

It's possible European leaders agree to Macron's approach toward Iran: Murphy **7**



A woman is never incapable, says 91-year-old doll-maker **12**



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© File photo

## Al-Abadi slams Tillerson's remarks on Popular Mobilization Units

See page 13

## Iran, S. Africa pen document on economic, banking co-op

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Iran and South Africa signed a document on cooperation in banking, development and investment, biotechnology, nanotechnology, agriculture, transportation, fisheries, beekeeping and shipping, IRNA reported on Monday.

The document was signed between Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad-Javad Zarif and South Africa's Minister of

International Relations and Cooperation Maite Nkoana-Mashabane during the 13th meeting of Iran-South Africa Joint Economic Committee in Pretoria. The meeting was attended by Iranian and South African economic delegations.

Iranian delegation was reportedly headed by the Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) Masoud Khansari.

## Rouhani: Iran's defense program is like most other states

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani said on Monday that Iran's defense program is like many other countries in the world and no one has the right to object it.

"We have international regulations (about a country's sovereign right for

defense) and it is also mentioned in the constitution that our military power should be deterrent and we do not seek anything else," he said during his speech at a ceremony held to commemorate the memory of Ayatollah Seyyed Mustafa Khomeini, the son of Imam Khomeini. **->2**

## UK firm to invest €1.8b in building cancer centers in Iran

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — International Hospitals Group (IHG), a UK-based healthcare services company, has signed a memorandum of understanding worth €1.8 billion with Iran to finance the construction of a network of cancer centers in the country.

"The British major company (IHG) signed today an MOU to finance construction of a network of cancer centers in Iran," Iran's ambassador to

the UK, Hamid Baeidinejad, wrote on his Twitter account on Monday.

Baeidinejad also noted in a post in his Instagram that the agreement was signed between the Iranian ministry of health and the British company following months of negotiation.

The agreement will see IHG invest in and build modern cancer treatment centers across the country in three phases, Tasnim news agency quoted him as saying.

## TSE moves to bridge foreign investment gap

By Haniyeh Sadat Jafariyeh

Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) hosted a conference on Sunday to attract more foreign capital via introducing foreigners to Iranian capital market and making Iranian firms aware of the pre-requisites for attraction of foreign investments such as financial transparency, compliance standards, feasibility studies, business plans, and risk ratings.

Titled "Attracting Foreign Capital to Iran (2017)", the event was held at Tehran's Espinas Hotel with the participation of officials

and experts from KPMG, a leading professional service company in advisory, audit and tax; Scope Ratings Ag., a provider of independent ratings, research and risk analysis solutions across all asset classes, and Vienna Stocks Exchange (Wienerborse).

### Need for update

In his remarks addressing the conference, TSE CEO Hassan Qalibaf-Asl outlined the existing potentials of TSE in the Middle East region and underlined the need for standardizing and updating Iran's capital market and debt instruments.

"TSE has signed MOUs with 12 different stock exchanges. One of the agreements was signed with Borsa Istanbul Stock exchange last year. Some meetings have been held since then to implement the MOU, focusing on dual listing," he announced.

"The main point in boosting cooperation with foreign stock exchanges for Iranian firms is adopting their destination markets' standards such as the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), which is presently an acceptable standard worldwide," he underlined. **->4**

## Trump tells Europe to do trade with Iran

U.S. President Donald Trump on Sunday said he does not object to France and Germany continuing trade with Iran, despite his refusal to recertify the Iran nuclear deal.

"I told them just keep making money. Don't worry. You just keep making money," AFP quoted Trump as telling the Fox News program Sunday Morning Futures.

"They are friends of mine. They really are. I get along with all of them. Whether it's Emmanuel or Angela," Trump continued, referring to French President Emmanuel Macron and the German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

"I don't know what's going to happen with that deal," Trump said of the 2015

accord, which on October 13 he refused to certify, leaving the pact's fate to Congress.

"When they buy those things, it is a little harder," Trump said of French and German commercial dealings with Iran. "I told them just keep making money. Don't worry. We don't need you on this one."

## Israel maintains robust arms trade with rogue regimes

Human rights activists are stepping up efforts to expose Israel's long and covert history of supplying weapons and military training to regimes while they actively commit massacres, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

The issue of Israel's trade with rogue regimes has been thrust into the spotlight again after revelations that it is sending weapons to Myanmar, in defiance of a United States and European arms embargo.

Formerly known as Burma, Myanmar was

condemned last month by the United Nations for conducting what it called a "textbook ethnic cleansing" of the Rohingya, a Muslim minority. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya are reported to have fled to neighboring Bangladesh in recent weeks, after evidence of the torching of entire villages, massacres and systematic rapes.

Israel has not divulged details of its ties to Myanmar's military government, but public records show that it has sold the military there armed patrol boats, guns and surveil-

lance equipment. Myanmar's Special Forces have also been trained by Israelis.

Human rights groups are set to stage a protest outside Israel's parliament on October 30, calling for an immediate halt to the weapons sales to Myanmar. Israeli firms have also broken with the United States and Europe by supplying weapons and surveillance equipment to militias in South Sudan, where a civil war has raged since late 2013. Some 300,000 Sudanese are believed to have been killed in the fighting. **->13**



© IRNA/Mohammad Sefarpoor

## "Red gold" harvest in northeast of Iran

Farmers are harvesting saffron which routinely begins in Iran in mid-October and lasts until early November.

Dubbed as "the red gold", saffron is mainly produced in the provinces of North Khorasan, Khorasan Razavi, and South Khorasan.

Iran exported 68 tons of saffron in the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-August 22), bringing over \$92 million in revenues, according to the customs administration data.



## ARTICLE

By M.A.Saki

Deputy editor-in-chief

## The illusion to align Iraq with Saudis against Iran

In the inaugural meeting of the Saudi Arabia-Iraq Coordination Committee in Riyadh on Sunday which Iraqi Prime Minister al-Abadi had also been invited, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had formulated the illusion to take steps to seal an alliance between Saudi Arabia and Iraq against Iran.

Contrary to Saudis and Americans' ill-conceived assumptions, Iran warmly welcomes rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Iran has been loudly and repeatedly saying that regional crises can only be resolved through dialogue and cooperation between regional states. In line with this policy why Saudi Arabia should not be a partner.

However to put Iraq against Iran through creating a Saudi-Iraqi bloc is purely delusional. Such wishes originate from Trump and his inner circle's lack of understanding of the realities in the region and the larger world in general.

Iraqis' mind is fresh with Saudi Arabia's destructive approach toward their country since the toppling of the Saddam Hussein regime in March 2003. Since that date not only terrorists from Saudi Arabia started pouring into neighboring Iraq, the al-Saud family also rebuffed all overtures by Iraq to normalize ties. Saudi Arabia even refused to open its embassy in Baghdad until 2015.

On the contrary, Iran, which had suffered greatly at the hands of Saddam Hussein's Iraq in the 1980s, stood beside the Iraqis in difficult days, especially when Daesh made rapid military advances in Iraq in 2014.

Now Tillerson, who has no experience in foreign policy, should answer which country has been the friend of Iraq in these difficult years and which country or countries have been educating terrorists through their Wahhabi schools (madrassas) and encouraging them to go to Iraq to kill American soldiers and Iraqis alike. **->13**



## ARTICLE

By Hanif Ghaffari

Political analyst

## Three American Female Politicians in Confrontation with the JCPOA

In recent days, the name of Nikki Haley has been considered by many international analysts. Nikki Haley is described as a diplomat who, with her insistence on cancelling the JCPOA by Trump, has made lots of knots in the U.S. foreign policy. The fact is that since the beginning of 2000, three women have played a very significant role in the U.S. foreign policy. One of these was Condoleezza Rice, the national security adviser and former U.S. secretary of state during George W. Bush's presidency.

After the end of Bush presidency and during Obama's presidency, we saw Susan Rice's great role as U.S. National Security Advisor.

Susan Rice initially, as the United States ambassador to the United Nations, played a significant role in the intensification of the Security Council's multilateral sanctions against Iran. Susan Rice continued to work against our country as the U.S. National Security Advisor. Right now, following the presence of Donald Trump at the White House, we are witnessing the highlighted presence of Nikki Haley in the U.S. foreign policy. Nicky Haley is now a United States ambassador to the United Nations. Here we look at the positions of each of these three women as "American diplomats" on Iran's nuclear program:

Condoleezza Rice; attempts to refer Iran's file to the Security Council

At the time when Condoleezza Rice served as the Secretary of State of the United States and in George Walker Bush administration, her main concern was to send Iran's nuclear file to the Security Council and impose multilateral economic sanctions on Iran. In April 2005, about 12 years ago, Rice announced at a press conference that she was taking serious steps through Bush administration to send Iran's case to the Security Council. The former Secretary of State said: **->7**



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Iran provides passive defense training for Syria, Iraq, and Hezbollah

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Head of Iran's Passive Defense Organization said on Monday that the organization has provided Syria, Iraq and Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement with training in passive defense.

Brigadier General Gholam Reza Jalali told reporters at a press conference in Tehran that the organization is prepared to give the countries more training in passive defense at their request, Tasnim reported.

In recent years, Iraq and Syria have been gripped by insurgency with various terrorist groups, including Daesh (ISIS), currently controlling parts of the two countries.



Hadi Khamenei to lead reformist council

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Mahmoud Sadeqi, a reformist parliamentarian from Tehran and a member of the coordination council of reformists, said on Monday that Hadi Khamenei has agreed to become the president of the council.

Hojjatolislam Hadi Khamenei is an influential reformist politician and a key member of the reformist Association of Combatant Clerics.

Sadeqi denied reports that Khamenei had been reluctant to take over the rotating presidency of the council.

He also said the council has not yet reached a conclusion on its future policies, Fars reported.



British FM praises nuclear deal, says it will survive

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson on Monday praised the Iran nuclear deal, which has been widely criticized by U.S. President Donald Trump, and urged North Korea to choose the path of diplomacy.

Speaking at a conference in London, Johnson said he is confident the deal will survive despite Trump's opposition.

Trump has decertified Iran's compliance with the nuclear agreement, signed in 2015 and known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), leaving it up to Congress whether to impose new sanctions on Iran.



Iranian MP, Jordanian diplomat hold talks on regional peace

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Unity of the Islamic nation is effective in promoting peace among Muslims, head of the Iranian-Jordanian parliamentary friendship group said on Monday.

Amir Khojasteh made the remarks in a meeting with Mohammed al-Khalidi, Jordanian charge d'affaires in Tehran, Mehr news agency reported.

Khojasteh said Jordan and the Islamic Republic of Iran have age-old Islamic, national and cultural backgrounds, adding, "The Islamic Ummah expects Tehran and Amman to make efforts in establishing peace, tranquility and friendship."



Journalists express support for IRGC

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — More than 500 journalists, working in various Iranian news outlets, have issued a statement expressing their support for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) after it was attacked by U.S. President Donald Trump, Mehr reported on Monday.

The statement said Trump's crazy remarks once again showed American politicians' hostile stance against the Iranian government and people.

It also described Trump's disrespectful remarks as a sign Washington's failure in the region.



Two high-ranking delegations to visit Azerbaijan

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Two high-ranking Iranian delegations are expected to pay separate visits to Azerbaijan within the coming weeks, Trend quoted Mohammadreza Najafi, the press officer of Iran's embassy in Baku, as saying on Monday.

The first delegation, headed by Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Masoud Karbasian, will arrive in Baku for a two-day visit on October 26, Najafi said. This is Karbasian's first visit to Azerbaijan since assuming the office.

He added that Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli is also scheduled to arrive in Baku in early November.

# Zarif to Tillerson: Popular Mobilization Forces right at home

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Monday lashed out at U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson for his call on the Popular Mobilization Forces to go home, saying "They are home. They have not been, nor will they be, waiting for anyone's orders."

Tillerson said on Sunday it was time for Iranian-backed militias and their Iranian advisers who helped Iraq defeat Daesh to "go home", after a rare joint meeting with the leaders of Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

Zarif who was on a trip of South Africa also said "if they (Popular Mobilization Forces) had waited for orders from Tillerson or the government of America, we should have had Daesh in Baghdad and Erbil today"

"Exactly what country is it that Iraqis who rose up to defend their homes against ISIS return to?" Zarif also asked in a tweet late on Sunday.

"Shameful US FP (foreign policy), dictated by petrodollars," the chief Iranian



**Zarif says: "Shameful US FP (foreign policy), dictated by petrodollars".**

## ' Hamas officials' visit to Iran proves failure of Saudi, Israeli policies' Hamas says Tehran backs national reconciliation among Palestinians

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Kamal Kharrazi, director of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, said on Monday that presence of Hamas officials in Iran proves that the policies adopted by Saudis Arabia and the Zionist regime of Israel have ended in failure.

After his meeting with Saleh al-Aroui, deputy chief of Hamas political bureau, Kharrazi expressed hope that Hamas would continue resistance against the occupation of the Palestinian lands by Israel.

He also called the fantasy of Shia Crescent a "wrong theory", because Iran has always supported Sunni Palestinians, including the Hamas resistance group, against Israel.

"Today, we support Hamas against the Zionist regime", he added.

Some radical politicians in the Arab world have



claimed that Shiite Iran is seeking to create a bloc of Shia communities in the region.

## Rouhani: Iran's defense program is like most other states

**1 →** "We conduct effective defense in the rainy day and no one can talk about our country's military power which is based on the constitution and defense doctrine," stated Rouhani who led Iran's Supreme National Security Council for 1989 to 2005.

Rouhani also said, "We ask you: When our people were under artillery and bombardment of the enemy missiles, did you give us weapons of air defense, let alone offensive weapons? At that time, we sent a Europe-made anti-aircraft gun, which it was committed to repair, but they didn't, and they did not even gave it back to us, saying that you are in war and we cannot do it. Now they want to talk with us about weapons."

With the attempt to undermine the landmark 2015 nuclear agreement, the Trump administration has created a commotion over Iran's conventional

ballistic missile program.

Iran has been repeatedly saying that its missile program is purely defensive.

During Iraq's war against Iran in the 1980s, when Saddam Hussein was ruling Baghdad, Iranian cities were showered with missiles. However, Iran was not allowed to buy weapons to defend itself.

In an article published in the Atlantic on October 9 Iranian foreign minister defended Iran's missile program. He said, "It is in this atmosphere—and mindful of our 20th-century experience with a neighbor that waged an eight-year war against our people while virtually the entire world took the side of the aggressor—that we endeavor to have a working defensive capability. It is because of the hostility shown to us since the Islamic Revolution, from within our own region and from the West, and because of the West's refusal to sell us

any defensive weaponry that might deter a future Saddam, that we have developed an indigenous capability."

**■ 'Bright future'**

Rouhani also noted that a "bright future" awaits Iran.

"Today is not a day to say something that weakens the people's hope on the future. We will have a bright future. We have taken right steps in the region and also in the nuclear issue," he said.

Referring to comments made by U.S. President Donald Trump on putting pressure on Iranians without any help from Europe, Rouhani said that Trump's language proves the fact that Iran is on the "right path".

In an interview with Fox News published on Sunday, Trump said that the U.S. is capable of putting pressure on Iranians on its own.

"I told them [the EU]: 'Just keep making

money. Don't worry about it. We don't need you on this."

**■ 'Unity is essential'**

Rouhani said that it is essential to set hope on the future and maintain unity.

"Unity and hope on the future is essential for us and we can easily face the problems and pass them all," he said.

He also said, "Today, greatness of Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region is more than ever. Can anyone take any action in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, North Africa and the Persian Gulf without considering Iran's viewpoint? This is due to the nation's awareness and unity, and vigilance of the Leader [of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei]."

He added, "Do you remember any time when the U.S. president say something and the whole world stand against it? ... So, we should protect the trust between the people and the sovereignty.."

## Fixed Equations of the United States and Europe towards the Nuclear Deal

By Ebrahim Karimi

"Simplifying the problem" is the most important skill that an individual or a group must learn in the face of the challenges ahead! The simplification of the problem means the arrangement of the fixed equations of that problem together and, consequently, the exact formulation of that. This rule applies to the world of politics, especially in relation to complex international cases. Incapability of some politicians to systematically arrange evidences of a phenomenon together leads to their inability to deal with the subject, and ultimately to make a false, costly decision. This general rule applies to the nuclear deal between Iran and the members of the P1 + 5.

The silence of the government against the CAATSA Act, calculated with the government's optimism about European support for the nuclear deal and other issues like this, shows that the government has failed to formulate the West stances towards the JCPOA. As mentioned above, the main prerequisite for formulating a subject and its simplification is the arrangement of fixed, absolute and definite propositions alongside each other. There are also strong propositions about the JCPOA of which indifference and negligence towards them lead to incorrect reading of the subject. The fixed equations of recent nuclear developments include:

- The United States is seeking to permanently restrain the Iranian nuclear program. In this regard, Trump emphasizes that the so-called "Sunset" Section should be redefined, and the temporary limitations imposed on Iran should turn to permanent restrictions.

- The United States seeks to guarantee the access of IAEA inspectors to Iran's military sites on the pretext of revising Section T of Annex1 of the

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

- Washington is seeking to include Iran's missile capability in the JCPOA (or in a new agreement) to restrict Iran's missile activities along with imposing new nuclear sanctions on our country.

- Yukio Amano, the Director General of the IAEA, with a vague idea about the verification mechanism for Section T of Annex 1 of the JCPOA, has virtually shown a green light to Trump about putting pressure on Iran to access military places of our country. **→7**

### EXTENSION OF TENDER SUBMISSION DEADLINE

FOR

### TENDER NO. HOA-2017-09-01 & HOA-2017-09-2

**HOA has decided to extend the deadlines established in the Tender notice for tenders**

**No. HOA-2017-09-01 & HOA-2017-09-2 published on Thursday 14 September, 2017.**

The modified dates shall be as follows:

Event	Previous Date	Extended Date
Tender Document Submission	23-26 Oct	30 Oct -2 Nov
Envelop A&B Opening Session	27 Oct	3 Nov

This decision has been made so that participants may have more time to complete the participation requirements for these tenders.

For more information, please contact:

Phone: **+98-912 961 1962**

E-mail: [intl.tender@hoa-ir.com](mailto:intl.tender@hoa-ir.com)



# Tillerson in Qatar: Saudi Arabia not ready to talk

The United States Secretary of State Rex Tillerson says he has embarked on a diplomatic shuttle to help mend fences between neighboring Persian Gulf states of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, but that Riyadh has been unresponsive to his mediation bid. Tillerson has traveled to Qatar following a visit to Saudi Arabia, telling Qatari officials that Riyadh is not ready to talk to Doha to end a months-long diplomatic dispute between the two states.

In a joint press conference with Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in Doha on Sunday, Tillerson said that during his stop in Saudi Arabia, he had seen no signal that Riyadh was willing to resolve differences with Doha through negotiations.

"In my meetings with [Saudi] Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), I asked him to please engage in dialog, [but] there is not a strong indication that parties are ready to talk yet," Tillerson said. The House of Saud regime has been leading three other Arab states in a diplomatic and economic war on Qatar since



June, accusing Doha of supporting "terrorism." Qatar rejects the allegation, blames the Saudi regime-led countries for the crisis, and says they harbor ulterior motives for the showdown.

The U.S. official has sought to mediate between the feuding parties, and his trip to Saudi Arabia and then to Qatar has been seen as an attempt at shuttle diplomacy. But according

to Tillerson himself, he may not have been successful.

"We cannot force talks upon people who are not ready to talk," he said in the presser with Sheikh Mohammed.

Since the eruption of the dispute, Qatar has said it is open to dialog even as it has condemned the pressure being exerted on it by the Saudi regime-led countries, which include

the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, and Bahrain.

"These countries have resorted to undiplomatic [measures] that have nothing to do with modern diplomatic lessons, and this is no good," the Qatari foreign minister said in the Sunday press briefing. Tillerson also met with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, stressing unity among the member states of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC).

The PGCC is a regional grouping of six Persian Gulf states, namely Qatar, Bahrain, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Oman. Four of those countries are involved in the dispute with Qatar, and given Saudi Arabia's influence in the PGCC, there have been indications that the body may eject Doha. Sheikh Mohammed reaffirmed Tillerson's position on the PGCC.

The Qatari foreign minister said at the presser, "The PGCC is quite important for the collective security and we feel sorry that the PGCC will be the victim of the crisis against the state of Qatar."

(Source: agencies)

## Opposition group calls for Kurdish leader to resign

### Iraq's Kurdistan region delays elections

A Kurdish opposition group that opposed the recent referendum on secession from Iraq, on account of poor timing, has called for the Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region (Kurdistan Regional Government/KRG) leader to resign.

Gorran, or the Movement for Change, called for a "national salvation government" in a statement posted on its website, saying the KRG "must be dissolved".

Iraq's KRG Leader Masoud Barzani, the party said, "refused to listen to our demands and those of Baghdad", leaving the Kurdish region "with another terrible crisis".

"What has happened now does not demonstrate the failure of our people and the Kurdish nation, rather it is the defeat of the authority and officials who caused the biggest crisis and disaster to the Kurdish people," the statement said.

People in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq voted for secession on September 25 in a controversial referendum, amid rising tensions and international opposition.

The United States and other Western allies of Iraq had urged Barzani to cancel or postpone the vote.

More than 92 percent voted "Yes" to secession, with the turnout at almost 80 percent.

The referendum set off a chain of events, culminating in a military confrontation between Erbil and Baghdad.

Iraqi government forces launched a major operation in Kirkuk on October 16 aimed at re-taking the Kurdish-held city, advancing towards oil fields and a strategic military base.

