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Iran, Saudi Arabia not to play each other in neutral venues: AFC **15**

## Sochi conference: Syria's transition point to a new era

By Hanif Ghaffari

**TEHRAN** — Russia hosted a meeting in Sochi, which was referred to as a summit aimed at “portraying the prospect of the region”. The great role of the leaders of Iran, Russia and Turkey should be taken into consideration in this regard. Before the Sochi conference, foreign ministers from the three countries met in Antalya, Turkey. At the meeting, they discussed the latest developments in Syria. As for the Sochi meeting and its importance, there are points that can't easily be overtaken:

First, the Sochi meeting took place after the official announcement of the defeat and destruction of ISIS in Syria and Iraq. That's why Sochi's conference is considered to be the most important meeting on Syria in recent years. In the course of other Syria-centered meetings, we saw the explicit demands of the United States and its representatives and allies, the demands which were contrary to the will of Syrian people.

Meanwhile, Turkey, which is considered the enemy of the Syrian government and has played a significant role in strengthening the terrorist and takfiri groups over the past years, has practically represented the other dissenters of the regime of Bashar al-Assad in previous meetings. However, during the Sochi Summit, the hands of the opponents of the Syrian government were all empty. The defeat of ISIS in Syria, in spite of great investment on its survival by the West, has led to an increase in the power of the Syrian defenders in the talks. **→13**

# Mohammadzadeh wins APSA special mention



See page 16

Iranian actor Navid Mohammadzadeh (L) shakes hands with APSA Academy President Jack Thompson after being honored with a special mention during the 11th Asia Pacific Screen Awards in Brisbane, Australia on November 23, 2017.

## Cornage in Egypt mosque

At least 235 people have been killed and dozens injured in a shooting attack and bombing at a mosque in the restive Sinai Peninsula, state TV said.

Police officers said militants attacked al-Rawdah mosque in the town of Bir al-Abd, 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the North Sinai provincial capital of el-Arish, during Friday prayers.

Egyptian state media MENA provided the death toll, citing an official security

source. It also said that 120 people were wounded in the attack.

Local media reports said that attackers planted explosives and then opened fire on worshippers while the sermon was under way.

The attack reportedly targeted the supporters of Egyptian security forces attending prayers there.

No group has so far claimed responsibility for the attack, **→3**

## Macron's remarks show he is inexperienced: IRGC chief

**POLITICS DESK** **TEHRAN** — The commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps said on Thursday that French President Emanuel Macron's remarks about Iran's missile program show that the French leader is inexperienced.

“This issue [missile program] is different from the nuclear issue. Missile power

is a defensive capability,” Mohammad Ali Jafari said in a press conference.

During a visit to Dubai on November 9, Macron said he was “very concerned” by Tehran's missile program.

The French president also called for a firm stance over Iran's ballistic missile program, raising the prospect of possible sanctions on Tehran with regard to those activities. **→2**

## Saudi crown prince's attempt to raise his head among political pros

By staff & agencies

The House of Saud regime's king in waiting, Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman (MBS), has spoken out on the Persian Gulf kingdom's controversial foreign policy in an interview with the New York Times published on Thursday.

The inexperienced Saudi regime prince, now first in line to succeed

81-year-old King Salman Bin Abdulaziz, compared the regional power house of Iran to Nazi Germany and lauded the United States President Donald Trump as “the right person at the right time.”

He went on to further compare the situation between Riyadh and Tehran to Europe in World War II. **→13**



## ARTICLE

By Seyed Hossein Mousavian  
Princeton University  
Researcher

## The wrong way to address Iran's missile program

In remarks on Oct. 13 when decertifying Iranian compliance with the July 2015 nuclear deal, U.S. President Donald Trump called on Congress to address the “near total silence on Iran's missile program” and prevent it from “developing an intercontinental ballistic missile.” Congress has since floated bills that would not only impose further sanctions on Iran for its missiles, but would also condition America's commitment to the nuclear deal on Iran's missile policies.

While the European Union and the United States differ on the nuclear deal, they have taken a common position on Iran's missile capability, with French President Emmanuel Macron saying on Nov. 9 that Iran's missile program should be restricted, either via negotiations or sanctions.

U.S. and European assumptions about Iran's missiles often fail, however, to consider the political, legal, defensive and regional security contexts of the program. To hedge the nuclear deal's fate on such a misguided understanding of Iran's missile ambitions only serves to doom the deal and reinforce the rationale behind Iran's missile program in the minds of decision-makers in Tehran.

In the political arena, Trump regularly lambasts the nuclear deal for not doing more to address Iran's missile program and its regional activities. Indeed, the nuclear deal, by design, focused only on the crisis surrounding Iran's nuclear program.

Ironically, during the tenure of former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran had put regional issues on the negotiating table in its nuclear talks with the United States and the other world powers, but the Americans and Europeans at the time balked at the prospect of bringing regional issues into the discussion. Senior U.S. and European nuclear negotiators have since told me that they believed going beyond the nuclear issue would have bogged down the negotiations process.

Legally speaking, the Trump administration has no basis for pursuing punitive measures against Iran for its missile program. There is no international treaty curtailing the development of ballistic missiles, and 31 countries, including Iran, currently possess ballistic missiles. **→7**

## Fidel left us the banner of resistance

### PERSPECTIVE

By Alexis Bandrich Vega  
Cuban ambassador to Tehran

With deep pain, but with unwavering firmness and loyalty to his legacy, millions of Cubans and friends of the world today commemorate the first anniversary of the physical disappearance of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz.

Fidel, who had the universe as his homeland, was a profound connoisseur of the history of humanity, and a tireless fighter for world peace and security. This explains his deep concerns about the dangers that have loomed over Iran, especially in recent years.

Fidel emerged as a strong defender of the integrity, sovereignty and independence of the Persian nation. In his reflections, widely read throughout the world, he persuaded those who threatened Iran of its great defensive power and that this warlike people would not bow to the demands of any foreign nation. He was convinced of the resilience of the Iranian government and

**Fidel emerged as a strong defender of the integrity, sovereignty and independence of the Persian nation.**

## Philippines presses for Shia-Sunni dialogue

By Marjan Golpira

**TEHRAN** — Jose Claveria De Venecia, the special envoy of Philippine President Duterte for inter-cultural dialogue, is pushing for talks between Sunni and Shia Muslims, no matter how “difficult”, “slim” and “almost impossible” it may sound.

The five-time former speaker of the House of Representatives of the Philippines told the Tehran Times in an interview recently that he is taking initiative by proposing the “revival of Shia-Sunni interfaith dialogue.”

the self-proclaimed “father of interfaith dialogue”, who introduced the topic to the United Nations in 2004, de Venecia sparked the idea when it was a “taboo” to bring up a religious issue at the United Nations addresses.

He believes in not just interfaith dialogue among Christians, Muslims and Buddhists, etc., but intrafaith dialogue among Muslims to bridge the gap and divisions among them.

The envoy opined that much of the conflict in the “Persian Gulf region” and part of “North Africa” stems from Sunni-Shia divide that could eventually “lead to destruction of the Middle East.”

“Conflicts in Libya, in Yemen, in part of Jordan and Lebanon and South Asia” come from the Sunni-Shia conflict, he noted.

The former speaker said by leaving the Middle East, ISIS is moving to South Asia, Central Asia and now to South East Asia where his country the Philippines is situated.

In June 2017, a group of pro-ISIS militants

people, and of their religious leaders, inspired by the Islamic Revolution of Ruhollah Khomeini, creator of the Guardians of the Revolution.

The optimism, the humanism and dignity of Fidel, his permanent struggle and his ironclad conviction in unity, in victory and in the triumph of ideas, are the inspiration of millions of revolutionaries in Cuba and in the world.

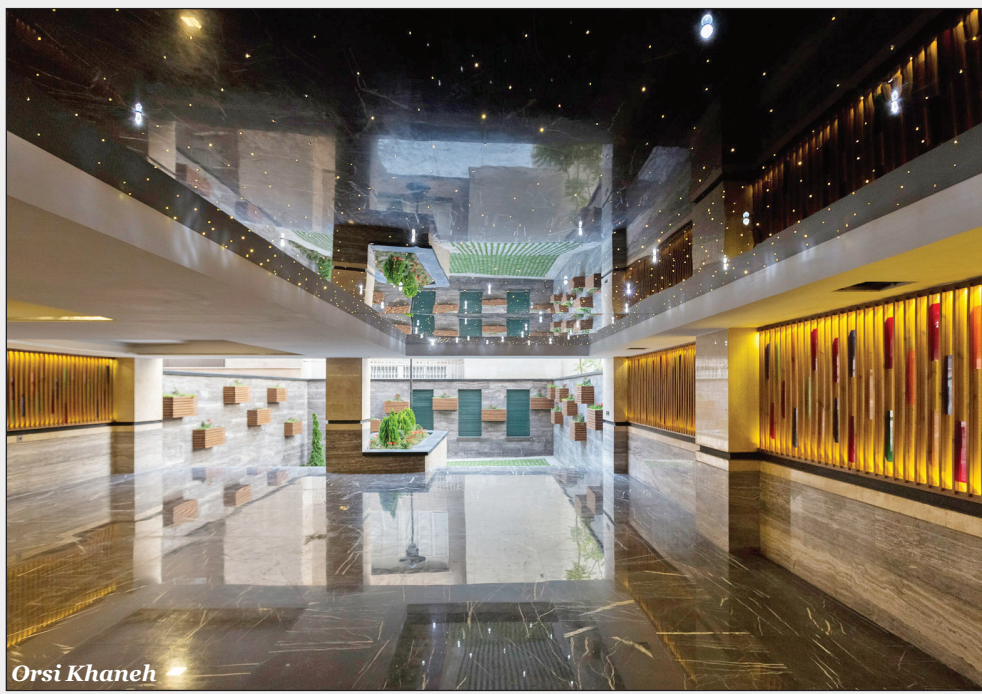
Fidel not only left us his ideas, projects and works, Fidel left us the banner of resistance and triumph.

Thank you infinite Fidel!

“Death is not true when the work of life has been well fulfilled”

- José Martí.

November 25, 2017.



Orsi Khaneh

## Iranian projects, professional honored at Middle East Architect Awards

**A R T DESK** **TEHRAN** — Several Iranian projects and an expert were honored at the 10th Middle East Architect Awards 2017 on Thursday night in Dubai.

Orsi Khaneh located on Olyai Street off Nasr Street in Tehran was announced as the Residential Project of the Year during a gala ceremony at the Ritz Carlton.

The structure has been designed by Nima and Sina Keivani who won a silver award for their joint design “House of the Sun” in the Interior Space and Exhibition Design category of the A' Design Award and Competition in Italy in May. **→16**



## ARTICLE

By Mahnaz Abdi  
Head of the Economy Desk  
of the TehranTimes

## PTA a key to promote Iran's competitiveness

Preferential tariff refers to tariff favoring the products of one country preferential to another. Under a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) the customs duties for selected imported goods are lower or totally eliminated.

As one of the strategies to promote the competitiveness of its products both in domestic and international markets, Iran has put signing PTAs with other countries on its agenda.

On October 18, Mojtaba Khosrotaj, the head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), mentioned Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan and India as the four countries with priority for PTA, with them Iran is conducting related negotiations. He had also previously announced Iran's readiness to ink PTAs with some countries including Afghanistan and Oman. Meanwhile, in the seventh round of Iran-Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) meetings, which was held at the deputy level in Tehran in mid-June, Iranian officials discussed preferential tariff on agricultural and industrial products with deputy industry and agriculture ministers from five EAEU member countries.

Iran Export Confederation Chairman Mohammad Lahouti is of the opinion that Iran should compensate for the lack of membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) through signing PTAs.

In a meeting between officials from industry and agriculture ministries, which was held last week at the place of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), Lahouti supported the idea by saying that a country like China once it was not a member of WTO, compensated its absence in the international body through inking some PTAs and balanced its trade in this way.

A good example of preferential trade effect on the expansion of Iran's exports is what we see in the country's trade with its neighbor Turkey. In an interview with ISNA in late October, Reza Kami, the Iranian chairman of Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce, said that Iran's exports to Turkey has increased to \$5 billion during the past nine months from \$2 billion in the same period of time in the past year as the result of preferential trade.

And it is why Khosrotaj says signing PTAs with the neighboring countries is on the agenda.

Preferential tariffs also boost competitiveness among domestic producers and they also could play significant role in averting products smuggling.



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Yemenis to emerge victorious against Riyadh, cleric predicts

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Ayatollah Kazem Seddiqi, the interim Friday prayer preacher of Tehran, has criticized Saudi Arabia's war on Yemen, predicting that the Yemeni people will soon emerge victorious.

Ayatollah Seddiqi told worshippers that despite all the crimes committed in Yemen, the Saudis have achieved "nothing" and that "the victory is for the Yemenis".

He also said the defeat of Daesh (ISIS) in Syria and Iraq was in fact the defeat of the United States and the Zionist regime in the region.

The cleric also lauded the role of the Hezbollah resistance movement in fighting terrorism.



Afghanistan needs popular forces to fight terror: Larijani

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani has voiced concerns over the future of Afghanistan, saying the country needs to encourage popular forces alongside the army to launch an effective fight against terrorism, Mehr news agency reported.

Larijani made the remarks in a meeting with his Afghan counterpart Abdul Rauf Ibrahimy on Thursday on the sidelines of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) in Istanbul.

"The situation in the region warns [us] that some difficulties may plague Afghanistan, therefore we are seeking to establish security in this country," Larijani said.



Diplomat praises Sochi summit on Syria

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Hassan Qashqavi has underlined the importance of further talks and cooperation between Iran and Turkey.

Qashqavi told Anadolu news agency that that the trilateral meeting of the presidents of Iran, Turkey and Russia in Sochi was a milestone in follow-up to the Astana talks, Fars reported on Thursday.

"This was the first time the three countries' presidents discuss the Syrian issue at this level," he said.

Iran, Turkey and Russia brokered the Astana peace initiative and agreed to act as guarantors of a nationwide Syrian ceasefire.



Ex-defense chief felicitates Nasrallah, Soleimani over ISIS defeat

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Former Defense Minister Hossein Dehqan has congratulated Hezbollah Secretary General Seyed Hassan Nasrallah and Major General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of Iran's Quds Force, over the victory of the resistance forces against Daesh (ISIS).

In two separate messages on Thursday, Dehqan said the sacrifices of the resistance forces and the people of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan against terrorists will never be forgotten, Tasnim reported.

It came days after General Soleimani declared the end of Daesh in a message to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

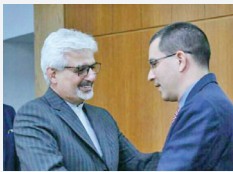


Rouhani likely to attend Paris climate summit

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iran's ambassador to Paris, Abolghassem Delfi, said on Wednesday that President Hassan Rouhani is likely to attend a summit on climate mobilization which will be held in France on December 12.

In an interview with France 24, Delfi said Tehran is considering the invitation to attend the summit. "A presidential visit cannot be organized overnight, so we are verifying the dates and the availability of our president."

Pointing to Macron's upcoming visit to Tehran, he said when the moment is right, the French president will visit Tehran.



Washington, Tel Aviv, Riyadh failed to split Syria, Iraq: envoy

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iran's ambassador to Caracas said on Friday that the U.S., Israel and Saudi Arabia tried but failed to disintegrate Syria and Iraq. Mostafa Alaei made the remarks in a meeting with Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza, IRNA reported.

Alaei said the Saudis are angry and have become more aggressive toward Iran and the resistance forces because their plots have been foiled.

Arreaza, for his part, said, "Venezuela is trying various ways including consultations with governments to de-escalate tensions in the Middle East region."

# We will help out wherever our presence needed to counter hegemony: Leader

In a meeting with the participants in a Tehran conference titled "The Admirers of the [Prophet Mohammad's] Household and the Issue of Takfiris", Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said unity and rapport in the Muslim community in the current circumstances are among the critical imperatives and added, "The Islamic Republic of Iran is standing and will continue to stand against the plot by the hegemonic and Zionist front to create war and conflict among Muslims and, with the blessing of God Almighty, will emerge victorious in this battle just as the malignant tree of Daesh was cut down in Iraq and Syria.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution reiterated, "Although Daesh reached its end in Iraq and Syria, we should not neglect the deceit and duplicity of enemies, because America and Zionism and their stooges will not give up enmity toward Islam and they might hatch and execute a plot like Daesh and such in another region."

Stressing that we cannot afford to ignore the enemy and we must be vigilant and cautious, Ayatollah Khamenei added, "One of the requirements of this awareness is kindness and camaraderie in the Muslim community, and the prerequisite for this kindness is countering any element that is openly hostile to the world of Islam or helps the enemies of Islam."

He cited love for the Prophet's Household as one of the suitable grounds for forging unity and rapport among Muslims and said, "The most important duty of the admirers of the Household in various countries is raising Mus-



lims' awareness concerning the realities of the world of Islam and the creation of the spirit of vigilance and awareness in the face of plots to sow discord within the Muslim community."

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution said Muslims in various countries are a reality imposed upon the hegemonic and heretic front and reiterated, "The world of Islam can stand up to hegemony and heresy today and the Islamic establishment in Iran, which seeks the full realization of Islamic rule, will be the means for victory over the enemies of Islam."

Ayatollah Khamenei pointed to around 40 years of conspiracy, pressure and sanc-

tions by America and Zionism against the Islamic establishment and said, "Despite all this pressure, the Islamic Republic of Iran, by the grace of God, has had dramatic progress and is standing against the hegemonic front with absolute power and strength and we openly declare that the Islamic Republic of Iran will help out wherever there is need for participation to counter hegemony and heresy and we have no consideration for anyone in expressing this issue."

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution described the issue of Palestine as the foremost issue of the world of Islam and added, "The

key to overcoming the enemies of Islam is the issue of Palestine, because the heretic, hegemonic and Zionist front has, through the expropriation of the Islamic state of Palestine, turned into a base to disrupt the security of regional countries, and the cancerous tumor of Israel must be confronted."

Ayatollah Khamenei said by sowing discord and conflict among Muslims, the enemies mainly aim to create a safety margin for the Zionist regime and said, "We hope that a day comes when the Palestinian people will become the owners of their own land and that day will be the day of celebration and festivity in the world of Islam."

He reiterated, "The day that Palestine is returned to Palestinians, hegemony will suffer a real blow in the back and we will strive for that day to come."

Prior to the remarks by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ali Akbar Velayati, the secretary general of the World Assembly of Islamic Awakening, said the motto of the "The Admirers of the [Prophet Mohammad's] Household and the Issue of Takfiris" conference is "Love for the Household, the promise of unity and revival of Islamic civilization" and said, "The enemies of Islam have in recent years been seeking to neutralize the effects and results of the Islamic Awakening through the two strategies of 'sowing sectarian discord' and '[promoting] Islamophobia'."

At the end of this meeting, a number of participants in the conference met closeup with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

(Source: leader.ir)

## Tehran: Even Riyadh's old allies stiffened by bin Salman's greenness

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi has responded to the recent anti-Iran statements by Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, saying the remarks shows bin Salman's "immature, unsophisticated behavior."

"The adventurist Saudi crown prince's mistakes, latest of which was the scandalous meddling [of Riyadh] in Leb-

anon's internal affairs, have even disturbed Saudi Arabia's traditional allies," Qassemi said in a statement on Friday.

He also advised bin Salman to think about the ultimate fate of the previous dictators in the region instead of looking up to them as his role models.

The Saudi crown prince recently revealed that Riyadh prefers a confrontational approach to "appeasement" in dealing with Iran.

## 'All parties' compliance crucial for nuclear deal to survive

Reza Najafi, Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, said on Thursday that all parties' compliance to the 2015 nuclear deal is "crucial" for the agreement to survive.

"As we have stated from the start of negotiations on the JCPOA and then its implementation, reciprocal and full implementation of the measures by all parties, including by E3/EU+3 is the crucial basis of the JCPOA and is the indispensable element of the agreement for its sustainability," Najafi said at the IAEA Board of Governors meeting.

Following is full text of his address published by IRNA: At the outset, I would like to express my government's appreciation to those delegations that either by their presence in our embassy or during this meeting extended their sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims of the sad event of recent earthquake.

Mr. Chairman, My delegation once more would like to express its appreciation to the Agency's Secretariat for its efforts on the monitoring and verification of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

As we have stated from the start of negotiations on the JCPOA and then its implementation, reciprocal and full implementation of the measures by all parties, including by E3/EU+3 is the crucial basis of the JCPOA and is the indispensable element of the agreement for its sustainability.

For our part, since the Implementation Day, we have honored our commitments under the JCPOA and the Agency's reports on verification and monitoring of JCPOA in Iran for the ninth time provides clear evidence to such commitment. However, the implementation of the commitments of other sides to the JCPOA, in particular the United States is unacceptable.

Indeed, by limiting Iran's benefits from the deal the US Government in contradiction with both letter and spirit of the agreement, particularly paragraphs 26, 28 and 29 of the JCPOA, has taken a negative approach to undermine "successful implementation" of the JCPOA. The US non-compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA has not only undermined this international agreement but also has put the US credibility for any international deal under serious question.

The JCPOA has provided for the full lifting of all UNSC



sanctions and all unilateral or multilateral nuclear-related sanctions.

Furthermore, the E3/EU+3 have an unequivocal responsibility to implement the JCPOA "in good faith and in a constructive atmosphere, based on mutual respect, and to refrain from any action inconsistent with the letter, spirit and intent of the JCPOA that would undermine its successful implementation". The US should comply with all its obligations under the JCPOA which only deals with nuclear issue.

In the recent visit of the Director General to Iran, our authorities at the highest levels stressed that the JCPOA is not a one-sided road and Iran's implementation of its commitments can continue if all other parties to the JCPOA continue to implement fully and unconditionally their commitments. Anything other than the good faith implementation is contrary to the letter and spirit of the JCPOA.

Mr. Chairman, We note that recent updated report (GOV/2017/48), once more demonstrates that Iran's nuclear program continues within the framework of the JCPOA.

Nonetheless, I would like to reiterate the following points: 1. As stated before, the JCPOA text on heavy water reads that all excess heavy water which is beyond Iran's needs will be made available for export to the international market based on international prices and delivered to the international buyer for 15 years. That is the only commitment Iran has in this regard.

2. We would like to stress, once more, that the report should be as concise as possible and stay away from mentioning avoidable detailed information, particularly it should not contain any confidential Safeguards information

## Iran to counter plots to create another Daesh, general says

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Major General Mohammad Baqeri, the chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces, has lauded the defeat of Daesh (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria, saying Iranian Armed Forces are prepared to counter plots by enemies to create another similar terror group.

Baqeri made the remarks in a congratulatory message to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on Thursday.

He said "although the fall of Daesh heralds the collapse of the sinister

dominance of the U.S. and its regional and extra-regional allies" but the guidelines of the Leader, who has called for vigilance in the face of enemy plots, should be taken into serious consideration, Press TV reported.

Brigadier General Massoud Jazayeri, the deputy chief of Iran's armed forces, has made similar remarks, saying the axis of resistance will reinforce itself until "the annihilation of the Zionist regime and the expulsion of the each and every last American soldier from the region."

## Velayati says Iran proud of its regional 'friendly influence'

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Ali Akbar Velayati, a top advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, said on Thursday that Iran is proud of its influence in the Middle East as its approach is "friendly".

"We are proud of our influence in the region, because this influence is friendly and the Islamic Republic of Iran practices altruism to protect its neighbors," he said in a televised interview.

If Iran did not help Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, Baghdad, Damascus and Beirut would now be controlled by Daesh, he said.

"Iran helped the Iraqi and Syrian legal

governments in fighting Daesh upon their requests and the aid was beneficial to them. If Iran had not entered (the scene) they would have not been able to resist against Daesh even for seven weeks," the veteran politician remarked.

Armed forces in Iraq and Syria, backed by popular mobilization units and Iranian military advisors, have managed to flush Daesh militants out of their last strongholds in both countries, declaring full victory over the notorious group.

Elsewhere, Velayati said that the Western countries seek to disintegrate the regional countries through creating division.

## Macron's remarks show he is inexperienced: IRGC chief

**▶▶▶ 'Victories do not mean total annihilation of Daesh'**

General Jafari also said that recent victories in defeating Daesh in Iraq and Syria do not mean a total annihilation of the terrorist group.

The Sovereignty of Daesh has been annihilated, he noted.

Daesh has not been completely annihilated and has gone underground in various countries especially Afghanistan, he said. "So, we put on agenda fighting their plots," he added.

Armed forces in Iraq and Syria, backed by popular mobilization units and Iranian military advisors, have managed to flush Daesh militants out of their last strongholds in both

countries, declaring full victory over the notorious group.

Commenting on Saudis' hostile approach towards Iran, Jafari said that Iran is practicing "self-restraint" because the country seeks to counter the U.S. and Zionist regime of Israel and not their allies.

He added Iran does not seek to enter "direct confrontation" with Saudi Arabia.



# Lebanon's Jumblatt criticizes Saudi regime over Hariri

## Hezbollah MPs welcome Hariri's return

By staff & agencies

Top Lebanese Druze politician Walid Jumblatt on Friday criticized the way Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri had been treated by "some Saudi circles", the first time he has appeared to direct blame at Riyadh over Hariri's resignation this month.

