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Castro was amazingly successful in instituting functioning system: professor

INTERVIEW
By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Arshin Adib Moghaddam says Fidel Castro succeeded to establish a functioning ruling system, especially in the health sector.

Castro, the legendary leader of the Cuban Revolution, died on November 25 at the age of 90.

"He (Fidel Castro) was amazingly successful in instituting a functioning system for governance and administration, including one of the best health care systems in the world," Adib Moghaddam, chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute, tells the Tehran Times.

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Tehran says Senate sanctions renewal breaches JCPOA

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Friday the U.S. Senate's vote to renew sanctions law against Tehran flouts the terms of an international nuclear deal finalized last year.

"As announced repeatedly by the country's senior officials, the recent bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate to extend sanctions against Iran runs counter to BARJAM (JCPOA) and the U.S's

commitments under international law on non-interference in domestic and international relations of other countries," read part of an announcement carried on the official website of the Foreign Ministry. ➔2



Iraqi troops take two neighborhoods in Mosul

See page 13

© Telegraph

Romanian embassy marks National Day in Iran

By Marjan Golpira

TEHRAN — On Tuesday, the Romanian embassy celebrated its National Day, also known as Great Union Day, in Tehran.

Each year on December 1st, Romanians celebrate the unification of Romanian provinces, a day that is observed as an annual public holiday throughout the country.

Speaking before a group of diplomatic corps, the Romanian Ambassador to Tehran, Adrian Kozjaski, highlighted the traditional and historical ties between Iran and Romania.

Ambassador Kozjaski also said the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, has prepared the ground for expansion of relations between Iran and Romania in agriculture, transportation, tourism, energy, and telecommunications and so on.

Since the beginning of 2016, there have been cross-visits by high government officials of the two countries as well as bilateral political consultations at the level of deputy chiefs, the ambassador added.

The ambassador said the "joint economic commissions" are of high importance for development of economic relations.

To do so, the envoy added, a team of Iranian experts and their Romanian counterparts met and held talks on trade and business in Bucharest this year.

He held out hope that with the upcoming parliamentary election in Romania, political talks are held at higher levels so that "we witness further expansion of economic and bilateral relations."

CIA chief: Tearing up JCPOA will be 'height of folly'

Outgoing CIA Director John Brennan has said it would be the "height of folly" for U.S. President-elect Donald Trump to tear up the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

"I think it would be the height of folly if the next administration were to tear up that agreement," he told BBC in an interview aired on Wednesday.

"First of all for one administration to tear up an agreement that a previous administration made would be unprecedented," he said. He added, "I think it would be disastrous."

Iran and the six major powers finalized the text of the JCPOA in July 2015 which took effect in January 2016.

In a speech to a conference of

the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in Washington in March Trump claimed that his "number one priority is to dismantle the disastrous deal with Iran". However, he later backed down from his rhetoric saying it was difficult to violate a deal which has been approved by the UN Security Council.

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said on November 9 that the JCPOA is a "multilateral agreement" and that she is tasked to guarantee its full implementation.

EU foreign ministers also issued a statement on November 14 reiterating the 28-nation bloc's "resolute" commitment to the implementation of the nuclear agreement.

Court orders release of Shiite leader Zakzaky

The Federal High Court in Abuja, on Friday, ordered the unconditional release of detained Shiite's Islamic leader, Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky and his wife, Malama Zee-natudeen within 45 days.

Delivering the judgment, the Presiding Judge, Justice Gabriel Kolawole held that the continued detention of El-Zakzaky and his wife

by state instrumentality was an arbitrary act.

Kolawole said no extant law within the country's statutory legal frameworks and external ones subscribed to by the state had allowed anybody to be held against his or her wishes.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that El-Zakzaky had filed a fundamental right enforcement suit against the Federal

Government challenging both him and his spouse detention.

The court therefore, held that the continued detention of the applicant without trial amounted to a gross violation of the constitution and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.

(Source: Guardian)



© IRNA/ Vahid Khademi

Archaeologists unearth history at ancient site in Bojnourd

Excavations at a historical site in Bojnourd, northeastern Iran, bore fruit as a group of German archaeologists unearthed artifacts and skeletons at a historical hill dubbed "Rivi", three kilometers east of North Khorasan province.

The remains are estimated to date back to the Sassanid and Achaemenid eras, when Iran established the prototype for all future great empires.

Iran's agriculture sector welcomes Dutch investment

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian desk Agriculture Minister Mahmoud Hojjati has said Dutch entrepreneurs and investors are welcomed to participate in the development of Iran's agricultural sector.

Hojjati made the remarks in a Friday meeting in the Netherlands with Dutch Minister of Economic Affairs Henk Kamp, IRNA reported.

Iran is the leading producer of pistachios, dates, pomegranates, and apricots in the world and is planning to increase exports of such products through expanding target markets, Hojjati said.

The Dutch minister, for his part, voiced his country's readiness for economic cooperation with Iran in all areas, especially in the field of agriculture.

At the end of the meeting, the two sides signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in various fields including agriculture, food, fisheries, livestock, and health as well as agriculture modernization and marketing.

According to Iran-Netherlands Business Council, economic ties between Iran and the Netherlands are focused on agriculture, fishery, horticulture, water management, transportation, and marine industries.

Iran's key imports from the Netherlands include equipment and machinery for oil, gas, petrochemical, mining, and transport projects, while key exports to the European country include minerals, dried fruits, carpets, handicrafts, and caviar.

ARTICLE
By Yuram Abdullah Weiler
Analyst and journalist

Sisi's policy switch on Syria widens Egypt-Saudi split

"Our priority is to support national armies, for example in Libya to assert control over Libyan territories, and deal with extremist elements. The same with Syria and Iraq."

—Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi

When Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi met with Lebanese prime minister Tammam Salam in June 2015, al-Sisi informed Tammam to be prepared for the fall of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, which could occur "at any moment." Now the Egyptian head of state has announced his support for the besieged Syrian leader and will be dispatching forces to supplement Egyptian troops already in the country since early November.

The move has lowered the temperature of Cairo's already lukewarm relations with Riyadh. The big chill seems to have intensified when Egypt backed a UN Security Council resolution on Syria drafted by Russia in October 2016. The resolution proposed by Russia contained much the same language as a rival resolution drafted by France, with the exception of a demand "that all parties immediately end all aerial bombardments of and military flights over Aleppo city."

Strangely enough, the Egyptian ambassador to the UN, Amr Abu Atta, voted for both the French and Russian draft resolutions. Justifying his seemingly ambivalent position, Atta explained that both drafts contained many common points, and that Egypt wants to support all efforts to end the tragedy in Syria. The Saudi ambassador, Abdallah al-Mouallimi, expressed his displeasure over the vote of the Egyptian ambassador, calling it "painful."

Following the vote, the Riyadh regime retaliated by cutting Saudi Aramco oil aid deliveries to Egypt; however, a five-year contract reportedly remains in force. ➔13

ARTICLE
By Ebrahim Fallahi
Tehran Times journalist

OPEC deal: Iran turns the tables on Saudis

After months of talks and rounds of meetings, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) finally sealed a deal on November 30 for a production cut, marking a turning point in the organization's history.

A deal which everyone believed had a very little chance of success, is now done and the organization agreed to cut production by about 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd), or about 4.5 percent of current production, to 32.5 million bpd.

Two months ago in Algiers an agreement was outlined based on which the OPEC and non-members were obliged to cut their productions in order to stabilize the market. The idea received waves of skepticism from the very first moments.

With Iran's tensions with its arch-rival Saudi Arabia at highest and with Russia not in accordance with the organization regarding any cuts in its production the chances of the real implementation of the agreed looked quite dim.

■ rivals duel

On one hand, Saudi Arabia with a long history of having the final say in the organization suddenly saw its position threatened by Iran, and on the other hand, unshackling from years of sanctions imposed by the West, Iran did not accept another imposition on its production level.

The kingdom which was trying to maintain authority and saving its shattering economy at the same time, insisted on an old offer, to cut production only if Iran freezes at current levels.

Finding their proposal refused by Iran, Saudis played the "threat" card in an OPEC's ministers gathering, hinting that they might walk away from the negotiations. They expected a desired response from Iran but apparently Tehran was willing to take the risk; the country did not withdraw its position. ➔4

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Iranian parliament to adopt legislation against Senate act

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — MP Akbar Ran-d e s k jbarzadeh said on Friday that the Iranian parliament will approve a triple emergency plan on Sunday to counter the Senate's act.

He described the U.S. Senate's approval in extending sanctions against Iran as a violation of the JCPOA which causes harm to Iran's interests.

The U.S. Senate passed a 10-year extension of sanctions against Iran on Thursday, sending the measure to the White House for President Barack Obama to sign into law.



Cleric: Iran should retaliate U.S. violation of nuclear deal

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Tehran's interim Fri-d e s k day prayers leader has blasted the U.S. Senate for extending sanctions against Iran for another 10 years, saying now it is Tehran's turn to reciprocate, Fars reported.

Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Movahedi Kerma-ni said, "Nothing but hostility is expected from America, but as said before, now it's time for re-taliation."

"As the Supreme Leader has said, if the law which extends sanctions against Iran for another 10 years is approved, it will certainly and undoubtedly violate the nuclear deal."



'Navy, IRGC not to allow alien vessels approach Iran'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Navy d e s k commander has underlined that his forces along with the IRGC Naval Force are monitoring any moves inside and outside the country's territorial waters and will not allow alien vessels to approach Iran's borders.

"The Iranian Navy, fully supported by peo-ple and taking orders from the Supreme Leader, doesn't fear any threats and will be present in all arenas to safeguard the water borders," Rear Ad-miral Habibollah Sayyari said on Friday, Nasim re-ported.



Rouhani urges all-out ties with Romania

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian President d e s k Hassan Rouhani in a message to his Romanian counterpart Klaus Iohannis on Thurs-day stressed the need for a further enhancement of relations between Tehran and Bucharest.

"I extend my heartfelt congratulations to His Excellency, the Romanian government and peo-ple on Romanian Republic's national day," Rou-hani said in his message to Iohannis, ILNA re-ported.

"I hope for growing expansion of bilateral rela-tions in all political, economic and cultural levels," he wrote.



Putin's envoy due in Tehran for talks on Syria

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Russia's presiden-t d e s k tial representative for the Middle East and Africa is scheduled to visit Iran on Monday for talks on issues of mutual interest, including the ongoing crisis in Syria, Ebrahim Rahimpour, deputy foreign minister for Asia-Pacific Affairs, told IRNA on Thursday.

Mikhail Bogdanov last visited Tehran four months ago for talks with Iranian officials on coun-terring international terrorism and finding a lasting settlement to the crisis in Syria.



Mohsen Rezaee: Iran's response to U.S. will be 'shocking'

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The secretary of d e s k Iran's Expediency Council has said if the U.S. extends sanctions on Iran, the Islamic Republic's response will be "shocking".

Writing on Instagram on Friday, Mohsen Rezaee said the new sanctions will not concern only Iran, but will be a mockery of Europe, China, and Russia.

"It will be a disregard for the UN Security Council. Therefore, we will be free to act against America. But our action will be more fundamen-tal and more crushing," the former IRGC chief remarked.

FM Zarif to head to India, China, Japan



POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's For-ei g n Minister Moham-mad Javad Zarif will start its three-leg visit to China, India, and Japan, a policy the ministry's spokesman saw in line with efforts to establish "balanced" relations with countries.

"The three-leg visit is in line with Iran's active and dynamic diplomacy which aims to balance communications and in-teractions with different countries around the world," ISNA quoted Bahram Qassemi as saying on Friday.

As the first leg of his trip, Zarif is due to flow from Tehran to India on Saturday to attend 6th Heart of Asia ministerial confer-ence, due in India's Amritsar on Saturday.

The "Heart of Asia—Istanbul Process" was founded in 2011 and the first confere-ence was held at Istanbul that year.

The two-day conference, which fo-cuses on regional cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbors to improve connectivity and tackle security threats, will bring delegates from over 30 coun-tries, including around 15 Asian nations.

This year's running theme is "Address-ing Challenges, Achieving Prosperity."

Zarif is scheduled to address the con-ference on the latest developments in Afghanistan and the challenges the Eur-asian country faces as well as Tehran's stance in this regard, Qassemi explained.

"A business delegation comprising of private- and state-run representatives will accompany the foreign minister," he said.

■ Zarif to discuss banking ties with China

Zarif will visit China as the second leg of his tour, where he will sit down with a number of Chinese officials.

"Expansion of ties with China as one of



The last destination of the three-leg visit will be Tokyo, where Zarif will exchange views with his Japanese opposite number as well as the country's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

the key economic countries is of critical importance for us," Qassemi said of Zarif's trip to Beijing.

China was one of the six countries fi-nalizing the deal with Iran over its nuclear program.

Ever since, officials of the countries have been reciprocating high-ranking visits.

During the visit to Tehran of Chinese President Xi Jinping contracts worth of billions of dollars were finalized.

However, still there are problems to be

resolved.

"We hope the visit lays the ground-work of bilateral relations to continue and red tape issues such as sluggish banking ties to ease," the Foreign Ministry spokes-man stressed.

■ Japan has "explicit proposals" for cooperation with Iran

The last destination of the three-leg visit will be Tokyo, where Zarif will ex-change views with his Japanese opposite number as well as the country's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

"In addition to his Japanese coun-terpart, Mr. Zarif will meet some other Japanese officials including the country's prime minister," Qassemi said.

"The Japanese have explicit proposals to expand ties with Iran, and we hope the projects are finalized during the visit," he further stated.

Trade between Iran and Japan dropped dramatically during the sanctions years and unlike China which did not leave the Iranian market, Japan proved a less strate-gic partner.

Tehran says Senate sanctions renewal breaches JCPOA

1→ On Thursday, the U.S. Senate overwhelmingly voted 99-0 to reinstate the Iran Sanctions Act, a ten-year exten-sion of sanctions in place since 1996.

The bill had already been passed two weeks ago by the House of Represent-atives with a landslide margin of 419-1, now at Obama's desk for final approval.

If not extended, the ISA expires by the end of 2016. However, U.S. Congress members will see the ISA as a fast-track mechanism for any U.S. president to rein-state sanctions against Tehran.

Obama's sign can be an ironical part-ing shot to the nuclear deal his aides have hailed as one of the administration's sig-nature achievements.

Under the deal, signed by world pow-ers, including the U.S., Iran reveled in relief from international sanctions in ex-change for a limited nuclear program.

Obama is expected to sign the legisla-tion, the American Hill daily quoted an of-ficial close to the administration as saying.

The official said the administration has



"Under BARJAM, the president of the United States has undertaken to use his prerogatives to prevent anti-JCPOA measures, the recent Senate bill included, from being legalized and enforced."

determined the measure does not vio-late the Iran nuclear agreement, meeting a condition had Obama set to earn his signature.

Iran sees the sanctions extension push a violation of the nuclear deal, urging Obama to veto the act.

"Under BARJAM, the president of the

United States has undertaken to use his prerogatives to prevent anti-BARJAM measures, the recent Senate bill included, from being legalized and enforced," read another part of the announcement.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final say on Iran's foreign policy, had said the anti-Iran act, if passed and en-forced, "would certainly be in breach of BARJAM."

Also, Iran's nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi, who helped finalize the deal, said a week ago that plans had been envisioned in the event Washington failed to make good on its JCPOA com-mitments.

The most explicit stance was taken by Alaeddin Boroujerdi, head of the Iranian parliamentary committee for national secu-rity and foreign policy.

"If America extends sanctions and vio-lates BARJAM (JCPOA), we increase pro-duction and enrichment of uranium up to 190,000 SWU," he said on Tuesday.

Iranian ambassador delivers credentials to British queen



POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's Ambassador to Britain, Hamid Baedinejad, met with Queen Elizabeth II on Thursday and delivered his credentials to her.

"The new situation in the contemporary world and the challenges that it has created for Asia, Europe, the U.S. and Mideast were discussed in the meeting," Baed-inejad posted on his Instagram page.

Queen Elizabeth II received the credentials and ex-pressed hope that expansion of ties and cooperation



would benefit the Iranian and British people, he wrote.

The Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Kingdom restored their diplomatic relations to the highest level by assigning and dispatching their ambassadors to the other country each in September.

Nicholas Hopton has been appointed as British am-bassador to Iran.

The two countries resumed their ties about a year ago by assigning chargés d'affaires. The two had closed their diplomatic missions in 2011.

Iran urges Kenya to release two lawyers immediately



POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Fri-day called on the Kenyan officials to immediately release two Iranian advocates detained on Thursday.

"Dr. Abdolhossein Safaei and Dr. Seyyed Nasrollah Ebrahimi, two Iranian lawyers and university profes-

sors, went to Nairobi to provide two Iranian inmates in Kenya with legal consultations and were questioned by police on Tuesday after meeting with the inmates. Unfortunately, interference of some third parties led to detention of the two lawyers on Thursday," he ex-plaind.

Senate act will influence international trust on U.S.: senior lawmaker



POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Moham-mad Reza Aref, head of the reformist parliamentary Hope faction, said on Friday that the Senate's action in extending the Iran Sanctions Act (ISA) for another 10 years will ne-gatively influence international trust on the U.S.

"The U.S. Senate's action in ex-tending sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran for 10 years will in-fluence trust on the country at the international system and will bring many consequences for the U.S.," not-

ed Aref, a Stanford educated lawmak-er who garnered the highest number of votes in the Tehran constituency in February.

He urged the U.S. president to veto the Senate's act.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will re-spond to this action of Senate seriously while being committed to international obligations," he said.

Aref called on the Iranian foreign po-licy officials to observe actions being tak-en by the signatories to the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive

Plan of Action, and take appropriate stance based on the country's national interests.

According to Reuters, the ISA was first adopted in 1996 to punish invest-ments in Iran's energy industry. The extension was passed unanimously on Thursday.

Iran and the 5+1 group - the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia plus Germa-ny - reached the nuclear deal in July 2015 which went into effect in January 2016.



France presidency: Francois Hollande decides not to run again

In a surprise move Francois Hollande has announced he will not seek a second term as president of France.

"I've decided not to be a candidate to renew my mandate," the Socialist leader said in a live televised address.

The 62-year-old, faced with very low popularity ratings, has become the first sitting president in modern French history not to seek re-election.

Conservative Republicans party candidate Francois Fillon is seen as a favorite in next year's election.

Recent opinion polls suggest far-right contender Marine Le Pen from the National Front could be Fillon's closest challenger.

'Aware of risks'

"In the months to come, my only duty will be to continue to lead my country," Hollande said on Thursday.

"The world, Europe, France have faced particularly serious challenges during my mandate. In these particularly challenging circumstances I wanted to maintain national cohesion," he said.

He was referring to deadly terrorist attacks in Nice last July and Paris in November 2015, as well as the shootings at the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo several months before that.

Hollande added that he was aware of the risks of running and warned of the threat from the National Front.

