



**Qatar says interested in positive ties with Tehran** 2



**Iranian trade delegation to embark for Croatia in early-July** 4



**Two Iranian universities in QS top list** 12



**New York gallery displays Ali Kurechian's mask collection** 16

# Iran: United Iraq benefits all Iraqis



In April 2017, Iraqi lawmakers rejected a decision to raise the Kurdistan flag alongside the Iraqi flag on public buildings and institutions in Kirkuk city.

## Eight more arrested over Tehran terror attacks

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Eight more people have been arrested in Alborz Province in connection with the recent terrorist attacks targeting two important sites in Tehran, a provincial official said.

Ahmad Fazelian, a provincial judiciary official, said on Saturday that the eight were arrested on suspicion of having provided backup for the five terrorists who carried out the assaults on Wednesday.

According to Fazelian, seven of the individuals were arrested in Fardis, in southern Alborz, and one in Karaj, the provincial capital. On Wednesday morning, Iran's parliament and the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Revolution, were targeted by two simultaneous gun and suicide bomb

assaults. Intelligence officials later stated that they thwarted a third attack.

The attacks unfolded as a number of gunmen stormed the main gate of the parliament building in central Tehran and opened fire. At the same time, a shooting spree targeted Imam Khomeini's shrine in south Tehran.

At least 17 people lost their lives and nearly 50 others were wounded in the assaults which were later claimed by Daesh (ISIS). All the five attackers were gunned down at the scene by the country's security forces.

On Friday, authorities announced the arrests of 41 elements of Daesh in connection with the twin attacks. The terrorists were detained in the province of Kermanshah, Kurdistan, West Azarbaijan and Tehran.

## Iran's Aseman concludes purchase of 60 Boeing aircrafts

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iran's Aseman Airlines sealed a deal in Tehran on Saturday with the American manufacturer Boeing on purchasing 60 aircrafts.

As per the deal, Aseman is going to receive 30 Boeing 737 MAX aircrafts as of 2022 over the course of two years, ISNA reported.

The deal would also provide the airline with purchase rights for 30 additional 737 MAXs, the report added.

In early April, Aseman said it had signed an agreement with Boeing on

the purchase of 30 planes model 737 MAX worth \$3 billion.

Shortly after Iran's nuclear deal with the world major powers in January 2016, the country inked an \$18 billion deal with France-based Airbus for 46 Airbus A320 planes, 38 A330 planes and 16 A350 XWB aircraft.

It was finalized last December. That same month, state-owned Iran Air signed a \$16.6 billion agreement to purchase 80 new Boeing 777 and 737 passenger planes, to be delivered over a period of 10 years.

## Merkel says Iran, Turkey must work to ease Qatar crisis

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Friday she was concerned about the situation in Qatar, adding that all Persian Gulf Arab nations, and also Iran and Turkey, should work together to resolve the regional dispute.

Merkel, who was speaking in Mexico City alongside Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto, said it would be impossible to sort out the "very unsettling" situation unless all regional actors were involved. She added that it was vital the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council worked together to end the crisis.

"We have to see that the political solution of conflicts ... such as the situation in Syria, such as the situation in Libya or the situation in Iraq, won't happen if certain players are

no longer even included in the conversation, and that includes Qatar, it includes Turkey, it includes Iran," she said, according to Reuters.

Merkel said she wanted the balance of power to be maintained "sensibly" in the region, and that combating terrorism would be on the agenda when G20 leaders meet next month in Hamburg.

U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday accused Qatar of being a "high-level" sponsor of terrorism, potentially hindering the U.S. Department of State's efforts to ease heightening tensions and a blockade of the tiny nation by Arab states and others.

"The nation of Qatar unfortunately has historically been a funder of terrorism at a

very high level," Trump told reporters at the White House.

"So we had a decision to make, do we take the easy road or do we finally take a hard but necessary action. We have to stop the funding of terrorism. I decided ... the time had come to call on Qatar to end its funding," Trump said, adding that he helped plan the Qatar action with Arab leaders after a recent summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Arab states tightened their squeeze on Qatar by putting dozens of figures with links to the country on terrorism blacklists, while its ally, Turkey, rushed to its side with plans to send troops. →13

## 13 Philippine marines killed as fighting rages in Marawi City

At least 13 Philippine marines were killed on Friday as the battle against terrorists linked to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit continued in the besieged southern city of Marawi.

The death toll was provided by the Philippine army on Saturday, which also said that at least 40 others were wounded in a 16-hour fight against members of the Maute group.

"There was an intense, house-to-house fire fight between the marines and the local terrorist group," Jo-Ar Herrera, army spokesman, told a televised press conference.

He said the marines, who were taking part in an operation to rescue about 100 people

who are being held hostage by Maute, were targeted by improvised explosive devices set off by the group's fighters.

The setback for the Philippine military comes more than two weeks after the start of the deadly siege of Marawi City, which prompted Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte to declare martial law on May 24 on the southern island Mindanao.

Officials said an estimated 500 to 1,000 civilians are trapped in the built-up area occupied by the terrorists, which also came under heavy aerial bombardment on Friday.

At least 200 people, including soldiers, armed gunmen and civilians have been killed

and more than 200,000 people have been displaced.

As the fighting intensifies, the United States said on Saturday that its special forces were providing technical support to the Philippine military in Marawi City.

"US special operations forces are assisting" the armed forces of the Philippines in Marawi "at the request of the government of the Philippines", an unnamed U.S. official told the Reuters news agency.

The official gave no details of the U.S. involvement, but a U.S. surveillance plan was seen flying over Marawi on Friday. There is no evidence Washington has put troops on the ground there. →13

**ARTICLE**  
By Yuram Abdullah Weiler  
Analyst and journalist

## Mr. Trump, why blame the victim?

As a Shiite Muslim and a Vietnam era veteran, I wanted to congratulate the "president" on making America great—the Great Satan, that is. It is especially depressing to think that I once served a country, which now has a representative in Congress that seems to believe it is good that ISIS has killed innocent people in Tehran.

Piggybacking on the "president's" callos remarks implying Iran deserved the attack, Republican Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (CA-48), stated, "Isn't it a good thing for us to have the United States finally backing up Sunnis who will attack Hezbollah and the Shiite threat to us, isn't that a good thing?" I really don't understand what this "Shiite threat" is allegedly facing "us." If he means Iranians and Shiite Muslims, then perhaps the congressman would consider me to be threat as well.

Apparently, it isn't enough for the U.S. to take the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MeK or MKO) off its terrorist list. Now the U.S. has politicians who openly praise one of the most violent terrorist organizations operating in the world. I suppose I should not be surprised since Congressman Rohrabacher is also a supporter of the MeK, which has claimed some 12,000 victims in terror attacks inside Iran.

This is why Iranians call members of MeK "munafeqin," an Arabic word that is found in the Holy Qur'an and means "hypocrite." Given U.S. support for this terrorist cult, and the threatening words of the U.S. "president" and congressman Rohrabacher, it's no wonder that Iranians chanted "Marg bar Amrikaa," "Death to America" during the funeral processions for the innocent victims.

Meanwhile the "president" continues to befriend and arm Saudi Arabia, the source behind all Wahhabi terrorism, including the 9/11 attacks. This is while Iran has committed thousands of troops to fight ISIS. But perhaps the goal is, as Rohrabacher stated, to have "radical Muslim terrorists fighting each other." Such warped, hypocritical thinking on the part of politicians really makes me ashamed to be an American and to have served in its armed forces.

**PERSPECTIVE**  
Mahmood Monshipouri  
University of California, Berkeley

## The (P)GCC in disarray

Since its inception in 1981, the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council (P)GCC — with its member states Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the Saudi Arabia — has never been united on all fronts, often lacking a unified foreign policy approach toward contemporary world affairs. As experts have reminded us, the (P)GCC, a regional multilateral organization, has suffered from an identity crisis of sorts, leaving unanswered the question of whether it is a security structure or a political or a monetary union, or some combination of those. But since U.S. President Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia, the Saudis have felt emboldened to talk about spearheading a new order, one that is ruled and heavily influenced by the royal family in Riyadh. It seems as though the Trump administration has given the Saudis the green light to organize and influence this new order as they wish. Clearly, Qatar and its young leader, Sheikh Tamim, stand on the way of this so-called "new order," as their free media (particularly Al Jazeera) and sympathetic approach toward the Arab Spring uprisings un-nerve the Saudis with regard to policies in the region. In this sense, Qatar poses a major threat to the advocates of the status quo, particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Except for opposing the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria and fighting Daesh (ISIS), not much common ground exists among the GCC member states. Qatar — a country that acts pragmatically and is at peace with its neighbors — presents a tantalizing example of prosperity and political stability in a region surrounded by turbulence and rising tensions. The political rifts between the Saudis and Qataris are not new, nor is their competition over political influence throughout the region. It is an open secret that Qatar's rulers have pursued pragmatic and relatively open-door policies toward Iran — an approach that the Saudis strongly resent and have described as the major cause of discord and division within the dynastic rule of monarchies in the Persian Gulf. →13



IRNA/ Amin Rahmani

## Sarash Village home to warm, hospitable people

An Iranian woman shepherds a small herd of cows in the mountainous Sarash Village, northern Gilan province, on June 6, 2017.

The greenish village boasts intact natural sceneries and is home to warm, hospitable people whose main occupations are farming and animal breeding.

**MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS**



**Majlis to hold closed session on terror assault**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Iran's parliament (Majlis) will hold a closed session on Sunday for a hearing on the Wednesday ISIS-claimed twin assault in Tehran, a senior parliamentarian said.

"The closed session will be attended by intelligence and interior ministers and other security officials," Mehr news agency quoted Mohammad Hossein Farhangi as saying on Saturday.

The murderous attacks on the administrative building of the parliament and the mausoleum of the founder of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, left 17 dead and 56 injured.

ISIS, called Daesh in its Arabic acronym, took credit for the attacks.



**Jahangiri urges government branches to back executive body**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri has urged all the branches of government to stand united in the wake of the May 19 presidential election, ISNA reported.

Jahangiri said on Saturday that the other branches should not consider the executive branch as their rival.

"We need to forget about the election period and enter an era of hard work and unity," he remarked, calling on everyone to help the administration to achieve its goals.



**Iran navy to unveil achievements by yearend**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — The Iranian navy plans to unveil its achievements by the end of the current calendar year which ends on March 20, 2018.

Speaking on Saturday, Navy Commander Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said Iran does not need to buy military equipment from other countries. "We're in a place where we can manufacture all navy equipment including submarines and destroyers"

"We need to carry out a number of tests on the new equipment before unveiling them," the commander added.



**Minister urges end to case of Telegram administrators**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Justice Minister Mostafa Pourmohammadi said on Saturday that the case of Telegram administrators should be dealt with and ended as soon as possible.

A number of administrators of Telegram channels who were arrested on the eve of Nowruz face security charges.

Qolamhossein Mohseni Ejei, the Judiciary deputy chief and spokesman, said in April that "some of them arrested [are charged] with anti-security issues and some other with moral charges."

"The charges were filed according to official reports and the prosecutor acted according to the law to have them arrested," he added.



**Larijani visits people injured in terrorist attacks**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani on Saturday visited those injured in the terrorist attacks in Tehran.

In two simultaneous terrorist attacks on the administrative building of Majlis and the shrine of Imam Khomeini in Tehran on Wednesday 17 people were killed and 56 injured.

A funeral procession was held on Friday for those killed in the attacks. Daesh claimed responsibility for the attacks.



**Cyprus offers condolences over Tehran terror attacks**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — President of the Cypriot House of Representatives Demetris Syllouris has offered condolences on the terror attacks in Tehran to his Iranian counterpart Ali Larijani.

"It is with great shock and profound sorrow that we have been informed of the cowardly attacks at the Iranian Parliament and Ayatollah Khomeini's Mausoleum, in which at least twelve people lost their lives and many more were injured. We unreservedly condemn these indiscriminate acts of terror and hereby reaffirm our commitment to fight this scourge, a global challenge, which must be decisively and quickly defeated," he said in a letter on Sunday.

# Hamas leader to visit Iran amid Qatar row

By Ali Kushki

**TEHRAN** — The Palestinian movement Hamas said on Saturday that a delegation headed by its leader Ismail Haniyeh will visit Iran in the near future as the Saudi-led squeeze on its main supporter Qatar is expected to exacerbate.

The delegation is scheduled to make visits to several other countries as well, the Hebrew language Walla quoted Osama Hamdan, a senior Hamas official, as saying.

Hamdan did not provide details. The news comes days after Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen and the Maldives severed all diplomatic relations with Qatar, a main backer of Hamas.

The Saudi kingdom made the surprise announcement on Monday, saying that it was taking action for what it called the protection of national security.

Monday's diplomatic moves came a fortnight after four Arab countries blocked Qatar-based media over the appearance of comments attributed to the Qatari emir that praised Iran. Qatar said hackers had taken over the website of its state-run news agency and faked the comments.

The announcement accused Qatar of "harboring a multitude of terrorist and sectarian groups that aim to create instability in the region".

Qatar vehemently denies the accusations.

On Tuesday, Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir conditioned restoration of ties with Qatar upon it taking several steps, including ending its support for the Palestinian group Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Hamas was formed in the 1980s as an offshoot of the pan-Arab Brotherhood but has more recently stressed its basis as a Palestinian liberation movement, in part to defuse Egyptian enmity and draw support from wealthy Arab states.

In a separate development, Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed al-Khalifa told the Saudi-owned Asharq al-Awsat newspaper that the conditions posed by the four countries for a resolution of the crisis were "crystal clear".

"Qatar has to redress its path and has to go back to all previous commitments, it has to stop media campaigns and has to distance itself from our number one enemy, Iran," he said.

Moves by Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other Arab states to isolate Qatar may have serious consequences for Hamas,



**Hamas says statements by the Saudi government regarding the blockade of Qatar "are a shock to our Palestinian people and to our Arab and Islamic nation, which considers the Palestinian cause its central cause."**

which has long relied on the tiny Persian Gulf state for financial and political support.

Qatar has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to build roads, houses, schools and clinics in impoverished Gaza, which Hamas seized its control from the rival Palestinian movement Fatah in 2007.

As well as financial support, Qatar has long hosted exiled Hamas officials, including its former political chief Khaled Meshaal since 2012, who was recently succeeded by Ismail Haniyeh.

Reacting to the blockade, Hamas said it felt "deep regret and disapproval" at the Saudi statement.

"These statements are a shock to our Palestinian people and to our Arab and Islamic nation, which considers the Palestinian cause its central cause," the statement said.

Washington has reacted confusingly. U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, while praising Qatar's emir for working to limit the funding of terror groups, said more needed to be done.

Meanwhile U.S. President Donald

Trump has accused Qatar of funding terrorism, and urged it to stop.

"I decided with Rex Tillerson that the time had come to call on Qatar to end funding and extremist ideology in terms of funding," he said.

President Trump had previously tweeted support for the move to isolate Qatar over its alleged financing of extremist groups.

While the Syrian crisis has driven a wedge between Tehran and Turkey since 2011, the rift between Arab caliphates have led them into an ad-hoc alliance that some believe represents the best chance to mend fences.

Turkey and Iran back Qatar and have links with the Muslim Brotherhood.

"Neighbors are permanent; geography can't be changed. Coercion is never the solution. Dialog is imperative, especially during blessed Ramadan," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad tweeted, reacting to the development.

On Wednesday, Zarif made an unannounced visit to Turkey, holding talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip

Erdogan and his opposite number Mevlut Cavusoglu.

Iran sent the first food cargo to Qatar, according to Iranian media outlets on June 8.

Also, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan voiced support for Qatar on Tuesday, saying he intends to "develop" ties with the embattled state hit by sanctions from Saudi Arabia and its allies.

"Let me say at the outset that we do not think the sanctions against Qatar are good," Erdogan said in a speech in Ankara.

"Turkey will continue and we will develop our ties with Qatar, as with all our friends who have supported us in the most difficult moments," he added in reference to last year's failed coup.

In a sign of support for tiny Arab country, Turkey's parliament approved a legislation on Wednesday, allowing its troops to be deployed to a Turkish military base in Qatar.

The foreign minister of Bahrain arrived in Ankara on Saturday to discuss the issue.

## Iran: United Iraq benefits all Iraqis

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Saturday that the "integrated", "stable" and "democratic" Iraq will serve the interests of the Iraqi people all.

Qassemi's comments came in response to the Iraqi Kurdistan Region's decision on Wednesday to hold an independence referendum in September on breaking away from the mainland.

Qassemi said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran's clear status is to support Iraq's territorial integrity and unity."

The Kurdistan region is part of Iraq's soil and unilateral decisions which are not on the basis of the Iraqi constitution will just complicate the crisis in the country, he said.

"Today, Iraq needs peace and national unity more than ever and differences between Erbil and Baghdad should be bridged through dialogue, and national agreement on the basis of Iraq's constitution," Qassemi stated.

According to Middle East Eye, the decision to hold



the referendum was taken on Wednesday, during a meeting between President of Iraqi Kurdistan Massoud Barzani and other political leaders.

"I am pleased to announce that the date for the in-

dependence referendum has been set for Monday, Sept. 25, 2017," Barzani tweeted.

The Iraqi government issued a statement on Friday rejecting any unilateral move by Kurdish regional authorities to press for independence.

"No party can, on its own, decide the fate of Iraq, in isolation from the other parties," Aljazeera quoted Saad al-Haddithi, the Iraqi government spokesman, as saying in a statement.

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim has also denounced the Iraqi Kurdistan's decision.

"We have enough problems in our region. We believe it is not correct to create a new area of conflict," Middle East Eye quoted Yildirim as telling reporters.

Turkey's Foreign Ministry also called the decision a "grave mistake".

"The maintenance of Iraq's territorial integrity and political unity is one of the fundamental principles of Turkey's Iraq policy," it added.

## Qatari FM confirms Doha interested in positive relations with Iran

**POLITICS** Doha is interested in maintaining positive relations with Tehran, Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said in an interview with RT Arabic Saturday.

The interview was carried out amid the crisis in Qatar's relations with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt which cut off ties with Doha on Monday after accusing it of supporting terrorism and destabilizing the Middle East.

"As far as our relations with Iran are concerned, everyone wants position relations with Iran, Iran is a neighbor. The countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf have some disputes and concerns, but the strategic choice of all the countries is to maintain dialogue with Iran... and we, in the state of Qatar, support

these efforts," Al Thani said during his visit to Moscow.

The diplomatic row came in the wake of the Qatar News Agency posting a speech attributed to Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, in which he supported building relations with Iran.

The Qatari Foreign Ministry said that the agency's site was hacked and the speech was published by hackers that had nothing to do with the Qatari leader.

The foreign minister on Thursday rejected what he described as interference in his country's foreign policy.

"No one has the right to intervene in our foreign policy," he said.

"We are an independent country with sovereignty," he told AFP, rejecting tutelage from other states.

Qatar is the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas. (Source: agencies)

## U.S.-based Iranians condemn Tehran terrorist attacks

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Dozens of Iranian expatriates living in the U.S. staged a rally in Washington to condemn the recent twin terrorist attacks in Tehran, which killed 17 and injured 56.

During the rally held outside the White House on Friday, the participants paid tribute to the Iranians killed in the attacks on the Iranian parliament and the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, on Wednesday.

They condemned the attacks carried out by the Islamic State, sympathizing with families of the victims.

The participants also lit candles and observed a minute of silence for the victims.

The attacks, one on the executive building of the parliament and the other on the mausoleum of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, left 17 dead and 56 injured.

Iran, unlike much of the rest of the Middle East and North Africa, had been relatively free of terrorist attacks.

One day after the raids, the country's Intelligence Ministry released pictures of the dead bodies of the five ISIS-linked men who launched the attacks, saying they had been fighting for the extremist group in Iraq and Syria.

Also, on Friday, the ministry issued a statement announcing that 41 suspects in connections with the terrorist attacks have been arrested.

# Russia urges dialogue between Qatar, Arab neighbors to end dispute

BY staff & agencies

After holding talks in Germany on Friday, Qatar's foreign minister, met with his Russian counterpart in Moscow.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has reacted to a stand-off between Qatar and its Arab neighbors of the Persian Gulf region, saying the parties to the dispute should embark on a dialogue to resolve their differences.

"We call for all contradictions to be resolved at the negotiation table through a mutually respectful dialogue," Lavrov said in a meeting on Saturday in Moscow with his Qatari counterpart Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani.

The top Russian diplomat said Moscow was saddened by a decision by some members of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) to cut their diplomatic ties with Qatar, adding that it was in Russia's interest to see the countries of the region united in the fight against terrorism.

"As a matter of policy we do not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries or their bilateral relations with each other. But it does not give us joy when relations between our partners deteriorate," said Lavrov.

For his part, the Qatari foreign minister said his country was also intent on engaging in talks with the neighbors to resolve the stand-off, saying the council would be the best mechanism for such negotiations.

The meeting between Lavrov and Al Thani comes more than a week after the House of Saud regime, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain decided to cut diplomatic relations with Qatar and halt trade with the country. The three, along with Egypt and the Maldives, which have also closed their embassies in Qatar, have accused Qatar of supporting terrorism. Doha has denied the allegations while maintaining that the Saudis and allies have been constantly pressuring Qatar over the past months to dictate their foreign policy to the kingdom. Niger has also announced it had recalled its ambassador to Qatar following the latest developments. However, Eritrea declined a request by the Saudi regime and the UAE to cut diplomatic ties with Qatar. The African nation's foreign ministry said in a statement it "rejected" the demand to cut ties "with brother Doha".

**■ S. Arabia welcomes Trump's remarks, does not respond to Tillerson's call**

With the United States administration sending mixed signals in regards to its stance to the crisis, the House of Saud regime, via a statement on its state media, welcomed U.S. President Donald Trump's call on Qatar and other countries to increase their efforts against "terrorism", but did not respond to a state department request to ease pressure on its neighbor.

Trump also accused Qatar of "funding terrorism" at "very high level" when speaking at the White House on Friday, where he was holding a joint news conference with Romanian President Klaus Iohannis.

Just minutes before Trump's speech on Friday, Rex Tillerson, the U.S. secretary of state, had urged the Saudi regime and its allies to ease their blockade on Qatar, saying it is causing unintended humanitarian



consequences and affecting the U.S.-led fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group.

Tillerson also said that Qatar has a history of supporting groups across a wide political spectrum, including those that engage in violence, and that the emir of Qatar had made progress in halting financial support for "terrorism" but that he must do more.

**■ Pentagon: Blockade 'hindering' planning for long-term operation**

Meantime the Pentagon said on Friday a blockade against Qatar was not affecting current operations against the ISIL, but was "hindering" the ability to plan for long-term operations, the.

"While current operations from Al Udeid Air Base have not been interrupted or curtailed, the evolving situation is hindering our ability to plan for longer-term military operations," Captain Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, said in a statement. Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar is home to more than 11,000 U.S. and coalition forces and an important base for the fight against ISIL.

**■ Merkel calls for regional cooperation**

Elsewhere, German Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed her concern about the situation in Qatar, saying that all the Persian Gulf countries, as well as Iran and Turkey, should work together to end the regional crisis.

