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“Harmless Ruler” named Iran’s best-selling album of the year **16**

## Military chief says Iran won’t give in to U.S.

By Ali Kushki

**TEHRAN** — A top Iranian military official has said his country won’t surrender to the U.S. days after a top American military official made military threats against Iran.

In a New Year speech in Tehran on Tuesday, Major General Mohammad Bagheri, the chief-of-staff of Iran’s armed forces, said, “We won’t give in to pressures, propaganda war and psychological operations of the U.S. and its allies. We have the upper hand in countering them.”

Tensions between Tehran and Washington have risen under the Trump administration, an end to a less strained era during the presidency of Barack Obama who championed an international nuclear deal with Tehran.

The comments come after a series of vehement exchanges between senior military officials of the sides.

Late March, U.S. Army General Joseph Votel branded Iran as “the greatest long-term threat to stability” in the Middle East.

Votel, who heads the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), made the hostile remarks while speaking before the House Armed Services Committee.

“We need to look at opportunities where we can disrupt [Iran] through military means or other means their activities,” he said. **→2**

# Iran condemns terror act in Saint Petersburg



Russian rescue forces cordon off Saint Petersburg metro after a twin blast on April 3, 2017

## ‘Iran unhappy with Pakistani gen. heading Saudi-led counterterror alliance’

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Ambassador to Islamabad Mehdi Honardoost has voiced Tehran’s misgivings on the appointment of Pakistan’s former army chief General Raheel Sharif as the commander of the 39-nation Islamic Military Alliance, warning it may impact unity among Muslim countries.

Last week, Islamabad approved the appointment of Sharif to lead the Islamic Military Alliance, a Saudi-led coalition of Muslim countries with the professed aim of countering terrorism. This is while Iran and Iraq, two Shia-majority countries, were not included in the alliance.

The coalition has also been criticized for not taking significant military actions against Daesh in Syria or Iraq. Critics note that the

appointment of Sharif, who has close ties to Riyadh, could bolster the Arab country’s effort to counter Iran’s influence in the region.

Iran and Saudi Arabia have serious disagreements over the current situation in the Middle East, especially about the conflicts in Syria and Yemen.

**Iran’s ambassador to Pakistan said Tehran informed Islamabad that Muslim nations should form a peaceful coalition rather than controversial military alliances.**

This marks the first time that Tehran has overtly expressed dissatisfaction over Islamabad’s decision to give the green light to Sharif to lead the coalition.

Honardoost said on Tuesday that Tehran has conveyed its concerns regarding the appointment to Islamabad. “We are concerned about this issue... that it may impact the unity of Islamic countries,” IRNA quoted him as saying.

Analysts have criticized Pakistan’s decision, saying it could worsen regional conflicts.

Sharif’s appointment “is a bit of a departure from Pakistan’s more-or-less neutral position on the Iran-Saudi regional war,” said Arif Rafiq, a political analyst. “As a result, it’s been opposed by even the mainstream, non-sectarian political voices in Pakistan.” **→13**

## Historian says Bannon is fond of thinkers on radical right

By Javad Heirannia

**TEHRAN** — Professor Mark Sedgwick, a British/Irish historian, says Donald Trump’s chief strategist Steve Bannon “is interested in a whole range of thinkers on the radical right.”

Sedgwick, professor of Arab and Islamic Studies at Aarhus University in Denmark, is also of the opinion that Trump has a number of big ideas which are not always “coherent” but Bannon is the only person in the administration with a “coherent philosophy”.

Following is the text of Sedgwick’s interview with the Tehran Times:

**■ Some analysts have called Steve Ban-**

**non ‘the ideologue of White House and Donald Trump’. What do you think?**

A: That is a fair description. President Trump has a number of big ideas, but these are not always coherent. The only person currently in a top position in the administration with a coherent philosophy--call it an ideology if you like--is Mr. Bannon.

**■ At the moment, who are behind Trump’s policy making?**

A: This is not clear. I would expect that there is still a lot of competition and disagreement, especially between experienced insiders like General McMaster, the national security advisor,

and radical outsiders like Mr. Bannon.

**■ In his famous speech in 2014, Bannon cited Julius Evola, uncanny Italian philosopher which appealed to Nazism supporters. Why is he interested in this philosopher?**

A: Mr Bannon is interested in a whole range of thinkers on the radical right. He used to run Breitbart, which is one of the major websites for promoting the radical right and its ideas. So it is natural that he is also interested in Evola. That does not mean that Evola is a major influence on him, though. He is interested in many thinkers, and other thinkers are probably more important for him. **→13**



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## Chabahar hosts folk camel racing

Camel riders are seen during a traditional competition in the southeastern Iranian port city of Chabahar, April 3, 2017.

The racing of camels has long been a folk sport practiced by the local population at social gatherings and festivals. Now, it has come to be recognized as a serious international sport and a great tourist attraction. A mature racing camel can reach speeds of 32–40 km per hour at a gallop.

Camels are often controlled by child jockeys, but in modern camel racing, camels are often controlled by remote controlled robotic whips.

## Iran’s Aseman Airlines inks \$3b deal with Boeing

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Airlines Aseman signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the U.S. aircraft maker Boeing to buy 30 passenger planes model 737 MAX worth \$3 billion, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

The MOU, penned in Tehran, also provides the airline with purchase rights for 30 additional 737 MAXs and the American plane maker is to start delivering the airplanes from 2022.

According to Aseman’s office of public relations, issues regarding technical support and training were also covered in the deal.

Boeing announced on Tuesday that the company will look to the Office of Foreign Assets Control for approval to perform under this transaction.

Earlier in December 2016, the Airline of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran Air) signed a \$16.6 billion deal to buy 80 passenger planes from Boeing.

The deal included the purchase of 50 narrow-bodied 737 planes and 30 long-range 777s which are due to be delivered in a 10-year period starting from 2018.

Iran Air-Boeing agreement was the first of its kind since the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and came after most international sanctions on Iran were lifted as part of its nuclear deal with world powers.

## EU states won’t move Israel embassies to al-Quds: Mogherini

The European Union’s foreign policy Chief Federica Mogherini says the bloc members will not move their embassies from Tel Aviv to Israeli-occupied al-Quds (Jerusalem), which Palestinians want as the capital of their future state.

“Our position is the same as the one of Arab League which is of the international community. EU and its member states will not move their embassies to Jerusalem and we discourage any kind of decision that goes in that direction,” Mogherini said Monday, according to the Kuwaiti state news agency KUNA.

She was speaking during a joint press conference with Egyptian Secretary General of the Arab League Ahmad Aboul-Gheit in Luxembourg.

“We share the same approach, that is a two-state solution, negotiations between the parties and in particular within the framework of the Arab Peace Initiative which we consider the most useful basis for advancing in this respect,” she further stated in reference to the long-running Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The last round of negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians collapsed in 2014, and efforts have so far failed to revive the process.

The EU’s top diplomat also pointed out that she had participated in the 28th Arab League Summit in Jordan, highlighting “excellent cooperation” between the European bloc and the Arab League.

For his part, Aboul-Gheit stated that he intends to brief the EU Foreign Affairs Council about the resolutions passed during the Arab Summit in Jordan last week, while expressing the willingness of the Arab world to expand cooperation with the Western bloc.

The Arab League heads of state convened their annual summit in the northwestern Jordanian city of Sweimeh last Wednesday in a bid to address a range of issues, particularly regional conflicts.

The 22-member pan-Arab body reiterated its support for an independent Palestinian state, while censuring the Israeli regime for its continued settlement construction in the occupied territories. **→13**



ELECTION COUNTDOWN



Judiciary launching center to deal with possible election crimes

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Judiciary is launching **d e s k** a special headquarters to deal with crimes that may be committed during and in relation to the May 19 elections.

The announcement was made by the Judiciary spokesman on Monday during a joint meeting with a number of judges from Tehran province, Fars news agency reported.

One of the duties of the Judiciary is to answer official inquiries about candidates, Qolamhossein Mohsen Ejebi explained, adding another duty is to prevent electoral crimes.



Rouhani to run for a second term

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The government **d e s k** spokesperson said on Tuesday Hassan Rouhani, who is constitutionally allowed to run for the post of president for a second term, will be the only cabinet member who will register to contest the May 19 presidential elections.

Mohammad Bagher Nobakht who appeared in his first press conference after New Year holiday, also said that Rouhani has not yet launched any campaign headquarters, Mehr news agency reported.

The spokesman also expressed concern that over the recent weeks a number of pro-Rouhani Telegram activists have been arrested by security organizations.



One or two reserve candidates for Rouhani would be beneficial: ex-MP

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — A member of the central **d e s k** council of Mardomsalari party and former MP has said it would be beneficial to have one or two reserve candidates behind Hassan Rouhani for the May presidential race.

Speaking to Mehr on Monday, Dariush Ghanbari said doing so would be beneficial if the timing is right.

However, he underlined that it is too early yet to speak of a reserve candidate. He also predicted all reformist groups will agree on Rouhani.



IRGC, Basij should not be used for any political faction: commander

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The commander of the **d e s k** Basij Organization has said neither Basij nor the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps should be “used” in favor of a political faction as the May 19 presidential election is approaching.

Brigadier General Hossein Gheibparvar also told a conference of Basij commanders on Monday that the criteria for a qualified candidate should be introduced in such a way that it would be understandable for everyone to vote for the right person, the IIRB news agency reported.



Over 200 million ballot papers printed for elections

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Over 200 million ballot **d e s k** papers have been printed for the upcoming elections, according to the secretary of the Interior Ministry elections headquarters.

The number of ballots were calculated according to population as reported by the census conducted last year, Ali Pourali Motlaq said on Monday. He added ballots come with at least 10 security codes each to ensure election security, Tasnim reported.

On May 19, Iran is going to hold presidential, council, and mid-term parliamentary elections.



Interior Ministry names election committee’s board of trustees

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Ministry of Interior **d e s k** has named seven members and four alternates for the board of trustees of its central executive election committee.

According to ministry spokesman Salman Samani, the seven members are Kazem Mirvalad, Ali Asqar Ahmadi, Hamid Mirzadeh, Mohsen Haji Mirzaee, Mohammad Ali Shahidi, Hosseinali Amiri, and Qolamreza Tajgardon.

Zahra Ahmadipour, Shafi Shafiiinia, Yahya Al Es’haq, and Habibollah Haqiqi will also act as the alternate members of the committee.

# Zarif: Regional security a priority for Iran

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian **d e s k** Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday that Iran prioritizes a “secure” region, beleaguered by a number of wars over the past years.

“Our country is safe thanks to efforts being made by security and military forces and the security [in the country] has cost a high price. Other countries’ security is important to us because of our own national interests, and today security is a national necessity,” he said during a meeting with Foreign Ministry officials.

He also said that Iran has prioritized expansion of ties with other countries, especially neighbors, in the current Iranian calendar year of 1396 which began on March 21.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the top diplomat pointed out that Iran will continue to live up to its obligations under the 2015 international nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, while keeping an eye on implementing the



outlines of resistance economy.

“From today on, the JCPOA means comprehensive plan of resistance economy,” he highlighted.

The term “resistance economy” was

used for the first time in 2013 by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to highlight the importance of domestic production as a tool to reduce dependence on foreign resources.

## Iran condemns terror act in Saint Petersburg

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry **d e s k** spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Monday strongly condemned the terrorist attack in the Russian city of Saint Petersburg which left at least 14 people killed.

Qassemi reiterated Tehran’s position on the need for a “collective international involvement” in the fight against terrorism.

Determination of the international bodies is required to root out such “brutal crimes”, he added.

Also, in a separate message to his Russian opposite number Vladimir Putin, President Hassan Rouhani sympathized with the bereaved families of the victims and

the Russian people.

“As pointed out in our meeting in Moscow, eradication of all types of terrorism requires collective contribution of the international community along with cooperation of all countries,” read part of the message.

A bomb blast on the St. Petersburg metro on Monday killed at least 14 people and over 50 wounded.

One more explosive device was found at another metro station and neutralized by the specialists, Sputnik reported.

President Vladimir Putin had been in St. Petersburg earlier in the day.

According to Kyrgyz intelligence, a Russian citizen

born in the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan is the prime suspect of the attack.

Mehdi Sanai, the Iranian ambassador to Moscow, also condemned the attack on Tuesday.

He offered condolences to the Russian government, people and families of the victims.

The ambassador said that the terrorist attack proves this bitter fact that terrorist threats are not restricted to one country.

In a meeting with Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Erlan Abdyldayev, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the attack “once again shows the importance of stepping up joint efforts to combat this evil”.

## Military chief says Iran won’t give in to U.S.

**1 →** “We need to look at opportunities where we can expose and hold them accountable for the things that they are doing.”

Responding to the remarks, Iranian Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan called on the U.S. to leave the Persian Gulf region and stop harassment of Iran.

In a separate development, U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis said on

Friday in London that Iran is continuing to behave as an exporter of terrorism and still sponsors militant activity.

Asked about his comments made in 2012 that the three primary threats the United States faced were “Iran, Iran, Iran,” Mattis told reporters that Iran’s behavior had not changed in the years since.

Iran, while rejecting the allegations, said that the main source was U.S. ally Saudi Arabia.

“Some countries led by America are determined to ignore the main source of Takfiri-Wahhabi terrorism and extremism,” foreign ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi was quoted as saying.

“Giving a wrong address when referring to the roots and the financial and ideological resources of terrorism is a main reason for a lack of success by international anti-terror efforts,” Ghasemi added.

Earlier in February, an Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps commander threatened that Iran would use its missiles if its security comes under threat, saying, “Our roaring missiles will fall on their heads.”

However, on Monday Iran’s Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif noted his country will not give the Trump administration any pretext that can be used against it.

## UAE resorted to back-channel line to mar Russia- Iran ties: Washington Post

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The United Arab Emirates arranged **d e s k** a secret meeting in January between Blackwater founder Erik Prince and a Russian close to President Vladimir Putin as part of an apparent effort to establish a back-channel line of communication between Moscow and President-elect Donald Trump, according to U.S., European and Arab officials, the Washington Post reported on April 3.

Though the full agenda remains unclear, the UAE agreed to broker the meeting in part to explore whether Russia could be persuaded to curtail its relationship with Iran, including in Syria, a Trump administration objective that would be likely to require major concessions to Moscow on U.S. sanctions.

The meeting took place around Jan. 11 — nine days before Trump’s inauguration — in the Seychelles islands in the Indian Ocean, officials said.

Though Prince had no formal role with the Trump campaign or transition team, he presented himself as an unofficial envoy for Trump to high-ranking Emiratis involved in setting up his meeting with the Putin confidant, according to the officials, who did not identify the Russian.

Prince was an avid supporter of Trump. After the Republican convention, he contributed \$250,000 to Trump’s campaign, the national party and a pro-Trump super PAC led by GOP mega-donor Rebekah Mercer, records show. He has ties to people in Trump’s circle, including Stephen K. Bannon, now serving as the president’s chief strategist and senior counselor. Prince’s sister Betsy DeVos serves as education secretary in the Trump administration. And Prince was seen in the Trump transition offices in New York in December.

U.S. officials said the FBI has been scrutinizing the Seychelles meeting as part of a broader probe of Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. election and alleged contacts between associates of Putin and Trump. The FBI declined to comment.

The Seychelles encounter, which one official said spanned two days, adds to an expanding web of connections between Russia and Americans with ties to Trump — contacts that the White House has been reluctant to acknowledge or explain until they have been exposed by news organizations.

“We are not aware of any meetings, and Erik Prince had no role in the transition,” said Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary.

A Prince spokesman said in a statement: “Erik had no role on the transition team. This is a complete fabrication. The meeting had nothing to do with President Trump. Why is the so-called under-



Erik Prince is the founder of Blackwater Worldwide.

resourced intelligence community messing around with surveillance of American citizens when they should be hunting terrorists?”

Prince is best known as the founder of Blackwater, a security firm that became a symbol of U.S. abuses in Iraq after a series of incidents, including one in 2007 in which the company’s guards were accused — and later criminally convicted — of killing civilians in a crowded Iraqi square. Prince sold the firm, which was subsequently re-branded, but has continued building a private paramilitary empire with contracts across the Middle East and Asia. He now heads a Hong Kong-based company known as the Frontier Services Group.

Prince would probably have been seen as too controversial to serve in any official capacity in the Trump transition or administration. But his ties to Trump advisers, experience with clandestine work and relationship with the royal leaders of the Emirates — where he moved in 2010 amid mounting legal problems for his American business — would have positioned him as an ideal go-between.

The Seychelles meeting came after separate

**Though the full agenda remains unclear, the UAE agreed to broker the meeting in part to explore whether Russia could be persuaded to curtail its relationship with Iran, including in Syria, a Trump administration objective that would be likely to require major concessions to Moscow on U.S. sanctions.**



# Iraqis entitled to consider Saudi Arabia state sponsor of terror: PM Abadi

Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi says the nationals of his country have good reason to believe Saudi Arabia is a state sponsor of terror.

"Many Saudi nationals have carried out terrorist operations in Iraq, and every Iraqi citizen has a right to believe that Saudi Arabia is a supporter of terrorism," he told Lebanon's Al Mayadeen television channel.

Saudi Arabia's official radical ideology of Wahhabism, which is known for its lack of tolerance, informs the mindset of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) and other terrorist groups worldwide. ISIL has been ravaging Iraq, and neighboring Syria, since 2014.

On March 8, Fox News cited a senior Iraqi counterterrorism intelligence officer as saying that around 30 percent of the ISIL terrorists in Iraq had been Saudi nationals, who had entered the country over the previous three years via Turkey or through the Syrian border town of Abu Kamal.

## ■ Iraqi-Saudi ties

Elsewhere in the interview, Abadi said it was too early to think that relations between Iraq and Saudi Arabia had warmed. The normalization of the ties, he said, was only in its embryonic stages.

In January 2016, Thamer al-Sabhan became the first Saudi ambassador to be assigned to Baghdad in a quarter of a century. The two countries had severed ties following former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

However, in August 2016, senior Iraqi officials requested Riyadh to replace Sabhan. He had on occasions received warnings from Iraqi officials for interference in the country's internal affairs. Riyadh later withdrew the ambassador, but instead of naming another one, it named a chargé d'affaires at its diplomatic mission in the Iraqi capital, in what was regarded as a unilateral and quick downgrading of the bilateral diplomatic ties.

In February this year, Saudi regime Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir made a rare visit to Baghdad and met with Abadi, and the relations have been interpreted as being on the mend ever since.

In the Al Mayadeen interview, Abadi also dismissed "the Saudi mentality that Iraq is under Iran's control"



as "flat wrong."

He said the normalization of relations between Baghdad and Tehran — as well as with Kuwait and Jordan — was a "success" by the Iraqi government.

He said both Iran and Saudi Arabia were interested in calm being restored to the region and added that Iraq, looking at its own interests, was not interested in an escalation of tensions with Iran.

The Iraqi prime minister also said his country was ready to mediate between Riyadh and Tehran but had not been asked to do so yet.

The House of Saud regime unilaterally severed its diplomatic ties with Iran last January after protests outside its diplomatic premises in Tehran and Mashhad against Riyadh's execution of eminent Saudi Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr. Relations between the two had already suffered due to mutual accusations of intervention in regional affairs and Iran's strong opposition to Saudi Arabia's invasion of impoverished Yemen.

## ■ The Saudi-led war on Yemen

Turning to the Saudi regime-led war on Yemen, Abadi said Riyadh had been convinced that it needed to end

the war, which has killed more than 12,000 Yemeni people since it began in March 2015.

"It is likely that this will happen soon," he said, referring to an end to the war.

## ■ A red line on Syria

"Some want Syria to disintegrate," the Iraqi prime minister said, stressing that, "This is a red line."

He asked Arab states to extinguish the flames of the war in Syria, saying the money that had been spent on regional conflicts "could have turned the Arab world into paradise."

