -- air, water, soil, chemical or occupational pollution, according to a new report published Thursday in The Lancet.

Air pollution is by far the largest contributor to early death, according to the new research produced by The Lancet Commission on Pollution and Health. This form of pollution is linked to 6.5 million fatalities in 2015.

Water pollution, responsible for 1.8 million deaths, and workplace-related pollution, which led to 0.8 million deaths, pose the next largest risks, the report noted.

The overwhelming majority of pollution-related casualties -- 92% -- occur among people living in low- and middle-income countries. And, one in every four early deaths in nations trying to industrialize rapidly -- such as India, Pakistan, China, Bangladesh, Madagascar and Kenya -- could be connected to filthy air, water, soil or other contamination.

"Pollution disproportionately impacts the poor and the vulnerable," said Dr. Olusoji Adeyi, a commissioner and director of the health, nutrition and population global practice at the World Bank Group.

In countries at every income level, disease caused by pollution is most prevalent among minorities and the marginalized.

"Children face the highest risks," said Adeyi. "It is important to translate awareness into action at the local, national, and global levels."

(Source: CNN)

Tillerson: U.S. won't interfere with European trade with Iran

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has said the Trump administration does not intend to disrupt European business deals with Iran, a week after Trump's refusal to certify the Iran nuclear deal.

"The president's been pretty clear that it's not his intent to interfere with business deals that the Europeans may have under way with Iran," Tillerson told the Wall Street Journal in an interview published on Friday.

"He's said it clearly: 'That's fine. You guys do what you want to do.'"

Trump has time and again threatened to

exit the landmark 2015 nuclear agreement, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was clinched in July 2015 between Iran and six world powers. A week ago, he announced his decision to disavow the accord, leaving the fate of the deal to the U.S. Congress.

The decision prompted European Union leaders to reaffirm their full commitment to the deal. "We fully stay committed to the complete implementation by all sides of the Iranian nuclear deal. We see this as a key security interest for the European Union and

the region," said the bloc's top diplomat, Federica Mogherini.

Tillerson told the Journal that Washington has been working with the Europeans for six months. "They have been brought along with this same thought process. It doesn't mean that they necessarily agree entirely with it ... Now we will start a more formalized process with them now that the policy's been adopted."

Since the deal went into effect in January 2016, European trade with Iran has surged. However, most large European banks remain reluctant to invest in Iran, fearing U.S. fines.

Iran's military chief meets Assad, visits Aleppo

POLITICS TEHRAN — Major General Mohammad Baqeri, the chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces, met with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Damascus on Thursday and visited a frontline position near the Syrian city of Aleppo on Friday.

In his meeting with Assad, Baqeri said that Iran will continue supporting

the Syrian government and people in the war against terrorism.

Assad praised supports by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the Iranian people and government for Syria in fighting terrorism.

The major general left Tehran for Damascus on Tuesday by heading a high ranking military delegation. **->2**

Putin: West has betrayed Russia's trust

Russian President Vladimir Putin has directed scathing criticism at the West — the United States in particular — saying it had repeatedly betrayed Moscow's trust.

Speaking at a discussion with Western academics in the southern Russian city of Sochi on Thursday, President

Putin listed Moscow's many grievances against the West.

Asked by a Germany-based academic about what Russia's biggest mistake had been in its relations with the West, the Russian president said putting too much trust in Western countries, which he said had not been reciprocated. **->3**

Iran cannot count on Europe to retaliate against America: Shireen Hunter

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Shireen Tahmasb Hunter, a professor of political science at Georgetown University, tells the Tehran Times that that "Despite some voices raised in America against the decertification, many in Congress--both Republican and Democrat --have been against JCPOA."

She adds that "Other parties to the JCPOA, including Europe, can only plead with the US and have no way retaliating against America. Therefore, Trump believes that he can get away with it"

"Iran cannot count on Europe, or for that matter Russia or China to retaliate against America," Hunter tells the Tehran Times. **->7**

Tillerson blames Saudi-led group for PGCC rift stalemate

The United States Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has said he has little hope that the months-long Persian Gulf diplomatic crisis will be resolved soon, blaming the House of Saud regime-led group of countries for lack of progress.

Tillerson made the comments on Thursday, a day before he embarks on a trip to the region in a renewed attempt to mediate the dispute.

"I do not have a lot of expectations for it being resolved anytime soon," he said in an interview with financial news agency Bloomberg.

"There seems to be a real unwillingness on the part of some of the parties to want to engage."

■ Qatar ready to engage

On June 5, the House of Saud regime, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt and Bahrain cut diplomatic ties with Qatar and imposed a land, air and sea blockade on their Persian Gulf neighbor, accusing it of financing "terrorism". Doha denies the allegations.

On June 22, the group issued a 13-point list of demands, including the shutdown of Al Jazeera, limiting ties with Iran, and expelling Turkish troops stationed in the country as a prerequisite to lifting the blockade.

Doha rejected all the demands, denouncing them as an attempt to infringe on Qatar's sovereignty.

The sides have been at an impasse for more than four months, despite efforts by Kuwait and top U.S. officials - including Tillerson, who visited the region again back in July - to mediate the crisis.

"It's up to the leadership of the quartet when they want to engage with Qatar because Qatar has been very clear - they're ready to engage," said Tillerson, who will visit Saudi Arabia on Friday, before heading to Qatar.

"Our role is to try to ensure lines of communication are as open as we can help them be, that messages not be misunderstood," he added.

"We're ready to play any role we can to bring them together, but at this point, it really is now up to the leadership of those countries." **->13**

The Tehran Times new pocket-sized glossary is now available on the market. The reader-friendly is a rich source of the most common journalistic terminology collected by the daily's retired staff.

It can benefit a wide range of tastes from students to professional journalists. Persian equivalents have been given for all entries, including idioms and expressions. The glossary also includes example sentences for entries the authors thought it would be a bit difficult to learn.

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MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Kharrazi says
Iran will not trust
Washington

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Kamal Kharrazi, head desk of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, has denounced Washington's lack of commitment to the 2015 nuclear deal, saying it's just common sense not to trust someone after they broke their promises.

In an interview with IRIB news published on Friday, Kharrazi said Iran will not give in to the U.S. pressure and will continue its path to progress.

"The Americans know that the Islamic Republic is expanding its influence and is boosting the country's stability and defensive power," he said. "That's what they oppose."



Energy, science
ministers to be
named for approval
on Sunday

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — A member of Majlis presiding board has said on Sunday Reza Ardakanian and Mansour Qolami will be officially introduced to the parliament as nominees for energy and science ministers respectively.

The parliamentarians seek the good of the country, Akbar Ranjbarzadeh told IRNA on Thursday, adding that the parliament thinks Qolami is a good candidate to head the Science Ministry.

He also said Ardakanian has been working in the Energy Ministry for years, but the parliament does not know much about him.



Ahmadinejad must
return \$1.1bn to
the treasury

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been found responsible for causing as much as \$1.1 billion in damages to national wealth, Press TV reported on Thursday.

The State Audit Department of Iran announced that Ahmadinejad would be responsible for returning a total of 46 trillion Rials (\$1.1 billion) to the treasury from the revenues of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).

The amount pertained to a series of cases of failures and unauthorized decisions by the former president in handling the trade activities of the NIOC.



Iran united against
threats to its
independence:
Hassan Khomeini

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Seyed Hassan Khomeini, the grandson of Imam Khomeini, has said that Iranians are united against any foreign threats that question national independence, Fars news agency reported on Thursday.

"We should be vigilant that the country's political independence not be attacked under no pretext," he said, adding independence was as one of the greatest achievements of the Islamic Revolution.

The remarks came after U.S. President Donald Trump's warning against IRGC, which faced an angry backlash from Iranians.



Azerbaijan president
hails Iran ties

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev said on Thursday that bilateral relations with Iran are developing successfully, hailing the political ties between the two neighboring countries.

In a meeting with Iranian Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri in Istanbul, Aliyev said economic cooperation has expanded and important infrastructure projects have been jointly implemented.

Jahangiri, for his turn, hailed the expansion of ties with Azerbaijan and highlighted the significance of increasing efforts in the fight against terrorism.



Israeli occupation
source of conflicts:
Iran's UN envoy

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations Gholamali Khoshroo said on Wednesday that Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories is the origin of all problems in the Middle East.

"The injustice has been continuing for more than seven decades, exacerbated through Israeli expansionist and aggressive policies towards Palestinians and the whole region," Khoshroo, told a UN Security Council debate.

He noted that Tel Aviv have violated at least 86 UNSC resolutions. "These violations happen under the total impunity this regime is enjoying," he added.

Iran's military chief meets
Assad, visits Aleppo

General Baqeri: 'Life of terrorists is coming to end'



Mohammad Baqeri, Iran's armed forces chief of staff, looking at a map as he visits the Aleppo region in northwest Syria.

1→ Baqeri also met with "defenders of holy shrines" in the Aleppo region in northwest Syria, IRNA reported.

Tehran refers to those Iranians who fight alongside Syrians against the terrorists as "defenders of holy shrines".

"The process of the resistance front's victories by braveries of the defenders of the holy shrines will continue. We are getting close to end of the life of terrorists," he explained.

He added, "The main factor behind these victories is unity and coordination among the forces [who are fighting terrorists], their spirit of altruism, faith on God and also self-confidence of the resistance front."

He described coordination between the Syrian Army and defenders of the holy shrines as "exemplary".

These "coordination" and "integrity" will be continued till the total eradication of the terrorists, the military chief asserted.

The top general also announced the purpose behind his visit to Syria after the "great victories" of the Syrian forces against

his recent anti-Iran speech was a sign of the beginning of an end to Washington's hegemonic control.

Also, the Guards issued a statement on Thursday announcing that Iran will continue boosting its defensive missile capabilities.

The IRGC issues a statement
announcing that Iran will
continue boosting its
defensive missile capabilities.

No problems with Iran,
Amano says

Yukiya Amano, chief of the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency, said on Thursday that the IAEA will continue its work with Iran without any problems.

According to Reuters, Amano said after meeting French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian that his inspectors had yet to encounter problems with Iran a week after U.S. President Donald Trump refused to certify that Tehran was complying with a 2015 nuclear deal.

"We haven't had sufficient time to see (a change) in the attitude of the Iranians, but they are cautious and we continue our control and verification activities without any problems," he said.

Amano, who had earlier met President Emmanuel Macron, said that Tehran was also giving the IAEA full access to all the sites it needed to inspect.

Le Drian said, "Thanks to the IAEA, we don't have any concerns on this.



The (deal) is being implemented transparently and we believe that Iran up to now has met its commitments since 2015."

Trump on October 13 unveiled a new strategy on confronting Iran, which included "de-certifying" Iran's compliance to the nuclear accord despite repeated confirmations by the IAEA that Iran is living up to its obligations.

Tehran: U.S. 'irresponsible approach' has created new situation

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Thursday that the U.S. administration's "irresponsible approaches" on the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), has created a new situation.

"The JCPOA is not a bilateral deal between Iran and the U.S. and is an international document supported by the United Nation Security Council," he said during a meeting with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey

Ryabkov in Moscow.

Araqchi, the deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs who was a key negotiator with the P5+1 group in crafting the nuclear agreement, said one country should not be permitted to decide for the whole world.

For his part, Ryabkov reiterated Russia's commitment to fulfil its obligations under the JCPOA.

According to a press release published by the Russian Foreign Ministry's website, the officials had a

detailed exchange of opinions on the current situation around the JCPOA considering U.S. President Trump's recent decision to not confirm Tehran's conscientious compliance with the JCPOA to Congress.

Ryabkov and Araghchi discussed the tasks for improving coordination between Russia and Iran in the interests of preserving the JCPOA and further developing bilateral cooperation.

Araqchi was in Moscow to attend the 2017 Moscow Nonproliferation Conference.

EU leaders reaffirm support for Iran
nuclear deal

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — European Union leaders on Thursday reaffirmed their full commitment to the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers, hoping that the U.S. Congress would not let it collapse despite relentless criticism by President Donald Trump.

"We fully stay committed to the complete implementation by all sides of the Iranian nuclear deal. We see this as a key security interest for the European Union and the region," said the bloc's top diplomat, Federica Mogherini.

According to Reuters, the EU leaders' joint statement, agreed after talks in Brussels on Thursday, "reaffirms full commitment to the Iran nuclear deal".

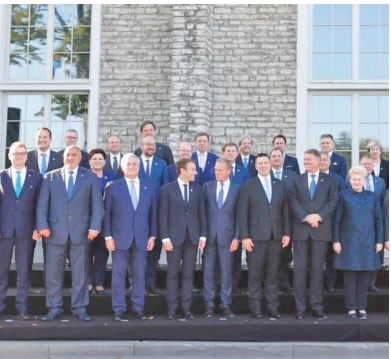
The EU leaders also highlighted the need to protect their companies and



spotlight since U.S. President Donald Trump decided last week not to certify the deal.

Ever since, top world leaders have voiced their strong support for the full implementation of the deal.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday Tehran would stick to the deal as long as the other signatories respected it, but would "shred" the deal to pieces if Washington pulled out.



investors dealing with Iran from any adverse effects should Washington re-instate the sanctions, officials said.

European officials said they want to put disputes on Iran's military program on separate tracks from the nuclear deal.

Obama and Bush decry deep U.S. divisions without naming Trump

Former United States Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush have voiced concern about the current political climate in the U.S., in comments seen as a veiled rebuke of Donald Trump's leadership.

Obama urged Americans to reject the politics of "division" and "fear", while Bush criticized "bullying and prejudice" in public life.

They were speaking separately. Neither mentioned President Trump by name. Trump, who has been critical of his two predecessors, is yet to comment.

Ex-presidents traditionally shy away from commenting publicly on their successors, and Obama said on leaving office he would extend that courtesy for a time to Trump, as George W. Bush had to him. He has broken his silence since to issue statements on Trump's efforts to dismantle Obamacare, as well as his controversial "Muslim ban" and decision to abandon the Paris climate accord.

Speaking at a Democratic campaign event in Newark, New Jersey, Obama said Americans should "send a

message to the world that we are rejecting a politics of division, we are rejecting a politics of fear".

He added: "What we can't have is the same old politics of division that we have seen so many times before that dates back centuries.

"Some of the politics we see now, we thought we put that to bed. That's folks looking 50 years back. It's the 21st Century, not the 19th Century. Come on!"

He touched on similar themes at another event later in Richmond, Virginia, saying: "We've got folks who are deliberately trying to make folks angry, to demonize people who have different ideas, to get the base all riled up because it provides a short-term tactical advantage."

Speaking just hours earlier in New York, Bush said: "Bigotry seems emboldened. Our politics seems more vulnerable to conspiracy theories and outright fabrication."

"There are some signs that the intensity of support for democracy itself has waned - especially among the young."

Americans, he said, have "seen our discourse degraded by casual cruelty".

"At times it can seem like the forces pulling us apart are stronger than the forces binding us together. We've seen nationalism distorted into nativism, forgotten the dynamism that immigration has always brought to America."

Both former presidents have until now largely avoided commenting publicly on Trump's policies.

Before his election last year, Trump was highly critical of both Obama and Bush, describing each of them at one time or another as "perhaps the worst president in the history" of the U.S. Since his inauguration in January, Trump's combative style and direct public comments on a number of key issues have caused controversy both among Democrats and Republicans.

He has regularly blamed the media, which he says do not focus on his achievements and instead choose to concentrate on what he describes as "fake news".

(Source: BBC)

Putin: West has betrayed Russia's trust

1 → ■ Unreciprocated trust, too much of it

"Our biggest mistake was that we trusted you too much. You interpreted our trust as weakness and you exploited that," Putin said.

"From the Russian side unprecedented openness and trust were demonstrated," Putin said, explaining that, through the 1990s, about 100 U.S. officials had been given the right to conduct surprise inspections of Russian nuclear facilities.

"What we got in return is well-known: a complete disregard for our national interests, support for separatism in the Caucasus, a circumvention of the United Nations Security Council, the bombing of Yugoslavia, the invasion of Iraq, and so on. The U.S. must have seen the state of our nuclear weapons and economy and decided to do away with international law," he said.

■ **Exporting democracy**
The former Soviet Union and the United States were considered the two superpowers of the bipolar world that emerged after the Second World War. They engaged in a series of politico-strategic, economic, and military rivalries after 1945 that became known as the Cold War.

Putin said Western countries self-righteously proclaimed themselves



victors after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the former Soviet Union in 1991.

"They started to openly interfere in the sovereign affairs of countries and to export democracy in the same way as in their time the Soviet leadership tried to export the Socialist revolution to the whole world," he said.

■ Unprecedented anti-Russia campaign in U.S.

The Russian president specifically castigated the United States for plunging relations with Russia to new lows. He said an "unprecedented" anti-Russia

campaign was ongoing in the U.S., referring to the closure of Russian diplomatic facilities and restrictions on Russian media in America.

The U.S. State Department announced in early September that several Russian diplomatic perimeters, namely a consulate building in San Francisco, a Russian consular annex in New York City, and a chancery annex in Washington DC, had to be shut down.

Earlier, in late 2016, the administration of former U.S. President Barack Obama expelled 35 Russian diplomats

"over espionage" and closed two Russian diplomatic compounds in New York and Maryland over the accusation that Moscow interfered in the U.S. presidential election in November 2016.

Moscow has denied the allegation and has repeatedly called for the diplomatic perimeters to be returned.

Furthermore, U.S. authorities have introduced restrictions on the Russian media operating in the U.S., limiting their broadcasts and terminating existing contracts.

In his Thursday remarks, Putin said the latest anti-Russia sanctions passed at the U.S. Congress and signed into law by President Donald Trump in August were meant to squeeze Russia out of European energy markets.

The Russian president also had a warning for the U.S., which under Trump has shown a tendency to unilaterally withdraw from bilateral and international accords.

If the United States withdrew from a landmark arms control treaty — the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty — Russia would respond quickly, he said.

"From our side, the response will be instant, and I want to warn, symmetrical," Putin said.

(Source: Press TV)

North Korea 'on cusp' of perfecting nuclear weapons capabilities, warns CIA

The United States CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) Director Mike Pompeo has said North Korea is months away from perfecting its nuclear weapons capabilities.

"They are close enough now in their capabilities that from a U.S. policy perspective we ought to behave as if we are on the cusp of them achieving" their objective of being able to strike the United States, Pompeo told a national security forum in Washington.

But he said there's a difference between having the ability to fire a single nuclear missile and the capability of producing large amounts of fissile material and developing an arsenal of such weapons.

Speaking later at the same event, National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster said, "We are in a race to resolve this short of military action."

"We are not out of time," he told the forum, organized by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies think tank. "But we are running out of time."

North Korea, which started its nuclear program decades ago, has accelerated its weapons tests. Twice in July, it launched a long-range missile that could potentially reach the U.S. mainland. In September, it conducted its most powerful atomic explosion yet.

Dire threats traded by President Donald Trump and North Korean Leader Kim Jong-un have



further stoked fears of war.

John Brennan, who was Pompeo's predecessor as CIA chief, voiced concern late on Wednesday about Trump's tweets and said the prospects of a military conflict on the Korean Peninsula "are greater than they have been in several decades."

"I don't think it's likely or probable, but if it's a one-in-four or one-in-five chance, that's too high," Brennan said at Fordham University in New York.

Both of the Trump administration officials

stressed that while military force was a last resort, the President was prepared to use it if necessary to ensure Kim is not able to put America at risk with a nuclear weapon.

Independent experts differ on just how advanced Pyongyang's program is in miniaturizing a nuclear warhead to fit on a missile and in mastering how to make a missile re-enter the Earth's atmosphere and strike a target.

Pompeo said intelligence on North Korea and the current state of its weapons capabilities is imperfect, and "when you're now talking about months, our capacity to understand that at a detailed level is in some sense irrelevant."

"We are at a time where the president has concluded that we need a global effort to ensure Kim Jong-un doesn't have that capacity," Pompeo said.

With tough international sanctions now in place, Pompeo said China has done more than expected to reduce trade with its wayward ally but can do more. Beijing has also communicated around the world it is intent on helping the U.S. resolve the issue, he said.

McMaster said China has the vast majority of economic power over North Korea, controlling 90 percent of its external trade, but Russia has considerable influence too.

(Source: The Independent)

Iraqi and Kurdish forces exchange fire at border



■ Iraq orders arrest of Kurdish vice president

Iraqi federal and Kurdish forces exchanged fire at their shared border on Friday, capping a dramatic week of maneuvers that saw the Kurds hand over territory across northern Iraq.

Iraqi forces shelled Kurdish military positions north and south of Altun Kupri, a town of about 9,000 people just outside Iraqi semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region (Kurdistan Regional Government/KRG), a day after Brigadier General Raad Baddai gave warning he was going to enter the town.

Organized Kurdish forces, known as the peshmerga, as well as irregular forces, responded with rocket fire.

By mid-day, Iraq's Defense Ministry said anti-terrorism forces, the federal police and the country's Popular Mobilization Units (Al-Hashd Al-Sha'abi) had taken the town.

■ Iraq orders arrest of Kurdish vice president

Meanwhile, an Iraqi court has issued an arrest warrant for the vice president of the KRG, accusing him of provocation against the country's armed forces, which managed to take over Kirkuk province earlier this week.

Baghdad's Rusafa Investigation Court on Thursday ordered the arrest of Kosrat Rasul, who had referred to the Iraqi army and federal police as "occupation forces" in a statement he released a day earlier.

In his statement, Rasul, who is also the vice president of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK/Yekêtiya Nîrtimaniy Kurdistan), one of the two main Kurdish parties alongside the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP/Partiya Demokrat a Kurdistanê), had also criticized his group for not having resisted the entry of Iraqi forces into Kirkuk on Monday.

The court announced that it "considers these comments as provocation against the armed forces, under Article 226 of the penal code," an offence, which can entail a prison term of up to seven years or a fine, said a judiciary spokesman for the court.

Rasul entered Kirkuk with his Peshmerga fighters on Sunday, but withdrew from the oil-rich northern city without a fight.

The withdrawal came after the Kurds handed over their positions in the northwestern province of Nineveh to Iraqi troops following a 48-hour operation against Kurdish forces in the disputed areas.

Kurdish leaders have coveted Kirkuk, which houses some 10 percent of Iraq's oil reserves, for long and described it as part of their territory even though roughly two-thirds of the city's population is non-Kurd.

