

Iran sees gas deal with Total within weeks:
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Iranian films line up for Shanghai festival **16**

Sanctions show despair, inherent hostility

Tehran seeks better banking ties with Seoul, New Delhi

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian Finance Minister Ali Tayebnia met his South Korean and Indian counterparts in Seoul on Friday, discussing ways to improve banking cooperation between Iran and the two trade partners.

The meetings were held on the sidelines of the second annual meeting of the board of governors of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), June 16.

In a meeting with South Korean Finance Minister Yoo Il-ho, the two sides discussed opening credit lines by Iranian and South Korean banks and also establishing branches of

Iranian banks in South Korea, IRNA reported on Saturday.

In a separate meeting with Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitley the two sides stressed the need for facilitating the use of credit lines opened by the two countries' banking sectors.

South Korea's Exim Bank and Trade Insurance Corporation (K-SURE) are going to allocate €13 billion finance in total for Iranian projects.

India's EXIM bank has also promised \$150 million credit for the development of the port of Chabahar, south-east Iran, through which India can bypass Pakistan and transport goods to Afghanistan and central Asia.



Putin: More U.S. sanctions would be harmful

Russian President Vladimir Putin said new sanctions under consideration by the United States would damage relations between the two countries, but it was too early to talk about retaliation, state news agency RIA reported on Saturday.

The U.S. Senate voted nearly unanimously earlier this week for legislation to impose new sanctions on Moscow and force President Donald Trump to get Congress' approval before easing any existing sanctions.

"This will, indeed, complicate Russia-American relations. I think this is harmful," Putin said, according to RIA.

In an interview with Rossiya1 state TV channel, excerpts of which were shown during the day on Saturday, Putin said he needed to see how the situation with sanctions evolved.

"That is why it is premature to speak publicly about our retaliatory actions," RIA quoted him as saying.

Russia and the West have traded economic blows since 2014, when Moscow annexed Ukraine's Black Sea peninsula of Crimea and lent support to separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine.

The West imposed economic and financial sanctions that battered the ruble and the export-dependent economy. **->13**

ARTICLE
 By Seyed Hossein Mousavian
 Princeton University
 Researcher

This is why Iran should play a major role in the negotiations to ban nuclear weapons

Since the advent of nuclear weapons, nations and grassroots movements across the world have sought to eliminate the risk they pose to life on Earth through nuclear prohibition and disarmament.

The foundation for these efforts has been the 1968 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Article VI of which calls on its 190 signatories for "a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control".

Last autumn, 123 states issued a call on the United Nations for a nuclear ban treaty, which led to a draft of a legally-binding text to prohibit nuclear weapons on 22 May 2017.

Now, from 15 June-7 July, representatives from roughly 130 nations will negotiate the final text and try to make the treaty a reality. Sadly, all the recognised nuclear-weapons states and their allies have voiced strong opposition to the historic talks.

Though the five recognised nuclear powers are signatory to the NPT and have been obligated to pursue disarmament for nearly 50 years, they have not only failed to do so **->2**

No clashes in western areas: commander

POLITICS TEHRAN — The IRGC Ground Force commander on Saturday denied reports about any clashes with terrorists in western provinces.

Nevertheless, Mohammad Pakpour detailed a Thursday clash in Sistan-Baluchestan province, saying the forces killed some of the terrorists while others fled.

According to Pakpour, a car with 600 kg of explosives was blasted, 15 suicide bombs and 700 kg of ammunition were seized

from the group.

Also late on Wednesday Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi announced security forces killed two terrorists in the city of Chabahar in Sistan-Baluchestan province on Wednesday. He added five other terrorists, including two nationals from a neighboring country, were arrested in the operation.

The intelligence chief who had visited Lahijan, Gilan province, to participate in a funeral procession for an intelligence agent

who had been martyred in the fight against terrorists in Chabahar on Wednesday said, "I will give assurances to the people of Islamic Iran that we will spare no effort in strengthening security in the country."

Iran has started a new campaign against terrorism as it has found clues about the whereabouts of some terrorist cells whose some of their members were arrested following the twin terrorist attacks in Tehran on June 7.

Technology has opened new ways to transfer Iranian gas to India: diplomat

By Banafshee Esmaeili
 TEHRAN — The Indian ambassador to Tehran says new technologies have provided new opportunities for transfer of Iranian gas to India.

"Modern technology provides other possibilities," Ambassador Saurabh Kumar says in an interview with the Mehr news agency when asked about the "peace pipeline" which was expected to transfer the Iranian gas to Pakistan and then to India.

Following is the text of the interview:

■ What is the common ground of cooperation between Iran and India?

A: India-Iran relationship is a very old relationship. It is a very historical relationship, and we have had good bilateral ties, and people to people contacts. So we look forward to our relationship growing further in all areas including political, economic, cultural, people to people and scientific and technical exchanges.

We already have a good base for moving ahead in these areas. We are doing good in some of these areas, but potential is a lot more. So we are working for expanding the relationship. Hydrocarbon or energy sector is an important sector for cooperation. Chabahar, trade, connectivity are other areas where we are working. Our prime minister's visit last year was reflective of the desire on both sides that we want to broaden and deepen our relations.

■ What changes have been made in terms of economic relations between the two countries since the implementation of the JCPOA, the official name for the 2015 nuclear deal?

A: The most significant consequence of the JCPOA was that we are now importing more Iranian crude oil. We are also able to pay Iranian side for the crude oil which we buy in hard currency. This was not possible before the JCPOA. Crude oil is very important and significant part of our bilateral trade.

So this is something which has benefited us and has benefited you. Before the JCPOA there were restrictions on the crude we could buy from you since banking channels were not working. After the JCPOA there are no obstacles in the way of crude purchase by India from Iran. So this is a very positive development.

■ What position does Iran hold in meeting India's energy needs?

A: As I told you energy cooperation is a very important part of our cooperation. Before sanctions, Iran was at number two position in supplying crude to India. I am happy to inform you that after the JCPOA, we started importing more and more of Iranian crude. Today Iran has improved its position. It is the second largest supplier of crude to India. Last year we bought 20 million metric tons of crude from Iran worth almost 7 billion US dollar. So we are satisfied that energy partnership has progressed. **->13**

Saudi king strips crown prince of prosecution oversight

The House of Saud regime's King Salman bin Abdulaziz has stripped the country's crown prince of powers overseeing criminal investigations, designating a new public prosecution office to function directly under the king's authority.

In a royal decree issued on Saturday, the Saudi ruler relieved Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef of his duties and renamed the Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution (BIP) as the Public Prosecution office.

The decree orders that the newly appointed public prosecutor, Sheikh Saud bin Abdullah bin Mubarak, report directly to the monarch, ensuring his independence to review Saudi Arabia's system of investigation and propose any required amendments within 90 days.

The crown prince, who also served as head of the Interior Ministry, had been in charge of the BIP and tasked with nominating its chairman.

The bureau's duties included investigating crimes, filing cases, prosecuting individuals, appealing court judgments and supervising the execution of criminal sentences.

The House of Saud regime executed a total of 153 people in 2015, a global high.

Second Announcement

International Public Tender Notice (Two Stage)

"Purchase of One Set of Mobile X-Ray Inspection System"

No: 46422116

See Page 3



Zoroastrians gather at Pir-e-Sabz shrine

The Zoroastrian community annually gathers at Pir-e-Sabz, a Zoroastrian temple situated in Yazd, central Iran, to practice specific rituals and traditions.

From June 14-16, Zoroastrian pilgrims make their way to Pir-e-Sabz, or Chak Chak, nestled in the rock face, to pray in the spot where Princess Nikbanoo, the daughter of the last Sassanian king Yazdegird III escaped the Arabs.

The word Sabz is Persian for "green" and refers to the small burst of greenery surrounding the temple in an otherwise desert landscape.

The Saudi regime has come under particular criticism from human rights groups for the executions carried out for non-fatal crimes.

Saudi regime authorities say the executions reveal the Saudi government's commitment to "maintaining security and realizing justice."

Amnesty International says Saudi Arabia has one of the highest execution rates in the world. Human Rights Watch has also called on the Saudi regime to abolish its "ghastly" beheadings.

Rights experts have raised concerns about the fairness of trials in the country.

Muslim clerics have also denounced Riyadh for executing suspects without giving them a chance to defend themselves, describing the Saudi regime authorities as uncivilized.

(Source: Press TV)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Zarif to start tour of North Africa from Sunday

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif will start a tour of North African states on Sunday.

During the two-day trip, Zarif will visit Algeria, Mauritania and Tunisia. He will meet not only his counterparts but also the countries' presidents.

"The visits come at the official invitation of the mentioned countries.... Consultation about the regional developments such as Syria and the Persian Gulf issues are among the aims of the visit," Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said.



Electoral crime reports sent to Judiciary

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Guardian Council d e s k has sent reports about electoral crimes to the Judiciary, the council's spokesman said on Saturday.

Abbasali Kadkhodaei said that a number of government officials had played role in the crimes during the May 19 elections, ISNA reported.

According to Kadkhodaei, delaying the delivery of ballots, short supply of ballots, delaying the start of polling, and promoting a certain candidate were among the crimes committed by the officials.



'Iranians not to suffer captivity as they cherish martyrdom'

POLITICS TEHRAN — The people of Iran will not d e s k suffer the burden of captivity as long as they prize martyrdom, the minister of intelligence said on Saturday during a funeral procession for Said Ashuri who had been martyred in clashes with terrorists in southeast Iran on Wednesday.

Mahmoud Alavi said Ashuri had inflicted heavy losses on 120 terrorist gangs in the past.

He added that the Ministry of Intelligence has so far seen the loss of 200 forces on various operations.



IAEA's safeguards expenditures up due to Iran program

POLITICS TEHRAN — The UN's nuclear d e s k body, the International Atomic Energy Agency, has reported that the safeguards expenditures from its extra-budgetary contributions were €29.8 million in 2016, 10.9 percent more compared to 2015.

"This increase resulted mainly from the implementation of Iran's Additional Protocol, verifying and monitoring Iran's nuclear-related commitments as set out in the JCPOA and the Agency's MOSAIC project," the IAEA reported on Friday.

Regular Budget appropriation for 2016 was adjusted to €133.1 million.



Chinese commander congratulates Iran on naval industry

POLITICS TEHRAN — The commander of a d e s k Chinese naval fleet visited Iran's naval facilities on a voyage to the port city of Bandar Abbas on the shores of the Persian Gulf.

Shen Hao congratulated Iran on its advanced naval industry during the visit on Saturday, IRNA reported. He said the facilities bolster Iran's naval power.

The Chinese naval fleet is going to perform a one-day series of exercises jointly with a corresponding Iranian fleet on Sunday.



Iran, UN sign MOU on carbon sequestration

POLITICS TEHRAN — A memorandum of d e s k understanding was signed between Iran and the United Nations for the third phase of a carbon sequestration program in four Iranian provinces on Saturday.

The MOU is expected to cover five regions in Yazd, North Khorasan, South Khorasan and Golestan provinces, IRNA reported.

Carbon sequestration is a natural or artificial process by which carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere and held in solid or liquid form, as in plants or soil.

Iran, Switzerland hold new round of political talks

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran and d e s k Switzerland held a second round of political talks on Friday in line with a roadmap that the two countries devised last February to enhance bilateral relations.

The new talks were held in the Swiss city of Bern between Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's deputy foreign minister for European and American affairs, and State Secretary at the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pascale Baeriswyl, Press TV reported.

Swiss President Johann Schneider-Ammann visited Tehran last February, meeting with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani.

Schneider-Ammann and Rouhani decided to have the roadmap devised, and the two sides signed six memoranda of understanding in the scientific and technical fields and chose to step up their cooperation in the area of tourism.

The visit was followed by a first round

of political talks between Takht-Ravanchi and Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter in Bern last June.

The follow-up talks on Friday saw the two sides laying emphasis on the further enhancement of mutual relationship. They also featured discussions on all-out cooperation against instability and toward fighting terrorism as an international threat.

Takht-Ravanchi pointed to the recent developments in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region, which have seen Saudi Arabia and some of its allies cutting ties with Qatar. He said the Islamic Republic's policy concerning the development was one of cooperation toward the establishment of peace and stability in the region and the easing of regional tensions.

Baeriswyl, for her part, condoled with the Iranian nation and government over the recent terrorist attacks in the Iranian capital which claimed 17 lives. The Swiss president and foreign minister had already extended their condolences over the in-



Majid Takht-Ravanchi

cident. Baeriswyl also referred to the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers as a "valuable" achievement of the international community, and emphasized

its complete implementation. The deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), was reached in July 2015 and ended a long-running dispute over the Iranian nuclear program.

Senate's sanctions show despair, inherent hostility

POLITICS TEHRAN — A number d e s k of Iranian officials have strongly criticized the new U.S. Senate's sanctions bill against Tehran, saying it shows Washington's "despair" and "inherent hostility" toward the Islamic Republic.

"The U.S. Senate's approval of new sanctions against Iran was not unpredictable, due to the Senate's record of hostility toward the Iranian nation," Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Friday.

Officials have said the sanctions violate the spirit and content of the international nuclear agreement signed between Iran and great powers.

Qassemi said the U.S. government must comply with its commitments under the nuclear accord, noting Washington cannot breach the international agreement.

Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, Germany and the European Union signed the nuclear deal on July 14, 2015. Under the deal, officially known as the JCPOA, Iran agreed to slow down its nuclear program in return for the termination of economic and financial sanctions.

Like Iran, Qassemi said, the other parties to the JCPOA need to remain committed to obligations under the international accord.

The official further said that Tehran will

soon take countermeasures against the sanctions move.

On Thursday, the Senate approved the sanctions on Iran over its ballistic missile program and alleged human rights violations. The U.S. legislation still must pass the House of Representatives and be signed by President Donald Trump to become law.

Qassemi said Iran's missile program does not violate the UN Resolution 2231 which endorsed the nuclear agreement.

The resolution calls upon Iran "not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology."

Iran has repeatedly insisted that its missile program is purely defensive.

Only two senators voted no to the measure while 98 agreed to it. Republican Senator Rand Paul and Bernie Sanders, an independent who caucuses with the Democrats, were the only two "no" votes.

'Clear violation of the nuclear deal'

A senior member of parliament on Saturday condemned the move, saying it's a "clear violation" of the nuclear deal.

"The U.S. Senate's recent approval of (new) sanctions against Iran is undoubtedly in clear violation of the Joint Comprehensive

Plan of Action and contrary to its text and spirit," said Alaeddin Boroujerdi, chairman of the Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee.

"Since the international document has been signed by all permanent members of the UN Security Council, plus Germany and the European Union, all these signatories, too, should voice their opposition to the move and U.S. breach (of the nuclear deal)," Tasnim quoted the MP as saying.

Boroujerdi further said that Iran will take necessary measures to counteract the sanctions bill.

The Iranian ambassador to the UK, who was involved in the nuclear negotiations with the West, also said approval of new sanctions indicates Washington's despair and hostility over the failure of U.S. and its allies' policies in the Middle East.

In a post published on his Telegram and Instagram accounts on Friday evening, Hamid Baedinejad summarized the main points of the new legislation as:

1. Imposes sanctions on persons engaged in efforts to manufacture, acquire, possess, develop, transport, transfer, or use ballistic missiles.

2. Places sanctions on persons who kill or torture those who wish to exercise or defend internationally recognized human

rights or wish to expose illegal activity in Iran.

3. Imposes terrorism-related sanctions on Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps.

4. Places sanctions on persons who violate the arms embargo placed on Iran.

Baidinejad said although the authors of the draft bill had tried not to violate the JCPOA, in the days leading to the Senate voting on it the content changed and new aspects were added to it.

Ali Akbar Velayati, the senior foreign policy advisor to the Leader, also voiced opposition to the action, saying the U.S. is covering up its failures in the region by imposing new sanctions against Iran.

Velayati named Washington's defeats against the Islamic Republic in Syria and Iraq as the ulterior motive behind the move.

Mostafa Kavakebian, a parliamentarian representing Tehran, said the bill has targeted the only democracy in the region, adding that it's a violation of the nuclear deal.

Also, the political director of the presidential office has censured the new sanctions, saying the move shows U.S. opposition to democracy in Iran.

Washington's hostility toward Tehran increases as democracy is boosting in the Islamic Republic, Hamid Aboutalebi said in a post on his Twitter account.

Iran, Afghanistan kick off five-pronged strategic talks

POLITICS TEHRAN — A large delegation d e s k of Afghan officials traveled to Tehran on Saturday to start a previously arranged series of talks with Iranian officials in five strategic fields.

The two countries had agreed each to assign committees in the areas of security, economy, culture, refugees, and water to discuss mutual cooperation.

The Afghan committees are holding a tightly packed series of meetings with their Iranian counterparts during their two-day stay in Tehran.

The meetings are a long-delayed arrangement that was hoped to follow an unattained agreement during former president Hamid Karzai's tenure.

Talks in areas of water and refugees are expected to turn out as the hottest. Water management plans in Afghanistan have led to the eastern Iranian Lake Hamoun drying out.

Also, estimates from the government of Iran indicate that 951,142 Afghan refugees reside in Iran, in addition to 620,000 Afghans who hold Afghan passports and Iranian visas. The government also estimates that there are approximately 1.5-2 million undocumented

Afghans living in Iran.

Relations between Iran and Afghanistan are expected to undergo major positive shifts as the two are close to drafting a comprehensive roadmap which catapults bilateral ties to previously unseen levels.

The document, once drafted and implemented, will soothe concerns about a wide spectrum of issues, including environmental challenges which have escalated over the past decade.

Forging a consensus on five components of what Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called "a strategic framework" was the running theme of his talks in early May with five senior Afghan officials.

"We had very important discussions during the visit," Zarif then told reporters on his way back to Tehran. He said the visit capped months of negotiations to hammer out a "certain framework for strengthening strategic ties between the two countries."

"We have a non-paper agreement on the principles and between three to six months we hope we can reach an agreement," Zarif said.

The security committee will focus on terrorism, drug

smuggling, and radicalism.

An economic committee will seek to spur more trade. Stronger economic ties between the two sides can be of critical importance particularly for Afghanistan.

A third body is tasked with an environmental mission. For years now, the shrinking Lake Hamoun has been a source of concern for Iran.

Events such as the 1973 coup in Afghanistan, Iran's 1979 revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the subsequent civil war, and Taliban's rule have all had disastrous impacts on the fate of the Hamoun wetlands, which straddle the Iran-Afghanistan border and are fed by the Helmand or Hirmand (as it is known in Farsi) river.

In addition to Hamoun, Iran's water rights in Hirmand River and Harirud (The Heray Rud River) are to be discussed by the environmental committee.

A fourth taskforce will explore ways to boost cultural and educational exchanges between Iran and Afghanistan.

Discussing the status of Afghan refugees in Iran is the task of the fifth committee.

This is why Iran should play a major role in the negotiations to ban nuclear weapons

➔ but now have far-reaching plans to upgrade and extend the lifespans of their nuclear weapons.

Even more egregious, they have de facto supported the proliferation of nuclear weapons by establishing strategic relations with countries like India, Pakistan and Israel, which have rejected the NPT and amassed sizeable weapons arsenals.

All told, there exist about 15,000 nuclear weapons in the world today, of which the U.S. and Russia possess around 7,000 each. America's nuclear modernisation program alone is estimated to cost the country \$1 trillion over the next 30 years.

Since the NPT went into effect, the reality has been that the world has been split between the haves and have-nots of nuclear weapons, and the haves have been able to selectively agree on the new haves. This longstanding status quo has now led to a majority of nations – cognizant that the world has been held hostage to the weapons stockpiles of the nuclear-armed states – to push for a prohibition treaty, to put political and legal restraints on the possession of nuclear weapons.

One state supporting the ban treaty negotiations, Iran, can play a unique role in making the talks a success. Three chief reasons explain why Iran can and should be a strong advocate to advance the causes of nuclear non-proliferation and the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

First, the July 2015 nuclear deal agreed to by Iran and six major world powers – formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – sets a new global nuclear non-proliferation standard far stronger than the NPT. As President Obama has stated, the deal cuts "off every single one of Iran's pathways to a [...] nuclear weapons program," and establishes the "most comprehensive and intrusive inspection and verification regime ever negotiated".

Consequently, the JCPOA can serve as a new basis for the verification and enforcement provisions of the disarmament treaty that the prohibition treaty will call for. To this end, Iran can play an instrumental role in pushing for the globalisation of the JCPOA's principles, and can even position itself as a regional nuclear fuel hub as part of future prohibition and disarmament treaties.

Second, Iran's long-established track record of seeking to advance the cause of nuclear non-proliferation gives it a responsibility to continue its role of spearheading non-proliferation initiatives.

In 1974, Iran first proposed a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone (ME-NWFZ) at the UN General Assembly, which was passed by the body and has been renewed annually since 1980. The ban treaty negotiations provide Iran and other regional states the opportunity to realise a ME-NWFZ.

Third, Iran is the only country that at the highest religious levels has issued religious edicts banning WMDs. Iran's position in this regard was shaped during the 1980s Iran-Iraq War, during which it was the victim of WMDs in the form of chemical weapons attacks, but refused to retaliate in kind due to religious considerations.

This was due to a fatwa, or religious decree, by Iran's revolutionary father Ayatollah Imam Khomeini, against the production or use of chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons. Iran's current Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has upheld this fatwa, uniquely binding Iran to be unequivocally against

WMDs of all kinds and making it a sincere voice in any WMD-prohibition debate.

The ban treaty negotiations represent a potential major historical turning point, where a majority of the world's nations will act to safeguard humanity's future from the threat of nuclear holocaust. While the nuclear-weapons states argue that they need their weapons for reasons of deterrence and strategic balance, their logic does not hold in a world where their nuclear-weapons monopoly is unsustainable.

Increasingly, other countries may seek the same status relying on the same logic as the five-recognised nuclear-weapons powers. The North Korean case serves as an example of how an NPT member may leave the treaty and develop nuclear weapons.

If global peace and stability is to be ensured for future generations, a new model for international security must be created, one that does not rely on WMDs of any kind.

Iran, given its longstanding commitment to the non-proliferation of WMDs, must play a decisive role in ensuring the success of the nuclear ban treaty negotiations to bring about such a world.

Saudis and allies working on list of Qatar 'grievances'

The House of Saud regime's foreign minister says a list of "grievances" involving Qatar is being drawn up and will be presented to the Persian Gulf state shortly.

Speaking in London, Adel al-Jubeir called on Qatar to respond to what he claimed were international and regional calls for it to halt its support for "extremism and terrorism".

"I would not call them demands. I would say it is a list of grievances that need to be addressed and that the Qataris need to fix," he said.

Jubeir did not detail what complaints could be made, but added that they will be presented "very soon".

Four Arab states namely, the House of Saud regime, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Egypt, severed diplomatic and trade relations with Qatar on June 5, accusing it of supporting "extremism" and Iran.

They later issued a list of 59 people and 12 groups with links to Qatar, alleging that they have ties to "terrorism".

The list included several prominent Qatari charities that carry out life-saving work across the Middle East and elsewhere, including in Syria, Yemen, Sudan and Palestine.

The Qatari government has repeatedly rejected the allegations of supporting individuals and groups blacklisted as "terrorists" as "baseless".

It said that it has been leading the region in attacking what it called the roots of "terrorism" by giving young people hope through jobs, educating hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees and funding community programs to challenge the agendas of armed groups.

The Saudi regime-led bloc of nations cut off sea and air links with Qatar and ordered Qatari nationals to leave their countries with 14 days.

They also urged their citizens to return to their respective countries, disrupting the lives of thousands in the region and restricting their freedom of movement.

Regional ambitions 'exposed'

In his remarks from London, Jubeir said there was no intention of harming the Qatari people and called Qatar an "ally" in the six-nation Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC).

Saad Djebbar, an international lawyer based in London, told Al Jazeera that Jubeir's comments exposed the regional ambitions of the four countries leading the blockade against Qatar.

Qatar imported the vast majority of its food from its Persian Gulf Arab neighbors before the diplomatic shutdown, but has been talking with regional power house Iran and Turkey to secure food and water supplies since the crisis broke out.

