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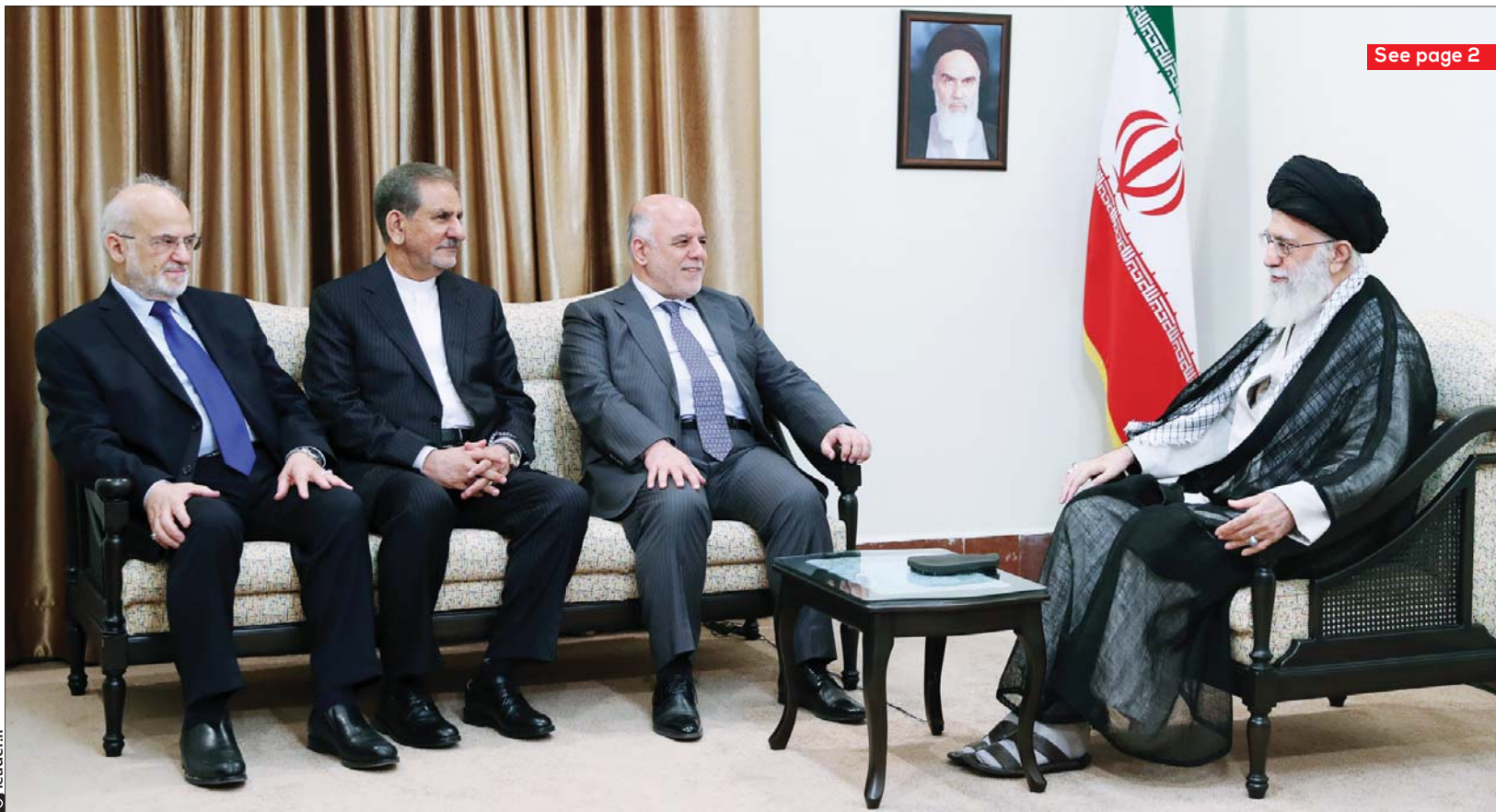


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Iran's support for Iraq is support for intl. community: ambassador

By Zahra Khezri

TEHRAN — In an interview with The Tehran Times, Baghdad's ambassador to Tehran says the Iraqi government appreciates Iran's stance on the region, noting that the Islamic Republic's help to Iraq in the fight against Daesh is in fact support for the international community.

"When the Iranian government and nation stand alongside Iraq, they are in fact standing alongside the international community because Iraq is defending the security and stability of the international community against Daesh (ISIS) terrorists who are threatening the world's security and peace,"

Ambassador Rageh Al-Musawi says.

The diplomat also says there is no way that Iraq would take a hostile stance against the Islamic Republic.

Here's the full transcript of the interview:

■ What is Baghdad's position on the recent regional developments and the deepening row between certain Persian Gulf Arab states with Qatar?

A: As you know, Iraq is a very important country in the region, with a history which cannot be separated from its current situation. Iraq has always wanted to be an element of stability in the region and wishes to have **→2**

France's Total to go ahead with major Iran gas project: CEO

Total will go ahead with development of a giant Iranian gas field this summer, its CEO told Reuters, in the first major western energy investment in the country since Tehran signed an international nuclear deal.

Chief Executive Patrick Pouyanne said the French group would make an initial \$1 billion investment after the United States extended sanctions relief for Iran under the 2015 agreement.

Washington has warned that it could cancel the sanctions waivers if it believes Tehran is not curbing its nuclear program in line with the deal with world powers.

"It is worth taking the risk at \$1 billion because it opens a huge market. We are perfectly conscious of some risks. We have taken into account (sanctions) snap-backs, we have to take into account regulation changes," Pouyanne said in an interview.

The offshore field was first developed in the 1990s, and Total was one of the biggest investors in Iran until the international sanctions were imposed in 2006 over Tehran's nuclear program.

Total has decided to return and develop phase 11 of the South Pars project in the Persian Gulf, which will cost up to \$5 billion, **→4**

World Refugee Day commemorates strength, courage, and perseverance of refugees

On June 20, World Refugee Day, we honor the resilience and courage of more than 65 million people who have been forced to flee war, persecution and violence. But it's also a moment to recognize those communities and people around the world who receive refugees and the internally displaced in their midst, offering them a safe haven, and welcoming them in their schools, their workplaces and their societies.

Today we live in a world in which uncertainty often abounds; economic instability, political upheaval and violence close to home can make us want to shut our eyes or close our doors. But fear and exclusion will not lead us to a better place - they can only lead to barriers, alienation and despair.

It's time to change this trajectory. And for the better.

In countless communities around the world, including in the poorest countries that host the vast majority of the world's refugees, business people, faith communities, teachers, journalists and many more are joining together to provide refuge to the displaced and foster their inclusion in their societies.

Through UNHCR's work - often on the front lines of conflict - we witness the courage, tenacity and brilliance of refugees every single day.

Having lost their homes, their work, and sometimes their families - they don't give up - they find a way to start again. Striving to belong, and to contribute, they reach out to their new neighbors, building connections, and creating new opportunities. Given the right environment, our experience is that refugees bring solutions, not problems.

Inclusion requires opening our minds, hearts and communities to refugees. It requires a whole of society approach - joining up students, business leaders, athletes, activists, religious leaders, politicians and artists - to share responsibility. And welcoming refugees cannot be at the expense of helping others, but should broaden support to all who need a hand. **→13**

Iran wants 'all states' to condemn Tillerson remarks in letter to UN

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — In a letter to **d e s k** UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the UN Security Council on Monday, Iran strongly objected to recent remarks by the U.S. secretary of state, requesting "all States condemn such grotesque policy statements."

In a hearing on the 2018 State Department budget before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Wednesday, Rex Tillerson said the U.S. major policy towards Tehran is to seek "peaceful transition" of the country's government.

"This statement is a brazen interventionist plan that runs counter to every norm and principle of international law, as well as the letter and spirit of UN Charter, and constitutes an unacceptable behavior in international relations," Iran's UN Ambassador Gholamali Khoshroo said in the letter.

"The Iranian government expects that all States condemn such grotesque policy statements and advise the U.S. government to act responsibly and to adhere to principles of the

UN Charter and international law."

Khoshroo said the remarks brazenly contravene the 1981 Algiers Accords, to which Washington is a signatory.

"This statement is also a flagrant violation of the 1981 Algiers Accords and other treaty obligations to which the United States is a party. According to the Algiers Accords, 'the United States pledges that it is and from now on will be the policy of the United States not to intervene, directly or indirectly, politically or militarily, in Iran's internal affairs'."

Tillerson's remarks already drew strong rebuke from Tehran.

On Sunday, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dismissed the statement as hackneyed and old, emphasizing that Washington has been and will continue to be a loser.

"In the past 38 years, has there been a time when you haven't wished to change the Islamic system?" he said, adding, "Your head has hit the rock each time and always will."

Iran condemns London mosque attack

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi condemned on Tuesday a van attack on a mosque in London which left one person dead and 11 injured.

"Violence and extremism at any place, with any intention and objective and by any instrument is condemned," he said.

It is essential to raise awareness towards such terrorist acts and take measures to eradicate them, he added.

A van plowed into worshippers near a London mosque on Monday, killing one and injuring 11 people.

British Prime Minister Theresa May said it was a "sickening", terrorist attack on Muslims.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted: "U.S. officials should worry more about saving their own regime than changing Iran's, where 75% of people just voted," a reference to the unprecedented turnout in the May 19 presidential election in Iran.

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council reacted strongly, branding "American extremists and Daesh (Islamic State)" as "two sides of the same coin, both seeking to negatively influence the country's internal environment and make security issues a major concern for Iran."

Citing the U.S.-engineered coup in Iran in 1953, Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said, "Since the 1950s, the United States tried to meddle in Iranian affairs by different strategies such as coup d'état, regime change, and military intervention."