The House of Saud regime and Qatar are accused of funding and arming anti-Damascus militants, who have been waging deadly violence in Syria since 2011.

## ■ Turkish tensions

The Iraqi statesman also remarked on the ongoing Turkish military presence in Iraq and Syria in the name of fighting ISIL.

He accused the Turkish forces of being more focused on fighting Kurdish forces than battling ISIL. Turkey considers the Kurds to be associated with anti-Ankara militants and has been pushing them back away from its common border with Syria.

Turkey's military presence in Iraq has had no authorization from the government in Baghdad and has been a major source of tensions between the two states.

Abadi once again called the Turkish military presence in his country "a violation of Iraq's territorial integrity," and especially denounced the Turkish presence in the town of Bashiqa near the northern city of Mosul. The Turkish troops entered the town last year, despite warnings from Baghdad.

## ■ Fighting at home

The Iraqi prime minister also said there were indications that Ibrahim al-Samarrai, the Leader of ISIL, who is better known as Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi, had fled Mosul, the Iraqi city, which ISIL has announced as its so-called headquarters in Iraq and which has been the target of a major Iraqi offensive to dislodge the terrorists.

ISIL has been largely forced out of the city in the Iraqi military operations.

The city's western side and more than 50 percent of its eastern half had been fully liberated, Abadi said, adding there were now only pockets of terrorists in the city.

(Source: Press TV)

## NATO calls on Germany to boost military budget amid U.S. pressure

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) Chief Jens Stoltenberg has called on Germany to boost its military spending, amid United States pressure on Berlin to assume a bigger financial role in the alliance.

"For me it is decisive that the U.S. and Germany agree that we have to invest more in our security," Stoltenberg told German business daily Handelsblatt on Tuesday.

Boosting the military budgets "is not about making the U.S. happy. It is about Europe's security. Europe is much closer to the crises and threats than the U.S., closer to Russia, closer to Syria and Iraq," he pointed out.

U.S. President Donald Trump has accused NATO members, particularly Germany, of taking advantage

of American protection, urging the military allies to increase their spending closer to the minimum criterion of two percent of their economic output by the end of the year.

NATO heads of state agreed in 2014 to raise their defense spending to two percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) within a decade. At present, only five countries - the U.S., Britain, Greece, Poland, and Estonia - meet the target, while Germany spends just 1.2 percent of GDP.

Stoltenberg welcomed a more than eight-percent budget increase for the German armed forces in 2017 as well as Berlin's "announcement that spending will be increased further", and noted, "We do not expect Germany to get there in one or two years."

Trump had said Germany owes the U.S. and NATO "vast sums of money" for the decades of protection by the U.S.

The U.S. president's proposed national budget seeks a \$54 billion increase for the military and a roughly 31-percent cut for the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development.

Later on Tuesday, Germany's Development Minister Gerd Muller said the U.S. plan to spend more on its military will not guarantee peace and criticized Trump's proposal to cut Washington's foreign aid.

"Anyone who pretends that more military is the answer will see that he will not be getting more peace," Muller said at a meeting with a group of diplomats.

(Source: Press TV)

## May to raise 'hard issues' with Saudi Arabia, stand up for Britain interests

British Prime Minister Theresa May said on Tuesday she would raise "hard issues" with Saudi Arabia's leaders as domestic critics urged her to pressure Riyadh over its war in Yemen and human rights record.

May, who has launched a diplomatic drive to secure trade deals after launching divorce talks with the European Union, said she would stand up for both human rights and her country's national interests in her talks in the Middle Eastern kingdom.

The House of Saud regime is a major customer for British defense companies, an ally in countering terrorism and a wealthy oil-producing nation that May's government hopes to win over after launching Brexit talks late last month.

But Britain's supply of aircraft, weapons and munitions to the Saudi regime has come under scrutiny because of Yemen, where a Saudi regime-led coalition plays a major role in the two-year civil war that has killed more than 10,000 people, half of them civilians.

"We have no difficulty in raising hard issues with those that we meet



with, be it in Saudi Arabia or elsewhere around the world," she told reporters in Jordan before heading for Saudi Arabia where she is expected to meet Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef.

"The strong British tradition of standing up for human rights is there, the strong British tradition of stand-

ing up for British national interest is there," she said, underlining the importance of the two countries' trading and security ties.

This is not the first time May has come under fire over her foreign trips since becoming prime minister last year. She was criticized for failing to challenge United States President

Donald Trump and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan earlier this year.

The leader of Britain's main opposition Labor Party, Jeremy Corbyn, said May must put human rights and international law at the center of her talks with Saudi regime.

"Unless the prime minister challenges the Saudi regime over its abuses this week, it will be clear she is ready to sacrifice human rights and security on the altar of the arms trade," he said in a statement.

May is navigating many demands in trying to secure a good deal for Britain from the European Union. She must try to strengthen her hand in talks with the bloc without annoying EU leaders and also secure trade deals elsewhere in case the talks fail and Britain crashes out of the EU without an agreement.

"I want to see the United Kingdom as a truly global Britain, outward looking, around the world, trading around the world, a good continuing deep partnership with the European Union but also trading and working with others around the world," May said.

(Source: Reuters)

## St. Petersburg metro blast suspect likely born in central Asia

A blast in a St Petersburg train carriage on Monday that killed 14 people and wounded 50 was probably carried out by a Russian citizen born in Kyrgyzstan, authorities from the predominantly Muslim central Asian state said.

Russian news agency RIA Novosti reported on Tuesday that authorities had received a warning of a possible second attack at the same Sennaya Ploshchad metro station. Interfax news agency said several fire engines were outside the station, which had been closed.

The explosion on Monday was a suspected suicide bombing by a perpetrator with ties to extremists, Interfax cited a law enforcement source as saying. A spokesman for the State National Security Committee of Kyrgyzstan (GKNB) security service identified the suspect as Akbarzhon Jalilov, born in the city of Osh in 1995, but provided no other details.

Russia has been on alert against attacks on its soil in reprisal for its military intervention in Syria, where Moscow's forces have been supporting troops loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group has repeatedly threatened revenge attacks.

The bombing of a nightclub in Istanbul on New Year's Eve that killed 39 people involved a suspect from the same area of central Asia. He said he had been acting under the direction of ISIL terrorists in Syria.

But Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said it was cynical to say the bombing in St Petersburg was revenge for Russia's role in Syria, RIA reported. He said the attack showed that Russia needed to press on with its fighting against global terrorism.

So far, no-one has claimed responsibility. Officials said they were treating the blast as an act of terrorism, but there was no official confirmation of any link to Islamist radicals.

Kyrgyzstan, a former Soviet republic of six million, is a close political ally of Moscow and hosts a Russian military airbase.

A Reuters reporter visited a house in Osh which neighbors said was the family home of Jalilov, the man identified as the bombing suspect. The home, a modest but well-maintained one-story brick building, was empty.

Neighbors said Jalilov was from a family of ethnic Uzbeks, and that while they knew his parents they had not seen the young man for years. They said his father worked as a panel-beater in a car repair shop.

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the site of the blast late on Monday. The explosion, which hit at 2:40 p.m. (1140 GMT), made a huge hole in the side of a carriage and blew off the door, strewn metal wreckage across the platform.

Passengers were seen hammering at the windows of one closed carriage after the train pulled into the station. Russian TV said many suffered lacerations from glass shards and metal, the force of the explosion amplified by the confines of the carriage and the tunnel.

RIA Novosti quoted Russia's health minister Veronika Skvortsova as saying on Tuesday that the death toll had risen to 14, with 50 wounded.

St Petersburg television showed footage of the corpse of a bearded man they said was the perpetrator. The man resembled footage of a man captured on closed circuit television who Russian media said was a suspect.

The blast raised security fears beyond Russian frontiers. France, which has itself suffered a series of attacks, announced additional security measures in Paris.

(Source: Reuters)

## Philippines' Duterte fires minister over corruption allegations

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has fired his interior minister for "loss of trust and confidence", the most senior government executive to be removed in a campaign to root out corruption, two Cabinet officials said on Tuesday.

The firebrand Duterte came to power 10 months ago on a platform of fighting drugs, crime and corruption. He has removed dozens of bureaucrats, two senior immigration officials and a former campaign spokesman suspected of corruption.

"Duterte has dismissed Department of Interior and Local Government Secretary, Mr Ismael Sueno, citing loss of trust and confidence," presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella said in a statement, adding the sacking served as a warning to all other presidential appointees.

Duterte made the announcement at the end of a cabinet meeting on Monday night, he said.

"The secretary had, in fact, been instrumental in convincing the president to run for election, but this did not deter the president from pursuing his drive for a trustworthy government by addressing issues like corruption," said the spokesman.

In a statement, Sueno said Duterte had been given "wrong information by those who were salivating" for his position as interior minister.

"It is his call if he wants me in his Cabinet or not," Sueno said. "But, for the record, Mr President, I can say this with all honesty and sincerity, I am not corrupt."

Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre in a radio interview also confirmed the dismissal of Sueno from the Cabinet but did not give any reason for the president's decision.

In February, Sueno helped organize a pro-Duterte rally, which more than 200,000 people attended, to counter a mass protest denouncing allegations of extra-judicial killings under Duterte's anti-narcotics campaign.

(Source: Reuters)



NEWS IN BRIEF



Annual agricultural output rises by 10m tons

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Agricultural production **d e s k** rose by 10 million tons in Iran during the past Iranian calendar year, which ended on March 20, 2017, Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) reported on Tuesday, quoting an official in the Ministry of Agriculture.

Ali-Akbar Mehrfard, the deputy agriculture minister, noted that the performance of Ministry of Agriculture relies on domestic production.



Customs income hits \$4.8b, up 60% yr/yr

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Customs income reaches **d e s k** over 181 trillion rials (about \$4.839 billion) in the past Iranian calendar year 1395 (ended on March 20), Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) reported on Tuesday.

The figure of 1395 shows about 60 percent growth from the customs income in its preceding year.



Over 200,000 enterprises set up in a year

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Over 200,000 enterprises **d e s k** were established in Iran during the past Iranian calendar year, which ended on March 20, IRNA reported on Tuesday, quoting Iran Chamber of Guilds Chairman Ali Fazeli.

It shows that there is high potential for employment in the small-sized businesses, Fazeli noted.

He referred to preserving stability in the business environment and facilitating condition for starting new businesses as some of the necessities for small-sized enterprises and said the mid-term plans of Iran Chamber of Guilds in this due will come to result this year.



Transport infrastructures development needs \$127b by 2026

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — According to the Ministry **d e s k** of Transportation and Urban Development, developing transportation infrastructures in Iran requires 4.75 quadrillion rials (about \$127 billion) investment by the end of the country's outlook plan for the calendar year of 1404 (March 20, 2026), IRNA reported on Tuesday.

Some 380 trillion rials (about \$10.16 billion) have been expended for development of transportation infrastructures during the past three years, which is higher than the fund allocated to the Ministry of Transportation for such development and it indicates the big steps taken by the ministry in this due.

Australian dollar slips despite Reserve Bank of Australia keeping rates on hold

The Reserve Bank of Australia kept interest rates on hold at a record low of 1.5 percent on Tuesday, but the Australian dollar slipped as the balance of risks appeared to shift.

The central bank had been widely expected to keep rates unchanged, remaining stuck between the rock of rising housing prices and the hard place of a higher jobless rate.

Analysts were very certain the RBA wasn't changing policy, with a Reuters poll of 50 analysts unanimously predicting the on-hold call.

But Paul Dales, chief Australia economist at Capital Economics, noted that the RBA's rhetoric had shifted subtly.

That was likely the driver of the Australian dollar's drop, from around \$0.7607 before the decision, to as low as \$0.7569 afterward.

In the statement accompanying the decision, RBA Governor Philip Lowe said that recent economic data were consistent with continued moderate growth.

"Most measures of business confidence are at, or above, average and non-mining business investment has risen over the past year. At the same time, some indicators of conditions in the labor market have softened recently," he said, noting wage growth remained slow.

"The outlook continues to be supported by the low level of interest rates," he said.

But the statement also indicated that one of the central bank's previous key concerns, rising home prices, may be easing.

"Growth in household borrowing, largely to purchase housing, continues to outpace growth in household income. By reinforcing strong lending standards, the recently announced supervisory measures should help address the risks associated with high and rising levels of indebtedness," the statement said.

Last week, the Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority (APRA) asked banks to limit the amount of new interest-only loans. Recently, some banks have also raised their mortgage rates on property investment loans.

Capital Economics' Dales said the statement indicated the central bank was becoming less concerned about housing and more concerned about employment and inflation.

(Source: CNBC)

IRISL signs co-op MOU with Kamigumi, SUZUE

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Republic **d e s k** of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Japan's SUZUE Corporation and Kamigumi Company in Singapore, IRIB new reported on Tuesday.

The MOU includes cooperation on construction of dry ports in Iran as well as making investments on improvement of terminals in Iranian ports.

As accorded, the MOU will become operational after conducting the required studies and finalizing the related contract.

Kamigumi, as an integrated logistics services provider, is active in warehouse storage, overland transport and heavy cargo transportation and also offers large-scale terminal operations, logistics outsourcing and overseas local transportation.

SUZUE Corporation provides international transportation service besides marine logistics business service.

After the removal of financial sanctions against Iran in January 2016, IRISL has taken different steps to boost its ties with international giant companies.

In early January 2017, the Iranian company signed an agreement with Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering Co., Ltd. (DSME) on establishing a shipbuilding company in Iran.

Earlier in December 2016, South Korea's Hyundai Heavy Industries Company, Ltd. (HHI) accepted to build mega-container vessels as well as tankers for carrying petroleum products for Iran, due to its agreement with IRISL.



Norway's SKULD marine insurance company also signed a memorandum of understanding in the

field of shipping insurance with IRISL back in August 2016.

South African banks tumble as junk rating puts earnings at risk

South Africa's banks index fell to the lowest in six months after S&P Global Ratings cut the sovereign's foreign-currency debt rating to junk, increasing the likelihood that lenders will have to battle declining returns and rising bad debts in the year ahead.

South Africa's six-member banks index, which includes Standard Bank Group Ltd. and Barclays Africa Group Ltd., has plummeted more than 9 percent since President Jacob Zuma fired Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan, making it the country's worst-performing stocks gauge this year. Barclays Africa, still waiting for its London-based parent company to sell down its holdings, has been hit the hardest, sliding 18 percent in 2017. The rand has also weakened against major currencies while yields on benchmark government bonds have soared.

The S&P downgrade "is bad for banks' net return on assets and return on equity, not just via lower performance on existing assets, but also via a higher incidence of non-performing loans," Adrian Saville, chief strategist at Citadel Wealth Management, said in emailed comments on Tuesday. "The real issue is the impact on economic growth, industrial performance and employment. There is an unambiguous negative relationship between economic growth and bank assets."

S&P cut South Africa's foreign-currency debt to junk status on Monday night, just two trading days after Zuma axed

Gordhan and replaced him with former home affairs minister Malusi Gigaba, a rookie when it comes to finance and business. While the nation had an investment grade rating for 17 years, S&P said its downgrade was in response to Zuma's cabinet purge. Moody's Investors Service said on Monday its ratings were on review.

■ South Africa cut to junk first time since 2000 after Zuma purge

Short-term volatility in bank stocks is expected, Mike Brown, chief executive officer of Nedbank Group Ltd., said by email. "Our cost of capital and certain borrowing costs, mainly in debt-capital markets, will increase, meaning we will charge more for our loans. As consumer finances come under more pressure, affordability will naturally decline, even if lending criteria stays the same."

"Banking shares get priced, or valued, relative to the 10-year government bond yield," said Adrian Cloete, a banks analyst at PSG Wealth in Cape Town. "A weaker rand also causes investors to switch out of local South African shares like banks, retailers and local property counters."

Before Gordhan was fired and S&P changed its rating, South Africa's biggest banks were considering easing lending criteria for the first time in five years because the economic outlook was better than last year and bad-loan charges were at a multi-year low.

(Source: Bloomberg)

May urged to assess impact of leaving EU without deal

Theresa May has been urged by MPs to carry out a full economic and legal assessment of what would happen if Britain left the EU without a deal.

The Commons Brexit committee said the prime minister's assertion that "no deal is better than a bad deal" was "unsubstantiated" because the government had not assessed the implications of such an outcome since last year's referendum.

The report's conclusions were strongly contested by pro-Leave MPs on the committee, however, who claimed it was biased and "too gloomy". In the end it was backed by a majority of 11 to 6, a split that blunts its political impact.

"The report was rushed, skewed and partisan" said Dominic Raab, a Eurosceptic former Conservative justice minister. "After two reports that had strong support, it's regrettable that this one split the committee."

Hilary Benn, the Labor MP and chair of the committee, was accused by some colleagues of trying to "bounce" them into accepting the report. Two Eurosceptic former Conservative ministers, Michael Gove and Peter Lilley, did not attend the final two sessions when the report was discussed.

Nevertheless, the report comes after an admission last month by David Davis, Brexit secretary, that there had been no economic assessment of a "no

deal" scenario since the Treasury's own analysis before the EU referendum.

"The public and parliament have a right to the maximum possible information about the impact of the different future trading options being considered," Benn said. "Without an economic impact assessment of 'no deal' and without evidence that steps are being taken to mitigate the damaging effect of such an outcome, the government's assertion that 'no deal is better than a bad deal' is unsubstantiated."

The report also calls for MPs to be given a vote on the matter, arguing that a default to World Trade Organisation terms would be no less significant than the terms of any trade agreement, which would be put to parliament. It does not specify what would happen if MPs were to vote "no" in such a scenario, although one likely outcome is that the government would have to continue negotiations with the EU.

May's Article 50 letter to Donald Tusk, president of the European Council, made it clear she hopes to secure a comprehensive exit deal, including a trade and security partnership.

Davis has also distanced himself from the comments of Boris Johnson, foreign secretary, who claimed that an exit on WTO terms would be "perfectly OK".

(Source: Financial Times)

Global trade expert: U.S. may increase tariffs on China, but there won't be a trade war

President Donald Trump has been a vocal critic of U.S.-China trade relations since his days on the campaign trail, often calling for a stronger stance against Beijing.

That rhetoric led many analysts to suggest a trade war between the world's two largest economies could be on the horizon, and it would have major global ramifications. But, Alex Capri, an expert on international trade and a visiting senior fellow at

the National University of Singapore's business school, told CNBC that such a trade war is unlikely — although an increase in certain kinds of tariffs on Chinese products could well occur.

Speaking with CNBC's "Capital Connection" on Monday, Capri said "there will be an increase in anti-dumping duties, there will be an increase in countervailing duties levied against Chinese products."

Still, he said, "it's unlikely that we will see an across-the-board tariff of 45 percent across a whole suite of Chinese products."

Capri stressed that it would be unlikely for a trade war to break out between the nations as such a move would be unlikely to benefit anyone.

He did, however, caution against possible retaliation by the Chinese government if the U.S. decided to take actions on trade

which Beijing deems too drastic or unfair. U.S. businesses would obviously be concerned by the prospect of retaliation, Capri added, as many are already facing difficulties in China.

"[The Chinese government] could certainly make business much more difficult for companies on the ground in China, and it's not exactly easy for them now as is," Capri said.

(Source: CNBC)

Lloyds to shrink hundreds of UK branches to two staff

Lloyds Banking Group is to shrink the size of hundreds of its branches so they have only two staff with tablet computers helping customers.

The new "micro branches" will not have counters, with customers paying in cash and cheques through self-service machines and talking to mortgage advisers through video links.

Alongside the micro branches it will open 20 larger banks in city centers, offering a wider range of services, and introduce 20 new mobile branches operating out of vans.

"Branches are a vital part of our strategy, and we're investing in our network to make sure it's right for the future. We're transforming branches, responding to customers and giving them choice, including new flagship branches in city center locations, and introducing some smaller micro-formats alongside our community and mobile branches," a Lloyds spokeswoman said.