Kirkuk is the capital city of a province with the same name, which is not one of the three provinces that have made up the semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan Region since 2003. However, Kurdish militants used a vacuum created when government troops were fighting against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists to overtake the city.

■ Iraq warns oil companies against Kurdistan deals

In another event, Iraq's oil ministry has cautioned oil companies against signing contracts with authorities in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region without its approval.

"This department and the Iraqi federal government are the only two bodies with whom agreements should be reached for the development and investments in the energy sector," the ministry said in a statement.

Iraqi Oil Minister Jabbar al-Luaybi also denounced the "irresponsible announcements coming from certain officials in Iraq or abroad, or from foreign companies about their intention to conclude deals with parties in Iraq without the federal government being aware."

"The federal government and the oil ministry are the only bodies responsible for developing oil and gas strategy and authorized to sign agreements with foreign countries and companies," the minister stressed.

This comes a day after Russian energy giant Rosneft signed a deal to put production sharing agreements into force with respect to five production blocks in the Iraqi Kurdistan.

On Wednesday, the Russian state-controlled giant said it would pay up to \$400 million for 80 percent in the venture as part of the deal with the Kurdistan authorities.

A joint exploration program and pilot production is to start next year. If successful, Rosneft said it would start full-field development of the blocks in 2021.

Recoverable oil reserves at the five blocks are around 670 million barrels, the Russian company said, calling the estimate "conservative."

Rosneft and the Iraqi Kurdistan are already cooperating on crude purchases and sales, but the new deal "will allow us to talk about full-fledged entry of the company in one of the most promising regions" of the developing global energy market, Rosneft said.

On Thursday, Rosneft boss Igor Sechin told Russian news agencies that the company strictly followed the law and said that "if there are problems between the government of Iraq and Kurdistan then they need to solve the problems themselves."

"I am not a politician, my job is to produce oil," Sechin added.

The agreement came as the Iraqi forces took control of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk on Monday, removed Kurdish flags from government buildings and replaced them with the Iraqi flag.

(Source: agencies)

Trump links crime surge in Britain to 'radical Islamic terror'

The United States President Donald Trump has blamed a rise in crime in Britain on what he calls "radical Islamic terrorism", but presented no evidence to support his claim.

"Just out report: 'United Kingdom crime rises 13% annually amid spread of

Radical Islamic terror.' Not good, we must keep America safe!" Trump said in a tweet on Friday morning. The mainstream media and several politicians, like Trump, describe the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) or al-Qaeda terrorists as "Islamists", "Jihadists", or "Islamic" terrorists, which is completely wrong.

Islam has nothing to do with terrorism. Islam, which is a religion of mercy, does not permit any kind of terrorism. Islamic scholars call people who claim they are Muslims but are involved in terrorist activities Takfiris, or Takfiri terrorists. Trump's

tweet came after Britain's Office for National Statistics (ONS), released new data on Wednesday showing the number of crimes recorded annually in England and Wales had passed five million for the first time in ten years.

(Source: Press TV)

Madagascar plague deaths hit 94, 1,100 suspected cases: WHO

The death toll from a plague outbreak in Madagascar has risen to 94, with the number of suspected cases jumping to more than 1,100, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Friday.

Officials on the poor Indian Ocean island nation had earlier this week reported 74 fatalities and 805 cases. WHO's director for health emergencies in Afri-

ca, Ibrahima Soce Fall, told reporters in Geneva that out of 1,153 suspected cases, 300 had been laboratory confirmed.

Fall said WHO has sent 1.3 million doses of antibiotics to Madagascar, enough to treat 5,000 patients and protect another 100,000 people who may have been exposed to the infectious disease.

Madagascar has suffered plague outbreaks almost every year since 1980 - typically between September and April. The current outbreak is unusual as it has affected urban areas - especially the capital Antananarivo - increasing the risk of transmission and sparking panic in the population. Plague bacteria develops in rats and is carried by fleas.

(Source: AFP)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Rosneft in talks with Iran to set up oil supply chain

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Rosneft is negotiating with d e s k Iran to set up a supply chain to deliver oil from Iran and Central Asia nations to the global markets, Igor Sechin, chief executive of Russia's oil major, said on Thursday.

Rosneft will forge a partnership with China's CEFC firm in a number of projects including exploration, production, refining, oil and oil products trading, Sechin told an industry forum in Verona.



TPO hosts Iran-Uzbekistan business forum in Tehran

E C O N O M Y **TEHRAN** — An Iran- Uzbekistan d e s k business forum was held at the Trade Promotion Organization (TPO)'s Morvarid Conference Hall in Tehran on Thursday, TPO portal reported.

The so called forum was attended by high ranking officials from both sides including Iranian Deputy Industry Minister and Head of TPO Mojtaba Khosrotaj, Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov and Foreign Trade Minister Elyor Ganiev and a handful of managers, company representatives and entrepreneurs from various areas.



Iranian, Turkish ministers discuss transport ties

E C O N O M Y **TEHRAN** —Iranian Transport and Urban d e s k Development Minister Abbas Akhoundi and Turkish Minister of Transport, Maritime Affairs and Communications Ahmet Arslan conferred on major mutual transportation ties, IRNA reported on Friday.

In their meeting, the two ministers addressed the issue of transit of Turkish goods to Qatar via Iran.

Transit of Turkish goods via the Iraqi Kurdistan was another issue discussed in their meeting. As reported, the Turkish minister announced that his country is ready to transport goods via Iran instead of the Iraqi Kurdistan to its intended destinations.

In addition, the two sides also decided to form a committee to inspect road transportation between them.

Akhoundi was accompanying Iranian First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri in his trip to Turkey.

Senate Republicans push through budget proposal, clearing path to tax overhaul

U.S. Senate Republicans adopted a budget for the next fiscal year, clearing a critical hurdle in the GOP push to overhaul the tax code.

The Senate's late Thursday passage of the budget blueprint, in a 51-49 vote primarily along party lines, helps unlock a procedure that Republicans plan to use to rewrite the tax code with just GOP votes. It also allows the tax bill to lower projected revenue by up to \$1.5 trillion over a decade. Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky was the lone Republican to vote against the budget.

"Passing this budget is critical to getting tax reform done, so we can strengthen our economy after years of stagnation under the previous administration," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) said on the Senate floor Thursday.

Budget resolutions are nonbinding and don't require the president's signature. They generally reflect the parties' priorities and are separate from the spending bills that actually fund the government. The bill's passage capped a series of amendment votes Democrats used to drive home their argument that the GOP tax rewrite would benefit the country's wealthiest citizens at the expense of the middle class.

(Source: The MarketWatch)

European markets edge higher on earnings

European markets were slightly higher Friday morning, as earnings season and political turbulence in the region continued to dominate discussion.

The pan-European Stoxx 600 was up around 0.14 percent during mid-morning deals, as most sectors and major bourses were in positive territory.

Banks and basic resources stocks were the best performers on Friday morning, with each sector up over 0.6 percent amid a flurry of corporate earnings reports.

Truckmaker Volvo soared to the top of the European benchmark after the Scandinavian firm released its latest figures. Sweden's biggest manufacturer reported a stronger-than-anticipated rise in quarterly core earnings as robust demand for heavy trucks more than offset costs from its supply chain. Volvo was more than 6 percent higher on the news.

Antofagasta, Anglo American and ArcelorMittal were all over 1 percent higher in mid-morning trade after a firmer copper price supported shares of mining firms.

Towards the bottom of the index, Sweden's Assa slipped more than 2 percent Friday morning. The world's biggest lock maker posted a modest increase in third-quarter profit as expected, but sales dipped in China.

(Source: cnbc)

South Pars development phases to be complete in 1.5 years

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** —

d e s k Development phases of Iran's South Pars gas field (in the Persian Gulf) will be completed within one and half years, according to Mohammad Meshkinfam, the managing director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of developing the field.

Meshkinfam said 85 percent of the phases are complete so far and implementation of the rest 15 percent will be finished by the next 1.5 years, Shana news agency reported.

South Pars, which Iran shared with Qatar in the Persian Gulf, is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent

Tehran, Ankara to trade in local currencies

E C O N O M Y **TEHRAN** — In a move

d e s k to increase bilateral trade, the central banks of Iran and Turkey signed a deal to trade in their local currencies.

The document was signed on Thursday by Central Bank of Iran Governor Valiollah Seif and his Turkish counterpart Murat Çetinkaya during the trip of Iranian First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri to

Turkey.

Under the deal, the Iranian rial and Turkish lira will be easily converted to help reduce the costs of currency conversion and transfer for traders. The countries had been using euros.

The deal allocates a credit line of 5 billion liras and its equal amount in Iranian rials. It would be used to facilitate the proceedings for the opening of letters of

UK business minister travels to Canada for talks on Bombardier deal

British Business Secretary Greg Clark will hold talks in Canada on Friday to discuss Airbus SE's plans to buy a majority stake in Bombardier's C-Series jetliner program aimed at helping it avoid high U.S. import tariffs.

Clark will meet with Canadian government officials and executives from the two manufacturers, according to a spokeswoman for the ministry for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

A deal announced earlier this week gives Airbus (AIR.PA) a controlling stake in the Canadian manufacturer's troubled C-Series jets, which are partly made in Northern Ireland.

The tie up gives Bombardier (BBD.B.TO) a possible way out of a damaging trade dispute with Boeing (BA.N), in which the U.S. Commerce Department has threatened to impose 300 percent import duties, potentially threatening thousands of jobs in Northern Ireland.

Under the deal, Airbus would take a 50.01 percent stake in the C Series and add an assembly line for the plane in Alabama, thus becoming a U.S.-made product so it can avoid anti-subsidy and anti-dumping duties.



The Boeing-Bombardier dispute has snowballed into a bigger multilateral trade dispute, with British Prime Minister Theresa May wading into the debate and asking U.S. President Donald Trump to intervene in order save British jobs.

Bombardier is the largest manufacturing employer in Northern Ireland, which is the poorest of the United Kingdom's four nations and remains mired in political sensitivities after emerging from decades of armed sectarian conflict.

Clark and Northern Irish politicians had welcomed the Airbus deal and promised to work with the firms to protect the workforce in the province. Bombardier makes the C-Series CS100 and CS300 state-of-the-art carbon wings at a plant in Belfast. (Source: Reuters)

U.S. lurks as spoiler threat at Asia-Pacific trade talks

Negotiators from Asia-Pacific nations are gathered in Vietnam to push forward trade deals while mindful that the U.S. could be a spoiler as it toughens its stance.

"Trade has been an issue where the drafting has become somewhat more complicated in the last few international meetings," Angel Gurría, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development secretary general, said in an interview on Friday. "This is something we still are trying to find, I think, common ground."

U.S. President Donald Trump has taken a harder line on global trade deals, withdrawing earlier this year from the Trans-Pacific Partnership as

he pushes for an "America First" policy. Amid growing uncertainty, ministers at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Hoi An are debating the way forward.

"The easy issues are always resolved first," Gurría said on the sidelines of the APEC finance ministers meeting, when asked about the content of a joint statement set for release Saturday. "In the wee hours of the night, you take on the impossible ones."

Read an explainer on free trade: QuickTake: Free Trade and Its Foes

■ Evolving

U.S. Treasury Undersecretary for International Affairs David Malpass said the trade discussions were "very con-



of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

The field is divided into 24 standard phases of development in the first stage. Most of the phases are fully operational

at the moment.

Completing development phases of South Pars is among the Oil Ministry's priorities outlined by President Hassan Rouhani in a decree in mid September.

credit by merchants on both sides of the border.

"Trading with local currencies is the most significant step to improving economic ties. The central banks of both countries agreed on this issue and they will inform other banks about how the deal will be applied," Reuters quoted Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim as saying in a joint news conference with

Jahangiri.

"Trading in local currencies will be encouraged and this will contribute to making trading easier and increase the trade volume and diversity," Yildirim added.

Earlier this month, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said the deal was aimed at raising Turkish-Iranian trade volume to \$30 billion from current \$10 billion.

Merkel sends positive signal to May on Brexit talks

German Chancellor Angela Merkel offered one of her most positive assessments of Brexit talks in months on Thursday, saying she believed negotiations between the EU and Britain were moving forward and dismissing the prospect of a breakdown.

Merkel made her comments after the first day of a European Union summit at which British Prime Minister Theresa May appealed to her fellow leaders to help her silence critics at home and break a deadlock in the talks.

"In contrast to how it is portrayed in the British press, my impression is that these talks are moving forward step by step," Merkel told reporters, dismissing suggestions from some in Britain that the talks should be broken off as "absurd".

"I have absolutely no doubts that if we are all focused ... that we can get a good result. From my side there are no indications at all that we won't succeed," she said.

Earlier, in remarks delivered at the end of a dinner of butternut gnocchi and pheasant supreme, May sought to calm fears that Britain would use its de-



parture in March 2019 to undercut the bloc's economy by lowering standards and taxes.

She asked EU leaders to respond in kind to her efforts to break the Brexit stalemate, making clear she was disappointed at their plan to announce on Friday that talks have not yet made enough progress to move on to a discussion of future trade ties.

The EU is seeking a clearer commitment from Britain that it will settle financial obligations linked to its exit. Leaders will on Friday set a target of December for London to improve its divorce settlement offer.

But they will also make a gesture by launching internal preparations for the next phase of the negotiations.

(Source: cnbc)

OECD has judged that it's "better, but not good enough," he said.

■ TPP alive?

Japan is working with Vietnam and other nations to reach an early agreement for a TPP deal even without the U.S., Yasuhisa Nakao, deputy vice minister for international affairs in Japan's finance ministry, said in an interview.

"Japan is still looking for a good possibility of having this TPP-11 trade deal as early as possible", he said, referring to the number of nations potentially included in the deal. No matter what bilateral trade agreements or other trade negotiations are going on, TPP is still Japan's priority, he said.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Low pay, no bonus: U.S. retailers struggle with hiring

U.S. retailers are finding it increasingly difficult to hire employees for stores and for middle and higher management as low pay and a feeling of uncertainty clouds the industry following a spate of bankruptcies and store closures.

Retailers including Macy's Inc and J.C. Penney have said they will hire the same or fewer seasonal workers for the holidays this year than last, while some, like Wal-Mart Stores Inc, have chosen not to hire temporary workers at all.

Sector observers have attributed this to brick-and-mortar retailers' retreat under pressure from online players including Amazon, and firms themselves say they have simply taken a staggered approach to hiring this year that fills gaps slowly. Macy's said holiday hiring was "off to a great start".

But staffing companies that hire employees for the industry say the problem is deeper and is putting pressure both on the quality of staff retailers can hire and, sooner or later, wages that potential candidates will demand.

The staffing firms say it may also create a squeeze on retailers as they seek to hire heavily for Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas -- the biggest drivers of retailers' annual profits.

"Where we have a problem hiring is the lower level,



the seasonal or entry-level employees," said Melissa Hassett, vice president of client delivery for Manpower-Group Solutions.

Her clients include Lowe's Cos Inc, Staples and auto parts firm Pep Boys and she says employees are seeking more flexibility with their schedules, training and pay, which is competitive with other entry-level jobs.

U.S. unemployment levels have hit their lowest in more than 16 years and recruiters say the rise of the "gig economy" and new occupations, such as driving for Uber [UBER.UL] or Deliveroo, is shrinking the youth talent pool.

The hourly mean wage for entry level sales personnel at retailers, including at clothing, sports goods and

department stores, was \$11.96 as of May 2016, according to the latest data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In comparison, an Uber driver earns \$14.76 per hour, according to data Glassdoor posted on its site earlier this month.

The job search and review site listed 829,500 retail job openings as of mid-October, compared with 875,000 at the same time a year ago.

"There just aren't enough people who are looking for work ... to be put in those positions," the site's chief economist, Andrew Chamberlain, said.

■ No bonus

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' JOLTS survey on job openings also shows that more people have quit retail by August this year than in the past decade, with 3.74 million giving up their jobs.

Recruiters say that reflects the growing stresses of working for companies who have cut costs, closed stores and asked staff to adapt and do more.

"The jobs have become bigger," Manpower Group's Hassett said. "A manager will do more at the stores, they'll even pick up and join a register, help stocking if they need to."

Wal-Mart said that it has not hired for the holiday-season in part because they are paying existing employees more.

(Source: Reuters)

In oil-producing Iran, renewables are booming

By Lefteris Karagiannopoulos

OSLO (Reuters) — Renewable energy is booming in Iran, where installed capacity is expected to grow at least sevenfold over the next five years, despite U.S. President Donald Trump's more confrontational attitude towards Tehran.

Iran's latest deal was signed on Tuesday, when Norway's Saga Energy concluded a \$2.9 billion deal to build solar power plants in the oil-producing country.

That gives Iran agreements with 124 companies, most of them European, to install 2,380 megawatts (MW) in renewable capacity, in addition to the 340 MW currently in place, according to data from Iran's Energy Ministry.

They range from wind power to solar farms and hydropower dams to burning biomass and waste to heat homes. Iran is a signatory of the 2015 Paris climate agreement committing 195 nations to limit their carbon emissions.

"Iran is trying to increase the share of renewable energy in the energy mix of the country and also (honor) our international environmental commitments," Fareeh Bahrami, an official at SATBA, the



state agency promoting renewables under the authority of Iran's Energy Ministry, told Reuters.

Iran's ambition is to install 5 gigawatts of renewables by 2022, he said.

Among the companies engaged is unlisted British firm Quercus, which will help

build the world's sixth-largest solar farm in central Iran, investing over half a billion euros.

Dutch energy firm Global Renewables Investments (GRI) plans to build up solar and wind farms that could produce up to 1.7 GW of electricity.

To finance the projects, the companies have used European export credit agencies, private equity and Asian financial institutions.

"We have been approached by a number of finance providers, especially from the Far East, including China, proposing various options for construction and financing," Quercus CEO Diego Biasi told Reuters.

However, the United States is taking a harder tone towards Iran lately. Trump said on October 13 he may ultimately terminate the 2015 nuclear deal, which could mean some international sanctions may be restored.

As a result, some companies already invested in Iran said they would be taking a "wait-and-see" approach, such as Greek conglomerate Mytilineos Holdings, which built a 10 MW solar farm in Iran.

"We are monitoring developments before making any new project plans," spokeswoman Antigoni Fakou told Reuters.

Others said they would continue with their investments, including Quercus and GRI. "We won't change our strategy on Iran," GRI co-founder Gerben Pek told Reuters.

Europe's oil capital turns to clean, green hydrogen buses

The discovery of oil reserves in the North Sea means that, over the years, many have referred to Aberdeen as the "oil capital of Europe." Times are changing, however.

Today, the Scottish city is home to what is claimed to be Europe's largest fleet of hydrogen fuel cell buses.

The £19 million (\$24.98 million) project means that hydrogen buses are ferrying residents around Aberdeen as authorities look to reduce city center emissions and boost air quality.

"They're a very good fit for us because we have, like many other cities... air quality issues," Barney Crockett, the Lord Provost of Aberdeen, told CNBC's Sustainable Energy.

The U.S. Department of Energy has said that fuel cell electric vehicles are more efficient than conventional internal combustion engine vehicles and have a driving range of roughly 300 miles.

According to those involved with the project in Aberdeen, the buses there hold 40 kilograms of hydrogen and can travel up to 260 miles "on a typical urban cycle."

The buses were proving popular with residents, Crockett added. "They really like the buses because we've no harmful emissions, it's only water va-



por... that comes out of the tailpipe."

The vehicles were completely silent and offered a smooth riding experience, he explained. "A lot of people have said to us it's more like being on a train than being on a bus."

Aberdeen is the latest in a long line of cities looking to improve air quality and slash emissions.

Next week, for example, will see a new £10 'T-Charge' introduced to help discourage the use of older, more polluting vehicles on the streets of central London. The city is also set to be home to what authorities describe as the world's first Ultra Low Emission Zone, subject to consultation.

Back in Aberdeen, Crockett struck an ambitious note with regards to the future. "We think the sky's the limit — we're looking at cars, we're looking at trucks, we're looking at vans and... we're looking at storage."

(Source: CNBC)

Russia's Rosneft to take control of Kurdish oil pipeline amid crisis

Russian energy major Rosneft has agreed to take control of the main oil pipeline in Iraq's Kurdistan, further boosting its role as the main international investor in the semi-autonomous region.

The move is an apparent part of a broader strategy by President Vladimir Putin to ratchet up Moscow's political and economic influence in the Middle East. It came amid the crisis in Kurdistan's relations with the central government in Baghdad, which erupted after the region held an independence referendum last month.

Rosneft said its share in the project may total as much as 60 percent, while the current pipeline operator KAR Group will retain 40 percent.

Sources familiar with the deal said Rosneft's investment in the project was seen totaling about \$1.8 billion.

The deal comes days after Baghdad threatened to re-route a big chunk of oil flows toward an old oil pipeline, which has been out of operation for several years since Kurdistan built its own infrastructure to the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan.

The main lifters of the oil there are trading houses Vitol, Petraco, Glencore and most recently Rosneft via pre-financing deals.

Rosneft's influential Chief Executive Officer Igor Sechin said on Thursday that



Kurshish authorities and Baghdad have to resolve their differences by themselves.

Iraq, along with neighboring Iran and Turkey, has pledged to isolate Kurdistan in the wake of last month's referendum. That includes cutting off air and banking ties and reviving an old pipeline to Turkey to deprive Erbil of a big chunk of oil revenues.

Rosneft will be investing in expanding Erbil's independent pipeline, which Baghdad has targeted, hoping to boost its capacity by a third to 950,000 barrels per day. That is the equivalent of about 1 percent of total global supply.

With Rosneft acquiring 60 percent in the project, the Kremlin oil major effectively becomes a controlling stakeholder in Kurdish oil infrastructure. That should give Erbil some sense of security as it faces unprecedented pressure from its neighbors.

Rosneft has already agreed to invest \$400 million in five oil blocks in Iraqi Kurdistan.

(Source: Reuters)

The massive Saudi Aramco IPO doesn't look like a great investment to many

Oil giant Saudi Aramco is readying what's set to be the biggest initial public offering ever. But as it turns out, investors might not be all that interested.

In fact, fund managers told CNBC that the Saudi energy behemoth — the valuation of which has seen estimates from \$1 trillion to \$2 trillion — comes up short for all three basic tests investors apply to potential IPO investments: growth, an attractive dividend and solid corporate governance.