These efforts have all failed, Qassemi said, adding that the new U.S. government was "confused" and could be "easily manipulated by wrong information." **→13**

36th martyrdom anniversary of professor-commander Chamran

June 20 marked the 36th martyrdom anniversary of professor-commander Mostafa Chamran, the first Iranian defense minister after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Born in 1932, Chamran was a member of parliament, as well as the commander of paramilitary volunteers during the Iraq-Iran War (1980-1988).

Chamran left his academic career as a scientist and professor at the University of California, Berkeley in order to help Islamic movements in Palestine, Lebanon and Egypt. He was also instrumental in the struggles leading to the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

Chamran died on June 20 1981 after being hit by shrapnel shells in Dehlahieh, a region in Iran's southern Khuzestan Province during the 1980-1988 Iraqi imposed war on Iran.



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Revolutionary
Guards dismisses
Saudi arrest claim

POLITICS TEHRAN — Saudi Arabia's claim that **d e s k** it has captured three IRGC members in the Persian Gulf is false, a top official with the IRGC said on Tuesday.

IRGC Deputy chief for Political Affairs Rassoul Sanaeeraad slammed the Saudi claim as an outright lie, Fars news agency reported.

On Monday, Riyadh claimed its forces had captured and were questioning three IRGC members who allegedly intended to carry out an attack on a major offshore oilfield in the Persian Gulf.



Syria requested
missile attack on
Deir ez-Zor: Iranian
MP

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Syrian government **d e s k** had requested Iran to fire missiles at ISIL positions in Deir ez-Zor which took place late on Sunday, the deputy chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee said on Tuesday.

Speaking to ILNA, Abolfazl Hassanbeigi said initially the Syrian government was going to deal with the terrorists in that city, but preferred to ask Iran for help for certain reasons.



Iran arrested
terrorist team in
Qom on June 7

POLITICS TEHRAN — On June 7, concurrent **d e s k** with the terrorist attacks in Tehran, security forces arrested a terrorist gang in the central city of Qom, the political deputy to Qom governor-general said on Tuesday.

Ahmad Jamali said security forces confiscated bombing equipment from them.

Elsewhere, security forces discovered a remote-control explosive unit in suburban Ardabil, 700 meters away from a village named Golshan.



Missile attack show
of Iran's power:
former ambassador

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's former ambassador **d e s k** to Iraq in a commentary published in the Persian language Iran newspaper on Tuesday praised the IRGC missile attack on Daesh as a "show of power".

"It was a timely act and sent a clear message to terrorist groups and also a message of defense against terrorism to regional countries," Hassan Kazemi Qomi wrote.

He pointed out that according to Article 51 of the UN Charter, any country attacked by a terrorist group has the right to self-defense.



Missile raid only
fraction of Iran's
response to terrorism:
defense minister

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Sunday missile attack **d e s k** that the IRGC carried out against the positions of terrorists in Syria was only a small part of Iran's response to Daesh and its sponsors, Defense Minister Hossein Dehqan said on Tuesday, lauding the IRGC's attack on the terrorist group.

Denouncing as "blind and despicable" the recent terrorist attacks by Daesh in Tehran, he underscored that Iran's defense power is serving regional peace, stability and security, Tasnim reported



Iran united against
foreign threats,
Velayati says

POLITICS TEHRAN — Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior **d e s k** foreign policy advisor to the Leader, said on Tuesday that Iran is united against any foreign threat.

In an interview with the IRIB, he also said that Iran's parliament will spare no effort in countering new U.S. Senate's sanctions bill.

Velayati also said that the Europeans have confirmed violation of the JCPOA - the official name for the nuclear pact - by the U.S.

"Naturally, when the Europeans confirm this issue, they will not stop economic ties with our country and our interaction with them in economic area is progressing," the veteran politician noted.

Leader to al-Abadi: Don't trust U.S.

POLITICS TEHRAN — Leader of **d e s k** the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Tuesday told Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi not to trust the Americans because Washington and its allies are against the Iraqi unity and independence.

"There is need to be vigilant in the face of Americans and not trust them at all because the U.S. and its stooges are against the sovereignty, identity and unity of Iraq," the Leader remarked in a meeting in Tehran.

The Iraqi prime minister arrived in Tehran on Tuesday afternoon directly from Riyadh, where held talks with top Saudi officials including King Salman.

The Leader added, "The reason why Americans are against popular forces is that they want Iraq to lose its important cause of clout.

"Don't trust Americans at all because they are waiting for the opportunity to deliver their blow (to Iraq)."

Also, Ayatollah Khamenei advised the Iraqi prime minister against allowing the Americans enter Iraq under the guise of



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training Iraqi forces.

"They (Americans) shouldn't be given the opportunity, and American forces should not be allowed to enter Iraq under the pretext of training (Iraqi forces) or other issues."

The Leader further said there is no will by the U.S. and its allies to counter terrorists in the region.

"Americans and its certain subservient countries in the region don't aim to uproot Daesh (ISIS) because Daesh rose

from their backing and money."

Ayatollah Khamenei also voiced his strong opposition to holding a referendum on the independence of the Iraqi Kurdistan.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran as a neighbor is against certain remarks about holding a referendum on a portion of Iraq getting separated, and considers those who promote the issue as opponents of Iraq's sovereignty and identity."

"With such historical, cultural, and humanitarian civilization, Iraq should remain united, and it's the right of such country to stand on its feet and powerfully stand up to those who seek to confront it."

Ayatollah Khamenei added, "The Iraqi government should be reinforced from all directions, and it's the duty of all political and religious currents in Iraq to support the incumbent government."

Al-Abadi, for his part, said Iraq needs the assistance of Iran in fighting Daesh and later in reconstructing the country.

The Iraqi prime minister also held separate talks with President Rouhani and his deputy Es'haq Jahangiri.

Five new ambassadors submit credentials to Rouhani



Slovenian Ambassador



Malaysian Ambassador



Thai Ambassador



Benin Ambassador



Mexican Ambassador

POLITICS TEHRAN — In separate **d e s k** meetings on Tuesday President Hassan Rouhani received credentials of the new ambassadors of Mexico, Benin, Thailand, Malaysia and Slovenia to Tehran.

During the meetings with the ambassadors, Rouhani said Tehran is willing to expand relations with their respective countries.

In his meeting with Slovenian Ambassador Kristina Radej, Rouhani said it is essential for the two countries to expand relations.

Rouhani said Slovenian President Borut Pahor's visit to Iran in November 2016 brought "positive developments" in relations.

For his part, Radej said there is no

impediment in expansion of ties and that Slovenia will spare no effort in increasing relations.

■ **'Expansion of Iran-Malaysia ties beneficial to region'**

In his meeting with Malaysian Ambassador Dato Rustam bin Yahaya, Rouhani said comprehensive relations between the two countries will benefit the entire region.

The president added Iran attaches great importance to ties with Malaysia. He also said expansion of "cultural" and "social" relations among the countries that believe in moderate Islam is very important.

"Violent and extremist" ideologies are dangerous to the world of Islam and the two countries should cooperate in pro-

moting Islamic culture, Rouhani stated.

For his part, the new Malaysian ambassador said his country is ready to expand relations with Iran in various areas.

In a separate meeting, Rouhani discussed expansion of relations with the new Thai ambassador to Tehran.

The Iranian president called for more participation of the two countries' private and governmental sectors on the path of expanding ties.

The Thai ambassador expressed readiness for expanding relations with Iran in economic, agricultural, tourism and energy spheres.

■ **'Consultations with African countries essential in fighting terrorism'**

In his meeting with Naim Akibo, the

ambassador of Benin to Tehran, Rouhani said it is essential to consult with African countries in the fight against terrorism. "Cooperation and consultation with African countries are necessary in fighting extremism and terrorism."

The president added, "The crises in the Middle East region and Africa can only be solved politically and through dialogue."

For his part, Akibo praised Iran's efforts in war against terrorism.

Mexican Ambassador Jose Alfonso Zegbe Camarena and Rouhani also discussed ways for close cooperation.

The Mexican ambassador said that his respective country is willing to deepen ties with Iran in both economic and political spheres.

Iran's support for Iraq is support for intl. community: ambassador

1 → friendly relations with neighboring countries in order to be able to resolve regional issues. As you know, a number of meetings were held in the region for nearly a month, which can be described as dramatic. In a press conference, the Iraqi foreign minister announced the country's stance on the recent dispute, saying Iraq is against political division and does not want to take a stance against the Islamic Republic. Iraq always encourages dialogue to resolve regional issues. We feel distressed by the recent events and hope that wise actions can prevail over incendiary ones, so that we move toward dialogue to resolve the problems.

■ **What is the Iraqi government's stance on Saudi accusations that Iran is backing terrorism?**

A: As I said, there's no way that Iraq would take a hostile stance against the Islamic Republic. We appreciate Iran's stance on the region and its help to the Iraqi nation. When the Iranian government and nation stand alongside Iraq, they are in fact standing alongside the international community, because Iraq is defending the security and stability of the international community against Daesh (ISIS) terrorists who are threatening the world's security and peace. I should say, therefore, that Iran has a strong position towards supporting stability and peace in the region.

■ **It seems the operation to fully liberate Mosul is lasting more than it is expected. Can you elaborate on this please?**

A: The media outlets have reported everything about this issue. Don't be worried about Iraq, as its people are heroes and are blessed with God's support as well as strong determination. I think someday, very soon, we will be announcing the final victory. I mean we are in final stages. We wish for the operation to be over soon. It has already taken more time than planned due to the large population of Mosul and the nature of the western part of the city which has lots of narrow alleys. We want to protect our infrastructure as well as the Iraqi citizens and security forces. We have plans for our future, and thank



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God, we have gained lots of experience from such wars in our cities. The reason the operation has taken so long is that we want minimum security and military risks to be imposed on our people and infrastructure. I assure you that we will continue to advance in our operation and Mosul will definitely be liberated.