"We have to see that the political solution of conflicts ... such as the situation in Syria, such as the situation in Libya or the situation in Iraq, won't happen if certain players are no longer even included in the conversation, and that includes Qatar, it includes Turkey, it includes Iran," said Merkel, speaking alongside Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto during a visit to Mexico City.

Merkel said she wanted the balance of power to be maintained "sensibly" in the region, and that security would be on the agenda when G20 leaders meet next month in the German city of Hamburg.

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel has also called for an end to the land, sea and air blockade imposed on Qatar

after a meeting with Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in Wolfenbuettel, Germany.

Gabriel also called for increased diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis.

**■ Erdogan: Turkey won't leave Qatar isolated**

Meantime, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan reaffirmed his backing for Qatar in its dispute with other Persian Gulf Arab states, saying Turkey would never leave the country isolated.

Delivering a speech at a Ramadan fast-breaking dinner in Istanbul, Erdogan said on Friday that Turkey would provide food and medicine to help Qatar ease its isolation despite the other nations "displeasure".

He called on the House of Saud regime and other countries of the region to end their sanctions, rejecting accusations by these countries that Qatar supports "terror groups".

Referring to a statement by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson calling on the Arab nations to immediately ease their blockade of Qatar, Erdogan said: "I say let's lift it entirely".

On Wednesday, Turkey's parliament passed legislation permitting the deployment of troops to a Turkish military base in Qatar.

**■ Amnesty condemns actions taken against Qatar**

The developments followed as Amnesty International said on Friday that Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE are toying with the lives of thousands of Persian Gulf residents as part of their dispute with Qatar, splitting up families and destroying peoples' livelihoods and education.

The organization's researchers have interviewed dozens of people whose human rights have been affected by a series of sweeping measures imposed in an arbitrary manner by the three Persian Gulf Arab states in their dispute with Qatar.

**■ UN: We are not bound by Saudi Arabia's 'terror list'**

Elsewhere, the United Nations says it is not bound by Saudi Arabia's "terror list" after the kingdom named several high-profile Qatari charities that carry out

life-saving work in war-torn and impoverished countries on it.

Stephane Dujarric, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterras' spokesman, said on Friday he had seen media reports that four Arab states accused three Qatari-based charities of being involved in "terrorism".

Qatar Charity, Qatar's largest NGO (non-governmental organization), has worked extensively with the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), the World Food Program, Oxfam, CARE, and USAID.

**■ Qatar FM: PGCC Blockade violates international law**

The Sheikh Eid Al-Thani Charity Foundation and the Sheikh Thani Bin Abdullah Foundation for humanitarian services were also blacklisted by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Bahrain late on Thursday.

"The UN is bound only by the sanctions lists put together by UN organs such as the Security Council. We're not bound by any other lists," Dujarric said.

"The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has over the years built strong partnerships with these organizations based on shared humanitarian principles, which are strictly non-political," he added.

However the Qatari government said "The recent joint statement issued by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, and the UAE regarding a 'terror finance watch list' once again reinforces baseless allegations that hold no foundation in fact."

"Our position on countering terrorism is stronger than many of the signatories of the joint statement - a fact that has been conveniently ignored by the authors."

Since its establishment in 1984, Qatar Charity has sponsored 213,750 young orphans into adulthood, and has built more than 621 schools worldwide.

In 2014, it was ranked first by the UN for its relief efforts in the Syrian, Palestinian, and Somali crises. Since the start of the Syrian war more than six years ago, Qatar Charity has helped about eight million Syrians.

## Israel, Saudi, UAE team up in anti-Qatar lobbying move

The United States legislation threatening to sanction Qatar for its support of "Palestinian terror" was sponsored by 10 lawmakers who received more than \$1m over the last 18 months from lobbyists and groups linked to Israel, the House of Saud regime, and the United Arab Emirates UAE.

The bill was introduced to the U.S. House of Representatives on May 25, but the text wasn't available until Friday morning, hours after the Saudi regime, UAE, and Egypt put 59 people and 12 institutions linked to Qatar on a "terror list".

The nations abruptly ended diplomatic relations with Qatar on Monday, accusing Doha of supporting "extremism" and siding with their regional rival Iran.

" Hamas has received significant financial and military support from Qatar," the Palestinian International Terrorism Support Prevention Act of 2017, also known as HR 2712, said. It went on to list sanctions including an end of exports of defense technologies, arms, and loans or financing totaling more than \$10m.

Israel's influence on U.S. policymakers is clear. HR 2712's sponsors received donations totaling \$1,009,796 from pro-Israel individuals and groups for the 2016 election cycle alone, according data collected by the Center for Responsive Politics, an independent research group tracking money in U.S. politics and its effect on elections and public policy, and then compiled by Al Jazeera.

In contrast with the \$1 million donated by pro-Israel entities in 2016, HR 2712's sponsors received roughly \$25,700 in donations by pro-Saudi and UAE lobbying groups over the last 18 months, according to filings with the U.S. Department of Justice made public under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA).

The act requires that lobbyists track and submit donations and contacts between themselves and lawmakers when working for foreign governments.

Al Jazeera's investigation covered 10 firms associated with Saudi and Emirati lobbying efforts. However, these are not exhaustive. Both Persian Gulf nations have rapidly expanded their lobbying in recent years and could include further donations from individuals.

FARA filings also document frequent emails and meetings between the 10 lawmakers and Saudi-UAE lobbyists, as well as calls to major media outlets concerning news coverage of major events.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Gunmen attack mosque in E. Afghanistan, fatally shoot 3 worshippers

U.S. air raid kills Afghan forces in Helmand

At least three civilians have been shot and killed by unknown gunmen in a mosque in Afghanistan's eastern province of Paktia on a day of national mourning in the war-torn country in honor of terror victims.

The Afghan Interior Ministry announced in a Saturday statement that the armed assault took place on Friday night in the provincial capital of Gardez, also injuring nine more individuals.

The statement further censured the bloodshed as an act against Islam and humanity, pointing out that the victims came under attack while praying.

The attack came as Afghanistan is observing the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

While no group has yet claimed responsibility for the deadly attack, Taliban and Haqqani militants are highly suspected of involvement since both remain active in Paktia and surrounding provinces.

Both groups have frequently staged armed attacks on government authorities and the country's military forces as well as the United States-led foreign troops remaining in the terror-ravaged nation.

Saturday has been declared a national day of mourning by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani in memory of the victims of the recent deadly attacks in Kabul, Khost and Herat provinces.

He had called on Afghan people to attend prayer ceremonies inside mosques to honor the terror victims.

The deadliest of the attacks hit the heart of Kabul last week, claiming the lives of at least 150 people and wounding more than 450.

**■ U.S. air raid kills Afghan forces in Helmand**

Meantime, several members of the Afghan security forces were killed on Friday when a U.S. military aircraft opened fire during an overnight operation in Helmand province, according to officials.

The incident took place in the Loy Bagh area of Nad Ali district on Friday, said Razia Baluch, a provincial council member from the southern province.

There were conflicting reports about the number of officers, members of the Afghan Border Police, killed in the air raid.

Local media reported at least two deaths, while the Reuters news agency quoted Omar Zwak, a spokesman for the Helmand governor, as saying that three officers had lost their lives and two were wounded.

The DPA news agency, meanwhile, placed the death toll at 10 members of security forces, adding that another 16 had been wounded.

The U.S. military command in Afghanistan released a statement saying that the "friendly-fire" incident "resulted in the deaths and injuries" and that an investigation is being conducted.

It said the officers were killed when a U.S. aircraft "returned fire" during the operation, which included Afghan and American special forces.

Taliban fighters have made widespread gains in Helmand, seizing many of the province's districts and threatening the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah.

Hundreds of U.S. Marines recently arrived in Helmand to take over an advising mission as part of a NATO-led coalition training and assisting local forces. Air raids by the U.S. fighter jets have sharply increased in recent months, just as the White House considers requests from military commanders to send thousands more troops to Afghanistan.

Civilian casualties from both U.S. and Afghan air raids increased dramatically last year, according to the United Nations most recent report on threats to civilians.

At least 891 civilians were killed or injured in 2016, a figure highest in areas outside of the capital, Kabul.

Afghanistan has been gripped by insecurity since the U.S.-led military forces invaded the country as part of Washington's so-called war on terror in 2001. Many parts of the country, however, remain plagued by militancy and terrorism despite continued presence of thousands of foreign troops.

During the past 16 years, the Taliban militants have been conducting terrorist attacks across the country, killing and displacing tens of thousands of civilians.

In addition, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group, which is mainly active in Syria and Iraq, has recently managed to take recruits from Afghan Taliban defectors.

(Source: agencies)

## Theresa May shuns calls to resign after shock result

People living in Britain are waking up to uncertainty as Prime Minister Theresa May ignored calls to stand down after the ruling Conservative Party lost an overall majority in parliament in a general election on Thursday.

May had called the snap vote in April to strengthen her mandate ahead of negotiations with the European Union to quit the bloc.

"As I said many times during the campaign, I had wanted to achieve a larger majority, but that was not the result we secured," May, who had previously pledged not to hold an early election, said on Friday.

She also apologized to her colleagues who had lost seats as a consequence.

The Conservatives won 318 seats and 42.4 percent of the vote share, while Labour won 262 and 40 percent of the vote share - an increase from the 2015 result which saw the left-wing opposition party win 232 seats.

As May announced forming a minority government with the support of the small Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), allowing her to cling to her position, a resurgent Labour Party celebrated as it outperformed expectations following a successful campaign led by Jeremy Corbyn.

Corbyn was among those who called for May to resign after the results were announced.

"Now, the prime minister has no authority and the Conservatives have no mandate," he said in a video



message posted to Twitter on Friday.

**■ 'May fatally wounded'**

Britain's right-wing newspapers, which are usually loyal to the Conservative Party, also turned their backs on May.

In an opinion column, The Times said: "This crisis has been years in the making. Mrs May's party believes that government is in its DNA. Yet it has failed to win a majority in five of the past six general elections and it has left the country all but ungovernable as a consequence of two extraordinary miscalculations."

Those "miscalculations" were ex-Prime Minister David Cameron's decision to call a referendum on leaving the EU, and May's snap vote.

"Mrs. May is now fatally wounded," The Times wrote. The Daily Mail's headline was "Tories turn on There-

sa" after Conservatives told media that the party was discussing the prospect of another election and potential candidates to replace May.

Britain's best-selling Sun newspaper said senior party members promised to get rid of May, but would wait at least six months because they were worried that a leadership contest now could propel Corbyn into power.

Several members of parliament also demanded the resignation of May's top advisers, who have been widely blamed for a disastrous policy to make the elderly pay more towards their care and a campaign seen as too insulated from ordinary voters and too focused on attacking her opponent.

Looking ahead, May is expected to announce the details of her new government on Saturday.

It was not immediately clear what the demands of the DUP - which won 10 seats - might be.

Politicians and citizens expressed concerns over the DUP's stance on various issues - it is anti-abortion, has railed against LGBT rights, and previously appointed a climate change denier as environment minister in Northern Ireland.

Brexit negotiations were expected to begin in about 10 days, but several officials cast doubt whether the discussions would start on time given the political drama.

Many analysts said it was unlikely May could remain leader for long now that her authority has been eroded.

(Source: agencies)

NEWS IN BRIEF



**Iranian trade delegation to embark for Croatia in early-July**

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) plans to dispatch a trade delegation headed by ICCIMA Chairman Gholam-Hossein Shafeie to Croatia from July 4 to 7, 2017, the official website of ICCIMA announced.

The visit is aimed for the two side's businessmen to get to know each other and explore grounds of cooperation.

**Central banks poised to start rowing in one direction again**

The world's central banks aren't moving in harmony just yet, but at least the discord is beginning to fade.

The European Central Bank on Thursday ruled out further interest-rate cuts in a sign that it's cautiously edging toward an exit from stimulus. Bank of England officials are considering gradually removing accommodation in coming years, though a move is some way off and the assessment will have to take into account the fallout from the country's messy election outcome. And while Japan's central bank has no intention of removing stimulus soon, it is said to be re-calibrating communications to acknowledge that it is thinking about how to handle an eventual policy change.

The Federal Reserve remains well ahead of the pack. The U.S. central bank is expected to lift rates for the fourth time this hiking cycle at its June 13-14 meeting and is mapping out a plan for unwinding its \$4.5 trillion balance sheet, a process it's handling gingerly to avoid roiling global markets. China, meantime, has been allowing money markets to tighten as policy makers seek to squeeze leverage from parts of the financial system.

The nascent signs of policy synchronicity in the world's largest economies come as global growth improves, and despite central banks continuing to undershoot their inflation targets. Labor-market slack is drying up in many places, and world output is expected to expand 3.5 percent this year, according to International Monetary Fund forecasts, up from 3.1 percent in 2016.

**'Global upswing'**

"We're in a sort of a global upswing," said Jay Bryson, global economist at Wells Fargo Securities LLC in Charlotte, North Carolina. "Given that, you probably don't need these super-accommodative policy stances anymore."

The shift has been gradual and often subtle, yet it marks a sea change. Largely in unison, central banks employed unprecedented, unconventional easing to force their economies back into gear after the global financial crisis spurred widespread unemployment and a decade of sub-par growth. In many, that involved large-scale asset purchase programs. In the euro area and Japan, it included negative rates.

The Fed has been reducing accommodation on its own since December 2015. Now, others are beginning to discuss unwinding their policies, restoring a sense of togetherness.

"We're talking about a change from a situation where the central banks were basically pedal to the metal, full throttle, as much monetary stimulus as you could conceivably do," said Jacob Funk Kirkegaard, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington. "Now, central banks in advanced economies are reacting to a recovering economy."

As hiring hums along and central banks tip-toe toward the exit, the Fed stands to benefit. The dollar has seen upward pressure as the U.S. central bank hikes and other monetary authorities ease, and a strong greenback means cheaper imports and lower inflation. The Fed's preferred price index continues to undershoot its 2 percent goal.

"You don't want it falling out of bed, but dollar depreciation would lead to higher inflation in the U.S.," Bryson said. "Frankly, I think the Fed wouldn't be that unhappy to see higher inflation."

The change is also good news for the nations turning toward the exit, as it signals that business confidence is picking up, more people are working, and the specter of another economic dip is fading from view.

"None of the big global central banks is looking to loosen policy," said Andrew Kenningham, chief global economist at Capital Economics in London. "What has changed is that the fear of outright deflation, or entrenched low inflation, has now faded."

In Japan, the economy has expanded for five straight quarters, the best run of growth in a decade, and unemployment has dropped to levels last seen more than 20 years ago. While inflation remains stubbornly low, chipping the BOJ to its stimulus program for the foreseeable future, some lawmakers have demanded the institution begin talking about how it may handle an eventual exit.

It's taking notice. Officials realize it's not constructive to remain silent on the issue and are making it known that the BOJ is conducting simulations internally on how an exit could play out, according to people with knowledge of discussions at the central bank. Governor Haruhiko Kuroda and his board are expected to stand pat the conclusion of the next policy meeting June 15-16.

**Draghi's view**

In the euro area, ECB President Mario Draghi took a tiny step toward an eventual exit from extraordinary stimulus by saying on Thursday that the risks to economic growth are now "broadly balanced" and another rate cut is no longer on the table. Bond purchases are still intended to run until at least the end of the year, but economists predict them to be tapered in 2018.

"The fear of being behind the curve is not the case -- it's more a fear of tightening policy too quickly," said Steven Bell, an economist at BMO Global Asset Management in London. Even so, "you don't want to wait too long if inflationary pressures are building and you want to get rates up, so when the next crisis occurs you've got a bit of ammunition."

In the U.K., the BOE said on May 11 that if growth keeps up "then monetary policy will need to be tightened by a somewhat greater extent over the forecast period than the very gently rising path implied by the market yield curve."

That position assumed a "smooth" exit by Britain from the European Union, an outcome that may not be achieved if the Brexit negotiations become bogged down. The picture is even muddier now after Prime Minister Theresa May's snap election held on Thursday led to a so-called hung parliament, where no single party has a majority.

(Source: Bloomberg)

**Iran's electricity generation capacity touches 77GW**

**ENERGY TEHRAN** — Iran's electricity generation capacity was increased to 76.947 gigawatts (GW) during the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21, 2017), Tasnim news agency reported on Saturday.

With 110 new power plants going operational, the country has increased its electricity generation capacity by 0.385 GW since the beginning of the current fiscal year.

The country's electricity generation capacity was boosted by 2.199GW during the past Iranian calendar year 1395 (which ended on March 20), according to a report by Iran Power Grid Management Company.

Natural gas power plants accounted for 75.5 percent of the last year's increased generation capacity, equaling 1.66GW, IRNA reported in March.

Combined cycled power plants, hydroelectric power plants, distributed generation power plants, and renewable energy power plants also accounted for 14.6 percent, 3.4 percent, 5.7 percent, and 0.9 percent of the total rise in the country's electricity generation capacity, respectively.

Iran ranks currently the first in the region and 14th in the world in terms of electricity generation capacity.

In January 2016, Deputy Energy Minister Houshang Falahatian said that over 95 percent of the country's power transmission equipment are domestically built, adding that Iran is also self-sufficient in manufacturing its power distribution equipment.



**Tehran to host intl. kitchen, ceramic exhibits**

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Iranian capital will host the 15th Kitchen, Bath, Sauna and Pool Industries and Equipment International Exhibition and the 24th International Exhibition of Ceramic Industries at Tehran's International Permanent Fairgrounds from June 30 to July 3, 2017, IRIB news reported.



As reported, 250 domestic and foreign companies will showcase their latest products at the named kitchen industry. The attending 66 foreign companies come from South Korea, Turkey, Finland, China, France, Italy, Germany, Brazil, Spain, and the Netherlands.

The ceramic exhibition will reportedly comprise four sectors including

kitchen products, bath products, sauna products, and pool products.

The two exhibitions are going to be held simultaneously to give Iranian and foreign participants a chance for improving the efficiency of their production units, finding export destinations for their products, improving their quality via creating a competitive environment and etc.

**Bidders hand in development proposals for Iran's Azadegan oilfield**

**ENERGY TEHRAN** — Iran's Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC) Managing Director said some of the foreign bidders for Iran's Azadegan oilfield have presented their development proposals to Iran, Tasnim reported on Saturday.

According to Seyed Nouredin Shahnazadeh France's Total, Japan's Inpex and Malaysia's Petronas have handed their proposals in.

Iran sent formal invitation letters to major oil companies to finalize the list of bidders for its upcoming IPC-based tender for the development of Azadegan oilfield in late-May.

"France's Total and Anglo-Dutch

Shell, Eni, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), as well as Japan's Inpex and Malaysia's Petronas are major companies among other to bid for the development of Iran's Azadegan oilfield," Shahnazadeh said.

Azadegan is an oilfield Iran shares with Iraq at the western part of Iran's southwestern region of Karoun.

National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Managing Director Ali Kardor had said earlier that the 29 companies which were pre-qualified to bid for oil and gas projects under the country's new model of oil contracts known as IPC (integrated petroleum contract) will be invited for the final tender.

**UAE blacklist likely to squeeze liquidity of Qatari banks**

A move by four Arab states to blacklist dozens of figures with alleged links to Qatar could squeeze liquidity at Qatari banks which get a significant amount of their funding from the region.

Qatari banks have around 60 billion riyals (\$16 billion) in funding in the form of customer and interbank deposits from other Persian Gulf states, Chiradeep Ghosh, banking analyst at SICO Bahrain, said.

But the United Arab Emirates central bank has ordered local banks to stop dealing with the 59 individuals and 12 entities with alleged links to Qatar and to freeze their assets, state news agency

WAM reported.

It has also told them to apply enhanced due diligence for any accounts they hold with six Qatari banks, including Qatar National Bank (QNB) which is the Middle East and Africa's largest bank, WAM said in its report.

The six banks- QNB, Qatar Islamic Bank, Qatar International Islamic Bank, Barwa Bank (IPO-BABK.QA: Quote), Masraf Al Rayan and Doha Bank- did not respond immediately to requests for comment.

The move followed the isolation of Qatar by the four states, which have cut all diplomatic and transport links.

This pressure is likely to constrain the funding Qatari banks would be able to raise from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain, one banker in the region told Reuters.

"All Qatari banks will struggle for liquidity and will have to pay a premium for funding from elsewhere outside these four countries," SICO Bahrain's Ghosh said.

Qatari banks, like their Persian Gulf neighbors, have been struggling against a backdrop of lower oil prices, which has pushed up funding costs and raised non-performing loans.

"It is especially challenging as they're

not very liquid as their loan to deposit ratios are already above 100 percent," Ghosh said.

In recent years several have also expanded outside Qatar's small domestic market to grow their business, with QNB holding a presence in several countries including Egypt, Turkey, Nigeria and UAE either directly or via affiliates.

UAE banks would find it relatively easy to comply with the rules as many had invested in improving their compliance systems in recent years and already complied with sanctions against a range of other entities and individuals, another banker said. (Source: Reuters)

**Clouds gather over UK economy as data points to lackluster growth**

Britain's economy made a lackluster start to the second quarter, according to official figures on Friday that added to gloom about the UK's growth prospects following the inconclusive election results.

Manufacturing output and broader industrial output made only small gains in April, dashing economists' forecasts for a rebound for the economy after a slow start to 2017, which has put the UK at the bottom of the European growth league.

Firms and consumers have been under pressure from rising prices since last year's Brexit vote knocked the pound sharply lower, making imports to the UK more expensive. Higher inflation has curbed consumer spending with knock-on effects for the wider economy.

The pound dropped again on Friday after the snap election called by Theresa May resulted in a hung parliament rather than the increased majority she had hoped to achieve ahead of Brexit negotiations with the rest of the EU.

The figures from the Office for National Statistics suggested the economy was already struggling before this latest bout of political uncertainty. They showed manufacturing output rose 0.2% in April after falling 0.6% in March. That was well below economists' forecast for a 0.9% rise in a Reuters poll.

Output for the broader industrial sector, which also includes utilities and mining, also rose 0.2% in April, rebounding from a 0.5% fall in March but again below forecasts for 0.8%. Construction output also missed expectations but Britain's trade performance improved.

The figures painted a picture of a "somewhat precarious UK economy," said Jack Coy at the Centre for Economics and Business Research consultancy.

"With the service sector clearly stuttering, hopes of a stronger performance from the industrial sector failed to materialize this month. The trade figures provide some crumbs of comfort, but while the deficit



narrowed in monthly terms, UK exports have shown little sign of picking up considerably so far in 2017," he added.

Construction output was weaker than expected in April but figures for the first three months of 2017 were revised up. Britain's trade deficit narrowed more than forecast in April as imports dropped sharply. There was little sign that the pound's drop was helping drive up exports, despite making UK goods cheaper overseas. Export volumes slipped on the month.

The signs of a sluggish start to the second quarter follow news that the UK economy grew just 0.2% in the first quarter, making it the worst performer in the European Union and also bottom of the league among the world's advanced economies. That was a stark contrast with the close of 2016 when the economy confounded predictions from the Bank of England and others for a post-referendum slump.

The latest figures suggested the production and construction sectors were on course to provide a negligible contribution to GDP growth again in the second quarter, said Ruth Gregory at the consultancy Capital

Economics. But she highlighted the narrowing in the trade deficit and recent business surveys that have pointed to a pickup for the manufacturing sector.