#### ■ The Kurdish collapse was sudden

The decision to hold the referendum in the face of near-universal condemnation now appears to have been a colossal miscalculation, analysts said, with Barzani vastly overestimating the KRG's political and military heft and undermining his legitimacy.

Elsewhere on Monday, the Kurdistan Region Security Council (KRSC) - established in 2011 and headed by Barzani's son - called on the Iraqi government to "immediately cease its military aggression and withdraw from all territories" in a statement.

The KRSC said was concerned by "continued military buildup of Iraqi forces and ... PMF (Popular Mobilization Units/PMU/Hashd al-Shaabi) towards the Kurdistan region," the statement read. "In the last 48 hours, Iraq has continued to deploy tanks and artillery, as well as American equipment."

Iraq has not shown any sign of de-escalating "military aggression" against people of the Kurdish region, the KRSC said, repeating a call for talks.

#### ■ Kurdistan elections delayed

Meanwhile, elections for Iraq's Kurdistan region's presidency and parliament set for Nov. 1 will be delayed because political parties failed to present candidates, the head of the electoral commission Hendrean Mohammed told Reuters on Monday.

Parties have been unable to focus on the elections because of turmoil that followed a referendum on Sept. 25 on Kurdish separation, a Kurdish MP said on condition of anonymity. Authorities in Baghdad as well as neighbors Iran and Turkey opposed the referendum.

The Kurdish electoral commission's Mohammed, speaking by phone from the KRG capital Erbil, in northern Iraq, said it is up to the Kurdistan region's parliament to fix a new date for the elections. The deadline to present candidates expired last week and was extended until Monday.

The current KRG presidency, held by Barzani since 2005, and parliament, elected in 2013, are expected to continue until new votes are held, he said.

(Source: al Jazeera)

## Resistance thwarted 'dangerous' U.S. plot to divide region: Naim Qassem

Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem says the "axis of resistance" has managed to thwart the United States and Israeli plots to divide the Middle East region by defeating the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group.

Speaking at a memorial ceremony in Beirut on Sunday, Qassem said the U.S. supports Israel despite its oppression and occupation because it is in American interests to transplant "this cancerous tumor" to disturb the region and to use it as "a stick" against the countries that disobey the United States.

Washington, he said, tried to destroy Syria in order to implement its plan for creating a new Middle East and dividing the regional countries, "but we managed to thwart the plot."

Like Israel, the U.S. also supports the Takfiri "beasts" because that serves their interests, the cleric said, adding Washington and Tel Aviv do not care about other countries and nations.

"The entire world knows that the



U.S. and its allies created ISIL and dispatched terrorists from across the world to Syria," Qassem said.

Their plan was to divide the region "so that they can control it easily" and to damage the true image of Islam and project a false and gruesome picture of the divine faith in order to prevent it from spreading to other parts of the world, he added.

Qassem emphasized that the "axis of resistance" has defeated the Takfiri

project and that the terrorist groups are taking their last breath.

"If it weren't for the resistance, Israel wouldn't have left and Lebanon wouldn't have been independent and become strong. And if it weren't for the resistance, we wouldn't have beaten Takfiri terrorism through the tripartite equation of the Army, people and the resistance," he said.

In Tehran, the chief commander of the ground forces of the Islamic Rev-

olution Guards Corps (IRGC) said all enemy plots in the region have been thwarted, thanks to the "resistance forces."

"Who disrupted America's plans in Syria and Iraq and the region? They saw the conditions in Syria and Iraq, and found out that there would be no trace of Israel, so they created ISIL (Daesh) and other terrorist groups," said Gen. Mohammad Pakpour.

The commander said the U.S., which is seeing ISIL being eliminated by "resistance forces," is now planning to impose sanctions on the IRGC but the measure will fail.

"With Daesh being annihilated, the Americans have also raised the issue of a referendum for the Iraqi Kurdistan."

This is while the world wants Iraq to remain united," Pakpour added.

Enemy threats, he said, are increasing day by day which requires armed forces to keep themselves at the highest level of readiness and power and take away the chance of any miscalculation from the enemies.

(Source: al Alam)

## U.S. preparing to put nuclear bombers back on 24-hour alert: report

The United States Air Force is preparing to place its fleet of B-52 bombers rigged with nuclear weapons on 24-hour alert for the first time since 1991 amid escalating tensions with North Korea.

A senior U.S. Air Force official told security news website Defense One on Sunday that American military leaders are reacting to new threat levels.

"The world is a dangerous place and we've got

folks that are talking openly about use of nuclear weapons," General David Goldfein, Air Force chief of staff, said, referring to North Korea's Leader Kim Jong-un who has threatened to attack the U.S. with nuclear weapons if it continues its aggressive policy against his country.

Goldfein said no official order had been given to put nuclear bombers on alert, but said preparations are underway.

That decision would be made by the commander of U.S. Strategic Command, or the head of U.S. Northern Command.

Goldfein noted that it is "no longer a bipolar world where it's just us and the Soviet Union. We've got other players out there who have nuclear capability. It's never been more important to make sure that we get this mission right."

(Source: Press TV)

## Syrian army makes new advances on ISIL lines south of Dayr al-Zawr

The Syrian army has advanced deeper into the southern outskirts of the eastern city of Dayr al-Zawr, which is partially held by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists, pushing the Takfiri outfit further toward total defeat in the oil-rich province, a monitoring group reports. According to the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights on Monday, ISIL terrorists are increasingly losing ground across the province to advancing Syrian troops and the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which is a United States-backed group of Kurdish and Arab militants.

The developments came a day after Syrian ground forces, backed by pro-government fighters, managed to liberate the strategic town of Khasham, located in northeastern countryside of Dayr al-Zawr city, from the grips of ISIL. ISIL overran large parts of Dayr al-Zawr province, including its many oil fields, in mid-2014 as it seized swathes of land in Syria and neighboring Iraq.

By early 2015, the Takfiri terrorists were in control of some parts of city of Dayr al-Zawr and besieged the remaining parts, which were under government control. It is estimated that 100,000 people remain in the government-held parts of the city. Backed by the Russian military and fighters from Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement, the Syrian army has managed to break ISIL's three-year siege on Dayr al-Zawr province, though the total elimination of the group is yet to come. Syrian army troops and their allies liberate the central town of al-Qaraytan from ISIL Takfiri terrorists.

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

(Source: Press TV)

## Japan's PM vows to 'deal firmly' with N. Korea immediately after he won elections

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has promised to "deal firmly" with North Korea, immediately after he won a landslide "super-majority" in the snap elections he had called, for an increased mandate to deal with the "crises" facing his country.

Exit polls suggested on Monday that Abe's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) coalition has retained its two-thirds majority in Sunday's election.

The conservative LDP together with its coalition ally Komeito Party, has won 312 of the 465 seats in the lower house of parliament, according to local broadcaster NHK.

The results give Abe the parliamentary numbers he needs to pursue his longtime ambition—to give the role of the military a boost amid tensions with North Korea, which has fired two missiles over Japan in recent months.

Speaking after the exit polls on Monday, Abe said, "As I promised in the election, my imminent task is to firmly deal with North Korea.... For that, strong diplomacy is required."

Japan's deputy chief cabinet secretary Yasutoshi Nishimura also said that Abe had a phone conversation with the United States President Donald Trump after his victory, during which the two leaders agreed to work together to increase pressure on Pyongyang.

Abe is now one step closer to his mandate of revising Japan's post-war pacifist constitution, which is considered by many conservatives as a humiliating imposition following Japan's World War II defeat in 1945.

The prime minister had previously proposed to revise a clause of the constitution—known as Article 9—which renounces war completely. Article 9 bans a standing military but has been interpreted to allow armed forces exclusively for self-defense.

Abe has set a deadline of 2020 to make that revision happen, but even if he manages to get the approval for such an amendment in the two houses of parliament, he would still need to put it to a public vote in a referendum.

Parties, which are in favor of the change, are now in possession of almost 80 percent of the seats in the lower house of the parliament. Abe had previously said he needed a new mandate to tackle a "national crisis" from North Korea's missile and nuclear programs.

Speaking at a news conference on Monday, Abe outlined his North Korea policy and said, "I will pursue decisive and strong diplomacy to tackle North Korea's missile, nuclear and abduction issues and put further pressure to get it to change its policy." He also said he would "thoroughly" discuss North Korea's nuclear weapons program with Trump during his first visit to Asia next month.

Trump's planned trip to Asia will include stops in Tokyo as well as in the Chinese and South Korean capitals, Beijing and Seoul. In the meantime, Trump's Defense Secretary James Mattis has kicked off a week-long tour of Asia to hold talks with the U.S. regional allies on what he has called Pyongyang's "reckless" provocations.

Mattis, who is in the Philippines, will pay visits to Thailand and South Korea. Tensions between the United States and North Korea have increased in recent months, with Trump repeatedly threatening military action against the country.

He has claimed that a diplomatic approach over the past 25 years "hasn't worked" and that Pyongyang has made "fools of the U.S. negotiators."

In response, North Korea has vowed a tough response to any American aggression.

The North has faced tough United Nations sanctions over its nuclear weapons program, but says it will continue to develop its military programs as a deterrent against the hostile policies of the United States and its regional allies, including South Korea and Japan.

(Source: agencies)



NEWS IN BRIEF



**Iran Expo 2017  
to host over 500  
companies**

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The second edition of d e s k Exports Capabilities Exhibition of Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran Expo 2017) is due to be held at Tehran's Shahre Aftab International Exhibition Center from October 31 to November 3, IRNA reported on Monday.

According to Alireza Chenari, secretary of the non-oil exports faction of the parliament, so far 34 different countries and around 500 companies have expressed interest in participating in the exhibition.



**Number of Iran's  
commercial  
attachés to  
increase to 50**

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Mojtaba Khosrotaj, head d e s k of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), said the country plans to increase the number of its commercial attachés to 50 in near future.

As ISNA reported, Khosrotaj noted that Iran currently has 20 commercial attaches in countries which are export destinations for Iranian goods.

## Competitive advantage a key for railway development

By Mahnaz Abdi

**TEHRAN** — Creation of competitive advantage is the key for railway development in Iran, according to Saeed Mohammadzadeh, the managing director of Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI).

In the general policies of the country, for example for preparing the five-year national development plans, railway has been always the main pivot when it comes to development of the transportation, Mohammadzadeh said in a press conference on Monday.

"Therefore, we, in all sectors, should try for creating some competitive advantage for the railway transportation in the country", the official emphasized.

"Our duty is to make railway transportation competitive and being of service to the national economy", he noted and reinforced his remarks by saying: "Railway transportation has a unique role in Resistance Economy."



"In order to achieve the targets that the Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan has set for us [20 percent and 30 percent shares in passenger and cargo transportation, respectively] we should follow up very serious, fast and specified plans", Mohammadzadeh opined.

■ **Fruitful measures taken in rail freight transport**

Elsewhere in his remarks, the managing director of RAI underlined that some big and effective measures have been taken in cargo transportation via railway in the country in the recent years.

He said that cargo transport capacity has been boosted through actions such as establishment of news stations, as some 20 new stations have been set up in the high traffic lines and some of these lines have become double-tracked as well.

Several deals have been made on supplying new freight wagons for the fleet and some wagons have been already received. For example, it could be referred to the deal with Russia on the joint manufacturing of 6,000 freight wagons through Russian finance based on a five-year loan, Mohammadzadeh stated.

"We are planning to develop the freight fleet through securing fund, domestic manufacturing, and using foreign sources", the official noted.

While putting the number of freight wagons at 22,000 for the moment, he said the figure should reach 28,000 by the next four years and also at least 300 locomotives should join the freight fleet by the next three years.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mohammadzadeh mentioned benefitting from private sector investment as an achievement in building infrastructures.

■ **Planning to reduce passenger fleet average life**

When elaborating on the RAI plans for the passenger fleet, the managing director said: "We are planning to reduce the average life of passenger fleet."

He also mentioned the project of Tehran-Mashhad railway electrification and said based on this project the speed will reach over 200 km/h in this line.

"The \$1.5-billion finance deal has been finalized and through the underway follow-up measures it is hoped that the related LC will be opened by the end of the calendar month of Dey (January 20, 2018)", he announced and added that a consortium of Iranian and foreign consultants has been studying the project since six months ago.

# TSE moves to bridge foreign investment gap

➔ "On the way to decrease Iranian firms' financial expenses and smoothing access to foreign capitals, TSE has made it mandatory for 61 firms, with the capital of 10 trillion rials (about \$248 million), to match their financial statements of the year 1395 (ended March 20, 2017), with IFRS and present them within a month (November 21, 2017)," he added.

Qalibaf-Asl, elsewhere, addressed the issue of corporate governance- which involves balancing the interests of a company's many stakeholders, such as shareholders, management, customers, suppliers, financiers, government and the community. As he announced, in a bid to improve the standards of Iranian firms and preparing them for taking part in foreign markets, TSE is on the process of rating all of them regarding the quality of their corporate governance and is ready to support all the firms to improve their corporate governance index.

As he added, to ease Iranian capital market's interactions with the world, TSE has also made some modifications in its instructions in various sectors.

He, in addition, underscored the significance of rating as an important instrument in debt market and also the importance of getting Iranian firms rated by international institutes. TSE has newly prepared some instructions in this regard, he said. In case of being volunteer to be rated, Iranian firms should choose a foreign partner for themselves and ask TSE for a permit, he added.

As TSE Vice President Rouhollah Hosseini Moghaddam said addressing the conference, "according to the financial statements of Iranian calendar year of 1395 financial expenditures constituted for eight percent of Iranian



stock exchange companies' sales, which is a big amount and reduces the attrac-



TSE CEO Hassan Qalibaf-Asl

tion of foreign investors for making their investments in our capital market and in particular TSE."

"Therefore, it is vital to encourage Iranian firms to reduce their financial expenses through replacing their usual methods of financing such as usance, BOT and finance with non-borrowing financing methods including selling their debt securities at international markets or listing their shares at foreign stock exchanges," he said.

As he further explained, it is now very essential for Iranian firms to present their reports in foreign languages, achieve the required qualifications from international rating agencies, learn how to use IFRS reporting language in their filings, and the most important of all to be accepted by foreign stock exchanges.

However, the path is new and long for us and Iranian firms are not experienced in this regard, he added.

■ **KPMG ready to help to remove obstacles**

KPMG Director of Financial Service Ulrich von Zanthier and Head of Country Practice Iran Kaveh Taghizadeh were the other lecturers of the conference.

The two officials sought to put forward a clear understanding of their company's

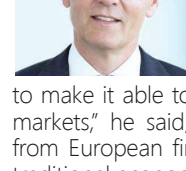
activities for the audience. According to them, obstacles on the way of Iranian firms for attracting foreign capital include: hesitation of major investors and international banks, compliance related concerns (ownership structure, U.S.-led sanctions,...), deficiencies in financial transparency (IFRS), lack of international ratings and uncertainties regarding the potential risks, lack of international investors' experience in Iran and etc.



To overcome the existing barriers, KPMG will provide the following services for Iranian firms: advising, guiding, and driving the bond or loan issue process or equity issue process, market sounding and engaging with potential investors and lenders including banks, funds, and insurance companies, preparation of required documentation, identification and appointment of other required professionals including investment banks, rating agencies, lawyers, etc., structuring of transactions, and coverage of transaction from A to Z, they said.

■ **Iran an interesting market: Scope Ratings**

Scope Ratings CEO Torsten Hinrichs was also among the presenters. Calling Iran an interesting market with high potentials, he said the country is in great need for attracting foreign finance.



"This increases the need for credit risk analysis in Iran to make it able to access to international markets," he said, "The growing interest from European firms has reactivated the traditional economic relations with Iran."

"Scope tries to provide an unbiased, objective, and independent view about the future credit risks in Iran and the quality of Iranian firms as partners for Europeans," he added.

■ **Wienerborse hopes for closer cooperation**

Wienerborse's representative and expert in listing service Florian Vanek was the next speaker. He spoke about the advantages of dual listing on European stock exchanges, equity market segments at Vienna stock exchange as well as admission criteria and ongoing obligations on EU regulated market.



In an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times and answering a question about his idea about the impact of ongoing political challenges between Iran and the U.S. on cooperation between TSE and Wienerborse he said that Austria is politically a neutral country with a warm relation with the Middle East hoping that the cooperation will witness an upward trend with removal of the remained sanctions on Iran. He referred to the large number of companies active in TSE and the wide range of industries as the positive point of TSE in Europeans opinion.

## Venezuela's behind on its debt and facing 2 huge bond payments

Ever since the price of oil collapsed in mid-2014, there's been a broad consensus among the bond-market crowd that Venezuela was going to default. Not immediately, they said, but at some point down the road.

Three years on, that time may have arrived. On Friday, the government-run oil giant PDVSA owes \$985 million. Six days later, it's on the hook for another \$1.2 billion. Not only is that a daunting sum for a country whose foreign-currency reserves recently dipped below \$10 billion for the first time in 15 years, but it figures to be a logistical nightmare too.

Increasingly isolated by U.S. financial sanctions that have spooked banks and other intermediaries in the bond payment chain, Venezuela has already fallen behind on interest payments worth \$350 million that were due earlier this month. Those payments had a grace period -- a buffer of sorts that gives the country an additional 30 days to work out the technical glitches and deliver the cash. The principal portions of the payments owed over the next two weeks contain no such language. Miss the due date and bondholders can cry default. Prices on the notes due Nov. 2 acutely reflect those risks: They're at just 93 cents on the dollar.

"This is Venezuela -- they're very disorganized with these types of things," said Alejandro Grisanti, the director of the Caracas-based research firm Ecoanalitica. "Every day, it's harder for them to pay."

A default would be a painful end to what has proven one of the more profitable, and strange, trades in emerging markets over the past two decades. While the plunge in oil prices deepened an economic collapse and triggered a humanitarian crisis unprecedented in the nation's history, President Nicolas Maduro, like his predecessor and socialist mentor Hugo Chavez, has been determined to meet all foreign bond payments.

And because yields on the bonds have been so high, the returns have been eye-catching: over 9 percent per year on average over the past 20 years. This combination -- outsize profits for Wall Street traders and shortages of food and medicine for Venezuelans back on the ground -- has been so jarring that it even led to the coining of a new term for the nation's debt: hunger bonds.

The fine print on these next two principal payments puts Venezuela in a tricky spot. If PDVSA were to deliver the funds even one day late, investors can rally together to demand the immediate payment of the rest of the money they're owed. (Lacking the funds to pay back all the debt at once, Venezuela would likely look to enter into restructuring talks with creditors -- a step that's complicated by the sanctions.)

(Source: Bloomberg)

Second Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

**INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 96-07/132**

**Tender Holder:**  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

**Subject of Two-Stage Tender:**  
Design and Implementation of Imam Ali (S) Data Center's Monitoring according to the tender documents

**Deadline of Receiving Documents:**  
As of publishing second announcement of advertisement latest by the business hour dated on **Wednesday Nov. 1, 2017**.  
Place of Receiving Documents:  
Secretariat of Tenders' Commission, Technical Purchasing (KALA) Dept., Media Technology and Development Deputy Office, Bldg. No. 2, IRIB, Jam-e Jam St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran

**Type and Amount of Guarantee for Participating in Tender:**  
The amount of **USD 59,280** which should be in the form of extendable bank guarantee  
Time and Place of Delivering Priced Bid:  
The sealed A, B & C packages/envelopes should be submitted within one main envelope marked with tender number no later than **15 p.m. on Saturday Dec. 9, 2017** and submitted to the Secretariat of Commission of Tenders.

**Time and Place of Opening Envelopes**  
The date of opening envelopes A&B is at **8:30 a.m.** on Monday **Dec. 11, 2017** in the office of Vice President of IRIB Planning and Financial Resources and opening of envelope C will be after technical evaluation.  
It should be noted that bidders should hold license from the authorized bodies.

**For more information, please contact the following phone numbers: 0098-21-22166313**  
It is obvious that cost of publishing two advertisements shall be borne by the winner of tender.

Public Relations Dept. of IRIB



# Oil keeps gains, supported by Iraq disruptions and drop in U.S. rigs

Oil prices largely held on to last week's gains on Monday, supported by supply disruptions in Iraq and a drop in U.S. drilling.

However, the reduction in drilling rigs in the United States could be temporary, analysts said, as activity had been restrained by hurricane threats.

The number of U.S. rigs drilling for new oil fell by seven to 736 in the week to Oct. 20, the lowest level since June, energy services firm Baker Hughes said on Friday.

Global benchmark Brent crude was trading at \$57.56 a barrel at 0957 GMT, down 19 cents.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was up 2 cents at \$51.86.

"The market is in a tug of war between short-term bullish drivers which are very true, very visible and very strong versus real concerns for the oil market balance for 2018," said Bjarne Schieldrop, chief commodities analyst at SEB Markets.

One bullish factor is supply disruptions in northern Iraq, where tensions have been running high since



the Kurdistan region's vote in favor of independence last month.

As of Sunday, oil exports from Iraq's Kurdistan via the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan were still flowing at sharply reduced rates between 200,000 and 250,000 barrels per day,

two shipping sources said. Flows had increased slightly to 255,000 bpd by Monday, one source said.

Typically, the pipeline transports around 600,000 bpd.

Iraqi Oil Minister Jabar al-Luaibi said on Saturday oil exports were increasing

from the southern Basra region by 200,000 bpd to make up for a shortfall from the northern Kirkuk fields.

In a landmark visit to Iraq, Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih praised the two countries' collaboration within the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries to cut production in an effort to prop up prices.

Iraq said the two countries would continue to cooperate in implementing decisions by oil-exporting countries.

The remarks come just over a month ahead of the group's next scheduled meeting, at which the oil exporters are expected to announce further decisions on their production-curb deal.