The new micro branch format is based on a pilot at an existing branch near St Paul's Cathedral in London.

Banks are closing branches across the country due to the rise of online banking. Lloyds — which owns Bank of Scotland and Halifax — has already announced plans to close 400 of its branches, with more than 9,000 job losses,



while last month Royal Bank of Scotland said it was shutting 158 sites, mostly NatWest, and the Co-operative Bank is battling to find a buyer amid fears about its future.

In January, HSBC said it was shutting a further 62 branches this year, on top of 55 already earmarked for closure, while Yorkshire Building Society revealed it was closing 48 branches, 28 of which are Norwich & Peterborough outlets.

Susan Kramer, the Treasury spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats, said: "Lloyds and other banks are turning their backs on the communities that have been the foundation

of its business for generations."

The downsizing of Lloyds branches was revealed as the government cut its stake in Lloyds to below 2%.

UK Financial Investments, which manages the stake in Lloyds, sold off about 1% of the shares in the bank. This left it with a stake of 1.97% and edges the bank another step closer to full private ownership.

The sale means more than £20bn has now been returned to government coffers since the lender's £20.3bn bailout at the height of the financial crisis in 2008.

This includes about £500m in payouts to shareholders since the bank resumed paying dividends in 2014 as it has returned to profit growth in recent years.

The stake sale is the latest in a series by the government, which said in October that it hoped to offload its remaining shares in Lloyds within a year. The City expects Lloyds to return to full private ownership by June.

Simon Kirby, the economic secretary to the Treasury, said: "I welcome this further progress in returning Lloyds to the private sector. We have now recovered over £20bn for the taxpayer and are very close to recovering all of the money taxpayers injected into the bank during the financial crisis."

(Source: The Independent)



# Iran, Germany ink MOU on joint water research, training

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Tehran and Berlin desks signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on carrying out joint water training and research projects, Mehr news agency reported on Tuesday.

The MOU was signed between Iran's Energy Ministry and Germany's Federal Ministry of Education and Research, in Berlin.

Headed by the Iranian deputy minister of energy for water and wastewater, Rahim Meidani, an Iranian delegation traveled to the European country to take part in the International Trade Fair and Congress for Water and Wastewater( WASSER) which was held 28-31 March in Berlin.

The MOU was signed on the sidelines of the event during which the Iranian delegation visited several booths including German Water Partnership (GWP) and attended the conference.

In the conference, Meidani presented Iran's potentials and opportunities for foreign companies which are willing to contribute to the country's water projects.

In his remarks the official noted that the hurdles in the way of investment in Iran's water sector has been removed after the removal of the west-imposed sanctions, saying "Iran Energy Ministry will do its best to support the German companies willing to invest or fi-



nance water projects in Iran."

The two sides also stressed the great potentials for

bilateral cooperation in this area and discussed ways of facilitating cooperation.

## Oil rally fizzles as prices made vulnerable by Libyan crude gain

Oil's rally above \$50 a barrel is running out of steam. Futures in New York were holding losses after dropping 0.7 percent on Monday, following a 5.5 percent jump last week. While OPEC output fell by 200,000 barrels a day in March, the decline was helped by cuts in Nigeria and Libya that are exempt from its production-curb deal to shrink a global glut, a Bloomberg News survey shows. Libya was said to resume pumping at its biggest field after about a week of disruption that had helped boost prices.

Oil's climb last week, its most since December, was also aided after Kuwait and other producers from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries joined with Oman to voice support for an extension of the six-month deal to reduce output that began in Janu-

ary. OPEC Secretary-General Mohammad Barkindo said Sunday that he is "cautiously optimistic that the market is already rebalancing," even as data showed the number of active oil rigs in the U.S. rose to the highest since September 2015.

"Oil will continue to remain vulnerable as Libyan production recovery is expected to increase downward pressure on prices," said Will Yun, a commodities analyst at Hyundai Futures Corp. "For oil to climb further, it will need more definite comments from either Saudi Arabia or Russia about extending the output deal beyond six months."

West Texas Intermediate for May delivery was at \$50.19 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange, down 5 cents, at 1:27 p.m. in Singapore. Prices



slipped 36 cents to close at \$50.24 on Monday. Total volume traded was about 70 percent below the 100-day average.

Brent for June settlement was down 6 cents at \$53.06 a barrel on the London-based ICE Futures Europe exchange, after falling 0.8 percent on Monday. The global benchmark crude traded at a \$2.41 premium to June WTI.

### Libyan rebound

Libya's crude production rebounded to about 660,000 barrels a day as the OPEC nation's biggest oil field resumed output, according to a person familiar with the matter. The nation's output had dropped to about 500,000 barrels a day last week when production was halted at the Sharara field.

OPEC pumped 32.095 million barrels a day last month, based on information compiled from analysts, oil companies and ship-tracking data. Among the 10 members bound by production caps, compliance weakened to 89 percent of pledged reductions from 104 percent. As well as Nigeria and Libya, Saudi Arabia buoyed the group's effort by cutting its own output by more than it agreed late last year.

(Source: Bloomberg)

## Shetland oil discoveries fuel hopes for UK production

The discovery of one of the largest undeveloped oilfields last week near the Shetland Islands was a boost for the UK's oil and gas industry after more than two years of cuts in jobs and investment.

The breakthrough by Hurricane Energy, a British oil exploration group, followed a licensing round in which several of the world's biggest oil groups won acreage in untapped areas of the UK continental shelf.

Both events brought a reminder of the billions of barrels of oil still available beneath UK waters to replace maturing areas of the North Sea fields.

Much of the remaining resources

are concentrated west of the Shetland Islands, where the North Sea meets the Atlantic. Hurricane has drilled five successful wells in the past year in the area, and Royal Dutch Shell and BP won licenses last month for further exploration.

"When you go west of Shetland?....you have the ability to make large discoveries because it hasn't been picked over quite so much as the central North Sea," says Nathan Piper, analyst at RBC Capital Markets. "The exciting thing is that people are getting on and drilling and the majors are picking up new blocks."

Oil industry leaders have been pin-

ning their hopes on the west of Shetland region to breathe new life into UK production since the 1990s, when BP began developing a trio of fields — Foinaven, Schiehallion and Clair — on the Atlantic frontier.

Other companies were slow to follow, deterred by hostile weather, lack of infrastructure and relatively deep water compared with the North Sea. However, technological advances, coupled with high oil prices before 2014, spurred a spate of new developments that are only now reaching production.

(Source: Financial Times)

## Buhari's change of tack in Nigeria delta boosts oil production

When militants in Nigeria's southern Niger River delta started attacking oil installations, President Muhammadu Buhari promised to crush them by force. A year and \$7 billion in lost oil exports later, his decision to switch tack by negotiating with the fighters seems to be working.

All but one force majeure, a clause that gives oil producers the right to miss supply obligations, have been lifted since peace talks were initiated in November with militants. Shipments at Forcados, the nation's third-largest export terminal, are on course to restart in the second quarter. Nigeria rivals Angola as Africa's biggest oil producer.



"Despite the president's initial threats and bluster on the delta, common sense now seems to be prevailing," said Cheta Nwanze, Lagos-based head of research at risk advisers SBM Intelligence. "The government needs steady oil production to stand any chance of a quick end to the econom-

ic recession."

Since the truce, Nigeria has restored output to 1.68 million barrels a day from the 27-year low of 1.4 million barrels a day in August, according to Bloomberg estimates, with the last attack reported by the main militant group in November. While that's still below the 2014-15 average of about 2 million barrels a day, it's brightened prospects that the country can emerge from its worst economic slump in a quarter-century and ease a foreign-currency crisis sparked by the lower production of oil, its main export, and falling crude prices.

(Source: Bloomberg)



government of Ignacio Lula da Silva to replace previous royalty payments and to ensure the state gets a bigger portion of the revenues derived from the deposits in Brazil's presalt layer.

The announcement of profits from the new framework comes just as oil prices recover from 2.5 years of volatility.


(Source: oilprice.com)

function of higher production from the offshore areas in Brazilian waters, where huge oil finds were made in the pre-salt and sub-salt layers in the past few years.


Brazil — which is not part of the non-OPEC group that signed up to OPEC's concerted efforts to cut global supply — had said that it planned to increase its oil production in the coming years, even before the cartel decided to commit to cuts.

Brazil announced last week that it expected to see its first profits from projects finalized under new profit-sharing agreements (PSAs) in September.

The PSAs were introduced by the



**N.I.O.C**  
1395.5503



**National Iranian Drilling Company**

**Public Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tender(First publish/seconded publish)**  
**One-stage(semi-compressive)**

TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	DESCRIPTI ON	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
49,574	1,735,000,000	34,702,000,000	Well head & Christmas tree 10000psi	1,480,614	Tender NO . pfp/azd/95/011 Indent No. 48-22-9522026	1

**Brief discription of subject:**  
National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address pasdaran Blev., Airport Saqare, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase its requirements from qualified and interested tenderers through one-stage public tender ( semi-pressed) upon following terms and conditions:

A) Qualitative evaluation of tenderer:

The evaluation is based on article ( J ) implementing regulations of the law of tenders and also carried out base on worksheets qualitative evaluation inquiry in the tender doucments. Minimum acceptable point of quality is 60.

B) Preparation of tender documents:  
Purchasing of documents:

In order to receive the tender documents, 510,000 Rials should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.

Reciving of documents:  
Tenderers must be obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum 2 week after the date of second publication in person at the following address:A) Hall No.:316,3 th floor, Foreign Procurement Dept.(DRILLING PROJECTS). National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN  
B) jomhouri street .yaghma alley nioc 8th building floor on : 04 room on 428 –Tehran-iran.

Note 01: only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and recieve tender ducments from foreign procurment department in due date will be known as tenderer from tender committee.

Note 02:the tender would be held in a tight period so the participants. should hand over all prequalification documents along with all enveiopes (A.B.C)before closing date.

C) Delivery of call quality evaluating including prequalification documents and envelopes (A.B.C)shoud be submitted before closing date:  
Tenderers shall submit the completed documents including qualificaion worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 45 days from last day of document recived deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1th floor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN.

D) Tender Guarantee:  
Type of guarantee:  
A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activites licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.  
B) The original cash deposit receipt paid to National Iranain Drilling Company.

Duration of credit guarantee:  
This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.  
More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. [WWW.NIDC.IR](http://WWW.NIDC.IR)  
[Foreign Procurement Dept. \(DRILLING PROJECTS\)](#)  
[National Iranian Drilling Company](#)

## Russia's Gazprom may move operations from London

Russia's energy giant Gazprom may leave the United Kingdom in light of potential trading difficulties associated with the country's departure from the European Union, media reported on Tuesday.

"Running our European trading operations out of London is not advantageous any longer... We have to look at the impact and our options," a company source familiar with the situation was quoted as saying by the Financial Times.

According to the publication, the Russian state-run natural gas producer is concerned that Brexit could hinder trade with the European Union, or make it less profitable.

Gazprom opened its trading operations in London in 1999, and now conducts its European trade through the UK capital, which acts as the company's EU headquarters.

London's impending breakup with the European market has already raised concerns for the business community and made several companies, such as Russia's VTB bank, Microsoft, Credit Suisse, Citigroup, HSBC, the American International Group insurance company, Lloyds Bank and Standard Chartered Bank signal their intentions to move portions of their operations out of the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom's exit from the European bloc formally began last week, after a letter triggering Article 50 of the EU treaty signed by UK Prime Minister Theresa May was delivered to Brussels. May had stated her priority to be migration controls and has ruled out remaining part of the single market. She has, however, stressed that she wants a free trade agreement reached and thus a tariff-free zone established.

(Source: Sputnik)

## LNG supply gap may form as investment drop stymies projects

The global liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry will face a supply shortfall in about five years because low prices have discouraged investment in new production, major producers said on Tuesday at a gas conference in Chiba, near Tokyo.

Without the investments, suppliers may not be able to meet the needs of buyers such as Japan — the world's biggest importer of LNG — at a time when reducing emissions from other dirtier fossil fuels will be crucial to abate global warming, executives with international gas majors said.

As a result, "the industry is entering a period of reduced investments ... (that) could result in a lack of supply in five years. We must carry on investing for the future," he said.

LNG projects typically require billions of dollars of investment over many years of development. The industry has usually relied on long-term contracts linked to oil prices to ensure producers can get financing on favorable terms.

(Source: Reuters)



## Why we march 49 Years after Dr. King was assassinated

By Rev. William J. Barber II

Fifty years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King called for a “revolution of values” in America, inviting people who had been divided to stand together against the “triplets of evil” — militarism, racism and economic injustice. Preachers, editorial boards, and fellow civil rights leaders condemned King, saying that his vision was too radical. But thousands of poor people — black, white, brown and Native — embraced his vision and built a Poor People’s Campaign. One year later to the day, Dr. King was assassinated while standing with black sanitation workers in Memphis who were fighting for higher pay and safe working conditions.



Martin Luther King

The fights for racial and economic equality are just as inseparable today as they were half a century ago. And it is this connection that compels me this April 4 — on the anniversary of Dr. King’s assassination — to join the Fight for \$15 and the Movement for Black Lives to march in Memphis as part of a national day of action to fight racism and raise pay.

On April 4, we’re not simply remembering Dr. King’s assassination. We’re continuing the work that brought him to Memphis, even as we reimagine a Moral Movement for the 21st century. Make no mistake about it: we face a crisis in America. The twin-forces of white supremacy and unchecked corporate greed have gained newfound power and influence in our democracy. As Dr. King said in 1968, America may go to hell if we do not listen to the cries of the poor and hurting among us. People across this land are crying out in defiance — and for change. Our future as a people depends on America seeing and hearing them.

Black and brown workers are disproportionately represented in low-wage jobs in America. Across the country, more than half of black workers and nearly 60 percent of Latino workers are paid less than \$15 an hour. Discrimination against women of color at the workplace is especially extreme: Latinas make only 54 percent as much as white men, and black women earn only 63 percent of white men’s wages.

Some opponents ask: why don’t these workers find better jobs? But you simply need to look around your own hometown to see that low wage jobs are all that is available. Six of 10 jobs that the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects will add the greatest number of jobs by 2024 had median hourly wages in 2015 of less than \$15. And when you look at discrimination in hiring, underfunded schools and an unfair justice system, it’s no surprise that most of the workers who end up filling these jobs are black and brown people.

### ■ Movement for Black Lives

Out of this injustice two movements have emerged: The Fight for \$15 and the Movement for Black Lives. The Fight for \$15 was born nearly five years ago by a group of 200 brave fast-food workers in New York City, who recognized that \$15 an hour and union rights is what is needed to survive. It has since spread across the country, winning wage hikes for 22 million underpaid workers, including more than 10 million who are on their way to \$15 an hour. Meanwhile, the Movement for Black Lives came about as a response to the sustained and increasingly visible violence against black communities in the U.S. and globally. The movement is made up of more than 50 organizations representing thousands of black people from across the country, who have come together with renewed energy and purpose to articulate a common vision and agenda.

King said that “the two most dynamic and cohesive liberal forces in the country are the labor movement and the Negro freedom movement. Together we can be architects of democracy.” By joining forces on April 4, the movement for higher pay and racial justice are carrying that vision forward. They are coming together in Memphis and in cities across America to say: we are part of the same fight. Together, our movements empower those who are told they are powerless.

I’m proud to fight to stand on the frontlines of this Moral Movement. When the prophet Isaiah calls us to “loose the bands of injustice,” he is both inviting us to shed the vestiges of race-based slavery and to pay people what they deserve. This is the work of Reconstruction that has united Americans to pursue a more perfect union in our past. Together we can be the architects of democracy, continuing the work of reconstruction in our own day.

(Source: Time)

# Why suspicion over St Petersburg metro attack is likely to fall on ISIL

For many years in the 1990s and 2000s, terror attacks hit Russia with alarming frequency, as the Chechen independence movement, which morphed over time into an terror group, targeted trains, planes and subway stations.

But outside Chechnya and the other restive republics of the North Caucasus region the number of attacks has decreased dramatically in recent years. Monday’s bomb on the St Petersburg metro was the worst act of terror outside southern Russia since a 2011 suicide attack at Moscow’s Domodedovo airport, which killed 37 people.

As of Monday evening, no group had taken responsibility for St Petersburg blast, but given the history of terror attacks in Russia, ISIL groups are likely to come under suspicion.

Early terror attacks by Chechens, such as the mass hostage taking at the Dubrovka theatre in Moscow in 2002 or at School Number One in Beslan in 2004, were accompanied by demands for a Russian withdrawal from Chechnya.

Later, the Chechen independence movement renamed itself the Caucasus Emirate, which sought to impose an Islamic state across the mainly Muslim North Caucasus region, and drew fighters from neighboring republics such as Dagestan.

The Caucasus Emirate took responsibility for a 2009 train bombing, the 2010 Moscow metro bombings and the 2011 suicide attack at the city’s Domodedovo airport.

Doku Umarov, the self-styled emir of the insurgency movement, was killed in 2013, apparently after Russian security services sent poisoned food to him through middle men. Since then the group’s ability to strike at the heart of Russia has appeared to be on the wane.

Inside Chechnya, there have been reports of torture and of punitive house burning of families believed to have links to the insurgency. A renewed crackdown on any suspected militant activity in the run-up to the Sochi winter Olympics in 2014 and the departure of many militants to fight in Syria led to a weakening of the North Caucasus insurgency.

There is significant circumstantial evidence that Russian security services



## Responsibility has yet to be established, but Russia’s intervention in Chechnya and Syria has led to threats from ISIL and others.

ignored suspected militants leaving the country for Syria, figuring they would be less of a threat outside Russia than inside. There are also reports of many Muslims from the former Soviet republics of central Asia being radicalized while working on construction sites in Russia and subsequently heading to Syria.

Russian security officials have said there are several thousand fighters from Russia and other former Soviet countries fighting in Syria.

Since Russia’s military intervention in Syria on the side of the Assad regime in September 2015, there have been a

number of propaganda videos made by ISIL terrorists promising revenge on Vladimir Putin and the Russian people. In October 2015, a plane travelling from Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt to St Petersburg crashed, apparently after an explosive device was detonated on board. More than 200 people died, and ISIL claimed responsibility.

Up until now, however, the only successful ISIL attacks inside Russia have been in Chechnya and elsewhere in the North Caucasus. As well as targeting militant groupings of Russian origin in Syria, Russia has worked quietly to

liquidate key players in the movement in Turkey. Assassins believed to be linked to Russian intelligence have also carried out a number of killings of figures believed to have links to the Chechen insurgency in Istanbul.

There is no evidence so far that ISIL or North Caucasus militant groups were behind Monday’s explosion. There have also been a number of smaller explosions in St Petersburg in recent years that were linked to nationalist groupings, although the randomized slaughter on the metro does not fit with their usual methods.

(Source: The Guardian)

## Why China won’t buy Trump’s North Korea bluster

By Christopher Green

U.S. President Donald Trump has sent Xi Jinping a clear message before the two meet in Florida later this week.

With all his customary bluster, Trump told the Financial Times that China “will either decide to help us with North Korea, or they won’t,” and if Beijing decides not to, “it won’t be good for anyone.”

This is standard Trump: an aggressive opening salvo designed to give the U.S. a competitive advantage over Xi Jinping. Faced with a fuzzily-worded ultimatum, the Chinese leader will be on the back foot when the two come face-to-face at Mar-a-Lago.

Certainly, there is a world in which this is a diplomatic masterstroke. In that world, the leader of the U.S. declares that he is ready to take unilateral action against North Korea -- which may include imposing secondary sanctions on Chinese banks and other companies suspected of aiding North Korea.

Accordingly, Xi Jinping concludes that China’s main policy goal of ensuring stability along its borders is best served by “helping with” North Korea, which means that Beijing comes down harder on the regime in Pyongyang than it has ever done before.

Thereafter, all the actors in Northeast Asia fall into lockstep against the Kim Jong Un regime, which buckles under the pressure and returns to the negotiating table.