"Looking ahead, there is clearly a risk that today's election result causes growth to weaken towards the end of the second quarter," Gregory added.

"That said, this is unlikely to spell disaster since the economy has proved pretty resilient to political uncertainty in the recent past."

Samuel Tombs at the consultancy Pantheon Macroeconomics said the latest batch of official figures was consistent with slow growth again in the second quarter.

"April's modest rise in industrial production reverses only a tiny fraction of the 1.8% fall between December and March and so will increase concerns that the overall economy is stagnating," he said.

"Looking ahead, we expect manufacturing output to revive slowly, as moderate growth in exports offsets weakness in domestic demand. Even so, industrial production is on track to barely rise at all again in the second quarter, ensuring that overall GDP growth struggles to better the first quarter's 0.2% rise," he said.

Some business surveys have suggested exports have been boosted by the weaker pound and stronger global demand. But the official trade figures for April showed export volumes fell 0.1% while import volumes dropped 5.1%. That helped narrow the deficit on Britain's goods trade to £10.38bn from £12.05bn in March, better than forecasts for a £12bn trade gap.

Adding in the services sector, which includes activities such as banking and legal services, the deficit almost halved to £2.1bn from £3.9bn in March. But it widened over the three months to April compared with the previous three months on the back of a rise in the value of imports. (Source: The Guardian)

# Iran raises oil exports to West, almost on par with Asia

Iran's oil exports to the West surged in May to their highest level since the lifting of sanctions in early 2016 and almost caught up with volumes exported to Asia, a source familiar with Iranian oil exports said.

Iran, which used to be OPEC's second biggest oil exporter, has been raising output since 2016 to recoup market share lost to regional rivals including Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

While many Asian nations continued to purchase oil from Iran during sanctions, Western nations halted imports, halving Iran's overall exports to as little as one million barrels per day (bpd).

Last month, Iran exported about 1.1 million bpd to Europe including Turkey, almost reaching pre-sanction levels and only slightly below the 1.2 million bpd supplied to Asia, the source told Reuters.

Iran's exports to Asia last month were the lowest since February 2016, Reuters' calculations showed.

Oil exports to Asia fell as South Korea and Japan stepped up oil condensate purchases and bought less oil, said the source, who asked not to be identified as the information is confidential.

"Iran's condensate parked in floating storage has almost been exhausted because of higher purchases by Japan and Korea," the source said.

Exports to Asia were also hit by India's decision to cut annual purchases from Iran by a fifth for the fiscal year to March 2018.

After the lifting of sanctions, Tehran added new clients such as Litasco and Lotos and won back customers such as Total, ENI, Tupras, Repsol, Cepsa and Hellenic Petroleum.



OPEC member Iran was allowed a small production increase under a December deal to limit output.

Iran's overall May oil production totaled 3.9 million bpd, the source said.

Iran is currently producing about 200,000 bpd of West Karoun grade, which the nation blends with other Iranian heavy grades for export, he said.

(Source: Reuters)

## Oil demand in India rises most since November's cash clampdown

India's oil demand bounced back in May, led by the highest growth in gasoline consumption in nine months and the fastest increase in diesel usage since November.

Total fuel consumption rose 5.4 percent to 17.79 million tons in May, the most in six months, according to the Oil Ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell. Demand for diesel, which accounts for about 40 percent of total sales, expanded 8 percent to 7.5 million tons. Gasoline uptake climbed 15 percent to 2.4 million tons, the fastest since August.

Oil consumption plunged 5.9 percent in January, the most in 13 years, after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's shock clampdown on high-value currency notes in November. Demand fell 3.1 percent in February and 0.7 percent in March before rebounding in April.

"Fuel demand, unusually subdued

in the last quarter of the fiscal due to demonetization, seems to be coming back to normal levels," said K. Ravichandran, senior vice president and group head, corporate ratings at credit assessor ICRA Ltd. "Passenger vehicle sales continue to be good and that explains the recovery."

The International Energy Agency, which expects India to be the fastest-growing oil consumer through 2040, trimmed the country's demand growth estimate for 2017 by about 15 percent last month following demonetization.

"With the onset of the monsoon, we expect demand to pick up further in the coming months," Mukesh Kumar Surana, chairman of Hindustan Petroleum Corp., said by phone. "There's also a pickup in two-wheeler segment and that augurs well for the oil industry."

(Source: Bloomberg)

## Renewable energy supplies over 50% of the UK's electricity

It's been just two weeks since the last time the United Kingdom set new records in renewable energy. However, last May 26's record was just with solar energy, and this week's is for a combination of all the UK's renewable energy resources.

According to the National Grid's Control Room, solar, wind, and nuclear power each supplied more electricity than coal and gas combined at 1 p.m. on Wednesday (June 7) — the first time such an event has occurred in the UK. On the record-setting day, wind generated an estimated 9.5 gigawatts, nuclear power giving about 8.2 gigawatts, and solar contributing roughly 7.3 gigawatts. For reference, gas only provided some 7.2 gigawatts and coal did not generate any electricity at that time.

In another record, renewables such as wind, solar, biomass, and hydro also generated about 18.7 gigawatts com-

bined. This was more than 50 percent of the nation's total electricity demand, capable of powering about 13.5 million homes.

Although the record-breaking figures didn't last long, it's a sign of things to come. For one, it showed that renewable energy can sufficiently supply the electricity needs of a country — provided they be given the opportunity.

According to Aurora Research Energy, at the time when the renewables took flight, the UK was experiencing (for the first time) negative prices in its "day ahead" electricity market. This meant that wind power was supplying more than 40 percent of the country's electricity generation. As The Independent reported, that's a testament to how renewables could reduce electric bills.

(Source: Futurism.com)

## Oil rises as Nigerian pipeline leak overshadows supply worries

Oil prices rose on Friday after a pipeline stoppage in Nigeria, but crude still ended the week down nearly 4 percent on persistent worries about global oversupply.

Brent crude oil settled up 29 cents at \$48.15 a barrel. U.S. crude futures rose 19 cents to \$45.83 a barrel. Both benchmarks posted weekly declines of nearly 4 percent, pressured by big U.S. inventories and heavy worldwide flows.

"I don't think it's anything more than a temporary stabilization," said Gene McGillian, manager of market research at Tradition Energy in Stamford, Connecticut, adding that traders were short-covering ahead of the weekend.

"The increases in production will still drag us lower," he said. The Shell Development Company of Nigeria declared force majeure on Nigerian Bonny light crude oil after someone drilled a hole into the Trans Niger Pipeline, causing a leak.

Nigeria has typically been Africa's largest oil exporter but rebel activity and government mismanagement have caused slowdowns and stoppages.

The leak shows "the production trend in Nigeria is far from stable," said Carsten Fritsch, senior commodity analyst at Commerzbank. Oil markets have been under pressure in part because Nigeria and Libya, the two members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries exempt from output cuts, were boosting production.

Last month OPEC and other key producers agreed to extend a November agreement to decrease production by almost 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd), and hold output there until the first quarter of 2018.



Libya's 270,000-bpd Sharara oilfield has reopened after a workers' protest and should return to normal production within three days, the National Oil Corp said on Friday.

U.S. production is also increasing. Drillers added eight oil rigs in the week to June 9, bringing the total count to 741, the most since April 2015, energy services firm Baker Hughes said on Friday.

U.S. data this week showed a surprise 3.3-million-barrel build in crude stocks to 513.2 million barrels. Inventories of refined products also rose, despite the start of the peak-demand summer season.

"The drop (in gasoline demand) a week after Memorial Day demoralized the market," said McGillian, referring to the late-May U.S. holiday weekend which marks the beginning of driving season. Americans have driven less than expected compared to this time last year.

U.S. refined product inventories are now back above 2016 levels and well above their five-year range, reflecting an unexpected slowdown in U.S. demand, Jefferies said.

Asian markets are also oversupplied, with traders putting excess crude into floating storage, an indicator of a glut. Thomson Reuters shipping figures show at least 25 supertankers sitting in the Strait of Malacca and the Singapore Strait, holding unsold fuel.

(Source: Reuters)

## Special conditions for Nord Stream 2 to harm EU private investment

The European Union's desire to create a special legal base for Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline for political reasons may become a dangerous precedent for any private investment in the infrastructure sector on the territory of the European Union, the project's operator said in a statement.

The European Commission sent a request to the EU Council on June 9 to obtain a mandate to conduct negotiations with Russia to create a special legal

framework on the basis of which the future Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline should operate.

The reasoning of the Commission is flawed and based on misperceptions, the company said. Effective rules and a comprehensive legal framework are already in place to let the market decide whether to buy Nord Stream 2 gas, while market dynamics clearly demonstrate the need for Nord Stream 2, it added.

On March 30, the operator reiterated

that project would proceed in full compliance with the existing legal framework consisting of EU law, intergovernmental conventions and national laws.

Previously, a number of countries called on the EU to oppose Nord Stream 2, alleging the pipeline might increase bloc's dependence on Russian gas and cause geopolitical destabilization, with Ukraine and Poland being the most vocal critics of the project.

(Source: Sputnik)

## Oil comeback for cut-exempt producers threatens to swamp OPEC

OPEC's battle against an oil glut is under threat as unsold crude from members Nigeria and Libya, which are exempt from a global production-cutting deal, is swamping the Atlantic Basin.

Nigeria has more than 60 million barrels of unsold crude, traders of its oil said, surpassing the level reached when global oversupply peaked two years ago. More export plans are a week away, likely bringing more than 50 million extra barrels.

Libya, meanwhile, is pouring nearly triple the amount of crude into global markets compared with last year.

Few expected the two nations' output to rebound so quickly, and it could scupper OPEC's plans to lift oil prices out of a nearly three-year-long slump.

The 14-nation Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries two weeks ago extended a deal struck in December with several non-member oil producers to cut output by 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) from levels seen late last year.

But OPEC also renewed exemptions for Libya and Nigeria, which have struggled with output-sapping internal conflict. Those struggles, however, are abating.

"They've added 600,000 barrels per day between the two of them" since the original deal was struck, said Amrita Sen of consultancy Energy Aspects.

"And that's half the OPEC cuts."

Royal Dutch Shell this week lifted force majeure on Nigeria's Forcados crude, bringing the country's oil exports fully online for the first time in 16 months and cementing the addition of some 250,000 bpd to world markets.

Libyan oil production hit its highest since October 2014 at 835,000 bpd this month, despite the brief shutdown of Sharara, the country's largest oilfield, due to protests.

Despite this, OPEC sources said calls to bring Libya or Nigeria into the cuts never garnered enough support. OPEC Secretary-General Mohammad Barkindo said this month it was too early for those countries to be considered for output curbs.

But the excess is palpable — and it's pouring straight into the Atlantic Basin, home of the physical crude grades that underpin the global Brent benchmark.

"In a physical sense, it's pretty dire," one West African oil trader said. "Everything is on offer, and everything is pumping."

Traders said some Mediterranean refiners — typically reliable consumers — were reselling their oil.

A Mediterranean trader said that while Libya "is not a totally reliable source", its production was "running high on several fields".

There are doubts over whether the two nations will maintain their run, particularly given Libya's political problems.

(Source: Reuters)

### Job Vacancy

A well-known Engineering Company is recruiting below positions:

#### Bilingual Senior Accountant:

-University educated in accounting, fluent in English with ability of issuing full financial statement in English language.  
-Computer savvy

Interested candidates are invited to send their CV to the email address:

hiring.ibp@gmail.com



**N.I.O.C**  
1396.1079



**National Iranian Drilling Company**

**Public Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tender(First publish/second publish)**  
**one-stage(compressed)**

TENDER GUARANTEE	ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	SUBJECT OF TENDER	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
5327	186,420,000	p/f mi " swaco " centrifuge model:cd500	1487378	Tender No.:PF/05-96/015 Indent No.: 9245351	1

**Brief description of subject:**  
National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address Pasdaran Blev., Airport Saqare, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase some oil well crown block sheave from qualified and interested tenderers through one-stage public tender (semi-pressed) upon following terms and conditions:

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

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

**Receiving of documents:**  
Tenderers must be obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum ten days after the date of second publication in person at the following address: Hall No.:113, 1thfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN  
Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and receive tender documents from foreign procurement department in due date will be known as tenderer from tender committee.

**C) Delivery of envelopes of bids and call quality evaluating:**  
Tenderers shall submit simultaneously envelopes of bids including bank guarantees (A), financial offer(C) and stamped and signed of tender documents (B) along with qualification worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 40 days from last day of document received deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1st Floor, Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN.  
Notice: The deadline for the refusal of bidders participation in the tender is the last day of determined for submission of bids.

**D) Tender Guarantee:**  
**Type of guarantee:**  
A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activities licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.  
B) The original cash deposit receipt paid to National Iranian Drilling Company.  
Duration of credit guarantee & quotation:  
This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.  
More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. [WWW.NIDC.IR](http://WWW.NIDC.IR)  
Foreign Procurement Dept  
National Iranian Drilling Company

تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۶/۳/۲۱ نوبت دوم ۹۶/۳/۲۲

## Even if May forms a new government, the big winner in this election is the EU

By Denis MacShane

After Trump in America and Macron in France now it is the turn of British voters to astonish themselves and the world with an election result that was unthinkable a few weeks ago.

Last year David Cameron believed that his cynical plebiscite on Europe could not be lost. This year Theresa May believed her opportunistic early election would result in Labour being crushed. Never have two British prime ministers shown such lack of judgment in just 12 months.

### ■ A humiliating defeat

Theresa May has suffered a humiliating defeat after less than a year in office. The 48 per cent of the British voters who said Yes to Europe a year ago have risen up and told the Conservative Party that they cannot be ignored.

Far from leaving Europe, Britain seems more continental than ever as the nation has no stable government, a parliament of many parties and could face new elections.

May says she will stay as Prime Minister but she is massively weakened as she loses her majority in the House of Commons.



The UK's former Minister of Europe

Her decision to embrace the anti-European ideology of Ukip and put into her cabinet populist anti-EU demagogues like the Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, has backfired.

Most polls show that the British people do not support leaving the EU single market and customs union and want to keep the right to live, work and retire in other European countries where two million Brits have a home. May however has opted for a hardline on Brexit, but she no longer has a majority in the House of Commons for this policy. Britain is caught between the decision of voters in last year's plebiscite to say No to Europe and the decision of the election to say No to a hard Brexit.

Jeremy Corbyn, the leftist Labour leader, has saved his honor and his focus on domestic issues like austerity, cuts to public services like health care and the police found an echo.

May and the pro-Brexit press in Britain tried to portray Corbyn as a friend of terrorists, a left-wing extremist and even someone who had met Yanis Varoufakis. But voters saw an elderly man with a white beard talking about injustice and inequality at home and abroad and young voters in particular liked the message and gave Corbyn their support.

But the Labour leader only added 31 Labour MPs and Labour is still far short of a majority in the Commons. In London, where many Labour candidates defied Corbyn's support for leaving the single market and imposing immigration controls on fellow Europeans and campaigned to stay in Europe, Labour did very well.

The losers of the election were English and Scottish nationalists. The Ukip vote disappeared and pro-European Liberal Democrats won seats from the Conservatives in London even if the party's former leader, Nick Clegg, was defeated by the Conservatives in Sheffield.

In Scotland, Scottish nationalism suffered major blows as Scottish Nationalist Party seats fell to Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats. The party's leader in the House of Commons and the former Scottish Nationalist leader, Alex Salmond, were both defeated as Scottish voters rejected calls for independence and separation from the rest of the United Kingdom.

### ■ An accidental Prime Minister

All the assumptions about British politics have turned out to be false. May was an accidental Prime Minister who arrived in Downing Street after the Brexit plebiscite because all the main anti-European Tory MPs who expected to take over after David Cameron resigned stabbed each other in the back, front, top and bottom and she was the only senior Tory minister left standing as her colleagues destroyed each other.

She had no clear program for government. She made a powerful pro-European speech in April 2016 but then adopted Ukip policy on Europe. She refused to explain to the public what the costs and consequence of a hard Brexit would be. In exchange, the public refused to endorse her when she asked for a personal mandate in the general election many saw as opportunistic and cynical.

The assumption that Corbyn's leftism would destroy Labour has been shown to be false. The assumption that the mass circulation British press with its daily fake news propaganda attacks on the European Union spoke for Britain is also false.

Since 2014 Britain has had two major referendums — on Scottish independence and Brexit — and two general elections. But nothing has been finally decided. Anti-European Conservatives were hoping to be joined by dozens of pro-Brexit candidate but the reverse has happened. A clear majority of British MPs want Britain to stay as fully in Europe as possible. The cause of Europe lost in Britain in the referendum in June 2016 but won in the election of June 2017.

When May met President Trump as the first European leader to go and pay homage to the new U.S. president she was seen holding his hand. Now Trump's best friend in Europe has been mortally wounded. As in the Netherlands, Austria and France, Europe has emerged as the winner in the British election.

(Source: Independent)

**The 48 per cent of the British voters who said yes to Europe a year ago have risen up and told the Conservative Party that they cannot be ignored.**

# What exactly is the U.S. policy on Qatar?

Trump administration officials, including the president, have issued seemingly contradictory statements about the dispute among Arab states

This week six Arab countries — Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Libya, and Yemen — severed their relations with Qatar over its alleged support of terrorism. The action went further than any previous Arab response to Qatar's alleged support: It included stopping all flights, preventing all travel, and the closure of all borders.

The move, which came after President Trump visited Riyadh in May and called for a united front against ISIS and extremism, could have far-reaching consequences for U.S. alliances in the Middle East, as well as the U.S.-led effort against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Qatar is home to 11,000 U.S. military personnel stationed at Al Udeid Air Base, the largest U.S. military base in the region. The base has been used to stage attacks against ISIS targets.

Energy-rich Qatar has a regional and global influence that far outweighs its size, partly through Al Jazeera, the Arabic-language channel that is funded by the Qatari government, and partly through its policy of supporting groups, in the words of U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, "that span the spectrum of political expression from activism to violence." Qatar's Arab neighbors say it supports the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, as well as al-Qaeda and ISIS. Qatar, which also has friendly relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia's main regional rival, and Israel, denies it supports terrorism.

Meanwhile the countries in the region are watching the issue carefully. Kuwait's emir has offered to mediate. Qatar, which relies heavily on its land border with Saudi Arabia for food and other essential supplies, is holding talks with Turkey and Iran, and Tehran offered to ship supplies in. Turkey's parliament voted Wednesday to approve sending troops to Qatar in solidarity. Tass, the Russian news agency, reported Qatar's foreign minister would visit Moscow. All of which give the U.S. incentives to want the issue resolved quickly. Indeed, that's how it seemed at the outset.

Immediately after the joint action by the Arab states, Tillerson, speaking in Sydney, said "a growing list of some irritants in the region ... have now bubbled up" and urged the countries "to sit down together and address these differences." Those comments were echoed by James Mattis, the U.S. defense secretary, who said "the diplomatic situation, it will probably take some time — I don't know how long — but it will be resolved."

### ■ The joint action

Then on Tuesday came Trump's first tweets on the matter, in which he suggested it was his pressure on Saudi Arabia and others to target the funding of terrorists that brought about the joint action



**The U.S. was aware of the impending action by the Arab states against a country that is home to the largest U.S. military base in the Middle East.**

against Qatar.

Here's what happened next, according to The New York Times:

The Qataris were shocked at the contradiction between evenhanded statements from the State Department and Pentagon, and Trump's Twitter posts castigating the tiny Persian Gulf Arab state. They began asking American officials whether their longtime alliance was in peril.

Tillerson was forced to try to adjudicate the dispute in phone calls while flying back from a trip to Australia and New Zealand.

Later Tuesday, Sean Spicer, the White House spokesman, said: "The U.S. still wants to see this issue de-escalated and resolved immediately, in keeping with the principles that the president laid out in terms of defeating terror financing and extremism." That night, Trump spoke with Saudi King Salman and, according to the readout of the call, "underscored that a

united Persian Gulf Cooperation Council is critical to defeating terrorism and promoting regional stability." Qatar is a member of the PGCC.

On Wednesday, Trump spoke to Qatari Emir Sheikh Tameem Bin Hamad al-Thani and offered to resolve the dispute. The Trump administration appeared to be speaking with one voice on the subject.

Then on Friday, Tillerson, in a televised statement, once again urged the countries to resolve their differences. He called on "Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt to ease the blockade against Qatar" and urged Doha to be "responsive to the concerns of its neighbors." He said Qatar's emir had made progress on the issues raised by his neighbors, "but he must do more and must do it more quickly." He also urged other countries in the region to drop their support of terrorist groups — but did not name any of them.

Less than an hour later, Trump ad-

ressed the issue during a joint news conference with the Romanian president.

"The nation of Qatar, unfortunately, has historically been a funder of terrorism at a very high level," he said, adding Arab leaders had spoken to him during his visit "about confronting Qatar over its behavior." Those remarks would suggest the U.S. was aware of the impending action by the Arab states against a country that is home to the largest U.S. military base in the Middle East. Qatar's emir was among the Arab leaders who met with Trump in Riyadh.

"I decided, along with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, our great generals and military people, the time had come to call on Qatar to end its funding," Trump said. "They have to end that funding, and its extremist ideology in terms of funding."

And once again, in attempting to explain U.S. policy, the U.S. president had made it even less clear.

(Source: The Atlantic)

## Fighting season in Afghanistan

By Gary Anderson

When an explosion rocked Kabul in late May, attention again was drawn to the state of the Afghan security forces. Spring ushers in the fighting season, and the Afghan National Army (ANA) has been losing ground; this is particularly true of the Pakistan border areas where the Pashtun tribal culture is strongest; it was the cradle of the Taliban and remains Taliban's primary sanctuary. While the urban terror of the Kabul blast remains primarily a police responsibility, the army's struggles remain a mystery to many Americans who wonder why the American trained ANA has trouble taking and holding ground against a poorly equipped non-state actor such as the Taliban after 15 years of American mentoring. The answer is logistics, or lack of it. We have failed to build a self-sustaining Afghan Army.

It is true that the ANA has some deep institutional problems of leadership, including corruption and nepotism, but it is not the drug-addled mob that is depicted in the recent Brad Pitt movie "War Machine." The Taliban have the same problems; that is why they are having such a hard time stemming ISIS incursions into some traditional Taliban strongholds.

We failed to build a logistics structure based around helicopter resupply in a country that has some of the most militarily challenging terrain in the world. Most resupply for Afghan troops comes from the major cities. Roads are poor to nonexistent and the only efficient way to resupply remote garrisons and operations is by air. We failed to build an Afghan air force capable of resupplying its army. There is an old military maxim that amateurs talk tactics while professionals talk logistics.

I saw this firsthand in Afghanistan in 2012. I was a

civilian adviser to a remote district in the northwest that had a Taliban presence. Bala Murghab is one of the most remote spots in Afghanistan. The only reliable form of travel between our district and the provincial capital was by helicopter.

### ■ Italian army

For four years the Italian Army and U.S. Marine Corps special operations teams had worked hard to help the local ANA battalion and police to clear Taliban from the Murghab valley, and by the spring of 2012, we had comfortable security bubble where the civilians of our interagency District Support Team could try to help reform the local police and judiciary as well as to improve the district's appalling 80 percent illiteracy rate.