"The market looks considerably different now than it did just a few months ago and signals coming from the organization itself and member countries continue to be constructive for prices," analysts at JBC Energy wrote.

The crude oil volatility index .OVX, which measures market expectations for 30-day price volatility, fell to levels similar to those seen in 2014 last Friday. (Source: Reuters)

## Solar costs to fall further, powering global demand: Irena

Solar power costs will fall by another 60 percent over the next decade giving an already booming market another boost, the head of the International Renewable Energy Agency (Irena) said on Monday.

Solar power is in the midst of boom because of sharp drops in costs and efficiency improvements, pushing global capacity from virtually zero at the start of the century to 300 gigawatt (GW) by the end of 2016, a figure expected to rise again by 2020.

Irena expects 80 to 90 gigawatts (GW) of new solar capacity, enough to power more than 8 billion LED light bulbs, to be added globally each year over the next 5 to 6 years, Adnan Amin, the director general of Irena told Reuters, exceeding a forecast of 73 GW from the International Energy Agency (IEA).

"This could easily accelerate as costs decline in the future," said Amin. "China alone can do 50 GW a year."

"In the next decade, the cost of (utility scale) solar could fall by 60 percent or more," he said in Singapore on Monday.

That growth will mark China as the world's biggest and fastest growing solar market as Beijing relies on renewable power to cut air pollution from coal-fired power plants.

While Amin said that India would



also see sharp solar growth in coming years, he expected Southeast Asia to be more mixed.

"There is a target of 23 percent (power generation) in ASEAN for renewables by 2025. We think it's ambitious but it's achievable," he said.

The solar power share of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) 10 members is currently negligible.

Amin said improvements in solar technology were especially expected from thin films, which can be applied on windows. While this is already possible, it remains prohibitively expensive.

Irena also expects the cost of batteries, key to back up a technology that relies on daytime, to fall by 60 percent to 70 percent in the next decade.

Despite its boom, Amin said potential U.S. trade barriers would only make solar energy more costly for the world's largest oil consumer. (Source: Reuters)

## Asian LNG prices drop on wary buyers and lackluster Egyptian demand

Asian spot LNG prices fell this week as reluctant buyers submitted lower bids, more supply emerged and Egypt's call for 12 shipments in Q1 2018 undershot expectations by traders.

Spot prices for December delivery fell to \$8.70 per million British thermal units (mmBtu), 20 cents below last week levels. However, at least two traders pegged December prices at around the \$8.50-8.60 per mmBtu level, arguing that buyers were unlikely to pay up.

Bid-offer spreads remained somewhat wide with bids submitted at around the mid-\$5/mmBtu and offers in the high-\$5/mmBtu range, two traders said.

Egypt's tender for deliveries between January and March - including three shipments which are to be imported via Jordan - was seen as a bearish signal for global gas markets as traders had expected Egypt to seek five cargoes per month, not four.

Petroleum Minister Terek El Molla said in September the country was on track to cease importing LNG by the end of 2018, a goal seen as unrealistic by some analysts.

Egypt's mega purchase tenders of the past several years turned the country into one of the world's fastest-growing LNG importers, absorbing



hundreds of shipments and propping up global prices for the fuel.

Weaker spot Asian prices came after weeks of gains which saw the contract rally more than 40 percent since the end of August.

"The market has really overshot, driven by a variety of factors from the extent of Chinese demand, which was completely unexpected, to rising NBP [British gas] prices and other factors such as Hurricane Harvey," one trade source said.

Another source said added that prices are set for a further correction. "There is downside risk for December prices and upside risk for the first quarter."

Given rapidly growing imports by Chinese companies this year, traders believe stocks there to be healthy and demand covered for November and December so long as temperatures stay within normal bounds. (Source: Reuters)

## Major oil traders see upside for oil prices

Division among the world's biggest oil traders indicates the strong degree of uncertainty in the market.

According to Bloomberg, questions over demand growth, relative production from the U.S. and OPEC and the lingering glut are dividing prognosticators and generating some seriously divergent views of what the future holds for oil prices.

Glencore Plc, Gunvore Group Ltd. and Trafigra Group Pte are all bullish, Bloomberg notes, estimating that prices will exceed \$60 by late in 2018. Trafigra is particularly optimistic, noting that OPEC cuts and surging demand will allow market rebalancing in 2018, while a lack of new production due to cuts in capital expenditure will see a shortage in markets by 2019, lifting prices further.

Trafigra's co-head of group market risk Ben Luckock declared an end to "lower for longer" in September, noting that surging demand in India would drive global demand and squeeze supplies by 2020.

India, often cited as the world's fastest-growing oil consumer, has actually seen a decline in oil demand this year, due to environmental disasters including widespread flooding. Consumption of all fuels fell from 16.78 million tons per month in August 2016 to 15.75 million tons this last August. Oil demand is nevertheless expected to surge, with demand growing between 8-10 percent, according to forecasts by Platts.

On the other side of the debate is Vitol Group. CEO Ian Taylor sees Brent falling to \$45 in 2018. For Vitol, it's not demand but production that will be decisive, as Taylor predicts another big surge from



U.S. shale. Production in the U.S. has increased from 8.9 million bpd in January 2017 to 9.48 million in October, according to the Energy Information Administration, which expects it to rise still further in early 2018, possibly exceeding 10 million bpd.

Peak demand has been discussed throughout the year, as some of the majors anticipate lower for longer stretching past 2025 and beyond. Wood Mackenzie says that peak demand is "very real," with demand declining by 4 million bpd between 2020 and 2035. Other majors including BP and Total SA see peak demand as coming between 2025 and 2040, driven in large part by changing government policies, slower economic growth and wider use of electric vehicles (EVs).

If EVs are adopted on a large scale, prices could fall to \$10 as early as the 2020s, according to one official speaking to CNBC. But skeptics argue that support for EVs is too weak and the demand too stagnant without major changes to existing infrastructure. Markets in Western Europe are planning to phase out gasoline and diesel vehicle sales in the next few decades. China plans a massive roll-out of EVs to help cut down on pollution, but has pushed back its timetable in order to give automakers more time to adjust.

Norway's Energy Minister estimates that demand will remain strong into the 2040s, enough to support further exploration. OPEC is characteristically optimistic, as Secretary General Mohammed Barkindo discussed the possibility of permanent-

ly institutionalizing the group's alignment with Russia and other non-OPEC producers over production cuts. Barkindo emphasized the importance of "fiscal discipline" moving forward.

OPEC now estimates that global surpluses will clear in the second half of 2018. But its figures are at odds with the International Energy Agency (IEA), which sees 1.5 million bpd in new production compared to OPEC's 900,000 bpd estimate.

The uncertainty is exacerbated in a recent spike in geopolitical risk, particularly in Iraq and Iran. But predicting the impact of risk has become a lot harder as markets adjust to realities faster than they have in the past. Violence in Iraqi Kurdistan could push prices past \$60 but only in the short term; if there's a boost in U.S. shale this fall, the increase could be much smaller, and it may not come at all. So far the reaction in the WTI and Brent has been tepid, with prices falling between October 17 and October 20.

The market was especially volatile in the last three years, as prices collapsed in 2014 and recovered slightly, only to crash again in early 2016. The recent rise above \$50, which many traders have come to accept as a new norm, has made some confident while others point to long-term trends as reasons to be pessimistic about further increases in price.

The divergent opinions among prognosticators about peak demand, demand growth and supply-demand rebalancing in the near term will only make it harder to tell where the market will go from here. Expect more volatility, not less. (Source: oilprice.com)

## China drives natural gas demand boom

For much of the past two decades, China has been the main driver of global oil demand growth. In the coming two to three decades, China is expected to become the leading determinant in global natural gas demand as well, outpacing the U.S. as the biggest natural gas consumer at some point between 2040 and 2050.

Economic and industrial production growth, coupled with efforts to reduce stifling pollution levels, will lead China's surging natural gas demand over the next couple of decades, according to analysts and international projections.

The latest forecast for China's upcoming leading role in the world's natural gas market comes from Sanford C. Bernstein & Co, whose analyst Neil Beveridge said in a research note earlier this week:

"China's gas market has entered a new golden age."

"Growth in 2017 has shown significant improvement over 2016, as government policies to stimulate gas demand growth are starting to pay dividends," Beveridge says in the report, as carried by Bloomberg.

China's gas consumption is expected to rise to 300 billion cubic meters (bcm) in 2020 from 206 bcm in 2016, and surge to 600 bcm by 2040. After that, China is seen outstripping the U.S. in natural gas consumption to become the biggest user of the fuel in the world, according to Bernstein.

The biggest risk to the expected natural gas demand surge is renewables rising more than currently projected and therefore narrowing the timeframe in which gas will serve as the 'bridge fuel' between coal and clean energy.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) sees global gas demand growing 1.6 percent annually until 2022, with China making up 40 percent of this growth. Consumption in China is expected to increase to almost 340 bcm by 2022, of which imports will account for 140 bcm, up from 70 bcm last year, according to IEA's Gas 2017 report. In addition, China's domestic production is seen growing by around 65 bcm to 200 bcm by 2022, with annual growth of 6.6 percent, which would make the country the world's fourth-largest natural gas producer by 2022.

China is already setting the stage for a natural gas import boom, with imports running at record rates as Beijing pushes on with its cleaner energy agenda that should see the country satisfy 10 percent of its energy needs with gas in 2020, from 5.9 percent in 2015.

By 2035, Chinese gas demand will be treble the 2016 levels, according to Wood Mackenzie.

Last year, China's gas demand accounted for just 6 percent of its fuel mix, but the government aims to increase this to around 15 percent by 2030, WoodMac's Kerry-Anne Shanks, Vice President, Gas & Power Asia-Pacific, said in the five takeaways from a recent Gas and LNG Summit.

"While it is unclear if this fuel mix goal will be reached, even minor gains in share translate into big numbers. Presenters showed forecasts for China's gas demand increasing to 450-600 bcm by 2030," Shanks noted.

According to industry observers, China needs further gas market reforms in order to reach the full gas potential and make gas for industrial use cheaper—and thus more competitive—than coal and oil. In addition, the more flexible and lower-priced LNG market is bound to benefit Chinese gas importers, WoodMac says.

The BP Energy Outlook 2017 sees China's energy mix evolving through 2035, with coal's dominance dropping from 64 percent in 2015 to 42 percent in 2035, and natural gas nearly doubling to 11 percent.

BP sees Chinese demand for oil surging 61 percent, and gas demand soaring 186 percent by 2035. The UK supermajor also expects China to become the world's second-biggest shale gas producer after the U.S. in two decades' time.

Almost everyone expects China to become for the natural gas market what it is for the oil market now—the leading consumer with the largest demand growth. Whether these projections will materialize will depend on Chinese economic growth, urbanization, energy policies, global gas supply, and last but not least—the pace of renewable energy and storage solution technology and adoption. (Source: oilprice.com)

## U.S. is doing 'something we've never seen before' with crude

The United States has started doing something unprecedented when it comes to oil, and the impact is expected to grow into next year.

Tom Kloza of the Oil Price Information Service is alluding to the U.S. ramping up exports. It follows the 40-year ban that was lifted two years ago.

"The highlight you need to watch for the next few months is going to be more record breaking exports of crude oil. Our view is that it's going to soften the price for Brent," the firm's global head of energy analysis said recently on CNBC's "Futures Now."

According to Kloza, it's possible the U.S. will export 15 million to 20 million barrels of crude a week to several continents.

"That's something we've never seen before," he added.

Kloza, who accurately called the 2015 oil collapse, says it's unclear how the phenomenon will affect the global markets, but he doesn't expect a breakout to the downside.

"If you consider what happened in Iraq and the saber rattling about the Iran nuclear deal, the market barely moved. So, it may be a little biased towards lower prices," Kloza said.

He's predicting Brent will be stuck in a \$54 to \$57 a barrel range for the rest of the year while WTI crude will hover around \$47 to \$51. That's near current levels.

"The interesting thing is when you get to 2018, we're expecting a tale of two markets. Weaker prices in the first half with maybe some more inventory builds worldwide, and stronger prices in the second half of 2018," he said.

And when could crude oil see \$60 a barrel again?

Kloza said probably not until 2019. (Source: CNBC)



## What is Trump's policy toward the Kurds?

By Michael Rubin

The Kirkuk crisis seems largely over.

With the exception of a pocket here or there, Iraq has regained areas lost or abandoned in 2014, while the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) retains control of those regions which the Iraqi constitution assigns it.

Stripping away the propaganda, polemics, and disinformation of the past week, what happened is clear: Masoud Barzani overstepped.

He might have compromised, but he spurred all offers in his own nationalist frenzy and efforts to distract from the political and economic malaise which his dictatorship had wrought. He forced a confrontation, and he lost. It's that simple. Had he compromised, Kurds would still retain daily control over disputed areas in Diyala, Nineva, and Kirkuk. The decision and responsibility for it was Barzani and Barzani's alone. There was no 1975-style betrayal, for the United States was very transparent in what would happen.

So what happens next with regard to U.S. policy toward the Kurds?

U.S. policy must be cognizant of the complexity of the region. While it's easy to be sympathetic to the Kurdish narrative, there should be some soul-searching for those who took part in KRG propaganda tours and only now are surprised by what Kurds and regional minorities say when freed from the watchful eyes of Kurdish militias and intelligence.

Barzani is an illegitimate leader. Under Kurdish law, his term in office expired more than two years ago.

The State Department and Presidential Envoy Brett McGurk erred by continuing to engage him. They may have thought it was easier to engage a dictator than deal with a more complex Kurdish political landscape, but they were wrong.

By law, Yousif M. Sadiq, the speaker of parliament, should be recognized by Washington as Iraqi Kurdistan's interim president until elections can be organized. Those elections should be organized by a commission independent in more than just its name and observed professionally by credible groups like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Carter Center, or the National Democratic Institute, among others.

Prior to the September 25 referendum, the KRG and its proxies in Washington and London invited former officials, thinktankers and academics to "observe" the referendum and promised that all expenses would be covered by the KRG. Most smartly demurred and stayed home.

They were right. I saw some of the invitations and the proposed schedule: They included just about two hours of observation at hand-picked voting centers but were heavy on meetings with KDP bigwigs and entertainment. That sort of nonsense delegitimizes neutral observation; it is frankly what dictatorships do, not democracies.

When new elections occur, it is time for Kurdish leaders to address an issue they have ignored for 25 years: Do the properties in which top leaders live belong to the individuals, parties, or government? Let us hope that it is the latter.

What this means is that if Barzani steps down, he should vacate his palace and his mountaintop complex in Sare-e Rash. Let him purchase a house in Erbil but, if he doesn't want to mix with ordinary Kurds, then let him return to his village or go abroad.

His father once fled to Moscow but Barzani may prefer Turkey or Dubai. Frankly, it is long past time the KRG abandoned its mountaintop complex, once a popular resort until confiscated first by Saddam Hussein and, after 1991, the Barzani family.

### ■ The hands of America

The hands of America — or, more accurately, Americans — are not entirely clean.

In the weeks before the referendum, Kurds with whom I spoke suggested that despite all the official statements coming from Washington, they had been assured by other Americans that the United States would accept the referendum.

Who were these Americans who gave the Kurds such false assurances? It's time for the Kurds to say: Did they misinterpret outspoken congressmen? Or did they listen too much to former U.S. officials who had leveraged their former positions into business opportunities in the region?

It does a huge disservice to American statecraft in Iraq and elsewhere when former ambassadors effectively use their title to bolster their local importance long after their terms have expired.

It is also time for the United States to be transparent with regard to the Syrian Kurds. In early 2014, long before U.S. government officials would deal with Syrian Kurds, I visited the homeland they had carved out for themselves against the backdrop of fighting Islamist radicals in Syria. It was impressive.

Little did I know that was only the start. The People's Protection Units (YPG) and the YPG-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces were, hands-down, the most capable and effective local fighting force against Al Qaeda and ISIS. They should be rewarded.

It's time for a real debate about de-listing the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) which, frankly, has long seemed more an insurgency than a terror group. Turkey — to whom the State Department has for too long deferred — has no basis for complaint given President Erdogan's own outreach to the group in years past as well as Turkey's open embrace of Hamas.

Simply put, the United States should guarantee Syrian Kurdistan (or Rojava as Kurds call it) be considered a federal region within Syria. Syrian Kurds should not be betrayed. Preventing betrayal means not only deterring potential Turkish aggression, but also engaging with Rojava's leaders so that they shed the personality cults that so undercut their Iraqi Kurdish cousins.

The Kurds in both Rojava and Iraqi Kurdistan are capable of democracy. Democracy, however, is about accountability, not backroom deals to divide the region along preordained lines hashed out by party bosses. It means accountability to the rule-of-law regardless of family name.

No one should be able to murder a journalist with impunity nor should they be able to leverage their political offices to augment family fortunes. Indeed, against the backdrop of so much financial hardship, it is well past time Kurds demanded the return of stolen assets.

The true peshmerga who fought on the frontlines (rather than those who claimed to be peshmerga but traded oil with the Islamic State) deserve no less.

(Source: Newsweek)

# Saudi regime 'real sponsor' of global terror: U.S. senator

**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — Richard Black, a Republican member of the Virginia State Senate, said the term terrorism has its roots in Saudi Arabia's extreme and radical actions, describing Al Saud as "the real sponsor of global of terror".

"On the contrary, 'terrorism' as that term is commonly understood, stems mostly from the actions of Saudi Arabia, which routinely promotes acts of terror through its radical madrassahs. Those madrassahs indoctrinate poor youth around the globe in the ultra-violent Wahhabi doctrines," Sen. Black told the Tasnim news agency.

He stressed, "The real sponsor of global terror is Saudi Arabia, not Iran."

Richard Black represents the 13th District encompassing parts of both Loudoun and Prince Williams Counties. He was previously a member of the Virginia House of Delegates from 1998 to 2006. Black was a career military officer. He served in both the U.S. Marines and in the U.S. Army JAG Corps. He served a total of 31 years active and reserve, rising from the rank of private to full colonel. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army War College, Command and General Staff College, and Naval Aviator's Flight School. Black served as a pilot in the U.S. Marines during the Vietnam War, earning the Purple Heart medal. He flew 269 combat helicopter missions with HMM-362's "Ugly Angels" squadron, which operated out of Ky Ha, Vietnam.

Following is the full text of the interview.

■ U.S. President Donald Trump on October 13 refused to certify the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers. What is your take on his speech?

Sen. Black: President Trump's refusal to certify the 2015 nuclear deal has caused considerable confusion and consternation around the world. The Joint Comprehensive Plan was not a treaty between the United States and Iran; it was an agreement among the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia, China, Iran, and the European Union. Once those parties agreed, the deal was sanctioned by a unanimous vote of the UN Security Council. Except for the United States, no other nation appears willing to withdraw from the agreement. UN Ambassador Nikki Haley announced that even the U.S. would remain in the deal for the time being. However, the President has asked Congress to express its views on the agreement, and the U.S. Senate appears almost evenly divided on the issue. So at this point, no one knows whether the U.S. Congress will agree to modify the plan of action. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the other signatories from Europe, Russia, and China will fully cooperate with the United States in tightening the sanctions.

■ "The Iranian regime has committed multiple violations of the agreement, for example on two speared occasions they have exceeded the limit of 130 metric tons of heavy water until recently, the Iranian regime has also failed to meet our expect-



Richard Black

## In December 2015, the German BND intelligence service warned that Saudi Arabia was at risk of becoming a major destabilizing force in the Arab world.

tation in its operation of advanced centrifuges," Trump said. This is while the IAEA has confirmed Iran's compliance with the deal for eight times. What is behind this denial?

A: I have little doubt that Iran is in compliance with the nuclear agreement. The UN inspectors, Secretary of Defense James Mattis, and General Dunford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, all agreed that Iran had complied with the terms of the agreement. Even after President Trump refused to certify compliance, Nikki Haley, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, surprisingly announced on October 15, 2017, that Tehran is complying with the nuclear accord.

■ It seems that all of this is happening because Trump does not like the Iran nuclear deal. He doesn't like it because it was Barack Obama's triumph, because he doesn't like Iran, because his friend, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu doesn't like Iran and doesn't like the Iran deal, and because he, Donald Trump said that he would kill the deal, and if he doesn't, his "base" will be upset. What do you think?

A: President Trump is critical of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action because he feels it is unreasonable to have an agreement that expires within ten or fifteen years. He also feels that it should be expanded to encompass long-range missile technology. It did not help when missiles that Iran launched bore the inscription, "Death to Israel." Undoubtedly, Benjamin Netanyahu and hawkish elements within the Republican and Democrat parties were critical of the deal from the beginning. They will all continue demanding modifications.

■ Shortly after Trump's speech, Israel,

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE welcomed his decision not to certify the agreement. Trump called Iran a "rogue" state and repeated that Tehran sponsors terrorism and continues "aggression in the Middle East and all around the world." What do you think?

A: I do not agree with those who refer to Iran as a "rogue" state. While Iran has a unique political structure, it does have free and fair elections for parliament and the president. I agree with former Congressman Ron Paul, who has said Iran does not have a history of invading other countries. While I suspect that Iran funneled arms to Iraq during the U.S. invasion, that action was defensive in nature. Iran's present involvement in Syria took place at the invitation of the legitimate Syrian government that is recognized by the United Nations. Like all sovereign nations, Syria has the right to self-defense and is fully justified in seeking Iranian assistance to defend against foreign-funded terrorists recruited by the (P)GCC and NATO members.