However, that is probably not the world in which we live. North Korea is not the kind of problem that can be resolved unilaterally, no matter how much Donald Trump might wish it were, which leaves his aggressive rhetoric sounding a little empty.

The U.S. president has fired a warning shot that Beijing won’t feel obliged to heed for the simple reason that it isn’t terribly credible, not to mention that his lack of clarity will have sent shivers down the spine of the Korean peninsula.

Trump is right that progress on the North Korea question requires the active cooperation of China. To that extent, he has selected the right target. However, North Korea is not a standalone problem; it is one piece of a much bigger geostrategic jigsaw.

### ■ Diplomatic pressure points

There are several pending diplomatic pressure points between the U.S. and China, all the way from Korea to Taiwan and onward to the South China Sea.



## Accordingly, Xi Jinping concludes that China’s main policy goal of ensuring stability along its borders is best served by “helping with” North Korea, which means that Beijing comes down harder on the regime in Pyongyang than it has ever done before.

China is not about to act bilaterally on the Korea question without a quid pro quo elsewhere. Unless Washington is ready to end its support for Taiwan, say, or cede control of the high seas west of the Philippines -- a truly historic “grand bargain” that would destabilize the region.

South Korea can ill afford to hear this kind of talk. Next month’s presidential election seems set to bring a liberal back to power for the first time in 10 years.

No doubt the country would like a U.S. administration that, though inevitably unenthusiastic about engagement with Pyongyang, would at least not actively hamper Seoul’s attempts to jaw-jaw.

Instead, Seoul will be worried that Washington and

Beijing might be about to go over its head. This is destabilizing.

This same sense of existential angst is only going to encourage North Korea -- a master at playing in the interstitial space between Great Powers -- to conduct another nuclear test, its sixth.

North Korea will likely conduct a sixth nuclear test no matter what the Trump administration says or does. The door to denuclearization closed many years ago. To that extent, antagonizing the Kim regime is neither here nor there. But it is only worth doing that with a clear and moreover achievable goal in mind. Not for the first time, Trump has neither.

(Source: CNN)



By Mohammad Hossein Azari

Recent oil market developments could justify presence of shale oil as an alarm for OPEC members though what decision to take is yet open to debate.

It was last week that Reuters reported on the agreement reached by the joint ministerial committee comprising members of the 13-nation oil cartel to extend the production cut deal for another six months. While the first draft of the deal argued that a high level of commitment to the deal was required, in its final version, the committee has demanded OPEC Secretariat to review market conditions and submit a report in April 2017 on extension of voluntary output cuts. The reason for such action goes back to the rise in oil reserves of the US on the basis of recent reports. According to statistics, America's oil supply reached the unprecedented level of 528.4 million barrel in the week leading to March 10. The same issue affected the OPEC basket whose prices dropped to their lowest rate so far in the new Christian calendar year of 2017. As such, the average price of OPEC oil in the week ended on March 24, 2017, stood at 48.76 dollars per barrel, while the average price of oil at the beginning of 2017 had revolved around \$52.23. These developments could justify presence of shale oil which marks a warning for OPEC; now, the decision which oil producers need to take in order to manage the market and crude prices remains open to debate and puts OPEC members in a great dilemma.

On the proper decision to be adopt-



**“Gunvor Group is one of five companies active in oil trade and its revenues sometimes surpass that of oil-producing countries.**

## US war strategy: Destroy, partition, occupy and control

By Stephen Lendman

Since the 1990s rape of Yugoslavia, US wars were waged to replace independent governments with pro-Western puppet ones.

Strategy involves destroying, partitioning, occupying and controlling one country after another.

Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo is America's largest European military base since the Vietnam War era – established for regional control, US bases in other war theaters for the same purpose.

Washington intends a permanent military presence in all its war theaters. The Brookings Institution's policy paper laid out a strategy for Syria, applicable for other nations America attacked, titled “Deconstructing Syria: Towards a regionalized strategy for a confederated country.”

It's a diabolical destroy, divide, partly occupy and control scheme – unknown to the public, unexplained by media.

Other countries America attacked face the same possible diabolical fate, part of a grand plan to redraw the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia maps.

More wars are planned besides ongoing ones, millions more lives at risk, greater vast destruction than already.

Trillions of dollars are spent for Washington's aim to achieve unchallenged global dominance, including homeland police state harshness and information control to quash dissent.

US regime change plans in Syria failed so far. Russia's vital intervention at the behest of its government prevented Washington from controlling the entire country, including its capital Damascus, puppet rule replacing Assad.

Objectives haven't changed, just strategy, intending destruction of northern Syria, occupying, partitioning and controlling it – on the phony pretext of combating ISIS America created and supports, along with virtually all other terror-

## OPEC in dilemma of market share, crude prices



**It should be noted that capital is directed towards a position where relative peace and stability is found. Therefore, higher levels of consistency in oil industry policies are required if we want to attract foreign investment.**

ed in view of current situations, Javad Yarjani, a former Iranian OPEC official, while stressing that OPEC members have to choose between market share and crude prices, said “all oil-producing

countries hold concerns about global crude prices and it can be boldly claimed that high oil prices over past few years, which were caused by sanctions against Iran and political events in Libya, landed the strongest blow on the oil market since they marginalized main factors determining crude prices while political issues began to dominate the market.”

In November 2014, Saudi Arabia was able to push American shale oil out of the market by avoiding cuts in its output. It should be noted that with technological improvements, shale oil production costs have fallen and on the other hand, shale technology offers the possibility to begin oil production at any time. OPEC states therefore feel urged to reach an appropriate consensus on their policies in the oil market, the official added.

The international oil expert said the US had taken the first step in regulating its oil market adding OPEC owes many of its scheme to an institution through which American oil producers have become united.

Yarjani described Saudi Arabia as the most influential decision maker in OPEC for undertaking the largest portion of oil production cut in order to control the market. On the other hand, it should be noted that Saudis hold a different situation among all OPEC members because

they pay high production costs and suffered the most damage from at the time of high oil prices.

### ■ Arabic marketing

He referred to the recent visit of Saudi king to East Asian countries asserting “the most important consequence of the visit pertained to importance of oil as the highest-ranking official of the Arab country travelled to East Asian countries majority of whom are oil consumers. Most of the media described the visit of the Saudi king as a marketing measure for petroleum products which reveals particular importance of crude. Although prior to the Islamic Revolution, Iran was the first country to run 50-50 partnership in construction of a refinery project in Korea to diversify its oil consumption venues, the country was forced to sell its shares due to various problems. At this juncture, Saudi Arabia purchased 40 per cent of the share at the price of 500 million dollars.

Iran's former representative at OPEC said what mattered to the 13-nation oil league was the production capacity rather than amount of oil reserves. On the other hand, it should be noted that capital is directed towards a position where relative peace and stability is found. Therefore, higher levels of consistency in oil industry policies are required if we want to attract foreign investment.

### ■ Tzarist trade

At another part of his remarks, Javad Yarjani deemed Russia as a major partner of Iran in the oil industry saying “volume of trade turnover between Tehran and Moscow stands at nearly one billion dollars which marks a low figure given that the two sides are neighbors and hold common interests. The exchanges in the field of Russian petroleum equipment and products in return for Iranian crude oil could prove effective in strengthening bilateral relations.”

He also pointed to capabilities of Gunvor Group which mainly work under non-Russian (Finnish) corporates asserting “such successful experiences need to be exploited in order to strengthen the Iranian oil industry.”

“Gunvor Group is one of five companies active in oil trade and its revenues sometimes surpass that of oil-producing countries. Nevertheless, the US has imposed sanctions against Gunvor under the pretext that the oil giant is affiliated with the Russian President Vladimir Putin,” he concluded.

**It's a diabolical destroy, divide, partly occupy and control scheme – unknown to the public, unexplained by media.**

tary presence, intention to increase it, or diabolical strategic plans – unrelated to combating ISIS or other terrorist groups.

Deployments and missions are permanent, not temporary, everything done secretly. Officially, around 5,300 US forces are in Iraq, around 1,000 in Syria.

Actual troop strength may be much larger, likely greater numbers to be deployed.

In March 2016, Reuters said: “(t)he United States has nearly finished setting up an air base in Kurdish-controlled northern Syria and was proceeding with the construction of a second base for dual military and civilian use”



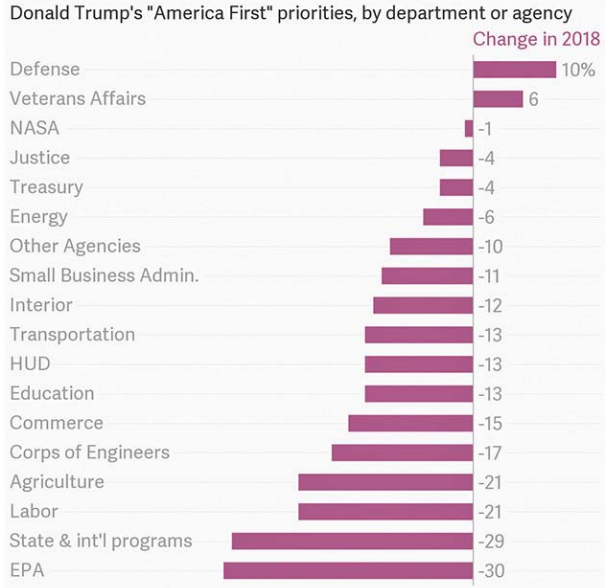
**Trillions of dollars are spent for Washington's aim to achieve unchallenged global dominance, including homeland police state harshness and information control to quash dissent.**

## Pentagon budget: Our military waste game suddenly seems prophetic

By Megan Rose

The most jaw-dropping element of President Donald Trump's proposed budget for 2018 is still shaking the foundations of Washington. The Pentagon, the most profligate agency in all the land, would get another \$52 billion to play with — and it is already one of the top spenders of taxpayer money. To fatten up the military coffers, pretty much everything else would take a drastic pay cut. Here's the brutal visual by Quartz:

You can see pretty clearly what Americans would give up to finance Trump's military spending, which includes another \$2 bil-



Δ T L Δ S | Data: OMB

lion for other non-Pentagon defense programs. Everyone from students to diplomats would take a hit. (Congress ultimately decides the budget, and Trump's plan would require lawmakers to repeal the current spending caps — a contentious issue with opponents in even Trump's own Republican party.) Although Trump wants the military to shrink its footprint abroad — essentially to do less — he nevertheless wants to give the Pentagon the extra cash to build up the number of, well, everything from troops to fighter jets.

**With Trump pushing to give the U.S. military another \$52 billion, a game we built two years ago to put the billions wasted in Afghanistan in perspective seems particularly relevant.**

proposed largesse. The massive military industrial complex, with ample assistance, if not insistence, from Congress (which likes to buy unneeded toys), isn't known for its efficiency with a dollar. More than one watchdog has noted that the Pentagon's daily routine includes overpaying for parts — for instance, spending \$264 for a helicopter part worth \$8 — even when it already has a surplus of the supplies in military warehouses. The financial head smacking just gets worse the bigger the purchase. The F-35, anybody? That stealth fighter jet has gone over budget by \$200 billion.

Waste like that could fully fund some of the programs on the chopping block for years. The roughly \$148 million spent each year on the National Endowment for the Arts is but a rounding error for the Pentagon. So just how much of that \$52 billion can we expect the Pentagon to fritter away, while other agencies starve? One way to imagine the possibilities is to look back at how money was wasted in a microcosm of military spending: the war in Afghanistan. Now, it's not exactly the same. We're talking about spending money in a combat zone — a considerable complicating factor — and the U.S. Agency for International Development and the State Department were involved in the mess, too.

Still, back in 2015, ProPublica was so gobsmacked by the staggering reports from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction detailing the waste in individual projects that we decided to do the math. Adding up just those projects the IG had evaluated — a fraction of what was spent in the country — we found \$17 billion of likely waste. Like the \$25 million blown on a military headquarters that was never used. Not once. And commanders were pretty darn sure before they started that it wouldn't be. Or the police building that was so poorly constructed it melted in the rain. Or the \$8.4 billion spent on counter-narcotics programs that resulted in — drumroll — Afghanistan producing more heroin than it did before the war started.

Even when faced with such absurd examples, though, the idea of waste is still pretty abstract. So we came up with a game to answer the question: What does the waste mean to me? We wanted to show taxpayers in real terms what that money could have bought at home. With the game you can look at the \$486 million worth of cargo planes that couldn't fly, and figure out that the cash would have put 57,000 low-income children in preschool with enough money left over to treat thousands at mental health clinics. Or it could have gone towards building clinics and community centers for veterans.

So take the game for a spin while picturing how much waste might come from, say, Trump's big-ticket wish — worth billions and likely to have plenty of its own F-35-like problems — to increase the Navy fleet from 272 ships to 350.

(Source ProPublica)



# When disaster brings reconciliation

A massive flood in Colombia brought an offer of aid from a rebel group, another example of how disasters can bring people together and alter the course of history.

Natural disasters often create unexpected bonds between people, even long-time rivals, which can then alter the course of history. A good example was an offer made Monday by armed rebels in Colombia to assist in the recovery of a town hit by a flood over the weekend.

At least 262 civilians were killed by the flooding and more than a thousand were made homeless. "We are ready to help," stated the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Colombia's government is in the midst of ending a half-century of war with the FARC.

## Humanitarian gesture

The tragedy in the town of Mocoa offered an opportunity for 400 rebels encamped nearby to show they are prepared to work with the government and forsake killing for cooperation. Their humanitarian gesture could help break down political barriers and provide an antidote to a long war.

Another example of disaster-related reconciliation occurred in 2004 when a tsunami struck the province of Aceh



in Indonesia, killing some 130,000.

The mass devastation and the aid provided by the Army forced a group of rebels to end its 30-year struggle for Aceh's independence. The government and rebels signed a peace deal the next year.

In recent years, countries opposed to North Korea's nuclear program have nonetheless offered food aid during a famine.

A Russian tanker has brought an emergency supply of winter fuel to the isolated Alaskan city of Nome.

China and Japan, despite their rivalry in Asia, have offered aid to each other after recent disasters.

Japanese teams searched for survivors after China's 2008 earthquake while Chinese rescuers reciprocated after Japan's 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

After a 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, India delivered

assistance to its longtime rival.

## Geopolitical conflicts

Yet these latter examples also illustrate the difficulty of resolving many geopolitical conflicts.

Japan and China are at odds over an island dispute, while North Korea and Russia are only winning more adversaries. India and Pakistan continue their estrangement.

One notable example came after a massive cyclone hit Myanmar (Burma) in 2008. The disaster opened the opportunity for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which includes Myanmar, to both offer relief and open a new dialogue with the government. This created enough trust for ASEAN to push Myanmar to move toward democracy.

In 2010, the country held free and fair elections. Missions of mercy have a way of softening hard hearts between adversaries.

Differences dissolve in the face of suffering and an outpouring of empathy. Politicians cannot afford to play political football with disaster relief.

A moment of mutual respect and cooperation after a disaster can linger long past the memory of loss.

(Source: The CSM)

**One notable example came after a massive cyclone hit Myanmar (Burma) in 2008. The disaster opened the opportunity for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which includes Myanmar, to both offer relief and open a new dialogue with the government.**

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# How to cultivate mental toughness

What can we learn about mental toughness from the world's top athletes?

Grit. Determination. Willpower. Fortitude. Do you have what it takes to persist in the face of challenges? To pick yourself up and carry on even when it seems like you have hit a brick wall? Mental toughness is a term used in psychology to refer to the resilience and strength that people possess to soldier through struggles and succeed.

It is this mental toughness that gives some of the world's athletic superstars the ability to push past exhaustion, opposition, and injury to score and to win. It is the same quality that gives even weekend warriors the strength to finish that last mile and power through that final set of reps.

So what can you do to cultivate a mentally tough attitude that will serve you well in not only your fitness pursuits but also in other aspects of your life?

## 1. Understand what it takes to be mentally tough

### ■ Mentally tough athlete

Mental toughness is what helps set great athletes apart from the competition. To cultivate these qualities, it is essential first to understand what exactly makes these mentally strong competitors different from the pack.

While it originated in the field of sports training, referring to the ability of athletes to stay strong, confident, and competitive, the concept is now widely used to refer to the host of mental attributes that allow people to handle life's difficulties.

How do psychologists define mental toughness? There is some debate among researchers about exactly how to define it including what it entails and the areas of life to which it applies. Some experts, for example, suggest that mental toughness should be restricted largely to the field of sport while others believe that it is a more general quality that impacts many other areas of life.

In their book, *Developing Mental Toughness*, researchers Peter Clough and Doug Strycharczyk define mental toughness as "The quality which determines in large part how people deal effectively with challenge, stressors, and pressure...irrespective of prevailing circumstances."

Clough and his colleagues describe it as similar to a personality trait consisting of four critical components:

1. Challenge: Viewing challenges as opportunities rather than obstacles.
2. Control: Believing that you are in control of your life and destiny.
3. Commitment: Having the ability to stick to tasks and see them through to completion.
4. Confidence: Possessing strong self-belief in your ability to succeed.

They also suggest that it is similar in many ways to the concept of psychological hardness and that mental toughness should not be restricted to the field of sport. Elite athletes might typify the sort of mental tough-



It is this mental toughness that gives some of the world's athletic superstars the ability to push past exhaustion, opposition, and injury to score and to win.

ness that makes them winners, but the same skills can apply to many areas of everyday life.

So is mental toughness the product of nature or nurture? Available evidence points to a strong genetic link. While some people just seem to come by mental toughness quite naturally, researchers suggest that it is also a skill that can be learned and strengthened. Athletic training certainly points to the ability to acquire these skills. So what else can you do to cultivate the quality of mental toughness?

## 2. Believe in your ability to achieve your goals

In a 2002 study of ten of the world's most elite athletes, one factor that these top performers named as a major contributor to their success was an unshakable self-belief.

Mentally tough people don't just think they might be able to succeed, they know they can. While much of the research on mental toughness relates directly to the world of athletics and sport, you can apply some of these same principles to other areas of your life.

Whether you are trying to lose weight, drop a bad habit, run a marathon, or excel in your profession, believing in yourself is essential. Avoid negative self-talk and instead focus your energy on staying positive self-encouraging.

## 3. Focus on intrinsic motivations rather than external rewards

The world's top athletes don't find the will to persevere and win because they are seeking acclaim, money, or other rewards (although those things are undoubtedly nice). Instead, they are intrinsically motivated by forces within themselves. Intrinsic motiva-

tions are those that come from within an individual and involve doing things for their own sake. These internal motivations drive people to do better, push harder, be stronger, and see just how far they can go.

Mentally tough people don't focus on the possible rewards that may await them at the end of a challenge. Instead, they see participating and overcoming challenges as rewarding in and of themselves.

## 4. Don't let setbacks get you down

Mentally tough athletes tend to rebound from setbacks with a renewed sense of determination. You can employ this in your own life as well. Rather than becoming discouraged, focus on building the resolve to push through the challenge and achieve your goals.

In one study of elite female athletes, many participants suggested that mental toughness often develops out of negative experiences. Facing difficulty both in their sport and in their personal lives led these top performers to develop new ways of managing stress and excelling in the face of difficulty.

## 5. Be self-directed

Mentally tough people don't let life happen to them—they create the life they want. By setting goals and then taking the initiative to follow through on pursuing these goals, mentally tough people are able to get the things that they want out of life.

When surveyed about their perceptions

Facing difficulty both in sport and in their personal lives led these top elite female athlete performers to develop new ways of managing stress and excelling in the face of difficulty.

of what helped them develop this mental toughness, elite gymnasts cited having goals as one of the strongest influences: "I realized how to set goals and how trying to reach them would help me get to the highest level," one gymnast told researchers.

While they sometimes make it look effortless, it is important to realize that they are simply willing to put in the work. For athletes, this is all about sticking to training regimens and facing competition at athletic events. In everyday life, this might involve taking steps each day toward reaching your goals, even when achieving those goals seems far off or even impossible.