We even had hopes of getting electricity in the district. We figured that, with two more years of work, we would be able to hand security over to total Afghan control. Then, disaster struck. In June 2012, we were informed that security of the district would be handed over to the Afghans in accordance with the Obama drawdown by September. No one in the local U.S. contingent had ever suggested that the district was ready for transition, but there was no appeal.

In a meeting of the District Security Council, the

**In a meeting of the District Security Council, the senior coalition military and civilian leaders with our Afghan partners reviewed the potential post-coalition military situation; it was bleak.**

senior coalition military and civilian leaders with our Afghan partners reviewed the potential post-coalition military situation; it was bleak. We carefully estimated the Afghan battalion's military and police logistic needs as opposed to the Afghan helicopter lift available. The numbers didn't add up. Despite appeals for delays, we transitioned as ordered by the end of August. The result was predictable.

Without the ability to supply their remote outposts, the Afghan Army and police security bubble collapsed to the immediate perimeter of the district capital. This has happened exponentially in the rest of the country since 2012.

### ■ Counterterrorism troops

The current administration is contemplating a mini-surge in Afghanistan; it will probably be a mix of counterterrorism troops and trainers, but I would suggest that the trainers not be infantry advisers; in their own way, the Afghan soldiers know how to fight.

The Afghans need people to train their mechanics and logistics personnel to keep their equipment running, and the need more helicopters. Our district's pessimistic logistics estimate in 2012 was based on the assumption that the Afghans could keep their helicopters running at 60 percent availability this was inadequate. Actual helicopter readiness fell well short of even that modest goal.

We need to double the size of the Afghan helicopter fleet and improve its maintenance and logistics capability by an order of magnitude if the Afghan security forces are to be expected to hold territory or expand government control outside of the cities. We built an Afghan Army that looked like ours without building a logistics capability to sustain it. We should rectify that mistake.

(Source: The Washington Times)

# Cutting ties with Qatar demonstrates fragile nature of Saudi-led PGCC

**INTERVIEW**  
By Lachin Rezaian

Canadian Human Rights Attorney Edward Corrigan said the crisis resulting from Saudi Arabia's cutting ties with Qatar is to force Qatar to forge closer links to Iraq and Iran, something that the Saudis want to prevent from happening.

Corrigan added that Saudis were emboldened by U.S. President Trump's recent visit to crack the whip and try to reign in Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamin bin Hamad Al-Thani and assert Saudi control over Qatar.

"Qatar supported the Saudi attack on Yemen and their attempt to re-install their puppet in Sana. Now the allies are at odds and the Saudis are saying that Qatar is supporting the Houtis, a preposterous claim if there ever was one. The same can be said for the Saudis and friends claim that Qatar is supporting extremism and terrorism when the Saudis are clearly guilty of that charge," Corrigan noted in an exclusive interview with Tehran Times:

**What is your opinion on the recent conflict between Saudi Arabia and some of its allies, many of which OPEC member states, and Qatar?**

To date only five Arab States have broken ties with Qatar: Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The Maldives also severed ties with Qatar. Notably, Kuwait and Oman did not break ties. Kuwait has been attempting to mediate the dispute. The dispute shows divisions in the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) but I would say not OPEC.

The membership of OPEC includes the Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. In 1960 these were the founding Members of the Organization. These countries were later joined by Qatar (1961), Indonesia (1962), Libya (1962), the United Arab Emirates (1967), Algeria (1969), Nigeria (1971), Ecuador (1973), Gabon (1975), Angola (2007) and Equatorial Guinea (2017). Many of these oil producing countries will not support this Saudi-led initiative, notably Angola, Ecuador, Iran, Iraq and Venezuela for starters. I think they would see this type of politicization of OPEC as divisive and counterproductive.

How do you evaluate U.S. role in the cutting ties of some Persian Gulf states with Qatar? Does U.S. pull strings on the issue?

There has been a long simmering dispute between the Saudis and Qatar. Qatar has pursued a more independent and liberal foreign policy and has not followed the dictates of the Saudis. I do not think that the United States is pulling the strings on this diplomatic crisis. The United States has its largest military base in the Middle East in Qatar, the al-Udeid air base, from where it bases its operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. The United States 5th Fleet is based in Bahrain as well as its headquarters for the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT). The U.S. Military and State Department want this crisis to go away. However, I do believe that the Saudis were emboldened by U.S. President Trump's recent visit to crack the whip and try to reign in Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamin bin Hamad Al-Thani and assert Saudi control over Qatar.

**How do you evaluate the financial and economic consequences of cutting ties for Qatar?**

It is true that the Qatar's Stock Market suffered a decline but then it rebounded nearly 3% the very next day. The Saudi closure of the land border with Qatar will block much of the food shipments to the small country. However, Iran has offered to supply Qatar whatever food it requires. The blockade will cause difficulties for Qatar but as the richest country in the World and the largest exporter of natural gas in the world, Qatar has huge resources that will help it overcome any adversity. The closure of Saudis and UAE air space will force Qatar airlines to fly through Iraqi and Iranian airspace. It will be inconvenient but not crippling. What the crisis may do is force Qatar to forge closer links to Iraq and Iran, something that the Saudis want to stop.

What are the likely effects on regional stability and security, following the conflict in the Persian Gulf?

Clearly this dispute demonstrates the fragile nature of the Saudi-led Persian Gulf Cooperation



**The dispute between Saudi Arabia and Qatar shows divisions in the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC).**



**This dispute demonstrates the division and weakness of the Arab autocratic governments and that they are incapable of getting their act together.**

Council (PGCC) and threatens the security and stability of Persian Gulf region. There are many factors involved. Turkey for example has a Defense Treaty with Qatar and has a small military base on the peninsula. The Saudi led campaign will drive Qatar closer to Iran and closer to Iraq. Qatar has long been suspected of supporting extremists against Syria. This support may end if Saudis and their allies try to keep up the pressure on Qatar. As noted above the United States will have competing interests over its military bases in the region. The U.S. sold \$17 billion worth of arms to Qatar in 2015, representing 42.5 per cent of U.S. arms sales that year.

Qatar supported the Saudi attack on Yemen and their attempt to re-install their puppet in Sana. Now the allies are at odds and the Saudis are saying that Qatar is supporting the Houtis, a preposterous claim if there ever was one. The same can be said for the Saudis and friends claim that Qatar is supporting extremism and terrorism when the Saudis are clearly guilty of that charge.

This dispute demonstrates the division and weakness of the Arab autocratic governments and that they are incapable of getting their act together. They also will not allow for differences in opinion in their policies. The Saudis want to mobilize the Sunni Arabs against their regional rival Iran. However, Qatar shares the world largest natural gas field with Iran and it is imperative that it maintains cordial relations with Iran in order to exploit this resource. Israel of course benefits from these divisions and wants to use the Sunni autocratic regimes against Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and also Hamas.

**How do you evaluate the position of other Persian Gulf states towards the event?**

Kuwait which is a member of the PGCC has not joined the campaign to ostracize Qatar. Nor has Oman. Jordan has downgraded its ties with Qatar. Several more countries small countries have joined the boycott of Qatar. The administration of Saudi-backed and resigned Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, Libya (at least one of the factions), the Maldives, Djibouti, Senegal and the Comoros later joined the Saudi camp in ending diplomatic ties. Egypt is dependent on Saudi money and is opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood which supported deposed elected Egyptian President Morsi. Qatar has long cultivated ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, which it refuses to designate a terrorist organization. Neither does the United States.

Turkey's President Erdogan and his party has links to the Muslim Brotherhood and has voiced support for Doha. I do not think that other States, and in particular Western States, will interfere unless their economic or strategic interests are threatened. It is also important to remember that Qatar has made some major investments in Russia.

The Saudis and the UAE can only buy so much support with their money. They really have very little military power. The only states they can threaten is tiny Qatar, the UAE and Bahrain. But to attack Qatar opens up a hornet's nest that may come back and bite the feudal states in the Persian Gulf and could set a precedent that just might destroy them.

**How do you evaluate the international**

**reactions to the conflict?**

So far international reactions are mute and take a wait and see approach. The United States is sending conflicting messages. France's new President Emmanuel Macron has called for a reduction in tensions. Other than the furious tempest in the Persian Gulf, I do not see this conflict expanding. However, if it does expand and other parties get involved like Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey and even Russia and its ally China it will get very messy.

Edward C. Corrigan holds a B.A. in History and a Master's Degree in Political Science from the University of Western Ontario. He also has a Law Degree from the University of Windsor and was called to the Bar of the Law Society of Upper Canada in 1992. His academic area of expertise is the Middle East and he has published many articles in academic publications including Middle East Policy, Middle East International, Outlook and Z Magazine.

**Western sanctions, like a cancer, seriously hit Syrian medicine**

By Firas Samuri

The Representatives of the World Health Organization (WHO) said the hospitals in Syria are now in critical situation because of Western sanctions.

WHO representative in Syria, Elizabeth Hoff, said there aren't enough equipment and replacement parts for X-ray, ultrasound machines, endoscopes and other scanners in the hospitals because of restrictive measures against the republic. According to the World Health Organization's research, the equipment for providing diagnostic care in fact is not in a serviceable condition or completely unavailable.

In addition, the Syrian Ministry of Health reports there is a catastrophic shortage of many drugs, in particular, immunosuppressive drugs and oncology treatments.

To be noticed is that the European Union extended imposing the sanctions against Syria until June 1, 2018. The updated



'black list' includes 240 individuals and 67 legal entities. Current sanctions against Syria will be extended, for instance, and will also affect the oil embargo, investment restrictions, an assets freeze of Syria's Central Bank inside the EU, and prohibition of sale or supply of equipment and technology to the country.

Meanwhile, according to the rector of the Chemistry and Pharmacy Institute at the University of Aleppo, Mahar Harman, only friendly to Syria countries are trying to help. "Our

**Western countries are not ready to realize that civilian population of Syria first of all suffers due to the shortage of medicines, medical equipment and scanners.**

arguments that spare parts for medical equipment are needed exclusively for peaceful purposes are not accepted, we are doing our best to resolve the situation, we are asking for help from friendly countries, primarily to Russia, as well as to India, Armenia and China."

Apparently, the Western countries are not ready to realize that civilian population of Syria first of all suffers due to the shortage of medicines, medical equipment and scanners. There aren't enough polio vaccinations, insulin, painkillers and anti-inflammatory medications and other life-saving medicines. Thus, the EU sanctions against Syria only aggravate the humanitarian catastrophe in the country.

**N.I.O.C**  
1396.1080

National Iranian Drilling Company

**Public Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tender(First publish/second publish) one-stage(compressed)**

TENDER GUARANTEE	ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	SUBJECT OF TENDER	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
7310	250,000,000	p/f "OILWELL" CROWN BLOCK MOUNTED ON LEE C MOORE DERRICK REF:OIL WELL SUPPLY CO	1478347	Tender No.:PF/05-96/016 Indent No.: 9545044	1

**Brief description of subject:**  
National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address Pasdaran Blev., Airport Saqare, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase some oil well crown block sheave from qualified and interested tenderers through one-stage public tender (compressed) upon following terms and conditions:

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

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

Receiving of documents:  
Tenderers must obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum ten days after the date of second publication in person at the following address: Hall No.:113, 1thfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN

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

C) Delivery of envelopes of bids and call quality evaluating:  
Tenderers shall submit simultaneously envelopes of bids including bank guarantees (A), financial offer(C) and stamped and signed of tender documents (B) along with qualification worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 40 days from last day of document received deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor, Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN.

Notice: The deadline for the refusal of bidders participation in the the tender is the last day of determined for submission of bids.

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

Duration of credit guarantee & quotation:  
This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.

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

تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۶/۳/۲۱ نوبت دوم ۹۶/۳/۲۲

# Manuel Noriega and the fragility of America's alliances

By Daniel R. DePetris

A man who was once known as one of the world's most infamous and colorful dictators died after several months in a coma on May 29. Manuel Antonio Noriega, the general that pulled the strings of Panamanian politics for six years — the "pineapple-faced," short, tough guy who liked to don his military uniform

when addressing large crowds — passed away at the age of eighty-three.

To call Noriega a criminal or an old Latin American strongman who ruled with an iron fist would be to sully his brutish reputation. Noriega was nothing but a survivor: someone who seemed to have no ideology but a thirst for power; a former army man that worked his way up the Panamanian military chain-of-command,

working with pretty much anybody who would make him rich or solidify his reputation as a ruler. At heart, Noriega was an opportunist who relished playing regional powers against one another, working as an intelligence asset for the CIA while at the same time opening up Panama's banking system to the Colombian drug lords who were looking to export their product to the U.S. market.

The Panamanian general's fall from grace began with the murder of Hugo Spadafora — Noriega's loudest critic — by pro-government goons, criminals who preceded to behead his corpse in the process. The United States and the international community denounced the murder as a heinous act perpetrated by savage men with no moral compass, reporting to a dictator who mowed down anyone in his way. →13

## Pars Diplomatic Real Estate

### Apartment

Apt in Mahmoudieh  
5<sup>th</sup> floor, 320 sq.m, 3 Bdrs.,  
2 Balcony, nice View, lobby, Spj  
& Gym saloon, Diplomatic Tower,  
excellent view, good Access to high  
Way, luxury furn, \$6000 negotiable  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Perfect Apt in Saadat Abad  
170 sq.m, 3 Bdrs., fully furn, close  
to the international school, Only \$2700  
Ms.Sara 09128103207

Amazing Apt in Tower  
Kamranieh  
250 sq.m, 3 large Bdrs., master  
room, nice view, Spj & pool 24  
security, furn/unfurn \$ 4500  
Suitable for Residency of Ambassadors  
Ms.Sara 09128103207

Apt in Elahieh  
180 sq.m, 3 Bdrs flat, full furn,  
Spj & Pkg, good access, Only \$3800  
Ms.Sara 09128103207

Apt in Velenjak  
1<sup>st</sup> floor, 270 sq.m, 3Bdrs., fully  
furn, diplomatic, nice and cozy, \$3000  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Apt in Jordan  
85 sq.m, 1 Bdr., fully furn,  
clean & quit, \$1000  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

### Villa

Super Luxury Villa in Farmanieh  
800 Built up in 1200 Land, duplex,  
completely renovated, 7 Bdrs., 2  
level, green garden, outdoor pool,  
high security, equipment kitchen  
Suitable for Residency of Ambassadors  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Luxury Villa in the North  
duplex, 1200 sq.m built up, 2000  
sq.m land, 5 Bdrs., big saloon, ser  
vant, indoor pool, Spj, renovated,  
beautiful and green garden, semi furn  
\$18000 negotiable  
Suitable for Embassies  
Renting also for Iranian  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Palace in Tajrish/ Elahieh  
duplex, 7000 sq.m land, 2200 sq.m  
built up, 8 Bdrs., renovated, green  
& unbelievable Garden, water fall,  
Spj, Parking, completely renovat  
ed, big saloon \$30000  
Suitable for Residency & Embassy  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Villa in Mahmoudieh  
Duplex, 600 sq.m built up, 5 Bdrs.,  
small Garden, Parking  
Suitable for small Companies &  
small Embassy  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206



Holder of

ISO 9001:2008

ISO 10004:2012

ISO 10002:2014

From Oxford Cert Universal

Best Consultation,  
Best Services, Best Result

Section Manager "Tina 09128440154"

Tel: 22662452-8, Fax: 22667173

Hot Line: 28141

info@parsdiplomatic.com

### Building & Office

New Whole Building in Elahieh  
32 Apts, each Apt is 140 sq.m, One  
duplex Apt 250 sq.m, 670 sq.m  
built up, 250 sq.m land, So shiny,  
quit & cozy, parking  
Good for Embassy  
Price reasonable  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Whole building in Jordan  
each floor 126 sq.m,  
duplex store, open space, full glass,  
smart AC, furn/unfurn, storage,  
900 sq.m Pkg  
Each floor available for Sale & Rent  
Ms.Sara 09128103207

New Whole Building in Aqdasieh  
6<sup>th</sup> floor, 12 units, Apts between 170  
sq.m to 250 sq.m with 3 Bdrs., Spj,  
parking, 2500 sq.m built up, 700  
sq.m land  
Suitable for Embassy & Residency  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Building in Fereshteh  
Ready to rent separately or whole  
building, 3 Apt, 3 & 5 Bdrs. furn  
& unfurn, SPJ & Pkg, good access, \$2900  
Ms.Sara 09128103207

Whole Building in Zafaranieh  
Lobby, 30 Bdrs., reception, Furn,  
parking, gathering Room, Suitable  
for Residency & big companies  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

### Ideal Offers

World's finest serviced  
and virtual office in Iran  
and 154 locations worldwide  
Fully furn, dedicated Receptionist,  
IT support  
Located in Jordan Business Area  
Packages start from \$120  
Ms.Sara 09128103207

Apt in Zafaraiyeh  
130 sq.m, 2 Bdrs., near Paladium  
mall, good access, nice & cozy,  
only \$2700  
Ms.Sara 09128103207

Office in Jordan  
110 sq.m to 240 sq.m, full of  
foreign companies, could be flat,  
Parking lot with extra visitors  
parking, Lobby, Security, reno  
vated, almost new  
Price per each sq \$40  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Nice Apt in Zafaranieh  
4<sup>th</sup> floor, 130 sq.m, 2 Bdrs., com  
pletely renovated, luxury furn,  
cozy & diplomatic, near to Paladium  
\$2300  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

Luxury Apt in Jordan  
70 sq.m, 1 Bdr., good access,  
Top floors \$1500  
Suitable for foreign Companies  
Ms.Diba: 09128103206

مالکین محترم

ملک های فروش و اجاره ای خود را (آپارتمان،  
ویلا، مستغلات، اداری و تجاری) به ما بسپارید.

بهترین مشاوره، برترین سرویس، بالاترین رضایت

مالکین محترم املاک مبیل و غیرمبیل، مسکونی، اداری و تجاری، ویلا و مستغلات  
شما را جهت اجاره به سفارتخانه ها و شرکت های خارجی نیازمندیم.

مالکین محترم

ویلاهای شما را جهت اجاره به منزل سفیر و مدیران  
شرکت های بین المللی در مناطق شمالی تهران  
نیازمندیم.

FIRST  
CHOICE  
REAL  
ESTATE



Mr. Ghanizadeh  
Nobody does  
it better

آژانس املاک انتخاب اول در خدمت شماست  
TEL: 22041212 - 09121081212  
APARTMENT - VILLA - OFFICE  
PROPERTY@FIRSTCHOICECO.COM  
WWW.FIRSTCHOICECO.COM

Don't Waste Your Time

Visit our website to choose your desired rental Properties

www.DeltaHOME.ir  
The Most Specialized Website for Foreigners

HOME  
Real Estate

Member of DELTA Real Estate Group  
(021) 88888865

TEHRANTIMES  
Iran's Leading International Daily  
Advertising Dept: times1979@gmail.com  
430 51 450 - 430 51 405

SHANON  
Shanon\_zt@yahoo.com  
+989121907875  
Tel: 88510081

Kamranieh (\$2800) 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F	Farmanieh Villa (\$15000) 1500sq.m, 6bdrs, & S/p
Darrous (\$2200) 3bdrs Apts	Elahieh (\$10000) 9bdrs bldgs
Jordan (\$2700) 4bdrs	Vozara (\$12000) 20bdrs
Zafaranieh (\$3500) 3bdrs, S/p, S, J, & F.F	Jordan bldg (\$60000) 5storey, 20bdrs, S/p, & J

TEHRAN TIMES  
Iran's Leading International Daily

Advertising Dept

Tel:  
021 - 430 51 450  
times1979@gmail.com

IraniaHOME  
Real Estate

SH.LAVASANI  
09123103526  
Tel: 88888007 Fax: 88675936  
www.iraniahome.com  
Email: info@iraniahome.com

مالکین محترم: ویلا و آپارتمان مبیل شما  
را جهت اجاره به دیپلماتها نیازمندیم  
North Tehran to rent  
4300 SQM. garden with 7 apartments  
constructed next to each other.  
Each unit is 2 floors of 250 SQM.  
Totally 3500 SQM .built up all.  
facilities affordable price.  
Please call 09123103526 Lavasani.

SHANON  
Shanon\_zt@yahoo.com  
+989121907875  
Tel: 88510081

Niavaran (\$4000) 280sq.m, 4bdrs S/p, S, J, & F.F	Elahieh (\$3500) 200sq.m, 3bdrs S/p, S, J, & F.F	Mahmoudieh bldg 3storey, 10bdrs S/p, S, J (\$18000)
Velenjak (\$3000) 250sq.m, 4bdrs S/p, S, J, & F.F	Jordan (\$1800) 130sq.m, 2bdrs balcony, & F.F	Vali-e-Asr office 200sq.m, 2bdrs (\$45 per sq.m)

# The cure for loneliness

Want to stop being lonely? What works, and what doesn't.



By Heidi Grant Halvorson

The world grows ever smaller, more connected, more crowded, and ironically, increasingly lonely for many of us. This is a problem with a whole host of unhappy consequences, not just for the individuals who experience it, but for society as a whole.

It's important to point out before I go any further that loneliness is not the same thing as being a private person, or a "loner," because some of us actually both need and enjoy a lot of time to ourselves. Loneliness, instead, refers to the difference between the amount of social contact and intimacy you have and the amount you want. It's about feeling isolated, like an outcast.

(That said, the opposite of loneliness isn't popularity either - you can have dozens of "friends" and still feel lonely. True intimacy and feelings of relatedness are much more about the quality of your relationships than the quantity.)

Persistent loneliness is not only emotionally painful, but can be more damaging to our physical and mental health than many psychiatric illnesses. For instance, lonely people sleep poorly, experience severe depression and anxiety, have reduced immune and cardiovascular functioning, and exhibit signs of early cognitive decline that grow more severe over time.

Not surprisingly, psychologists have created dozens of interventions designed to try to tackle this epidemic of loneliness. The approaches taken are varied, but can be broken up, roughly speaking, into four different categories.

#### ■ There are interventions aimed at:

- Improving social skills. Some researchers argue that loneliness is primarily the result of lacking of the interpersonal skills required to create and maintain relationships. Typically,

**Loneliness refers to the difference between the amount of social contact and intimacy you have and the amount you want. It's about feeling isolated, like an outcast.**

these interventions involve teaching people how to be less socially awkward - to engage in conversation, speak on the phone, give and take compliments, grow comfortable with periods of silence, and communicate in positive ways non-verbally.

- Enhancing social support. Many lonely people are victims of changing circumstances. These approaches offer professional help and counseling for the bereaved, elderly people who have been relocated, and children of divorce.

- Increasing opportunities for social interaction. With this approach, the logic is simple: If people are lonely, give them opportunities to meet other people. This type of intervention, therefore, focuses on creating such opportunities through organized group activities.

- Changing maladaptive thinking. This approach might seem surprising, and its rationale less obvious than the other approaches. But recent research reveals that over time, chronic loneliness makes us increasingly sensitive to, and on the lookout for, rejection and hostility. In ambiguous social situations, lonely people immediately think the worst. For instance, if coworker Bob seems more quiet and distant than usual lately, a lonely person is likely to assume that he's

done something to offend Bob, or that Bob is intentionally giving him the cold shoulder.

Lonely people pay more attention to negative social information (like disagreement or criticism). They remember more of the negative things that happened during an encounter with another person, and fewer positive things.

