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# TEHRAN TIMES

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Leader aide says May's remarks akin to 'stand-up comedy'

## Rouhani orders work on nuclear-powered vessels in response to ISA

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani wrote letters to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and the Atomic Energy Organization chief Ali Akbar Salehi on Tuesday asking them to take legal and technical steps in response to the extension of the Iran Sanctions Act (ISA) by the U.S. Congress which is a violation of the international nuclear deal.

"The United States has not fully delivered its commitments in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (the nuclear deal)," Rouhani wrote.

In his letter to Salehi, Rouhani ordered scientists to start developing systems for nuclear-powered boats in marine transportation.

Part of the letter to Salehi reads as follows:

1. Plan for designing and manufacturing nuclear propeller to be used in marine transportation with the help of scientific and research centers.

2. Study and design production of fuel to be used by the nuclear propeller with the help of scientific and research centers.

■ **Legal and international proceedings**

Rouhani also ordered his foreign minister Zarif to address the violation of the nuclear deal by taking the required legal steps. ➔2

## Tehran, Moscow open new page in energy, industry ties

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iran and Russia signed 11 memoranda of understanding (MOUs) on energy and industry cooperation in Tehran on Tuesday.

Ten of the MOUs were penned during the 13th session of the Russian-Iranian Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation co-chaired by

Iranian Communications and Information Technology Minister Mahmoud Vaezi and Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak, Mehr news agency reported. ➔4



### Bomber drones take lead in final stage of war game

See page 2

## Syria establishing full control over Aleppo

The residents of Aleppo have taken to the Syrian city's streets to celebrate the imminent official announcement of the city's full liberation from militants.

As Syrian troops are about to re-establish full government control over Syria's second-largest city of Aleppo, Turkey has prepared a meeting with Russia to discuss the safe passage of the militants and out of the flashpoint city.

On Monday, Syrian soldiers forced the militants out of six of Aleppo's residential districts after seizing the key Sheikh Saeed neighborhood on the city's southeastern outskirts.

The Syrian military has said it is in the "final phase" of fully liberating the city. The liberation of the city will deal the worst blow to the foreign-backed militants since they took up arms in Syria in 2011.

Early on Tuesday, the troops were conducting searches in Bustan al-Qasr, Kalaseh, Fardaws, and the other neighborhoods they had captured around Aleppo's Old City a day earlier, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Locals have, meanwhile, been celebrating the city's imminent liberation on the streets. There have been reports that the remaining pockets of militants in Aleppo have set up checkpoints to stop civilians from leaving the city. ➔13



## ARTICLE

By Roozbeh Aliabadi  
Political Analyst

## West Asia's new alliance

Iran's Regional Security Order in West Asia Conference, which took place on December 10, in Tehran, was a crucial step for regional consensus building addressing key challenges of the future.

It clearly exhibited Iran's undeniable commitment and decisive contribution in organizing and extending a platform for dialogue based on confidence among regional countries in the broader West Asia. Therefore the one-day conference should be regarded as a prelude for a thoughtful and much-needed collaboration as well as highly demanded solution-oriented policy making structure among regional countries at all levels.

The central message that has repeatedly been emphasized by Iran's highest ranking decision makers in the legislative branch, the executive branch, as well as the national security establishment is embracing the country's definite and firm pledge to the regional security and stability. Officials insisted on this principle at the conference.

The two principal factors that have led to the deterioration of the region's stability in the recent years and infected the prospects of peace remain non-regional actors that have sponsored terrorist groups in the area, and fabricated and exaggerated hostility among regional countries. Iran, as it has done so in the past, will take the lead in the fight against terrorism, with the intention of defending and promoting joint regional stability and security coalition.

Countries in the region must recognize the hypocrisy of hegemonic expansion by non-regional actors has produced enormous political, social and economic cost for the collective interest of the region. This expansionist strategy must change, and such change can only be built and developed in the region, and most importantly by the regional nations through consistent, productive dialogue and shared understanding. ➔13

## Iran, Airbus hopeful of finalizing deal in two weeks

European plane maker Airbus and Iran Air will finalize a deal to buy aircraft in two weeks, the head of Iran's flag carrier said on Tuesday, adding Airbus has agreed to provide financing for 17 planes.

Uncertainty over financing of the deal and political opposition in the United States against Iran have slowed down Tehran's ef-

orts to import aircraft following the lifting of sanctions this year.

Iran signed a \$16.6 billion deal for 80 Boeing passenger jets on Sunday, the biggest package of firm contracts with Western companies since Iran's 1979 revolution.

Iran Air Chief Executive Farhad Parvaresh said he was hopeful to finalize the deal with Airbus in

two weeks.

"There are only few small remaining issues like financing. Airbus has agreed to provide financing for 17 planes," he was quoted as saying by Tasnim news agency.

Iranian officials told Reuters in November that they have reached a deal with a foreign leasing company to finance the first 17 jets from

Airbus but declined to name the lessor involved.

Parvaresh said Iran Air was trying to get first five Airbus planes before March 2017.

During a visit by President Hassan Rouhani to Paris in January 2016, Iran provisionally ordered 118 Airbus jets worth \$27 billion.

(Source: Reuters)

## Rally in Vancouver in support of Narges Ashtari

By Marjan Golpira

**TEHRAN** — On Tuesday, a crowd of people held a rally in Vancouver outside the Indian consulate office in support of former resident of Vancouver Narges Kalbasi Ashtari.

The crowd raised strong objection to the recent judgment made in a local court in Rayagada where Narges was found guilty of involuntary manslaughter and was sentenced to a year in jail and fined \$4,300.

In 2011, Narges, an Iranian-British girl, moved to Rayagada District, Odisha State in eastern India, and opened two children's

homes for the most underprivileged and abandoned children of the area.

After her first home was taken from her by a local NGO, ASSIST, through forged document, then came her second home. But this time Narges fought back, making the corrupt organization quite displeased.

Narges's life took a turn for the worst when she found herself charged with involuntary manslaughter.

In a one-day field trip set for her visually impaired children in 2014, a couple who both worked for her school brought their two chil-

dren along for the day out.

However, during the picnic the couple alleged that their older son, a healthy 5-year-old boy, who was not part of Narges' children, was missing. They called the police for investigation but a month later they changed the story and accused Narges of killing their son by throwing him into the river and watching him drown.

Though later their story changed once again, as they called the picnic area not a suitable location for the excursion for the children.

Narges will appeal the Rayagada court decision in a week.

## Oil minister touts OPEC compromise as outgrowth of nuclear deal

**POLITICS** TEHRAN —

Iran's Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh hailed on Tuesday the recent OPEC deal to stabilize the oil market, seeing it an outcome of the international deal over Iran's

nuclear program.

"Fortunately, we managed to increase output and this is an outcome of BARIJAM (the Persian acronym for the nuclear deal)," said Zanganeh at a parliamentary hearing.

The world's largest oil export-

ers agreed on November 30 to cut output to a maximum of 32.5 million barrels per day for the first time in eight years to erode a global supply overhang.

Many experts came to see the freeze deal a victory for Iran over

archival Saudi Arabia, which agreed to bear the lion's share of the cuts.

Iran, Libya and Nigeria were all given special dispensation not to join in with the reduction, as the three are still fighting to boost their exports and regain market share.



## Aleppo residents celebrate full liberation from militants

The residents of Aleppo have taken to the Syrian city's streets to celebrate the imminent official announcement of the city's full liberation from militants.



## PERSPECTIVE

By Yuram Abdullah Weiler  
Analyst and journalist

## Unleashing Lethality: Obama OKs MANPADs for Syrian "moderates"

"[A]n ultimate goal of the United States continues to be a world which is free from the scourge of war and the dangers and burdens of armaments..."

—United States Arms Export Control Act

The Nobel Peace Prize winning U.S. president, Barack Hussein Obama, has issued an executive determination allowing the export of lethal weaponry to Syrian "moderate rebels." The decision by the U.S. commander-in-chief reflects the Washington regime's utter lack of morality and underscores its desperation to effect regime change in Syria at any cost, even by arming al-Qa'ida-affiliated terrorists with MANPADs, Man-portable air-defense systems.

Citing efforts to fight terrorism in Syria and therefore within the scope of U.S. "national security interests," Obama has authorized the transfer of lethal military articles and munitions "to foreign forces, irregular forces, groups, or individuals." In short, fanatics with links to al-Qa'ida or any other extremists supporting the Washington regime's frantic efforts to topple the sovereign government of Syria may now legally acquire armaments itemized on the United States Munitions List. Obama's arms waiver not only brands his administration as a brazen violator of international and U.S. law, but also exposes his government as a state sponsor of terrorism.

### ■ The Munitions List

Those arms made available to terrorists by Obama's directive are enumerated in a document called the United States Munitions List, and are termed "defense articles and defense services pursuant to ... the Arms Export Control Act." The list includes, but is not limited to, fully automatic firearms, howitzers, mortars, recoilless rifles, flame throwers, rockets, bombs, grenades, land and naval mines, non-nuclear warheads for missiles, explosives and incendiary agents (to include HMX and RDX and their derivatives), tanks and other armored vehicles. ➔13



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



**Leader orders \$500m allotment to Sistan-Baluchestan development**

**IT d e s k** **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Supreme Leader has issued an order to withdraw a sum of \$500 million from the National Development Fund for development projects in the southeastern province of Sistan-Balouchestan.

The news was announced on Tuesday by Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani, telling about Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's orders for development of the under-privileged province, IRIB reported.

In a related statement, Health Minister Mehdi Qazizadeh Hashemi said in the past three years half a million people in Sistan-Baluchestan were insured.



**Indonesian president visit Iran**

**IT d e s k** **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Indonesian President Joko Widodo arrived in Tehran on Tuesday on an official visit.

Widodo is heading a high-ranking politico-economic delegation in his trip to Tehran, Press TV reported. He will meet President Rouhani, Majlis speaker Ali Larijani and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Before leaving for Tehran, Widodo said Iran can play a pivotal role in promoting dialogue among members of the Economic Cooperation Organization and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.



**Police to set up center to ensure election security**

**IT d e s k** **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian police will establish an ad hoc headquarters to control and command the efforts for ensuring security of the upcoming presidential election, slated for May 2017, a spokesperson announced on Tuesday.

Saeed Montazer-al-Mahdi said special plans have been devised in preparation for the presidential election, Mehr reported. The planned headquarters is going to comprise units from cyber police, security police and other specialized departments, Montazer-al-Mahdi explained.



**Assyrian MP: Iran respecting religious minorities**

**IT d e s k** **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The representative of the Assyrians at the Majlis on Tuesday said religious minorities in Iran enjoy complete freedom. Speaking in a local gathering of the Islamic Human Rights Commission on Human Rights Day, Yonatan Betkolia said the freedoms are to such an extent that they are not comparable with any other country, IRNA reported.

In a country where different religious and ethnic groups are living together peacefully, unity will cement diverse groups, he remarked.



**Iran, South Africa sign defense cooperation agreement**

**IT d e s k** **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iran and South Korea have inked a memorandum of understanding for military and defense cooperation.

Visiting Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan and his South African counterpart Nosiviwe Nolutshando Mapisa-Nqakula signed the MOU on Tuesday, Fars reported.

Dehqan arrived in Pretoria on Monday at the official invitation of Mapisa-Nqakula to discuss bilateral and international issues with senior South African officials during the two-day visit.

South African President Jacob Zuma officially visited Tehran in April.



**Bomber drones take lead in final stage of war game**

**IT d e s k** **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The newly-unveiled unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) took an active role in the final stage of the massive military exercises the ground forces staged in south-east Iran. The ground forces commenced the third day of the drill, codenamed "Muhammad Rasulallah-4", on Tuesday with flying new drones for various purposes such as reconnaissance, combat, or suicide offense, Tasnim reported. The drones varied in kind from reconnaissance to bomber and suicide attacker.

**Correction**

In our Tuesday edition the photo of the WHO representative in Iran was wrongly published as head of the Egyptian interest section in Tehran. The picture and story were taken from ISNA. The mistake is regretted.

# Leader aide says May's remarks akin to 'stand-up comedy'

**"British democracy means to call dictators allies on the deck of a warship," Saeed Jalili notes**

**IT d e s k** **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — A senior advisor to Supreme Leader blasted on Tuesday British Prime Minister Theresa May for her recent anti-Iran remarks, branding her as a "stand-up comedian".

"Remarks by Theresa May are akin to a stand-up comedy," said Saeed Jalili, the Leader's representative to the Supreme National Security Council, a responsible authority for sensitive issues of national and international relevance.

During the recent [Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council's annual summit in the Bahraini capital Manama May had said she was "clear-eyed" about what she called "the threat" Iran poses to the region.

May had also stressed England would help the council "push back" against what she branded Iran's "aggressive regional actions".

Jalili, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator under the Ahmadinejad administration,



further rapped the remarks as echoes of May's "anger" at "Our nation's authority and progress."

"Even if we had spent billions, perhaps

we would have not been able to depict the British democracy in any better way because the British democracy means to call dictators allies on the deck of a war-

## Rouhani highlights importance of Iraqi territorial integrity

**IT d e s k** **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday that protecting Iraq's territorial integrity and boosting national unity are main priorities.

Rouhani made the remarks during a meeting with Ammar Hakim, chairman of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), and his accompanying team.

Rouhani said, "Unfortunately, actions and words of the major powers show that they are seeking to create division among the Iraqi people."

The president also said Iran will spare no effort in supporting the Iraqi and Syrian people in fight against terrorism and extremism, highlighting the necessity of expanding Tehran-Baghdad ties.

For his part, Hakim said Iraq seeks to have "exemplary" relations with Iran.



Also, Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani met separately with Hakim on Tuesday. Larijani said Iran welcomes expansion of relations with the regional countries including Iraq.

## Iranian envoy: Iran Sanctions Act runs contrary to JCPOA

Iran's ambassador to the UN said on Monday that extension of the Iran Sanctions Act runs contrary to obligations under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly called the nuclear deal.

"The recent action by the United States in extending sanctions against Iran, clearly runs counter to its commitments under the JCPOA. We urge the U.S. administration to swiftly resolve concerns that the above-mentioned action has caused," Gholamali Khoshroo told the UN General Assembly.

Following is the text of Khoshroo's speech posted on the Foreign Ministry website:

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

**Mr. President,**

At the outset, I would like to thank the distinguished Director General of the IAEA for his report.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, once again, underlines the role and responsibility of the IAEA in facilitating the full realization of the inalienable right of all NPT States Parties to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, including their right to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials

and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Recalling the statutory functions and primary responsibility of the Agency to assist Member States in research on, and practical application of, nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and appreciating its related activities, Iran stresses the need for further enhancement of such activities, particularly to meet the expectations of developing Member States.

In this context, and taking into account the growing applications of nuclear energy and the role it plays in the socio-economic development of societies, Iran is

determined to vigorously continue to exercise its inalienable right to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy, including development of a full national nuclear fuel cycle, for peaceful purposes.

In regard to the role and functions of the IAEA in implementing the safeguards agreements, Iran would like to stress that all such activities should be carried out in full conformity with the relevant legally-binding instruments, and take into account the concerns and interests of Member States, in particular, by strict observance of the principle of confidentiality.

**Mr. President,**  
With regard to the

**Iran has been and will remain fully committed to the JCPOA as a multilateral instrument. However, it is crystal clear that ensuring the continued viability of the JCPOA requires the full and timely fulfillment by ALL JCPOA participants, not just Iran, of their commitments. Indeed, it is in the interest of the international community and all JCPOA participants.**

## Iran buoyed over Aleppo victory

**IT d e s k** **POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Government spokesman Mohammad Baqer Nobakht on Monday expressed happiness over the Syrian government's victory against the terrorists in Aleppo, IRNA reported.

"According to the latest reports which are very promising, the legal government and people of Syria are liberating Aleppo from terrorists," Nobakht told a press conference on Tuesday.

He noted that the Islamic Republic and all those who truly believe in human rights will be happy with the elimination of the bloodthirsty and ruthless terrorists who have been committing atrocities in the recent months.

He added, "There were countries who wanted to retain the terrorists in the area through passing a resolution at the United Nations."

Resistance for the right purpose will always be victorious, he emphasized.

Nobakht also condemned those who have been supporting the terrorists, saying they must be "ashamed" of themselves.

Thousands of civilians living in Aleppo were able to flee the city on Tuesday as the Syrian military advanced on the territories held by the terrorists.

The Russian Peace Coordination Center in Syria said on Tuesday that the Syrian Army troops and popular forces



ship."

By "dictators" Jalili probably would have had in mind rulers of Arab states of the Persian Gulf region, which have emerged growingly hostile to Iran over the past years over a list of issues, notably the Syrian crisis and the clinching of the nuclear deal with great powers.

May's words had already drawn strong condemnation from Iran's Foreign Ministry which considers the remarks motivated by England's efforts to win further lucrative arms deals with Arab countries.

It drew the strongest condemnation from Iran's Foreign Ministry which said England breeds insecurity and wages wars in the region and is in no position to launch accusations against others.

Tehran and London has recently promoted bilateral ties to an ambassadorial level after three years of frosty relations over Iran's nuclear program and England's support for a stricter sanctions regime against Iran.

He also said the growing sectarian rift among Muslims is the most "serious threat" to the region.

Hakim said Iraq views the liberation of Mosul as an example of national unity.

**■ 'Palestine issue should be first priority'**

In a separate meeting on Tuesday with Ramadan Shalah, the leader of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Rouhani said the Palestinian issue should be the first priority.

He said the Zionist regime of Israel has never been after peace and therefore no way is left other than resistance by Palestinians against the occupying regime.

Shalah also praised Iran's supports for the Palestinians.

He also expressed regret over the fact that some regional countries seek to marginalize the Palestine issue by creating conflicts in the region.

IAEA's verification and monitoring activities in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the distinguished Director-General of the IAEA in all his past four reports to the Board of Governors in 2016 have certified Iran's full compliance with its Safeguards Agreement's obligations and the complete fulfillment of its commitments under the JCPOA.

While the Islamic Republic of Iran has fully implemented its commitments, as verified by the IAEA and acknowledged by all JCPOA participants, other parties are also obliged to genuinely carry out their commitments under the JCPOA and refrain from any action inconsistent with its letter, spirit and intent. The recent action by the United States in extending sanctions against Iran, clearly runs counter to its commitments under the JCPOA. We urge the U.S. administration to swiftly resolve concerns that the above-mentioned action has caused.

Iran has been and will remain fully committed to the JCPOA as a multilateral instrument. However, it is crystal clear that ensuring the continued viability of the JCPOA requires the full and timely fulfillment by ALL JCPOA participants, not just Iran, of their commitments. Indeed, it is in the interest of the international community and all JCPOA participants.

have taken control of more than 98 percent of entire Eastern Aleppo, Fars news agency reported.