Jubeir's comments in London echoed the Saudi regime, Emirati, and Bahraini envoys to the United Nations, who af-



firmed on Friday that their recent moves to diplomatically isolate Qatar are within their rights to protect national security.

"Decisions to cut ties with Qatar are a sovereign right of the States concerned and aim to protect their national security from the dangers of terrorism and extremism," they said in a joint declaration.

The statement came in response to remarks on Wednesday by Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, the United Nations high commissioner for human rights, who expressed "alarm" about the human rights impact of cutting off ties.

Separately, Ali bin Samikh al-Marri, chairman of Qatar's national human rights committee, said the measures amounted to "collective punishment" and cited one case of a mother being separated from her baby.

This had led to "gross violations of human rights", Marri said on Friday in Geneva, noting that every Qatari family had at least one member living in other countries in the region.

Mediation efforts continue

Against this background of continued tensions, Mevlut Cavusoglu, Turkey's foreign minister, held talks in Saudi Arabia with King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, on Friday.

"The meeting was positive," AFP news agency reported, quoting diplomatic sources, but there were no specifics.

Cavusoglu travelled to Mecca, where Salman is based for the last days of Ramadan, after meeting his Kuwaiti counterpart on Thursday.

Cavusoglu was in Doha on Wednesday where he called for dialogue after meeting Qatar's emir and foreign minister.

"Although the kingdom is a party in this crisis, we know that King Salman is a party in resolving it," Cavusoglu said earlier.

"We want to hear the views of Saudi Arabia regarding possible solutions and will share with them our views in a transparent way... We pay a great attention to our relations with them."

Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad Al Sabah, the emir of Kuwait, which has not cut ties with Qatar, has also been trying to mediate.

Tillerson's decision

For his part, Rex Tillerson, the United States secretary of state, has cancelled his scheduled trip to an Organization of American States (OAS) meeting in Mexico next week to stay in the United States and work on resolving the Qatar crisis.

(Source: agencies)

Ex-German Chancellor Helmut Kohl dies aged 87

Former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the architect of Germany's reunification, died on Friday aged 87, his party said.

"We mourn," Kohl's Christian Democratic Union party (CDU) tweeted with a picture of the former chancellor.

Kohl led Germany through reunification in 1990 and was chancellor of first West Germany and then the unified nation from 1982 to 1998.

He had been frail and wheelchair-bound since suffering a bad fall in 2008, and was largely house-bound in his home in Ludwigshafen, in the western state of Rhineland-Palatinate.

Chancellor Angela Merkel said Kohl was "the right man at the right time", when the winds of change began sweeping through Eastern Europe in the 1980s.

"We all should be grateful what Helmut Kohl achieved during many years he served for us Germans and our country. He will live in our memories as the great European and the chancellor of our reunification. I bow before his legacy."

Tributes pour in

Meantime, former United States presidents George H W Bush and Bill Clinton both called Kohl the greatest European leader of the second half of the 20th century.

"Working closely with my very good friend to help achieve a peaceful end to the Cold War and the unification of Germany within NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) will remain one of the great joys of my life," Bush said in a statement.

"Throughout our endeavors, Helmut was a rock - both steady and strong. We mourn his loss today, even as we know his remarkable life will inspire future generations of leaders to dare and achieve greatly!"

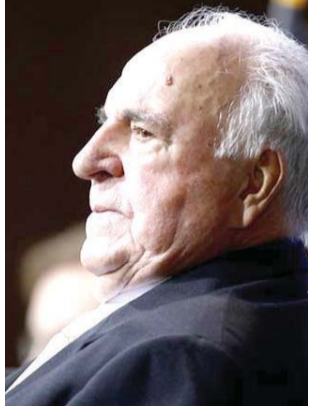
The view was echoed by German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel. "A truly great German and above all a truly great European has died," he said in a statement.

European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker also paid tribute to Kohl.

"Helmut's death hurts me deeply. My mentor, my friend, the very essence of Europe, he will be greatly, greatly missed," Juncker, a former prime minister of Luxembourg, said on Twitter.

"Helmut Kohl filled the European house with life - not only because he built bridges to the west as well as to the east, but also because he never ceased to design even better blueprints for the future of Europe," Juncker added.

NATO Secretary Jens Stoltenberg described him as the "embodiment of a united Germany in a united Europe". (Source: Al Jazeera)



Seven sailors missing after U.S. Navy destroyer collides with container ship in Japan

The United States Navy destroyer USS Fitzgerald sailed back to its base in Yokosuka, with seven of its sailors still missing after it collided with a Philippine-flagged container ship more than three times its size in eastern Japan early on Saturday.

The Fitzgerald, an Aegis guided missile destroyer, collided with the merchant vessel at about 2:30 a.m. local time (1730 GMT), some 56 nautical miles southwest of Yokosuka, the Navy said.

Three aboard the destroyer had been medically evacuated to the U.S. Naval Hospital in Yokosuka, including the ship's commanding officer, Cmdr. Bryce Benson, who was reported to be in stable condition, the Navy said. The other two were being treated for lacerations and bruises, while other injured were being assessed aboard the ship, it said.

Search and rescue efforts by U.S. and Japanese aircraft and surface vessels were continuing for the seven missing sailors, the Navy said. Their names are being withheld until the families have been notified, it said.

Benson took command of the Fitzgerald on May 13. He had previously commanded a minesweeper based in Sasebo in western Japan.

Unclear what happened

It was unclear how the collision happened. "Once an investigation is complete then any legal issues can be ad-



ressed," the 7th Fleet spokesman said.

The Fitzgerald suffered damage on her starboard side above and below the waterline, causing "significant damage" and flooding to two berthing spaces and other areas of the ship, the Navy said. The flooding was later stabilized, but it was uncertain how long it would take to gain access to those spaces once the ship is docked, to continue the search for the missing, it said.

Back in Yokosuka, divers will inspect the damage and develop a plan for repairs, the Navy said.

The ship was able to operate under its own power with limited propulsion, the Navy said. The Japanese Coast Guard said separately the Fitzgerald was towed back to Yokosuka by a tugboat at about 3 knots.

Part of an eight-ship squadron based in Yokosuka, the Fitzgerald had in February completed \$21 million worth of upgrades and repairs.

Japan's Nippon Yusen KK, which

charters the container ship, ASX Crystal, said in a statement it would "cooperate fully" with the Coast Guard's investigation of the incident. At around 29,000 tons displacement, the ship dwarfs the 8,315-ton U.S. warship, and was carrying 1,080 containers from the port of Nagoya to Tokyo.

None of the 20 crew members aboard the container ship, all Filipino, were injured, and the ship was not leaking oil, Nippon Yusen said. The ship arrived at Tokyo Bay around 5:00 p.m. (0800 GMT), sailing under its own power, the Coast Guard said.

Busy waterways

The waterways approaching Tokyo Bay are busy with commercial vessels sailing to and from Japan's two biggest container ports in Tokyo and Yokohama.

International maritime rules for collision avoidance do not define right of way for any one vessel, but provide common standards for signaling between ships, as well as regulations on posting lookouts.

Japan's public broadcaster NHK showed aerial footage of the Fitzgerald, which had a large dent on its right, or starboard, side. Images broadcast by NHK showed it had been struck next to its Aegis radar arrays behind the vertical launch tubes.

Such incidents are rare.

(Source: Reuters)

Hamas: ISIL didn't kill Israeli soldier

Palestinian groups have rejected the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit's claim of responsibility for Friday's attacks in al-Quds (Jerusalem), which left one Israeli police officer killed and resulted in Israeli soldiers killing three Palestinians.

The Palestinian resistance movement of Hamas says ISIL did not kill a female Israeli soldier in the Tel Aviv-occupied East al-Quds (Jerusalem), as the Takfiri terrorist group has claimed.

According to Israeli media, officer Hadas Malka was killed in a stabbing attack on Friday near Damascus Gate, which is one of the main entrances to al-Quds' Old City.

Israeli forces shot three Palestinians dead in response to the reported attack.

Another Palestinian man from al-Khail (Hebron) was also injured by Israeli security forces, despite playing no role in the attacks.

Some Israeli media later said that ISIL had claimed responsibility.

However, Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said that the ISIL claim had been an attempt to "muddy the waters," and that the attack had been carried out by "two Palestinians from

the PFLP and a third from Hamas," referring to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine by its acronym.

The PFLP is the second largest group within the umbrella group of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

The Times of Israel said, though, that "Israeli officials cast doubt on both claims, saying there was no indication of IS (ISIL) involvement, and that the attack did not appear to have been directed by any group."

Also, Israeli police spokeswoman Luba Simri said the Israeli military had so far found no connection between the three assailants and any armed group.

"It was a local cell. At this stage no indication has been found it was directed by terrorist organizations, nor has any connection to any organization been found," Simri said.

Meanwhile, eyewitnesses to the reported incident said Israeli forces opened heavy random fire in the crowded area.

Shoot-to-kill

Since October 2015, about 250 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces, with many instances occurring within close range or during protests in occupied territory.

(Source: agencies)

Second Announcement

IN THE NAME OF GOD



I.R Iran Customs Administration (IRICA)
Finance and Economic Affairs Ministry

International Public Tender Notice (Two Stage)
"Purchase of One Set of Mobile X-Ray Inspection System"

No: 46422116

Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) intends to purchase one set of Mobile X-Ray Inspection System to inspect tracks and containers through Public, international tender according to the following conditions. Therefore, all eligible Iranian or foreign company agencies are requested to refer to mentioned address to obtain the tender documents.

- 1) **Tender Participation:** International Public Tender Notice (Two Stage) "Purchase of One Set of Mobile X-Ray Inspection System"
- 2) The amount of Participation Guarantee Bank shall be either 9'000'000'000 Iranian Rials or 247'886 Euros
- 3) **Tender Participation Guarantee:** As a Bank Guarantee issued by one of the Iranian banks (accredited by Central Bank of I.R.I) or be deposited to account No.4001001106370306 in the name of IRICA at the Central bank of I.R.I and submit the receipt
- 4) **Deadline for obtaining tender documents:** 27may, 2017 - 03 june, 2017
- 5) **The address for obtaining tender documents and submitting bid envelopes:** Tenders & Contracts Bureau, Room No.104, Development & Equipment Dept. 1 st floor Iran Custom Administration Bldg. Next to Nasser Alley, upper than Valiasr Sq. Tehran, Iran.
- 6) **Deadline for submitting bids:** 04 july, 2017
- 7) **Opening bid envelopes:** 05 july, 2017

Further information would be available at www.irica.gov.ir also "National Database Portal of Iran Tenders Information" or **Tel: +98 21 82992290**

Development and Equipment Dept.
of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Tenders & Contracts Bureau

Spain's Telepizza seeking to enter Iranian market

Madrid-based Telepizza, which claims to be the largest pizza delivery company outside the U.S., has been seeking to expand abroad from the U.K. to Iran to diversify a business that still relies on its home country for about two thirds of its sales, Chief Executive Officer Pablo Juantegui said in an interview in Madrid.

The company, which sells 60 million pizzas a year, is also accelerating plans to refurbish its restaurants and is investing in higher-margin gourmet pizzas to help boost revenue, Juantegui said. *(Source: Bloomberg)*

Russia expects Turkish inspection of meat, dairy products to take place soon

MOSCOW (Sputnik) — Russia expects that a Turkish delegation will arrive soon in the country with an inspection to assess the quality of Russia's meat and dairy products, as the recent cancellation of Turkish inspectors' visit was caused by technical issues, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich said Saturday.



Russian agricultural watchdog Rosselkhoz nadzor said that a delegation from the Turkish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock had not arrived this week for talks with Russian counterparts and that the visit had been postponed for an uncertain term.

"Yes, we expect this [to happen] soon," Dvorkovich told reporters, adding that the cancellation of the visit was connected with "technical issues."

On May 26, Rosselkhoz nadzor said that the Turkish delegation would visit Moscow on June 13 for talks with Rosselkhoz nadzor officials on cooperation in the veterinary and phytosanitary areas. After that the Turkish inspectors were expected to visit Russia's enterprises engaged in meat production in Bryansk, Orenburg and Moscow regions.

Almost 1m UK bank customers will be forced to use new sort codes

Almost 1 million UK bank customers will be forced to have to use new six-digit sort codes as the high street lenders implement rules intended to make the financial system safer, a Bank of England official has said.

James Proudman, a senior regulator in Threadneedle Street, said the estimate from high street banks included retail and corporate customers.

The change has been caused by the Vickers rules, which force banks to ringfence their high street operations from other banking activities.



Proudman added: "Banks will inform those customers that their sort code details are changing, when the change will take place and if there is anything they need to do."

In order to minimise the disruption these changes could cause customers, Proudman said, "banks will ensure that any outgoing payments, for example standing orders and direct debits, are made as normal".

The Bank of England regulator also revealed that the banking industry will have spent billions of pounds to meet the timetable for the new rules by 2019.

Some changes will also need to go through the courts, starting later this year, to allow business to be transferred into the "ringfenced bank", Proudman said.

The rules are named after Sir John Vickers who recommended in 2011 that banks ringfence their high street operations from the riskier businesses after the financial crisis.

"As with any big infrastructure project, there is some potential for disruption to everyday activities as new group structures are moved into place and new ways of operating are brought on-line," Proudman said.

He said ringfenced banks — typically holding bank's retail customers — would need their own capital and pools of liquid assets to be able to "stand resiliently on their own".

Each bank has its own approach to ringfencing. Lloyds Banking Group, for example, will house the bulk of its activities inside the ringfence but others will need to make bigger changes. HSBC is setting up its ringfenced retail bank in a new head office in Birmingham.

Barclays, for instance, has said it will hand out new sort codes over the Easter weekend next year.

Twelve months ago, Tushar Morzarzia, Barclays' finance director, compared the looming split to the uncertainty over Y2K or the adoption of the euro and said other banks would also choose the same date in 2018.

"That weekend we have to create a brand new bank, probably the largest bank that will ever be created in the UK," he said.

(Source: The Guardian)

Iran sees gas deal with Total within weeks: Zanganeh

Iran expects to sign a long-delayed gas deal with French oil major Total in the next few weeks, Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh was quoted as saying on Saturday.

"Iran and Total are summing up the discussions on signing the contract for

the development of phase 11 of South Pars, and this is almost in the final stages," said Zanganeh, quoted by the oil ministry's news website SHANA.

"The contract ... will be signed before the end of the (current) government," Zanganeh said.

Iran, EAEU discuss preferential tariffs on agricultural, industrial products

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Attended by a 33-member delegation, the seventh round of Iran-Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) meetings was held on the deputy level in Tehran, IRNA reported on Saturday.

In the meeting, deputy industry and agriculture ministers from five EAEU member countries discussed preferential tariff on agricultural and industrial products with their Iranian counterparts.

Iranian Deputy Industry Minister and Head of Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO) Mojtaba Khosrotaj emphasized Iran's willingness for finalizing the free trade deal negotiations with EAEU on the basis of the union's frameworks.

The Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union aims to finalize a free-trade deal with Iran by the end of the year, in an attempt by Russia and its fellow members to deepen ties with Tehran.

Relief on way for Indians exporting to Iran

Indian exporters up against banking issues such as third-party payments can expect relief as the departments of commerce and financial services have decided to set up a joint task force to resolve those problems.

Earlier this week, Commerce Secretary Rita Teotia discussed the matter with the Department of Financial Services and the RBI.

Exporters of goods especially to countries like Iran, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Iraq, and Congo face such banking bottlenecks.

The other talking points include RBI's caution list of ex-

porters, reluctance of banks to issue electronic bank realization certificates (e-BRCs) for payments made by buyers through online gateway service providers and national electronic funds transfer (NEFT).

Under third-party payments, for instance, firms that export to Africa get their payments from Dubai, Singapore, Hong Kong and London.

The commerce ministry, on its part, has approached the RBI to exclude those exporters from the caution list that have an outstanding of up to 5-10 percent of previous year exports, an official said.

"There are several banking related issues with Iran that need resolution as huge export potential exists there," he reasoned.

The commerce ministry has sought establishment of banking ties in Iran for euro transactions. It has also pitched for opening up of Indian banking channels in those countries that do banking with Iran.

Exporters body Federation of Indian Export Organizations (FIEO) said that early resolution of all these issues would help reduce transaction cost of exporters.

(Source: Times of India)

Iran shows appetite for Belarusian dairy, meat products

MINSK (BelTA) — Iran is interested in importing Belarus' dairy and meat products, BelTA learned from Belarusian Deputy Agriculture and Food Minister Leonid Marinich.

He headed the Belarusian delegation during the talks over an Iran-EAEU provisional free trade agreement in Tehran on 13-14 June.

The sides reviewed the catalogs and groups of agricultural, mechanical engineering, and industrial products that can enjoy mutual preferences.

During the visit the Belarusian delegation met and negotiated with top executives of Iran Veterinary Association (IVA) and the Office for International Affairs and Specialized Agencies at Iran's Agriculture Ministry.

The supplies of dairy and meat

products were the centerpiece of the discussion. "This refers to the supplies of fat-free powdered milk, whole milk powder, and butter in the first place. At the moment these Belarusian products are virtually not present in the Iranian market.

However, ahead of the negotiations an Iranian delegation paid a visit to Belarus and showed interest in importing Belarus' dairy products.

We now need to pursue a wise pricing policy to make sure our products are competitive in terms of price with the goods from Australia, New Zealand, and India," Leonid Marinich remarked.

He emphasized that Belarus does not sell meat into Iran either. "We have consulted with IVA about starting supplying Belarusian beef.

We have agreed that each side will set up a working group to resolve all the questions that may arise. Iran does not object to these supplies. The most important thing is that the products should correspond to Iran's veterinary requirements," Leonid Marinich pointed out and added that the Iranian side inquired about Belarus' system of quality control, standards and requirements.

In July the two working groups will meet in Iran to discuss the inspections of relevant Belarus' companies by Iranian specialists. "The Iranian market holds great promise.

With a population of 80 million, Iran produces 10 million tons of milk a year. This is why the country imports dairy products. It also imports \$400 million worth of beef annually.

Belarus is interested in advancing into the Iranian food market, especially if its products will enjoy certain preferences, namely the reduced customs duties as envisaged by the Iran-EAEU free trade agreement," Leonid Marinich underlined.

The Belarusian delegation at the Tehran negotiations comprised representatives of the Agriculture and Food Ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As a result of the talks, the sides signed a protocol on the approval of the provisional free trade agreement between Iran and the EAEU. The sides also agreed to resume discussing the lists of goods and tariffs at the next round of negotiations and exchange proposals within a month.

Germany threatens retaliation if U.S. pushes ahead with Russia sanctions

German leaders have reacted angrily to proposed new American sanctions on Russia they say target Moscow's new gas pipeline to Europe, threatening retaliation if the measures harm the European economy.

The stand-off comes amid already strained relations with the US over Donald Trump's aggressive rhetoric and provoked accusations that America was trying to promote its own gas exports to Europe by blocking Russia.

The result is a rumbling threat of a new energy war and a breakdown in trans-Atlantic unity against Russian aggression.

A spokesman for Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, said she was concerned by the new sanctions. "It is, putting it mildly, a peculiar move by the US Senate," he said.

Senators insist their bill — passed on Thursday by a margin of 98 to two — is designed to punish Moscow for interfering in last year's presidential election and limit Mr Trump's ability to lift sanctions.

It includes punitive measures for anyone helping Russia build energy export pipelines.

The bill must still be approved by the House of Representatives and President Trump, but already Berlin fears it could bring fines against European companies involved in Nord Stream 2, a project to build a pipeline carrying Russian gas under the Baltic Sea.

Brigitte Zypries, economy minister, accused Washington of abandoning a joint approach with Europe on



sanctions against Russia and threatened retaliation if Mr Trump signed it into law.

"If he does, we'll have to consider what we are going to do against it," she told Reuters.

It marks the latest area of conflict between Washington and Berlin since Mr Trump took power, following the US President's criticism of Germany's trade surplus, defence spending and his broader attacks on global co-operation.

The Nord Stream 2 pipeline is being built beneath the

Baltic Sea to supply Russian gas to Germany and beyond. It avoids older routes through Ukraine, which have been disrupted by disputes between Kiev and Moscow.

They accused the US of trying to elbow its way into the EU market to protect American jobs by deploying foreign policy for economic gain.

"To threaten companies in Germany, Austria and other European firms with fines in the US if they take part in or finance energy projects like Nord Stream 2 represents a new and negative dimension to US-European relations," they said.

The bill is designed in part to make it more difficult for Mr Trump to lift sanctions imposed on Russia for annexing Crimea. As a candidate, he was vocal in his praise for Vladimir Putin, raising suspicions that once in office he would ease restrictions in return for Russian support.

It also introduces sanctions against anyone conducting cyberattacks on behalf of the Russian government, following evidence that Moscow was behind attempts to swing the presidential election in Mr Trump's favour.

"The legislation sends a very, very strong signal to Russia, the nefarious activities they've been involved in," said Bob Corker, Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In a joint statement, Sigmar Gabriel, the German Foreign Minister, and Christian Kern, the Austrian Chancellor, said European energy supplies were a matter for Europe not the US. *(Source: The Telegraph)*

Bahrain plans to launch 'mini-SPIEF' with participation of Russia, Persian Gulf States

MOSCOW (Sputnik) — Bahrain is planning to organize an economic forum in the country with the participation of the companies from Russia and the Persian Gulf states, an event which will resemble the format of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Bahrain's Ambassador to Russia Ahmed Abdulrahman

Saati told Sputnik in an interview.

The diplomat added that Manama was planning to hold this forum on an annual basis and invited the Persian Gulf states to establish contacts with Russian companies at the proposed event.

"Now we are working on holding the mini-SPIEF in Bahrain. The Roscongress

Foundation [Russia's organizer of exhibition events] will cooperate with Al Riyadh Group in Bahrain on the issue of holding this forum to discuss cooperation in all the spheres," the ambassador said.

Businesspeople from the region also have plans to hold a forum in Russia's North Caucasus region, the Bahrain of-

ficial continued, adding that the idea has already been supported by leader of Russia's Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov.

On June 1-3, Russia's historic city of St. Petersburg hosted the SPIEF, which gathered together high-ranking politicians and prominent business leaders from dozens of countries.



Re-elected in May, President Hassan Rouhani is expected to form his new cabinet in August.

Total's chief executive Patrick Pouyanne said in late May that the company planned to conclude the South Pars gas deal before summer.

The deal would be signed under the new Iran Petroleum Contract (IPC) scheme which has been postponed several times due to opposition from rivals of Rouhani, and while international companies awaited the waiving of U.S. sanctions.

(Source: Reuters)

German companies ink co-op MOU on building solar farms in Iran

ENERGY TEHRAN — A group of German investors signed a memorandum of understanding for cooperation on the construction of solar farms in North Khorasan Province in northeast of Iran, the official website of Iranian Energy Ministry (known as PAVEN) reported.

A 12-member German delegation comprised of the managers and representatives of seven major German

companies active in renewable energies area, travelled to the mentioned province for conducting the preliminary observations of the region.

According to Alireza Sabouri, the managing director of North Khorasan's Power Distribution Company, the companies will confirm the allocated lands for the projects after complementary studies are done in Germany.

More Russian, Azeri companies prequalified for Iran projects

The National Iranian Oil Company has added five more international oil companies in its list of prequalified companies for Iran's oil and gas upstream projects, just days before the June 19 deadline for the Azadegan oil field tender consortia.

NIOC has added Russia's Gazprom Neft, Rosneft, Tatneft and Zarubezhneft and Azerbaijan's state-owned Socar, taking its list of prequalified companies to a total of 34, according to a list posted on its website.

Gazprom Neft and Zarubezhneft declined to comment, when contacted by S&P Global Platts on Friday, while Rosneft, Tatneft were not available.

Russia now has six companies with Gazprom and Lukoil in the list, the single largest number of prequalified companies for Iran's upstream projects, followed by five companies from Japan.

Officials at Russian companies have said they are potentially interested in projects in Iran but the companies are awaiting for a final contract to evaluate the economics and decide whether they are to take part in them and in which form, individually or via consortia.

NIOC's updated prequalified list of companies comes as Tehran is gearing up for the biggest test of interest in the country's oil sector in years, as major international oil companies prepare to bid for the right to develop the Azadegan oil field, one of its most prized assets.