Lebanese officials say the House of Saud regime put Hariri under effective house arrest in Riyadh and forced him to declare his resignation on Nov. 4. The House of Saud regime has denied holding Hariri against his will or forcing him to resign.

Hariri shelved his resignation on Wednesday after returning to Beirut this week following an intervention by France.

"The Lebanese have enough experience and knowledge to deal with their affairs through dialogue. We do not want dictates from across the borders that go against their interests," Jumblatt said.

### ■ Hezbollah MPs welcome Hariri's return

The parliamentary group of the Hezbollah resistance movement has welcomed Prime Minister Saad Hariri's return to Lebanon, who recently stepped back from his surprise resignation in Saudi Arabia.

In a statement released on Thursday, the Loyalty to the Resistance Bloc voiced its "great satisfaction" with recent political developments in Lebanon, adding that Hariri's latest "positive statements" signaled a possible return to normalcy in the country.

The recent developments were "the result of the adherence of the Lebanese to their unity, sovereignty, independence and national dignity," in tandem with "their rejection of any foreign dictates," the bloc said.

It further hailed the "outstanding management of President Michel Aoun" and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri during the fresh political crisis in Lebanon.

Hariri stunned Lebanon by announcing his resignation in a live television broadcast from Saudi Arabia on November 4.

Senior sources close to Hariri and top Lebanese officials said the Saudi regime had coerced Hariri into stepping down and put him under house arrest.

The development was followed by a steep escalation in Saudi regime statements, accusing the Lebanese government of declaring war on the kingdom.



Aoun refused to accept Hariri's resignation and said that the premier was being detained in Saudi Arabia against his will.

On November 22, Hariri returned to Lebanon after a nearly three-week absence, emphasizing that he had accepted Aoun's request to suspend his resignation.

### ■ Put country first: PM to Lebanese

Separately on Thursday, Hariri described the latest turmoil as "a wake-up call" for the Lebanese people to put their country ahead of regional issues.

"The period that passed was perhaps like a wake-up call for all of us to look for Lebanon's interests rather than look-

ing at problems around us," Hariri said at the annual Arab Banking Conference in the capital, Beirut.

### ■ Stability Lebanon's top concern

He also noted that stability was Lebanon's "primary concern" and thus his government would focus on the issue.

The prime minister further said that his government was going to prioritize Lebanon's interests over regional challenges. "The problems around us are important, but Lebanon is more important," he said.

Hariri stressed the need for Lebanon to stay out of regional conflicts "not just with words but with action as well" and return to the official policy of "disassociation" or neutrality.

## Erdogan does not rule out contact with Assad



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has not ruled out possible contact with President Bashar Assad, signaling a break with his long-held opposition to the Syrian president's role in the country's future.

"The political doors are always open until the last minute," Erdogan said when asked about a possible contact or cooperation with Assad.

Erdogan's comments were reported by Hurriyet newspaper and other Turkish media on Friday, made on board his plane returning from a trilateral meeting with Russia and Iran to promote a peaceful settlement in Syria.

Even though Russia and Iran have backed Assad's government since the start of the Syrian conflict in March 2011 and Turkey has supported anti-government forces, the three countries have teamed up to help mediate a peace settlement.

Ankara has toned down its anti-Assad rhetoric, and the climb-down was clear during the trilateral meeting with Russia and Iran in the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi on Wednesday.

Turkey made clear its "reservations" about Assad having any future role in Syria, Mahir Unal, the spokesman of the Justice and Development Party, told reporters.

Unal said Turkey emphasized that there

must be negotiations between Assad and the opposition.

"It's not within the logic of negotiations to have a precise position today on the political solution and on whether the transition will be with or without Assad," he said.

Both Syria and Turkey are suspicious of the United States intentions in the country's north where Washington is supporting Kurdish militants.

Ankara considers the militants, which control a significant stretch of territory in Syria, a terrorist group and an extension of the Kurdish insurgency with Turkey's own borders.

Erdogan met with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Black Sea resort of Sochi on Wednesday to discuss an end to the conflict in Syria.

The Syrian government welcomed the closing statement of the trilateral summit which called for a political settlement of the conflict.

Putin called for a congress of the Syrian government and opposition to draw up a framework for the future structure of the Syrian state, adopt a new constitution and hold elections under the United Nations supervision.

(Source: agencies)

## Tunisia MPs rap Saudi regime-backed Arab League statement



A group of Tunisian lawmakers have condemned a recent Arab League (AL) statement against Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement and Iran, calling on Tunis to withdraw its support for the House of Saud regime-backed document.

Arab League member states had gathered in Cairo last Sunday at the Saudi regime's request to discuss "confronting" Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement.

In a final statement, the gathering accused Tehran of "interfering" in Arab states and disrupting security in the region, and branded the Lebanese resistance movement as "a terrorist" organization.

As many as 41 Tunisian legislators co-signed a statement to counter that of the Arab League, condemning it and pleading with the Tunisian Foreign Ministry to withdraw its support for it.

Part of the parliamentarians' statement read, "We, the signatories, decisively condemn what has been featured in the statement by the Arab League foreign ministers' meeting, including the accusations against Hezbollah and whatever effort at igniting flames of a new war against the people of this nation (Lebanon)."

Mubarakah al-Brahim, an MP with the

country's Popular Front political coalition, denounced the content of the Arab League statement as "a stain on the forehead of the revolutionary Tunis, and betrayal of the blood of the revolution's martyrs."

In 2011, the country's people rose up in revolution, ousting dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. The revolt was first in a string of similar uprisings across the Arab states that became known as the Islamic Awakening (Arab Spring).

Iran has called the Arab League statement "worthless," emphasizing that it was "full of lies and distortions."

Tehran has urged the House of Saud regime to stop its policy of exerting pressure on Lebanon, Qatar, and other Middle Eastern nations.

The Islamic Republic has invariably rejected the Saudi regime's accusation of regional interference, and invited it to negotiation over standing differences.

The Saudi regime has also been trying to weaken Hezbollah for more than a decade.

Riyadh opposes the group's considerable military and political power in Lebanon, despite the group's vital contribution to its homeland's security in the face of repeated Israeli wars.

(Source: Press TV)

## Carnage in Egypt mosque



1 → which had the hallmarks of the the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh)-affiliated Velayat Sinai terrorist group.

President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi convened an emergency security meeting soon after the attack, state television reported. The Egyptian president announced three days of national mourning. The Sinai Peninsula has been under a state of emergency since October 2014, after a deadly terrorist attack left 33 Egyptian soldiers dead.

Over the past few years, militants have been carrying out anti-government activities and fatal attacks, taking advantage of the turmoil in Egypt that erupted after the country's first democratically-elected president, Mohamed Morsi, was ousted in a military coup in July 2013.

Velayat Sinai has claimed responsibility for most of the assaults. The group later expanded its attacks to target members of Egypt's Coptic Christian community as well as foreigners visiting the country. That has prompted the government to impose the state of emergency and widen a controversial crackdown, which critics say has mostly targeted dissidents.

(Source: agencies)

## Myanmar, Bangladesh sign Rohingya return deal



Bangladesh and Myanmar have signed a deal for the return of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees, who have taken shelter in the border town of Cox's Bazar after a brutal crackdown by the military. Myanmar's foreign ministry confirmed the signing of the agreement on Thursday, without releasing further details.

"I didn't find any clear statement how these refugees will be repatriated. I'm not sure whether they will be allowed to return to their original village," Rohingya activist Nay San Lwin told Al Jazeera.

"It looks like they will be placed in the temporary camps, and later the refugees will be locked up in the camps for a long time like the Rohingya in Sittwe for more than five years now."

"Myanmar minister for resettlement and welfare said they will repatriate maximum 300 refugees a day. So it can take up to two decades to repatriate all those refugees."

Al Jazeera's Scott Heidler, reporting from Yangon, said the deal was the result of international pressure which has been mounting steadily on Myanmar.

### ■ Concentration camps

"For Myanmar, it's very important because it is showing some progress on this Rohingya crisis," Heidler said.

San Lwin said refugees should not return if their citizenship and basic rights are not guaranteed.

"Bangladesh should not send back any Rohingya refugee to Myanmar unless citizenship and basic rights are guaranteed. The people who fled to Bangladesh lived in the open air prison for almost three decades, now it looks like they will be sent back to concentration camps."

The agreement comes after Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi met Bangladesh's foreign minister to resolve one of the biggest refugee crisis of modern times.

More than 620,000 people have poured into Bangladesh since August, running from a Myanmar military crackdown that the United States said this week clearly constitutes "ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya". The talks between Aung San Suu Kyi and her Bangladeshish counterpart come in advance of a highly anticipated visit to both nations by Pope Francis, who has been outspoken about his sympathy for the plight of the Rohingya.

Buddhist-majority Myanmar, which denies committing atrocities against the Muslim minority, has agreed to work with Bangladesh to repatriate some of the Rohingya piling into desperately overstretched refugee camps.

### ■ Systematically oppressed

But the neighbors have struggled to settle on the details, including how many Rohingya will be allowed back in violence-scorched Rakhine, where hundreds of villages have been burned.

Last week Myanmar's military chief Min Aung Hlaing said it was "impossible to accept the number of persons proposed by Bangladesh".

Rendered stateless, Rohingya have been the target of communal violence and vicious anti-Muslim sentiment for years.

They have also been systematically oppressed by the government, which stripped the minority of citizenship and severely restricts their movement, as well as their access to basic services.

The latest crisis erupted after Rohingya rebels attacked police posts on August 25. The army backlash rained violence across northern Rakhine, with refugees recounting nightmarish scenes of soldiers and Buddhist mobs slaughtering villagers and burning down entire communities.

The military denies all allegations but has restricted access to the conflict zone.

Aung San Suu Kyi's government has also vowed to deny visas to a United Nations-fact finding mission tasked with probing accusations of military abuse.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Mnangagwa the 'Crocodile' sworn in as Zimbabwe president

Emmerson Mnangagwa was sworn in on Friday as president of Zimbabwe in front of thousands of cheering supporters at Harare's national stadium, bringing the final curtain down on the 37-year rule of Robert Mugabe.

Taking his oath of office, the 75-year-old known as the Crocodile vowed to uphold the constitution of the former British colony and protect the rights of all Zimbabwe's 16 million citizens. In a speech he said elections would go ahead next year and acknowledged there had been "errors" under Mugabe. He has hailed the "voice of the people" during a dramatic ascent to power. But some wonder whether a man who loyally served Mugabe for decades can bring deep change to a ruling establishment accused of systematic abuses of human rights and disastrous economic policies.

In particular, they question his role in the so-called Gukuruhundi massacres in Matabeleland in 1983, when an estimated 20,000 people were killed in a crackdown on Mugabe's opponents by the North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade.

Mnangagwa was in charge of internal security then, but has denied any part in the atrocities. Since his return to Zimbabwe this month after two weeks in hiding he has been preaching democracy, tolerance and respect for the rule of law. "The people have spoken. The voice of the people is the



voice of God," he told thousands of supporters on Wednesday at the headquarters of his ruling ZANU-PF (Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front) party.

Mugabe, 93, has been granted immunity from prosecution and assured that his safety will be protected in his home country as part of a deal that led to his resignation, sources close to the negotiations said.

And Mnangagwa urged citizens on Thursday not to under-

take "vengeful retribution" - striking a tone of reconciliation that echoed those made by Mugabe almost four decades ago.

However, the army's rough treatment of some Mugabe loyalists - former finance minister Ignatius Chombo was hospitalized on Friday because of beatings sustained in military custody, his lawyer said - has added to concerns about Mnangagwa's true commitment to democracy.

"It was a very brutal and draconian way of dealing with opponents," Chombo's lawyer, Lovemore Madhuku, told Reuters.

Mugabe, the world's oldest serving head of state, resigned on Tuesday as parliament started to impeach him, a week to the day after the army stepped in to seize power. Crowds celebrated in the streets of Harare.

### ■ Fall of Grace

His sudden fall was triggered by a battle to succeed him that pitted Mnangagwa against Mugabe's much younger wife Grace.

Some of Mnangagwa's supporters have called for unspecified action against the "G40" group that backed Mugabe and his wife, known as "Gucci Grace" for her reputed dedication to shopping, an affront to many in a country with an unemployment rate of 90 percent.

(Source: Reuters)



STOCK MARKET

|        |         |
|--------|---------|
| TEDPIX | 89339.1 |
| IFX    | 1017.12 |

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

|     |               |
|-----|---------------|
| USD | 41,150 rials  |
| EUR | 49,000 rials  |
| GBP | 55,2000 rials |
| AED | 11,260 rials  |

Source: Mehrnews.com

COMMODITIES

|             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| Brent       | \$63.35/b     |
| WTI         | \$58.70/b     |
| OPEC Basket | \$ 61.10/b    |
| Gold        | \$1,288.25/oz |
| Silver      | \$17.07/oz    |
| Platinum    | \$936.50/oz   |

Sources: Oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Tehran hosting 17th intl. household appliances expo

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The 17th International Exhibition of Household Appliances became operational in the presence of Iranian Industry Minister Mohammad Shariatmadari on Thursday at Tehran International Permanent Fairgrounds.



As IRIB news reported, some 298 Iranian and 137 foreign companies from 21 countries are showcasing their latest products in the four-day event.

Foreign companies reportedly come from China, Russia, Turkey, America, Italy, Germany, South Korea, Thailand, Taiwan, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Poland, Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Spain, France, and Switzerland.

Predictions for the UK economy may be gloomy but are reasonable

From Pollyanna to Cassandra in under a day, the UK government's independent economic forecaster has learnt how quickly its reputation can change.

Criticized for its deluded optimism on Monday, by Wednesday afternoon after the Budget, economists united to say the Office for Budget Responsibility was too gloomy.

At stake is the OBR's judgment that the UK economy can only grow 1.5 per cent a year without running into trouble. As recently as July 2015, it thought 2.5 per cent was possible, so its outlook has almost halved in just over two years. The figure — the potential growth rate of the economy — is both the most important and least certain judgment OBR chairman Robert Chote and his Budget Responsibility Committee make. It is vital because if the UK economy averages 2.5 per cent growth, living standards will rise close to historical norms and sufficient revenues will be collected to fund an ageing population without higher tax rates. But at 1.5 per cent a year, none of this applies. Average pay and income growth will be feeble, and Britain will have to choose between worse public services and higher taxes.

The question is whether the OBR has spilled too much red ink over the longer-term economic forecasts, as most independent forecasters seem to believe. Sadly, it is on pretty firm territory.

Any reasonable forecaster might start by looking at Britain's performance over the past decade to gain a sense of the future. The economy has grown at an average annual rate of 1 per cent, yet unemployment is lower now than before the crisis in 2007. Since unemployment cannot fall forever, the past decade's sustainable growth rate has therefore been less than 1 per cent.

Looking at more recent trends also suggests a struggling British economy. While the performance of the rest of the G7 league of leading economies has been improving, Britain has experienced a slowing growth rate this year, with companies reluctant to invest and exports rising slowly despite sterling's fall. Moving from the top of the G7 growth league table to the bottom is more than suggestive that all is not well with the UK economy.

Taking a disaggregated view does not improve the outlook either. Part of an economy's potential growth rate comes from increased labor resources. This has been a boon for Britain in recent years with high inward migration, a record employment rate and increase in average hours worked. But the latter two cannot keep rising forever and it is now policy to reduce migration.

The other building block of sustainable growth rates is Britain's productivity — the amount of output produced for every hour worked. It has not increased in the past decade, so an OBR forecast that it will recover to grow at half its historic rate is far from unduly pessimistic.

All of these sense checks ignore Brexit and assume things will carry on much as before. That is an optimistic bias, since it is easy to explain how a deterioration in Britain's trading relationship with the EU will hit the efficiency of supply chains and production, but difficult to see productivity gains from Brexit.

As a final check, people making sensible judgments might look at the UK and ask the simple question whether prospects should be better, about the same, or worse than those in similar countries. Unless you are sure British people are superior to those in the US or Europe, you would want to support the OBR. The Federal Reserve thinks the US can grow at about 1.8 per cent a year sustainably, while the European Commission thinks 1.5 per cent is the right figure for the eurozone. *(Source: The Financial Times)*

Inflation rate stands at 8.4% in Iran: statistical center

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The **d e s k** Statistical Center of Iran announced that the inflation rate for the 12-month period ended on the last day of the eighth Iranian calendar month of Aban (November 21) compared to the same period in the previous year hit 8.4 percent.

The center also put the inflation rate at 8.2 percent and 9.3 percent in the urban areas and rural regions, respectively,

during the mentioned period of time and announced that the rates for the whole country as well as urban and rural areas show 0.2 percent increase compared to the 12-month period ended on the last day of the seventh calendar month of Mehr (October 22).

Point-to-point inflation rate stood at 9.6 percent, 9.5 percent, and 10 percent in the whole country, urban areas and rural regions, respectively, showing 0.9 percent

JCPOA good chance for expanding Norway's economic ties with Iran

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Secretary **d e s k** general of Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs called implementation of Iran's nuclear deal-known as Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)- a good opportunity for Norway to boost economic bonds with Iran, IRNA reported.

Addressing a seminar titled Iran-Norway Bilateral Maritime Opportunities in Oslo on Thursday, Wegger Christian Strommen named Iran's post-sanction era a good chance for Norway to enhance maritime, shipping, oil and gas, and energy ties with Iran.

Calling Iran the largest market in the Middle East, he vowed that cooperating with Iranians, Norwegian companies will fulfill their obligations.



The one-day named seminar was held with participation of tens of Iranian and Norwegian companies in the Norwegian capital, where Iranian Ambassador to Oslo Mohammad-Hossein Habibollahzadeh was also present.

German Business Optimism Climbs to Record as Economy Booms

German companies are more confident than ever as they tap into the global economic upswing.

A measure of the nation's business confidence set a new record high in November. The Ifo institute's index climbed to 117.5 from a revised 116.8, beating economists' estimates for the gauge to remain unchanged.

Germany's economy, the largest in Europe, has soared this year as global trade picks up and the euro area's revival becomes more broad-based. The Bundesbank predicts that German momentum will carry into the final

quarter, and economists foresee the fastest expansion since 2011.

Ifo's gauge of expectations rose to 111.0 from a revised 109.2, though a measure of current economic conditions dropped to 124.4 from 124.8.

One headwind is domestic political uncertainty after Chancellor Angela Merkel saw her efforts to form a coalition government collapse. Ifo said 90 percent of the responses to its survey were submitted before that turn of events.

UK consumer confidence at lowest point since Brexit result

UK households are their least confident since immediately after last year's Brexit vote, partly because of this month's interest rate hike and further signs of a slowdown in the housing market, a survey showed on Friday.

A consumer confidence index produced by polling firm YouGov and the Centre for Economics and Business Research, a consultancy, sank to 106.6 in November, down sharply from 109.3 in October.

It was the first fall since June although it remained above the 100 level above which consumers are considered to be feeling confident.

All eight of the index's underlying measures weakened and a score for household finances over the past 30 days sank to its lowest level since January 2014.

Christian Jaccarini, an economist at Cebr, linked the



fall to factors including the first interest rate hike by the Bank of England in over a decade and a slowdown in the housing market.

"With these economic headwinds set to persist, and the OBR forecasting weaker growth, households are understandably worried," Jaccarini said, referring to a sharp cut to Britain's economic growth outlook by the Office for Budget Responsibility, the government's fiscal watchdog, on Wednesday.

Chancellor Philip Hammond announced measures to help the housing market in his budget statement also on Wednesday.

The survey was conducted between 1 November and 21 November and was based on responses from 5,673 people. *(Source: The Independent)*

Stocks set for first week of gains in three, euro climbs

World stocks hovered below record highs on Friday, set to reverse two straight weeks of losses while the euro hit its highest levels in six weeks following stronger than expected economic data this week.

The MSCI World Index, which tracks shares in 47 countries, was up 0.1 percent, set for a 1 percent gain this week. Its climb was underpinned by modest gains in Europe and Asia.

Emerging stocks .MSCIEF were up 0.2 percent and the pan-European STOXX 600 was up 0.1 percent. .STOXX50

Surveys on Thursday covering Europe's services and manufacturing industries outshone the most optimistic forecasts in Reuters

polls, with factories having the second-best month in the index's history.

"It's a bit of a Goldilocks situation (for economic growth). It is finely balanced and I think the European Central Bank has very much hinted at that in its actions, but at the moment I can't really see how this is going to be up-ended," said Ken Odell, market analyst at City Index.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan .MIAPJ0000PUS was up 0.2 percent, as Hong Kong shares .HSI bucked the softness in mainland Chinese shares to gain 0.6 percent.

Stocks in mainland China dropped to three-month lows after big falls the previ-

ous day on concerns about fresh government steps to curb financial risks and rise in Chinese bond yields.

Japan's Nikkei .N225 ended up 0.1 percent after a market holiday on Thursday while U.S. stock futures ESc1 were little changed after shortened trading on Thursday.

In the currency market, the U.S. dollar remained under pressure after the minutes from the U.S. Federal Reserve's latest policy meeting highlighted concern among some of the board members over persistently low inflation. The index that measures the greenback against a basket of peers was 0.2 percent lower. .DXY

The euro EUR= hit its highest in nearly

two months at \$1.1875 and was on track to mark its third consecutive week of gains despite failure of coalition talks in Germany earlier this week.

The leader of country's Social Democrats is coming under growing pressure to drop his opposition to a new "grand coalition" with Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives, with senior politicians arguing the party had a duty to promote stability.

A weaker dollar saw the British pound staying near a six-week high against the dollar ahead of British Prime Minister Theresa May's visit to Brussels later in the day for talk on Brexit. *(Source: Reuters)*

Black Friday draws early shoppers, but real frenzy is online



some video games for my nephew a few days ago. The deals were pretty good then, too. In fact I was just looking at some of them today and the deals are similar."

Tenesha Robertson, 43, a loader at UPS, exited Macy's in Jersey City's Newport Centre Mall with her mother, daughter and several large bags in tow. They were headed to drop shopping items off at Robertson's car before buying more at the mall.

"We go to Macy's every year," she said. The discounts are about the same, but we like to come just to be here for the family time."

But online demand may help make up for lackluster store traffic, and even the subdued in-store activity this year marked an improvement over recent years.

Macy's Inc Chief Executive Jeff Gennette told CNBC on Friday that the retailer was better off this year than last, had robust online demand and was in a good place for holiday promotions, sending the retailer's shares up more than 4 percent in early trading.

JC Penney Co climbed 1.8 percent, while Target Corp and Wal-Mart Stores Inc edged higher.

The period between the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday and Christmas can make or a break a retailer, accounting for as much as 40 percent of total revenue for the year.

"The turnout this morning has been relatively slow but it is still the best we have seen in three years. We expect it to pick up as the day progresses," said Burt Flickinger, managing director, Strategic Resources Group. He cited improving consumer confidence, a strong job market, and healthy housing prices. *(Source: Reuters)*



rise from the previous 12-month period. The Statistical Center of Iran has put the country's inflation rate at 9.8 percent

in the past Iranian calendar year 1395 (ended on March 20, 2017), showing 4.5 percent drop from its preceding year.

Iran plays leading role in making world energy policies

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Addressing the 4th Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) Summit in Bolivia, Iranian First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri stressed the role of Iran in making global energy policies, IRNA reported on Friday.

"Possessing one of the largest gas reserves in the world, Iran has a significant role in determining future global policies about energy and in particular exporting gas," he added.

Accompanied by Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, Jahangiri arrived in Santa Cruz in Bolivia on Thursday to attend the summit.

The GECF is an international governmental organization which provides the framework for exchanging experience and



information among member countries.

Iran, Algeria, Bolivia, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Russia, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates and Venezuela are the permanent members of GECF and Azerbaijan, Iraq, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Norway, Oman and Peru have the status of observer members.



# OPEC meeting uncertainty threatens to spoil oil's awesome run

By Joe Chidley

After a summer in the doldrums, oil prices have suddenly — and at long last — enjoyed a pretty awesome run. This month alone, benchmark West Texas intermediate has gained nearly five bucks, reaching above \$55 a barrel for the first time since 2015. European benchmark Brent crude has risen pretty much in step, maintaining above \$60 a barrel so far in November.

So are happy days here again (at least for oil investors, if not for the rest of us schlubs who have to pay more for gas)? Well, maybe. But a lot will depend on what happens when the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries gets together for its 173rd meeting in Vienna next week.

At the top of the agenda will be the production-cuts agreement OPEC brokered a year ago and whether, by how much and by how long, to extend it beyond the current March 2018 end-date. Despite signals from OPEC that the production agreement will be extended beyond the current March 2018 end-date — Iranian oil minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said earlier this week that most members want it so — the outcome is far from clear.

The OPEC meeting comes amid a recent turn in oil market sentiment. WTI futures earlier this month switched over from a contango position, where six-month contracts were higher than spot prices, to backwardation, where futures are priced lower. That's generally taken to indicate higher immediate demand, so it's bullish for prices, at least in the short term.