One of the first reactions came from a former economy minister, Emmanuel Macron, who said the president had made a "courageous decision". He is himself standing for president as an independent centrist, having resigned from the government a few months ago.

But Hollande's decision not to stand now opens up the Socialist party contest in January. Prime Minister Manuel Valls is likely to be favorite to win the candidacy, having said last weekend he was ready to run.

Valls described Hollande's decision



not to run as "the choice of a statesman".

Last weekend, more than four million French voters chose Fillon, a former prime minister, to represent the Republicans in the two-stage presidential election in April and May next year.

Opinion polls suggest he would win the first round in April, ahead of Marine Le Pen. If Valls were the Socialist candidate he would be placed third. Fillon would then go on to win the run-off.

During his term in office, he devoted all his energy to cutting unemployment, and it had begun to fall but far later than he had hoped.

Since January 2015, Hollande's presidency has been overshadowed by jihadist terror attacks. France has been under

a state of emergency amid fears of further attack.

Francois Hollande's decision not to stand again comes as a huge relief to the Socialist Party, and probably to himself as well.

He - no doubt - mulled it hard and long. It is, after all, something of a humiliation to be the first president under the Fifth Republic to decide he's not good enough to run for a second term.

And yet how much more of a humiliation would it have been to stand in the presidential and be wiped out by Marine Le Pen in round one?

Or worse, to be eliminated in the Socialists' own primary in January?

Because the truth is Francois Hollande

had lost touch not only with the country - but also with his own camp.

He was always the indispensable compromise candidate who saved the Socialist party from pulling itself in two.

But now both left and right in the party have had enough.

Hollande came to power promising a period of normality, after the turbulent centre-right presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy.

But he struggled to introduce reform and faced rebellion from the left wing of his Socialist party.

His judgement was called into question in October, when a book of damaging revelations was published, entitled A President Shouldn't Say That.

He suggested the justice system was full of "cowards" and labelled his left-wing opponents a "crowd of idiots".

French media stunned by Hollande "bombshell"

Several French media outlets point out that this is the first time in modern French history that a sitting president has decided not to seek a second term in office.

After the suspense that attended the run-up to Hollande's announcement, his decision is seen by many papers - such as Le Parisien - as "a bombshell".

The Catholic paper La Croix calls his decision "unprecedented", adding that "although, of course, in theory it was conceivable that an outgoing president might not stand again, it was not that likely".

L'Observateur notes that the only other president who failed to seek a second mandate was Georges Pompidou, but that was on account of his death.

"Hollande, on the other hand, must resign himself to a political death," the newspaper concludes.

(Source: BBC)

ISIL may use car bombs, extortion, kidnappings in new terrorist attacks in EU

Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist group is likely to carry out more terrorist attacks in the EU, Europol warns, citing intelligence sources. Terrorists may resort to tactics that they use in Syria and Iraq, such as car bombs, extortion and kidnappings, according to a new report.

Intelligence sources suggest that ISIL has "assembled teams in Syria" that are being sent to European Union countries to carry out attacks, the report, entitled "Changes in Modus Operandi of Islamic State Revisited," from Europol's European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) warned on Friday.



"Estimates from some intelligence services indicate several dozen people directed by ISIL may be currently present in Europe with a capability to commit terrorist attacks," Europol warned.

"Modi operandi employed in Syria and Iraq, such as the use of car bombs, may emerge as a method of attack in the EU," it said.

Automatic firearms are the weapons of choice for terrorist cells, and easier access to them in countries neighboring the EU, particularly in Ukraine and Western Balkan countries, "may lead to a significant number of those weapons becoming available via the black market, posing a significant threat in the near future," the report says.

ISIL 'interested' in use of chemical weapons

There is evidence that ISIL has also shown an interest in using chemical and/or biological weapons, Europol noted.

"ISIL is known to have used sulphur mustard gas in Syria and is thought to be able to produce the gas itself. ISIL is believed to include people who were formerly engaged in Iraq's weapons program and it is assumed that the group has access to Iraqi and Libyan storage sites of chemical weapons. In addition, there are indications that ISIL is experimenting with biological weapons," the report says.

Counter terrorism experts are concerned that Libya could develop into a "second springboard for ISIL, after Syria, for attacks in the EU and the North African region," Europol said.

"Terrorists acting in the name of ISIL are able to plan relatively complex attacks - including those on multiple targets - quickly and effectively," the report said, adding that the scale and impact of lone actor attacks is also on the rise.

In addition to France and Belgium, all other EU member states that are part of the US-led coalition against ISIL are "prone to be attacked by terrorists led or inspired by ISIL," it warned.

Syrian refugees 'vulnerable to radicalization'

"Attacks may also be carried out to compromise Syrian refugees as a group and to provoke member states to change their policies towards them," the report added.

There is a "real and imminent danger" that ISIL recruiters targeting refugees from Syria who are "vulnerable to radicalization once in Europe" will be successful, Europol said, noting that a number of terrorists are traveling through Europe specifically for this purpose. According to unconfirmed information, as of April 2016, German authorities had recorded around 300 attempts made by terrorists to recruit refugees trying to enter Europe, the report says.

Europol warned that if ISIL is defeated or severely weakened by the coalition forces in Syria and Iraq, it may trigger a surge of foreign fighters and their families returning from the region to the EU or other conflict areas, like Libya. "Those who manage to enter the EU, will pose a potential security risk for the Union. Given the high numbers involved, this represents a significant and long-term security challenge," the report says.

'Soft targets' new ISIL priority

Europol pointed out that the terrorists have shifted their focus away from attacking symbolic targets like law enforcement officers and military personnel towards soft targets, like the concert goers and football fans killed during the Paris attacks in 2015. "Terrorists have a preference for soft targets," the report said, adding that attacking critical infrastructure like power grids, nuclear facilities, and transportation hubs is currently "not a priority" for them.

The same applies to cyber-attacks, due to their relatively low impact on the general public, according to the report.

"We have to be vigilant, since the threat posed by the so-called ISIL and returning foreign fighters is likely to persist in the coming years. These people are trained to use explosives and firearms and they have been indoctrinated by the terrorist ideology," EU Counter-terrorism Coordinator Gilles de Kerchove stated in a press release.

The report also noted that ISIL is not the only terrorist group with the "intent and capability to carry out attacks against the West, or to inspire individuals and groups residing in EU Member States to do so." Al-Qaeda and/or Al-Nusra affiliated or inspired groups and individuals continue to pose a serious threat to EU countries and Western interests in general, it added.

Besides the "threat of major attacks" being carried out by terrorists acting on ISIL instructions is the risk of those committed by so-called "clean skins" - lone self-radicalized individuals, not associated with known extremists and unknown to security services, Europol warned.

ISIL is a terrorist group based mostly in Iraq and Syria that has also expanded into Libya and Afghanistan. It has masterminded several high-profile attacks in large European cities over the past two years, most notably in Paris and Brussels. On November 13 of last year, a wave of bombings and shootings killed 130 people and injured hundreds more in the French capital. In March of 2016, the same terrorist cell carried out suicide attacks at the airport and a metro station in Brussels, leaving 23 people dead and more than 300 injured.

On Bastille Day this year, a truck plowed through a crowd in Nice in the south of France, leaving 85 people dead and hundreds injured.

(Source: RT)

New Israeli envoy arrives in Turkey after rapprochement

Israel's new ambassador to Turkey has arrived in the capital Ankara, to serve as the first official envoy since 2010 as the two countries advance with their rapprochement since a six-year spat put diplomatic relations on ice.

Eitan Naeh, upon his arrival at the Esenboga Airport, said that the two countries "have a history of helping each other in times of need," referring to Turkey's help while handling wildfires in Israel last week.

Naeh is due to present his letter of credence to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the next few days.

Naeh, who had been serving as deputy head of mission at the Israeli embassy in London, was chosen as ambassador earlier this month by a government committee.

A career diplomat, he previously worked at the embassy in Ankara from 1993 to 1997.

Mavi Marmara raid

Naeh is the country's first envoy since Israeli commandos in 2010 raided Mavi Marmara, a Gaza-bound flotilla of activists aiming to break the siege on the Gaza Strip.

After the raid, which killed 10 Turkish activists, rela-



tions between the two countries plunged to an all-time low, with both pulling their envoys out from the respective capitals.

However, the bitter rift came to an end in June after long-running secret talks in third countries with Israel offering \$20m in compensation, an apology over the raid and permission for Turkish aid to reach Gaza.

Last week firefighting planes from Turkey were sent to Israel after wildfires raged.

In a video shared on the embassy's official Facebook page, Naeh said: "I am very happy to be back in Turkey as ambassador. We have a lot of work to do ... I am looking forward to starting the work here, officially."

The process to normalise relations was strongly supported by the U.S., which had long wanted to see NATO ally Turkey resume its once-closed relationship with Israel.

Turkey this month appointed Prime Minister Binali Yildirim's foreign affairs adviser Kemal Okem as its ambassador to Israel. He is expected to move to Israel in the next few days.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Trump to nominate retired General Mattis for Pentagon

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump said he would nominate retired Marine Corps General James Mattis, known as "Mad Dog" and renowned for his tough talk and battlefield experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, to lead the Pentagon.

"We are going to appoint 'Mad Dog' Mattis as our secretary of defense," Trump told a rally in Cincinnati. He said the formal announcement would be made on Monday.

The choice of a seasoned military strategist would be another indication that Trump, a Republican, intends to steer U.S. foreign policy away from Democratic President Barack Obama's increased reliance on U.S. allies to fight Islamist militants and to help deter Russian and Chinese aggression in Europe and Asia.

Mattis is a revered figure in the Marine Corps and known for his distrust of Iran.

The Washington Post and CNN reported earlier that Trump had chosen Mattis, but Trump spokesman Jason Miller said earlier on Twitter that "no decision has been made yet with regard to Secretary of Defense."

While the nomination of the 66-year-old Mattis would likely be popular among U.S. forces, it would have to clear a bureaucratic hurdle.

Because he retired only in 2013, Mattis would need the U.S. Congress to waive a



requirement that a defense secretary be a civilian for at least seven years before taking the top job at the Pentagon. His impressive combat record, however, may deter some Senate Democrats from trying to block his nomination.

Trump has described Mattis as "a true general's general."

The New York real estate magnate famously asserted last year: "I know more about ISIL than the generals do."

Mattis, whose past assignments include leading Central Command, which oversees U.S. military operations in the Middle East and South Asia, is known for his colorful expressions that unashamedly embrace the job of the U.S. armed forces: fighting wars.

In one famous line in 2003 attributed to Mattis, the general told Marines in Iraq: "Be polite, be professional, but have a plan to kill everybody you meet."

Tough talk

In a 2016 question-and-answer session, Mattis appeared to be moved by a Marine's question about how far out he could inflict casualties with his knife hand, known as a "kill-casualty radius."

"Once you get to be a high-ranking officer, the kill-casualty radius is whatever your Marines make it, and by the time I got up to the senior ranks it was hundreds of miles," he said in a video for the Marine Corps.

Still, such tough talk has gotten him in hot water. He was once rebuked for say-

ing in 2005 that "it's fun to shoot some people."

His talk, however, belies a more thoughtful side. Mattis once said the most important 6 inches in a combat zone was "between your ears."

Now a fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, Mattis is also a scholar who was praised by then-U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates in 2010 as one of the country's great strategic thinkers.

Mattis reads avidly, frequently quotes history and is proud that he grew up with a large library and no television.

After meeting Mattis on Nov. 19, Trump described him as a strong, dignified man who persuasively argued against waterboarding, an interrogation tactic that involves pouring water over someone's face to simulate drowning.

Trump had promised during the campaign he would not only revive use of waterboarding, which is widely regarded as torture and was banned under President Barack Obama, but bring back "a hell of a lot worse" if elected.

"(Mattis) said: 'I've always found, give me a pack of cigarettes and a couple of beers and I do better with that than I do with torture.' And I was very impressed by that answer," Trump told The New York Times.

(Source: Reuters)

JUMP

OPEC deal: Iran turns the tables on Saudis

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And finally to the world's amazement, the kingdom surrendered to Iran's will. In OPEC's 171st meeting, Saudi Arabia agreed to fully adhere to 'Algiers Accord'.



Iran not only was exempted from the cuts, the country even managed to win the right to increase its production by 90,000 barrels per day, while Saudis agreed to cut 500,000 barrels from their current production level.

■ Turning tables

But what was the real story behind this outcome?

A few days before the November meeting, Algerian Oil Minister Nouredine Buterfa visited Iran to convince the country regarding a 1.2 million bpd cut, a proposal for a 4.5 percent cut for each country was handed to Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh during this visit.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia whose economy was under pressure from low oil prices and faced the fact that Iran had the upper hand in the current situation, saw itself with no choice but to go with the flow.

Of course, Russia played a significant role mediating the accord to the point that they even agreed to cut their production by 300,000 bpd to encourage others.

Accordingly, Iran agreed to the terms proposed by Algiers under the condition that the cut should be applied to its highest production level which was recorded in 2015.

The country argued since all OPEC members were producing at their highest levels at the time of the discussions, so Iran's cut must be calculated for its highest production rate. Iran had recorded its highest production level of 3.975 million bpd in 2015 which left the organization with no choice but to agree with the proposal and letting the country to even raise its current production level by 90,000 bpd in order to 4.5 percent cut to be applied fairly to all countries.

Iran turned the tables on Saudi Arabia and unlike all other OPEC members the country managed not only to keep its current production level but also to raise it. The Iranian oil minister believes that this success has been a result of a healthy diplomacy, when all members put economic interests before raising controversial political issues.

Based on the agreement, Iran's average crude production level for the first half of 2017 will be 3.797 million barrels and according to the country's oil minister, \$10 billion will be added to Iran's oil income.

Time ripe for Spanish companies' presence in Iran: envoy

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's desk Ambassador to Madrid Mohammad-Hassan Fadaeefard, in a Thursday meeting with representatives from 50 companies from the eastern Spanish province of Valencia announced the time ripe for expansion of Spanish companies' activities in Iran, IRNA reported.

As reported, the meeting was coordinated by the Valencia Chamber of Commerce and the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade to probe opportunities available in Iranian market specifically after the removal of financial sanctions against the country.

Underlining the significance of developing Spanish companies' cooperation with their Iranian counterparts, the Iranian ambassador named machineries, agriculture, industries, and renewable



Iran's Ambassador to Madrid Mohammad-Hassan Fadaeefard

able energies as the possible fields for further mutual collaboration between

the two sides.

He elsewhere noted that Iran and

Spain have been enjoying a new era in their bilateral trade in post-sanction time, referring to the 170-percent growth witnessed in mutual trade during the first half of 2016, i.e. as of the implementation of Iran's nuclear deal.

■ Spanish trade delegation to visit Iran soon

According to the portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), representatives from 11 Spanish companies are to pay a visit to Tehran, on December 12-13, to hash out common future ties with their Iranian counterparts.

The visiting companies are reportedly active in various fields including oil and gas, steel, drilling equipment, telecommunications, foodstuff, lighting equipment, elevators, heat exchangers, and etc.

ICCIMA to hold Iran-Chile Agro-Business Forum on Sunday

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's desk Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) plans to hold Iran-Chile Agriculture-Business Forum in Tehran on Sunday.

As the portal of ICCIMA announced, Head of Trade Office of PROCHILE for the Middle East Sharif Chacoff and Charge d' Affaires

of Chile in Tehran Fernando Berguno as well as some other Chilean officials will participate in the event at the ICCIMA building.

The attendees will confer on Iran-Chile cooperation capacities in agriculture and business sectors as well as suitable ways to develop mutual trade and joint ventures.

U.K. construction pickup overshadowed by soaring cost pressures

Construction activity in the U.K. grew at the fastest pace in eight months in November, but companies warned that rising costs are squeezing their profit margins.

Housing, commercial and civil engineering improved and it marked the first time since May that all three sectors posted readings of at least 50, the dividing line between growth and contraction.



Russia's central bank governor says inflation to slow by year-end

Russian consumer price inflation will slow down by the end of this year, central bank governor Elvira Nabiullina told parliament on Friday.

Nabiullina also said that rouble volatility has decreased, and that the banking system is stable. She said she saw Russia's potential economic growth at less than 1.5-2 percent.

(Source: Reuters)



Qualification Notice Lease Contract for the Operation of the Container Terminal II of Shahid Rajaei Port Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO)



with a view to promote quality and efficiency of its services, increase volume throughput of the cargo and container and gain an increased and sustainable share of regional and international market, Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) is planning to hold the tender for the operation of Container terminal II of Shahid Rajaei port located in Hormozgan Province in the form of a lease contract with the following conditions. Accordingly all interested and qualified companies are invited to submit their information on the basis on the following table and time-limit mentioned therein.

1	The name of the Organization issuing Qualification Notice : Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO)
2	Address: No 1, PMO building, Shahidi St., Haghani Expressway, Vanak Sq., Tehran, Iran
3	The subject of qualification notice : <i>Lease contract for the Operation of Shahid Rajaei Container Terminal II</i>
4	Date, time-limit and address
4-1	The collection date of documents commences on 23 November 2016 and ends in 10 December 2016
4-2	The documents must be submitted no later than 28 December 2016
5	The qualification documents can be collected in two manners: in person & through website
6	Collection of documents in person: PMO Secretariat, Phone number: 0098 21 84932645 The applicant must collect the documents within the deadline set out in para 4-1.
6	Collection of documents through website The applicants must visit the website: http://iets.mporg.ir Note: If the applicant fails to download documents completely and appropriately from the website, the applicant shall bear all responsibilities and consequences thereto and the PMO shall bear no responsibility.
7	The qualification documents must be completed and submitted to the PMO Secretariat no later than 28 December 2016 against a receipt.
8	The packets containing prequalification documents shall be opened by the Initial Processing Commission on Saturday, 31 December 2016
9	The Initial Processing Commission shall convene in: Port and Maritime Organization (PMO)
10	The applicants may apply for the qualification stage in a joint-venture with a foreign firm in accordance with the conditions set out in qualification documents.
11	If the applicants have any enquiry or seek any clarification on the qualification documents, they may attend a briefing session scheduled to be held on 14 December 2016 at 9:00 at the Conference Room, 12 th floor, Ports and Maritime Headquarters, Tehran. It is to be noted that no question, criticism or protest shall be dealt with after the above session.

Dollar dips before U.S. jobs data; eyes on Italy's vote

The dollar was on course for its first weekly fall in four weeks against a basket of currencies on Friday after investors trimmed some bets against the euro on the run up to U.S. jobs data and Italy's constitutional referendum.

Positions on the euro have largely been taken on options markets this week, driving implied volatility of the currency - which could pay off for speculators in either direction - to its highest since Britain's June vote to leave the European Union. EURSWO=

But spot rates for the single currency have held up as the U.S. currency drifted lower, a move that most analysts cast as a short-term correction to the dollar's surge since Donald Trump won the U.S. presidential election on Nov. 8.

Most banks have forecast a broadly stronger dollar next year.