Western media repeatedly claim that Tehran sponsors terrorism. I find it difficult to locate substantial evidence supporting that claim. On the contrary, "terrorism" as that term is commonly understood, stems mostly from the actions of Saudi Arabia, which routinely promotes acts of terror through its radical madrassahs. Those madrassahs indoctrinate poor youth around the globe in the ultra-violent Wahhabi doctrines. Saudi Arabia was the principal actor in the September 11, 2001 attacks on the Twin Towers and Pentagon. Those attacks, which killed 3,000 Americans, were prin-

cipally carried out by Saudi Arabians with considerable help from Saudi government officials. Other acts of terrorism, including the Boston Marathon, San Bernardino, the Pulse Night Club, and the European attacks on Paris, Brussels, and dozens of other nations all stem from Saudi Arabian religious doctrines. It seems difficult to justify aligning the United States with Saudi Arabia in order to defend the world against terrorism. Senator Bob Graham, co-chair of the 9-11 commission said, "I am convinced that there was a direct line between at least some of the terrorists who carried out the September 11th attacks and the government of Saudi Arabia."

Wikileaks published a secret communique from then-Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, dated 20009. In it, she said, "...donors in Saudi Arabia constitute the most significant source of funding to Sunni terrorist groups worldwide." In a 2014 speech at Harvard, Vice President Joseph Biden criticized Saudi Arabia for the rise of the Islamic State, saying "Those allies' policies wound up helping to arm and build allies of Al Qaeda and eventually a terrorist Islamic State [ISIL]." In December 2015, the German BND intelligence service warned that Saudi Arabia was at risk of becoming a major destabilizing force in the Arab world. Beyond that, in December 2015, Germany's Vice-Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel said, "Wahhabi mosques all over the world are financed by Saudi Arabia. Many Islamist's who are a threat to public safety come from these communities in Germany."

The real sponsor of global terror is Saudi Arabia, not Iran.

## Who will replace Tillerson?

By Josh Rogin

The most popular parlor game in Washington right now is speculating who will replace Rex Tillerson as President Trump's next secretary of state, a thankless job in an administration that has downgraded the role of the State Department and diplomacy overall. But two qualified and apparently willing candidates have emerged.

When confronted last week with pervasive rumors that he is on the way out, Tillerson pleaded ignorance. "Who in the world is telling you that stuff?" he asked reporters from the Wall Street Journal. He promised to stay in the job "as long as the president thinks I'm useful." Early this month, he held a news conference to deny reports that he had considered quitting. Publicly, Trump has expressed confidence in his top diplomat, despite reports that Tillerson had called the president a "moron."

Inside the White House, officials say privately that Tillerson's repeated disputes with various parts of the Trump inner circle have made his long-term survival untenable. The leading speculation is that he may depart after he has served one full year, to save face and complete the State Department reorganization he has publicly claimed as his primary mission.

### ■ Excruciating profiles

As several excruciating profiles have detailed, Tillerson's main legacy will likely be a State Department depleted of talent, with the lowest morale in decades and playing a reduced role in the crafting and implementation of U.S. foreign policy. His successor's primary mission will be to reverse that trend. The top two contenders, Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley and CIA Director Mike Pompeo, offer different paths for recovery.

Haley has been praised both externally and within the Trump team during her short tenure in New York City. She's credited with "getting it done" on matters such as North Korea sanctions and toughening up the U.S. stance at the United Nations. Unlike Tillerson, she was



## Tillerson's repeated disputes with various parts of the Trump inner circle have made his long-term survival untenable.

quick to get a top-notch staff in place, which has allowed her to be effective inside the interagency process.

Her appointment would foretell a State Department that hews toward traditionally hawkish GOP positions, including forceful advocacy for freedom and human rights abroad. It could also mean a shift in the current drive to mend relations with Russia. Last week, Haley told the George W. Bush Institute that Russian interference in U.S. elections amounted to "warfare." Haley also defended funding for diplomacy and free trade.

"We're not going to see [diplomacy and development funding] gutted, that's just the reality of it, because we can't and the president doesn't want to," Haley said. "I don't see us tearing up any [trade] deals. If that was the case, we would have done it already."

Haley took a middle-of-the-road approach in deliberations on the new Iran strategy, which ended up winning the day. She has met with refugees in the Middle East

and is continuing her world tour this week, heading to Ethiopia, South Sudan and Congo. She looks like someone campaigning for a promotion.

### ■ Huge gamble

But the Haley choice is risky for Haley. She already has amassed the foreign policy bona fides required for a future run for president. Her physical distance from the White House has allowed her to avoid internal conflicts and act independently. It's not clear what she gains politically from moving up to secretary of state. Taking the job would be a huge gamble.

Should Haley move to Foggy Bottom, her most likely replacement in Turtle Bay would be deputy national security adviser Dina Powell, according to reports. Powell has been shrewd in staying out of the spotlight while demonstrating her value and effectiveness to Trump.

Pompeo would be a secretary of state with deeper ties to Trump and views that align more with those of the White House. He is more hawkish on Iran than Haley is. As he demonstrated in remarks last week, he is willing to play down Russian interference in the 2016 election.

Pompeo briefs the president personally several times a week, and the White House likes his willingness to push the administration's narrative. While his tendency to be overtly political makes some uncomfortable at the CIA, it would be an asset at the State Department.

Some reports suggest that if Pompeo gets the State Department job, Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) is in line for CIA director. Cotton is the rare senator who has good relations with Trump and the White House team. His move to CIA could be a stepping stone in his ambition for higher office.

The State Department professional corps would welcome either Haley or Pompeo with open arms, but neither would have an easy task. Unless they clearly break with Tillerson's approach and stand up for diplomats and the work they do, Washington will find itself speculating about yet another secretary of state soon enough.

(Source: The Washington Post)



# It is possible European leaders agree Macron' approach toward Iran: Murphy

By Javad Heirannia

**TEHRAN** — Richard W. Murphy, the former U.S. ambassador to Syria and Saudi Arabia, says "French President Macron has spoken of the need for measures affecting the Iranian missile program, human rights in Iran and Iranian regional activities."

Murphy says "It is possible European leaders will agree with that approach provided it does not mean abrogating the JCPOA."

Following is the text of the interview:

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

A: From the beginning of his election campaign President Trump declared the JCPOA the worst agreement ever reached by American negotiators. He promised before the election to tear it up on his first day in office. He did not do so and certified the agreement was in the US national security interest twice in 90 day periods as required by the American Congress. On the second occasion he let it be known that he continued to be unhappy with the JCPOA and had directed his staff to build the case why the JCPOA was not serving US



interests.

By refusing in October to certify the agreement for another 90 days period he did not cancel American agreement to the JCPOA but effectively returned the action to Congress. He thereby conveyed his unhappiness with the agreement but did not withdraw American support. This sent a signal to his supporters in the American public that he would carry out his pledge to oppose the agreement and to foreign leaders that he was serious in wanting changes in the

agreement, or at least supplementary agreements, which would make up for what he perceives as deficiencies in the JCPOA.

■ A re-imposition of sanctions on Iran by Congress will in fact be tantamount to the violation of JCPOA. In that case, Trump makes Congress responsible for the scrap of the very deal. What do you think?

Congress has not reimposed the "nuclear sanctions" cancelled in the JCPOA. It is unclear what the Congress will decide to do. Prominent

members of the House and Senate have spoken out against reimposing those sanctions and expressed support for the JCPOA as in the US national interest.

■ 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: French President Macron has spoken of the need for measures affecting the Iranian missile program, human rights in Iran and Iranian regional activities. It is possible European leaders will agree with that approach provided it does not mean abrogating the JCPOA.

■ Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has underscored so far that the JCPOA is deemed a deal when all parties are committed to it. What will be Iran's reaction to possible U.S. withdrawal from the deal?

According to press reports, Foreign Minister Zarif and Supreme Leader Khamenei have made clear that if the US withdraws from the JCPOA that will lead Iran to cancel its support. Their position seem to have hardened on this point.

## Three American Female Politicians in Confrontation with the JCPOA

1→ "Bush administration is still considering the referral of Iran's nuclear case to the UN Security Council in order to stop its nuclear weapons program. If the European negotiations do not lead to a result, then the option to refer the case to the Security Council remains open; an action that could impose economic punishments on Iran. Washington will make the final decision to adopt a tougher stance against Iran's nuclear program at the UN Security Council."

Susan Rice; attempts to set up and intensify sanctions against Iran

Undoubtedly Susan Rice, the former United States ambassador to the United Nations and former U.S. national security adviser, has played a major role in tightening sanctions against Iran. However, the name of Susan Rice was attended to by the addressees of Iran's nuclear file between 2013 and 2015. During these two years, Susan Rice advised Obama on how to deal with Iran's nuclear case. These consultations were of such an importance to the former U.S. president, who, even in vital cases, preferred her to people like John Kerry and Joe Biden.

For example, Susan Rice is referred to as the one person who played an important role in extending the seven-month nuclear talks (in December 2014), while the parties of the nuclear talks were ready to agree on a general statement. Also during the final round of the Vienna nuclear talks which resulted in the signing of an agreement between Iran and the members of the 5 + 1, Susan Rice played a crucial role in defining the



process of returning sanctions against Iran.

From the very beginning, there was a dispute between Secretary of State John Kerry and Obama's National Security Advisor Susan Rice on the crucial issue of lifting Iran's sanctions in the UN Security Council, which this disagreement led to the failure of the U.S. president to express a definitive statement on this controversial issue. Finally, Susan Rice could draw Obama's attention to be stricter in lifting sanctions of the Security Council.

Nikki Haley; Trump's main encourager in dealing with the JCPOA. Right now we are facing a person named Nikki Haley as the United States representative to the United Nations. A hardline person whose main concern presently is to become U.S. Secretary of State. In November 2016, Donald Trump announced that he intended to nominate Nikki Haley as the United

States Ambassador to the United Nations. On January 24, 2017, the Senate appointed her as the United States Ambassador to the United Nations with 96% of the vote.

Nikki Haley is the main encourager of Donald Trump in his recent rivalry with Iran. The Politico announced in its report that it was Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the UN, who against the caution of other members of Trump's administration, paved the way for the cancellation of the JCPOA. In early July, Trump announced Tehran's commitment to Iran's nuclear deal with reluctance. The announcement of this commitment by the U.S. government was encouraged by Rex Tillerson and James Mattis, the Secretaries of State and Defense.

Right now, Nikki Haley has become virtually the closest person to Trump in the field of U.S. foreign policy. This is while many of Trump's entourage warned him of the consequences of following this radical diplomat. As you can see, all these three female politicians, regardless from the party they belonged to, played a direct and highlighted role in confronting the Islamic Republic of Iran and our peaceful nuclear program.

Hence, it must be emphasized again that there is essentially no difference between the two Democratic and Republican parties in the United States over the confrontation with our system and our nation and both of them play the same role in the same context in this regard.

## Fixed Equations of the U. S. and Europe towards the JCPOA

2→ The controversy between the Congress and the White House, is not about reforming the JCPOA, but it's rather on Trump's overall commitment to the nuclear deal. In other words, even some Democrat senators like Chuck Schumer and Ben Cardin agree to modify the nuclear deal (based on American interests). Consequently, the conflict in the United States of America is about the real challenge of "facing the JCPOA" rather than the "commitment or lack of commitment to the nuclear deal!"

The European Troika, in announcing its positions on the nuclear deal, has virtually welcomed the resumption of negotiations on controversial issues of the JCPOA. The British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has stated in one of his most recent positions that the U.S. Congress "only" calls for reform, not withdrawal from the nuclear deal! On the other hand, French officials have said they could push Iran to apply nuclear restrictions after 2025 (which means changing the sunset clause)! Germany's foreign minister, Sigmar Gabriel, also said that his country is now ready to engage with the United States, Britain and France to put pressure on Iran to fulfill its obligations! Gabriel's purpose is, in concrete terms, the access of the IAEA to military sites in Iran.

In recent days, Russian officials have taken the most explicit positions



on the nuclear deal. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said that the United States should be thinking of fulfilling its nuclear obligations instead of a change in its content. Also, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that according Section T of Annex 1 of the JCPOA, it's not within the IAEA's authority to decide on this section being true or not. In other words, the Russian authorities have stood against reviewing the JCPOA and considered the inspection of Iran's military sites (under

the pretext of revising Section T) illegal. However, European officials not only have not taken such positions, but have condemned Iran's missile defense efforts to respond to the third request of Trump for limiting Iran's missile power.

The arrangement of this equations together shows that the JCPOA has been cancelled in a unilateral move by the United States and its allies.

Has the diplomacy and foreign policy apparatus of our country put together these definite statements and fixed equa-

tions (based on the explicit positions of American and European officials) yet? If that is the case, what does the optimism of our diplomacy mean towards the Europe's support for the JCPOA? On the other hand, the foreign policy apparatus of our country should not be subjected to a duplicate of "Exit / Change" about the JCPOA. Acceptance of this issue means playing in the United States and the European Troika's ground. The government's action must be in such a way that the United States and the European Troika are to choose between two options, the "100% commitment to the nuclear deal" or "full withdrawal from the JCPOA."

Given the existing and definite propositions, the time has now come for our foreign diplomacy system to make the West to answer us about the JCPOA. Obviously, if the current process continues, we will become a dependent variable of Washington and the European Troika's about the nuclear deal, rather than becoming an independent and decisive variable in the recent JCPOA equation. "Decisiveness" and "transparency" are the missing circles that must emerge in the state's manner towards the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The time has sure come for the government to display a clever and clear conduct toward the United States and other members of the P1 + 5 positions on the basis of the nuclear deal.

## Europeans keen on investing in Iran solar power

By Maryam Azish

**TEHRAN** — (MNA) — Despite the decertification of the landmark Iran nuclear deal by US President Donald Trump, European companies are interested in pushing ahead with Iran contracts, the solar energy in particular.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has always been a reliable trading partner for other countries, the Europeans in particular and had always tried to live up to its commitments as per its trade deals with the Europeans, even while under US-led sanctions.

Iran-Norway Energy Contract

On Oct 18, Iranian and Norwegian firms sealed a €2-billion contract to produce two gigawatts of solar energy.

The contract was signed by the managing director of Norway's Saga John Eric, the managing director of Energy Amin Company Majid Shahrestani and in the presence of Norwegian envoy to Iran Lars Nordrum.

Based on the contract, the Norwegian side will invest two billion euros to launch and produce solar energy units in Iran.

The contract is to be implemented in three provinces which have areas more exposed to sunlight.

During the first phase, 180 mw of solar energy will be produced.

The first phase of the plan will be implemented in six sites in Razavi Khorasan, Kerman and Yazd Provinces.

In addition to transferring technical knowledge, the Norwegian company will also build a factory to produce the project's equipment in Iran.

Solar Power Plants

Meanwhile, Fars Province Investment Services Center and Austrian Benefit & Solar Company signed a contract worth \$100 million to make four solar power plants in Abadeh, Fars Province, south of Iran.

Director General of Economic Affairs and Finance Office Babak Daee said, 'The capacity of the power plants will be 70 megawatts and will be made in Abadeh and Izad-Khast;' both town are located in north of Fars Province.

Daee also said that the agreement includes two 25 and two 10-megawatt plants, adding, 'The four plants will be built and connected to the country's electricity network in seven months.'

Solar Complex

A German-Iranian company started construction of a new solar power plant in Meybod region located at central province of Yazd.

Pasargad Solar Projects Ltd, a German-Iranian Company, in collaboration with Kronos Solar Projects GmbH, international players in large-scale solar energies, announced the launch of the construction of first phase of a new 100 MW solar power plant in Meybod.

According to Iran's 6th five-year development plan, Iran has had the green-light and the target of generating over 5,000 MW of renewable energies with 20 years power purchase agreement and many other advantages, the 10 MW Solar Complex with an investment of \$12 million is a part of our activities in Iran's renewable energy market in line with attracting foreign investments; Amir Eslamnezhad, Managing director at Parsia Business Development Solutions which is a partner at the project said.

Solar Farm

On Sep. 20, 2017, UK renewable investor Quercus signed a deal worth over half a billion euros to build and operate a 600-megawatt (MW) solar farm in Iran.

The work located in central Iran is expected to take three years, with the project coming online in 100 MW phases every six months, Quercus said of its first project outside Europe.

"As Iran opens for business, we are delighted to be taking a leading role in building the country's renewable energy infrastructure at such an early stage of its development," Quercus CEO Diego Biasi said.

The company will be responsible for the construction, development and operation of the plant, for which it will set up a specialist team based in Dubai and Tehran to help deliver the project, including a head of engineering, financial controller, project coordinator, planning manager and procurement staff.

According to Biasi, the project by Iran's Ministry of Energy has attracted enough interest from private and institutional investors, including sovereign funds.

"This is a project of national interest, so we got special support. We had enough investors interested so instead of splitting that across smaller projects which wouldn't have given us the same relationship with the Ministry, we decided to go for one," Reuters quoted him as saying.

Under the contract, foreign investors will be treated the same as local ones, with a guarantee that the electricity would be paid for, PressTV wrote.

Quercus prides itself on a portfolio of around 40 renewable energy plants across Europe. Biasi hoped that its first inroads into Iran would lead to more solar projects.

Before Quercus's announcement, contracts for about 950 MW of renewable energy projects had been signed. They are part of the plan to add 1000 MW of renewable energy to the national grid each year in the next five years but the ultimate goal is to establish a 26,000 MW renewable capacity with \$60 billion of investment.

Iran currently has 63 MW of installed solar capacity, chiefly in the cities of Yazd, Kerman, Isfahan and Hamadan. This figure is meager for a country with over 300 sunny days and an average of 2,800 hours of sunshine.

There is an ambitious plan to expand the renewable capacity in the face of an acute air pollution problem in major cities and towns. Iran's overall power capacity stands at 77,000 megawatts, which is mostly generated in thermal power plants using fossil fuel.



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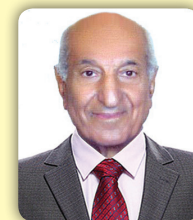
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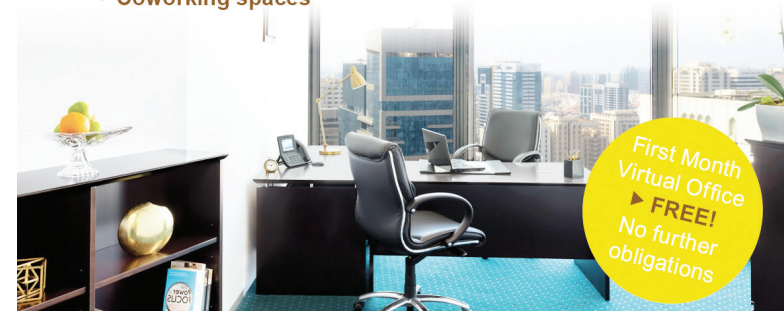
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# 16 more reasons black seed is ‘the remedy for everything but death’

Known since ancient times as a ‘remedy for everything but death,’ an increasingly vast body of scientific research reveals that it is indeed one of nature’s most potent and versatile healing agents.

A year ago, we wrote an article about nigella sativa (aka black seed) titled, ‘The Remedy For Everything But Death.’ It described the research on the many ways in which black seed (nigella sativa) is a potentially life-saving medicinal food, and is one of our most popular articles, with over 700K social media shares.

Opening with, “This humble, but immensely powerful seed, kills MRSA, heals the chemical weapon poisoned body, stimulates regeneration of the dying beta cells within the diabetic’s pancreas, and yet too few even know it exists,” the article summarized the peer-reviewed and published research on 10 of the seed’s remarkable health benefits:

- Type 2 diabetes: Two grams of black seed a day resulted in reduced fasting glucose, decreased insulin resistance, increased beta-cell function, and reduced glycosylated hemoglobin (HbA1c) in human subjects.[i]
- Helicobacter pylori infection: Black seeds possess clinically useful anti-H.



pylori activity, comparable to triple eradication therapy.

- Epilepsy: Black seeds were traditionally known to have anticonvulsive properties. A 2007 study with epileptic children, whose condition was refractory to conventional drug treatment, found that a water extract significantly reduced seizure activity.

- High blood pressure: The daily use of 100 and 200 mg of black seed extract, twice daily, for 2 months, was found to have a blood pressure-lowering effect in

patients with mild hypertension.

- Asthma: Thymoquinone, one of the main active constituents within Nigella sativa, is superior to the drug fluticasone in an animal model of asthma. Another study, this time in human subjects, found that boiled water extracts of black seed have relatively potent antiasthmatic effect on asthmatic airways.

- Acute tonsillopharyngitis: characterized by tonsil or pharyngeal inflammation (i.e. sore throat), mostly viral in origin, black seed capsules (in

combination with Phyllanthus niruri) have been found to significantly alleviate throat pain, and reduce the need for pain-killers, in human subjects.

- Chemical weapons injury: A randomized, placebo-controlled human study of chemical weapons injured patients found that boiled water extracts of black seed reduced respiratory symptoms, chest wheezing, and pulmonary function test values, as well as reduced the need for drug treatment.

- Colon cancer: Cell studies have found that black seed extract compares favorably to the chemoagent 5-fluoruracil in the suppression of colon cancer growth, but with a far higher safety profile.[x] Animal research has found that black seed oil has significant inhibitory effects against colon cancer in rats, without observable side effects.

- MRSA: Black seed has anti-bacterial activity against clinical isolates of methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus.

- Opiate addiction/withdrawal: A study on 35 opiate addicts found black seed as an effective therapy in long-term treatment of opioid dependence.

(Source: greenmedinfo.com)

## Can too much calcium cause muscle cramps?



By Sharon Perkins

Although both high and low calcium levels in the blood can cause muscle symptoms, low levels are typically the culprit behind muscle cramping. Low serum calcium levels, medically termed hypocalcemia, or high calcium levels, called hypercalcemia, most often are related to causes other than dietary intake. Ingesting large amounts of calcium in supplement form can raise your calcium levels, but disease processes more often cause abnormal calcium levels.