"Over the past 24 hours, Syrian government forces have liberated 11 districts of Eastern Aleppo. Thus, the Syrian authorities have regained control of over 98 percent of Aleppo city," the Russian center said in a statement.

"The area controlled by the militants in Eastern Aleppo does not exceed 3 square kilometers," it added.

Also, Turkish and Russian officials will meet on Wednesday to discuss a possible ceasefire and the opening of a corridor, Reuters quoted an unnamed Turkish official as saying on Tuesday.

## Rouhani orders work on nuclear-powered vessels in response to ISA

**1 → ■ Rouhani's letter to Zarif reads as follows:**

Regarding the U.S government's negligence and delay in living up to its commitments made in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and with regard to the latest extension of the Iran Sanctions Act (ISA),

which Iran had already declared it was considered violation of the JCPOA, and in implementing the decisions made by the Supreme National Security Council and the Committee for Monitoring JCOPA's Implementation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is required

to seriously implement the anticipated steps in the JCPOA for addressing violations and required legal and international proceedings.

Rouhani has asked Zarif to give him a report of the steps taken in a month and Salehi in three months.



# U.S. protecting Nusra terrorists to use them to topple Assad: Russia

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov says the United States is seeking to protect the Takfiri al-Nusra Front terrorist group and use it as a tool to overthrow Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

"There is a slew of examples showing that al-Nusra Front somehow evaded the U.S.-led coalition's actions," Lavrov said in the Serbian capital of Belgrade on Monday, referring to the coalition of countries bombarding alleged terrorist positions in Syria and Iraq.

"There were and are solid reasons to believe it (al-Nusra) was being protected as the most efficient and combat-capable anti-government force on the ground so that it could be used in the future to topple the legitimate leadership of Syria," Lavrov added.

Al-Nusra Front has recently renamed itself and claimed to have broken ranks with al-Qaeda, although there is general consensus that the moves are decoy attempts.

The U.S.-led coalition has achieved little, if anything, to dislodge the terrorist groups it claims to be fighting.



Earlier, the Russian foreign minister had described the movement of Daesh terrorists from the northern Iraqi city of Mosul to neighboring Syria and a subsequent attack on the ancient city of Palmyra as a part of an orchestrated plan

to salvage Takfiri militant groups in Syria's strategic northwestern city of Aleppo.

"It makes me think, and I hope I am wrong, that it is all orchestrated in order to give a respite to the bandits still in eastern Aleppo," Lavrov said.

Syrian and Russian militaries are engaged in the final phases of a large-scale operation to retake Aleppo from militants, including those of al-Nusra.

## ■ EU 'plans no sanctions against Russia'

Meanwhile, the European Union (EU)'s foreign policy chief has said the bloc does not intend to impose any sanctions on Russia over the nearly six-year-old conflict in Syria.

EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini made the announcement on Monday.

Prior to a recent meeting of EU foreign ministers, there had been speculation that the bloc may impose new sanctions on Moscow over the Syrian crisis. Russia has been helping the elected government of Syria fight off a foreign-backed militancy.

"No, we didn't discuss at all sanctions, and there was no member state asking for additional work on sanctions" against Russia, Mogherini said following the ministerial meeting. (Source: agencies)

## 2.2 million Yemen children acutely malnourished: UN



Nearly 2.2 million Yemeni children are acutely malnourished, victims of the near-collapse of the health care system during two years of escalating conflict, UN children's fund UNICEF said on Tuesday.

At least 462,000 are suffering from severe acute malnutrition, as food supplies have been disrupted by the devastating war between the Saudi-backed government and revolutionaries, the agency said.

Saada province, a revolutionaries bastion in the far north, has the world's highest stunting rate among children with eight out of 10 children affected in some areas, it added.

"Malnutrition in Yemen is at an all-time high and increasing," said UNICEF's acting country representative, Meritxell Relano.

"The state of health of children in the Middle East's poorest country has never been as catastrophic as it is today."

At least one child dies every 10 minutes in Yemen because of malnutrition and preventable diseases such as diar-

rhea and respiratory infections.

"Diseases such as cholera and measles have spread and, with few health facilities functional, such outbreaks are taking a heavy toll on children," Relano said.

In 2016, UNICEF supported the treatment of 215,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition and provided more than four million children under the age of five with vitamin supplements. "We call on parties to the conflict to give us unhindered access to children in need across the country so we are able to deliver nutrition supplies, treat malnourished children and support Yemen's health services," Relano said.

Yemen, the Arab world's poorest country, has been under Saudi Arabia's attacks since March 2015. Riyadh's military aggression, which has killed at least 11,400 people, has been meant to undermine the Ansarullah movement and bring back the resigned Yemeni president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, to power.

(Source: AFP)

## UK-funded anti-migrant wall completed in Calais



A wall funded by Britain to try and stop migrants from the former Calais "jungle" camp reaching its shores has been completed -- seven weeks after the site was cleared, a French official said.

The four-meter-high (13-foot) wall runs along a kilometer-long stretch of the main road leading to Calais port, next to the area that used to house the sprawling camp.

The concrete barrier -- estimated to cost 2.7 million euros (\$3 million) -- aims to prevent new arrivals stowing away on trucks bound for Britain.

Work on the wall, which is covered with plants on the traffic side, began in September. The squalid camp was razed after thousands of migrants were taken to shelters around France in October.

The structure is complete, a spokesman for the local prefecture told AFP late Monday.

(Source: AFP)

The wall was built to boost a network of wire fences that had failed to prevent near nightly attempts by migrants to waylay trucks en route to Europe's second-busiest port.

This year alone, several migrants died after falling off trucks or being run over.

Calais has for years been a staging post for attempts by migrants to sneak into Britain by stowing away on trucks or trains crossing the Channel.

The Jungle camp was first demolished in 2009 only to sprout up again in 2015 when migrants from the Middle East and Africa began pouring into Europe in unprecedented numbers.

Calais Mayor Natacha Bouchart attempted to stop construction of the wall, saying there was no need for it once the camp was cleared.

(Source: AFP)

## Top U.S. spy agency has not embraced CIA assessment on Russia hacking

The overseers of the U.S. intelligence community have not embraced a CIA assessment that Russian cyber attacks were aimed at helping Republican President-elect Donald Trump win the 2016 election, three American officials said on Monday.

While the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) does not dispute the CIA's analysis of Russian hacking operations, it has not endorsed their assessment because of a lack of conclusive evidence that Moscow intended to boost Trump over Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton, said the officials, who declined to be named.

The position of the ODNI, which oversees the 17 agency-strong U.S. intelligence community, could give Trump fresh ammunition to dispute the CIA assessment, which he rejected as "ridiculous" in weekend remarks, and press his assertion that no evidence implicates Russia in the cyber attacks.

Trump's rejection of the CIA's judgment marks the latest in a string of disputes over Russia's international conduct that have erupted between the president-elect and the intelligence community he will soon command.

An ODNI spokesman declined to comment on the issue.

"ODNI is not arguing that the agency (CIA) is wrong,

only that they can't prove intent," said one of the three U.S. officials. "Of course they can't, absent agents in on the decision-making in Moscow."

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, whose evidentiary standards require it to make cases that can stand up in court, declined to accept the CIA's analysis - a deductive assessment of the available intelligence - for the same reason, the three officials said.

The ODNI, headed by James Clapper, was established after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the recommendation of the commission that investigated the attacks. The commission, which identified major intelligence failures, recommended the office's creation to improve coordination among U.S. intelligence agencies.

In October, the U.S. government formally accused Russia of a campaign of cyber attacks against American political organizations ahead of the Nov. 8 presidential election. Democratic President Barack Obama has said he warned Russian President Vladimir Putin about consequences for the attacks.

Reports of the assessment by the CIA, which has not publicly disclosed its findings, have prompted congressional leaders to call for an investigation.

Obama last week ordered intelligence agencies to

review the cyber attacks and foreign intervention in the presidential election and to deliver a report before he turns power over to Trump on Jan. 20.

The CIA assessed after the election that the attacks on political organizations were aimed at swaying the vote for Trump because the targeting of Republican organizations diminished toward the end of the summer and focused on Democratic groups, a senior U.S. official told Reuters on Friday.

Moreover, only materials filched from Democratic groups - such as emails stolen from John Podesta, the Clinton campaign chairman - were made public via WikiLeaks, the anti-secrecy organization, and other outlets, U.S. officials said.

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## ■ "Thin Reel"

The CIA conclusion was a "judgment based on the fact that Russian entities hacked both Democrats and Republicans and only the Democratic information was leaked," one of the three officials said on Monday.

"(It was) a thin reel upon which to base an analytical judgment," the official added.

Republican Senator John McCain said on Monday there was "no information" that Russian hacking of American political organizations was aimed at swaying the outcome of the election.

(Source: Reuters)

## No EU money for Syria unless opposition in govt

The European Union will not pay towards rebuilding post-war Syria if Moscow and Damascus leave no space in the future for opposition to President Bashar Assad's government, according to a draft joint statement from the EU's 28 leaders.

For weeks, Syrian firepower has pounded rebels - including those backed by the West and Turkey - in what was their main urban stronghold of Aleppo. On Tuesday, thousands of people fled the city with rebel defeat seem-

ingly imminent.

Establishing full control over Aleppo would mark government forces' biggest battlefield victory yet in the conflict that has raged for nearly six years, killing more than 300,000 people.

But, even if the rebels are defeated, the EU says no peace can hold in Syria as Damascus would face years of guerrilla warfare and the country could fall apart if power is not decentralized or devolved to give the opposition a role.

"The EU will provide support for Syria's reconstruction only once a credible political transition is firmly under way," the EU leaders will say on Thursday, according to the statement prepared for their meeting in Brussels and seen by Reuters. The bloc's top diplomat Federica Mogherini has been delivering this message to Middle Eastern regional players - some of which are waging proxy wars in Syria - for several weeks, sources say.

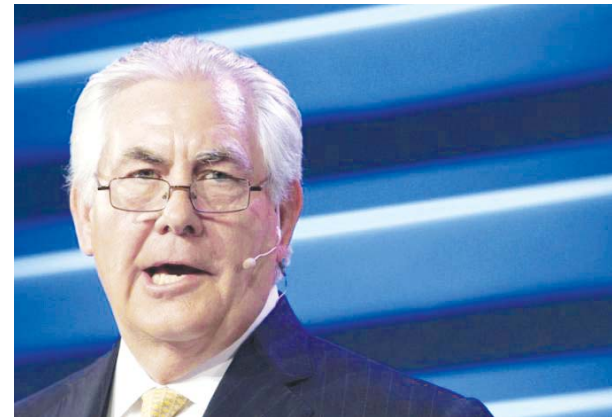
(Source: Reuters)

## Trump picks Exxon chief Tillerson as secretary of state

President-elect Donald Trump announced Exxon Mobil Corp's Rex Tillerson as his choice for secretary of state on Tuesday, praising the business leader as a successful international dealmaker who has led a global operation.

Tillerson's experience in diplomacy stems from making deals with foreign countries for the world's largest energy company, although questions have been raised about the oil executive's relations with Russia.

"He will be a forceful and clear-eyed advocate for America's vital national interests, and help reverse years of misguided foreign policies and actions that have weakened America's security and standing in the world," Trump said in a statement.



Tillerson said he shared Trump's "vision for restoring the credibility of the United States' foreign relations and advancing our country's national security."

Trump picked Tillerson, 64, after the Texan was backed by several Republican establishment figures including former Secretary of State James Baker, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and former Defense Secretary Robert Gates, the transition official said.

Their support is seen as key to helping Tillerson get past a possibly contentious Senate confirmation battle likely to focus on his relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In 2013, Putin bestowed a Russian state honor, the Order of Friendship, on Tillerson, citing his work "strengthening cooperation in the energy sector".

Trump judged in making the pick that Tillerson could adequately address questions about his relations with Russia, an official said.

Lawmakers from both major parties have raised questions about Tillerson and former UN Ambassador John Bolton, who has been mentioned as a possible No. 2 State Department official and who has voiced hawkish views on Iraq and Iran.

Separately, a source close to the transition said Trump had chosen former Texas Governor Rick Perry as his nominee for energy secretary, with an announcement expected soon. Perry met Trump on Monday at Trump Tower in New York.

Republicans and Democrats said Tillerson, who is president of Exxon Mobil Corp, would be asked about his contacts with Russia, having met Putin several times. He won fresh praise from Moscow on Monday.

Senator John McCain, a leading foreign policy voice and the 2008 Republican candidate for president, told Reuters in an interview: "I have concerns. It's very well known that he has a very close relationship with Vladimir Putin."

There has been controversy over the role alleged Russian cyber hacking may have had on the outcome of the Nov. 8 presidential election, in which Trump defeated Democrat Hillary Clinton.

## ■ Business interests

While busily filling out his Cabinet, Trump is seeking to answer questions about how he will separate himself from his far-flung business empire before taking over the presidency on Jan. 20.

He had planned a news conference on Thursday to lay out the details but delayed it until Tuesday due to what aides said was the crush of picking people to serve in his administration.

In a series of late-night tweets on Monday, Trump said he would be leaving his business before Jan. 20 so he can focus full-time on the presidency and that he would leave his two sons, Donald Trump Jr and Eric Trump, to manage it.

He did not mention his daughter, Ivanka, who has been a central player in Trump's business affairs and who is said to be considering a move to Washington to help her father.

"No new deals will be done during my term(s) in office," Trump said.

He said he would hold a press conference "in the near future to discuss the business, Cabinet picks and all other topics of interest. Busy times!"

Trump chose Tillerson over 2012 Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney, who had famously criticized Trump during the party's fight for a nominee this year. Trump called Romney to tell him he had decided to choose someone else for the job.

"It was an honor to have been considered for secretary of state of our great country," Romney said in a Facebook posting on Monday night.

"My discussions with President-elect Trump have been both enjoyable and enlightening. I have very high hopes that the new administration will lead the nation to greater strength, prosperity and peace."

(Source: Reuters)



## Iran says Boeing to provide financing for firm's first six planes

Boeing has agreed to provide financing for the first six planes it sells to Iran, Iran Air chief Executive Farhad Parvaresh was quoted as saying by Fars news agency on Tuesday.

Parvaresh added that IranAir will pay 15 percent of prices of the passenger jet from Iran's development fund. (Source: Reuters)

## UniCredit plans \$13.8b stock sale, cuts to boost profit

UniCredit SpA plans to raise 13 billion euros (\$13.8 billion) in a rights offer, betting that a balance-sheet cleanup and cost cuts will persuade investors that Italy's biggest bank can restore profitability even without much revenue growth.

The bank is targeting 4.7 billion euros of net profit in 2019 with a return on tangible equity above 9 percent, Milan-based UniCredit said in a presentation of its strategic plan on Tuesday. As part of the three-year strategy, the bank plans to shed an additional 6,500 jobs, bringing the total to 14,000, as it aims for 1.7 billion euros of annual cost savings.

UniCredit Chief Executive Officer Jean Pierre Mustier, a 55-year-old Frenchman, in July took the helm of a lender burdened by a mounting pile of bad loans, record-low interest rates and Italy's longest recession since World War II. The bank had the slimmest capital buffer among those deemed important to the financial system in the latest European stress tests.

While the bank expects annual costs to drop, it sees revenue rising by just 0.6 percent per year through 2019. UniCredit sees falling net interest income, with growth coming from fees and commissions, it said in a presentation in London.

"With almost no revenue growth in the foreseeable future, the plan is focused on cutting costs and improving the asset quality and capital levels," Luigi Tramontana, an analyst at Banca Akros, said in a note to clients. "The rights issue stands at the top of the expectations, given the stronger-than-expected effort" to boost loan-loss reserves.

UniCredit has struggled to build up capital, a task compounded by the bank's complex structure after \$60 billion of acquisitions it made in the past decade under previous management. To simplify the bank and boost buffers, Mustier is disposing of assets including the Pioneer Investments fund management business and its Polish unit, Bank Pekao SA. It expects to raise about 8 billion euros from those deals as well as the sale of its 30 percent stake in online lender FincoBank SpA.

### ■ 'Decisive actions'

"We are taking decisive actions to deal with our non-performing-exposure legacy issues to improve and support recurring future profitability," Mustier said in the statement.

UniCredit will focus on organic growth and doesn't plan further acquisitions, the CEO said at a press conference, ruling out acquisitions. The company's German unit, formerly Hypovereinsbank, is a strategic asset in a country that is core to the bank, Mustier said, adding that he also isn't looking to sell the company's shipping business or other major operations.

The stock rose as much as 9.3 percent and was up 6.9 percent at 2.69 euros as of 11:37 a.m. in Milan. UniCredit has lost about half its value this year, valuing the bank at 15 billion euros.

The capital increase will take place in the first quarter of next year, Mustier said on a conference call with journalists. The CEO said he's confident Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena SpA's efforts to raise capital will be resolved this month and will have "no impact" on his own bank's fundraising.

The revamp will help UniCredit to increase its common equity Tier 1 ratio to more than 12.5 percent by 2019 from 10.8 percent at the end of September. The bank won't pay a dividend for 2016 and targets a 20 percent to 50 percent payout ratio in subsequent years.

(Source: Bloomberg)

# Tehran, Moscow open new page in energy, industry ties



The MOUs included one inked between the Export Insurance Agency of Russia (EXIAR) and the Iranian private sector.

Another one was signed between Federal Agency on Technical Regulation and Metrology of Russia (Rosstandart) and Iranian National Standards Organization.

Three other MOUs were signed between the industry ministries, while another one was signed by the Iran-Russia Trade Council and the joint chamber of commerce.

Another memorandum of understanding was on construction of a thermal power plant in southern Iran and the other one on signaling of the Garmsar-Incheh Borun railway line in Iran.

A cooperation MOU was also penned by the managing director of National Iranian Gas Company, Hamid-Reza Araqi, and the deputy chairman of the management committee at Russian Gazprom PJSC, Alexander Medvedev.

In addition to the ten abovementioned MOUs, Gazprom Neft PJSC, a subsidiary of Russian oil giant Gazprom, signed a memorandum of understanding with National Iranian Oil Company for carrying out development studies on two Iranian oilfields.

A Russian delegation including over 200 representatives of ministries, agencies, and leading corporations and companies, headed by Novak arrived in Tehran on Sunday to outline the main spheres of bilateral cooperation and joint priority projects for the nearest future.



© IRNA/Mojtaba Mohammadlou

## Iran, Turkey mull over boosting transport, communication bonds

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Turkish

Transport Minister Ahmet Arslan conferred on expansion of transport and communication ties with Iranian Transport Minister Abbas Akhoundi and Communication Minister Mahmoud Vaezi in Tehran on Tuesday.