"We're in a period of consolidation. We saw this in October, we spent the whole month rising and then we had a week of sideways trading," said Neil Mellor, a strategist at BNY Mellon in London.

"I don't think we need to overcome

complicated things today. You have the Friday factor, there is always a degree of reserve before payrolls. It does also feel as if liquidity is already falling ahead of the end of the year. Some people may be sitting back and waiting for January."

In morning trade in Europe, the dollar index dipped 0.1 percent to 100.86 .DXY, down 0.6 percent for the week. It was marginally higher against the euro while pulling back from Thursday's 9-1/2-month highs of 114.83 yen. JPY=

The logic behind the dollar's gains has been broadly about another rise in U.S. Federal Reserve interest rates later this month raising the premium for holding dollars.

That now looks fully priced in, however, and some have argued the dollar may struggle for momentum until there is more clarity on Trump's economic policy proposals and their ability to raise inflation rates and in turn drive rates higher.

There is also growing speculation that the ECB could include some sort of tapering of bond purchases in the re-ordering of its quantitative easing pro-

gram set to be announced next month.

Economists polled by Reuters expect that U.S. employers added 175,000 jobs in November, although a poorer batch of weekly jobs figures on Thursday hinted at a weaker number. ECONUS

The focus for the euro now is on an Italian referendum on Sunday that could reject constitutional reforms on which Prime Minister Matteo Renzi has staked his political future.

Renzi's departure could destabilize Italy's fragile banking system and be taken as another sign of rising anti-establishment sentiment around the world, potentially eroding investor confidence in the currency union.

"High-frequency accounts and leveraged specs (speculative traders) have been reported on the bid, though there are plenty of offers ready to cap overdone rallies," analysts from currencies exchange LMAX said in a morning note.

"There is sure to be plenty of volatility in Asia on Monday as the result of the Italian referendum comes in."

(Source: Reuters)

Swiss economy unexpectedly stalls on weak domestic demand

Switzerland's economy failed to grow for the first time in more than a year in the third quarter, held back by weak domestic demand and the first fall in government spending since early 2014.

The stagnation followed expansion of 0.6 percent in the three months through June, and fell short of the 0.3 percent growth forecast by economists in a Bloomberg survey. The statistics office said the weak performance wasn't a sign of the recovery being thrown off course.

"This surprisingly slow growth is not mainly due to the strong franc, but due to a few special factors -- for example, there was no growth impulse from the health care sector which is unusual," Ronald Indergand, head of the economics department at the SECO, said by telephone. "We believe that the quarter is an outlier and that the recovery of the economy from the strong franc isn't in jeopardy."

Switzerland's growth has long been plagued by the strength of its currency, which the central bank says is

"overvalued" and occasionally tries to tame with market interventions. While the recovery in the euro area -- Switzerland's biggest market -- is chugging along, political uncertainty linked to elections across the region next year could undermine demand there.

"It's all a bit tepid, if you look at the various components," said Cornelia Luchsinger, an economist at Zuercher Kantonalbank. ZKB sees the economy growing 1.1 percent this year and 1.4 percent next year. "We see growth around the potential, not above."

■ Contributing factors

Exports of goods relevant to the real economy increased 1.2 percent in the quarter, thanks to strong foreign demand for pharmaceuticals, according to the SECO. Exports of services contracted 0.8 percent, and when factoring in imports of both goods and services, that resulted in a negative trade balance.

Swiss household spending rose just 0.1 percent, while investment in equipment increased 0.5 percent, the SECO said. Government consumption

declined 0.1 percent.

"The surprise for us was the weak domestic situation," Indergand said. "Manufacturing was relatively solid, and other sectors such as the tourism industry that have been under pressure due to the strong franc didn't fare so poorly either."

Recent economic gauges have indicated that economic growth is on track. A closely watched index of manufacturing activity touched its highest in nearly three years in November. Output increased for a 14th month and the backlog of orders rose markedly.

The Swiss National Bank, which caused the surge in the franc last year when it gave up its minimum exchange rate, will issue its first take on growth in 2017 at its policy assessment on Dec. 15. It's most recent forecast, issued in September, was for growth of approximately 1.5 percent in 2016. The SECO, which will also update its projections on Dec. 15, predicts an expansion of 1.8 percent in 2017.

(Source: Bloomberg)

OPEC focuses on shrinking stockpiles to pave the way for \$60 oil

OPEC's first production cuts in eight years are intended to shrink the world's bloated oil stockpiles back to a normal level, paving the way for prices to rise to more than \$60 a barrel.

Bigger volumes of oil in storage mean lower prices, but the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' "landmark" agreement Wednesday to cut production will accelerate the decline of global stockpiles, Secretary-General Mohammad Barkindo said in a Bloomberg TV interview Thursday. Within nine months, OPEC's deal should bring inventories closer to normal levels and potentially lift crude prices as high as \$70 a barrel, said Venezuelan Oil Minister Eulogio del Pino.

OPEC confounded skeptics by agreeing in Vienna on Wednesday to fully implement supply cuts outlined in Algiers two months ago. The group will cut production by about 1.2 million barrels a day to 32.5 million and also secured a pledge from Russia to reduce its output by 300,000 next year. The deal will bring global oil supply and demand back into balance early in 2017, faster than previously expected, according to the International Energy Agency.

"Our objective has been since Algiers to stimulate the joint deal with non-OPEC and accelerate the drawdown of stocks," Barkindo said. "Inventories have continued to weigh down on prices" and all of OPEC wants to see prices higher, he said.

Last month the IEA warned that oil stockpiles, already at a record level, would continue to expand for a third consecutive year in 2017 unless OPEC cut production. The agency estimates that the current inventory surplus compared to the five-year average is about 300 million barrels, enough to fill 150 supertankers.

"Before the OPEC decision we expected oil markets to



rebalance towards end of 2017," IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol said at a briefing in Bratislava, Slovakia. After the agreement to cut production, "one could well see rebalancing to take place earlier, in early 2017."

Anything short of a production cut would have taken

too long to eliminate the oil surplus, Venezuela's Del Pino said in a Bloomberg TV interview.

"Just freezing the production will take two years to restore an equilibrium," he said. "Two years it too long."

(Source: Bloomberg)

Global LNG prices hit 2016 high as OPEC agrees oil output cut

Asian spot prices for liquefied natural gas (LNG) this week rose to their highest for 2016 so far, lifted by OPEC's announcement it would cut crude oil production in cooperation with Russia and by a tightening regional gas market.

Spot prices for Asian LNG rose 30 cents from last week to around \$7.40 per million British thermal units (mmBtu), trading sources said.

The main price driver was an agreement reached by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and non-OPEC oil production giant Russia to cut crude output in order to rein in global oversupply that has dogged markets for more than two years.

The announcement led to a more than 10 percent rise in oil prices to above \$53 per barrel.

With 80 percent of Asian LNG supply contracts linked to the price of crude, and oil playing a key role in shipping costs, the spot LNG market was also affected, traders said, pushing prices to their highest since November 2015.

However, because the price link with oil in supply contracts is stronger than oil's influence in spot markets, analysts warned OPEC's output cut could yield a growing price disparity between more expensive term supplies and cheaper spot cargoes.

"The unintended consequence could be the return of acrimonious negotia-

tions as buyers opt for spot cargoes in lieu of its long-term contracts," said Chong Zhi Xin, principal Asia LNG analyst at Wood Mackenzie.

On the demand side, cold weather in the biggest LNG importing countries is also lifting prices as many traders expect utilities in Japan, South Korea and also China to turn to the spot market to buy cargoes to meet strong heating demand.

Weather data in Thomson Reuters Eikon shows that average temperatures in Tokyo and Seoul are expected to be below the seasonal norm in the next 45 days of peak winter demand.

On the supply side, Chevron said on Wednesday it had temporarily halted

production from one of its two production units at the huge Gorgon export plant off Western Australia.

The energy major is now seeking three prompt LNG cargoes, in order to meet its supply requirements with clients, said trading sources.

In other LNG news, Egypt will import around LNG 60 cargoes next year, with Glencore contracted to supply around 25 cargoes and Trafigra winning the right to supply 18.

Egypt's state-run EGAS, which issued the import tender in late October, sought a total of 96 cargoes for delivery in 2017 and 2018, with an option to buy 12 additional cargoes in 2017.

(Source: Reuters)

Russia's Lukoil says OPEC deal should be supported by all Russian companies

Russia's No.2 oil producer Lukoil said on Friday that the Russian part of the deal with OPEC on cutting output should be supported by all companies.

"This decision should be supported by all Russian oil companies," Lukoil vice president Leonid Fedun told a conference in Moscow on Friday.

Russian oil output will be at 555 million tons in 2017 and 2018, slightly up on the forecast for this year, according to a presentation released on Friday by oil company Lukoil.

According to the presentation, Russian crude output will fall to 554 million tons in 2019, and 551 million tons in 2020.

It was not immediately clear if the presentation took into account this week's deal between the world's major oil exporters on cutting output from next year. Russian production for 2016 is forecast at 544 million tons.

(Source: Reuters)

Oil prices dip as doubt seeps into market on OPEC-Russia output cuts

Oil prices dipped on Friday on concerns whether major producers would implement an OPEC-Russia deal to reduce production, compounded by data showing output in Russia rose to a post-Soviet high ahead of the announced cutback.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and non-OPEC oil production giant Russia this week said they would cut crude output early next year in order to rein in global oversupply that has dogged markets for over two years.

But front-month Brent crude futures were down 16 cents, or 0.3 percent, from their last settlement at \$53.78 per barrel at 0836 GMT on Friday, as doubts emerged over the viability of the announced cut.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) futures were at \$51.06, flat with their last close.

Traders said prices were weighed down by concerns over the implementation of the deal under which OPEC members were joined by non-OPEC Russia for the first time in 15 years in announcing coordinated production cuts by a combined 1.5 million barrels per day.

Russia said on Friday that its output in November rose slightly to 11.21 million barrels per day, a fresh post-Soviet high.

As part of the OPEC-deal, Russia has promised to gradually cut its crude output by up to 300,000 barrels per day in the first half of 2017.

With cuts only being implemented next year against end of 2016 levels, analysts said there was still a possibility that oversupply, which has halved oil prices since 2014, remains in place next year.

"Let us put OPEC's decision into perspective: oil has just

risen above \$50 per barrel. Five months ago it was at similar levels, as indeed it was one month ago," said analysts at AB Bernstein on Friday.

"More important is the sentiment: does this mean oil will now rise sustainably above \$60 and start its long-awaited rebalancing? It is possible, but far from certain," the analysts added.

Despite Friday's falls, traders and analysts said the deal was significant, and that it would at least reduce oversupply.

The announcement of the deal on Wednesday had led to a more than 10 percent rise in prices for Brent crude oil futures, the international benchmark for oil prices.

"This deal is significant. It sends a very strong message to the market and it should help the market find a balance," said Simon Flowers, chief analyst at Wood Mackenzie.

(Source: Reuters)

Iran's Abadan Refinery development project to go operational in 3 weeks

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The executive operations of Iran's Abadan Refinery development project will begin by China's Sinopec in this Iranian calendar month (which will end on December 20), ISNA reported on Friday.

Deputy Head of National Iranian Oil Products Distribution and Refining Company (NIOPDRC) Shahrokh Khosravani said that Sinopec's representatives have recently visited Iran to sign the legal documents which are now going through the final stages.

"There is no problem in the implementation of the signed agreement and the project which is in the form of an EPC (engineering, procurement and construction) will begin this month," he added.

The official further explained that the project aims to increase the refinery's capacity and to upgrade the complex to comply with world standards.

Khosravani noted that the project's implementation period will be 3.5 years and said the project will probably be completed in 2020.

China's Sinopec and Iran's Oil Ministry finalized the agreement regarding the development project of Abadan Refinery in September.

Based on this \$1.2 billion agreement, Sinopec will be responsible for the development, optimization and improvement of production processes in Abadan Refinery as the largest oil refinery in Iran.

As Mexico welcomes oil giants, Pemex future hangs on an auction

Mexico will hold its first-ever deep-water auction on Monday -- part of an effort to attract investment from international oil giants such as Exxon Mobil Corp., Chevron Corp. and BP Plc to help develop the country's offshore oil properties.

The auction of 10 deep-water blocks is the most significant step yet in Mexico's effort to reclaim its spot as a global crude-producing powerhouse. Pemex has suffered from repeated setbacks in recent years as its production declined and financial woes multiplied. Monday could mark the start of a turnaround in the state-owned company's fortunes.

"I'm nervous, but I have high expectations," Jose Antonio Gonzalez Anaya, Pemex's chief executive officer, said Thursday on Bloomberg Television. "It would be the first time in history that Pemex has a joint venture in the upstream with risk involved."

The auction also includes a tender to secure a partner for Pemex in its Trion field, where the ailing state-owned operator hopes to secure as much as \$11 billion in investment to produce around 500 million barrels of oil equivalent.

Pemex is "cautiously optimistic" one of the world's oil giants will bid to partner with Pemex in Monday's auction, Gonzalez Anaya said. If so, the company expects to see investments from the partnership as soon as next year.

Mexico needs the auction to be a hit. Pemex's empire has been slowly dismantled since industry reforms in 2013 ended its monopoly and opened the nation to foreign oil explorers for the first time in more than seven decades. Out of the gate, the industry overhaul suffered a major blow when the country's oil prices collapsed from above \$100 a barrel in 2014 to as low as \$19 a barrel in January. The drop stymied participation in the nation's debut auctions last year, while accelerating the decline of Pemex, once the world's third-largest producer.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Merkel plans to challenge Trump on renewables in G-20 forum

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, fresh from taking over the presidency of the Group of 20 nations, plans to use her leverage to challenge Donald Trump's skepticism about the value of renewable energy by pointing out where it's a viable business.

The strategy is aimed at reducing the risk that Trump will upend work by Europe and the rest of the G-20 to rein in greenhouse gases and advance the cause of low-pollution fuels, according to a senior German official.

Instead of gathering G-20 energy ministers and risk disagreements on policy, Germany will seek to keep the political gatherings focused on areas where business is earning returns from wind and solar farms, said the person, who asked not to be identified because the information isn't yet public.

Trump in 2012 described climate change as a hoax invented by China and more recently singled out wind farms as a costly energy source that kills too many birds. He has pledged to reduce environmental regulations and encourage the use of coal, the most polluting fossil fuel.

Germany and the European Union have pledged to ratchet up restrictions on greenhouse gases, shifting the continent away from the fuels blamed for damaging the climate. Europe wants to protect the Paris Agreement on climate change signed a year ago and ratified in November, setting reductions on emissions in more than 190 countries. Trump pledged during the U.S. election campaign to "cancel" the pact, though he said he'd "keep an open mind" about it after winning the presidency in November.

Germany and the U.S. compete as global champions in exporting environmental technology. That market will "at least" double by 2025 from the 2.5 trillion euros (\$2.66 trillion) it's valued at now, according to the German government.

Merkel, a former German environment minister who championed the Paris agreement, signaled she'll challenge Trump's statements on global warming. As part of the G-20 presidency that Germany took over on Thursday, Merkel will host leaders of member nations, including the U.S., in Hamburg in July.

(Source: renewableenergyworld.com)

PICTURE OF THE DAY SHANA/Reza Rostami



With a nominal capacity of 50,000 barrels per day (bpd) and operating capacity of 60,000 bpd, Lavan Oil Refining Company or Lavan refinery, a subsidiary of National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company in southern Hormozgan province, is one of the most environment friendly refineries in the country. In February 2016, the refinery's hydrogen purification unit came into operation to produce kerosene and gas oil in accordance with the Euro4 standard.

The election recount is a distraction. Only a strong left can beat Trump

By Kate Aronoff

Some hope Trump's presidency can be averted through Jill Stein's initiative. What we should focus on instead is strengthening the Democratic party.

It's hard to imagine a happy ending to the recount of this year's election results, spearheaded by Green party presidential candidate Jill Stein. Barring miracles in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania in the coming weeks, the challenge for the next four years remains the same: make Trump's job impossible, and build a visionary alternative to both his autocracy and Clinton's Third Way neoliberalism. Everything else is a distraction.

Stein has been joined by dozens of lawyers and security experts, \$5m in crowd funding and Hillary Clinton in her recount efforts. But neither Clinton nor Stein are the right women for the job of standing up to Trump.

Continuing to revolve a media circus around either could cause us to lose focus from the task ahead.

The president-elect has emboldened and empowered a new generation of bigots and neo-Nazis. He has appointed their heroes to senior White House posts. Marine Le Pen is better poised than ever to win France's presidential election next year, and deliver the European far right their victory of the century.

As the economist Mark Blyth has pointed out, "Global Trumpism" has been under construction for the last 30 years via neoliberalism, a project owned as much by the right as by Clintonian Democrats. Whatever the results of the recount end up being, voters in the U.S. just raised a 60-million-strong middle finger to business as usual.

■ Trump's America

The result is both the real potential for autocracy and a gaping power vacuum in the Democratic party. Stein's brand of politics are questionable for a whole host of reasons, including the way she fetishizes her party's own marginalization, and distance from power. Indeed, her politics might be the opposite of what's needed in Trump's America: for the left to step into power at every level.

→13



Jill Stein

These six elections are set to change Europe forever

By Sean O'Grady

Inspired by Donald Trump, the right, in all its varieties, is on the march. Here are the key election results to look out for in 2017.

As far-right groups across Europe become normalized and more popular than at any time since the end of the Second World War, a series of votes set to be held across the continent could spell doom for the European Union by this time next year. They could even make Brexit irrelevant if far-right parties succeed in restricting freedom of movement of people in the EU, holding back migration to Europe and hastening the break-up of the eurozone.

■ 4 December 2016: Italian referendum and the rerun of the Austrian presidential election

Most attention this weekend will be focused on the Italian referendum, which seeks to make Italy easier to govern and reform. But the Prime Minister, Matteo Renzi, has made the cardinal error of threatening to resign if his proposed changes are rejected. Meanwhile, the far-right Five Star Movement (Movimento 5 Stelle, or M5S), led by a former comedian, has campaigned vigorously against the proposed changes.

Before a ban on publishing opinion polls a few weeks ago, the "No" camp was ahead. If that turns out to be the result, and Italy is plunged into a fresh political crisis, then her fragile banks could suffer yet another crisis of confidence.

If that continues then it would be beyond the means of the Italian state to save them; indeed the Italian Treasury would be unlikely to be able to sell its bonds to the domestic banks and be forced to go to the EU and the European Central Bank for a Greek-style rescue package.

Trouble is, the eurozone's solvent



members – Germany, the Netherlands and Finland – are running out of the financial means and the political willpower to subsidize their southern neighbors. With a €4 trillion banking system, and with a GDP not far off the UK's, Italy is a nation that is both too big to save and too big to fail – and big enough to wreck the euro.

The Austrian presidential election is a rerun occasioned by some technical failings in the first poll in May. The result then was extremely tight between the Green candidate Alexander Van der Bellen, just ahead on 50.3 per cent, and the candidate of the far-right Freedom Party, Norbert Hofer, on 49.7 per cent.