### ■ Muscle symptoms and calcium

Around 99 percent of the calcium in the body stays in the bones and teeth, but the other 1 percent stays in the blood and cells, where it affects muscle contraction and nerve transmission, the Office of Dietary Supplements explains. High calcium levels can cause muscle twitching and weakness, while low calcium levels can prompt spontaneous muscle cramping that can lead to severe spasms, called tetany.

### ■ Causes of abnormal calcium levels

Problems with the parathyroid glands, located behind the thyroid, can cause calcium levels to rise or fall. Between 1 and 2 percent of people develop hypoparathyroidism, which leads to hypocalcemia, after complete thyroid removal, according to the Cleveland Clinic. Some cancers, such as lung cancer, breast cancer and multiple myeloma, can cause high calcium levels. On the other hand, magnesium imbalances, vitamin D deficiency, infection, chemotherapy and pancreatitis can cause low calcium levels.

### ■ Treatments

Treatment for high calcium levels depends on the cause, but may include hospitalization for intravenous fluids, diuretics, dialysis or drugs to wash out extra calcium or decrease bone breakdown. Low calcium levels require calcium supplementation either orally or intravenously, depending on the severity of the disease.

### ■ Considerations

Both high and low calcium levels can cause muscle and nerve symptoms that may appear somewhat similar, although low calcium is more likely to cause severe muscle cramping. Diagnosing abnormal calcium levels requires blood tests; determining the cause of abnormal levels requires further testing.

(Source: livestrong.com)

## What should you do about those unpleasant eye floaters?

Debris in your vision is a nuisance, but you may have to live with it.

Strings, blobs, and cobwebs: they all describe types of specks that may appear to float across your field of vision. These “floaters” are usually just a nuisance. “In many cases, floaters become less noticeable or more tolerable over time, and can even disappear entirely,” says Dr. Jeffrey Heier, an ophthalmologist and Harvard Medical School instructor.

But for some people, floaters are distracting to the point of interfering with vision.

### ■ Where do they come from?

As we age, the thick, jelly-like substance that fills the center of the eye — called the vitreous — starts to form dense “blobs.” Some of this debris may wind up floating around and blocking some of the light

coming into your eyes.

Most floaters are small and don’t bother vision much. But one kind — called a Weiss ring — is larger and ring-shaped. It can interfere more with vision than other floaters. This larger type of floater is caused when the vitreous, which normally hugs the retina in the back of the eye, frees itself from the retina.

### ■ Treatment

Right now, Dr. Heier recommends only two approaches to dealing with floaters: ignore them, or in extreme cases, have surgery.

In the surgery, called vitrectomy, a surgeon removes the gel — along with its floaters — from the back of the eye. It’s effective, but it has risks, including cataracts (cloudy lenses) and retinal detachment. It’s usually a last resort for people whose floaters make it

hard for them to see.

### ■ A laser zaps floaters?

Another treatment that’s not currently recommended — a laser procedure called YAG vitreolysis — has begun to get attention. YAG vitreolysis vaporizes floaters by heating them. “You can see the tissue turn into gas bubbles,” says Dr. Chirag Shah, a Boston ophthalmologist.

The procedure is controversial, mainly because some doctors have been offering it since the early 1990s without any solid evidence about its safety and effectiveness.

But Dr. Heier and Dr. Shah recently showed that YAG vitreolysis may deserve more investigation. They randomly assigned 52 people with Weiss ring floaters to receive either YAG vitreolysis or a sham laser treatment.

(Source: health.harvard.edu)

## The smell of newborn babies triggers the same reward centers as drugs

By Rachel Nuwer

When women catch the scent of a newborn baby, their dopamine pathways in a region of the brain associated with reward learning light up ewborn babies, parents swear, have a distinct smell. According to new research in the journal Frontiers in Psychology, that universal baby smell does not occur by chance but rather is a carefully concocted perfume of biological manipulation, evolved to trigger maternal bonding.

Smells have long been associated with mother-child bonding. Babies can recognize their mother’s smell, past research indicates, and moms likewise can do the same for their children (even their poop).

Now, this new paper teases out the mechanisms behind that olfactory bonding, at least on the mother’s end.

Researchers recruited 30 women for their study, 15 who recently gave birth and 15 who did not have any children. They asked the women to try and identify various mystery scents, including the smell of a newborn, taken from a baby’s pajamas. While



the women sniffed, the researchers watched their brain activity via fMRI.

Most of the women struggled to pinpoint the baby smell, although they generally said it was a pleasant one. Their brains, however, told a different story.

When sniffing the baby pajamas, the dopamine pathways in a region of the brain associated with reward learning lit up, LiveScience reports.

Other odors, like those of delicious foods, trigger this pathway, and the same dopamine surge is also associated with satiating sexual and drug-addiction cravings.

This mechanism influences us by triggering “the motivation to act in a certain way because of the pleasure associated with a given behavior,”

Medical Xpress writes.

Although all the women reacted this way to some extent, the mothers had a much stronger reaction than the non-mothers. “For moms the sensation one gets when sniffing an infant presumably feels even more like the feeling of having obtained food,” Christian Science Monitor writes.

This finding left the researches with a sort of chicken-or-the-egg puzzle, however. LiveScience explains:

The researchers aren’t sure if new moms undergo a hormonal change that leads to this surge of dopamine or if their reaction is influenced by the experience of smelling their own baby, the researchers say.

“It is possible that childbirth causes hormonal changes that alter the reward circuit in the caudate nucleus, but it is also possible that experience plays a role,” Fresnel said in a statement.

The researchers did not test whether or not men also undergo this same dopamine spark when sniffing an infant, though finding that answer would hint at the mechanism behind women’s reactions.

(Source: smithsonianmag.com)

## Why do I yawn?

Everybody yawns — from unborn babies to the oldest great-grandparent.

Animals do it, too. But why, exactly, do people and animals yawn? No one knows for sure. But there are many theories (ideas) about why people yawn.

### ■ Did you yawn while reading this article?

One is that when we are bored or tired, we just don’t breathe as deeply as we usually do.

As this theory goes, our bodies take in less oxygen because our breathing has slowed. Therefore, yawning helps us bring more oxygen into the blood and move more carbon dioxide out of the blood.

Yawning, then, would be an involuntary reflex (something we can’t really control) to help us



control our oxygen and carbon dioxide levels. Sounds good, but other studies have shown that breathing more oxygen does not decrease yawning. Likewise, breathing more carbon dioxide does not increase yawning. Hmmm. Now what?

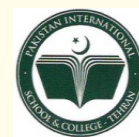
Another theory is that yawning stretches the lungs and lung tissue. Stretching and yawning may be a way to flex muscles and joints,

increase heart rate, and feel more awake.

Other people believe that yawning is a protective reflex to redistribute the oil-like substance called surfactant that helps keep lungs lubricated inside and keeps them from collapsing. So, if we didn’t yawn, according to this theory, taking a deep breath would become harder and harder — and that would not be good!

But there is one idea about yawning that everyone knows to be true. It seems contagious. If you yawn in class, you’ll probably notice a few other people will start yawning, too. Even thinking about yawning can get you yawning. How many times have you yawned while reading this article? We hope not many!

(Source: kidshealth.org)



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- Short Listed candidates would be notified on their given e-mail addresses with time and date of interview
- Interview would be conducted by the Selection Committee.



## Yazd to host air sports tourism event

**TOURISM TEHRAN** — The rugged landscape of Yazd province in central Iran will play host to a four-day festival of air sports tourism, which will start on October 31.



*A paragliding athlete is about to fly across an oasis landscape in Yazd province, central Iran.*

The province is a budding destination for countrywide aeronautical athletes and associated tourists in autumn due to its mild and favorable weather conditions, a provincial tourism official said on Saturday.

"Yazd province has considerable potential for air tourism and over the past two years it has played host to various events in this arena as well as an air show program," Mohamadreza Nasiri added.

Two flight sites, namely Sahelnama and Ardeshir, will hold the event under supervision of paragliding pilots.

Yazd is wedged between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain ringed by mountains. Its historical structure enjoys a very harmonious public-religious architecture that dates from different eras.

A major destination of international and domestic travelers, the Historical City of Yazd was made a UNESCO World Heritage in June.

## Telangana forests opened for eco-tourists as forces uproot Maoists

What were once Maoist hotbeds in the forests of Telangana in southern India are now being opened to eco-tourism lovers. The Telangana Rashtra Samithi government in the state has given its nod to a request from the tourism department of Telangana to convert the erstwhile Maoist hideouts into public places, indicating the police and the government's confidence that they have cleared the areas of extremist elements.

Two such Maoists areas, the Amrabad reserve forest on the banks of River Krishna and Jannaram reserve forest on the banks of Godavari, are now thrown open to eco-tourists.

The Maoists, who worked for CPI(ML) people's war till 2005, ran their command from these jungle hideouts for close to two decades, before they were evicted in an aggressive hunt by the then Andhra Pradesh police under an elite force, Octopus, which was exclusively formed to combat them.

In the thick cover of the Amrabad reserve forest, the Maoists held a number of top level meetings and conducted special training camps for their militants and also used the hideouts to shelter their ailing comrades. The cops were afraid to venture into these areas as they suspected there were many landmines.

(Source: Sunday Guardian Live)



### ROUND THE GLOBE

## Upper Middle Rhine Valley

The 65km-stretch of the Middle Rhine Valley, with its castles, historic towns and vineyards, graphically illustrates the long history of human involvement with a dramatic and varied natural landscape.



*A view of the Upper Middle Rhine Valley, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Germany*

A UNESCO World HeIt is intimately associated with history and legend and for centuries has exercised a powerful influence on writers, artists and composers.

As a transport route, the Rhine has served as a link between the southern and northern halves of the continent since prehistoric times, enabling trade and cultural exchange, which in turn led to the establishment of settlements.

Condensed into a very small area, these subsequently joined up to form chains of villages and small towns. For over a 1,000 years the steep valley sides have been terraced for vineyards.

The landscape is punctuated by some 40 hill top castles and fortresses erected over a period of around 1,000 years. Abandonment and later the wars of the 17th century left most as picturesque ruins.

The later 18th century saw the growth of sensibility towards the beauties of nature, and the often dramatic physical scenery of the Middle Rhine Valley, coupled with the many ruined castles on prominent hilltops, made it appeal strongly to the Romantic movement, which in turn influenced the form of much 19th century restoration and reconstruction.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Handicraft exports sees ten-fold rise to \$2b

**HERITAGE TEHRAN** — Iran has set a goal to increase the value of handicraft exports per annum to \$2 billion by 2021 from currently around \$240 million, the director of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization (CHTHO) said on Saturday.

Exporting \$2 billion worth of handicrafts is projected to be achieved by the end of the tenure of the incumbent administration (August 2021), said Ali-Asghar Mounesan, adding that the target would be met through [appropriate] marketing.

To date, a total of 370 fields of handicraft as well as around 400,000 craftspeople and artisans have been registered in the country, IRNA quoted Mounesan as saying.

"There is untapped potential to double the number of people employed in this sector. Taking their whole family members into account, the sector can engage up to four million people."

Mounesan lamented Iran's current world ranking in terms of handicrafts exports, saying "Iran assumes the 31st position despite having considerable potential."

According to statistics, the country's handicrafts exports, excluding traditional jewelry and suitcase trade, hit \$240m in the past Iranian calendar year (March 2016-March 2017), witnessing a 36.3-percent rise year on year.

Handicrafts exports from Iran hit a record high over the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-July 22, 2017) with 45.4 percent growth



*A craftswoman meticulously brush paints a traditional fruit pot in an undated photo.*

in contrast to the same period a year earlier, Pouya Mahmoudian who presides over the CHTHO exports department announced in September.

Traditional ceramics, pottery, handwoven cloths as well as precious and semi-precious gemstones were amongst the most handicrafts exported, she said,

adding Iraq, Afghanistan and Germany were the main importers of Iranian handicrafts with the U.S. and the UK recently resumed their imports.

## Tchogha Zanbil to offer free entry to mark UNESCO-listing anniversary

**TOURISM TEHRAN** — Tchogha Zanbil, a prehistoric ziggurat in southwest Iran, will offer free admission on October 26 on the occasion of the 38th anniversary of inscription on UNESCO World Heritage list.

"People can visit Tchogha Zanbil with no entrance fee on October 26," Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization announced.

A topmost tourist destination in Khuzestan province, the magnificent ruins of Tchogha Zanbil is considered by many the finest surviving example of the Elamite architecture in the globe.

Its construction started in c. 1250 BC upon the order of the Elamite king Untash-Napirisha (1275-1240 BC) as the religious center of Elam dedicated to the Elamite divinities Inshushinak and Napirisha.



*People visit ruins of Tchogha Zanbil, a UNESCO-listed prehistoric ziggurat in Khuzestan province, southwestern Iran.*

It was made a UNESCO site in 1979. The prehistoric mud brick complex bears testimony to the unique expression of the culture, beliefs, rituals and traditions of one of the oldest indigenous communities of Iran.

The ziggurat overlooks the ancient city of Susa (near modern Shush) in Khuzestan Province. Reaching a total height of some 25m, the ziggurat was used to be surmounted by a temple and estimated to hit 52m during its heyday.

UNESCO says that Tchogha Zanbil is the largest ziggurat outside of Mesopotamia and the best preserved of this type of stepped pyramidal monument.

Tchogha Zanbil was excavated in six seasons between 1951 and 1961 by Roman Ghirshman, a Russian-born French archeologist who specialized in ancient Iran.

## How to celebrate holidays on the road

If you're traveling over a holiday like Thanksgiving, Christmas or Hanukkah, don't forget to celebrate it with style, says Rebecca Gardner, an event designer in Savannah, Ga., who is creating a holiday boutique, Sugarplum Pop-Up, in November and December at the St. Regis New York.

"Holidays are a time to connect with those closest to you, and when you're on a trip, there can be a tendency to lose sight of the specialness of the occasion," she said.

Ms. Gardner is often on the road with family over Christmas and tries to make sure that the day is a fun-filled one for everyone.

Here, her advice on how to make celebrations away from home memorable for you and your loved ones:

### ■ Incorporate personal touches

Holidays are about feeling at home, and while you may be staying in a hotel, Ms. Gardner said that you can make that stay more personal. On her Christmas getaways, for example, she often brings a few small gifts for each person and leaves them on their pillows. Individually addressed notes also work.

And ahead of your stay, you can even order pillow cases with funny nicknames or monograms, and have them shipped to your hotel so they're already on your bed when you arrive. (Ms. Gardner uses the company Number Four Eleven for this.)

If you celebrate Christmas or Hanukkah, some hotels,

such as the Lowell, will put decorated trees and Menorahs for guests who ask — the hotel doesn't charge extra for this service.

### ■ Book a private room for the holiday meal

Reserving a private room for Thanksgiving or Christmas Day or the first night of Hanukkah at your hotel's restaurant or another restaurant in town evokes a cozy and familial feeling, Ms. Gardner said. "In a private dining room, you can make toasts and carry on without worrying about your voice," she said.

Rather than sticking strictly with the restaurant's décor, Ms. Gardner advised adding your own festive touches to the table, such as handwritten place cards or personalized chocolate boxes.

### ■ Serve family recipes

Did you know that, with advance notice, some hotels are more than happy to prepare and serve you your favorite family recipes, be it your grandmother's coconut cake or your mother's challah? You can call the hotel and ask to speak with the pastry chef to make the arrangements. "Surprise your family with a nostalgic dessert. No one will be devastated that the pumpkin pie has a graham cracker crust," Ms. Gardner said.

### ■ Arrange special experiences

Instead of dealing with the hassle of packing or shipping holiday gifts to your destination, plan an indulgent expe-



rience as the collective gift for your loved ones such as a private sunset cruise or a private after-hours museum tour with an art historian. "You can lose or forget about gifts, but unique experiences will stay with you forever," Ms. Gardner said.

(Source: The New York Times)

## Tourists revel in colorful autumn landscape in China

Tourists enjoy views of autumn leaves in China's Liaoning province, north-east of Beijing, 20 October 2017.

Leaf-peeping is becoming a popular activity among the Chinese, for whom the red of the maple leaves symbolizes good fortune, the Guardians reported.

Industrialized Fushun is known as the capital of coal but is surrounded by forested mountains that attract tourists from all over the country, and its Red River valley is home to China's first white-water rafting route.



© XINHUA / Li Hongxin



# Scientists creating plasma hotter than the sun in quest for limitless clean energy

Scientists believe that fusion energy — which generates electricity in the same way that the sun creates energy — has the potential to provide the world with an almost limitless, clean source of power.

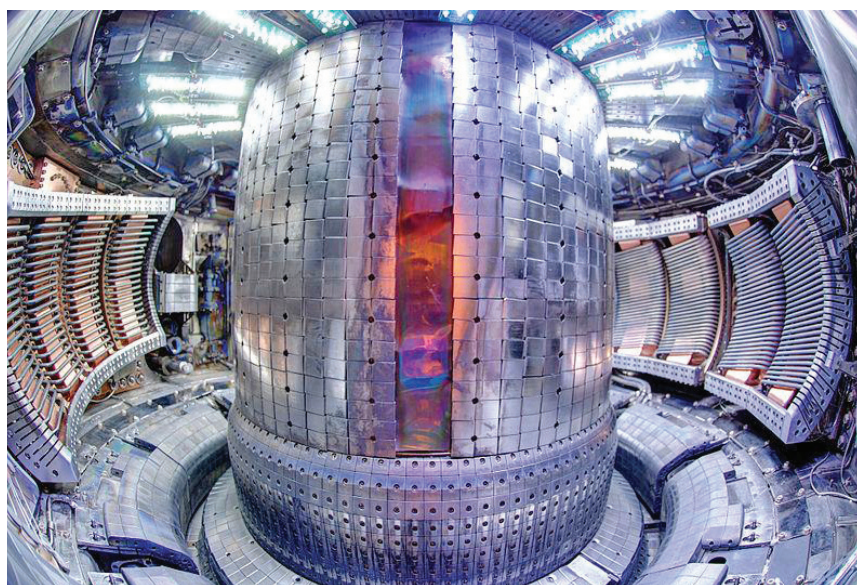
But while it is known that fusing two lighter atomic nuclei to form a heavier nucleus releases energy, it is far more difficult to harness that power. In order to do so, they would have to create plasma hotter than the sun that could be stably confined.

So far, researchers working across the globe have managed to achieve these temperatures to produce the plasma using two types of device — a tokamak and a stellarator (explained below). But as of yet they have been unable to generate more power from the fusion than it takes to create the reactions in the first place.

In a study published in *Nature Physics* in June, John Wright, from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and colleagues showed how they had developed a new way to heat fusion plasma in tokamaks. By using radio frequency heating, they were able to raise ions to energies far greater than had previously been achieved.

## ■ Three ion species

The technique involves three ion species — hydrogen, deuterium and helium-3. Normally, only two species are used. By adding in a third, of which there were only trace amounts, researchers could focus in



the energy on this species and heat it up to far higher energies.

Scientists now plan to build on this technique in the effort to achieve fusion energy.

**The technique involves three ion species — hydrogen, deuterium and helium-3. Normally, only two species are used. By adding in a third, of which there were only trace amounts, researchers could focus in the energy on this species and heat it up to far higher energies.**

The answer to this question is always dependent on political and social will and funding to an extent. However, I am confident saying that the path to nuclear fusion has never been clearer. What is needed now is a next step experiment that enables us to test the robustness of the tokamak design to steady-state fusion plasmas.

## ■ Largest fusion experiment

The ITER device (which will be the world's largest fusion experiment) being constructed in the south of France by an international consortium is expected to begin operations late next decade. If it operates as expected, it will demonstrate net fusion power output in bursts of thousands of seconds.

During the period since ITER's design, construction, and operation, technology and plasma physics have and will continue to progress.

For example, recent developments in the field of high field high temperature superconductors may permit the construction of tokamaks with higher magnetic fields and hence smaller and cheaper construction than ITER.

Therefore, in concert with ITER construction and operations, other tokamaks should be built in parallel that focus on integrating new developments and capabilities to address other technical challenges outside of ITER's mission.

(Source: Newsweek)

## Women who give birth in winter and spring less likely to suffer baby blues: study

The winter can be a gloomy time for many, but for new mums, the darker days may bring an unexpected benefit - a decreased risk of post-natal depression.

An intriguing new study has shown that women who give birth in winter and spring are less likely to suffer the 'baby blues' those who have babies at more clement times of year.

Although it may seem counter-intuitive, researchers believe that friends and family are more likely to rally round and help as the weather turns colder and are on hand to offer greater psychological support.

## ■ Mums feeling abandoned

In contrast social engagements often pick up in the summer months, leaving new mums feeling abandoned, or trapped at home.

Dr. Jie Zhou, from Brigham & Women's Hospital in Boston, which is attached to Harvard Medical School, said: "We wanted to find out whether there are certain factors influencing the risk of developing postpartum depression that may be avoided to improve women's health both physically and mentally.

"We have a few theories. Delivery will typically confine mothers to indoor activities with the newborn babies. It is naturally occurring for postpartum women in winter. Holiday season in the winter is very enjoyable.

"Literature has linked postpartum depression to Vitamin D. Its storage may deplete in a few months without proper supplement or sun exposure, which



could be related."

Researchers also found that other factors influencing post-natal depression were length of pregnancy, having an epidural and body mass index (BMI).

Women who gave birth early were more likely to suffer depression. The same was true of heavier women and

At least 10 percent of women experience some

degree of anxiety or depression after giving birth.