But there is more behind the recent gains in oil markets than the OPEC agreement. On the supply side, heightened geopolitical tensions in the Mideast have raised the specter of disruptions. Some analysts are looking at the escalating proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran in Yemen and seeing the possibility of outright conflict. And



the “anti-corruption” power grab by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman — which has caught up the military, business and religious leaders, and his own family members in its net — is another potential destabilize for the region and for OPEC's most powerful member.

Obviously, trouble in the Mideast supports expectations for higher prices. But the concerns (or, for oil bulls, hopes) might be overblown. Bin Salman's domestic overhaul is big news, but it doesn't look likely to impact oil production. As for a “hot” war, Saudi-Iranian tensions have been going on for years without escalating into open conflict, and there are a number of military, political and geographic (i.e. the Persian Gulf) reasons to believe they won't anytime soon.

So here's a question: if the current worry about Mideast instability ends up amounting to not much, what will happen to oil prices? Another way to ask that question is, absent geopolitical factors, how much have OPEC's production cuts been working?

There are no easy answers. It seems, at

least, that compliance to the agreement is high. Yet October was the first month this year both OPEC and non-OPEC members (led by Russia) collectively reached their production targets. Iraq, the second-largest exporter of crude to the U.S., is a serial under-achiever: it has managed just 54 percent of its production cutback on average this year, according to Bloomberg. Exogenous factors have also helped OPEC meet overall targets — for instance, the political and economic nightmare in Venezuela, whose oil output hit a three-decade low last month.

OPEC, however, is only a cartel — it's not a monopoly. Other producers, especially the U.S. shale industry, have stepped forward while OPEC has cut back. According to the Energy Information Administration, U.S. oil production rose to nearly 9.65 million barrels a day in the first full week of November. That's a multi-year high, but what's even more remarkable is how elastic shale production has proven to be: it's risen nearly 15 per cent since a mid-2016 low.

## Saudis push for 9-month extension of OPEC-led oil cut: sources

Top crude exporter Saudi Arabia is lobbying oil ministers to agree next week on a nine-month extension to OPEC-led supply cuts, sources familiar with the matter said, as Riyadh seeks to ensure a price-sapping glut is eradicated.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, non-member Russia and nine other producers are cutting oil output by about 1.8 million barrels per day until March 2018, and will discuss extending the deal at a Nov. 30 meeting in Vienna.

Oil prices have risen to almost \$65 a barrel, the highest since 2015, supported by lower inventories. However, OPEC is wary prices could fall again since excess supply persists, while a flare-up in Middle Eastern political tensions has also played a part in the rally.

“The Saudis are lobbying to have a decision in November for nine months,” said a senior oil industry source with knowledge of the matter who declined to be identified.

Indications of support for a nine-month extension have come from the very top in Saudi Arabia, OPEC's de facto leader, and Russia, the largest non-OPEC producer involved in the agreement.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman signaled he was supportive of extending the agreement further into 2018, following remarks by Russian President Vladimir Putin on Oct. 4 that the deal could be stretched to the end of next year.

“The Saudi and Russian leaders have indicated it's on the cards,” an OPEC source said, referring to the chances of a nine-month extension. “Why would I disagree with them?”

To be sure, the OPEC-led group is also

One of OPEC's goals is the reduction in the glut of oil sitting in reserves. But U.S. crude inventories have been both resilient (trending above five-year averages) and volatile. The week before last, American Petroleum Institute data showed them rising unexpectedly by 6.5 million barrels; API data for last week had them declining by pretty much the same amount. (No doubt EIA data coming out Wednesday will add another wrinkle.) Meanwhile, no one really knows how much crude China has been stockpiling, but the International Energy Agency estimates the country has been buying it up at a record pace this year.

Another potential headache for OPEC is Russia, whose participation in the production agreement is key, and whose compliance so far has been fairly high. Russian producers, however, have reportedly been chafing at the possibility of an extension of cuts, which they (rightly) see as subsidizing higher-cost producers. Energy minister Alexander Novak could push for OPEC to delay any decision until next year.

As it stands, markets seem to be betting that OPEC and its partners will play it safe and extend the agreement next week. But that only raises the stakes for investors, who are likely to see anything less — say, a shorter extension, or no extension at all, or a deferral until next year — as a big disappointment.

For OPEC, the longer-term challenge might be that production cuts work too well, in that they benefit U.S. producers who have already been ramping up production a) because prices support it and b) because they can. Meanwhile, OPEC, and especially Saudi Arabia, are limiting the upside from the higher prices they're creating, while sacrificing market share.

When the supply-demand balance stabilizes, how weakened will OPEC and its production-cut partners be?

(Source: Financial Post)

## Russia sends mixed signals about oil output deal before OPEC meets

**MOSCOW (Reuters)** — Russia is sending mixed signals about its support for extending a deal among oil producers on cutting output less than a week before OPEC meets in Vienna to discuss policy.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, Russia and several other major producers cut their combined output by about 1.8 million barrels per day since January to reduce bloated inventories and boost oil prices.

Saudi Arabia has been pushing for an extension for nine months until the end of 2018, a position President Vladimir Putin had suggested in October that Russia backed.

But Russia, heavily reliant on oil revenues but wary that any sharp rise in oil prices may be followed by another punishing collapse, has sent mixed signals about its support for such a move since then.

Russia's TASS news agency reported earlier this week that oil producers and the Russian Energy Ministry had discussed a six-month extension.

Then on Thursday, Russia's Economy Minister Maxim Oreshkin said Russian economic growth had been hurt by the deal because it dampened investment in the industry - the first clearly negative assessment of the pact by a senior Russian official.

On Friday, Russian Economy Minister Alexander said that Russia was ready to discuss an extension of the global deal, but made no mention of how long any extension should last.

“We are ready to discuss this issue, and I think we will be able to discuss it at the meeting in Vienna,” Novak said without elaborating. His spokeswoman declined to comment.

Novak was speaking in Bolivia where he is at a Gas Exporting Countries Forum of leading gas producers. He said he had met the Qatari and Venezuelan oil ministers in Bolivia, as well as an official from the United Arab Emirates, Russian news wires said.

One of the stumbling blocks for extending the OPEC-led deal is a boom in U.S. oil production, which has jumped by 15 percent since mid-2016 to a record 9.66 million bpd.

U.S. producers, which scaled back output with the price slump after mid-2014, have ramped up production as oil prices climbed. Higher U.S. output undermines the impact of output cuts and erodes market share for others, like Russia.

“Make no mistake, expect the dog fight for the global markets once the deal expires,” a source at a Russian oil major said about scenarios once the deal on curbing output expires.

A key task of the agreement, lifting prices, has been achieved. Benchmark Brent crude, which tumbled from well above \$100 a barrel in 2014 to about \$27 in 2016, is back above \$60.

Russia's budget is based on an oil price of \$40 per barrel, suggesting there is a good cushion against a sudden price slide.

Novak said on Friday he expected the oil price to remain between \$50 and \$60 a barrel this and next year.

But Moscow has had to deal with economic and social fallout caused by price falls in 2008-09 and since 2014, said Chris Weaver at Moscow-based Macro-Advisory.

“The damage from a third collapse would likely greatly outweigh the financial gains to be made from higher oil in the meantime,” he wrote.

## French strike disrupts Exxon and Total's oil product shipments

Oil product shipments at some refineries in France owned by ExxonMobil and Total SA were disrupted on Thursday as French labor union CGT is staging a 24-hour strike in the petroleum sector.

Shipments of products at Exxon's refinery in Fos sur Mer, as well as at Total's Grandpuits refinery near Paris, have been disrupted, Platts reports, quoting union sources and the companies.

Shipments of oil products are partially disrupted at Grandpuits, while at Fos sur Mer, workers have joined the industrial action and the plant is operating at reduced throughput for safety reasons.

The CGT union called the 24-hour strike because it had not received a positive response from employers over its demands to keep the collective labor agreement in the petroleum sector. The labor union called upon workers in various segments of the petroleum industry to join the strike—refineries, fuel storages,

country and to encourage consumers to produce solar electricity and sell it to the national grid.

The AEDB board of directors gave the go-ahead in the 41st meeting on Wednesday chaired by the Federal Minister for Power Division Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari.

“The move is bound to bring green energy

and the biggest renewable electricity source of around 5,000 to 7,000 megawatts can be exploited,” he said.

The idea of getting compensated for excess energy generated is appealing to many homeowners. The minister highlighted that consumers with the desire to install solar panels with net

meters up to 25 kilovolts would be facilitated in installing the system within days compared to the current process that take months.

“We are actually bringing on the doorstep the profitable business of electricity generation for everyone,” Leghari stated.

(Source: gulfnews.com)



petrochemical facilities, all depots, ports and airport depots. CGT has said, however, that it could call off the strike if it receives a positive response to its demands.

While part of the production at Exxon's Fos sur Mer refinery is disrupted due to the strike, its other refinery, the 235,000-bpd Gravenchon, as well as the chemical plant there, are running normally, according to Platts.

The refineries near the port city Le Havre in the northern Normandy region have not seen disruptions in operations or loadings so far, Platts says, quoting media reports. In the south of France, operations at the Lavera refinery of Petroineos have slowed down, but Total's Feyzin refinery is said to be operating normally.

Among the French trade unions, the CGT union has been the most vocal opponent to the reforms in France's employment laws in recent months. In early October, CGT called its third strike against the reforms of French President Emmanuel Macron, but failed to get the other two major unions on board.

(Source: oilprice.com)

## World Bank to provide \$100m financing for Indian solar parks

India's government has signed a \$98 million loan agreement and \$2 million grant agreement with the World Bank to support Indian solar parks.

The Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) will be financed by the Shared Infrastructure for Solar Parks Project to provide sub-loans to select states to invest in various solar parks.



The first two solar park projects are located in the state Madhya Pradesh with a joint capacity of 1GW.

Further potential solar parks to be supported are located are in Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Haryana.

Sameer Kumar Khare, joint secretary, department of economic affairs, signed the agreement on behalf of the government of India with Hisham Abdo from World Bank and K S Popli, Chairman and managing director of IREDA.

Kumar Khare said: “This project will help establish large-scale solar parks and support the government's plan to install 100GW of solar power out of a total renewable-energy target of 175 GW by 2022.”

An estimated 300 million people in India are not connected to the grid, in spite of already having 331GW of installed capacity.

Hisham Abdo, acting country director, World Bank India, said “India's goal of scaling up the provision of clean energy will require a vibrant market for solar investments.”

“The challenge for this project is to go beyond investments; it is to deepen the solar market,” he added.

The project is one solar power initiative in a series of engagements between the Government of India and World Bank.

(Source: pv-tech.org)

## Statoil cuts costs 15% on latest offshore wind farm

Dudgeon offshore wind farm operator Statoil and partners Masdar and Statkraft say they delivered the 67 turbine project 15 percent under budget on its opening this week.

The 402 megawatt wind farm in Great Yarmouth is now delivering electricity to the U.K. grid, providing renewable energy to around 410,000 homes.

Since the investment decision was made in 2014, construction costs have been reduced from GBP 1.5 billion to approximately GBP 1.25 billion.



“Dudgeon represents an important contribution to realizing the U.K.'s renewable energy strategy,” Statoil chief executive officer Eldar Sætre said in a statement. “The U.K. has already achieved impressive reductions in CO2-emissions with clear policies to phase out coal, and last year achieved the lowest CO2 emissions since before year 1900. Statoil is proud to contribute to this both by being a large supplier of natural gas and by our investments in offshore wind.”

The opening also moves the Norwegian state controlled company further into the green energy sector as it leverages its offshore oil and gas expertise to complement its portfolio with profitable renewable energy solutions. “As part of our strategy to develop from an oil and gas company to a broad energy major, Statoil will grow significantly in profitable renewable energy, with an ambition to invest around NOK 100 billion towards 2030,” said Sætre.

It comes as Norway's trillion-dollar sovereign wealth fund is proposing to drop oil and gas companies from its benchmark index, in part to make the Norwegian government's wealth less vulnerable to a permanent drop in oil prices.

It also comes as the U.K. government doubles down on electric vehicles to reduce emissions from the transportation sector. In its budget this week, the government announced a £400 million fund for EV charging infrastructure projects across the country and pledged to invest an extra £100 million to help people buy EVs and £40 million toward charging research and development. The more renewables are feeding the grid, the greener EVs become.

Also this month, California Gov. Jerry Brown met with top Statoil executives to discuss the company's pursuit of wind power off the Golden State's coastlines. Because of the depth of its continental shelf, the state would likely require floating wind turbine technology, another specialty of Statoil, which has in its portfolio Hywind Scotland, the world's first floating offshore wind farm that came into production in October.

Statoil's current offshore wind portfolio, which includes the Sheringham Shoal wind farm in the U.K. and the Arkona wind farm in Germany, has the capacity to provide more than one million homes with renewable energy.

Dudgeon is located 40 kilometres off the coast of Norfolk in England. Local suppliers account for more than 40 percent of the value creation in the project.

Toward 2030 it is estimated the installed capacity of offshore wind in Europe can grow from 12 GW (2016) to 70 GW. Improved technology, increased deployment and lower costs are the key drivers turning offshore wind into an attractive power source, outcompeting traditional sources of energy in important markets, Statoil said.

(Source: junenergy.com)



## A beleaguered Tillerson still has a seat at the table

By David Ignatius

A funny thing happened to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on the way to the exit door: He didn't leave. He may be "Dead Man Walking," as many Washington analysts assume. Yet he's still pursuing the same list of quiet but mostly correct diplomatic goals as when took the job 10 months ago.

Tillerson has had a catastrophically bad encounter with official Washington. The White House disdains him; the State Department resents him; the press corps mostly scorns him. Tillerson presses on as if he doesn't care. Many officials claim they don't give a damn about "inside the Beltway" opinion; Tillerson seems to mean it.

The latest instance of Tillerson clashing with his subordinates, according to Reuters, was a dissent memo from about a dozen foreign-service officers accusing him of giving Iraq, Myanmar and Afghanistan a pass on a federal law opposing the use of child soldiers. That's just one example of internal criticism from the unhappiest State Department I've seen in more than 30 years of covering Foggy Bottom.



Secretary of State Rex Tillerson at the State Department on November 20, 2017.

Tillerson often seems out of sync with President Donald Trump on major issues including North Korea, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Lebanon. And White House insiders have been predicting for months that this marriage can't last. Yet it not only continues, but on many areas of supposed disagreement, Trump has ended up adopting, more or less, the diplomatic course that Tillerson recommended.

Tillerson has one secret survival weapon: He's running a three-legged race, figuratively speaking, alongside Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis, who respects Tillerson's judgment and stays aligned with him through all the palace intrigue. Trump may not be a soul mate with his secretary of state, but he's not going to pick a fight with Mattis.

### ■ Two policy areas

Two policy areas where Tillerson's approach seems to have the president's support, despite noise to the contrary, are dialogue with China on the North Korea crisis, and cooperation with Russia to stabilize Syria. Administration policy could change at any moment, given the "iron whim" of the man in the Oval Office. But the persistence of diplomacy is one of the little noted facets of this most undiplomatic president's first year.

U.S. engagement with China was the centerpiece of Trump's Asia trip this month. But observers overlooked one of Tillerson's signature initiatives: During the Beijing visit, the U.S. continued a high-level, secret dialogue with China about how to secure North Korea's nuclear weapons if the regime implodes.

Tillerson lobbies China to encourage talks with the Kim Jong Un regime, even as the administration keeps escalating pressure. Two more turns of the screw came this week: Monday, Pyongyang was added to the list of state sponsors of terrorism; Tuesday, the U.S. applied new sanctions to Chinese and North Korean companies. But Tillerson cautioned that even as the U.S. seeks more pressure points, there's no "silver bullet."

Asked how the Chinese are helping, a U.S. official noted last weekend's visit to Pyongyang by a high-level Chinese emissary. The message was the administration is still pursuing the Sino-American diplomatic track, and sanctions and military options.

Trump and Tillerson also share the unpopular but probably inescapable view that the U.S. must work with Russia to stabilize Syria. Russia's centrality in the miserable Syrian war was dramatized anew by President Vladimir Putin's meeting Monday with President Bashar Assad, who thanked the Russian leader for "saving our country." Putin enhanced his leverage as regional broker when he met Wednesday with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

Putin has emerged as a dominant player in Syria, and he wants to play the peacemaker there now, but he doesn't hold all the cards. U.S. allies control big swaths of Syrian territory, and they're the missing pieces of Putin's peace process. Tillerson, working with America's allies, has pushed for a resumption of UN-organized peace talks in Geneva. A meeting there is now scheduled for Nov. 28, followed by a gathering in Sochi on Dec. 2. These talks aren't a cure-all; but they can help reduce Syria's violence and begin a gradual political transition.

Trump made the Russia connection personal with an hour-long phone call Tuesday with Putin, discussing Syria, Ukraine and North Korea.

Trump may get hammered for it, but the conversation was sensible, and it capitalized on Tillerson's patient spadework.

Tillerson is famously a former Boy Scout. He talked in 2014 about the character-building value of suffering in silence, during a "frog-strangler" downpour as a 12-year-old scout. Trump has tested Tillerson's determination and dignity, but at Thanksgiving, the secretary of state is still at the table.

(Source: The Daily Star)

**Tillerson often seems out of sync with President Donald Trump on major issues including North Korea, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Lebanon.**

# Why is Trump backing Saudi's murderous attacks on Yemen?

The United States is helping one of the most vicious authoritarian regimes in the world bomb and blockade one of the poorest and most defenseless countries in the world.

Painful as it may be for Americans to hear, war crimes are being committed with America's support.

Saudi Arabia launched its war on Yemen in 2015 on flimsy national security grounds and almost immediately garnered criticism from the United Nations and human rights groups for indiscriminate bombings, and in some cases deliberate targeting, of civilian areas.

Saudi bombs have landed on residential homes, marketplaces, refugee camps, schools, hospitals, and at least one funeral. In spite of these allegations and clear evidence of extreme human suffering, the United States has supported the Saudi campaign from the beginning by providing refueling assistance, logistical support, intelligence cooperation, and diplomatic cover (not to mention massive arms sales).

To date, conservative estimates put the number of Yemenis killed by Saudi bombs at more than 13,500 (including more than 5,000 confirmed civilians). What has made the situation an order of magnitude worse is Saudi Arabia's de facto blockade of Yemen's air, sea, and land ports, preventing the delivery of much needed humanitarian aid.

The main sewage plant in Yemen's capital Sana'a ran out of fuel, couldn't import more, and hasn't run for months at a time, helping intensify the spread of disease. More than 900,000 Yemenis are suffering from cholera, a disease that could be treated if the Saudis would permit entry of aid and medical supplies.

But, according to the BBC, the Saudis have turned away up to 29 vessels with 300,000 tons of food and 192,000 tons of fuel, plus a UN ship transporting 1,300 tons of health, water, sanitation, hygiene, and nutrition supplies.

About 17 million Yemenis are in urgent need of food; 7 million of those are facing starvation. Roughly 400,000 children under the age of five are suffering from acute malnutrition and, if Yemen doesn't get relief soon, up to 150,000 of those children will likely die within a few months.

Journalists from CBS News, looking to shine a light on what the United Nations



**Painful as it may be for Americans to hear, war crimes are being committed with America's support.**

has called a "man-made catastrophe," were recently denied entry into Yemen by Saudi authorities. Riyadh doesn't want the world to know what it's doing. CBS instead found Yemenis willing to film the horror, which aired on 60 Minutes this past weekend.

The stomach-churning footage is not easy to watch. David Beasley, who runs the UN's World Food Program, told 60 Minutes that, "the Saudi-led coalition" — a phrase he apparently used advisedly to include the United States — "are using food as a weapon of war. And it's disgraceful."

### ■ No credible strategic justification

Let's be clear: there is no credible strategic justification for U.S. complicity in this abominable cruelty. The Saudis claim the war is necessary to crush the Houthis in Yemen.

This kind of brutal collective punishment and excruciating human suffering

inflicted on millions of innocent people. Putting hundreds of thousands of children at risk of starvation is an intolerable crime, and only one among many currently being perpetrated.

Shamefully, the issue doesn't elicit nearly the level of outrage as President Trump's Twitter feuds and rhetorical attacks on professional athletes. The public indifference is rather shocking.

A few members of Congress have spoken out publicly against the savagery in Yemen. Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) has repeatedly made the case for restricting U.S. military support for Saudi operations in Yemen, has called on Riyadh to lift the blockade, and has accused the U.S. of complicity in war crimes.

Senator Rand Paul (R-KY), too, has forcefully condemned U.S. involvement in Saudi crimes. Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA),

Rep. Walter Jones (R-NC), and Rep. Mark Pocan (D-WI) have joined the chorus.

And last week the House passed a non-binding resolution declaring U.S. involvement unauthorized. Unfortunately, the executive branch is insulated from these somewhat meager efforts to check and balance.

As Cato's foreign policy team has said from the beginning, the United States should immediately halt all support to Saudi Arabia and use its influence to allow Yemen the relief it needs. The manner in which the war is being conducted will cast a long shadow over America's reputation, and undermines Americans' claim to uphold human rights.

And empowering some of the most violent and extreme elements within Yemen is likely to increase threats to U.S. national security down the road.

(Source: Newsweek)

## Boko Haram and Shabaab will become deadlier as the ISIL

For the past three years, the Islamic State (ISIL) terror group has been synonymous with brutal executions, persecution of minorities, chilling videos of child soldiers beheading hostages, deadly suicide bombings, knife and vehicle attacks.

When the group emerged in 2014, it swept across Iraq and Syria and seized numerous territories and key cities. Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria became the capitals of its self-declared caliphate.

Hundreds of thousands of people became subjected to the group's cruel regime that limited freedoms to the very minimum. Many more fled their homes and the group's brutal grip on what became a de-facto state ruled by extremists.

The ISIL propaganda machine reached every corner of the world with images and videos of brutal executions and calls for war against the West.

The group quickly became one of the world's most brutal terrorist organizations, blamed for the death of thousands of people in all its declared provinces.

The organization has also claimed responsibility for numerous lone wolf attacks across the West, although analysts have often warned such claims are not reliable and could be just a propaganda tool.

Once one of the most feared entities on the planet, ISIL is now seeing its dream of a caliphate fading away, as it continues to lose both territories and fighters due to multinational offensives.

Both Raqqa and Mosul have been retaken by coalition forces, leading to ISIL fighters breaking ranks and attempting to leave.

The demise of ISIL does not mean the end of the group's ideology, however. Many fighters are returning home, but many more are regrouping somewhere else or are joining other terrorist cells around the world.



**"Influence and capacity of Boko Haram and Shabaab will increase tremendously in 2018," says analyst.**

The most recent example of this phenomenon is Marawi, a city in the Philippines seized by ISIL-linked Maute and Abu Sayyaf terrorists. The city was under siege from May until October.

Dozens of foreign fighters fought alongside the Maute in Marawi. A Philippines intelligence source said that of the 400-500 fighters who seized Marawi, as many as 40 had recently come from overseas, including from countries in the Middle East.

Fleeing ISIL terrorists could relocate in Africa, where ISIL has already established a foothold with a presence in Libya and Egypt and through alliances with local groups, including Boko Haram in Nigeria and, to a minor extent,

Shabaab in Somalia.

Both groups have wreaked havoc in western and eastern Africa for years.

Boko Haram - blamed for the death of at least 20,000 people since 2009 - was declared the world's deadliest group in 2015, surpassing ISIL.

Last month, Shabaab carried out what has been labelled as the worst terrorist attack in Somalia, and perhaps Africa, in recent times. More than 300 lives were claimed in a truck bomb attack in Somalia's capital Mogadishu, often targeted by the group, whose splinters are affiliated to both ISIL and Al-Qaeda.

Counter-terrorism expert David Otto believes that these two groups, the deadliest in Africa, are set to become even more powerful as fleeing ISIL terrorists will seek a safe haven on the continent, which he deemed as "ISIL Disneyland for recruitment, planning and preparation of attacks."

"The majority of ISIL foreign fighters combined come from countries linked to North Africa, such as Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan and Mali," Otto explained.

"Now that ISIL has been pushed back, it is only normal that North Africa will provide a very convenient environment for fighters to retreat, especially with the instability provided by Libya, Mali, Nigeria and Somalia - the best hideout for jihadist groups.

"As ISIL moves towards Africa, the influence and capacity of Boko Haram and Shabaab will increase tremendously in 2018. Africa provides a ready environment for vulnerable and potential recruiters, especially now that young Africans are auctioned in Libya for as little as \$400. This is a market that Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda and ISIL will be looking to take advantage of."

(Source: btimes.co.uk)

## Merkel struggles to hold Germany together

The collapse of coalition talks in Germany is not simply a political problem for the Germans; it portends a period of serious uncertainty for all Europe and the West. In a Europe shaken by Brexit, the election of Donald Trump, democratic backsliding in Poland and Hungary, Chancellor Angela Merkel's Germany was supposed to be a beacon of prosperity and stability, an indomitable defender of the international liberal order. Suddenly there is talk of new elections and possibly the start of a post-Merkel era.

The deadlock was a result of national elections in September that demonstrated that Germany, for all its economic strength, was also vulnerable to the divisive social forces sweeping through the West. The 2015 refugee crisis, in which Merkel courageously declared "We can do it" and opened Germany's doors to a million refugees, also shifted votes, especially in the east,

to the far-right Alternative for Germany party, which won a stunning 13 percent of the vote.