Being mentally tough is not something that just happens suddenly in a moment; it is more about daily habits that help people soldier through the tough times in order to realize their ambitions.

This doesn't mean that you should not accept help or go it alone. Even elite athletes rely on their coaches and teammates to help push them, guide them, and inspire them to work harder and achieve their full potential.

## 6. Maintain focus in the face of distraction

Elite performers are able to stay focused on their goals, even when life throws disruptions their way. You aren't always going to have the perfect setting and support for pursuing your goals. Other things are going to compete for your attention.

Mentally tough people are able to maintain their sense of direction and keep working toward their goals in the face of these distractions. When you feel yourself losing focus, look for ways to recharge and bring yourself back on track.

## 7. Understand that there will be highs and lows in life

Mentally tough people don't expect life to be sunshine and roses all the time. In fact, they expect adversity, but they have faith in their abilities to survive, adapt, and overcome.

According to research, elite athletes report that it is often adversity and competition that helps foster mental toughness. It is only in the face of great difficulty that people learn what they are truly capable of.

## 8. Maintain your sense of control

According to researcher Peter Clough, control is a key component of mental toughness. Those who exude this type of mental strength feel that they have personal control over their own destiny.

Rather than pin their failures or successes on outside forces, the mentally tough have more of an internal locus of control. They don't see themselves as simply passive observers in their lives. Instead, they believe that they have an active role in creating their own

victories.

## 9. Stick with it, even when it's hard

Commitment is another one of the four major factors identified by Clough and his colleagues. Consider how athletes are able to power through exhaustion and pain to reach the finish line. The mentally tough are dedicated to seeing it through, even when it's hard and even if they think they might fail.

Many of the best performers suggest that competition, and the inherent success and failure that comes with it, is one of the critical components that contributes to their mental toughness.

The lesson from the world's top athletes is that even though setbacks are hard, sticking to your commitments helps you gain the lessons and experience you need to succeed in the future. It teaches you about your strengths, makes you aware of your weaknesses, and helps you realize that obstacles and even failures don't spell disaster—as long as you dust yourself off and keep going.

## 10. Put a positive spin on it

Simply working on your goal may, over time, help contribute to a mentally tough attitude. Mahoney and his colleagues found that by exerting more continuous effort, people are more likely to feel a sense mastery, achievement, and productivity, all of which make the pursuit of the goal a more positive experience.

When things are challenging or even unpleasant, pushing forward and attaining that feeling of accomplishment can give you the mental strength to keep going.

## 11. Find support

World-class athletes do not reach the top of their game all on their own. In most cases, they spend a tremendous amount of time with peers who provide support, training opportunities, and a positive environment for personal and professional development.

Friends, family, colleagues, and even your competitors can also help contribute to a 'never say die' attitude. Look to people you admire to help instill these feelings of hard work, determination, grit, and positivity. Seek out people who are going to contribute to your success and encourage you to achieve your goals. Find mentors and look to people who exude mental toughness to help inspire the development of this mental skill in your own life.

## ■ Final thoughts

Mental toughness certainly has a strong genetic component, but research on some of the world's strongest athletes suggests that it is also a skill that can be developed. Look for ways to apply some of these lessons learned from mentally tough athletes to different areas of your own life, whether you are trying to find the strength to stick to a difficult workout routine or succeed in a challenging job. As Winston Churchill once proclaimed, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."

(Source: verywell.com)

## Rapid blood pressure drops in middle age linked to dementia in old age

Temporary episodes of dizziness or light-headedness when standing could reduce blood flow to the brain with lasting impacts.

Middle-aged people who experience temporary blood pressure drops that often cause dizziness upon standing up may be at an increased risk of developing cognitive decline and dementia 20 years later, new Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health research suggests.

The findings, being presented March 10 at the American Heart Association's EPI[LIFESTYLE 2017 Scientific Sessions in Portland, Ore., suggest that these temporary episodes – known as orthostatic hypotension – may cause lasting damage, possibly because they reduce needed blood flow to the brain. Previous research has suggested a connection between orthostatic hypotension and cognitive decline in older people, but this appears to be the first to look at long-term associations.

"Even though these episodes are fleeting, they may have impacts that are long lasting," says study leader Andrea Rawlings, PhD, MS, a post-doctoral researcher in the Department of Epidemiology at the Bloomberg School. "We found that those people who suffered from orthostatic hypotension in middle age were 40 percent more likely to develop dementia than those who did not. It's a significant finding and we need to better understand just what is happening."

An estimated four million to five million Americans currently have dementia and, as the population ages that number is only expected to grow. There currently is no treatment and no cure for the condition.

For the study, the researchers analyzed data from the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC) cohort, a study of 15,792



residents in four communities in the United States, who were between the ages of 45 and 64 when the study began in 1987. For this study, they focused on the 11,503 participants at visit one who had no history of coronary heart disease or stroke. After 20 minutes lying down, researchers took the participants' blood pressure upon standing. Orthostatic hypotension was defined as a drop of 20 mmHg or more in systolic blood pressure or 10 mmHg or more in diastolic blood pressure. Roughly six percent of participants, or 703 people, met the definition.

These participants, who were on average 54 years old upon enrolling in the study, continued to be followed over the next 20 or more years. People with orthostatic hypotension at the first visit were 40 percent more likely to develop dementia than those who did not have it. They had 15 percent more cognitive decline.

Rawlings says it is not possible to tease


out for certain whether the orthostatic hypotension was an indicator of some other underlying disease or whether the drop in blood pressure itself is the cause, though it is likely that the reduction in blood flow to the brain, however temporary, could have lasting consequences.

It also wasn't clear, she says, whether these participants had repeated problems with orthostatic hypotension over many years or whether they had just a brief episode of orthostatic hypotension at the original enrollment visit, as patients were not re-tested over time.


"Identifying risk factors for cognitive decline and dementia is important for understanding disease progression, and being able to identify those most at risk gives us possible strategies for prevention and intervention," Rawlings says. "This is one of those factors worth more investigation."

(Source: Bloomberg)

First Announcement



N.I.O.C  
1395.5502



National Iranian  
Drilling Company

Public Renewed Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tenderers						
TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	DESCRIPTI ON	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
94,285	3,300,000,000	104,542,000,000	PDC BITS	1,480,557	Tender No.:pfp/azd/95/001 Indent No.:48-22-9522016	1

NIDC hereby intends to purchase its requirements from qualified and interested tenderers through public tender upon following terms and conditions.

A)For Brief description of the materials please see the Table above:

B)For Estimated value of requests please see the Table above :

C) Quality evaluation criteria of tenderers

1)Natural/ Legal entities

2)Financial soundness to supply materials in question, offer Bank Guarantee, Coded Check or deposit the equal amounts according to the table above in favor of NIDC.

3)Goodwill

4)Standardizing Products

5)Adequate Knowledge and experience in the relevant field

6)Company's good reputation

7)Quality Guarantee of products

8)Suitability of products volume

D) Minimum acceptable point of quality is 50

E)Tenderers can receive the quality evaluation documents by sending their request to the fax no:0613-4148261 or In person at the following address:  
Foreign Procurement Dept.(DRILLING PROJECTS).HALL NO 316.3 FLOOR . OPERATIONS BUILDING.  
NIDC. Ahwaz. Iran

F)Qualified tenderers shall submit the completed documents within 14 days from publication of such a call (second time) to the following address:  
#234.Opening Tender Committee Office.  
FRIST Floor. OPERATIONS BUILDING .AFTHER AIRPORT SQUARE .N.I.D.C, AHWAZ, IRAN.

G) Qualified tenderers whose documents have been accepted will be considered for award of tender documents thereafter.

More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. [WWW.NIDC.IR](http://WWW.NIDC.IR)  
[Foreign Procurement Dept.\(DRILLING PROJECTS\)](#)  
[National Iranian Drilling Company](#)



## 10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

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

- 1

Apple releases iOS 10.3.1 with security fix, 32-bit support.  
Apple started rolling out iOS 10.3.1, a minor update to iOS 10.3, which became available to everyone last week.  
Gal Beniamini, a security researcher at Google Project Zero, uncovered a bug that enabled a nearby attacker to run code on an iOS device's Wi-Fi chip.
- 2

Google Wifi now lets you pause the internet for certain periods of time.  
Google today announced a software update for its Google Wifi routers. Now it's possible to temporarily block internet signal in your home for a set period of time on a regular basis.  
The idea for the "scheduled pause" feature came out of the life experience of Google product manager Edith Chao.
- 3

Twitter has launched a new tool for brands to use when interacting with customers. Within direct messages, businesses can now ask for or share location data, which should help guide people to nearby retail stores. This feature is available through Twitter's developer program to partners offering customer service tools for brands.
- 4

At the Open Networking Summit conference in Santa Clara, California, Microsoft and Alibaba are announcing that Alibaba's public cloud is starting to use Software for Open Networking in the Cloud, or SONiC, which Microsoft introduced last year.  
SONiC, originally known as Azure Cloud Switch, is Linux-based open source software that runs on networking switches. It's designed to let public cloud providers do more on their hardware at great scale.

- 5

Imagination Technologies' shares plunge 70 percent after Apple ditches firm.  
Imagination Technologies has been told by Apple , its biggest customer, that the maker of iPhones, iPads and Apple Watches is to stop using its graphics technology in its new products, sending shares in the company crashing by more than 70 percent
- 6

All three of Nokia's Android smartphones could be released in May, new 3310 in April.  
The news comes from Chinese-language website Vtech, and specifically concerns the devices' release dates in Malaysia.

- 7

Google's CBO Schindler blames the media for putting YouTube's video content issue on the front page.  
Even Google is accusing the press of making a mountain out of a molehill. Firms like AT&T, Verizon and Walmart have been canceling their ads on Google owned YouTube because they have discovered that their spots are being placed before videos with racist and bigoted content.

- 8

BlackBerry KEYone arrives in Europe on May 5, pre-order one for £499.  
UK retailer Clove confirmed the first BlackBerry KEYone stock will soon be available for dispatch so that the phone will be available for purchase on May 5.

- 9

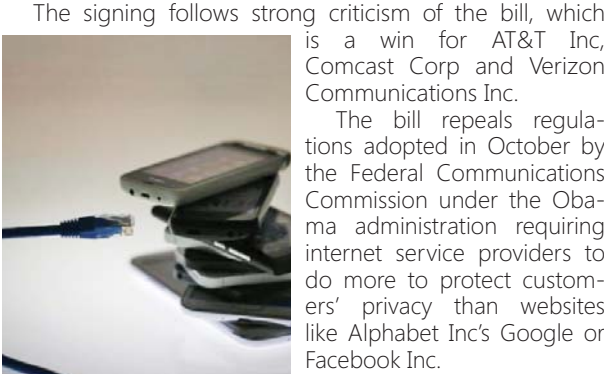
HTC U (Ocean) leak reveals pressure-sensitive frame.  
The new Taiwanese flagship named HTC U is expected in the second half of April but it already leaked from head to toes. The most impressive feature of all is a touch-sensitive frame that enables several features, depending on how hard you squeeze or press it.

- 10

Computer programmers can still qualify for H-1B visas.  
The H-1B work visa was created for foreigners working in "specialty occupations," and who typically demonstrate qualification for those jobs with four-year Bachelor's Degrees in related fields.

## Trump signs repeal of U.S. broadband privacy rules

U.S. President Donald Trump signed a repeal of Obama-era broadband privacy rules, the White House said, a victory for internet service providers and a blow to privacy advocates. Republicans in Congress last week narrowly passed the repeal of the privacy rules with no Democratic support and over the strong objections of privacy advocates.



The signing follows strong criticism of the bill, which is a win for AT&T Inc, Comcast Corp and Verizon Communications Inc. The bill repeals regulations adopted in October by the Federal Communications Commission under the Obama administration requiring internet service providers to do more to protect customers' privacy than websites like Alphabet Inc's Google or Facebook Inc. The rules had not yet taken effect but would have required internet providers to obtain consumer consent before using precise geolocation, financial information, health information, children's information and web browsing history for advertising and marketing. FCC Chairman Ajit Pai praised the repeal in a statement for having "appropriately invalidated one part of the Obama-era plan for regulating the internet." Those flawed privacy rules, which never went into effect, were designed to benefit one group of favored companies, not online consumers." On Friday, Comcast, Verizon AT&T Inc said they would voluntarily not sell customers' individual internet browsing information. (Source: Reuters)

# Nokia 9 rumored to be the first to feature “Nokia OZO Audio” technology

The first three Nokia-branded Android smartphones announced by HMD this year have to make their global debut. Aside from the Nokia 6 that's now available for purchase in China, the other two Nokia phones, 3 and 5 will hit the shelves in April/June.

Two new high-end Nokia-branded smartphones are supposed to be unveiled in the coming months, as HMD plans to launch 6 or 7 handsets this year.

HMD's top-of-the-line Nokia-branded smartphone, the unannounced Nokia 9 is expected to come equipped with one of the most powerful chipsets, Qualcomm's Snapdragon 835. A new tip coming from an unverified source claims this will be the first smartphone to feature Nokia OZO Audio enhancements.

Nokia OZO Audio offers 3D audio experience optimized for headphones and spatial audio playback systems. It features low latency 3D audio playback for VR devices supporting head tracking, as well as high-quality stereo playback for devices without OZO Audio playback support.

According to Nokia, the "audio focus technology enables accentuating sounds in one direction while reducing ambient sounds and background noise." Nokia OZO Audio technology will also allow 3D audio capture with 4 or more microphones (when available on the smartphone).

Smartphones that come with just three microphones will also be able to capture spatial 360 audio, while those with two mics will offer spatial audio capture.

Besides the new Nokia OZO Audio technology, the upcoming Nokia 9 is rumored to pack 6GB RAM and



64GB or 128GB internal memory. Furthermore, the smartphone is said to boast a 22-megapixel dual-lens Zeiss camera and a secondary 12-megapixel shooter in the front.

HMD might consider the addition of an iris scanner,

along with fingerprint reader. The flagship will sport a 5.5-inch Quad HD OLED display and a decent 3,800 mAh battery. Nokia 9 will feature IP68 certification and should run Android 7.1 Nougat right out of the box. (Source: nokiapoweruser)

## Apple orders 70 million OLED screens; 3D face recognition confirmed for iPhone 8

a report from Japan's Nikkei news agency revealed today that Apple has ordered 70 million OLED panels from Samsung for use in 2017. The 10th anniversary iPhone model, dubbed the Apple iPhone 8, is expected to be the only handset from Apple using OLED this year. As a result, we can deduce that Apple expects to sell a huge amount of iPhone 8 handsets over the holiday quarter.

During the same period last year, Apple sold a record 78.3 million handsets. In preparation of extremely heavy demand for the model, Samsung is ready to deliver as many as 95 million OLED screens to Apple. The information comes from a source in the iPhone supply chain. According to David Hsieh, a senior director at research company IHS Markit, Samsung will be the sole supplier of OLED displays



to Apple. In addition, as previously mentioned by KGI Securities' reliable Apple analyst Ming-Chi Kuo, the other two iPhone units expected this year (Apple iPhone 7s and the Apple iPhone 7s Plus) will stick with LCD screens. Next year, all Apple models will be using OLED screens, according to Kuo.

The report published by Nikkei also confirms Kuo's earlier comment that the iPhone 8 will feature a "revolutionary" front-facing camera. This camera will employ 3D facial recognition technology that will allow it to unlock the phone and verify identification. The supply chain source also said that the iPhone 8 will not have a home button although the other two 2017 models will. The iPhone 8 will not be cheap as speculation has Apple pricing the handset above \$1,000.

(Source: Nikkei)

## PlayStation classic ‘Jak and Daxter’ will be re-released on PS4



Sony isn't slowing down in its quest to bring seemingly every classic PlayStation series to the PS4. The gaming giant has revealed that Naughty Dog's PS2-era Jak and Daxter games (The Precursor Legacy, Jak II, Jak 3 and Jak X: Combat Racing) will be available on the PS4 as a download later in 2017. Don't get your hopes up for a Crash Bandicoot-style makeover, though. They'll be rendered at 1080p and support modern features like Remote Play and trophies, but they won't receive graphical overhauls or any new features. If you want to duke it

out with a friend in Jak X, you'll have to share a TV.

The relatively modest conversion effort isn't surprising. Naughty Dog has its hands full with The Last of Us Part II and, to a lesser extent, Uncharted: The Lost Legacy. And while third parties can certainly handle remasters (Vicarious Visions is largely responsible for the Crash re-do), overhauling four games is no mean feat. Look at it this way, though: if you've lost your PS2 to the ravages of time, you won't have to completely forego Jak as well. (Source: playstation)

## AOL and Yahoo will become Oath following Verizon deal



When the acquisition of Yahoo by Verizon concludes later this year, the storied Yahoo name will be no more. Instead, the core assets of the search engine company will be merged with AOL to become a new entity known as Oath. The official rebranding takes place this summer.

First reported by Business Insider, the new brand was confirmed in a tweet by AOL's chief executive Tim Armstrong this afternoon. Some details he did share was that under Oath, it would have more than a billion consumers and stretch across more than 20 brands. The rationale for the name and why Verizon is bundling up legacy brands AOL and Yahoo

are unclear, but hopefully this summer we'll be provided additional information.

In July, Verizon announced its purchase of Yahoo for \$4.8 billion, picking up core assets like mail, finance, search, and more. What wasn't included in the price was Yahoo's holdings in Yahoo Japan and Alibaba. That will remain in a holding company that's called Altaba, previously known as Abaco. The acquisition of Yahoo hasn't exactly been smooth sailing, with multiple revelations of state-sponsored hacking that compromised billions of user accounts — Verizon has since won a \$350 million discount for Yahoo. (Source: venturebeat)

## The White House is saving all of Trump's deleted tweets

Five days after Trump's inauguration, news leaked that his staff was continuing to use email linked to a private server. While that's not illegal (though hypocritical, given Hillary's election pillorying), it requires those using non-government emails to disclose them. If that doesn't happen -- if those messages aren't forwarded to an official account and stored for posterity -- the offender violates the Presidential Records Act. It seems the same could apply to Trump's tweets: The White House has agreed to the US National Archives' request that they save everyone, including those he deletes.

We don't know exactly how they're archiving his tweets, but it's the first confirmation that even his retracted and typo-filled messages will be saved. But concerns to save them came soon after it was clear Trump would continue his feverish Twitter posting. Back in February, Tom Carper (DE) and Claire McCaskill (MO) sent a letter



to Secretary of Defense James Mattis asking after the security of Trump's unsecured Android smartphone (which


he only replaced last week).


David S. Ferriero, head of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), replied to the pair and assured them Trump's Twitter messages would be saved. The White House had acquiesced to Ferriero's requests to save the President's current and future tweets, including ones that were deleted.

NARA was formed after the Nixon administration to make public the archives of Presidential correspondence. It's the kind of safeguard that was supposed to protect against things like the George W. Bush administration "losing" 22 million emails between 2003 and 2009. In the event that the Trump team permits a similarly obscene level of erasure of public documents, at least ProPublica is looking after his deleted tweets, which they've tracked back to June 2015. (Source: Mashable)



First Announcement


  
N.I.O.C
   
1395.5506


  
National Iranian
   
Drilling Company

### Public Renewed Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tenderers

TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	DESCRIPTI ON	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
32,440	1,350,000,000	22,707,000,000	Tree cone Bits	1,480,561	Tender No.:pfp/azd/95/002 Indent No.:48-22-9522017	1

Brief description of subject:

National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address pasdaran Blev., Airport Square, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase its requirements from qualified and interested tenderers through one-stage public tender ( semi-pressed) upon following terms and conditions:

A) Qualitative evaluation of tenderer:

The evaluation is based on article ( J ) implementing regulations of the law of tenders and also carried out base on worksheets qualitative evaluation inquiry in the tender documents. Minimum acceptable point of quality is 60.