Though only a ceremonial post, a Hofer victory would represent an even more significant result for the anti-migrant Eurosceptic right in a eurozone

and EU member state – the first time a representative of the far right had been elected head of state or government since the Second World War. By contrast, the once dominant Social Democrats trailed on 11 per cent in the May election. Hofer is the favorite to prevail next week.

■ 15 March 2017: Dutch general election

Once merely a noisy and unpleasant fringe grouping, the "Party for Freedom" (Partij voor de Vrijheid, or PVV), led by Geert Wilders, is just about leading the polls in the Netherlands. Because the Dutch party system is so fragmented, the PVV can do this with just 28 per cent support, a point or two ahead of the conservative governing party, the VVD.

The elections will be contested on the grounds of the economy, migration and the healthcare system. Always a mildly

Eurosceptic nation, the Netherlands looks set to tilt further in that direction. Expect less support for the Eurozone's weaker members, more pressure to restrict migration and more pressure on minorities.

■ 4 May 2017: British local elections

These are unlikely to make much of a cross-continental impact and, ironically, might see a little recovery by the now leading pro-European mainstream party, the Liberal Democrats. Still, the Conservatives and Ukip seem likely to have a good showing, and will take the results as a confirmation of the Brexit referendum vote. A poor showing by Labour would also add to the chances of a Tory win at an early general election, again which would in effect endorse Brexit.

■ 7 May: French presidential election

Polls suggest the conservative Francois Fillon will "trump" the Front National's Marine Le Pen, but after recent upsets many are nervous. Even if Le Pen doesn't win, if one in three French voters decided to back her it would be an extraordinary result, and one unthinkable not so long ago. Again, it will add to the anti-European, anti-euro, anti-migrant mood sweeping the West.

■ 22 October 2017: German elections

This is the last date for the contests, which could be held as early as 27 August. Either way, Angela Merkel looks likely to embark on another term in office. But the far right Alternativ fur Deutschland (AfD) is polling at 13 per cent – easily sufficient to secure seats in the Bundestag and be a constant source of agitation against the EU on issues such as subsidies to Greece and Italy and, of course, migration.

Even Chancellor Merkel would have to bow to changing popular opinion, both in her own political grouping – the Bavarian wing of the Christian Democrats are more hostile to migration, for example – and in the nation as a whole.

(Source: Independent)

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By Maryam Azish

Slovenia after fostering ties with Iran

For decades before sanctions were imposed against the Islamic Republic of Iran, the European countries were Tehran's trading partner. The gap in Iranian imports from Western countries was filled by Chinese, Korean and Middle Eastern competitors, and now thanks to the removal of nuclear-related sanctions against the country, economic collaboration between Iran and the Europe have been enhanced.

Up to now, several numbers of the European officials have voiced their willingness to persist supporting the implementation of agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action throughout the lifetime of the agreement, as well as the UNSC Resolution 2231.

Thanks to being the safest and the most secure country in the region, Iran considered as a promising trading partner, eye-catching and lucrative market for European countries like Slovenia.

The Iranian officials are trying to pave the ground for luring the domestic and foreign investments which is considered as key for settling the country's economic problems.

In a sign of nurturing ties between Iran and the Europe, Slovenian President Borut Pahor heading a high ranking politico-economic delegation arrived in Tehran in late November to amend cooperation between the two countries.

As long as Iran is a country with plenty of economic advantages in the region and Slovenia is a gateway for European Union, so the advantages would be enough to draw the best roadmap for future cooperation and economic outlook.

For sure, presence of Slovenian President and accompanying delegation indicates that economy is a main route to access macro political goals in development of a country.

While in Iran, Pahor held talks with several high ranking Iranian officials including Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, his counterpart Hassan Rouhani, Foreign Minister Mohammad-Javad Zarif, Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian as well as Head of Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture Gholamhossein Shafei and took part in Iran-Slovenia Trade

Commission attended by representatives of 50 Slovenian companies in Tehran. Slovenian embassy which was closed in 2012, because of economic austerity policy of the country, also was reopened in Tehran in presence of Pahor.

The visit also resulted in inking three cooperation agreements in economic, information and communications technology (ICT) and bionano arenas.

According to the official statistics, trade between Iran and Slovenia fell down in the past several years from 96 million euro in 2011 to 46 million euro in 2012 and 25.5 million euro in 2013.

■ **Slovenia seeks 5+1 commitment to JCPOA**

In a joint press conference attended by President Rouhani, Pahor expressed pleasure with fruitful outcome of the landmark nuclear deal signed between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the world six major countries (US, Britain, Russia, France and China plus Germany) in July 2015 and urged the G5+1 member states to remain committed to their pledges on sound implementation of JCPOA.

He said that the nuclear talks proved that diplomatic means is the best way for settlement of international disputes.



The visit also resulted in inking three cooperation agreements in economic, information and communications technology (ICT) and bio-nano areas.

In a sign of nurturing ties between Iran and Europe, Slovenian President Borut Pahor arrived in Tehran in late November.

Slovenia believes that settlement of disputes through diplomatic means and restoring Iranian relations with the international community should be regarded as a suitable opportunity for Slovenia to bolster its economic and political ties with Iran, he said, adding normalization of ties between Iran and the international community is a suitable opportunity for Slovenia to revive its relations with Iran at the highest level.

■ **Iran's determination for promotion of ties with EU**

In a meeting with a top-ranking Slovenian delegation led by President Pahor, President Rouhani said Iran is resolved to expand relations with friendly countries, particularly those in the European Union, citing the visit as a turning point in the history of relations between the two countries.

Underlining the need for joint banking and insurance cooperation as a key step to develop Iran-Slovenia trade and eco-

omic relations, the president noted that banking and insurance relations serve to regulate trade and commerce between the two nations.

■ **Iran, Europe should trust each other**

Addressing the Iran-Slovenia Trade Commission held at Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mine and Agriculture in Tehran, President Pahor said that Iranian and EU governments and nations should trust each other and expand trade relations.

'We are here to find a solution for problems at the beginning of trade ties between the two countries after a long halt,' the Slovenian president said.

Iran has successful experience in peaceful dialogue for a complicated nuclear dispute so that the experience may be used for settling the other international disputes, Pahor said.

■ **Iran-Slovenia trade commission convenes**

On Nov 22, Iran-Slovenia Trade Commission convened on in presence of President Pahor and Chitchian as well as representatives of 50 Slovenian companies.

The companies were involved in businesses ranging from aerial transport, energy, banking and monetary, tourism, communications and information technology equipment, to electronic devices and machinery for construction, agriculture, medicine, food industries, industry and mines.

■ **Slovenian president addresses Iran's Parliament**

On Nov 23, President of Slovenia attended open session of Iran's Majlis (Parliament) becoming the first foreign head of state who has ever addressed the Iranian MPs.

He stressed Ljubljana's willingness to promote bilateral economic and political ties with Tehran, noting that there are good potentials for mutual cooperation between the two countries.



President Pahor added that cooperation between Iran and Slovenia can help promotion of peace and security in the world.

■ **Terrorism common concern of region and world**

In a meeting with his Slovenian counterpart, Karl Erjavec, and his accompanying delegation, Zarif said that terrorism and extremism are common concerns of the region and world, requiring comprehensive campaign from cultural and intellectual job to military undertaking.

Describing presence of Pahor and senior officials in Iran as a positive step and good prelude for new period for bilateral ties, Zarif said that there are numerous capacities for promoting cooperation.

Zarif listed energy, financial and banking, tourism, visa facilities and culture as suitable areas of cooperation, saying, 'We have common viewpoints and concerns in regional and international developments.'

Erjavec, for his part, expressed pleasure with his visit to Tehran, saying a new chapter has opened in Iran-Slovenia ties.

He said that Iran-Slovenia Joint Economic Commission will be held in Ljubljana in 2017, adding that the Slovenian job generators and businessmen are very interested in cooperation with Iran's state-run and private sectors.

■ **Lack of political will to tackle terrorism**

In a meeting with Slovenian president,

Larijani said that the bitter experience of terrorism has roots in lack of firm political will at international level in fight against it and adoption of improper method in the campaign.

'Iran welcomes expansion of parliamentary, economic and cultural cooperation with Slovenia,' Larijani said, adding some good measures have been taken to ease domestic and foreign investment and the Iranian parliament supports the move.

The bitter reality with the region is the existence of terrorism in the region, which has been mounting in recent years and requires a collective contribution and firm political will at international level to uproot the improper methods, Larijani said.

Slovenian president, for his part said the Islamic Republic of Iran is regarded as a very significant country in the region, leaving impressive impact on regional and global developments.

No doubt, reopening Slovenian embassy in Tehran will shed light on prospect of Iran-Slovenia relations, he said.

Indisputably, the atmosphere shaped after the JCPOA is a good chance for the country's exporters and producers to cooperate with foreign companies and the reputable brands.

Nobody can deny the positive effects created by the nuclear deal because it has provided safer and more secure ground for foreign countries to engage with in Iran, the Slovenia in particular.



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This one small change makes it so much easier to stick with your fitness routine

By Jessi Kneeland

"I practice yoga."

As a personal trainer, I hear people express (or accept) this popular concept without a second thought. But if you said "I practice working out," people would be very confused.

There is something about yoga that allows us to approach it as a lifelong practice; we somehow know we can continue to improve ourselves through yoga forever, without reaching an end or conclusion. I think this has something to do with yoga's origins in Eastern traditions. Yoga's ancient spiritual roots seem to make people more forgiving of some of its less tangible aspects. For example, if a yoga instructor tells us that we store a lot of emotion in our hips, it may not occur to us to ask what that means or how anyone could know that. By contrast however, if a Western medical doctor shared some of the physiological specifics of running intervals or doing deadlifts, you might be tempted to ask for evidence—like solid research—that backs the claim.

I propose we start thinking about our workouts the way we think about yoga. Why? I'm glad you asked.

Internal motivation vs. external goals

For many people, practicing yoga has as much to do with mental and emotional goals as physical ones. Because yoga encourages the practitioner to remain present, pay attention to her or his breath, and check in with her- or him- self, yoga provides a workout for the mind as well as the body. In short, for many people, the purpose of doing yoga is doing yoga.

In stark contrast to this "the-process-is-the-product" understanding of yoga, we tend to view traditional ways of working out as a means to some other specific end. Being a trainer, I can tell you that most people work out to see aesthetic or performance improvements (and those goals are usually about creating body composition changes). Just as often, fitness is seen as a way to improve the quality of another aspect of life, like lifting luggage, playing with kids, walking up stairs, or carrying groceries. Very rarely does someone improve their fitness in order to be better at the experience of fitness.



Placing the fitness focus on external goals, as opposed to the internal experience of exercise, makes working out seem more like a chore—a step that must be accomplished to get what we really want, as opposed to an experience or a reward in and of itself. There's nothing wrong with having external or aesthetic goals, but in my experience, most clients who are able to find true, long-term success also tend to fall in love with the process itself.

The "about-to-die" factor

Yoga encourages practitioners to check in with their bodies' limitations so that poses, though potentially challenging, remain physically attainable for the practitioner without causing injury or strain. Good, old fashioned fitness, on the other hand, currently has a terrible (and inaccurate!) rap for being so hard.

I've had clients complain to me after a great and productive workout that they didn't feel like they were going to puke—as if that's a bad thing! Marketing, media, and sports folklore would have us believe that if a workout doesn't make us feel like we're about to die, then we aren't working hard enough. Aside from the fact that this is absolutely not true, it also makes the idea of working out extremely daunting and unmotivating.

There's no such thing as "Right"

Add to the equation the fact that fitness has relatively recent Western roots, and you can see why we tend to be more exacting in our desire to do fitness "right." It seems like we're more forgiving with yoga. In fact, part of yoga's appeal might be that because we don't fully understand how it affects us, we can't pursue doing it "correctly." All we know is it's been around for thousands of years, it challenges our bodies and minds, and it feels darn good.

But in Western science and medicine, we are taught to expect black and white answers. All my clients want to know the exact right way to do things, the exact right combination of exercises, and the exact right eating plan. I assure you: There is no such thing. But that doesn't stop marketing and media from inundating us with claims of "scientifically proven" ways to lose weight or get shredded fast. (Insert eye roll here.)

Bonus: Meet your goals and maintain your gains

If your goal is to get stronger, protect your joints, maintain fat loss, build lean muscle mass, increase balance and mobility, and improve your cardiovascular system, then consistency over the long term is much more important than intensity in the short term. Going really hard

and then quitting for a while is the opposite of what you need.

Approaching fitness as a lifelong habit—a continuous, fluid practice—will not only protect you from things like overuse injuries and other ailments that come with doing too much too soon. It will also bring you closer to your goals and allow you to maintain the results you work so hard to achieve.

Practice makes... even better practice

So why does any of this matter? Would approaching fitness as a practice actually improve anything?

I think so.

For one, calling something a practice takes the pressure off doing it perfectly. What if not doing it "right," (missing a lift, having an unexpectedly slow and difficult run, etc.) was just part of getting better at fitness? Thinking you have to do something perfectly makes it more likely you won't do it at all. I often see clients approaching fitness with the idea that they must succeed in a specific way, and it inevitably leads to them feeling like failures—all it takes is one not-so-great workout to leave people unmotivated to try it again. On the other hand, "practicing" something seems harmless. Fun, even! I think approaching fitness as a skill to be developed and improved would increase the likelihood of people getting started, while increasing motivation for continuing.

The future of the fitness industry should be anti- fast results and anti- instant gratification. We should be approaching the weight room as a place to learn skills that we can practice and improve, month after month, year after year, forever. There is so much joy to be had in fitness, so many different ways to progress, and so much pleasure in movement and overcoming obstacles.

So, let's start approaching fitness like we approach yoga. Let's take our time to learn the basics before moving on to the hard stuff. Let's aim to be constantly improving and taking on new challenges, and pushing our limits. Let's celebrate our victories in the gym, not just on the scale, and let's do it for the simple reward of using our bodies for something challenging and wonderful.

(Source: greatist.com)

With access to treatment, people living with HIV are living longer: UNAIDS chief

Executive Director of UNAIDS Michel Sidibé in his message on World AIDS Day, 1 December 2016, said with access to treatment, people living with HIV are living longer.

The full text of his message reads:

Today, we commemorate World AIDS Day—we stand in solidarity with the 78 million people who have become infected with HIV and remember the 35 million who have died from AIDS related illnesses since the first cases of HIV were reported.



The world has committed to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. We are seeing that countries are getting on the Fast-Track—more than 18 million people are now on life-saving HIV treatment and many countries are on track to virtually eliminate HIV transmission from mother to child.

We are winning against the AIDS epidemic, but we are not seeing progress everywhere. The number of new HIV infections is not declining among adults, with young women particularly at risk of becoming infected with HIV.

We know that for girls in sub-Saharan Africa, the transition to adulthood is a particularly dangerous time. Young women face many challenges—for HIV, they face a triple threat: a high risk of HIV infection, low rates of HIV testing and poor adherence to HIV treatment.

The world has committed to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. We are seeing that countries are getting on the Fast-Track—more than 18 million people are now on life-saving HIV treatment and many countries are on track to virtually eliminate HIV transmission from mother to child.

Coinfections of people living with HIV, such as tuberculosis (TB), cervical cancer and hepatitis B and C, are at risk of putting the 2020 target of fewer than 500 000 AIDS-related deaths out of reach. TB caused about a third of AIDS-related deaths in 2015, while women living with HIV are at four to five times greater risk of developing cervical cancer. Taking AIDS out of isolation remains an imperative if the world is to reach the 2020 target.

With access to treatment, people living with HIV are living longer. Investing in treatment is paying off, but people older than 50 who are living with HIV, including

people who are on treatment, are at an increased risk of developing age-associated noncommunicable diseases, affecting HIV disease progression. Whatever our individual situation may be, we all need access to the information and tools to protect us from HIV and to access antiretroviral medicines should we need them. A life-cycle approach to HIV that finds solutions for everyone at every stage of life can address the complexities of HIV. Risks and challenges change as people go through life, highlighting the need to adapt HIV prevention and treatment strategies from birth to old age.

The success we have achieved so far give us hope for the future, but as we look ahead we must remember not to be complacent. AIDS is not over, but it can be. Fundamental political, financial and implementation challenges remain, but we should not stop now. This is the time to move forward together to ensure that all children start their lives free from HIV, that young people and adults grow up and stay free from HIV and that treatment becomes more accessible so that everyone stays AIDS-free.

(Source: UNIC)

When to worry about worrying

There is no shortage of things to worry about --- from personal concerns about job security or health, to fears related to larger issues such as political conflicts or natural disasters. Temporary anxiety can be a healthy response to uncertainty and danger, but constant worry and nervousness may be a sign of generalized anxiety disorder.

Do I have generalized anxiety disorder?

You'll need your doctor's help to know for sure, but while other types of anxiety disorders arise from particular situations, generalized anxiety disorder is characterized by debilitating worry and agitation about nothing in particular, or anything at all.

People with generalized anxiety disorder tend to worry about everyday matters. They can't shake the feeling that something bad will happen and they will not be prepared. They may worry to excess about missing an appointment, losing a job, or having an accident. Some people even worry about worrying too much.

Physical symptoms are common too, and can include a racing heart, dry mouth, upset stomach, muscle tension, sweating, trembling, and irritability. These bodily expressions of anxiety can have a negative effect on



physical health. For example, people with generalized anxiety disorder are at greater risk for heart attack and other cardiovascular problems.

Taming anxiety

If you have generalized anxiety disorder, therapy — particularly cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) — can help. CBT helps people recognize when they are misinterpreting events, exaggerating difficulties, or making unnecessarily pessimistic assumptions, and offers new

ways to respond to anxiety-provoking situations.

For some people, medications can be an important part of treatment. Commonly prescribed drugs include antidepressants, such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (like Prozac or Zoloft), or dual serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (like Effexor or Cymbalta). These drugs take longer to work than the traditional anti-anxiety drugs, but also may provide greater symptom relief over time.

Symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder

- Persistent, excessive worry about several different things for at least six months
- Fatigue, difficulty sleeping, or restlessness
- Trouble concentrating
- Irritability
- Muscle tension
- Feeling tense or "on edge"

Only your doctor can determine whether you meet the criteria for generalized anxiety disorder. If you think you might have this condition, don't hesitate to talk to your primary care doctor. There are many different treatments that can ease the very real discomfort of this condition.

(Source: health.harvard.edu)

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10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

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

1 Users around the world will able to download video from Netflix, but not movies and shows from disney.

Netflix is the most popular subscription streaming service in the world with 88 million users introduces limit download option for internet-free streaming to watch offline.

2 GoPro is cutting 15% of its workforce amid sales slump.

Wearable action-camera maker GoPro said it would cut about 15 percent of its workforce and shutter its entertainment business, as the one-time Wall Street favorite cuts costs to help it return to profitability.