Merkel's conservative Christian Democrats won the most seats, but they and their former coalition partner, the Social Democratic Party, took a drubbing. The Social Democrats opted out of the coalition, leaving the chancellor to seek the support of two smaller parties — the Greens and the pro-business Free Democrats. After four weeks, the talks finally collapsed Sunday night when the Free Democrats' leader, Christian Lindner, walked away saying, "It is better not to govern than to govern badly."

The Social Democrats have still shown no interest in teaming up again with the Christian Democrats, and Ms. Merkel indicated that she prefers to hold new elections.

The politics will play out as President Frank-Walter Steinmeier sounds out the



political players. However it ends up, Germany and the West are in for a stretch of considerable uncertainty on a broad range of fronts in which Germany's leader of 12 years often had the decisive voice: refugees; the stumbling negotiations with Britain on its exit from the European Union; the

ambitious plans by President Emmanuel Macron of France to join with Germany in forging a more integrated eurozone and a European military force; European relations with the United States, Turkey, Russia and China; the Greek debt.

Optimists in Germany and the union see in new elections a potential opening to a new generation of leaders who could imbue Germany with a fresh dynamism. Others fear even more votes for the far-right and the emergence of leaders reluctant to take bold risks or to follow Merkel's lead on refugees.

And then there is the possibility that Merkel will emerge strengthened by the brush with the unknown. For now, she has retained her signature pragmatism, pledging to "do everything possible to ensure that this country is well governed through these difficult weeks ahead."

(Source: The NYT)



# Turkish expert: Iran, Turkey, Russia Coop. sends strong message to U.S.

By Payman Yazdani

**TEHRAN — (MNA)** — Referring to possibility of revising the NATO membership by Turkey, Dr. Bora Bayraktar says the recent cooperation between Iran, Turkey and Russia despite differences sends strong message not only to US but also to the world.

After recent meeting between foreign ministers of Iran, Turkey and Russia in Antalya, the leaders of the three countries are set to meet at a crucial presidential summit in Sochi on Nov. 22 to discuss the political future of Syria, amid hope that the civil war is coming to an end and victory against jihadist groups is imminent.

Russian President Vladimir Putin will host President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in the Black Sea resort town after a series of trilateral political and military meetings on Syria.

To shed more light on the issue and the current differences between Turkey and its old allies, the US and NATO, Payman Yazdani from Mehr News agency reached out to Dr. Bora Bayraktar, Assistant Professor of Istanbul Kultur University.

Following is the full text of the interview with him:

■ Despite differences between Iran, Turkey and Russia over some issues in the region, recently we are witnessing very close cooperation between these three countries in Syria, Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan. What makes these cooperation significant for these countries?

A: I think the basis of cooperation among these countries due to the common understanding that there is existential threat against them. And the epicenter of these threats are in Syria and Iraq. This is more valid for Turkey and Iran. Both countries feel that after Syria and Iraq, next target will be Turkey and Iran. In the Western media this existential concerns of survival is labeled as «paranoia» of Erdogan or Turkey or Iran, making them as if they were some kind of illness, and there is no basis for it. In fact, in our national memories, we know that Turkey and Iran were targeted in the past, tried to be occupied. There were times of military coups or attempts of regime change directed from Western capitals. Although there are some disagreements between Iran and Turkey on some issues, when it comes to survival, keeping territorial integrity of themselves



and neighbors, the two can come together and form an effective alliance. Russia also feels threatened by the US and some other Western powers, understands the importance and capacity of Turkey and Iran and tries to counter balance others.

This cooperation is significant because when these trio bring their forces together they are able to block outsiders' plans which work against the people of our region. The current attempt of the US and its affiliates is to destroy territorial integrity of Syria and Iraq.

■ Does this cooperation sends any message to US for post-ISIL era in the region?

A: I think this cooperation, especially between Iran and Turkey, during the Iraq referendum crisis was a strong message not only to US but also to the whole world as well. Germany stopped training Peshmerga, soon after Turkish-Iranian and Iraqi cooperation. The US and other European countries just watched the developments with weak statements. Israel downgraded its pro-Kurdish rhetoric. It seems that the original Post ISIL scenario was based on Kurdish sovereignty in North belt of Syria and Iraq. It is already dead after Iraqi operations in Kirkuk and its north, after Turkish-Iranian moves to contain KRG. The attempts to weaken Syria and Iraq territorial integrity will continue, especially in North

of Syria, but the rising cost of this project may force the US and its allies to review their position. I believe a viable solution to these problems can only come within the region. No country has the power to impose their will in the Middle East but Iran and Turkey has the power to spoil any attempt that they don't want to see.

■ How successful have been the US and some its European and regional allies policy that aimed to disintegrate the region especially Iraq and Syria to their own interest?

A: After 6 years of war in Syria, and 14 after Iraq invasion of the US, territorial integrity, state structures of Syria and Iraq have been harmed terribly. The economies collapsed and social life has been destroyed. Seeds of hatred planted among different ethnic and sectarian groups. But still we can talk about Iraq and Syria. During the Kurdish independence referendum we witnessed a stronger position in favor of Iraqi unity among Iraqi people. Regardless of their different ethnic and religious differences many Iraqis fought for their country. This shows us there is still hope for these countries. The disintegration attempts were strong, the civil war was ruthless, but people learned a lot from their grief.

I think the trend of unity is stronger now. In Iraq, the Central government is in

a position that no government had in the last 14 years. In Syria I think we are getting closer to the final process of the civil war. The ground is almost ready for political solution. The common goal will be keeping Syria as one. The only obstacle now is US supported PYD and YPG, affiliated with PKK terrorist organization.

■ considering the tensions between US, NATO and Turkey over different issues such as their support to some terrorist groups like PKK and, buying S 400 missile system, and identifying Erdogan and Ataturk as enemy in NATO drills in Norway, How serious do you see the problem of Trust between Turkey and its old allies? How do you see the future of their relation and cooperation?

A: This is a big crisis from Turkish point of view and it shows that the problem for US and some European countries is not the personality of Turkish President Erdogan. It is Turkey itself. Putting Kemal Ataturk, founder of Turkey as a target shows the anti-Turkey climate in NATO Headquarters. This move requires more than the daring of a single official. Turkish people are aware of that. The trust between the two sides is getting weaker and weaker. Many people now question the logic behind Turkey's membership in Atlantic Pact. Even people close to the government, officials, and intellectuals now consider the implications of a leave from NATO. This is not the first crisis between Turkey and NATO.

When Turkey asked for air defense systems against the missiles from Syria or ISIL they were very slow to provide this support. When Turkey decided to buy air defense system NATO countries were not helpful. That's why Turkey turned to Chinese and Russian markets. Turkey is also disappointed with the attitude and reaction of NATO about the military coup attempt last year. NATO and European countries have been very welcoming to FETO members (Gülenist Terrorist Organization who attempted the coup last year), granted asylum to them. Countries like Germany and Belgium provided space to PKK actions on their territories. I think in the short run Turkey will remain in NATO but for the first time in the history of Turkey, leaving NATO is seriously being considered by the state bureaucracy. The future of the relation is foggy, and the trust/tolerance in Turkey for NATO has been exhausted.

## U.S. failed to fulfill its aims in Mid-East: Turkish expert

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

By Payman Yazdani

**TEHRAN —** Professor of political science, Istanbul University Nuray Mert, believes the U.S. and its allies failed to fulfill their regional aims to disintegrate Middle East.

After recent meeting between foreign ministers of Iran, Turkey and Russia in Antalya, the leaders of the three countries met at a crucial presidential summit in Sochi on Nov. 22 to discuss the political future of Syria, amid hope that the civil war is coming to an end and victory against jihadist groups is imminent.

Russian President Vladimir Putin hosted President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in the Black Sea resort town after a series of trilateral political and military meetings on Syria.

Increasing current cooperation between Iran, Turkey and Russia despite all their differences on the regional issues and the reasons behind it was discussed in an interview with Dr. Nuray Mert, professor of political science, Istanbul University.

Commenting on the increasing cooperation between the three countries, she said, "I think that unfortunately this cooperation is bound to be issue based and temporal rather than permanent. Since as you also point out, there are many differences among them on various issues. First of all, they do not agree on Syria; despite that Turkey seems not to insist on the regime change in Syria and stopped helping opposition there, Turkey's main concern is Kurds in



Northern Syria and do not agree to include them in 'political solution'. As for Iraq, Turkey seems to have changed its position and happy to cooperate with central government, there may be complications about Turkey's previous cooperation with Barzani and his oil exports without the approval of the central government. As for; Northern Iraq, Iran is keen to keep close to KRG but Turkey still perceive Kurdish power in Iraq as a major threat."

Referring to the possible message of this cooperation to the U.S., Mert noted, "It may aim to send a message to U.S. but I do not think U.S. perceive it as a serious policy shift since they know the differences among those three countries.

Besides, Turkey and Iran are at odds on Zarrab-Zencani issue despite Iran keeps silent on that issue so far."

She went on discussing the U.S. and its western allies' regional policies to disintegrate the Middle East to their benefit, she added, "They failed to fulfil their aims, first after 2003 invasion of Iraq created a mess in Iraq and Western support to Syrian so-called opposition backfired."

Touching upon the recent tensions between Turkey and its NATO allies and the possibility of Turkey's withdrawal from the alliance, Mert said, "There is a lot of mistrust on both sides and the relations are detreating every day. Nevertheless, at the end of the day, Turkish government announced today that being a NATO ally is very important for Turkey. It seems that, leaving NATO is no option so far, since Turkey's NATO membership since the end of Second World War puts Turkey in a very difficult position. It is very difficult for Turkey to overcome security and intelligence matters if it leaves NATO. Besides, any alternative alliance that Turkey can join does not exist yet, the prospect of Russian alliance cannot compensate the Western alliance. That is why, U.S. does not seem very bothered by Turkish policy shift towards Russia. Finally, I do not think that Russians consider to confront U.S. by replacing their relations with U.S. After all, as Turkey insisted to refuse 'only political choice in Syria' and wanted support for military action against Northern Syrian Kurdish enclave in Afrin, U.S. and Russia agreed that political solution is the only option and Turkey had to accept that decision."

## Wrong way to address Iran's missile program

➔ Furthermore, contrary to the Trump administration's claims, the nuclear deal does not obligate Iran to cease development of its ballistic missile program.

UN Security Council Resolution 2231, endorsing the nuclear deal, only "calls upon" Iran not to undertake missile tests that are "designed to be nuclear capable." This is far less than the stringent language of a previous resolution it voided.

The International Crisis Group notes that the language "calls upon" is nonbinding, and Greg Thielmann, an expert with the Arms Control Association, has stated that the language of Resolution 2231 "implies nuclear weapons intent must now be established in assessing the design of any missile launched by Iran, ... [a] higher bar in light of Iran's acceptance of stringent limits on its nuclear program."

In the context of Iranian security, the aim and design of Iran's missile program is to provide the country with a conventional deterrent, not to attain a nuclear-weapons delivery system. This need for deterrence stems from Iran's threat perceptions — chiefly a U.S. or Israeli attack — and its

history of having been subjected to missile and chemical weapons attacks by Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War. Iran had been unable to retaliate against the latter, much less deter the attacks. Iran's precarious borders with weak states ridden with conflict — Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq — and the terrorist threat it faces from groups such as the Islamic State (IS) further inform the logic behind Iran's missile program. Indeed, this summer, Iran responded to IS attacks in Tehran by launching missiles at IS targets in Syria.

It is also a technical reality that Iran does not have and is not developing an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) program, as Trump has claimed. Iran has limited the range of its ballistic missiles to 2,000 kilometers as a matter of policy, well below the minimum 5,500-kilometer threshold for an ICBM. Instead of focusing on range, Iran's ballistic missile program has been concerned with improving accuracy, a quality not necessary in missiles designed for nuclear weapons. As nonproliferation expert Tytti Erasto has noted, "Iran's pattern of missile testing — which has sought to

address the long-standing problem of poor accuracy — is consistent with the program's stated purpose as a regional deterrent."

Another vital lens through which Iran's missile program must be viewed is the regional security environment. By every military measure, Iran is outmatched by its regional rivals. For instance, Saudi Arabia not only has sophisticated U.S.-made ballistic missiles, but also possesses advanced Chinese Dongfeng intermediate-range missiles with a range upwards of 4,000 kilometers. Israel maintains a hefty arsenal of nuclear-tipped missiles on top of its powerful conventional military capabilities. To Iran's east, Pakistan has a nuclear arsenal potentially vulnerable to terrorist groups.

Also of importance, Iran's military spending is dwarfed by that of its regional rivals. Simply stated, at a time when Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Saudi Arabia is telegraphing overt hostility toward Iran, and Israel is threatening military strikes, for Iran to have the minimum form of deterrence that its indigenous missile program provides is logical and far from destabilizing.

If Europe and the United States are sincerely concerned about Iran's missile program, they should cooperate with other global and regional powers on a region-wide arms control initiative, for both conventional and unconventional weapons, that would foster a regional balance of power and promote regional peace and security. Endeavors to realize UN resolutions on weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons free zones in the Middle East, coupled with a regional conventional arms control arrangement, would be the most effective path to preventing further militarization and conflict in the area.

Otherwise, to discriminate against Iran for its military capabilities while U.S. officials insist on policies of "regime change" and "all options on the table" signals to Iranian decision-makers that the United States seeks to weaken Iran's means of deterrence to more easily attack it. This, in turn, compels Tehran to invest more in developing effective deterrents.

This steers the United States and Iran into an escalatory cycle that could lead to disastrous conflict.

## Will Steinmaier save Germany?



By Saeed Sobhani

**TEHRAN —** The Jamaica coalition has failed in Germany. Merkel goes through hard days. Many German officials believe that the holding of early elections in Germany is also futile in the current situation because surveys show that election results will not change. On the other hand, the formation of a minimalist government in Germany will also reduce the power of the Chancellor. In such a situation, there remains only one option for Merkel: a coalition with the Social-Democratic Party!

Although the Social Democratic party has previously stated that it will not enter into negotiations with the Christian Democrat to form a coalition government, the Social Democrats seem to be willing to end the political crisis in Germany, with German President Steinmeier's efforts. This is good news for the European Union.

As Guardian reported Germany's president will meet with the leader of the Social Democrats today as the centre left faces growing pressure to consider talks about a centrist coalition with Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats to avoid fresh elections in 2018. Martin Schulz, the leader of the Social Democratic party (SPD), ruled out another "grand coalition" after his party's worst postwar performance in federal elections in September. He reiterated his stance after the collapse on Sunday of talks about a three-way coalition between the CDU, the Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the Greens.

But Germany's president, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, a fellow Social Democrat, will appeal to Schulz to reconsider at a meeting between the two on Thursday. There is speculation that the SPD leader could face calls to step aside at a party conference in two weeks' time if he refuses to change his stance. The FDP's walkout from coalition talks on Sunday night has thrown politics in Germany into a state of paralysis, described by Steinmeier as "a situation that the German federal republic ... has never seen before".

While postwar Germany has been ruled for periods by minority governments and snap elections have been called before, there has never been a comparable struggle to form a government directly after an election. The national poll on 24 September showed a pronounced splintering of the vote, with six parties crowding into the Bundestag's plenary chamber for the first time since the introduction of a 5% vote-share hurdle for parliamentary seats in 1953.

Merkel has indicated that she would prefer fresh elections over a minority government and would be willing to run again as her party's candidate. While German media are in part attributing the collapse of the so-called "Jamaica" talks to a flaw in Merkel's approach, support for the chancellor in the CDU has solidified after Sunday's drama and a leadership challenge is unlikely.

Guardian continues that Schulz's position in the SPD is less stable. Like the FDP, the party is nervous about entering into another "grand coalition" with Merkel as a junior partner: its previous two partnerships in 2005-09 and 2013-17 were punished at the voting booth.

"We don't want Austrian conditions," said one of the SPD's deputy leaders, Thorsten Schäfer-Gümbel, pointing at the political situation in Germany's southern neighbour, where years of grand coalition rule have enabled the rise of a far-right party. But many politicians on the centre left are equally nervous about further elections, which would not only hurt the SPD's finances but could also result in a diminished share of the vote and more seats for the rightwing populist Alternative für Deutschland.

At a party group meeting on Monday, Schulz tried to pass a resolution affirming his position that the SPD was "not available for entering a grand coalition" and "not scared of fresh elections", but ended up facing protests from more than 30 delegates who questioned its unambiguous language. The party group leader Andrea Nahles afterwards hinted that the SPD could consider tolerating a minority government made up either of just Merkel's party or a CDU-Green coalition: a solution that would run an even greater risk of allowing a conservative chancellor to take credit for social democratic ideas, however.

Another rumoured solution to the political deadlock — whereby grand coalition talks could be started only if Merkel, Schulz and the Christian Social Union leader, Horst Seehofer, all resigned — is unlikely to have any sympathisers among the CDU. Already, there is speculation in the German press that the SPD party conference in two weeks' time is likely to see Schulz make way for a new chancellor candidate or a new party leader, mooted to be either Manuela Schwesig, a former minister for family, or Olaf Scholz, the mayor of Hamburg.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung suggested that the only way out for Schulz, a former president of the European parliament, would be to drop his election-night promise and kickstart coalition talks with Merkel. "He could show the FDP what taking responsibility means," said the centre-right broadsheet. "And he could demonstrate his instinct to show that his European moment has come."

Maybe few thought that Day Stein Mayer could save Merkel from the political crisis, but this is happening now. However, it should not be forgotten that the formation of a coalition government between the two parties of the Social Democratic Party and the coalition of Christian parties does not mean the end of the political crisis in this country. There are many differences between the two Social-Democratic and Christian Democrats.

One of the issues that exists between the two sides is the issue of asylum seekers and refugees. Over the past years, there were many differences over the various problems between the two Social Democratic parties and the Christian Democrats. The disputes that have been aggravated during the recent general election race in Germany. On the other hand, there is a dispute over some economic policies between the two Social Democratic parties and Christian Democrats.

One of the issues that exists between them is between the two parties, the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats, the Merkel's approach to NATO. During the electoral campaign, the Social Democrats repeatedly criticized Merkel's approach to addressing the president and his demands in NATO. The Social Democrats have repeatedly called on Merkel to take a firmer approach against U.S. policies in NATO, but the German Chancellor has so far not been able to take action.



# The Ratko Mladic disease infecting Europe

By Nidzara Ahmetasevic

Ratko Mladic, war-time Chief Commander of the Army of Republika Srpska, has been found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995, and genocide committed in the city of Srebrenica in July 1995.

The judge of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) said that Mladic has been found guilty for some of the most horrendous crimes known to humanity. And he will spend the rest of his life in prison.

This verdict will not change anything in the lives of people in Bosnia, or those living in the diaspora around the world. But at least we can comfort ourselves that some kind of justice does exist in this world and that those who are responsible for such horrific crimes, sooner or later, will end up in prison.

At least, that is how I felt, while sitting in the courtroom and listening to the judge reading the verdict. But there is still one question that

bothers me: What did we learn from the Yugoslav wars, if we learned anything at all?

Ratko Mladic and war-time Republika Srpska President Radovan Karadzic (sentenced to 40 years in prison by the ICTY) started their bloody campaign in 1992. Under their command, people were mercilessly killed, raped, tortured, expelled from their homes, burned alive, and mutilated. All that was happening in the heart of Europe, while the European Union and its institutions were being established, celebrated, and praised as something that would bring hope, peace and stability for all.

A new Europe was born and people were promised to live in unity and solidarity, under the rule of law, in respect of human and civil rights. However, that Europe was not wise or brave enough to find a way to prevent, or, at least, to stop the killings in its very heart.

While they were lying to themselves that it can only happen to us, in the Balkans, they were closing their eyes to the growing, far-right

movement.

European and other Western leaders were hesitant, back then, to call Mladic and Karadzic war criminals, or name what they were doing a genocide. They did not want to compare their killing campaign to Nazi mass murders, or to call their ideas fascist.

## ■ Ethnic cleansing

Instead, they were trying to find a way to negotiate with murderers, while using gentle terms to describe what was going on in Bosnia, like «ethnic cleansing», «conflict», or «civil war». It took them a long time to even recognize that war crimes were committed. Then, it took them almost four years to act and stop the war, four years that cost us over 100,000 lives and more than 2 million refugees.

When they finally stopped the war, making all these people with blood on their hands sign a peace agreement, it took years again to find a way to prosecute them. The processes were long and dreadful, and some, like the one for

Slobodan Milosevic, former president of Serbia, never really ended; he died before the verdict was pronounced.

People from Bosnia suffered a lot because of this, and we still live the consequences of European hesitation. But these consequences I can see now everywhere around the world.

By not reacting on time to stop mass crimes being committed, Western leaders sent a message to everybody in the world that it is OK to kill other people, and to promote dangerous, ultranationalist ideas. That it is OK to commit genocide, and the world will pretend it is something else, just a small regional conflict among some tribal people. That it is OK to be a fascist, but just call it something else.

While they were lying to themselves that it can only happen to us, in the Balkans, they were closing their eyes to the growing far-right movement and rebirth of fascism all over Europe and the world.

Balkans had been stopped on time, and their

ideas proclaimed dangerous, it could have been a clear message to all those who support ultranationalist and fascist ideas. But, everybody forgot the lesson we should have learned in the 1990s in Yugoslavia - that fascism is like a disease; it spreads easily and can infect anyone.

And in my own country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, it seems we also haven't learned anything for the past 25 years. Nothing, after all the pain we lived and continue to live through.

## ■ Old fears kept alive

We did not learn not to trust nationalist politicians. They still rule the country, while constantly keeping old fears alive and reminding us all that we are nothing else but victims. The word «survivor» has not been introduced to our post-war lives yet.

We did not learn how not to have confidence in the international community, whatever is meant by that term. Today, most Balkan people still expect salvation to come from the outside. We still think we are unable to do it ourselves. ➔13

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# Fighting salt and sugar cravings, with spicy food

By Lisa Drayer

There's no magic pill that will cure you of your cravings. But there is something that may help the effort, and it's all-natural.

Research has shown that simply spicing up your diet may help you consume less salt and possibly less sugar, while potentially improving your health even beyond the reduction of salt and sugar.

There is more consistent evidence that spicy food helps curb salt cravings than sugar.

In a study involving more than 600 people from China whose brains were analyzed with PET/CT scans, researchers found that regions stimulated by intake of both salty and spicy foods overlapped. Because of similar activities taking place in this shared space, consuming spicy foods effectively enhanced one's sensitivity to salt, thereby helping people crave and consume less salt.

"We think that spicy food can trick our brain when tasting salty food. It makes us taste the same (level of) saltiness even when a reduced amount of salt is actually consumed," said study author Dr. Zhiming Zhu, professor and director of the Department of Hypertension and Endocrinology at the Third Military Medical University in Chongqing, China.

In fact, researchers found that people who regularly enjoy spicy foods consumed 2.5 grams less salt in a day (that's 1,000 fewer milligrams of sodium) compared with those who typically steer clear of spice. They also had lower blood pressure.

It remains to be seen whether the findings can be replicated in other populations outside China, said Richard David Wainford, associate professor in the Department of Pharmacology at the Boston University School of Medicine, in an accompanying editorial. Still, "a lifestyle intervention that adds taste to the diet, in the form of extra spice and flavor, versus reduction of the pleasure given by the salt we add to our food, may have more success as a public health strategy to promote population-level dietary salt reduction," he added.

Spice may have the potential to curb sugar



**Consuming spicy foods effectively enhances one's sensitivity to salt, thereby helping people crave and consume less salt.**

cravings too, though the evidence is mixed. In one study involving 40 students from Denmark, when chili pepper was added to sweet, sour and bitter meals, participants experienced a greater desire to eat sweet foods compared with meals without chili added. In another study, also from Denmark, people experienced a decreased desire for salty and spicy foods when they ate tomato soup with cayenne pepper compared with eating the soup without pepper. But their desire for sweet and fatty foods significantly increased when they consumed the spicy soup.

**No pain, no weight gain?**

Capsaicin is the compound in chili peppers that is responsible for the burning sensation we experience when eating them. The compound has the ability to suppress sweet taste, which could also explain some findings.

But while some may enjoy the heat that capsaicin produces, it may also come with an unintended consequence.

"Capsaicin helps fight pain. Most of the time, you hear about this as a topical cream, but eating chili peppers also has benefits. It may be that when the pain goes away, you're stimulated to consume more sweet foods," said Mary-Jon Ludy, an associate professor of clinical nutrition at Bowling Green State University.

In a meta-analysis, involving more than 70 studies, funded by the National Institutes of Health and the McCormick Science Institute, researchers state that the balance of the literature suggests the capsaicin suppresses appetite, though the magnitude of the effects is small. "Purposeful inclusion of these compounds in the diet may aid weight management, albeit modestly," the study stated.

The meta-analysis included the Danish study that found increased sugar cravings among those who consumed spicy meals. But it also included a study that found adding spice can actually curb sugar cravings. In

that study, when people added half a teaspoon of red pepper to their lunch, they had a decreased desire to eat sugary, fatty and salty foods, and ate about 70 fewer calories at their next meal. The effects were seen only among those who didn't regularly consume red pepper.