After his meeting with Akhoundi, Arslan told reporters that during the meeting, the two sides explored the possible avenues to ease mutual trade and transport ties and are to make the required efforts to remove the present obstacles to reach



© IRNA

that target, IRIB news reported.

The Iranian transport minister, for his part, underlined that to get connected to eastern Asia, Turkey needs to pass Iran, while the Islamic Republic requires Turkey to get access to the Black Sea and countries in that region; however, the two countries are each other's rivals in some transport sectors.

### ■ Tehran-Ankara to bolster communication relations

Tehran and Ankara intend to develop their relations in various communication

sectors via overcoming the present barriers, the Iranian communication minister was quoted by IRNA in his Tuesday meeting with Arslan.

Vaezi also informed that Iranian Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri will pay a visit to Turkey in near future saying that the Turkish minister's visit to Iran is a preparatory measure for Jahangiri's trip to Turkey.

According to an Invitation made by Vaezi and Akhoundi, Arslan, leading a delegation, arrived in Tehran on Monday.

## Polish Foreign Investment Agency to open office in Tehran

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Polish Information and

Foreign Investment Agency (abbreviated to PAIIZ in Polish) will open an office in Tehran and has already received the necessary permit, according to Wojciech Fedko, a member of the board in the agency.

Fedko made the remarks in a Monday meeting in Tehran with Abolfazl Rahnama, a director in Foreign Affairs Department of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), the portal of ICCIMA reported.

Opening this office will be a bid to provide opportunities for cooperation between Polish and Iranian economic entrepreneurs to expand economic ties between

the two countries, he underlined.

Emphasizing the necessity of boosting cooperation between this office and ICCIMA, Fedko said, "Through exchanging information and introducing active members of the two countries, we should lay the ground for bilateral cooperation."

Rahnama, who has been previously Iran's ambassador to Poland, for his part referred to the good political and economic relations between the two countries and said that 14 Polish economic delegations have visited ICCIMA officials in Tehran over the past three years which indicates existence of many opportunities for bilateral cooperation and also high willingness in this due.

He further announced ICCIMA's readiness for ex-



change of information and also for bilateral cooperation through PAIIZ's office in Tehran.

## Gold falls ahead of Fed decision

Gold prices traded near 10-month lows on Tuesday in London, as the precious metal remained under pressure ahead of this week's meeting by the Federal Reserve, which is expected to raise rates.

Spot gold in London was down 0.46 percent at \$1,158.82 a troy ounce in mid-morning trade in Europe, after trading at its lowest price since early February earlier in the morning.

"Gold is under renewed pressure this week as market participants wait

for the results of the FOMC meeting this Wednesday," said Joni Teves, a strategist at UBS.

The FOMC's two-day meeting will begin on Tuesday, but the announcement on whether the Fed will raise rates will come on Wednesday. A rate increase would typically be bearish for the metal, which does not bear interest and so struggles to compete with other investments when rates rise.

"I think the consensus is there will be a rate increase," said Nitesh Shah,

commodities strategist at ETF Securities in London.

However, Mr. Shah said many analysts expected that a rate hike -- which has been anticipated for months -- was already priced into the market, and investors would now look ahead to clues on the timing of future rate hikes in 2017.

Gold was also under pressure from a stronger U.S. dollar and stronger equity markets on Tuesday.

The WSJ Dollar Index, which measures the dollar against a bas-

ket of other currencies, was up 0.17 percent. A stronger dollar makes dollar-denominated commodities like gold less affordable for investors who hold other currencies.

The Stoxx Europe 600 was also rising on Tuesday.

The other precious metals were mixed. Silver was down 0.47 percent at \$17.01 a troy ounce, platinum was down 0.64 percent at \$925.50 a troy ounce, and palladium was up 0.03 percent at \$725.25 a troy ounce.

(Source: Wall Street Journal)



### Public Call for Quality Evaluate of Tenderers (95/0002)

GOVERNMENT TRADING CORPORATION OF IRAN (GTC)

Government Trading Corporation of Iran (GTC) hereby publicly invites local and international vendors and/or suppliers that may resource her essential commodities, namely milling wheat, rice, raw vegetable oil and raw sugar to join her vendor's list.

All qualified vendors that have the required financial and logistic capacity to duly meet GTC's substantial requirements to the above items are hereby invited to submit their company's profile and previous transaction records and proceed to fill in the relevant credit rating forms and questionnaire placed on GTC official portal at:

[WWW.gtc-portal.com/English/knowledge/questionnaire](http://WWW.gtc-portal.com/English/knowledge/questionnaire).

All required information and records together with bank remittance note of Euro 2,000 as credit rating costs, should be submitted in person to the Secretariat of the Purchasing Council of GTC placed on the 10<sup>th</sup> Floor of the GTC's Headquarter at No. 12, Jahad Square, Fatemi Ave., Tehran, Iran latest by 16:00 hours on **January 4, 2017**.

GTC has full prerogative to approve and/or reject either of the submissions at her own discretion and the respective parties shall waive the right to contest GTC's decisions.

### PICTURE OF THE DAY

PORTAL OF ICCIMA



## Switzerland calls for stronger co-op with Iranian SMEs

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Former Swiss ambassador to Iran,

Livia Leu Agosti (L), has voiced her country's willingness for boosting economic cooperation between Iranian and Swiss small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) portal reported.

She made the remarks in a meeting with the Chairman of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, Gholam-Hossein Shafei in Tehran on Monday.

Agosti who is the delegate of Switzerland's Federal Council for Trade Agreements and Head of the Bilateral Economic Relations Division at the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs in the country's Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research, noted that even during the west imposed sanctions the two countries did not cut the ties and Switzerland sent certain commodities like medicine and food products to Iran.

In the meeting, Shafei for his part stressed the need for development of economic ties and removing the banking obstacles between the two countries.



# Gazprom Neft, NIOC sign MOU, strengthening Iran-Russia energy ties

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Gazprom Neft PJSC, a subsidiary of Russian oil giant Gazprom, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) on Tuesday for carrying out development studies on two Iranian oilfields, Shana reported.

Based on the MOU, which was signed in Tehran by Managing Director of Iran Central Oil Fields Company (ICOFC) Salbali Karimi, and Gazprom Neft's Chairman of the Management Board Alexander Dyukov, the development study of Cheshmeh-Khosh and Changouleh fields was awarded to the Russian company.

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh and Russian Minister of Energy Alexander Novak were also present in the signing ceremony.

## Russia's presence in Iran stronger than before

Before the signing ceremony, Iranian oil minister held talks with Novak during which he noted that with this MOU signed the number of field studies entrusted to Russian companies reaches seven and this makes Russia the greatest shareholder in Iran's oilfields studies.

"Lukoil has signed a MOU with NIOC to study Ab-Teymour and Mansouri fields, Zarubezhneft is awarded the development study of Aban and West Paydar fields and Tatneft is studying Dehloran field," he said.

### Iran praises role of Russia in OPEC deal

During his meeting with Russian minister, Zanganeh voiced the country's appreciation for Russia's significant role in the recent OPEC deal saying, "The positive communication between the two countries' presidents was



Managing Director of Iran Central Oil Fields Company (ICOFC) Salbali Karimi (R) and Gazprom Neft's Chairman of the Management Board Alexander Dyukov signed an MOU in Tehran on Tuesday in the presence of Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh and Russian Minister of Energy Alexander Novak. (Photo: SHANA/Reza Rostami)

highly influential and determining in this regard."

Novak on the other hand said he would exchange views with officials in Iran on agreements reached.

Iran and Russia held their first Joint Energy Com-

mittee meeting on Monday in which Iranian Deputy Oil Minister for International Affairs and Trading Amir-Hossein Zamaninia said oil and gas investment capacity between Iran and Russia could reach \$10 billion.

## Indonesia's Pertamina may sign deal with Iran for 2017 LPG imports

Indonesian state energy company Pertamina may sign a deal to import Iranian liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) in 2017 when Indonesia's president visits the country this week, company officials said on Tuesday.

The LPG imports may total up to 528,000 tons during next year, the officials said.

"It is highly likely we will import again from the National Iranian Oil Company," Pertamina spokeswoman Wianda Pusponegoro told reporters, adding that Per-

tamina planned to import up to 12 cargoes, each of which contains 44,000 tons of gas, in 2017.

A deal could be signed this week during Indonesian President Joko Widodo's trip to Iran, she said.

The planned purchases are part of 600,000 tons of LPG that Pertamina tentatively agreed to purchase in May from state-owned National Iranian Oil Co (NIOC) this year and in 2017.

Pertamina is also considering buying stakes in two oil and gas blocks in Iran

and had met and discussed the matter with Iran's oil minister during the recent Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries meeting in Vienna, Pusponegoro said.

"We hope they can agree on Pertamina's proposal," she said, noting that Iran was still studying the matter and that Pertamina aims to complete a deal at the beginning of 2017.

"Our target is for at least 30,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day."

Separately, Pertamina's deputy chief

executive, Ahmad Bambang, told reporters that the company is also hoping to expand its footprint in Algeria.

"In the short term we want to strengthen our position in Algeria with a purchase from Repsol, but this is still being discussed," Bambang said.

Spanish energy company Repsol wants to sell its 35 percent participating interest in the MLN field, where Pertamina currently holds the remaining 65 percent stake, he said.

(Source: Reuters)

## Oil prices firm as Abu Dhabi cuts exports amid soaring Asian demand

Oil prices were stable on Tuesday, supported by strong demand in Asia and a supply cut by Abu Dhabi as part of production curbs organized by OPEC and other exporters.

But traders said the market was being pressured by investors closing financial positions that profited from strong gains the day before.

International Brent and U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) both flirted with negative territory in early European trading. By 0945 GMT, Brent was up 26 cents at \$55.95, while WTI was up 12 cents \$52.95.

Traders said there was significant profit-

taking after oil shot to mid-2015 highs earlier this week after the Middle East-led Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other exporters led by Russia reached a deal to cut output by almost 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) to reduce oversupply.

But they added that oil markets were still broadly supported by the deal to crimp output.

"The market is putting a lot of importance on the commentaries coming out of OPEC and non-OPEC (and) the market is giving OPEC the benefit of the doubt that cuts will be implemented and achieved,"

said Michael McCarthy, chief market strategist at Sydney's CMC Markets.

However, he added that prices would "turn negative very quickly if the market feels compliance won't happen".

"The plan was designed on Nov. 30. The foundation was laid down on Dec. 10. The construction will start on Jan. 1. The following 3-6 months will provide us with an answer as to whether the foundation is strong enough to hold the building or will it collapse like a house of cards," PVM analysts said in a report.

In a sign that producers are acting on their plans to cut output, Abu Dhabi Na-

tional Oil Company (ADNOC) told customers it would reduce Murban and Upper Zakum crude supplies by 5 percent and Das crude exports by 3 percent.

Kuwait's Petroleum Corporation (KPC) did similar, notifying its customers of a cut in their contractual crude oil supplies for January.

Meanwhile, China's November crude output fell nine percent on a year earlier to 3.915 million bpd, data showed on Tuesday, but recovered from October's 3.78 million bpd, which was the lowest in more than seven years.

(Source: Reuters)

## China November refinery runs hit record high, crude output falls

China's refinery throughput hit a daily record in November as plant maintenance wound down and independents ramped up productions, while crude oil production fell as producers held to output cuts at inefficient wells.

Data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed on Tuesday that refinery throughput rose 3.4 percent year-on-year to 45.77 million tons, or 11.14 million barrels per day (bpd), an all-time high on a daily basis.

"Plant overhauls wound down sharply in October and November versus a peak in August," said Harry Liu, a Beijing-based consultant with research and analysis agency IHS. "A rebound in diesel fuel demand also helped."

Diesel consumption strengthened between October and November driven in part by a price surge in local commodity futures for coal and steel, said Liu.

The re-opening of some mines, in response to the government's call to boost output to tame a year-

long price rally in the world's top coal consuming nation, also drove up diesel use for heavy-duty trucks.

A few independent refineries winning fresh quotas to import crude oil since late September also added to run increases, analysts and traders have said.

Daily crude oil output in November, however, fell 9 percent from a year ago to 3.915 million barrels, the data also showed. It recovered from October's 3.78 million bpd, though, the lowest in more than seven years.

(Source: Reuters)

## Iran agrees to negotiate GSPA amendment with Pakistan

Iran has agreed with Pakistan to negotiate amendment in the Gas Sale Purchase Agreement (GSPA) for implementation of the IP gas pipeline project in the extended period.

"Pakistan has requested Iran for amendment in the GSPA and sent it a draft accordingly. Iran has agreed to negotiate the same along with some other amendments, which are awaited," official sources in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources told APP sharing current status of the project.

They said funds would be allocated for the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline Project as per procedure in the due course of time.

Answering a question, the sources said the revised timeline for completion of the project would be decided mutually in the forthcoming meetings between Pakistan and Iran.

"The details, in this regard, can be sorted out by the Experts Group, which should meet to discuss and decide on all outstanding matters," they said. (Source: nation.com.pk)

## Iran says Putin-Rouhani call had role in OPEC deal: RIA

A phone call last month between Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Iran's President Hassan Rouhani, just before an OPEC meeting, played a part in helping to reach a deal on cutting oil output, RIA news agency quoted Iran's ambassador to Moscow Mehdi Sanai as saying on Monday.

OPEC and non-OPEC producers on Saturday reached their first deal since 2001 to curtail oil output jointly and ease a global glut after more than two years of low prices that overstretched many budgets and spurred unrest in some countries.

(Source: Reuters)

In the Name of God



Shahid Tondgooyan Petrochemical Company

### Call for Identify Resources

Shahid Tondgooyan Petrochemical Company (STPC) intends to identify the following chemical suppliers which are qualified.

#### Subject:

ROW	CHEMICAL NAME	CONSUMPTION RATE (TON/YEAR)
1	ISOPHTHALIC ACID	5000
2	TITANUM DIOXIDE	600
3	ANTIMONY (III) OXIDE	110
4	ANTIMONY (III) ACETATE	150
5	HYDROBROMIC ACID	250
6	Cobalt Acetate	60
7	CMB	600
8	Therminol 66	Up to process condition
9	SHELL OIL	Up to process condition

#### General Conditions of Suppliers & Specialized Degree Necessary:

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

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

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

It shall be given latest by 16:00 pm on **24/Dec/16**

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

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

It should be submitted latest by 16:00 pm on **07/Jan/17**

#### Contacts:

You can contact any of the addresses below:

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

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

### PICTURE OF THE DAY

SHANA/Mojtaba Mohammadgholi



Based in the southern Bushehr province, Iran's Fajr Jam Gas Refinery has a daily refining capacity of 125 million cubic meters of gas. The refinery is responsible for supplying 15 percent of the country's gas needs.



## The Rohingya genocide has begun in earnest

Troops were “slaughtering children, burning and looting houses.”

By Azeem Ibrahim

Over the past decade, the Rohingya minority in Myanmar have been repeatedly called “The Most Oppressed People in the World.”

Ever since 2012 and 2013, when a wave of attacks by their ethnically Rakhine neighbors in the north-eastern state of Arakan/Rakhine of the Union of Mynamar killed thousands and displaced hundreds of thousands from their homes—driving them into refugee camps abroad or internally displaced people’s (IDP) camps within the country—numerous NGOs and UN agencies have warned that they were the population most at risk of genocide.



Now it looks like the genocide has begun in earnest.

John McKissick, a UN official with the refugee agency, has declared, with the typically diplomatic tone of the UN, that “Myanmar is seeking the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya from its territory.”

Ever since an attack against a few government border outposts back in October allegedly carried out by a group of militant Rohingyas, the entire community has been taken to be collectively responsible and has suffered from an unrelenting assault by various organs of the state, including border agencies, the police and the army. Troops were “killing men, shooting them, slaughtering children, burning and looting houses.”

There are somewhere between 1.5 million and 2 million Rohingya people in the world—most born in Myanmar, and most rendered stateless by the country’s 1982 Citizenship Law. Of those, more than half have already been displaced abroad over the past few decades by repeated waves of aggression from either the state or their ethnic Rakhine neighbors.

### ■ Southeast asia’s migrant crisis

Most notably, in 2015, the exodus culminated in what the world media dubbed “Southeast Asia’s Migrant Crisis.” Of the fewer than 800,000 left in the country, over 110,000 were already in IDP camps in extremely precarious conditions before this latest crisis started.

The fundamental problem is that even though more Rohingya are trying to flee the country as we speak, most of those who could have left have done so already. Left behind are those who do not have the resources to pay border officials and people-traffickers to smuggle them across the border, or are not able to withstand the perils of the journey: children, elderly people, women, especially the poorest.

We are still at the stage where the ultra-nationalist elements within Myanmar are mostly trying to intimidate the Rohingya to flee the country. Yet even when some of the Rohingya succeed, they often face being sent back, as per the official stance of Bangladesh, the closest neighbor to Arakhan/Rakhine state, where most of the Rohingya refugees go first.

But amid the increasingly hostile attitude toward the refugee flow in almost all the neighboring destination countries, the simple fact is that most of those still within Myanmar simply cannot leave or they would have done so a long time ago. It is only a matter of time before the aggressors move to the next logical step.

**John McKissick, a UN official with the refugee agency, has declared, with the typically diplomatic tone of the UN, that “Myanmar is seeking the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya from its territory.”**

The situation will be hugely exacerbated if the Rohingya start fighting back. At that point, Myanmar will bring all its defense forces to bear on the conflict, and they will have the support of the Buddhist population in the region.

But at this point what is left for them to do? They are facing constant harassment, have been almost entirely expropriated so they have nothing left to lose and they can expect to be murdered for no reason whenever an army patrol goes by.

And there is nobody who seems willing or able to intervene to protect them. Not the country’s Nobel Peace Prize laureate leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, who has so far completely avoided engaging with the crisis, nor the international community who are waiting for Suu Kyi to solve everything, even as they know she will likely do nothing.

For all practical intents and purposes, the genocide has started. It is only a matter of time before the truth hits home, when the dead bodies start piling up. And then it will be too late for soul searching and asking whether we could have done more.

Will we fail yet another vulnerable people?

(Source: Newsweek)

# Why Obama won’t tell the truth about terrorism

By John Mueller

Terrorism in the United States has killed fewer Americans than lightning, accident-causing deer and drowning in bathtubs.

Five years after 9/11, journalist James Fallows suggested in a cover story on terrorism in the Atlantic that Americans “lacked leaders to help keep the danger in perspective.” Fallows’ observation remains valid a decade later.

On Tuesday, in his last presidential address on the terrorism issue, Barack Obama did note, as he has from time to time over the last couple of years, that terrorists “don’t pose an existential threat to our nation” — an observation security specialist Bruce Schneier has aptly characterized as “blindingly obvious.”