■ **As you know the Popular Mobilization Forces are heading toward Iraqi-Syrian borders. Do you think they may enter into Syrian soil to push back ISIS?**

A: Mr. prime minister announced Iraq's position recently, saying that our forces would not cross the Syrian borders. But if the situation changes and there would be a need for our forces to establish peace and security, they would do so after both Iraqi and Syrian governments as well as the international community consent to such move. This would be similar to the international coalition which was formed to fight Daesh and help the Iraqi government. Wherever Daesh and other terrorists are present – whether in Syria or Iraq – they should be fought against under the international laws and agreements. Anyway, the Iraqi government's position is to keep its forces within the Iraqi borders and not to cross the Syrian borders.

■ **Iranian intelligence minister has announced that the mastermind of the June 7 terrorist attacks has**

been killed through collaboration of Iran's intelligence services with those of neighboring countries. Do Iranian and Iraqi intelligence services cooperate to fight terrorist groups?

A: Iran and Iraq cooperate on various issues and this is not a secret. Such teamwork has led to many victories against Daesh. Both countries are known for their close bilateral relations and such relations are well-established in many fields, including security and intelligence.

■ **What is your government's position on holding a referendum on the fate of the Iraqi Kurdistan?**

A: As you know, when we had a referendum on the constitution, our Kurdish brothers agreed to the country's territorial integrity. Holding a referendum and splitting the country is against the constitution and it's not permitted. We are with the constitution and we respect it. All Iraqi people should respect the constitution and obey it. The international community has also opposed holding a referendum and insisted on Iraq's territorial integrity. All Iraqi people – whether Arab, Kurd, Sunni, Shia, Turkmen, Izady, Sabian or Christian – will join hands for freedom and will cooperate to build a prosperous country and government in Iraq.

■ **Iran and Turkey have objected to referendum. Do you have any comments?**

A: We're happy that our friends and the international community insist on Iraq's territorial integrity. We're sure that the majority of the international community are alongside Iraq in insisting on the Iraqi constitution and that it should be obeyed by all Iraqi people, as it had received a high approval rating.

■ **How can Tehran-Baghdad oil agreements help improve the Iraqi economy?**

A: As I said earlier, our relations with the Islamic Republic are pretty good in all areas. One of the most important ties between the two countries is in areas of economy, especially in the oil sector. In every field that the two countries reach an agreement, a positive effect will be seen in bilateral relations and the two countries will enjoy economic prosperity. The oil agreements will definitely have a great impact on the income of the two friendly countries.

■ **Oil producers have complied with the pledge by OPEC to cut their oil output. Will Iraq remain committed to the deal as well?**

A: In spite of the difficult conditions that Iraq finds itself in, it will remain committed to the deal and insists on OPEC's unity as well as compliance to all OPEC agreements.

■ **Which countries does Iraq prioritize in commercial transactions?**

A: We're willing to have good relations with all of our neighbors, but I think at the moment our commercial transactions have tilted the balance in favor of the Islamic Republic. With Iran, I think, we have the closest commercial transactions compared to other countries, and we hope such relations would become twice as much. However, this requires certain conditions to succeed and we are serious about this matter. Talks are being held between the two countries. A week ago, Iraq's transport minister was here for connecting Iran and Iraq's railways. This would be a strategic project provided that the two sides reach an agreement. There are also other issues being discussed as to increase the trading volume and to expand relations in all areas between the two countries. →13

Australia halts Syria air strikes after Russia warning

Australia's military said it was temporarily halting air missions over Syria, following the shooting down of a Syrian jet by the United States forces.

The decision came amid increasing tension between the U.S. and Russia, which warned it would track coalition aircraft in Syria as potential "targets" and halted a military hotline with Washington over the incident.

"As a precautionary measure, Australian Defense Force (ADF) strike operations into Syria have temporarily ceased," Australia's Department of Defense said in a statement.

"ADF operations in Iraq will continue as part of the co-alition."

Russia made clear it was changing its military posture in response to the U.S. downing of a Syrian military jet on Sunday, which, according to Damascus, is the first such incident since the start of the conflict in 2011.

"ADF personnel are closely monitoring the air situation in Syria and a decision on the resumption of ADF air operations in Syria will be made in due course," Australia's Department of Defense said.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has moved quickly to contain an escalation of the situation, with a top general saying the country would work to re-launch a "de-confliction" hotline established in 2015.

Russia said Washington had failed to use the line - a vital incident-prevention tool - before targeting the plane near Raqqah.

On Sunday, a U.S. Navy F/A-18 Super Hornet shot down a Syrian SU-22, which was conducting an operation against ISIL terrorists on the outskirts of the city of Raqqah.

Australia is part of the coalition fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit in Iraq. In late 2015, it extended air operations into Syria on U.S. request.

It has six fighter jets based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that strike targets in Syria and Iraq.

In September, Australia said it would widen the scope of targets in the air war against ISIL by allowing its pilots to strike support and logistics resources in Iraq and Syria.

Australia has conducted one of the highest number of airstrikes in Syria and Iraq, according to Airwars, a Britain-based non-profit research group monitoring airstrikes.

■ **Damascus: Downing of Syrian jet proves U.S. support for terrorism**

Meantime, Damascus has written to the United Nations, saying the recent U.S. downing of a Syrian air force jet shows beyond any doubt Washington's backing for terrorism.

In two letters addressed to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the world body's Security Council, the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates said on Monday that the shoot down incident revealed the "real face and the underhanded goal" of the U.S.-led collation, which is allegedly fighting terrorists in Syria.

Sunday's aggression "exposes the political and military inclinations and the malicious intentions of the U.S. and its illegal alliance to manage terrorism and invest in it to achieve its objectives and realize the Western project in the region."

The U.S.-led coalition claimed in a statement that the downed jet had been dropping bombs near U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and it was brought down "in accordance with rules of engagement and in collective self-defense of coalition partnered forces."

However, Russia's Foreign Ministry reacted angrily and urged a "careful investigation by the U.S. command" into the incident.

It also announced a halt to a hotline with the U.S. meant



to minimize incidents in Syrian airspace and vowed to track U.S.-led coalition aircraft in central Syria as "targets."

"Any flying objects, including planes and drones of the international coalition, discovered west of the Euphrates River will be tracked as aerial targets by Russia's air defenses on and above ground," it warned.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry said the U.S. had "committed a new crime ... by intentionally shooting down" the Syrian jet.

It is "shameful" that Washington tried to justify its aggression by making statements far from the truth, particularly since the Syrian plane fell in an area close to ISIL-held Resafa City, the ministry noted.

It also accused the U.S. military of seeking to undermine the capability of the Syrian army that is the only effective force exercising its legitimate right to fight terrorism in the country.

The shoot down comes at a time when the Syrian army and its allies are making gains against ISIL in al-Badiya desert area, the ministry said, warning against the repercussions of the U.S. criminal act on counter-terrorism efforts.

It further stressed that such attacks would not dissuade Syria from continuing its operation against ISIL and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham terror outfits.

"Syria condemns this aggression; it calls on the Security Council to break its silence and condemn these cowardly and reckless military actions, particularly as they are carried out by an illegal coalition," the Syrian foreign Ministry pointed out.

It concluded that Sunday's shoot down cannot be separated from the crimes committed by the U.S. and its alliance against the Syrian army in the town of At-Tanf as well as in those against civilians through deadly strikes in the north and west of Raqqah.

In two occasions in June and May, U.S. warplanes attacked a Syrian military position near At-Tanf, killing an unspecified number of people and causing some material damage.

The U.S. said that the Syrian forces who came under the attack posed a threat to its forces in Syria, but Damascus rejected the claim.

■ **Ex-US envoy: Assad, allies to prevail in Syria, drive U.S. out**

Elsewhere, a former American ambassador to Syria says

the Syrian government and its allies, including Iran, will ultimately frustrate attempts by the United States to influence Syrian matters and will drive the U.S. out of the country.

Robert Ford, who served as the U.S.'s envoy to Syria under former U.S. president Barack Obama, made the remarks in an interview with the London-based Arabic-language newspaper Asharq Al-Awsat on Monday.

He said the U.S. was, first of all, mistaken in giving support to the opposition in Syria back in 2011 and demanding Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's ouster. Ford said he knew that that expression of support would encourage certain elements of the opposition to take up arms and expect a U.S. invasion against Damascus, which he said would not be forthcoming.

Ford also said that the U.S. would not defend the Kurdish forces it has been supporting so far in case the Kurds engaged in clashes with the Syrian forces.

"[The US] will not defend the Kurds against Assad's forces," the former U.S. envoy said. "What we're doing with the Kurds is not only politically stupid, but immoral."

"Syrian Kurds are making their biggest mistake in trusting the Americans," he added.

The U.S. has been backing a mainly Kurdish alliance known as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

Ford also said that, given the strong support being offered by Iran and Russia to the Syrian government, the "game was finished" for U.S. plans to overthrow Assad or compete with what he said would be Iran's success in the country.

"The Iranian position will advance," Ford said.

"Assad won, I mean he's the victor, or he thinks so," he added. "Maybe in 10 years, he will retake the entire country."

Syria has been gripped by foreign instigated unrest since 2011, when militancy first began in the country. Foreign states opposed to President Assad have since then been funding and providing weapons to anti-Assad militants, among them thousands of paid foreign terrorists dispatched to help force Assad out of power.

The Syrian government, however, has been fighting that militancy back, aided in that battle by advisory military support from Iran and Russia. Moscow has also been conducting an aerial campaign against terrorist positions in the country on a request by Damascus.