Symptoms include sadness, restlessness, and lack of concentration. Post-natal depression typically arises from a combination of hormonal changes, psychological adjustments to motherhood, and fatigue, said US researchers.

## ■ Medical records

The team reviewed the medical records of 20,169 women who delivered babies between June 2015 and August 2017. Of the total, 817 (4.1 percent) suffered from depressed mood.

Why giving birth in winter or spring should have a positive effect is not known but could be linked to the "seasonal enjoyment of indoor activities mothers experience with newborns," said the researchers.

The "influence of season on the incidence of post-natal depression may be due to better care and more psychological support from other people in harsh weather situations," they concluded.

The NHS labels depression after birth which lasts under two weeks as 'baby blues' and any longer as post-natal depression. Left untreated it can become a long term problem.

Recent research has shown that 1 in 25 new fathers also become depressed after having a baby.

The study also found that a longer pregnancy reduced the risk of post-natal depression while not having an epidural anesthetic during delivery increased it.

(Source: The Telegraph)

## Researchers create tool to measure, control protein aggregation

A common thread ties seemingly unlinked disorders like Alzheimer's disease and type II diabetes together. This thread is known as protein aggregation and happens when proteins clump together. These complexes are a hallmark of many diseases, but have recently been linked to beneficial functions as well.

Even though protein aggregation is prevalent in biology, many of the causes and consequences are unknown. This is largely because no simple, standardized research tool exists to study this phe-

nomenon in live cells. Now, Assistant Professor Ahmad S. Khalil (BME) along with colleagues from MIT and the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, among others, have built a synthetic genetic tool called yTRAP (yeast Transcriptional Reporting of Aggregating Proteins) to quantitatively sense, measure and manipulate protein aggregation in live cells.

Prions are a special, heritable form of aggregation and are most famous for transmitting neurodegenerative diseases

es in mammals. But they are also used by organisms to execute a diverse set of beneficial functions that are just starting to be identified. Using the new tool, Khalil and the team created sensors to track aggregation of prions and other proteins, manipulated prions to engineer synthetic memories in cells, identified genes that can cure cells of prions and enabled high-throughput studies to learn what can influence protein aggregation and its consequences.

Although developed and tested in

yeast, yTRAP could allow scientists to test and develop treatments for currently incurable diseases and potentially turn on new, beneficial functions in other types of cells.

The tool is composed of two parts — one piece couples to the protein of interest and the other produces a fluorescent signal to measure the amount of aggregation in a cell. Each piece can be customized to study different proteins or express different genes and signals.

(Source: medicalxpress.com)

## AIC to Take Part in Intl. Stock, Bank, Insurance and Privatization Exhibition Strongly

Asia Insurance Company will partake at the 4th International Exhibition of Stock, Bank, Insurance and Privatization and also 9th Exhibition of Introducing Investment Opportunities of the country, the Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

It should be noted that the 4th International Exhibition of Stock, Bank,

Insurance and Privatization and 9th Exhibition of Introducing Investment Opportunities of the country will be held from Oct. 30 to Nov. 2 at Kish Island International Exhibitions Center.

ASIA Insurance Company is ready to offer quality consultation services in the field of insurance to dear visitors.

As the largest privately-funded insurance company, ranked first for third consecutive years among top insurance companies in the country, ASIA Insurance Company benefits from 100 branches and 300 branch offices across the country, the Public Relations Department of the company concluded.



## NDFI to Offer Special Package for Exemplary Exporters: Chief

A couple of days ago, National Export Day was held in the presence of senior executive officials of the country, exemplary and model exporters.

Every year, National Exports Day is held in order to honor salient achievements of exporters who managed to realize most objectives of export in the country.

Head of Overseas' Investment and Goods Export Department of Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI) Mr. Seyyed Hossein Hosseinian announced the above statement and said: 'As mentioned in above, National Exports Day is held every year in order to honor and appreciated achievements taken by exemplary exporters in the country.'

Banking system is one of the most important con-



cerns of exporters, he said, adding: "For this purpose, different countries resort to various methods such as offering cheap facilities, export incentives, export insurance in order to back exporters wholeheartedly."

He pointed to the resources offered by the National Development Fund of Iran (NDFI) and said: "Of course, NDFI has thrown its heavyweight on banks of the country specially Export Development Bank of Iran which is tasked with importing and exporting products to and from the country."

Given the above issue, a considerable amount was offered to EDBI with 11 to 16 percent interest rate, he maintained.

In the end, Head of Overseas' Investment and Goods Export Department of Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI) Mr. Seyyed Hossein Hosseinian said: "With the coordination made in this regard, giant steps have been taken in order to back exemplary and model exporters of the country."

## Dawn's mission extension to send probe into indefinite orbit around dwarf planet

Back in May 2015, NASA's Dawn spacecraft became the first man-made object to enter orbit around a dwarf planet. It has circled Ceres ever since, with NASA extending its mission not once but now twice. The latest lifeline involves sending the unmanned probe closer to the surface of Ceres than ever before, as it shifts its focus to measuring gamma rays and neutrons.

Dawn arrived at Ceres after a seven and a half year journey, making a stop to orbit the giant asteroid Vesta and then continuing on with the goal of investigating the dwarf planet. That primary mission drew to a close midway through last year, meaning the probe has already far outstripped its initial scientific goals.

With supplies of hydrazine fuels waning quickly, NASA last year moved to extend Dawn's mission by maneuvering it into higher orbit, where it required less juice to counter Ceres' gravitational pull. The agency has now authorized another extension, where if all goes to plan, Dawn will be lowered to within 120 mi (200 km) of the dwarf planet's surface.

At that altitude, Dawn's priority will be to collect data with its gamma ray and neutron spectrometer, used to measure the number and energy of gamma rays and neutrons. This data will help scientists understand more about the composition of Ceres' uppermost layer and how much ice it holds.

It so happens that this extension will also station Dawn in Ceres' orbit as the dwarf planet goes through its closest approach to the Sun, something known as perihelion. Taking place in April next year, this may cause ice on the surface to turn into water vapor, which scientists suspect may contribute to a weak transient atmosphere.

(Source: New Atlas)

## Irregular heartbeat linked to higher thyroid hormone levels

Individuals with higher levels of thyroid hormone (free thyroxine, FT4) circulating in the blood were more likely than individuals with lower levels to develop irregular heartbeat, or atrial fibrillation, even when the levels were within normal range, according to new research in the *American Heart Association's* journal *Circulation*.

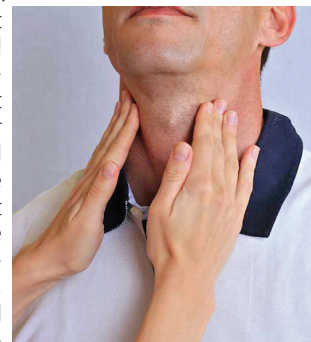
"Our findings suggest that levels of the thyroid hormone, free thyroxine, circulating in the blood might be an additional risk factor for atrial fibrillation," said study lead author Christine Baumgartner, M.D., specialist in General Internal Medicine from the University Hospital of Bern, Switzerland, and currently a postdoctoral scholar at University of California San Francisco. "Free thyroxine hormone levels might help to identify individuals at higher risk."

In the United States, irregular heartbeat (atrial fibrillation) affects between 2.7 to 6.1 million people and is estimated to affect up to 12.1 million people by 2030. It occurs when the two upper chambers of the heart, called the atria, beat irregularly and faster than normal.

Symptoms may include heart palpitations, dizziness, sweating, chest pain, anxiety, fatigue during exertion and fainting, but sometimes patients with atrial fibrillation have no symptoms at all. Although people can live with irregular heartbeat, it can cause chronic fatigue and increase the risk of serious illnesses, such as stroke and heart failure, potentially associated with lifelong disability and even death.

The thyroid gland is a small gland in the neck. In response to thyroid-stimulating hormone released by the pituitary gland, the thyroid gland secretes thyroid hormones required to regulate energy metabolism. Patients with low levels of thyroid hormone, or hypothyroidism, may require medications containing thyroid hormone (thyroxine) to increase their hormonal levels. Sometimes intake of thyroxine sometimes can increase these levels too much.

(Source: EurekAlert)



## Mars has ideal conditions to produce oxygen from CO2: study

Mars has 96 percent carbon dioxide in its atmosphere, according to researchers

Mars has nearly ideal conditions for efficiently creating oxygen from atmospheric carbon dioxide in the future using plasma technology, a study has found.

According to researchers from University of Porto in Portugal and Ecole Polytechnique in Paris, Mars has 96 percent carbon dioxide (CO2) in its atmosphere.

The research, published in the journal *Plasma Sources Science and Technology*, shows that the pressure and temperature ranges in the Martian atmosphere mean non-thermal plasma can be used to produce oxygen efficiently.

## ■ Manned mission

"Sending a manned mission to Mars is one of the next major steps in our exploration of space. Creating a breathable environment, however, is a substantial challenge," said Vasco Guerra, from the University of Lisbon in Portugal.

"Plasma reforming of CO2 on Earth is a growing field of research, prompted by the problems of climate change and production of solar fuels," said Guerra.

"Low temperature plasmas are one of the best media for CO2 decomposition — the split-up of the molecule into oxygen and carbon monoxide — both by direct electron impact, and by transferring electron energy into vibrational excitation," he said.

Mars has excellent conditions for In-Situ Resource Utilisation (ISRU) by plasma.

(Source: thehindu.com)



LEARN ENGLISH

Making Comparisons

Mr. Ford: Now a key question you might ask yourself is what **differentiates** the new x420 line with our previous models, and also of course with some of our competitors. Mr. Ford: **In other words** what makes the x420 **stand out** from all the others? This is a key question, and is something I'd like to explore in a little depth. Firstly, the x420 has a range of USPs that really make it **a cut above** the rest.

Mr. Ford: The first thing to mention is that the x420 is the first in a new generation of ultralight laptop computers. It is only 2lbs, which compares very favorably with all our key competitors. In terms of computer performance, for such a light machine it's very powerful. 4 GB of RAM, with an ultra-fast processor.

Mr. Ford: The most advanced video and sound cards on the market are installed with a **crystal-clear** 15-inch LCD display. The x420 really stands out as next generation laptop. Compared with our previous x540 range it really is **in a league of its own**.

Mr. Ford: Now, if we go on to look at **projected** sales for the x420 we can see that sales **revenue** for 2010 is expected to hit at least 20 million dollars. Now this is really a **conservative estimate**.

Mr. Ford: If our marketing campaign is successful I'm confident that we could see a doubling of this figure at the very least. Now please **bear in mind** that this is only for the first year of production.

Mr. Ford: I'm certain that in the coming three years the x420 will actually overtake all our existing products, both in terms of sales and revenue. Okay, now let's move on to discuss our marketing concept and look more closely at our key competitors.

■ **Key vocabulary**  
**differentiate:** recognize or show the difference  
**in other words:** take another way to say  
**stand out:** very noticeable  
**a cut above:** better than  
**crystal clear:** perfectly clear  
**in a league of its own:** the best; have no competitor  
**project:** to calculate what something will be in the future, using the information you have now  
**revenue:** the amount of sales, in dollars (or other currency)  
**conservative estimate:** a guess which is deliberately lower than what the real amount probably is  
**bear in mind:** remember  
■ **Supplementary vocabulary**  
**market share:** how much of the market is occupied by sales of a certain product  
**breakthrough:** creative, innovative technology  
**generate:** to come up with

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

A woman is never incapable, says 91-year-old doll-maker

By Naghmeh Mizanian

**TEHRAN** — Every morning I wake up with my heart full of love. I have an enthusiasm to make new dolls, says Bibi Hazer Omidvari, a 91-year-old Iranian woman born and grown up in the southwestern city of Kazeroun.

"Thanks God that granted me the patience of making dolls. If I wasn't busy with these dolls, I always thought of my past and the burdens I had tolerated in my life. Then these memories made me crying," she explained.

Elaheh Abbaspour, her granddaughter, spoke with the Tehran Times by phone and quoted Bibi Hazer's comments because Bibi Hazer was not able to talk personally.

"Doll-making is a remedy for me. I try not to think about the past. I make dolls with happiness while I pray God," Bibi Hazer said adding, "I pray God to keep my eyes and my hands healthy to help me make dolls. I pray God not to take my patience and power for making dolls."

"I do not feel disabled yet because I still feel power through my heart," she added.

"Since a human being takes breaths, she should be busy with a job. Each person should create good mood for herself. When you are in a good mood, you are still alive; you can work and you are happy," believes the doll-maker.

There is a story behind many dolls Bibi Hazer makes. She has heard many stories from her mother, grandmother and aunts.

"She likes her doll, Samanbar, more than other dolls because Samanbar is an intelligent and deliberate woman. Samanbar is a doctor and she helps people. I even love my children more, when they are helpful for

others," Bibi Hazer said.

Bibi Hazer doesn't like her doll Dada Siyah (the black slave-girl) which is a dishonest character of the story "The patient stone doll" because Dada Siyah violates the right of the dear darling daughter. She had to make daughter awake to help the bewitched boy; but she didn't.

"My children and grandchildren are the most important encouragers of me and then those who visit my artworks," Bibi Hazer said, adding that about one thousand dolls are currently on the show at Iran Artists Forum.

To date, she has held three exclusive exhibits and another general one. Three years ago, an exhibition of her works was held for public sale. Bibi Hazer has given about one thousands of her dolls to many children as a gift.

Children of both sexes like her dolls, even boys may like it much and ask me to give them dolls, said the mother of five.

Storytelling is women's custom. Mothers and grandmothers tell stories for their children and grandchildren to make them amuse and also make them mindful, Elaheh who has heard her grandma's stories many times quotes Bibi Hazer as saying.

Elaheh is now composing many of her grandma's stories in a book.

Stories are full of advices. A mother tells story to her child and her child repeats the same story for her own child. In this way all generations will receive the advices for better life, the grandmother of twelve and great grandmother of seven stated.

An illiterate woman is blind and deaf, Bibi Hazer whose wish of being literate was never fulfilled said.

Her husband and her mother didn't like making

embroider on a kind of shoes that was women's job at that time. Her mother was not unhappy when she made dolls, said the doll maker who began doll making from the childhood as a hobby and at the age of 78 seriously.

Bibi Hazer used to knit washcloth and make doormats. However, after some medical problems, she started making dolls."

"Many of these dolls are unique. Bibi creates some of her dolls by watching TV programs."



IKCO Adopts New Approach towards Export Markets

Iran Khodro Industrial Group (IKCO) considers having active presence in the world market and winning appropriate share at the international markets as "essential". Like any other large economic enterprises, this leading car manufacturing company in the country has clarified its mission and outlook comprehensively, the issue of which has been put atop agenda. In line with materializing the mentioned objectives, manufacturing product at the production bases overseas and exporting complete product are considered as two main export strategies of this prestigious company.

Given the above issue, Iran's largest car manufacturer, Iran Khodro Industrial Group, (IKCO) has adopted a new approach towards exports to certain countries. Having achieved a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weakness of many export markets across the world, the car manufacturer has put exports to these countries at the top of its priorities.

Getting lion's share at regional markets, stabilizing its presence and reviving new export target markets and eyeing new markets have been considered as main strategies of the company in promoting export and export activities. The objectives of the said issue will be materialized through increasing capacities of research and development (R&D) in the field of development of platform, driving and automotive force. Empowering sales and after-sales network in export target countries



are of the other approaches of IKCO in the field of promotion of foreign markets. Adapting product with the standards of the target markets and making brand through the development of IKCO's brand both in regional and international levels is of the another point for materializing export objectives of the company.

IKCO CEO, Hashem YekeZare, cited exports of products with competitive pricing as the main strategy of his company and added that with the aim of expanding export markets, IKCO is seeking to promote its current sites

abroad and also to make operational its new site in Azerbaijan which is under construction with the Azeri investment and Iranian engineering knowhow.

He went on saying establishing new sites abroad is part of a plan to increase IKCO's profits from the tariff advantages of the target markets.

"To have a continuous presence in the export markets, Iran Khordo has given priority to exporting certain products to certain markets, giving variety to the export production portfolio and assembling different models of vehicles in IKCO's sites abroad," he noted.

Exporting product with competitive price is of the main strategies of the company, he said, adding: "With promoting current production sites and taking advantage of new sites of the company in the Republic of Azerbaijan, export markets of the company will be expanded and developed."

Elsewhere in his statements, YekeZare said one of the main goals, which IKCO is pursuing in the new chapter with the international partners, is to gain a share in the vehicle markets, auto parts and particularly in meta-casting field.

He also added another main strategy of IKCO is to establish new sites abroad by the target countries' investment and IKCO's engineering knowhow.

"With the new approach, Iran Khodro Company has already managed to lower the investment risks of its foreign sites," he added.

The CEO of Iran's largest car manufacturer also referred to the underway project to establish a site in the neighboring Azerbaijan and added given to the popularity of IKCO's Denza, Samand and Runna models in Azerbaijan, the company has decided to produce the models in Azerbaijan. "Other models will also be added the production portfolio of the site in the future."

YekeZare also stated IKCO's site in Azerbaijan is under construction on a vast land in the industry center of Neftchala with a production capacity of 10,000 vehicles each year. In the second phase of the project, the site is going to produce commercial vehicles

to renew the transportation fleet of Azerbaijan.

"Azerbaijan will turn into an export hub for the regional states for IKCO as soon as Azerbaijan's site becomes operational," he said.

The CEO also referred to the CBU export of vehicles to other target markets and added IKCO has also given priority to the expansion of its markets in the traditionally friendly states like Iraq.

"Iran Khodro has also adopted new measures to expand its after-sale services in Iraq with the goal of promoting communication with the customers and offering best-quality services to them. Meanwhile, we are seeking to promote our auto parts supplying in the country," YekeZare added.

He referred to IKCO's CBU exports to the Commonwealth of Independence State and said Armenia is among the target markets of Iran Khodro. "Having access to CNG and its low price in the country are among the main reasons behind IKCO's hybrid vehicles' popularity among the Armenians."

YekeZare also said with receiving Euro 5 standard certificate, IKCO will put export of its vehicles to CIS states including Belorussia and Kazakhstan at to the top of its priorities.

He finally stressed with the development of new products and participation in joint projects to establish new sites abroad, IKCO is seeking to play a leading role in the international markets and gain the appropriate share.



# Israel maintains robust arms trade with rogue regimes

➔ Eitay Mack, a human rights lawyer, has submitted a spate of petitions to the Israeli courts in an attempt to bring to light details of Israel's trade with such regimes. He said the cases were designed to hasten war crimes investigations of the officials and contractors involved.

"Many Western states sell arms, but what's unique about Israel is that, wherever war crimes and crimes against humanity are being committed, you find Israel is present," Mack told Al Jazeera.

"The companies selling the weapons, and the officials who quietly approve the trade, must be held accountable. Otherwise, why would this ever stop?"

## ■ Clandestine practice

Mack said that Israel's collusion with Myanmar's military was part of a pattern of aiding rogue regimes that went back decades and reflected the importance of the arms trade to Israel's economy.

Over the summer, it was revealed that Israeli defense officials approve 99.8 percent of all requests for arms export licenses.

As well as fuelling the current violence in Myanmar and South Sudan, Israel has been accused of clandestinely providing arms used in notorious past episodes of genocide and ethnic cleansing in places such as Rwanda, the Balkans, Chile, Argentina, Sri Lanka, Haiti, El Salvador and Nicaragua. Israel also cultivated close ties to apartheid South Africa, Mack noted.

Yair Auron, a genocide researcher at Israel's Open University, said that Israel's supply of weapons to regimes such as Myanmar should be compared to the sending of arms to Nazi Germany during the Holocaust.

"These sales turn me and all Israelis into criminals, because they are sent in our name," he told Al Jazeera. "We are abetting genocide."

Efforts by human rights groups to shed light on Israel's collusion with Myanmar have so far been frustrated by Israeli authorities and the courts.

The Haaretz daily accused Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman of "lying" when he claimed in parliament last month that Israel's policy in Myanmar accorded with that of the "enlightened world".

Officials refused to disclose information of arms exports to the military government during a hearing at Israel's Supreme Court last month on a petition to halt the sales. Lawyers for the state insisted on closed-door sessions when discussing relations with Myanmar.

The three judges hearing the case issued a gag order to prevent publication of their decision, widely assumed to have approved the continuation of arms sales. They justified the blackout on the



grounds that publicity risked damaging Israel's foreign relations.

Late last year, the same court rejected a petition demanding that officials release documents showing Israel's role in arming Serbian forces that carried out massacres of Bosnians in the 1990s.

Campaigners are waiting on hearings in a host of other cases concerning South Sudan, Rwanda, Chile, Haiti and Argentina.

In August, Israeli officials argued before the Supreme Court that its exports to militias in South Sudan were "lawful".

Evidence suggests that Israel sold rifles and surveillance equipment to militias and the army in South Sudan. A United Nations report found that the Israeli-made Ace and Galil rifles were in widespread use there.

## ■ No oversight

Next week, the Supreme Court is due to hear a petition on Israel's involvement in Rwanda, where it reportedly armed Hutus who carried out genocidal attacks against Tutsis.

Mack noted that there were a handful of officials in the Israeli Defense Ministry overseeing some 400,000 annual permits issued for weapons sales. "That means in practice, there is no oversight at all," he said.

Israeli companies, meanwhile, are authorized to sell arms to some 130 countries, though activists say there are other states with which Israel deals covertly.

Israel is the only major weapons exporter that has consistently bucked the global trend of a downturn in arms sales. In March, it was reported that Israel's weapons trade in 2016 was worth some \$6.5bn, up from \$5.7bn the year before.