3 Twitter only recently opened up its Moments product to users, allowing them to curate tweets around specific events, but it was limited to just the desktop and web. However,the company is rolling out mobile support so now you'll be able to do the same thing while on the go.

When you want to create a Moment, first start with a tweet you want to add. Click on the downward arrow in the tweet details and you can add it to a Moment. Do this over and over again until your curation is complete.

4 YouTube now supports 4K livestreaming across standard and 360-degree videos.

YouTube has supported 4K-resolution videos for a number of years already, but the Google-owned streaming giant is taking things to the next level with support for 4K livestreaming.

5 Google is announcing the launch of App Maker, a new service that people inside organizations can use to easily develop custom applications based on their business needs.

6 Food delivery giant Just Eat is laying claim to a significant milestone — the world's first takeaway meal delivered by a robot.

Now, after five months of "exhaustive" testing, the company says it has made its first proper delivery with one unsuspecting customer's Turkish takeaway in Greenwich, London.

7 Fitness wearable creator Fitbit is in the process of acquiring smartwatch maker Pebble in a deal that will likely spell the end of the Pebble brand. The sale price will be between \$34 million and \$40 million.

8 Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella declared that the company is "not stepping away" from supporting Windows Phone users, but insisted that Microsoft software must also be available to other mobile platforms

9 A recent patent application filed in by Apple with the USPTO hints that Cupertino could be entertaining the idea of coming up with a circular Apple Watch in the future.

The patent description shows us a smartwatch that boasts a pretty traditional circular shape, similar to what most of Apple Watch's rivals have been rocking for a while.

10 Taiwanese chip maker MediaTek has debuted two new chipsets, the Helio X23 and Helio X27. They are high-end chips with upgrades over the flagship Helio X20 silicon. They bring improved overall performance, video shooting quality, and lower power consumption.

IT IRAN

Iran to host Asia-Pacific RoboCup Competition 2018

By Shataw Naseri

Head of Iran's National RoboCup Committee Morteza Mousakhani announced our country's accomplishment in acquiring the hosting grant of Asia-Pacific RoboCup Competition 2018, IRNA reported.

"Despite an important rival such as Russia, backed up by the experience of hosting the contest for 11 times, we managed to obtain the license of hosting the 2018 competition at Beijing meeting," Mousakhani said.

"The next-year Competition is due to be hosted by Thailand, as, for some reasons, its hosting was awarded to China and the organizers decided to introduce Thailand as the host of the next round with no voting; however, Iran was selected through voting," he added.

Mousakhani noted, "the 2018 Competition is due to be held by Islamic Azad University of Qazvin on Kish Island and will be attended by the Asian nations as well as Australia and Russia."

Iran to boost speed access to NIN

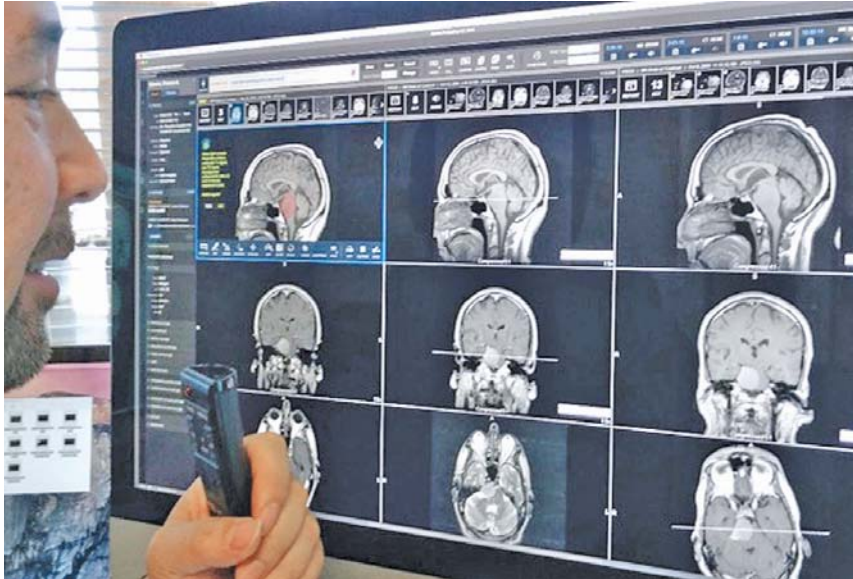
Iran's Deputy ICT Minister Barat Ghanbari announced resistance economy project's accomplishment in escalating speed access to National Information Network(NIN) by the end of the year, Mehr reported.

Stating that according to resistance economy charter, boosting the speed access to the domestic websites on National Information Network platform is on agenda, he maintained, "the development of optical fiber network, the evolution of data transmission network along with the increase of IP network capacity have been planned."

Deputy ICT Minister added," the average speed access to National Information Network is due to be reached to 4 Mbps, as a result, the domestic websites will be easily available."

In accordance with the Sixth Development Plan, Iran's net speed has to reach to 20 Mbps, a goal to be realized in 2020, according to Ghanbari.

In IBM's future, Watson will be your doctor



be able to identify when things have gone awry in scan images to direct doctors toward areas of concern. If this data is merged with each patient's medical records, it could mean faster

and more effective treatment for serious conditions.

The company is desperate to turn a profit on all of the money it's crammed into selling Watson as a general-pur-

pose supercomputing tool. The only problem is that is that IBM thinks every issue in the world can be solved with big data, but here it may actually work. After all, other companies are trying similar things -- including Zebra Medical, which does the same job with X-ray images. That firm is also letting patients upload their own CT scans and mammograms for a big data second opinion.

One of the systems that IBM is developing is a "physician support tool," that seems to take much of the mental leg-work away from doctors. If a patient is diagnosed with a tumor, Watson will pull together data from various sources to develop a personalized health care plan. Another system will help emergency rooms detect a brain bleed by cross-checking scan data with their historical records to spot patterns. Although there's always a worry that Google -- via its DeepMind AI -- may have won the hearts and minds of clinicians across the world.

(Source: engadget)

Apple to use drones for Apple Maps data collection



Apple has received approval from the Federal Aviation Administration to fly drones and collect data for Apple Maps, according to Bloomberg.

Bloomberg reported Apple has assembled a team of robotics and data-collection experts who will use the drones to update its Google Maps competitor.

Drones, a more mobile way for Apple to move than its current fleet of minivans, could examine street signs and roadways to update for construction and other new obstacles.

The FAA granted Apple approval in March to "operate an unmanned aircraft system to conduct data collection, photography, and videography," according to

US, EU take down Avalanche cybercrime network

A massive, complex criminal network that has caused millions of dollars in damages has been identified and targeted, thanks to a multi-national law enforcement effort announced Thursday.

Europol, working with the US Justice Dept., said five suspects have been arrested and dozens of servers have been seized as part of the beginning stages of an operation to shut down the Avalanche botnet infrastructure.

One of those arrested was the cyber-crime ring leader, according to the Associated Press, citing a Europol official.

Law enforcement called the operation "unprecedented in its scale," and also said

that another 221 servers were blocked by sending abuse notifications to the hosting providers, in a statement Thursday.

More than 800,000 malicious domains were also blocked in the process.

The Avalanche botnet infrastructure allowed notorious malware, like the Citadel financial crime malware and TeslaCrypt ransomware, to operate, such as by locking users out of their files for ransom or enlisting devices into distributed denial-of-service attacks to knock out infrastructure. It used a double fast-flux domain name service, which changes the IP address and name server records every five minutes, to hide the servers.

(Source: AP)

Russia set to become BlaBlaCar's biggest market in 2017

BlaBlaCar's activity in Russia has reached a "phenomenal level," said its cofounder and CEO Nicolas Brusson, in a recent interview with French business daily Les Echos.

The French startup entered the Russian and Ukrainian markets in 2014 through the acquisition of Ukrainian site Podorozhniki. "Our concept is popular there; there was a demand but little competition," Brusson said. He said he expects Russia to become his company's number one market, including its native France, in 2017.

Brusson confirmed a recent €21.3 million euro capital injection from Baring Vostok, a leading Russian private equity firm. "We were looking for a trustworthy local partner to help us

better know the market. This investor is independent from the authorities and the oligarchs, and has supported the development of Yandex and Avito," the French businessman emphasized.

"This round of financing was different from the previous ones, in that the financial dimension was not very important," Brusson added, somewhat elliptically.

Recently, BlaBlaCar also launched its service in Brazil, India, Mexico, and Turkey. "It's too early to draw conclusions, but our start has been very strong in Brazil," said Brusson. Meanwhile, BlaBlaCar has not taken off in Great Britain, for reasons which the company has not fully understood yet.

(Source: venturebeat)

Huawei announces Nougat update plans

Huawei has announced Nougat update plans for its smartphones. The Android 7 update for Huawei devices will arrive in the form of version 5.0 of the Chinese company's EMUI skin. The roll-out will begin sometime in Q1, 2017, with the Huawei Mate 8 and P9 getting the update first, followed by the P9 Plus, P9 lite, nova, and nova Plus.

The new EMUI 5.0, Huawei claims, is more efficient, secure, and user friendly. It "significantly cuts down on the number of steps needed to achieve the desired function," the company says in a press release, adding that "fur-

thermore, the user can reach 90% of the core functions in just two to three clicks."

The new UI also lets users choose between the standard layout and an app drawer. "Additionally, users can jump between their professional and personal lives effortlessly with profiles now being able to run in parallel -- no switching of phones necessary."

Coming back to the update, those rocking a Huawei P9, P9 Plus, P9 Lite or Mate 8 will be able to participate in the beta testing as well.

(Source: gsmarena)

HMD officially takes over the Nokia phone business

Starting today, HMD Global Oy is now the home of Nokia phones and tablets. The exclusive license extends 10 years forward and covers the whole world (sans Japan). Nokia, the company, will receive royalty payments for Nokia-branded products made by HMD (for both the name and for the intellectual property used).

It's important to note that Nokia, the company, is not an investor or a shareholder in HMD. That said, HMD is a Finnish company and there's one Nokia representative on its Board of Directors. Also, FIH Mobile (a Foxconn subsidiary) will be

making Nokia-branded feature phones.

This leaves HMD to focus on the Android-powered side of things. The site nokia.com/phones (operated by HMD) promises new smartphones coming in 2017. You can sign up to be notified by email for new developments.

The site currently lists a number of Nokia feature phones, which used to be manufactured by Micro-soft, until the company unloaded the factories to Foxconn (technically, to FIH).

(Source: nokia)

New Nokia phones to be revealed in early 2017

Nokia will release a range of feature phones and smartphones with HMD

By Cara McGoogan

Nokia has officially announced that it will re-enter the smartphone in early 2017 with a range of new feature phones and smartphones.

The once-ubiquitous Finnish company plans to use its historic gravitas to secure a place as a market leader alongside the likes of Apple, Samsung, Google and HTC.

Nokia won't be manufacturing the phones, but has signed a 10 year deal brand licensing deal with a Finnish startup called HMD that will take responsibility for producing and marketing the new devices.

Competing in the saturated phone market will be no easy feat, but HMD is confident that customers want to see Nokia devices on sale again. It hopes that its feature phones, which made the company the top phone maker until 2007, will be particularly popular in Russia and India, as well as in parts of Africa and Asia.



"Nokia has been one of the most iconic and recognisable phone brands globally for decades," said Arto Nummela, HMD's chief executive. "The excitement of re-introducing this much-loved, well-known and trusted brand to smartphone consumers is a responsibility and an ambition that everyone at HMD shares."

The quick turnaround of the new phones, which will

be unveiled in the first half of 2017, has prompted concerns after Samsung was forced to recall its Galaxy Note 7 device when it missed a fault during production. Responding to possible fears, Nummela said HMD "will not take any shortcuts".

"We have amazing support from our technology and engineering partners who have provided a huge number of engineers to make this very quick," he said. "We are focused on quality and reliability, and we will not take any shortcuts. Nokia as a brand owner is very keen that we maintain what has always been its trademark."

The Nokia-branded phones, which will run Google's Android operating system, are being designed with reliability, simplicity and ease of use in mind, HMD said. Nummela added that the company is working with Google to "take the clutter away" and create a range of phones that are recognisable as Nokia ones.

(Source: The Telegraph)

Carbon dioxide released by soil could undermine climate efforts

A lot of carbon stored inside the Earth may soon re-enter the atmosphere, according to a new, global study on soil-based carbon. The massive release of carbon could be the equivalent of adding another fully industrialized country the size of the United States to the map over the coming decades.

Plants, animals, and microbes absorb much of the carbon dioxide released into the Earth's atmosphere by burning fossil fuels. As these plants and animals die, their carbon-based bodies become part of the soil, storing the equivalent of millions of tons of greenhouse gases in the dirt.

As atmospheric carbon dioxide is a primary driver of climate change, some have pointed to this soil absorption as a helpful carbon sink, somewhat alleviating the human-caused warming of the planet. But as surface temperatures continue to rise, a lot of the carbon stored in the soil may be set to re-enter the atmosphere in a big way.

■ New study
The new study warns that a sort of feedback loop caused by climate change will cause a massive amount of carbon formerly trapped underground to return into the atmosphere in the form of even more greenhouse gases. These soil-based emissions could be a major obstacle to keeping climate change in check in coming decades, say the researchers.



The "exchange of carbon (C) between the soil and atmosphere represent a prominent control on atmospheric C concentrations and the climate," they wrote in a paper published in the journal Nature. "These processes are driven by the organisms (plants, microbes, and animals) that live in the soil, the activity of which could be accelerated by anthropo-

genic warming."

As the Earth gets warmer, say the researchers, microbes and other organisms living in the soil will increase their respiration rate, producing greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane, which are two leading causes of warming. These emissions could create a feedback loop as the greenhouse gases warm the

planet further, leading to further respiration in the soil, which creates more warming, and so on.

■ Climate change

"If climate change isn't stopped, an additional 55 trillion kilograms of carbon will be released into the atmosphere by the year 2050," said Tom Crowther

efforts to keep the global temperature from rising more than 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels — the commonly held goal of the nearly 200 countries who signed the Paris Agreement on climate change, which went into force in early November.

Climate scientists had not considered the scale of carbon feedback during those negotiations because so little was known about the phenomenon.

Previous studies on the subject had shown conflicting data from highly localized regions, leading to mixed and unclear results. But this study was different, incorporating data from around the globe.

"With data from more than 40 institutes around the world, covering 20 years, our scope is now finally worldwide," said Dr. Crowther.

The results of the worldwide study? For every degree of warming, about 30 petagrams (30 trillion kilograms) of carbon could be released into the atmosphere through this soil feedback mechanism, the paper warns.

(Source: The CSM)

"If climate change isn't stopped, an additional 55 trillion kilograms of carbon will be released into the atmosphere by the year 2050," says researcher Tom Crowther.

Tornado outbreaks are on the rise, and scientists don't know why

A single tornado can cause a lot of damage. But even worse are tornado outbreaks. Just this week, a cluster of at least 18 tornadoes struck the Southeast over two days.

Scientists are seeing bigger clusters in recent years, and they're struggling to figure out what's happening.

When weather conditions are just right — lots of rising heat and moisture, and vertical wind shear — sometimes you get more than just a tornado. Mathematician Michael Tippett at Columbia University, who tracks these outbreaks, says that while the number of tornadoes nationwide varies a lot year to year, the overall average is pretty steady.

This map from the National Weather Service shows tornado reports (red T), wind reports (blue W) and hail reports (green H) for Tuesday. More than 20 tornadoes were reported as a powerful storm system moved through the Southeast. Zoom in on the map here.

"But the number of tornadoes in outbreaks is increasing," he says. And the number of tornadoes in the most extreme outbreaks — those where at least a dozen tornadoes hit a region within one to three days — is in-

creasing the fastest.

■ Warming temperature

Scientists who study climate suspect that warming temperatures may affect how many tornadoes we get. After all, warmer, wetter conditions are like priming the tornado pump.

But Tippett says so far he is not seeing a connection between climate change and these bigger outbreaks. "It's not the expected signature of climate change," he says, "it could be either something else, or we really don't understand what climate change is doing."

All sorts of things influence weather: for example, the circulation of warm water in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. That circulation changes over decades, which in turn alters long-term weather patterns. Writing in the journal Science, Tippett says those ocean changes could be implicated here, but there's no evidence yet. The only thing that seems to be changing are certain kinds of wind patterns near these clusters — when wind at different elevations is blowing in different directions (wind



shear), for example.

No matter what the cause, these bigger outbreaks hurt people in their path. This week's killed five. And they affect the insurance industry. Bigger outbreaks usually mean more damage, and more payouts.

(Source: npr.org)

China's first astronaut reveals hearing mysterious knocking sound in space

Yang Liwei, China's first astronaut, heard a knocking sound during his maiden flight in space. Other Chinese astronauts heard it as well. What could be behind this mysterious sound?

Yang Liwei, China's first astronaut, has revealed that he heard a mysterious knock while alone in a tiny spacecraft during his maiden flight in space.

In an interview, Yang said that he recalled hearing something like somebody knocking on the body of the spaceship during his first flight in space in 2003. He compared this sound to somebody knocking on an iron bucket using a wooden hammer.

A "non-causal situation I have met in space is a knock that appeared from time

to time," Yang related saying the sound just appeared suddenly sans any rhyme or reason. The astronaut added that the sound neither came from the inside nor outside of the spacecraft.

■ Mysterious sound

Yang admitted that he got a bit nervous and decided to move close to the porthole in an attempt to find out what's behind the mysterious sound. Nothing out of the ordinary, however, appeared and he could not find any explanation for the eerie knocking sound.

He was not able to figure out what the sound was even after he returned to Earth. He has already tried albeit in vain to recreate the sound so experts would be able to help him identify what it was.

He tried to imitate the sound using different instruments but he never heard the exact sound again.

Yang said that the sound was also heard by the Shenzhou 6 and Shenzhou 7 astronauts during the 2005 and 2008 missions but he has already assured the astronauts that the sound is a normal phenomenon and there is no reason to get worried.

■ Water molecules

Space is expected to be silent because there is no medium such as air particles, water molecules, metals or solid atoms that would allow sound to travel.

Goh Cher Hiang, from the National University of Singapore, said that it is possible that something physical could

be hitting the spacecraft carrying the astronauts, which could be responsible for the knocking sound.

Wee-Seng Soh, also from the National University of Singapore, offered a different explanation. He said that the sound could have been the result of the spacecraft's contraction or expansion given that the temperature of the spacecraft's exterior could possibly change within the orbit.

This is not the first time that a mysterious sound has been heard in space. De-classified NASA tapes, for instance, have revealed that the astronauts of the Apollo 10 mission heard odd music on the far side of the moon.

(Source: Tech Times)

Malware used to spy Iran's nuclear negotiations in Geneva

Swiss officials confirmed to have found an espionage malware in the computer equipment at a five-star hotel that has hosted sensitive talks including Iranian nuclear negotiations.