"I think that there's something in the novelty of the stimulus that would allow you to eat less," said Ludy, who authored the study and the meta-analysis. "In terms of the work with red pepper, I think that that's an important piece of the puzzle. If you are adding a spicy meal every couple of weeks, it might be enough to have an effect ... but if you have it every day, the effect goes away, because you get used to it."

**A little dash will do ya**

To get started with spice, Ludy recommends sprinkling red pepper flakes into eggs in the morning. You can also use spice when making a rub for meat or when seasoning vegetables, soups, pasta or curry dishes.

She also recommends adding red pepper flakes to a meal in anticipation of a tempting dessert. "It may give you that extra piece of security," she said. Though not specific to sweet taste, cinnamon, ginger and saffron are other pungent spices with appetite suppressive effects, according to Ludy.

However you choose to use spice, it's wise to start slowly. "Remember that a tiny bit of spice can go a long way!" Ludy said. If the heat is an issue, you can calm your taste buds by pairing hot spices with healthy fats, such as avocados and nuts, according to Ludy. "They help break down the chemical that causes the burn."

If you're new to spicy peppers, she recommends starting with milder varieties, such as jalapeno or serrano, which cause less burn than cayenne or habanero. "These peppers still contain some capsaicin but not as much. Although I haven't researched it directly, my guess is that there would still be appetite effects (perhaps of a lesser magnitude) ... but if you can't tolerate higher quantities of spice, something is better than nothing, right?"

(Source: CNN)

# The importance of detaching from work

By Steve M Jex

Detaching from work is one of the keys to thriving under stressful work.

Typically when we hear that someone is "detached", or is actively seeking "detachment", this is viewed negatively. There are, however, instances where a certain amount of detachment is a good thing; in fact, there is considerable evidence that regularly detaching from work is an important key to thriving under stressful conditions. Before discussing the primary mechanisms by which people may be able to detach, it is important to first consider why we often don't detach from work. One obvious reason is technology. Today we have the capability of being in touch with the workplace 24 hours a day through e-mail and smartphones. In many ways this technology enhances our lives, but unfortunately it also blurs the lines between work and other aspects of our lives—that is, we can never fully get away from work. Another reason, which is perhaps less obvious, is social comparison processes. Oftentimes we don't detach because we don't want to be seen as a slacker compared to other employees in our organization. I had a student in one of my classes once describe how he worked in a large accounting firm, and at the end of the workday everyone looked at everyone else to see when they were going to leave work—nobody wanted to be the first to leave!

So it seems that there are some real pressures on many of us not to detach from work, especially if we want to get ahead in our careers. Consider, though, the cost of not detaching. Research has shown that when people do not regularly detach from work, there is a very real cost in terms of the depletion of mental and physical energy. There is also a more subtle, and perhaps in the long run a more important, cost. When we are constantly thinking about work, checking e-mail, and taking work-related phone calls, we are really detaching from those around us, such as family and friends. Obviously there are times when it is necessary for work to intrude on our personal lives, and most of the time important people in our lives understand, but if we constantly do this it may destroy important relationships—relationships that we may not be able to repair. Finally, we can also look at the failure



**So how do you detach? Researchers have examined many strategies, including learning new things, taking up a hobby, reading for pleasure, and exercising.**

to detach from a purely economic standpoint. Consider, for example, a person who works 5 extra hours a week checking e-mail at home. If that person earns \$10 per hour he or she is giving the employer an extra \$50 per week, and over the course of a year, an extra \$2,500. In fact, working extra hours from home raises important legal questions.

So it's been shown that detachment from work is healthy, and one of the major keys to thriving under stressful working conditions. So how do you detach? Researchers have examined many strategies, including learning new things, taking up a hobby, reading for pleasure, and exercising. Also, given the way technology often seems to tie us to work, it might be a good idea to occasionally "unplug" and get away from the electronic gadgets. Another way to look at

detachment from work is that it really involves being fully engaged in other aspects of our lives when we're not at work. When we're reading a newspaper article about events in other parts of the world, really focus on the issues involved. When we're talking to our child about what they're doing in school, ask them questions.

Research has also shown that a key to achieving some level of detachment from work is to manage the boundaries between work and other aspects of our lives. There are many ways to do this, but probably the most effective strategy is simply to establish expectations with people when it is acceptable to cross boundaries. Like most professors, I'm very dedicated to my students and work hard to meet their needs. Despite this high level of dedication, my students understand that it would not be appropriate for them to call me at 9:00 PM to ask for help on a paper. On the other hand, if one of my students had a death in their family and could not make it to their final exam the next day, calling me at home in the evening would certainly be justified. One thing to keep in mind, though, is that boundary management can be a challenge. As was discussed above, technology certain makes it much easier for work to intrude on our personal lives. Also, in many professions (and academia is certainly one of them), people are often rewarded for not establishing boundaries.

As a final thought, one of the other benefits of detachment is that it provides us with practice for the day when we permanently detach from work; that is, when we retire. Although retirement is now voluntary in most countries, most people eventually retire. Research on adjustment in retirement suggests that two of the strongest predictors of adjustment are financial security and health; as one might expect, those who are financially secure and healthy tend to adjust well to retirement. However, another factor that impacts retirement adjustment is simply whether people have something meaningful to do with their time when they retire. Detachment helps us to find things that we like to do outside of work, so when the time comes that work is not part of our lives we can still find meaning and fulfillment.

(Source: psychologytoday.com)

# Iran airports to benefit from GARD disaster response training program

Deutsche Post DHL Group and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) together with Iran Airports and Air Navigation Company will carry out the Get Airports Ready for Disaster (GARD) program at Mehrabad International Airport from 25 to 29 November 2017. Deutsche Post DHL Group and UNDP are working with Iran's airport and government authorities, representatives of humanitarian response experts to better prepare Iran's airports for future natural disasters.

Airports are central to ensuring lifesaving support reach impacted communities in the most seamless and fastest way possible. In 2009, GARD was developed by Deutsche Post DHL Group in cooperation with the UNDP with the aim of preparing airports in disaster-prone areas to handle the surge of incoming relief goods after a calamity occurs. It also

enables the various organizations and aid agencies to better understand the processes at the airport in the aftermath of a disaster, which will help facilitate relief efforts and enhance overall coordination. To date, GARD workshops have been held at more than 40 airports. Over 40 officials and experts will participate in the five-day GARD workshop in Tehran, starting 25 November, which will be led by specialists from Deutsche Post DHL Group and UNDP. During the workshop, the participants and trainers will evaluate the current level of preparedness at the airport, conduct training exercises, and develop specific recommendations and an action plan that ensures Mehrabad International Airport is prepared for future disasters.

Iran, being situated in one of the most disaster-prone regions of the world, means it

is highly susceptible to droughts, earthquakes, floods and industrial incidents. Forest fires and sand and dust storms increasingly affect different parts of the country. Iran's main concern however continues to be seismic risk. Due to its particular location in the Alpine-Himalayan mountain system, the Islamic Republic of Iran is also highly vulnerable to numerous and often severe earthquakes such as the one that hit western parts of the country on 12 November 2017. According to news reports, the 7.3-magnitude earthquake, which struck in a populated region on the border of Iran-Iraq where more than 1.8 million people live, is estimated to have taken the lives of about 500 people and injured another 7,460. It is by far the deadliest earthquake to strike Iran since 2012, and most lethal in the world in 2017.

As part of the current GARD workshop, Deutsche Post DHL Group's aviation experts, UNDP leaders and Iran Airports and Air Navigation Company representatives will equip participants with best-practice logistics management during natural disasters and work with them to devise customized disaster-response plans for the airport. The workshop will also raise awareness of Disaster Risk Reduction, which taps on Deutsche Post DHL Group's extensive logistics experience to focus on surge capacity so that airports better handle the overwhelming international support that they receive after a disaster, and identify priorities for investment in national infrastructure, which could further improve the resilience of emergency supply chains during a disaster.

(Source: UNIC)

## 7 Simple and easy exercises that will help you grow taller

By Himanshu Sharma

One of the most obvious physical characteristics is height. You might have seen endless advertisements touting to increase height and don't want to go by any phony claims anymore. What about exercising your way to be tall?

Most people believe that how tall we grow is in our genes. Besides genetic factors, there are various reasons that we often don't reach that maximum.

Exercise can help you grow taller and achieve your maximum height.

Nutrition, physical activities, posture and height maximizing exercises can aid in height increase.

Some of the exercises that will help you grow taller.

**■ Skipping/Basketball**

Skipping rope is one thing that you must learn when trying to reach your maximum height. Jumping rope increases blood supply and exerts pressure on the long bones of the body to grow in length.

**■ Vertical hanging**

Hanging may sound a simple exercise; it is one of the powerful exercises to increase height. The exercise extends the cartilages in the vertebrae and make them grow, leading to extension of the spine.

**■ Side bends**

It is one exercise that will help you increase height. You have to stand vertically on your feet kept flat on the floor, bend your body sideways and stretch as far as you can. Hold the position for 15 seconds and do the repeat with the other side of the body.

**■ Vertical stretch**

If you are not comfortable with exercises, this simple exercise is for you. Stand on your toes; lift your body with arms facing up. Stretch your body as high as you can. Hold your hands there for at least 30 seconds. The exercise stretches the spine to help you grow taller in a course of time.

**■ Vertical bends**

It is one of the excellent grow-taller exercises, wherein you stand with your legs slightly apart. Bend down and try to touch the floor without bending your knees.

The movement flexes the spine. Initially, you should try to touch the floor, but it is better if you can place your palm completely on the floor.

**■ Cobra pose**

Lie down flat on the floor with your chest facing down. Keep your upper body still, lift your upper body and try to stretch as much as possible.

Hold the position for 15 seconds and bring your body back to the initial position slowly. The exercise stretches the upper body and helps you grow taller.

**■ Lying two way stretch**

Lie flat on the floor. Your chest must face up and your arms rest on the floor straight above your head. Stretch your arms and legs simultaneously. Hold the position for 20 seconds before bringing arms/legs to rest.

It is an established fact that how tall we grow is determined by genetic factors. Physical factors such as diet and exercise do have a role in how tall we are.

Mostly, growth stops at the age of 25, but there are some things that you can do beyond this stage to add a few more inches to your height. Grow-tall exercises are not the sure way to get taller, but you can give it a try.

(Source: onlymyhealth.com)

## 6 tips for reducing body odor

Ever had that moment where you wonder if you smell, well, not so great? It happens. But you can make body odor go away. Try these six tips.

1. Keep yourself squeaky clean

Shower at least once a day and you'll wash away sweat as well as reduce the number of bacteria on your skin.

Sweat by itself is virtually odorless. But when microscopic bacteria that live naturally on your skin mix with sweat, they multiply quickly and raise quite a stink.

So washing thoroughly, especially areas prone to sweating, can reduce body odor.

2. Use antibacterial soap

Choose an antibacterial bath soap. Washing thoroughly with an antibacterial soap bar will reduce the bacteria count, in turn reducing the odor.

Look for the words "antibacterial" on the soap's packaging.

3. Towel off thoroughly

Once you've showered, be sure you dry yourself completely.

Towel off and make sure you dry any areas where you sweat a lot.

If your skin is dry, it's harder for bacteria that cause body odor to breed on it.

4. Apply "industrial strength" deodorants or antiperspirants

Once you are clean and dry, use a strong deodorant or antiperspirant on your underarms. While deodorants do not prevent sweating, they mask the smell of bacteria on your skin. Antiperspirants contain aluminum chloride, a chemical that reduces sweating, and often also contain a deodorant.

Stronger deodorants and antiperspirants are available without a prescription. Look for products that say on the label they are higher strength due to ingredients.

If you think you need even more help, you may want to ask your doctor about prescription antiperspirants.

Apply the deodorant or antiperspirant twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening.

5. Keep your wardrobe squeaky clean

Change clothes often when you're sweating heavily. Fresh clothes help keep body odor down.

Be sure to change your socks as well, especially if you tend to have foot odor. Use deodorant powders in your shoes, replace insoles frequently, and go barefoot if possible.

6. Cut out or cut down "offensive" foods or drinks

What you eat affects your body odor.

Foods that tend to make you sweat more, such as hot peppers or other spicy foods, might also contribute to body odor. And the aroma of foods such as onions or garlic can be carried in the sweat, making you smell bad. Drinks with caffeine or alcohol may also cause you to sweat more.

(Source: webmd.com)



## 10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

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

- 1

The rumor mill is spinning hard yet again, this time powered by the gossip winds of Samsung's next flagship.

According to the source, the Galaxy S9 will come with a screen-to-body ratio of up to 89-90 percent. Galaxy S9, S9 Plus rumored to appear at CES tradeshow in January 2018.
- 2

Android Wear got bumped up to version 2.6 with several helpful improvements. The Recent App complication is handy for multitasking and Google improved touch algorithms to reduce the chances of accidental side-swipe and long-press gestures.
- 3

Apple files for patent on flexible iPhone display. Interestingly, a foldable iPhone might not see the light of day until 2021. And that would come after Apple will reportedly unveil its AR headset in 2020, a device that is supposed to be even bigger than the iPhone ever was.
- 4

Pokemon GO now fully compatible with iPhone X, but drops support for iOS 8 devices. Many developers must update their apps and games to support Apple's new iPhone X due to the unusual display of the smartphone. Niantic announced recently it has issued such an update for the ever popular Pokemon GO game.
- 5

Uber's merger with ride-sharing company Yandex in Eastern Europe is one step closer to completion after getting the green light from Russia's Federal Antimonopoly Service (FAS). The Belarus Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation has also approved the deal, leaving Kazakhstan's regulatory body as the last main hurdle.
- 6

Uber said on Thursday that it discussed a massive data breach with potential investor SoftBank Group ahead of going public with details of the incident on Tuesday.

The ride-hailing service is trying to complete a deal in which the Japanese company would invest as much as \$10 billion (£7.52 billion) for at least 14 percent of Uber, mostly by buying out existing shareholders.

7

European Union privacy regulators will discuss ride-hailing app Uber's massive data breach cover-up next week and could create a task-force to co-ordinate investigations.

Uber faces regulatory scrutiny after CEO Dara Khosrowshahi said the company covered up a data breach last year that exposed personal data from around 57 million accounts.

8

Swedish band taps Google Translate to perform song in 3 new languages.

Google has now enlisted Swedish indie band Vita Bergen to demonstrate how good its translation technology has become. Vita Bergen's new single, "Light the Lights," was originally recorded in Swedish, but the band said that it has used Google Translate to convert the song into three new languages.

9

Google to launch Hong Kong cloud region in 2018.

Launching sometime in 2018, it will be Google's sixth Asia-Pacific (APAC) region after Singapore, Sydney, Taiwan, Tokyo, and the recently announced Mumbai region.

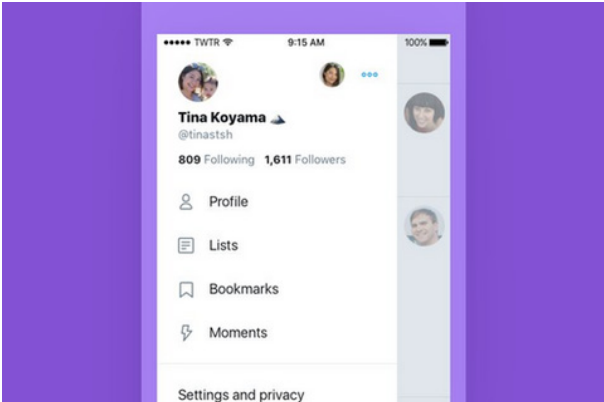
10

Amazon begins taking orders in Australia.

Amazon.com's Australian arm began an order-taking trial on Thursday, giving life to the hype which has preceded its arrival in the world's No. 12 economy and weighed on the shares of the brick-and-mortar retail sector.

## Twitter to add a ‘save for later’ feature called Bookmarks

So let's say you have received a tweet from your cousin's best friend's dental hygienist's step son. In other words, it isn't an urgent bit of communications and in fact, you'd rather save it to read later.



Right now, hitting the “Like” button is the only way to save the tweet, and by clicking on “Like,” you might be giving a false impression about how you feel about this particular tweet. Twitter has come up with a new feature called “Bookmarks” that will appear in the lists on the sidebar.

In a demo that Twitter demonstrated last month, the user pressed the “...” icon and clicked on ‘add to bookmarks.’ That saved the tweet until the user was ready to read it.

At this point in time, there is no word on when we might see Bookmarks rollout to Twitter users world-wide.

However, it is a useful feature that we're sure that Twitter fans will take advantage of once it has been officially added to the app.

(Source: TheVerge)

# Augmented reality will transform city life

By Michael Park

It's understandable to feel underwhelmed by augmented reality thus far; AR won't really become interesting and practical in a mass market way until it can do more than just place 3D objects on tables. Despite this, AR is already changing our urban lives, even if the technology's effects aren't being felt at a mass scale yet. I've interviewed three AR entrepreneurs who explain three key ways that AR is set to transform urban living.

■ **The real world will be indexed**

Google has undoubtedly changed billions of lives. By indexing the web, Google has enabled us to find virtually anything we need with the click of a button. However, as the internet evolves from 2D computer screens into a 3D internet that overlays the real world, an entirely new paradigm for navigating, identifying, and organizing data will be required. That is, trying to get information about the objects, places, and people in the space immediately around you is a complex process that is dramatically different from typing a search into Google on Firefox. However, once solved, this “indexing of the real world” will make our urban lives richer and easier to navigate.

Amir Adamov is the CEO of Fringefy, a connected-car focused platform that allows users to conduct visual searches for places in the real world. He expands on this point: “Humans naturally use vision to identify, process, and express information about the physical world. Similarly, smartphones can enhance our ability to use visual recognition to index unique points of interest in the urban environment.”

Commuting will be smarter and safer

Despite the advances made in the automotive industry since its inception, traffic



accidents remain a significant cause of injury and death worldwide. However, with the advent of AR-enabled smart devices, commuting will become increasingly safe and efficient. The rise of networked intelligent vehicles communicating with each other in real time, coupled with commuters wearing AR-enabled wearables, will result in dramatically improved urban transport systems.

Alfred Boyagdis is the CEO of Forcite, a company that builds smart helmet technology. He elaborates on this point: “The transport sector is already adopting AR technology to great effect. Companies like BMW and Daimler are making dramatic progress in HUD technologies that enable drivers to gain more situational awareness on roads.

This could help in detecting potholes and general navigation and speed management.”

Language will be less of a barrier

Being completely immersed in a foreign city and culture can be intoxicating for tourists. However, for the business traveler on a project abroad, language barriers can be a major hindrance in navigating basic situations like ordering food or asking for directions. This problem is exacerbated in situations that require interpretation with a deeper level of cultural nuance, much to Google's chagrin.

■ **AR as an interface for AI**

Despite AR's advances in translating text in a literal word-for-word manner, it'll be a long time before it's possible to accurately interpret real-time conversations. This is

because humans usually do not speak in literal terms. Moreover, most of our communication is displayed through our body language, intonation, gestures and facial expressions – all of which are difficult for artificial intelligence (AI), in its current state, to interpret accurately and in real time.

Thus, the long term utility of AR will depend heavily upon advances in AI and how well the two technologies can combine in providing better context to the world. In the next phase of technology's evolution, AI will increasingly be “the brain” with which we process the world around us, while AR will be “the eyes” through which we visually and physically engage the augmented reality of our urban environment.

(Source: Venturebeat)

## Russia says Google down-ranking Sputnik, RT would be censorship

Russia's foreign ministry said that moves by Alphabet Inc's Google to place articles from Russian news outlets Sputnik and Russia Today lower in search results would amount to censorship.

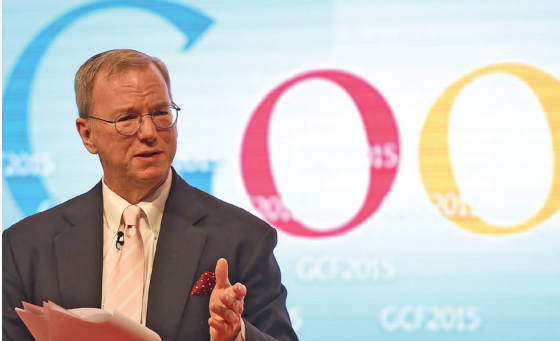
Speaking at a news briefing, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Thursday Google was acting under strong political pressure from the U.S. authorities.

Eric Schmidt, the chief executive of Google's parent company Alphabet, has said the search engine is preparing to take action against state-run Russian news agencies, including Russia Today and Sputnik, which are accused of spreading propaganda by US intelligence agencies.

“We're working on detecting this kind of scenario ... and de-ranking those kinds of sites,” Schmidt said, in response to a question at an event in Halifax, Canada. “It's basically RT and Sputnik. We're well aware and we're trying to engineer the systems to prevent it.”

Google has faced criticism for promoting the two news sites by including them in its Google News service – a curated list of legitimate news sites – as well as other algorithmic services that select and promote news.

Schmidt described the previous approach of the technology industry to misinformation as “naive”, arguing that “almost



all the things in Alphabet and the other tech companies can be understood as the maturation of what we do.

“Ten years ago I thought that everyone would be able to deal with the internet because the internet, as we all knew, was full of falsehoods as well as truths. But faced with the data, from what we've seen from Russia in 2016 and with other actors around the world, we have to act.”

According to Motherboard, which first reported Schmidt's comments, he claimed the Russian disinformation strategy was easy to combat, since it is based on “amplification around

a message” of information that is “repetitive, exploitative, false, [or] likely to have been weaponised”.

“My own view is that these patterns can be detected, and that they can be taken down or deprioritised.”

But he denied going as far as to ban the two news sites. “We don't want to ban the sites. That's not how we operate,” Schmidt said. “I am strongly not in favour of censorship. I am very strongly in favour of ranking. It's what we do.

“It's a very legitimate question as to how we rank, A or B, right? And we do the best we can in millions and millions of rankings every day.”

Russia Today's editor-in-chief, Margarita Simonyan, issued a statement in response noting that Google's own internal review system had found that the news site had broken no rules.

“Mr Schmidt should use Google,” she said, “as his colleagues admitted three weeks ago that RT did not violate any rules of their platform.”

A Guardian investigation revealed the extent of Russian penetration of the British media. At least 80 times, news sites including the Telegraph, Metro and BuzzFeed embedded or quoted tweets known to have been written by a notorious state-backed “troll army” based in St Petersburg.

(Source: Reuters, Guardian)

## Facebook tool to allow users check if they interacted with Russian ‘professional trolls’



Facebook has said it will release a tool that will allow users to check if they interacted with an account created by Russia's so-called ‘troll army’.

The company is making moves to highlight accounts created by the Internet Research Agency - an organization based in St Petersburg that has close ties to the Russian government.

The Internet Research Agency has been described as a ‘troll farm’, with the New York Times writing in 2015: “The agency had become known for employing hundreds of Russians to post pro-Kremlin propaganda online under fake identities [...] in order to create the illusion of a massive army of supporters.”

Concerns about such Russian government-linked agencies have intensified in the wake of alleged Russian interference in last year's US election, with claims that fake social media accounts were heavily

responsible for helping spread misinformation and false stories.

US intelligence agencies have said: “The likely financier of the so-called Internet Research Agency of professional trolls [...] is a close Putin ally with ties to Russian intelligence.”

Last month, Facebook revealed that people in Russia had published thousands of posts via Facebook that were seen by up to 126 million Americans before and after Donald Trump's election win - with millions more Instagram users having also seen similar content.

The new tool will be available by the end of the year.

It's the latest move by a major technology company against Russian organizations, with Twitter having recently banned ads from Russian state media outlets RT (Russia Today) and Sputnik.

(Source: newstalk)

## Virtual reality boom brings giant robots, cyberpunk castles to China



Giant robots and futuristic cyberpunk castles rise out of lush mountain slopes on the outskirts of Guiyang, the capital of one of China's poorest provinces.

Welcome to China's first virtual reality theme park, which aims to ride a boom in demand for virtual entertainment that is set to propel tenfold growth in the country's virtual reality market, to hit almost \$8.5 billion by 2020.

The 330-acre (134-hectare) park in southwestern Guizhou province promises 35 virtual reality attractions, from shoot-'em-up games and virtual rollercoasters to tours with interstellar aliens of the region's most scenic spots.

“After our attraction opens, it will change the entire tourism structure of Guizhou province as well as China's southwest,” Chief Executive Chen Jianli told Reuters.

“This is an innovative attraction,

because it's just different,” he said in an interview at the park, part of which is scheduled to open next February.

The \$1.5-billion Oriental Science Fiction Valley park, is part of China's thrust to develop new drivers of growth centered on trends such as gaming, sports and cutting-edge technology, to cut reliance on traditional industries.

The park says it is the world's first of its kind, although virtual reality-based attractions from the United States to Japan already draw interest from consumers and video gamers seeking a more immersive experience.

China's virtual reality market is expected to grow tenfold to 55.6 billion yuan (\$8.4 billion) by the end of the decade, state-backed think-tank CCID has said.