B) Preparation of tender documents:

Purchasing of documents:

In order to receive the tender documents, 510,000 Rials should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.

Receiving of documents:

Tenderers must obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum 2 week after the date of second publication in person at the following address:A) Hall No.:316,3 th floor, Foreign Procurement Dept.(DRILLING PROJECTS) National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN  
B) jomhuri street ,yaghma alley nioc 8th building floor on : 04 room on 428 –Tehran-iran

Note 01: only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and receive tender documents from foreign procurement department in due date will be known as tenderer from tender committee

Note 02:the tender would be held in a tight period so the participants . should hand over all prequalification documents along with all envelopes (A.B.C)before closing date.

C) Delivery of call quality evaluating including prequalification documents and envelopes (A.B.C)should be submitted before closing date:

Tenderers shall submit the completed documents including qualification worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 45 days from last day of document received deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1th floor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN.

D) Tender Guarantee:

Type of guarantee:

A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activities licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

B) The original cash deposit receipt paid to National Iranian Drilling Company.

Duration of credit guarantee:

This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.

More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. [WWW.NIDC.IR](http://WWW.NIDC.IR)

Foreign Procurement Dept. (DRILLING PROJECTS)

National Iranian Drilling Company



## Average precipitation almost at normal levels

**SOCIETY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s average precipitation has almost hit the normal levels since the beginning of the current water year (Sept. 22, 2016) up until April 2, director for drought and crisis management department of Iran’s Meteorological Organization said.

Over the aforesaid period Iran got some 180.4 millimeters of rain while the long-term average precipitation levels are reported to be 183.8 millimeters and last year’s precipitation levels hit 184.2 millimeters, ISNA news agency quoted Shahrokh Fateh as saying.

“Relatively speaking we are 1.9 percent and 2.1 percent short of long-term average precipitation and last year’s precipitation levels respectively,” Fateh said, stating, “despite the decrease we are almost in a normal condition.”

“From the beginning of the current water year to Jan. 19 the situation was extremely worrying regarding precipitation level as we were 46 percent short of long-term average precipitation level and 60 percent below that of 2015-2016 water year,” Fateh noted.

However, he continued, precipitations over the past three months have helped to ease the shortage to a great level.

## Whoa: Horse rescued after falling into hole in California

**RIVERSIDE, Calif. (AP)** — Authorities say a horse returning from a run to Taco Bell escaped serious injury after falling into a 5-foot-deep hole in Southern California.



Fire officials say the saddled horse and its rider had just left a Taco Bell near downtown Riverside on Saturday when the cover on a utility vault collapsed.

Battalion Chief Jeff DeLaurie says a crane was initially requested to haul the horse from the vault but it wasn’t needed. The animal managed to position itself so crews could pull it out using ropes.

A veterinarian says the horse suffered minor cuts to its legs.

DeLaurie tells the Press-Enterprise that it’s unusual to see a horse in that part of the inland city of about 300,000 people.

## LEARN ENGLISH

### Farm Animals

A: Isn’t this great? I always wanted to own a farm, live out in the **country**, and grow my own food!  
B: This is very beautiful. Though I have to **confess**, I **don’t know the first thing about** farming!  
A: That’s fine! Don’t worry about it!  
B: What was that?  
A: Relax, it was just a goat!  
B: And that?  
A: It’s just the cows that are **grazing** over there. We can **milk** them later.  
B: What was that?  
A: Honey, seriously, it’s just a sheep. Relax!  
A: Relax, that was just the horses and donkeys that are in the **stable**.  
B: You know what? I don’t think I can **hack it** here out in the countryside. I’m going back to the city!

■ **Key vocabulary**  
**country:** rural areas  
**confess:** to admit something that you feel embarrassed about  
**don’t know the first thing about:** know little about  
**graze:** to feed in a meadow or pasture  
**milk:** get the milk from a cow  
**stable:** a building for the shelter and feeding of domestic animals, especially horses and cattle  
**hack it:** be able to manage or manage successfully  
■ **Supplementary vocabulary**  
**stall:** a compartment for one domestic animal in a barn or shed  
**pig sty:** a pen or enclosure for pigs; pigpen  
**pen:** a small enclosure for domestic animals  
**chicken coop:** an enclosure or cage for chickens  
**herd:** a group of cattle or other domestic animals of a single kind kept together

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



## Be kind to me!

# RoboCup Iran Open 2017 kicks off

**SOCIETY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The 12th edition of the international Robocop competitions (RoboCup Iran Open 2017) started on Tuesday at the Tehran Permanent International Fairground.

Some 2,820 contestants from the United States, Germany, India, Japan, China, Singapore, South Korea, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Mexico, England, Turkey, Peru, and Iran will be competing during the 4-day event, Tasnim news agency reported.

The first RoboCup Iran Open took place in April 2006, Tasnim quoted Morteza Moosakhani, the chairman of the National Robocop Committee as saying.

He went on to say that 139 Iranian teams and 21 foreign teams will be competing in the university students’ league, 167 Iranian and foreign teams in the school students’ league, and 39 Iranian teams as well as 15 foreign teams in the simulation league.

The teams which succeed to win a



title will be qualified for international competitions, Moosakhani highlighted, saying, Iran is also playing host to Asia-

Pacific competitions.

“RoboCup competitions aim to promote robotics and artificial intelligence

## Five autism centers operational in Tehran province

**SOCIETY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — There are five autism centers operational in Tehran province providing patients suffering the disorder with proper services, an official with Tehran province’s welfare organization said.

“Some five more centers are to be set up in the near future in Tehran,” Mohammadreza Asadi said, ISNA news agency reported.

Currently each center is offering treatment and support for some 280 patients, Asadi said, explaining, each center charges a monthly fee of some 5.68 million rials (nearly \$140) which receives direct subsidies amount to 4 million rials (nearly \$100).

“Currently some 20 patients are receiving home care in pilot program and in case we get satisfactory results and families welcome the program we will administer the program on a larger scale,” he added.



Some 809 patients are suffering autism in the province of Tehran, Asadi said, stating, the number is believed to be some 4,000 who are not diagnosed yet.

Autism is becoming one of the most prevailing childhood disorders which needs timely diagnosis, assessment, treatment and support, he suggested.

Autism is a mental condition, present from early childhood, characterized by great difficulty in communicating and forming relationships with other people and in using language and abstract concepts.

Earlier in December, it was announced that an offline autism screening test was available for downloading from Iran’s Welfare Organization website comprising of 10 questions for parents with children aged 2 to 5 to diagnose children who are suffering from the autism spectrum disorder.

## Peace without mine action is incomplete peace: UN Chief

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his message on the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, 4 April 2017, while emphasizing that peace without mine action is incomplete peace, urged all Member States to keep this issue at the top of the international agenda when negotiating peace, when seeking to prevent harm during conflicts, and when deploying emergency humanitarian responses in war zones.

The full text of his message reads:

In today’s world, conflicts are multiplying and increasingly interlinked.

Most disturbingly, many warring parties shamelessly target civilians and show a flagrant disregard for international humanitarian law.

Improvised explosive devices are killing and injuring thousands of civilians annually. These pernicious devices are hidden in homes and schools, terrorizing local populations.

Over the past twenty years, the United Nations and its partners have cleared vast areas of land contaminated by landmines and explosive remnants of war. Land that was once dangerous and unproductive has been returned to citizens, enabling them to rebuild their communities. The removal of landmines from roads and airstrips has facilitated humanitarian access to people in need.

The United Nations has provided medical assistance to victims, and educated millions of people on how to live safely during or in the immediate aftermath of conflict.

We have also trained and employed thousands of men and women in mine action jobs that support and sustain peace.

I thank the brave women and men working in mine action for their life-saving work.

I commend the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action for its needs-driven, people centered approach.

And I applaud the United Nations Mine Action Service, now in its 20th year, for its leadership, courage and commitment to peace.

Peace without mine action is incomplete peace.


I urge all Member States to keep this issue at the top of the international agenda when negotiating peace, when seeking to prevent harm during conflicts, and when deploying emergency humanitarian responses in war zones.

Mine action establishes the foundations for lasting recovery and development.


No one should have to live in fear of dying even after the fighting stops.

(Source: [UNIC](http://UNIC))

First Announcement



N.I.O.C  
1395.5508



National Iranian  
Drilling Company

**Public Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tender(First publish/seconded publish)**  
**One-stage(semi-compressive)**

TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	DESCRIPTI ON	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
83,685	2,929,000,000	86,414,000,000	COMPLETI ON 5000 PSI	1,480,571	Tender No .:pfp/azd/95/009 Indent No.:48-22-9522024	1

Brief discription of subject:  
National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address pasdaran Blev., Airport Saqare, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase its requirements from qualified and interested tenderers through one-stage public tender ( semi-pressed) upon following terms and conditions:  
A) Qualitative evaluation of tenderer:

The evaluation is based on article ( J ) implementing regulations of the law of tenders and also carried out base on worksheets qualitative evaluation inquiry in the tender documents. Minimum acceptable point of quality is 60.

B) Preparation of tender documents:  
Purchasing of documents:

In order to receive the tender documents, 510,000 Rials should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.  
Receiving of documents:  
Tenderers must be obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum 2 week after the date of second publication in person at the following address: A) Hall No.:316,3 th floor, Foreign Procurement Dept.(DRILLING PROJECTS). National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN  
B) jomhourri street .yaghma alley nioc 8 th building floor on : 04 room on 428 –Tehran-iran.  
Note 01 : only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and recive tender ducments from foreign procurment department in due date will be known as tenderer from tender committee.  
Note 02:the tender would be held in a tight period so the participants. should hand over all prequalification documents along with all envelopes (A.B.C)before closing date.

C) Delivery of call quality evaluating including prequalification documents and envelopes (A.B.C)should be submitted before closing date:  
Tenderers shall submit the completed documents including qualificaion worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 45 days from last day of document recived deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1th floor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN.

D) Tender Guarantee:  
Type of guarantee:  
A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activites licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.  
B) The original cash deposit receipt paid to National Iranain Drilling Company.  
Duration of credit guarantee:  
This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.

More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. [WWW.NIDC.IR](http://WWW.NIDC.IR)  
Foreign Procurement Dept. (DRILLING PROJECTS)  
National Iranian Drilling Company



# 60 killed in attack in Syria's Idlib

Syria's rebels to form a new alliance

A monitoring group says at least 60 people have died in an attack in Syria's north-western Idlib Province.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said dozens were also wounded in the strike, which it said targeted the province on Tuesday.

The pro-opposition body cited "medical sources" as saying that victims displayed symptoms of asphyxiation, which they said could mean that chemical agents were used in the attack.

Those claims and the report about the alleged attack could not be independently verified.

■ **Never in the past, never in the future**

Later on Tuesday, a Syrian military source said the Syrian army "does not [use] and has not" used chemical weapons, "not in the past and not in the future."

Separately, a Syrian member of parliament, Sharif Shahada, said he believed a chemical arms depot set up and held by the militants in the area may have exploded in the incident. He said the Syrian government was not in possession of such weapons.

Shahada also accused Turkey of having supplied militants in Syria with chemical arms.

The United States and its allies have in the past accused the Syrian military of conducting chemical attacks. This is while Syria turned its entire chemical arsenal over to international monitors under a deal negotiated by Russia and the United States back in 2013.

The Syrian stockpiles of chemical weapons were surrendered in a joint mission comprising representatives of



the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in 2014.

That same year, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group started a campaign of deadly terror in the country. Damascus has continuously warned about the deployment of chemical arms by ISIL and its fellow Takfiri outfits against civilian targets.

The Syrian government and the anti-Damascus militants reached a deal last Wednesday enabling the evacuation of civilians from the Shia-populated towns of al-Foua and Kefraya in Idlib, which have been under militant siege, in exchange for the evacuation of militants and their families from the Sunni-majority towns of Zabadani and Madaya near Syria's border with Lebanon.

But the Observatory said on Tuesday that those evacuations had been delayed over reservations by the residents in the

four towns and other issues. It said the evacuations had been delayed likely to Thursday or Sunday.

A ceasefire has also been largely holding over the entire country, but it excludes internationally-recognized terrorist groups.

■ **New alliance of rebels**

Meanwhile, a new military alliance of rebel groups in northern Syria aims to consolidate military control over Idlib province, the western part of Aleppo province and parts of Latakia province, according to a Free Syrian Army (FSA) commander.

Two sources from FSA have confirmed to Al Jazeera that the new military operation room, under discussion, will be supported by the "Friends of Syria" - a coalition of the U.S., Turkey, Western European and Persian Gulf states - which have supported the Northern Front's operations room, known by its Turkish acronym MOM.

■ **U.S. & Assad**

In a departure from earlier official statements, the United States has said it cannot accept Syrian President Bashar al-Assad running in future elections.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley made the remarks during a news conference held at the UN Headquarters in New York City to mark the U.S. presidency of the UN Security Council for April.

She was asked about U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's comments made in Turkey last week. "I think the longer term status of President Assad will be decided by the Syrian people," Tillerson said.

Haley, who herself said on Thursday the U.S. is no longer interested in removing the Syrian leader, changed her tone on him, saying it does not mean Washington will accept Assad participating in future elections.

She said the Syrian people don't want him in power, and went on to describe Assad as a war criminal and a long-time hindrance to peace.

"It's that we don't think the people want Assad anymore; we don't think that he is going to be someone that the people want to have," Haley said.

"We have no love for Assad. We've made that very clear. We think that he has been a hindrance to peace for a long time. He's a war criminal. What he's done to his people is nothing more than disgusting," she said.

This is while the White House stressed on Friday that the U.S. must understand the "political reality" in Syria and accept the future of Assad is for Syrians to decide.

(Source: agencies)

## Turkey fires 45 more members of judiciary in post-coup purge

Turkey has dismissed 45 more judges and prosecutors as part of a heavy-handed crackdown launched by the government on political dissent following last year's failed military coup.

Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency reported the development on Monday, saying the latest dismissal brings to 4,000 the total number of the members of the judiciary purged so far.

Turkey witnessed a coup attempt on July 15, 2016, when a faction of the Turkish military declared that the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was no more in charge of the country.

A few hours later, however, the putsch was suppressed. Almost 250 people were killed and nearly 2,200 other wounded in the abortive coup, which was blamed on the movement led by the United States-based opposition cleric Fethullah Gulen. He has denied the charges.

Since then, Ankara has been engaged in suppressing the media and opposi-

tion groups, who were believed to have played a role in the failed putsch.

Reports say Turkish authorities have detained, sacked or dismissed over 113,000 people from the police, military, public service, judiciary and elsewhere in the post-coup crackdown.

Elsewhere in its report, Anadolu said the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors in Turkey had suspended a judge and an official, who were handling a case of suspected members of the Gulen movement, just a few days after the judge acquitted most of the defendants.

Earlier on Monday, Turkey's main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP/Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi), accused the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP/Adalet ve Kalk?nma Partisi) of having prior knowledge of what it said was a "controlled" coup.

(Source: travelwirenews)

## Thousands of Greek pensioners protest against cuts as more austerity looms

Thousands of elderly Greeks protested peacefully on Tuesday against more pension cuts, as cash-strapped Greece remained locked in talks with lenders on further austerity and unpopular labor reforms.

Pension cuts have been a regular feature of austerity drives to ensure that financial aid continues to the indebted country. Greece has needed three multi-billion bailouts since 2010 to stave off bankruptcy.

Greece is now negotiating new cuts to keep its latest 86 billion-euro (\$91.54 billion) bailout. They would represent the 12th reduction in pensions in seven years, a controversial issue for Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, whose Syriza party vowed to fight austerity when it was elected to office in 2015.

Pensioners in the country are often the sole means of support in a household, where a quarter of the workforce

is jobless.

Several said their pensions were financially supporting unemployed adult members of their family and that they scrimped on food.

Greece has agreed to cut pension spending after its current bailout expires in 2018. It has sought to implement the cuts gradually, over two or three years. But Germany and the International Monetary Fund want them implemented in 2019, sources said.

Greece's finance and labor ministers were due to fly to Brussels on Tuesday for consultations with lenders, hoping to wrap up a long-delayed bailout review that will unlock more aid before repayments loom this summer.

One placard summed up the mood at Tuesday's demonstration: "Don't slash pensions. Go slash your throats."

(Source: Reuters)

## FAO: Conflicts impose \$16 billion losses to Syrian agricultural sector

➔ \* About 60 percent of households reported that a lack of fertilizers was a critical production constraint for crops such as wheat, barley, legumes and pulses. A lack of fuel, outbreaks of pests and diseases, and destruction of irrigation systems and water points for livestock were also listed as important constraints.

\* Since 2011, household livestock ownership has plummeted, down by 57 percent for cattle, 52 percent for sheep, 48 percent for goats and 47 percent for poultry.

\* The proportion of income spent on food has soared as incomes and household food production have decreased, while food prices have increased dramatically. Before the crisis about 25 percent of households would spend over half their annual income on food; by the time of the survey in September 2016, 90 percent of households were spending more than half of their annual income on food.

\* Less than half of the 2011 rural population still lived in rural areas in 2016.

Of the \$16 billion total bill, the cost of damage to assets - such as tractors, machinery, commercial farms, veterinary clinics, animal sheds, greenhouses, irrigation systems and processing facilities - is estimated at over \$3 billion, though this number is likely to rise significantly when the full extent of damages in the main conflict

**"The survey shows that in the midst of conflict, agriculture provides a lifeline for the millions of Syrians, including internally displaced people, still living in rural areas," said José Graziano da Silva, FAO director-general.**

## 'Iran unhappy with Pakistani gen. heading Saudi-led counterterror alliance'

➔ Pakistan's Tehreek-e-Insaf party, led by Imran Khan, has strongly opposed the appointment, saying it could widen the Sunni-Shia divide in Pakistan and upset Iran.

"We strongly advocate the policy of impartiality as far as conflicts in the Middle East and Muslim world are concerned," Khan said. "We under no circumstances should fall into any conflict and hence be watchful of the impacts of every decision or choice we make."

Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua replied to criticisms, saying that

Islamabad is committed to its policy of non-interference in the conflicts among Muslim countries.

"The Islamic [military] alliance is against terrorism, not any [specific] country," Janjua said, addressing concerns that Islamabad's move could complicate the already fraught Pakistan-Iran ties.

She further emphasized that Pakistan's policy regarding Iran, Yemen and Saudi Arabia has not changed and that her country aims at reducing tension between Tehran and Riyadh.

The Express Tribune, on Tuesday, quoted informed sources who said

Pakistan's army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa has given the Iranian envoy a categorical assurance that Islamabad's decision would not hurt Tehran's interests.

The sources also said that General Qamar might visit Iran in the coming days to assuage fears of the Iranian leadership over the controversial alliance.

Pakistan contacted Iranian officials before issuing a no-objection certificate to Sharif to take up the position of head of the 39-nation military alliance, but this "did not indicate that Iran was satisfied

with this decision or it had accepted the same", Honardoost said.

The Tehran Times tried to reach Pakistani ambassador to Tehran in order to make comments on the issue, but he was not available.

On Monday, the Iranian ambassador underlined the need to establish a coalition of peace to resolve regional issues, voicing Iran's readiness to do so.

"Iran firmly believes that all the tensions which the Islamic world is facing can be resolved mutually," the Iranian ambassador remarked said.

## Putin, Merkel and Hollande discuss anti-terrorism data exchange

The leaders of Russia, Germany and France on Tuesday agreed in a phone call to speed up the exchange of data aimed at fighting terrorism, the Kremlin said.

They spoke following Monday's deadly bomb attack on a metro train in Russia's second-largest city of St. Petersburg which killed 14 people and wounded 50.

The Kremlin said the leaders also discussed the situation in Ukraine and the Easter cease-fire declared from April 1.

A German government source said: "Merkel urged Putin to use his influence with the separatists [to keep to the April 1 cease-fire]."