All this leads, as you might imagine, to more negative expectations about future interactions with others - lonely people don't expect things to go well for them, and consequently, they often don't.

Interventions aimed at changing this self-fulfilling pattern of thinking begin by teaching people to identify negative thoughts when they occur. Whenever they feel anxious about a social encounter, find themselves focusing on everything that went wrong, or wondering if they've made a bad impression, a red flag is raised.

Next, they learn to treat these negative thoughts as testable hypotheses rather than fact. They consider other possibilities - maybe everything will go smoothly, maybe it wasn't all bad, perhaps everyone liked me after all. They practice trying to see things from the perspective of others, and interpret their actions more benignly.

Take the case of Bob the Distant

**Lonely people sleep poorly, experience severe depression and anxiety, have reduced immune and cardiovascular functioning, and exhibit signs of early cognitive decline that grow more severe over time.**

Coworker. With thought retraining, lonely people learn to ask themselves questions like "Am I sure Bob doesn't like me? Could there be other, more likely reasons for his quiet, reserved behavior at work? Could he simply be preoccupied with some problem? I know sometimes I get quiet and distracted when something is bothering me. Maybe Bob's behavior has nothing to do with me!"

Once the negative thoughts are banished, lonely people can approach new relationships with a positive, optimistic outlook, see the best in others, and learn to feel more confident about themselves.

With four approaches to curing loneliness, the obvious question is: What works? Thanks to a recent meta-analysis of 50 different loneliness interventions, the answer is clear. Interventions aimed at changing maladaptive thinking patterns were, on average, four times more effective than other interventions in reducing loneliness. (In fact, the other three approaches weren't particularly effective at all.)

It turns out that fundamentally, long-term loneliness isn't about being awkward, or the victim of circumstance, or lacking opportunities to meet people. Each can be the reason for relatively short-term loneliness - anyone who has ever moved to a new town or a new school and had to start building a network of friends from scratch certainly knows what it's like to be lonely. But this kind of loneliness needn't last long, and new relationships usually are formed... unless you've fallen into a way of thinking that keeps relationships from forming.

More than anything else, the cure for persistent loneliness lies in breaking the negative cycle of thinking that created it in the first place.

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

## FDA wants opioid painkiller pulled off market

By Jen Christensen

The US Food and Drug Administration said Thursday that drugmaker Endo Pharmaceuticals must remove its powerful opioid painkiller Opana ER from the market. The agency says this the first time it has asked that an opioid pain medication be pulled due to "the public health consequences of abuse."

"We are facing an opioid epidemic -- a public health crisis -- and we must take all necessary steps to reduce the scope of opioid misuse and abuse," FDA Commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb said. "We will continue to take regulatory steps when we see situations where an opioid product's risks outweigh its benefits, not only for its intended patient population but also in regard to its potential for misuse and abuse."

If Opana ER sounds familiar, it's because it was the drug of choice for many addicts at the center of an HIV outbreak in Indiana in 2015.

The drug is about twice as powerful as OxyContin, another often abused opioid. Opana ER, oxycodone hydrochloride, is used to manage pain severe enough to require daily, around-the-clock, long-term opioid treatment for which alternatives aren't strong enough, according to the manufacturer's website. The FDA approved it for this use in 2006.

"My comment is 'wow,'" said Dr. Andrew Kolodny, co-director of opioid policy research at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University. "This is pretty exciting. This is big news."

Though it is a "good sign" for the fight against opioid abuse, he said, "Opana is not the only one that needs to come off the market."

Endo had tried to make it harder for addicts to use Opana ER by making it with a coating that made it hard to crush. The medication is intended to release over time, but addicts had been crushing it to get a massive high all at once.

When the drugmaker changed the formula in 2012, some addicts began injecting it instead. In the Indiana case, the shared needles helped spread the HIV infection to over 142 people.

The FDA said it made its latest decision based on a review of all post-market data, which suggested that when the company reformulated the medication, people were injecting it more than they were snorting it. This method of delivery also caused a serious outbreak of hepatitis C and a serious blood disorder, according to the agency.

Thursday's announcement followed a March vote from an independent group of experts, brought together by the FDA, who voted 18-8 that the benefits of reformulation no longer outweighed the risks.

Endo has had other issues with the FDA and the drug.

**Endo had tried to make it harder for addicts to use Opana ER by making it with a coating that made it hard to crush. The medication is intended to release over time, but addicts had been crushing it to get a massive high all at once.**

When the company submitted its reformulated version to the FDA in 2012, the agency decided the data weren't strong enough to show that it could "meaningfully reduce abuse," and the agency denied a request to include a label that would describe its reformulation as having abuse-deterrent properties.

The United States is in the midst of an opioid overdose epidemic, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Opioid overdose killed more than 33,000 people in 2015, more than any year on record. Nearly half of all overdose deaths involve some kind of prescription drug.

Endo is reviewing the FDA's request and evaluating all its options "as we determine the appropriate path forward," it said in a statement.

"While the benefits of opioids in treating and managing pain are widely recognized, the misuse and abuse of these products have increased greatly in the U.S. As a pharmaceutical company with a demonstrated commitment to the improvement of pain management, Endo feels a strong sense of responsibility to improve the care of pain for patients while at the same time taking comprehensive steps to minimize the potential misuse of its products. Despite the FDA's request to withdraw Opana ER from the market, this request does not indicate uncertainty with the product's safety or efficacy when taken as prescribed. Endo remains confident in the body of evidence established through clinical research demonstrating that Opana ER has a favorable risk-benefit profile when used as intended in appropriate patients."

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

## How to reduce wrinkles on neck

By Brenda Barron

When it comes to skin care, don't just focus on the face alone: pay attention to the skin below the chin, as well. Your neck is one of the most sun-exposed parts of the body with thinner skin than the face and therefore especially vulnerable to problems like wrinkling and sagging from UV exposure and aging. Treat your neck just as you would your face and help improve the appearance and condition of your skin, reducing wrinkles and making you look and feel younger.

#### ■ Step 1

Make sure you're getting all of the nutrients you need by reviewing your diet. You need plenty of vitamin C, E and A to maintain smooth and wrinkle-free skin. To boost your intake of these vitamins, eat citrus fruits, low-fat milk, carrots and dark green vegetables. A multivitamin might also be a good idea. Drink plenty of water, too, as proper hydration keeps your skin supple.

#### ■ Step 2

Apply the same anti-aging creams and serums you use on your face to your neck. Products that contain wrinkle-reducing retinoids, including prescription or prescription-strength versions, are safe to use on your neck and just as effective at preventing and treating the signs of age.

#### ■ Step 3

Use a moisturizer on your neck each day. An oil-free moisturizer is best since it won't clog pores. Rub the moisturizer into your skin after cleansing your face and neck each morning and night, being sure to start from the collarbone and to work up to the chin.

#### ■ Step 4

Wear a sunscreen when working outdoors that contains at least SPF 15. Sun damage is one of the prime causes of wrinkles, so keep yourself protected to prevent further ones from forming.

#### ■ Step 5

Exercise your face and neck each day. This will tighten the musculature of your neck and pull in sagging skin a bit. Try sitting and lifting your head up toward the ceiling. While in this position, pucker your lips up like you're trying to kiss the sky. For an added workout, stick your tongue out and try to touch your chin with it. After holding for several seconds, you should feel the tension in your neck.

#### ■ Step 6

Discuss laser treatments with your dermatologist. If none of your wrinkle-reducing measures work, you might need a stronger treatment like laser therapy. During treatment, a laser is pointed at your neck and damages the top layers of skin. Once healed, this skin will look tighter and smoother.

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

## What you should know about epigastric hernia

An epigastric hernia happens when a weakness in the abdominal muscle allows the tissues of the abdomen to protrude through the muscle. It is usually present at birth and is similar to an umbilical hernia, except the umbilical hernia forms around the belly button and the epigastric hernia is usually between the belly button and the chest.

An epigastric hernia is typically small enough that only the peritoneum, or the lining of the abdominal cavity, pushes through the muscle wall.

In minor cases, the issue may be diagnosed during a CT scan or other testing for an entirely different issue, and may never cause symptoms. In fact, many epigastric hernias are diagnosed in adults, rather than in children. In severe cases, portions of an organ may move through the hole in the muscle.

#### ■ Who is at risk for an epigastric hernia?

Epigastric hernias are typically present at birth and may seem to appear and disappear, which is referred to as a "reducible" hernia. The hernia may not be noticeable unless the patient is crying, pushing to have a bowel movement, or another activity that creates abdominal pressure. The visibility of a hernia makes it easily diagnosable, often requiring no testing outside of a physical examination by a physician.

#### ■ Epigastric hernia treatment in children

An epigastric hernia will not heal by itself and does require surgery to be repaired. However, unless the hernia threatens to become an emergency, surgery can be postponed until the child is older.

Toddlers tend to tolerate surgery better than newborns, so it may be beneficial to wait before surgery is performed.

#### ■ Epigastric hernia treatment in adults

It is not uncommon for an adult to be diagnosed with an epigastric hernia that they were unaware of earlier in life. It is also possible for a hernia that was known to be present for many years to become an issue as the individual ages.

For many, a hernia does not cause symptoms until later in life due to obesity, muscle weakness, or strain on the muscular wall of the abdomen. In these cases, surgical repair may be necessary if the hernia is causing pain or threatens to become strangulated.

#### ■ When is epigastric hernia an emergency?

A hernia that gets stuck in the "out" position is referred to as an incarcerated hernia. While an incarcerated hernia is not an emergency, it should be addressed, and medical care should be sought. An incarcerated hernia is an emergency when it becomes a "strangulated hernia," where the tissue that bulges outside of the muscle is being starved of its blood supply. This can cause the death of the tissue that is bulging through the hernia.

A strangulated hernia can be identified by the deep red or purple color of the bulging tissue. It may be accompanied by severe pain, but is not always painful. Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal swelling may also be present.

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

## Historical lodgings can buttress Iranian hospitality industry

**HERITAGE** TEHRAN — Abundant historical mansions scattered across Iran, if restored properly as tourist lodgings, can bolster hospitality industry of the country that is steadily becoming a hot tourist destination.



An exterior view of Vakil Caravansary in Kerman province

The Revitalization and Utilization Fund for Historical Places provides ample investment opportunities for the private sector to cede historical buildings as long as they are repurposed into hotels, restaurants or lodging places, ISNA reported.

The sum of private investments in restoration of such cultural heritage structures has witnessed a staggering 449% rise over the past four years compared to the previous records, the fund announced in May.

In the latest row of such honors, Aminian Mansion and Vakil Caravansary in southern Kerman province were ceded to the private sector via auctions late last week, said Mahmoud Vafaei, the head of the provincial office of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization.

Meanwhile, Iran follows an initiative for building hundreds of hotels to jumpstart its tourism industry. It will inaugurate 20 four- and five-star hotels by the end of the current calendar year (March 20, 2018), a tourism official said in May.

## CHTHO to establish countrywide handicrafts kiosks

**HERITAGE** TEHRAN — Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization will launch handicrafts kiosks and souvenir shops in major cities and tourist destinations nationwide, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

The plan is aimed to assist domestic and foreign tourists with easy access to variety of Iranian handicrafts, souvenirs and gifts, Pouya Mahmoudian, the director of the CHTHO Exports Department, told IRNA on June 7.

She added that 16 of such handicraft kiosks have already opened in Zanjan province and three more are about to be launched in Kermanshah province.

The CHTHO is concentrated on strengthening infrastructures and providing equipment for the supply and sale of the crafts in a bid to expand its market.

Iran exported \$237 million of handicrafts in the past Iranian calendar year, which ended on March 20, according to a press release by the organization.

Over the past couple of years, dozens of Iranian handicrafts have been honored with the UNESCO Seal of Excellence. In 2010, a total of 65 crafts on various themes including enamel, tile, metalwork, leatherwork, wood carving received the privilege.



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef is a site of remarkable variety and beauty on the north-east coast of Australia.

As the world's most extensive coral reef ecosystem, the Great Barrier Reef is a globally outstanding and significant entity. Practically the entire ecosystem was inscribed as World Heritage in 1981, covering an area of 348,000 square kilometers and extending across a contiguous latitudinal range of 14o (10oS to 24oS).

The Great Barrier Reef (hereafter referred to as GBR) includes extensive cross-shelf diversity, stretching from the low water mark along the mainland coast up to 250 kilometers offshore.



This wide depth range includes vast shallow inshore areas, mid-shelf and outer reefs, and beyond the continental shelf to oceanic waters over 2,000 meters deep.

Within the GBR there are some 2,500 individual reefs of varying sizes and shapes, and over 900 islands, ranging from small sandy cays and larger vegetated cays, to large rugged continental islands rising, in one instance, over 1,100 meters above sea level. Collectively these landscapes and seascapes provide some of the most spectacular maritime scenery in the world.

The latitudinal and cross-shelf diversity, combined with diversity through the depths of the water column, encompasses a globally unique array of ecological communities, habitats and species. This diversity of species and habitats, and their interconnectivity, make the GBR one of the richest and most complex natural ecosystems on earth. (Source: UNESCO)

# ICOM to draw up Iranian antiquities 'red list'

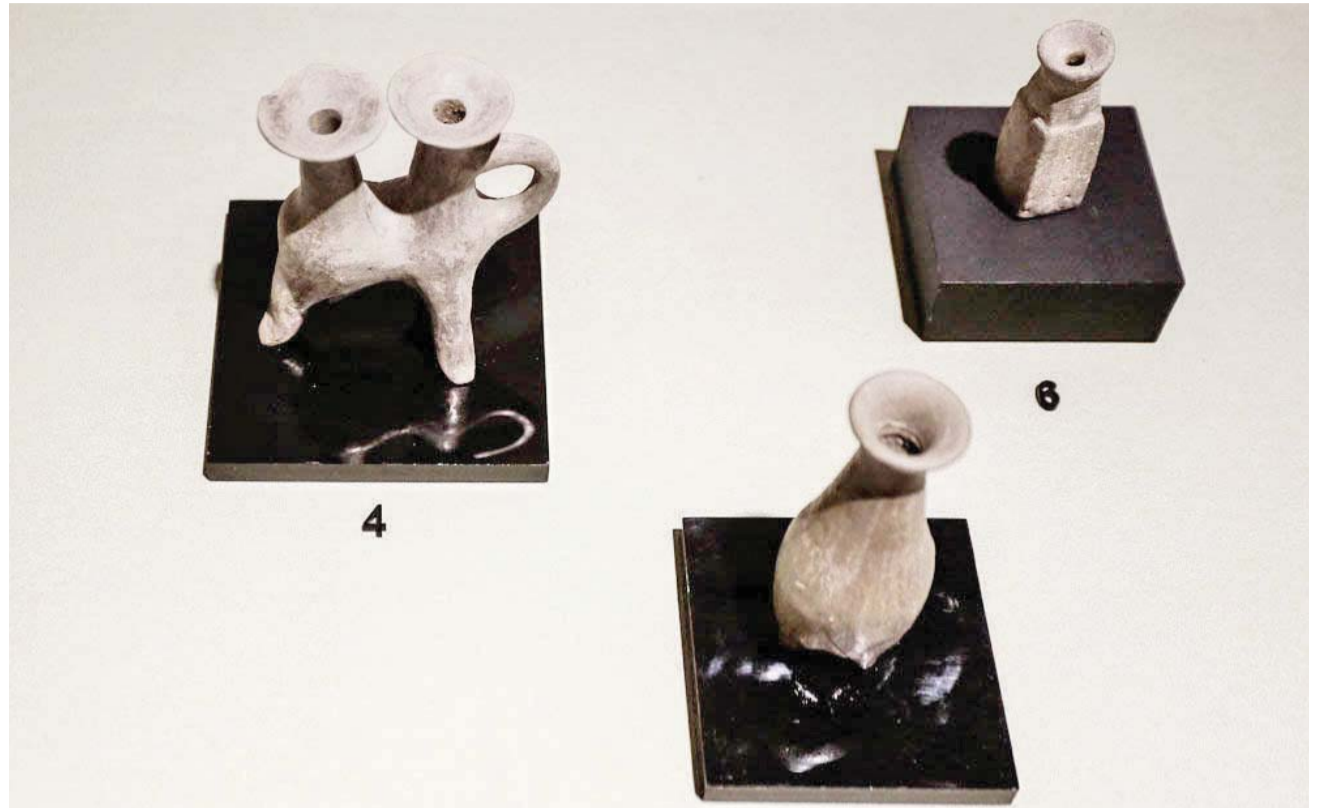
**HERITAGE** TEHRAN — The Iranian National Committee for ICOM (the International Council of Museums) aims to make a red list of nationwide historical relics and cultural objects that are highly at risk of damage, missing, or smuggling.

The red list will entail extensive studies of Iranian cultural and historical works that are kept every corner of the world, ISNA quoted the ICOM-Iran director Seyyed Ahmad Mohit-Tabatabaei as saying on Sunday.

He made the remarks on the sidelines of the 32nd ICOM's General Assembly on June 9 in Paris, adding that a catalog will be compiled under the auspices of ICOM and the UNESCO office in Tehran.

In addition, the scheme helps to identify and monitor Iranian cultural heritage around the world and lets legal teams to effectively negotiate in order to win back stolen artifacts in case, the official explained.

In May 2016, the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization publicized a call for assistance, asking Iranians abroad to inform the organization in case of tracing smuggled artifacts and antiquities of Iranian heritage.



Picture depicts a detail of Iranian historical relics repatriated from Belgium, Italy and the U.S. during an exhibit at the National Museum of Iran on February 6, 2017.

## Russian Far East e-visa available for Iranians as of Aug.

**TOURISM** TEHRAN — Electronic permissions for visiting the free port of Vladivostok in Russian Far East will be issued from Aug. 1 for Iranians and travelers from 17 other countries, IRNA reported on Thursday.

"The system of issuing electronic visas for visiting the free port of Vladivostok is to be commissioned on Aug. 1, 2017," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told a news briefing on June 8, TASS reported.

"Foreign citizens crossing the state border in the port of Vladivostok will be granted single business, tourist and humanitarian visas in the form of electronic documents in accordance with the government's resolution of April 14, 2017," Zakharova said.

Other countries associated with the simplification are Algeria, Bahrain, Brunei, India, Qatar, China, North Korea,



A view of Vladivostok, a Russian city located at the head of the Golden Horn Bay, adjacent to China and North Korea.

Kuwait, Mexico, Morocco, UAE, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Tunisia, Turkey and Japan, the official added.

The Foreign Ministry will be issuing visas on the basis of an application filled in on the ministry's website four days before the planned arrival. A color photo is to be attached to the application, Zakharova said.

"No other documents for obtaining an electronic visa will be required. The consular fee will not be charged. The visa will be issued for a period of 30 days. The maximum period of presence in the host territory of Russia is no more than eight days," Russia Behind the Headlines quoted Zakharova as saying.

The Russian Far East is situated between Lake Baikal in Eastern Siberia and the Pacific Ocean in the extreme east parts of the country.

## Visa-free travel in Africa remains far off

By 2063, according to the African Union's (AU) rather long-range prediction, Africa will be "a continent of seamless borders". People, capital, goods and services will flow freely from South Africa to Tunisia and from Senegal to Somalia.

Europe's frontier-free Schengen area may be creaking under the strain of migration and terror, but another will arise, this one encompassing a continent of more than 1.2bn people.

Last year, with that goal in mind, the AU boldly introduced a single African passport. The first recipients were two of the continent's most powerful strongmen: Rwanda's president, Paul Kagame, and Chad's president, Idriss Déby.

For now, however, crossing borders remains a painful experience for most Africans. The World Bank estimates that intra-African trade is more expensive, all things considered, than trade in any other region.

According to Anabel Gonzalez, senior director of a World Bank group on trade and competitiveness, one African supermarket chain reports that it spends \$20,000 every week to get import permits for meat, milk and other goods in one country alone; every day one of its lorries is held up at a border costs it \$500.

On average, Africans need a visa to travel to 54% of the continent's countries; it's easier for Americans to trav-

el around Africa than it is for Africans themselves. So far, the AU has issued its single African passport only to heads of state and senior AU officials.

But in the past year things have improved a little, according to a new report from the African Development Bank. Africans now need visas to travel to slightly fewer countries than they did in 2015, and 13 African countries now offer electronic visas, up from 9 the previous year. Ghana made the most progress: in 2016 the government announced that it would provide visas on arrival for citizens of every AU member state, while offering entirely visa-free travel to 17 African countries, including the 14 other members of the Econom-

ic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The Seychelles is still the only country on the continent to offer visa-free access to all Africans. (An archipelago in the middle of the Indian Ocean, it is a haven for well-heeled tourists but hard to get to if you are poor.)

Elsewhere, progress has been patchy. Less than a quarter of African countries provide "liberal access"—meaning visa-free travel or at least visas on arrival—to all African citizens, and most of the continent's richest countries tend to be more restrictive. War-torn central Africa remains the most closed region; east and west Africa have opened up the most. (Source: Economist)

## Luxury hotels arrive in Cuba despite fears Trump may hurt tourism boom

**HAVANA (Reuters)** — Towering cranes dot the Havana skyline as communist-run Cuba races to build luxury hotels, amid indignation among some residents and concern that U.S. President Donald Trump might reverse a detente that fueled the tourist boom.

Swiss-based Kempinski Hotels SA will inaugurate its Gran Hotel Manzana in the heart of the capital on Wednesday, billing it as Cuba's first true luxury hotel.

The five-star property, managed by Kempinski but owned by the Cuban government, occupies the top floors of a renovated Belle Epoque shopping mall filled with glitzy Gucci and Montblanc stores.

Farther down the iconic Paseo de Prado boulevard toward the Caribbean Sea, workers are developing two other sites into luxury hotels to be operated respectively by Spain's Iberostar and France's Accor SA ACCPSA, the largest hotel group in Europe.

Tourism is the one bright spot in Cuba's moribund economy, which is struggling with falling exports and upheaval in major trade partner Venezuela.

Cuban Tourism minister Manuel Marrero said in May that more than 4.2 million tourists were expected this year, up from 4 million in 2016. He said the country was adding 2,000 hotel rooms a year to its stock of 65,000 hotel rooms and 21,000 homes renting to tourists.

Visits by Americans have soared since U.S.-operated cruises and scheduled flights were relaunched last year as part of the detente pursued by former President Barack Obama after a half-century hiatus.

However, his successor Trump is considering tightening those rules when he announces his Cuba policy as soon as this month, according to current and former U.S. officials and people familiar with the discussions. That would likely hurt tourism, at least in the short run, and might slow the pace of hotel construction.

"We hope that trade and travel restrictions eased by the Obama administration will not be tightened again by the current U.S. government," said Alessandro Benedetti, a marketing director at Kempinski.

"That would not be favorable for any kind of businesses connected to tourism, such as cruise ship operators, airlines or hotel chains."

The Cuban government has courted foreign hotel operators to develop untapped markets, particularly in high-end tourism.

With its gleaming white stone facade and French bay windows, the Gran Hotel Manzana features a rooftop infinity pool overlooking Havana's central park, as well as a spa with steamroom and sauna. There is also a cigar lounge with a tobacco sommelier.

Industry experts say Cuba, which offers a plethora of low- and mid-range accommodation, is right to bet on luxury, although it will be a challenge for operators to maintain standards in a tightly controlled Soviet-style economy.