**Eitay Mack, a human rights lawyer: What's unique about Israel is that, wherever war crimes and crimes against humanity are being committed, you find Israel is present.**

That included a 70 percent jump in sales to Africa.

African states accused of widespread human rights abuses were among more than 100 countries that attended the annual Israel Defense Exhibition, a weapons trade fair, in June.

Despite its tiny size, Israel is believed to be the sixth biggest arms exporter in the world - and the largest one per capita.

That has made arms sales integral to the Israeli economy, accounting for possibly as much as 8 percent of gross domestic product. As many as 100,000 Israeli households are reported to be dependent on the arms industry.

John Brown, an investigative journalist with the Haaretz newspaper who writes under a pseudonym, said there was a long history of what he called "Uzi diplomacy" - referring to the Israeli sub-machine gun that became a favorite with security forces around the world from the 1960s onwards.

"If countries want the best arms, then they probably go to the U.S. and Europe. But when no one else will sell to you, then you turn to Israel," he told Al Jazeera.

"The benefits for Israel are not just measured in money. Often even more important are the diplomatic and strategic alliances Israel can gain from this arms trade."

## ■ A conduit for drones

Mack said that mounting international outrage over the plight of Myanmar's Muslim minority provided an opportunity to shine a light on Israel's long role in supporting regimes in the midst of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

In what sounded like a rare rebuke to

Israel, Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the UN, said last month: "Any country that is currently providing weapons to the Burmese military should suspend these activities until sufficient accountability measures are in place."

Although the Israeli courts have blocked access to documents that could shed light on what arms have gone to Myanmar, activists have been able to identify some dealings from open sources.

In September 2015, Min Aung Hlaing, the commander of Myanmar's army, posted on social media details of a "shopping trip" to Israel that included visits to leading Israeli weapons manufacturers and a meeting with the Israeli military's chief of staff, Gadi Eisenkott.

A year later, Michael Ben Baruch, an Israeli defense ministry official in charge of exports, visited Myanmar to meet its army's top brass to sign a deal for patrol boats.

Shortly afterwards, the website of TAR Ideal Concepts, an Israeli company, posted images of its staff training Myanmar special forces and teaching them how to handle Israeli-made Corner-Shot guns.

Other analysts have suggested that Israel has also been acting as a conduit for Chinese weapons, including drones, to Myanmar, allowing Beijing to bypass the embargo.

"There is no statute of limitations on war crimes and crimes against humanity, so we will keep putting Israeli officials under pressure till the trade stops," Mack said. "They will have to endure a regular 'walk of shame' in the courts, forcing them to explain their policies and why the documents remain secret."

He noted that Israel's success in arms dealing was intimately tied to five decades of its control over the occupied Palestinian territories.

"Israeli companies exploit Israel's long experience there to sell arms, arguing that the weapons and training have been tested in real-world conditions."

Brown said that Israel appeared to be indifferent towards the victims of the violence it helped to stoke. This was especially evident during the so-called "Dirty War" in Argentina, through much of the 1970s, when 30,000 left-wing activists were "disappeared", he said. Israel is believed to have supplied the military government there with some \$700m in weapons.

"Of those killed, probably some 2,000 were Argentinian Jews," he said. "Israel knew that the weapons it was selling were being turned on Jews, but that did not stop it selling arms. It simply didn't care."

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Al-Abadi slams Tillerson's remarks on Popular Mobilization Units

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's media office has criticized meddlesome comments made by the United States Secretary of State Rex Tillerson regarding the country's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) or Hashd al-Sha'abi.

"No party has the right to interfere in Iraqi matters," Abadi's media office said in a statement on Monday, citing a source close to the prime minister.

Abadi made the remarks after Tillerson said Iran and all other countries currently helping Iraq in its fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group needed to leave the country now that the battle was drawing to a close.

"The foreign fighters in Iraq need to go home and allow the Iraqi people to regain control," Tillerson said in the Saudi capital on Sunday.

Tillerson was speaking after a rare joint meeting with the leaders of Iraq and Saudi Arabia in Riyadh.

Popular Mobilization Units is an Iraqi state-sponsored umbrella organization composed of some 40 groups, which are mainly Shia Muslims. The force reportedly numbers more than 100,000 fighters. Iraqi authorities say there are between 25,000 and 30,000 Sunni tribal fighters within its ranks in addition to Kurdish Izadi and Christian units.

The fighters have played a major role in the liberation of ISIL-held areas to the south, northeast and north of the Iraqi capital Baghdad, ever since the terrorists launched an offensive in the country in June 2014.

On Sunday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also slammed Tillerson's remarks, saying they had been uttered under the influence of petrodollars of certain states.

(Source: Press TV)

## Erdogan: Europe died in Bosnia, now buried in Syria

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday urged European leaders to use their "common sense" and give full membership to Turkey in the European Union that would in turn help the bloc in overcoming its problems.

Erdogan strongly criticized the EU states at an event in capital Ankara to commemorate Alija Izetbegovic -- the founding president of modern Bosnia who died 14 years ago.

"Europe died in Bosnia and was now buried in Syria."

"You should know that innocent children whose bodies washed ashore are the gravestones of the Western civilization."

Unfortunately, in the last seven years, European values have been discredited and destroyed one-by-one by the very owners of those values," the president said.

He recalled the Western states' position on Bosnia during the 1995 war.

"Human rights, democracy, national will and freedom were considered too much for Bosnians. Today, these are seen as luxury for Syrians, Palestinians, and Libyans. Though the oppressed and tyrants have changed, those watching the oppression from sidelines have not."

About the harassment of Turkish passengers in Austria's Schwechat Airport on Oct. 13, he said: "They search my citizens coming from the west to Turkey with dogs. How can such a disgrace happen?"

He urged European leaders to use their "common sense" when dealing with Turkey.

"Escalating xenophobia will not benefit anyone. Dreaming of power through Islamophobia will not bring anyone anywhere."

"A Europe without Turkey will only reach isolation, desperation and civil strife. Turkey does not need Europe. Europe is the one that is in need [of Turkey]."

"Though they do not want to see it, Turkey and its full membership is the cure for their chronic problems."

Turkey applied for membership in the European Economic Community (a precursor to the EU) in 1987. It became eligible for EU membership in 1997 and accession talks began in 2005.

To gain membership, Turkey has to successfully conclude negotiations with the EU in 35 policy chapters that involve reforms and the adoption of European standards.

(Source: Anadolu)

## The illusion to align Iraq with Saudis against Iran

➔ In 2007, the U.S. military reported that around 40% of all foreign militants targeting U.S. troops and Iraqi civilians and security forces had come from Saudi Arabia. The U.S. military said half of the Saudi fighters who arrived in Iraq during that time went there to be suicide bombers.

Iraqis are aware of this fact that if it had not been for Iran's military help Daesh would have captured Baghdad and Erbil, the capital of the Iraqi Kurdistan, and now the U.S., which had spent more than 2 trillion dollars to stabilize the post-Saddam Iraq, would have had to fight Daesh in Baghdad let alone formulating the fantasy of aligning Iraq with Saudi Arabia to counter Iran's influence in the region.

Those countries which Tillerson is seeking to rally against Iran are mostly Washington's allies which were indifferent to the agonies of the Iraqis at the hands of terrorists over the past 14 years.

Such attempts show that Trump and his inner team are too naive to understand the realities in the region and the strong cultural and religious bonds between Iraq and Iraq and some other countries in the region.

## Russia 'committed' to Iraq despite Kurdish oil ties: Lavrov

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov says Moscow is committed to Iraq's territorial integrity after Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region (Kurdistan Regional Government/KRG) held a controversial plebiscite on secession.

"I would like to confirm once again our commitment and respect to Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity," Lavrov said at a meeting with Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari in Moscow on Monday.

Russia's top diplomat further said that Moscow respects the desire of Iraq's Kurdistan to seek to assert its identity. However, he stressed that this must be done in dialog with the Iraq's central government.

Lavrov said Russia will also continue its economic relations with the Iraqi Kurdistan, as it does with the rest of Iraq even as government troops have retaken control of major oil fields in Kirkuk.

The top Russian diplomat said Moscow was not closing its consulate in the Kurdish capital city of Erbil, but the mission was subordinate to the country's embassy in Baghdad.

Last week, Russian energy giant Rosneft signed a

deal to put production sharing agreements into force with respect to five production blocks in the Iraqi Kurdistan.

The announcement ignited condemnation by the Iraq's oil ministry, which cautioned oil companies against signing contracts with authorities in the semi-autonomous 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."

Tensions flared up between Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region and the central government in Baghdad after the KRG held a highly controversial plebiscite on secession.

The referendum was held on September 25 despite



strong opposition from the central government in Baghdad, the international community, and Iraq's neighboring countries, especially Turkey and Iran.

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: TASS)

## Lombardy and Veneto back greater autonomy from Rome

The leaders of Italy's two wealthiest northern regions have claimed victory in a non-binding referendum, seeking greater autonomy from the central government in Rome.

Voters in Lombardy and Veneto overwhelmingly backed more regional control over tax revenues, immigration and education systems on Sunday.

The turnout in Veneto was projected at around 58 percent - above its 50 percent threshold - while just over 40 percent of the eligible voters cast their ballots in neighboring Lombardy, where no quorum was set.

More than 95 percent voted "yes" in

both regions, according to the projections.

An approval of the parliament will be now required to allow regional autonomy.

Lombardy and Veneto account for 30 percent of Italy's Gross domestic product (GDP), but many taxpayers in the north resent subsidizing the relatively poor south of Italy.

Al Jazeera's Hoda Abdel Hamid, reporting from Veneto's capital, Venice, said the result will give a popular mandate to the far-right party Northern League in advance of elections next year.

Italy's twin referendums come on the

back of the vote on Catalonia's secession from Spain.

Tensions have been high in neighboring Spain after an overwhelming 90 percent voted in favor of secession.

Analysts in Italy fear the vote could have a "snowball" effect, while paving the way for other regions to demand greater leverage in negotiations with the central government.

"We already have other regions calling for referendums," Pietro Basso, sociology professor, told Al Jazeera. "So, if each region calls for autonomy, then there will be a clash of power centers and more chaos."

(Source: Al Jazeera)



## Mbappé wins Golden Boy 2017 award



The France forward Kylian Mbappé has won the Golden Boy award for the best young player in Europe, fending off competition from Barcelona's Ousmane Dembélé and Manchester United's Marcus Rashford.

The 18-year-old came to prominence last season, scoring six Champions League goals to propel Monaco to the semi-finals while playing a huge part in the club's title-winning Ligue 1 season, scoring 15 goals from an often wide berth. Mbappé is on loan at PSG, where he has scored four goals and made four assists in 11 games. He will make the move permanent in a £166m transfer next summer.

Mbappé won by an overwhelming 291 votes, with Dembélé coming second on 149. Manchester United's Rashford was third and Manchester City's Gabriel Jesus fourth.

The award, run by Tuttosport, is in its 15th year and winners have included Wayne Rooney, Mario Balotelli, Raheem Sterling and Anthony Martial.

(Source: Guardian)

## UEFA fines for Celtic, PSG, Basel



UEFA has fined Celtic and Paris St Germain for crowd trouble after last month's Champions League game between the teams, European football's governing body said on Monday.

UEFA's Control, Ethics and Disciplinary Body fined Celtic 10,000 euros (£8,920) for field invasion after a supporter ran on to the pitch and attempted to kick PSG striker Kylian Mbappe during their 5-0 home loss in the Group B opener.

The supporter ran towards the French forward as the Scottish side prepared to kick off after the third goal, before being caught by stewards and escorted from the pitch.

PSG were fined 5,000 euros for acts of damage after visiting supporters broke seats at Celtic Park.

Meanwhile, Swiss side Basel have been fined 12,000 euros after supporters set off fireworks in their Group A game against Manchester United at Old Trafford last month.

(Source: Goal)

## Mueller out for three weeks with muscle injury



Bayern Munich will be without midfielder Thomas Mueller for three weeks after he picked up a thigh muscle injury in Saturday's 1-0 league win over Hamburg SV, the club said on Monday.

Mueller, who was returning to top form under new coach Jupp Heynckes after being left on the bench often by Carlo Ancelotti, had set up Corentin Tolisso's 52nd-minute winner before being taken off injured soon afterwards.

"The Germany international will be out for an expected three weeks," Bayern said in a statement.

This means he will miss the German Cup clash with RB Leipzig this week as well as the weekend league game against the same opponents.

Mueller will also sit out the Champions League group game at Celtic on Oct. 31 and the league match against Bundesliga leaders Borussia Dortmund.

Bayern are second in the standings, level on 20 points with Dortmund but with an inferior goal difference.

(Source: Daily Star)

# Bolt says he's serious about a soccer career



Usain Bolt says he is serious about starting up a soccer career now he has retired from sprinting — and believes he could even be good enough to play for Jamaica.

The 31-year-old eight-time Olympic gold medalist, currently recovering from a hamstring injury, accepted there might be some skepticism but said it had always been his boyhood dream.

"For me it's a personal goal. I don't care what people really think about it. I'm not going to lie to myself. I'm not going to be stupid," the Jamaican told reporters at the U.S. Formula One Grand Prix.

He was speaking before world champion Lewis Hamilton drove him around the Circuit of the Americas in a Mercedes AMG sports car, sending the car sliding into corners and ending with tire-smoking spins.

"If I feel I can't do it, I'm going to say 'you know what, forget this'. I'm not trying to embarrass myself. But if I go out there and feel I can do this then I will give it a try. It's a dream and another chapter of my life," said Bolt.

"If you have a dream that you always wanted to do, why not try and see where it will go."

The world's fastest man has been sponsored by Puma since he was 15 and the German sportswear company has a

stake in Borussia Dortmund.

Bolt, who retired from athletics after August's world championships in London, has been invited to spend a week training with the Bundesliga club and he plans to take it up.

"It's just my hamstring is keeping me back right now. In two weeks I can start training again and get back into some shape. Then I can really explore the situation," he said.

"They say the invitation is always open so it's all about me getting over my injury and then getting into shape.

Then I can do the trials and see what level I'm at."

A keen Manchester United fan, Bolt doubted manager Jose Mourinho would be on the phone any time soon but said he had spoken to the club's former manager Alex Ferguson about his dream.

"He said 'Alright, get into shape and I'll see where that goes,'" said the sprinter.

Jamaica, who failed to qualify for next year's World Cup finals, are currently 59th in the world rankings, leaving Bolt

to also muse: "I think I can make the Jamaica team easily. I wouldn't say they are that good at this point."

Bolt, who suffered the injury in his final race, the world championships 4 x 100 meters relay final, again ruled out any athletics comeback, saying he missed the laughs and banter but not the training and he was intending to start a family.

"I'm waiting to see if my football career will go anywhere but I definitely want to work with the IAAF in ways to promote the sport and help keep it on the level on which I left it," he added. "Being a coach? No. Definitely not."

Asked about the current state of athletics and doping scandals that have seen Russian athletes barred from competition, the Jamaican felt the sport was climbing back out of the gutter.

"You have to get to the worst to start rebuilding and I think the Russia situation was the worst we could get," he said.

"Now it's all about rebuilding and making people trust the sport again. This year was the first that we made a step in the right direction so, hopefully, we continue.

"If you're in the gutter and working your way up, it's going to take time. That's what we need. Just time for people to really start trusting the sport again."

(Source: Reuters)

## 'Ridiculous' to suggest City can end season unbeaten - Pep



Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola has said it is "ridiculous" to suggest that the Premier League leaders can emulate Arsenal's Invincibles of 2003-04 and go through the season unbeaten.

Free-scoring City moved five points clear at the top of the table as Sergio Aguero's landmark 177th strike for the club helped them to a 3-0 win over Burnley at the Etihad Stadium.

Guardiola's side are the only undefeated team left in the league after their club record-equalling 11th consecutive win in all competitions but the Spaniard is not getting carried away with talk of going the distance without a loss.

"To finish unbeatable, that is not going to happen because we are in a lot of games and a lot of competitions are so demanding, more than ever. To win with this kind of record sounds ridiculous," he told the British media.

"There will be a moment when we

are going down. In that moment I am curious and I will test myself as a manager with the players and see how we are going to react.

"I know people like a lot of the statistics and to compare one to another one with titles, and I am happy for the 11 wins in a row because we showed that we can win a lot of games in a row. But that's all."

Arsenal's 2003-04 team ended the Premier League campaign as champions with 26 wins and 12 draws.

Guardiola said even the Golden State Warriors, NBA's dominant force in recent seasons, had tasted defeat in a shaky start to their regular season and warned City there could be bumps on the road ahead.

"We are going to lose games, of course, but complacency, being (too) relaxed, is what we are not. That is not going to happen with me."

City, who have 25 points from nine games, visit 13th-placed West Bromwich Albion on Saturday.

(Source: Independent)

## All venues completed for Pyeongchang 2018 - Games chief



Organizers of the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics have completed construction of all competition and non-competition venues, Games chief Lee Hee-beom said on Monday.

Pyeongchang had been rushing to finish work on a number of projects including hotels and event venues after falling behind in the first few years of preparations. Lee said the completion of work was good news for organizers who can now focus on the delivery of what he said were going to be the biggest Winter Olympics in history.

Lee is in ancient Olympia for the lighting of the Olympic torch at the site of the ancient Olympics which will kick off the countdown to the Games.

The flame will arrive in Seoul on Nov. 1 for the start of a three-month journey across the country. "I can announce that as of today all competition and non-comp venues are complete," Lee told reporters a day before the torch lighting ceremony. "We want to ensure they (athletes) have their time of their life with the best facilities possible. We

are well on the road to achieving that."

"Infrastructure including the high-speed rail (connecting Pyeongchang with Incheon airport) and highways are already done. We will be the biggest winter Games ever and we aim to be the most athlete-focused."

The Feb. 9-25 Winter Games are the first to be staged in Asia outside Japan and the first of three consecutive Olympics on the continent, with the Tokyo 2020 Summer Games and the 2022 Beijing Winter Games to follow.

But organizers are struggling to sell tickets with only about a third of those available having been bought.

The run-up to the world's biggest winter sports event has also been overshadowed by an escalating crisis on the Korean peninsula. North Korea is working to develop a nuclear-tipped missile capable of striking the U.S. mainland and has ignored all calls, even from its lone major ally China, to rein in its weapons programs which it conducts in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

(Source: Reuters)

## Hamilton wins US GP, edges closer to 4th world title



sixth lap he swept past his German rival and immediately started to extend his advantage.

Vettel tried everything to keep up, coming in for fresh tires late in the race in a desperate bid to challenge but it was to no avail as Hamilton continued his relentless pace up front to eventually win by 10 seconds.

"It's the greatest feeling in the world," Hamilton said when interviewed by Bolt on the podium. "I was not expecting to have the pace on Sebastian today ... the car felt fantastic."

While Hamilton celebrated in customary "lightning bolt" fashion with the Jamaican sprinter, Vettel admitted that he just hadn't been quick enough.

"We couldn't go at (Hamilton's) pace today," Vettel said. "We were a bit in no-man's land. Towards the end we tried to pit again and put on a fresh set of tires, but overall not the result we wanted.

"There was no real secret other than they were quicker than us. Whoever is fastest usually has the best chance of winning."

Vettel was joined on the podium by his teammate Kimi Raikkonen after Max Verstappen took third, only to receive a five-second penalty from the stewards for going off the track when overtaking the Finn on the final lap.

Hamilton may not have won the title in Austin but his victory alongside Valtteri Bottas' fifth-place finish ensured that Mercedes sealed its fourth consecutive constructors' title.

Hamilton will look to do the same in the drivers' championship next weekend at the Mexico Grand Prix — finish fifth or higher at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez and he will be champion.

(Source: CNN)



# Young Team Melli promise a bright future for Iran

Kuala Lumpur: Their FIFA U-17 World Cup India 2017 run may be over but the Islamic Republic of Iran can look forward to a future which promises to see them staying at the top of the game.

Despite falling 3-1 to Spain in the quarter-finals on Sunday, Iran performed admirably as they enjoyed their most successful run in the tournament in four outings.

They hardly put a foot wrong in advancing to the last eight as they negotiated the group stage with a perfect record of three wins before seeing off Mexico, semi-finalists in the last three editions of the FIFA U-17 World Cup, in their last-16 showdown.

Their group stage wins included a 4-0 whitewash of football giants Germany and despite not producing their best in the loss to European champions Spain, coach Abbas Chamanian had reason to feel positive.

"I'm really happy that we got to play five games. It's been an amazing experience for the players and the coaching staff.

"We can already start harnessing this generation with a view to the future," said Chamanian as he reflected on a campaign which had also seen Iran beat Guinea (3-1) and Costa Rica (3-0).

Iranian football is at a high and the U-17 squad have huge shoes to fill going forward.

The senior Team Melli are preparing for the FIFA World Cup Russia 2018, having sealed qualification in style, but Iran must already start preparing for the future.

A future in which the U-17 squad is expected to play a prominent role, which Chamanian believes is very much within their reach.

Despite their young age, the players displayed a high level of maturity and were not overawed by the occasion.

The partnership of Allahyar Sayyad and Younes Delfi upfront was one of the best in the tournament and the duo look set to lead Iran's charge in the coming years.

Their relationship off the pitch is also good and this



can only mean one thing - goals on the pitch.

"Knowing each other's strengths helps us to work well together," said Delfi (pictured above, right) after Iran beat Germany.

Sayyad (pictured above, left) said the fact that they spend a lot of time together has helped their partnership.

"We always go through the details one more time

and don't like to leave anything to chance," said Sayyad.