However, Obama seems to be ready to go further. In another Atlantic cover story, this one from earlier in the year, Jeffrey Goldberg discloses that Obama “has never believed that terrorism poses a threat to America commensurate with the fear it generates” and that he “frequently reminds his staff that terrorism takes far fewer lives in America than handguns, car accidents, and falls in bathtubs do.”

Terrorism in the United States, after all, has killed in total some six people per year since 9/11. That is six too many of course, but lightning kills about thirty Americans a year, accident-causing deer another two hundred and drownings in bathtubs around four hundred. And eight people die from drug overdoses each day in Ohio alone.

### ■ Security measures

Moreover, the low number of terrorism deaths is unlikely to be the result of security measures. There have been scores of terrorist plots rolled up by authorities



President Barack Obama listens during a terrorism threat briefing in the Situation Room of the White House.

**In his last presidential address on the terrorism issue, Barack Obama did note, as he has from time to time over the last couple of years, that terrorists “don’t pose an existential threat to our nation”.**

over the years but, looked at carefully, the culprits, left on their own, do not seem to have had the capacity to increase the death toll very much. As RAND’s Brian Jenkins puts it, “Their numbers remain small, their determination limp, and their competence poor.” Nor could security measures have deterred terrorism. Some targets, such as airliners, may have been taken off the target list, but, as demonstrated tragically in Paris last year, potential terrorist targets remain legion.

Nevertheless, Obama can’t seem to

summon the political courage to say such things in public. Continues Goldberg, “his advisers are fighting a constant rearguard action to keep Obama from placing terrorism in what he considers its ‘proper’ perspective, out of concern that he will seem insensitive to the fears of the American people.”

Something similar happened during the Cold War.

In his speech, Obama said that communism “threatened nuclear holocaust.” However, that is simply not true. As Columbia’s Robert Jervis has

noted, “Soviet archives have yet to reveal any serious plans for unprovoked aggression against Western Europe, not to mention a first strike against the United States,” and historian Vojtech Mastny, after looking thoroughly through those archives, concludes, “The strategy of nuclear deterrence [was] irrelevant to deterring a major war that the enemy did not wish to launch in the first place.”

One of the few people to have realized this at the time was Dwight Eisenhower. As his press secretary recorded at the time, although Eisenhower was concerned about what he called “a sort of peaceful infiltration,” he insisted, “after many long, long years of study on this problem,” that “everything points to the fact that Russia in not seeking a general war and will not for a long, long time, if ever.”

But, like Obama, Eisenhower was unwilling to express such unpopular views in public. Instead, he railed against what he called the “military-industrial complex,” attacking a successful lobbying movement for its machinations, but not attacking the premise that gave that movement its effectiveness.

The grand mistake of the Cold War, then, was to infer desperate intent from apparent capacity. For the war on terrorism, it is to infer desperate capacity from apparent intent.

And in both cases, presidents who understood that mistakes were being made were unwilling to say so in public. Instead, they embraced a lesson succinctly put forward by analyst Stephen Sestanovich: “It’s not good politics to display your irritation with the American people.”

That is, it is better to let the people wallow in fearful error than to appear to be insensitive to their fears.

(Source: The National Interest)

## Pence on the Trump mandate

The vice president-elect says growth is the key

By Cal Thomas

When Mike Pence becomes the 48th vice president of the United States next month, he will take on the role of a political lobbyist for Donald Trump’s activist agenda.

In an interview I conducted with Pence in his transitional office next to a sandwich shop in Washington, he said he believed voters gave Donald Trump a “mandate.” How can that be when Hillary Clinton won the popular vote? “Trump won 30 out of 50 states. He won more counties than any Republican candidate since Ronald Reagan, and he undeniably reached Americans that Republican candidates haven’t been reaching on the national level.”

To help Trump accomplish his legislative goals, Pence plans to attend the weekly luncheon meeting with senators and meet on occasion with members of the House where he spent more than a decade as a representative from Indiana.

“My years on Capitol Hill have convinced me that it is often the informal settings where you can learn where the opportunities are, what challenges need to be met. The agenda we are laying out is as energetic as the man who was elected president. We have a 100-day agenda, a 200-day agenda.”

### ■ Trump’s pledges

I asked about Trump’s pledges to spend on infrastructure, rebuild the military, the option of private care for veterans, paid for by the government. All of these will cost money and add to the debt.

Pence responds: “The president-elect, I think, believes everything begins with growth.” Trump, he says, is counting on economic growth from repealing and replacing Obamacare and liberating corporations from unnecessary regulations. He foresees a wave of prosperity that will not add to the debt, but produce more tax revenue, even as taxes are cut for individuals and businesses. He adds that in



**What about the “never-Trumpers” and their refusal to accept him as president? “I think the president-elect has the leadership qualities and the strength to meet this moment in our national life,” Pence said.**

the case of infrastructure, “encouraging public and private partnerships” will reduce the cost to government.

“The president-elect is absolutely committed to scrubbing the federal budget with the eye of a businessman,” Pence said, “looking for efficiencies in every industry and looking for ways to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse and really meaning it.”

Like the issue of Boeing and the new Air Force One planes, which Trump has said he would cancel, unless the costs come down? Trump and Dennis Muilenburg, Boeing chairman and CEO, spoke by phone and Muilenburg reportedly said he is committed to controlling costs.

## Missing ISIL men must be found

ISIL may not be the all-conquering military force it once was, but it has shown remarkable resilience and a great ability to regroup its forces and reorganize after defeat, as it has done in Palmyra. The historic city in Syria’s Homs governorate was seized by ISIL forces last year. In March, Syrian government forces backed by Russian air support liberated the city in what was considered to be a major symbolic victory for President Bashar Al Assad. But on Sunday, ISIL fighters made a lightning-fast advance across the town, taking advantage of the vacuum left by Syrian forces pushing forward in Aleppo.

Their actions in the past few days have confirmed that members of the extremist group have been able to cross borders at will before regrouping and returning to the fray. There will be a concern after Mosul falls, that ISIL members may vanish into the general population.

This tactic is nothing new. Some of the several hundred ISIL fighters who took part in the battle for Sirte, Libya,

this year survived not just that defeat but also previous battles in Mosul, Manbej, Jarabulus and elsewhere near the Syrian-Turkish border.

Sirte may not be controlled by ISIL any more, but the threat is far from over as many of these fighters are thought to have slipped out of the town or to have dissipated into the crowd. The same thing has been happening in Iraq.

According to some estimates, tens of thousands of ISIL combatants have neither been killed nor captured, they have simply disappeared. They have either integrated into local communities or escaped into other countries in the Middle East, North Africa and even Europe, where the fear is that they could launch terrorist attacks.

Over the past year, intelligence sharing among Arab and western countries has improved dramatically, increasing the possibility of foiling these attacks. We must remain vigilant, and all efforts must be made to find these people and prosecute them.

(Source: The National)



**Tens of thousands of ISIL combatants have neither been killed nor captured, they have simply disappeared. They have either integrated into local communities or escaped into other countries in the Middle East, North Africa and even Europe, where the fear is that they could launch terrorist attacks.**



# Report from Aleppo: A historic moment

By Revd Andrew Ashdown

I sensed that I was coming to Aleppo at an historic moment, and tonight I think that is true. Throughout the night there has been an unceasing and relentless bombardment of the last 'rebel'-controlled pockets in the city, all of which I have a bird's eye view from my hotel room. Every few seconds there are huge explosions rending the air and lighting up the sky a few kilometres away, interspersed with rapid bursts of gunfire. I can see tracer bullets, and the trail of missiles as they hit their target.

This is a frightening, relentless

and prolonged attack that has gone on for hours. I watch and listen with sadness and ambiguity. Sadness because as a priest I abhor violence, hate conflict, am thinking of any civilians trapped in that hell-hole and wondering how many are dying – and because like everyone else, I only want peace. But ambiguity, because over the past few years, I have been listening to the voices of ordinary Syrians whose cries and experiences of brutality and violence at the hands of extremist terrorist factions supported by the international community have been ignored by the outside world ; and whose suffering in the conflict has been exploited and

heightened by the arrogant intransigence and bloody-minded single-mindedness of an international agenda that has nothing to do with the interests or human rights of the Syrian people. The fact is, across the country, and amongst the citizens of Aleppo – including those who have finally been able to flee the terrorist-controlled areas and are emerging with heart-rending accounts of the violence and brutality meted out on them these past years by the terrorists occupying their neighborhoods – everyone wants to see the terrorists defeated and an end to the fighting. Independent journalist, Vanessa Beeley interviewed one



**"I hope the Army will show them no mercy. They are animals and deserve to die," a woman said.**

woman yesterday who had fled East Aleppo a few days ago and whose eight year old daughter was killed and husband shot by the 'rebels', and who saw a woman shot in the mouth asking them for food who said: "I hope the Army will show them no mercy. They are animals and deserve to die."

The international community are calling for a ceasefire. Why on earth, when the Syrian Army are making such progress which the people of Aleppo are celebrating, and when every ceasefire so far has been used to resupply the terrorists, would the Syrian Government stop now? The last ceasefire which the Government held for two weeks last month was broken relentlessly by 'rebel' attacks on Western Aleppo that killed and maimed dozens of innocent civilians. Make no mistake, this is not a Government attacking its own people. I have laid out before me a whole city, in the majority of which, and as in all other

Government-held areas of the country, citizens from whatever faith or ethnic community, are getting on with their lives and living together.

I am standing a few kilometers away from the battle zone but am safe. The bombing is taking place, not across the city, but only in those small pockets of the city where the 'rebels' have held out. Most of the civilians that have been able to flee those areas are being looked after in Centers run by the Syrian Government and Syrian Red Crescent and with aid which the Russians are providing. They all tell of the 'rebels' shooting at those trying to leave. (Few know anything about the 'White Helmets' and those that do, have little good to say about them because they are working with the terrorists.)

So I stand here watching a battle with deeply mixed and conflicted feelings ... sadness at the loss of life taking place before me; but a

feeling like so many others in this city that the Syrian Government has been left with no other choice.

It is only when fighting ceases that a political solution can be found, but it is clear that as long as the Western -backed al-Qaeda linked terrorists are able to operate, there can and will be no peace in the city or the country. Believe me, most Syrians are cheering their army on. The refusal of western governments and media to listen to the Syrian people, and to follow only their own agendas, has ensured that this brutal conflict and suffering on all sides has gone on for far too long. So as I watch a relentless battle taking place before my eyes, I feel that sadly, there is no other option.

And when the battle ends, in Aleppo and in other parts of the country, the long and no doubt difficult and painful task of rebuilding people's lives, and healing the pain, will begin. (Global Research)



**The international community are calling for a ceasefire. Why on earth, when the Syrian Army are making such progress which the people of Aleppo are celebrating, and when every ceasefire so far has been used to resupply the terrorists, would the Syrian Government stop now?**



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# Scientists find socially anxious people are highly intelligent

By Matt Duczeminski

While it doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that most people of high intelligence are usually socially awkward in some respect, most people don't realize it's not because they're "dorks" or whatever high school stereotype you care to use. Rather, it's because highly intelligent people see the world on an entirely different level than the rest of us. Because of this, become incredibly anxious in seemingly normal situations. It's not that they don't know how to function at parties and social gatherings; it's that their mind is constantly working on overdrive, which makes them incredibly anxious about any and everything around them. The following explains why being super-smart is both a blessing and a curse:

## 1. They have high sentinel intelligence

Highly intelligent people are much more in tune with the world around them than most other individuals. They are highly sensitive to threats of any kind, to the point that they have a hard time relaxing. Sudden loud noises can be enough to send them into a panic. They are so quick that while everyone else is processing the noise they just heard, the quick-thinker has already moved on to the "what if it was a gun or bomb or..." cycle of thought. Rethink this the next time you call your friend a "nervous Nellie."

## 2. They are highly self-aware

Intelligent people are constantly thinking about how they are being perceived, and will change their behavior when in a public place to attempt to blend in as much as possible. They're constantly plagued with thoughts of "What if everyone saw me just sneeze all over my hand? They're all gonna laugh at me." While people may have seen it happen, chances are they didn't care enough to make a big deal about it. Oddly enough, it's tough for intelligent people to realize most of their thoughts are only in their head, and they're being too self-aware.



## 3. They over-analyze events

Highly intelligent people constantly look for deeper meaning in conversations and regular life occurrences. This can lead to them getting lost in their own train of thought and losing their place in the conversation at hand. By over-analyzing things, intelligent people often distance themselves from mainstream conversations, finding it better to be an outside observer of goings-on than actively partaking in interactions with little face value.

## 4. They over-analyze words

Intelligent people are constantly wondering "What did he mean by that?" This can cause social anxiety in the most innocuous of situations. A simple compliment from a boss could lead to a string of worries, such as "Was he being sarcastic? Did I really do a good job? Have I not been doing a good job, and he felt the need to tell me I was today?" and so forth. Of course, their boss most likely meant to give a quick compliment; but the over-thinker is left worrying about the simple interaction for the rest of the day.

## 5. They're overly aware of other's states of mind

Let's go back to the last example, imagine the boss had said "Great job today" with anything less than enthusiasm and

exuberance. You can be sure the socially anxious person would have picked up on his boss' body language and lack of excitement. A boss could be having a bad day which has nothing to do with the highly intelligent person, but being aware of someone else's state of mind makes you want to find the problem and fix it. A socially anxious person will spend the rest of the day wondering if he did something to offend the other party.

## 6. They're empathetic

Along with being overly sensitive to how other people present themselves, highly intelligent people are also highly empathetic. Unfortunately, this causes them to take on their friends' burdens and problems as their own. Since they overanalyze every situation they encounter, highly intelligent people will stop at nothing until they've solved their friends' issues; of course, this leads to even more anxiety, as they are dealing with not only their own problems, but the problems of a person they care for deeply.

## 7. They're incredibly logical

Highly intelligent people are incredibly logical, which sounds like it should be a good thing. However, working with people who don't think the same way can be incredibly frustrating. Many people op-

erate off of emotions, so when a logical (and correct) conclusion is reached by a person with higher intelligence, there are usually some who will oppose the idea because it does not align with their train of thought. No matter how fool-proof a logical plan may be, it can be thwarted by those who fail to acknowledge the logical process behind it.

## 8. They extrapolate past experiences

Being logical thinkers, highly intelligent people use past experiences to predict future outcomes. This can lead to high levels of social anxiety, as any possible negative outcome will certainly cross their mind along the way. Socially anxious people avoid getting themselves into situations in which they've embarrassed themselves or otherwise failed in the past. While weighing possible outcomes, it becomes difficult to avoid thinking of worst-case scenarios, and doing so can potentially derail an anxious person's drive to complete a task.

## 9. They're aware of ulterior motives

As mentioned before, intelligent people often overthink off-the-cuff, innocuous remarks made by others. So when someone acts generously, a socially anxious person may get caught up wondering if there was some reason the other person was being so nice. This leads to a mistrust of the general public, regardless of people's actual intentions. Again, socially anxious people think of worst case scenarios, and often let these scenes blind them from reality.

## 10. They get no rest

Since they tend to overthink every little situation they face, intelligent people's minds are constantly working. This leads to burnout, insomnia, and undue stress that could have long-lasting negative effects on a person's health and overall well-being. Although people with higher than average intelligence are overall grateful for the gift they've been given, I'm sure they'd like nothing better than to be able to take a few minutes each day and tune everything out.

(Source: lifehack.org)

## Does extra virgin olive oil really reduce your dementia risk?

By Esther Heerema

Want to reduce your dementia risk? Consider starting by changing what kind of oil you use. Seriously? Yes.

Several research studies have cited olive oil as being correlated with improved cognition and brain health. These include:

A study with mice demonstrated that administration of extra virgin olive oil cleared extra beta-amyloid protein deposits in their brains. A build-up of these protein deposits is one of the hallmarks of Alzheimer's disease.

Another study conducted with mice found that the mice whose diets consisted of high levels of oleuropein aglycone, a main component of extra virgin olive oil, generated new cells in the hippocampus and improved the memory of the mice who had been engineered to develop Alzheimer's disease-like symptoms. The hippocampus is an area of the brain where atrophy is typically seen in Alzheimer's disease.

A third study found that, after administration of oleuropein aglycone, mice with Alzheimer's disease demonstrated improved brain health, a decreased level of (unwanted) beta-amyloid protein deposits and improved memory functioning.

## What about research with humans?

More importantly, what about in people? I'll highlight one



**There are many health benefits correlated with consumption of olive oil, including a lower risk of type 2 diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure problems, metabolic syndrome and obesity as well as improved cardiovascular health.**

here, but multiple studies have been conducted to determine how extra virgin olive oil affects dementia risk in humans.

In a study published in the Journal of Nutrition, Health and Aging, two different versions of the Mediterranean diet- which has been strongly correlated with a decreased risk of dementia- were provided for participants.

One group of participants followed a Mediterranean diet that was supplemented with mixed nuts and the other group of participants followed the same Mediterranean diet that was supplemented with extra virgin olive oil instead. (Nuts have been correlated with a decreased dementia risk, but one type in particular has been more strongly connected to improved brain health and functioning.)

At the end of the 6.5 years of the study, the participants who consumed the Mediterranean diet plus the olive oil demonstrated better cognitive performance in all cognitive areas tested, most notably in memory and fluency. This group also demonstrated a lower risk for the development of mild cognitive impairment, a condition that sometimes progresses to dementia.

## Other benefits of olive oil

Several other studies have identified many other health benefits correlated with consumption of olive oil, including a lower risk of type 2 diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure problems, metabolic syndrome and obesity as well as improved cardiovascular health.

(Source: greatist.com)

## 8 weight loss questions to ask your doctor

By Malia Frey

If you are ready to see a doctor for weight loss, you need to go to your appointment prepared. There are several critical weight loss questions you need to ask. You may want to talk to your doctor about weight loss medication, about the risks of different weight loss programs and about the benefits of losing weight. Your physician will be able to give you answers that take your personal health history into account.

## The best doctor for weight loss

Before you make an appointment, you might wonder about what kind of doctor to see about losing weight. There are probably dozens of weight loss doctors in your area and many of them may be connected to a diet program or service. Eventually, these doctors may be able to help.

But when you are starting a weight loss program, you should see your primary care doctor first. Why? Because even though your doctor may not be an expert in weight loss, your primary care doctor is an expert in your medical history. Your regular doctor can address general questions about weight loss and give you personalized answers based on your own health history and medical conditions.

If your doctor is not able to answer specific questions about popular diet programs, exercise routines or about weight loss medications, he or she can refer you to the best expert in your area.

## Weight loss questions to ask your doctor

When you first see your doctor for weight loss, begin the conversation by explaining that you want to lose weight.

Your physician may take it from there and offer suggestions for diet programs or exercise plans to follow. But if not, ask these questions to get the information you need.

1. Should I lose weight? Your physician may give you a quick answer or he may take some time to calculate your BMI. Some physicians may also be able to measure your body composition as well.