"We have travel agencies contact us saying they had never worked with Cuba because it didn't offer anything up to their standards," said Benedetti.

"But now that's changed," he said, citing strong interest



The National Capitol Building and the Gran Teatro de la Habana Alicia Alonso on the Paseo del Prado boulevard are seen from the rooftop of the Hotel Gran Manzana, in Havana, Cuba June 7, 2017.

from U.S. tourists seeking more luxurious destinations.

### Cubans have mixed feelings

It remains unclear how far Trump will go in rolling back Obama's changes. Any reinstatement of U.S. restrictions on Cuba travel would face criticism from American travel companies as well as a growing number of U.S. lawmakers.

The number of U.S. visitors rose 74 percent last year, but Americans are still not officially allowed to visit as tourists. Because their trips must fit certain categories, like educational travel, most descend on Havana rather than the coastal resorts.

# 1,000-foot-wide asteroids that could hit Earth discovered by astronomers

Scientists have discovered a new branch of the Taurids meteor stream that could pose a major risk to Earth, with asteroids up to 1,000 feet wide flying past us every few years.

The Taurids meteor shower peaks every October and November, producing a relatively small display of shooting stars as the planet passes through its stream.

Meteor shower displays happen when tiny bits of cosmic debris enter Earth's atmosphere and burn up in the sky. Because the Taurids are made up of branches and a core, activity levels increase and decrease depending on how much debris Earth passes through.

Mostly, the meteoroids are about the size of a grain of sand and pose no risk at all. However, if a large enough asteroid entered the atmosphere, instead of disintegrating it would pass through and hit the Earth's surface.

## Risk by asteroids

A stark reminder of the risk posed by asteroids and meteors came in 2013, when the 66-foot-wide Chelyabinsk meteor fell over Russia's southern Ural region.

A team of researchers from the Czech Academy of Sciences in the Czech Republic has now found evidence to suggest Earth is at greater risk of being hit by an asteroid than we previously thought.



In their study, which is to be published in the journal *Astronomy & Astrophysics*, the team analyzed data on 144 Taurid fireballs that had been filmed with new digital cameras over the 2015 shower —

a year of enhanced activity. They were able to work out the orbits of these fireballs, and found 113 of them show "common characteristics and form together a well-defined orbital structure, which we

**A stark reminder of the risk posed by asteroids and meteors came in 2013, when the 66-foot-wide Chelyabinsk meteor fell over Russia's southern Ural region.**

call new branch."

This branch was found to contain at least two asteroids with diameters of between 650 and 980 feet.

An impact from an asteroid of this size would cause a huge amount of damage if it hit a populated area of the planet.

## Undiscovered objects

As well as the two large asteroids, the team also found the branch likely contains "numerous" undiscovered objects that are at least 30 feet wide.

"Since asteroids of sizes of tens to hundreds of meters pose a threat to the ground, even if they are intrinsically weak, impact hazard increases significantly when the Earth encounters the Taurids new branch every few years," the scientists wrote.

The branch is not new. It has been passing by Earth every few years, ever since it formed around 1,000 years ago.

In an email interview with *Newsweek*, study author Jiří Borovik says that at present they do not have enough data to quantify the risk the branch poses to Earth.

A "systematic search for asteroids within the newly identified branch will be needed to find the size-frequency distribution of large bodies within the branch," she says.

(Source: *Newsweek*)

## Scientists develop invisibility cloak for soldiers

Scientists from the Saratov State University in Russia have developed a custom-made invisibility cloak for soldiers that will help the camouflage with their background without being detected by radars and radio devices.

The cloak is not like the one seen in fictional content like *Harry Potter* movies but can be a crucial defense technique of the future as enemy troops will not be able to detect soldiers in hiding. By using radio-absorbing properties it will allow soldiers in ordinary uniforms to be invisible to the enemy's radar devices.

"It will allow to impart radio-absorbing properties of any fabric practically without changing its mass and other parameters, in other words — it allows to make fighters dressed in ordinary uniform invisible to radar reconnaissance devices," said a statement from the scientists accessed by Sputnik.

The cloak consists of a sophisticated membrane that uses nano-processing technology. Tiny light-sensitive cells embedded can detect surrounding colors and electrical signals then trigger the top layer to imitate those colors by using heat-sensitive dyes.

Using this technology, military gear can be developed to suit a wide range of temperatures and loads.

The technology was first developed by the University of Illinois and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) which other military research tanks have advanced. The US and the UK military has already tested a range of these cloaks since 2015 but continue to develop advanced technology to master the art of camouflaging.

(Source: *IBT*)

## Plastic in rivers major source of ocean pollution: study

Plastic that is dumped in rivers and then ends up in the world's oceans is one of the major sources of marine pollution, a new study said this week, with Asian waterways the main culprits.

Researchers at The Ocean Cleanup -- a Dutch foundation developing new technologies for ridding the oceans of plastic -- say rivers carry an estimated 1.15-2.41 million tons of plastic into the sea every year, an amount that need between 48,000 to over 100,000 dump trucks to carry it away.

Their latest study has added that two-thirds of the pollution comes from the 20 most polluting rivers, the overwhelming majority in Asia with the Yangtze River in China topping the list.

The Yangtze, the world's third-longest river, "is the largest contributing catchment", dumping some 330,000 tons of plastic into the East China Sea.

This is followed by the Ganges River in India and a combination of the Xi, Dong and Zhujiang Rivers in China as well as four Indonesian rivers: the Brantas, Solo, Serayu and Progo.

The rest of the world shared the remaining 14 percent of plastic pollution via rivers, The Ocean Cleanup researchers said.

"Most of this river plastic input is coming from Asia, which emphasizes the need to focus on monitoring and mitigation efforts in Asian countries with rapid economic development and poor waste management," they said.

The researchers however issued a disclaimer saying "there is very little data to document these assumptions and thoroughly verify the validity of our model."

(Source: *AFP*)

## Scientists figured out a simple way to discover what's troubling bees

We've seen big declines in wild bee populations. That's not just bad for the fuzzy little bees; it could drive up prices for almonds, blueberries, and other pollinator-dependent treats.



The challenge is knowing what would help them. Do we focus on preserving habitat and flowers? Or should we focus on certain pesticides?

Is climate change behind this, too? It's hard to say because bees are hard to study.

It's relatively easy to count long-legged pronghorns or wide-winged condors compared to counting the gnat-sized *Perdita minima*, the world's tiniest bee.

That's why a research team at the University of Missouri has been putting little microphones in alpine meadows. When those mics record buzzing, the team's software analyzes the noise to tell scientists the number and species of bees visiting. They just published a paper, showing that their methods work.

This breakthrough could allow regular folks to collect solid scientific data from the safety of their porch. Farmers could "monitor pollination of their orchards and vegetable crops and head off pollination deficits," said Candace Galen, a biological science professor who led the university's research team, in a news release.

Interested? The group is working on an app that would let you collect bee data with your smartphone.

(Source: *Business Insider*)

## Boeing announces study for self-flying airliners

Boeing has announced that it is going to begin studying autonomous flying technologies that could eventually be implemented in passenger airliners, according to Reuters. The "basic building blocks of the technology clearly are available," said Mike Sinnett, Boeing's vice president of product development. The announcement comes a week and a half before the annual Paris Air Show, one of the biggest aviation events in the world.

A self-flying airliner is a logical continuation of autopilot systems that are already in place, and Boeing has the backing of many major airline companies who are interested in more efficient flight. On major airline flights, the autopilot system can handle takeoff, cruise, and landing, and the pilot spends his time monitoring things like weather conditions and fuel consumption. The pilot will take control of the craft in rough flying conditions or to make heading adjustments, but a lot of the work is already done by the airplane.

## Different levels of automation

As *Wired* points out, different airplane manufacturers and airlines make use of different levels of automation in commercial flights. U.S. airlines place more responsibility on the pilot to control the aircraft, while Asian carriers actually prohibit their pilots from taking control

in a number of situations.

The pilot or captain does not fly above 3,000 feet on Asiana airlines, for example, and the co-pilot or first officer is prohibited from landing the plane.

The type of plane plays a role, too. Airbus tends to rely more heavily on automation, giving the computer control unless the pilot overrides it. Boeing favors letting the human make the final decision with automated systems guiding and assisting, but not dictating. "Both have advantages and disadvantages," says Clint Balog, a former test pilot who researches human performance, cognition, and error at Embry Riddle Aeronautical University. "Airbus tries to avoid human error; Boeing tries to take advantage of human capability."

## Self-flying jetliners

Even as effective as autopilot has become, there is still a long way to go before FAA approval of self-flying jetliners. As Sinnett, a pilot himself points out, a completely autonomous flight system would need to be able to pull off feats like the "Miracle on the Hudson" when Captain Chesley Sullenberger saved all 155 people aboard his Airbus A320 by landing on the Hudson River after a collision with a flock of geese blew out all engine power.

In addition, a self-flying plane would require an en-



tirely new certification process, which will take time to iron out.

Boeing continues to work on its newest versions of the 737 narrow-body and 787 wide-body airliners to enter service in the coming years. A self-flying program would be a long-term play in preparation for expected rapid growth in the aviation market in the coming decades.

(Source: *Popular Mechanics*)

## We really are made of stardust - building blocks of life found at birth of new stars

When Carl Sagan, the late American astrophysicist, made the comment that "we are made of star-stuff" he meant that all the elements on Earth were once produced in the heart of stars before being flung out into the universe in giant supernovae.

But British scientists have now discovered that the actual building blocks of life itself are also found floating in stardust.

Researchers from Queen Mary University of London and University College London discovered an organic compound in the swirling material which is forming new stars 400 light years away in the constellation Ophiuchus, The Serpent Bearer.

The area of space is significant because it is a mirror image of how our own Solar System formed billions of years ago, suggesting that life in our section of the universe probably got going in a similar way. It also means alien life elsewhere is more likely.

ALMA has observed stars like the Sun at a very early stage in their formation and found traces of methyl isocyanate a



chemical building block of life.

## Family of molecules

The compound Methyl isocyanate comes from a family of molecules which are the foundation of vital molecular mixtures such as peptides and amino acids which are essential for living organisms on Earth.

Scientists have long suspected that organic compounds were brought to Earth via comets, which crashed into the

planet, setting off an evolutionary chain of events which eventually led to humans. But it was unclear where they had come from in the first place. The new finding suggests the compounds may form in the melting pot of new stars.

"This family of organic molecules is involved in the synthesis of peptides and amino acids, which, in the form of proteins, are the biological basis for life as we know it," said Audrey Coutens at UCL.

## Iran Adopts Decisive Policies to Develop Clean Energy: Industry Minister

Islamic Republic of Iran will adopt policies for developing and broadening clean energy.

Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Eng. Mohammad-Reza Ne'matzadeh announced the above on the sidelines of opening Iran's pavilion in EXPO-2017 in Kazakhstan.

In the beginning, the Industry Minister expressed his thanks to participants and Kazakh officials in this prestigious event and said: "I am very glad to be here and it is hoped that friendly ties between Iran and Kazakhstan will be expanded to higher levels."

Turning to Iran with rich resources of clean energy, he said: "Due to the age-old historical background in Iran in the field of protecting health of the Earth, we have adopted policies in the fields of water, soil and solar energy, the issue of which has been put atop agenda."

He pointed to the high capability of the country in the field of wind energy and said: "Fortunately, Iran has

been equipped with high capacity of designing, engineering and constructing wind turbines up to the capacity of 5.2 megawatts."



Given the above issue, a contract has been inked between Iran and Kazakhstan in order to construct a huge wind power plant in the hosting country, he maintained.

With regard to the significance of solar energy, he said: "Fortunately, there are some projects in the field of solar cells, construction operation of which are underway with considerable physical progress."

Iran is the largest holder of natural gas in the world, he said, adding: "Benefitted from combined cycle turbines, we also use gas and steam-turbines in industries. Currently, hydro- and gas turbines are manufactured in the country, so that 26-megawatt gas-powered turbines will hit the consumer market in near future."

In the end, Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Eng. Mohammad-Reza Ne'matzadeh once again reiterated: "It is hoped that we will be able to develop this clean industry in cooperation with other countries especially Kazakhstan."

Health tips for Ramadan



ARTICLE

By Seyed Mahdi Mirghazanfari, MD, PhD

Part 5

Ramadan is the month in which God opens the doors of mercy, forgiveness and blessings upon Muslims. The month of Ramadan which leads to the glorious and auspicious occasion of Eid al-Fitr holds a special place in Islam and among Muslims because Holy Quran was revealed upon Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in this month.

The month is given great importance by Muslims, who, in each part of the world, welcome and observe this month with all the reverence, prestige and dedication it deserves. The mosques are filled with people, the recitation of Quran takes place and people become charitable. In this month Muslims make special preparations to ask for forgiveness from God and plead for His blessings and mercy.

In addition to the spiritual blessings of the month of Ramadan, fasting- for those who are capable of observing the demanding task physically- is of great benefits to the body.

The Iranian-Islamic traditional medicine is one of the best routes to have a better fasting experience considering long hot days of Ramadan.

Here are some tips to feel better during and after long fasting days.

■ Eat sour, full of water, cool foods

Eating food items which are sour, have cooling characteristics and are high in water content (with regard to one's temperament) such as lemon, barberry syrup, pomegranate juice, and fresh tamarind are recommended during the month of Ramadan.

■ Breaking fast with lukewarm drinks

Instead of drinking cold water at the Iftar meal- which is pretty harmful to digestive system- it is better to break the fast with lukewarm water, weak tea, warm milk, or warm honey water (again with regard to one's temperament).

Due to the fact that the stomach has been empty all day long it has shrunk in size and drinking or eating large quantities of food stuff might hurt the digestive system.

■ Eat bran bread, cheese, walnuts

To complete the Iftar meal after drinking lukewarm drinks one can eat some toasted bran bread, cheese, and walnuts or some vegetables.

Those who do not like to have cooked meals for Iftar can have some butter, bread and their favorite jam instead.

LEARN ENGLISH

Making Breakfast

A: Smells good! What's for breakfast?  
B: Well, since we are getting up so late, I decided to make a big breakfast!  
A: Nice! **Brunch!**  
B: **Kind of**, so I made **scrambled** and **soft boiled** eggs, some **French toast** and **buttered pancakes!**  
A: Wow! You really **went all out!** Did you make any coffee?  
B: Yeah, just the way you like it! I also put out some cereal and **muesli** if you feel like having something more light.  
A: Looks good! I'll **squeeze** us some fresh orange juice.  
B: Get the **jam** and butter while you are in there! Oh! And don't forget the **syrup!**

■ **Key vocabulary**  
**brunch:** a meal that serves as both breakfast and lunch  
**kind of:** to some extent; somewhat; rather; sort of  
**scrambled eggs:** eggs cooked in a pan after the white and yellow parts have been mixed together  
**soft boiled egg:** an egg that is soft-boiled is boiled long enough for the white part to become solid, but the yellow part in the center is still liquid

**French toast:** pieces of bread put into a mixture of egg and milk and then cooked in hot oil  
**pancake:** a thin, flat cake of batter fried on both sides  
**to go all out:** with maximum effort; using all one's resources  
**muesli:** a mixture of grains, nuts, and dried fruit that is eaten with milk for breakfast

**squeeze:** to get liquid from something by pressing it  
**jam:** a preserve of whole fruit, slightly crushed, boiled with sugar  
**syrup:** a thick sticky sweet liquid, eaten on top of or mixed with other foods

■ **Supplementary vocabulary**  
**oatmeal:** a meal made from oats softened by boiling water  
**bacon:** a strip of fat and meat usually made from pork waffles a pancake like breakfast made in squares rather than circles  
**eggs benedict:** a poached egg on half of an English muffin with a hollandaise sauce

(Source: irlanguage.com)

■ **Person 1 is resilient.** He doesn't let a small setback knock him down, and he keeps applying for other jobs. Soon enough, he gets one - and it's even better than the original job!  
■ **Person 2 isn't resilient.** When he

Iran to impose stronger measures against Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever

**SOCIETY TEHRAN** — The **d e s k** Veterinary Organization is adopting stronger measures against Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever (CCFH) in five provinces of Sistan-Baluchestan, Hormozgan, Kermanshah, Isfahan and Mazandaran.

"So far some 40 billion rials (nearly \$1 million) worth of insecticide to fight the infected ticks spreading the Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever is spent," Nasimonline quoted Veterinary Organization director Mahdi Khalaj as saying.

Numerous wild and domestic animals, such as cattle, goats, sheep and hares, serve as amplifying hosts for the virus. Transmission to humans occurs through contact with infected ticks or animal blood.

Shutting down illegal slaughterhouses which do not observe sanitary conditions for slaughtering livestock, fighting infectious ticks, and avoid consuming freshly slaughtered animals are of the



necessary measures needed to be implemented in the aforesaid provinces, Khalaj added.

Eco-tourists should use tick repellent products and in case of buying freshly slaughtered animals the meat should

be refrigerated 24 hours before use, he highlighted.

The CCHF is a widespread disease caused by a tick-borne virus. The CCHF virus causes severe viral hemorrhagic fever outbreaks, with a case fatality rate of 10-40%.

CCHF virus is transmitted to people either by tick bites or through contact with infected animal blood or tissues during and immediately after slaughter. The majority of cases have occurred in people involved in the livestock industry, such as agricultural workers, slaughterhouse workers and veterinarians.

Human-to-human transmission can occur resulting from close contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected persons. Hospital-acquired infections can also occur due to improper sterilization of medical equipment, reuse of needles and contamination of medical supplies.

CCHF is endemic in Africa, the Balkans, the Middle East and Asian countries.

Two Iranian universities in QS top list

**SOCIETY TEHRAN** — Quacquarelli Symonds **d e s k** (QS) World University Rankings official website has placed University of Tehran and Sharif University of Technology among the world top universities in engineering and technology.

The QS World University Rankings by Subject highlights the world's top universities in a range of popular subject areas, covering 42 subjects as of 2016. Published annually since 2011, the rankings are based on academic reputation, employer reputation, faculty/student ratio, citations per faculty, international faculty, and international students.

QS World University Rankings, an annual league table of the top 600 universities in the world, is arguably the best-known and respected rankings of its kind. Compiled



by QS in close consultation with an international advisory board of leading academics, the rankings are widely

referenced by prospective and current students, university professionals and governments around the world.

Based on the latest ranking released by QS, Sharif University of Technology is ranked between 471 to 480 and University of Tehran is ranked between 601 to 650 are the only Iranian representatives among world-class universities for the second consecutive year.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Stanford University, and Harvard University are the top three universities respectively. All top 9 universities are either American or English.

The first top Asian universities are Nanyang Technological University, Singapore and National University of Singapore holding the 11th and 15th place respectively.

How to build resilience to survive in this difficult world

Why do people fail?  
Surprisingly, it's not usually down to a lack of talent, ability or motivation.

In fact, plenty of very intelligent people fail for one simple reason: they lack resilience.

If you want to enjoy life, be successful, and cope well in a difficult world, you need to build up resilience.

Read on to find out how.

■ **What is resilience?**  
Simply put, resilience is the ability to deal with whatever life throws at you without giving up.

Being resilient means being able to bounce back, even after something really bad happens.

One key characteristic of successful people is that they aren't afraid to keep trying after they fail, and that's because they've learned to be resilient.

Here's an example:  
Two people go to interviews for their dream job. Neither of them get the job.

■ **Person 1 is resilient.** He doesn't let a small setback knock him down, and he keeps applying for other jobs. Soon enough, he gets one - and it's even better than the original job!

■ **Person 2 isn't resilient.** When he

doesn't get the job, he loses all confidence. He thinks he's a failure, that he should never have bothered trying, and that he might as well give up now. He stops applying for the jobs he really wants, and sticks with a career well below his ability level.

■ **How to become more resilient**  
Ready to start your journey towards resilience?

Here are some great places to start.

■ **Learn to overcome trauma**  
Had a bad experience in the past that's put you off trying again?

Maybe you fell off a bike while learning, and got too afraid to get back in the saddle?

Learning to overcome difficult memories is the first step towards building resilience.

Here's an idea of how to get started:

- Accept what happened, and how it affected you.
- Don't feel like you shouldn't be upset because 'other people have it worse'.
- Don't set a strict timeline - let yourself overcome issues in your own time.
- Ask for help. This could be from family, friends, or medical professionals.
- Practice acceptance. You can't change what happened, but it doesn't have to take

over your life.

- Meditate and focus on all the things you have to be grateful for.

■ **Look at how fear rules your life**  
Do you make decisions to avoid what you're afraid of, rather than to move towards what you want?

Many of us live our lives ruled by fear - and this means we miss out on great opportunities and new experiences.

It takes time to overcome fear, but it is possible.

Start by identifying your fears, and trying to get to the root of them. Maybe you're afraid of the unknown, of criticism, or of being rejected by others.

Try to imagine the worst case scenarios in each situation - often you'll realize that they really aren't that bad.

■ **Learn to overcome fear**  
No matter what you fear, overcoming it is a worthwhile goal.

You'll practice and develop fear-busting skills like:

- Keeping a fear journal.
- Creating more 'me' time.
- Speaking in public.
- Exercising daily.
- Visiting new places.
- Communicating in a more confident way.

- Trying new, scary activities
- Resolving conflict.

At the end of the 30 days you'll feel like you're ready to face anything.

■ **Is resilience the same as optimism?**  
No. This is a common myth.

Of course it's good to try and be positive - but blind optimism can actually do a lot of harm.

When something bad happens, do you brush it off, acting like you don't care at all?

Suppressing your emotions in this way can be really harmful, and is actually the opposite of resilience.

Resilience means allowing yourself to experience difficult feelings and working through them in a healthy way - not pretending they don't exist.

Optimist can also blind us to important things.

If you feel bad about a job, it could be a sign for you to move onto to something new.

If you're unhappy in the place you live, maybe it's time to relocate?

Listening to your emotions can help you to make decisions that change your life for the better. Ignoring them could lead to missed opportunities for positive change.

(Source: Lifehack)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Tehran hosting women's clothing expo

The fifth national exhibition on Iranian and Islamic style of clothing and fashion for women is being held at Tehran's Goftogu Park. Organized by Tehran Municipality, the exposition opened on January 11 and will last until January 18, Mehr news agency reported. Along with 80 well-known women clothing brands attending the event breadwinner women are also showcasing their products, Elahe Ataei, director general for Tehran Municipality women affairs said. "The women wear being exhibited at the exposition cater for all tastes and can meet all women's needs," Ataei added.

تهران میزبان نمایشگاه نمایشگاه مد و لباس زنان

پنجمین نمایشگاه مد و لباس ایرانی اسلامی زنان در بوستان گفت و گو فعالیت خود را آغاز کرده است. به گزارش خبرگزاری مهر این نمایشگاه که توسط شهرداری تهران برنامه ریزی شده است از ۲۲ تا ۲۹ دی ماه جاری برگزار می شود. الهه عطایی مدیرکل امور زنان شهرداری تهران گفت: زنان سرپرست خانوار نیز در کنار ۸۰ تولیدکننده بزرگ و مطرح حوزه برند زنانه حاضر در این نمایشگاه، مشغول به فعالیت هستند. عطایی با بیان اینکه در این دوره از نمایشگاه تلاش شده تا ذائقه و نظر اکثریت زنان در حوزه مد و پوشش اسلامی دیده شود گفت: خوشبختانه در این نمایشگاه شرایطی ایجاد شده است تا هر کدام از بانوانی که از این نمایشگاه بازدید می کنند بتوانند با سلیقه و ویژگی های متفاوت خود دست پر و راضی از نمایشگاه خارج شوند.