The Kremlin added that Putin, Merkel and Hollande have agreed to continue contacts on Ukraine.

(Source: Reuters)

## Trump campaign adviser Carter Page met with Russian spy in 2013

A foreign policy adviser to the United States President Donald Trump's presidential campaign met with a Russian intelligence operative in 2013 and provided him documents about the energy industry, according to court filings.

The Russian, Victor Podobnyy, was one of three men charged in connection with a Cold War-style Russian spy ring. According to the court documents, Podobnyy tried to recruit Carter Page, an energy consultant working in New York at the time, as an intelligence source. Page is referred to in the filing as "Male-1."

Page briefly served as a foreign policy adviser to Trump's campaign, though he split from the campaign before the election and the White House says the president has no relationship with him. He's among the Trump associates under scrutiny as the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) and congressional committees investigate Russian interference in the 2016 election and possible ties between the Trump campaign and Russia.

Page acknowledged in a statement on Monday night that he "shared basic immaterial information and publicly available research documents" with Podobnyy. He described the information as "nothing more than a few samples from the far more detailed lectures" he delivered at New York University in 2013.

BuzzFeed News first reported on the filings.

Trump has vigorously denied that he or his associates were in contact with Russia during the election. He's blasted the focus on his possible Russia ties as a "ruse" and has insisted that the real story is the leaking of information to the media and allegations that he and his associates were improperly surveilled by the Obama administration.

"The real story turns out to be SURVEILLANCE and LEAKING! Find the leakers," Trump wrote in a tweet on Monday morning.

Page's contacts with Podobnyy happened about three years before Trump listed him as a foreign policy adviser to the campaign. Trump and his advisers have been vague about how Page became connected with the campaign.

The court filings include a transcript of Podobnyy speaking with Igor Sporyshev, who was also charged in the spy ring, about Page.

"I like that he takes on everything," Podobnyy says. "For now his enthusiasm works for me. I also promised him a lot."

Separately, The Washington Post reported on Monday that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) arranged a secret meeting in January between an American businessman supporting Trump and a Russian close to President Vladimir Putin as part of an apparent effort to establish a back-channel line of communication between Moscow and the incoming president.

(Source: Chicago Tribune)

## Historian says Bannon is fond of thinkers on radical right

➔ ■ A report appeared in the New York Times ascribed the roots of anti-immigration to traditionalist thinkers such as René Guénon. What is your view?

A: The roots of anti-immigration are not any particular thinker but rather the human tendency to form "in groups" and "out groups." Small-scale immigration by people who do not look or behave very differently is not usually noticed, but large-scale immigration by people who look or behave differently always results in hostility. However, it is true that some thinkers who are inspired by Guénon and Evola, the so-called identitarians, have worked out what is in effect an anti-immigration ideology. They see individual cultural traditions as needing protection from admixture from other traditions, and thus from immigration. But this is not what is inspiring President Trump. He is not opposed to immigration in general--his wife is an immigrant, for example--but against Muslims. That covers both Muslims in the Muslim world and Muslims in America. Thus has nothing to do with Guénon, who himself converted to Islam, or Evola, who did not convert but was not unsympathetic to Islam.

## EU states won't move Israel embassies to al-Quds: Mogherini

➔ Jordan's King Abdullah II, who hosted the summit, said the creation of a Palestinian state remained the basis of any solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In a final declaration issued at the end of its summit, the Arab League voiced opposition to any plan for the transfer of embassies from Tel Aviv to al-Quds.

The declaration was apparently referring to plans by the United States President Donald Trump to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds.

The bloc had earlier warned the U.S. against the plans, saying such a move would worsen the already-tense situation in the Middle East region.

(Source: Press TV)



## Police detain Eldense coach in match-fixing probe after 12-0 Barca B loss

Police in Spain investigating match-fixing have detained the coach of third-division club Eldense following their 12-0 to Barcelona B over the weekend.

Police said Eldense coach Filippo Vito di Piero, who is Italian, was detained on Monday in the small eastern city of Elda and his documents were seized, according to the Associated Press.

Authorities detained him after interrogating some Eldense players following a complaint made by the club's president. Eldense temporarily ceased their sporting activities on Sunday, a day after the loss sealed their relegation to the fourth division with six games left to play.



The 12-0 loss equalled a record for Spain's third division. Extremadura routed Portuense by the same score in 1993.

Di Piero was acting as one of Eldense's coaches alongside Fran Ruiz Casares.

Di Piero was in the process of having his head-coaching licence certified, according to reports in Spain.

Earlier, one of the team's players, Cheikh Saad, had accused three of his teammates and Ruiz of match-fixing. Saad said he refused to play on Saturday because he believed the game had been thrown.

Eldense conceded five goals in 15 minutes. Saad said via Twitter: "In the end everything will come out because the 12-0 is unreal."

The Mauritania-born striker told Cadena Cope radio: "I don't know about others but I had to come out and tell the truth.

"I have received threats not to reveal the names of those involved but I don't care.

"There were four that were involved and I have given the names to the police.

"The police have all the information they need and I hope there is an exemplary sanction against them. I'm 100 percent certain that the coach [Fran Ruiz] was involved."

Saad said his suspicion grew before the game when he and another regular starter were left out of Saturday's starting XI.

"As we sat on the bench and we saw the score of 5-0 after 15 minutes, we realised that something strange was going on," the 26-year-old said. "The coach told me to warm up and I told him I don't want to because I didn't want to play. I knew something was going on.

"I told the other bench players not to warm up because it was clear the game was fixed. I wanted those players that had started and fixed it to be the ones to finish the game in shame.

"Some of our players that finished the game crying are acting because they were the ones that fixed it."

Saad said that he saw the president of Eldense's managing board, David Aguilar, go to the dressing room at half-time with the score 8-0 and argue with the coach.

"He [Aguilar] had words with the coach, calling him a scoundrel because it was evident that something was going on," he said. "I listened to an audio recording that some people showed me after the game and it revealed that certain players had made bets to lose.

"In that recording, it stated that there would be eight goals at half-time and then the result in the second half. The police have that recording.

"We are talking about big amounts [money], they would not have earned that amount in their whole lives playing in this division. Apparently, it has not been the first game this season where that has happened."

Eldense said via a statement on Sunday that they had terminated their relationship with an Italian investor group, allegedly involved in the scandal, and have temporarily ceased first-team activity.

Reports in Spain say that the club have had three presidents, seven coaches and have used 52 players in 32 games this season. Eldense have won just three games and lost 24 and are bottom of group III in the Segunda Division B, 16 points behind their nearest rivals.

La Liga president Javier Tebas said he was asked by Aguilar to investigate the allegations.

Aguilar told Cadena Cope: "We have to get to the end of this. What we saw at the Mini Estadi was not football and I was tremendously ashamed. Now we will use youth team players for our remaining games, who I'm certain will compete more than those that played on Saturday."

Aguilar said he suspects that other games were fixed, including Cornella's 3-1 win at home to Eldense on March 19, where irregular bets took place in an encounter that had three penalties.

"For the past four weeks, we have seen strange things like we saw in the game in Cornella," he said. "Bookmakers suspended betting for our game last week because of those irregularities and I don't understand why they didn't do the same thing this weekend."

(Source: Soccernet)

# Missing Miami title defense was refreshing, says Djokovic

Sitting out last week's Miami Open was rejuvenating for Novak Djokovic although it meant missing the chance to win a record seventh title in the tournament, Serbia's world number two said on Tuesday.

Djokovic missed the Masters series event with an elbow injury and, having recovered, is eager to face Spain in the Davis Cup quarter-finals in front of a boisterous home crowd next weekend.

"Of course I wanted to be on the court and defend my title but it just didn't happen this time," Djokovic told a news conference in the Serbian capital's Aleksandar Nikolic arena.

"At the same time, it was also rather refreshing to get some rest and sit out Miami at home with my wife and son. It was quality family time which I don't get enough of and it made me very happy," he said.

"A hardcourt tie is not an ideal preparation for the clay court season but given that I was away for a few weeks after a patchy start to the season, I need as many matches as possible to get back into my stride irrespective of the surface."

Djokovic added: "The Davis Cup is a very special event as it generates the kind of home crowd atmosphere you don't see on the ATP Tour, so I am really looking forward to performing in front of our fans. I always draw very positive energy from the Davis Cup as it invariably brings out the best in me."

Having dominated for several years to rack up 12 grand slam tournaments after clinching his maiden French Open title last June, Djokovic then suffered a dramatic



loss of form which saw him ousted as the world number one by Briton Andy Murray.

With Murray also playing in fits and starts in the early stages of the season, Djokovic heaped praise on the evergreen Roger Federer after the Swiss maestro won the Miami Open following his

Australian Open triumph in January.

"What Federer has accomplished this year is admirable and it shows that one can play at the top level even at his age. He's had his ups and downs in the last three or four years but came back swinging and revitalized after a six-month

layoff last year," said Djokovic.

He said the Miami Open final between Federer and Nadal was "as outstanding as anyone might have expected from the greatest rivalry ever".

Nadal will skip Spain's clash with Serbia. (Source: Reuters)

## Mario Balotelli happy to stay at Nice if money is right - Yoan Cardinale



Mario Balotelli will stay at Nice this summer if the Ligue 1 club can meet his financial demands, the Italy striker's teammate Yoan Cardinale has told RMC.

Balotelli, 26, signed a one-year deal with Nice last summer after he was deemed surplus to requirements at Liverpool but he has thrived, scoring 11 goals in 18 games to help Nice mount a shock title challenge.

With a 16-point gap between Lucien Favre's men in third place and Lyon in fourth with just seven games left this season, Nice look set to qualify for the third qualifying round of next season's Champions League at the very least.

Cardinale, who has struck up a good relationship with Balotelli, said the former Inter and AC Milan forward wants to stay on the Cote d'Azur if the money is right.

"He tells me he would like to stay, that at Nice there are all the conditions for him to stay. He's very happy here. He sees there is a great project being put in place. So why not?" the Nice goalkeeper said.

"He knows it will be very difficult be-

cause in terms of salary, a player like Balotelli costs a lot. But if the club is able to meet his demands, he'll stay happily."

While Balotelli seems to have found his form in Nice, Favre looks to have found the way to get the best out of the striker.

Favre recently said that Balotelli is "not difficult" to handle if he is shown respect, and Cardinale said the Nice dressing room is united in its admiration for the forward.

"We are all trying to get it into his head that he should stay next season when he's as committed as he has been in the last few games," Cardinale, who saw Balotelli score in last weekend's league win over Bordeaux, said.

"People are talking about Bordeaux, but he's been good for a few matches now. Unfortunately, he just didn't score. Against Bordeaux, he was very good. We even saw him defend which is something that's quite rare for him. When he's like that, it's good for us and for him. Everyone is happy."

(Source: Soccernet)

## Jose Mourinho wants Marouane Fellaini contract extension - sources



Jose Mourinho is to recommend a contract extension for Marouane Fellaini to the Manchester United board when the Old Trafford manager finalises his plans for summer rebuilding, sources have told ESPN FC.

United triggered a one-year option in the midfielder's contract in January in order to secure the 29-year-old to the club until the end of the 2017-18 season.

But with uncertainty surrounding the Old Trafford futures of Michael Carrick and Wayne Rooney beyond this summer -- both players are expected to leave the club at the end of the campaign -- Mourinho is keen to reward Fellaini for his contribution this term by urging executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward to sanction another extension to keep the former Everton man at the club for a further 12 months until June 2019.

Sources have told ESPN FC that United are determined to bolster their midfield this summer, with Monaco's Tiemoue Bakayoko a leading target.

In order to build his midfield around £89.3 million world-record signing Paul

Pogba, Mourinho has identified a defensive midfielder as a priority, with Claude Makelele and Nemanja Matic performing the role successfully during his two spells as Chelsea manager.

Fellaini has been used in that position on several occasions by Mourinho this season, generally alongside Carrick, but his versatility, strength of character and readiness to play in numerous roles has impressed the United manager, who believes his value to the squad warrants a longer-term deal.

Mourinho has already offloaded Morgan Schneiderlin and Bastian Schweinsteiger this season and, with Carrick and Rooney also likely to leave, Fellaini's ability to play as either a defensive or attacking midfielder position has made him a key figure in the manager's plans for next season.

Fellaini rejected interest from the Chinese Super League in January after being told by Mourinho that he would play a significant role during the second half of the season.

(Source: Soccernet)

## IOC expresses regret over NHL's Olympic no-show

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has expressed its regret that the world's best ice hockey players will miss next year's Winter Games after the National Hockey League opted against participation in Pyeongchang.

The NHL reached a decision on Monday to not release its players for the Games, saying talks to find a solution to the problem of halting their league mid-season to accommodate the Olympics in the past had not been successful.

"I feel sorry for the athletes because for them it must be a great disappointment," IOC President Thomas Bach told reporters in Aarhus on Tuesday. "Obviously, they (NHL) wanted more money or whatever, we do not know what they really wanted.

"The IOC policy cannot be there to give more money, finances, to a commercially orientated owner of a club in a national league," Bach added, admitting that he had expected the NHL's decision.

In an earlier statement, the IOC said: "The decision is even more regrettable, as the International Ice Hockey

Federation (IIHF) had offered the same conditions to the NHL as at previous Olympic Games, where the insurance and travel costs were covered."

The Pyeongchang Winter Games will take place in South Korea from Feb. 9-25 next year.

Unhappy over the prospect of shutting down their season for almost three weeks, the NHL had been seeking major concessions from the IOC, including recognition comparable to that of an Olympic top sponsor, for taking part.

The IOC and the IIHF had agreed to ensure payment of transportation and insurance for the players after having initially refused, in an effort to reach an agreement.

PLAYERS UPSET

The decision will impact almost every major hockey-playing nation with the Swedish, Finnish, Russian, United States and Canadian teams almost entirely comprised of NHL representatives.

However, some players have said they would like to go to the Games irrespective of what the league had decided.

"We players knew nothing, because naturally they haven't spoken to us," Ottawa Senators captain Erik Karlsson told Swedish sports newspaper Sportbladet.

"It's so idiotic. Whoever did this has obviously no idea what they are doing."

With both the 2018 and the 2022 Winter Games in Asia and the NHL making efforts to tap into the region's lucrative market, the logic behind the decision was lost on Swedish goaltender Henrik Lundqvist, who plays for the New York Rangers.

"Disappointing news, @NHL won't be part of the Olympics 2018. A huge opportunity to market the game at the biggest stage is wasted," he said on Twitter.

Bach said all players, including those in the NHL, were welcome should they decide to compete in South Korea.

"For us, the players are always welcome. If any NHL player wants to join his Olympic team then he is most welcome," he said.

(Source: Reuters)



# Iran lose to South Korea in Asian Boys' U19 Volleyball Championship semis

Fired-up Korea, powered by ace spiker Im Donghyeok, repeatedly stunned defending and seven-time champions Iran in hard-fought five-set thriller 25-19 25-22 23-16-25 9-15 in the thrilling semi-final match to go up against Japan in the final showdown of the SMM 11th Asian Boys' U19 Volleyball Championship at the Wunna Theikdi Indoor Stadium Hall B on Tuesday.

Korea, which have already beaten the Iranians in straight sets in their Pool B preliminary round, played a tough first set against the title-holders, led by hard-attacking Morteza Sharifi. At 16-16, Korea won a crucial point, but Iran's head coach Mohammad Vakili attempted to protest against the referee's decision and was shown a red card. From then, Korea went on their mighty attacks to win the set 25-19.

In the second set, Korea still gained the upper hand to take an initial 15-11 lead and stretched it to 24-17, needing only one more point to take the set. However, Iran were just never-say-die to counter-attack well and save five set points before Korea won it 25-22.

Iran gave it all-out to race to a 5-0 lead in the third set and widen the margin 7-4. Korea maintained their poise and fought back mightily to catch the Iranians at 14-14 and again 20-20. Iran bagged the set 25-23 and went on their sparkling form to win the fourth set 25-16. Korea were back on the right track to win the decider 15-9, match and a final berth.

Im Donghyeok scored a match-high 41 points including 39 kills from 73 attempts, while Morteza Sharifi topscored with 30 points for Iran including 23 kills, 4 stuff blocks and 3 ace serves. Ali Tabari contributed 18 attack hits.

(Source: asianvolleyball)



## Ryuji Sato to officiate Persepolis vs Al Rayyan in ACL



**S P O R T S** Japanese referee d e s k Ryuji Sato has been appointed to officiate Iran's Persepolis vs Al Rayyan of Qatar match in Group D of the AFC Champions League.

Persepolis will host Michael Laudrup's team in Tehran's Azadi Stadium in Group D on April 10.

Sato will be assisted by his two countrymen in this match.

This is a must-win game for Persepolis since the Reds have lost to Al Rayyan 3-1 on March 14 in Doha and are third in the standings with four points, two points adrift of the Qatari team.

Ryuji Sato has refereed internationally in the ASEAN Football Championship, and FIFA World Cup qualifiers. He is also a referee at the J. League Division 1.

## Iran learn fate at Asian Women's Volleyball Championship



**S P O R T S** Iran will be playing d e s k in Pool D of the 2017 Asian Women's Volleyball Championship slated on August 9 to 17 in Manila, the Philippines.

The Iranian team have been drawn along with reigning Southeast Asian Games winners and third seed Thailand, fourth seed Taiwan, Iran and Maldives.

Pool A consists of the Philippines, Kazakhstan and Hong Kong.

Seeing action in Pool B are defending champions and Rio Olympics gold medalists China, 2012 London Olympics bronze medalists Japan and Australia while second seed South Korea, fifth seed Vietnam, Sri Lanka and New Zealand are in Pool C.

The top two teams in each group will advance to the quarterfinals while the losing teams will play in the classification round.

## Luis Enrique plans year-long holiday after Barcelona stint

Luis Enrique has said he is planning to take a break from football after leaving Barcelona in the summer.

Luis Enrique said he is not thinking about joining another team after leaving the Catalan giants and wants a year to recover from his time at the Camp Nou.

Although Barcelona have been successful in his reign -- with two La Liga titles and the 2015 Champions League triumph, among other trophies -- he said the job has taken a toll on him.

The former Roma and Celta Vigo boss said in a news conference on Tuesday: "If I'm leaving Barcelona, my home, where I have a great relationship with the club and the players, it's purely for tiredness. I need to recover. I'm not thinking about other teams."

"It will be a year to recover, but now what's left to do is to end the season with all our objectives achieved."

Barcelona are still fighting for the Champions League,



have booked their place in the Copa del Rey final and trying to overtake Real Madrid at the top of La Liga.

On Wednesday night they host Sevilla, who recently

announced they would be losing sporting director Monchi.

Asked if he would like to team up with the Sevilla man, Luis Enrique joked: "I don't see Monchi on the beach in Escalerona [in Gijon], where I will be. I don't see him planning that."

"I will go there to rest and to the beach when there's good weather. If he comes I'll invite him for a drop of cider."

"This isn't a new thing. I'm not going to coach next season and then in the future, we will see."

Luis Enrique's assistant, Juan Carlos Unzué, has been tipped to replace him as coach, but the incumbent does not want to interfere in the club's selection process.

"We will see if Unzué comes cycling with me in the summer. If like normal I leave him behind, it won't be a problem," he joked.

(Source: Soccermet)

## Zlatan Ibrahimovic could be 'difficult' at Ajax - Everton's Ronald Koeman

Everton boss Ronald Koeman says Zlatan Ibrahimovic is "still one of the best" as he prepares to face Manchester United on Tuesday but acknowledged he found the striker "difficult" when managing him at Ajax.

Ibrahimovic is set to return to the United side at Old Trafford after serving a three-match suspension, with the 35-year-old having scored 15 Premier League goals so far in his first ever season in England.

Koeman had managed the former Sweden international at Ajax, helping launch his career after a difficult start to life in the Netherlands, and said he has huge respect for his abilities.