Saudi Arabia, which plans to float five percent of the state-owned oil giant, may earmark the lions' share of the issue to strategic investors, reportedly from China, if the response from the broader market seems lukewarm.

Even portfolio managers with a reasonably bullish view on the price of oil are thinking twice about buying into Aramco because of uncertainty about the true extent of the company's — and effectively the Kingdom's — oil reserves.

"That's going to be the biggest hurdle. What are we buying?" said Kunal Ghosh, portfolio manager of global emerging markets at Allianz Global Investors who manages \$2.1 billion. "For the last 100 years there's never been a published number that's validated. My enthusiasm for the IPO is very low."

Though Ghosh said he believed a higher price environment for oil may support the valuation during the initial stages when Aramco does come to market, the perceived lack of transparency over reserves and what's seen as weak corporate governance stemming from decades of state control represent longer-term structural hurdles for many investors.

On the sidelines

"When I'm buying an oil company, I'm doing it because I have a view on the commodity, a view on reserves and a view on the management and their respect for my view as a minority shareholder," Ghosh told CNBC.

"Saudi Aramco has been a private company for decades, and needs a change of mindset," Ghosh added. "Until there's a change of mindset, it will keep us on the



sidelines. What multiples it will get for its reserves and earnings will be determined by their corporate governance."

The company has appointed international auditors to independently assess its massive oil reserves, a process that's expected to be completed by the end of the year. The result of that audit — and whether it undershoots or overshoots the official Saudi figure of over 261 billion barrels — will have a direct impact on the all-important valuation.

National interests

"In Saudi, they have done some verification in some small areas, but the full verification will take several years and will take time," said Fereidun Fesharaki, founder of energy consultancy, FACTS Global Energy. "However, based on the crude production capability, I think they may have more reserves than they said."

How Aramco handles the transition from national oil company to one answerable to shareholders, though in a minority, will be closely watched by the market.

Offering only five percent of the company "means investors are a very small minority and minority rights might be subordinated to national interests," said Bryan Goh, chief investment officer at private bank Bordier & Cie in Singapore. "Aramco is not just an oil and gas

company, it's the sovereign wealth fund and economic and social development fund of Saudi Arabia. We can't be confident that the company will be managed from a purely commercial perspective."

Beyond questions of corporate priorities, many fund managers are also concerned that Aramco's business model simply won't stand up over the longer term as the rise of renewable energy undermines the future growth prospects for traditional oil and gas producers.

"It's a bit like asking if you would buy Ford if it was to IPO tomorrow. Unlikely. Its day in the sun has passed," said Warren Gilman, chairman and CEO of CEF Holdings.

Sunset industry

Thomas Hugger, founder and CEO of fund manager Asia Frontier Capital, added: "We are not really bullish on the oil price due to the strong push by China to reduce the air pollution. However, each investment has its price and if the valuation is very attractive (which I doubt) it could be worth an investment."

One route that may enable Saudi Aramco to pull in buyers for its shares could be inclusion into the MSCI Emerging Markets Index, but would investors buy Aramco on a stand-alone basis?

"Maybe not," said Michael Preiss, a Singapore-based portfolio strategist at Taurus Family Office with \$1.9 billion of assets under advisory. "It may be part of the (MSCI EM) Index, so you'll be forced to buy it."

And in a world that's shifting away from fossil fuels, Aramco is "a bit backward looking," Preiss said. "It's more of a sunset industry. The Saudis are realizing it's the end of the cycle."

"We need to see how they manage the governance but there's no doubt that everybody around the world is going to be interested in looking at Aramco," said Robert Thummel, managing director and portfolio manager at Tortoise Capital Advisors, which handles \$16 billion in energy-related assets.

He pointed to its "massive reserves and the low-cost nature of production."

(Source: CNBC)

Oil set for weekly loss on profit-taking

Oil prices fell on Friday and were set for a weekly loss as investors sought to book profits, despite tensions in the Middle East that have slashed supplies of crude.

Brent crude futures were down 47 cents at \$56.76 a barrel at 0954 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$50.75 per barrel, down 54 cents.

"There's a little bit of profit-taking," Olivier Jakob, chief strategist at consultancy Petromatrix, said.

"The market has really been treading a small range all of this week without any true momentum," he added.

Oil exports from Iraq's Kurdistan towards the Turkish port of Ceyhan were flowing at average rates on Friday of 216,000 barrels per day versus the usual flows of 600,000 bpd, a shipping source said.

Iraqi troops regained control of two major oilfields northwest of Kirkuk from Kurdish Peshmerga forces this week, and the oil ministry in Baghdad expects to bring the fields back on stream on Sunday.

In a major development, Russia's biggest oil company, Rosneft, has agreed to take control of Iraqi Kurdistan's main oil pipeline in a \$1.8 billion investment.

The deal "makes it a bit harder for Baghdad to do anything against those flows", Jakob said.

Despite the losses on Friday, analysts say the market is on a path towards rebalancing.

"The oil market has moved into modest undersupply and we expect this will persist at least through the end of the year," U.S. investment bank Jefferies said.

U.S. commercial stocks of crude oil have dropped 15 percent from their March records, to 456.5 million barrels, below levels seen last year.

Part of this drawdown has been due to rising exports as a result of the steep discount of U.S. crude to Brent, which makes it attractive for American producers to export their oil.

Additionally, crude futures price curves are in backwardation, which makes it attractive to sell produced oil immediately rather than store it for later dispatch.

Shipping data in Thomson Reuters Eikon shows that overseas U.S. crude oil shipments have soared from virtually zero before the government loosened export restrictions in late 2015 to around 2.6 million bpd in October.

"Physical bottlenecks are unlikely to kick in until waterborne (U.S.) exports approach 3.2 million bpd," RBC Capital Markets said.

(Source: Reuters)

OPEC looks to permanently expand the cartel

At its November 30 meeting, OPEC will seek to discuss making its current partnership with non-OPEC producers permanent, OPEC's Secretary General Mohammad Barkindo told reporters at the Oil & Money conference in London.

"This platform of 24 countries, now hopefully growing, should be institutionalized," Barkindo said, as quoted by Platts.

"We should have a permanent framework to sustain this platform," OPEC's secretary general added. "We are working with the Russian and Saudis on how we can structure this platform to sustain it."

In his speech at the conference, OPEC's chief said that "at OPEC we recognize the importance of institutionalizing a framework that builds on this unparalleled global platform of stability. This would go beyond the short-term and look at some of the broader challenges, as well as opportunities, the oil industry is expected to face in the years and decades ahead."

Referring to the U.S. shale producers, Barkindo reiterated his view that American producers should have a "shared responsibility", and said that some of them are "playing the proverbial ostrich."

In an unconventional plea to U.S. shale drillers last week, Barkindo urged North American producers to share the responsibility for drawing down the global oil overhang.

"We urge our friends in the shale basins of North America to take this shared responsibility with all the seriousness it deserves, as one of the key lessons learnt from the current, unique supply-driven cycle," OPEC's chief said in a speech last week.

Commenting on the shale drillers' opportunities and challenges, Barkindo said today:

"You cannot have your cake and eat it. Hence we are beginning to see some of them coming out to say we have to be mindful of fiscal discipline. The funding they are getting from Wall Street is not continuing at the pace and level that they were getting."

(Source: oilprice.com)

Singapore teams up with Goldman on Japan clean energy

Singapore's sovereign wealth fund is teaming up with a company created by Goldman Sachs Group Inc. to make its first-ever investments in renewable-energy projects in Japan.

The fund, GIC Pte, will become a corporate partner in GS Renewable Holdings GK, the parent of Japan Renewable Energy Corp., the companies said in a statement Friday. Terms of the transaction weren't disclosed.

JRE develops and operates solar, wind, biomass and other clean-energy projects in Japan. It runs 34 power plants with a combined capacity of about 210 megawatts, and has 170 megawatts of new projects under construction, according to the statement.

"We see GIC's investment as a testament to the potential of the Japanese renewable-energy market and JRE's growth strategy," JRE Chief Executive Officer Kazuhiro Takeuchi said in the statement.

(Source: Bloomberg)

When the commander in chief disrespects his commanders

By James Stavridis

There is a glittering annual dinner at the White House that is typically exclusive to the most senior admirals and generals in the U.S. military: the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs; the service chiefs of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard; and the combatant commanders, who are the most senior four-star officers and who direct U.S. combat operations, reporting directly to the Secretary of Defense and the President. For seven years, as a combatant commander, I attended these gatherings. They were intimate and off-the-record affairs — a chance for the Commander in Chief to bond quietly and privately with his commanders.



Recently, at President Trump's first of these dinners, it was surprising to see him use those senior officers and their spouses as a backdrop for a cryptic comment to the press: "'You guys know what this represents? Maybe it's the calm before the storm.'" When asked what the "storm" was, he responded equally oddly: "You'll find out." Speculation ran wild. Was it a military strike on North Korea? Iran? Venezuela? The White House refused to clarify, citing a desire to keep the enemy guessing.

At an earlier meeting in the Cabinet room, Trump publicly, bluntly dressed down his admirals and generals: "Moving forward, I also expect you to provide me with a broad range of military options, when needed, at a much faster pace. I know that government bureaucracy is slow, but I am depending on you to overcome the obstacles of bureaucracy." That kind of rebuke — in the presence of the press — is a hard moment for senior military officials who wake up every morning seeking to keep the nation safe and have worked at a record pace to keep up with a disorganized White House's constant desire for new military options.

A few days later, well-respected Republican Senator Bob Corker of Tennessee addressed in a series of remarks another crucial role of senior military in the Administration: essentially providing psychological guardrails around the President's impulsive and dangerous tendency to blurt out highly inflammatory statements on Twitter. Corker also upped the verbal ante by describing the collective role of General John Kelly (White House chief of staff), General James Mattis (Secretary of Defense) and Lieut. General H.R. McMaster (National Security Adviser) as running "an adult day care center."

Then Vice President Mike Pence pulled the military even further into the political debate over NFL players' taking a knee during the national anthem when he exited a game after several athletes undertook their planned protest. He said his reason for leaving was, in part, the fact that he and the President "stand with our soldiers."

■ An unsettling image

All of this creates an unsettling image of Trump's relationship with the senior military. On the one hand, he clearly manifests great respect for them, and has selected a coterie of the most senior retired officers for jobs at the highest levels in the Cabinet and White House. But it seems he has a need to dominate them publicly and is trying to pull them into public political debates in ways that will be increasingly uncomfortable for them. He continues to tweet in a jingoistic and militaristic way, effectively swaggering on the global and domestic stage with the cudgel of U.S. military prowess — inflaming already fraught situations and placing him in conflict with the steady advice from his generals, whose operational competence, loyalty to the nation and apolitical approach are thus far unquestioned.

These admirals and generals swear an oath to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States." That is the bedrock for every one of these active and retired officers: serve the nation and avoid the partisan crosswinds. But the ground is slipping under them. Trump is like a hurricane: unpredictable, potentially destructive and endowed with enormous power. Thankfully, our military can stand as a kind of bulwark against his darker angels, but only up to a point. In the end, these officers will obey his lawful orders.

We must hope he will listen to his military counsel, while insulating them from the partisan bickering that is so endemic in our Republic. Meanwhile, the senior military must avoid the politics of the moment and, in private, continue to speak truth to power in the most direct and meaningful ways.

(Source: Time)

Emmanuel Macron: 'We need to develop political heroism'



France has a special position: We are Continental Europe's nuclear power and a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

open to new things, and that includes things that have been taboo until now: France still insists that the treaties cannot be changed. Germany doesn't want any financial transfers. We have to leave these old ways of thinking behind.

■ What does that mean concretely?

A: I think the goal should be that of creating a space that protects us and helps us survive in this world. The European community of values is unique: It combines democracy with the market economy, individual freedoms with social justice. How can we expect the U.S. or China to defend these values, this one-of-a-kind European balancing act that has developed over the course of decades? The challenges are manifold, issues such as migration or terrorism are important to us all. But the switch to renewable sources of energy must also be planned together. And last, but not least, there is digitalization and the societal change that goes along with it. We can only have success on all those fronts if we move forward together.

■ How do you intend to do so? How can you get the Eastern Europeans to get behind your project, and all those countries that are increasingly displaying nationalist tendencies and that don't want to have anything to do with Europe anymore?

A: I don't think what you say is true. I was in Bulgaria in August. The people there are excited about Europe. We can't start dividing people up into categories. In the past, France has often committed the error of not speaking to everybody because there was a belief that some countries could be neglected. I am convinced that there is a desire for Europe. And by the way, who is to be blamed if that isn't the case? The Europeans. We have allowed the development of a kind of collective defeatism and are allowing primarily those to speak who hate Europe and want to give up on it.

■ How important is the trans-Atlantic relationship with the U.S. to you?

A: The trans-Atlantic relationship is strong and must remain so. The U.S.

is an ally in the camp of freedom. On security and military questions, whether in Iraq and Syria or in Africa, we are closely tied to one another. But we have to establish a joint strategy on other issues, such as Iran and North Korea, but also on climate change. That's why I think it is important to speak at length with the American president and show him a path forward for possible cooperation. I feel an obligation to do so.

■ Does Trump make you afraid?

A: Trump is here, he is the head of a global power. I speak with him and explain my views. We have an extremely cordial relationship. Sometimes, we have contradictory views but sometimes we agree. I won't stop working together with him.

■ You speak of a united Europe, but one gets the impression that you are fond of taking unilateral action - things like inviting Trump to Paris, offering to mediate between the Iraqi government and the Kurds following the independence referendum and holding an important speech on the future of Europe two days after the German elections.

A: Every country has its own diplomacy. Being part of Europe doesn't mean giving up one's independence or no longer being able to take the initiative. There are 27 of us - does that mean it is forbidden for some of us to be more ambitious than the others? No, otherwise stasis would be the result and we would be putting ourselves in handcuffs. For example, I often speak with (Turkish) President (Recep Tayyip) Erdogan. I have established a certain relationship with him and talk about it with the German chancellor. When I speak with the Turkish president, I defend European positions. That is how we European partners must do things. You also will have taken note of the fact that I intentionally avoided holding my Sorbonne speech before the elections in Germany. I coordinated closely with the chancellor and spoke with her at the end of the campaign and even on the evening of the election. She even received a copy of my speech before I delivered it.

■ "France must make it possible for Europe to take a leading role in the free world," you said recently. That doesn't sound particularly modest, either.

A: Ambition is never modest. If modesty means to have middling success, then I can only say: I'm not interested. France has a special position: We are Continental Europe's nuclear power and a permanent member of the UN Security Council. This special role, though, only makes sense if France fills it as a member state of the European Union. France cannot play this role alone, it must be seen as a part of Europe. I have always insisted on that. Our international role depends on a strong Europe and a strong Europe depends on France's ability to share leadership with others, including Germany. If France is economically weak and doesn't carry out reforms, it is no longer credible. Europe's position on the global stage is thus weakened. I would like to change all that. France needs a strong Germany and a strong chancellor. But Germany also needs a strong France.

■ Are you concerned that Merkel's potential coalition government with the business-friendly Free Democrats (FDP) and the Greens could stand in the way of your European project? The rise of the right-wing populist Alternative for Germany will also certainly make things more difficult.

A: I don't think so and I told the chancellor that as well. There are three possible ways to react to right-wing extremist parties. The first is to act as though they don't exist and to no longer risk taking political initiatives that could get these parties against you. That has happened many times in France and we have seen that it doesn't work. The people that you are actually hoping to support no longer see themselves reflected in your party's speeches. And it allows the right wing to build its audience. The second reaction is to chase after these right-wing extremist parties in fascination.

■ And the third possibility?

A: To say, these people are my true enemies and to engage them in battle. Exactly that is the story of the second round of the presidential election in France. That is also what I told our German friends: Don't be shy with these people. Look at me, the Front National got many more votes than the AfD. Ms. Le Pen ended up with 34 percent of the vote, 34 percent! I defended Europe, an open society and all my values. And today, the Front National has been significantly weakened. In the debates, you don't hear anything from them anymore - because we engaged them in battle. Now is the time to be bold! The only answer to the AfD is courage and ambition.

■ The weekly magazine Le Point has described you as "France's last chance." Does that create pressure for you?

A: No, otherwise I would not have taken on this battle. If this enormous pressure didn't exist, I wouldn't have been elected. It would have been one of the usual candidates. But that also means that there is no time for a breather right now. I titled my book "Revolution." And that is exactly what it is. France is experiencing a time of transformation - in education, on the labor market and in the pensions system. We're talking about a cultural revolution.

Kenyan elections in crisis again



through Parliament that will make it harder for the judiciary to nullify future elections.

■ Complicate matters

If the election goes ahead on Oct. 26 without Odinga, the effectively anointing Kenyatta, the opposition, already aroused, would erupt. Postponing the vote further and working to fix the electoral commission would seem a reasonable solution, but Kenyatta insists on keeping to the calendar, and there is no certainty that the Supreme Court would allow a delay. To further complicate matters, the commission has said that all minor candidates who had run

for president in August were eligible to run again.

The legal complexities, moreover, are being accompanied by a drumbeat of protests and threats, raising fears of a sequel to the terrible bloodshed after a disputed election in 2007. Odinga has called for daily protests in the coming days. To maintain pressure on the commission; the government has banned demonstrations in the centers of three major cities, citing lawlessness in earlier protests.

Earlier this month, ambassadors from the United States and the European Union issued a statement accusing both sides of preventing a smooth re-election — Kenyatta for changing the electoral rules, Odinga for a "growing list of political demands, inflammatory rhetoric, and boycott threats" that undermined the commission's ability to organize a new election. But the Western diplomats, who had been too quick to accept the results of the August election, seemed to have had little effect on events.

There are ways to make Kenya's complicated new voting system work better, many of them technical, and it is imperative that the electoral commission promptly and publicly show that it has learned its lessons. But first the political war must end. Kenya's Supreme Court demonstrated that there were legal alternatives to street battles. For that to become a guiding precedent, Kenyatta and Odinga have to make peace, restrain their followers and agree on ways to ensure a fair election.

(Source: The NYT)

Decryption of the conflict between Trump and Schumer

By Anna Sadat Hosseini Fard

In recent days, Donald Trump has attacked some senators as well as some congressmen. One of these people is Chuck Schumer, the leader of the Democratic opposition party at the Senate. Chuck Schumer is an opponent of the violation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) at the Congress of the United States and opposes the aggressive approach of the U.S. President to the nuclear deal with Iran. Chuck Schumer has recently stressed that the withdrawal from JCPOA would endanger American interests and national security. Trump, in response to the Democratic senator, said:

"Dem Senator Schumer hated the Iran deal made by President Obama, but now that I am involved, he is OK with it. Tell that to Israel, Chuck!"

The truth is, in 2015, at the time of the U.S. Senate review, Chuck Schumer was the first Democrat to oppose the nuclear deal. At that time, the announcement of Schumer's disapproval sounded like a media bomb in the United States. Similarly, Schumer's opposition to the nuclear deal led to dissatisfaction with people like Obama and John Kerry. Schumer, who is an AIPAC lobbying senator, insisted on his position to the end.

However, Schumer was able to bring along only three other Democratic senators (Bob Menendez, Ben Cardin and Joe Manchin). Eventually, the JCPOA passed with the support of 42 Democratic senators so that even Obama didn't need to use his veto power. Hence, there is no doubt about the extremist approach of Chuck Schumer towards the Islamic Republic of Iran. Even during the last two years, the signature of Schumer could be seen under all sentences of the United States Senate against Iran and the JCPOA. However, Trump's approach to the nuclear deal is so unreasonable and dangerous that even an extremist senator such as Chuck Schumer, is not willing to accompany it.

Chuck Schumer and Ben Cardin, two



Democratic Senators who have declared their opposition to the JCPOA in 2015, are now explicitly warning about the implications of Trump's approach to the nuclear deal with Iran. This time, even the attachment of the two senators to the AIPAC lobby has not been able to make them indifferent to this political suicide. Undoubtedly, Schumer and Cardin, as well as other Democrats' senators, are not concerned about the interests and the good future of Iran in the nuclear deal. However, they are deeply concerned about the future of the United States in the international system (in case of violating the nuclear deal).

On the other hand, Trump's remarks pointing that Schumer should talk about his disapproval of violating the JCPOA to Israel, once again shows the highlighted role of the Zionist regime and lobbies (such as the AIPAC lobby) in the process of dealing with the nuclear deal. Trump has indirectly warned Schumer that he will not be supported by the Zionist regime and the AIPAC lobby in the event of a protest against the cancellation of the JCPOA. This is a warning that the U.S. president has sent to other opponent senators in various forms. In any case, we should expect more open confrontation between Trump and some American

senators on how to deal with the nuclear deal with Iran.

It should be noted that these confrontation with the U.S. President is not limited to the American Senators. For example, John Bolton, the former United States ambassador to the United Nations and one of the main opponents of the nuclear deal, has said in his recent remarks that basically the JCPOA can't be changed.

Bolton acknowledged that the nuclear deal signed between the P5+1 and Iran could not be reformed nor can there be any amendment. Bolton emphasized that what is important is not to add sub-clauses to this agreement (JCPOA), but the principle of the agreement is wrong and in no way correctable!

These statements by Bolton should be considered alongside Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's recent remarks. He, who is one of the opponents of the apparent nuclear deal's violation by the White House, has recently spoken about the possibility of a "second deal" between Iran and the members of the 1 + 5!

Tillerson recently said in a conversation with the CNN television channel that the White House did not ask Congress to impose sanctions on Iran that

would lead to the abrogation of the JCPOA: "If nothing is going to be done about this agreement, the President insists on getting out of it. The President wants a more comprehensive strategy towards Iran. For a long time and especially in the previous government, we have limited our relations with Iran to the nuclear deal. This agreement has some flaws and weaknesses that we not only want to address, but are going to examine a lot of other threats that Iran has brought to the region. We have an agreement that we want to work with other allies to address its shortcomings, and it is possible to include these in a secondary agreement!"

It seems that Trump's legal advisors have come to the conclusion that it is not possible to impose new restrictions on the JCPOA in the form of an addendum or amendment, since this attachment should not be regarded as a violation of the terms and conditions of the agreement. This is while Trump's emphasis on reforming the so-called "sunset" clauses means changing the text of the main agreement.