ENGLISH PROVERB

Fish rots from the head down

■ **Explanation:** it refers to failing organizations and how the blame of it should be on its 'head' that is its leadership  
■ **For example:** The company was bound to be closed sooner or later considering the kind of managers that they had hired. A fish rots from the head down after all.

PHRASAL VERB

Cry off

■ **Meaning:** to say that you cannot do something that you have already promised to do  
■ **For example:** Leah and I were going to go to Morocco together, but at the last moment she cried off.

ENGLISH IDIOM

Before you know it

■ **Explanation:** if something takes place so suddenly that you don't have time to become aware of it, it happens before you know it  
■ **For example:** The doorbell rang, and before we knew it a surprise birthday party was under way!

Have an idea?  
Be in touch!  
lifestyle.tehrantimes@gmail.com

# Saudi warplanes strike civilian targets in Yemen, kill several

The House of Saud regime's warplanes have continued bombing civilian targets across Yemen, killing several civilians, including six children and a woman, in four provinces.

On Saturday morning, Saudi regime fighter jets repeatedly pounded the 9th district of Sana'a Province, taking the lives of three Yemeni kids, the local al-Masirah TV network reported.

Saudi regime airstrikes in Ta'izz Province also destroyed a civilian vehicle in the Sha'abo area of Waze'iya district, killing and wounding an unspecified number of people, according to the report.

It added that a highway in the Maran region of the northern province of Sa'ada came under attack by Riyadh's jets, without elaborating on potential casualties.

The Saudi regime war planes further attacked the residential area of al-Khamisin in the southern section of the capital, Sana'a on Friday night, killing a woman and her three children as well as injuring two more kids along with two other women, according to a report by the official website of the country's Ansarullah Movement.

Additionally, the report noted that several residential units surrounding the bombed-out house were also destroyed or damaged.

It added that Saudi regime warplanes further bombarded a road between Khob and Sha'af districts of the western province of Jawf, injuring three more civilians.

In response, Yemeni media outlets also reported that the country's army units fired missile at gathering areas of Saudi mercenaries in the provinces of Ta'izz and Jawf.

The House of Saud regime has been engaged in a bloody military aggression against neighboring Yemen since March 2015 in a bid to reinstall the former gov-



ernment, which is a close Riyadh ally.

The Ansarullah (Houthi) movement, backed by the army and popular forces has been defending Yemen against the Saudi military campaign, which has so far left over 12,000 civilians dead, according to the latest tallies.

The movement has also been running state affairs since 2014, when the former president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, resigned and fled to Riyadh, further destabilizing the country, which was already grappling with threats from al-Qaeda terrorists.

■ **UAE-tied militants kidnap, torture hundreds in Yemen**

Meantime, militants backed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have reportedly kidnapped and tortured hundreds of people in southern Yemen.

On Friday, the American news and

analysis website The Daily Beast published an investigation bankrolled by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism NGO, which pointed to the findings.

The probe said the militants, who would fight under the banner of the Elite Forces, had spirited the men away from their homes and brought them to a secret prison compound in southern Yemen, where they were tortured.

Earlier in the year, the United Nations had likewise reported an increase in forced disappearances in southern Yemen.

The UAE has served as an ally of Saudi Arabia in the latter's 2015-present campaign in Yemen to restore the impoverished country's former Riyadh-allied government. The Elite Forces have been fighting in Yemen since the same year to assist the Saudi-led campaign.

The investigators interviewed local rights activists and families of those abducted, who said the situation at the al-Riyyan airport, which has been used as a place of incarceration for the abductees, compared to that in the notorious U.S.-run prisons such as Guantanamo Bay in Cuba and Abu Ghraib in Iraq.

The kidnapping spree took place under the pretext of clearing out suspected al-Qaeda-linked elements. Activists, however, told the Bureau that many of those abducted had normal jobs while al-Qaeda was in control in the area, and were not tied to the group.

According to various reports, Abu Dhabi holds notable sway in southern Yemen and looks to be trying to expand its leverage there by lending its support to southern separatists.

The separatists are led by two pro-Emirati officials of Yemen's former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, who have been sacked by him over suspicions of serving the Emirates.

The men, Hadi's governor for Yemen's port city of Aden, Maj. Gen. Aidarous al-Zubaidi, and his state minister Hani bin Breik, reacted to the sacking by breaking ranks with Hadi and forming an autonomous regional body in southern Yemen.

Saudi Arabia then "invited" the separatists to the kingdom, in what was seen as an effort at seeking explanation from them for parting ways with Riyadh-allied Hadi.

Observers say the Emirates increased activities could drag Doha into a political struggle against Saudi Arabia.

Earlier in the month, Yemeni sources reported that militants backed by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates had engaged in infighting in the southern port city of Aden, with UAE-backed militia seizing a facility there.

(Source: Press TV)

## Iraqi fighters finish west Mosul operation successfully

Iraq's pro-government Popular Mobilization Units (Hashd al-Sha'abi) say they have accomplished their goals in the battle against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group in the western flank of the flashpoint city of Mosul.

Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of the Popular Mobilization Units, broke the news at a press conference on Friday, adding that the fighters had already "liberated 14,000 square kilometers and 360 villages," Arabic-language al-Sumeria TV network reported.

He went on to say that the pro-government fighters "have also managed to kill 2,000 ISIL terrorists west of the northern province of Nineveh," of which Mosul is the capital.

Muhandis added that the units "are ready to liberate Tal Afar town," situated 63 kilometers west of Mosul, from the grips of ISIL, and "are now waiting for the orders of Iraqi Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief Haider al-Abadi."

He also said the units had so far liberated between 50 and 60 kilometers of the Iraqi-Syrian borderline.

Late last month, the paramilitary units, consisting of some 40 mainly Shia Muslim groups, reached the Syrian border in the north in an attempt to block ISIL from crossing the common border.

Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq, fell to ISIL in 2014, when the terrorist group began its campaign of death and destruction in Iraq, making the city its de facto capital in the country. However, Iraqi forces took control of its eastern part in January and the push for the western side, separated from the east by the Tigris River, began in February.

The terrorist group currently holds less than nine percent of western Mosul and is on the brink of total defeat in the city. The full liberation of Mosul would likely spell the end for the Iraqi half of ISIL's so-called caliphate.

Earlier this week, the popular forces liberated the strategic district of Ba'aj, located some 30 kilometers from the Syrian border. On Tuesday, Abadi vowed to block the border with Syria to ISIL. Blocking the Syrian border means terrorists would no longer receive rein-

forcement and ammunition from Raqqa, the terror group's de facto capital in Syria, which is also waiting to be totally liberated by the advancing Syrian troops.

Separately, the media bureau of the Iraqi Joint Operations Command (JOC) said in a statement on Friday that dozens of ISIL terrorists had been killed after Iraqi warplanes carried several airstrikes against terror group's positions in Tal al-Qasab village in Qairawan region west of Mosul.

Qairawan, a main ISIL stronghold connecting Tal Afar town to the Syrian border, was largely liberated late last month following a major offensive by Popular Mobilization Units some three weeks earlier.

Gruesome violence has plagued the northern and western parts of Iraq ever since ISIL terrorists mounted an offensive there in the summer of 2014, and took control of portions of the Iraqi territory.

The terrorists have been committing heinous crimes against all ethnic and religious communities in Iraq, including Shias, Sunnis, Kurds and Christians.

(Source: Press TV)

## U.S.-led coalition appears to be using white phosphorus in Syria, Iraq

Newly released videos appear to show the United States-led coalition bombers using white phosphorus-loaded munitions in densely-populated areas in Syria and Iraq.

White phosphorus is an incendiary and toxic chemical substance. The munitions filled with the substance create a thick white cloud when they explode. Upon contact with flesh, the substance can maim and kill by burning to the bone. Human rights groups warn against the use of the substance.

Raqqaq is Being Slaughtered Silently (RBSS), a group of citizen journalists who document abuses in the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group's stronghold of Raqqaq, posted

footage online showing the signature spread of airstrike white phosphorus — probably from M825 series 155-millimeter artillery rounds — while exploding over the Syrian city's eastern part.

Similar videos were also published online, appearing to show the use of white phosphorus bombs by the U.S.-led coalition warplanes in the Iraqi city of Mosul as well.

Mary Wareham, the advocacy director at Human Rights Watch's arms division, said the organization was trying to determine the veracity of the videos.

U.S. Army Colonel Ryan Dillon, a spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition, said he would not confirm the use of the munitions but claimed that the U.S. military

employed it in "accordance with the law of armed conflict" and that white phosphorus rounds were "used for screening, obscuring, and marking in a way that fully considers the possible incidental effects on civilians and civilian structures."

"The coalition takes all reasonable precautions to minimize the risk of incidental injury to non-combatants and damage to civilian structures," he claimed.

Last month, the Pentagon posted photographs taken in March of U.S. Marines using white phosphorus munitions in Syria.

The U.S. and its allies have been bombarding what they say are ISIL positions inside Syria and Iraq since 2014. The coalition has repeatedly been accused of targeting and killing civilians. It has also

been largely incapable of fulfilling its declared aim of eliminating ISIL.

The Pentagon has admitted to killing almost 500 civilians in the U.S. campaign over the past three years, but monitoring group Airwars says the actual number is around 3,800.

The U.S. coalition operations do not have the permission of the Syrian government and are not coordinated with Damascus.

The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates has on several occasions written to the United Nations, saying the "illegal" attacks "blatantly contradict the UN Security Council's resolutions, international law, and international humanitarian law."

(Source: agencies)

## The (P)GCC in disarray

Strait of Hormuz — that is, Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs.

How would this scenario play out? If a conflict with Iran over these islands intensifies, it is not unreasonable to assume that the Trump administration would likely side with the conservative Arab regimes vis-à-vis Iran. The question of how these pieces all fit together to encourage or inhibit U.S. intervention in favor of the UAE in the dispute between Tehran and Abu Dhabi remains unanswered at best and hard to predict at this point. There is an essential simplicity to the Emirati narrative — that they will have U.S. backing vs. Qatar — in part because such a scenario is fraught with risks and unpredictable turns and twists.

The doleful consequences of the ISIL attacks on Iran on June 7, 2017, in which 12 people were killed and more than 50 were injured, should not be understated, as Tehran has blamed Riyadh for these attacks. One impact is that the two sides are likely to further stoke the kind of sectarian tensions that embolden ISIL and will be exploited and/or manipulated by it to spread its terrorist acts in the region.

The (P)GCC appears to be in crisis and could unravel if its most significant actors decide to write the script for other members on how to conduct their foreign policies and/or manage their domestic politics. Tehran could very well be the major beneficiary of this rift among (P)GCC members if other (P)GCC member states, such as the Kuwaitis, fail to mediate this tension. The larger question that confronts U.S. policymakers is how likely is this political cleavage to undermine the anti-Iran coalition that the Trump administration has so painstakingly sought to put together in its initial months in the office? The answer is very likely, especially if the Saudis and its Persian Gulf allies continue to isolate Qatar at a time when they need to be unified in their attempts to defeat and dismantle ISIL.

**Mahmood Monshipouri, PhD, teaches Middle Eastern Politics at San Francisco State University and the University of California, Berkeley. He is the editor, most recently, of Information Politics, Protests, and Human Rights in the Digital Age (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016).**

## 13 Philippine marines killed as fighting rages in Marawi City

➔ The assistance comes after months of strain between the two long-time allies that was stoked by Duterte's pledges to throw U.S. troops out of the country.

Washington deployed Special Forces soldiers to Mindanao in 2002 to train and advise Philippine units fighting the Abu Sayyaf group in an operation that once involved 1,200 Americans. It was discontinued in 2015 but a small presence remained for logistics and technical support.

The U.S. and the Philippines have been allies for decades. Their relationship provided Washington with a strategic foothold in Asia, and offered Manila a shield against China's assertiveness in the region.

But Duterte has openly scorned the alliance, seeing it as an obstacle to a rapprochement with China, and has repeatedly lambasted Washington.

On Friday, police also arrested the mother of the Maute brothers, the two men leading the fighters in Marawi City.

Ominta "Farhana" Maute, the mother of Abdullah and Omar, was detained with nine other people, including two wounded men, in the town of Masiu.

(Source: agencies)

## Merkel says Iran, Turkey must work to ease Qatar crisis

➔ The Pentagon said the blockade was hindering U.S. ability to plan for long-term operations in the region. Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar is home to more than 11,000 U.S. and coalition forces and an important base for the fight against Islamic State. It is the U.S. Air Force's largest base in the region.

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said he expected all parties to find a resolution.

According to al-Jazeera, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan on Friday requested the full removal of a Saudi-led blockade of Qatar after approving the deployment of Turkish troops there. He said Riyadh needed to put brotherhood ahead of animosity.

Erdogan said isolating Qatar would not resolve any regional problems and vowed to do everything in his power to help end the regional crisis.

"We will not abandon our Qatari brothers," Erdogan told members of his ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party at a fast-breaking meal in Istanbul during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

## Manuel Noriega and the fragility of America's alliances

➔ Over the next four years, Noriega's relationship with Washington collapsed. In 1988, two grand juries indicted him for cooperating with drug traffickers like Pablo Escobar's Medellín Cartel, effectively transforming Panama into a safe haven for Colombian traffickers to export their product (for a fee, of course). In 1989, President George H. W. Bush authorized the largest U.S. invasion since Vietnam, deploying twenty-five thousand U.S. troops to overthrow Noriega and replace his narco-tinged government with something friendlier to the United States. Several weeks later, Noriega surrendered to U.S. authorities, stood trial in Miami, and was convicted in 1992 on eight counts. He spent the last twenty-five years of his life in prison.

■ **The Cold War intrigue**

Noriega's story is interesting and full of Cold War intrigue fitting for a Hollywood script. But his death is also an opportune time for the United States to reflect on how complicated alliance building can be and how quickly a partnership can disintegrate.

Noriega is a perfect example of one of George Washington's most famous lessons, made centuries earlier: the best thing that the Republic could do is "steer clear of permanent alliance with any portion of the foreign world."

■ **Strengthening geopolitical influence**

Throughout history, the United States has chosen to form alliances with authoritarian leaders — in many cases after deciding that forging pragmatic, issue-specific ties to dictators in strategic regions of the world would promote U.S. national-security interests or strengthen Washington's geopolitical influence.

Whether it's Egypt's Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Jordan's King Abdullah II, or Saudi Arabia's royal family, American presidents — Republican and Democrat — have wagered that forging bonds with leaders who may not share U.S. values or love for representative democracy can still serve a critical function. Perhaps that function is acquiring intelligence information that Washington would not otherwise obtain. Or it could be something as simple as reliable over flight rights or permission to build an operations base on its soil.

Frequently, these relationships run their course, maybe due to events outside U.S. control, over genuine concerns about human rights, or because the intelligence is no longer useful. Manuel Noriega is on a long list of former allies who were discarded once their presence in power started to accumulate too many problems. The Philippines's Fernando Marcos, Iran's Reza Pahlavi, Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and Yemen's Ali Abdullah Saleh are all included as well. When the intelligence runs dry, an autocrat's foreign policy turns in a less friendly direction, or their behavior becomes too oppressive to condone or ignore, American presidents pull the plug. Bonds often outlive their usefulness.

All these centuries later, George Washington's final message to the American people remains poignant: there are no permanent alliances (or adversaries) in this world—there are only common interests that bind countries together at specific times in history. Noriega's death reminds us of how spot-on America's first commander-in-chief was on that day in 1796.

(Source: nationalinterest.org)

## Chelsea make their first major move of the summer

Monaco's Tiemoue Bakayoko is flying over to London this weekend with a move to Chelsea appearing imminent, Sportsmail understands.

Chelsea manager Antonio Conte is a fan of the 22-year-old, who would fit into their midfield alongside the ever-reliable N'Golo Kante.



Meanwhile, L'Equipe claim that the Ligue 1 champions and Premier League winners are close to reaching an agreement over the midfielder's fee, believed to be near the €40million (£35m) mark.

The former Rennes player, who attracted interest from a host of Europe's top sides, including Paris Saint-Germain, both Manchester teams and Bayern Munich, is determined to make a move to Stamford Bridge.

Discussions between the Blues and Bakayoko's representatives have gone on for several weeks and a move seems very likely now.

It remains to be seen what will happen with midfielders Cesc Fabregas and Nemanja Matic, both of whom have admirers from home and abroad.

The Blues have been leading the chase for Bakayoko for a while and are eager to bolster their squad as they prepare to play in the Champions League once again next campaign.

The France international made 32 appearances for Monaco last season as they went on to win the Ligue 1 title, finishing an impressive eight points ahead of second-placed PSG. (Source: Daily Mail)

## Kroos should just retire - Heynckes

Former Bayern Munich coach Jupp Heynckes has jokingly told Toni Kroos he might as well retire now after winning the Champions League for the third time in his career.

The Germany international was part of the Bayern team that won the treble under Heynckes in 2012-13, but whereas the Allianz Arena side have since failed to add another European title to their trophy cabinet, Kroos has lifted the trophy on another two occasions with Real Madrid.

Having also won the World Cup with Germany in 2014, Heynckes thinks it will not get much better for his former pupil and has suggested he might as well call it a day now.

"Toni is 27 and has won the Champions League three times, won the treble with Bayern and lifted the World Cup with Germany," Heynckes was quoted as saying by Sport Bild. "He should just hang up his boots now..."

"Toni is a strategist. He has developed into an even better player at Madrid. He plays like any coach wants his players to play."

Kroos, however, remains hungry for success and has no intention of waving farewell to the game.

"I cannot retire now just because I have won it all," he stressed.

"You always have new goals at Real Madrid and with the German national team."

"I want to win it all." (Source: Soccerway)

## Saudi football team apologizes for snubbing terror victims tribute

Saudi Arabia men's national football team has apologized "unreservedly" after its players failed to observe a minute's silence for the victims of last week's London terrorist attack.

During a match in Australia Thursday night, the majority of the Saudi Arabian players continued to warm-up as the Soccerroos stood arms linked and heads bowed.



The Saudi Arabian Football Federation said their players' behavior had not been intended to offend in a statement Friday.

"The players did not intend any disrespect to the memories of the victims or to cause upset to their families, friends or any individual affected by the atrocity," the statement read.

Two Australian nationals, 21-year-old Sara Zelenak and 28-year-old Kirsty Boden, were among the eight killed in the June 3 attack on London Bridge and Borough Market.

Football Federation Australia said in a statement Thursday that both the Asian Football Confederation and the Saudi Arabian team had agreed to hold a minute's silence before the match in Adelaide to pay tribute to the victims.

However, the FAA said it was "further advised by Saudi team officials that this tradition was not in keeping with Saudi culture and they would move to their side of the field and respect our custom whilst taking their own positions on the field."

Australia eventually won the match by three goals to two.

# French Open - Storm brewing for Nadal as Wawrinka blocks his path

PARIS It has been a breeze for Rafa Nadal so far at this year's French Open -- but a storm is brewing.

Even by the Spaniard's ridiculously high standards at a tournament where he has won 78 of his 80 matches since bounding into town like a runaway bull in 2005, the way he has reached a 10th final has been astonishing.

The 31-year-old has not conceded a set and dropped only 29 games in six rounds -- two more than Bjorn Borg's 1978 record when he destroyed Guillermo Vilas in the final.

Yet standing in the way of the Mallorcan from becoming the first player in the professional era to win the same grand slam title 10 times is a highly-destructive Swiss; not 18-times major winner Roger Federer but the barrel-chested Stan Wawrinka.

Wawrinka was at his belligerent best against world number one Andy Murray in a semi-final classic, striking 87 winners in a five-set duel that would have graced any final.

Late bloomer Wawrinka, 32, has won each of the three grand slam finals he has contested and possesses the kind of baseline firepower Nadal is yet to face so far in the past fortnight.

Described as 'scary' by three-times former grand slam champion Mats Wilander, Wawrinka will not be taking a backwards step when play commences on Court Philippe Chatrier on Sunday when the temperatures are expected to soar into the 80s.

Should Wawrinka repeat his scintillating 2015 victory over Novak Djokovic he would become the oldest man to lift La Coupe des Mousquetaires since 34-year-old Andres Gimeno in 1972.

The last grand slam clash between the pair came at Melbourne Park in 2014 when Wawrinka beat a hobbling Nadal to claim his first grand slam title.

It was a breakthrough moment for the



Swiss, but even then there was a sense he still felt like an imposter at the top table of men's tennis.

Three years on and there is little doubt Wawrinka truly believes he belongs alongside the best and that when the stakes are highest, he brings it all to court.

"Mentally I've become a different player," Wawrinka, who has won three of his last six matches against Nadal having lost the first 12, told reporters.

"When I arrive in a big match, it's like

closing, switching off everything in my body except my brain which I put in winning mode.

Nadal, who tops the match-wins list this year with a 42-6 record, including a 23-1 stretch on clay, knows the threat.

But with La Decima within touching distance and the chance to claim a 15th grand slam title after a three-year hiatus, it will take Wawrinka at his fiery best to stop him.

"It's true that when he hits hard, he hits really hard," Nadal said. "Stopping him can be difficult. I do not want him to play

his game, which means I need to make sure I don't let him be in that position where he can hit hard.

"I will have to do everything I can to keep him from playing aggressively. If I can play long balls, if I can hit hard, if I can do that, well, I think I will be able to control him."

Whoever wins goes second in the ATP rankings list on Monday -- a three-year high for Nadal and a career high for Wawrinka. (Source: Reuters)

## Bolt will miss the crowds as he considers helping others

As Usain Bolt prepares to run his last competitive Jamaican race on Saturday, the world's fastest man is already thinking about his future.

Charity work and assisting coach Glen Mills with his track club appear at the top of the list for Bolt, who will retire after August's world championships in London.

"I promised him (Mills) that I will try to be a part of Racers Track Club as much as possible," Bolt told Reuters.

"He wants me to take over but I don't think that will happen, but I will definitely try to assist as much as possible because I love Racers and I love my coach very much."

Multiple Olympic and world gold medalist Bolt, who seems to have moved past his earlier desire to play professional soccer, said he would miss competing, but not the hard training.

"I'm going to miss the crowds," the 30-year-old said. "I enjoy just playing with the crowd, feeling the energy and just competing in front of them... that's what I'm going to miss about track and field."

Politics are also out of the question, the 100 and 200 meters world record holder said.

Even with Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness offering opportunities in government, the lanky sprinter has said no.

"I've said it over the years, politics is not me," Bolt said. "When your guys



(journalists) ask me questions, I've always tried to stay away from politics because it's a tricky thing, so I try to stay as far away as possible."

But Bolt, who considers Jamaican sprint icons the late Herb McKenley and Don Quarrie, both Olympic gold medalists, among his role models, wants to put on a show in his last run on home soil, a 100 meters at the National Stadium.

"The fans in Jamaica know that when I show up I always show up at my best," the 11-time world champion said.

"I always try to make sure they're happy because they're very hard to please," added the man who clocked 50 sub-10 second 100 meters in his career.