(Source: agencies)

Blockading Qatar, targeting Iran

The Saudi-Israeli alliance is out of the closet

The almost simultaneous blockade of Qatar spearheaded by Saudi Arabia and joined by a few of its sidekick states and two pernicious, violent attacks on two symbolic sites in Tehran may have taken the world by surprise but the mad logic and the mischievous rhetoric of them are anything but surprising.

The organic link between the regional, decidedly anti-Palestinian, ambitions of Israel and the sectarian designs of Saudi Arabia for the Arab and Muslim world at large have been known for quite some time now. The question is what has triggered that alliance between the Israeli settler colony and the Saudi garrison state suddenly to up the ante and come out with such ferocious intensity, throwing all pretenses of "Arab brotherhood" or "Muslim unity" under the speeding Zionist bus.

As reported by Al Jazeera, there is now an active lobbying putsch in Washington, DC, coordinated among Israel, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates, simultaneously targeting Qatar and Iran, with the future of Palestine and the fate of millions of Palestinians in and out of their homeland as the focal points of this treacherous alliance to sabotage and destroy the cause of Palestinian self-determination.

Taking full advantage of this crisis, the timing of the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, the die-hard Zionist, Nikki Haley's visit to Israel marks Benjamin Netanyahu's long-standing design to push the Palestinian question completely off the global agenda. The ruling regimes in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt are willing and eager parties to this perfidious act.

Although there can never be any hard evidence of the Saudi instigation of the suicide attacks and bombing of two symbolic sites in Iran, the parliament and the mausoleum of Ayatollah Khomeini, Iranian officials are pointing fingers at the Saudis. But we need not necessarily accept the Iranian account to realise that Israel and Saudi Arabia are (and have been for a very long time) the main beneficiaries of such violent acts against Iran and Iranians.

If we put the blockade of Qatar by its Arab neighbours and the unprecedented attack on Iran analytically together, a number of crucial consequences emerge to redefine the geo-strategic map of the region.

■ Israel and Saudi Arabia as two garrison states

The current Saudi-Israeli alliance in trampling the Palestinians' fate, warmongering against Iran, and subjecting Qatar to a crippling blockade dominates and distorts the real picture of the region. The principle enemies of the Saudi and Israeli garrison states are not their counterpart states in the region but, in fact, the defiant nations that are falsely framed by these states.

Three powerful nations in this area defy their respective states to map out their own democratic destinies: Egypt, Iran, and Turkey. These are the three nations that, in their thick historical memories and ensuing democratic aspirations, pose the greatest threat to the Saudi and Israeli colonial concoctions with no historical legitimacy on the ground. By virtue of US military and diplomatic support, this Saudi-Zionist alliance dominates the geopolitics of the region beyond its historical deserve.

Among these three historic nations, the Saudi Arabia and Israel falsely assume they have neutralised Egypt by recruiting the military junta that has aborted its revolutionary momentum. Egyptians as a people, as an historically self-conscious nation (remember Tahrir Square), are not to be confused with the corrupt junta that now rules it, tramples on Palestinian rights, and is even willing to sell its own territorial integrity to Saudi Arabia.

This Saudi-Zionist alliance thinks it can also disregard Turkey for it confuses the current coup-counter coup draconian dynamics of Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government with the robust democratic urges of Turks as a people, as a deeply rooted and self-conscious nation (remember both the Gezi Park movement and the popular uprising against the military coup last year).

The alliance, therefore, laser beams on Iran for, contrary to its ridiculous claims, it is not the adventuresome disposition of its state that bothers it but, in fact, the volcanic democratic upsurge of Iranians as a nation frightens the living daylight out of these two colonialy manufactured garrison states.

It is not accidental that the primary target of those demented mercenaries attacking Iran was the Iranian parliament, next to the office of the presidency and the city councils. It is the democratic effervescence of the people of Iran (and Turkey and Egypt), trapped as they are within the framing of a misrepresenting state, that poses an existential threat to Saudi-Israeli alliance.

Keep your eyes on these three nations: Turkey, Iran, and Egypt - do not be distracted by the antics of their respective state apparatuses being dragged into the geopolitics of the region - and you will have a far more accurate conception of every single development in the Arab and Muslim world. Keep also in mind that the Palestinian cause is at the heart of these three nations' democratic aspirations, and not a matter of systematic political abuse by their respective states.

Despite its tiny size and sparse population, though deeply informed by waves of Arab and non-Arab migrant skilled labourers, scholars, journalists, artists, and intellectuals from across the world populating its universities, museums, and research institutes, Qatar has dared dreaming itself integral to the larger Arab-Muslim desire to fulfill its historic sense of dignity, which it has in part invested in putting the Palestinian self-determination at the forefront of its sense of moral identity.

Qatar is not just for Qataris. Despite all its structural limitations as a minuscule rentier state with a massive US military base on its soil, Qatar has enabled an engine of social, intellectual, and artistic ambitions for the larger Arab and Muslim world. Donald Trump looks at Qatar and all he sees are dollar signs for his military contractor friends. Israel looks at Qatar and it is worried to see a thriving Arab capital with a sharp critical intelligence to the Palestinian politics it enables. Saudi Arabia looks at Qatar and sees dangerous ideas being banded about its northern frontiers.

Qatar will not negotiate with Arab states that have cut economic and travel ties with it unless they reverse their measures and lift a blockade against it, its foreign minister has said.

"Qatar is under blockade, there is no negotiation. They have to lift the blockade to start negotiations," Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani told reporters on Monday, ruling out discussions over Qatar's internal affairs, including the fate of the Doha-based Al Jazeera Media Network.

"Until now we didn't see any progress about lifting the blockade, which is the precondition for anything to move forward," he added.

Speaking from the capital, Doha, the minister said Qatar had still not received any demands from the House of Saud regime, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain, who severed relations with two weeks ago, triggering the worst Persian Gulf Arab crisis in years.

Anything that relates to the affairs of the six-nation Persian Gulf Cooperation Council is subject to negotiation, he said, referring

to the body comprising Qatar, the House of Saud regime, the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman.

"Anything not related to them is not subject to negotiation. No one has the right to interfere in my affairs. Al Jazeera is Qatar's affairs, Qatari foreign policy on regional issues is Qatar's affairs. And we are not going to negotiate on our own affairs," he said.

The minister said Kuwait's ruler was the sole mediator in the crisis and that he was waiting for specific demands from the Persian Gulf Arab states in order to take resolution efforts forward.

"We cannot just have (vague) demands such as 'the Qataris know what we want from them, they have to stop this or that, they have to be monitored by a foreign monitoring mechanism,'".

The crisis hit civilian travel and some food imports, ratcheted up tensions in the Persian Gulf and sowed confusion among businesses. However, it has not affected energy exports from Qatar, the world's biggest exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG).

The minister said Qatar would rely on

other states if the boycott continued, including regional power house, Iran.

"We have a backup plan which depends mainly on Turkey, Kuwait and Oman," he said.

"Iran has facilitated for us the sky passages for our aviation and we are cooperating with all countries that can ensure supplies for Qatar"

■ Bahrain to revoke passports of nationals who visit Qatar

Meantime, Bahrain's Interior Ministry has issued an order according to which the passport of any Bahraini citizen who travels to Qatar, resides there, or even crosses Qatari soil en route to other countries, would be revoked.

Bahrain's Lualua television network reported on Tuesday that Interior Minister Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifah had issued the order based on a June 5 decision by the cabinet.

According to the report, the violators of the ban would also be banned from applying for a new passport.

After the severance of ties, Bahrain banned its citizens from traveling to Qatar.

French armed forces minister Sylvie Goulard unexpectedly quit her job on Tuesday, saying she did not want to stay on because of an investigation overshadowing her Modem party's affairs in the European parliament.

That followed an announcement late on Monday that Richard Ferrand, an aide to President Emmanuel Macron and minister for territorial planning, facing a separate judicial investigation, would move out of government to a job as leader of his party in parliament.

After a solid win for his centrist Republic On the Move party in a parliamentary election on Sunday, Macron is preparing a government reshuffle before embarking on far-reaching economic and social reforms, including overhauling labor rules.

The ministers' departure gives Macron a chance to re-

shape his government without including names who could prove awkward. The president, elected just over a month ago, made improving transparency in politics a priority.

The reshuffle will now be more far-reaching than expected. It is due to be announced by Wednesday evening, with Prime Minister Edouard Philippe staying in the job.

Goulard is a member of Modem, the center-right party that allied itself to Macron's Republic on the Move (LREM) centrist party in the presidential and legislative elections. Since June 9, Modem has been the subject of an investigation into allegations of misuse of public funds.

"Defense is a demanding portfolio. The honor of our armies, that of the men and women who serve and who put their lives in danger, should not be mixed up with contro-

versies that have nothing to do with them," Goulard said in a statement.

Macron appointed members of several parties among his ministers after he was elected president in May, including from Modem and the conservative The Republicans, seeking to further redraw a political landscape blown apart by his election on an independent centrist ticket.

LREM's solid majority in parliament means Macron will not depend on Modem's votes to get legislation through parliament, giving him more margin of maneuver on how to deal with them and whether to keep them in government.

Alongside Goulard, he also picked Modem chief Francois Bayrou as justice minister and Modem member Marielle de Sarnez as junior European affairs minister. (Source: Reuters)

Pistachio exports up 3% yr/yr

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran has exported \$1.240 billion worth of pistachios to the world markets in the past Iranian calendar year 1395 (ended on March 20) to register a three percent rise compared to its previous year, IRIB news reported.

The country had exported \$1.202 billion worth of the commodity during the Iranian calendar year 1394.

Iranian pistachios were exported to Hong Kong, Vietnam, the United Arab Emirates, Germany and India during the past year.