This attention to detail is undoubtedly the reason behind Iran's run to the quarter-finals of the FIFA U-17 World Cup India 2017 and with players of this quality coming through the ranks, Team Melli can confidently look forward to a bright future.

(Source: the-afc)

## Bijan Heydari chosen to officiate Tehran derby



**S P O R T S** The committee referee desk of The Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran has chosen Bijan Heydari as referee of Tehran derby.

The 37-year-old referee will be assisted by Reza Sokhandan and Saeid Alinejadian in this match.

The 85th Tehran derby between Iranian giants Esteghlal and Persepolis will be held at the Azadi Stadium on Thursday.

This battle between two teams that

share an 80,000-capacity stadium is considered the biggest derby in all of Asia.

Persepolis sit third in Iran Professional League table with 17 points, eight points ahead of Esteghlal who remain in 13th place.

The two teams have played against each other 84 times, with Esteghlal winning 25 games, Persepolis taking 22 victories, and 37 matches ending in a draw.

## Paytakht Cup International Chess Festival to kick off on Tuesday



**S P O R T S** The second edition of the Paytakht Cup International Chess Festival will kick off on Tuesday in Tehran, capital of Iran.

A total of 430 chess players from Iran and 15 other countries are expected to participate in the nine-day competition.

The championship is organized in 9-round Swiss system in accordance

with the Tournament Rules and FIDE Laws of Chess.

Chess Association of Tehran Province under the auspices of Iran Chess Federation will organize the international event.

The first edition of the Paytakht Cup was held in Tehran from Oct. 24 to Nov. 1, 2016 with about 400 participants.

## Is Iran the world's greatest untapped skiing destination?

For most skiers and snowboarders the idea of an off-piste paradise normally conjures up thoughts of Alaska's majestic peaks, Verbier's world-famous freeride terrain or Japan's legendary powder fields.

Many, forgivably, would not consider looking to the mountains of Iran.

But hoping to lift the curtain on Iran's off-piste terrain is Snowworks, a UK-based provider of ski courses around the world. The company has announced a new trip to Iran's top resorts for British skiers next March, run in conjunction with tour operator Mountain Heaven.

Mountain Heaven MD Nick Williams visited the country in March 2016 and was impressed enough by the terrain, food, friendly people and atmospheric mountain cafés to launch holidays. The Snowworks trip combines four of Iran's main ski resorts: Dizin, Shemshak, Darbandsar and Tochal.

All the resorts have untapped off-piste areas that are accessed by lift, but most skiers and snowboarders have probably never heard of them. Mountain Heaven also offers a holiday to Dizin, Shemshak and Darbandsar which, while not recommended for beginners, is more piste based.

The Alborz Mountains, in northern Iran, stretch from the border with Azerbaijan and along the western and southern coast of the Caspian Sea. These holidays visit resorts in the center of the mountain range, north of the Iranian capital of Tehran.

Iran's ski areas reach altitudes that overshadow those of even the highest resorts in the Alps. Val Thorens, Europe's loftiest resort, sits at 2,300m with slopes ascending to just over 3,000m, and the highest mountain in the Alps, Mont Blanc, rockets to 4,810m. In comparison, Mount Damavand in Iran reaches 5,610m – just 285m short of Mount Kilimanjaro – and the resorts in the area all sit comfortably over 2,000m, with the ski areas reaching 3,600m and above.

The predominantly dry air that hits the Alborz Mountains from the desert means that the slopes and back-country terrain are covered in light dry powder, the perfect recipe for off-piste skiing.

"Skiing in Iran offers a true adventure, combining amazing culture and unforgettable skiing experiences," said Phil Smith, director of Snowworks.

"We'll be flying into Tehran with a city stopover before heading high up into the Alborz Mountain Range north of Tehran. Skiing in Iran is little known outside of the country, but there's an immense mountain range, largely untapped."

Designed to entice confident off-piste skiers to try a lesser-known destination, the Snowworks trip isn't for the faint-hearted. It involves ski touring in the Iranian back-country and off-piste riding in all types of terrain. Snowworks advises that those taking part in the adventure must reach its level five standard, which requires the participants to be confident in tackling black runs in any conditions, as well as

moguls, steep slopes and untracked off piste.

With 12 places available on the trip, Snowworks is offering only a select few snow-sports fans the chance to tap into Iran's off-piste secrets. For those who prefer to explore the pistes, Mountain Heaven's eight-day trip is for up to 20 people.

The skiing altitude in Iran may beat its European cousins, but the infrastructure is far less developed – a trait that makes it attractive to the handful of adventurous skiers and snowboarders who have visited.

A two-hour drive north from Tehran, Dizin is the country's biggest resort, sitting at 2,650m. Its slopes reach 3,600m and are supplied by three gondolas and 12 chairs. Shemshak (2,550m), the second-largest resort, has two chairlifts; Darbandsar (2,550m) has just one; and Tochal (1,950m), the smallest of the resorts, has two slow-moving gondolas.

While ski holidays from the UK to Iran are a new innovation, this is not the first time skiing in the country has hit the headlines. The opening of the Barin Hotel in Shemshak took the world by storm in 2016, when it was labelled one of the coolest ski hotels ever built.

Extreme skiing isn't a new phenomenon in the country, either. In 2016, professional skier Fabian Lentsch and his friends took on the dirt spines of Qeshm Island in Iran, making fresh tracks in the middle of the desert.

(Source: telegraph.co.uk)

## Ronald Koeman sacked as Everton manager

Everton have sacked manager Ronald Koeman after Sunday's 5-2 home defeat by Arsenal left them in the Premier League relegation zone.

A statement said the club "would like to express their gratitude to Ronald for the service he has given to the club over the past 16 months".

The Toffees are 18th in the Premier League and have won just two of their nine league games this season.

"I still believe I can change the whole situation," Koeman had said on Sunday.

Koeman became the third Premier League managerial casualty of the season after Frank de Boer left Crystal Palace and Craig Shakespeare was sacked by Leicester.

The 54-year-old Dutchman, who guided Everton to seventh place in his first season in charge last term, paid the price for a poor start to this season despite having spent £140m in the summer.

Everton owner Farhad Moshiri gave Koeman his backing a fortnight ago after their 1-0 defeat by Burnley, but the Toffees then drew at Brighton and lost to Lyon, in the Europa League, before their Goodison Park humbling by Arsenal.

Everton's chances of progressing from Europa League Group E are slim, with the Merseysiders bottom after defeats by Atalanta and Lyon and a draw with Apollon Limassol. On Sunday Koeman tweeted that getting

a result against Arsenal was "impossible" after being reduced to 10 men while losing 2-1.

Koeman reported for training at the club's Finch Farm base on Monday morning, with preparations for Wednesday's Carabao Cup game at Chelsea seemingly under way.

But chairman Bill Kenwright and chief executive Robert Elstone were later reported to have arrived unexpectedly and Koeman's dismissal was confirmed soon after.

(Source: BBC)

## IWBF Asia Oceania Championships: Iran down Saudi Arabia

**S P O R T S** Iran defeated Saudi Arabia 85-31 at the desk IWBF (International Wheelchair Basketball Federation) Asia Oceania Championships on Monday.

Iran have been scheduled to play New Zealand on Tuesday.

There will be 45 matches will played on two courts over six days at the Chinese Paralympic Training Venue.

In the men's competition, the 14 teams will be split into four pools and play a round-robin.

Defending champions Australia, who beat Iran 78-60 in the 2015 final, have been drawn in Group A alongside Chinese Taipei and Iraq.

Japan, the 2015 bronze medalists, are in Group B with Hong Kong and Kuwait.

Iran have been pitted against Thailand, Saudi Arabia and New Zealand in Group C.

Hosts China meet South Korea, the United Arab Emirates and Afghanistan in Group D.

The top two in each pool will progress through to the quarter-final.

The four semifinalists will secure a ticket to the 2018 World Championships, scheduled to take place in Hamburg next year from August 17 to 26.

## Sardar Azmoun's rise is meteoric: AFC

The-AFC.com takes a look at the best young talents in Asia and lauded Sardar Azmoun's meteoric rise.

The Iranian striker is rather unique for the young Asian players who have joined European clubs in recent years, in that he made the move before making his debut for the senior national team.

Azmoun's talent was first noticed after his displays for Iran's U-19 teams in various competitions with his fine form earning him a move to Russia's Rubin Kazan at the age of just 18.

During the qualifiers for the 2014 AFC U-19 Championship, Azmoun was particularly impressive in the 6-1 win over Lebanon as he scored twice and registered an assist.

Since then, Azmoun's rise has been meteoric, with the 22-year-old boasting 22 goals in 28 matches for the senior national team after making his debut in 2014.

(Source: the-afc)



## Iran and Malta disqualified from FINA Water Polo Development

After Malta and Iran were disqualified, Uruguay was awarded the FINA Water Polo Development Trophy title.

It was all about tensions which erupted towards the end of the final between Malta and Iran. Malta led 8-6, the last goal came 44 seconds from time and decided the outcome.

Eleven seconds later players started to provocation. Red cards were shown for two Maltese and five Iranian players but those who had been excluded earlier, began a mainly verbal fight outside the pool, FINA.org reported.

While the coaches tried to order their players to refrain from making further insults on each other, the teams' players left the pool and rushed towards the scene.

There were no punches or serious physical violence, the participants just yelled on each other amidst some pushing.

Anyway, that should not be part of any water polo games which are supposed to be decided in the pool and not out of it.

Uruguay won the title, followed by Saudi Arabia and Austria. Santiago San Martin of Uruguay was named as Most Valuable Player of the competition.

(Source: fina.org)

## Wada to investigate claims of doping in China

Claims that more than 10,000 Chinese athletes used banned substances will be investigated by the World Anti-Doping Agency's intelligence unit.

The claims, made by former Olympic team doctor Xue Yinxian on German TV, refer to athletes using the substances in the 1980s and 1990s.

Xue claimed there was systematic doping across a number of Chinese sports.

She also said she was dismissed from the national team for refusing to give a gymnast a banned substance.

A World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada) statement said it had seen Xue's claims but it would have difficulty prosecuting cases that happened 30 years ago.

The Wada code was introduced in 2003, and the statute of limitations for prosecuting code violations is 10 years.

Xue claimed in the interview that athletes as young as 11 were given banned substances, and that all of China's medals in major tournaments during that period were won through the use of performance-enhancing drugs.

She added that doping existed in football, athletics, swimming, volleyball, basketball, table tennis, diving, gymnastics and weightlifting. China was one of nine countries to be banned from international weightlifting for one year earlier this month, after drugs tests came back positive.

(Source: BBC)



INTERNATIONAL DAILY  
www.tehrantimes.com

■ Managing Director: Ali Asgari

■ Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895  
editor@tehrantimes.com

» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000

» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450

» Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807

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P.o. Box: 14155-4843

Zip Code: 1599814713

Works by Iranian artists to go under hammer at Christie's London

**A R T TEHRAN** — Works by a number of Iranian artists will be offered at Christie's Middle Eastern, Modern and Contemporary Art sale, which is scheduled to be held in London on October 25.



"Heartbeat" by Monir Farmanfarmaian

Monir Farmanfarmaian's "Heartbeat" painted in Tehran in July 2006 is on sale at an estimated price of £60,000 to £80,000. A painting by Bahman Mohasses named "Tiresia Did Not Know Much about the Future" is offered at an estimated price of £200,000 to £250,000 and Sohrab Sepehri's untitled painting is going on sale at £70,000 to £90,000. "Standing Lovers" from sculptor Parviz Tanavoli's Heech series is offered at £120,000 to £180,000. Works by Faramarz Pilaram, Manuchehr Yekta, Hossein Zenderudi, Nasrollah Afjei and Reza Derakhshani have also been selected for the sale. Other highlights of the event are "The Watermelon Seller" by Iraqi artist Jewad Selim (1919-1961) offered at £200,000 to £250,000 and "Hanem" by Egyptian artist Mahmoud Said (1897-1964) offered at £120,000 to £180,000.

Iran's "Color of Poetry" on display at Romanian ceramic biennale

**A R T TEHRAN** — Iranian artist Abbas Akbari is showcasing his latest artwork "Color of Poetry" at the 3rd International Cluj Ceramics Biennale, which is currently underway in the Romanian city.



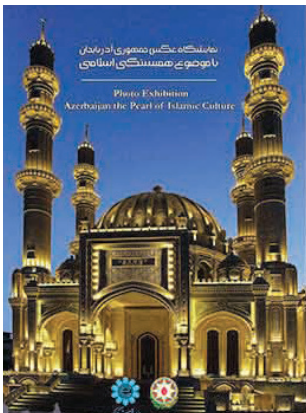
"Color of Poetry" by Iranian artist Abbas Akbari

"Color of Poetry" is an orange, oval-shaped bowl decorated with golden Persian typographical designs. Works by artists from Turkey, France, the U.S., Canada, Italy, South Korea, Germany and several other countries are on display at the biennale, which will come to an end on November 26.

ECO Cultural Institute to host Azerbaijan photo exhibition

**A R T TEHRAN** — An exhibition of photos from Azerbaijan on the theme of "Islamic Solidarity" will be held at the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Cultural Institute (ECI) in Tehran from October 29 to November 5.

The exhibition, which has been organized to observe Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's decision to declare 2017 as the year of Islamic solidarity, the ECI announced on Sunday. A collection of 80 photos of the Azerbaijani Islamic sites will be put on display at the Diplomatic Gallery of the ECI located on 3 Movahhed Danesh St., off Nilufar St, in the Aqdasieh neighborhood.



A poster for an exhibition of photos from Azerbaijan at the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Cultural Institute (ECI) in Tehran

Polish "Evil Deeds" wins grand prix at Tehran Intl. Short Film Festival

**A R T TEHRAN** — Polish filmmaker Piotr Domalewski's "Evil Deeds" won the grand prix of the 34th Tehran International Short Film Festival (TISFF) on Sunday. The film is about Max, the ten-year-old son of a hospital cleaner who has been caught trying to steal a patient's wallet. The elderly pensioner decides not to report the theft, and instead asks Max to complete three tasks, which are more challenging than Max would ever have expected. Winners were awarded at the closing ceremony of the festival at Tehran's Art Bureau. "Andro" by Tornike Gogrichiani from Georgia won the best fiction film award while "Whole to Part" by Seyyed Vahid Hosseini from Iran received the best experimental film award. "Friday Carpet" by Iranian filmmaker Mehdi Asadi was named the best documentary and the best animation award was presented to "The Never Ending Wall" by Silvia Carpizo from Spain. In the Iranian film competition, "Animal", co-directed by Bahram and Bahman Ark, was picked as the best film. The film also received the audience



A scene from "Evil Deeds" by Polish filmmaker Piotr Domalewski

award and the directors shared the best director award with Arman Khandsarian for his film "Elephant's Shadow".

"Animal" tells the story of a man who attempts to cross a frontier disguised as a ram.

The 34th Tehran International Short Film Festival was held from October 17 to 22.

Iranian designer's "Panacea" for Spain's Roca wins top prize at Jumpthegap contest



"Panacea" by Iranian designer Mohammadreza Shahmohammadi won the top prize at the 7th Jumpthegap in Barcelona.

**A R T TEHRAN** — A design for a special bathtub by Mohammadreza Shahmohammadi from Iran, has been selected as best work at the 7th Jumpthegap, an international design competition in Barcelona. The design won a €10,000 cash prize in the professional category of the contest, which is organized every year by Roca, a major Spanish producer of sanitary products, the organizers announced last week. Jumpthegap recognizes the most innovative and sustainable projects for the bathroom of the future. "Panacea" provides solutions to

overuse of water, the possibility of a child's drowning in a bathtub, and occupying extra space, which is not in harmony with the contemporary lifestyle. Second prize was presented to "Sanctuary" by Bodin Hon & Dilara Kan from Hong Kong and third prize was awarded to "WCircle" by Charbel El Tawil from Lebanon. London-based architect Patrik Schumacher, director of Zaha Hadid Architects, presided over the jury this year. The award ceremony was held at the Disseny Hub Barcelona on October 17. Roca has organized the contest in collaboration with the Barcelona Design Center since 2004.

David Letterman, celebrated late-night TV host, receives U.S. humor prize

**WASHINGTON (Reuters)** — David Letterman, a pioneering entertainer who was the longest-running host of late-night TV in U.S. history, was honored on Sunday for his contributions to American culture. After-hours television was built around the set-piece interview and guest appearance when Letterman's "Late Night" broke the mold in 1982 with absurd pranks and send-ups. Everyday viewers went on his show to present "stupid pet tricks." Behind his desk, Letterman could be serious, dry and cerebral. But he often volunteered for oddball pranks. In one well-known stunt, he worked a shift at a Taco Bell in suburban New Jersey, taking pickup orders. In another sketch, Letterman was dunked in water while covered in Alka Seltzer tablets. Receiving the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor at the Kennedy Center, the national showcase for arts, Letterman, 70, was praised for his imagination, comic daring and heart. Many younger comedians, including current late-night host Jimmy Kimmel, have described Letterman as a major influence. Before Kimmel's on-stage tribute to Letterman, the entertainer recalled one of his favorite, offbeat moments. "Dave brought this doorknob out. And he put it on a table. And he said 'It's just plain big.' That was it." Letterman hosted more than 6,000 episodes of his original "Late Night with David Letterman" on NBC and its successor on CBS, "Late Show with David Letterman," which ended its run in May 2015. He won multiple Emmy Awards, U.S. television's highest honor, for his work



Comedian David Letterman speaks to the media as he arrives for a gala where he is receiving the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor at Kennedy Center in Washington, U.S., October 22, 2017. (Reuters/Joshua Roberts)

as a writer, performer and producer. The Indiana native made his first of 22 appearances on "The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson" in 1978. After hosting "Late Night" for 11 years, he moved to CBS in 1993 after losing out to longtime rival Jay Leno to succeed Carson at "The Tonight Show". On Sunday, comic friends teased Letterman about his late-night wars with Leno and retirement but the honoree struck a poignant note in his acceptance speech. "Mark Twain's definition of patriotism is this: Patriotism is supporting your country all the time and your government when it deserves it." In 2012, Letterman was recognized for his contributions to the arts and American culture at the Kennedy Center Honors, a lifetime achievement awards for performing artists. The Letterman tribute will be aired on public television stations on Nov. 20.

Cartoon exhibit to spotlight women's rights in Iran

**A R T TEHRAN** — An exhibition of cartoons on women's rights in Iran will be held in Paris during January 2018. The cartoons have been created by Pantea Vaeznia for the exhibit, which is part of the 1st Persian Speakers in Europe Art Festival, the organizers announced in a press release on Monday. "This exhibition gives a real insight into women's status and their rights in modern Iranian society," said Vaeznia who has worked with Gol Aqa, a Persian satirical magazine, and several Iranian newspapers. "Despite all the misinformation about Iran from foreign media, Iranian women are active in various cultural, social and political fields," she stated. "Iran's patriarchal society has not only failed to keep women in homes, but also has caused them to strive for greater success," she added. "By this exhibition, I intend to change the improper views of Iranian expatriates about women's status in Iran and convince them to be more realistic," she noted. Vaeznia said that her exhibition



*Iranian cartoonist Pantea Vaeznia will familiarize visitors with women's problems as well with their successes in Iranian society. The Persiana Media Group is the main organizer of the festival, which will be held from January 13 to 20, 2018. The event is designed to introduce Persian art and culture to the world.*

Graffiti set design adds punch to Cuba theater festival

**HAVANA (Reuters)** — A play parodying the lengths some Cubans will go to in order to earn a few tourist dollars set against the backdrop of socially critical graffiti is adding punch to Havana's annual theater festival. The first-time collaboration between veteran theater director Nelda Castillo, 64, and street artist Yulier Rodriguez, 27, underscores unease among some Cubans with the recent influx of tourists on the cash-strapped, Communist-run island. The interdisciplinary spectacle, "¡Guan melón!, ¡tu melón!", is also an example of the innovative ways Cubans are pushing the boundaries of critical expression. Rodriguez's eerie murals of creatures that look malnourished and malformed had become ubiquitous throughout Havana over the last three years, reflecting his view of the dark path upon which society was. But the artist said authorities detained him for two days in August and ordered him to stop painting in public spaces. Graffiti is seen as vandalism in many countries, although Rodriguez suspects authorities stopped him more because they did not like the content of his work. "Now I am limited in what I can do in the streets, any space where I can exhibit my work becomes a space of resistance for me," said Rodriguez. Castillo, who often collaborates with visual artists, said she invited Rodriguez to paint the walls of the renowned El Ciervo Encantado theater because she knew his graffiti would enrich her play. "The piece is about the Cubans' struggle in the street in the context of the new relations with the United States



*Public wait for the beginning of the spectacle "¡Guan melón!, ¡tu melón!" beside a paint of Cuban street artist Yulier Rodriguez in a theatre in Havana, Cuba, October 20, 2017. (Reuters/Alexandre Meneghini)* and the influx of American visitors," she said. "His work is also about that struggle in the street." In the play that was first staged last year, a skinny and squat comic duo attempt frantically to entertain tourists arriving on cruise ships with Cuban tunes and to sell them outsized cigars and paper cones of peanuts. In a beleaguered economy which shrank last year and where the average state salary is \$30 a month, the tourist sector is a relative gold mine. Castillo said Rodriguez's graffiti - eerie, scared and hungry-looking creatures with four eyes, two gaping mouths or a crown of skulls - was like another protagonist in the play. "Dialogue is always enriching as long as it is coherent," said Castillo. The two kept quiet about their collaboration until the day it opened to the public, at the start of the theater festival that runs from Oct. 20-29. "Fingers crossed no one from up top orders the graffiti to be erased," said Rodriguez.