2. Am I healthy enough to diet? If you have been undergoing health changes, your physician may ask you to wait until your condition has stabilized to start a diet or exercise program.

3. How much weight should I lose? The answer to this question may depend on how much weight you want to lose, but it's possible that your physician will have a recommendation as well. With input from your doctor, you may be able to set a more reasonable goal.

4. Does my weight affect my health? There are some conditions like type 2 diabetes or hypertension that may improve if you lose weight. Ask your doctor if a diet or exercise program can improve your medical condition.

5. How much weight do I need to lose to see a benefit? In some cases, just a small amount of weight loss can have a significant impact on your health.

6. Are there any foods I should avoid? Some medications can become less effective if you eat certain foods. Grapefruit for example, is not recommended for people who are on cholesterol-lowering medications. Write down any foods you should avoid and post the list in a place where you see it every day.

7. Am I healthy enough for vigorous physical activity? Make sure you are healthy enough for both strength and cardiovascular workouts. If your doctor provides limitations, you may want to write them down so that you remember them after you leave the office.

8. How should I monitor my exercise intensity? Most exercise programs require that you work at different levels of intensity. But not all methods of monitoring exercise intensity work for all exercisers. Heart rate monitors, for example, won't work for people who are on medications that keep their heart rate low. Ask your doctor to be sure.

This initial conversation with your doctor should provide you with all of the information you need to begin your weight loss program. As you continue on your program, be sure to contact your physician if you notice unusual symptoms or changes to your health that cause alarm.

If you have problems losing weight, don't hesitate to revisit your doctor to see if there might be a medical or physical reason for your struggle. If you've tried to lose weight for six months or more and your weight has caused health problems, you may want to discuss the possibility of weight loss surgery.

(Source: verywell.com)

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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
- American Google arriving to communist Cuba soon.  
Google signed a deal with Cuba's state-run telecommunications provider, bringing the Google Global Cache to the communist country. The deal won't expand internet access in the communist country, but it will give Cubans who already have internet access faster connections to Google-branded content.
- 2
- Apple releases iOS 10.2, tvOS 10.1 and WatchOS 3.1.1 With Performance Improvements,fixes for notifications, Activity rings and New Emoji.
- 3
- Instagram launched live video streaming for all users in the U.S., while its parent company, Facebook, added 360-degree video support for its own streams — though initially in a limited capacity.
- 4
- Messaging services such as Microsoft's Skype and Facebook's WhatsApp face stricter rules on how they handle customer data under new security laws due to be proposed by the European Union, according to a draft document seen by Reuters. The EU executive wants to extend some rules that now only apply to telecom operators to web companies offering calls and messages using the internet, known as "Over-The-Top" (OTT) services, according to the draft.
- 5
- SWIFT has confirmed that hackers are using new ways to steal money.  
Banks using the SWIFT network, which include both central banks and commercial banks, have been hit with a "meaningful" number of attacks – about a fifth of them resulting in stolen funds, since the Bangladesh heist, Stephen Gilderdale, head of SWIFT's Customer Security Programme, told Reuters in an interview.
- 6
- Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and a group of high-profile executives are investing \$1 billion in a fund to spur clean energy technology and address global climate change a year after the Paris climate agreement.
- 7
- HMD Global, the Finnish company that owns the rights to use the Nokia brand on mobile phones, announced its first new products on Tuesday - two basic handsets without internet access priced at \$26 before local taxes and subsidies.  
HMD said the Nokia 150 and Nokia 150 Dual SIM would go on sale in selected markets early next year.
- 8
- Super Nintendo World will open at Universal Studios Japan by 2020.  
The first of multiple theme park attractions across the globe, Super Nintendo World will feature Nintendo's familiar video game characters. The attraction will open at Universal Studios Japan in time for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.
- 9
- Google has acquired the team behind Cronologics, a startup looking to develop what it hoped would be the smartwatch platform in the marketplace. Terms of the deal were not disclosed, but the Cronologics team will be joining the Android Wear division.
- 10
- Skype for iOS has received a holiday update that includes a personalized message that can be sent to friends and family. This is something that the Microsoft-owned messaging app does every year. Another new feature removes notifications once the Skype app is launched. In the past, you would have to remove the notifications manually whenever you opened the app.

## DARPA wants your gaming tactics for its drone army

Urban areas continue to vex the US military as tall buildings and narrow streets keep impeding troop communications and tactics. While ground soldiers have used single drones for years, DARPA believes that a whole swarm could mitigate those disadvantages, giving units more eyes and guns. Since the military is currently unable to control such swarms, DARPA is launching a new program to develop both drone-wrangling tech and the tactics they'd need to assist soldiers in urban environments. Oh, and they want video gamers to playtest the best strategies.

The program, called OFFensive Swarm-Enabled Tactics (OFFSET), aims to produce over a hundred tactics to be used by systems of over a hundred unmanned air and/or ground drones. Developing a usable interface will be key, and researchers will consider using virtual and augmented reality along with gesture and voice commands.

To develop operational tactics and maneuvers, OFFSET will also make "a physics-based, swarm tactics game," according to a DARPA press release. The networked game seems like a competitive playground, letting users explore different methods and submit their tactics and performance to a leaderboard for bragging rights. They even want players to interact and swap tactics, building a community of players to mix-and-match collective behaviors and algorithms to hone the best ways to control drone swarms.

"With the technologies and tactics to be developed under OFFSET, we anticipate achieving a deeper understanding of how large numbers of increasingly autonomous air and ground robots can be leveraged to benefit urban warfighters," DARPA program manager Timothy Chung said in the press release. "If we're successful, this work could also bring entirely new scalable, dynamic capabilities to the battlefield, such as distributed perception, robust and resilient communications, dispersed computing and analytics, and adaptive collective behaviors." *(Source: DefenseOne)*

# Robotic industries are opposite of what India IT needs

By Rajiv Rao

Early this year, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi jumpstarted the "Make in India" initiative in an effort to woo foreign direct investment and the desperately-needed manufacturing jobs that it would ostensibly bring with it, especially to the electronics manufacturing sector.

Launched on a large stage in Girgaum Chowpaty on one of the most iconic beaches in the middle of urban Mumbai, the event literally started off with fireworks -- an electric short circuit that sparked a huge conflagration that burnt the stage down, racked up close to a million dollars in damage, and caused a huge embarrassment to the government.

This is only getting worse by the day. The country is already home to the second-largest user base for smartphones at 220 million, eclipsing the US last year, and on track to hit 500 million in the next five years at a market value size of \$400 billion.

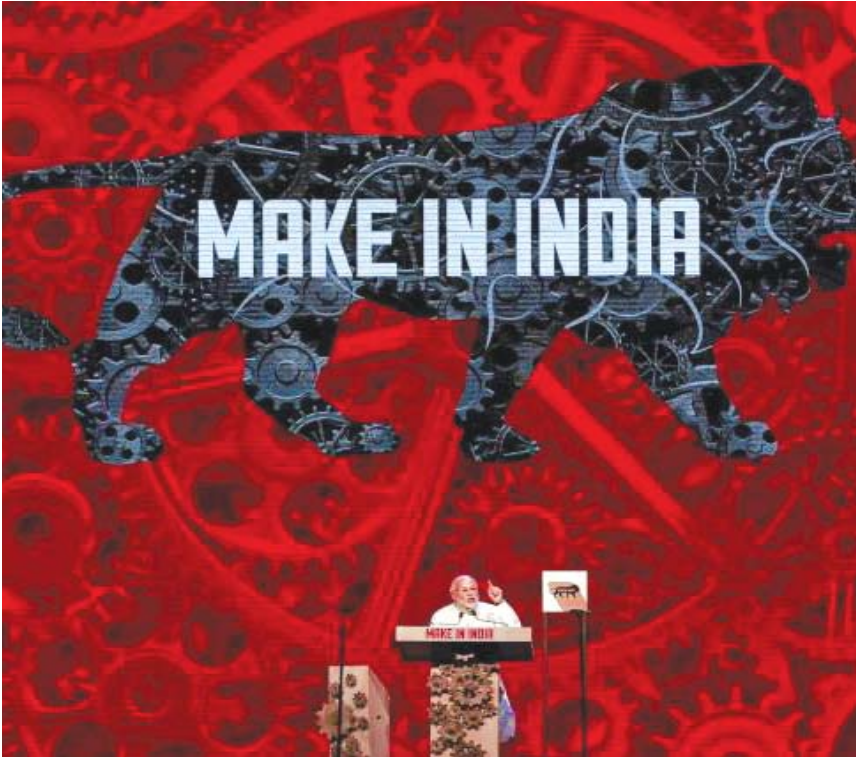
The problem is that since few of these goodies are made at home, India will need to ship in \$300 billion worth of electronic items by 2020, roughly equivalent to its entire tab for imported oil. This is a disgrace considering both the global talent in tech that the country has spawned and the abundant tech-minded workforce it could hypothetically churn out to pull off such a feat.

The previous Congress government launched an ambitious national electronics program in 2012, replete with plans for East Asian-like ecosystems, from assembly units to semi-conductor fabs. The current Modi government extended that effort under an ambitious plan called "Make in India" that aims to replace China as the next big locus for electronic manufacturing.

And many proud Indians would say that the plan seems to be working, that over the past 18 months, 40 new domestic assembly units and 12 new component or accessory manufacturing units have mushroomed as part of this initiative. Research outfit Counterpoint thinks that at least 180 million mobile phones will be assembled in the country out of a total of 267 million phones sold here in 2016.

Furthermore, attractive subsidies and schemes have attracted the likes of Foxconn (maker of Apple's iPhone amongst other things) which last year announced plans to invest \$5 billion in a factory in the Indian state of Maharashtra.

Many large tech companies -- Cisco and Microsoft to name a few -- have also plonked large investments in R&D facilities that are the biggest outside of the United States. Subsequently, as Quartz notes, India zoomed to become



**Yet, it would be a grave mistake to buy into these statistics as a sign of India's manufacturing ascendancy. In reality, a recent study says that the actual value of all the local manufacturing going on in India to produce the \$11 billion worth of components going into 267 million phones (which utilize \$80 billion worth of components) is under a paltry 6 percent this year compared to 70 percent in China and 35 percent in Vietnam.**

the number one foreign direct investment destination in the world, having increased 39 percent in just 18 months, making Make in India a big success so far.

Yet, it would be a grave mistake to buy into these statistics as a sign of India's manufacturing ascendancy. In reality, a recent study says that the actual value of all the local manufacturing going on in India to produce the \$11 billion worth of components going into 267 million phones (which utilize \$80 billion worth of components) is under a paltry 6 percent this year compared to 70 percent in China and 35 percent in Vietnam.

In fact, according to the Boston Consulting Group, India has only created 4 million manufacturing jobs since 2010 and at present pace will only generate another 8 million by 2022.

Most of India is still deeply agrarian -- only 17 percent of its population is in manufacturing jobs -- but the problem is

landholdings have fragmented so drastically that the majority of farmland owned by the average farmer is under an acre, which doesn't leave much room for improved productivity needed to boost income levels.

With an additional, staggering 150 million Indians entering the workforce in the next 15 years this is no time to cheer essentially empty stats.

One of the big reasons why it is so hard to generate these desperately needed jobs in electronic manufacturing (make that any kind of manufacturing) is because of the dismal state of education -- hard to imagine considering that the country has churned out the likes of Google's Sundar Pichai, Microsoft's Satya Nadella, and Sun Microsystems' Vinod Khosla to name just a few global corporate and entrepreneurial tech stars. Apparently, around 15 percent of companies in Silicon Valley alone have been started by Indians.

Most recruiters in India say that

college students considering an electronics career either don't know how to think creatively or are dismal problem solvers -- their raison d'etre firmly attached to clearing exams. Technology in many of the country's college labs is seriously outdated. Teachers are not valued, salaries are pathetic, and so instruction invariably is of very poor quality.

Those students that do become competent in spite of this systemic failure flock to what some describe as less rigorous software jobs that have built the \$150 billion, mainly export-oriented industry in the last decade and a half. Consequently, the majority of college graduates -- especially those in engineering -- that the country churns out are simply unemployable, say employers and recruiters.

Nevertheless, gains have to come from somewhere and the study suggests a three-step process to drive local value addition with trips to Taiwan for rigorous benchmarking. Phase 1 will churn out things like batteries, chargers, cable, and housing locally; phase 2 things like displays and cameras; and phase 3 semi-conductor components generated by local fabs, which various governments over the years have endlessly debated and planned to no avail.

Here's another colossal problem facing India apart from their potentially 100 million-plus under-educated youth hanging out with no jobs or opportunities to chase, time to kill, and growing rage at the BMWs and Audis that swish by: By the time we find ourselves well and truly in the muck, the world would have moved on to automated robots handling mass production.

In other words, as the Quartz article states, the jobs that will compete with the robots will be those that command cheaper and cheaper wages, exactly the opposite of what India needs.

As the Economist so eloquently puts it (in the Quartz article), "The technological transformation now under way appears to be permanently changing the economics of development ... China may be among the last economies to be able to ride industrialization to middle-income status." Take a peek at these stats that show manufacturing jobs in industrializing countries cresting at lower and lower average wages over the years.

India, some say, is a little too late to the party. Its future workers will neither have the skills to compete with uber automation nor the desire to work for the paltry wages that capital equipment will be able to. Somehow, it has to avoid what today looks like a near-certain future social armageddon.

*(Source: zdnet)*

## New ransomware offers to restore your files for free — if you infect two friends

The days of random mischief on the internet are not over, but the most skilled hackers have moved on to more lucrative ventures. Stealing personal data and banking details has been a moneymaker for years, but more recently the threat of ransomware has appeared. These pieces of malware encrypt your files and won't unlock them unless you pay, but the new "Popcorn Time" ransomware offers an alternative: Just infect some friends and you get your files back free.

This malicious piece of software is currently set up to find all files on the desktop and the Windows My Documents folder, then encrypt them with AES-256. Like all ransomware, Popcorn Time (not related to the BitTorrent-based streaming client) demands payment in Bitcoin in order to provide the encryption key to unlock your personal files. In this case, the price tag is one Bitcoin. That works out to \$780 right now. The payment screen includes instructions on how to get Bitcoin and where to send it. There are various warnings about losing access to your files, and even a function that can delete your files completely if you enter the wrong decryption key four times.

If you're short on cash and don't mind being a jerk,



the HTML payment screen gives you another option. There's a link containing a unique ID that will download the malware when clicked (it resolves to a hidden TOR server). If you can get two other people to install that file — thus encrypting their files — and pay the ransom, you get your files decrypted for free.

## Apple held talks to invest up to \$1 billion in SoftBank tech fund

Apple has held talks to invest up to \$1 billion into Japan-based SoftBank's upcoming \$100 billion "Vision Fund" pitched to President-elect Donald Trump, according to Reuters and Wall Street Journal.

SoftBank is said to invest at least \$25 billion into the fund, to be used in large tech investments. The telecom giant has also been in talks with Saudi Arabia's Public Investment

Fund (PIF) for an investment up to \$45 billion.

The Journal reported nothing has been finalized between Apple and SoftBank, and status of the deal couldn't be learned. Apple's investment could give it insight into emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and Internet of Things.

Apple's recent earnings report revealed more than \$237.6 billion cash



and cash equivalents stashed around the world.

SoftBank and Apple couldn't immediately be reached for comment.

Trump met with SoftBank CEO Masayoshi Son in New York City earlier this month. There, the duo announced a plan for \$50 billion investment in US tech startups, which they said would create 50,000 new jobs.

*(Source: reuters)*



# Mountain glaciers showing some of the strongest responses to climate change

Mountain glaciers have long been a favorite poster child of climate change. The near-global retreat of glaciers of the last century provides some of the most iconic imagery for communicating the reality of human-driven climate change.

But the scientific basis for their retreat has been less clear. Glaciers respond slowly to any climate changes, they are susceptible to year-to-year variations in mountain weather, and some of the largest are still catching up after the end of the Little Ice Age. Scientists can connect climate change to the overall retreat of glaciers worldwide, but linking an individual glacier's retreat to climate change has remained a subject of debate.

The last report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded only that it was "likely" that a "substantial" part of mountain glacier retreat is due to human-induced climate change -- a much weaker conclusion than for temperature and other things.

Now, using statistical techniques to analyze 37 mountain glaciers around the world, a University of Washington study finds that for most of them the observed retreat is more than 99 percent likely due to climate change. In the climate report's wording, it is "virtually certain" that the retreat of these mountain glaciers is due



to climate change over the past century.

**■ Signal of climate change**

"Because of their decades-long response times, we found that glaciers are actually among the purest signals of climate change," said Gerard Roe, a UW professor of Earth and space sciences. He is corresponding author of the study published Dec. 12 in Nature Geoscience, and presented this week at the American Geophysical Union's annual fall meeting in San Francisco.

**In the climate report's wording, it is "virtually certain" that the retreat of these mountain glaciers is due to climate change over the past century.**

The new study analyzes specific glaciers with a history of length observations, and nearby weather records of temperature and precipitation. The authors also sought different glacier locations, focusing on roughly seven glaciers in each of five geographic regions: North America, Europe, Asia, Scandinavia and the Southern Hemisphere.

**■ High altitudes**

"We evaluate glaciers which are hanging on at high altitudes in the deserts of Asia as well as glaciers that are being beaten up by midlatitude storms in maritime climate settings," Roe said. The "thickness, slope and area of the glaciers are different, and all of those things affect the size of the glacier length fluctuations."

Co-authors are Florian Herla, an undergraduate student at the University of Innsbruck in Austria, and Marcia Baker, a UW professor emeritus of atmospheric sciences and Earth and space sciences.

The authors used statistical tools to compare the natural, weather-induced variations in a glacier's length with its observed changes over the last 130 years, and establish a signal-to-noise ratio. They then use that to calculate the probability that observed retreats would have happened without any background change in the climate.

(Source: EurekAlert)

## Glitch delays launch of hurricane-watching microsattellites

It will be at least another day until NASA can get its set of eight microsattellites into Earth's orbit to observe how tropical storms form, helping scientists better predict the intensity of life- and property-threatening hurricanes.

The space agency scrubbed Monday's satellite drop-off midflight after engineers realized that the hydraulic pump on the plane carrying the Pegasus XL rocket, with the satellites on board, failed to release the latches that would have freed Pegasus to take off for low-Earth orbit, where it would have dropped the satellites.

The "aircraft is on its way back with the Pegasus XL rocket still safely attached," NASA reported online Monday morning after canceling the mission. The "next possible launch opportunity is Tuesday, pending resolution of the pump issue," said the agency.

If the pump is fixed and the mission resumes Tuesday, the piloted L-1011 Stargazer aircraft will take off from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station again in the morning, with Pegasus XL attached to its underbelly. Both aircraft and rocket were built by Dulles, Va.-based aerospace and defense company Orbital ATK. When the Stargazer reaches about 40,000 feet over the Atlantic Ocean -- a few thousand feet higher than commercial airlines reach

-- it will release Pegasus.