France's Total to go ahead with major Iran gas project: CEO

1 → at a time when President Hassan Rouhani has faced criticism at home over a lack of economic revival following the easing of sanctions under the nuclear deal.

Total holds a 50.1 interest in the South Pars project along with state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation, with 30 percent, and Iran's Petropars with a 19.9 percent, Pouyanne said.



The French group has also made a number of significant investments in recent years in Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Brazil as Pouyanne sees the three-year downturn in the global energy market as an opportunity to clinch deals for cheap resources to secure strong growth. (Source: Reuters)

Iran exports 35,000 tons of wheat to Oman

Iran exported a 35,000 ton cargo of wheat to Oman last week.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani had said in September that the country was aiming to start exporting wheat soon after a good 2016 crop.



However, traders did not expect significant volumes to flow from the country.

"For the time being only one cargo of milling wheat has been traded to Oman," a European trader said.

Iran has been a major wheat importer in recent years as the country aimed to guarantee local food supplies, although its needs have varied.

But Iran's Agriculture Ministry said last year that 4.2 million tons of wheat had been bought from domestic farmers in state-sponsored purchases, a 20 percent increase from the same period in the previous year. (Source: Reuters)

German economy to grow by around 1.5% this year

Germany's BDI industry association on Tuesday confirmed its forecast that German economic output would increase by around 1.5 percent this year as exports pick up but it warned that Europe's largest economy should not rest on its laurels.

"The good economic situation is not a free ticket to taking a rest," said BDI President Dieter Kempf.

"Our success is due to a weak euro exchange rate, a moderate oil price and the European Central Bank's expansive monetary policy," he said, adding that Germany's influence on those factors was limited. (Source: Reuters)

Fitch sees China growth below government target in 2018, 2019

China's economic growth is expected to fall below the government's 6 percent target in 2018 and 2019, according to Fitch, reflecting the increasing challenge of supporting growth given a higher level of indebtedness.

The ratings agency, in its regular Global Economic Outlook report forecast growth in China of 5.9 percent in 2019 and 5.8 percent the year after. The economy is expected to grow 6.5 percent this year.

Fitch noted tighter credit conditions as authorities clamp down on the growth of leverage in the financial system. The agency said new credit as a share of GDP has already "slowed sharply", suggesting a slowdown in housing sales ahead. "Housing is the key cyclical sector in the economy and will weigh on growth in 2018 along with a likely slowdown in infrastructure development," Fitch said. (Source: Financial Times)

NIOC awards Eni oil, gas fields development study

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Italy's major oil company Eni signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) for carrying out development studies on two of Iran's oil and gas fields.

The MOU was signed by Gholam-Reza Manouchehri, the deputy managing director of NIOC for development and engineering, and Antonio Vella, the chief upstream officer at Eni SpA, in Tehran on Tuesday, Shana reported.

Based on the MOU, the Italian company will conduct development studies on the phase 3 of Darkhovin oil field in southwest Iran as well as Kish gas field in the Persian Gulf.

The company is to hand in its proposed master development plan (MDP) to NIOC after a six-month period.

Royal Dutch Shell, Russia's Gazprom and Iran's Ghadir Investment Group are also under contract with NIOC to perform development studies on the Kish gas field.

Philippine's PNOC Exploration Corporation (PNOC EC) and Ghadir Investment Group have reached agreements to conduct preliminary studies on phase 3 of Darkhovin field.

In August 2011, NIOC and a consortium of Iranian companies signed a \$1.6 billion deal to develop the third phase of the Darkhovin oilfield but due to the West imposed sanctions on Iran the project didn't witness any progress as planned.



Gholam-Reza Manouchehri (R), the deputy managing director of NIOC for development and engineering, shaking hand with Antonio Vella, the chief upstream officer at Eni SpA, as NIOC Managing Director Ali Kardor looks on

Development plan of the Kish gas field started in 2007. The field holds around 66 trillion cubic feet of in-situ gas and 514 million barrels of condensate.

Iran to construct 6,500 km railroads by 2022

Iran will construct 6,500 km long railroads in five years, Hossein Ashoori, member of board and head of international transportation at Iranian Railways, told Trend.

He added that the figure includes the underdeveloped projects as well, while construction of further 3,500 km railroads after 2022 is under study now.

He didn't mention the needed investment for the projects, but the General Director of Iranian Railways Saeed Mohammadzadeh told Trend on June 19 that during the past four years, Iran invested \$1 billion annually in railroad projects, and for the next five years the figure would reach \$1.5 to \$2 billion annually.

Currently, Iranian railroad grid's length is 10,170 km.

One of the railroad projects is the Rasht-Astara segment with 175 km length, after completion of which, the North-South Transport Corridor will become fully operational.

The International North-South Transport Corridor is meant to connect Northern Europe with Southeast Asia. It will serve as a link connecting the railways of Azerbaijan, Iran and Russia.

The corridor is planned to transport 6 million tons of cargo per year at the initial stage and 15-20 million tons of cargo in the future.

The only remaining section of the project in Iran is the Rasht-Astara segment, which Iran plans to complete in three years through a loan from Azerbaijan. Financial talks continue and an agreement is at the final stage, Ashoori said.

The Rasht-Astara segment would need \$1.1 billion worth of investment. Iran and Azerbaijan are negotiating on a \$0.5 billion loan.

(Source: Trend)

Azadegan oilfield tender delayed to offer companies more time for study

A tender for developing Iran's Azadegan oilfield has been delayed by another few months to allow energy companies more time to study the field, a senior Iranian oil official said on Tuesday.

Tehran is looking to increase its crude output, and with 37 billion barrels of oil the Azadegan field is Iran's largest, shared with neighbouring Iraq. It is located in southern Iran, 80 km west of the Khuzestan provincial city of Ahvaz.

Iran said this month that international energy companies including France's Total, Malaysia's Petronas and Japan's Inpex, have presented technical surveys for the development of the Azadegan oil field for the tender. "The tender will not happen in this government because we have not signed memorandum of understandings with some companies and they need three to four months to study the field," the managing director of the National Iranian Oil Company



(NIOC), Ali Kardor, was quoted as saying by ISNA news agency.

Iranian president Hassan Rouhani, who was re-elected in May's election, will form a new government in August.

The tender for developing the Azadegan oilfield, Iran's first such tender since the lifting of international sanctions more than a year ago, has been postponed several times for unspecified reasons.

Iran's oil minister said in May that the international tender for the Azadegan oilfield was underway.

(Source: Reuters)

Iran-Brazil Joint Chamber of Commerce to open in early July

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The Iran-Brazil Joint Chamber of Commerce will be opened in Tehran on July 9, Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Chairman Gholam-Hossein Shafeie announced.

According to the ICCIMA's portal, the official made the announcement in a meeting with Brazilian Ambassador to Tehran Rodrigo de Azeredo Santos.

During the meeting Shafeie mentioned the lack of a joint chamber of commerce as a hurdle in the way of the two countries' trade expansion saying "With the joint chamber opened this barrier is going to be removed from the path to a greater economic cooperation."

"Iran and Brazil have a long history in economic cooperation which



Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Chairman Gholam-Hossein Shafeie (R) meeting with Brazilian Ambassador to Iran Rodrigo de Azeredo Santos in Tehran

Oil prices near seven-month lows on global oversupply

Oil prices steadied just above seven-month lows on Tuesday after news of increases in supply, a trend which has undermined attempts by OPEC and other producers to support the market through reduced output.

Benchmark Brent was up 15 cents at \$47.06 by 0820 GMT. On Monday, it fell 46 cents, or 1 percent, to settle at \$46.91 a barrel.

That was its lowest close since Nov. 29, the day before the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other producers agreed to cut output by 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) for six months from January.

U.S. crude oil was 15 cents higher at \$44.35 a barrel. It fell 54 cents on Monday to \$44.20, its lowest close since Nov. 14.

Both benchmarks are down by around 15 percent since

late May, when OPEC, Russia and other producers extended their limits on production until the end of March 2018.

"Recent data points are not encouraging," Morgan Stanley analysts said in a research note. "Identifiable oil inventories - both crude and product in the OECD, China and selected other non-OECD countries - increased at a rate of (about) 1 (million bpd) in Q1."

OPEC supplies jumped in May as output recovered in Libya and Nigeria, two countries exempt from the production reduction agreement.

Libya's oil production rose more than 50,000 bpd to 885,000 bpd after the state oil company settled a dispute with Germany's Wintershall, a Libyan source told Reuters.

Nigerian oil supply is also rising, industry figures show.

Exports of Nigeria's benchmark Bonny Light crude oil

are set to reach 226,000 bpd in August, up from 164,000 bpd in July, loading programs show.

"The increasing August export program in Nigeria and the jump in Libyan oil output should pressure oil prices further in the short term," said Tamas Varga, senior analyst at London brokerage PVM Oil Associates.

"If we get bearish U.S. oil statistics this week, we could see a test of \$45 on Brent," Varga said.

U.S. oil production has been rising quickly this year, feeding the global glut. Data on Friday showed a record 22nd consecutive week of increases in U.S. oil drilling rigs.

But Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih said the oil market is heading in the right direction and just needs time to rebalance, the London-based newspaper Asharq al-Awsat reported on Monday. (Source: Reuters)

Japan business mood up, signaling economic recovery

TOKYO (Reuters) — Confidence among Japanese manufacturers bounced in June to match a decade-high level recorded in April and is expected to rise for several months, a Reuters survey found, providing more evidence of economic recovery.

Service-sector mood rose to a two-year high, evidence of broadening confidence, although the Reuters Tankan also found that confidence was seen slipping over the next

three months.

The readings in the Reuters' monthly poll - which tracks the Bank of Japan's closely watched quarterly tankan - suggested a slight improvement in the central bank's survey due July 3, which would support the BOJ's upbeat economic outlook.