The prequalified oil companies have been asked to provide details of their planned consortium partners by Monday, as part of NIOC's planned tender to develop the giant onshore Azadegan oil field, a source familiar with the matter said last week.

NIOC has also asked prequalified companies to seek its approval if they are selecting partners that have not been prequalified for Iran's upstream bidding rounds, the source said.

It plans to distribute detailed tender documents to the companies in July, the source added.

The tender will be Iran's first bidding round for a major oil field, having previously relied on bilateral negotiations to award development contracts. It is also the first to be launched under Iran's much delayed new model contract, the Iran Petroleum Contract, which is yet to be published.

This replaces the old buyback contract, which failed to attract sufficient investor interest due to its tough terms.

■ New contract

The delay in launching the new contract has held up Iran's plans to bring in new international oil companies and restore its oil production to pre-sanctions levels of around 4 million barrels per day (b/d).

"Azadegan is the core of Iran's upstream development plans, and accounts for most of Iran's target for oil production



capacity increase. Hence, the upcoming tender is perhaps the most important event the government has been looking forward to for months now, if not years," Iman Nasseri, a senior consultant at FGE said last week.

The tender covers the development of the entire Azadegan field.

Azadegan currently produces around 125,000 b/d, with 75,000 b/d from the northern portion and 50,000 b/d from the south. NIOC plans to raise production to 150,000 b/d in the north and as much as 600,000 b/d in two phases from South Azadegan.

"Iran seems to be in favor of having a Chinese/Russian partner in key developments to keep the project alive together with the local contractor should a 'snap back' of sanctions pull the European partner back out of the project," Nasseri said.

At the start of June, Gazprom Neft and Austria's OMV, which is also a prequalified company, signed an agreement on cooperation on projects in Iran.

The MOU outlines possibilities for working together on "analysis, assessment and study of certain oil deposits... in the

territory of [Iran] in cooperation with the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC)," the two companies said in a statement at the time.

It said Gazprom Neft was "studying the possibility of participating in the development of two blocks in Iran" and given OMV's experience in Iran and the Middle East, "joint geological assessment of blocks will be most effective."

Gazprom Neft earlier said it was looking at the Changouleh and Cheshmeh Khosh oil fields.

Iran has already invited OMV to participate in an imminent tender to develop the Azadegan oil field.

Malaysia's state-owned Petronas and Royal Dutch Shell have handed over their technical studies report on the Azadegan oil field to NIOC, Iran's official Shana news agency reported Sunday.

France's Total and Japan's Inpex Corp. have also offered their surveys on Iran's largest crude reserves, Shana reported quoting Nouredin Shahnazadeh, the managing director of Iran's Petroleum Engineering and Development Company.

Total, Shell, Inpex and Petronas are among the prequalified companies to bid for the Azadegan field. (Source: PLATTS)

Mexico awaits next oil round with cautious optimism

Mexico is looking forward to its next round of offshore oil auctions on Monday with guarded optimism thanks to robust interest from oil majors for the shallow-water tenders.

On Monday, Mexico auctions 15 oil and gas blocks along the southern coastal waters of the Gulf of Mexico in the next stage of the country's historic opening of the industry following a 2013-14 energy reform.

In December 2013 Congress changed the constitution to end a 75-year production and exploration monopoly enjoyed by state oil company Pemex in a bid to reverse years of declining output.

Among the companies that prequalified to compete are Chevron Corp, ConocoPhillips, Eni SpA, Repsol SA, Royal Dutch Shell Plc, Total SA and China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC Ltd).

All told, 20 companies signed up to take part on an individual basis, with 16 consortia also on the list.

Energy Minister Pedro Joaquin Coldwell said he was hopeful that at least 35 to 40 percent of the blocks would be won.

"The pleasing thing about this auction is the high number of consortia taking part, which is a sign there will be plenty of bids," he told Reuters on Friday. "There wouldn't

be much point in forming a consortium and then not making an offer."

How many blocks were snapped up would depend on whether bidding focused on just a few areas, or many, he added.

The auction is the fifth since the energy reform, including one deep-water and two previous shallow-water tenders, yielding 39 contracts signed with forecast investment over the life of the contracts at \$48.8 billion, according to energy ministry data.

Juan Carlos Zepeda, head of the oil regulator known as CNH which oversees the auction, also saw the number of equity tie-

ups among oil companies as a positive sign, expressing optimism that "a bit more than the international benchmark of 30 percent" could be assigned.

The blocks up for auction are spread between the coastal waters of the Gulf states of Veracruz, Tabasco and Campeche, with an average size of 594 square kilometers.

If successful, the blocks could yield production of some 200,000 barrels per day (bpd) in five years, the CNH estimates.

Total crude oil production in Mexico now stands at 2.01 million bpd, down from a peak of 3.38 million bpd in 2004.

(Source: Reuters)

The forward curve for oil prices suddenly looks awful for OPEC

As if a mini-collapse in oil prices wasn't bad enough for OPEC, the pattern in which futures contracts are trading years from now has flipped into the worst possible structure for the exporter group.

Brent and West Texas Intermediate crudes, down almost 15 percent since late May, are both trading in contango, where forward prices get higher all the way into the next decade. While it's a structure that normally denotes weak demand for spot cargoes, the price pattern could also be bad news for the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries as it can sometimes tempt producers outside the group to lock in output for future years.

Saudi Arabia is among nations that have been saying for months that a re-balancing is under way in the oil market after OPEC and other producing nations agreed late last year to cut production. That view was undermined in recent weeks by data showing that combined stockpiles of crude and fuels in the U.S. still the biggest consumer, swelled by 22 million barrels. The International Energy Agency in Paris suggested Wednesday that there's little sign 2018 will be much better.

■ Backwardation banished

Until last week, the forward curves for Brent and WTI had partly been trading in backwardation, meaning some prices were lower further in the future. That flipped into full contango last week, as the U.S. Energy Information Administration unexpectedly said crude inventories rose 3.3 million barrels. The structure became even more entrenched on Wednesday when the IEA said non-OPEC producers led by shale will add barrels more quickly than any expansion in global consumption.

Brent time-spreads between December 2017 and 2018, and then 2018 to 2019, are trading in the deepest contangos since mid-November, the most bearish structure since before OPEC agreed to cut output.



■ OPEC disconnect

"OPEC's decision to merely extend production cuts showed a disconnected cartel, which was not on the 'market pulse,'" said Thibaut Remoundos, founder of Commodities Trading Corporation Ltd. The increase in later-dated futures has been driven by a surge of activity from consumers such as shipping companies and airlines, while bullish bets on the market's structure have been unwound, Remoundos said.

Consumers have been quick to lock in cheap future supplies as crude prices have dropped below \$50. Citigroup Inc. analysts including Daoyuan Zhou wrote in a report on Friday that structural changes in the options market are likely a reflection of consumer activity being stepped up. Producers may hedge 1.3 billion barrels of next year's crude supply in the second half of this year, BofA Merrill Lynch analysts wrote.

The weakness of crude timespreads has outpaced the declines in the nearest prices. That's a sign that market concerns about a lingering supply glut have extended beyond the short-term

into later years. On Thursday, WTI for December 2019 was as much as \$1.37 cheaper than the same contract for December 2020, just 10 cents away from its most bearish level in a year.

Some of the world's biggest banks have also grown increasingly pessimistic about the prospects for crude prices into next year. Morgan Stanley said recently that OPEC will need to extend cuts for the whole of 2018 if it wants to keep the market in balance. Meanwhile, JP-Morgan slashed its forecast for next year by \$10, anticipating "a substantial build in inventories" as U.S. shale producers ramp up output. Even if crude stockpiles do eventually fall, financially traded oil may still struggle to reflect it, said BofA Merrill Lynch.

"There were all those expectations that inventories would go down and that would lead to a tighter market this year and in following years," Olivier Jakob, managing director of consultancy Petromatrix GmbH, said by phone. "Right now it has been delayed and the expectations of a re-balancing are starting to evaporate."

(Source: Bloomberg)

Qatargas to deliver up to 1.1m tons of LNG per year to Shell

State-owned Qatargas said on Saturday it had signed an agreement with Shell for the delivery of up to 1.1 million tons of liquefied natural gas (LNG) per year for five years.

The agreement will start in January 2019 and will be for the supply of LNG from Qatar Liquefied Gas Company Limited (4) (Qatargas 4), a joint venture between Qatar Petroleum which holds 70 percent and Shell with the remaining 30 percent.

The LNG will be delivered to either the Dragon LNG Terminal in Britain or the Gate LNG Terminal in the Netherlands, Qatargas said in a statement, which gave no value for the deal.

Qatar, the world's biggest exporter of LNG, faces competition from Australian and U.S. producers. Supply deals into Europe offer a valuable option as Asia's gas-consuming economies rein in new deals in light of a growing supply overhang.

The Shell agreement also comes as the worst rift in years among some of the most powerful states in the Arab world continues to simmer.

Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain severed their ties with Qatar this month, accusing it of supporting terrorism, a charge which Doha denies.

Qatargas has said its LNG supply to the world's largest LNG importer Japan would not be affected by the economic, diplomatic and transport boycott.

(Source: Reuters)

Russia's central bank sees oil prices down to \$40 in 2018-2019

In view of the current price movements and the oil market outlook, Russia's central bank is keeping its oil price forecast for this year at \$50 per barrel, and still believes that the price of oil will drop to roughly \$40 in 2018-2019, Bank of Russia Governor Elvira Nabiullina said in a statement after the bank cut the key interest rate to 9 percent annually.

Although the pace of economic recovery has somewhat exceeded the Bank of Russia's expectations, medium-term inflation risks remain in place, governor Nabiullina said.

In the medium-term, "The external economic situation will likely remain unstable, as confirmed by the volatility of oil prices. We do not rule out that [oil] production in the U.S. will grow and other countries, which are not parties to the agreement, will expand their supplies to the global market. Demand-side risks are also in place. They result from a likely slowdown in the Chinese economy, as well as the development of energy-efficient technologies and alternative energy sources," the governor noted.

"We still assume that the oil price will draw back to roughly \$40 a barrel in 2018-2019. We do not expect it to considerably affect economic growth given that the economy has already largely adjusted to low oil prices," Nabiullina said.

Russia has adapted to the lower-for-longer oil prices, and this year Russia's budget is reaching its highest level of resistance to oil price swings in the past nine years, Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said in Parliament last week.

A week before that, Russia's Economy Minister Maxim Oreshkin said that the current underlying key assumption of Russia's economic policies—oil prices at \$40—can allow it to live forever at that price or below.

"We are actually ready to live forever at oil prices \$40 or below," Oreshkin said.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Tender Announcement

Title: Agriculture Consultant Services Including Greenhouse Design and Maintenance

Shahid Motahari Agri-industrial Company affiliated with Mostazafan Foundation of the Islamic Revolution of Iran is considering to complete the design and supervision of **5000** hectares of olive orchards in more than **8** provinces in **22** locations ranging **20** to **700** ha within **5-year period**, with the collaboration of a foreign based Agriculture Consulting Engineering to join with a local consulting engineering company on these main activities:

- 1- Prepare a plan and consultation during the **5-year** period in **5000** ha.
- 2- Prepare a plan and consultation on Mechanized greenhouse. (**1,000,000 olive cuttings propagation per year**)
- 3- Planning and consultation on olive plant propagation greenhouse
- 4- Enhancement on Education and training the human resource management

Deadline for the applications is 15 days after Announcement in Newspaper.

Interested candidates are encouraged to apply and submit a letter of interest with full resume, to Human Resources Department by:

Mail: #234, North Mofateh St., Tehran, Iran

P.O. box 134-15745

Postal code: 34431-15889

Tel: +989111517819

Email: motahari1364@gmail.com

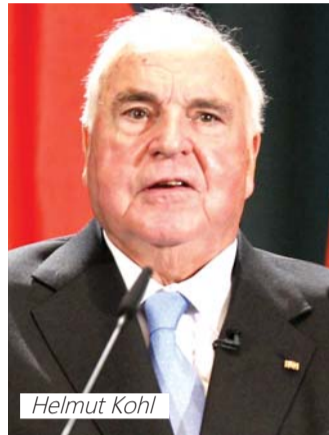
Leader who united Europe as well as Germany

Helmut Kohl, who died on Friday aged 87, was one of a trio of dominant western conservative politicians – along with Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher – whose determined ideological and practical opposition to the Soviet Union helped lead in the closing months of 1989 to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent end of the cold war that had gripped Europe since 1945.

But despite his reputation as a hardliner and his achievement as Germany's longest-serving chancellor since Bismarck, Kohl in person was a shambling bear of a man (he was 193cm or 6'4" tall) who often did not take himself too seriously. Rather than claim a perspicacity he did not possess, Kohl freely admitted later that he did not foresee the sudden Soviet implosion and was as surprised as anyone when it happened.

East Germany's collapse

It is difficult to imagine Angela Merkel, Kohl's protegee and now chancellor herself, behaving so artlessly in public. Unprepared though he might have been, Kohl rose to the occasion presented by East Germany's collapse with a purposeful single-mindedness that shocked and alarmed many in the west, not least Margaret Thatcher.



Helmut Kohl

Kohl took literally the injunction in the West German constitution to restore the country's unity. He produced his own unilateral 10-point plan for "Overcoming the Division of Germany and Europe"

without reference to the western wartime powers – the U.S., Britain and France. In a series of bold and rapid moves in 1990, he travelled to Moscow to seek President Mikhail Gorbachev's acquiescence in German reunification, signed a fast-track economic and social union treaty with the East German leaders who had ousted Erich Honecker's Communists, and with the help of his able foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, won the backing of the U.S.

Kohl had luck on his side, too. In part his success was rooted in Ostpolitik ("east policy") pursued by the former Social Democrat (SPD) chancellors Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt. Their policy of détente towards the Communist-controlled East had been steadfastly opposed by Kohl's Christian Democrats (CDU) and the hard right. But in the end, Kohl's breakthrough vindicated that policy.

For her part, Thatcher remained opposed to reunification throughout, fearing that a resurgent, reviving Germany would once again dominate Europe. She was comprehensively out-manoeuvred by Kohl. But 25 years later, it could be said that Thatcher's premonition has proved accurate. The Greek government would certainly agree. Reunification, ratified in September 1990, turned out to be an enormously costly business for both Germans. The eastern states were poor, persecuted and polluted, while the taxes levied in western Germany to pay for the project, and accompanying westwards migration of jobless Ossi (East Germans), caused deep resentment in some sections of German society.

Maastricht Treaty

The fact that Germany has ultimately proved able to afford this epic act of national reconstruction is attributable, in part at least, to Kohl's other signal political achievement: the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 that brought the European Union into existence and paved the way for the creation of the euro currency. Whatever else they may have done, the EU and the euro (replacing the former, less politically integrated European Economic Community) gave Germany the markets and the means to produce a second German industrial and manufacturing miracle.

In this ambitious vision for a united Europe, Kohl found a willing partner not on the political right but in the rotund form of François Mitterrand, France's Socialist president. Both men remembered the bad old times. Both reasoned that Europe would only be safe and secure if its two leading powers and its most frequent antagonists, France and Germany, worked in tandem. For Kohl, such cooperation was at one with his instinct for peaceful reconciliation. Early in his second term as chancellor, in 1984, he shook hands with Mitterrand on the First World War battlefield at Verdun, as if to finally bring down the curtain on two world wars.

In the same year he became the first German leader to address the Knesset in Israel. At the same time, he was not afraid to confront strength with strength, in facing down the totalitarianism of the Soviet Union. West Germany played a full part in the controversial 1980s U.S. deployment of intermediate-range cruise and Pershing nuclear-tipped missiles in Europe, under the banner of NATO, the target of the Greenham Common protests in Britain.

And it was Kohl who was happy to play host to Reagan, the hawkish U.S. leader, and sit with him on a platform near the Brandenburg Gate in divided Berlin in 1987 when Reagan issued his challenge: "Mr Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"

Kohl served as chancellor continuously from 1982 to 1998. He retired from public life in 2002. His later years were marred by a scandal over CDU party financing and the suicide, in 2001, of his popular wife, Hannelore. Until he suffered the first of a series of serious illnesses, he continued to air his views, and was sharply critical of Merkel's pro-austerity policies in response to the global financial crisis. Kohl's verdict was terse: "Die macht mir mein Europa kaputt" ("She's destroying the Europe I built.")

(Source: The Guardian)

When East Germany collapsed, the West German chancellor rose to the occasion and helped heal the cold war's bitter divisions.

Turkish military will protect Qatari regime if necessary

By Metin Gurcan

In the deepening crisis between Qatar and a Saudi-led coalition, Ankara faces yet another test of its rhetoric versus its actual abilities. Ankara tried to give the impression of being a mediator in the first two days of the crisis but suddenly made a dramatic reversal and adopted a pro-Qatar position. Ankara cannot easily resume its mediator role, especially since the parliament authorized Turkey to send 3,000-5,000 soldiers to Qatar, which allows them to assist with internal security should there be mass popular movements against the rule of Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain severed ties with Qatar a week ago, accusing it of supporting terrorism, which Doha denies.

Two legislative documents constituting the basis of military cooperation between Qatar and Turkey had been waiting for parliamentary approval for more than a year. One of them was the protocol signed in Doha in December 2015 that calls for deployment of Turkish troops in Qatar. The protocol cites as its objective "modernization of Qatari military institutions, diversifying military training, [and supporting] defense capabilities and facilities of the Qatari armed forces through training and exercises."

About 90 Turkish military personnel currently are stationed temporarily at a former British base 15 miles from Doha. That number now can be boosted to a brigade-level task force of 5,000 troops made up of a joint headquarters staff, coordination council, support units, infantry, and air and naval components. The protocol also authorizes the parties to exchange training programs, experiences and knowledge, and provide each other with advisory services.

A parliamentary source in Ankara who didn't want to be identified said the project for a Turkish military base was held up in the Turkish parliament because of complacency and foot-dragging of Qatari authorities in allotting a permanent base for the Turkish troops. The source said Ankara was truly annoyed by the Qatari attitude, but since the crisis erupted, Qatar has sped up the process.

Other legislation that was awaiting Turkish parliamentary approval was the Protocol on Cooperation on Gendarmerie Training. The document authorizes Turkey to assign as many gendarmerie personnel as necessary to provide "training in internal security, in combating smuggling and organized crime, and to control mass public protests."

Diplomatic crisis

After the diplomatic crisis began a week ago, the Turkish parliament processed those two documents with incredible speed and approved them instantly. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is thereby fully authorized, without worrying about contravening



Ankara tried to give the impression of being a mediator in the first two days of the crisis but suddenly made a dramatic reversal and adopted a pro-Qatar position.

any domestic legislation, to increase the strength of current Turkish army units consisting of infantry, military engineer, combat support units and Special Forces elements and, more significantly, to dispatch Turkish gendarmerie forces to confront internal security threats the Al Thani regime may face. Both documents have carefully underlined that Turkish soldiers and gendarmerie units dispatched to Qatar will not be involved in "operational missions" but will provide "military training and advice."

But what if the crisis deepens? If mass protests break out in Qatar or if there is a threat to the personal safety and rule of the emir, could Erdogan — who regularly refers to Al Thani as "my brother" — then dispatch troops on operational missions to protect him? Experts say there is no legal or political impediment to prevent Erdogan from doing it.

Here we must refer to a news report that cited a document of the Qatari Embassy in Ankara saying that on July 16, 2016, one day after the July 15 Turkish coup attempt, a 150-strong elite unit of Qatari Special Forces had come to Ankara for close-quarters protection of Erdogan and stayed in Ankara for four days.

Ankara has not denied this four-month-old report. If the report is factual, one can be sure Erdogan would definitely

respond in kind should Al Thani and his family need it.

I personally feel that a young emir who had been ambitiously working to promote the "Qatari way of thinking and doing things" will eventually give in to the demands of the Saudi-led bloc. If Al Thani's behavior does not change and if he does not affirmatively respond to U.S. President Donald Trump's call for a "meeting at the White House" to discuss the matter, he could wind up being ousted.

To resolve the problem, then, I feel a plot to depose Al Thani would likely be a U.S.-endorsed, Saudi-led military intervention. This coup's overall objective would be to replace the emir, with a view to bringing Qatar under the same level of Saudi influence and control as Bahrain.

In Ankara, this is a nightmare scenario widely discussed in government circles. Many Turkish officials fear the crisis could end with Al Thani giving in to demands of "Bahrainization" — that is, just a pretense of independence but governed from Riyadh. If he resists, he would be removed from the throne.

Al Thani's fate is a vital matter. If he does not comply with U.S. and Saudi Arabia demands, massive street protests could start in Qatar. If this happens, the Qatari military would be unlikely

to offer an effective response. Then, a decision by high-profile members of the Al Attiyah and Al Thani families could be to abandon the emir and side with U.S.-endorsed Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates rather than militarily escalate the crisis.

Now everyone's wondering how the emir will respond to Trump's invitation to the White House to discuss the crisis.

In Turkey, eyes are on Erdogan. If the crisis deepens and the emir's situation becomes more precarious, we will have to wait and see what Erdogan will do for his bosom buddy, who has proved his friendship many times over. Here, we have to keep in mind the increasing disparity between what Turkey wants to do and what it can actually do in the Middle East.

Well-placed military sources in Ankara who wanted to remain anonymous said Turkey intends to deploy infantry first and then a naval force in Qatar. Deployment of Turkish F-16 fighter jets would come in the third phase. Military cargo planes would be used for logistical support of the base.

The major test awaiting Ankara is how to reconcile what Turkey actually can do with the personal brotherhood bond of the two leaders.

(Source: Al Monitor)

A cynical reversal on Cuba

Fans of Cuban rum and cigars can rest easy. So can the Starwood chain, which has a deal to manage a historic hotel in Havana. But Americans who want to vacation in Cuba or start doing business there will find it harder as a result of President Trump's misguided decision to slam the brakes on a two-year-old diplomatic opening with the island.

Trump told a cheering crowd in Miami on Friday that his goal is to achieve a "free Cuba." In truth, his new policy is just the latest chapter in a spiteful political crusade to overturn crucial elements of his predecessor's legacy while genuflecting to Cuban-Americans in Miami's exile community who helped put him in office.

By now, Trump has perfected the art not of the deal but of dismantling what went before. "I am canceling the last administration's completely one-sided deal with Cuba," he declared, an exaggeration in that he reversed only parts of it. But they were important parts, including relaxations on travel and commerce negotiated by President Barack Obama. The net result is that Cuban-American relations are likely to revert to a more adversarial Cold War footing, undermining Washington's standing in Latin America.

The new policy

Under the new policy, Americans may no longer plan their own private trips to Cuba, and those who travel with authorized education tours will be subject to new rules to ensure that they are not tourists. American companies and citizens will be barred from doing business with firms controlled by the Cuban military or its intelligence services, thus denying Americans access to criti-



Cuban-American relations are likely to revert to a more adversarial Cold War footing, undermining Washington's standing in Latin America.

cal parts of the Cuban economy, including much of the tourism sector.

Trump's policy rests on a cynical and historically bogus foundation. The aim, he says, is to force Cuban leaders to end repression, embrace democracy and open their economy. "We will not be silent in the face of Communist oppression any longer," he said, adding that Obama's brief détente has only empowered the Communist government and enriched the military. But 50 years of isolationist, hard-line sanctions never produced the ouster of Cuba's Communist regime that

anti-Castro activists had hoped for.

Trump's sudden concern for human rights is particularly hard to swallow. No recent president has been so disdainful of these rights or embraced so lovingly authoritarianism who abuse their people, like the Saudi royal family.

And while Trump says he wants to deprive the Cuban state of income from American dollars, many Cubans say the real victims will be the entrepreneurs who have benefited from the thousands of American tourists who visited Cuba over the last two years. If Trump would open his mind to facts like these, instead of succumbing to the blandishments of cheering crowds and political sycophants, he would learn that three-quarters of all American adults favor Obama's decision to re-establish ties with Cuba.

About the best that can be said is that his reversal is not as bad as it might have been. Embassies in Washington and Havana will stay open, direct flights between the two countries will continue, and Cuban-Americans will still be able to travel freely to Cuba and send money to relatives there.