Under these circumstances, U.S. officials have come to the conclusion that they have to effectively abrogate the existing agreement and conclude a second-round agreement to meet the multiple concerns of the U.S. president. Obviously, there was a complete harmony between Bolton's statements about the unchangeable nature of the JCPOA and Tillerson's remarks on the possibility of concluding a secondary agreement. It should be noted that over the past few weeks, many discussions have been held in the U.S. Review Committee of the JCPOA about the modification of the nuclear deal.

What is certain is that it is not basically important for the Islamic Republic of Iran that what way or method do the U.S. officials try to resort to for the violation of the JCPOA, but that any efforts to make even a slight change in the content of the nuclear deal is not to be accepted by our country.

It is difficult to predict what Congress may do: Brian Katulis

By Javad Heirannia

Brian Katulis, senior fellow at American Progress says "It is difficult to predict what Congress may do - it has a lot of other issues, especially on the domestic front, to tackle."

Advisor of senior U.S. policymakers on foreign policy also adds that "Congress may seek to institute additional sanctions that do not violate the terms of the JCPOA - for instance, more sanctions on Iran for ballistic missiles and support for terrorism."

Following is the full text of the interview:

■ Despite many internal and external oppositions, Trump decertified the JCPOA. What were the reasons behind his very decision? What signal did he want to deliver both internally and externally by doing so?

A: I think a primary motivation for Trump was to fulfill some promises he made during the campaign, or at least be seen to be doing so. He wanted to send a message to Iran and to US partners in the Middle East that he was going to institute tougher measures to counter Iran's destabilizing actions in the Middle East, but there is a gap between the rhetoric he used and the measures that have been



proposed so far. He wanted to send a message to Congress that he wanted to see them take more actions on issues like sanctions against Iran for its ballistic missiles and support for terrorism.

■ Reimposing Iran's sanctions by Congress is in fact tantamount to the violation of JCPOA. Then, Trump makes Congress responsible for the scrap of the very deal. Do you believe Congress Reimpose Iran's nuclear deal waiver before?

A: It is difficult to predict what Congress may do - it

has a lot of other issues, especially on the domestic front, to tackle. Congress may seek to institute additional sanctions that do not violate the terms of the JCPOA - for instance, more sanctions on Iran for ballistic missiles and support for terrorism.

■ In Europe, a single voice concerning the violation of JCPOA cannot be heard. French President, Macron, had underlined before that it would be necessary to include some articles pertinent to human rights and missile issues within JCPOA. This is somehow similar to Trump's word. Do you think Europe will follow suit?

A: It seems like the main reaction from Europe has been to oppose the message from Trump's speech and moves. France is somewhat of an outlier at this point.

-Iran's FM, Zarif, has underscored so far that JCPOA is deemed a deal when all parties are committed to it. What is Iran's reaction to the US withdrawal from the deal?

Iran remains defiant against Trump's statements and gestures. Iran is playing a long game here and understands that Trump risks isolating the United States internationally and that he may not have a credible plan to address Iran's actions in the Middle East.

Macron and nuclear deal with Iran

By Hossein Yari

The French president is scheduled to travel to Iran to meet and discuss the latest developments in the nuclear deal with our country's authorities. This meeting comes at a time when France did not have any clear positions on the nuclear deal.

France, on the one hand, has expressed its support for the nuclear deal, and on the other hand, it has been prepared to re-negotiate it.

France is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and is also a member of the 1 + 5. France played a significant role in opposing peaceful nuclear program in Iran during its nuclear talks with Iran. Currently, Trump is seeking a re-negotiation of a nuclear deal. In order to achieve this goal, the president of the United States will have to conquer France.

The last visit of the US president and Emmanuel Macron in New York can also be analyzed in the same vein.

The main topic of the talks between US and French presi-

dents was a nuclear deal with Iran. French President Emanuel Macron met with President Donald Trump in New York in the sidelines of United Nations General Assembly. The main topic of the US-French presidents' talks was over the nuclear deal with Iran.

In recent weeks, the French authorities have also shown green light to the United States in the context of a fresh deal on JCPOA. A spokesperson for the French president recently announced that the Nuclear Deal could be "completed" by attaching the issue of Iran's missile power. The French authorities have claimed that they were about to complete a nuclear deal after 2025.

But the main question is why the French authorities have already expressed such positions?

What is certain is that the French authorities have started a paradoxical and dual game in this regard.

On the one hand, they try to capture the satisfaction of Trump and the White House, and on the other hand, they are committed to a nuclear deal.

This dichotomy shows itself in the language and behavior of French officials. Donald Trump, on the other hand, has left the Paris climate agreement after attending the White House.

Some analysts say Trump is looking to get concessions from European countries, especially France, to return to this agreement. One of those privileges could be to accompany Paris on a nuclear deal with Iran.

However, after the French presidential election and the election of Macron, talks were held between Washington and Paris on the return of the US to the Paris agreement. Even Macron has stated that he will do his best to bring America back to Paris agreement.

However, after the United Nations General Assembly, France, like other European countries, stressed that it was not possible to re-negotiate a nuclear deal, but it should be noted that it was not possible to open a special account on this Parisian position!

The rules of the French deal with the nuclear deal are subject to a variety of components, including the relationship

with the United States and two other European countries, Germany and Britain. In other words, France does not look at the nuclear deal with a legal approach and as an independent phenomenon.

In this equation, France, like the United States and even two other European countries, Britain and Germany, have a political and instrumental view of a nuclear deal with Iran.

Finally, the young French president Emanuel Macron knows well that his approach to the nuclear deal will be judged by the general public.

He knows well that the cost of leaving the nuclear deal is heavy. However, the foreign diplomacy and foreign policy system of our country should not be convinced that the French are a safe actor to protect the nuclear deal.

The experience of the past two years has shown that, despite the interaction and association with the three European countries over a nuclear deal, it can not be argued that they support the correct implementation of this agreement.

Trump: Heading for another crisis in the Middle East

1 → Should the US Congress approve of pulling out of the deal, the Western world's unified position so arduously formed under the Obama administration will collapse, and so too will the US reputation as a trusted ally. The US European allies strongly reject the far-fetched notion that Trump can somehow conjure up a better deal. Legally, the United States—not Iran—will be in violation of the accord. To avoid this situation, the United States would then have no option but to kill the agreement. This raises several questions, including, (1) what does this mean for US credibility? And (2), if Washington insists on re-negotiating this deal and Tehran refuses to comply and is thus forced to withdraw from this deal, would the Trump administration eventually turn to an unprovoked military action against Iran?

Other foreign policy implications flowing from this move will be equally destabilizing. North Korea, for instance, will be just as adamantly perplexed as to the value of negotiating a deal with the United States. In the event that the United States decides to walk away from this accord, an act that has been widely condemned by all great powers inside and outside the UN Security Council, North Korea would most certainly avoid any diplomatic initiatives similar to the Iran deal. All this is likely to compel many of the region's countries to maintain stronger economic and military ties with China, a development commonly known as Asianization. To many countries in the region, China is becoming a more and more reliable economic and diplomatic partner. This trend would add another layer of complexity to the ongoing conflicts and tensions in the Middle East. Is the Trump administration slowly moving in the direction of confronting Iran—reminiscent of the way the George W. Bush administration paved the way for the war with Iraq? Alternatively, subjecting Iran to more punitive sanctions is likely to strengthen hardliners in Iran and dramatically undercut the Rouhani government and its moderate allies.

So what is to be done? The way forward is to work within the JCPOA framework to see if legal and diplomatic solutions will pay dividends. I concur with those observers who argue that a smart strategy for Iran would be to keep its economic and commercial ties with the EU, Russia, China, India, South Korea, and Japan, while leaving Washington to become further isolated. History suggests that withdrawing from legal commitments, while relying solely on saber-rattling, has been counterproductive at best.

Mahmoud Monshipouri, PhD, teaches international relations and Middle East politics at San Francisco State University and the University of California, Berkeley.

Iran cannot count on Europe to retaliate against America: Shireen Hunter



1 → Following is the text of the interview:

■ Despite many internal and external oppositions, Trump decertified the JCPOA. What were the reasons behind his very decision? What signal did he want to deliver both internally and externally by doing so?

A: Despite some voices raised in America against the decertification, many in Congress--both Republican and Democrat--have been against JCPOA. Other parties to the JCPOA, including Europe, can only plead with the US and have no way retaliating against America. Therefore, Trump believes that he can get away with it.

Trump want to say to the Iranians and to its regional allies that he will be much harsher in dealing with what he considers as Iran's destabilizing policies in the Middle East.

■ Reimposing Iran's sanctions by Congress is in fact tantamount to the violation of JCPOA. Then, Trump makes Congress responsible for the scrap of the very deal. Do you believe Congress Reimpose Iran's nuclear deal waiver before?

A: Most probably, the Congress will impose new sanctions on Iran under other pretexts not related to the nuclear issue. In this regard the designation of the IRGC as a terrorist organization is especially important, because the IRGC is deeply involved in economic matters. In short, most likely the Congress will not impose nuclear-related sanctions. Instead it will sanction Iran on the basis of other complaints.

■ In Europe, a single voice concerning the violation of JCPOA cannot be heard. French President, Macron, had underlined before that it would be necessary to include some articles pertinent to human rights and missile issues within JCPOA. This is somehow similar to Trump's word. Do you think Europe will follow suit?

A: The problem with JCPOA is that it solved one aspect of Iran's difficulties with the West. Other questions related to Iran's attitude towards Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict were not addressed in JCPOA. Yet, the Israeli issue is the real problem in Iran's relations with the West. President Macron's reference to other issues is essentially about Israel, and Iran's approach towards it. Without change in this regard, it is unlikely that Iran's relations with the West will be normalized.

Iran cannot count on Europe, or for that matter Russia or China to retaliate against America. At the end of the day, forced to choose between Iran and America, Europe will chose America, and others will stay neutral.

■ Iran's FM, Zarif, has underscored so far that JCPOA is deemed a deal when all parties are committed to it. What is Iran's reaction to the US withdrawal from the deal?

A: Imposition of nuclear -related sanctions is clearly against JCPOA. But US can argue that new sanctions are not nuclear related. Basically, Americans want to retain those aspects of the JCPOA that limits Iran's nuclear activity, but also put more pressure on it.

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Multivitamins: Do his and hers make a difference?

By Chris Woolston

It's a good thing dietary guidelines aren't laws. If they were, just about all of us could be found guilty. Even if you load fruit onto your whole-grain cereal and pile greens on your sandwiches, chances are you're regularly falling short on one or more nutrients.

Many people take multivitamins to fill in these gaps, but since everyone's different, how do you pick the right pill? You can't buy a multivitamin with your name on it, but you can buy one aimed at your gender. Many multivitamins come in his and her varieties. Examples are One A Day Women's, One A Day Men's Health Formula, Centrum Ultra Women's and Centrum Ultra Men's. They're sold in grocery stores and drug stores everywhere. Expect to pay \$10 or so for 100 tablets, enough for more than three months.

Different companies take a different approach to gender-specific nutrition. One A Day Women's isn't very different from the basic One A Day Essential, although it does contain extra vitamin D (800 IU instead of 400 IU), calcium (450 milligrams instead of 45 mg.) and iron (18 mg. instead of no iron at all).

One A Day Men's Health Formula contains extra vitamins E (45 IU instead of 30 IU), C (90 mg. instead of 60 mg.) and B12 (18 mcg. instead of 6 mcg.). It doesn't have iron, but it has 600 mcg. of lycopene, an antioxidant found in tomatoes that is touted as a defense against prostate cancer.

Compared with the basic Centrum multivitamin, Centrum Ultra Women's contains extra vitamin D (800 IU versus 400 IU), calcium (500 mg versus 200 mg), and vitamin E (35 IU versus 30 IU). Both



varieties contain 18 mg. of iron. Centrum Ultra Men's doesn't have iron but offers extra vitamin D (600 IU versus 400 IU) and vitamin E (45 IU versus 30 IU) along with 600 mcg. of lycopene.

The claims

Like almost all multivitamins, gender-specific varieties claim a long list of supposed benefits. The website for One A Day Women's says the product supports health of the bones, breasts, heart, reproductive system and skin. Centrum Ultra Women's promises to boost the immune system and provide more energy along with healthy skin, nails and hair.

One A Day Men's Health Formula claims to support the prostate and heart. Centrum Ultra Men's supposedly enhances immunity and energy while supporting prostate, colon and heart health.

The bottom line

You probably shouldn't expect dramatic results from a multivitamin, says Jeffrey Blumberg, professor of nutrition science and policy at Tufts University in Boston. "It's not clear that multivitamins have some magical powers to prevent heart disease and cancer," he says. But they can bring most Americans more in line with nutritional guidelines, he adds, and since guidelines for women and men differ somewhat, a gender-specific multivitamin makes some sense.

In practice, though, the products on the market aren't necessarily in sync with guidelines. According to the Institute of Medicine, men and women have the same basic requirements for calcium and vitamins D, E and B12. (Women who are pregnant or nursing need extra

amounts of many vitamins and minerals.) Men need a little more vitamin C than women (90 mg. each day versus 75 mg), and premenopausal women need more iron (18 mg. versus 8 mg.). For postmenopausal women, the iron quota is the same as for men.

At least one nutrient in the men's formulas may not help much. A 2007 study out of the National Cancer Institute and the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle found no evidence lycopene can lower prostate cancer risk.

Blumberg notes that there aren't any studies showing that gender-specific vitamins have any particular health benefits. Such studies would be very difficult and costly to run, he says.

In fact, the value of any multivitamin is an open question. A study of more than 160,000 women published in February concluded that there's "convincing evidence" that multivitamins don't protect postmenopausal women from common cancers or heart disease. Still, it seems likely they have value to people who don't get enough nutrients in their diets -- which is pretty much everyone, says Victoria Drake, a Linus Pauling Institute research associate at Oregon State University in Corvallis. Like Blumberg, Drake thinks gender-specific multivitamins make sense, especially because they offer different levels of iron. "That's the one you would worry about," she says. Women who are menstruating need relatively large amounts of iron to prevent anemia, but too much can encourage heart disease in men and postmenopausal women.

No multivitamin can exactly match a person's nutritional needs, Drake says. But one with the right amount of iron will probably be close enough.

(Source: latimes.com)

Gender-specific multivitamins make sense, especially because they offer different levels of iron but you probably shouldn't expect dramatic results from a multivitamin.

How to reduce your risk of dementia

Ageing is the biggest risk factor for dementia and can't be changed. There are however lots of things you can do to reduce your risk. It's up to you.

It's never too young to develop good habits, but mid-life (age about 40-64) is a good time to start making healthy choices if you're not already doing so. Many people use changes in their lives -- children moving out, a health scare, divorce or starting the menopause -- as a prompt to start living more healthily. You'll find it easier to adopt a healthier lifestyle if you can build it into your normal daily routine. Get your friends and family to support you -- or better yet, join you.

Based on the latest research, here are our top tips to reduce your risk of dementia. Your risk will be lowest if you can adopt several of these and not just one or two.

1. Keep physically active -- for at least 30 minutes, five times a week. You'll need to be active enough to raise your heart rate and get a bit out of breath. You could walk, cycle, swim or join an exercise or dance group. Regular physical exercise in middle-aged or older adults reduces the risk of developing dementia. It's also good for your heart and mental wellbeing. Exercise like this brings health benefits even if you're not losing weight.

2. Don't smoke -- if you already do smoke, try to stop. By smoking you are at a greater risk of developing dementia and harming your lungs, heart and circulation. If you want to stop smoking, talk to your GP. They can provide help and advice about



quitting, and can refer you to an NHS Stop Smoking Service.

3. Eat a healthy balanced diet -- A healthy diet has a high proportion of oily fish, fruit, vegetables, unrefined cereals and olive oil, and low levels of red meat and sugar. Such a diet will help reduce your risk of dementia and heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes. Try to cut down on saturated fat (eg cakes, biscuits, most cheeses) and limit sugary treats. Keep an eye on your salt intake too, because salt raises your blood pressure and risk of stroke. Read food labels to see what's in them and seek out

healthier options.

4. Take control of your health -- If you're invited for a regular mid-life health check at the doctor's, be sure to go. It's like an 'MOT' for your body and will include a check of your blood pressure, weight and maybe cholesterol level. These are linked to dementia and conditions that are strong risk factors for dementia (heart disease, stroke and diabetes). If you're already living with one of these long-term conditions, follow professional advice about medicines and lifestyle. If you feel that you might be getting depressed, seek treatment early.

5. Keep to a healthy weight -- this will reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes, stroke and heart disease -- and hence probably of dementia. A good place to start is to follow the advice on exercise and diet. Keep a diary of your food intake and exercise for each day, and remember that alcohol contains hidden calories. The NHS Live Well website has lots of practical tips. Or you could join a local weight loss group. If you've tried to make changes without success, your GP can also offer advice.

6. Give your brain a daily workout -- This could be reading, doing puzzles, word searches or crosswords, playing cards or learning something new -- maybe another language. If you can keep your mind active you are likely to reduce your risk of dementia. There is a bit less evidence, but keeping socially engaged and having a good social network may also reduce your dementia risk. Visit people or have them visit you, join a club or volunteer.

(Source: alzheimers.org.uk)

Don't worry about sudden cardiac arrest during exercise

Getting regular exercise is the best way to prevent most types of heart disease—including sudden cardiac arrest.

You've probably heard at least one account of a middle-aged man who suddenly collapsed and died while exercising. One famous example is James F. Fixx, author of The Complete Book of Running, who in 1984 died of a heart attack at age 52 while jogging.

These anecdotes might give you pause as you lace up your workout shoes. But a new study offers reassurance that exercise-related heart deaths are quite rare, accounting for just 5% of sudden cardiac arrest cases.

"These deaths grab our attention because they're rare and counterintuitive. But there's absolutely no question that regular, moderate-intensity exercise is the best way to prevent sudden cardiac arrest," says Dr. Aaron L. Baggish, associate director of the Cardiovascular Performance Program at Harvard-affiliated Massachusetts General Hospital. The paradox is that if you are going to have a heart-related event, it's more likely to occur when you're exercising than when you're not, he

explains.

What can cause sudden cardiac arrest?

Sudden cardiac arrest means the heart abruptly and unexpectedly stops working. It can occur in a person with or without known heart disease. Possible causes include a structural or electrical problem with the heart; dehydration; a serious imbalance of potassium, magnesium, or other minerals in the blood; an inherited condition; or a blow to the chest.

Cardiac arrest is not the same as a heart attack, which is caused by an artery blockage that stops blood flow to the heart. A heart attack can kill part of the heart's muscle but isn't necessarily fatal. However, a heart attack can trigger a malfunction in the heart's electrical system, which can lead to sudden cardiac arrest. In most of these cases, the heart's lower chambers beat fast and chaotically, a condition known as ventricular fibrillation. Circulation stops, and death occurs in minutes.

For the study published in the April 21, 2015, issue of Circulation, researchers reviewed 1,247 cases of sudden cardiac

arrest in middle-aged men and women over an 11-year period. Of the 63 cases of cardiac arrest that occurred during exercise, most occurred in men, most of whom were jogging, playing basketball, or cycling.

Watch for early warning signs

Two-thirds of these people had known heart disease. In fact, nearly one-third of them had experienced typical cardiovascular symptoms such as chest pain and breathlessness during the week before the sudden cardiac arrest. But the exercisers were twice as likely to survive as people with cardiac arrest from all other causes, probably because they were in public places and more likely to receive quick treatment from a bystander.

In addition to the reassurance that exercise-related cardiac arrest is rare, the study's other important message is that heart disease often gives warning signs, says Dr. Baggish. If you feel any chest pain during exercise, have difficulty breathing, or even feel more drained than usual, stop and call a doctor for advice.

Recognizing and reacting to cardiac arrest

Someone having a cardiac arrest

- Suddenly faints or collapses
- Stops breathing
- Has no pulse
- May have twitching muscles.

If you witness someone collapse from what appears to be cardiac arrest:

1. Call 911 right away. The sooner professional help arrives, the better.

2. Start "hands only" CPR. Push hard and fast (about 100 times a minute if you can) on the middle of the person's chest. This keeps blood flowing to the brain and the rest of the body. If you aren't in a public place with a defibrillator handy, keep doing CPR until emergency help arrives. Swap off with a partner if needed.

3. Use a defibrillator. If you are in a public place such as a fitness center or airport, ask a bystander to find the nearest automated external defibrillator (AED). These user-friendly devices have step-by-step visual and voice prompts that tell you how to use them correctly. An AED shocks the heart out of its deadly rhythm and back to normal.

(Source: health.harvard.edu)

What are the benefits of morning water therapy?



By CureJoy Editorial

Morning water therapy is a traditional way of beginning each day with a glass of lukewarm H2O. Designed to get your digestion going and help cleanse your body of toxins+waste, this is a quick and easy method to give your body a leg up. Storing the water in a copper vessel overnight and adding a dash of lemon to it before consuming can help amp-up the health benefits.

Getting your daily intake of about 2.7 to 3.7 liters of water every day isn't always easy. But a routine like morning water therapy can ensure that you start on the right track. Water therapy is popular in several Asian branches of medicine -- from Ayurveda to traditional Japanese medicine.

Beginning each day with a big glass of lukewarm water is considered a quick and easy method to give your body a leg up. Here's why you should keep that momentum going every day.1

What are the benefits of morning water therapy?

1. Kickstarts the digestion

Water consumption early in the morning helps get your digestion going and is a good antidote to problems like diarrhea and constipation, which are usually due to sluggish digestion. For best results, use warm water.

This practice also causes your blood vessels to dilate and help you digest food better. This treatment may also help ease heart trouble for some people due to the vasodilatory effects of warm water.2

2. Flushes out toxins

Water has the ability to flush out toxins from your body, and this detox effect helps with problems like acne. It also eases the workload for your kidneys, keeping kidney trouble at bay.

This ability also helps in the optimal performance of the gastrointestinal tract, a clincher if you're struggling with obesity. This practice helps get a good start to the day, cleaning out your system and getting it ready for the rest of the day.3

3. Helps fight illness

According to Japanese water-therapy practitioners, following the morning water regimen can ward off problems

as diverse as acne and obesity. Other claims surrounding this therapy aren't backed by clinical studies or scientific research yet, but many vouch for its benefits. For instance, women with menstrual issues or people suffering from diabetes, headaches, body aches, arthritis, and piles say that morning water therapy eases their symptoms. The water temperature is the key as cold water does not yield the same results.