The central bank kept monetary policy steady on Friday and upgraded its assessment of private consumption for the first

time in six months, signaling its confidence in an export-driven economic recovery that is gaining momentum.

In the poll of 526 large- and mid-sized firms, conducted between June 2-15 in which 250 responded, the sentiment index for manufacturers rose to 26 from 24 in May, led by materials firms such as oil refinery/ceramics and textiles/paper.

"Machine tool makers, who are our main

clients, are performing well for both external and domestic markets. The situation is good because currencies remain stable," a manager of a nonferrous metal firm wrote in the survey.

A recent run of indicators and business activity surveys have pointed to solid exports and factory output, although wage growth and household spending remain stubbornly sluggish despite a tightening job market.

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Why are only poor countries taking refugees?



ARTICAL

By Kofi Annan

Former Secretary-General of UN

It has now been almost two years since the world was confronted with the harrowing image of drowned Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi washed up on a Turkish beach. At that moment, there was an overwhelming sense of “Enough is enough” — a cry of anguish over the misery endured and lives snuffed out as refugees seek safety. In the time since then, thousands more have lost their lives while trying to traverse the Mediterranean, with 2016 becoming the deadliest year on record. Globally, refugees now number more than 22 million.

Yet the sad truth is that for many, especially in the prosperous Global North, refugees have slipped from the minds of citizens. When they do appear, it's often because of irresponsible political rhetoric designed to stoke fears rather than foster genuine debate. Citizens of countries witnessing an influx of refugees sometimes feel overwhelmed, concerned that borders are no longer secure and that their jobs and way of life are under threat. Quasi-populist politicians have all too often exploited these fears — when what is needed is responsible leadership shaped by facts, principles and values.

But around the world, the plight of the uprooted is also driving thousands of acts of solidarity, from the Ugandan farmers sharing their land with refugees fleeing famine and violence in South Sudan to the Canadian communities offering a lifeline through sponsored resettlement programs to the teachers, employers, athletes, faith groups and volunteers working to foster the inclusion of refugees in the social, economic and cultural lives of their communities.

■ World Refugee Day

It is their voices — the voices of compassion and humanity that often struggle to make themselves heard — that should guide our call for action this World Refugee Day.

Today is an opportunity to appeal to what Abraham Lincoln called the “better angels of our nature.” We need leaders to act responsibly and commit to cooperating and sharing the burden, so the world can manage refugees with dignity and respect their human rights.

At the moment, the balance is skewed. Most pressure has fallen on neighboring states. Tiny Lebanon, for example, hosts more refugees (1,462,926) than the total number of asylum seekers that arrived in the European Union in 2015, when numbers peaked (1,255,600). This is not an isolated case. Eighty-four percent of refugees are in developing countries, while the countries that account for 57% of global GDP host fewer than 9% of all refugees and asylum seekers.

One of the most important forms of burden-sharing is resettlement, through which refugees find security and stability in a third country. The United Nations' refugee agency, UNHCR, estimates that 1.2 million especially vulnerable refugees are in need of resettlement in 2017, but places are expected to be available for fewer than one in ten — a drop of around 43% from 2016. Traditionally, the United States has been UNHCR's largest resettlement partner, but the Executive Order issued by President Donald Trump in January has sought to more than halve the number of refugees that can be settled in the U.S. this year.

■ Humanitarian principles

Curtailing the U.S. resettlement program — the last lifeline to so many — is deeply regrettable. It undermines the great values of a nation that has always championed humanitarian principles and human rights.

But as long as an isolationist mood prevails in Washington DC, other powers have an even greater responsibility to uphold the values and mechanisms of refugee protection — especially the European Union, given the continuing tragic deaths on the shores and waters of the Mediterranean.

In 2015, many European citizens showed great acts of solidarity and humanity to the influx of refugees. Some European governments took courageous steps, particularly Germany. Yet certain other European states — and in certain respects, the institutions of the European Union — have so far seemed more interested in closing borders and deflecting responsibility elsewhere than championing compassion. Tens of thousands of refugees remain stranded in Greece, some in truly pitiful conditions. Meanwhile, a 2015 EU agreement to share responsibility by relocating refugees within Europe remains largely unimplemented.

No one underestimates the challenges of devising a fair and robust shared refugee policy or of balancing humanitarian imperatives with fraught domestic political agendas. Nevertheless, there is a clear need for moral leadership from the EU, an institution created amidst the rubble of post-war Europe with solidarity at its core.

The current negotiations on an EU Resettlement Framework present an opportunity for precisely this leadership. It is imperative that this framework increases the quantity and quality of resettlement places available, without making this conditional upon third country cooperation with the EU on migration controls. The March 2016 EU-Turkey deal, for example, offered resettlement of Syrian refugees from Turkey, but only in exchange for the forcible return of those arriving on Greek shores. The lives of the world's most vulnerable refugees cannot be allowed to become a political bargaining chip.

In his poem “No Man Is An Island,” the English poet John Donne wrote that “Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind.” His words ring true today, some four centuries later. They should guide our global efforts to treat refugees with the respect and dignity they deserve.

(Source: Time)

America will regret helping Saudi Arabia bomb Yemen

By Medea Benjamin

“USA Kills Yemeni People”, screams graffiti plastered on walls in Yemen's capital Sana'a. The Yemeni people who have been on the receiving end of U.S. bombs dropped by Saudi pilots know all too well that the United States is complicit in their suffering.

The intense anti-U.S. sentiment in Yemen should be a wake-up call for Americans: if you don't care about the millions of suffering Yemenis, you might think about the future blowback.

Two U.S. Senators, the Republican Rand Paul and the Democrat Chris Murphy, understand full well the implications and have been trying to halt the weapons sales. “The United States has no business supporting a war that has only served to embolden our terrorist enemies, exacerbate a humanitarian crisis, and incite fear and anger among the Yemeni people toward the United States. This will come back to haunt us,” warned Murphy.

Unfortunately, the Trump administration and the majority of U.S. senators have failed to heed their call. On 13 June, their resolution to stop the Saudi sale of precision-guided munitions was narrowly defeated by a 53-47 vote.

The vote broke down mainly along party lines, with four Republicans and five Democrats breaking ranks. It also broke down along another divide: peace and humanitarian aid groups v the Trump administration, lobbyists for the Saudi government and the weapons industry.

Paul, an anti-interventionist Republican pushing the resolution, railed against the senators who were more concerned about the jobs the weapons manufacturers could generate than the lives of Yemeni children. “I am embarrassed that people are talking about making a buck while 17 million people are threatened with famine,” he said.

He didn't mention that many of the senators, Democrats and Republicans alike, have taken tens of thousands of



“Today's vote total would have been unthinkable not long ago, but Congress is finally taking notice that Saudi Arabia is using U.S. munitions to deliberately hit civilian targets inside Yemen,” Murphy said.

dollars in campaign contributions from the same corporations benefitting from the sales.

Despite the loss, the vote reflected an unprecedented level of Senate opposition to the sale. A similar effort during Obama's presidency failed 71-27. “Today's vote total would have been unthinkable not long ago, but Congress is finally taking notice that Saudi Arabia is using U.S. munitions to deliberately hit civilian targets inside Yemen,” Murphy said.

■ Cynical interpretation

The more cynical interpretation would be that Democrats are more willing to criticize Saudi weapons sales under a Trump administration than under a Democratic one.

Yemenis are desperate to end this

conflict, now in its third year. Nearly 19 million people require assistance and 6.8 million are at risk of famine. This has been compounded by a cholera outbreak that has surpassed 124,000 cases and is projected to double every two weeks. Almost half the country's medical facilities have been destroyed. A Yemeni child dies every 10 minutes from the combined effects of hunger and lack of medical facilities.

Saudi forces have targeted farms, food facilities, water infrastructure, marketplaces, and even the port of Hudaidah, where most of the humanitarian aid was entering the country. Meanwhile, extremist groups such as al-Qaida and ISIL have seized upon the chaos to expand their reach.

U.S. backing for the Saudi-led

intervention against the Yemeni Houthis is not new. But after Saudi Arabia bombed a funeral procession in October 2016 that resulted in 150 casualties, the Obama administration put a halt to the sale of munitions that would be used in Yemen and pulled back on U.S. logistical support.

Donald Trump has been quick to resume weapons sales, bragging about clinching an enormous \$110bn deal during his trip to the kingdom in May. With the growing chorus against U.S. support to the Saudis, the royal family promised Trump that their military would undergo rigorous U.S. training to reduce civilian casualties, signing a \$750m training program.

The Saudis also agreed that U.S. advisers would sit in their air operations control center; previously, only a small U.S. team was allowed to operate from another office to coordinate logistical assistance.

But U.S. training or having a seat in the operations control center will not stop the conflict; only a ceasefire and political talks will do that. In December 2015, UN peace talks were launched in conjunction with a ceasefire but no agreement was reached; the same happened in October 2016.

The United Nations Security Council is now making another attempt to address the conflict, calling on all parties to allow unhindered access to humanitarian supplies, to keep all ports functioning (especially the critical port of Hudaidah, which the Saudis have threatened to take from Houthi control), and to make a good-faith attempt to find a political solution.

This is where the United States should be putting its efforts. People in the region understand that until there is a serious U.S. interest in a political solution, it won't happen. Even if Trump is only interested in “putting America first”, he would do well to stop being involved in dropping bombs on Yemenis and instead use his “art of the deal” to join with the United Nations in ending this catastrophic conflict.

(Source: The Guardian)

The U.S. sanctions Russia, Europe says ‘Ouch!’

European leaders suspect the senators were pursuing U.S. economic interests at Europe's expense

by Leonid Bershidsky

The Russia sanctions bill passed by the U.S. Senate threatens to deepen the rift between the U.S. and Europe that has emerged since Donald Trump won the presidency. Though in the U.S., the bill is only discussed in a domestic political context, German and Austrian leaders see certain provisions as an attempt to give an unfair advantage to U.S. energy exports.