Investigations revealed that a significant number of computers (servers and clients) at a hotel in Geneva had been infected with a form of malware developed for the purposes of espionage, and is basically used to gather data from the computers infected.

Clearly gathering information on the nuclear talks is a primary goal for intelligence agencies that are interested to know the evolution of the negotiations with governments involved.

The malware was discovered on computers at the hotel where talks on Iran's nuclear work had taken place a month before, following a tip-off from the Swiss intelligence services.

When the talks shifted to a luxury hotel in Vienna,

the microwave radiation from the surveillance efforts of competing intelligence agencies was so intense that diplomats had to walk some distance from the venue to use their mobile phones.

The Israeli government is one of the main suspects, but it has always denied accusations of cyber espionage despite a Russian-based security firm speculated the use of a spyware having similarities with the ones used by Israeli cyber spies.

AIC Articles Admitted in 9th Intl. Insurance Seminar

A number of seven articles authored by ASIA Insurance Company (AIC) were accepted at 23rd National Seminar and 9th Intl. Insurance and Development Seminar in the form of presentation and poster, Public Relations Dept. of the company reported.

Given the above issue, the two articles entitled "Dynamics of Insurance Market in Post-Sanctions Era, Challenges and Opportunities" authored by Dr. Nima Nourollahi Deputy for Planning and Development Affairs, Hossein-Ali Bakhtiar Nasabadi and Mehdi Khosravi & Asieh Bakhtiar advisors of the company for Market Development and Insurance Sales Network as well as "Dividend

and Its Relationship with Performance at Insurance Firms" authored by Behrouz Nouri Advisor to AIC Chief and Seyyed Sa'eb Mousavi will be presented at 23rd National Seminar and 9th Intl. Insurance and Development Conference.

It should be noted that the following articles have been admitted as poster in 23rd National Seminar and 9th Intl. Insurance and Development Conference: "Identifying and Ranking Factors Affecting Business Performance of Insurance Industry in Country" by Masoud Badin (member of Board of Directors of AIC), "Compiling Competitive Strategies of Insurance Firms with Strategic Management

Approach, Case Study: AIC Branch in Yazd Province" authored by Dr. Nima Nourollahi (Deputy AIC Chief for Planning and Development), Farham Soleymani (Deputy AIC Branch in Meybod), Hossein-Ali Bakhtiar Nasrabadi (Advisor to AIC Chief for Market Development and Sales Network), Isa Mehravaran (Head of AIC Branch in Bandar Abbas), "Studying Competitive Development Strategies in Insurance Industry" by Faramarz Khajir Deputy Chief for Properties' Insurances Affair and Samira Zaroudi Expert Official in Charge for Fire Insurances of company, "Pricing Strategies in Insurance Industry with Just Pricing Challenges Approach" by Mahmoud

Sabzi (director general for Planning and Development Affairs) and Aydin Rashidi (head of Special Contracts Department for Liability Insurances) & "Comparative Study of Insurance Market between Iran and Malaysia and Presenting Strategy for Entry of Foreign Insurers" by Mahmoud Sabzi (director general for Planning and Development Affairs) and Zahra Soleymani and Zohreh Saedi expert officials for Planning and Development Affairs.

The prestigious ceremony will be held at Intl. Conferences Center of Tehran's Milad Tower concurrent with commemorating Insurance Day on Dec. 3 in the presence of senior insurance officials of the country.

Physics, photosynthesis and solar cells

A University of California, Riverside assistant professor has combined photosynthesis and physics to make a key discovery that could help make solar cells more efficient. The findings were recently published in the journal Nano Letters.

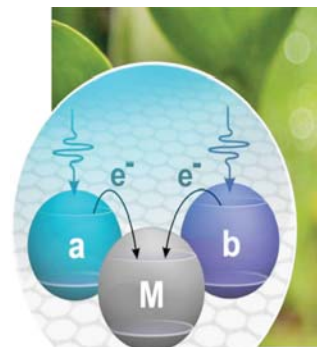
Nathan Gabor is focused on experimental condensed matter physics, and uses light to probe the fundamental laws of quantum mechanics. But, he got interested in photosynthesis when a question popped into his head in 2010: Why are plants green? He soon discovered that no one really knows.

During the past six years, he sought to help change that by combining his background in physics with a deep dive into biology.

He set out to re-think solar energy conversion by asking the question: can we make materials for solar cells that more efficiently absorb the fluctuating amount of energy from the sun. Plants have evolved to do this, but current affordable solar cells - which are at best 20 percent efficient - do not control these sudden changes in solar power, Gabor said. That results in a lot of wasted energy and helps prevent wide-scale adoption of solar cells as an energy source. Gabor, and several other UC Riverside physicists, addressed the problem by designing a new type of quantum heat engine photocell, which helps manipulate the flow of energy in solar cells. The design incorporates a heat engine photocell that absorbs photons from the sun and converts the photon energy into electricity.

Surprisingly, the researchers found that the quantum heat engine photocell could regulate solar power conversion without requiring active feedback or adaptive control mechanisms. In conventional photovoltaic technology, which is used on rooftops and solar farms today, fluctuations in solar power must be suppressed by voltage converters and feedback controllers, which dramatically reduce the overall efficiency.

(Source: EurekAlert)



We might save the internal combustion engine by flipping it on itself

Engineers hope to stave off the death of the internal combustion engine by perfecting the opposed piston design.

It's commonly understood that the internal combustion engine has to die. Nations have considered banning fuel-burning vehicles beyond a certain future date, though none of these proposals has stuck around. But with increasing pressure on automakers to build more efficient vehicles that put out fewer emissions, the future of the piston engine looks grim.

But now, a team of engineers is investigating a way to make a cleaner, greener internal combustion engine. And their solution involves flipping the standard four-stroke engine on top of itself.

As Wired explains, the opposed piston engine layout has long been on the minds of vehicle engineers. It replaces the four-stroke engine's valvetrain with open intake and exhaust ports, eliminating the friction and complexity of a camshaft and valves. But for decades, we didn't have the means to control air and fuel metering precisely enough to take advantage of the design's inherent efficiencies.

Now, engineers think they've finally perfected the opposed piston design. Their hope is that the engine can harness the century-plus refinement of the piston engine, along with the opposed layout's advantages, to make a clean-running new vehicle that uses the fueling infrastructure we've already got in place.

Check out how this innovative new engine works. Who knows — someday, this type of engine might be under the hood of your own car.

(Source: Popular Mechanics)

MIT researchers discover another weird property of water

Despite its abundance, water remains a mysterious substance with a host of strange properties. A new discovery from researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology just added to the anomalies — even at high temperatures, water freezes solid when placed in tiny tubes.

The discovery came as a surprise to a team of chemical engineers led by Professor Michael Strano, who had been trying to send electric currents through water in nanotubes.

"We noticed unexpected changes in some measurements and discovered that the changes resulted from heating," graduate student Lee Drahushuk, co-author of a paper detailing the discovery, told Digital Trends. "From there, we varied temperature systematically and realized the changes were an effect of a phase transition between liquid and solid water inside the nanotube."

The researchers decided to investigate this behavior but were surprised to find just how strange it was. At temperatures of at least 105 degrees Celsius (221 degrees Fahrenheit) — well beyond water's usual boiling point — the water in their nanotubes froze solid. The degree and direction of the phase transition was way more than they expected.

But there's another mystery here which hasn't been solved — how water enters the nanotubes in the first place. Nanotubes are just a few water molecules thick and are thought to be water-repellant. Strangely, filling them with water proved easy.

"In many cases water enters the carbon nanotubes by itself," Drahushuk said, "more or less the same as water is pulled up into paper or other porous things, just on a very small scale. We do need to open up the ends, as carbon nanotubes usually have natural caps on their ends after they are grown."

(Source: Digital Trends)

Intl. medical equipment exhibition opens in Kish Island

THE SOCIETY DESK TEHRAN — The Third International Exhibition of Medical Equipment, dubbed Hormoz Health, opened in Kish Island, southern province of Hormozgan, on Friday.

Co-organized with Iran's Food and Drug Administration and Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade, the three-day event is attended by some 132 Iranian and foreign companies, IRNA news agency quoted the exhibition executive secretary Es'haq Ameri as saying.

Companies from 13 countries such as South Korea, Japan, the U.S., Belgium, Germany, China, and the Netherlands, along with Iranian companies are showcasing their latest products and technologies on a land stretching 14,000 square meters, Ameri highlighted.

Introducing world's latest and most modern technologies in medical equipment and promoting interaction between Iranian and foreign companies are of the event's objectives, he pointed.

"The exhibition will also help us to be up to date by comparing our achievements and products in this field to other countries," he said, adding, "Moreover the event will open up foreign investment opportunities."

2-year-old baby girl missing for 13 days found alive

THE SOCIETY DESK TEHRAN — A two-year-old baby girl, who had went missing in one of southern Tehran neighborhoods, was found alive after 13 days.

On November 13, Zahra went to the market with her mother but has gone missing since then. Despite her father's efforts to find her after searching the whole place he was unable to find her and informed the police, Tasnim news agency reported on Wednesday.

The police began searching for Zahra in the neighborhood where she went missing by putting up fliers with Zahra's pictures on them.

The searches were ongoing up until November 26 when a man called Zahra's family describing a little girl wandering in their neighborhood whose description matched Zahra's, and finally she was brought back to her parents.

The police is still investigating Zahra's 13-day mysterious disappearance.

LEARN ENGLISH Playing Fair in Business

Marcel: Hey, why do you have the file for the Donovan **account** on your desk? I thought that was Evan's account.
Amanda: It is, but I'm about to **snatch** it from him. He **won't know what hit him**.

Marcel: You're stealing his account? If you do that, you'd better **watch your back**.

Amanda: You've got it all wrong. This is **payback**. Three months ago, when I was **on the verge of** getting the Moralez account, Evan **swooped in** and **snagged it**. He doesn't **play fair** and now neither do I.

Marcel: This sounds like the beginning of a **feud**.

Amanda: Evan started it. If he wants to **play hardball** then **what's good for the goose is good for the gander**.

Marcel: You're not worried that he'll **up the ante** and try to do something even more **underhanded**?

Amanda: Evan doesn't scare me.

Marcel: This could easily **escalate**.

Amanda: Like I said, I'm not afraid of Evan. This is business. **If you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen**.

(Source: *eslpod.com*)

Words & phrases

account: an arrangement in which a bank keeps your money safe so that you can pay more in or take money out

snatch: to take something away from someone

not know what hit you: to feel shocked and confused because something happens when you were not expecting it to

watch your back: to be careful because other people may try to harm you

payback: when you do something to make someone suffer because of something they have done to harm you

on the verge of: to be at the point where something is about to happen

swoop in: if a bird or aircraft swoops, it moves suddenly down through the air, especially in order to attack something, here it metaphorically means that Amanda's colleague has taken the account in an attack like a bird

snag: to succeed in getting something, especially something difficult to get

play fair: fair treatment of people without cheating or being dishonest

feud: an angry and often violent quarrel between two people or groups that continues for a long time

play hardball: o be very determined to get what you want, especially in business or politics

what's good for the goose is good for the gander: something that you say to suggest that if a particular type of behavior is acceptable for one person, it should also be acceptable for another person

up the ante: to increase your demands or try to get more things from a situation, even though this involves more risks

escalate: if fighting, violence, or a bad situation escalates, or if someone escalates it, it becomes much worse

if you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen: used to tell someone that they should leave a job or situation if they cannot deal with its difficulties

Tehran University to host intl. conference on water and environment

THE SOCIETY DESK TEHRAN — Tehran University will host the "International Conference on Water and Environment in the New Millennium: Education and Capacity Building" on December 3 to 5.

The conference is co-organized with German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Dutch and German universities as well, Khabaronline reported.

The event which is comprising of various workshops and panels is hoped to help improve Iran's water and environmental status, the conference secretary Masoumeh Malek said.

The workshops will be specifically focused on developing a new curriculum for training water policy makers with cross-disciplinary knowledge in the fields of hydrology (surface and groundwater), water engineering, water law, water and environment economics, socio-hydrology and eco-hydrology, Malek explained.

"We believe educating the public



© IRNA / Zahra Baghebani

Zayandeh Rud, Isfahan province, affected by extreme drought

Iran's Welfare Organization conducts offline autism screening test

THE SOCIETY DESK TEHRAN — An offline autism screening test is now available for downloading from Iran's Welfare Organization website, ISNA news agency reported.

The questionnaire is comprising of 10 questions for parents with children aged 2 to 5 to diagnose children who are suffering from the autism spectrum disorder, an official with Iran's Welfare Organization has said.

Maryam Pourseyyed explained that in case a child shows three of the symptoms, he/she might be suffering from autism and need to refer to the centers [also listed in Iran's Welfare Organization website] to undergo treatments [if necessary].

Meanwhile, the Welfare Organization deputy director Hossein Nahvinejad said that some one percent of people in the country are suffering from autism and currently some 2,100 patients are receiving behavioral treatments in 60 centers nationwide.

Except for physical therapy other treatments such as work therapy and speech therapy autism patients need



UK health body proposes removal of speed bumps to cut air pollution

Speed bumps should be removed, speed limits made variable on England's motorways, sometimes dropping as low as 50mph, and a congestion charge considered in more cities to cut air pollution and save lives, health experts have said.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Nice) released a series of recommendations on Thursday which it said would "promote a smoother driving style" and help keep emissions down.

Health officials said vehicles created more emissions when they were speeding up and slowing down, as on congested motorways. To keep a more consistent speed, they said, the limit could be temporarily lowered to 50 or 60 mph when traffic is stop-start. That represented a "more sensible" approach than having lower fixed limits, Nice's Prof Mark Baker said.

The officials added that some speed bumps encouraged people to speed up, then slow down. They urged planners to consider using average speed technology on the roads to promote smoother driving. Figures released earlier this year by the RAC Foundation showed that cameras measuring average speeds were now

monitoring drivers on more than 250 miles of Britain's roads. Sections covered range in length from a quarter of a mile on London's Tower Bridge to 99 miles on the A9 between Dunblane and Inverness in Scotland.

On top of that, they want towns and cities with pollution problems to consider implementing clean air zones and look into the possibility of introducing congestion charging zones.

The draft guidance for England also contains proposals for "no-idling" zones around schools to prevent parents leaving their cars running during school drop-offs. Air pollution is a contributory factor to about 25,000 deaths a year in England, almost 5% of all deaths, Nice said, and road traffic is estimated to contribute to about a third of air pollution in urban sites.

Provisional figures show that road usage is at record levels, with an estimated 320bn vehicle miles travelled on Britain's roads in the year ending September 2016.

Health campaigners welcomed the draft proposals, which were devised for local authority staff and are out for consultation, but environmental groups

called for more stringent measures.

The British Lung Foundation said it backed the plans because "air pollution contributes to tens of thousands of early deaths every year" and the British Heart Foundation called them a "step in the right direction".

Jenny Bates, a Friends of the Earth air pollution campaigner, said the proposals were to be welcomed but that "we must deal with the real crux of the issue and reduce air pollution levels".

She said: "Action is needed both to ensure vehicles on the road are clean and that there are fewer of them. Diesel vehicles, which are the most polluting, must be phased out and our transport and planning policy needs a radical overhaul."

Nice officials called for a review of trees lining streets in urban areas. "In some cases, they restrict street ventilation, causing poorer air quality. In others they improve it". It also warns that solid barriers placed next to roads to mitigate noise can actually lead to a wider dispersal of pollution.

Other suggestions by Nice included:

■ Town planners should avoid putting



cycle routes on heavily polluted roads but, where this was unavoidable, they should consider using foliage to screen cyclists from vehicles. .

■ Local authorities may want to look into setting a standard for the types of cars used for taxis.

■ Some areas should consider public awareness initiatives such as "car-free days". Those could be similar to measures sometimes used in Paris, which only allows drivers with a number plate ending in an odd or even number into the city on given days when pollution reaches high levels.

■ House builders should place living rooms at the back of houses away from roads and hedgerows should be grown to protect cyclists using cycle paths.

(Source: *The Guardian*)

ENGLISH IN USE

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A ← → ع

Transport budget for special students jumps fivefold to \$5m

Iran's government has allocated some 180 billion rials (nearly \$5 million) to provide special students with school transport at no cost, the director for special students department of the Education Ministry has said.

There has been a fivefold increase in the budget allocated to the special students school transport as the budget was some 35 billion rials (nearly \$1 million) in 2013, Majid Qadami told Fars news agency.

"Following through on the pledge we made, last year we provided special students living in underprivileged areas with free school transport and paid for 80 percent of the costs of the transport in other areas," Qadami explained.

ENGLISH PROVERB

Rolling stone gathers no moss

■ **Explanation:** person who does not settle down is not attached to anything or anyone

■ **For example:** I worry about Tom. He's never lived in the same place for two years in a row, and he keeps changing jobs. A rolling stone gathers no moss.

PHRASAL VERB

Breeze in/into/out etc.

■ **Meaning:** to walk somewhere in a calm confident way

■ **For example:** She just breezed into my office and said she wanted a job.

ENGLISH IDIOM

Bad shape

■ **Explanation:** a person who is in bad shape is in poor physical condition

■ **For example:** I really am in bad shape. I must do more exercise.

اختصاص اعتبار پنج برابری ۱۸۰ میلیارد ریالی برای دانش آموزان استثنایی

رئیس سازمان آموزش و پرورش کودکان استثنایی وزارت آموزش و پرورش گفت: دولت اعتباری معادل ۱۸۰ میلیارد ریال برای رایگان شدن سرویس دانش‌آموزان استثنایی اختصاص داده است.

به گزارش خبرگزاری فارس مجید قدمی گفت: : رایگان شدن سرویس مدارس دانش‌آموزان استثنایی نسبت به سال ۱۳۹۲، پنج برابر شده است؛ یعنی حدود ۳۵ میلیارد اعتبار این کار به حدود ۱۸۰ میلیارد ریال رسیده است.

قدمی همچنین توضیح داد: مطابق قولی که داده بودیم سال گذشته هزینه سرویس مدارس در مناطق محروم پرداخت شد و در سایر مناطق را تا ۸۰ درصد هزینه های سرویس مدارس را در سایر مناطق پرداخت کردیم.

Assad cannot remain in power: Turkish FM

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu Friday said that Syrian President Bashar Assad cannot remain in power, speaking during a visit to Beirut.

"Instead of prioritizing his own interests, he should consider the interests of the entire [Syrian] nation," Cavusoglu said during a joint news conference with his Lebanese counterpart, caretaker FM Gebran Bassil.

"Assad's existence [in power] cannot fortify the unity of Syria," he said. "A person responsible for the death of more than 600,000 of his people cannot remain in power."

The Turkish FM also called for an immediate cessation of hostilities in Syria.

"War in Aleppo is worrying," he said. "A mutual understanding is necessary to declare a cease-fire."

He expressed support for any effective meetings between main players in the region, particularly between Russia and the U.S., to end hostilities in Syria.

"We [the international community] should get together to facilitate a solution in Syria and reach a cease-fire through collective efforts," he said.