How to do it at home

Morning water therapy is easy enough to work into your routine.

- As soon as you wake up, before you even brush your teeth, drink water. The Japanese version of the water therapy suggests drinking four glasses (of 160 ml each) of warm or room temperature water, while some practitioners of Ayurveda recommend as much as 1.2 liters. A glass or two is probably what most people should go for to avoid overdoing it.

- Next, brush your teeth but avoid eating or drinking anything -- not even a morning cuppa. You're free to eat or drink whatever you want after a 45-minute window.

Ayurveda recommends warm water mixed with lemon or lime. According to practitioners, this warm water encourages muscular contractions of the intestinal walls to get your bowel movements going while also stimulating the gastrointestinal tract. The rich vitamin and mineral content of lime or lemon is considered useful for freeing toxins called "ama" from the tract. Storing the boiled water in a copper vessel overnight has added benefits, including killing microbes in the water.

What to watch out for

Water therapy may be a good supplement to modern medicine. But remember, this routine is based on individual user experience and not prescribed by doctors, so you will need to take an informed decision on whether or not this is for you. While it may be useful to treat cases of digestive trouble or acne, for more serious ailments like diabetes and heart problems, consult your doctor first. If you are pregnant, elderly, or have kidney problems, this is probably not for you.

Also, avoid overdoing the water therapy. Diluting your blood too much through excess water consumption can lead to serious problems. Consuming over 3 liters of water in a short interval is also likely to cause water intoxication. If this happens, you may first feel a headache coming on, nausea and vomiting, fatigue, and disorientation. You will also need to urinate often. If the buildup of water goes to the brain cells, it could cause seizures, respiratory arrest, coma, or even death. So moderation is the key!

(Source: curejoy.com)

10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

Here are high rated IT titles in the world that reviewed by savvy tech users:

1 Apple plans on selling lower priced models with iPhone X features in 2018?

According to a report published in China today, Apple will be using some of the technology found in this year's Apple iPhone X on next year's models that are rumored to have code names of Lisbon and Hangzhou.

2 Tech companies to lobby for immigrant 'Dreamers' to remain in U.S.

Nearly two dozen major companies in technology and other industries are planning to launch a coalition to demand legislation that would allow young, illegal immigrants a path to permanent residency, according to documents seen by Reuters.

3 U.S. lawmakers want crackdown on Facebook, Twitter political ads.

U.S. lawmakers, alarmed that foreign entities used the internet to influence last year's election, introduced legislation on Thursday to extend rules governing political advertising on television, print and radio to also cover social media like Facebook Inc.

4 HTC U11 Plus leaked renders show a glamorous back plate, but rather thick chins.

The smartphone is supposed to go official on November 2, but the first details about the U11 Plus have already emerged earlier

The smartphone is expected to pack a Qualcomm Snapdragon 835 processor inside, paired with 4GB or 6GB RAM and either 64GB or 128GB internal memory.

5 Apple Watch Series 3 users in China have their cellular connection cut off abruptly.

The Chinese government requires consumers who need a SIM card for an online device, to register their real name with the wireless operator that they subscribe to.

6 Since two massive earthquakes hit Mexico in September, claiming more than 460 lives, an early warning start-up called SkyAlert has doubled its users to 5.8 million, making it one of the country's most downloaded apps.

7 Clap for China's president anywhere, anytime with new app.

The app, "Excellent Speech: Clap for Xi Jinping," had apparently been played more than 400 million times the night it was uploaded, according to What's On Weibo.

8 Logitech has announced two new Ultimate Ears speakers, the Blast and the Megablast. While on the surface they look like slightly redesigned Boom 2 and Megaboom, both of these new speakers feature Amazon Alexa built-in.

As you'd expect, both speakers have Wi-Fi and need to stay connected to the internet for Alexa to work, although they can be used without it as regular old Bluetooth speakers. The UE Blast is priced at \$229.99 and the UE Megablast at \$299.99. The Power Up charging dock is priced at \$39.99.

9 Visa Checkout allows you to pay through Visa's platform, without giving your credit or debit card information to the merchant. You just need a user name and a password. And now you can use it with Android Pay too so that password can be switched out for a fingerprint.

10 Huawei has announced the completion of dual-connectivity technology verification during a 5G trial with Korean telco LG U+ in Seoul, providing 20Gbps downlink speeds by simultaneously linking two 5G base stations.

The trial took place using a 3.5GHz base station and a 28GHz base station at an LG U+ test base in the Korean capital, with Huawei saying that the dual-connectivity solution can also be used to link 4G and 5G base stations.

51 percent of tech experts say fake news can't be fixed

With content peddlers Facebook and Google still struggling to combat fake news, especially during crises like the Las Vegas shooting, the proliferation of such false content might seem like an unstoppable flow. If that's your opinion, you're in the (slight) majority. A Pew survey of over 1,100 "tech experts" and scholars found that 51 percent believed the fake news problem will continue to get worse in the next decade.

When asked to explain their reasoning, both groups centered their outlooks on the potential of technology to prevent (or fail to prevent) people from enacting their less-than-noble agendas. In practice, this has meant the string of Russian actors influencing the 2016 election and its aftermath, but their successful efforts have opened the door to other bad actors with nefarious motives.

Those who believe technology won't stop their efforts had two major arguments: Human desire pleasing content will inevitably feed the fake news machines, and that technological advance will outpace our ability to comprehend and control it. The 49 percent who believe we'll get a handle on fake news have serious faith in eventual tech fixes, along with our human capability to recognize a collective threat and collectively organize a solution. More extensive responses can be found on the survey's page.

In the meantime, tech titans are still scrambling to produce fixes to stem the tide of fake news. Facebook continues to introduce possible solutions, like applying its algorithms to supply a fact-checking feedback loop, but fake news continues to slip through, as we saw with Google's ads. And then, of course, there's Twitter's late policing.

(Source: Recode)

The Surface Book 2's secret weapon is ceramic, says Panos Panay

By Devindra Hardawar

With the Surface Book, Microsoft delivered yet another way to rethink traditional computers. It resembled a laptop more than the earlier Surface devices, which were basically tablets with keyboard covers. But it also packed in one new trick: a large screen that you could easily remove at the touch of a button and use as a tablet. At the heart of that feature was a unique hinge that looked unlike anything else on the market. It had one big problem, though: It wasn't very stable.

It was something that was hard to ignore when you used it on your lap; the screen would shake as you typed, as if the display was barely holding on for life. It made the Surface Book feel more like a prototype than an expensive high-end laptop -- not exactly inspiring. So when it came time for the sequel, the Surface Book 2, it was one of the first things Microsoft addressed.

"The hinges are completely redesigned; it's all from the learnings of the first one, because you want more stability," Microsoft's Panos Panay, the creator of the Surface line and its VP of devices, said in an interview with Engadget. "We redesigned the connection mechanism, we went to ceramics, we lightened the whole product."

Yes, ceramics. That's not something you'd typically find in a notebook, but its ability to deal with high temperatures better than metal made it the ideal material. Specifically, the notebook uses a small ceramic part (below) that works together with muscle wire to attach and detach the screen, as well as keep everything steady.

"We didn't invent muscle wire. But we went and found it and thought: How



would you include it with a hinge that could lock these two together, with a mechanism that felt robust and premium?" Panay said. "You had to hear it when it was open. You had to know when it was locked... That disconnect moment should be emotional, it should be connected to you, you should understand it."

Based on my hands-on with the Surface Book 2, it's definitely much more stable than the original. And, oddly enough, removing and reattaching the display to the keyboard base felt easier than before. It makes a satisfying click when it connects to the base, but it also smoothly detaches. It might sound like a small change, but it's a truly meaningful one for Surface Book users. We were promised the laptop of the future -- and the future shouldn't have screens that wobble like a bobblehead on a dashboard.

Naturally, the Surface Book 2. It's more powerful than before, and there's a new 15-inch model joining the family. But is that enough to take on Apple's MacBook Pro, not to mention other powerful laptops?

"With the [Surface Book 2] hardware, we redesigned everything on the inside, period," Panay said. "To get to that next level of performance we needed -- it's three times more powerful -- we put in a quad-core Intel eighth-generation CPU. Now you're in a totally different class of computing from gen 1 to gen 2."

Even though the Surface Book was generally well reviewed, early users were plagued by a variety of issues, including screen flickering, power problems and bouts of instability. We talked with Microsoft representatives about those problems shortly after the laptop's launch,

and, for the most part, they acknowledged that they still had work to do.

"When we launched the Surface Book, we had some challenges from the silicon through the software," Panay said. "This is why the Surface Book 2 is so important... Right now we look at Surface Book quality and it's off the charts. Did it take some learning to get it to where we needed to be? Absolutely."

While he wouldn't point to any specific changes that helped stability, Panay noted that they have a better understanding of how they're pushing the CPU, GPU and hinge components. The Surface Book design is unique among laptops: It houses its CPU in the display but holds its graphics hardware (and additional battery) in the keyboard base. In particular, dealing with those early issues strengthened Microsoft's relationship with Intel, which was essential as they developed the Surface Book 2.

Panay didn't say much about what his team is cooking next, after reinventing laptops three times, as well as all-in-one desktops with the Surface Studio. But, not surprisingly, he's excited about the vision of seamless computing that Microsoft is pushing to consumers.

"There was a point in time where you had to switch between your pen, your touchscreen and your keyboard," he said. "There was literally a break in flow... The most inspiring thing about our categories today -- whether it's Cortana, with the dual-array mic, or interacting with Office with a Pen and touch -- as they continue to evolve into a seamless way, we're going to get the best out of people... We're now in a generation where, if you want to get something done: Start. Go. Move."

(Source: Engadget)

Google and Facebook under pressure after helping anti-refugee campaign

By Greg Nichols

An anti-refugee campaign, Secure America Now, received targeted help from Facebook and Google to achieve the most efficient use of its millions of dollars of ad-spending in the run up to the US general election, it has been reported.

The campaign, which split its focus between anti-Islamic adverts, such as one alleging the imminent creation of the "Islamic State of France", and more specifically political messages focused on Hillary Clinton, was treated as a big-ticket customer by the advertising teams at both companies, receiving a high tier of personalised treatment, according to Bloomberg News.

On Facebook's part, that partially involved working directly with the advertising agency that handled Secure America Now's business, to experiment with video advert formats in an effort to find which of 12 different versions was most effective. Facebook used Secure America Now's video to explore whether or not vertical video adverts could be more impactful than square ones. (They are not, was the result.)

Facebook declined to comment on the record about the partnership, but was keen to stress that it did not work directly with Secure America Now, only the campaign's ad agency, and that it was the agency's idea



to perform the experiment.

Google worked closely with the campaign, according to Bloomberg, with sales managers from its elections team bringing Secure America Now and its agency into the web firm's New York offices for advice about how to create more effective campaigns.

In a statement, Google said: "We have strict policies that govern where we allow Google ads to appear and we enforce these policies vigorously. When we find ads that violate these policies, we immediately disapprove and stop showing them." The company eventually

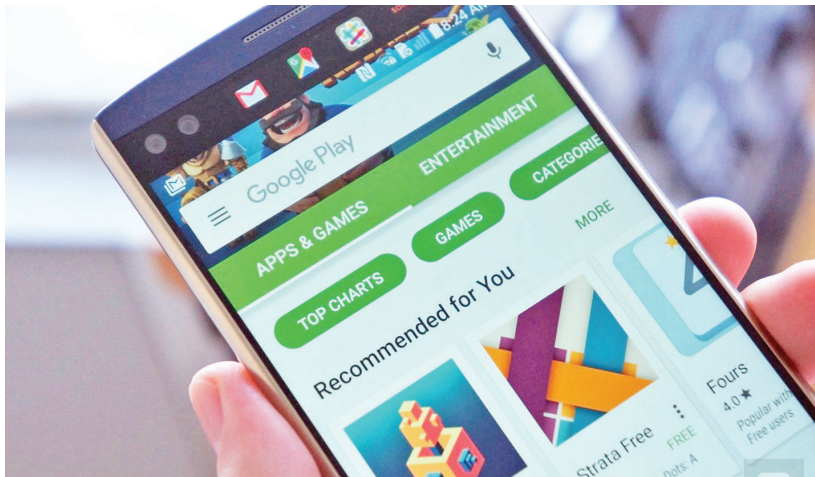
blocked some ads from the campaign for violating its policies, including some for the Islamic State of France video.

The work with Secure America Now cuts to the core of Facebook's difficult year since the election. Immediately after Donald Trump was proclaimed President Elect, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg said it was a "crazy idea" that fake news on Facebook had influenced the his election; and even before Trump's victory, Facebook committed to political neutrality: "we have not and will not use our products in a way that attempts to influence how people vote," the company said, after Zuckerberg was asked by employees "what responsibility Facebook [has] to help prevent President Trump". (Zuckerberg has since backtracked: "Calling that crazy was dismissive and I regret it," he wrote in September.)

But Facebook also markets itself to politicians and campaigners around the world based precisely on its ability to influence how people vote. One Facebook advertiser "success story" is even titled "the best content to influence voters". The company, like Google, makes a significant amount of its income providing programmatic advertising in a completely hands-off manner for small organisations, but as its work with Secure America Now shows, it also takes a more active role in campaigns.

(Source: Guardian)

Google will pay hackers who find flaws in top Android apps



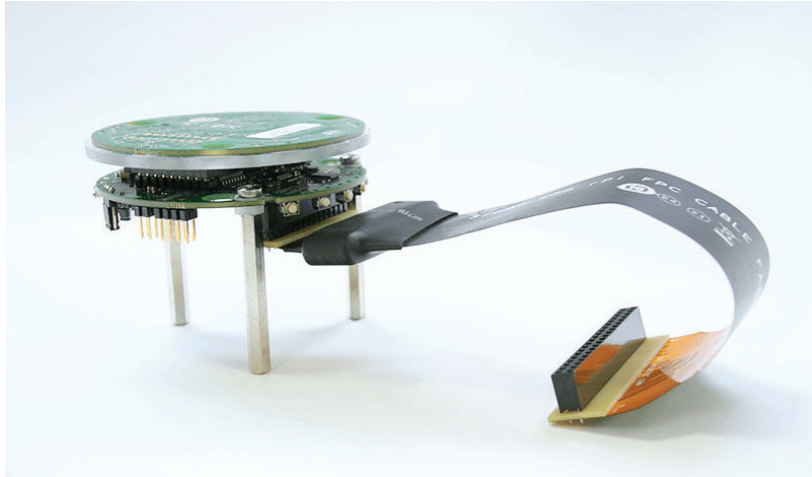
Google is probably hoping to raise the quality of apps in the Play store by launching a new bug bounty program that's completely separate from its existing one. While its old program focuses on finding flaws in its websites and operating systems, this one will pay hackers when they find vulnerabilities in Android's top third-party apps. They have to submit their findings straight to the developers and work with them before they can turn in a report through HackerOne's bounty platform to collect their reward.

Google promises \$1,000 for

every issue that meets its criteria, but bounty hunters can't simply choose a spammy app (of which there are plenty on the Play Store) to cash in. For now, they can only get a grand if they can find an eligible flaw in Dropbox, Duolingo, Line, Snapchat, Tinder, Alibaba, Mail.ru and Headspace. Google plans to invite more app developers in the future, but they have to be willing to patch any vulnerabilities found... which means you can't rely on the program to fix the issues in your favorite low-quality application.

(Source: AndroidPolice)

Intel and Amazon partner on voice recognition tech



Intel and Amazon are partnering to put the former's silicon and smarts into the latter's Alexa voice platform. The chip-maker has introduced the Intel Speech Enabling Developer Kit to provide a "complete audio front-end solution for far-field voice control," according to a press release. The idea is that Intel has done the hard work of designing the mic arrays and voice systems and that all developers will need to do is write applications for them. It offers algorithms for echo cancellation and beam forming, wake words, an 8-mic array and the company's dual digital signal processor. The development kit is up for pre-

order as of today for \$399. And while that might be a little too expensive for a hobbyist developer (a Raspberry Pi is \$25) for now, it isn't exorbitantly priced a la some game console development kits. If you wait until after the pre-order window, the cost jumps \$100.

Of course, if you don't want to get your hands dirty with hardware -- or spend any money -- you can always make skills for Alexa for free with Amazon's developer portal. That's helped Amazon's voice platform grow by leaps and bounds, so it'll be interesting to see what effect Intel's new kit will have.

(Source: Intel)

Warning of ‘ecological Armageddon’ after dramatic plunge in insect numbers

The abundance of flying insects has plunged by three-quarters over the past 25 years, according to a new study that has shocked scientists.

Insects are an integral part of life on Earth as both pollinators and prey for other wildlife and it was known that some species such as butterflies were declining. But the newly revealed scale of the losses to all insects has prompted warnings that the world is “on course for ecological Armageddon”, with profound impacts on human society.

The new data was gathered in nature reserves across Germany but has implications for all landscapes dominated by agriculture, the researchers said.

The cause of the huge decline is as yet unclear, although the destruction of wild areas and widespread use of pesticides are the most likely factors and climate change may play a role. The scientists were able to rule out weather and changes to landscape in the reserves as causes, but data on pesticide levels has not been collected.

■ Flying insects

The “fact that the number of flying insects is decreasing at such a high rate in such a large area is an alarming discovery,” said Hans de Kroon, at



Radboud University in the Netherlands and who led the new research.

“Insects make up about two-thirds of all life on Earth (but) there has been some kind of horrific decline,” said Professor Dave Goulson of Sussex University, UK, and part of the team behind the new study. “We appear to be mak-

ing vast tracts of land inhospitable to most forms of life, and are currently on course for ecological Armageddon. If we lose the insects then everything is going to collapse.”

The research, published in the journal Plos One, is based on the work of dozens of amateur entomologists

across Germany who began using strictly standardized ways of collecting insects in 1989. Special tents called malaise traps were used to capture more than 1,500 samples of all flying insects at 63 different nature reserves.

■ Startling decline

When the total weight of the insects in each sample was measured a startling decline was revealed. The annual average fell by 76% over the 27 year period, but the fall was even higher – 82% – in summer, when insect numbers reach their peak.

Previous reports of insect declines have been limited to particular insects, such European grassland butterflies, which have fallen by 50% in recent decades. But the new research captured all flying insects, including wasps and flies which are rarely studied, making it a much stronger indicator of decline.

The fact that the samples were taken in protected areas makes the findings even more worrying, said Caspar Hallmann at Radboud University, also part of the research team: “All these areas are protected and most of them are well-managed nature reserves. Yet, this dramatic decline has occurred.”

(Source: The Guardian)

“Insects make up about two-thirds of all life on Earth (but) there has been some kind of horrific decline,” says Professor Dave Goulson of Sussex University, UK, and part of the team behind the new study.

Scientists detect massive caverns on moon that could house colony

If humans are going to live someplace other than Earth, the moon seems like a good option. It’s nearby and could serve as a launchpad for missions to other locations in the Solar System.

Scientists have long wondered if shadowy crevasses on the lunar surface could be entrances to caverns that could serve as a home for future colonists. New data from Japanese and U.S. researchers indicates such caverns do exist.

The moon is a cold, lifeless chunk of rock today, but it was active in the past when the interior was still cooling. Geological activity like lava flows and volcanic activity could have carved out tubes and caves similar to features we have here on Earth.

■ Dark pits

The international team examined several dark pits on the moon in what is known as the Marius Hill region. These features are considered some of the best candidates to be the openings to ancient lava tubes.

Researchers from the Japanese space agency JAXA analyzed radar data from

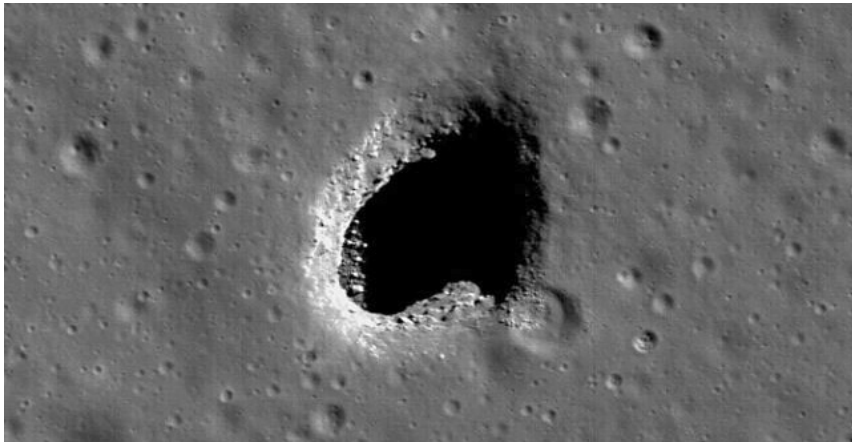
the SELENE spacecraft, which was deployed in 2007 to study the moon’s geology. It turns out the radar instruments on SELENE were also able to provide good evidence for the existence of lava tubes.

Scientists fired multiple radar bursts into the suspected lava tubes, and what they got back was a two-part echo indicating the interior of the pit has a floor and a ceiling. Several other sites produced the same echo patterns, so there may be multiple tubes in the region.

■ Microwave and sensor system

The same area surveyed by JAXA also happens to be where NASA conducted studies with a mission called GRAIL (Gravity Recovery and Interior Laboratory). This mission used a microwave band sensor system to map the gravitational field of the moon. This data can also tell you where there’s a mass deficit—areas where there’s less mass than the surrounding space.

Combining SELENE and GRAIL data, the suspected lava tubes show mass deficits. The team was even able to use the combined data to estimate the size of



the chamber. The underground cavern is several kilometers long and at least one kilometer tall.

A massive space like this could serve as a location to study the internal structure of the moon, as well as build a colony. Without an atmosphere or magnetic field, the moon’s surface doesn’t offer any protection from radiation. Any extended stay on the moon (or Mars,

for that matter) would require heavy shielding to prevent excessive radiation exposure, but you don’t need to build something on the surface to do that when the moon’s regolith does the job fine when you’re underground. There’s a lot of hype about colonizing Mars, but the moon is looking like an even more attractive place to start.

(Source: extremetech.com)

This record-breaking device just made solar thermal power vastly more

Scientists have successfully pumped molten metal in a custom-made machine at a temperature of 1,400°C (2,552°F), a leap forward that could be used to upgrade the capabilities of solar thermal plants across the world.