(Source: Reuters)

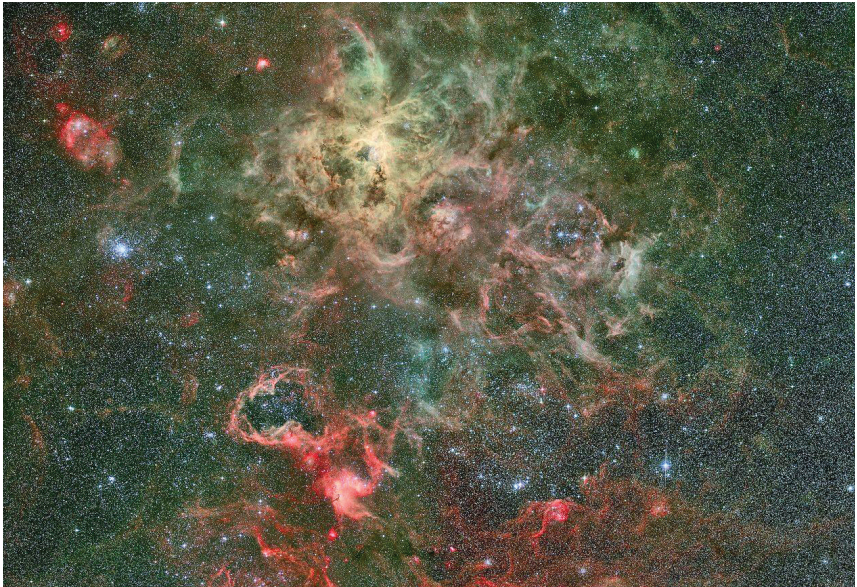


# Interstellar dust could transport life from star to star, researcher says

The theory of Panspermia states that life exists through the cosmos, and is distributed between planets, stars and even galaxies by asteroids, comets, meteors and planetoids. In this respect, life began on Earth about 4 billion years ago after microorganisms hitching a ride on space rocks landed on the surface. Over the years, considerable research has been devoted towards demonstrating that the various aspects of this theory work.

The latest comes from the University of Edinburgh, where Professor Arjun Berera offers another possible method for the transport of life-bearing molecules. According to his recent study, space dust that periodically comes into contact with Earth's atmosphere could be what brought life to our world billions of years ago. If true, this same mechanism could be responsible for the distribution of life throughout the Universe.

For the sake of his study, which was recently published in *Astrobiology* under the title "Space Dust Collisions as a Planetary Escape Mechanism", Prof. Berera examined the possibility that space dust could facilitate the escape of particles from Earth's atmosphere. These include molecules that indicate the presence of life on Earth (aka. biosignatures), but also microbial life and



molecules that are essential to life.

**■ Interplanetary dust**  
Fast-moving flows of interplanetary dust impact our atmosphere on a regular basis, at a rate of about 100,000 kg (110 tons) a day. This dust ranges in mass from 10-18 to 1 gram, and can reach speeds of 10 to 70 km/s

(6.21 to 43.49 mps). As a result, this dust is capable of impacting Earth with enough energy to knock molecules out of the atmosphere and into space. These molecules would consist largely of those that are present in the thermosphere. At this level, those particles would consist

largely of chemically disassociated elements, such as molecular nitrogen and oxygen. But even at this high altitude, larger particles – such as those that are capable of harboring bacteria or organic molecules – have also been known to exist. As Dr. Berera states in his study:

**■ Particles in atmosphere**  
“For particles that form the thermosphere or above or reach there from the ground, if they collide with this space dust, they can be displaced, altered in form or carried off by incoming space dust. This may have consequences for weather and wind, but most intriguing and the focus of this paper, is the possibility that such collisions can give particles in the atmosphere the necessary escape velocity and upward trajectory to escape Earth's gravity.”  
Of course, the process of molecules escaping our atmosphere presents certain difficulties. For starters, it requires that there be enough upward force that can accelerate these particles to escape velocity speeds. Second, if these particles are accelerated from too low an altitude (i.e. in the stratosphere or below), the atmospheric density will be high enough to create drag forces that will slow the upward-moving particles.

(Source: Universe Today)

## LED lights don't solve the light pollution problem, they made things worse

Outdoor LED lights were supposed to be a solution to light pollution, but a new study revealed that they have only made things worse.

Artificial light is found to be growing brighter and becoming more extensive every year, as the world's nights are slowly being lost.

Light pollution refers to the excessive and inappropriate usage of artificial outdoor light. The phenomenon disrupts the sleep cycle of humans, resulting in metabolic disorders and affecting health. It can also affect the migration and reproduction patterns of animals such as birds and fish, and was found to have brought spring to the United Kingdom a week in advance.

A team of researchers from Germany studied satellite observations from five previous Octobers, and discovered that the artificially lit outdoor area of the Earth increased by 2 percent every year from 2012 to 2016.

**■ Weather satellites**  
However, researchers pointed out that the light pollution problem is actually worse than that. This is because the imaging sensor on the weather satellites that took the images are not able to detect the blue that is generated by LED lights, which means some light is missed. “Honestly, I had thought and assumed and hoped that with LEDs we were turning the corner. There's also a lot more awareness of light pollution,” said Christopher Kyba



of the GFZ German Research Center for Geosciences. “It is quite disappointing.”

Kyba and his colleagues expected to see declines in light pollution in wealthy cities and industrial areas as the trend of switching from orange sodium lights to more energy-efficient LED lights continued. However, according to their research, the United States stayed just as bright while the United Kingdom and Germany

became even brighter.

LED lights offer the advantage of lower energy consumption, making the switch to using the technology an easy decision. However, instead of LED lights leading to energy savings and decreased levels of outdoor lighting, the technology has backfired. Due to the energy savings, there are now even more lights outdoors, contributing to the light pollution problem instead of helping solve it.

**■ Light pollution**  
LED outdoor lights as a way to fight back against light pollution is a bust, but there are other light pollution solutions available. The International Dark-Sky Association, an organization that looks to address light pollution, recommended families to switch to energy efficient bulbs and to keep their blinds and curtains drawn at night. The IDA also urges people to only use outdoor lighting when necessary, including installing motion detector lights so that they would only activate when needed.

Perhaps the most effective way of solving the light pollution problem, however, is to spread awareness. Light pollution is not a widely discussed topic, but if more people talk about it and understand the negative effects, then there may be bigger initiatives in fighting back against it.

(Source: Tech Times)

## Species may appear deceptively resilient to climate change

Nature itself can be the best defense against climate change for many species -- at least in the short term -- according to a study published in the journal *Ecology Letters* from the University of California, Davis.

The study found that natural habitats play a vital role in helping other plants and animals resist heat stresses ramping up with climate change -- at least until the species they depend on to form those habitats become imperiled. This suggests a need to re-evaluate climate change predictions for many species, including predictions that species in the south will move north with global warming.

The work focused on the rocky shoreline stretching from California's Channel Islands to Washington's Olympic National Park, where low tides expose marine species to

intense heat. It also has implications for habitats like grasslands and rainforests, which support millions of smaller species.

**■ Forming habitats**  
Similar to how trees support birds and chipmunks, species like mussels and seaweed form habitat for other coastal species. They can lower temperatures so much for those other species that there is ultimately no difference in heat stress for sea creatures living in southern California versus northern Washington. If those habitats become suddenly imperiled, however, the species relying on them have little time to adapt.

“We might take for granted some of the resilience of our ecosystems because we don't realize how much they depend on these habitats,” said lead author Laura Jurgens, who

was a Ph.D. candidate at the UC Davis Bodega Marine Laboratory at the time of the study and is currently a postdoctoral researcher with Temple University and Smithsonian Institution. “For creatures that live in mussel beds and seaweed beds, it's like having a house with air conditioning at low tide. You can tolerate a lot of what goes on outside if you have air conditioning. But if you're looking at a future with more intense heat waves, and you don't have air conditioning anymore, you wonder, ‘Where can I go?’ For these species, they could make a big move north, but it won't help -- they still need these habitats to keep the heat in a tolerable range.”

**■ Threatened species**  
The study indicates that plants and animals whose habitats serve as “ecological

air conditioning” are not likely to move until the other species protecting them are threatened.

This could make those species more vulnerable to sudden events like warm blobs of ocean water, disease, extreme storms or intense heat waves. These species may appear “deceptively resilient” to climate change until one event takes away their habitats.

The study adds to the understanding of how different species respond to climate change.

Scientists have observed some plants and animals under climate change are leaving lower latitudes for cooler ones. But this study shows that, for some species, habitat is more important than latitude in protecting them from the effects of climate change.

(Source: eurekaalert.org)

## 99% of ocean plastic waste is invisible, but this method could help find it

The oceans are full of plastic. We know it, and we know it's a big problem. What we don't know is precisely how big the problem is.

A fluorescent dye could help scope out the tiniest pieces of garbage in our marine environments, allowing researchers to map oceanic waste in unprecedented detail and just maybe help us find solutions to this growing environmental crisis.

Waste that accumulates in gyres, often described as Great Garbage Patches, often shocks us with its sheer scale.

But it's the tiny bits we don't see that are as much of a concern, if not more so.

Particles smaller than 5 millimeters (0.2 inches) known as microplastics can be found as tiny beads in cosmetics and cleaning products, fibers in garments, or form from larger plastics breaking down.

**■ Floating bags**  
As such, they are estimated to be far more abundant than the chunky bottles and floating bags we can see. Just how much more, nobody really knows.

Research led by the University of Warwick in the UK has found a practical solution for detecting microplastics in field samples.

Tiny pieces of plastic waste on the scale of tens of micrometers aren't exactly easy



to distinguish from other pieces of natural flotsam, even with a decent microscope.

As tempting as it is to think of these minuscule shreds of rubbish as ‘out of sight, out of mind’, they're just a much of an issue for marine species as the turtle-choking plastic bags that larger animals mistaken for tasty jellyfish.

Just recently, researchers found coral polyps didn't just swallow them up – they

did so with relish, seeming to actually like the flavor.

That's not to mention the variety of plastic materials that shed persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic (PBT) compounds into the food chain.

So getting a grip on the scale and distribution of microplastics is clearly a high priority.

“Current methods used to assess the

amount of microplastics mostly consist in manually picking the microplastics out of samples one by one,” says marine ecologist Gabriel Erni-Cassola.

To help make the plastics stand out from similar-looking bits of gunk, the researchers investigated the use of “Nile red”, a fluorescent dye that lights up when it comes into contact with the right kinds of chemicals.

Preliminary tests on different plastic polymers showed the dye was up to the job of making microplastics stand out.

**■ Fatty substances**  
To make sure it didn't mark similar materials such as fatty substances or tiny wood fragments, they flushed samples with nitric acid, which proved efficient at digesting all kinds of biogenic matter.

Out in the field, the team took samples of beach sand and trawled the surface water from the coast around the town of Plymouth and analyzed them for microplastics using both traditional methods and their staining technique.

They found a much larger amount of microplastics under 1 millimeter (0.04 inches) in size than they'd predicted, and significantly more than they'd have found using traditional methods alone.

(Source: sciencealert.com)

## People who are smart have ‘social networks’ in their brains

Scientists may understand a bit more about how a smart person's brain acts, according to a paper published Wednesday in *Scientific Reports*.

Ulrike Basten, a cognitive scientist at Goethe University Frankfurt, and her team compared the results of an intelligence test given to 309 people to data collected from brain scans. Specifically, they found that connections within and between modules could be correlated with those results.

These modules are more of a concept than a physical section of one's brain, but there are a few whose functions have been established. Some are related to executive function – being able to organize thoughts, for example – while other modules are related to salience detection – being able to pick out details from the environment, for example. Other modules are actually less connected to others in the brains of intelligent people.

“It's a major step forward in that we now are using a much more realistic model of the brain than previous research had,” Basten told *Newsweek*. “You can say it's a big step forward because previous research was using a very coarse model.”

In a press release announcing the findings, Basten compared the connections that these modules make to a social network—not all connections between people will be equally strong. Close friends and family might share more information among themselves than they would with more distant acquaintances.

“From all we know about the brain, it's so much about connections and interactions between regions and neurons,” she said. “It's the only thing that makes sense if you consider that in your model of the brain. We're not the first ones to do that, but this is still a rather new trend.”

The paper builds off previous results from this team published in 2015 and earlier this year, which looked at individual brain regions that seemed to activate differently in people who did better on a test designed to measure general intelligence.

(Source: Newsweek)

## Scientists genetically engineer a form of gluten-free wheat

A freshly baked roll is as delightful as a soft, fluffy cloud on a summer's day. What gives bread much of its appealing texture is gluten, a group of proteins found in wheat, rye and barley. But in people with a serious autoimmune disorder called celiac disease, gluten damages the small intestine.

Most gluten-free bread is made from alternative flours such as rice or potato, so it tastes and feels different from wheat bread. Now, however, researchers say that they have found a way to genetically engineer wheat that contains far less of the most troublesome type of gluten – but still has other proteins that give bread its characteristic taste and springiness.

Genetically modified crops are the subject of fierce debate around the world; some countries, including France and Germany, outlaw their cultivation. The biggest concern involves the practice of inserting DNA from one species into another, says Francisco Barro, a plant biotechnologist at the Institute for Sustainable Agriculture in Spain.

Their study zeroed in on alpha-gliadins, gluten proteins believed to be wheat's major troublemakers in the immune system. The researchers designed bits of genetic material that directed the scissorlike Cas9 protein to cut out 35 of the 45 alpha-gliadin genes. When the modified wheat was tested in a petri dish, it produced an 85 percent weaker immune response, the team reported online in September in *Plant Biotechnology Journal*.

Wendy Harwood, a crop geneticist at the John Innes Center in England, who was not part of the study, notes that the engineered wheat has a ways to go before it can be turned into anything marketable. “I don't think it's the end of the story,” she says.

(Source: Scientific American)



## How frying food could be altering the weather

Healthy eaters may have something to feel extra smug about.

Fried fatty food not only has an impact on waistlines, it is also affecting our weather systems, according to scientists.

Chemists at the universities of Reading, Bristol and Bath have discovered that when droplets of cooking fat are released into the atmosphere they form complex structures which attract moisture and form into clouds.

In large cities like London, cooking fat is known to be responsible for 10 per cent of small particles in the air, so researchers believe frying food could have a noticeable impact on cloud formation and rainy weather.

In fact, the effect is so large it could even have a cooling effect on the planet, and potentially slow down global warming.

“I think it could be having an impact on cloud formation,” said Dr. Christian Pfrang, Associate Professor of Physical and Atmospheric Chemistry at the University of Reading.

“It is likely that these structures have a significant effect on water uptake of droplets in the atmosphere, increase lifetimes of reactive molecules and generally slow down transport inside these droplets with yet unexplored consequences.

“We're not saying that becoming a healthier eater could have an impact on climate, but fat does seem to encourage cloud formation.”

In laboratory experiments, researchers levitated droplets of saltwater and oleic acid, a fatty acid associated with cooking.

They found that the molecules in the droplets arranged themselves into crystal-like lattice structures which act like a sponge to trap water. The complex structure also helps the droplets to survive longer in the atmosphere, enhancing their ability to seed clouds.

The researchers have so far only conducted experiments in a lab, but now want to see how the droplets react in the environment.

(Source: The Telegraph)



## ‘Incentives needed to boost electric motorcycle market’

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — The provision of financial incentives is a requirement to promote the use of electric motorcycles in the country, Tehran city councilor Shahrbanoo Amani has said.

Over a session held on Thursday Amani explained that allotting budget in the form of incentives will certainly persuade the buyers to purchase electric motorcycles which are costlier than gasoline-powered ones.

Following the measures taken by various responsible organization regarding the abatement of emissions and fighting air pollution in Tehran the city council have held a meeting with electric motorcycle domestic manufacturers and importers to arrive at solutions to replace eco-friendly electric motorcycles with older and high emission, carbureted models.



Replacing gasoline-powered motorcycles with green electric motorcycles is a “primary concern” for Tehran city council, Mehr news agency quoted Amani as saying. “In a collaborative attempt with the administration and the municipality we are striving to mobilize incentive payments and gain cooperation from Ministry of Industry to surmount and remove obstacles for manufacture and import of the electric motorcycles.”

To fight the choking air pollution-being blamed partly on highly pollutant vehicles- production of carbureted motorcycles, which account for more than 19 percent of pollutants in the capital, was halted in Iran since September 2016.

The carbureted motorcycles are mandated to be replaced with fuel injection and electric motorcycles.

Fuel injection generally increases engine fuel efficiency. Exhaust emissions are cleaner because the more precise and accurate fuel metering reduces the concentration of toxic combustion byproducts leaving the engine. The more consistent and predictable composition of the exhaust makes emissions control devices such as catalytic converters more effective and easier to design.

Even cleaner options are electric motorcycles. Electric motorcycles offer several benefits over gasoline-powered vehicles when it comes to air pollution, noise pollution, fuel source, and climate change. Because their fuel is electricity rather than gasoline, electric motorcycles use no oil or gasoline and emit none of the exhaust fumes that cause air pollution and smog.

Furthermore, as per the clean air law, adopted by the Iranian parliament on July 16, 2017, all homegrown, ecofriendly, zero-emission hybrid and electric cars and motorcycles are subjected to exemption from value added tax (VAT). Additionally import duty on hybrid and electric cars and motorcycle are removed as well.

## LEARN ENGLISH Talking About Skincare

A: You want to go get a **facial** with me today?  
B: Dude, what are you talking about? Only girls do that.  
A: Not at all, guys also get facials, **manicures** and **pedicures**. There is nothing wrong with looking after your skin and looking good.  
B: True. So what do they do to you at your beauty **spa**?  
A: Well, first they **exfoliate** my face, getting rid of all the dead skin. Then I get a face mask with nutrients that keep my skin healthy and young. Afterwards, they apply some moisturizer and you leave feeling like a million bucks.  
B: That doesn't really sound like something I would be interested in. In any case, I just wash my face every night and use **sunscreen** during the day.  
A: Well you should come with me one day, I'm sure you'll love it.  
B: Uh... no.

■ **Key vocabulary**  
**facial:** a treatment to beautify the face.  
**manicure:** a cosmetic treatment of the hands and fingernails, including trimming and polishing of the nails  
**pedicure:** professional care and treatment of the feet  
**spa:** a luxurious resort or resort hotel.  
**exfoliate:** to remove the surface of...such as skin and dirt  
**sunscreen:** a substance formulated to prevent sunburn, skin cancers, and other conditions caused by excessive exposure to the sun  
■ **Supplementary vocabulary**  
**massage:** the act or art of treating the body by rubbing, kneading, patting  
**tranquil:** free from commotion or tumult; peaceful; quiet  
**sunburn:** inflammation of the skin caused by overexposure to the sun or a sunlamp.  
**tan:** A brown color on the skin caused by the rays of the sun  
(Source: irlanguage.com)



# Cold spell, flooding hit Iranian provinces

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Over the first days of the ninth Iranian calendar month of Azar (starting November 22) some parts of the country have experienced a sharp drop in temperature and were inundated with flood.

Variations in temperature, particularly in western half of the country, would lead to snowfall over the next few days, weatherman Mohammad Asghari said, IRIB reported on Friday.

The cold wave which will hit northwestern provinces of Ardebil, West Azarbaijan, and Kordestan will be accompanied with snow, Asghari added.

As Asghari has said the temperature will plummet to well below minus 10 centigrade degrees in earthquake-hit areas of Kermanshah province.

The sub-zero, freezing temperature would put the survivors of the deadly magnitude 7.3 earthquake to major inconvenience as a vast crowd of the temblor victims are now living in tents and lack proper heating systems.

■ **Three killed by flood, lightning**  
Moreover, in another report Morteza Salimi, director of the Relief and Rescue Organization of the Iranian Red Crescent Society, announced on Friday that that some seven provinces of Ilam, Bushehr, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Khuzestan, Fars, Golestan and Hormozgan are stricken with flood over the past three days.

Following the flood two, including a 14-year-old and a 42-year-old victims, have lost their lives in Bushehr, Salimi regretted, adding, another victim aging 65 was also hit by lightning and passed away in Khuzestan.

■ **Abnormally warm month**  
The Iranian calendar month of Aban (the second month of autumn falling on Octo-



Rain falling down in quake-hit province of Kermanshah has made life even harder for the quake survivors.

**The temperature will plummet to well below minus 10 centigrade degrees in earthquake-hit areas of Kermanshah province.**  
**The sub-zero, freezing temperature would put the survivors of the deadly magnitude 7.3 earthquake to major inconvenience as a vast crowd of the temblor victims are now living in tents and lack proper heating systems.**

ber 23-November 21) was abnormally warm nationwide, director for drought and crisis management department of Iran's Meteorological Organization said, ISNA reported on Thursday.

"We had a very warm month of Aban na-

tionwide and without exception, all provinces of Iran experienced a-warmer-than-usual Aban," Fateh stated.

He went on to say that regarding the country's annual mean long-term temperature of the month of Aban this year 1.8-degree rise

in temperature was reported.

As Fateh have said with a mean temperature rise of 3.3 provinces of Alborz, Qazvin, Zanjan and Tehran set the records high for the warmest weather in the Iranian calendar month of Aban.

## UN urges global action so women and girls everywhere can live free from all forms of violence

Achieving gender equality and the full empowerment of women is the answer to ending violence against women, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said Wednesday, calling for collective global action on this cause.

"Violence against women is fundamentally about power," Mr. Guterres said in his remarks alongside UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, at a special event held at UN Headquarters in New York to commemorate International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, which is annually observed on 25 November.

"It will only end when gender equality and the full empowerment of women will be a reality," he stressed, adding that his policy on gender parity in the United Nations is one step towards achieving this goal.

Mr. Guterres noted that every woman and every girl have the right to a life free of violence, but this right is violated in a variety of ways in every community, with more than one in three women worldwide face violence throughout their lifetime.

This violence, the most visible sign of pervasive patriarchy and chauvinism, directly impacts women's physical and



psychological health. It affects whole families, communities and societies. While it continues, States will not achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a master plan to end poverty and save the planet, adopted by them in 2015.

"There is increasing recognition that violence against women is a major barrier to the fulfilment of human rights, and a direct challenge to women's inclusion and participation in sustainable development and sustaining

peace," said Mr. Guterres.

The United Nations is committed to addressing violence against women in all its forms, he stressed, citing such initiatives as the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, which has successfully awarded \$129 million to 463 initiatives across 139 countries and territories over the past 20 years.

These also include the Spotlight Initiative recently launched by the UN and the European Union, as well as the UN Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Initiative, which seeks to help end sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces.

Mr. Guterres is also addressing the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse in-house by launching a new, victim-centered approach to the offenses committed by those serving under the UN.

While noting that these initiatives should help deliver transformative change, he said much more remains to be done.

"It is time for united action from all of us, so that women and girls around the world can live free from all forms of violence," he said.

(Source: UNIC)

IN THE NAME OF GOD



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| C              | 0.2 %                                    | Max                             |
| P              | 0.05 %                                   | Max                             |
| Size Of Pieces | 20-60 mm                                 | Min 90 %<br><20 mm Max 10 %     |
| Packing        | BULK OR 1MT BIG BAG IN THE 20' CONTAINER |                                 |
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# Saudi crown prince's attempt to raise his head among political pros

➡ Mohammed bin Salman told the New York Times that Riyadh prefers a confrontational approach to "appeasement" in dealing with Iran.

MBS made a similarity between Iran's growing regional influence and Germany's hegemonic policies in the Hitler era and said, "We learned from Europe that appeasement does not work."

The 32-year-old Saudi regime Crown prince also praised Trump for his stance on the Middle East. Trump has been vehemently opposed to Iranian expansion, slamming its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) with sanctions in October and refusing to recertify the nuclear deal signed between Iran and the E3+3 group of countries in 2015.

Bin Salman said that the Saudi regime and its Arab allies were building up a coalition against Iran, with the backing of the Trump administration.

Tensions soared this month when Lebanon's Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigned in a television broadcast from Riyadh, citing the influence of Iran-backed Hezbollah resistance movement in Lebanon and risks to his life.

Hezbollah called the move an act of war engineered by the Saudi regime authorities, an accusation they denied.

Hariri has since suspended his resignation. The House of Saud regime has been pursuing an open warmongering policy toward Iran. Earlier this year, MBS threatened to move the "battle" to Iran.

Obviously, such bellicose rhetoric has not remained unanswered.

Iranian authorities have all along made sure that Saudi officials realize that aggression of any magnitude will be reciprocated. Tehran has called on the Saudi regime to stop the war of words it has waged against Iran and return to the path of peace and dialogue.

Amid reports that Saudi King Salman seeks to relinquish power in favor of the crown prince, informed sources say Mohammed bin Salman plans to shift his main focus to Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement by seeking assistance from the Israeli military after he ascends to the throne.

## ■ Saudi purge of elites

The Saudi regime Crown prince also addressed the wide range of the so-called



reforms he has spearheaded since his ascendancy to first in line to the throne earlier this year. This month, the reforms were joined by what the Saudi regime authorities said was an unprecedented crackdown on graft and corruption. Among more than 200 individuals summoned for questioning were 11 members of the Saudi royal family, including the king's nephew and the kingdom's richest man—billionaire investor Alwaleed Bin Talal and former spy chief Prince Bandar bin Sultan. Bin Salman pushed back against allegation the arrests were aimed at consolidating his personal power, dismissing the characterization as "ludicrous." He said some 10 percent of government funds had been siphoned off by corruption each year since 1980 until today. Some \$100 billion is set to be recovered in settlements.