Cavusoglu's remarks come a day after he met with Russian FM Sergey Lavrov. The two discussed the deteriorating conditions in eastern Aleppo but gave no indication they were close to a cease-fire.

Ankara and Moscow have long been at odds over the conflict in Syria, in which Russia backs Assad and Turkey supports rebel factions fighting to topple the Syrian leader.

The conflict has played out tragically



in the divided city of Aleppo, where more than 300 civilians have been killed and tens of thousands have been displaced since the government began its offensive on rebel-held areas of the city on Nov. 15.

"Stability and security in Syria must be fortified," Cavusoglu said.

Moscow has been a staunch defender of the Syrian government and says its military involvement in the country is designed to stamp out Daesh (ISIL) and other extremists.

Turkey, which has always backed the opposition, caused a strain in its new rapprochement with Moscow when President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recently suggested his country's military actions in Syria aims to topple the Syrian government.

The Lebanese caretaker FM said that his country's position on Syria was "clear." "We respect the decision of the Syrian

people and want to make sure of their safe return to Syrian territories," he said.

He also called for a "secular system [in Syria] that includes all sects."

Five years after the onset of the war in Syria, Lebanon continues to endure the largest refugee crisis in its history.

Every area in Lebanon has been affected by the influx of refugees, especially those near the Syrian border, which have borne the heaviest burden.

This influx has exacerbated underlying conditions in a country that was already witnessing social and economic problems prior to the Syrian conflict.

UNHCR has registered some 1.1 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, however the Lebanese government estimates the total figure to be closer to 1.5 million.

■ **Erdogan backpedals on Assad ouster** Meanwhile, Turkish President Recep

Tayyip Erdogan has backtracked on his earlier statements that his country's military forces launched operations in neighboring Syria to end the rule of the incumbent Damascus government, asserting that the offensives there are aimed only at terrorists.

"The aim of the Euphrates Shield Operation [in northern Syria] is not any country or person, but only terrorist organizations," Erdogan said in a speech at the presidential palace in Istanbul on Thursday.

He added, "No one should doubt this issue that we have uttered over and over, and no one should comment on it in another fashion or try to derail it."

The remarks came only two days after Erdogan said the Turkish army marched into Syria to end the rule of President Bashar al-Assad, whom he accused of terrorism and causing the deaths of thousands.

The Turkish president further alleged that Ankara had no territorial claims in Syria, and that Turkey was seeking to restore "justice" in the war-torn Arab country.

"Why did we enter? We do not have an eye on Syrian soil. The issue is to provide lands to their real owners. That is to say we are there for the establishment of justice," he said.

He went on to say that he estimates almost one million people to have died in the conflict in Syria. This is while UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura puts the number of people killed in the five-year foreign-sponsored militancy at more than 400,000 people.

(Source: agencies)

Castro was amazingly successful in instituting functioning system: professor

Arshin Adib Moghaddam says Fidel Castro was an 'internationalist-socialist'

➔ Following is the text of the interview:

■ **Fidel Castro, along with a small number of rebel forces, succeeded to topple the authoritarian regime of President Fulgencio Batista in 1959. What were the reasons behind his success?**

A: The Cuban revolution was one of the cosmic events of the 20th century. It had all the ingredients of a revolution, a gigantic explosion of political desire for a better tomorrow. First, an ideology with global appeal that Fidel Castro utilised in order to give an identity to his movement and to secure the backing of a superpower such as the Soviet Union. Castro was not a blind communist of course. He was a child of his time, politically enveloped by the post-colonial emancipation of the non-Western world, buttressed by events such as the nationalisation of oil in Iran led by Mohammad Mosaddegh, Nassirism in the Arab world, the emergence of the Non Alignment Movement and the activism of people such as Che Guevara, Frantz Fanon and Kwame Nkrumah in Africa. Inspired by the revolutionary philosophy of Jose Marti, Castro was a Cuban first, a Latin American second, and an internationalist-socialist in the third place.

Second, Castro became the point of fixation of the people. Comparable to the role of leaders in the other great revolutions of 20th century modernity, Lenin in Russia, Mao in China and Khomeini in Iran, Castro was the iconic, charismatic figure head of a mass movement in the name of national liberation.

■ **What were the reasons that the U.S. failed to overthrow the Castro government? And, did he succeed to fulfill his promises to the Cubans?**

A: The reasons given above, the fact that the Cuban revolution had ideological depth, a charismatic leadership and

a populist agenda which substituted a corrupt and submissive ancien regime (again very comparable to Iran), explain why the United States was not able to unhinge his rule, despite of the activism of Cuban exiles to that end. This is a case study par excellence for everyone who is interested in the dynamics of the Cold War and the limitations of U.S. power. An island country just off the coast of the U.S. mainland managed to secure its revolution in the name of independence against all odds, including invasions, sanctions, assassination attempts and constant, covert strategies to bring about "regime change". Fidel Castro may not have given his people the political freedoms they desired, but under the circumstances of a clear and present threat from the United States, he was amazingly successful in instituting a functioning system for governance and administration, including one of the best health care systems in the world. Again, this is a historic achievement for a small country under constant harassment from an imperial power.

■ **"The country (Cuba) brokered the peace between the FARC movement and the government in Columbia; a truly gigantic diplomatic achievement and something that none of the so called great powers came even remotely close to with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."**

■ **The United States and Cuba have taken great steps to normalize ties. Does this mean that Cuba has taken a departure from its ideals?**

A: The main ideals of any revolution start to be realised when the movements transcends the anger and tribulations of the revolutionary moment. Countries can't be built in a war zone or within an explosion such as a revolution. The revolutionary event creates the conditions of independence to implement the desires of the people: liberty, political freedoms, human rights, economic security. After the end of the Soviet Union, the Castros were very successful in sponsoring like-minded movements in Latin America – Chavez would not have happened without the Cuban revolution, neither would there be the Moraleses, Ortegas and Lulas of this world. So central has Cuba become to the continent, that the country brokered the peace between the FARC movement and the government in Columbia; a truly gigantic diplomatic achievement and something that none of the so called great powers came even remotely close to with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. So Cuba created facts on the ground, and in many ways coerced the United States into accepting those realities. Of course, the Obama factor should not be disregarded. In my opinion, he has been the most prudent and intelligent U.S. leader in the country's history. The Cuban revolution was meant to improve the lives of Cubans. Fidel was a nodal point, a relay jump-starting a new era. In the end, the Castros understood that relations with the United States will be beneficial to achieve the socio-economic goals of the revolution and to improve the lives of ordinary Cubans. It remains to be seen, however, how the brute gangster capitalism of someone like Trump affects this Cuban-American dialectic.

Sisi's policy switch on Syria widens Egypt-Saudi split

➔ Yet the October 8th draft resolution vote appears to have exposed an existing rift in relations between Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

In fact, there now seems to be a fundamental disjunction of views between Cairo and Riyadh on the direction of a "post-Arab-Spring" Middle East, quite the opposite of the "strategic and fraternal" relations between the two Arab countries proclaimed by Egyptian foreign minister Sameh Shoukri after a January 2016 meeting with his Saudi counterpart, Adel bin Ahmed Al Jubair.

In funding the coup that overthrew Egypt's first democratically-elected president, Mohammad Morsi, the Saudi royals had hoped to entice Sisi to join them in their regional hostility towards Iran. Instead, the Egyptian leader not only has withheld Egypt's forces from participating in Saudi proxy wars against Iran, but also has even hinted at warmer relations with Tehran, much to the chagrin of the Wahabi war lords.

After Sisi's successful coup in 2013, the U.S. suspended foreign military aid for two years. As a result, Sisi, logically, reached out to Russian president Putin, who pledged increased support to Egypt and even alluded to inclusion in the Eurasian Economic Union, which consists of Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. Russia's assistance on the construction of nuclear power plants was also discussed.

The warming trend in Cairo-Moscow bilateral ties undoubtedly unnerved Washington, so in March 2015, the Obama administration countered by signing

off on a large package of advanced military hardware, which included 12 Lockheed Martin F-16 fighters, 20 Boeing Harpoon missiles and up to 125 General Dynamics M1A1 Abrams tank kits. Citing U.S. national security interests, Obama also pledged to continue to ask congress for the \$1.3 billion per year military aid despite Egypt's failure to gain "democracy certification." Historically, Egypt is the second largest recipient of U.S. foreign military assistance; the Israeli entity being number one.

Obtaining military weaponry for a country in economic distress by balancing against major powers is understandable, but causing an open split with major benefactor Saudi Arabia over Syria is not. Certainly, it is possible that Riyadh could further cut assistance to Cairo and possibly even support other Egyptian generals in a coup to oust Sisi. But this is not likely, since Russia, and perhaps even Iran would step in to make up any shortfall should the Saudis pull the aid plug on Egypt. And since both Russia and Iran are supporting the legitimate government of Syria under president Bashar al-Assad, it follows that Egypt would want to do likewise.

Furthermore, Saudi Arabia is tied down in regional wars it has started in Bahrain, Yemen and Syria as well as an ongoing oil price war, all of which are placing an enormous drain on Saudi financial reserves. Accordingly, Riyadh is not in a favorable financial position to exert substantial pressure on Cairo to impel Sisi to adopt the Saudi worldview. Saudi

threatening to cut off oil shipments to Egypt had no effect either.

And despite rhetorical attempts at downplaying the dispute to the contrary, Egypt is clearly at odds with Saudi Arabia over Syria. "The [Saudi] Coalition fighting in Syria may want to change the regime in the country, but that is not Egypt's position," stated Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukri in an interview with Egyptian media. The public statement followed an unexpected meeting between Shoukri and his Iranian counterpart, Dr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, on September 23 on the margins of the annual UN General Assembly session in New York.

Another factor in all this is the election in the U.S. of the flamboyant showman/real estate tycoon Donald Trump, whose foreign policy statements about Iran, Russia and Syria imply contradictory goals. Regarding Russia, Trump has expressed a desire to seek better relations with Putin. Concerning the fight against the so-called Islamic State, the U.S. President-elect claims eradicating Daesh is his number-one priority in the Middle East. As a result, even President al-Assad has expressed hope that the U.S. and Syria could be "natural allies" against terrorism.

On the one hand as a result of approaching the Russian position on Syria, Trump would by logical necessity become a de facto ally of Iran in the war against terror. But then on the other hand, Trump has also threatened to dismantle the nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1 coun-

tries, something that would decidedly sharpen tensions between Tehran and Washington. And this would also be an unfortunate development for Sisi, since bilateral ties with Iran appear to be thawing, after having been on ice from the time of Egypt's acceptance in 1979 of a U.S.-brokered peace deal with the Israeli entity.

Nevertheless, Sisi may be hedging his bets with Russia by warming up to Trump. "I believe that President-elect Trump will be more rigorously engaged with the issues of the region," he said, adding, apparently without sarcasm, "As a matter of fact President-elect Trump has shown deep and great understanding of what is taking place in the region as a whole and what is taking place in Egypt." Former U.S. ambassador Gary Grappo, now at the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Denver's Korbel School for International Studies, disagrees. "President-elect Trump has little knowledge of the Middle East, and his campaign was marked by a singular dearth of detail about whether or how exactly he will address the region's many problems."

While Sisi's praise for Trump may seem somewhat inflated, the Egyptian leader knows full well of the danger posed by Daesh to his country. With terrorist attacks for which Daesh has claimed responsibility occurring in the Sinai and elsewhere in Egypt, Sisi may have chosen to support the Syrian military to fight his war on terror in Syria instead of in the Egyptian homeland.

Iraqi troops take two neighborhoods in Mosul

An Iraqi commander says troops fighting ISIL terrorist group in the northern city of Mosul are now in full control of a densely populated neighborhood and have retaken another.

Lt. Col. Muhanad al-Tamimi of the special forces tells The Associated Press Friday his men are now in full control of the Zohour neighborhood, more than a week after they first entered the district.

He says the men also captured the neighborhood of Qadisiyah-2 Friday.

Most of the fighting in Mosul has been taking place in the city's eastern sector, where Iraq's special forces are making slow progress because of fears over the safety of civilians still inside the city and spirited ISIL resistance.

Iraq's second largest city, Mosul is the largest urban center in Iraq still held by ISIL.

■ **Battle to liberate Mosul could take months: Red Cross**

Meanwhile, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has warned that the Iraqi government's operation to liberate the northern flashpoint city of Mosul from the ISIL (Daesh) terrorist group could take weeks or months.

Dominik Stillhart, director of ICRC operations worldwide, said in an interview on Thursday that civilians could suffer from the fight in and around the city of one million, which was captured by Daesh in June 2014.

"What we see now on the ground is indeed that the fight in Mosul is not just going to stop anytime soon because the resistance is very strong," Stillhart said, adding, "It is reasonable to expect that this is going to take weeks if not months."

The official also noted that the ongoing fierce fighting has prompted more and more civilians to try to flee to avoid being trapped between frontlines.

"It is likely that we will see long, drawn-out fighting with very serious suffering of a population that will once again be caught between two frontlines," he said.

Commenting on the reason behind the slow advances of the Iraqi security forces, the ICRC official said the Iraqi military was seeking to protect the civilian population.

"The original idea of the government as they told me, government officials, is that people should stay in their houses as much as possible," he said.

Stillhart said the ICRC is focusing on providing food and shelter material to civilians who have fled Mosul and on water and sanitation projects in the area.

After months of preparation, Iraqi army soldiers, backed by popular volunteer forces and Kurdish fighters, launched an operation on October 17 to retake Mosul from the Daesh terrorists.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has vowed that Mosul, Iraq's second largest city and Daesh's last stronghold in the country, will be fully recaptured by the year-end.

■ **About 2,000 members of Iraqi forces killed in November: UN.**

The United Nations said in a statement on Thursday that close to 2,000 members of the Iraqi security forces were killed in November across the country.

The toll includes members of the army, police forces, Kurdish Peshmerga fighters and pro-government volunteer forces known as Popular Mobilization Units.

The UN statement also said at least 926 civilians were killed, bringing to 2,885 the number of Iraqis killed in the acts of terrorism and violence last month.

"The casualty figures are staggering, with civilians accounting for a significant number of the victims," said Jan Kubis, the top UN envoy in Iraq.

(Source: agencies)

The election recount is a distraction. Only a strong left can beat Trump

➔ In a move toward that, Keith Ellison – the first Muslim member of Congress and a reliable progressive champion – is running for chair of the Democratic National Committee, a race that has received relatively little attention compared with the recount fight.

Some 12 million Americans voted for an avowed socialist – Bernie Sanders – and millions more are now polarized against Trump and his administration's bigotry. And while the right are arguably better internationalists than the left in the 21st century, there has been a left resurgence as well. Consider Jeremy Corbyn's Labour party leadership; Podemos and progressive city takeovers in Spain to Iceland's still-congealing leftwing government.

So, if the left is more powerful than it has been in decades. Why not leave the recount to Stein and Clinton and work on ensuring progressive movements and electoral challengers succeed?

To have any shot of capturing back power from Trump, the future of the Democratic party will need to be more progressive and populist than at any point in its history. It should be headed by women, young people and people of color, emergent from formations like the Movement for Black Lives and Occupy. The party needs to have a thirst for transformative wins – to dismantle white supremacy and shake power and wealth down from the top.

The recount is a fine and potentially even worthwhile sideshow to build that resistance against Trump, but only that. Actually winning will take a lot more than looking backward.

(Source: The Guardian)

To have any shot of capturing back power from Trump, the future of the Democratic party will need to be more progressive and populist than at any point in its history.

Rosberg stuns F1 with retirement bombshell

Nico Rosberg stunned Formula One on Friday with the shock announcement that he was retiring only days after achieving a lifetime ambition by winning his first world championship with Mercedes.

"From the moment when the destiny of the title was in my own hands, the big pressure started and I began to think about ending my racing career if I became world champion," the German said in a statement.

"On Sunday morning in Abu Dhabi, I knew that it could be my last race and that feeling cleared my head before the start. I wanted to enjoy every part of the experience, knowing it might be the last time," the 31-year-old added.



The driver, who had given no previous indication of his intentions, said he had made the decision the day after the title race.

Rosberg, who was due to attend the governing FIA's gala prize-giving in Vienna later on Friday along with team mate and triple world champion Lewis Hamilton, did not say what he planned to do next.

He will leave with a record of 23 wins in 206 races - putting him equal 12th on the all-time lists with Brazilian triple champion Nelson Piquet - and as only the second son of a champion to take the title.

His Finnish father Keke was champion with Williams in 1982.

Nico Rosberg was also the first German driver to win the Formula One title with a German car and team, and now becomes the first champion to walk away without defending the title since Frenchman Alain Prost in 1993.

"Since 25 years in racing, it has been my dream, my 'one thing' to become Formula One World Champion. Through the hard work, the pain, the sacrifices, this has been my target. And now I've made it," he said.

"I have climbed my mountain, I am on the peak, so this feels right. My strongest emotion right now is deep gratitude to everybody who supported me to make that dream happen."

HAMILTON RIVALRY

Rosberg's battles with Hamilton, his boyhood friend and rival in karting, have lit up the last couple of seasons - and provided plenty of headlines - and he said that too had taken its toll.

"This season, I tell you, it was so damn tough," said the man who also partnered seven-times champion Michael Schumacher, and beat him, in his early career at Mercedes.

"I pushed like crazy in every area after the disappointments of the last two years; they fuelled my motivation to levels I had never experienced before. And of course that had an impact on the ones I love too."

The Monaco-based German married his childhood sweetheart Vivian in 2014 and they had a daughter last year. A devoted family man, Rosberg said his wife was the first person to know his decision.

He acknowledged that his retirement had put his "racing family" in a difficult position, although Hamilton will now be an even stronger favourite to win his fourth title next season.

Rivals also will see a dream vacancy that every driver on the starting grid would jump at if given the chance, Mercedes being the most dominant team in the sport with 19 wins in 21 races this season.

Mercedes have won the drivers' and constructors' titles for the past three years in a row and will start next season, despite significant rule changes, as favourites again.

Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff hailed a "brave move" and said it was "testament to the strength of his character".

"The clarity of his judgement meant I accepted his decision straight away when he told me," added the Austrian.

Wolff said Mercedes would take time to evaluate their options and they will probably need it, given that the top drivers are already signed up by rivals.

One who is still available is reserve driver Pascal Wehrlein, who has impressed at tail-enders Manor.

The 22-year-old, who holds joint Mauritian and German nationality, was passed over, however, when Mercedes-powered Force India went looking for a replacement from the Mercedes stable for Nico Hulkenberg.

Frenchman Esteban Ocon, 20, who is also a Mercedes-contracted driver, was chosen instead with Wolff describing him at the time as boasting the most impressive track record in junior formulae.

That, however, is unlikely to stop others from thumbing through their contracts to see whether they can engineer a move.

(Source: Reuters)

Trump backs LA 2024 bid on call with IOC's Bach

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump spoke with the head of the International Olympic Committee to express his support for Los Angeles' bid to host the 2024 Summer Olympics, the city's bid committee said on Thursday.