Usually, shifting liquid metal at anything much above 1,000°C (1,832°F) causes the material it’s held in to break under the heat, thus limiting the amount of energy we can store as heat in facilities like the Crescent Dunes plant near Las Vegas.

To get around this limitation, the team from the Georgia Institute of Technology, Stanford, and Purdue University in Indiana, engineered a special kind of ceramic that could accommodate the expansion and contraction that comes along with

the intense heat. The pump was then sealed with graphite and filled with nitrogen.

■ Exposure to extreme heat

Along with the materials advances, the pump is also designed so that the gear teeth and motor are deliberately misaligned – the expansion that follows its exposure to extreme heat then aligns them properly to do the job at the heat levels we’ve never achieved before.

The “hotter you can operate, the more you can convert thermal energy to mechanical energy or electrical energy,” says one of the researchers, Asegun Henry from Georgia Tech.

“But when containment materials like metals get hot, they become soft and that limits the whole infrastructure.”

The new pump enables better ways to store the energy we capture from the Sun, using materials like molten tin and molten silicon that were previously off limits because we simply couldn’t build a pump strong enough to hold them.

Store energy in this way and we can get more energy out while putting less in, thanks to efficiency improvements over existing materials like molten salt, which is typically stored at just 566°C (1,051°F).

The whole operation would be cheaper too: solar thermal plants could increase efficiency by around 50 percent using the new pump and hotter materials, estimate the scientists, reducing costs by 20 to 30 percent along the way.

■ Utilizing thermal energy

The “hotter we can operate, the more

efficiently we can store and utilize thermal energy,” explains Henry. “This work will provide a step change in the infrastructure because now we can use some of the highest temperature materials to transfer heat.”

Further down the line the researchers think the high temperature pump could be used to get hydrogen out of methane without generating carbon dioxide at the same time – another potential route to using hydrogen as a clean energy source.

Although the Shapal ceramic used in the team’s experiments showed signs of wear, the researchers think a harder ceramic would solve that problem quite easily, and efforts are already underway on an improved version.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

World’s deepest lake in peril, scientists warn

Lake Baikal is undergoing its gravest crisis in recent history, experts say, as the government bans the catching of a signature fish that has lived in the world’s deepest lake for centuries but is now under threat.

Holding one-fifth of the world’s unfrozen fresh water, Baikal in Russia’s Siberia is a natural wonder of “exceptional value to evolutionary science” meriting its listing as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Baikal’s high biodiversity includes over 3,600 plant and animal species, most of which are endemic to the lake.

Over the past several years, however, the lake, a major international tourist attraction, has been crippled by a series of detrimental phenomena, some of which remain a mystery to scientists.

They include the disappearance of the omul fish, rapid growth of putrid algae and the death of endemic species of sponges across its vast 3.2 million-hectare (7.9 million-acre) area.

■ Species of salmon

Starting in October, the government introduced a ban on all commercial fishing of omul, a species of the salmon family only found in Baikal, fearing “irreversible consequences for its population”, the Russian fisheries agency told AFP.

The “biomass of omul in Baikal has more than halved



since 15 years ago” from 25 million tons to just 10 million, the agency said.

Local fishery biologist Anatoly Mamontov said the decrease is likely caused by uncontrollable fish poaching, with extra pressure coming from the climate.

“Baikal water stock is tied to climate,” he said. “Now there is a drought, rivers grow shallow, there are less nutrients. Baikal’s surface heats up and omul does not like warm water.”

UNESCO last month “noted with concern that the ecosystem of the lake is reported to be under significant

stress” and a decrease in fish stocks is just one observable effect.

The Baikal omul, a well-known specialty, was for centuries the main local source of food, eaten salted or smoked, and especially important given the region has no farming.

■ Lake’s ecosystem

Another peril to the lake’s ecosystem is the explosion of algal blooms unnatural to Baikal with thick mats of rotting Spirogyra algae blanketing pristine sandy beaches, which some scientists say indicates that the lake can no longer absorb human pollution without consequence.

Fifteen years ago, some of the lake’s picturesque villages had only two hours of electricity a day, but now improved power access means that “every babushka rents out rooms and has a washing machine,” he said.

Indeed the lake, which is 1,700 meters (5,580 feet) deep, and its tourism now provide a livelihood for many residents to replace fishing.

Timoshkin has travelled the length of Baikal testing for Spirogyra prevalence and said that in three critical zones near populated areas “the bottom does not look like Baikal anymore” and algae is pushing out oxygen-loving molluscs and crustaceans.

(Source: AFP)

Birds are evolving longer beaks because of bird feeders

Certain birds in the UK have longer beaks than their non-UK brethren of the same species. Evolutionary biologists suggest that it’s the British people’s fondness for setting out bird feeders that is behind this trend. The hobby appears to be directly impacting evolution.

Researchers studied beak lengths of great tits in the UK, where bird feeders are popular, and in the Netherlands, where they are not. They also tracked the location of tagged tits to determine how much time they spent at bird feeders. The scientists also have 70 years’ worth of historical data on great tits and could discern that their beak lengths are changing with time.

The researchers started by analyzing DNA from more than 3,000 great tits in the UK and in the Netherlands. They found differences in several genes indicating face shape. The gene variant for faces with longer beaks was correlated with having a higher number of fledgling chicks — so the gene can continue to spread throughout their population.

“DNA is a really useful way of finding out how natural selection occurs in the wild,” evolutionary biologist Lewis Spurgin at the University of East Anglia, one of the authors of this study, tells Newsweek. “Our study shows that we can start with DNA and build up a really complete picture of how evolution works.”

Spurgin says he doesn’t know for sure why birds would need longer beaks in the presence of more bird feeders. “There are several possibilities. It could be that they’re simply more able to access the feed, you may be able to get to it better,” Spurgin says.

(Source: Newsweek)

This ‘inflatable space yacht’ could be in orbit by 2022

The inflatable space habitat was originally designed by NASA and offers an efficient method for moving astronaut facilities into space.

Inflatable space habitats may sound like the stuff of science fiction to some, but such a contraption actually already exists in the form of a one-room module currently attached to the International Space Station for testing.

Partnering with United Launch Alliance — a joint venture of Boeing and Lockheed Martin Space Systems — Bigelow said it hopes to send put the B330 expandable space habitat into lunar orbit by 2022.

Announcing the ambitious project this week, Bigelow president Robert Bigelow said the fully autonomous space station would provide anchorage “for significant lunar business development in addition to offering NASA and other governments the moon as a new, exciting location to conduct long-term exploration and astronaut training.”

Bigelow’s B330 habitat — a larger version of the BEAM module currently attached to the space station — is composed of a super-strong, multi-layered Kevlar-esque material.

The company says the expandable habitat, which is about a third of the size of the space station — has the potential to be used for pretty much anything, including a microgravity research center, a space farm, a dormitory for deep space missions, a kitchen/cafe for astronauts, and even as a “private space yacht” for wealthy vacationers looking for a different kind of trip.

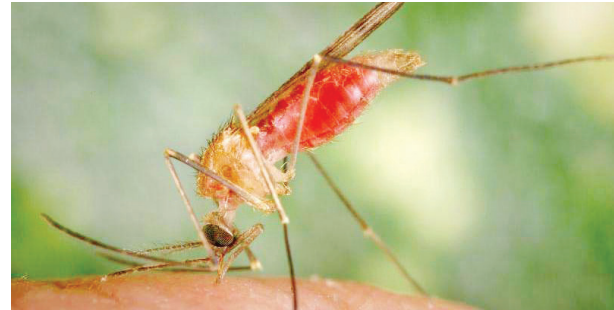
If Bigelow can raise the funds for its grand plan, the B330 would begin its journey to the moon on a Vulcan 562 rocket that would first take it to low-Earth orbit. During this phase, the habitat would be expanded, kitted out, and tested for any issues.

(Source: Digital Trends)

A mosquito’s secret weapon: a light touch and strong wings

Scientists have found the key to mosquitoes’ stealth takeoffs: They barely push off when making a fast getaway, but instead rely on strong and rapid wing beats to quickly get aloft without anyone noticing.

The technique is in stark contrast to other insects, like flies, that push off first and then start beating their wings frantically, often tumbling uncontrollably in the process. That strong push-off gives away their location, however, allowing us to swat them more easily than we can swat a mosquito.



“Mosquitoes take off mostly with their wings and push off with their legs very, very lightly, or maybe not at all,” said Sofia Chang, a University of California, Berkeley graduate student who wrangled and fed malarial mosquitoes in order to study their takeoffs. “If they were to push off a lot more with their legs, they wouldn’t have to produce as much lift with their wings. But if they lift just with their wings, you won’t feel them coming off your skin.”

Mosquitoes are able to make these stealthy takeoffs with an empty belly or one filled with a blood meal, which nearly doubles their weight, she said.

Working in the laboratory of Florian Muijres at Wageningen University in the Netherlands, Chang cycled through 600 mosquitoes as the team perfected its setup to film mosquito takeoffs with three high-speed cameras shooting at 125,000 frames per second. Chang initially fed them blood from her own arm before Wageningen University entomologist Jeoren Spitzen lent the project his entomological expertise and equipment to feed them artificially.

(Source: EurekAlert)

Iranian gastroenterologist Malekzadeh to receive ‘IARC medal of honor’

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Dr. Reza Malekzadeh, Iranian **d e s k** gastroenterologist and deputy health minister, will receive the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) medal of honor, Mehr news agency reported.

The IARC medals of honor are awarded to acknowledge and reward the work of scientists whose research has made an outstanding contribution to advancing the understanding of the biology or of the epidemiology of cancer.



In a letter addressed to Malekzadeh Dr. Christopher P. Wild, IARC Director, has formally invited the Iranian scientist to attend the Richard Doll Lecture, in France in 2018, to both deliver a speech and receive his medal at the event.

Reza Malekzadeh is a distinguished professor of medicine at Tehran university of Medical Sciences and is also the director of Digestive Research Institute at Shari'ati Hospital in Tehran.

Malekzadeh studied medicine at Shiraz University. In 1985, he joined the department of gastroenterology at Free Royal Hospital in London. He is also an Honorary Professor at University of Birmingham, UK. Reza Malekzadeh was the Minister of Health from 1991-1993.

He was elected as member of the World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) in 2004. He has numerous reputable scientific publications in gastroenterology and liver diseases.

Malekzadeh has been instrumental in designing and executing an efficient and practical way of diagnosing cancerous and benign esophageal lesions in Iran. He co-conducted Golestan cohort study of esophageal cancer with enrollment of 50,000 subjects between 2004 and 2008.

IARC is the specialized cancer agency of the World Health Organization. The objective of the IARC is to promote international collaboration in cancer research. The Agency is inter-disciplinary, bringing together skills in epidemiology, laboratory sciences and biostatistics to identify the causes of cancer so that preventive measures may be adopted and the burden of disease and associated suffering reduced.

A significant feature of the IARC is its expertise in coordinating research across countries and organizations; its independent role as an international organization facilitates this activity. The Agency has a particular interest in conducting research in low and middle-income countries through partnerships and collaborations with researchers in these regions.

LEARN ENGLISH

Daily Life - The Argument

A: Wow, that terrible movie is finally over. Next time I'm picking the film, because I don't want to end up seeing a **chick flick**.

B: Well you should have picked, in the end you always complain about everything.

A: Not everything, just this film. Even the title is ridiculous; and it's so long, those are the two and a half most wasted hours of my life, so much so that I'm thinking about asking them to give me my money back.

B: I'm thinking of taking you back home. I thought we could have a nice evening, but you're always so negative.

A: I'm only complaining about a movie that I could have rented or bought and then thrown in the garbage.

B: You see, that's what I'm talking about, I can't stand your **sarcastic** jokes anymore

A: Next time, go with your friends who are more **in touch** with their feelings.

B: May be they appreciates love stories.

A: Love? More like **one-night-stands**.

B: Don't **criticize** my friends otherwise I'll start on those fat friends of yours; they're no saints.

A: My friends? Fat? What about those whales you call friends?

B: You're **unbearable**; you can walk home, I'm leaving.

■ **Key Vocabulary**

chick flick: a film that appeals to women

sarcastic: the use of words to show irritation

in touch with: to be in close contact with

one-night-stand: a random and temporary romantic encounter

criticize: to express disapproval

unbearable: too bad to be accepted or endured

■ **Supplementary Vocabulary**

intolerable: too bad to be accepted or endured

chauvinist: prejudiced belief in the superiority of one's own gender, group, or kind

make fun of: to mock; ridicule.

brag: to speak arrogantly and boastfully

(Source: irlanguage.com)

Have an idea?

Be in touch!

lifestyle.tehrantimes@gmail.com

Health a necessity for vibrant society: Rouhani

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Giving **d e s k** priority to health is necessary for creating effective policies in moving towards a vibrant society, said President Hassan Rouhani on Thursday.

He made the remarks in a message sent to World Health Organization (WHO) Global Conference on Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) hosted by Uruguay from 18 to 20 October 2017 in Montevideo.

The message was read out in the presence of senior officials from more than 80 countries by Baqer Larijani, vice-president of the national committee on non-communicable diseases.

In this regard, efforts to create a public coverage of health and slashing health costs to the citizens are a matter of necessity that has been emphasized in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and been established in Iran as part of the Healthcare Reform Plan [a plan promoting healthcare coverage launched in Iran since May 2014], Rouhani explained.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani highlighted that “Our country has an effective governance mechanism called the Supreme Council for Health and Food Security, which, with the presidency of the President and the membership of nine ministers and heads of related organizations, implements the necessary inter-institutional cooperation and attention to health in all policies.”

“The adoption of a national document



on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases over the past year and a half, along with inter-sectoral decisions related to the reduction of fat, sugar and salt use and increased tax on harmful substances, is one of the Council's measures in this regard,” he added.

Iranian president further pointed out Iran's “coherent policies for controlling and preventing noncommunicable diseases sponsored by the World Health Organization” and expressed readiness to share the experiences with all countries, and reciprocally use world's knowledge and experience to promote people's health.

In line with WHO's activities to combat NCDs in 2015 Iran established a commit-

tee called National Non-Communicable Disease Committee at the Ministry of Health headed by the Health Minister, Hassan Qazizadeh Hashemi. There are also six subcommittees affiliated with this committee responsible for controlling cancer, cardiovascular diseases, metabolic disorders, air pollution and inter-sectoral collaboration, traffic injuries, and a subcommittee for monitoring and evaluating whole action plan for the NCDs.

The national plan was endorsed by the then Director-General of WHO Margaret Chan Fung Fu-Chun and WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Ala Alwan and it was very appreciated by other countries because the action plan is not just limited to one ministry and sector

but to other sectors as well.

WHO Global Conference on Non-communicable diseases 2017 goal is to highlight the critical links between reducing premature deaths from NCDs and enhancing policy coherence across areas that impact the governance, prevention, management and surveillance of NCDs.

According WHO in 2015, NCDs, including cardiovascular diseases cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes, were responsible for 40 million deaths, representing 70 percent of all deaths worldwide. A large proportion of deaths were premature. Regarding Iran the number is pretty much higher; 76 percent of the burden of the diseases comes from NCDs.

85 percent of premature deaths from NCDs occurred in developing countries, including 41 percent in lower-middle-income countries where the probability of dying from an NCD between the ages of 30 and 70 is up to four times higher than in developed countries. Most of these deaths from NCDs could have been prevented or delayed.

National policies in sectors other than health have a major bearing on premature mortality from NCDs. Health gains can be achieved much more readily by influencing public policies in sectors like agriculture, food production, pharmaceutical production, taxation, trade, and urban development than making changes in health policy alone.

Tehran city buses to run on biodiesel



ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Tehran **d e s k** buses will use biodiesel and will be equipped with diesel particle filter (DPF) in the near future.

This is a part of a broader plan aimed to meet emission standards in the metropolis of Tehran.

DPF is a filter that captures and stores exhaust soot in order to reduce emissions from diesel cars.

“The plan will reduce four percent of unburned hydrocarbon emissions,” Peyman Sanandaji, the director of Tehran bus transport company affiliated with the municipality, said on Thursday.

About 300 diesel buses are running in Tehran and 20 buses are now running on biodiesel, he added.

Biodiesel refers to a vegetable oil- or animal fat-based diesel fuel consisting of long-chain alkyl (methyl,

ethyl, or propyl) esters. It has proven a reliable and effective fuel for transport fleet and buildings and has helped reduce air pollution in megacities while lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

Choking air pollution hitting metropolises of Iran especially during cold seasons is making living in cities harder than ever. The predicament is blamed on numerous factors namely clunkers, sand mines, sand and dust storms originating from dried up wetlands, pollutant industries, carburetor motorcycles, etc.

Nonetheless, regulations such as increasing public transportation, addressing sand storms, setting high standards for fuel quality, imposing green tax and spending them on mitigating air pollution, and being explicit about the rules are believed to help curbing the problem of air pollution.

Osteoporosis among Iranians at alarming level



A crowd of senior Tehrani citizens gathered together, walked in groups and played group games on the occasion of the United Nations International Day of Older Persons, October 1.

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — In Iran, **d e s k** 7 in 10 women and 5 in 10 men over the age of 50 are suffering from osteoporosis, health ministry official Alireza Mahdavi announced on Thursday.

He made the remarks on threshold of World Osteoporosis Day (WOD), which is annually celebrated on October 20.

According to studies, on average, 1 in 3 women as well as 1 in 5 men aged over 50 worldwide are suffering from osteoporotic fractures.

Iran has the highest incidence rate of rheumatic disease in Asia, the official said.

Planning for prevention and reduction of musculoskeletal disorders is one of the main projects of the health ministry's center for non-communicable disease control, he added.

Osteoporosis is a disease in which the density and quality of bone are reduced. As bones become more porous

and fragile, the risk of fracture is greatly increased. The loss of bone occurs silently and progressively. Often there are no symptoms until the first fracture occurs.

Organized by the International Osteoporosis Foundation (IOF) every year, World Osteoporosis Day involves campaigns by national osteoporosis patient societies from around the world with activities in over 90 countries. Events and campaigns take place throughout the months leading up to and following WOD.

According to the International Osteoporosis Foundation, Osteoporosis causes more than 8.9 million fractures annually, resulting in an osteoporotic fracture every 3 seconds.

Osteoporosis is estimated to affect 200 million women worldwide - approximately one-tenth of women aged 60, one-fifth of women aged 70, two-fifths of women aged 80 and two-thirds of women aged 90.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

Working children celebrate National Children Day

The State Welfare Organization held a ceremony in Tehran on Saturday for 500 working children to celebrate the National Children Day.

Iran annually observes the National Children's Day on October 8 and the National Children's Week on October 7 to 13.

Entitled “Smile of God”, the ceremony was held at 22 Bahman Complex, the first non-governmental center for working and street children.

The complex, which accommodates 50 boys between 12 to 16 years of age, aims to empower working children.

During the celebration, the director general of Tehran department of the organization, Asghar Baqeri, announced that the organization supports the children through paying their education expenses.

ENGLISH PROVERB

(The) tongue wounds more than a lance

■ **Explanation**: insults can be more hurtful than physical injuries

■ **For example**: You shouldn't talk with your sister in that way. Tongue wounds more than a lance!

PHRASAL VERB

Wiggle out of

■ **Meaning**: avoid doing something

■ **Example**: I wiggled out of having to work late.

ENGLISH IDIOM

Watch one's step

■ **Explanation**: advise sb to be careful how they behave in order to avoid getting into trouble.

■ **For example**: There is zero tolerance in this school for bad behavior, so watch your step!

Militants promote PKK as Saudi, U.S. envoys visit Raqqah

The United States-backed militants have celebrated their capture of Raqqah under a huge portrait of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) Leader Abdullah Ocalan after a House of Saud regime minister and a United States envoy visited the northern Syrian city.

The PKK, listed as a terrorist organization by the U.S. and European Union, has been waging an armed campaign against the Turkish state for nearly 40 years, in which tens of thousands of people have been killed.

Footage emerged on social media on Thursday, showing the Kurdish militants with the so-called People's Protection Units (YPG/Yekîneyên Parastina Gel) putting up the poster of jailed Ocalan in Raqqah's central al-Naim Square during a victory parade.

In a statement afterwards, the YPJ command said the victory in Raqqah was a victory for Ocalan.

The YPG operates in northern Syria under the banner of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which is engaged in a purported fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit with the help of the U.S.

The SDF militants seized full control of Raqqah earlier this week following a months-long military offensive. The SDF has used the fight against ISIL as a pretext to expand the territory under its control in Syria.

The newly-released footage has



drawn angry reactions from Syrian activists, including those with the opposition, saying it means "one terrorist group has been replaced by another" after the fall of ISIL in Raqqah.

The tribute paid to Ocalan will certainly infuriate Turkey, which views the YPG as an extension of the homegrown PKK militant group. The YPG considers Ocalan to be its ideological leader.

PKK commanders are also thought to be in control of key institutions in northern Syria, where the YPG is active, the Middle East Eye news portal reported.

Ties between Turkey and the U.S., two NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) allies, have significantly soured over Washington's support for

Kurdish militants operating at Turkish doorsteps.

Turkey itself has deployed troops to northern Syria in a purported bid to fight ISIL and prevent Kurdish militants from linking up with the PKK on its soil.

The deployments have been without the consent of the central Damascus government, which is calling for the withdrawal of Turkish forces.

Russia said last month that SDF forces had targeted Syrian government positions in eastern Dayr al-Zawr Province where the army is making steady advances against ISIL.

With ISIL on retreat in Dayr al-Zawr, the U.S.-backed militants have pushed to capture as much territory as possible in

the oil-rich province, including a number of gas fields.

■ **Saudi regime minister, U.S. envoy in Raqqah**

On Thursday, Reuters said the House of Saud regime's Persian Gulf Affairs Minister Thamer al-Sabhan and the U.S. special envoy to the Syria war coalition Brett McGurk had visited Raqqah to discuss the city's "reconstruction."

Amed Sido, a senior adviser to the SDF, said the Saudi regime official had met "a reconstruction committee" set up by the "Raqqah civil council" which has been formed to run the city.

"We consider it a first visit, a first step, that could be the beginning of future relations," Sido said.

The London-based Arab news and opinion website Rai al-Youm, however, described the visit "dangerous" in line with the U.S. policy to divide the region.