That's little comfort, given Trump's harsh tone. The president leaves real questions about the future of bilateral agreements on health care cooperation, joint planning to mitigate oil spills, coordination on counter-narcotic efforts and intelligence-sharing — and real questions about a truly productive relationship with an old adversary that Trump seems determined to turn into a new one.

(Source: The NYT)

ISIL attack on Tehran, part of Saudi Arabia, Israel strategic military plan against Iran

INTERVIEW
By Lachin Rezaian

A former U.S. army psychological operation officer and counter-terrorism analyst said the attacks in Tehran, the first that ISIL had claimed responsibility for in the Shia Islamic republic, most likely were executed as part of a larger strategic military plan of Saudi Arabia and Israel against Iran.

Scott Bennett has noted that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has declared diplomatic war against Qatar and is waging a psychological warfare campaign against them in an effort to turn Qatar against Iran and Yemen.

He underlined that the reason for the joint operation of some states against Qatar is meant to serve as an "ethnic cleansing" against the Shia in Qatar, and hide this agenda by claiming Qatar is funding ISIL/Al Qaeda.

He also condemned the cutting of ties with Qatar as a pre-emptive strike that would distract Iran from the terrorist attack that would be launched days later.

"This attack of course was meant to try and provoke Iran into a counter-attack against Saudi Arabia, in order to justify the entry of the U.S. into a defense of Saudi Arabia," Bennett said in an exclusive interview with Tehran Times:

■ How do you evaluate Saudi Arabia's rift with Qatar in behind scenes?

With the recent terrorist attacks upon Iran by Wahhabi inspired fanatics (most likely from Saudi Arabia, Israel, and trained by the U.S. CIA and Britain's MI6), the cutting of ties with Qatar by Saudi Arabia suddenly takes on a whole new meaning. This cutting of ties with Qatar was meant as a pre-emptive strike that would distract Iran from the terrorist attack that would be launched days later. This attack of course was meant to try and provoke Iran into a counter-attack against Saudi Arabia, in order to justify the entry of the U.S. into a defense of Saudi Arabia.

Clearly, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has declared diplomatic war against Qatar and is waging a psychological warfare campaign against them in an effort to turn Qatar against Iran and Yemen. Saudi Arabia, and specifically the ruling Wahhabi Government regime, has sought to hide both its leadership role and its anti-Shia religious purpose in this act by pressuring other countries--Egypt, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and others--to also cut diplomatic ties. This act was not only known, but perhaps even planned and orchestrated, by the Saudi Intelligence Services, the American Central Intelligence Agency and State Department, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the British MI6, and the Israeli Mossad. It's essential to note that this act of diplomatic war was not initiated by the people of Saudi Arabia, nor was it done as an act of protest against Qatar's financing of Wahhabi terrorists, mercenaries, Al Qaeda and ISIL, since the Saudi Arabian royal family has been the largest financier of Wahhabi Sunni Islamic terrorism around the world. This cutting of ties was done as a pre-emptive attack upon Qatar, and was to serve as a warning that if Qatar did not fully join the Saudi Arabian agenda of attacking all Shia

communities, then they would suffer the same fate as Syria and Libya.

■ What did Saudi Arabia seek with the move against Doha?

The Saudi Arabian move against Doha was to infect the minds of the people of Qatar that if they did not support the agenda of Saudi Arabia, then Qatar as a nation would cease to exist. One of the reasons for this of course was to eventually absorb Qatar into Saudi Arabia, and thereby steal the resources, natural gas, wealth, and strategic position of Qatar, and use it in the long term Saudi Arabian-Israeli agenda of destroying Iran by breaking it up and crippling its ability to function as a nation.

Whether due to an act of commission or omission, the U.S. President Donald Trump is responsible for the Saudi declaration of diplomatic war against Qatar, because the U.S. President communicated to the Saudi Government the following messages: 1) The U.S. government does not object to the Saudi Arabian financing of terrorism, and is not going to file any United Nations diplomatic or military or economic punishment against Saudi Arabia;

2) The U.S. is choosing the Saudi Arabian Wahhabi side to ally with, and is thereby siding with the Saudi Arabians and Israelis against the Iran-Russian alliance; 3) The U.S. is supportive of a Saudi Arabian led Wahhabi Arab NATO type army, that will then be used against Syria and Iran and Russia in a long term Wahhabi mercenary operation; 4) The U.S. is giving a green light to igniting a war between Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel,



Saudi cutting of ties with Qatar is a pre-emptive strike that would distract Iran from the terrorist attack that would be launched days later.

and other nations, and will then enter this war to use it as a pre-text for direct confrontation with Iran.

As Middle East expert Catherine Shkadam reported to RT, the timing of the attacks upon Iran, shortly after a presidential election in Iran, may indicate that the perpetrators intended to cast doubt on the decision of the Iranian people to give President Hassan Rouhani a second term.

"Iran has just conducted quite successfully its presidential election. Everything went according to plan, it was peaceful, it was progressive," she said.

It's also important to note that the attacks in Tehran were the first that ISIL



The strategy of Saudi Arabia is to shock and strangle Qatar into submission to the Saudi political-military-religious agenda of destroying the Shia and all non-Wahhabist people's and nations.

had claimed responsibility for in the Shia Islamic republic, and most likely were executed as part of a larger strategic military plan of Saudi Arabia and Israel against Iran.

■ What would be the financial and economic consequences of cutting ties to Qatar?

The U.S. sale of weapons to Saudi Arabia, and promise of military training, is meant to more tightly bind the U.S. to the Saudi regime, and thereby guarantee a U.S. commitment to defend Saudi Arabia against any attack or counterattack that might occur. The strategy of

the political-economic-military stranglehold of Saudi Arabia by enlisting the help of Russia, Iran, China, and other nations. If Qatar submits, it will be used as a pawn against Iran, and destroyed in a counter-attack. If Qatar rejects the Saudi agenda and throws off the chains of Saudi domination, then it must become the Switzerland of the Middle East, and demand protection by other outside nations--most likely China, Russia, Iran, Syria, and other anti-Wahhabi Arab nations. The simple fact is that Saudi Arabia is close to collapse, and the people of Saudi Arabia are desperate for a revolution, and are looking for leadership to throw off the burden of the House of Saud and its corrupt criminal enslavement of Arabia, and the false claim of the Wahhabi control of Mecca and Medina and Islam. Saudi Arabia is now appearing to be the puppet of the Israeli-American regime, and is foolishly and blindly rushing towards war with Iran and Russia and Syria, which will only result in their own collapse and destruction as a nation. Time will tell when it happens, but the cutting of ties with Qatar is certainly the first step to the end of Saudi Arabia as a nation...which may be God's intention all along.

■ More than half a dozen Arab nations have cut ties with Qatar. Which countries are beneficiaries of the move?

Israel will side with their cousins in Saudi Arabia, and the U.S. will side against Qatar, as well as Somalia, Sudan, and the United States. The reason for this joint operation against Qatar is meant to serve as an "ethnic cleansing" against the Shia in Qatar, and hide this agenda by claiming Qatar is funding ISIL/Al Qaeda. The irony, and the lie, is that Saudi Arabia has been encouraging Qatar to fund terrorism, and if Qatar did not, then it would be punished by the Saudi government. So what we are seeing is the Saudi government punishing Qatar for its non-compliance and its objection to the Saudi genocide in Yemen.

■ How do you evaluate the international reactions to the conflict?

The international community's reaction is sickeningly silent and ignorant. The world is ignorant of the fact that Saudi Arabia has always pressured and managed Qatar's financing of terrorism, and that this action of cutting off of diplomatic ties is a pre-emptive act of diplomatic war against both Qatar and Iran, as well as an attempt to breathe new life into the Saudi led invasion of Syria. However what most likely will happen is that instead of breathing new life into Saudi Arabia, it will be the last death gasp of the House of Saud, and a revolution soon will occur that throws out of power the Saudi Royal family--and thereby end the Wahhabi wars of terrorism in the Middle East, Europe, and Africa.

The world should perform a forensic analysis of the Qatari role in Saudi Arabian foreign policy, and in exchange for protection, encourage the people and government of Qatar to declare itself a neutral country and serve as a liaison for Iran to the rest of the Arab world. That might serve to change the balance of power in the Middle East--which is the most important change needed to achieve a lasting peace.



The Saudi Arabian move against Doha was to infect the minds of the people of Qatar that if they did not support the agenda of Saudi Arabia, then Qatar as a nation would cease to exist.

Trump tests the emoluments clause

By Paul R. Pillar

A lawsuit filed by Maryland and the District of Columbia is the second such suit alleging that President Trump is violating the clause in the U.S. Constitution that prohibits officials from accepting emoluments from foreign states.

The principal focus of the suits is the Trump hotel that occupies the Old Post Office Building a few blocks from the White House (and is the subject of yet another irregularity, in that government officials are supposed to be legally barred from leasing that publicly owned property).

The new suit may have a better chance than the first one of establishing standing to sue, given that the plaintiffs represent jurisdictions with business interests that may lose customers to the Trump hotel because of its connection to the presidency. Earlier this year, for example, the Kuwaiti embassy, which for many years had held its national day celebration at the Four Seasons Hotel, held the event instead at Trump's hotel.

The lost business is legally significant regarding standing to sue, and when a public official gains a commercial advantage because of his position, there is a fairness issue regarding businesses competing on an uneven playing field. But which Washington hotel gets to host embassy parties is hardly the most important question involved.

We can get a sense of the relevant concerns of the Founding Fathers by noting that the Emoluments Clause is part of a broader prohibition in the Constitution (in Article I, Section 9) that bars the granting of any title of nobility and the acceptance "of any present, Office, Emolument, or Title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince, or foreign State."

Emolument may be an Eighteenth-Century word that is not in many active vocabularies in the Twenty-first Century, but the concern about the effects of flattery and favor are at least as relevant today as they were when the Constitution was written.

■ Trump's fondness for flattery

In fact, with the current President, the concern is more relevant than ever. The role of flattery in the Trump presidency was in full display in the public portion of a cabinet meeting this week, in which the self-congratulation from the man in the center and the sycophancy from nearly everyone else at the table was what one might expect from a meeting of the North Korean cabinet.

Foreign governments have concluded that flattering Trump is one of the best ways to influence his policies. The Saudis pulled out all the stops to do so during Trump's recent visit to the kingdom, including projecting a five-story image of Trump's face

on the side of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. In view of the output of the visit, including Trump quickly taking Saudi Arabia's side as it subsequently lowered the boom on Qatar, the Saudis no doubt consider their efforts to have been worthwhile.

Another all-too-obvious strand of Trump's presidency, and one at least as relevant to his ownership of unfairly advantaged hotels, is his throwing of ethics into the trash. A shameless mixing of public business and private financial interest has been a major feature of this presidency (and such steps as letting his sons manage his business day-to-day do nothing to remove the conflict of interest stemming from his ownership of businesses that profit from presidential actions).

That disregard for ethics also has set a terrible example for people around that Cabinet table and others in this administration who also have conflicts of interest. All this is a major problem even when no foreign governments are involved. Many aspects of domestic policy are being shaped by people who have private interests at stake, which often point in a different direction than the nation's interests.

■ Founders' worries

The writers of the Constitution were concerned about this broader problem of keeping public business separate from private pecuniary interests. Another place in the document where the term emolument comes up is in Article II, which is about the presidency and the Executive Branch. Section 1 says that the president's salary should not be changed during his term and that "he shall not receive within that Period any other Emolument from the United States, or any of them."

In contrast to Barack Obama, whose respect for the Constitution, including the Emoluments Clause, led him to request a formal legal opinion from the Department of Justice to determine whether he should be permitted to accept his Nobel Prize, Trump gives no indication of having even passing thoughts about such things, or about government ethics. His conduct in that regard is the opposite of what the writers of the Constitution sought in trying to erect a strict divide between private interests and the nation's business.

When a foreign government is involved, in violation of the Emoluments Clause in Article I, the fundamental problem is that U.S. foreign policy may be influenced by the President's private financial interests and thus may be shaped in ways different from what is in the national interest. The shaping need not entail a specific quid pro quo with a foreign state; general affinities or preferences, or a natural inclination to favor those who have bestowed favors -- or profitable business -- in the other direction may be sufficient to shape policy in ways detrimental to U.S. interests.

Moreover, the ability of foreign states to influence U.S. policies in this way is not an equal opportunity matter. Governments that are better able to do things such as holding expensive receptions at high-priced Pennsylvania Avenue hotels have more of an opportunity to play this game than do governments that are less well-heeled. Favoring the former over the latter is not necessarily in U.S. interests.

There can be a further detriment to U.S. interests that involves how other foreign governments perceive the drivers of U.S. policy, and their willingness to conform to or cooperate with that policy. If foreign leaders are left to wonder whether a U.S. president's policies reflect the president's private pocketbook rather than U.S. national interests, let alone interests that the two countries share, U.S. credibility suffers.

(Source: Consortium News)

Mr. Trump, Afghanistan is your war now

President Trump was typically self-absorbed in his tweet on Wednesday celebrating the 242nd birthday of the United States Army. "Proud to be your commander-in-chief," he proclaimed to the soldiers.

Yet, when it comes to the actual life-and-death responsibilities of the commander in chief — overseeing America's vast war machine and sending men and women into conflict — Mr. Trump seems more like the delegator in chief. The latest evidence was his decision this week to give Defense Secretary Jim Mattis the authority to determine troop levels in Afghanistan, which could lead to an increase of as many as 5,000 troops, if proposals favored by Mr. Mattis and his generals go forward.

Mr. Mattis has acknowledged to Congress that the United States-led coalition is "not winning" in Afghanistan. It is not at all clear that adding 5,000 more troops — a roughly 50 percent increase over the current troop level of 9,800 — can make a difference, especially when the administration has yet to confront the basic problem of ensuring public safety and the larger political and economic issues that must be part of a comprehensive strategy to resolve the conflict.

What such a decision would do is reverse the drawdown President Barack Obama put in place and set a new policy

of expanded involvement in a war that has already dragged on for 16 years, cost thousands of American and Afghan lives and consumed billions of dollars.

Military commanders chafed under Mr. Obama's tight controls on troop deployments and war making, which some of them saw as micromanagement. Even so, commanders in chief cannot subcontract their most sacred duties; what the United States faces at this moment is not some routine tactical maneuver or choice. It is what to do about America's longest war. That is, at bottom, Mr. Trump's responsibility, and at the moment the nation has no idea what he thinks or where he is headed.

More Americans into battle

Mr. Trump, who has no prior government experience, leaves the impression that he is cowed by the weighty responsibility of sending more Americans into battle, and is looking to put that onus on Mr. Mattis so he has somebody to blame if things go wrong, as he did when he fingered the generals for a botched raid in Yemen in January, in which one member of the Navy SEALs was killed.

That the president may be distancing himself from a complex challenge is only one concern. Another is the absence of an informed, wide-ranging public debate.

Discussions about possible troop increases have largely

been theoretical and limited to experts, prompting Senator John McCain, the Republican chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, to complain fiercely at a hearing on Tuesday that the Pentagon has yet to present a plan to regain the battlefield momentum that could provide a framework for decision making.

There is an urgent need for just such a plan and such a discussion, not least because everything in Afghanistan seems to be going backward. Mr. Mattis says that he may send some additional troops even before the new war plan is completed, perhaps next month, because the Taliban is once again "surging." (The Islamic State, a relative newcomer to the conflict, has been flexing its muscles in Afghanistan this year.)

Apart from the fact that the need for additional troops has not been cogently debated, much less established as necessary, such a move now would be premature: None of the big questions have been answered.

How will 5,000 more troops turn the tide, when the United States was unable to bring stability to Afghanistan when it had more than 100,000 troops there in 2011? What is the core American national security interest — defeating Al Qaeda, ISIS, the Taliban? Stabilizing the Afghan state? All of the above? None?

Civilian, military leaders

American civilian and military leaders have long agreed that the goal must be a political settlement with the Taliban. Yet five months into Mr. Trump's tenure, the well-resourced Pentagon, which is on track to receive a large budget increase this year, is calling the shots — not the State Department, which Mr. Trump's budget would decimate.

There also is no sign of a comprehensive strategy coordinated by the National Security Council to integrate all efforts — not just the battle against the Taliban and the Islamic State, but also broader issues of improving governance in Kabul, battling corruption, fostering reconciliation with the Taliban and engaging Pakistan and other regional partners.

One major hindrance to sound policy making is the fact that there are few experts in place to do the work; many senior national security positions remain unfilled. However capable and respected Mr. Mattis may be, the Pentagon and American military forces cannot alone bring stability, or whatever counts as "winning," to Afghanistan.

To achieve any worthwhile outcome, the president must be committed and involved, as must his entire national security team. So far the Pentagon is running the show, largely by default.

(Source: The NYT)

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What does it take to be a super-ager?

Research suggests that moving out of your comfort zone is the key to staying mentally and physically young.

Finding role models who are older than we are gets more difficult as we age. But in the last few years, medical science has identified a new group we can aspire to join — the super-agers. The term refers to people in their 70s and 80s who have the mental or physical capability of their decades-younger counterparts.

What makes a cognitive super-ager?

Dr. Bradford Dickerson, a neurologist at Harvard-affiliated Massachusetts General Hospital and his colleagues have been studying super-agers for several years. Their results suggest that embracing new mental challenges may be the key to preserving both brain tissue and brain function.

In one study, 81 healthy adults — 40 of whom were 60 to 80 years old and 41 of whom were 18 to 35 — were read a list of 16 nouns six times. Twenty minutes later, they were asked to recall as many of the words as possible. While 23 of the older participants recalled nine or fewer words, a score considered average for their age group, 17 seniors — the super-agers — could remember 14 words or more, a score similar to that of the younger participants.

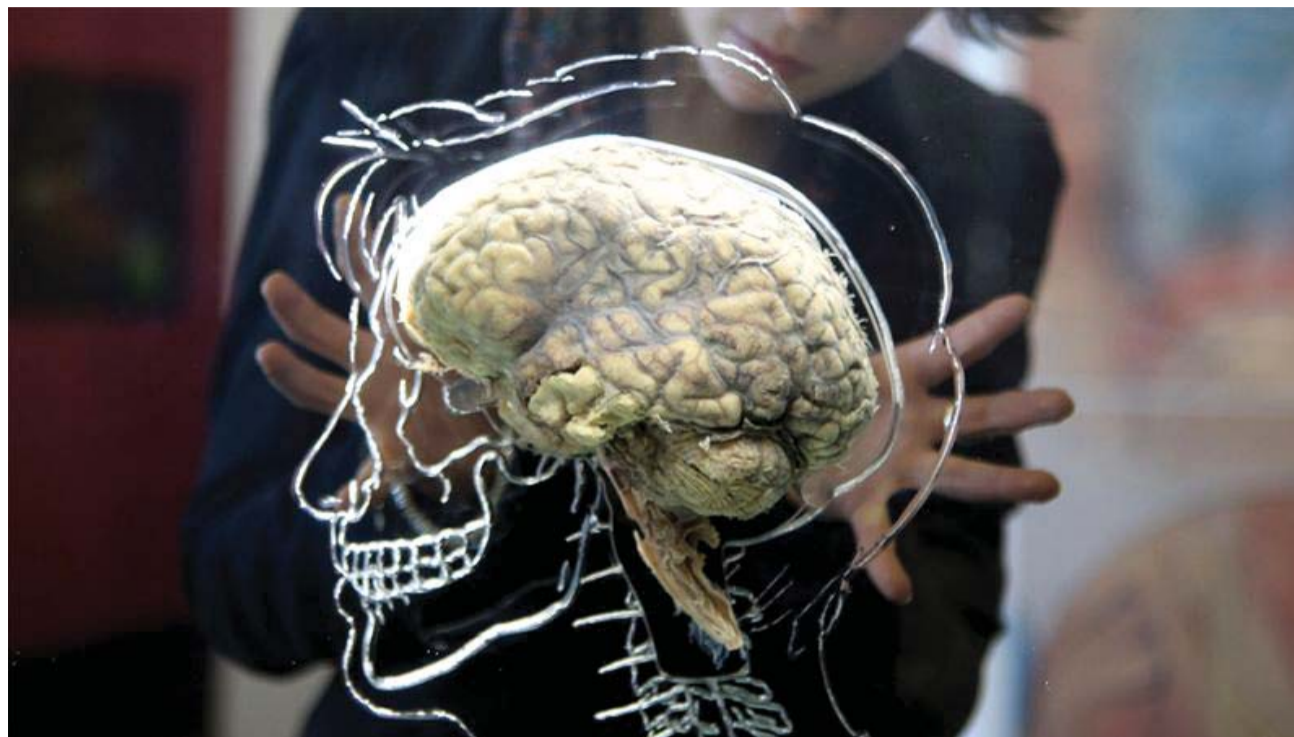
The participants also underwent functional magnetic resonance imaging, which provides images of the brain at work. The researchers found that some areas of the brain appeared thinner — an indication of cell loss — in the older people who had normal test scores, but not in those who scored as well as younger participants. These particular brain regions are involved in many functions, including emotion, language, and stress. They are also responsible for regulating internal organs and coordinating sensory input into a cohesive experience. The thicker these regions of brain are, the better a person's performance on tests of memory and attention, such as the word memorization test.

Although super-agers' brains show less cell loss than those of their contemporaries, their IQs and educational levels are similar. What sets them apart might be that they view problem-solving differently, Dr. Dickerson says. "They may approach these tasks as a challenge they can succeed at, in contrast to typical older adults who may give up."

One of Dr. Dickerson's colleagues, Dr. Lisa Barrett, speculates that super-agers may share a willingness to endure discomfort to master a new skill, like playing a musical instrument or speaking a new language. Super-agers keep moving out of their comfort zones to gain new areas of expertise.

What makes a physical super-ager?

Like cognitive super-agers, physical super-agers have scores that rival those of women decades younger, especially on measures of aerobic capacity — the amount of oxygen you can take in and distribute to your tissues in a minute, expressed as maximal oxygen consumption, or VO2 max. On average, people lose 10% of



On average, people lose 10% of their aerobic capacity every decade after age 30.

their aerobic capacity every decade after age 30. "Some studies have indicated that people in their 80s who exercised at high intensity for 20 to 45 minutes a day have an aerobic capacity of people 30 years younger," says Dr. J. Andrew Taylor, director of the Cardio-vascular Research Laboratory at Harvard-affiliated Spaulding Rehabilitation Network.

Measuring VO2 max requires a person to run on a treadmill in a medical facility while hooked up to monitoring equipment. Because treadmill tests are expensive, they usually aren't given to people who don't have symptoms of cardiovascular disease. A few years ago, Norwegian researchers came up with an algorithm to estimate VO2 max based on a person's answers to a few questions about his or her health and exercise habits. The researchers tested their method by asking 5,000 people to fill out the questionnaire and then take a treadmill test. When the researchers compared the VO2 max scores derived from the questionnaires to those from the treadmill tests, they found that the results obtained from the questionnaires closely approximated the treadmill results for about 60% of people. The questionnaire tended to underestimate VO2 max somewhat in the fittest volunteers and to overestimate it in the least fit.

Since the questionnaire was developed, several groups of researchers have used it to see how VO2 max relates to health outcomes. In general, they have found that as VO2 max increases, the risks of cardiovascular disease, dementia, and death fall. The Norwegian researchers have used the data from their studies to create a calculator to estimate a person's biological age; you can find it online at worldfitnesslevel.org.

In 2015, 4,200 participants in the 14th

National Senior Games used the Norwegian calculator to estimate their biological ages. Although the average chronological age of the participants was 68, their average biological age was 43.

What can you do to become a super-ager?

Scientists are still studying this question. What they do know is that although any regular physical and mental activity reduces health risks, intense physical activity increases aerobic capacity, and intense mental activity preserves areas of the brain involved in memory and reasoning. Following the suggestions below may not ensure that you'll become a super-ager, but it will put you on the road to better health.

Embrace mental challenges. If you enjoy crossword puzzles, you may want to take on acrostics or mathematical games. Try doing something yourself that you would have hired someone else to do in the past — perhaps calculating your income taxes, assembling a piece of flat-packed furniture, or installing new computer software. Volunteer for a project that may seem little intimidating, like tutoring students who are trying to master English as a second language or registering voters for the next election. Pursue a leisure activity you didn't have time for earlier in life, be it joining a theater group, writing poetry, learning the language of your favorite translated book so you can read the original, becoming proficient on your favorite musical instrument, or creating intricate origami sculptures.