**■ First-stage rocket**

Then Pegasus will free-fall for five seconds before igniting its first-stage rocket motor to help launch itself to low-Earth orbit, a strip of near-Earth space that stretches between 100 miles and 1,200 miles above sea level. Once there, Pegasus will deliver the constellation of eight microsattellite observatories, known collectively as the Cyclone Global Navigation Satellite System, or CYGNSS, in about 10 minutes, according to Orbital ATK's web site. The eight instruments, built by the Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio, Tex. will orbit the tropics, where most cyclones and hurricanes form.

"For the most part, we can predict track very easily," says Derek Posselt, a University of Michigan professor who is a deputy principal investigator for CYGNSS, in a video. "We still have a very hard time knowing how intense the storms will be when they get where they're going. The intensity of hurricanes is really what causes all the damage."

CYGNSS will use radio signals from four GPS satellites, the same ones that beam directions to the mapping apps on our phones, to measure the wind speed near the oceans. As Space.com explains:



The Earth's surface acts like a mirror, and reflects the GPS signals back into space. If there is no wind, the signal is relatively clear, just like the light from a reflected moon is clear on calm water, Ruf said. When the wind picks up, the "image" formed by the radio signals is blurry because the radio waves scatter, in the same way that a reflected moon on the water is broken up by wavelets.

Using eight satellites helps scientists increase the area of Earth that can be measured, according to NASA.

(Source: The CSM)

## 'Brightest supernova ever' was actually monster black hole's violent star slashing

An incredibly luminous outburst that astronomers had previously classified as possibly the brightest supernova ever actually might have been caused by the explosive death of a star torn apart by a giant black hole, a new study finds.

Supernovas are explosions that can happen when stars die, either after running out of fuel or gaining a sudden influx of new mate-

rial. These outbursts can briefly outshine all of the other stars in their galaxies.

Recently, scientists discovered a very rare class of supernova, known as superluminous supernovas. These explosions are up to 100 times brighter than other supernovas but account for less than one-thousandth of all supernovas.

In January, astronomers analyzing data

from the All-Sky Automated Survey for Supernovae (ASAS-SN) reported discovering an outburst more than twice as bright as any known supernova. The explosion, named ASASSN-15lh, happened about 3.8 billion light-years from Earth, in the sky at the border of the southern constellations Indus and Tucana, and gave off about 570 billion times more light than the sun does at its peak.

**■ Black hole**

This artist's illustration depicts a sun-like star being "spaghettified" by a supermassive black hole, which has the massive 100 million times that of Earth's sun. A new study found that this death by black hole was the fate of the ultra-bright supernova ASASSN-15lh.

(Source space.com)

## Bank Pasargad Named Iran's "Top Bank of the Year in 2016": BANKER

For 6th consecutive year, Bank Pasargad was introduced as exemplary and top bank in the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2016 by worldly renowned "BANKER" Magazine and received a Plaque of Honor due to its excellent performance in the field of offering high quality services, Public Relations Department of the bank reported.

Given the above issue, the bank managed to increase

its capital and total asset 23 and 17 percent respectively. Despite stagnation, skyrocketing inflation rate and intangible growth of gross domestic product (GDP), the bank managed to solve most of its problems in the best form possible, the report added.

Moreover, the bank focused on expanding its international banking network system through opening its

branch offices in other countries.

It should be noted that the bank also was named by BANKER Magazine as Iran's top private sector bank in 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015.

The Plaque of Honor is read as follows: This is to certify that the Banker has awarded BANK PASARGAD as Iran's top bank of the year in 2016."

## BSI Awarded with ISO 9001 Quality Management Standard Certificate

In order to meet demands of its dear customers with the aim of promoting its services qualitatively and quantitatively, Bank Saderat Iran (BSI) was awarded with ISO 9001 Quality Management Certificate by prestigious Canadian ALLIANCE Company its central branch, Public Relations Department of the bank

reported.

With its revising in structure and processes governing various sectors, the bank managed to obtain certificates such as ISO 50001 Energy Management System, ISO 10015 International Standard Certificate from prestigious Italian "IMQ" Company coupled with winning

top international technology standard in e-banking network system, etc.

Moreover winning the certificates and standards, Bank Saderat Iran has been introduced as top Iranian bank for consecutive years according to BANKER Magazine, the report added.

After a landmark deal inked be-

tween Iran and P5+1 in mid-July 2015 and implementation of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the official title of nuclear deal and after the lifting of sanctions, the bank's status has been promoted in both domestic and international levels, the report ended.

## Deputy Industry Minister Criticizes Intangible Exports of Furniture

Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Ali Yazdani lashed out at the intangible exports of furniture against import of this product, worth \$141 million.

Effective steps should be taken in an expert level sessions in order to solve problems facing this industry, he maintained.

Speaking in 9th International Trade Conference on Furniture, Art, Decoration and Related Industries (Décor 2016), held at the venue of IRIB Intl. Conferences Center, and said: "Today, neighboring Iraq provides more than 70 percent of its required furniture from Turkey while Islamic Republic of Iran can get lion's share of this market."

He put the number of major producers of furniture in the country at approx. 226 in a way that more than

46,000 production units are busy active in this industry officially and unofficially.

According to him, furniture industry accounts for 8% employment share in mineral and industrial sector of the country, that is to say that furniture industry can generate new job opportunities as much as eight percent (8%).

In the end, Managing Director of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) put the annual economic value in furniture sector of the country at \$5 billion, expandable to the higher rate.

For his part, Majlis Economic Committee Head Mohammad-Reza Pour-Ebrahimi emphasized on the issue that correction of Labor Act has not any relation to the issuance of sanctions and said: "Effective steps should be taken in this regard, so that more employment op-

portunities can be generated in the country."

Ali Ansari Head of National Furniture, Decoration and Related Industries Ali Ansari said: "Giant strides have been taken in conceptualization, institutionalization and modeling, the most important of which is the development of economic diplomacy, renovation of relevant distribution centers, setting up academic centers special of furniture and decoration industry, establishment of National Furniture Center and historic studies center, etc."

Dr. Ali-Akbar Torkan Secretary of Higher Council of Special Economic Zone was the last speaker who pointed to the furniture industry and said: "Furniture industry has recently witnessed significant progress and development in the past 20 years."

## Artificial intelligence can predict how scenes will play out

A new artificial intelligence system can take still images and generate short videos that simulate what happens next similar to how humans can visually imagine how a scene will evolve, according to a new study.

Humans intuitively understand how the world works, which makes it easier for people, as opposed to machines, to envision how a scene will play out. But objects in a still image could move and interact in a multitude of different ways, making it very hard for machines to accomplish this feat, the researchers said. But a new, so-called deep-learning system was able to trick humans 20 per cent of the time when compared to real footage.

Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) pitted two neural networks against each other, with one trying to distinguish real videos from machine-generated ones, and the other trying to create videos that were realistic enough to trick the first system.

This kind of setup is known as a "generative adversarial network" (GAN), and competition between the systems results in increasingly realistic videos. When the researchers asked workers on Amazon's Mechanical Turk crowdsourcing platform to pick which videos were real, the users picked the machine-generated videos over genuine ones 20 percent of the time, the researchers said.

Still, budding film directors probably don't need to be too concerned about machines taking over their jobs yet -- the videos were only 1 to 1.5 seconds long and were made at a resolution of 64 x 64 pixels. But the researchers said that the approach could eventually help robots and self-driving cars navigate dynamic environments and interact with humans.

(Source: Live Science)

## Scientists shed light on why lithium-ion batteries sometimes go boom

Lithium-ion batteries are all well and good until, as Samsung found out to its peril with the Note 7 disaster, they suffer a fault, swell up like a rock star's ego, and suddenly turn into potential safety hazards.

In a new piece of research, published in the Journal of the Electrochemical Society, scientists at Canadian Light Source (CLS) decided to see exactly what happens when a battery gets to this point.

"What we're trying to understand is what happens physically inside a battery when it generates gas and swells up like a pillow," energy storage and composite materials researcher Toby Bond told Digital Trends. "This swelling can happen for many reasons, but it is often the result of overheating, overcharging, or some other kind of stressful conditions. Many batteries swell up without further incident -- some even keep on operating -- but swelling can also be the first step on the way to an explosion or fire."

"What we found is that there are small imperfections in the way the electrodes are layered, and (these) become more pronounced when the battery swells up," Bond continued. "This likely affects what happens to the battery after that, since this kind of non-uniform swelling changes how the pressure is distributed inside the battery."

It's not known if this "pillowing" was the reason for some of the recent high profile lithium-ion battery-related disasters, but Canadian Light Source's study certainly sheds some light on potential major design faults. Considering that the same type of lithium-ion battery geometry is used in many electric vehicles -- but on a much larger scale -- it's a piece of research we hope can trigger positive change.

(Source: Digital Trends)



## Now researchers find why a Tibetan glacier mysteriously collapsed and killed 9

In July, at least 90 million cubic yards of glacial ice and rock plummeted from the Aru Range of mountains in western Tibet. Those who witnessed the collapse said that the avalanche lasted no longer than five minutes.

The devastation within such a short time was immense. In places, the ice deposits ran 30 feet deep. The avalanche buried 3.7 square miles -- an area equivalent to two-thirds of the Los Angeles airport campus. Debris struck Dungru village, in Tibet's Rutog County, killing nine herders.

The collapse, at first, left climatologists perplexed. But now an international team of scientists has found the most likely culprit: an unusual slick of meltwater beneath the glacier, created by unusually warm temperatures.

The "site of collapse is baffling. ... the Rutog avalanche initiated at quite a flat spot. It doesn't make sense," Tian Lide, a glaciologist at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, which operates a scientific station in the area, told Nature in August. The Aru Glacier collapsed again in September. No one was reported injured.

Certain glaciers surge, advancing a matter of yards in short bursts. "When the glaciers collapsed in western Tibet," wrote Tian in an email to The Washington Post on Monday, "it was first assumed to be [the result of] surging-type glaciers."

In 2002, a 1.5-mile-long section of glacier in Russia -- the Kolka Glacier, known to surge -- broke free, traveling 11 miles in six minutes and killing more than 100 people. Perhaps the Aru Glacier was acting like its Russian precursor.

But glaciers that surge tend to be lengthy and wide. The Aru Glacier is small and frigid and clings to the mountain like a tongue to a frozen flagpole. And glacial surges are cyclical. There was no indication in remote-sensing data nor in reports from local herders that the Aru Glacier had surged, Tian said.

(Source: The Washington Post)



## Iranian-made mind-controlled robot suit helps the paralyzed move again

**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — Two young Iranian d e s k postgraduates have succeeded in devising and producing a mind-controlled robot suit which helps paralyzed persons move their hands again.

Ismael Mohammadi-Flavarjani and Mohammad-Ali Ismaeli are the two postgraduates at Sharif University of Technology whose invention brought them the second-place finish in the practical research category of the 18th Khwarizmi Youth Festival on Monday.

Those suffering from mobility limitations or lack movement due to old age, strokes, or spinal cord injuries can once again restore their ability to move their hands using the mind-controlled robot suit, Mohammadi-Flavarjani said, IRNA reported.

The suit can translate electrical signals from the wearer's brain into mechanical instructions, he said, adding, this way such patients may be able to regain some of their muscular strength and go back to normal after some time.

The suit is easy to handle and move around and patients can use the suit independently without getting help from anyone, he highlighted.

Even armless people can also use the device by using prosthesis, he added.

The young genius went on to say that the devise has been tested in some 25 rehabilitation centers and proved to be effective in 90 percent of the cases.

The robots are applicable for upper-body use and are valued at some 300 million rials (nearly \$8,500) for replacing both hands, he said.

The Khwarizmi International Award is given annually to individuals who have made outstanding achievements in research, innovation and invention, in fields related to science and technology since 1987. Khwarizmi Youth Award is a national version of Khwarizmi International Award which only Iranians who are less than 35 years old can participate. This award started in 1999.

## LEARN ENGLISH Working in a Factory

Tony: The **plant manager** says that you're the new kid.  
Amber: Yes, it's my first day.

Tony: All right, you'll be a **line worker** like the rest of us. Here's your **workstation**. What you have to remember is that **output** and **productivity** are the most important things around here.

Amber: I understand, but...

Tony: Watch out for that **forklift**! You have to watch where you're going or you'll ruin our **safety record**.

Amber: Sorry. When will I get trained to use this **machinery**? I've never worked on an **assembly line** before to **mass-produce** anything.

Tony: I'm going to teach you, so pay attention. The other thing you have to worry about around here is **quality control**. If you don't do things right, you'll **hear about it**.

Amber: Okay, but...

Tony: Hey, sit down! As I said before, if you're not careful, you'll get your head **taken off** in this factory. Now, try to pay attention.

Amber: I'm trying, but it's hard to do when my life is in danger **every other minute**.

Tony: [sighs] **Rookies!**

(Source: eslpod.com)

- Words & phrases

**plant:** a factory or building where an industrial process happens

**plant manager:** people who watch over and organize the daily operations of manufacturing plants and similar places, they oversee employees, production and efficiency, to make sure the plant is running smoothly, quickly, efficiently and safely

**line worker:** an employee who works on an assembly line

**workstation:** an area where work of a particular nature is carried out, such as a specific location on an assembly line

**output:** the amount of goods or work produced by a person, machine, factory etc.

**productivity:** the rate at which goods are produced, and the amount produced, especially in relation to the work, time, and money needed to produce them

**forklift:** a vehicle with a pronged device in front for lifting and carrying heavy loads

**safety record:** records which refer to how many people are injured in a factory in a year

**machinery:** machines, especially large ones

**assembly line:** a series of workers and machines in a factory by which a succession of identical items is progressively assembled

**mass-produce:** produced in large numbers using machinery, so that each object is the same and can be sold cheaply

**quality control:** the practice of checking goods as they are produced to be sure that their quality is good enough

**you'll hear about it:** when you've done something wrong you are being told about it and will be punished for it

**to be taken off:** to be removed or separated

**every other minute:** often, very frequently

**rookies:** someone who has just started doing a job and has little experience



# Iran, Belgium to form long-term environmental partnership

**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — Iran d e s k and Belgium inked a memorandum of understanding (MOU) aimed at fostering full and effective environmental co-operation to form long-term technical partnership.

The chief of Iran's Department of Environment (DOE) Masoumeh Ebtekar and the Belgian minister of energy, environment and sustainable development Marie Christine Marghem signed the

MOU in Brussels on Monday.

The agreement is seeking sustainable management and exploitation of natural resources, waste and hazardous material management, monitoring and conservation of water resources, tackling soil and air pollution, addressing climate change, promoting new energies, green economy and clean technologies, marine conservation, etc., according to the DOE website.

Exchanging experience, faculty

and student exchange programs, holding joint seminars and workshops, conducting joint research projects, and taking on investment and commercial opportunities are the methods the two countries will employ to attain the environmental goals they have set.

The MOU will be valid for a period of five years and, accordingly, a joint working group will follow up on the progresses made under the terms of the agreement.



Masoumeh Ebtekar (L) and Marie Christine Marghem

## Trump: ‘Nobody really knows’ if climate change is real



Photos of Alaskan Pedersen Glacier, in 1930s and 2005 which indicate the dramatic and negative effects of climate change.

The reality of climate change is an open question, President-elect Donald Trump said in an interview aired Sunday.

"Nobody really knows" if climate change is real, Trump said in the "Fox News Sunday" interview, when host Chris Wallace asked the incoming President where he stands on the environment.

"I'm still open-minded. Nobody really knows. Look, I'm somebody that gets it, and nobody really knows. It's not something that's so hard and fast."

Trump told Wallace he is studying whether the United States should withdraw from its commitment to limit environmental output made at the Paris summit last year.

"Now, Paris, I'm studying. I do say this. I don't want that agreement to put us at a competitive disadvantage with other countries," Trump said. "And as you know, there are different times and different time limits on that agreement. I don't want that to give China, or other countries signing agreements an

advantage over us."

In point of fact, the vast majority of climate scientists say climate change is real and humans contribute to it. According to NASA, at least 97 percent of actively publishing climate scientists agree that "climate-warming trends over the past century are extremely likely due to human activities."

On the campaign trail, Trump called climate change a "hoax" that is being pushed by China, but in recent weeks has showed a growing interest in looking into issue. His daughter, Ivanka, has spoken publicly about taking on the issue as one of her platforms and Trump has met with notable environmentalists, including former Vice President Al Gore and actor Leonardo DiCaprio.

However, Trump named Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt as his choice for head of the Environmental Protection Agency, though Pruitt is a climate change doubter who is currently suing the EPA.

Trump defended his selection of Pruitt by blasting the current state of the EPA, saying businesses don't want invest in the United States because there are too many regulations, which Pruitt will help loosen.

"If you look at what -- I could name country after country. You look at what's happening in Mexico, where our people are just -- plants are being built, and they don't wait 10 years to get an approval to build a plant, okay?" he said. "They build it like the following day or the following week. We can't let all of these permits that take forever to get stop our jobs."

After noting that Trump has appointed many Cabinet positions and department heads with people who are opposed to what their respective agencies have been doing in recent years, Wallace asked Trump if he was "going to take a wrecking ball to the Obama legacy?"

Trump responded by saying, "No. No. No. I don't want to do that at all. I just want what's right."

(Source: CNN)



Medlar is one of the fruits which grow in the northern province of Mazandaran and is harvested from late autumn till early winter. The locals usually make medlar pickles, fruit roll-ups and flavored snacks and sell them in the market.

## ENGLISH IN USE LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ↔ E

### 200 schools to be inaugurated in underprivileged areas

200 schools built by Barekat charity foundation in underprivileged areas of Iran will be inaugurated on September 25, IRNA news agency reported. The schools which are comprising some 1,300 classes are built in provinces such as Fars, Lorestan, Bushehr, and Sistan-Baluchestan.

Based on a contract signed with schools renovating, developing and equipping organization, Barekat charity foundation is committed to build some 950 schools comprising 5,100 classes for some 127,500 students nationwide costing 4 trillion rials (nearly \$115m).

### ENGLISH PROVERB

#### Soft answer turneth away wrath

- Explanation:

if you speak softly and meekly to someone who is angry with you, that person will calm down (biblical)
- For example:

It won't do any good for you to yell at John because he yelled at you. Remember that a soft answer turneth away wrath.

### PHRASAL VERB

#### Brush somebody/ something off

- Meaning:

to refuse to listen to someone or their ideas, especially by ignoring them or saying something rude
- For example:

Corman brushed off the accusations.