"It is unclear what Sabhan and his government as well as the Americans are doing in Raqqah. In any case, what they are doing is dangerous that can draw either a direct or an indirect response from Turkey and Iran, and certainly Syria," it wrote on Friday.

"So, will the leadership of Saudi Arabia be able to deal with this response in any form, especially at a time when the country's leaders are stuck in the quagmire of the Yemeni war and their allies have been defeated in Syria?" it asked.

(Source: agencies)

Bombing hits mosque in Afghan capital, at least 30 killed

At least 30 people have been killed in a bomb attack carried out at a Shia mosque in the Afghan capital, Kabul.

The explosion rocked Imam Zaman mosque in the western district of Dasht-e-Barchi on Friday as worshippers had gathered for prayers.

A top security official said the exact number of casualties was still unknown.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorists claimed responsibility for the attack.

Concerns are growing over what appears to be an alarming spread of Shia killings in Afghanistan.

Late last month, a bomber detonated an explosive device outside another Shia mosque in Kabul, killing at least six people. The ISIL terrorist outfit claimed the attack, which came just ahead of Ashoora mourning rituals.

In August, more than 40 Shia Muslims were killed in Kabul when ISIL Takfiri terrorists attacked a mosque packed with worshippers.

Criticism has grown over Kabul's failure to take proper measures to better protect its Shia Muslim population against terrorist attacks.

(Source: Press TV)



Netanyahu lobbies world powers to stem Iraqi Kurd setbacks

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is lobbying world powers to prevent further setbacks to Iraqi Kurds as they lose ground to Baghdad's army, Israeli officials say.

Israel has been the only major power to endorse statehood for the Kurds, partly, say analysts, because it sees the ethnic group - whose population is split among Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran - as a buffer against shared adversaries.

Iraqi armed forces retook the oil-rich Kirkuk region this week, following a Sept. 25 referendum on the Iraqi semi-autonomous Kurdistan region secession that was rejected by Baghdad, delivering a blow to the Kurds' statehood quest.

Israeli officials said Netanyahu raised the Iraqi Kurds' plight in phone calls with German Chancellor Angela Merkel last

week and with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday.

It has also come up in his contacts with France and the Israeli national security adviser, Meir Ben-Shabbat, has been discussing the matter with the United States President Donald Trump administration officials in Washington this week, the officials said.

A Netanyahu government official, who declined to be named, given the sensitivity of Israel-Kurdish ties, suggested Israel had security interests in Iraqi Kurdistan, given its proximity to Israel's enemies in Tehran and Damascus.

"This (territory) is a foothold. It's a strategic place," the official said without providing further detail. He said Israel wanted to see Iraqi Kurds provided with the means to protect themselves, adding:

"It would be best if someone gave them weaponry, and whatever else, which we cannot give, obviously."

Israel has maintained discreet military, intelligence and business ties with Kurds since the 1960s, in the absence of open ties between their autonomous region in northern Iraq and Israel.

Netanyahu's recent lobbying has focused on Kurdish ambitions in Iraq, where the central Baghdad government has grown closer to Israel's foe Iran.

"The issue at present is ... to prevent an attack on the Kurds, extermination of the Kurds and any harm to them, their autonomy and region, something that Turkey and Iran and internal Shia and other powers in Iraq and part of the Iraqi government want," Netanyahu's intelligence minister, Israel Katz, told Tel Aviv

radio station 102 FM on Friday.

It was not clear to what extent Netanyahu's outreach may have been solicited by the Iraqi semi-autonomous Kurdistan region (Kurdish Regional Government/KRG) in northern Iraq, which shies away from public engagement with Israel, worried about further alienating Arab neighbors.

"The prime minister is certainly engaging the United States, Russia, Germany and France to stop the Kurds from being harmed," Katz said.

Another Israeli official, speaking to Reuters on condition of anonymity, framed Netanyahu's efforts as a moral imperative.

"They (Kurds) are a deeply pro-Western people who deserve support," he said.

(Source: Reuters)

Madrid to dissolve Catalonia parliament, hold elections

The Spanish government has secured opposition support to dissolve Catalonia's parliament and hold new elections there in January in an effort to defuse the regional government's push for secession.

The main opposition Socialists said on Friday they would back a package of extraordinary measures to impose central rule on the region, whose threat to break away has unsettled the euro and hurt confidence in the euro zone's fourth-largest economy.

Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, who wanted the Socialists' support in order to present a united political front against the secessionist Catalan government, will hold a special cabinet meeting on Saturday to start to process of imposing direct rule.

It would be the first time in Spain's four decades of democracy that Madrid will have invoked the constitution to effectively sack a regional government and call

new elections.

Rajoy wants as broad a consensus as possible before taking the step, which has raised the prospect of more large-scale protests in Catalonia, where pro-secession groups have been able to summon more than 1 million people onto the streets.

Catalan Leader Carles Puigdemont, a former journalist who is spearheading the secession campaign, has refused to renounce independence, citing an overwhelming vote in favor of breaking away at a referendum on Oct. 1.

The prolonged standoff has caused hundreds of companies to move their headquarters outside Catalonia and prompted the Spanish government to cut its economic growth forecast. The region accounts for a fifth of Spain's economy.

Socialist politician Carmen Calvo, a member of

cross-party talks to establish what measures the government should take to impose direct rule on Catalonia, told TVE state television that January regional elections would form part of the package.

She gave no further details apart from saying the Socialists wanted a light-touch intervention.

The measures to impose direct rule could be approved by the Senate as soon as the end of next week, a spokeswoman for Spain's upper parliament said. Rajoy's People's Party (PP) has a majority in the Senate.

Catalan authorities said around 90 percent voted for secession though only 43 percent of voters participated.

Opponents of secession mostly stayed home. Spanish courts had ruled the referendum unconstitutional, but Puigdemont says the result is binding and must be obeyed.

(Source: agencies)

10 dead as Saudi warplanes bomb civilian targets in Yemen

The House of Saud regime warplanes have bombed residential areas in the Sa'ada and Hajjah provinces of Yemen, killing at least 10 civilians, including an entire family.

The Saudi regime air raids, which targeted the city of Ghamr in Sa'ada on Friday, left six civilians dead, while four others, all members of the same family, lost their lives in similar attacks in the Abs city of Hajjah.

Both provinces are located in north-western Yemen and have shared borders with Saudi Arabia.

In another incident, a civilian was

killed due to Saudi shelling in the city of Mawza in Ta'izz Province, the al-Masirah television network reported.

In retaliation, Yemeni snipers shot dead three Saudi soldiers in the kingdom's Asir region. They also fired a Zelzal-1 (earthquake-1) missile toward Saudi forces at the border with Saudi Arabia where they had congregated.

In early May, al-Masirah reported that Yemeni sharpshooters had managed to fatally injure as many as 64 Saudi troops in April alone.

Yemeni forces fire a ballistic missile at

a Saudi regime army command center in Saudi Arabia's southwestern Jizan region, the Yemeni military says.

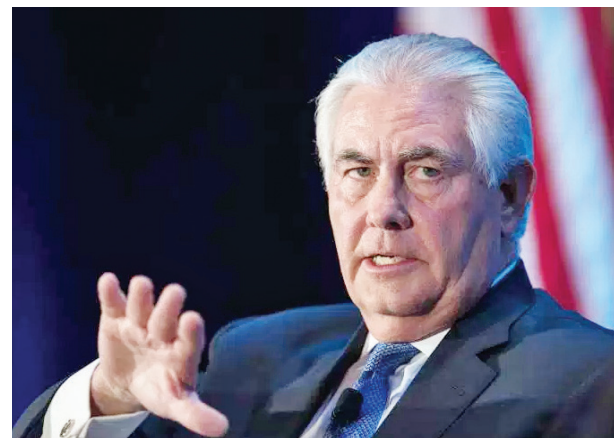
A report by Reuters published in April last year said that at least 400 Saudi soldiers had been killed in cross-border fire since the start of the Saudi regime war against Yemen in March 2015.

The Riyadh regime has maintained a policy of ambiguity regarding its casualties in the war on Yemen. Senior military officials have said that they would not release such information until after the war.

(Source: Press TV)

Tillerson blames Saudi-led group for PGCC rift stalemate

➡ Al Jazeera's Heidi Zhou-Castro, reporting from Washington, DC, said Tillerson's comments marked "a distinct change of tone".



■ **Unjust siege**

In Saudi Arabia's capital, Riyadh, Tillerson will take part in the inaugural Coordination Council meeting between the governments of Saudi Arabia and Iraq, the State Department said in a statement.

"The Secretary will also meet with various Saudi leaders to discuss the conflict in Yemen, the ongoing Persian Gulf dispute, Iran, and a number of other important regional and bilateral issues," it added.

Tillerson will then head to Qatar's capital, Doha, where he will hold talks with Qatari leaders and the U.S. military officials on a range of issues, including the Persian Gulf dispute and joint counterterrorism efforts.

After the stops in the Middle East, the top U.S. diplomat will go to Pakistan and India, and then to Switzerland on his way back to the United States.

On Wednesday, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani reiterated he is "open to dialogue" in resolving the dispute, calling the blockade imposed on Qatar an "unjust siege".

"We conveyed ... that Qatar is ready to conduct a dialogue to solve the problem as we already know that no one will win," Sheikh Tamim told reporters in Indonesia after meeting President Joko Widodo at the state palace in Bogor, outside the capital, Jakarta.

"We are all brothers and suffering because of this crisis," he added.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Ayatollah Sistani urges Iraq to protect Kurds amid tensions

Iraq's most senior Shia cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani has called on the government to protect the Kurdish population in the north amid rising tensions between Baghdad and Iraq's secessionist Kurds.

Sistani's call was issued at the Friday prayer in the holy city of Karbala by one of his representatives, Reuters reported.

According to Iraq's Alforat News Agency, Sistani called the presence of the Iraqi forces in Kirkuk a victory for all Iraqis.

He also warned against any retaliatory moves, and urged Kurdish leaders to cooperate with the federal government on the basis of Iraqi law.

The cleric stated that the country's Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen had to move shoulder to shoulder towards resolving standing problems.

Earlier in the day, security said Iraqi forces took control of the last district in the oil-rich province of Kirkuk, which was still in the hands of Kurdish Peshmerga militants following a three-hour battle.

Forces partaking in the operation to recapture Altun Kupri comprised Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service units, Shia-dominated Popular Mobilization Units and the Federal Police.

The Peshmergas withdrew from the district after battling the advancing Iraqi troops with machineguns, mortars, and rocket propelled grenades, security sources said, according to the agency.

The district, known as Perde in Kurdish, lies on the road between the city of Kirkuk, the province's capital, which had been returned to government control on Monday, and Erbil, the capital of the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan in the country's north.

Kurdish forces had been holding parts of Iraqi territory since 2014, when the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group began an offensive across Iraq. The Kurds joined the fight and began overrunning territory in the process.

The Baghdad government had long insisted that the Kurds pull out of the territories they had overrun. But the Kurdish militants had refused.

The oil-rich Kirkuk Province, which lies only partly within Kurdistan's borders, voted in a September 25 referendum on Kurdistan's separation from Iraq.

The referendum was held despite strong opposition from the central government in Baghdad, the international community, and Iraq's neighboring countries, especially Turkey and Iran.

Ayatollah Sistani had also voiced opposition to the referendum. He had warned against the unfavorable repercussions of separation and division in the Iraqi nation, stressing that this would pave the way for foreign interference in the affairs of the country.

Following the vote, Baghdad imposed a ban on direct international flights to the Kurdish region and called for a halt to its independent crude oil sales.

(Source: Press TV)

Blatter will accept Putin’s invitation to Russia



Former Fifa president Sepp Blatter has accepted an invitation from Russia leader Vladimir Putin to attend next year’s World Cup. Blatter’s 17-year spell in charge of world football’s governing body ended amid a corruption scandal in 2015.

Fifa subsequently banned Blatter from the sport for eight years, a term later reduced to six years after appeal.

“I will go to the World Cup in Russia,” said Blatter, 81. “I received an invitation from President Putin.”

Russia was awarded the right to stage the 2018 tournament in 2010, on the same day Qatar was controversially selected to host the 2022 event.

Both countries were cleared of corruption allegations in the Garcia Report, published in 2014.

But in September 2015, Swiss authorities announced Blatter was under investigation for a £1.3m “disloyal payment” to ex-Uefa boss Michel Platini in 2011. Both men denied any wrongdoing. He successfully appealed against an eight-year ban issued by Fifa’s ethics committee to reduce the term to six years. A further attempt to appeal against the ban through the Court of Arbitration for Sport was unsuccessful.

The World Cup begins on 14 June, the first edition of the tournament in Europe since 2006.

(Source: BBC)

Roma charged over ‘monkey chants’ towards Chelsea’s Rüdiger

Roma have been charged by Uefa after some of their supporters allegedly directed monkey chants at their former defender Antonio Rüdiger during Wednesday’s Champions League match at Chelsea.

The alleged chants were not reported by Chelsea but Uefa was made aware by comments on social media and the London club is willing to assist if required.

Rüdiger appeared in the match as a 77th-minute substitute. The 24-year-old German international left Roma for Chelsea in July, having previously expressed his frustration at a failure to tackle racist incidents which saw him targeted.

A statement from European football’s governing body said: “Disciplinary proceedings have been opened following the Uefa Champions League group stage match between Chelsea FC and AS Roma (3-3), played on 18 October in England.” Uefa said the charge was “racist behavior [monkey chants]”, adding: “This case will be dealt with by the Uefa control, ethics and disciplinary body on 16 November.”

Before Rüdiger’s departure from Roma, for an initial £29m, he told the German sports magazine SportBild: “Racism is a serious issue here. Incidents like the ones with [Juventus’s Medhi] Benatia and me simply happen too often in this country and that is why something must happen now.

“When the Italian FA is not doing anything then Fifa must act. It is easy to come up with the No to Racism campaign but when you don’t do anything concrete then that does not help.”

Chelsea had taken a 2-0 lead against the Italians on Wednesday before falling 3-2 behind and eventually securing a draw through Eden Hazard’s equalizer.

(Source: Guardian)

Doctor at center of ‘jiffy bag’ probe resigns due to ill health

The British Cycling doctor at the center of Team Sky’s “jiffy bag” saga has resigned due to ill health, the organization said in a statement on Friday.

Doctor Richard Freeman received a package on behalf of Bradley Wiggins at the 2011 Criterium du Dauphine race in France, the contents of which have remained a source of speculation despite Team Sky stating it was a flu treatment.

Both British Cycling and Team Sky are part of an ongoing investigation by UK Anti-Doping into allegations of wrongdoing in British cycling. Freeman was supposed to answer questions from MPs at a parliamentary committee hearing in February but failed to attend, citing a stress-related illness.

In a statement on Friday British Cycling said: “Dr Richard Freeman has tendered and we have accepted his resignation from British Cycling in the interest of his health.

“We regret that we have not been able to reconcile all unanswered questions whilst he was in our employment but we continue to work closely with UKAD as we are intent on bringing their investigation to a satisfactory conclusion.

“We hope that upon his return to health, Richard can do his part to help bring to a close ongoing investigations.”

Freeman, who worked for both British Cycling and Team Sky between 2009 and 2015, was criticized for failing to confirm what was in the package delivered for Wiggins.

He said his laptop containing details of the delivery to the Dauphine had been stolen in 2014.

British Cycling admitted “serious failings” in its record keeping while Team Sky boss Dave Brailsford admitted that there had been “process failures” but categorically denied any wrongdoing, saying the team was “100 percent” trustworthy.

(Source: Reuters)

Lewis Hamilton has ‘no plans to take a knee’



Lewis Hamilton has expressed his support for athletes protesting social and racial injustice in the US, but insisted he has “made no plans” to take a knee ahead of Sunday’s Austin Grand Prix.

On the verge of clinching his fourth Formula One world title, Hamilton has previously said he felt it was important to “try to make a difference in the world — particularly if your leader is not helping in that area.”

The Briton has also referenced the movement instigated by former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick in a series of Instagram posts, using the #TakeAKnee hashtag.

However, speaking at Thursday’s media conference, the 32-year-old Hamilton, who is the first and only black driver in F1 history, stressed his attention was focused squarely on the race.

“I am in support of the whole movement and I have made no secret of that,” Hamilton told CNN’s Amanda Davies in answer to her question as to whether he would take a knee when the US National Anthem was played. “But I am here to focus on my job this weekend. I have made no plans.”

In recent months the line between sport and politics has been increasingly blurred after President Donald Trump criticized NFL players who kneel doing the US National Anthem to protest police brutality.

“I don’t really plan on allowing all

the BS that’s surrounding the topic pull me down in my strive to winning this world title,” said Hamilton at the drivers’ media conference. “I’ve worked hard to be where I am today.”

■ **‘I have to keep the pressure on’**

Ronaldo pays for 370 wildfire victims’ treatment



Cristiano Ronaldo’s sister has appeared to confirm the football star has paid the medical bills of people injured in the devastating Portuguese wildfires.

Pop star Katia Aveiro posted a link to a report about the Real Madrid’s forward’s generosity on her Facebook page.

Cristiano Ronaldo fanpage O Eterno Melhor Do Mundo - which translates roughly as ‘The Eternal Best One In The World’ claimed yesterday/on Thursday in a Facebook post: “Cristiano Ronaldo paid for the medical treatment of the 370 people injured in the Portuguese wildfires.”

Katia, one of the former Man U player’s three siblings, responded with her own Facebook post applauding the move and writing: “This is a good way to react.” Cristiano, who comes from Madeira, took to Facebook after the weekend wildfires which claimed the lives of 42 people to say: “It’s impossible to remain indifferent to this tragedy. Solidarity with the relatives and friends of the victims.

“Full support for firefighters who risk their live to help in the best way possible.” Countryman Jose Mourinho, who now manages the side Cristiano left to sign for Real Madrid, said he would gladly swap a football win for the lives of people killed in the fires which devas-

tated the north and central part of Portugal. Singer Madonna, currently living in Lisbon also said she was praying for the loved ones of those killed.

There was no immediate comment from Cristiano’s agents Gestifute.

Cristiano, 31, due to become a father again shortly and add to his current batch of three children, offered financial support to his native Madeira following devastating wildfires which killed three people and led to mass evacuations last summer. The Real Madrid striker made the offer during a phone call to island president Miguel Albuquerque.

Reports in Portugal at the time didn’t say how much he had offered.

After his conversation with Mr Albuquerque, the footballer posted a message on his Facebook page revealing his pain over the devastating fires in Madeira and other parts of Portugal, especially the north.

He said: “It is with an aching heart that I’m seeing what’s happening in Madeira and other parts of the country.

The Portuguese weekend wildfires, which came four months after 64 people died in forest fires which started in the town of Pedrogao Grande near Coimbra, led to the resignation on Wednesday of the country’s Interior Minister Constanca Urbana de Sousa.

(Soruce: Mirror)

UEFA charges Everton, supporter banned following Lyon trouble



Merseyside Police are investigating the brawl that broke out on the pitch between players from Everton and Olympique Lyon in the Europa League - with UEFA charging the Premier League side.

Everton have banned one individual after reviewing footage of the incident, which almost spilled into the stands, and would also register a formal complaint against him with Merseyside Police, the Premier League side said in a statement on Friday.

Confirmation then came from UEFA that it had charged Everton for “aggressions by supporters against players”. A verdict will be delivered on November 16.

Everton captain Ashley Williams sparked off the incident in the 64th minute when he shoved Anthony Lopes into the advertising hoardings after the Lyon goalkeeper had collected the ball from a corner.

An all-out melee ensued with players from both sides getting involved, while at least one fan behind the goal was caught on video throwing punches at the Lyon players before stewards intervened.

“Merseyside Police can confirm officers are investigating following a disturbance on the pitch during a football match between Everton and Lyon at

The Mercedes driver has won four of the five races since the summer break, opening up a 59-point lead over leading rival Sebastian Vettel with just four races remaining.

Vettel’s title bid stalled after a spark plug failure at Suzuka, meaning the Championship is already out of the German driver’s hands.

Hamilton needs to score 16 more points than Vettel, which means if Hamilton wins Sunday he will become world champion if the 30-year-old German finishes sixth or lower.

Should Hamilton finish second in Austin, he will need Vettel to finish ninth or lower to secure the title which would make him Britain’s most successful driver.

“Sebastian has been a strong fighter all year,” Hamilton told reporters, insisting he is taking nothing for granted. “He has had a few issues technically but the car is as good as it’s always been. I anticipate [Ferrari] will be very strong this weekend and for the next four races.

“I have to keep the pressure on; there is no reason to back out. I have to keep pushing forwards.”

(Source: CNN)

South Korea stresses safety of Pyeongchang Olympics to diplomats, companies

South Korea’s foreign ministry stressed the Pyeongchang Olympics will be safe from North Korean provocations in a briefing to diplomats and executives at foreign companies in the country on Friday, as concerns persist over tensions with the North.

Officials and executives from around 120 embassies and companies in South Korea were hosted by the ministry to explain the government’s efforts for a safe Olympic Games scheduled for Feb. 9-25 next year, officials told Reuters.

“We will consider it our top priority to ensure the safety and security of each and every national team, the Olympic family, and all the spectators visiting Pyeongchang during the Games,” said Park Enna, a foreign ministry official, in opening remarks at the meeting.

“(We) will thoroughly prepare the Pyeongchang Olympics so that it may be regarded as the safest Olympics in history.”

Briefing topics included current events regarding North Korea and the Korean peninsula as well as preparations in general for the Pyeongchang Olympics, she

added.

Officials from the United States, Japan, Russia and China, as well as members of chambers of commerce for Japan, China and Europe were to attend, according to the ministry. An official at the Japanese chamber of commerce in South Korea told Reuters ahead of the meeting they were not specifically aware which companies were planning to attend as the ministry appears to have contacted businesses separately.

Park said the UN Olympic Truce Resolution, which has been adopted every two years since 1993 to cease all conflicts during the period of the Truce, will be adopted at the UN General Assembly on Nov. 13 for the Pyeongchang Games.

Tensions on the Korean peninsula have risen in recent months as North Korea’s leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump exchanged threats and insults over the North’s nuclear and missile development program.

Concerns over safety grew in tandem as the Games will take place just 80 km (50 miles) from the demilita-

rized zone between North and South Korea, the world’s most-heavily armed border.