Increase your exercise capacity. How much of your VO2 max you preserve depends on three factors — the intensity, duration, and frequency of your workouts. Exercise intensity increases as you come closer to achieving your maximum heart

rate, which you can calculate by subtracting your age from 220. If you're just beginning to exercise, try to get your pulse up to a rate of 50% of maximum. If you've been exercising a while, work up to 60%, then try sustaining 70% of your maximum rate. (At that rate, you won't be able to talk easily as you work out.) Try to exercise at that level for 20 to 40 minutes, three to five days a week.

Prepare to be frustrated. Patience and perseverance are key to mastering challenges. It may take months or years of practice to gain proficiency in a new field, but the benefits can be great. For example, the photo-editing software on your computer may seem impenetrable at first glance, but once you've learned to use all the menus and tools it offers, you'll be able to produce professional-quality images from photos captured on your smartphone. Although you may tire after walking a few blocks, if you gradually increase the time you walk and the distance you cover, you may be walking a mile within months.

Don't let your age deter you. As long as you are physically up to a challenge, your years shouldn't hold you back. Mary Robertson "Grandma" Moses didn't start painting in earnest until she was 78. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg began working with a personal trainer at 68 following treatment for colon cancer. Today, at age 84, she still completes a regular workout most of us shouldn't try without medical permission.

Get going with a group. You may find it easier to take on new challenges if you're in the company of other beginners. Check your local community center or "Y" for programs that welcome seniors. You may be surprised by what you can accomplish in a few months. (Source: health.harvard.edu)

Otto Warmbier's condition: What is unresponsive wakefulness?

By Joe Sterling

Otto Warmbier, the former North Korean detainee now back in the United States, is suffering from "unresponsive wakefulness," also known as a persistent vegetative state. That means he is awake at times but is not aware of his surroundings or himself.

The 22-year-old college student suffered severe brain damage during his 17 months of detention, said doctors at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center, who reported his condition during a Thursday news conference.

What is unresponsive wakefulness?

Unresponsive wakefulness is a syndrome in which someone has no awareness of their surroundings, despite perhaps his eyes being open, blinking or looking around, CNN Chief Medical Correspondent Dr. Sanjay Gupta said.

"They just have no recognition," he said. "They don't speak. There's nothing that is, sort of, voluntary in terms of movements, even though their eyes are open."

What's the cause?

A magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI, scan of Warmbier showed "extensive loss of brain tissue in all

Unresponsive wakefulness is a syndrome in which someone has no awareness of their surroundings, despite perhaps his eyes being open, blinking or looking around.

regions of the brain," Dr. Daniel Kanter, professor of neurology and director of the Neurocritical Care Program at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center, told reporters.

This type of brain injury is usually seen as a result of cardiopulmonary arrest, meaning heart or lung malfunctions may have prevented oxygen from reaching the brain through a person's blood supply, causing brain tissue to die, he explained.

When the brain is deprived of oxygen for longer than four minutes during a cardiopulmonary arrest, the risk of brain injury increases significantly, Dr. Robert Glatter, an emergency physician at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York, told CNN.

"Brain cells require oxygen, carried by red blood cells, to survive, so when the heart or lungs are compromised, the cells may not survive," he said.

"The result of such an insult to the brain is a variable loss of brain

function, including the capacity for (movement), language, vision, memory, comprehension, as well as the ability to maintain a general state of awareness," Glatter said.

Does the brain function at all?

During unresponsive wakefulness, the brain functions that control spontaneous breathing, heartbeat and blood pressure, urine production, metabolism and digestion continue, Glatter explained.

These routine functions of the body sometimes continue, as they are coordinated by different areas of the brain, he said.

However, while a person may sleep and wake as usual and may open their eyes spontaneously, that person is not truly conscious or aware of the environment as a neurologically normal individual would be, Glatter said.

How are patients treated?

Some patients who suffer an anoxic brain injury -- in which the brain is

deprived of oxygen -- require care to restore normal blood pressure and heartbeat, and to ensure a continuous supply of oxygen to the brain, Glatter said.

"Patients are placed on a ventilator and require medicine to reduce the risk of seizures, which are quite common after such an injury," he said. This is not the case for Warmbier, who can breathe on his own.

The majority of patients require chronic long-term care to address nutritional needs; prevent wound infections, urinary tract infections and pressure sores that can lead to sepsis; and avoid aspiration pneumonia, in which food, saliva or liquids are breathed into the lungs or airways, Glatter said.

What are the chances of recovery?

The chances of full neurological recovery after the brain has been deprived of oxygen for prolonged periods of time -- greater than four minutes -- are poor, Glatter said.

The long-term effects depend on how long the brain lacked an adequate oxygen supply and the amount of permanent brain damage that resulted from it.

(Source: CNN)

Life-changing lessons learned climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro

By Rachel Grice

1. Just show up -- even if you're nervous

"It's the willingness to show up with no guarantees. It's doing something that you feel uncomfortable doing. Doing something you feel excited about doing but also a little nervous about doing. It's like showing up with your whole heart, not half a heart. I think that's empowerment for anybody." —Heather Thomson, TV personality, "Real Housewives of New York," and entrepreneur.

2. Focus your mind to free your senses

"During the climb on Kilimanjaro, I had one thing on my mind: hiking. That's a rarity I hadn't experienced probably since I was a kid. I loved the single-minded action hiking requires. And the mind wanders while the senses have time to explore the ever-changing scenery: Colobus monkeys, white-necked ravens, little sparrows at 16,000 feet, ferns and junipers and wily weird Dr. Seuss trees. How lucky, to have one thing to do. How wonderful to spend every day outdoors!" —Ellie Weihenmayer, of Golden, CO, second-time Kilimanjaro climber.

3. There is strength in vulnerability

"Climbing Kilimanjaro taught me that I am a whole lot stronger than I ever knew. I also learned that there is pure power and grace in surrendering to vulnerability. In the past, I've had a tough time asking for help. On the climb, I had to rely on the love and support of my team. It was empowering to allow myself the freedom to ask for support and even more powerful to allow myself to receive it." —Angie Shireman, owner of Good Vibe Tribe Jewelry.

4. Being present helps you face your fears

"You must stay in the here and now. You have to completely focus on where you are, being in the present moment all the time. I had to really think about slow, deep breathing, a slow, slow pace and just putting one foot in front of the other. It was a great lesson in mindfulness. I thought about how important it is to face your fears head on. I adopted a 'let's do this!' attitude. When my thoughts did wander, I thought about my husband's homemade pizza!" —Remembrance "Memmy" Staber, certified personal trainer and ambassador for the non-profit organization No Barriers.

5. Use a failure to motivate you to try again

"I married my husband (blind climber, Erik Weihenmayer) 19 years ago on Kilimanjaro. We had our special ceremony on the Shira Plateau, about one third up the mountain. The climb was ill-planned and our summit day occurred before anyone had time to acclimate. The crater rim took 15 hours to reach. From there, you'd hike two hours up Uhuru peak, and then down-climb another six hours. At the crater, I didn't feel the need to hike up the last hump to the summit sign. I was just done with the mountain. Well, for 19 years, I have had that little itch that I couldn't quite scratch. How awesome to have a second chance!" —Ellie Weihenmayer.

6. Lean into the joy of your accomplishments

"Before, I was always striving. I always felt like I hadn't really truly succeeded yet. What I recognized on the climb is to lean hard into your moments of joy. Don't dress rehearsal for it. It's scary to do, because if you're not totally joyful, then you won't be let down as hard, right? You won't be as afraid. But you know what? Not being joyful won't protect you from pain." —Heather Thomson.

7. Let nature help you heal

"In nature you are vulnerable, and you have to trust yourself and most importantly, the team. Being in nature also helps you heal. You can get rid of a lot out there! We shared a lot of tears, but more importantly, lots of laughs." —Remembrance "Memmy" Staber.

8. A challenge allows you to let go of baggage

"On day 3, my emotions were all over the place! With the support of my friends, I allowed myself to shed layers of emotional baggage and move toward the light that comes with open-hearted freedom. Climbing Kilimanjaro was a personal and spiritual journey for me. With each passing step, I shed the weight of limiting beliefs and fear. I promised myself that going forward, I was going to be more tender with my heart. The day ended with a dance party as our guides and porters sang to us. It was the perfect ending to a tough day." —Angie Shireman.

9. You are stronger than you realize

"I joined this team of fearless climbers with the intention of raising awareness to the many avenues women can take to help themselves heal from the aftermath of military sexual trauma. One such organization is No Barriers Warriors based out of Fort Collins, CO, that welcomes both men and women veterans and uses the backdrop of the outdoors to instill wellness and healing. It's their belief that 'What is within you is stronger than what's in your way.' That's what I kept telling myself when I felt things were proving difficult. That positive self-talk helped me to keep stepping forward." —Stevi Gelinis, massage therapist and outdoor enthusiast.

10. Ditch your devices to give your brain downtime

"It was a nice time for me to actually be off the grid. I had all these big plans to Periscope on the side of the mountain and send pictures and live feed of our experience, and the satellites were not there. It was just me and the dirt. It gave me a lot of time to think, which I don't get often. I recognize how scarce it is. I learned to calm down a little bit. I was reminded how to relax. I was reminded how to walk along and whistle." —Heather Thomson.

11. Find a mantra to help you confront a fear

"On the night we were getting ready to summit I was very nervous and anxious. I laid in my tent, did some meditation and my mom's voice kept coming into my head saying, 'Don't be scared of the darkness; just step towards the light.' (You start for the summit at 1 a.m. with five hours of hiking in pure darkness.) And that night I used that message with every step I took, and when the sun came up, I cried tears of pure joy! And I stepped all the way to 19,341 feet." —Memmy Staber. (Source: livestrong.com)

ISIRI plans to set standards to uphold halal tourism

TOURISM TEHRAN — The Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of Iran (ISIRI) plans to establish a set of standards to promote Halal tourism in the country.



ISIRI Director Nayyereh Pirouzbakht in an undated photo

"It's time we plan for the development of halal industries, particularly in the field of tourism," Tasnim quoted ISIRI Director Nayyereh Pirouzbakht as saying on Thursday.

Last September, Iran tourism body announced that it plans to lay the ground to attract further Muslim tourists who are bound by picking the Halal tourism, considering the figures that the annual global turnover of such tourism industry reaches \$150 billion, he said.

A subcategory of traveling, Halal tourism is geared toward the specific needs of Muslim individuals who seek to abide by the Islamic rules.

Iran hosts some of the world's oldest cultural monuments, including 21 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and its varied terrain ranges from desert locales to ski resorts.

Tehran exhibit hails national soccer victory

HERITAGE TEHRAN — The National Museum of Iran has put on show prehistoric Iranian potteries that bear Asiatic cheetahs, endangered subspecies that also embellish jerseys for the national soccer team, hailing qualification for the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia.



National Museum of Iran Director Jibreil Nokandeh invited museumgoers to closely visit three prehistoric potteries that are engraved with images of cheetahs and leopards as he applauded the victorious national team, ISNA reported on June 14.

The potteries with such animal motifs date back to 3750 to 3350 BC and have been excavated from Tepe Sialk and in Tepe Hissar archaeological sites, Nokandeh added.

On June 12, Iran defeated Uzbekistan 2-0 to advance to successive FIFA World Cups for the first time in their history.

ROUND THE GLOBE

Historic Bridgetown and its Garrison

As one of the earliest established towns with a fortified port in the Caribbean network of military and maritime-mercantile outposts of the British Atlantic, Historic Bridgetown and its Garrison was the focus of trade-based English expansion in the Americas.

Historic Bridgetown and its Garrison in Barbados is a UNESCO World Heritage Site

By the 17th century, the fortified port town was able to establish its importance in the British Atlantic trade and became an entrepot for goods, especially sugar, and enslaved persons destined for Barbados and the rest of the Americas.

Historic Bridgetown's irregular settlement patterns and 17th Century street layout of an English medieval type, in particular the organic serpentine streets, supported the development and transformation of creolized forms of architecture, including Caribbean Georgian.



Historic Bridgetown's fortified port spaces were linked along the Bay Street corridor from the historic town's center to St. Ann's Garrison. The property's natural harbor, Carlisle Bay, was the first port of call on the trans-Atlantic crossing and was perfectly positioned as the launching point for the projection of British imperial power, to defend and expand Britain's trade interests in the region and the Atlantic World.

Used as a base for amphibious command and control, the garrison housed the Eastern Caribbean headquarters of the British Army and Navy. (Source: UNESCO)

Caravanserais, ancient roadside inns

TOURISM TEHRAN — Along the major roads that connect Iranian cities one can see many abandoned caravanserais, ancient roadside inns that brought comfort to travelers and their livestock on trade routes, including those on the legendary Silk Road.

For the time being, caravanserais have largely lost their old usage and popularity as places to stay on the road and are considered more for their historical and architectural aspects rather than for any practical purposes.

Under initiative plans by Iran tourism body, many of such caravanserais have been ceded to the private sector for better maintenance. Some have been exclusively renovated and tuned into impressive boutique hotels and tourist lodgings.

Caravansari is a compound word combining "caravan" with "sara". The first stand for a group of travelers and sara means the building.

Caravanserais often had massive portals with elevated surrounding walls. Architectural styles of caravansari reflect local styles and the construction materials available in each geographical locality.

Guest rooms were constructed around the courtyard and the stables were located behind them with their doors in the corners of the yard.

The earliest caravanserais in the county were built in Achaemenid era



A view of the restored Zeinoddin Caravanseri in Yazd, the 16th-century structure has been turned into a tourist lodging.

(circa 550 -330 BC). Such roadside inns was thriving upon the development of road systems and the in-

crease in the number of travelers and merchants.

Shah Abbas I (1571-1629) is credited with building a network of caravanserais across Iran during the much later Safavid dynasty.

Stonehenge tunnel 'should be reconsidered', UNESCO says

A group of 21 archaeologists have said the plan for a tunnel near Stonehenge will have "dreadful consequences" for the World Heritage site.

In a submission to the government, the academics claim the tunnel approach will be a "visual blemish" and ruin views of the winter solstice sunset.

They also warn it will place the area's future archaeology at risk and cause a "destructive impact" to the site.

Highways England says a tunnel will cut congestion and improve journey times.

The busy A303 currently passes within a few hundred meters of the ancient Wiltshire monument.

The 1.8 mile (2.9 km) dual carriage-way tunnel proposal forms part of a



A view of Stonehenge in Wiltshire, England. Archaeologists believe it was constructed between 3000 to 2000 BC.

£2bn government scheme to upgrade all remaining sections of the road between the M3 and M5.

The tunnel plan has the backing

of English Heritage and the National Trust.

A report by UNESCO and the International Council on Monuments and Sites has also recognized the benefits of the project.

However, the group of archaeologists, which includes Mike Parker Pearson, professor of archaeology at the University of Sheffield and the University of Buckingham's Prof David Jacques warn that the proposed tunnel entrance and approach road will be "a vast gash on the landscape".

They believe a southern bypass is the only option which will not severely impact the site. They also argue it would be cheaper to build and less damaging to the landscape. (Source: BBC)

UK attracts record overseas tourists after pound's Brexit slide

Record numbers of overseas visitors came to the UK in April, and spent record amounts of money in shops, hotels and restaurants in fresh evidence of a fillip to tourism from the steep fall in sterling.

But the pound's decline has left cash-strapped Britons forced to stay at home or cut their spending overseas.

A total of 3.7 million overseas residents visited the UK in April, according to the Office for National Statistics, up 19% compared with the same month

last year. They spent £2bn, up 20% on a year earlier.

The number of overseas visits by UK residents edged ahead by 2% to 6.1m, but their spending fell by 1% to £3.5bn.

The falling pound has sent holiday costs soaring for British travelers, with bureau de change at Gatwick airport giving holidaymakers just €0.98 for £1 this week, while at Southampton airport the rate has fallen to just €0.90. Tour operators Tui and Thomas Cook reported in May that sales and bookings for the

summer by British holidaymakers have slowed.

But the figures for visits to the UK were before recent terrorist attacks in London. Merlin Entertainments, the company behind London Eye and Madame Tussauds, said on Tuesday that visitors were staying away from some of the UK's biggest attractions.

April's visitor figures were also flattered by this year's late Easter, although the quarterly data reveal a similar pattern of growth.

Apps soothe the packing-averse traveler

Packing anxiety has inspired dozens of apps and services in recent years, many of them thriving on users' willingness to download checklists to avoid forgetting their socks and phone chargers. But there are a growing number of other services that have gotten more personal, inviting themselves into users' calendars and closets.

At least one offers a concierge service that does all the packing and then delivers the suitcases to the hotel. No need to hoist suitcases onto airport conveyor belts — or to get stressed about any of the other annoyances of modern air travel.

Debbe McCall, a cardiovascular patient researcher in Temecula, Calif, was an early customer of the concierge service, DUFL. "I've got three words for you: full-size toiletries," she said. DUFL includes full-size jars of her favorite face cream. And, she said, when she checks into a hotel for one of the dozens of medical conferences she attends annually, her luggage is waiting at the front desk for her.

DUFL, which costs \$99 per round trip plus \$9.95 a month for storage, works as an outsourced wardrobe. Instead of packing their own suitcases, travelers like Ms. McCall rely on the company, which started in 2015

and now has warehouses in three cities and 30 employees who clean, press and pack their clothes and toiletries for them.

When a trip is approaching, customers use DUFL's website or app to select items from their personal closet in DUFL's cavernous warehouse. (Photographs of every piece of clothing are uploaded.) DUFL then launders or dry cleans the clothes and packs them in a way Ms. McCall said reminded her of a shopping spree.

"Everything is wrapped in tissue paper, and they always tuck a little trial-size something in," she said.

The company uses FedEx to deliver the bags.

DUFL's president, Bill Rinehart, said he had developed the company because of his own frustrations as a tech entrepreneur who flew often.

"I had this massive red backpack I used to carry around with me because I never wanted to give my bag to an airline," he said.

Mr. Rinehart, who lives in Arizona, described a frantic process in which he would fly home from New York on a Friday and try to get his clothes cleaned in time for another East Coast business trip on a Monday.

"Finally I said there's got to be a better

way," he said. "I thought: Almost everything is available to us by phone now, but we're still traveling like it's the 1960s. The only thing that's really improved is they've put wheels on the bags. Otherwise, it's a painful process." Several focus groups later, DUFL was born.

Mr. Rinehart said customers saved three to five hours of personal time that would otherwise be used on laundry, packing and bag-check lines. Ninety percent of users are business travelers. And women may benefit most.

"They're maybe 35 percent of our customers," he said. "But they're our biggest advocates" because more than men, they take advantage of the flat rate to pack hair dryers, pillows and other personal items that would stay at home if they had to check suitcases.

DUFL is not the only luggage concierge available to packing-averse travelers. Ms. McCall tried Luggage Forward but switched because she was still doing her own dry cleaning and laundry.

She also tried UPS, "but it was really expensive," she said. And, like Luggage Forward, it did not relieve her of pre-trip chores.

Paying someone else to pack suitcases



Pete Talamantes, a DUFL employee, packed a customer's suitcase at the company's warehouse in Tempe, Ariz. DUFL packs and delivers bags for travelers.

may not be practical for less-frequent travelers because of the monthly fee and the need for multiple wardrobes. And hiring a concierge service may seem an extravagant antidote to packing stress.

That is why some travelers use packing apps like PackPoint. Ben Gillenwater, its founder, said that he had developed the app in 2013 and that it had been responsible for 2.1 million custom packing lists last year. He has since added bells and whistles to the premium version (\$2.99; the basic app is free) aimed at business travelers. (Source: The New York Times)

Scientists discover a new form of carbon that's hard as a rock

By heating carbon to an intimidating 1,000 degrees Celsius (1,800 degrees Fahrenheit), scientists have discovered a brand new elemental form that's ultra-strong and ultra-light, but also elastic like rubber and electrically conductive.

This new form of carbon not only offers up a range of extraordinary properties - the method used to find it could lead to the discovery of entire classes of materials we've never seen before.

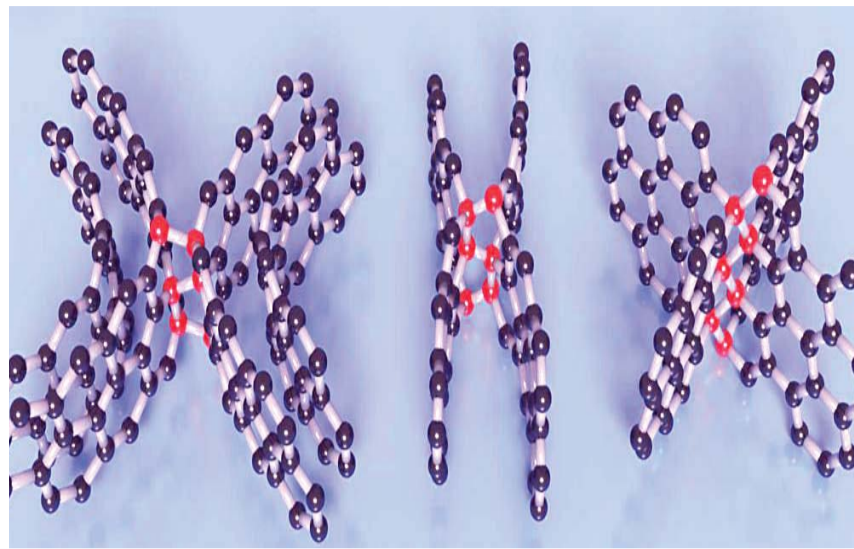
As the fourth most abundant element in the Universe, and the second most abundant in our bodies (after oxygen), carbon isn't just the key component of much of life on Earth.

When it comes to its physical properties, there are few elements as diverse as carbon.

Certain atomic configurations will result in the soft, slippery form of graphite, but arrange it another way, and you'll get diamond - one of the hardest materials on the planet. And then there's graphene, which is the strongest material known to science.

Normal atmospheric pressure

Now, researchers have figured out that if you heat the element to almost 1,000 degrees Celsius, and put it under 250,000 times normal atmospheric pressure, you can produce an ultra-strong, yet super-flexible form of carbon that could see use in everything from exoskel-



"Light materials with high strength and robust elasticity like this are very desirable for applications where weight savings are of the utmost importance, even more than material cost," says one of the team, Zhisheng Zhao from Yanshan University in China.

etons to spaceships.

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than material cost," says one of the team, Zhisheng Zhao from Yanshan University in China.

In the past, scientists have tried to create something like this, but without

the right combination of heat and pressure, it would keep reverting back to its original structure.

Now, Zhao and his team have finally found the optimal conditions, which force the carbon to buckle, merge, and connect in a range of configurations.

The result is a new, exotic type of carbon that contains both graphite-like and diamond-like bonds, plus layers of graphene, which help to impart softness and strength at the same time.

The glassy carbons

The "compressed glassy carbons have extraordinary specific compressive strengths - more than two times that of commonly used ceramics - and simultaneously exhibit robust elastic recovery in response to local deformations," the team reports.

Its elasticity beats organic rubber, silica, and even this shapeshifting titanium-nickel wire, and it's about five times stronger than common metals and alloys.

We'll have to wait and see which industries will take an interest in this new material, but in the meantime, the researchers expect the same technique can be used to find a whole range of never-before-seen materials.

"We believe that this synthesis method could be honed to create other extraordinary forms of carbon and entirely different classes of materials," says Zhao. (Source: ScienceAlert)

Scientists hope to better predict when future eruptions will occur



Volcanologists are gaining a better understanding of what's going on inside the magma reservoir that lies below New Zealand's Mount Tarawera volcano. They're finding a colder, more solid place than they thought, according to a research in the journal Science.

It's a new view of how volcanoes work, and will help scientists determine when a volcano poses the most risk.

To "understand volcanic eruptions, we need to be able to decipher signals the volcano gives us before it erupts," says Jennifer Wade, a program director in the National Science Foundation's Division of Earth Sciences, which funded the research. "This study backs up the clock to the time before an eruption, and uses signals in crystals to understand when magma goes from being stored to being mobilized for an eruption."