"For me this season is just about trying to win and continue winning and end my career on a winning note." (Source: Reuters)

## The staggering numbers behind Messi's new Barcelona contract uncovered

Lionel Messi will rake in a staggering £72,000-a-day when he signs his new Barcelona deal, according to reports.

The Argentina superstar's Nou Camp contract expires next summer and he could yet leave on a free.

But that is unlikely as Messi, who turns 30 later this month, wants to stay at Barca for the remainder of his career.

And should he agree to a new extension, he will take home a staggering £504,000-a-week in a deal worth £26million-a-season.

Italian newspaper Corriere dello Sport claims Messi's representatives have already successfully negotiated a deal that will run until 2021.

His release clause would in turn increase to a whopping £348m, ruling the possibility of him ever leaving the La Liga giants.

The 29-year-old, who moved to Spain aged 13 to join Barca, has won eight league titles and four Champions League crowns with the Catalan club, and has no plans to go anywhere else.

"It's what I always dreamed and what I always wanted. I would like to finish my career at Barcelona," Messi told Tencent Sports.

Barca had amazingly allowed Messi to get within 12 months of his current agreement ending - with worries he could quit the club with outgoing boss Luis Enrique.




But the Argentine intends to stay at Blaugrana.

The report, from Spanish newspaper Marca, suggests the 29-year-old's pay packet will vary from year to year.

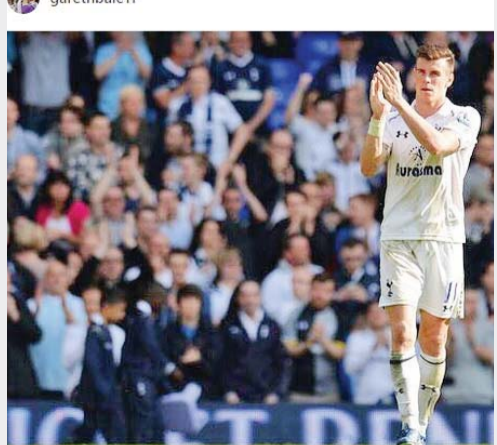
Messi managed 54 goals in all competitions for Barcelona in just 52 games last season to prove he is still at the top of his game.

A lack of support and depth to the squad ultimately cost the Catalan giants though with a leaky defence on the road in Europe proving too much to overcome.


The season was salvaged with the Copa del Rey triumph but Messi will have been far from satisfied after rival Cristiano Ronaldo bagged another European crown and leads the race for this year's Ballon d'Or. (Source: Mirror)




Instagram



*garethbale11: Made some incredible memories this season! But sad to see the last @spursofficial game at WHL, will always be a special place to me!*



*arsenal: @m10\_official - 2016/17 season; 41 starts + 3 sub appearances, 12 goals, 13 assists What was his season highlight?*



*fifaworldcup: Buon Compleanno, Carlo Ancelotti! #HappyBirthday #Ancelotti #Mister #FCBayern*

# Wearing a Barcelona shirt could land fans in prison for up to 15 years!

Barcelona fans in Saudi Arabia could be punished with up to 15 years in prison for wearing their team's colours.

Barca shirts sporting the Qatar Airways sponsorship logo are said to have been outlawed amid tensions in the Persian Gulf region over alleged links between extremist groups and Qatar.

The ban comes amid a diplomatic row as Saudi Arabia, along with Bahrain, Egypt and the UAE, blacklisted entities and individuals that they believed connected Qatar to extremist groups.

Qatar rejects the claims.

Qatari blogger Raed Al-Emadi showed how censorship is being conducted in the country, with an image of Lionel Messi, Neymar and Luis Suarez blanking out the sponsor.

Saudi Arabia shut its borders to Qatar and closed transport links between the countries, including flights, and suspended diplomatic relations.

Barcelona's deal with the Qatar Sports Investment in 2011 was historic for the club as it was the first time the Catalans had a sponsor on their shirt.

That deal ends on June 30 when Rakuten, a Japanese e-commerce company, takes Qatar Airways' place for the 2017-18 season.

(Source: Mirror)



## Omani Abu Bakar chosen to officiate Iran v Uzbekistan match



**S P O R T S** Ahmed Abu Bakar Said Al-Kaf has been chosen to officiate Iran and Uzbekistan match in the 2018 World Cup qualifier.

The match has been scheduled on Monday in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

Team Melli will confirm their place at the FIFA World Cup should they defeat third-placed Uzbekistan in Group A.

Abu Bakar will be assisted by Hamed Soleyman and Abu Bakr Salim in this match.

Omar Mubarak Mazaroua Al Yaquobi is fourth official.

Carlos Queiroz's team lead Group A with 17 points from seven games to date, followed by South Korea and Uzbekistan with 13 and 12 points respectively.

## Persepolis midfielder Soroush Rafiei joins Al-Khor



**S P O R T S** Soroush Rafiei has reached an agreement with Al-Khor Sports Club of Qatar.

The Persepolis midfielder has penned a one-year contract with the Qatar football team with an option of a two-year extension.

The details of the fee contract have not been revealed.

Rafiei joined Persepolis in January on a

six-month contract and played 14 matches for the Iranian giant, scoring four goals.

According to Qatari media, Rafiei has not finalized his contract.

Soroush Rafiei has made five appearances for the Iranian national football team.

Persepolis has signed a two-year contract with Paykan midfielder Siamak Nemati as replacement for Rafiei.

## Iran should beat Uzbekistan to confirm place at FIFA World Cup

The Islamic Republic of Iran will confirm their place at the FIFA World Cup should they defeat third-placed Uzbekistan in Group A on Monday, but a win for the visitors would close the gap to two points and offer real hope of a top-two finish with two games remaining.



Second-placed Korea Republic sit four points behind the unbeaten table-toppers and travel to bottom side Qatar a day later, desperate for a win ahead of meetings with both Iran and Uzbekistan on the final two Matchdays.

Also on Tuesday, Syria face off against China in Malaysia where a top-three place will still be firmly within their sights should the Uzbeks fail to win in Tehran a day earlier, while Marcello Lippi's China must claim all three points to keep alive their slim hopes of finishing third and grabbing the intercontinental play-off spot.

(Source: AFC)

## Amir Ghalenoei appointed Zob Ahan coach

Former Esteghlal and Tractor Sazi coach has been appointed as new head coach of Zob Ahan football team on Saturday.

The 53-year-old coach has penned a one-year contract with the Isfahan based football club for an undisclosed fee.

Ghalenoei is the most decorated coach in Iran Professional League.

He has already coached Sepahan of Isfahan and won the Iran Professional League (IPL) twice with the team.

Ex-Iran national team coach has also claimed IPL title three times with Esteghlal.

Ghalenoei led Tractor Sazi to IPL third place last season and became runner-up with the team in Iran's Hazfi Cup.

He replaced Mojtaba Hosseini in Zob Ahan.

(Source: Tasnim)



## Woods told arresting officer he had taken Xanax

Tiger Woods told police he had taken the anti-anxiety drug Xanax when he was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence of an intoxicant in Florida last month, golfchannel.com reported on its website on Friday.

The website posted the unredacted Jupiter Police Department report from

the incident on May 29, when Woods was found asleep at the wheel of his Mercedes by the side of a road in the early hours of the morning.

"I asked Woods if he had taken any medication to which he stated 'Xanax,'" police officer Christopher Fandry wrote in the report.

Xanax, the generic version of which is called alprazolam, is often prescribed to treat anxiety and depression and is also commonly used as sleep medication because of its sedatory effect.

The 41-year-old tested negative for alcohol after his arrest and later released a statement saying he had experienced

an unexpected reaction to prescription medicines.

Woods is the winner of 14 major championships, second only to Jack Nicklaus, but has hardly played in the last 22 months, during which time he has had multiple back surgeries.

(Source: Reuters)

## Iranian duo seek to inspire

Iranian snooker is on the rise and this season the country's World Cup team will be represented by two fully fledged professionals for the first time.

Hossein Vafaei and Soheil Vahedi will travel to Wuxi next month with high hopes, after enjoying promising campaigns in 2016/17. The former made an instant impact on the World Snooker Tour with a strong first full season and Vahedi secured professional status by winning the IBSF World Amateur title, beating Andrew Pagett 8-1 in the final.

"I've achieved only half of my dream turning pro," said the 28-year-old Vahedi. "This is just the start. Playing here on massive occasions is a different kettle of fish. That's what we need to do. We need to take our game to the next level and beat the top lads in the game."

Vafaei followed a similar path to secure his tour card. He also won the World Amateur title, pipping Lee Walker to the crown 10-9 in 2011. However, visa problems plagued his hopes of a professional breakthrough. He has now sorted those difficulties and won the World U21 title in the meantime.

Last season Vafaei went on a tremendous run to the quarter-final of the Northern Ireland Open in Belfast and recorded a stunning upset of Judd Trump on his way to the semi-final at the China Open. He lost out in the last four to Mark Williams, but his victory over the 2011 UK Champion served as a huge boost of confidence.

Vafaei remarked: "At that time I was dreaming. I had already lost to Judd Trump and Joe Perry two times in big



tournaments. At that point I kept losing to them but one day I had to take my revenge. I beat Joe in the last 64 which was great. To then beat Judd and reach the semi-final was an awesome feeling. I can't wait for this season. I am so hungry to win a tournament. I've come close many times. However, semi-final and quarter-final aren't good enough anymore. I need to take it that step further"

Iran possesses great potential as an emergent force on the snooker scene, with over 1000 clubs in the country. The strong following of the sport is typified in the close-knit relationship between their current top two stars.

Vahedi has moved in with his teammate in the past two weeks to base himself in Britain. The pair live in Sheffield, where they play out of Star Snooker Academy. However, their relationship as roommates was put under the mi-

croscope immediately at China Championship qualifying, where they came out of the hat against each other. On this occasion Vafaei came through a 5-0 winner. But his opponent remains undeterred by the experience.

Vahedi said: "It's a bad feeling. Out of 128 players I ended up drawing my roommate. I was really upset, but you just have to get out there and play. It's all about experience at the moment. The tables and the lighting are very different."

"Hopefully in the future I will fare better. Now he is through, I'm going to support him to go further. It is going to give me confidence. The whole thing is teamwork. He inspires me and I hope can inspire him."

"Snooker in Iran is already huge with us both turning professional. Hossein beating Judd Trump was a big moment for everybody. More youngsters are joining the game and if we could win the World Cup it would be a massive sign to them that they too can achieve things. You feel as if you are responsible for everyone watching back home. It is massive and we have to try to be successful."

Vafaei is equally as excited to represent his country next month and hopes that the close bond between the pair can aide their chances.

"We now live together, we practice together, everything is together. I have known him since I was 11 years old, which is half of my life. I hope we can do well in this event and throughout the season. Soheil will come up to around my ranking soon. We will look to help each other throughout the season."

(Source: worldsnooker.com)

## Chinese club ready to pay Ronaldo €120m a year

An as-yet-unnamed Chinese Super League club is set to make a mega-money offer to Real Madrid and Cristiano Ronaldo, according to Spanish outlet AS.

The report states that the Chinese club is prepared to offer Madrid €200

million for the signature of their talisman, and can offer the 32-year-old wages of €120 million a season.

Senior executives from the unnamed club reportedly will fly to Madrid next week to meet with Madrid president Florentino Perez and nego-

tiate what's said to be a concrete offer.

However, the Spanish outlet reports that it's all but impossible that Madrid would allow Ronaldo to leave, citing the player's importance to the club, which has won three Champions League trophies in the past four

seasons.

In January, agent Jorge Mendes told Sky Sports Italia that his client had already rejected a move to China, one that would have paid the Portugal captain €105m a season.

(Source: ESPN)

## Sharapova injury a blow to Aegon Classic's hopes of bumper TV figures

Maria Sharapova is said to be struggling to be fit to play in the Aegon Classic a week on Monday.

The former world number one sustained a leg injury that forced her to retire during the second round of the Italian Open in Rome on May 16.

Two well-placed, separate sources have told Sportsmail that it is inconveniencing her sufficiently enough to put her plans to take up the wildcard offered to her at the prestige event in the Midlands in jeopardy.

Wimbledon are believed to be monitoring the situation closely as she is due to make a high-profile, logistically difficult appearance at its qualifying event at Roehampton the following week, with huge international interest anticipated.

Sharapova's absence would come as a huge blow to the Birmingham tournament's organisers and broadcasters, with plans in place to show the Wimbledon warm-up on TV.

Eurosport own the exclusive rights to the event and the Russian would attract a large audience. The Aegon Classic is also on course for record ticket sales.

Sharapova, who won the title in Birmingham in 2004 and 2005, has served a 15-month suspension for taking the banned drug meldonium. She is now ranked 178 in the world.

A Lawn Tennis Association spokesperson refused to comment and there was no immediate response from her management company IMG.

If she were to miss Birmingham it would give her precious little grass court preparation ahead of what could be a three-week stint at Wimbledon, if she plays there at all.

After retiring from her match in Rome Sharapova said: "I apologise for having to withdraw from my match today with a left thigh injury. I will be getting all the necessary examinations to make sure it is not serious."

The 30 year-old Russian sustained the injury on the same evening that the French Open refused to give her any kind of wildcard.

(Source: Daily Mail)



INTERNATIONAL DAILY  
www.tehrantimes.com

Managing Director: Ali Asgari  
Editor-in-Chief: Hassan Lasjerdi

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895  
editor@tehrantimes.com  
Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000  
Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450  
Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807  
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603  
www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.  
Tel: 88911433  
Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com  
Printed at: Kayhan - ISSN: 1017-94

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran  
P.O. Box: 14155-4843  
Zip Code: 1599814713



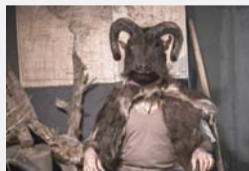
NEWS IN BRIEF



TMCA to review Godard docs

TEHRAN — The cinemathèque of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art is scheduled to screen two documentary films by French-Swiss director Jean-Luc Godard this afternoon.

"JLG/JLG", a self-portrait that Godard directed in 1994 about his place in film history, and "The Old Place" codirected by Anne-Marie Miéville in 2000 on the influence of arts at the end of the 20th century, will be reviewed at 5 p.m.



Spanish film festival to host Iran's "Animal"

TEHRAN — The Iranian short film "Animal" co-directed by Bahram and Bahman Ark will go on screen at the 32nd Valencia International Film Festival Cinema Jove, which will be held in the Spanish city from June 23 to July 1.

The film, which won the second prize in the Cinéfondation category at the 70th Cannes Film Festival in May, tells the story of a man who attempts to cross a frontier disguised as a ram.

Austrian-Iranian Symphonic Orchestra to honor sculptor Parviz Tanavoli

TEHRAN — The Austrian-Iranian Symphonic Orchestra (AISO) will honor the prominent Iranian artist Parviz Tanavoli who is mostly known for his sculptures by two performances at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on July 3 and 5.



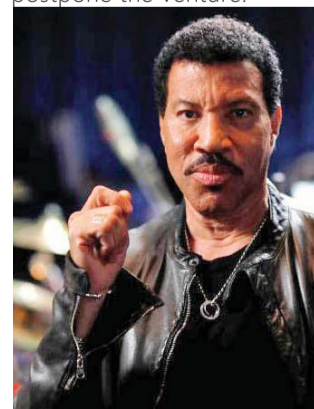
Maziar Yunesi is scheduled to conduct the AISO, which is slated to perform a repertoire of pieces composed by himself and his fellow Iranian musicians Christophe Rezai and Peyman Yazdani.

Born in 1937 in Tehran, Parviz Tanavoli is best known for his sculpture series "Heech" meaning "nil" in Persian. His expansive body of works includes paintings, prints, ceramics, rugs and jewelry. He is also regarded as a collector, art scholar and poet.

The concerts have been organized in collaboration with the Pari Safa Music Foundation and Hermes Records.

Back from injury, Lionel Richie to tour with Mariah Carey

BURBANK, Calif. (Reuters) — Lionel Richie is ready to hit the road with Mariah Carey for his "All the Hits" North American tour after a knee injury in March forced him to postpone the venture.



Richie and Carey are joining forces for the first time on tour, kicking off on July 21 in Oakland, California.

"I must tell you, I was so happy when she (Carey) said yes. My next thing was, 'Really?' It's going to be one of those evenings where you are going to just ... it's going to be pretty fun," the "All Night Long" singer said.

Richie was coy when asked if he and Carey would duet on the tour - and if so, which song they would choose.

"I heard a rumor about that, but I can't reveal these kinds of things. There's a rumor going round, but I won't say a word," he said.

Musician Lionel Richie poses for a portrait while promoting his upcoming North American tour in Burbank, California U.S., June 7, 2017. Picture taken June 7, 2017. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

New York gallery displays Ali Kurechian's mask collection

TEHRAN — Iranian sculptor Ali Kurechian is displaying a collection of his masks inspired by Persian alphabets in an exhibition underway at the Elga Wimmer Gallery in New York.

Entitled "For Your Eyes Solely", the exhibit features a number of masks with three-dimensional representations of poetry and mysticism.

"The reason why I have chosen the notion of the mask is that I was inspired by the equivocal phrases and lines of Persian poetry, which I took to mean that the truth about the world has been disguised," the artist has said about his masks.

"However, coming to use these mask-like volumes to convey the connotation and rhythm of what the Persian poets are trying to insinuate via the elements of these masks is the product of their shape," he remarked.

"This particular show in NY urges the viewer to think of masks as the veil between truth and reality, the way mystic poets such as Rumi use layers of meaning to allude to what lies beneath words," art dealer company Sotheby's has written about the exhibit.

Masud Nader and Roya Khadjavi are the curators of the exhibit, which opened on May 31 and will be running until June 11.

Tehran's Saless Gallery hosted the exhibit in January.



Sculptor Ali Kurechian poses with some of his works in an exhibition at Tehran's Saless Gallery on January 13, 2017.

Taraneh Alidoosti's films reviewed in Tokyo



Iranian actress Taraneh Alidoosti attends a talk show for "The Salesman" in the Japanese capital of Tokyo on June 7, 2017.

TEHRAN — Iranian actress Taraneh Alidoosti visited Tokyo from June 6 to 10 to attend a retrospective of her films that was organized by the NHK in the Japanese capital.

"I'm Taraneh, 15", her debut film directed by Rasul Sadr-Ameli in 2002, and "Modest Reception", the 2012 tragicomedy by Mani Haqiqi were discussed during the retrospective, she announced on her Instagram.

In addition, "About Elly" and the Oscar-winning movie "The Salesman",

both directed by Asghar Farhadi, were also screened.

She also appeared on talk shows, describing her views on different issues concerning cinema.

After "The Salesman" was nominated for an Oscar in the best foreign-language film category at the 89th Academy Awards, Alidoosti, said that she would boycott the Oscars ceremony in protest over U.S. President Donald Trump's proposed ban on visas to citizens from seven countries, including Iran.

"Lanturi" director dedicates award to victims of Tehran terrorist attacks



Director Reza Dormishian

TEHRAN — Iranian director Reza Dormishian has dedicated the award he won for his social drama "Lanturi" to the victims of last week's terrorist attacks in Tehran.

The acclaimed acid attack drama "Lanturi" won the award for best film at the Festival Internacional de Cine de Derechos Humanos (International Film Festival on Human Rights), which ran from May 31 to June 7 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

"I dedicate this award to the victims of the Tehran terrorist attacks, the innocent

people who are the victims of the cruelty of the enemy of human rights, which is Daesh," Dormishian said in a statement published on Saturday.

The movie starring Baran Kowsari and Navid Mohammadzadeh tells a love story that is turned tragic by external circumstances.

Last Wednesday, two terrorist attacks, one on the executive building of Iran's Parliament and the other on the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Revolution, left 17 dead and 56 injured. Daesh (ISIS) claimed credit for the attacks.

Polanski's rape victim says closing 1977 case would be 'act of mercy'

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Samantha Geimer, the woman film director Roman Polanski admitted raping when she was a teenager 40 years ago, pleaded for his case to be resolved on Friday, saying she had forgiven him years ago.

Making her first public appearance at a court hearing in the case, Geimer, who was 13 years old when Polanski assaulted her in Los Angeles in 1977, said she had wanted the criminal case against the film director closed for decades.

"I would implore you to consider taking action to finally put this issue to close as an act of mercy to myself and my family," Geimer told Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Scott Gordon.

"Justice is not only about punishment. It's about equity and consideration," she said, reading from a prepared statement.

Polanski, now 83, admitted raping Geimer in 1977 and spent 42 days in pre-trial custody. He then fled the United States, fearing a plea bargain with prosecutors would be overruled and that he would get a lengthy prison term.

Since then, the "Chinatown" director has remained a fugitive. The United States has attempted several times



Samantha Geimer arrives at court to attend a hearing regarding the 40 year-old case against filmmaker Roman Polanski in Los Angeles, California, U.S., June 9, 2017. (Reuters/Mike Blake)

to extradite him from Europe to face justice, and more jail time, in California.

Polanski's attorney, Harland Braun, asked the judge on Friday to unseal testimony about the 1977 plea deal. Braun hopes to use the testimony to persuade European authorities to rescind the international arrest

warrant against Polanski.

Judge Gordon said he would issue his decision at a later date.

Gordon ruled in April that the French-Polish director could not cut a deal from abroad to return to the United States without serving more jail time.

Outside court, Geimer, who now lives in Hawaii, said she was glad to "have had the chance to speak and not just be a spectator."

She said the case continued to affect her life and that of her family and three sons. "It is very embarrassing and unpleasant for them when there are reporters parked outside the house and they are outside with cameras."

Geimer also played down the severity of what happened to her in 1977, saying Polanski had apologized to her and that they had exchanged emails in recent years.

"It wasn't as traumatic for me as everyone would like to believe it was. I was a young, active teenager and it was scary thing. But it was not an uncommon thing. Much worse things happen to people," she said.

"People want to make it worse than it was and assign words to it ... I was there. I'm fine."

British artist Grayson Perry explores a divided country in new exhibition

LONDON (Reuters) — British artist Grayson Perry will launch a new exhibition on Thursday, the day Britain votes in a general election, and unsurprisingly, his works cast a critical eye over the country's tumultuous political landscape.

The exhibition, dubbed "The Most Popular Art Exhibition Ever!" will run at London's Serpentine gallery until September.

Much of the artwork addresses the

controversy around Britain's impending departure from the European Union, known as Brexit, after Britons voted to leave in June 2016.

"It was a point when there was a kind of cultural divide in the country and what the referendum did," Perry told Reuters.

"It presented a yes-no, black-and-white question at just the right moment in our society when there was

unacknowledged grievances by a large section of society and they hung those on the EU debate."

The exhibition features tapestries and sculpture, as well as Perry's trademark provocative pottery.

Two ceramic vases, decorated with images crowd-sourced from "Leave" and "Remain" voters via social media, are the keystone of the show.

As a reminder of the domestic political

division, Perry, who describes himself as a "gnarled 57-year-old artist" on his Twitter page, has placed "Our Mother", a statue of a refugee, in between the vases.

Perry won the Turner Prize, a prestigious British visual arts award that helped to put artists including Damien Hirst and Tracy Emin on the map, in 2003. In addition to his visual art, he has also produced television documentaries in recent years.