### ENGLISH IDIOM

#### Bait and switch

- Explanation:

a sales tactic in which a customer is attracted by the advertisement of a low-priced item but is then encouraged to buy a higher-priced one
- For example:

This store is famous for its bait and switch tactics.

### ۲۰۰ باب مدرسه در مناطق محروم افتتاح می شود

به گزارش خبرگزاری ایرنا ۲۰۰ باب مدرسه درس که به همت بنیاد خیریه برکت در مناطق محروم ساخته شده است، ۴ مهر افتتاح می شود.

این مدارس با یک هزار و ۳۰۰ کلاس درس در استان های مختلف از جمله فارس، لرستان، بوشهر و سیستان و بلوچستان ساخته شده اند.

بنیاد خیریه برکت تاکنون قرارداد ساخت ۹۵۰ مدرسه با ۵ هزار و ۱۰۰ کلاس درس و ظرفیت پذیرش ۱۲۷ هزار و ۵۰۰ دانش آموز با اعتباری بالغ بر چهار هزار میلیارد ریال با سازمان نوسازی ، توسعه و تجهیز مدارس منعقد کرده است.



# 35k Iraqi kids flee Mosul in almost 2 months: UN

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that some 35,000 children have escaped from Mosul since mid-October, when the Iraqi army launched a major offensive to retake the northern city from ISIL (Daesh) terrorists.

"Children are the innocent victims of any conflict and in this conflict are the most innocent victims," Peter Hawkins, the UNICEF Representative in Iraq, told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

He further expressed concern over the mental situation of the displaced Iraqi kids, saying that "they're not smiling, they're sad."

Once Daesh is forced out of Mosul, it will be important to "invest in children's services so this war doesn't continue," Hawkins added.

The official did not provide the exact number of the children killed, but he said some of them had been targeted by snipers.

"We know that children who have been queuing up for water have been



targets," he said, noting, "I saw a photograph of a child this morning who's been shot by a sniper queuing up for water."

The 35,000 children are among some

93,500 people who have fled Mosul since October 17, when Iraqi army troops and allied fighters began an operation to retake Daesh's last major urban stronghold in the Arab country.

Mosul fell to Daesh in 2014, when the terror outfit began its campaign of death and destruction in parts of Iraq.

## ■ Iraqi forces advance against militants

Separately on Tuesday, Iraqi forces made gains against militants in Mosul and wrested control of two villages in western Tal Abtah and Tal Afar.

Iraq's War Media Cell also reported the liberation of the Sanaiah district in eastern Mosul during clashes that killed 20 Takfiri elements.

Meanwhile, Daesh kidnapped 30 residents of an area in southwestern Nineveh Province, of which Mosul is the capital. An unnamed informed source said the captives were taken to an undisclosed location on charges of leaving the militant-held areas and helping civilians flee the provinces of Kirkuk and Salahuddin.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has vowed Mosul's full recapture by year-end.

(Source: Press TV)

## India and Saudi Arabia competing for most powerful army title

Military spending across the world grew to \$1.57 trillion this year as India, China, Russia and the United States competed for the title of most powerful army. The global ranking released by IHS Markit predicted defense spending would return in 2018 to pre-financial crisis levels, CNBC News reported.

The United States remains the world's biggest military spender, with \$622 billion set aside for weapons and personnel in 2016, according to IHS Janes, which releases an annual Jane's Defense Budgets Report every December. That represents about 40 percent of global military expenses, a figure expected to soar under President-elect Donald Trump.

"Since 9/11, over \$9.35 trillion has been allocated to the U.S. defense budget, with the Overseas Contingency Op-

erations (OCO) accounting for \$1.62 trillion or 17.3 percent of the total U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) budget," said Guy Eastman, senior analyst at IHS Jane's. "U.S. DoD investment levels going forward were to decrease by 1.1 percent in real terms, but with the election of Donald Trump, the expectation is that both investment and readiness will receive injections of much needed funds."

China, meanwhile, home to the world's largest military, continued to claim the second spot on the list. Beijing could double its defense budget by 2020 from from \$123 billion in 2010, the report found. The United Kingdom was in third place with \$53 billion in spending.

India, which allocated \$50 billion to defense spending this year, pushed its way into fourth place. It could be looking to move from being a regional leader to flex-

ing its global power, said Craig Caffrey, principal analyst at IHS Jane's, in a release Monday.

"This is new for the region and is likely to increase military-to-military contact between states," he said. "Rising defense spending could therefore be indirectly responsible for increased tension within the region which in turn could spur faster budget growth."

Defense suppliers will increasingly turn to India, Asia's third-largest economy, for purchases, Caffrey said. "India needs new equipment to fulfill its modernization drive," he said.

Beyond dollars and cents, when it comes to military strength, the world's leaders are the United States, Russia, China, Japan, India and France, a Credit Suisse Research report from 2015 concluded.

(Source: IBT)

## Merkel, Hollande back extended Russia sanctions over Ukraine

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande said Tuesday they favour extending EU sanctions against Russia over the Ukraine conflict, ahead of a Brussels summit where the issue will be discussed.

Merkel said that given grave shortcomings in the Ukraine peace process, which has been marred by regular ceasefire violations, "it will be necessary to extend sanctions against Russia once more".

Hollande, speaking at a joint Berlin press conference with Merkel, agreed there had been insufficient progress in implementing the Minsk peace agreements.

"Since there hasn't been an effort made, no progress, and the same blockages remain, I, like the chancellor, am in favor of extending sanctions," he said.

Neither the Ukrainian government nor the pro-Russian rebels waging an insurgency in the country's east have fully

implemented the agreements, which are designed to bring an end to a conflict that has claimed 10,000 lives since 2014.

In Brussels, a European official said last week that Merkel and Hollande would recommend extending the sanctions when EU leaders meet at Thursday's summit.

"There appears to be consensus," said the official, adding that a formal deal to prolong sanctions could be clinched in January.

"But for some member states, it's important to listen to Merkel and Hollande first," the official added.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin labelled the comments by Merkel and Hollande "cynical and counterproductive", Interfax news agency reported.

"Russia is doing its utmost to restart the process of implementing the Minsk accords, which is currently stalled by the Kiev authorities."

(Source: AFP)

## Syria establishing full control over Aleppo

### Turkey wants safe evacuation of militants

➔ Also on Tuesday, a senior Turkish official told Reuters that Russian and Turkish officials may be holding a meeting on Wednesday in Turkey to discuss the possibility of opening a corridor to evacuate remaining militants and civilians from the city and set up of a ceasefire.

"Efforts are still underway to open a corridor for the rebels and civilians in

Aleppo, and evacuate them from the region. There has been no agreement on this issue yet," the Turkish official said anonymously.

Turkey has been supporting anti-Damascus militants during the course of the Syrian conflict. It is accused of providing safe passage into and out of Syria for Daesh terrorists operating in the Arab

country. However, in the wake of a failed coup in Turkey in July, Ankara has been tilting toward Moscow.

Later on Tuesday, it was reported that a group of Russian sappers had performed a mine clearance operation in one of the schools in a liberated eastern district of Aleppo.

According to the commander of the

clearing detachment, Major Ivan Gromov, the school was "a stronghold" of the militants.

Gromov said that the premises were used because "the school is connected with the children" and the Syrian army would not attack the militants there because of that.

(Source: agencies)

## Unleashing Lethality: Obama OKs MANPADs for Syrian "moderates"

➔ Also included under the waiver, but not specifically mentioned on the Munitions List, are MANPADs, portable surface-to-air missile systems designed to be transported, carried and fired by one or more individuals. In any case, removing U.S. weapons supply restrictions to Syrian "foreign fighters" under the pretext of fighting terrorism appears to be an ill-conceived and thinly-veiled last-ditch attempt at regime change by a desperate lame duck president, and certainly flies in the face of alleged U.S. efforts to stop further MANPAD proliferation.

### ■ Arms Export Control Act

The Arms Export Control Act (AECA) was passed during the administration of president Gerald Ford at a time of congressional concern over the sheer volume of U.S. arms sales to foreign governments, which amounted to \$2.5 trillion among 128 nations. The minimum intent of the act was to insure that any so-called defense articles sold were used exclusively for defense. At a higher level, the act sought to promote peace by cutting worldwide arms sales, as the AECA text reads, "It shall be the policy of the United States to exert leadership in the world community to bring about arrangements for reducing the international trade in implements of war and to lessen the danger of outbreak of regional conflict and the burdens of armaments."

The AECA can be viewed as a high watermark in the ongoing power struggle between the White House and the U.S. congress for control over U.S. foreign policy. Attorney Peter K. Tompa explained, "As originally enacted, the AECA reflected congressional distrust of a strong executive." The congressional distrust had arisen over president Nixon's role in distorting the realities of the U.S. war against Vietnam as well as his personal involvement in the Watergate scandal. Thus, the AECA waiver for supplying U.S. arms to Syrian "moderate rebels" may be Obama's parting shot in a continuing foreign policy

battle between the executive and congress.

### ■ Peace prize presidency

The AECA tasks the U.S. president with the responsibility of convening a conference of arms dealers and state purchasers to "consider measures to limit conventional arms transfers in the interest of international peace and stability." Obama has not simply failed to live up to the spirit of the AECA, as has every other U.S. president from Ford to Bush II. On the contrary, he has escalated the contagion of conflict like none before him. No doubt this is why former Nobel Peace Prize committee secretary Geir Lundestad expressed regrets at having awarded the medal to the Potomac potentate in 2009.

Perhaps it is because of heightened expectations of Obama, especially after the sordid presidency of the Crawford cowboy, that most are highly disappointed with him. Or, perhaps it is because within days of receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, he ordered 30,000 additional troops deployed to Afghanistan. For despite campaign promises to end his predecessor's wars, Obama outdid Bush II when it came to American aggression. Bush only bombed four countries: Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Somalia. But Obama not only has bombed Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, Libya and Syria, but also has military operations in Cameroon, Central Africa, Jordan, Niger, and South Sudan.

### ■ Circular logic

Syria has been on the U.S. state department's list of state sponsors of terrorism since December 29, 1979. Countries on this list are prohibited from receiving U.S. economic or military aid or importing defense articles, yet the criteria used for placing a given country on or removing it from the document seem to be fuzzy, if not entirely political, having little to do with terrorism.

For example, North Korea, which reportedly has nuclear weapons capabilities in violation of the Nuclear

Non-Proliferation Treaty, was placed on the list by Reagan in 1988 and removed by Bush II in 2008. Likewise, Iraq, another charter member, was first removed by Reagan in 1982 to enable the legal sale of U.S. arms to support Saddam's war effort against Iran. Returned by Bush I to the list in 1990 before the first Persian Gulf war, the country was finally removed by Bush II following the 2003 U.S. invasion and occupation.

Syria, probably for political reasons tied to the wishes of the Zionist regime, was made a charter member of this exclusive club of pariah states in 1979. It is amusing to read the "Backgrounder" on Syria produced by the Council on Foreign Relations, whose logic for the placement of the country on the U.S. list seems quite circular. To begin with, the author notes that Syria is considered a state sponsor of terrorism due to its support of groups on the U.S. list of terrorist organizations, like Hezbollah and Hamas. This could not be the reason for the original nomination, however, since Hezbollah did not appear until 1985 and Hamas not until 1987.

Failing to shed light on Syria's original sin, the author then concludes that Syria is indeed a state sponsor of terrorism because it "has been on the State Department list of countries sponsoring terrorism since the list's inception in 1979." In essence, the argument is Syria is on the U.S. list because it is a state sponsor of terrorism, and we know that it sponsors terrorism because it has been on the list since 1979.

When someone, some group or some nation facilitates terrorists by providing increasingly lethal aid, by logical necessity, said party becomes an accomplice in any subsequent terrorist act perpetrated by the benefactor. With Obama's waiver, the U.S. has implicated itself as a state sponsor of terrorism and should therefore, at a minimum, place itself on its own pariah-state list.

## Western governments call for investigation of Afghan vice president

Afghanistan's Western allies called on Tuesday the government to investigate allegations that a vice president, Abdul Rashid Dostum, had been involved in assaulting and abducting a political rival last month.

Dostum, a former warring faction commander with a notorious reputation and a lingering power base in northern Afghanistan, is accused of beating a rival, Ahmad Ishchi, before having the man taken away and detained.



In a post online after the incident, Dostum denied abducting Ishchi, saying he was in police custody. Dostum's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

On Tuesday, as word of Ishchi's release came, delegations from the United States, Britain, European Union, and other governments called for a thorough investigation of the incident.

"The unlawful detention and reported mistreatment of Mr. Ishchi by the First Vice President raises serious concerns," the U.S. Embassy said in a statement.

"We would welcome the Afghan government's move to swiftly investigate these allegations."

The E.U., along with Australia, Canada, and Norway, also called for a "fair and transparent official investigation" into the reports of "gross human rights violations and abuses".

Dostum joined Afghanistan's National Unity Government in 2014 in a bid by President Ashraf Ghani to attract the support of his mostly ethnic Uzbek constituency, but allegations of past human rights violations have been a source of controversy.

Warring factions brought bloody chaos to Afghanistan after they forced the withdrawal of Soviet occupying forces in 1989. In the 1990s, many Afghans initially welcomed the rise of the Taliban who defeated and largely banished the "warlord" factions.

But some old faction commanders have made a comeback to positions of influence since the Taliban were ousted in 2001, to the dismay of many ordinary Afghans.

(Source: AP)

## West Asia's new alliance

➔ If such approach is not adopted promptly, further foreign interventions and the re-emergence of extremism that have posed as central challenges to peace and stability could further worsen the region. Hence Iran is extending its commitment to the creation of a coordinated and calculated regional security-oriented approach and alliance.

Iran has accurately recognized and emphasized that the West Asia region will be inevitably one of the main scenes for the development of the future international balance and order. Consequently, what will transpire in the region could undoubtedly have a resounding impact on the future of the global system, by shifting the order that previously originated in the West, and remains at growing odds with the contemporary and more connected modern world order.

It is time to recognize that advanced weaponry, defense orders and formulation of fabricated security alliances can not only undermine the long-lasting protection in the region, but it could further intensify the threats of undesirable and costly conflicts among regional countries with disastrous outcomes. The real stability will only be attained through shared understanding and harmony among the regional actors. It is time for the regional countries to recognize, accept and seek this valuable yet brief opportunity to collaborate and pave the way for a new chapter of practical regional partnership. The region must realize that true security must and can only be gradually built and not instantly bought. Therefore, Iran, as it has attested in the past, is extending its hand to work with other countries in the region to reach this vital and essential objective.

Iran remains committed to promoting and assisting regional countries in re-examining and re-building new order for establishment of security within borders, combat the emergence of extremist groups and flows across the region, and mitigate interventionist policies followed by non-regional powers.

It further extends its commitment to seeking stability and security in the West Asia region through fundamental collective reforms; moreover it aims to create a new and progressive West Asian order. That would serve the region's mutual interest based on inclusion, and respect for integrity and national sovereignty of countries. It will also assist countries to take a common security-oriented approach to regional issues in the coming years and particular attention to economic concerns and prosperity of its future generations.

The Regional Security Order in West Asia Conference signifies Iran's steadfast commitment to regional inclusion and security. Therefore the region demands the formation of a genuine coalition to fight terrorism and enhance economic cooperation that should include Saudi Arabia, along with Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, and Pakistan to jointly promote regional peace and security based on shared values, fighting extremism and enhancing economic interest through the development of strategic and economic connectivity.

Moreover, Iran and Saudi Arabia should make every attempt to reduce the inflated perception of bitterly divided policies in the region as the current gap could further escalate and damage the collective interest of the region and prospects for peace and collective unity.

Roosbeh Aliabadi is the advisor to the Director of Strategic Initiatives at the Institute for Political and International Studies (IPI) of the Iranian Foreign Ministry.



## How have Hoffenheim stayed unbeaten?

TSG 1899 Hoffenheim have yet to taste defeat in the Bundesliga this season, a feat that only European champions Real Madrid CF have matched across the continent's major leagues.

And then there was one. Following RB Leipzig's slip-up at FC Ingolstadt 04 on Saturday, Hoffenheim are now the only unbeaten team in the Bundesliga, with six wins and eight draws putting them fourth in the table.

The achievement is even more impressive when considering that TSG were bottom at the start of the calendar year. As they prepare to put their record on the line again this Friday, when Borussia Dortmund come to town, bundesliga.com asks the question – just how have they stayed unbeaten?



### ■ The Nagelsmann factor

Any analysis of Hoffenheim's upturn in fortunes has to start with their coach, Julian Nagelsmann. Since taking over from Huub Stevens in February, the 29-year-old has taken TSG from the relegation battle to the fight for Europe, picking up more points in the Bundesliga (49) than every team except FC Bayern München (68) and Dortmund (58).

A former disciple of Thomas Tuchel at FC Augsburg, Nagelsmann has been coaching since his early 20s, after a persistent knee injury ended his playing career. He may be young, but he is certainly not short of ideas, as Hoffenheim's numerous tactical innovations this season have shown.

"We have a plan for every match situation," explains defender Niklas Süle. "It's an incredibly flexible system. We can switch easily between three, four and five at the back during a game. We're more unpredictable to play against this season, which is one of our big strengths."

Nagelsmann has certainly kept his opponents guessing. Having abandoned a 4-3-3 system fairly early on in the campaign, he has experimented with any number of variations on a three- or five-man defence, which only 1. FC Köln have managed to get the better of – in the DFB Cup.

By his own admission, though, Hoffenheim's transformation has as much to do with man-management as any tactical revolution. He once described coaching as "30 per cent tactics and 70 percent psychology" – and his ability to get the most out of players considered past their best has been a hallmark of his tenure.

Take Sandro Wagner. Touted as a potential star after winning the UEFA European Under-21 Championship with Germany in 2009 alongside future world champions such as Manuel Neuer, Jerome Boateng and Mats Hummels, the former Bayern man failed to build on his early promise, enjoying mixed fortunes with SV Werder Bremen and Hertha Berlin. His renaissance, which began at SV Darmstadt 98 last season, has continued under Nagelsmann – and he is currently Hoffenheim's leading scorer with seven goals in the Bundesliga.

Dortmund youth product Kerem Demirbay spent last season on loan at second-tier Fortuna Düsseldorf, before joining from Hamburger SV over the summer. The 23-year-old has proved another inspired signing, notching up three goals and three assists – including the stunning opener in the 1-1 draw with Bayern.

Nagelsmann has also given a number of home-grown players a chance to shine. Süle, 21, has belied his tender years with a series of assured performances at centre-back, contributing to Hoffenheim's defensive solidity (only 14 goals conceded in 14 outings). Having made his Germany debut in August, Süle also popped up with a winner against Hertha on Matchday 9.