Kari Cooper, a geoscientist at the University of California (UC), Davis and corresponding author on the paper, said learning more about magma reservoirs is key to understanding volcanoes.

Studying magma directly

It's hard to study magma directly. Even at volcanic sites, it lies miles beneath the Earth's surface. Geologists have occasionally drilled into magma by accident or design, but heat and pressure destroy any instruments placed into it.

Cooper and her colleagues investigated magma by collecting zircon crystals from debris deposited around Mount Tarawera, when it erupted about 700 years ago.

That eruption, roughly five times the size of Mount St. Helens in 1980, brought lava to the surface from the magma reservoir. Once on the surface, the lava's record of the past, including its chemistry and temperature, was frozen in place.

The zircon crystals are like a "black box" flight recorder for studying volcanic eruptions, Cooper said.

"Instead of trying to piece together the wreckage, the crystals can tell us what was going on while they were below the surface, including the run-up to an eruption," she said.

Zircon crystals

By studying trace elements in seven zircon crystals, the scientists determined when the crystals formed and how long they were exposed to high heat (more than 700 degrees Celsius or 1,292 degrees Fahrenheit). The crystals provided information about the part of the magma reservoir where they resided.

The researchers found that all but one of the seven crystals were at least tens of thousands of years old, but had spent only a small percentage (less than about four percent) of that time exposed to molten magma.

The picture that emerges, Cooper said, is less a seething mass of molten rock than something like a snow cone: mostly solid and crystalline, with a little liquid seeping through it. To create an eruption, a certain amount of solid, crystalline magma has to melt and mobilize, possibly by interacting with hotter liquid stored elsewhere in the reservoir.

(Source: EurekAlert)

San Andreas earthquakes triggered by rain and snow



Earthquakes along the San Andreas Fault in California are being triggered by winter rain and snowfall, scientists have discovered.

The finding is important as it helps us understand what triggers earthquakes - and when they are more likely to strike.

Roland Bürgmann and Christopher Johnson, from the University of California, Berkeley, were investigating what impact seasonal loading has on fault systems - with the state's multiple fault lines acting as a "natural laboratory" to track changes.

Depressing land

Seasonal loading refers to how snow and rain over the winter months acts as a weight, causing the land to depress. However, when it dries up, the weight is removed - and the ground rebounds.

This process, the scientists found, changes the stress placed on California's state tectonics, pushing and pulling on the fault lines - including the biggest and most dangerous, the San Andreas Fault. Their findings are published in the journal Science.

The San Andreas Fault forms part of the tectonic boundary between the Pacific and North American Plate, stretching 800 miles through California. In September last year, there was a swarm of around 200 small earthquakes in the Salton Sea, just south of the fault.

This raised concerns that a much larger earthquake could soon take place - the region of the fault where the swarm occurred had not ruptured for over 300 years. Large earthquakes normally occur along the fault every

150 to 200 years, during which stress along the fault builds, so scientists think a "Big One" is overdue.

In the latest study, Bürgmann and Johnson measured vertical movement along the state's fault lines to track changes resulting from seasonal loading. They used nine years' worth of GPS data on vertical deformation to identify the stress changes on the fault lines that produce small earthquakes.

The seasonal stress

From this, they calculated the seasonal stress time for each fault location to calculate an average stress cycle. Findings showed that the San Andreas Fault has an increase in small earthquakes in late summer and early fall, while the faults along the eastern edge of the Sierra Nevada see more earthquakes in late spring and early summer.

This does not mean there is an "earthquake season," Bürgmann said, but that seasonal loading plays a role.

"What we find is the stresses that result from the flexing of the crust due to seasonal loads correlate with [around] 10 percent change in seismic activity from the background rates," Johnson tells Newsweek.

While the annual snow and rainfall increases the chance of earthquakes by a small amount, their discovery provides new information on how and why faults rupture, including the different stresses involved.

The study does not look at large earthquakes directly, but the researchers did look at historic events bigger than magnitude 5.5 going back to 1781.

(Source: rawstory.com)

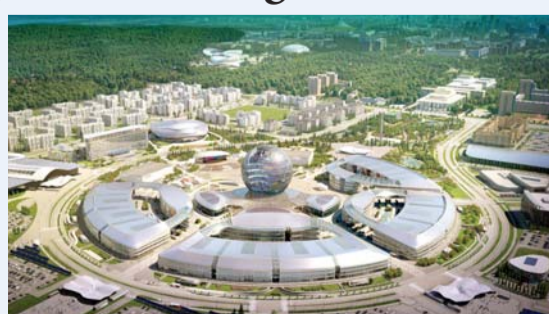
"Future Energy" Named Slogan for EXPO-2017 in Astana

The world exhibition complex "EXPO-2017" was inaugurated in Kazakh capital Astana, focused on the subject of future energies in this Asian country.

This global exhibition complex will be held from June 10 to Sept. 10 in Astana, Kazakhstan which will be concentrated on the consumption of energy.

As a matter of fact, exchanging knowledge and technical knowhow to control energy consumption in the Earth, controlling use of fossil fuels and minimizing the environmental damage have been cited as the main objectives of this prestigious exhibition dubbed "Future Energy".

Nursultan Nazarbayev President of Kazakhstan in the inaugural ceremony of this prestigious exhibition event said: "Bringing ideas together and exchanging views by participants from across the world on the subject of alternative and renewable energies is the most



important goal of this prestigious exhibition event."

Humanity is on the verge of creating a very rich and efficient source of energy, he said, adding: "Under such circumstances, this exhibition will play an important role in the development of clean energy, so that millions of

Kazakh people and thousands of foreign guests will be familiarized with the world's newest ideas in this field."

It should be noted that Chinese President Chi Jin Peng, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif attended this prestigious exhibition.

It is expected that two million tourists and more than five million people will visit this exhibition during three-month period.

Pavilion and exposition booth of Kazakhstan has been introduced as the symbol of this global exhibition which is designed in the form of a very large globe, including "future museum" and a museum special of history of Kazakhstan.

It should be noted that more than 115 countries and 22 international organizations will take part in EXPO-2017 Exhibition in Astana, Kazakhstan.

Saab's next-generation Gripen E fighter makes maiden flight

Saab's next-generation fighter, the Gripen E, has taken to the skies for the first time. At 10:32 am CET on June 15, the prototype delta-wing multi-role fighter set out on its maiden flight from Linköping, Sweden with Saab test pilot Marcus Wandt at the controls.

During the 40-minute flight over the eastern parts of Östergötland, the latest Gripen variant executed a series of maneuvers to test its systems, including extending and retracting its landing gear.

Based on the Gripen C/D fighter aircraft, Saab says that the US\$85 million Gripen E or Gripen E/F is completely redesigned with an all-new avionics suite and software that allows it to be modified at short notice without extensive layovers. It's fully NATO interoperable and includes Network Centric Warfare (NCW) technology for advanced data communications, dual data links, satellite communications, and video links.

The "flight was just as expected, with the aircraft performance matching the experience in our simulations," Wandt said after the flight. "Its acceleration performance is impressive with smooth handling. Needless to say I'm very happy to have piloted this maiden flight."

The Gripen E has an overall length of 15.2 m (49.9 ft), a wingspan of 8.6 m (28.2 ft) and has a maximum takeoff weight of 16,500 kg (36,400 lb). Its GE Aviation F414G engine gives it 20 percent more thrust than its predecessor for a maximum speed of Mach 2 (1,522 mph, 2,450 km/h) in Supercruise mode at high altitude.

With its 10 hard points, the Gripen E can carry a wide variety of armaments and pods, including METEOR, AMRAAM, IRIS-T, and AIM-9 missiles; JDAM bombs; and machine gun pods. It also has AESA radar,IRST passive sensors, Head-Mounted Displays, advanced avionics, next-generation data processing, and a state-of-the-art cockpit.

(Source: New Atlas)



How close are we to a real Star Trek-style medical tricorder?

Does science inspire fiction or does it work the other way around? In the case of medical technology, the long-running TV and film series Star Trek has increasingly been inspiring researchers worldwide. Two teams were recently awarded the Qualcomm Tricorder X Prize for developing handheld devices that can diagnose a range of diseases and check a patient's vital signs without invasive tests - inspired by Star Trek's medical "tricorder" device.

In the show, a doctor would use the tricorder and its detachable scanner to quickly gather data on a patient and instantly work out what was wrong with them. It could check organ functions and detect diseases and their causes, and also contained data on a range of alien lifeforms. But how close are we really to using such devices (assuming we don't need them to diagnose aliens)?

The main aim of the two prizewinners is to integrate several technologies in one device. They haven't created an all-in-one handheld machine but they do both represent significant steps forward.

The main winner, known as DxtER and created by US firm Basil Leaf Technologies, is actually an iPad app with artificial intelligence. It uses a number of non-invasive sensors that can be attached to the body to collect data about vital signs, body chemistry and biological functions. The runner-up technology from Taiwan's Dynamical Biomarkers Group similarly connects a smartphone to several wireless handheld test modules that can analyse vital signs, blood and urine, and skin appearance.

(Source: The Conversation)

Are left-handed people more gifted?

The belief that there is a link between talent and left-handedness has a long history. Leonardo da Vinci was left-handed. So were Mark Twain, Mozart, Marie Curie, Nicola Tesla and Aristotle. It's no different today - former U.S. president Barack Obama is a left-hander, as is business leader Bill Gates and footballer Lionel Messi.

But is it really true that left-handers are more likely to be geniuses? Let's take a look at the latest evidence - including our new study on handedness and mathematical ability.

It is estimated that between 10% and 13.5% of the population are not right-handed. While a few of these people are equally comfortable using either hand, the vast majority are left-handed. Hand preference is a manifestation of brain function and is therefore related to cognition. Left-handers exhibit, on average, a more developed right brain hemisphere, which is specialized for processes such as spatial reasoning and the ability to rotate mental representations of objects.

Also, the corpus callosum - the bundle of nerve cells connecting the two brain hemispheres - tends to be larger in left-handers. This suggests that some left-handers have an enhanced connectivity between the two hemispheres and hence superior information processing. Why that is, however, is unclear. One theory argues that living in a world designed for right-handers could be forcing left-handers to use both hands - thereby increasing connectivity. This opens up the possibility that we could all achieve enhanced connectivity by training ourselves to use both hands.

(Source: IBT)

Health tips for Ramadan

ARTICLE
By Seyed Mahdi Mirghazanfari, MD, PhD
Final part

All Muslims take part in the month-long dawn-to-sunset fast that is the hallmark of Ramadan. Eating and drinking (including water) is prohibited during daylight hours, and the day's abstinence is offset by a nightly meal known as Iftar.

The month also honors the time when God, via the angel Gabriel, revealed the first verses of the Quran, the holy book of Islam, to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

For 30 days, followers of Islam pray and refrain from smoking, bad behavior — including cursing, gossiping or fighting — and impure thoughts.

Muslims believe that fasting cleanses the body, and the practice reminds them of the suffering of the poor.

Physically speaking, the month also requires some strength to abstain from eating and drinking for long hours and for those who are healthy enough to observe fasting there will be benefits.

The Iranian traditional medicine has come up with a number of advices to feel better and experience better fasting days during this month.

How to avoid constipation

To prevent constipation it is recommended to consume lettuce, cucumber, and plum- especially for those with warm Mizaj- at Suhur meal.

Make sure to have Suhur

Not having Suhur is a huge mistake. The human digestive system converts food into nutrients that the body needs and once there is no food digestive acids eat away at the lining tissues of the stomach and lead to stomach ulcer and painful sores in the stomach lining or small intestine.

Do not insist on eating too much

Generally, fasting would shrink the stomach, decrease the appetite, and result in losing weight. Therefore, insisting on eating as much as one used to eat before Ramadan might cause nausea, excessive throat mucus and Acid Reflux.

Tehran to host pet accessories exhibit

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — The 3rd Pet Accessories Exhibition will be held from July 25 to 28 at Tehran's Milad Tower.

With the theme of "Be Kind with Urban Wildlife", the exhibit aims to get citizens more acquainted with the environment, the event's secretary Amir Hossein Khojasteh announced.



Experts and representatives from eco-friendly NGOs and vets will attend the exhibition, he said.

During the 4-day expo, twenty Iranian and ten foreign exhibitors will render accessories for pets as well as medicines, foods, supplements, and vitamins for cattle, birds, fish, and exotic pets, Khojasteh explained.

LEARN ENGLISH
You're Grounded!

A: Do you know what time it is?
B: Um. Ten?
A: Get in this door young man. It's midnight, you are two hours past curfew.
B: I know, but it wasn't my fault! I told Jennifer she had to drop me off before ten, but she wouldn't leave the party!
A: I don't care! You are grounded for life mister!
B: Mom! That is so unfair!
A: You know the rules and you broke them. No allowance and no TV for a week. I usually never ground you but this time I have to put my foot down!
B: What! For being a couple of hours late? You have to be kidding!
A: I don't want to hear it! Now go to your room!

Key vocabulary
curfew: order requiring one to be indoors at a certain time
drop one off: to unload someone as from a car, ship etc.
ground: to restrict one's activities, esp. of a child
allowance: money given on a regular basis for personal use
put your foot down: to say very firmly that someone must do something or must stop doing something
Supplementary vocabulary
furious: overly angry or upset
punish: to be reprimanded
inexcusable: have no reason or excuse
unreliable: a person who cannot be trusted to do something
disappointed: to be angry or sad when an expectation is not met
(Source: irlanguage.com)

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

HOVs to ease traffic congestion, air pollution in Tehran

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Tehran Municipality is planning on introducing high-occupancy vehicle lanes in two of the expressways in the capital with the goal of reducing traffic congestion and air pollution.

A high-occupancy vehicle lane (also known as carpool lane, diamond lane, 2+ lane, and transit lane or T2 or T3 lanes) is a restricted traffic lane reserved at peak travel times or longer for the exclusive use of vehicles with a driver and one or more passengers, including carpools, vanpools, and transit buses. The normal minimum occupancy level is 2 or 3 occupants.

Studies to implement HOV lanes in Niayesh Expressway, north-central Tehran, and Imam Ali Expressway, eastern Tehran, are well underway, Mehr news agency quoted Maziar Hosseini, deputy mayor for traffic and transport affairs, as saying on Friday.



"We have made necessary arrangement with Traffic Police and fortunately we agreed upon the matter," Hosseini highlighted.

He went on to say that traffic regulations will be imposed in these lanes as well by mounting traffic enforcement cameras on the side of the ways.

The possibility of implementing HOV lanes was once discussed and considered some five years ago in Tehran while vehicles with only one occupants are deemed as the main culprit of persistent air pollution in metropolis of Tehran.

HOV lanes are normally created to increase average vehicle occupancy and persons traveling with the goal of reducing traffic congestion and air pollution, although their effectiveness is questionable.

However, HOVs are fast and less crowded lanes for emergency vehicles which seems to be vital to a metropolis.

Live TV show helps release 500 prisoners

SOCIETY TEHRAN — A live TV show managed to collect donations worth 35 billion rials (nearly \$875,000) enough to release 500 prisoners, State Prisons Organization of Iran director has said.

The TV show, dubbed Mah-e Asal literally meaning honeymoon, is being aired for some 10 years now in the holy month of Ramadan. It seeks social reforms and promotes charity during this month.

"This amount is paid to the State Prisons Organization of Iran and we succeeded in freeing some 500 prisoners who committed involuntary crimes until Wednesday," Asghar Jahangir said, IRIB reported.



Out of the 500 prisoners who are mostly married, 80 have 3 or more children and 70 have 2 children most of whom are underage, Jahangir said, adding, almost all of them are prisoners of debt.

"We projected that the number would be doubled to 1,000 prisoners by the end of the holy month of Ramadan," he suggested.

There are some 7,000 prisoners of debt who need the public generous contributions to be with their families once again, he added.

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

Desertification is the degradation of land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas. It is caused primarily by human activities and climatic variations. Desertification does not refer to the expansion of existing deserts. It occurs because dry land ecosystems, which cover over one third of the world's land area, are extremely vulnerable to over-exploitation and inappropriate land use. Poverty, political instability, deforestation, overgrazing and bad irrigation practices can all undermine the productivity of the land.

Over 250 million people are directly affected by desertification, and about one billion people in over one hundred countries are at risk. These people include many of the world's poorest, most marginalized and politically weak citizens.

The World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is observed every year to promote public awareness of international efforts to combat desertification. The day is a unique moment to remind everyone that land degradation neutrality is achievable through problem-solving, strong community involvement and co-operation at all levels.

Land degradation and migration

This year the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought examine the important link between land degradation and migration. Among others,

environmental degradation, food insecurity and poverty are causes of migration and development challenges.

In just 15 years, the number of international migrants worldwide has risen from 173 million in 2000 to 244 million in 2015.

This year's celebration looks at specific ways local communities can build resilience against current multi-fold development challenges through sustainable land management practices. This day should remind everyone of land's important role in producing food and generating local employment, as well as its ability to add to the sustainability, stability and security of desertification-affected places. Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, hosts the global observance of 2017, organized by the Ministry of Environment, Green Economy and Climate Change.

Desertification and the Sustainable Development Goals

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development declares that "we are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations". Specifically, Goal 15 states our resolve to halt and reverse land degradation.

(Source: un.org)

Canadian climate change study got cancelled due to climate change

Climate change is causing more trouble as a Canadian research was cancelled due to, guess what -- climate change. The first leg of the 2017 Expedition project of the Canadian Research Icebreaker CCGS Amundsen was dropped due to the hazardous motion of the Arctic sea.

The study worth \$17 million should span for four years and involves about 40 scientists from five different universities. However, there is no assessment available yet as to how the delay will impact the course of the study.

Due to extreme ice conditions, the ship may arrive too late on site to perform the research objectives of this leg. This led the team to cancel the climate change study to avoid wasting efforts.

The Canadian researchers, in partnership with various international team, have monitored and observed the Arctic marine and coastal ecosystems since 2003. Any further study will help the scientific community further understand the effects of climate change not only to the Arctic region but also in the world.

The team already anticipated the extreme conditions on the location and have already requested to start the journey six days in advance. This will give them ample time

to deal with marine safety and security operations due to severe ice conditions. However, as it turned out, the conditions are far worse than expected. Inadequate ship and management issues eventually led to the cancellation of the Canadian climate change research. The safety concerns and risks are just too high to proceed any further at that time. The decision terminated the 2017 leg of the program.

"Considering the severe ice conditions and the increasing demand for Search And Rescue operations (SAR) and ice escort, we decided to cancel the BaySys mission," Dr. David Barber, Expedition Chief Scientist and BaySys Scientific Lead, said in a statement. "A second week of delay meant our research objectives just could not be safely achieved - the challenge for us all was that the marine ice hazards were exceedingly difficult for the maritime industry, the CCG, and science."

The team managed to use their innovative equipment to assess the situation. Furthermore, they believe that the condition will only get worse. The Arctic sea ice is not only thinning but it's increasing its mobility. This means the ice conditions can cause more severe situations in the future.

(Source: Nature World News)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Iran, Sri Lanka to bolster technological co-op

Iran and Sri Lanka have inked a memorandum of understanding to improve technological cooperation.

The visiting Sri Lankan minister of science, technology and research, Susil Premajayantha, and the Iranian vice president for science and technology, Sorena Sattari, signed the MOU in Tehran on Tuesday. Mentioning Iran's remarkable scientific and technological advances Premajayantha highlighted that "by recognizing Iran's technological achievement despite years of sanctions we now see Iran in a positive light."

توسعه همکاری های فناورانه ایران و سريلانكا

ایران و سريلانكا تفاهم نامه توسعه همکاری های فناورانه امضا کردند. روز سه شنبه ساسیل پریمایانثا وزیر علوم، فناوری و تحقیقات سريلانكا و سورنا ستاری معاون علم و فناوری ریاست جمهوری، در تهران تفاهم نامه ی همکاری امضا کردند. پریمایانثا در این جلسه با اشاره به پیشرفت های قابل توجه ایران در حوزه علم و فناوری، گفت: پس از بازدید از دستاوردهای علمی و فناورانه ایران به این نتیجه رسیدیم که با وجود موضوع تحریم ها، کشور ایران در حوزه های مختلف فناوری پیشرفت های بسیار خوبی داشته است و دید مثبتی نسبت به توسعه علم و فناوری در ایران پیدا کردیم.

ENGLISH PROVERB

A fool and his money are soon parted

Explanation: foolish people make purchases without consideration; it is easy to sell something to someone foolish

For example: As soon as Greg won the big lottery jackpot, he turned around and spent it all. A fool and his money are soon parted.

PHRASAL VERB

Cross something out

Meaning: to draw a line or lines through something you have written or drawn, usually because it is wrong

For example: I crossed out 'Miss' and wrote 'Ms'.

ENGLISH IDIOM

Before your very eyes

Explanation: if someone does something before your very eyes, they do it in front of you, without attempting to hide what they are doing

For example: Before my very eyes, he took the rubbish and threw it into the neighbor's garden.

Three killed in fresh U.S. drone strike on Yemen's Shabwah

The United States has conducted a fresh drone attack on the south-central Yemeni province of Shabwah, killing three people.

Residents and local sources said the incident took place in Shabwah's al-Naqba area on Friday.

Meanwhile, Yemeni officials, who were speaking on condition of anonymity, said the U.S. missile had targeted a vehicle while it was driving and killed all its occupants.

The officials identified the victims as al-Qaeda militants, saying one of them was close to Saad al-Awlaki, the al-Qaeda leader in Yemen.

Over the past few months, Washington has stepped up its drone strikes against what are claimed to be al-Qaeda targets in Yemen.

Back in March, U.S. President Donald Trump gave the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) new powers to launch drone attacks against suspected terrorist targets. The authority was limited to the Pentagon under the former U.S. administration.

The U.S. also conducted deadly ground and aerial raids on Yemen in January and May, leaving dozens of Yemeni civilians dead in total.

Yemen has been under regular U.S. drone strikes, with Washington claiming to be targeting al-Qaeda elements while local sources say civilians have been the main victims of the attacks.

The country has also been rocked by a military campaign by the House of Saud regime since late March 2015. The U.S. has been providing huge amounts of arms and military training to kingdom's military.

The aggression, which allegedly seeks to



restore Yemen's former Saudi regime-allied government to power, has killed over 12,000 people, according to the latest tallies.

Al-Qaeda has exploited the U.S.-backed Saudi regime war on Yemen to enhance its terrorist activities in the impoverished country.

The country is also grappling with a Cholera epidemic.

Earlier this week, Save the Children charity said at least 942 people have been killed since the outbreak began in Yemen in April.

It further warned that the rate of infection is increasing and that one child is contracting the disease every 35 seconds.

"Disease, starvation and war are causing a perfect storm of disaster for Yemen's peo-

ple. The region's poorest country is on the verge of total collapse, and children are dying because they're not able to access basic healthcare," said Grant Pritchard, Save the Children's Yemen director.

Cholera is an acute diarrheal infection that is spread through contaminated food or water. It can be effectively treated with the immediate replacement of lost fluids and salts, but without treatment it can be fatal.

■ Ansarullah: UNSC liable for consequences of Saudi regime war on Yemen
Meantime, Yemen's Ansarullah (Houthi) movement has held the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) accountable for the consequences of the deadly House of Saud

regime's aggression, stressing that the nation reserves the right to defend itself.

Mohammed Abdulsalam, the movement's spokesman, said on Saturday that the UNSC issues statements that encourage the invader to continue its attacks and sieges, increasing the suffering of millions of Yemenis and dashing hope for a political resolution of the conflict, the al-Masirah television network reported.

The Yemeni army and allied popular forces would use all means to respond to Saudi regime assaults as Yemen, like other nations, reserves the right to defend itself against any invasion, Abdulsalam said.

The UNSC, which is in charge of preserving global peace, should know that the Saudi war supported by the U.S. arms and financial aid, threatens international security, he added.

The Ansarullah official also stressed that the deterioration of the health situation in Yemen with the outbreak of Cholera is "a source of shame" for the body that claims to be promoting human rights.

He further held Saudi Arabia responsible for the stalemate in talks between Yemen's warring sides, the siege on Yemen and Sana'a Airport activities.