Prior to the first three rounds of sanctions, which were linked to Kremlin-backed aggression in Ukraine in 2014, the U.S. made a point of negotiating with its European allies. The European Union timed the roll-out of its own sanctions to coincide with U.S. actions. Indeed, it's the European trade and finance restrictions that have hurt Russia the most; Europe is the biggest market for Russia's energy exports, while Russia never had much of a trade relationship with the U.S. The loss of direct and portfolio investment from Europe and the demise of the South Stream natural gas pipeline plan were the most painful effects of the sanctions. Today, those European restrictions are the primary reason why the Kremlin wants sanctions lifted.

This time around, the senators who sponsored the bill have made no effort to build a coalition that would include Europe. It would probably be futile, anyway. Though the EU, with some reluctance, keeps extending its restrictions against Russia, there is little support for making them tougher. Besides, the Senate bill responds to allegations of Russian interference in the U.S. presidential election. But given the experience of recent European elections, where candidates favorable to Russian President Vladimir Putin have been losing, it looks to some EU leaders as if the U.S. is overreacting or worse.

Consulting European allies on the substance of the sanctions bill would have made sense given how offensive it was bound to be to some of them. Among other things, the bill says the U.S. president “may impose” various sanctions on companies that take part -- as investors, suppliers or contractors -- in Russian pipeline construction projects. Worse, it makes quite clear that this is not just about punishing Russia, but also about fighting for the European energy market.

“The United States government,” the Senate bill says, “should prioritize the export of United States energy resources in order to create American jobs, help United States allies and partners, and strengthen United States foreign policy.”

That seems aimed against Nord Stream 2, the proposed Russian pipeline across the Baltic Sea to Germany, bypassing Ukraine. Investors in Nord Stream 2 include five major European companies: French ENGIE, German Uniper and Wintershall, Anglo-Dutch Shell and Austrian OMV. The U.S. president is not about to sanction them for working with Russia as the bill authorizes. But by linking the issue to U.S. jobs and exports to Europe, the



Foreign policy interests must in no way be linked to economic interests.

senators clearly want to make it hard for Trump to reject the proposal: His agenda is heavy on jobs and trade advantages for U.S. producers.

That's what worries European leaders. Gas production in the northwest of Europe is falling rapidly, and while the U.S. is ramping up its liquefied natural gas (LNG) export capacity, it's not clear whether the price of U.S. gas can remain competitive with that of the Russian pipeline gas, supplied by state-controlled Gazprom. At this point, large-scale U.S. LNG exports to Europe appear to be a money-losing enterprise aimed at gaining market share. But if those exports are buoyed by U.S. sanctions against Gazprom's pipeline projects, northern and central Europe may become hostages to U.S. suppliers at some point.

■ Europe's energy supply

In a sharply worded joint statement issued Thursday, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel and Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern said they couldn't “accept the threat of illegal extraterritorial sanctions being imposed on European companies that are participating in efforts to expand Europe's energy supply network.” Europe's energy supply is a European affair, not an American one, they wrote. Gabriel and Kern also warned the U.S. against expanding sanctions without consulting European partners:

It would not only be highly regrettable, but would also diminish the effectiveness of our stance on the conflict in Ukraine, if we were to no longer take joint action, and if completely separate interests were to prevail, such as the U.S.'s economic pursuits in the field of gas exports. Foreign policy interests must in no way be linked to economic interests.

Europe's own economic interests here are not easy to sort out. Nord Stream 2 is highly unpopular with Eastern European countries that benefit from Russian gas transit

via Ukraine and Belarus. They receive hundreds of millions of dollars in transit fees from Gazprom. Poland is pushing the EU to ban Nord Stream 2, as it effectively banned South Stream. It has plans for a different Baltic pipeline, from Norway.

Sweden, Finland and Denmark, whose territorial waters the Russian pipeline is to cross, have pushed the European Commission to obtain a mandate to negotiate with Gazprom to remove legal uncertainty around the project. That's not gone well so far. On Thursday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said she didn't believe the “economic project” needed EU approval.

The current political dynamics in the EU favor Nord Stream 2. Western European nations, primarily Germany and France, are not inclined to cosset post-communist EU members such as Poland, especially given brazen flouting of EU values and refusal to cooperate in resolving the refugee crisis. To help matters along, Gazprom has been cooperative with the EU in the hopes of holding on to the market to which it delivered a record amount of gas in 2016. It has agreed to settle an antitrust case brought against it by the Commission and amend its contracts to give buyers more flexibility. Eventually, the matter is likely to be settled with a compromise: Gazprom may be held to contracts specifying delivery points in Eastern Europe even once the Baltic pipe is built.

That compromise, however, is for the Europeans to hammer out. If the U.S. wants to play a role, it needs to talk to its allies rather than try to present them with a fait accompli. U.S. legislators should realize that doing otherwise merely compounds the international chaos already sown by the Trump administration. Their zeal in trying to punish Russia shouldn't be served at the expense of the Western alliance's already diminished cohesion.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Remembering a priest, a diplomat, and a voice for Palestine

By Richard Falk

Father Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann, who died a few days ago, was a Catholic priest and former president of the UN General Assembly. The Nicaraguan diplomat was also a leading voice of conscience on Middle East peace — as well as a cherished friend, loved and admired by both of us, who became an inspirational figure to many around the world.

As much as anyone we ever encountered, Father Miguel lived as he preached. He worked and lived among the poor and struggled for years against dictatorship and injustice in his country. We want to pause not only to mourn this personal loss, but also to call attention to his public role both in his native Nicaragua and as a citizen of the world — an identity expressed most powerfully by way of his devotion to the United Nations.

■ A priest and a diplomat

A Maryknoll priest, Father Miguel became an early and impassioned practitioner of liberation theology. He later gained international fame as Nicaragua's foreign minister in the Sandinista government during the 1980s, a period during which his small country was plagued by the notorious Contra guerrilla insurgency that had been funded, equipped, and trained by the U.S. government.

Years later he was elected president of the UN General Assembly — just weeks before Israel's Operation Cast Lead began in late 2008. He quickly moved to become perhaps the world's leading spokesperson for Palestinian rights.

Richard first encountered Father Miguel in the mid-1980s when he was preparing a historic case before the International Court of Justice against the United States for its role in aiding the Contras and otherwise committing acts of aggression, including the mining of Nicaragua's harbors. He worked closely with Father Miguel in a New York townhouse on how to proceed at The Hague with a legal argument that might produce a level of international accountability for Washington's flagrant violations of Nicaraguan sovereign rights under international law.

In a stirring decision reached by the World Court in 1986, the main grievances put forward by Nicaragua were upheld, and although the United States boycotted the proceedings, it ended up complying with major findings of the decision. It was not only a moral and political victory, but a vindication of Miguel's underlying belief that international law, not violence, was the basis of peace and justice in the relations among nations.

After retiring from official life in 1991, Father Miguel was only pulled away from his religious ministry on behalf of the poor when he was elected to head the General Assembly — as an individual, not as a representative of his government.

Miguel took on that role, traditionally considered a largely ceremonial position leading a too-often marginalized organ of the UN system, and almost immediately emerged as an influential global voice who spoke pow-

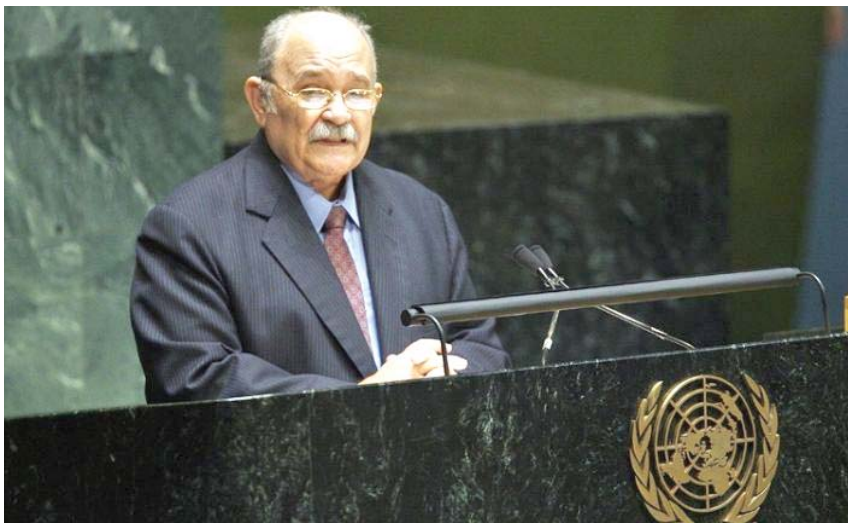
erfully in support of Palestinian rights under international law. He courageously opposed Israel's brutal Cast Lead military operation, defying the always present geopolitical pressures mounted by Washington on behalf of Israel. In his defense of Palestine throughout those weeks of war, and in his later commitment to forcing the UN to take environmental justice seriously, he aimed to transform the General Assembly into a potent force for global justice.

He never gave up this dream, collecting his thoughts in a widely distributed booklet bearing the title Reinventing the UN: A Proposal. The subtitle was a transparent summary of the text: "How to make the UN a functional organization capable of dealing effectively with the great XXI century challenges confronting Mother Earth and humanity!"

■ A voice for Gaza — and international law

Within hours of the first airstrikes against Gaza, Father Miguel condemned Israel's actions as "wanton aggression by a very powerful state against a territory that it illegally occupies." He insisted it was time for the General Assembly "to take firm action if the United Nations does not want to be rightly accused of complicity by omission."