The Los Angeles bid committee said on Twitter that Trump spoke with IOC President Thomas Bach by phone "to express his strong support" for the Olympics and the city's "plans to host a great Games."

The California city is seeking to host the summer Games for a third time in a bid that centered on celebrating diversity.

The call took place on Wednesday and was arranged by Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, who had previously said Trump's win after a campaign filled with harsh rhetoric toward immigrants, Hispanics, Muslims and women could be detrimental given the international makeup of the IOC's voting members.

The IOC, which will also consider bids from Paris and Budapest, will select the host next September.

(Source: Reuters)

Barcelona desperate to break Real Madrid's unbeaten streak

Real Madrid have won 15 more points in all in La Liga under the guidance of Zinedine Zidane since the sides last met in April and are riding a 31-game unbeaten run in all competitions. Barca are off to their worst league start in nine seasons.

Barcelona are the more desperate side as Real Madrid visit Catalonia on Saturday for the first El Clasico of the season boasting a six-point lead at the top of La Liga.

Madrid have won 15 more points in all in La Liga under the guidance of Zinedine Zidane since the sides last met in April and are riding a 31-game unbeaten run in all competitions.

"On Saturday we have more to play for than Madrid, they can lose, we can't," said Barcelona defender Gerard Pique.

Barca are off to their worst league start in nine seasons.

However, coach Luis Enrique believes much of the media criticism of his side has been overblown, citing the institutional crisis that Barca overcame in the January his debut season in 2015 to win the treble.

"We remain favourites for all the titles, but it is evident we have to improve," said Enrique. "We lack consistency, but don't exaggerate. In my first season you (the media) exaggerated and we ended up winning the treble."

The biggest match in club football is expected to capture an audience of 650 million people worldwide, according to figures released by La Liga.

"I am not going to say it is just another game, it is a very important match, it has a special meaning...a special taste," Real president Florentino Perez told AFP.

"No one hides that is a worldwide impact, it is seen by millions of people across the world, like the World cup final."

Yet, the composed Zidane refused to accept that a first Liga title in five years would be Madrid's to lose should they bag victory at the Camp Nou.

"I am not thinking about the consequences," he said after giving a goalscoring debut to his son Enzo in Madrid's 6-1 Copa del Rey thrashing of



Cultural Leonesa on Wednesday.

"We are thinking about preparing well for the game, and, whatever happens, it will not be decisive."

Iniesta back

Both sides are blighted by injury concerns.

Madrid will be without Gareth Bale with the Welshman now set to miss up to four months after an ankle operation, whilst Toni Kroos is also sidelined by a broken foot.

Tough tackling midfielder Casemiro made his first appearance in two months in midweek and could come into contention to partner the Croatian duo of Luka Modric

and Mateo Kovacic.

Cristiano Ronaldo has shot to the top of La Liga's goalscoring charts once more with five in his last two league outings and looks set to be partnered by Karim Benzema and Lucas Vazquez in Bale's absence.

Barca are sweating on the fitness of Jordi Alba and Pique, who both struggled through the 90 minutes in a 1-1 draw at Real Sociedad described as a "miracle" by Enrique given the state of Barca's display.

However, the champions will be hugely boosted by the return of captain Andres Iniesta, whilst the front three of Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez and Neymar are all fit to start.

The clash between the top two offers Sevilla and Atletico Madrid the chance to make up ground in the title race.

Sevilla sit behind Barca only on goal difference in third and can close on Real when they visit winless Granada on Saturday lunchtime. Atletico have bounced back from their Madrid derby humbling at the hands of Real two weeks ago with three wins and 11 goals without conceding since.

However, they will need to end a seven-game unbeaten streak in the league by Espanyol to keep that run going at the Vicente Calderon.

(Source: AFP)

Blatter appeal decision to be announced on Monday

Former FIFA president Sepp Blatter will discover on Monday whether he has won his appeal against a six-year ban from football imposed for ethics violations amid the biggest corruption scandal ever to shake the world soccer body.

Blatter led the global soccer body for 17 years until he resigned in June last year after several dozen football officials, including former FIFA executive committee members and entities, were indicted in the United States on graft-related charges.

Blatter, 80, was not among those indicted but himself became embroiled when he was banned from all football-related activity the following December by FIFA's ethics committee, along with the then UEFA president Michel Platini.

As a result of the scandal, FIFA has been forced to implement wide-ranging reforms to make itself more transparent and accountable, as have regional governing bodies in South America (CONMEBOL) and North and Central America and the Caribbean.

Meanwhile, Swiss prosecutors are investigating the decision made in 2010 to award the 2018 World Cup to Russia and the 2022 tournament to Qatar.

The bans were imposed on Blatter and Platini for ethics violations related to a payment of two million Swiss francs that FIFA made to Platini with Blatter's approval



in 2011 for work done a decade earlier.

Both men, who have denied wrongdoing, were initially banned for eight years, later reduced to six by FIFA's appeals committee.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), sport's highest tribunal, said on Friday it would announce its verdict in the case at 1400 GMT.

Platini has already taken his case to CAS, which rejected his appeal but reduced his ban to four years.

CAS secretary general Matthieu Reeb said at the time of Platini's hearing that the outcome of the Frenchman's case could be an accurate guide as to what would happen to Blatter.

(Source: Reuters)

French Grand Prix to return in 2018: Ecclestone

The French Formula One Grand Prix is set to return in 2018 after a 10-year absence, the sport's commercial supremo Bernie Ecclestone said on Friday.

"Yes, I think it will happen," the 86-year-old Briton told Reuters when asked about French media reports that a deal had been agreed to host the race at the Le Castellet circuit in southern France.

Also known as the Circuit Paul Ricard after the local pastis magnate who financed it, Le Castellet last hosted a grand prix in 1990. The most recent Formula One race in France was at Magny-Cours in 2008.

Ecclestone indicated that France was likely to be scheduled for a July date rather than the late August or early September slot reported in French media. "More or less sort of the German date, probably," he said, referring to a race under threat that has traditionally occupied a late July slot.

Germany has been axed from the 2017 calendar due to financial reasons, despite the country having world champions in Mercedes and Nico Rosberg, but Hockenheim still has a contract to host the loss-making race in 2018.

Le Castellet, which features the long Mistral straight, has been fully renovated and is now owned by Ecclestone's family trust, which will not be involved in hosting the race.

"It's nothing to do with them at all. I



think they are renting it to the people that are going to be the promoters," said the Briton.

L'Equipe reported that a five-year deal had been agreed with the Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur (PACA) region in association with the city of Toulon, department of Var and the French motorsport association (FFSA).

PACA president Christian Estrosi is an ex-mayor of Nice and also a former car and motorcycle racer who finished fourth in the 1978 French 500cc Grand Prix at Nogaro.

The race's return is expected to be announced formally at a news conference scheduled for Monday in Paris.

(Source: Reuters)

2024 bid cities upbeat on costs as Tokyo struggles

Budapest, Los Angeles and Paris have expressed confidence in their ability to control costs as they prepare for the final phase of bidding for the 2024 Summer Olympics, unworried by steep overruns at next host Tokyo.

Top officials from the 2024 candidate cities, visiting Tokyo this week, told Reuters they were being vigilant on costs from the onset and were focusing on utilizing existing infrastructure to limit financial risk.

"It's an important thing to get right at this stage," John Harper, chief operating officer of Los Angeles 2024, said of the need to deliver in the bid a reasonable and rigorous budget.

Their preparations come as Tokyo 2020 grapples with spiraling expenses. Japanese organizers this week said overall costs could run as much as 2 trillion yen (\$18 billion), almost three times initial estimates.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is fretting such a lofty figure could scare off future bidders, after cities

like Rome and Boston dropped out of the 2024 race, and has called for a sharp reduction.

The IOC is keen for cities to embrace its "Agenda 2020" initiative, which calls for, among other things, creating a more compact Games and using a high percentage of existing venues to lower costs.

Harper called Los Angeles "Games ready today" and said it would use only existing facilities, including the UCLA campus for the Olympic village, or a handful of temporary ones.

"I think that is a huge budget risk that gets taken off the table by having that in existence today," he said, referring to the Olympic village plan.

Laszlo Vajda, vice chairman of the Budapest bid team, said the Hungarian capital would provide a new alternative as a mid-size city to host the Games after the mega cities of Beijing, London and Tokyo, noting the compact nature of its plan.

"We believe because of this proximity, cost in terms of transportation, infrastructure and urban overlay is much smaller than would be necessary for a much larger city," he said.

Paris is highlighting its status as a top cultural and tourist destination with not only sports infrastructure but strong access to public transport and high hotel capacity already in place.

"The financial impact of the Games in Paris is relatively low because of all the investment that has already been done in the past," said Etienne Thobois, chief executive of the Paris bid team.

"We're confident that we can deliver the Games on a reasonable scale."

IOC members will select the 2024 host at the 130th International Olympic Committee Session in Lima next September.

(Source: Reuters)

Sarasadat Khademalsharieh 4th at FIDE Grand Prix

S P O R T S In the final round of the d e s k FIDE Women's Grand Prix in Khanty-Mansiysk, the game between Sarasadat Khademalsharieh and Georgian Bela Khotenashvili ended in a draw.

The Iranian chess player finished in fourth place bagging six points in the competition held in Russia.

Ju Wenjun and Natalija Pogonina from Russia made a rather quiet draw, and the Chinese player won the tournament with 7.5 points out of 11.

Nino Batsiashvili from Georgia won the silver medal with 6.5 points.

As it was said before, by winning the 5th leg and the whole series of the FIDE Women's Grand Prix, Wenjun qualified to the FIDE Women's World Chess Championship Match.

According to the Regulations, all prizes and GP ranking points are shared equally, in cases of any tied position/s. No tie break system will be utilised for the individual GP tournaments. So, Valentina Gunina, Sarasadat Khademalsharieh, Dronavalli Harika, Olga Girya, Alexandra Kosteniuk tied for 3-7 places.

Final Standings:

1. Ju Wenjun -7.5, 2. Nino Batsiashvili - 6.5, 3-7. Valentina Gunina, Sarasadat Khademalsharieh, Dronavalli Harika, Olga Girya, Alexandra Kosteniuk - 6, 8. Natalia Zhukova, - 5.5, 9. Bela Khotenashvili - 5, 10-11. Natalija Pogonina, Lela Javakhishvili - 4.5, 12. Almira Skripchenko - 2.5.



Khademalsharieh satisfies with her performance at FIDE Grand Prix

Iranian chess player Sarasadat Khademalsharieh says that she is happy with her performance at the FIDE Women's Grand Prix series 2015/16.

Khademalsharieh finished in fourth

place at the competition held in Khanty-Mansiysk in Russia.

"I am satisfied with my performance in the competition because I think I've reduced my distance with the world's

top chess players. As you know the tournament had brought the top chess players together," Khademalsharieh told Tehran Times in an exclusive interview.

"I have Women's World Championship

ahead of me. However, the competition's format is different. The Women's World Championship is a 64-player knockout tournament but I will do my best in the competition in Tehran," she added.

Persepolis edges past Machine Sazi to move IPL top

S P O R T S Persepolis football team defeated struggling Machine Sazi 1-0 in the 12th week of Iran professional League (IPL) in front of more than 25,000 fans in Tehran's Azadi stadium on Friday.

Vahid Amiri scored the sole goal of the match in the 22nd minute, heading home a wicked cross from Ramin Rezaeian.

Machine Sazi was reduced to 10 men in the 58th minute after Georgian midfielder Kakhaber Kakashvili received his second yellow card by the referee.



Machine Sazi could have levelled the score in the 70th minute when the team was awarded a penalty kick but Amin Ghaseminejad missed it.

Elsewhere, Tractor Sazi was held to a 1-1 draw against Padideh. Farzad Hatami put Tractor Sazi in front in the 38th minute but Mohsen Yousefi levelled the score in the 61st minute for Padideh.

Persepolis moved back to the top with 26 points two points ahead of Tractor Sazi.

In the other games, Zob Ahan beat Paykan 3-0 and Siah Jamegan suffered a 1-0 home defeat by Sanat Naft.

Bimeh Razi runner-up at Freestyle World Wrestling Clubs Cup



Bimeh Razi of Iran became runner-up at the 2016 Freestyle World Wrestling Clubs Cup on Thursday.

The Iranian team lost to Titan Mercury of USA 4-3 in the final match in Kharkif, Ukraine.

Last year, Bimeh Razi had defeated Titan Mercury 7-1 in the final match.

Iran's other representative Setaragan Sari finished in sixth place in the third edition of the competition.

The World Wrestling Clubs Cup is

an international wrestling clubs competition among teams representing member nations of the United World Wrestling (UWW), the sport's global governing body.

The first edition of the tournament was held on the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran Wrestling Federation in 2014 in Juybar, Iran.

The Iranian capital of Tehran hosted the second edition.

(Source: Tasnim)

Hossein Faraki resigns as Iran's Saipa coach



Hossein Faraki stepped down as Saipa coach following a string of poor results in Iran Professional League (IPL).

On Thursday, Saipa lost to titleholder Esteghlal Khuzestan 2-0 and stayed 15th in the 16-team table with nine points.

Faraki was appointed as Saipa coach in May but was forced to quit his job just after six months.

"I hope the Saipa's officials accept my resignation because I think I've made the best decision," Faraki said.

Under guidance of Faraki, Saipa suffered five defeats and just won one match.

Former Persepolis and Zob Ahan coach Yahya Golmohammadi is a candidate to replace Faraki in Saipa.

Faraki, who has already coached Pas, Naft Tehran and Foolad, led Sepahan to the IPL title in 2015, however was sacked after poor results in the next season.

(Source: Tasnim)

Anastasi likely to replace Raul Lozano as Iran volleyball coach

Head of Iran's Volleyball Federation Mohammadreza Davarzani said Andrea Anastasi is close to taking charge of the country's volleyball team.

The Iranian federation has negotiated with Marcelo Mendez, Argentinean coach Sada Cruzeiro, Italian coach Andrea Anastasi and Bulgarian Radostin Stoychev in the last few days.

Mendez is no longer a possibility to be appointed as Iran coach since he wanted to lead a club at the

same time.

Davarzani said the negotiation with Andrea Anastasi and Radostin Stoychev are in progress but it seems the Italian has a much better chance since Stoychev is a candidate to be named as Poland coach.

Iran is not going to renew Raul Lozano's contract. Under guidance of the Argentinean coach, Iran finished in fifth place in the 2016 Olympic Games.

(Source: Tasnim)

Olympiacos close in on signing Iran's Karim Ansarifard: report

Panionios striker Karim Ansarifard will reportedly join Olympiacos in the January transfer window.

The Greek giant will sign the Iranian international striker on an 18-month contract, www.gazzetta.gr reported.

Ansarifard has already caught the eye of Dutch professional football club Feyenoord Rotterdam,

Olympique de Marseille, PAOK and AEK.

Ansarifard's contract will expire at the end of the current season.

The international striker joined Greek Superleague club Panionios from Osasuna in 2015.

(Source: Tasnim)



AFC Futsal Player of the Year 2016: Iran's Hasanzadeh

Islamic Republic of Iran's Aliasghar Hasanzadeh was named the AFC Futsal Player of the Year for a second time on Thursday in the ceremony held in a grand ceremony held in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates.

Hasanzadeh was named the Futsal Player of the Year following a stirring displays at this year's AFC Futsal Championship and his country's subsequent FIFA Futsal World Cup campaign in Colombia where they finished third.

At the AFC Futsal Championship, Hasanzadeh, who first won the AFC Futsal Player of the Year accolade in 2014, was instrumental in his side's march to the final before putting on a confident display at the Uzbekistan Stadium to help see off the host and claim Iran's first continental crown since 2010 and a personal hat-trick of titles.



Hasanzadeh scored six goals in as many matches and created numerous assists as Iran netted an incredible 48 goals in the tournament. Hasanzadeh was subsequently named the competition's Most Valuable Player.

At the FIFA global gathering in Colombia, Hassanzadeh scored five times, including a strike against five-time champion Brazil which saw Iran sensationally beat its South American counterparts in the Round of 16.

Currently playing for Giti Pasand in the Iranian Futsal Super League, Hasanzadeh has also won the AFC Futsal Club Championship on two occasions - in 2010 with Foolad Mahan and five years later whilst representing Tasit Daryaei, the-afc reported.

The winners of the AFC Annual Awards 2016 are:

AFC Diamond of Asia Award: Issa Hayatou

AFC Dream Asia Award: Qatar Football Association

AFC Inspiring Member Association of the Year: Japan Football Association

AFC Developing Member Association of the Year: All India Football Federation

AFC Aspiring Member Association of the Year: Bhutan Football Federation

AFC President Recognition Awards for Grassroots Football (Inspiring): Football Federation Australia

AFC President Recognition Awards for Grassroots Football (Developing): Philippines Football Federation

AFC President Recognition Awards for Grassroots Football (Aspiring): National Football Association of Brunei Darussalam

AFC Coach of the Year (Men): Choi Kang-hee (KOR)

AFC Coach of the Year (Women): Chan Yuen-ting (HKG)

AFC Special Recognition Award: Makoto Tegumori (JPN)

AFC Player of the Year (Men): Omar Abdulrahman (UAE)

AFC Player of the Year (Women): Caitlin Foord (AUS)

AFC Futsal Player of the Year: Aliasghar Hasanzadeh (IRN)

AFC Youth Player of the Year (Men): Ritsu Doan (JPN)

AFC Youth Player of the Year (Women): Fuka Nagano (JPN)

AFC Asian International Player of the Year: Shinji Okazaki (JPN & Leicester City FC)

The AFC Referees Special Award (Men): Alireza Faghani (IRN), Reza Sokhandan (IRN), Mohammad Reza Mansouri (IRN)

The AFC Referees Special Award (Women): Kate Jacewicz (AUS), Renae Coghill (AUS), Uvena Fernandes (IND)

Iran beach soccer Mover of the Month for November

Iran is Mover of the Month for November after its run to the Beach Soccer Intercontinental Cup final helped the team into the world's top five.

Mohammadhossein Mirshamsi's side produced a string of impressive displays in Dubai to finish top of a group that included Russia, Egypt and the USA before then seeing off 8-6 in a thrilling semi-final.

Brazil proved too strong in the final - clinching the title with a 6-2 success - but Iran nonetheless showcased their quality to move fifth in the rankings, swapping places with Switzerland.

So impressive was Iran that Peyman Hosseini was named Best Goalkeeper and received an incredible welcome on his return home from the event.

Dubai champion Brazil remained third but closed the gap to Russia in second, behind the world's top-ranked side Portugal, beachsoccer.com wrote.

Poland was also in action in Dubai - its first event since winning the European qualifier for the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in the Bahamas - and its creditable fifth-place finish sees it maintains steady progress.

The Poles climb four places to 12th while Egypt and the USA also enjoy ranking boosts of five and three places respectively.