In a lengthy statement on Thursday, the UNSC called on the Ansarullah and allies to cease all attacks at Saudi Arabia.

It also urged Yemen's warring sides to reach a United Nations brokered deal on management of the strategic port city of Hudaydah at a time that the country slides closer to famine.

(Source: Press TV)

Kashmir clashes leave 10 people dead

Clashes in the Indian-administered Kashmir have killed 10 people - five police officers, a soldier, two civilians and two suspected separatist fighters, according to Indian authorities.

Suspected separatist ambushed a police patrol in the town of Achhabal, killing five police personnel, a police officer told AFP news agency on Friday.

Armed groups active in divided Kashmir have stepped up attacks in recent weeks on Indian government forces patrolling the area as part of "counter-insurgency" operations.

Earlier, soldiers and a police special counterinsurgency force cordoned off Arwani village on a tip-off that armed men were hiding in two homes, setting off a firefight, the officer said.

Two civilians, including a teenage boy, were killed when security forces fired at hundreds of villagers who marched to the site of the attack to help the fighters escape, the police officer said.

Two suspected separatists were also killed, the officer said.

The unrest spread to neighboring villages as thousands of residents clashed with government forces, hurling stones and chanting: "We want

freedom" and "Go India, go back".

Separately on Friday, an Indian army spokesman said a soldier was killed when Pakistani forces fired at Indian posts in southern Naushera along the Line of Control (LoC) that divides Kashmir between the two countries.

The two armies have traded heavy fire along the de facto border almost daily in recent weeks, killing civilians and soldiers on both sides while accusing each other of breaching a 2003 ceasefire agreement.

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since the end of British colonial rule in 1947, but both claim the Himalayan territory in full.

India maintains roughly 500,000 soldiers in the territory and blames Pakistan for fomenting unrest.

Pakistan denies the allegation, saying it only provides diplomatic support to the Kashmiri struggle for the right of self-determination.

Officials say dozens of youth have joined the separatist ranks since last July after a popular commander was killed by security forces, sparking months of wide-scale protests in the territory.

(Source: agencies)

Egyptian court recommends death penalty for 30 over assassination of prosecutor

A Cairo criminal court on Saturday recommended the death penalty for 30 people convicted of involvement in the 2015 assassination of Egypt's top prosecutor, the most senior state official killed by militants in recent years.

The court set a verdict session for July 22, after referring its recommendation to the country's top religious authority, the Grand Mufti, for a non-binding legally-required opinion. The July 22 verdict can be appealed against.

Public prosecutor Hisham Barakat was killed in a car bomb attack on his convoy in Cairo, an operation for which Egypt blamed the Muslim Brotherhood and Gaza-based Hamas activists, though both groups have denied it.

"The brutal conspiracy by hired hands to target the public prosecutor Hisham Barakat and assassinate him, where the corrupt and weak-willed forces of evil and tyranny conspired, could only be carried out by an unjust group that has shed innocent blood," said Judge Hassan Farid.

Farid initially read out 31 names but two of them referred to the same person and the judge then corrected himself.

Only half of the defendants are in

custody, with 15 on the run.

The Interior Ministry released a video last year showing clips of several young men confessing and admitting going to Gaza for training from Hamas, though some of them later denied the accusations in court.

The defendants said they were forced to confess under torture and their lawyers asked that they be medically examined. Farid said he granted the request to a majority, but not all, and that doctors in a prison hospital had found no signs of torture.

Egypt faces an insurgency led by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit in North Sinai, where hundreds of soldiers and police have been killed.

The group has also increasingly carried out attacks in Egypt targeting Christians in a spate of church bombings and shootings that have killed some 100 since December.

Barakat was the highest-ranking state official to die in a militant attack since President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, a former military chief, ousted President Mohamed Mursi, a Brotherhood leader, in 2013 after mass protests against his rule.

(Source: Reuters)

CAR: Church shelters Muslims fleeing Anti-balaka

At least 1,500 people, mostly Muslim civilians, currently stuck in a Catholic church in the country's southeast, are growing increasingly desperate, a priest has told Al Jazeera.

The displaced people took refuge in the cathedral in the town of Bangassou after fleeing deadly violence in mid-May.

"The situation is not safe enough to leave, and so they cannot move from here," said Father Alain Blaise Bissialo, the priest at the church. There are men who walk around town with guns. The crisis in Bangassou began between May 13-17 when Anti-balaka, a vigilante militia made up of mostly Christians, launched a series of attacks on Muslims in Tokoyo, a largely Muslim district of Bangassou.

Thousands flocked to a nearby mosque to seek refuge.

Yet, the mosque was subsequently attacked too, culminating in the killing of the local imam.

In an attempt to save civilians at the mosque, the Catholic bishop sent trucks to Tokoyo to transport as many civilians as possible back to the church for their safety.

"At last count, 150 people were killed during the violence since mid-May, but this number could rise," Antoine Mbao Bogo, president of the local branch of the Red Cross, told Al Jazeera on Friday. According to the United Nations, most of Bangassou's 35,000 residents fled, some to sites for internally displaced people and others across into neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

MINUSCA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic), the UN's mission in CAR, said the security situation in Bangassou has calmed significantly, adding, however, that it was still not safe for the displaced to return home. "Despite the MINUSCA patrols, the area is not safe enough and their homes and businesses have been destroyed, and so many have nowhere to go," Vladimir Montiero, MINUSCA spokesperson, told Al Jazeera from Bangui.

"It is not safe for them to leave the church."

Bob Libenge, acting president of the local branch of the Red Cross, told Al Jazeera that some people were sleeping inside the

church and the rest were outside, on mats, within the complex.

Meanwhile, a number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have come forward to assist with food and sanitation.

There has been an escalation of violence across central and southeastern parts of the CAR over the past two months, with armed groups clashing in Bria, Alindou and Bakouma in particular. Earlier in the week, MINUSCA warned the Popular Front for Renaissance of Central African (FPRC), a group associated with the Seleka, to not attack Bangassou.

Sources at the UN say that MINUSCA is concerned that there would be revenge attacks on the Christian civilian population if the group entered the city.

CAR has been beset with violence since Muslim-led Seleka fighters unseated the country's president in a coup in 2013.

Following a spate of abuses by the Seleka, a vigilante militia called the Anti-balaka, made up of Christians and animists embarked on a series of revenge attacks on the Muslim community.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Technology has opened new ways to transfer Iranian gas to India: diplomat

1 → But we have an understanding that we want to move away from a buyer-seller relationship to a more comprehensive energy partnership. This is what we need to work towards.

■ From India's perspective, what is the alternative to the Peace Pipeline?

A: I would not like to go into history of the pipeline. We should look ahead. Pipeline is one of the options for transfer of gas from Iran to India. There are other options too which are also available. LNG is one such option; modern technology provides other possibilities. So we look at all these when we have discussion with our Iranian friends. Whichever option is most practi-

cal from commercial point of view and is technically feasible, is the option which would be ready to work with.

■ India skipped One Belt One Road Forum (Silk Road) held in China due to the unresolved Kashmir dispute. Now the question is how India might form its future economic bloc facing the U.S. withdrawal from TPP and China's effort to revive the Silk Road? Will India finally join the New Silk Road project?

A: India's position in OBOR (One Belt-One Road) which now is being referred to as BRI (Belt and Road Initiative) is very clear. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passes through Indian Territory which is un-

der the illegal occupation of Pakistan. CPEC is an important component of BRI. So it would be appreciated that India for this reason, has difficulties with BRI. As far as India's economic relationships are concerned, we would like to have good economic ties with all countries. For example, India is part of the negotiations on RCEP in which China, South East Asian countries and others are involved. We are carrying on negotiations with the Europe Union for an economic partnership but these have not been successful till now. We are also looking at the Eurasian Economic Union for a structural relationship with it. And we are an active member of the WTO, and would like to see that its agenda moves

ahead. We would want to have good economic relationship with all.

■ The Nuclear Suppliers Group meeting will be held next month in Switzerland and India will put forward request to join the group. However, China has said its position in regard to an Indian membership has not changed, saying it is opposed to membership of countries that have not signed the NPT. Given the fact that China has veto rights in the UN Security Council, what will India do in this context?

A: Our policy is clear. India wants to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group and we would continue our consultations with all parties, including China to achieve our objective.

Cuba rejects Donald Trump's 'hostile rhetoric'

The Cuban government of Raul Castro has criticized the United States President Donald Trump's "hostile rhetoric" in announcing new restrictions on U.S. ties to the country, but repeated its willingness to hold "respectful dialogue" with Washington.

Earlier on Friday, the U.S. president pledged to overhaul his predecessor Barack Obama's Cuba policy.

"The government of Cuba denounces the new measures toughening the embargo" imposed since 1962, according to a statement read on Cuban state television.

However, it said Cuba "reiterates its willingness to continue the respectful dialogue and cooperation" that have taken place with Washington since 2015 when the drive for restored ties began under Obama.

Although the policy changes announced were limited, Trump has tightened rules for Americans travelling to Cuba, banned ties with a military-run tourism firm and reaffirmed the existing U.S. trade embargo.

The Cuban statement criticized the "hostile rhetoric that recalls the time of open confrontation" and "return to the coercive methods of the past".

It regretted "a reversal in relations between the two countries".

"Any strategy to change the political, economic and social system in Cuba, whether through pressure ... or through more subtle methods, will be doomed to failure."

■ Diplomatic ties to remain

Diplomatic relations, restored only two years ago, will remain intact. But, in a shift from Obama's approach, Trump said trade and other penalties would stay in place until a long list of prerequisites was met.

"America has rejected the Cuban people's oppressors," Trump said in Miami's Little Havana.

Declaring Obama's pact with Castro a "completely one-sided deal", Trump said he was cancelling it.

In practice, however, many recent changes to boost ties to Cuba will stay as they are.

Embassies in Havana and Washington will remain open. U.S. airlines and cruise ships will still be allowed to serve the island.

The "wet foot, dry foot" policy, which once let most Cuban migrants stay if they made it to U.S. soil but was terminated under Obama, will remain terminated.

Remittances from people in the U.S. to Cubans will not be cut off. But individual "people-to-people" trips by Americans to Cuba, allowed by Obama for the first time in decades, will again be prohibited.

And the U.S. government will police other trips to ensure travelers are pursuing a "full-time schedule of educational exchange activities".

■ Trump's excitement

Trump said that easing restrictions on trade and travel only helps the Castro government, and he wants U.S. money to go only to the fledgling private sector.

But the overwhelming majority of the Cuban economy is controlled by the government.

Some 285,000 people visited the Caribbean country in 2016, up 74 percent over 2015, with Americans the third-biggest group after Canadians and Cuban expatriates.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Qatar rebuts Bahrain destabilisation claim

Qatar has rejected accusations of attempting to undermine security in the neighboring Persian Gulf tiny nation of Bahrain.

On Friday, Bahrain's official news agency BNA broadcast the recording of a 2011 phone call alleged to have taken place between Hamad bin Khalifa Al Attiyah, an adviser to Qatar's emir, and Hassan Ali Joma, a leader of Bahrain's opposition Shia al-Wefaq group.

The news agency accused Qatar of meddling with Bahrain's internal affairs with the aim of "overthrowing" the government.

In response, the Qatari foreign ministry said in a statement the phone call was part of Qatari efforts to mediate between Bahraini authorities and the opposition in the wake of the 2011 unrest there.

The statement said the contacts had been made "with the approval and knowledge of the authorities in Bahrain".

"The Qatari mediation has stopped after the decision of military intervention to disperse the protests and sit-ins," the statement said, referring to the decision to send Saudi regime-led forces to quell the protests.

The ministry described the broadcast of the phone call as a "naive attempt to twist the facts and take them out of context".

On June 5, five Arab states, namely the House of Saud regime, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Yemen - abruptly cut diplomatic relations with Qatar, accusing Qatar of "supporting terrorism".

Qatar, for its part, denied the accusations, calling the moves to isolate it diplomatically "unjustified".

(Source: Anadolu)

Putin: More U.S. sanctions would be harmful, talk of retaliation premature

1 → Moscow retaliated by banning imports of Western food, which also hit ordinary Russians by spurring inflation, and barred some individuals from entering Russia.

The threat of a new wave of sanctions emerged this month as U.S. policymakers backed the idea of punishing Russia for alleged meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and for supporting Syria's government in the six-year-long foreign instigated war.

Putin had previously dismissed the proposed sanctions, saying they reflected an internal political struggle in the United States, and that Washington had always used such methods as a means of trying to contain Russia.

(Source: Reuters)

Michael Phelps is set to race against a great white shark

Michael Phelps, the most decorated Olympian in history, may have finally met his match. The 28-time Olympian is set to race a great white shark for Discovery Channel's Shark Week next month.



Phelps vs. Shark: Great Gold vs. Great White airs Sunday, July 23. In a Thursday press release, Discovery Channel called the event 'so monumental no one has ever attempted it before.' It's unclear how the race will be staged so as to protect the 31-year-old Olympian from being attacked by the shark. Five days ago, Phelps posted a picture to Instagram showing him cage-diving with a great white. 'I was able to do something that I had always wanted to do. Be in a cage and dive with great White sharks!! #bucketlist,' he wrote. The chances of Phelps winning will depend on how motivated the shark gets. Great white sharks cruise at about 5 mph, but can reach speeds of 25mph. Phelps, who holds the most records of any other living swimmer, has clocked speeds of 6mph at most. (Source: Daily Mail)

AC Milan open to swapping Donnarumma for Ronaldo

AC Milan sporting director Massimiliano Mirabelli has told Real Madrid president Florentino Perez he is ready to discuss a player exchange deal involving Gianluigi Donnarumma and Cristiano Ronaldo.

The 18-year-old Donnarumma informed Milan this week he is not interested in signing a contract renewal and Madrid are believed to be keeping a close eye on the highly rated goalkeeper's situation at San Siro.



Ronaldo, meanwhile, is reportedly keen to leave Madrid amid scrutiny in Spain over his tax affairs. 'If Ronaldo wants to leave Madrid because of his tax problems and Real want to sign Donnarumma, then we are ready to talk to Perez,' Mirabelli told Corriere dello Sport. 'Although obviously without the transfer fee of €400 million that the Spanish press has mentioned...'

Donnarumma's decision to reject Milan's offer came as a huge blow to the Serie A outfit, but they do not hold a grudge against the youngster or his agent Mino Raiola. 'For the moment, nothing will happen with Donnarumma. The owners do not want to accept any offers. For us, Donnarumma is priceless. We are not selling him for now,' Mirabelli added. 'We made him an enormous offer considering his age and the burden it would place on Milan. We were willing to pay him €25m net over five years, which would have cost the club an estimated €50m. (Source: Soccerway)

Messi may end up in U.S., China - City chief

Lionel Messi will either finish his career at Barcelona or in the United States or China -- but not at Manchester City -- according to the Premier League club's chief executive Ferran Soriano. Messi's Barca contract expires in 2018 and he is currently in talks over a new deal to extend his stay at the Camp Nou.

An agreement is expected to be finalised in the coming weeks despite speculation in Spain that the 29-year-old had turned down an offer worth between €30 million and €35m per season. Former Barca vice-president Soriano has previously said that he would 'open the doors' to Messi at City if he ever decided to leave the Camp Nou, though he now expects an extension to be agreed in Catalonia. 'No, I don't think so,' Soriano was quoted as saying in Marca after being asked if Messi could still end up at City one day. 'I know Messi very well. Our families are really good friends. He's really happy in Barcelona and he has his whole life there. 'I think he will end his career there. If he doesn't, afterwards maybe he could play in the U.S. or China.' Meanwhile, Soriano has said that City's biggest target is to win the Champions League. The club have already brought in Bernardo Silva and Ederison Moraes for a reported £77.7m this summer as they look to challenge in Europe as well as the Premier League next season. (Source: ESPN)



... (Source: ESPN)

McDonald's ends Olympics sponsorship deal early

McDonald's Corp (MCDN) ended its 41-year-old sponsorship of the Olympic Games three years early, the International Olympic Committee said on Friday, reflecting the U.S. fast-food giant's focus on its core business as well as rising Olympics sponsorship costs and declining TV ratings.

McDonald's deal would have run through the Tokyo Olympics in 2020, and bowing out will likely to save it hundreds of million of dollars if it had continued into the next four-year Olympics cycle and beyond.

McDonald's has been trying to hold down costs as it invests in improving food quality, restaurant service and online ordering to woo back U.S. diners. Intense competition has gnawed away at sales.

'We are reconsidering all aspects of our business and have made this decision in cooperation with the IOC to focus on different priorities,' said McDonald's Global Chief Marketing Officer Silvia Lagnado.

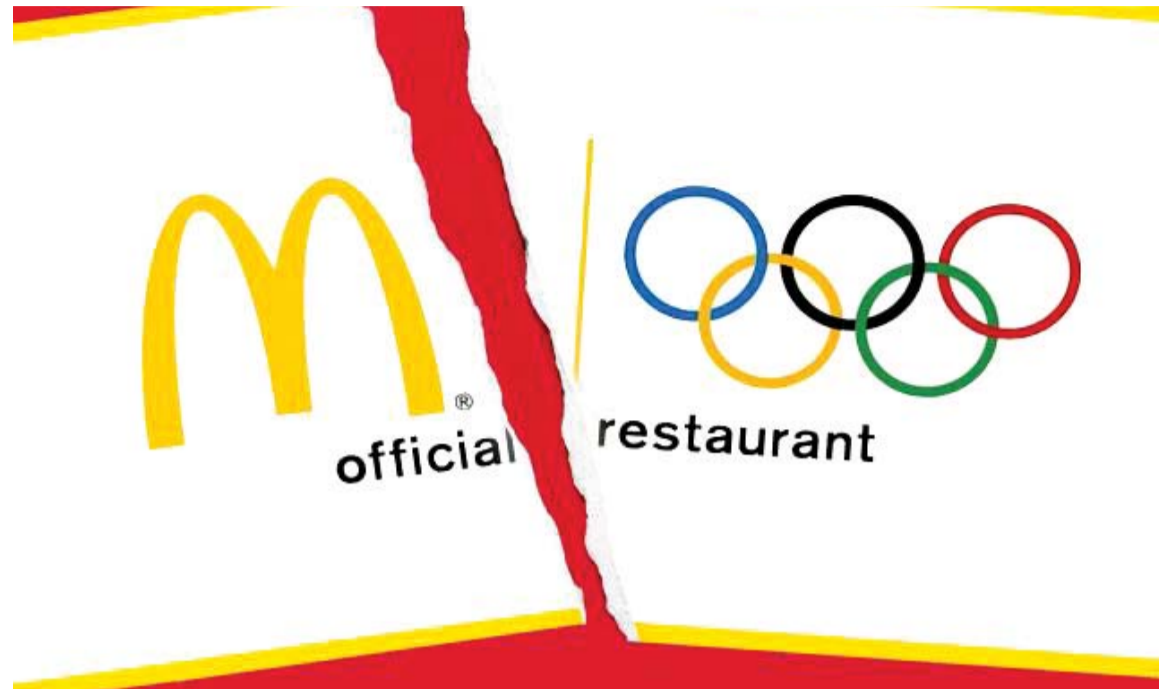
The company, first involved with the games in 1968 and a sponsor since 1976, was the Olympics' food retail sponsor. Despite pulling out with immediate effect, McDonald's will continue at next year's Pyeongchang winter Olympics as a domestic sponsor.

The company's move may also reflect a rising view among consumer brands that exclusive Olympics sponsorship deals do not offer the marketing impact they once did. Some companies find it is much cheaper to work directly with athletes or specific countries than the IOC.

Moreover, in a trend that began after the Beijing games in 2008, shrinking television audiences for the games could be diminishing the value of sponsors' ads. With the Rio de Janeiro games in 2016, many viewers turned to social media alternatives like Twitter and Facebook.

The fast food chain has been part of the IOC's top sponsors program that contributes more than \$1 billion in each four-year cycle for the games.

While terms of Olympic sponsorship are not disclosed, a source who negotiated previous IOC sponsorship deals said that top global sponsors like McDonald's spend about \$25 million a year or about \$100 million for a four-



year period that includes a summer and winter games. Reuters previously reported that the IOC had wanted to roughly double fees to \$200 million per four year period starting in 2021.

While it is unusual for an Olympic sponsor to leave early, sponsors change regularly within the IOC's top program. The most recent addition was China's Alibaba Group Holding Ltd, which signed a deal in January for a partnership through 2028.

The IOC said it was not planning a direct replacement for McDonald's, but it is expected to announce a new global deal with Intel Corp next week, according to a source familiar with the matter.

Intel did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

'Companies with a deep focus on technology are barging in while others migrate out,' said Peter Land, who works with Olympics and Paralympics sponsors for communications firm Finsbury.

The IOC has faced criticism from public health campaigners for allowing sponsors such as Coca-Cola and McDonald's to use the games to market their products, which are perceived to be unhealthy.

John Lewicki, who oversees global Olympic sponsorship deals for McDonald's, said last year the company would reevaluate its Olympic relationship after changes to a rule that ended a marketing blackout for companies that sponsor athletes rather than the event itself. (Source: Reuters)

Rodman returns from 'really good' North Korea trip

Former National Basketball Association star Dennis Rodman arrived in Beijing on Saturday after what he said was a "really good" 5-day trip to North Korea.

Rodman, 56, said last week before departing for Pyongyang that he was trying to bring sports to the increasingly isolated nuclear-armed country, where he has previously met leader Kim Jong Un.

'Everybody's going to be happy. It was a good day. It was a good trip. A really good trip,' Rodman said.

Wearing black clothing with the Pot-Coin logo - a crypto-currency used by the legal marijuana industry - Rodman fended off questions from dozens of journalists at the arrival gate.

Asked repeatedly if he had met Kim, Rodman said: "You'll find out."

He also declined to answer questions about whether he had played a role in the release of Otto Warmbier, an American student who was returned home on the day of Rodman's arrival suffering from brain damage and in a state of unresponsive wakefulness, after more than a year in detention in North Korea.

Tensions have escalated on the Korean peninsula over North Korea's nuclear and missile tests and its vow to develop a nuclear-tipped missile capable of hitting the U.S. mainland, presenting U.S. President Donald Trump with perhaps his most pressing security worry.

Rodman's North Korea visits over the years have fueled speculation that he could somehow facilitate a diplomatic breakthrough between Pyongyang and Washington.

The U.S. State Department has said



Rodman was traveling as a private citizen.

Rodman has faced ridicule and criticism for his trips to North Korea, which some U.S. politicians and activists view as serving only as fodder for North Korean propaganda.

His earlier visits to North Korea in 2013 and 2014 included a basketball game that he organized, an event chronicled in the documentary film "Big Bang in Pyongyang", which featured Rodman singing "Happy Birthday" to Kim.

The U.S. government has issued travel warnings to Americans against going to North Korea.

Rodman, nicknamed "The Worm" during his playing career and known for his tattoos, body piercings and multi-colored hair, is considered one of the best defensive players and rebounders in NBA history.

He won five league championships with the Detroit Pistons and Chicago Bulls. (Source: Reuters)

Does Ronaldo really want to leave Spain and Real Madrid?

Cristiano Ronaldo wants out of Real Madrid, or at least that was the hot rumor on Friday. Check a paper and someone had it.

Apparently, Ronaldo is upset that he's been accused of tax fraud and thinks he's been unfairly targeted because he's a famous and wealthy so he wants to leave Spain. That would obviously mean a transfer.

A Portuguese outlet, Bola, first reported the news, then others found "sources close to Ronaldo" to confirm it.

Ronaldo has been accused of putting money from his image rights in an offshore account and keeping more than €14 million in taxes out of the hands of Spanish authorities.

However, leaving Spain would mean leaving the back-to-back Champions League champions Real Madrid, who are arguably the biggest club in the world and pay him very handsomely. That seems highly unlikely at this point.

Didn't this happen with someone else?

Remember, Lionel Messi was found guilty of tax fraud and sentenced to 21 months in prison -- which he didn't have to serve because Spanish law lets people avoid it if their sentence is under two years and they're a first time offender.