MBS rejected speculation that the purge was part of a power grab campaign by the Saudi regime crown prince.

On November 4, dozens of Saudi princes, ministers, and former ministers were detained on the orders of the Saudi regime's so-called Anti-Corruption Committee headed by the crown prince.

According to the source, MBS has also confiscated over \$194 billion from the bank

accounts and seized assets of those arrested.

Mohammed bin Salman said his anti-corruption team started investigations for the so-called anti-corruption campaign in 2015 "until they collected the most accurate information, and then they came up with about 200 names."

MBS, who is also Saudi regime's defense minister in the U.S.-allied oil rich kingdom noted that the arrested billionaires and princes were given two choices: "We show them all the files that we have and as soon as they see those about 95 percent agree to a settlement," which means signing over cash or shares of their business to the Saudi state treasury.

"About 1 percent are able to prove they are clean and their case is dropped right there. About 4 percent say they are not corrupt and with their lawyers want to go to court," he added.

The crown prince cited the Saudi public prosecutor as saying that settlements could eventually "be around \$100 billion."

On Wednesday, DailyMail.com cited an informed Saudi regime source as saying that the House of Saud regime has been using the United States mercenaries to torture the arrested elite.

The detained Saudi princes and billionaire

businessmen are being strung up by their feet and beaten by American private security contractors, the report said.

The source noted that even Mohammed bin Salman himself conducts some of the interrogations as he is desperate to assert his authority through fear and seeks to uncover an alleged network of foreign officials who have taken bribes from Saudi princes.

President Trump has backed the crackdown, saying Saudi officials had been "milking" the country for years. "I have great confidence in King Salman and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, they know exactly what they are doing," Trump wrote on Twitter shortly after the arrests began.

## ■ Saudi regime blood thirst in Yemen

The Saudi regime crown prince also claimed that the regime's war on Yemen is going in favor of Riyadh, saying that its allies currently control 85 percent of Yemen's territory.

This is while Ansarullah (Houthi) movement fighters control the main population centers in Yemen, including the capital city of Sana'a.

The House of Saud regime invaded Yemen in March 2015, using the weaponry provided by the United States and its Western allies, to reinstall a former regime that had been friendly to the Saudi regime. It also imposed a land, aerial, and naval blockade on the already-impooverished country.

Despite the Saudi regime-led coalition's superior military power, the Ansarullah and their allies have been successfully defending the country, turning a war that the Saudi regime had hoped to finish in a matter of weeks into a quagmire that Riyadh continues to be stuck in almost three years later.

Earlier this month, the Saudi regime ramped up threats to Iran, blaming Tehran for a missile strike by Ansarullah from Yemen which struck Riyadh.

Riyadh and its allies accuse the Ansarullah of receiving financial and arms support from Iran. The Islamic Republic rejects the accusations, but is supportive of the Yemeni defensive campaign against the Saudi regime invasion.

## Iraq forces: ISIL retreating deep into desert

### Iraq's Nujaba 'ready to return arms' after ISIL purge

Iraqi forces said on Friday that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist are withdrawing deep into the desert to escape an offensive now in its second day aimed at finally defeating them.

The extremists have already been driven out of all of the towns they once held but Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has said he will not proclaim victory until they have been cleared from the western desert bordering Syria.

Popular Mobilization Units (PMU/Al-Hashed al-Sha'abi) paramilitary force said its fighters had taken control of 77 villages and hamlets since the launch of the offensive on Thursday morning.

## ■ Iraqi volunteer force hints will return weapons to army

An Iraqi volunteer military force, which heeded a government call to arms in 2014 to join the fight against the ISIL, says it respects the decisions of the national army, hinting that it will act on an order to hand heavy arms back when the counter-terrorism battles end.

"The heavy weapons belong to the Iraqi government, not us. We are not rebels or agents of chaos and we do not want to be a state within a state," the spokesman for Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, Hashim al-Mousawi, said at a Thursday news conference.

Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, which has about 10,000 fighters, is a branch of PMU.

PMU is an Iraqi state-sponsored umbrella organization composed of some 40 groups, which are mainly Shia Muslims. The force reportedly numbers more than 100,000 fighters. Iraqi authorities say there are between 25,000 and 30,000



Sunni tribal fighters within its ranks in addition to Kurdish Izadi and Christian units.

The volunteer force was formed in 2014, when the ISIL terrorist group managed to make sweeping territorial gains in Iraq's western and northern parts, helping the government forces regain their strength and speed up their counter-offensives.

The volunteer fighters have been on the forefront of the fight against ISIL and played a major role in the liberation of militant-held areas to the south, northeast and north of the Iraqi capital Baghdad.

"[Al-Hashd al-Shaabi] is under the command of the commander-in-chief of the armed forces and naturally when the war is over and victory is declared, the final decision will be his," Mousawi said.

The comments came after Iraqi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Rasool announced that tanks, armored vehicles,

and machine guns should be returned to the army after the ongoing battles end.

PMU fighters are paid by the Iraqi government and officially report to the prime minister, who is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

On Tuesday, al-Abadi said ISIL has been defeated from a military perspective but Baghdad will only declare final victory after the militants are purged from the desert areas.

Harakat al-Nujaba has strongly condemned Washington's plans to designate the groups as a terrorist organization.

Earlier this month, the United States Republican lawmaker Ted Poe proposed a bill to the House of Representatives that would place Nujaba on a list of terrorist groups over accusations of having links to Iran and give President Donald Trump 90 days to impose sanctions on it once the bills is passed.

The bill has sparked widespread condemnation in Baghdad, with Prime Minister Abadi saying he would not allow anyone who fought ISIL to be treated as criminals.

"Accusing us of terrorism is not new or surprising. It is not a coincidence, and does not shock us, because we have never been part of the American bloc or project," Mousawi pointed out.

He noted that his group receives support in the form of "advice" from Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah movement.

Iran has been providing advisory military assistance to the central government in Baghdad and the regional government in the Iraqi Kurdistan, helping them both maintain ground and win back territory lost to ISIL.

(Source: agencies)

## China says to help with reconstruction of Syria

China says it will help with reconstruction efforts in Syria, which has seen massive destruction as a result of over six and a half years of armed conflict.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told a visiting senior aide to Syria's President Bashar al-Assad on Friday that dialog was important in resolving the conflict and that

the world must support the reconstruction of the country.

"The international community should emphasize and actively support Syria's reconstruction. China will put forth its own effort for this," Wang told Bouthaina Shaaban, according to a statement by China's Foreign Ministry.

According to the statement, Shaaban

welcomed China playing a greater role in the political process to resolve the Syrian conflict.

Two parallel peace processes have been going on for Syria, one in the Kazakh capital of Astana and the other in the Swiss city of Geneva. The Astana peace process has been launched by Iran, Russia, and Turkey, and the Geneva talks are held on the auspices

of the United Nations.

On Wednesday, the presidents of Iran, Russia, and Turkey invited all countries to contribute to peace in the Middle East region, including in Syria, and help with the reconstruction of Syria and the return of Syrian refugees to their homes.

(Source: Press TV)

## Philippines presses for Shia-Sunni dialogue

A project that perhaps is calling on all Muslims around the world to play a part in.

## ➡ Third route in Silk Road proposed by De Venecia

In a separate project, de Venecia, also the Philippines' special envoy for APEC and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, has a third route to "extend" and "complement" China's Belt and Road Initiative in mind.

De Venecia made the proposal at the Belt and Road Forum in Beijing in May 2017.

He held out hope that the route would expand, deepen and strengthen the cultural, geopolitical, geo-economic trade and people-to-people linkages of the historic Silk Road.

Duterte's envoy explained that from Southern China, the route would pass through the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Timor-Leste, which would then lead to parts of Australia and Latin America.

Otherwise, he commented, the Silk Road in China includes only "Western Asia, Central Asia, Europe and Africa."

"This is globalization," he assures. "We are not talking about regions anymore, we talk about global community."

"So, what I'm proposing is a real circular navigation to benefit all the countries in the world."

The future of the proposal also known as "new spirit in the age of globalization" remains uncertain; however, de Venecia has taken strides in generating "global interest" for it. \*\*\*\* 'Iran plays a major role in industrialization'

The former speaker of the House of Representatives, who doesn't have just a hand in politics but in economics too, praised Iran's contribution to industrialization, saying, "Iran plays a major role in industrialization by bringing regions together."

Describing Iran as "Asia", Duterte's special envoy further noted the world is very proud of "Old Persian Empire."

## Sochi conference; Syria's transition point to a New Era

➡ Secondly, the approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards the developments in Syria has always been based on supporting Syria and respecting the will and decision of its people. Hassan Rouhani, the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, regards the future of Syria not in the hands of the foreign powers, but in the hands of the Syrian people.



He argued that the Islamic Republic of Iran, unlike the United States and the Zionists, is not after making tension in the region, he stated: "The bases of terrorism in Iraq and Syria have collapsed and Tehran's battle with terrorist groups in the region continues till they're all rooted out," he said.

What is certain is that due to the heavy and difficult expenses that the oppressed people of Syria have paid during the fight against ISIS and other terrorist and takfiri groups, it is now up to them to decide on the future of this country. Obviously, in this equation, the will of foreign players is respected to the extent that it's working for the completion and fulfillment of the will of the Syrian people. However, some foreign players, including the United States and its regional allies, who are also contributing to ISIS crimes and disasters in Syria, have made every effort to prevent the realization of the will of the Syrians during the post-ISIS era.

Washington and its allies must accept the fact that in the post-ISIS era, Syrians and only Syrians should determine their future. This is the main message of Sochi's meeting. A message that has been emphasized by our country's officials in Syria. Undoubtedly, the Sochi meeting is an entry point for official and diplomatic entrance into the post-ISIS era in Syria. As noted, the diplomatic power of countries and players must now focus on stabilizing and rebuilding Syria in the post-ISIS era and supporting the realization of the political will of the people of this country.

The third point here is about the impact of the Sochi meeting on regional developments. The message of the Iranian President advisor on the Sochi Summit should be reviewed here. Hassamodin Ashena, the president's advisor has analyzed this gathering of the Iranian, Russian and Turkish armed forces commanders. He wrote in his Telegram channel: "Through the cooperation of military and intelligence services with diplomatic sagacity and multilateral coalitions, the playing ground can be changed with strategic intelligence."

Undoubtedly, the time has come for changing the playing ground in Syria. But this change in the playing ground should be done with the will of the Syrian people and its true supporters. Obviously, in this equation, countries that have been the cause of the crimes and bloodshed in Syria and have made this country a place for bloodshed in the last six years should not be contributing. Meanwhile, countries such as the United States, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom must also be held accountable to international courts for killing Syrians by feeding ISIS forces.

The next point is about the U.S. role at the current time. At President Obama's time and then in Donald Trump presidency, both former and current U.S. presidents tried to compensate ISIS and other terrorist groups weaknesses in the diplomatic squad, but failed in this regard. Now and in the post-ISIS era, we have to watch out for Washington and its allies. Without a doubt, the United States will do its utmost to conduct diplomatic consultations on the situation in Syria to benefit its own interests in the region, although it is not directly involved in the negotiations. Therefore, it is necessary for the supporters of the Syrian people, including Iran and Russia, to be sensitive to the clear and hidden aspects of the United States' game at this time.

Abdul Bari Atawen, editor-in-chief of the independent newspaper of Election Ray al-Yawm, said that Bashar al-Assad's visit to Russia in order to hold the Sochi meeting between Russian and Syrian leaders, would be a celebration of the end of the current period and the beginning of reconstruction. Without a doubt, holding the meeting of Sochi has also accelerated this process. Sochi's meeting means Syria's transition to a new era. A period in which, while supporting the Syrian people, we must watch out for the games and conspiracies of the constant enemies of the Syrian people, especially the United States and its allies.

## The Ratko Mladic disease infecting Europe

➡ We are still unable to stop being victims and become survivors, and move on with our lives. Or start from the beginning. Anything, just to move forward.

After years of waiting, one more monster - Ratko Mladic - has been punished for what he did. But, unfortunately, I cannot say that his doings and his ideas have been eliminated in the process. They are not even defeated.

On May 28, 1992, I was wounded by shrapnel at my home in Sarajevo. That day, Mladic had ordered his soldiers to use all available ammunition to shoot at our city; «Blow their minds away,» he told them.

He not only blew our minds away, but he also left a time-resistant ideological crater in the heart of Europe. There was nobody to stop him and put him in prison years ago, so his ideas spread like a drug-resistant bug, adjusting to different circumstances and times.

I can hear Mladic and Karadzic in the words of many far-right leaders in Europe and around the world today. I can hear them in the words of people who are justifying wars and war crimes. I can hear them in policies of closed borders and «national security».

However, unlike many others in today's Europe, I can hear them and recognize them. And, unlike many others, that makes me worried.

(Source: Aljazeera)



## International authorities to blame for Sochi Games doping scandal: Russia

The International Olympic Committee and anti-doping authorities are to blame for a Russian doping scandal that tarnished the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Deputy Prime Minister Vitaly Mutko said on Thursday.

The IOC and the World Anti-Doping Authority (WADA) failed to supervise drug tests properly and Russia is innocent of any doping and should not be held responsible for what happened, Mutko said.

Ten Russian Olympians, six cross-country skiers and four skeleton athletes were banned for life from the Olympics by the IOC this month for violating anti-doping rules at Sochi.

The bans stem from an IOC investigation into allegations of widespread doping among Russians and sample tampering by security officials at the anti-doping laboratory in Sochi.

It is one of the biggest cases of state-sponsored doping in Olympic history. Russia denies any role but has pledged to co-operate with international sports bodies to help rid the country of doping.

“People have been so brainwashed that Russia is to blame for everything that nobody remembers WADA’s responsibility, nor that of the IOC,” R-Sport news agency quoted Mutko as saying.

WADA should be asked about its employees who worked at the laboratory during the Games.

“What were they doing there? Sleeping?” Mutko said.

The IOC has been re-testing all Russian athletes’ samples from the 2014 Games following revelations by Grigory Rodchenkov, the former head of Moscow’s suspended anti-doping laboratory, of a scheme to cover up home competitors’ positive samples.

The IOC is to decide next month on the participation of Russian competitors at the Pyeongchang winter Olympics in South Korea in February.

Russia’s Paralympic committee, anti-doping agency RUSADA and athletics federation remain suspended over doping scandals. *(Source: Reuters)*

## Messi equals Ronaldo with fourth European Golden Shoe

Lionel Messi drew level with Cristiano Ronaldo’s tally of four European Golden Shoes after receiving the award at a ceremony on Friday.

The Barcelona superstar claimed the prize – handed to Europe’s top goal scorer – for his 37 LaLiga strikes in 2016-17.

It is the fourth time Messi has taken the honors, after his successes in 2010, 2012 and 2013.

His impressive tally came from 34 top-flight games and saw him top the charts ahead of Sporting CP’s Bas Dost, who netted 34 in the Primeira Liga, while Borussia Dortmund’s Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang rounded out the top three with 31.

Ronaldo, winner of the award in 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2015, scored 25 league goals last season and did not make the top five.

Last year’s victor and Messi’s Barcelona team-mate Luis Suarez was fifth this time around with 29, one fewer than Bayern Munich’s Robert Lewandowski. *(Source: Soccerway)*

## Robinho sentenced to nine years in prison for 2013 sexual assault

Former Brazil forward Robinho has been found guilty of sexual assault and was sentenced to nine years in prison by an Italian court on Thursday.

According to La Stampa, Robinho, who now plays for Brazilian side Atletico Mineiro, and a friend have also been ordered to pay the victim €60,000 (\$71,097).

The outlet reports that the two men, along with a group of four other people who have not been identified and therefore have not been sentenced, got a woman drunk and assaulted her at a Milan nightclub in January 2013.

The Italian justice system permits several levels of appeal. According to reports, the verdict is placed on hold until all have been exhausted.

Robinho, who then played for AC Milan, denied any wrongdoing at the time of the allegations, and his lawyer, Marisa Alija, reiterated on Thursday that the player had no involvement in the incident and has already made legal arrangements to fight the decision.

“Concerning the case involving the forward Robinho, in an incident that occurred some years ago, I want to make clear that my client has already defended himself from these accusations, affirming that he did not have any participation in this episode,” she told ESPN Brasil.

“All the legal measures are being taken regarding this initial decision.”

Brazil does not extradite its citizens.

In 2009, Robinho, who was with Manchester City at the time, was arrested but did not face charges for what West Yorkshire Police called “a report of a serious sexual assault that occurred at a nightclub in Leeds.” *(Source: Soccernet)*

## Alcantara out for ‘lengthy period’ with thigh injury

Bayern Munich midfielder Thiago Alcantara is set for a lengthy spell on the sidelines after sustaining a thigh injury during Wednesday’s 2-1 Champions League win over RSC Anderlecht, the German champions said on Thursday.

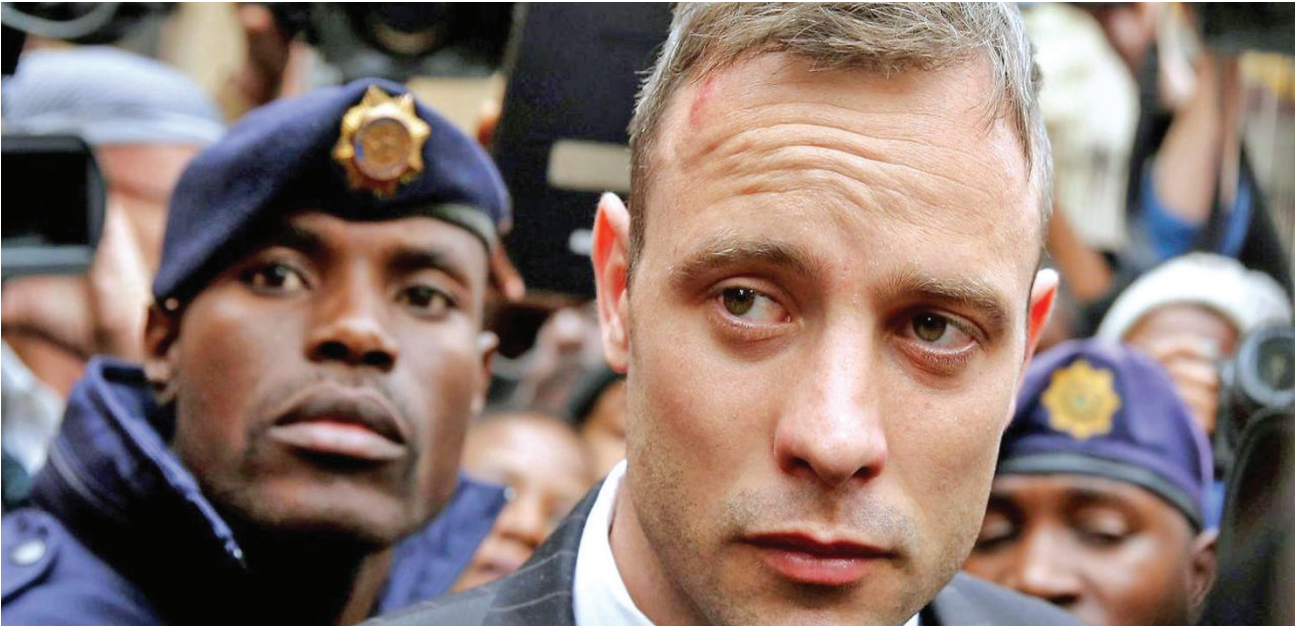
Spain international Thiago was substituted prior to halftime before Robert Lewandowski and Corentin Tolisso scored in the second half to extend Bayern’s winning run to nine matches across all competitions under manager Jupp Heynckes.

“Bayern are set to be without midfielder Thiago for a lengthy period of time,” Bayern said on their website. (fcbayern.com)

“Coach Jupp Heynckes revealed that the Spain international ‘most probably has a serious muscle injury in his thigh.’”

Bayern sealed qualification to the Champions League knockout stages last month and host Group B leaders Paris St Germain in their final group game on Dec. 5. *(Source: Goal)*

# Oscar Pistorius murder sentence increased to 13 years



to appeal, Phelps said.

### ■ The legal fight

Pistorius was initially convicted of manslaughter in 2014 after months of hearings, but a higher court changed that to murder a year later.

The judge surprised many when she initially sentenced Pistorius to five years. The minimum sentence for murder in South Africa is 15 years, but individual judges can lower the sentence if there are “substantial and compelling” reasons to do so.

During Pistorius’ initial sentencing, the judge cited mitigating circumstances for the lesser punishment, saying Pistorius was genuinely remorseful and a good candidate for

rehabilitation.

She described him as a “fallen hero” who will never be at peace when sentencing him to six years in prison.

Prosecutors had appealed Pistorius’ sentence in the past but a lower court judge rejected their request for a harsher sentence in 2016.

### ■ From hero to killer

Stunned fans wondered how the celebrated former Olympian and Paralympic gold medalist turned into a killer.

Pistorius was the so-called “Fastest Man on No Legs,” and his inspiring story captured the imagination of the world at the 2012 London Olympics.

Born with a congenital abnormality, Pistorius had both his legs amputated below the knee before his first birthday, but through sheer determination excelled in world-class athletics.

In 2012, he became the first double amputee to compete against able-bodied runners at the London Olympics, adding to his fame as the “Blade Runner,” a reference to his carbon fiber prosthetic legs.

While he failed to win a medal, Pistorius’ presence on the track was hailed as a triumph over adversity and a victory over critics who claimed his blades gave him an unfair advantage over the able-bodied. *(Source: CNN)*

## I don’t know what you want - Mourinho blasts Man United critics



Jose Mourinho has defended Manchester United’s style of play while insisting he is not paying too much attention to the gap to Premier League leaders Manchester City.

Pep Guardiola’s City lead rivals United by eight points, with the Etihad Stadium outfit also receiving plaudits for a free-flowing approach that has seen them net 40 times in 12 league games this term.

However, Mourinho disputed the suggestion that any side plays with more ambition than his own as United prepare for the visit of Brighton and Hove Albion on Saturday.

“[To have] more ambition than we have at home is quite difficult,” said the United boss. “I don’t know who is more ambitious than us.

“We played against Newcastle with [Paul] Pogba, [Marcus] Rashford, [Anthony] Martial, [Juan] Mata, [Romelu] Lukaku; the full-backs are not full-backs, [Antonio] Valencia and [Ashley] Young are wingers not full-backs.

“So I don’t know what you want.”

With the Brighton game followed in quick succession by clashes with Watford

and Arsenal, United have an opportunity to close in on City, who they face on December 10 – but that is not at the forefront of Mourinho’s mind.

“We cannot think about the gap,” he added. “We cannot think about the gap to City, to the fifth position. We just have to focus on ourselves and in matches.

“It’s probably the first time this season with three Premier League matches in one week, with a couple of days in between matches, but I think every team is prepared for that, even when I look to teams with other ambitions I see fantastic squads so I think the teams are going to cope with the week.

“Obviously, for us, Brighton, Watford, Arsenal is a very important week. But let’s focus on Brighton, ninth in the table, good team, difficult to beat, don’t concede many goals, have a mix of physicality, aggression, quality, creativity. I think Chris Hughton is doing a great job.

“We must focus on this one. I know we have a good record at home and are strong at home, but the opponent is going to be difficult for us.” *(Source: Four Four Two)*

## Could Italy really replace Peru at World Cup?



The FIFA regulations dictate that it is theoretically possible for Italy to replace Peru at the World Cup, but it’s highly unlikely.

It has been reported that the Peruvian State could take control of their football federation, something which is not allowed by FIFA. If the law is passed and world football’s governing body aren’t happy with the situation, it is possible Peru could be banned from international competition and with that the World Cup next summer.

In 2015, Kuwait were given a five-year ban from FIFA competition after government interference, though Sheikh Ahmad Fahad al-Ahmad al-Sabah remained on the Executive Committee. Speculation has therefore raged that the Azzurri could potentially be given a back door into the World Cup, having been knocked out by Sweden in the play-offs.

A perusal of FIFA’s laws governing the World Cup shows that it is possible.

Article 7 states “if any association withdraws or is excluded from the competition, the FIFA Organizing Committee shall decide on the matter at its sole discretion and take whatever action is deemed necessary”.

That means there is no statutory obligation for FIFA to replace Peru with New Zealand,

who lost to them in the play-offs, or another South American nation.

It’s explicitly stated that “the FIFA Organizing Committee may in particular decide to replace the association in question with another association”, but not which association that would be.

As a prestigious nation with a high world ranking, it would clearly be beneficial to FIFA to have Italy at the World Cup.

However, any such decision is highly unlikely, almost to the point of impossibility. The only likely reason for a nation being excluded is civil war or other conflicts which could affect the nation in question.

Yugoslavia were excluded from the 1992 European Championships when the country descended into civil war, and were replaced by Denmark. The Danes had finished behind Yugoslavia in qualifying, and went on to win the tournament in one of the biggest upsets in modern football history.