### ■ There's no 'i' in team

Beyond their individual talents, Hoffenheim's unbeaten streak has been built on their collective strength and a newfound sense of determination. Nowhere was this better displayed than in the astonishing 4-4 draw with 1. FSV Mainz 05 on Matchday 2. Trailing 4-1 at half-time, Nagelsmann's charges battled back after Mainz were reduced to 10 men, and even came close to snatching the unlikelyst of victories in the dying minutes.

"From his first day in charge, Julian boosted our self-belief," Süle points out. "He'll speak to you honestly and directly about anything. He told us, 'It can't get much worse, guys. I want to see you playing good football.' It's great to have that level of trust, when you have your backs to the wall. It started paying off straight away."

Dortmund should provide a fascinating test for Hoffenheim and especially Nagelsmann, who will be up against his old mentor Tuchel. When the two sides met at the SIGNAL IDUNA PARK back in February – in Nagelsmann's third game in charge – 10-man TSG led until the 80th minute, when Dortmund finally broke their resistance through Henrikh Mkhitaryan. The Black-and-Yellows went on to win 3-1, but there was no masking a palpable sense of relief at the final whistle.

Hoffenheim may be unbeaten, but they are only a point above BVB in the table. And having drawn four of their last five Bundesliga outings, the Sinsheim club will be keen to prove that winning comes as naturally to them as avoiding defeat. Victory over Dortmund would certainly send out a message – as well as boosting Hoffenheim's hopes of a maiden European campaign.

(Source: Bundesliga)

# Ronaldo's golden year rewarded with fourth Ballon d'Or

Cristiano Ronaldo capped a remarkable year by claiming a fourth Ballon d'Or award on Monday after leading Portugal to an emotional European Championship title and Real Madrid to a record-extending Champions League crown in 2016.

Ronaldo is one short of the record tally of five awards won by Barcelona's Argentina forward Lionel Messi, who was second with the pair having taken the first two spots since 2011.

"For me it's a great honor to receive my fourth golden ball. The emotion is like for the first one, it's a dream come true again. I never thought in my mind to win four times. I'm so happy," said Ronaldo, who won the award in 2008, 2013 and 2014.

"It's probably the best year of my career collectively, with Real Madrid and Portugal.

"Real are used to winning titles while Portugal had never won a major title so this (Euro 2016) title is special. I don't want to lack respect to the Champions League but the title with Portugal is a level above."

The Ballon d'Or, which merged with the FIFA World Player of the Year award from 2010-15 to create the FIFA Ballon d'Or, returned to France Football magazine this year.

A total of 173 journalists voted but not national team coaches and captains who were also polled for the FIFA award.

### ■ CUT ABOVE

France and Atletico Madrid forward Antoine Griezmann, who lost to Ronaldo's Portugal and Real in the Euro 2016 and Champions League finals respectively, took third place.

Uruguay forward Luis Suarez was fourth and Brazil's Neymar fifth, giving Barcelona three players in the top five.

Ronaldo was a cut above the competition, though.

He scored 51 goals in 54 games for club and country, albeit his lowest tally since 2008, claimed another Champions League winners' medal and lifted the European Championship trophy.

Ronaldo limped off midway through the first half of July's Euro 2016 final, which Portugal won 1-0 after extra time against hosts France, but he hobbled back onto the pitch to celebrate his country's first major soccer title.

Six weeks earlier, after a fairly anonymous performance against local rivals Atletico in the Champions League final, he scored the decisive penalty in the shootout to hand Real their 11th European Cup.

It was, therefore, hard to see past 31-year-old Ronaldo for the winner of the Ballon d'Or, even if the trophy is designed to reward individual performance rather than team results.



(Source: Reuters)

## Chelsea defender Azpilicueta extends contract to 2020



Chelsea defender Cesar Azpilicueta has signed a new three-and-a-half-year contract that runs until 2020, the Premier League club said on their website on Tuesday.

The versatile 27-year-old has been a regular starter since joining the London side in 2012 and is set to make his 200th appearance for the league leaders if selected for Wednesday's game at Sunderland.

"I'm really happy to have signed a new contract. Since I arrived here my target was to progress as a player and win trophies," Azpilicueta said.

"This new contract gives me the chance to continue my relationship with the club, that's what I wanted and obviously I'm really happy here."

The Spain international has been primarily used this season as the right-sided defender in a back three which has kept seven clean sheets in their last nine league games.

Chelsea, who have a three-point lead at the top of the table after 15 games, will bid for a 10th successive win against bottom-placed Sunderland.

(Source: Reuters)

## Messi meets young Afghan boy who became viral sensation



The Afghan boy who became an internet hit after wearing an Argentina shirt made from a plastic bag has at last met hero Lionel Messi.

Lionel Messi has at last met Murtaza Ahmadi, the Afghan boy who became a viral star after being pictured wearing a homemade Argentina shirt.

Six-year-old Murtaza became famous in January after a picture of him sporting a shirt fashioned from a plastic carrier bag, with Messi's name and number on the back, was shared across the world on social media.

Messi sent signed kits and a football to the youngster in February and Murtaza has

now been given the chance to meet his idol in person, according to the organising body for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

The Supreme Committee tweeted a series of images and a video showing Murtaza posing for pictures with Messi after being introduced to the Barcelona squad, who are in Al Rayyan for a friendly match against Al Ahli on Tuesday.

"The image the world wanted to see," the caption posted along with the video reads. "The six year old boy who dreamed of meeting his hero, Messi, finally comes true."

(Source: FourFourTwo)

# Criticism of Pep Guardiola's tactics against Leicester 'unfair' - Wenger

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger has defended Manchester City counterpart Pep Guardiola after his defensive tactics were questioned following a 4-2 loss to Leicester, saying criticism of the Spaniard has been "unfair."

Guardiola was criticised by pundits for dismissing the importance of tackling after his side fell to a second straight league defeat following a 3-1 loss to Chelsea the previous weekend.

"I'm not a coach for the tackles, so I don't train the tackles," Guardiola said after the Leicester game.

But Wenger said the former Barcelona and Bayern Munich coach should be applauded for his attack-minded style of play, and that his record proves his teams know how to defend.

"Pep Guardiola, like myself, we are for offensive football. And when you don't win, people question that. And that's as simple as that," Wenger said ahead of Arsenal's trip to Everton on Tuesday. "Overall, I think what he wanted to say is that he promotes a game that is positive and I agree with him on that. You respect him for that. I believe that he doesn't forbid his players to tackle."

It's true that in the trainings you focus on your players to play an offensive game. You look at the number of games he has lost in his career, you would think that he defends quite well. For me it's a bit the wrong debate. His teams usually defend well."



Defending champions Leicester have struggled badly to repeat their heroics of last season's stunning title charge, but looked back to their best against City as they took a 2-0 lead after five minutes and were 4-0 up by the 78th when Jamie Vardy completed a hat trick.

And Wenger pointed out that the strong start by Leicester didn't leave Man City much of a choice other than to expose themselves defensively for the rest of the game.

"I come back to one simple fact in that game. When you're 2-0 down away from home, against a team that is good on the counter-attack, you know you have have to

come out like mad to come back," Wenger said.

"And you expose yourself on counter-attacks. What was the strength of Leicester last season? It was that. So they were in a position where they are at their strength after five minutes. Then you can criticise what you want. I believe it's unfair because they had to come out and they had to take the risk to be exposed on counter-attacks."

Wenger's own team have often been criticised in recent years for conceding too many goals on counter-attacks, but this season they've been a lot more successful when they're chasing a deficit. The Gunners have fallen behind in six games in the Premier League and Champions League, but finished those games with three wins and three draws.

One of those was Saturday's 3-1 home win over Stoke, but Wenger admitted that the Gunners have often had small margins on their side -- such as when Petr Cech made a good save to deny a Peter Crouch header when the score was still 2-1 against Stoke.

"I look at the history of the games, there are always turning points that have gone for us. It's never one-way traffic. Even on Saturday it could have been 2-2," Wenger said. "We manage to get the turning points on our side. I'm conscious that it's very tight. But I'm conscious as well that there is a resilience in the squad, because it's not a coincidence, six times."

(Source: Soccernet)



# Persian Gulf sides discover fate at AFC Champions League

**T I S P O R T S** Persian Gulf teams Esteghlal d e s k Khuzestan, Persepolis, Zobahan and Esteghlal discovered their fate at the 2017 edition of the AFC Champions League on Tuesday.

The competition's official draw held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Iran Professional League (IPL) reigning champion Esteghlal Khuzestan has been drawn in Group B along with Al Jazira of the UAE and Qatar's Lekhwiya SC.

IPL runner-up Persepolis has been pitted with Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal and Qatari Al Rayyan.

Zobahan, Iran's Hazfi Cup titleholder, has been pitted against Al Ahli Saudi FC and UAE's Al Ain FC in Group C.

Esteghlal is another Iranian representative in the competition which will play Al Sadd of Qatar in Play-off Stage.

## Full ACL Draw

### WEST

#### ■ Group A

1. Al Ahli FC (UAE)
2. PFC Lokomotiv (UZB)
3. Al Taawoun (KSA)
4. Play-off winner (IRN/QAT)

#### ■ Group B

1. Esteghlal Khuzestan FC (IRN)
2. Al Jazira (UAE)
3. Lekhwiya SC (QAT)
4. Play-off winner (KSA/UZB/BHR)

#### ■ Group C

1. Al Ahli Saudi FC (KSA)
2. Zob Ahan FC (IRN)
3. Al Ain FC (UAE)
4. Play-off winner (QAT/UZB)

#### ■ Group D

1. Al Rayyan SC (QAT)
2. Al Hilal SFC (KSA)
3. Persepolis FC (IRN)
4. Play-off winner (UAE/JOR/IND)

#### EAST

#### ■ Group E

1. Kashima Antlers (JPN)
2. Muangthong United (THA)
3. Play-off winner (CHN/AUS/PHI/SIN)
4. Play-off winner (KOR/HKG/VIE)

#### ■ Group F

1. FC Seoul (KOR)
2. Japan 2nd Club (JPN)
3. Western Sydney Wanderers (AUS)
4. Play-off winner (CHN/THA/MYA)

#### ■ Group G

1. Guangzhou Evergrande FC (CHN)



2. Suwon Samsung Bluewings (KOR)

3. Japan 3rd Club (JPN)

4. Eastern SC (HKG)

#### ■ Group H

1. Adelaide United (AUS)
2. Jiangsu FC (CHN)
3. Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors (KOR)
4. Play-off winner (JPN/THA/MAS)

AFC Champions League 2017 Preliminary Stage & Play-off Schedule

#### WEST

Preliminary Stage 2 (January 31, 2017)

PS 2.1 - Al Wehdat (JOR) v JSW Bengaluru FC (IND)

PS 2.2 - FC Nasaf (UZB) v Al Hidd Club (BHR)

PS 2.3 - Al Sadd SC (QAT) v Bye

PS 2.4 - FC Bunyodkor (UZB) v Bye

Play-off Stage (February 7, 2017)

Al Wahda (UAE) v Winner PS 2.1

Al Fateh FC (KSA) v Winner PS 2.2

Esteghlal FC (IRN) v Al Sadd SC (QAT)

El Jaish SC (QAT) v FC Bunyodkor (UZB)

#### EAST

Preliminary Stage 1 (January 24, 2017)

PS 1.1 - Hanoi T&T (VIE) v Bye

PS 1.2 - Johor Darul Ta'zim (MAS) v Bye

PS 1.3 - Yadanarbon FC (MYA) v Bye

PS 1.4 - Global FC (PHI) v Tampines Rovers FC (SIN)

Preliminary Stage 2 (January 31, 2017)

PS 2.1 - Kitchee (HKG) v Hanoi T&T (VIE)

PS 2.2 - Bangkok United (THA) v Johor Darul Ta'zim (MAS)

PS 2.3 - Sukhothai FC (THA) v Yadanarbon FC (MYA)

PS 2.4 - Brisbane Roar (AUS) v Winner PS 1.4

Play-off Stage (February 7, 2017)

Jeju United FC (KOR) v Winner PS 2.1

Japan 4th Club (JAP) v Winner PS 2.2

Shanghai SIPG FC (CHN) v Winner PS 2.3

Shanghai Shenhua FC (CHN) v Winner PS 2.4

## Branko expects tough test for Persepolis in AFC Champions League



**T I S P O R T S** Persepolis Croatian head coach Branko Ivankovic believes that his team has been drawn in a difficult group in the AFC Champions League.

"We've been drawn in a tough group. Al Rayyan and Al Hilal are the best teams of their countries while Al Wahda, who has a better chance of qualifying from the playoff round, is a strong team too," Branko said.

"All teams have an equal chance of qualifying as the competition in our group is very close, however our goal is to qualify for the next round which is depending on how good we could strengthen our squad in

the January transfer window," he added.

IPL runner-up Persepolis has been pitted against Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal, Qatari Al Rayyan and the play-off winner of UAE/JOR/IND.

Persepolis has won just once in four encounter against Al Hilal. The Saudi side has won twice while they finished 1-1 in March 2012.

Persepolis has won the sole encounter against Qatari side Al Rayyan when the two teams met in December 1996.

Persepolis is currently top of Iran Professional League table after 13 weeks with 29 points.

## Chapecoense goalkeeper Danilo wins posthumous fan MVP honour



Chapecoense goalkeeper Danilo, who died in the Colombia air crash at the age of 31, has been posthumously awarded MVP in a Brazilian internet vote by fans.

Danilo -- whose fine performance against San Lorenzo helped Chapecoense reach the Copa Sudamericana final, the biggest match in their history -- got 48 percent of votes in an internet poll on Monday.

His mother, Ilaides Padilha, accepted the award at a ceremony in Rio de Janeiro.

She said: "In the name of Chapecoense, I want to thank everyone for their affection and ask

for their prayers.

"May the future warriors that come to Chapecoense be like the warriors that left there."

Seventy-one people died when the plane, which had been carrying Chapecoense players to the Copa Sudamericana final, crashed into mountains outside Medellin.

Meanwhile, Brazilian league winners Palmeiras took seven of the 11 places in the Football Writers' Player of the Year awards.

Striker Gabriel Jesus, set to join Manchester City, was named as the Player of the Year.

(Source: Soccer.net)

## Asian Young Player of the Year 2016: Sardar Azmoun

2016 has been a thrilling year for Iran's golden boy, Sardar Azmoun. Having made his loan spell permanent with Russian side FC Rostov following off the pitch complications, he embarked on a fairy-tale journey that transmitted to the rest of the side. The side surprised the footballing world, with an incredible title challenge that saw them ultimately finish second, and book a place in Europe's premier competition, for the first time in their history.

Azmoun's best performances came towards the tail-end of the 2015-16 Russian Premier League season. The 21-year-old scored six goals in the last six games of the season, propelling his side to the top and holding off pressure for that coveted Champions League spot.

But the year's fairy-tale was only beginning, as Azmoun and his Rostov side embarked on their European journey, knowing fully-well it wasn't going to be a simple task. The Russians first faced Belgian giants Anderlecht before squaring up against Dutch side Ajax -- both teams who traditionally have found their feet in European competition. But helped by Azmoun's two goals through the Champions League qualifying rounds, Rostov found themselves in the group stage, rubbing shoulders with the continent's elite.



Here's where Azmoun had arguably the most memorable highlight of his year, career and possibly Rostov's history. The minnows managed to secure

three points against German champions Bayern Munich, helped by a goal from Azmoun en route a 3-2 victory. The youngster has also been ever present for his national side, striking four times across seven matches as the Persians look to book their place at the 2018 FIFA World Cup, in Azmoun's adopted home -- Russia.

The clinical striker has done well to adapt himself into Europe, having developed his football in his homeland with Sepahan. Relying on his finishing and dependable first touch, the Iranian international has leaped to fame and is enjoying the prime of his career, with 2016 possibly being just a sneak peek of what's more to come.

Expert Talk | Here's what Toke Theilade, Editor-in-Chief of Russian Football News told OOTB:

Azmoun is an incredibly exciting young prospect, and after a nice, but somewhat inconsistent last season, he is in the middle of his major breakthrough with crucial goals both domestically and internationally. He is an almost complete striker, but is a somewhat controversial persona, best exemplified with his strange transfer to Rostov, which is still not recognized by his old club Rubin Kazan.

(Source: Outsideoftheboot.com)

## Lewandowski signs new Bayern deal

Robert Lewandowski has extended his contract with FC Bayern München, tying him to the German record champions until 2021.

Lewandowski has a league-leading 147 Official Fantasy Bundesliga points. Snap him up here!

"I'm really pleased that the discussions have come to a positive conclusion and that I'll be staying at Bayern for several more years," said Lewandowski, "We've got big targets together!"



Club chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge was also pleased to have successfully completed negotiations with the star striker. "I'm delighted that we've been able to come to a long-term agreement with Robert Lewandowski, one of the best strikers in the world. This means that we've ensured that one of the key players in our squad will continue wearing the FC Bayern kit over the coming years."

Lewandowski has won back-to-back Bundesliga titles since joining from Borussia Dortmund in 2014, plundering a league-high 30 goals as the club sealed a record fourth consecutive top-flight triumph last term.

The Poland national team captain currently sits third in the goalscoring charts in the current campaign having scored 11 times in 14 appearances, including a brace in Bayern's 5-0 thrashing of VfL Wolfsburg on Matchday 15.

(Source: Bundesliga)

## Iran wins title at 2016 Indoor Archery World Cup

Young Iranian male and female archers have delivered awe-inspiring performances at the second stage of the 2016/17 Indoor Archery World Cup in Thailand, and managed to win the title of the renowned tournament.

Iran's Sogand Rahmani recorded impressive displays in the final match of the recurve cadet women's division, and clinched a 7-1 victory over her compatriot Parisa Rohanian to snatch the gold medal. Arezoo Asgari of Iran claimed the third spot in the same category.

Matin Sabzi, meanwhile, could not overcome his Thai contender Maximilian Hahn in the final round of the recurve cadet men's section, and received the silver medal.

Vahid Behdani also lost his final men's junior showdown to Mongolia's Bataa Purevsuren, and scooped the silver medal.

Additionally, Iranian female junior archer Fatemeh Hajjallahyar trounced Pirada Kuekulkawinwong of Thailand in the final round of the recurve category. Maryam Karami, another Iranian representative in the same group, could bag a bronze medal.

Armin Pakzad and Danial Heidarzadeh also picked up the silver and bronze medals of the compound youth open respectively.

In the recurve cadet men's section events, Iran's Seyyed Abolfazl Hosseini thrashed his Thai opponent 6-4 in the final meet and claimed the title.

The second stage of the 2016/17 Indoor Archery World Cup opened in Bangkok, Thailand, on December 10, and concluded the following day.

Iranian archers were awarded three medals, including one gold, at the Indoor Archery World Cup - Stage 1. The tournament opened in Marrakesh, Morocco, on November 26, 2016, and finished the next day.

(Source: PressTV)

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(Source: Soccer.net)