But while that saga came to an end earlier this year, it started long ago. And when Messi was first accused of tax fraud, he vehemently denied it, like Ronaldo has, and then there were rumors he would leave Barcelona because he wanted out of Spain for being ... you got it, targeted on account of his fame and




wealth. "Sources close to Messi" went around saying he wanted out.


You may have noticed that Messi didn't leave Barcelona or Spain.

So what is Ronaldo doing?


Leaving Spain won't make his tax fraud issues go away. Spain will still pursue the matter and, if they see fit, demand back payment then potentially even push for conviction. All of that won't be affected by whether he plays for Real Madrid, Manchester United, in MLS, China or wherever he might go outside of Spain.

What Ronaldo has done in getting these rumors going is put the focus on whether he'll leave Real Madrid. No longer are we talking about his tax fraud and what he did or do not do wrong. The conversation is about soccer, which is where Ronaldo wants it to be. He might even turn the ire of Real Madrid fans toward the tax office. (Source: Foxsports)






keylornavas1 My new @realmadrid shirt for 2017/18. It's not white :-)) @adidasfootball #HalaMadrid



fcbayern Our women's U17 team have been crowned German Champions! Congratulations, ladies. #MiaSanMia #FCBayern #U17Juniorinnen



davidbeckham The moments I share with my children are incredibly special.

Iran Greco-Roman team claim title at Asian Junior Championships

S P O R T S Iran Greco-Roman wrestling team finished in first place at the 2017 Asian Junior Championships.

Iranian wrestlers snatched five gold medals and two silvers in the competition.

Iran won the title with 71 points, followed by Kazakhstan (58 points) and India (55 points).

The 2017 Junior Asian Wrestling Championships got underway at the National Taiwan University of Sport in Taichung city of Chinese Taipei from June 15-18.

50kg:
GOLD: Poya Soulat DAD MARZ (IRI) df. Alpamys DASTANBEK (KAZ), 2-1
BRONZE: Jasurbek ORTIKBOEV (UZB) df. Donghyeok WON (KOR) by FALL, 4-6

55kg:
GOLD: Mohammad Javad Saadat REZAEI (IRI) df. Zholaman SHARSHENBEKOV (KGZ), 4-4
BRONZE: Liguao CAO (CHN) df. Ilkhom BAKHROMOV (UZB) by TF, 9-0
BRONZE: Yernur FIDAKHMETOV (KAZ) df. Vijay VIJAY (IND) by TF, 10-2

60kg:
GOLD: Seydilla TAZAYEV (TKM) df. Keramat Morad ABDEVALI (IRI), 8-7
BRONZE: Tynar SHARSHENBEKOV (KGZ) df. Yoshiki YAMADA (JPN), 8-4

66kg:
GOLD: Amin Yavar KAVIYANINEJAD (IRI) df. Meray BEKENOV (KAZ) by TF, 12-0
BRONZE: Makhmud BAKHSHILLOEV (UZB) df. Parveen KUMAR (IND), 5-1

84kg:
GOLD: Mehdi Mohammad BALIHAMZEHDEH (IRI) df. Kalidin ASYKEEV (KGZ) by FALL, 13-2
BRONZE: Kumar SUNIL (IND) df. Xiangpeng SUN (CHN) by TF, 8-0

96kg:
GOLD: Temur Mirzo MAMAJANOV (UZB) df. Amir-mohammad Hosseinreza NOROOZIPASAND (IRI), 2-0



120kg:
GOLD: Amirmohammad Hossein HAJIPOURGANJI (IRI) df. Satish SATISH (IND), 6-3
BRONZE: Jijie MU (CHN) df. Anton SAVENKO (KAZ) by Injury Default, 0-0

BRONZE: Roman KIM (KGZ) df. Kisung KIM (KOR) by FALL, 6-4

BRONZE: Olzhas SYRLYBAY (KAZ) df. Sagar SAGAR (IND), 5-2
BRONZE: Dongjae LEE (KOR) df. Shigefumi DEGUCHI (JPN), 2-1

BRONZE: Sanzhar TEMIRBEK (KAZ) df. Ermatbek SHERMATOV (UZB) by TF, 12-3

BRONZE: Olzhas SYRLYBAY (KAZ) df. Sagar SAGAR (IND), 5-2
BRONZE: Dongjae LEE (KOR) df. Shigefumi DEGUCHI (JPN), 2-1

Iran finish eighth at U-23 World Wheelchair Basketball Championship

Iran had to settle for eighth place at the men's U-23 World Wheelchair Basketball Championship after a 76-63 loss to France on Thursday.



In the final day of competition, Great Britain claimed first place after defeating undefeated Turkey 54-43.

Ben Fox notched 23 points for Great Britain and Efeturk countered with 18 points and 16 rebounds for a double double for Turkey.

Australia outplayed Japan in the battle for bronze at the 2017 Men's U-23 World Championship at the Mattamy Athletic Centre in Toronto, Ont.

Australia secured a spot on the podium with a 71-66 win against Japan.

Final Standings:
1 - Great Britain, 2 - Turkey, 3 - Australia, 4 - Japan, 5 - Germany, 6 - Canada, 7 - France, 8 - Iran, 9 - United States, 10 - Italy, 11 - Brazil, 12 - South Africa

Ramin Rezaeian linked with Belgium's Gent

Iran international winger Ramin Rezaeian has been linked with a move to Belgian football club Gent.

The 27-year-old player is without a team after parting ways with Iranian giant Persepolis.

Rezaeian could replace Thomas Foket, who will likely join Napoli.

A few months ago, Club Brugge had also shown interest in signing Rezaeian.

Rezaeian is a main player in the Iranian national football team (also known as Team Melli).

He has made 19 appearances for Team Melli and scored two goals.

Rezaeian has been reportedly linked with a move to Persepolis archrival Esteghlal.

(Source: Tasnim)

Iranian fencers win medals at Asian championships



S P O R T S Mohammad Rahbari and Ali Pakdaman won two silver and bronze medal in the 2017 Asian Fencing Championships.

Rahbari lost to South Korean Gu Bon-gil in the individual sabre, while his countryman Pakdaman claimed a bronze medal in the weapon.

A total of 19 Iranian men and women fencers have participated in the competition in all three weapon categories, foil, epee and sabre.

The competitions have brought 340 fencers at the AsiaWorld-Expo in Hong Kong together from June 15 to 20.

Asian Fencing Championships is the fencing zonal championship organized by the Asian Fencing Confederation for the Asia-Oceania zone. The tournament began in 1989 and it has been held annually since 2007. It awards points for the Fencing World Cup.

Iran basketball beaten by China in friendly



S P O R T S Iran national basketball team lost to China 72-67 in a friendly match held in Changchun.

China's Zhai Xiaochuan scored 15 points in the friendly.

Mohammad Jamshidi led Iran with a match-high 24, while Rouzbeh Arghavan added six points.

Iran had already defeated China 63-60 in the first friendly on Tuesday. Team Melli will play the third and

also final match against China in Ningbo, Zhejiang on Sunday.

The two teams are preparing for the 2019 World Cup in China and the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. The Iranian team are headed by Mehran Hatami.

"We had a good start and a good ending," said China coach Li Nan. "Though we had some tough times in the middle of the match, I'm satisfied with my players."

Arsenal star pledges support to Grenfell Tower victims with £50 for every minute he plays

Arsenal star Hector Bellerin has shown solidarity with the victims of the tragic Grenfell Tower fire by vowing to donate £50 for every minute he plays at the European Under 21 Championships to help support them.

The death toll caused by the tower block fire in the north Kensington currently stands at 30 with as many as 76 people still missing. The tragedy has moved thousands to donate money and items to help victims.

As revealed in a post on his Instagram account Bellerin has joined them and called on others to do so too. Posted alongside a picture featuring messages of goodwill to victims of the tragedy, Bellerin wrote: "For every minute I play in #U21EURO I'll donate £50 to help Grenfell Tower victims. Please support in any way you can".

The Spaniard, 22, included a link to the Kensington & Chelsea Foundation's donation page on the BigGive.org.



Bellerin is regular starter at full-back for Spain's Under 21 side and just playing every minute of their group three games at the tournament in Poland would see his

donation reach £13,500.

Should they progress to the semi-finals, with Bellerin again playing 90 minutes, that would see the donation reach £18,000. Progression into the final and another full game would see Bellerin's contribution reach at least £22,500.

Given the generous nature of the pledge you would think Bellerin would include any extra time, so that figure could increase further.

Bellerin follows fellow Premier League star Raheem Sterling in donating to Grenfell Tower victims.

Manchester City winger Sterling, who grew up in North West London and began his football career at Queens Park Rangers, located just a mile from the Kensington estate, made a 'substantial' contribution according to a BBC report.

(Source: Daily Mail)

Guardiola's Man City will be 'extremely strong' after transfers - Joan Laporta

Manchester City will have an "extremely strong" team once Pep Guardiola finishes his transfer business this summer, says former Barcelona president Joan Laporta.

Guardiola and Laporta formed an all-conquering team at the Camp Nou under the former Barca midfielder's watch, which resulted in three La Liga titles, two Champions League crowns, three Spanish Supercups and two Club World Cups, while launching the likes of Lionel Messi, Dani Alves, Yaya Toure and Gerard Pique to world superstardom.

After another successful spell at Bayern Munich, Guardiola ended his first season at the Etihad without a trophy. But Laporta insists the Catalan manager

will win big again once he's brought in more players.

"If City back him as he deserves he will succeed," Laporta told The Guardian.

"He is an optimist, a winner and he is brave. He won't hide.

"Pep looked very well. He was here for a few days, so we met up and he was very upbeat. He is happy at City, optimistic he can build something.

"The way they plan to go about strengthening the team, I think they are going to be extremely strong. The fans will be very excited.

"I don't know what they are going to do! What I do know, and very well, is Pep and Txiki Begiristain and that they

are capable of building a team that will enthruse people."

Guardiola won three Bundesliga titles and two German cups in his three seasons with Bayern Munich.

And Laporta cites his success in Bavaria as reason for his confidence in Guardiola.

"Pep's record speaks for itself. Everywhere has its idiosyncrasies. He knew Barcelona as a kid but was successful at Bayern and I'm convinced he will be at City. He is lucky to work with Txiki [Begiristain] and Ferran Soriano, who trust him. That's peace of mind," Laporta said.

"When I saw Pep he was animated, enthusiastic, excited for the future. He's

smart, has emotional intelligence, an ability to convince.

"It is not easy: the Premier League's a challenge and there are two great teams in the city but he is the world's best coach and could have gone anywhere. He chose City because they'd have the faith, letting him build the project he has in mind.

"He will make his mark. If you watch City last season they passed the ball well but it doesn't happen overnight. You need the right players. They will bring in players who suit the system he wants, which doesn't have to be identical to Barca. He is intelligent, he will adapt. He will create an identity, a connection."

(Source: Soccernet)

Mehdi Taremi on Croatian Dinamo Zagreb's radar

Iranian footballer Mehdi Taremi is apparently on transfer radar to professional Croatian football club Gradanski nogometni klub Dinamo Zagreb, commonly referred to as GNK Dinamo Zagreb, thanks to his great performance during the third round of the 2018 FIFA World Cup qualification tournament.

According to a report published by Fars news agency on Saturday, the Zagreb-based club is considering to sign the 24-year-old, who plays as a forward for Persian Gulf Pro League club Persepolis as well as the Iranian national football team.

On June 12, the Iranian team, which has so far kept their clean sheet record unblemished at the third round of the 2018 FIFA World Cup qualification tournament, became the first Asian team - and the third squad after Brazil and hosts Russia - to secure their place at the quadrennial international football tournament.

Iranian national football team defeated Uzbekistan 2-0 at Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

(Source: Press TV)

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NEWS IN BRIEF



Tehran Symphony Orchestra to perform this week

TEHRAN — The Tehran Symphony Orchestra is scheduled to give concerts at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on June 22 and 23.

Pieces by Ludwig van Beethoven, Johannes Brahms and Arturo Marquez will be performed during the concerts, which will be conducted Shahrdad Rohani, the orchestra announced in a press release on Saturday.



Vienna film festival to host Iran's "Bodyguard"

TEHRAN — Iranian director Ebrahim Hatamikia's acclaimed political drama "Bodyguard" will go on screen in the official section of the Vienna Independent Film Festival (VIFF), which will be held in the Austrian capital from July 3 to 7.

The film tells the story of a middle-aged bodyguard who protects a politician from a suicide bomber, and then begins to question his dedication to his job.



Iranian artist displays works in Florence

TEHRAN — An exhibition of works by Iranian artist Amir-Mohammad Qasemzadeh opened in Casa di Dante (House of Dante) in Florence, Italy on Saturday.

The exhibit includes two collections of works under the title "Wood Wounds" and "Tribute to the Great Masters", the House of Dante has announced on its website.

Qasemzadeh is an honorary member of the house. The exhibit will be running until June 29.

John Avildsen, Oscar-winning director of "Rocky", dead at 81

NEW YORK (Reuters) — John Avildsen, the Oscar-winning director who made Hollywood's quintessential underdog story in 1976 boxing saga "Rocky" with a then-unknown Sylvester Stallone, and crafted another inspiring tale in "The Karate Kid", died on Friday at age 81, his family said.

Avildsen had been suffering pancreatic cancer at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, his son, Anthony, said by phone.

Avildsen won the Academy Award for best director for "Rocky" while the film was named best picture and other successes included the "The Karate Kid" series in the 1980s. He directed seven actors to Oscar nominations.

In the years before "Rocky", Avildsen won praise for two dark character studies: "Joe" (1970) with Peter Boyle and Susan Sarandon and "Save the Tiger" (1973) starring Jack Lemmon, who won the Academy Award for best actor for the role.

He also had his share of career setbacks, directing some clunkers and being fired as director of 1970s classics "Saturday Night Fever" and "Serpico" because of disputes with producers.

"Rocky" proved to be as much of an underdog success story as the fictional Philadelphia boxer Rocky Balboa portrayed by Stallone, who wrote the screenplay. Stallone was an obscure actor at the time but stubbornly refused to allow studios to cast anyone but himself in the role. Producers Robert Chartoff and Irwin Winkler consented to let him take the role under Avildsen's guidance.

"Rocky" was made for a modest \$1 million and generated \$225 million in ticket sales to become a cultural phenomenon, with a series of unforgettable characters and scenes and a blend of romance with pugilistic action.

The film centers on charismatic champion Apollo Creed, played by Carl Weathers, plucking Balboa, known as "The Italian Stallion", from obscurity for a dream shot at the world heavyweight boxing title.

Rocky, who earns money as a collector for a loan shark, falls in love with Adrian (Talia Shire), the sister of his miserable friend Paulie (Burt Young), and gets help from a gruff trainer named Mickey (Burgess Meredith) who long felt Rocky had wasted his considerable potential.

Iranian films line up for Shanghai festival

TEHRAN — A lineup of Iranian films is scheduled to go on screen at the various sections of the 20th Shanghai International Film Festival, which opened in the Chinese metropolis on Saturday.

Iranian director Mostafa Taqizadeh's debut film "Yellow" is competing with 13 other films for the Golden Goblet Award in the official section of the festival, which will run until June 26.

"Dogs and Fools" by Ali-Mohammad Qasemi is contending for the Asian New Talent Award in the categories of best film, best screenwriter and best actress.

Panorama, a non-competitive section of the festival, screens "Malaria" by Parviz Shahbazi, "Daughter" by Reza Mirkarimi, "Being Born" by Mohsen Abdolvahab, "Duet" by Navid Danesh, "Inadaptable" by Ebrahim Ebrahimian, "Simulation" by Abed Abest and "Parting", a joint production of Iran and Afghanistan by Navid Mahmudi.

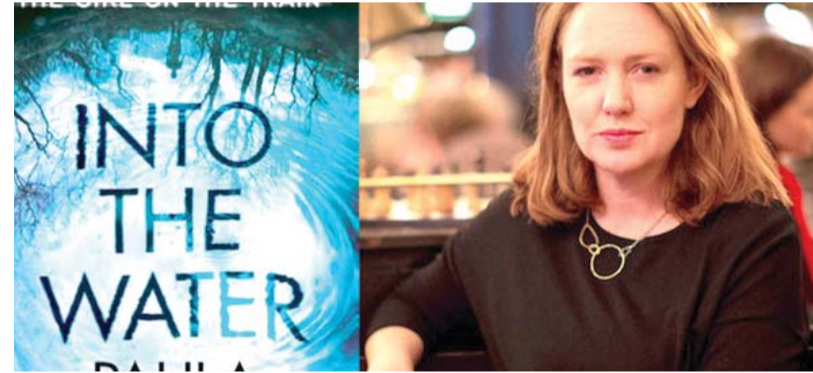
The festival also plans to pay tribute to Abbas Kiarostami by screening some of his films including "Close-Up", "The Wind Will Carry Us", "Taste of Cherry", "Where Is the Friend's Home", "Certified Copy" and "Through the Olive Trees".

"76 Minutes and 15 Seconds with Abbas Kiarostami", a montage film made by Kiarostami's close friend Seifollah Samadian and Kiarostami's "Take Me Home" is scheduled to go on screen in this section.



A scene from Iranian director Mostafa Taqizadeh's debut film "Yellow" that is competing in the official section of the 20th Shanghai International Film Festival

Five Persian translators working separately on Paula Hawkins' "Into the Water"



This combination photo shows Paula Hawkins and the front cover of her second novel "Into the Water"

TEHRAN — Iranian translator Ali Qane' has said that since his publisher has the copyright on Paula Hawkins "Into the Water", at least five other of his colleagues are working separately on the novel.

"I will soon finish translating the novel that will be released by Kuleh Poshty Publications in Tehran," he told the Persian service of ILNA on Saturday. He said that he called Hawkins personally to obtain her permission to translate "Into the Water".

"Into the Water" is Hawkins's follow-up to her best-selling debut thriller "The Girl on the Train".

Two Persian translations of "The Girl on the Train" by Mahbubeh Musavi and

Nilufar Amnzadeh were published in Iran.

Since Iran does not hold a membership in any international copyright conventions, international publishing companies and overseas writers cannot collaborate with Iranian publishers and translators.

Articles 245 to 248 in Iran's criminal law passed in 1931 contains allusions to copyright. However, Iran's first copyright law was passed in 1969.

The Iranian government submitted a new copyright bill to the Iranian parliament in May 2016 to tackle the chaos ruling the Iranian printing industry.

The bill has so far been discussed in the parliament.

Munich festival to screen Iranian films



Misaq Zare and Anna Nemati in a scene from "Immortality"

TEHRAN — A selection of Iranian films will be screened in the New Silk Road category of the Munich International Film Festival (Filmfest Munchen), which will be held from June 22 to July 1.

Among the films are "Immortality" by Mehdi Fard-Qaderi and "Parting", a joint production of Iran and Afghanistan by Navid Mahmudi, the organizers have announced on the website.

"Immortality" tells the story of several persons who have to spend a rainy night together on a train.

"Parting" is about teenage lovers Nabi and Fereshteh who are separated by her family's flight from Afghanistan. After years apart, Nabi decides to find Fereshteh and risk the hardship of flight

and resettlement in Europe with a hope of a better life.

Movies from China and Russia will also be screened in the New Silk Road category.

"Walking Past the Future" by Ruijun Li and "Knife in the Clear Water" by Xuebo Wang are among the Chinese films, while the Russian productions include "Loveless" by Andrey Zvyagintsev and "A Gentle Creature" by Sergei Loznitsa.

The festival will also pay tribute to the legendary Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami.

Kiarostami's close friend Seifollah Samadian's montage film "76 Minutes and 15 Seconds with Abbas Kiarostami" and Kiarostami's "Take Me Home" are scheduled to go on screen in this section.

As art flies off the walls at Basel, buyers beware, experts warn

BASEL, SWITZERLAND (Reuters) — "When did so many people start caring about contemporary art?" wondered Marc Glimcher, head of the Pace gallery empire, as he busily made deals at Art Basel's VIP preview this week.

With 291 galleries from 35 countries presenting 4,000 artists' works, the world's most prestigious art fair is as much a place to hobnob as it is to buy and sell an estimated 2.5 billion to 3 billion euros (\$2.8-3.4 billion) of art.

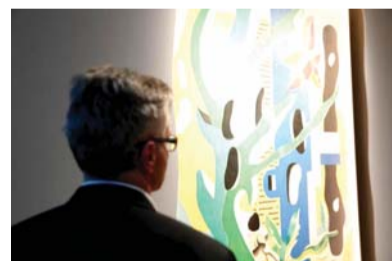
This year's fair — hard on the heels of a \$110.5 million sale of a Jean-Michel Basquiat painting at a Sotheby's auction in New York — got off to a fast clip, dispelling a somber market mood last year.

At the Levy Gorvy booth, a collector snatched up a small Joan Miro on paper while the gallery's co-founder and former Christie's chairman Brett Gorvy showed another potential buyer a nearby work.

A large painting from the late German artist Sigmar Polke's flamingo and heron series, which caught the eyes of four buyers, sold for around \$12 million, while a \$32 million Basquiat attracted museum curators and dealers.

"I always said I won't leave in a downturn or when the market is riding a rocket to the top," said top dealmaker Gorvy on his departure from Christie's in December to join forces with dealer Dominique Levy.

"It feels like there's a nice steady rise." With mid-market prices ranging



A man observes Mural painting for the fireplace of Nelson A. Rockefeller's apartment, New York from 1939 by French artist Fernand Leger during the Art Basel in Basel, Switzerland June 13, 2017. (Reuters/Mortiz Hager)

from \$50,000 to \$1 million, art deals represent "large and infrequent purchases" even among the world's growing population of millionaires, art economist Clare McAndrew said.

In the first market report commissioned by UBS and Art Basel, she estimated art sales hit \$56.6 billion last year, with the rich eager to place cash at a time of low financial returns.

"I don't know whether art is already an asset class," Juerg Zeltner, head of international wealth management at Swiss bank UBS, told journalists at the fair.

"The only thing I do know is that money is worth less. Given the central bank interventions, it does look to me that a lot of private investors are looking to also invest money in art."

But that poses pitfalls for buyers whose ranks have swelled from several dozen serious collectors to millions of active buyers in recent years.

As Shanghai's Magic Kingdom turns one, Disney pushes further into China

SHANGHAI (Reuters) — Walt Disney celebrated the first anniversary of its \$5.5 billion theme park in Shanghai on Friday, a key plank of the entertainment giant's push into the world's second-largest economy through everything from English schools to films.

China matters for Mickey Mouse's owner: its box office takings there have tripled over the last two years and Shanghai Disneyland has seen more than 10 million guests in its first year, setting it on track for faster profits than Disney reaped from parks in Paris and Hong Kong, both loss-making for most of the years they have been open.

The company was "extraordinarily encouraged" by the number of guests who visited Shanghai Disneyland and the satisfaction scores it received, Bob Chapek, head of parks and resorts, told reporters.

"I think those are the sort of right precursors, if you will, for future development," he said when asked about expansion plans.

"We're very encouraged by what we've seen."

Disney released 10 films in China last year, including "Zootopia" and "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" with ticket sales of about \$1 billion, according to box office tracker EntGroup. That was up from four films and \$313 million in 2014.

Last month, it rolled out the red carpet in Shanghai for a rare world premiere of the latest film in its "Pirates of the Caribbean" franchise. Stars Johnny Depp, Orlando Bloom and Javier Bardem made



Fireworks explode over the Shanghai Disney Resort during a celebration ceremony to mark its first anniversary in Shanghai, China June 16, 2017. (Reuters/Stringer)

an appearance.

It has also been tying up with partners like state-backed producer Shanghai Film Group, its digital subsidiary BesTV for online content, and Shanghai Shendi, its partner for Shanghai.

Now, for the first anniversary of the Shanghai park, it will celebrate Disney-style, with lights, fireworks and visits by executives including Chapek and Chief Executive Bob Iger.

Chapek said their hotels at Shanghai Disneyland had hosted almost 750,000 people and had maintained occupancy levels significantly higher than the overall market.

Guests were also spending more time at the park than anticipated, averaging about nine hours, he said.

But along with the hotel rooms and rides, Disney is pursuing a steadier path to build brand and profit in downtown classrooms in six Chinese cities, where children study English with the help of Winnie the Pooh and Captain America.