Even if the State does take over the running of the Peruvian FA - which in itself is far from certain - it’s not likely FIFA would consider that grounds to exclude them from the tournament. *(Source: Football-Italia)*

## Hamilton and Vettel already fixated on five

Formula One’s four-times world champions Lewis Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel engaged in some light-hearted end-of-season banter on Thursday, already looking beyond the final race of the season and ahead to the next big battle in 2018. For the first time, next year will see two quadruple champions start the season in search of a fifth title.

Mercedes driver Hamilton won his fourth in Mexico last month while Ferrari’s Vettel became a four-times champion with Red Bull in 2013 after Michael Schumacher had retired with seven to his name.

Only Schumacher and the late Argentine great Juan Manuel Fangio, who was dominant in the 1950s, have won five championships. Hamilton has won nine races this season and Vettel five with the pair looking at one stage like taking their title battle down to the wire before Ferrari’s challenge fizzled out with collisions and engine failures.

Vettel said the experience of 2017, after the team failed to win a race in 2016, filled him with confidence.

“I think if we can do a similar step for next year...then it should be a walk in the park,” he declared with a smile while appearing with Hamilton in a news conference at the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.



“I think the step that we’ve done this year was incredible. We learned our lessons so I believe that also those will help us next year. We are completely fired up.”

Asked for a particular highlight of the 2017 season, Vettel grinned. “Shall we start with Baku? Break the ice?,” he asked as Hamilton chuckled.

The pair clashed famously in Azerbaijan in June, with

Vettel running into the back of the Mercedes while behind the safety car and then pulling alongside to bang wheels in what was seen by some as a ‘road rage’ incident.

A question about the best overtaking move also triggered laughter. “I have a very bad memory,” confessed Hamilton, before Vettel interjected: “Not much to remember - you didn’t have to pass that many people.

“I passed you a couple of times,” retorted Hamilton. Vettel also had a dig at his own behavior when, asked whether the sport should have a fair play award, he singled himself out for honors.

“I should get the ‘move of the year’, ‘personality of the year’ and what was the last one? fair play? oh, fair play maybe not,” he said, as Hamilton laughed. “But those two for Baku for sure.” Red Bull’s Daniel Ricciardo, odd-man out among the champions at the news conference, joined in the end-of-term mood by setting out his own stall for next season. “Between us all we’ve got eight world titles so it’s pretty good,” joked the Australian. “But obviously we want nine. I’ve been pretty pleased with the year but I’ve still got some improvements to make.” *(Source: Reuters)*



# Iran climb in FIFA rankings

**S P O R T S** Iran have climbed two spots in the latest FIFA rankings released on Thursday.

Team Melli remain Asia's top-ranked team as they moved up to 32 in the rankings, an improvement of two places from October.

Australia - thanks to their FIFA World Cup 2018 Play-off wins over Syria and Honduras - also saw an improvement as the Asian champions jumped to 39th from 43rd spot previously.

Japan are Asia's third highest ranked team but they dropped to 55th, down 11 places.

Korea Republic improved three spots to 59 while China PR dropped from 57th to 60th.

Iran, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Korea Republic and Australia will be Asia's representatives at the FIFA World Cup 2018 Russia.

The top five remain unchanged in the World Rankings, with Germany still ranked as the best team in the world.

Spain have risen two places to sixth, with Switzerland also entering the top ten after rising three places to eighth.

North Korea were the most improved team, climbing 18 places to 114th, while Laos fell by 22 and are ranked 184th in the world.

Anguilla, the Bahamas, Eritrea, Gibraltar, Somalia and Tonga are jointly ranked as the worst team in the world, with zero points.

The next FIFA World Ranking will be released on December 21.



## Iran, Saudi Arabia not to play each other in neutral venues: AFC

**S P O R T S** The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) ordered Iranian and Saudi Arabian clubs should not meet each other in neutral venues.

In March 2016, AFC had ruled the clubs from Saudi Arabia and Iran had to play each other at neutral venues.

The decision was taken after two countries failed to resolve their political differences ahead of a deadline set by Asian football's governing body.

Head of Iran Football Federation Mehdi Taj attended a

meeting held in Tokyo, Japan on Friday and protested the decision taken by AFC, imposing the ban on Iranian clubs to play Saudi Arabian teams in neutral venues.

Iranian giants Persepolis were forced to play Saudi Arabian clubs Al Ahli and Al Hilal in Muscat and Abu Dhabi in the 2017 AFC Champions League.

Three other Iranian clubs Esteghlal Khuzestan, Zob Ahan and Esteghlal also met Saudi Arabian teams Al-Fateh, Al-Ahli and Al-Taawoun respectively in Oman.



## Hamed Haddadi to retire after 2018 Asian Games



**S P O R T S** Iran national basketball team captain Hamed Haddadi is going to bring his 15-year playing career in Team Melli to an end.

Haddadi has said he will hang up his shoes after the 2018 Asian Games.

The 32-year-old center helped Iran win Asian Championship three times in 2007, 2009, 2013.

He was most recently selected as MVP at the 2017 FIBA Asia Cup, where Team Melli became runners-up after losing to Australia in Beirut, Lebanon.

At the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, Haddadi led the tournament with the highest average blocked shots per game and rebounds per game, the latter by a wide margin.

Haddadi is the first Iranian to play in the National Basketball Association (NBA) when he debuted with the Memphis Grizzlies in 2008.

"At my age, that's enough. It's just right to give young players room. I think we have so many talented players in our country," Haddadi said in an interview with Varzesh 3.

"Before me, Mehdi Kamrani, Samad Nikkhah and Hamed Afagh have retired and it's my turn. I will be here with Team Melli until 2018 Asian Cup and will retire from the national team for always," the 2.18m added.

"I've played for national team since I was 17 and I think it's time to go," Haddadi concluded.

## Iran women's futsal team defeat Italy again



**S P O R T S** Iran women's national futsal team defeated Italy 2-1 in their second friendly match on Friday.

The match took place at the Payambar Azam Complex in Islamic Azad University Tehran Central Branch (IAUTCB).

Italia took the lead in the 14th minute when Arianna Pomposelu scored their first and only goal in the match. Despite Iran's attacking play, the first half finished 1-0 in favor of Italy.

Dominant Iran created a lot of opportunities in the second half, equalized the game in 23rd minute by Fereshteh Karimi and then took the lead when Fereshteh Khosravi scored the second goal in 37th minute. The game ended up 2-1 and Shahrzad

Mozzafar's girls celebrated their second consecutive win over their Italian counterparts.

The first friendly match between the two teams was held on Thursday, in which Iran beat their opponents 3-1.

Team Melli are preparing for the 2018 AFC Women's Futsal Championship which will take place in Thailand, between 2 and 12 May 2018.

It will be the second edition of the AFC Women's Futsal Championship, the biennial international futsal championship organized by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) for the women's national teams of Asia.

Iran claimed the title of the first edition in 2015, where they defeated Japan 1-0 in the final match in Malaysia.

## Queiroz seeks longer World Cup run from improving Iran

Iran secured back-to-back World Cup qualification for the first time in the country's history as Carlos Queiroz and his team sealed the nation's fifth appearance at the finals with relative comfort.

Iran were the first Asian nation to qualify for Russia 2018 as a miserly defence allied with the striking prowess of Sardar Azmoun saw Team Melli top their group ahead of South Korea to take one of the continent's four automatic berths.

Queiroz has built on the country's performance in Brazil 2014, when they exited in the group phase after encouraging showings against Nigeria, securing a 0-0 draw, and Argentina, with Lionel Messi's injury-time winner denying Iran a point.

The former Real Madrid and Portugal coach, who took over in April 2011, has freshened up his squad over the last four years, with Rubin Kazan's Azmoun the star attraction



in a team boasting more Europe-based players than any previous Iran side.

Azmoun is one of three players who play their club football

in Russia, along with central midfielder Saeid Ezatollahi and full back Milad Mohammadi, while Alireza Jahanbakhsh and Reza Ghoochannejhad are well established in the Dutch Eredivisie.

Queiroz has sought to strike a balance between youth and experience, keeping World Cup veterans Ashkan Dejagah and Jalal Hosseini involved as he sets his sights on taking the country into the second round for the first time.

The Portuguese coach has voiced concerns over the impact a lack of high quality opposition in the lead-up to the finals could have on his team.

But, with the Iran boasting the defensive attributes typically associated with a Queiroz-coached side, the three-time Asian Cup winners are hopeful of a longer stay in Russia for their fanatical support than at any previous World Cup.

(Source: Reuters)

## Urawa Reds counting on 'fortress Saitama'

Takafumi Hori insists Urawa Red Diamonds are in confident mode ahead of the second leg of the AFC Champions League final with Al Hilal on Saturday.

The sides go into the tie on level terms after playing out a 1-1 draw in Riyadh last week after Omar Khribin cancelled out Rafael Silva's early strike.

Urawa will be crowned continental champions should they claim a seventh home win on the bounce, while a scoreless draw would also see them lift the AFC Champions League for a second time.

"This game is going to be very difficult

but it's at home at Saitama Stadium which means we can play with the full support of our fans," said Urawa head coach Hori.

"After the first game we have prepared fully and we are very confident about the game tomorrow, so we're hoping to get the result that will make our fans happy."

Urawa's leading scorer Silva had given the 2007 continental champions the perfect start at King Fahd International Stadium last week, but Hori's team then had to withstand a wave of pressure.

Indeed Urawa were indebted to their goalkeeper, Shusaku Nishikawa, who made

a string of excellent saves to earn his side the draw.

"The away game was really difficult but thanks to the hard work of the players and the supporters who came from Japan we were able to get a good result," added Hori.

Now, just like in the semi-final when Urawa drew 1-1 with Shanghai SIPG in China, they return to Saitama Stadium knowing a win will confirm them as the victors.

Silva scored the goal in a 1-0 win in the second leg against Shanghai, but the Brazilian forward hobbled off in Riyadh and has

faced a battle to be fit for Saturday's clash. "Silva has been training with the team as always," said Hori when quizzed on his top goal scorer's fitness.

Urawa have been in dominant form at home, winning six from six, including memorable comebacks in the Round of 16 and quarter-finals against Jeju United and Kawasaki Frontale.

But Al Hilal remain unbeaten on the continent, having not lost in 13 games, meaning something will have to give when the tournament reaches its climax on Saturday.

(Source: AFC)

## Iran to host four-nation futsal tournament in December

**Press TV** — The Islamic Republic of Iran is set to host a four-nation futsal tournament early next month, with national men's teams from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Russia heading to the country for the event.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Football Federation (IRIFF) reported that the competition is scheduled to open on December 3, and the matches will be staged at Naghsh-e Jahan Stadium in the central Iranian city of Isfahan, located about 450 kilometers (279 miles) south of the capital Tehran.

The Russia men's national futsal team will take on Kazakhstan in the curtain raiser. The Iran men's national futsal team will face the Azerbaijani outfit in its opening match on December 3.

According to the latest monthly classification published by the Asociación Mundial de Futsal (AMF), which is the governing body of futsal, the Iran men's national futsal team has preserved its position as Asia's best and is in the fifth place of the world's overall standings. Team Melli Futsal earned 1,611 points.

Kazakhstan maintained the 9th slot in the latest AMF rankings with 1,487 points. The Central Asians are followed by their Japanese and Thai counterparts, who have claimed the 15th and 17th places respectively with 1,355 and 1,310 points.

Brazil is the top-ranked futsal team in the world with 1,931 points. Spaniards notched up 1,878 points to sit in the second position, while third-placed Russians kept their position with 1,762 points. Argentina collected 1,683 points to stand fourth.

## Gold medal for Junior Girls' Doubles at Portugal event

**TASNIM** — Iran's Junior Girls' Doubles team claimed a gold medal at the 2017 Portugal Junior & Cadet Open, ITTF Junior Circuit on Thursday.

The Iranian team consists of Fatemeh Jamalifar and Mahshid Ashtari defeated Portugal's Xenia Bettencourt and Vitoria Santos 3-1 (8:11 11:2 11:8 11:6) in the final match.

The Iranian pair had already defeated Netherland's Rachel Gerarts and Shuohan Men 3-0 in the semifinals.

The 2017 Portugal Junior & Cadet Open, ITTF Junior Circuit is being held in Guimaraes, Portugal from Nov. 22 to 25.

## Iran Greco-Roman wrestlers win three bronze medals at U-23 Worlds

**TASNIM** — Iranian Greco-Roman team claimed three bronze medals at the U-23 World Wrestling Championships in Bydgoszcz, Poland. The competition brought more than 400 wrestlers from 34 countries together.

In 66kg, Amin Yavar Kavianinejad claimed a bronze medal. The gold medal went to Shmagi Bolkvadze after the Georgian defeated Alen Mirzoyan from Russia.

Farshad Belfakeh from Iran also seized a bronze medal in the 71kg. Daniel Cataraga from Moldova claimed the gold medal, beating Hungarian Robert Fritsch.

And Payam Bouyeri took Iran's third bronze in the event. Turkey's Fatih Cengiz and Gela Bolkvadze from Georgia won the gold and silver respectively in the 75kg.

## Asian Kabaddi Championships: Iran men's team rout Thailand

**IRNA** — Iranian men's team started the Asian Kabaddi Championships on a high note on Friday.

The Iranian team pummeled Thailand 66-14 at the Azadi Complex in Gorgan, north of Iran.

The competitions are being held from Nov. 23 to 26 in the Iranian city. The championships feature a total of 10 teams take part in each section, with India, Iran, Japan, South Korea, Pakistan, Thailand, Iraq, Sri Lanka and Turkmenistan competing in both the men's and women's sections.

In the men's category, Iran has been drawn along with South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Turkmenistan in Group B.

Group A consists of India, Pakistan, Japan, Iraq and Afghanistan. In the women's category, Iran has been pitted against Sri Lanka, Japan, Iraq, and Pakistan in Group B.

India, Thailand, South Korea, Chinese Taipei, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan are in Group A.

## Cantona wants Jose Mourinho's side to be more attacking

Manchester United great Eric Cantona says he admires Old Trafford boss Jose Mourinho - but would prefer the team to play more like a side led by Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola.

Cantona, who spent five years at United between 1992 and 1997, described Portuguese Mourinho as "a winner who will continue to win". But the Frenchman also told BBC Radio Four's Today programme: "He is playing in this defensive way, which is not the identity of Manchester United."

Asked if he would prefer former Barcelona boss Guardiola to be in charge, he added: "Manchester United, it's like Barcelona.

"I love Mourinho. I like his charisma, he is very clever, he takes all the pressure on him. I said before he joined Manchester United, I love the man. And I love Guardiola too.

"Both are great, but I prefer attacking football, when it's more creative. It's the way I tried to play all my career."

United are second in the Premier League, trailing Guardiola's City side by eight points.

City have won 17 consecutive matches, scoring 54 goals during an unbeaten run that stretches 19 games in all competitions since August. By comparison, United have scored 11 goals fewer, while losing four of their 20 matches since the start of the season.

"United are my club," Cantona added. "They are my blood more than my club, but if I watch a game today I prefer more creative games.

"Like Barcelona or the Real Madrid of [Zinedine] Zidane, where you have players like [Luka] Modric or [Toni] Kroos who are the brains of the team."

(Source: BBC)



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## “No Date” star Navid Mohammadzadeh wins APSA special mention

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian actor Navid Mohammadzadeh was honored Thursday with a special mention for his performance in “No Date, No Signature” at the 11th Asia Pacific Screen Awards (APSA) in Brisbane, Australia.

After accepting the award, Mohammadzadeh dedicated it to the victims of the recent earthquake in the western Iranian region of Kermanshah.



*Iranian actor Navid Mohammadzadeh (L) holds his award after being honored with a special mention during the 11th Asia Pacific Screen Awards in Brisbane, Australia on November 23, 2017. (APSA)*

Directed by Vahid Jalilvand, “No Date, No Signature” tells the story of Dr. Nariman, a forensic pathologist played by Mohammadzadeh who has a car accident with a motorcyclist, injuring his 8-year-old son.

In addition, late Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami was honored with a special Artistic Acknowledgement. The APSA Academy conferred a posthumous membership on him. Kiarostami’s “24 Frames” was also in the APSA official competition.

Warwick Thornton’s “Sweet Country” (Australia) was named best feature film, while Andrey Zvyagintsev from Russia won the award for best director for “Loveless”.

Rajkumar Rao from India was crowned best actor for his role in “Newton”, and Nata Murvanidze from Georgia was picked as best actress for “Scary Mother”.

## Works by master miniaturist Mahmud Farshchian showcased in Nakhchivan

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A collection of miniatures by prominent Iranian artist Mahmud Farshchian has been showcased in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic.



*A number of Iranian and Nakhchivani cultural figures attend the opening ceremony of an exhibition of miniature paintings by Mahmud Farshchian at Bahrüz Kangarlı Gallery in Nakhchivan on November 22, 2017. (IRNA)*

A group Iranian diplomats and officials, and a number of artists and cultural figures from the autonomous republic attended an opening ceremony of the exhibit at the Bahrüz Kangarlı Gallery of the Artists’ Union of Nakhchivan on Wednesday.

As a co-organizer of the exhibition, East Azarbaijan Department of Culture and Islamic Guidance director Mohammad Mohammadpur gave a brief introduction to Farshchian at the ceremony and asked Nakhchivan officials to organize similar exhibits by their artists in Iran.

The exhibition will run until November 27.

## Cannes Film Festival reveals date change for 2018

**CANNES (Screen Daily)** — The 71st Cannes Film Festival will take place from Tuesday, May 8 to Saturday, May 19, 2018, it has been announced.

It will start one day earlier than in previous years, but will run for exactly the same length of time.

The opening will therefore take place on the evening of Tuesday, May 8 and the awards ceremony will be on Saturday, May 19.

The festival explained the date change in a statement: “Following 2017’s anniversary edition, the Festival is beginning a new period in its history,” said Festival President Pierre Lescure.

“We intend to renew the principles of our organization as much as possible, while continuing to question the cinema of our age and to be present through its upheavals.”

# Iranian projects, professional honored at Middle East Architect Awards

**1 →** In the Residential Project of the Year category, Woof Shadow by Tachra Design, which is also located in Tehran, received a special mention.

The award for the Concept Design of the Year also went to the Chabahar Free Zone Complex by Hajizadeh & Associates. The design was created for a cultural complex in the southern Iranian free zone of Chabahar.

Flexible Bridge by Mohammad Reza Kohzadi also won a special mention in this category.

Farshad Mehdizadeh from FMZD in Tehran was picked as the Architect of the Year. Projects and professionals from other countries were also honored at the competition.

Located in Dubai’s Burj Khalifa district, The Opus by Zaha Hadid Architects, which combines a variety of residences and a designed hotel, won the award for the Leisure and Hospitality Project of the Year.

Hend AlMatrouk from Studio Toggle in Kuwait was named the Young Architect of the Year.

## Tehran bookstores welcome Ketabgardi



*Actor Saeid Pursamimi joins Ketabgardi at the Salees Publications’ Bookstore on November 23, 2017. (Honaronline/Ramona Mirian)*

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The 4th annual round of Ketabgardi (Tour of Bookstores) was observed by a number of cultural figures, officials and Tehran City Council members on Thursday.

November 17 has been set for Ketabgardi, a reading campaign that was launched during the Iran Book Week in 2014 by cultural activist Ahmad Masjed-Jamei who is also a member of the Tehran City Council.

However, this year’s program was postponed since the date coincided with the death anniversary of Prophet Muhammad (S).

Masjed-Jamei accompanied by Tehran Publishers and Booksellers Association (TPBA) director Mahmud Amuzgar and the Tehran Book House director Majid Gholami Jaliseh began early Thursday by visiting the Sadi Bookstore in Tehran.

Eqbal Publications with over 114 years

of activities in this field was the second place Masjed-Jamei paid a visit.

His next destination was the Book City Institute, which hosted street children and a number of children from the quake-stricken region of Kermanshah.

He read part of the books “The Adventures of Tintin” and “Sinbad the Sailor” for the children. He also pledged to publish a book about the massive earthquake in Kermanshah.

Deputy Interior Minister Mohammad Hossein Moqimi, former Tehran City Council member Masumeh Abad, and Tehran Deputy Mayor for Social and Cultural Affairs Reza Salehi Amiri accompanied Masjed-Jamei in the visit to the institute.

Several other cultural figures joined the group and visited a number of bookstores on Enqelab Street in Tehran.

The reading campaign has been warmly welcomed by the Iranian cultural community over the past three years.

## Family, legacy celebrated in animated Mexican tale “Coco”

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — Who lives, who dies, who tells your story?

In “Coco,” Disney-Pixar’s colorful animated adventure into the land of the dead, a story of family, memory and legacy is hoping to not only celebrate Mexican culture but to bridge the political gap between the United States and Mexico.

“Coco,” out in U.S. theaters on Wednesday, follows a boy named Miguel who accidentally finds himself in the land of the dead during the Mexican celebrations for Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead.

As Miguel, voiced by newcomer Anthony Gonzalez, is reunited with his ancestors, he learns how the memories of the living help keep the legacies of the dead alive.

Tensions between the United States and Mexico have been high after U.S. President Donald Trump promised during his election campaign to build a wall along the border of the two countries to curb illegal immigration.

“There’s a lot of divisive rhetoric that aims to make us (Latino people) less than,” said Benjamin Bratt, who voices Miguel’s musical idol and late great-great-



*Cast member Anthony Gonzalez poses for a portrait while promoting the animated movie “Coco” in Beverly Hills, California, U.S., November 11, 2017. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)*

grandfather Ernesto de la Cruz.

“It’s unintended but by demonstrating what really exists, (this film) goes a long way to showing that we’re all in fact in this together and are more alike than we



*Orsi Khaneh in Tehran was named the Residential Project of the Year at the 10th Middle East Architect Awards in Dubai on November 23, 2107.*

## Tehran to host festival of Franco-Iranian female filmmakers



*A poster for a festival of French and Iranian female filmmakers in Tehran*

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A festival of French and Iranian female filmmakers will be held at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran.

Six Iranian and six French movies will be reviewed during the six-day festival, which will open Monday, the forum announced on Friday.

French Ambassador François Sénémaud, filmmakers Rakhshan Bani-Etemad from Iran, and Marianne Tardieu and Lidia Terki, both from France, will deliver speeches during an opening ceremony.

“Tales” by Bani-Etemad and “Qui vive” (“Insurance”) by Tardieu are scheduled to be screened that day and Terki and Tardieu will hold workshops afterwards.

Julie Bertuccelli’s “La cour de Babel” (“School of Babel”) and Puran Derakhshandeh’s “Hush! Girls Don’t Scream” will be reviewed on Tuesday, while “Facing Mirrors” by Negar Azarbaijani and “Bird People” by Pascale Ferran have been selected for Wednesday.

The festival will continue with screenings of “Two Women” by Tahmineh Milani and “L’avenir” (“Things to Come”) by Mia Hansen Love on Thursday.

“Nahid” by Ida Panahandeh and “La vie domestique” (“Domestic Life”) by Isabelle Czajka will be shown on Friday.

“Paris la blanche” by Terki and “Track 143” by Narges Abyar will be the closing screenings of the event next Saturday.

Several master classes have also been arranged on the sidelines of the festival, which will be organized in collaboration with the Embassy of France in Tehran.

support his musical ambitions. Miguel finds an unlikely guide through the Land of the Dead in Hector (Gael Garcia Bernal), whose legacy is about to be forgotten once his last living relative, his daughter Coco, dies.

The film is co-directed by Lee Unkrich and Adrian Molina, who said they were careful to reflect Mexican culture and beliefs “in a story free of cliché and stereotype,” and drew on the experiences of their Latino and Mexican colleagues.

“I’m Mexican-American myself so I had a vested interest in being able to see a family on screen that was representative of what I experienced growing up,” said Molina.

Bratt said he never grew up seeing Latino people reflected on screen.

“That my own children, who are brown-skinned and brown-eyed, can happily see an image of themselves on a big screen that’s being sent out globally, it affirms something that for a long time has been denied, which is that we’re all the same ultimately. We’re all human beings and we all are equal,” he said.

## German police present stolen John Lennon diaries

**BERLIN (Reuters)** — German police have presented pairs of glasses and other items belonging to late Beatle John Lennon that were stolen from his widow Yoko Ono in 2006 and eventually ended up in Berlin.

Police arrested a man in Berlin on Monday suspected of receiving the 86 stolen items, which include Lennon’s last diary that ended on the day he was shot and killed in New York on Dec. 8, 1980.

“This day contains the entry that on that morning John Lennon and Yoko Ono had an appointment with Annie Leibovitz to take a photo which I think is world famous,” Berlin prosecutor Mi-

chael von Hagen told a news conference. Hagen rejected suggestions that Ono might have lent or given away the objects: “The diaries especially ... were also treated by Yoko Ono as something sacred. And the idea that she would have given away three original diaries, especially the one that ends on the very day Lennon died, can be completely ruled out.”

Carsten Pfohl, head of property crime for Berlin police, said investigators had found one of the pairs of glasses and a receipt in Lennon’s name hidden in the trunk of the car of the accused on Monday.