France’s Sports Minister Laura Flessel said last month that if the crisis in the region deepened and athletes’ security could not be guaranteed then they would not travel to the Games. Members of France’s Winter Olympics team, however, have remained optimistic the country will not boycott.

Park said governments reportedly hesitant on participating in the Games have stated their position to par-take in and support the coming Olympics.

Rattled by rising tensions with North Korea, South Korea has been taking extra measures to try to ensure the safety of the 2018 Winter Games, including setting up a crack cyber defense team and doubling the number of troops, according to officials and documents reviewed by Reuters.

North and South Korea remain technically at war after their 1950-53 conflict with a truce and not a peace treaty.

(Source: Reuters)

Esteghlal into Hazfi Cup Round of Eight

S P O R T S Esteghlal football team booked a spot in Iran's Hazfi Cup Round of Eight after defeating Nassaji Mazandaran 2-1 on Friday.

In the match held in Tehran's Azadi Stadium in front of about 30,000 spectators, Farshid Esmaili gave the Blues a lead in the 28th minute after taking advantage of a mistake by Nassaji defender.

Nassaji coach Mehdi Pashazadeh, an ex-Esteghlal defender, was sent off in the 57th minute after protesting the referee's decisions.

Two minutes later, Ali Ghorbani extended Esteghlal's lead from a cross sent by Milad Zakipour.

Mohammad Usani pulled a goal back in the 71st minute.

"I am satisfied with the way my players showed in the first half. We created several chances in the first half but my players took their opponents for granted in the second half," Esteghlal coach Winfried Schafer said in the post-match news conference.

Esteghlal will play arch rival Persepolis in Tehran derby on Friday in Iran Professional League.

"I know Persepolis are one of the Iran's greatest team but we will be ready for this match," the German coach added.

Persepolis will play Naft Tehran in Hazfi Cup's Round of 16 on Saturday.



Pars Jonoubi move top of Iran Professional League table

S P O R T S Pars Jonoubi defeated Zob Ahan 3-0 in the 10th Week of Iran Professional League (IPL) on Friday.

The newly-promoted team moved top of the IPL table with 22 points.

Mehdi Zobeidi opened the scoring for Pars Jonoubi in the 41st minute in Isfahan's Naghsh-e Jahan Stadium.

Omid Sing made it 2-0 in the 83rd minute and Hossein Pouramini scored the visiting team's third goal

in the dying moments of the match.

"Pars Jonoubi played a good game and deserved to win. Our strikers wasted their chances in the first half and this is football. I'd like to congratulate Pars Jonoubi for this win," Zob Ahan coach Amir Ghalenoei said in the post-match news conference.

Pars Jonoubi sit top of the table two points clear of Paykan.

Holder Persepolis are third with 17 points and two matches in hands.



Ramos, Pique and Busquets threatened to quit Spain duty



Although Spain have reached the 2018 World Cup with a highly polished qualification record, things are not as they seem with Gerard Pique, Sergio Ramos and Sergio Busquets having threatened to quit national team duty if team director Maria Jose Claramunt was sacked by the Spanish FA (RFEF).

The complaint over Claramunt's planned dismissal was made ahead of La Roja's game with Liechtenstein earlier in the season when acting RFEF president Juan Luis Larrea informed the team of his plans over a squad meal.

At the time, the players were unhappy at how such news had been broken to them on a matchday, a sentiment which Julen Lopetegui agreed with, leading to the senior trio staying be-

hind after their colleagues left to talk personally to Larrea.

All three of Pique, Ramos and Busquets are understood to have indicated their desire to retire from Spain duty if Claramunt, a highly popular figure within the team setup, was fired.

And so it proved, with the director formally sacked on Thursday, although there is no news as of yet from either player.

In fact, the squad and Larrea have not been on talking terms over the past month-and-a-half leading to a strange scenario in which the RFEF acting president is banned from the dressing room and made no public congratulations about Spain's qualification or Busquets' 100th cap.

(Source: Marca)

Iran claim fourth place in 2017 World Para Taekwondo Championships



Iranian athletes have put a convincing end to their campaign at the 2017 World Para Taekwondo Championships in Great Britain, and took the fourth spot overall at the prestigious international event.

On Thursday, Mahdi Pourrahnama received a bye in the first round of the men's under 75-kilogram K44 at Copper Box Arena in the heart of the Olympic Park in London.

He then prevailed over representatives from Russia and Spain and progressed to the semi-finals, where he beat Russia's Vladimir Feofanov 23-10 and punched the ticket for the title challenge.

He defeated Magomedzagir

Isalidibirov from Russia 28-17 and clinched the goal medal.

Saeid Sadeghianpour and Ahmad Narimani added two bronze medals to the Islamic Republic of Iran's medal tally in the under 61-kilogram and over 75-kilogram weight classes of K42 division.

The 2017 World Para Taekwondo Championships was held on October 19. Around 260 athletes from 59 countries fought for titles across 14 medal events.

The championships provided athletes with the opportunity to earn vital Paralympic qualification points as the qualification cycle for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games has begun in 2017.

Analysis: Al Hilal fend-off Persepolis attacks to stay unbeaten

Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal returned to the second AFC Champions League final in four years after defeating Islamic Republic of Iran's Persepolis 6-2 on aggregate in the semi-final.

However, despite the large margin of victory on paper, the Riyadh heavyweights did not have it all their own way in the second leg in Oman on Tuesday night.

Al Hilal lined up in an unfamiliar 5-4-1 formation as they anticipated Persepolis to go all-out attempting to turn around a four-goal disadvantage. Salman Al Faraj and Nicolas Milesi shielded the back five while the attacking endeavours were left for Carlos Eduardo, Salem Al Dawsari and Omar Khribin.

The trio moved centrally to shorten the distances between them when in possession and their swift attacking combinations delivered on the counter. Khribin was once again on form, scoring twice as Al Hilal demonstrated their efficiency in front of goal with a 37.5% shooting accuracy compared to Persepolis' 25%.

Eduardo's trickery and Al Dawsari's pace unsettled Persepolis defence. The latter had a chance to nip a winner for Al Hilal five minutes from time after he broke



free inside area but was denied by the post.

Ivankovic's attacking approach was clear if unimaginative; if at first you don't succeed, cross, cross and cross again. Overall Persepolis showered Al Hilal's penalty box with 30 crosses. Between them, left-back Mohammad Ansari and left-winger Vahid Amiriri attempted 14 crosses and while ultimately both Godwin Mensha's goals for the

Iranian side resulted from crosses by the two players, the overall quality of Persepolis' crossing left a lot to be desired; only six of the team's 30 crosses found a teammate.

Persepolis had their work cut-out for them with poor finishing. Mensha's three efforts in target produced two goals for the Ivankovic's men, but they were the only occasions Persepolis managed a shot at goal the whole evening.

Godwin Mensha produced a man-of-the-match performance against Al Hilal, finding the back of the net twice despite the Saudis defensive approach. The Nigerian's pace and mobility proved a handful for ageing Osama Hawsawi and his defensive partners.

Ramon Diaz's men conceded 2+ goals twice in the group stage, but looked to have shored up at the back since then with three consecutive clean sheets in their last three games prior to Tuesday's 2-2 draw.

Al Hilal ultimately weathered the avalanche of Persepolis attacks and hit them for two on the counter, but there is work to be done on their defensive set-up ahead of facing Japan's Urawa Red Diamonds in the final.

(Source: the-afc)

Iran to play Serbia, Venezuela in November

TASNIM — Iran will reportedly play two friendly matches against Serbia and Venezuela next month.

Carlos Queiroz's men defeated Togo 2-0 in Tehran on Oct. 6 and drew 1-1 with Russia in Kazan four days later.

Team Melli will play two more friendlies against Serbia and Venezuela, Iranian media reported.

Iran national football team qualified for the 2018 FIFA World Cup in June.

The friendlies are as part of Iran's preparation for the 2018 World Cup.

Team Melli will likely play Serbia in its European training camp and face Venezuela in Tehran.

Persepolis striker Mensha named ACL Player of the Week

Godwin Mensha has been named the Toyota Player of the Week after the striker netted a brace in Persepolis' 2-2 draw with Al Hilal in the AFC Champions League semi-final second leg on Tuesday.

Unfortunately for the 28-year-old Nigerian and his side, the 4-0 deficit from the first meeting in Abu Dhabi proved too big an obstacle to overcome despite the best efforts of Mensha who twice put Persepolis ahead on the night in Muscat, the-afc wrote.

The man from Lagos, who gained a rating of 9.2, had 56 touches, made 32 successful passes and scored his brace from just five shots on goal, three of which were on target.

(Source: the-afc)

ACL2017 Allianz Goal of the Week: Omar Khribin

The-AFC.com has announced that Al Hilal's Omar Khribin is the winner of the Goal of the Week presented by Allianz for the second leg of the 2017 AFC Champions League semi-finals after a public vote amongst fans on the AFC's social media networks.

The three selected goals from this week are as follows, with the winner highlighted in bold:

1. Godwin Mensha (Persepolis vs Al Hilal)
2. Omar Khribin (Persepolis vs Al Hilal)
3. Rafael Silva (Urawa Red Diamonds vs Shanghai SIPG)

Watch the video below to see the winning goal from this week's AFC Champions League fixtures, along with the two other nominated goals.

(Source: the-afc)

Real Madrid blow as Navas suffers thigh injury

Real Madrid have confirmed goalkeeper Keylor Navas has sustained an adductor injury.

The Costa Rica international is reported to have suffered a relapse of the problem he picked up during the international break.

The 30-year-old missed the 2-1 LaLiga win over Getafe last weekend but returned for the midweek Champions League clash with Tottenham, making a crucial save from Harry Kane in the 1-1 draw at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Madrid released a statement on Friday confirming he has a thigh problem but would not specify how long he is expected to be sidelined.

However, reports in Spain suggest he could be out of action for up to two weeks, making him a doubt for the return fixture against Spurs at Wembley on November 1.

Navas will also likely miss the Copa del Rey trip to Fuenlabrada and the league visit to Girona, as well as this Sunday's home game against Eibar.

(Source: Goal)

Idris Elba to host The Best FIFA Football Awards ceremony in London

Hollywood actor Idris Elba will present The Best FIFA Football Awards ceremony in London on Monday, world football's governing body has announced.

Elba, who played Nelson Mandela in the 2013 film "Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom" and won a Golden Globe in 2012 for his titular role in the TV detective show "Luther," will host the ceremony at the London Palladium.

The 44-year-old Arsenal fan, who was born in London, will be joined by ESPN presenter Layla Anna-Lee and British band Kasabian will perform live.

Last year's winner, Cristiano Ronaldo, is the favourite to retain the title of The Best FIFA Men's Player ahead of fellow finalists Lionel Messi and Neymar.

Ronaldo's head coach at Real Madrid, Zinedine Zidane, is competing with Juventus boss Massimiliano Allegri and Chelsea manager Antonio Conte for The Best FIFA Men's Coach award.

United States international Carli Lloyd will be defending her 2016 The Best FIFA Women's Player against Venezuela's Deyna Castellanos and Netherlands' Lieke Martens.

Castellanos is also a nominee for the Puskas Award for best goal of the year, competing against Arsenal striker Olivier Giroud and South African goalkeeper Oscarine Masuluke.

(Source: ESPN)

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“The Rock” wins at New Orleans festival

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — “The Rock”, a documentary by Hamid Jafari from Iran, has received the best short documentary award at the 2017 New Orleans Film Festival, the organizers have announced.



A scene from “The Rock”, a documentary by Hamid Jafari

The film is about a woman in southern Iran who goes to the mountain by the village every day, breaks up rocks, puts the stones on a truck and makes a living out of it for her family. The festival ran from October 11-19.

American festivals to screen Iran’s “Kupal”

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Kazem Mollai’s drama “Kupal” will go on screen at the Portland Film Festival and the Berkeley Video and Film Festival, both being held in the U.S. cities.

The film will first go on screen at the Portland Film Festival, which will be held from October 30 to November 5.

“Kupal” will then be screened at the Berkeley Video and Film Festival, which will run from October 27 to November 5.

Starring Levon Haftvan, the film tells the story of a hunter and a taxidermist, called “Dr. Ahmad Kupal”. On the last day of the year, just moments before the arrival of the new year, he faces an unexpected challenge.

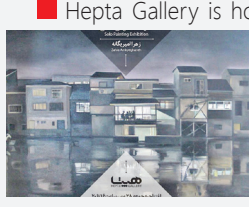
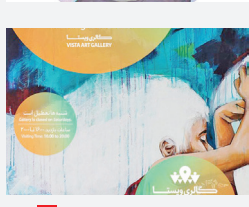
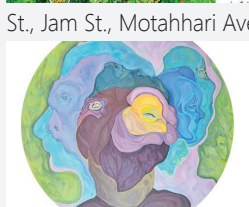
Photo exhibit to highlight Arbaeen rituals

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — An exhibition of 40 photos on Arbaeen rituals by Iranian artist Seyyed Omid Hamedy will open at Tehran’s Azadi Tower on Monday.

Arbaeen is the end of the 40-day mourning period following the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (AS) and his companions on Ashura, the 10th of Muharram when Imam Hussein (AS) and his companions were martyred.

The exhibit entitled “Forty Steps to Arbaeen” will run until October 27.

WHAT’S IN ART GALLERIES



Painting

■ Paintings by Maziar Emadzadeh are on display in an exhibition at Sayeh Gallery.

The exhibit named “From the Blues of the Green City” will run until October 25 at the gallery located at 3 Aqakhani Alley, Omidvar St. in the Niavaran neighborhood.

■ Negah Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Sara Sadatfar, Negar Kia, Zeinab Hemmati, Behnaz Moradi, Setareh Farhangi and several other artists.

The exhibit titled “Astonishment” will be running until November 1 at the gallery located at 64 Ghafari

St., Jam St., Motahhari Ave.

■ An exhibition of paintings by Mahtab Molavi is underway at Mehrva Gallery.

The exhibition entitled “Interact” will run until October 30 at the gallery, which can be found at 38 South Aban St. off Karim Khan Ave.

■ A collection of paintings by Fatemeh Pakdel is on display in an exhibition at Vista Gallery.

The exhibit named “Monologue” runs until October 24 at the gallery located at No. 11, 12th Alley, Mir Emad St.

■ Hepta Gallery is hosting an exhibition of paintings by Zahra Amirjeganeh.

The exhibit named “The Remains of the Day” will run until November 1 at the gallery that can be found at 3 Nikushahr Dead End, Iranshahr St., Karim Khan Ave.

APSA to honor late Abbas Kiarostami

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The 11th Asia Pacific Screen Awards (APSA) plans to honor late Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami with a special prize for the first time in the history of the event, the organizers announced on Thursday.

For his remarkable vision in his last movie “24 Frames”, the organizers will commend Kiarostami with a special Artistic Acknowledgement, and the APSA Academy confers a posthumous Academy membership on him.

““24 Frames” is an exquisite reverie on scenes from nature. Through still, but precise frames, and aided by subtle staging or effects, he captures the haunting, haiku-like poetry of nature, its beauty, amorousness and brutality”, Kim Hong-joon, chair of the APSA International Nominations Council has said.

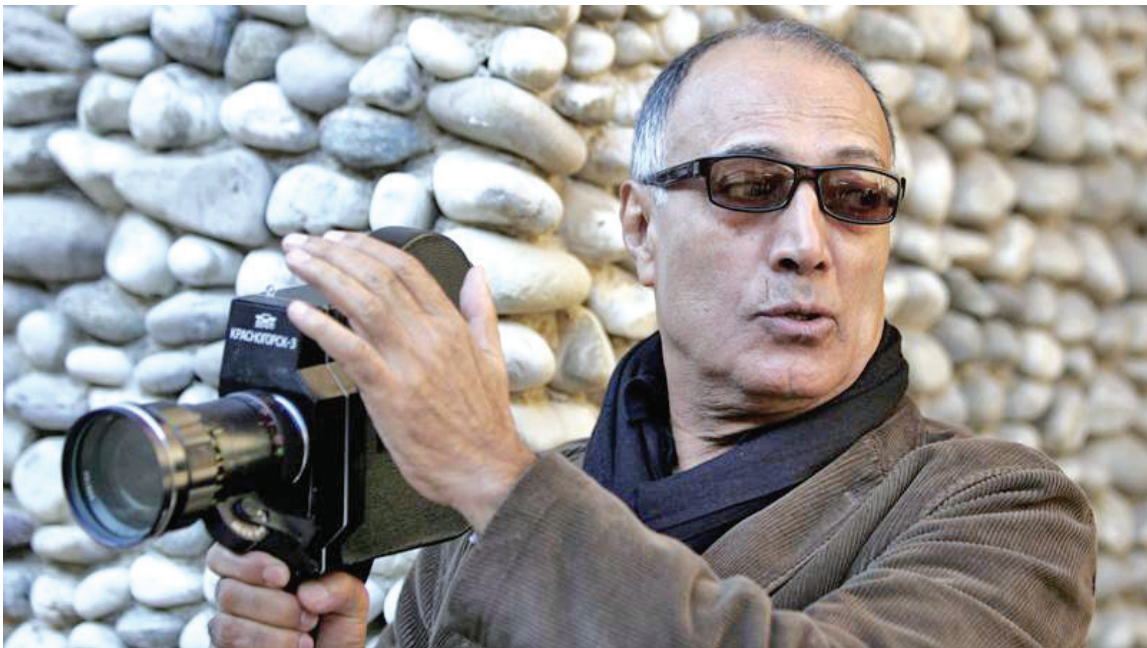
“The play with the double meaning of ‘frame’ reflects his profound meditation on the cinematic form,” he added.

Celebrated Iranian auteur Abbas Kiarostami and director of “Certified Copy”, “Taste of Cherry”, “Through the Olive Trees” and “Where Is Friend’s Home” died in July 2016.

In addition, this year the Iranian cinema has received three nominations at APSA.

“A Man of Integrity”, a drama directed and produced by Mohammad Rasuloof about a goldfish farmer who is battling corporate oppression in northern Iran, has been nominated for Best Feature Film award.

Fereidun Najafi’s “The Skater”, also known as “The Skier” that portrays childish persistence, has received a



Filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami in an undated photo

nomination in the Best Youth Feature Film category.

Navid Mohammadzadeh has been nominated for the best actor award for his role in the acclaimed drama “No

Date, No Signature” by Vahid Jalilvand.

The 11th Asia Pacific Screen Awards will be presented in Brisbane on November 23.

Film Museum of Iran to screen Georgia’s “Corn Island”



A scene from the film “Corn Island” by Giorgi Ovashvili

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Oscar-nominated “Corn Island”, a 2014 Georgian drama by Giorgi Ovashvili, will go on screen in the Film Museum of Iran Sunday.

The screening session is part of “Georgia Night”, a program organized by Iran’s Art and Experience Cinema in collaboration with the Embassy of Georgia in Tehran.

Representatives from different embassies along with Iranian artists and cineastes are expected to attend the screening session.

An astonishing film presented

with the utmost modesty, “Corn Island” observes a hardy old peasant and his obedient granddaughter as they carry out one of the world’s most daunting farming traditions.

The movie’s events take place in a conflict zone, the characters do not have names, and there is barely any dialogue, a psychological drama about the Georgian-Abkhaz relationship, a battle between man and nature, a desire to escape from a closed space and a love story.

“Corn Island” won the Crystal Globe prize at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in 2014.

Harry Potter exhibition blends wizardry with history

LONDON (Reuters) — A new exhibition celebrating the 20th anniversary of the first Harry Potter book’s publication is offering ‘muggles’ with an interest in magic the chance to view rare memorabilia, combined with historic artifacts referenced in the popular series.

“Harry Potter: A History of Magic,” held in the British Library in London, features Potter memorabilia including author J.K. Rowling’s first annotated sketch of Hogwarts school, as well as her handwritten list of its teachers and subjects.

As well as the items associated with Rowling and the book series, the exhibition also features historic artifacts from the library’s collection, including alchemists’ scrolls from the 1500s and Chinese oracle bones from the 12th century.

“Our exhibition explores the history, mythology and folklore behind the Harry Potter stories,” Julian Harrison, the exhibition’s lead curator, told Reuters.



A gallery assistant poses for photographs during the press preview of the exhibition “Harry Potter: A History of Magic” at the British Library in London, Britain, October 18, 2017. (Reuters/Mary Turner)

Han Solo’s standalone film titled “Solo: A Star Wars Story”

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — The origin story of Han Solo, the roguish intergalactic “Star Wars” bounty hunter, has finally been given a title, director Ron Howard unveiled on Tuesday.

“Solo: A Star Wars Story” will follow the beginnings of the gruff but loveable Han Solo, made famous by Harrison Ford in George Lucas’ “Star Wars” films. The movie is scheduled for release on May 25, 2018.

Alden Ehrenreich is taking over the role of the titular bounty hunter, while Donald Glover will play young Lando Calrissian, played by Billy Dee Williams in the original trilogy.

Howard, who took over the production of the film after the sudden departure of its two directors earlier this year, revealed the title in a short video and said that filming had wrapped on the project.

The “Solo” spin-off is part of Walt Disney Co’s expanding slate of “Star Wars” movies, which was rebooted by the 2015 blockbuster hit, “Star Wars: The Force Awakens”. That film made more than \$2 billion at the global box office.

The Han Solo film is the second of three stand-alone “Star Wars” films that kicked off with last year’s “Rogue One: A Star Wars Story.”

Los Angeles police investigating Harvey Weinstein in 2013 assault allegation

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Los Angeles Police Department said on Thursday that it is investigating a 2013 sexual assault allegation against movie producer Harvey Weinstein.

The LAPD robbery and homicide division interviewed a potential sexual assault victim, spokesman Kevin Maiberger told Reuters. No further information was given on who made the allegations or where the alleged incident occurred.

“Mr. Weinstein obviously can’t speak to anonymous allegations, but he unequivocally denies allegations of non-consensual sex,” his spokeswoman Sallie Hofmeister

said in an emailed statement.

The move follows allegations reported earlier this month by The New York Times and The New Yorker from a number of women that Weinstein sexually harassed or assaulted them in incidents dating back to the 1980s.

Reuters was unable to independently confirm any of the allegations. Weinstein, 65, has denied having non-consensual relation with anyone.

The New York Police Department said last week it was investigating an allegation of assault from 2004 against Weinstein.