"He is still one of the best and I still admire the boy," he told reporters. "I know him really well, and he is still showing really well at his age, being still so important for the team and scoring goals,

showing he's still one of the best -- I have great respect for him.

"I'm not surprised [by his continued success] because he really has that talent and he's so strong, and maybe mentally he's one of the strongest players I know."

Discussing his experiences managing Ibrahimovic, he said: "He was young and sometimes also difficult!"

"Yeah, but, OK, it's normal. I'm also better now to handle for a coach than when I was 19.

"And he was funny but sometimes difficult because when I was at Ajax we had a lot of young players at that time -- [Wesley] Sneijder, [Rafaël] van der Vaart, [Nigel] de Jong, [John] Heitinga, Mido, Zlatan. We had really big talents at that time, but all were 19, driving Porsches, driving Ferraris ... eh?! New generation."

"Stories? I tell you about it Wednesday."

Asked he had to fine Ibrahimovic a few times, he smiled and said: "We had some really strong talks to him, yes!"

He said it had been beneficial to his career "as a young coach at that time" to deal with Ibrahimovic and added: "I met Zlatan three or four times in the last four or five months, and if we speak about that time, he knows -- he knows perfectly -- how he was when he was 19 and how he is now."

Everton will be looking to Romelu Lukaku -- the Premier League's leading scorer with 23 goals so far -- to deliver against United after he struggled to make an impact in the 3-1 derby defeat to Liverpool at the weekend.

Koeman was reluctant to draw comparisons between Lukaku and Ibrahimovic but said the Belgium international had similar mental strength.

"You can't compare a 23-year-old boy with Zlatan now," he said. "Zlatan makes



those steps through his whole career, and the mental way, I don't have any doubt about Rom in that case.

"He really is that player who thinks a lot about football and he's really honest in his performances. Rom knows by himself when it's good and when it isn't good -- like last Saturday, he was not performing like he can do -- and what the team needs."

(Source: soccermet)

## First Tehran marathon: 'Let's build bridges, not walls'

Halfway through the Athens Classic Marathon in November 2003, Dutchman Sebastian Straten was about to collapse. The then 30-year-old runner had trained for five months for his first 42km race, yet his legs were giving up on him as he hit an uphill section of the course in the Greek capital.

"But I told myself, 'I want to finish this,'" he said. "When I start something, I never like to give up. It doesn't matter how hard it is. I think that every runner has that mentality."

Straten clocked four hours and 30 minutes as he reached the finish line at Panathinaiko Stadium, the same venue as the 1896 and 2004 Olympic ceremonies.

Organizing the first marathon in Tehran on April 7 is like running in Athens all over again and doing it every day, Straten told Al Jazeera.

"It is extremely challenging. I feel like I am constantly running to make sure that everything goes well."

Tehran-based organizer Maryam Feize said by bringing the marathon to Tehran, they want runners around the world to experience Iranian hospitality through sport, as well as their food, arts and culture, which were closed off to the West following decades of sanctions that were only lifted last year.



"We want to show everybody that Iran is a partner in making bridges, not walls." Just recently, Iran has been the target of US President Donald Trump's travel ban.

On that first Friday of April, runners from more than 50 countries will gather in the Iranian capital to make history.

According to the event website, 1,121 have so far registered online for the race, which also includes half-marathon, 10km races and a 1km fun run for children. Straten said hundreds of local runners are also expected to sign up.

For a country not accustomed to the tradition of street running, convincing public officials to shut down 42km stretch of roads in Tehran, and allow runners to take over the metropolis of 16 million people was the first challenge, he said.

"To do something new is always more difficult. It took a lot of explaining what a marathon is all about," Straten said.

"It is the first time something like this is being held in Tehran, so it is very special for local authorities to make sure everything goes well and safely."

### Running for the environment

That the run is being held on a weekend eased concerns that it would create more congestion in a city already grappling with vehicular gridlock.

Straten said that with the marathon, Tehran can also help promote environmental awareness and the importance of clean air. In November 2016, as many as 412 deaths were blamed on the city's air pollution, according to Fars News.

With the snow-capped Alborz Mountains serving as their backdrop, runners will crisscross Tehran, starting from Azadi (Freedom) Stadium, passing by the Azadi Tower, the iconic marble structure prominent in many rallies and protests including the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Other landmarks dotting the route include the Ferdowsi Square, built in honor of the famous Persian poet, Ferdowsi, and the Tehran City Theatre along Valiasr, one of the longest streets in the Middle East.

Straten said having organized a similar race in the southern city of Shiraz last year helped convince officials that a marathon can be done in the country.

But for Straten, who also operates a travel agency helping foreign runners come to Iran, the event is not just about work. He met his wife, Forough, while touring the ancient city of Yazd in 2005.

"Lighting struck," he said with a chuckle. He ended up staying in Iran for five years. They now have two children.

He hopes the race will also ignite passion in outdoor running among the country's youth, who make up over 70 percent of the 80 million population.

### 'Once in a lifetime experience'

Convincing foreign runners to join and come to Iran was another hurdle.

"We have to explain to the runners that Iran is a perfectly safe country, and that there is no hostility towards Westerners or foreign tourists or runners," Straten said.

For Canadian Iranian runner Haleh Magnus, however, there is nothing more special than taking part in the first marathon in her city of birth.

Magnus told Al Jazeera she decided to extend her family's stay in Iran for a week, so she could join the race.

"I truly believe running is the best sport for the soul and body, and a unique event like this can be inspiring to lots of people around the world," said Magnus, who is running 15 races this year, including an ultra-marathon in June.

There were some confusion about the rules on female runners, and whether they could run at all. Organizers told Al Jazeera women are allowed to run as long as they adhere to Iran's dress code.

Andre Doehring joined last year's race in Shiraz, where only male runners officially participated. He said running close to the ancient city of Persepolis was "unique". Doehring, who had also run a marathon in Bamiyan, Afghanistan, said he hopes the Tehran race will "bring people together".

Albertas Juknys had run 16 marathons including Paris in 2009. He managed to finish the Shiraz race after getting injured. Like him, he urged foreign runners to sign up for the Tehran Marathon.

Family ties persuaded British runner Babak Walker to join. He last visited his mother's country of birth in 2009..

"To be there for the inaugural event is a really exciting, once in a lifetime thing," he said. "I've made a big effort to get there. But I think it will be worth it."

Despite some injuries and recent illness, Walker said he is determined not to miss out on the opportunity, "even if I'm hobbling over the line."

"My grandmother will be there in Tehran cheering me on."

(Source: Al Jazeera News)



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■ Managing Director: Ali Asgari  
■ Editor-in-Chief: Hassan Lasjerdi

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98(21) 88808214 editor@tehrantimes.com  
» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000  
» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450  
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## Nominations for Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year announced

**A R T TEHRAN** — The nominations for the d e s k Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year were announced on Tuesday.



The nominees are painter Hassan Ruholamin, cartoonist Masud Shojaei Tabatabai, filmmakers Ebrahim Hatamikia and Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian and authors Mohammadreza Bayrami, Behnaz Zarrabizadeh and Hamid Hessam.

The winners will be announced during the closing ceremony of the Week of Islamic Revolution Arts, which will open in Tehran on April 8, reported the Art Bureau, the

organizer of the event.

The Art Bureau organizes the weeklong festival every year to remember Morteza Avini, the acclaimed documentarian who was martyred by a landmine in 1993 when he was making a documentary in the former Iran-Iraq war zone in southwestern Iran.

## NEWS IN BRIEF



### “Owsia” crowned best at Trenton Film Festival

**A R T TEHRAN** — Iranian documentarian d e s k Alireza Dehqan’s “Owsia” (“Darkened Water”) has won the best short documentary award at the Trenton Film Festival in the United States.

“Owsia” is about ancient aqueducts in the central Iranian city of Yazd.

“Who’s Gonna Love Me Now?” by Tomer Heymann from Israel received the best feature-length documentary film award at the festival, which was held in Trenton from March 30 to April 2.

“Jasmine” by Dax Phelan from the U.S. was named best film.

## U.S. court approves lawsuit against Germany over claims of Nazi art theft

**WASHINGTON (Reuters)** — A U.S. federal judge has allowed a lawsuit to proceed against Germany over claims of the Nazi-era theft from Jewish dealers of a celebrated collection of gilded medieval art treasures.

It was the first time a U.S. court had agreed to hear Nazi art theft claims against Germany, said Nicholas O’Donnell, an attorney for the heirs of three Jewish art dealers who say the Nazis terrorized their families in 1935 into selling the collection at far below market price.

The claim against Germany seeks the return of the Welfenschatz collection, which includes centuries-old gem-studded busts of saints and golden crucifixes.

Germany had asked for the case to be thrown out, arguing that a U.S. court did not have jurisdiction to deal with the matter.

Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly ruled on Friday, however, in federal court in Washington that since the Nazis’ organized plunder of Jewish property was part and parcel of their later genocide of the Jews - a crime under international law - the court had jurisdiction to hear the case.

Germany argued the case had already been heard before a German commission assessing Nazi-era property claims, which found the low sales price was a product of a collapse in the art market during the Great Depression - not because the Jewish art collectors were persecuted.

“This is a dispute that was already resolved on the merits in Germany, and it doesn’t belong in a U.S. court,” Germany’s attorney, Jonathan Freiman, said in an email.

The Welfenschatz was collected for centuries by the Brunswick Cathedral in Brunswick, Germany, according to court records. In 1929, a group of Jewish art dealers in Germany bought the art from the Duke of Brunswick.

Six years later, the dealers sold the art to the state of Prussia, then being administered by prominent Nazi official Hermann Goering. Pressure from the Nazis caused the dealers to sell for just 35 percent of its market value, lawyers for the heirs said.

O’Donnell told Reuters in an interview that the money the dealers received was deposited into a bank account they were unable to access because it was blocked by the Nazis.

## “Harmless Ruler” named Iran’s best-selling album of the year

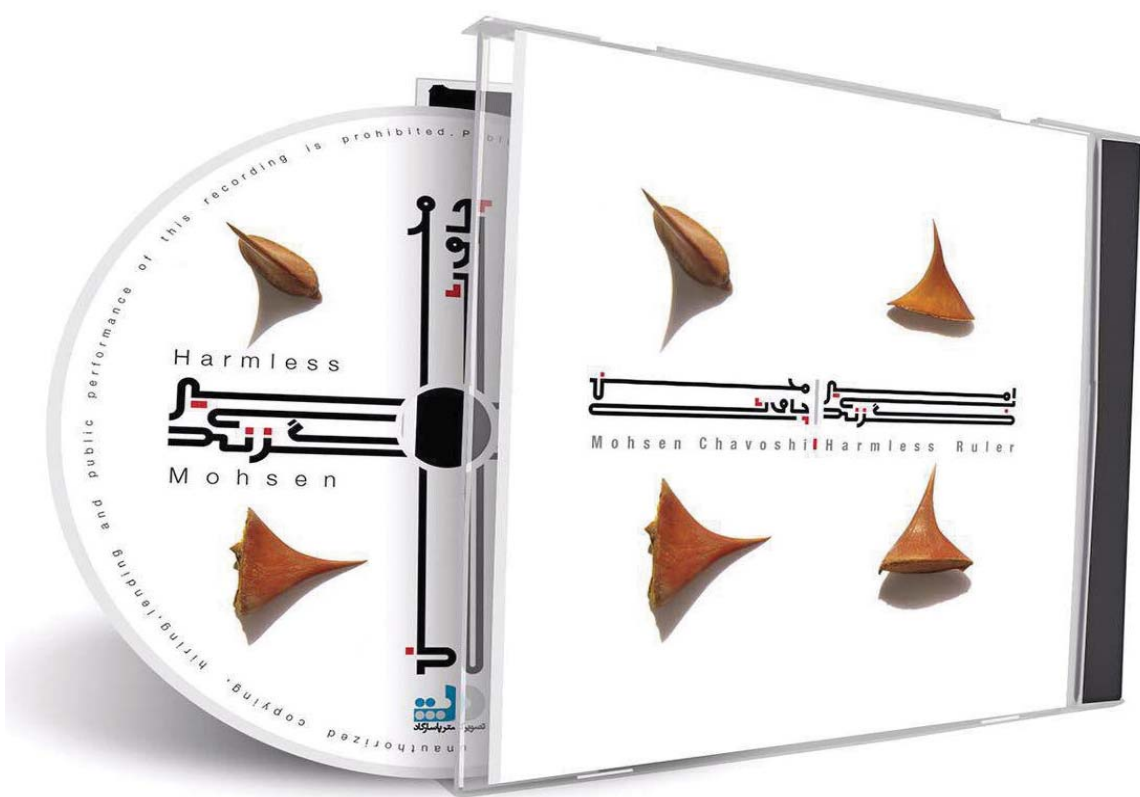
**A R T TEHRAN** — Iranian pop singer Mohsen d e s k Chavoshi’s “Harmless Ruler” (“Amire Bi Gazand”) has become Iran’s best-selling album of the year, Bepptunes, a major online Iranian music shop, has announced.

Released last June, “Harmless Ruler”, which contains songs composed by Sadi and Rumi and works by contemporary poets including Pedram Parizi and Hossein Safa.

The album is followed by Mohammadreza Shajarian’s “The Way of Love”, which the vocalist icon of Iranian traditional music had recorded with a number of legendary musicians in the Aref ensemble in 1989.

“30 Years Old” by pop singer Ehsan Khajeh-Amiri, “Walk of Ordibehesht” by Daal Band and “I Said Don’t Go” by Mohammad Alizadeh come next.

“Untold” by Hafez Nazeri, “Love Again” by Hamed Homayun, “Full Length Mirror” by Mehdi Yarahi and “Manshur” by Kaveh Yaghmai are also among the top-sellers.



## Fajr festival announces lineup for Retrospective of Korean Cinema

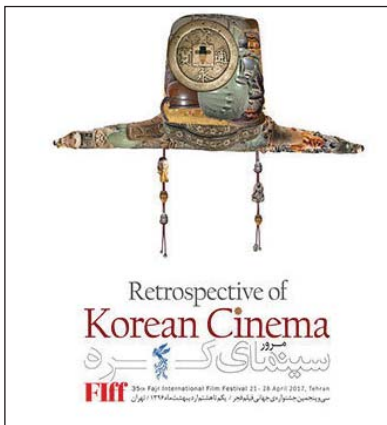
**A R T TEHRAN** — The d e s k 35th Fajr International Film Festival announced the lineup for the Retrospective of Korean Cinema on Tuesday.

Seven movies from South Korean filmmakers will be reviewed in the program.

“The Table” by Kim Jong-kwan, “The Net” by Kim Ki-duk, “Train to Busan” by Yeon Sang-ho and “The Tunnel” by Kim Seong-hun are among the films.

The lineup also includes “The Throne” by Lee Joon-ik, “The Last Princess” by Hur Jin-ho and “Luck-Key” by Lee Gae-byok.

The 35th Fajr International Film



Festival will be running from April 21 to 28.

## Book City Institute to host workshops on Persian translation of philosophical texts

**A R T TEHRAN** — The d e s k Book City Institute in Tehran will be hosting workshops on the Persian translation of philosophical texts.

The workshops will be organized for five weeks every Tuesday from May 2, the institute has announced on Tuesday.

Participants will be asked to translate texts by the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza, and German philosophers Friedrich Hegel and Martin Heidegger.

The texts have been selected by scholar Mohammad-Mehdi Ardebili and will come in English. The



translated texts will be reviewed and discussed during the workshops.

## Adaptation of “Le Prénom” to go on stage at Tehran theater

**A R T TEHRAN** — An adaptation of “Le d e s k Prénom” (“The Given Name”) by Alexandre de La Patellière and Matthieu Delaporte will be performed at Tehran’s Paliz Theater this evening.

Director Ali Ahmadi has renamed the play “Peperoni for Dictator” for his project, the Persian news websites announced on Tuesday.

The play, which will star Khosro Ahmadi, Pejman Jamshidi and Mohsen Kiai, has been sold out for the

first nine days of its month-long performances.

Nasim Adabi, Sogol Qalatian and Ali Ahmadi are other members of the cast.

Ahmadi staged the play with a different cast at Tehran’s Iranshahr Theater Complex in summer 2015.

De La Patellière and Delaporte directed a screen adaptation of the play in 2012. The French-Belgian comedy film titled “What’s in a Name?” was a box office success in France, selling 3,340,231 tickets.



Left to right, Mohsen Kiai, Pejman Jamshidi, Jaleh Sameti, and Khosro Ahmadi perform “Peperoni for Dictator” in a file photo at Tehran’s Iranshahr Theater Complex on August 4, 2015. (Mehr/Khosro Parkhideh)

## Harrison Ford not disciplined by U.S. agency for pilot mishap

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — Actor Harrison Ford, the daring space pilot of “Star Wars” fame, will get to keep flying airplanes in real life after federal officials closed a probe of his latest aviation mishap near Los Angeles without fines or other discipline, his lawyer said on Monday.

Ford, 74, came under investigation after he mistakenly flew his single-engine private plane over an American Airlines passenger jet and landed on a taxiway, rather than a runway, on Feb. 13 at John Wayne Airport in Santa Ana.

The Federal Aviation Administration determined at the conclusion of its inquiry that “no administrative or enforcement action was warranted,” Ford’s lawyer, Stephen Hofer said in a statement. “Mr. Ford retains his pilot’s certificate without restriction.”

The actor, who played swashbuckling space smuggler and Millennium Falcon pilot Han Solo in the “Star Wars” film franchise, also was cited by the agency for his “long history of compliance” with FAA regulations and “his cooperative attitude during the investigation,” Hofer said.

Although Ford incurred no penalty, he agreed to undergo voluntary “airman counseling” before the FAA closed the matter, his lawyer said. It was Ford’s second known misadventure in the more than 20 years since becoming a licensed pilot.

In 2015, he crashed a vintage plane onto a golf course near a Santa Monica airport, suffering serious injuries and badly damaging the aircraft. He told



Harrison Ford arrives at the European Premiere of Star Wars, The Force Awakens in Leicester Square, London, December 16, 2015.

(Reuters/Dylan Martinez/File Photo)

investigators then he did not recall the moments before the plane went down.

In addition to interviewing Ford following the Santa Ana incident, investigators examined audio tapes of pilot and air traffic control radio traffic, radar data and a three-dimensional flight analysis.

The actor was alone and at the controls of his Aviat Husky on a landing approach when he errantly flew over a Boeing 737 preparing for takeoff with 116 passengers and crew aboard, then landed his plane on a taxiway parallel to the runway assigned him.

Ford was clearly embarrassed by the gaffe, according to radio traffic, acknowledging to the tower, “I’m the schmuck that landed on the taxiway.”

An air traffic controller assures the film star that the mishap is “no big deal.”

Audio also revealed Ford had apparently been momentarily distracted by an Airbus passenger jet landing just ahead of him.

## ‘Speaking up,’ Depeche Mode expect more musicians to sing about world today

**LONDON (Reuters)** — With lyrics like “We’re going backwards” and “Blame misinformation”, the British electronic band Depeche Mode hope to “make people think” about the state of the world with their new album and expect more musicians to do the same.

Singer Dave Gahan, guitarist and keyboardist Martin Gore and

keyboardist Andrew Fletcher last month released “Spirit”, featuring politically and socially-charged songs like “Where’s the Revolution”, first inspired in 2015 by the Syrian conflict.

“When Martin ... wrote the songs a couple of years ago, he was sort of feeling that things weren’t going in the right direction,” Fletcher told Reuters.

“We don’t feel music can change things, really, but just to make people think a bit, look around the world and see what’s going on.”

Breaking onto the British new wave scene in the 1980s, the band is known for its synthpop music rather than being “overtly political” and decided to “speak up a bit” in its latest work,

Fletcher said.

“I feel there definitely is a move to the right all over Europe and Britain to a certain extent and definitely in America. Personally, I think it is something to worry about a little bit. We’re not communists ... we’re just slightly left ... I think there probably will be a reaction in music,” he said.