In following days, the UN Security Council —which under the UN Charter is supposed to take primary responsibility for peace and security issues — discussed and debated and consistently failed to respond to the growing Gaza crisis, mostly because the veto-wielding United States was active in blocking action. Then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, in the midst of the slaughter of Gazan



Father Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann was a man who spoke truth to power and expected others to do the same.

speech to respond to the urgent moment. Afterward he convened a special session of the entire General Assembly and delivered a stirring address condemning the assault, which had already killed over 1,000 Palestinians — a third of them children. "If this onslaught in Gaza is indeed a war," he said, "it is a war against a helpless, defenseless, imprisoned population." The small territory "is ablaze," he lamented. "It has been turned into a real burning hell."

As the "unlawful" but internationally recognized occupying power of Gaza, Father Miguel explained, Israel owed Gazans protection — along with "food, water, educa-

curity] Council" — like the United States — were bent on "allowing the military action to continue" while the façade of a diplomatic process unfolded. That, not coincidentally, "matched perfectly the unambiguous goal of the occupying power."

To that end, Father Miguel urged an uncompromising General Assembly resolution calling for both an immediate ceasefire and an end to Israel's blockade. Remarkably, he linked those demands not only to international law, but to the international social movements that had emerged to support the same calls under it.

Our obligation is clear. We, the United Nations, must call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and immediate unimpeded humanitarian access. We, the United Nations, must stand with the people around the world who are calling, and acting, to bring an end to this death and destruction. We must stand with the brave Israelis who came out to protest this war, and we must stand with those in the frightened city of Sderot who called for "Another Voice" to answer the fear of rocket-fire with reconciliation and not war.

We must stand with the hundreds of thousands of people who have stopped the trains, petitioned their governments, poured into the streets around the world, all calling for an end to war. That is our obligation, our responsibility, our duty, as we work, mourning so many deaths, for an immediate ceasefire.

Father Miguel will be long remembered and deeply missed by friends and the many lives that he touched forever. He was not only a religious figure, but a truly spiritual presence. So many times we were told at the UN that Father Miguel was not a politician or diplomat, but something far more valuable and rare at the UN, a man of unquestionable integrity and spirituality who fearlessly spoke truth to power and rather innocently expected others to do the same.

(Source: FPiF)



civilians, famously remarked, "We don't need a cease-fire yet!"

Some urged Miguel to wait, hoping that the Security Council would eventually act and the General Assembly could meekly fall in line. But such a cynical suggestion outraged the priest. As the airstrikes turned into a full-scale ground invasion, he called Israel's war "a monstrosity."

We were both working with Father Miguel during that frantic time. As the days passed without an Assembly initiative, his patience waned, and he asked for help drafting a

tion, freedom of religion, and more." Instead, "Gaza's civilians find themselves locked inside a lethal war zone behind a wall surrounding their densely populated territory." Under assault and hemmed in by an illegal Israeli blockade, "they have no means of escape."

In such circumstances, the priest insisted, "it becomes the responsibility of the international community as a whole, represented here in the United Nations, to provide that protection." Yet he charged that "some of the most powerful members of the [Se-

The ineffable reality of American democracy

Who is interfering in U.S. politics? Russia or Israel?

By William Hanna

Part of the ineffable reality of American democracy as Helen Thomas — American reporter, author, and longtime front row member of the White House press corps — once observed, is that "you cannot criticize Israel in this country and survive."

Thomas was subsequently obliged to step down from her job as a columnist for Hearst News after a rabbi and independent filmmaker videotaped her outside the White House calling on Israelis to get "out of Palestine." It is equally true that while the imposing United States Capitol Complex on the left is theoretically the seat of the U.S. government, it is in fact in the building on the right at 251 H St. NW — the soon to be dramatically expanded American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) headquarters — where much of America's domestic and foreign policy is determined.

This unmentionable reality was highlighted by a recently published article in The Duran, which reported that during an interview on The Late Show by host Stephen Colbert, Oliver Stone remarked that Israel had far more influence over U.S. elections than any of the surmised influence Russia may have had. When Stone referred to the alleged and yet to be substantiated Russian interference:

"Israel had far more involvement in the U.S. election than Russia, why don't you ask me about that?"

Colbert — who also hypocritically sniped about Vladimir Putin's alleged suppression of press freedom in Russia — abruptly ended that topic of conversation by saying:

"I will ask you about that when you make a documentary about Israel."

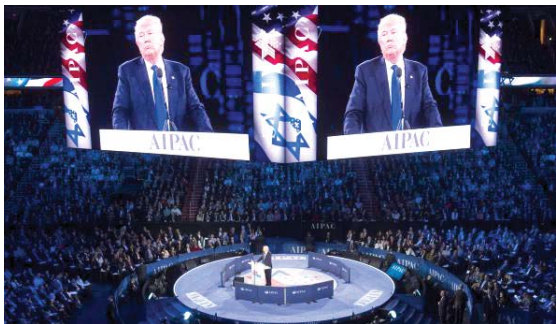
Though Stone's above assertion was valid and irrefutable, it was — in keeping with the best of the American

media's relentless quest for, and reporting of, the truth — nonetheless censored and omitted from the actual broadcast.

This was particularly hypocritical considering that since the issue of the Trump team's connections to Russia — and that country's alleged interference in the U.S. presidential election — The Late Show and Colbert have enjoyed a surge in ratings by constantly harping on the issue of "Russian skulduggery" while as always failing to mention the subversive influence on America of the all-powerful and well-funded pro-Israel lobby. Despite his undoubted talent and popularity, Colbert nonetheless failed during the interview to disguise the hypocrisy of his subservient silence — the hallmark of the "free" American press — with regards to Israel's subversive activities and violations of international law including crimes against humanity with arrogant impunity.

In the meantime, while an endless saga including the Russian "threat" to an American democracy that is a sham; the firing of former FBI Director James Comey; and the appointment of a special council is dominating the news, the pro-Israel lobby's undemocratic efforts to influence U.S. lawmakers at federal, state and local levels —with generous financial incentives, political intimidation, and expense-paid trips to Israel — have continued unmentioned and unabated.

Such tactics have resulted in the Israeli government reportedly committing 100 million shekels (about \$26 million) to fight BDS on as many fronts as possible with emphasis on the targeting of academic institutions and legislative bodies at the national, state and local levels; Congressional rejection of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334, which declared that "the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no



legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law . . ."; and a proliferation of laws, bills and non-binding resolutions — particularly in U.S., Canada, and the UK — against the global Boycott, Divest, Sanction (BDS) movement which according to numerous international academics and legal experts is "lawful exercise of freedom of expression."

Israel's ability to control the media dialogue with an endless stream of propaganda lies — otherwise known as Hasbara and meaning "explanation" — has been successful only because the U.S. corporate media has simply followed the example of the U.S. government by also accepting without question or conscience the heinous propaganda from an Israel which has no qualms about stooping to any level in its rejection of Palestinian identity, history, and presence in Palestine as is evident from the following Israeli government video:

The apparently successful, illegal, and brutal occupation of Palestinian land by an Apartheid Jewish state has only been possible as a consequence of Israel's total but unmentionable occupation of the American mind.

(Source: Global Research)

Sectarian exclusionism - Saudi Arabia's unspoken crusade against Shia Islam

By Catherine Shakdam

"How can I come to an understanding with someone, or a regime, that has an anchoring belief built on an extremist ideology? What are the interests between us? How can I come to an understanding with this?" - Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia

An interesting statement on the part of dignitary whose regime has been systematic in its targeting of religious minorities on the basis of religious supremacy. How insufferably hypocritical and malicious to deflect one's depravity onto those communities one earmarked for genocide.

Yes, genocide ... it is time we learn to use the word so that difficult truths could be made to surface.

The grand architect of all things sectarian Saudi Arabia has pursued a vicious campaign of defamation and persecution against Shia Islam stretching back several centuries. Ever since Wahhabism rose its perversion from the desert sand of Nejd (Hijaz) at the turn of the 18th century, religious minorities have lived under the blade of brutal tyranny.

An old demon, a grand intolerance to outshine all others, Wahhabism and its sisters in exclusion: Deobandism, Takfirism, Salafism, have all banded together to create Terror's complex. How many times will we need to hear those calls for religious cleansing before admitting that the very nature of Saudi Arabia's regime is in fact genocidal?

Maybe we should learn to be less selective in our outrage and calls for justice ... maybe we should act on principle and not out of ethnocentric political motivations? Maybe then, we would see that the very enemy we claim to fight, we have fostered and shielded.

Was it not Adel Al Kalbani, the leader of the congregation at the Grand Mosque (Masjid-ul-Haraam) in Mecca in 2009, who, in an interview with the BBC boasted that all Shia Muslims were apostate, unbelievers, and as such should be hunted down and killed?

Was it not Saad Al Durhim, a Saudi cleric, in April 2013, who posted a series of comments on Twitter in which he advocated that militias in Iraq demonstrate a more "heavy handed" approach when dealing with Shia Muslims and kill any Shias they might encounter — women, men and children in order to instill fear in their hearts?

In between the calls for mass genocide, the rampaging, looting, raiding, warring and grand apocalyptic declarations, Wahhabism has already positioned itself a devolution of dizzying magnitude

Daesh, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, al-Nusra, the Taliban, AQAP ... how many more acronyms before we learn to look at Riyadh as the very seat of religious annihilation?

Wahhabism breathes religious cleansing. Its very existence, the basis of its tenets and the nefarious wind in its sails are furious blades against all those who dare speak another faith, and pray a different fashion.

One has only to look upon the ruins of Najran in the Hijaz (now known as Saudi Arabia) where Arabia's thriving Christian communities once stood, or Yemen's disappeared Jewish heritage, or Iraq's Yazidis' massacre to appreciate the sheer insanity of the Wahhabi doctrine. And still, many capitals insist on calling the kingdom a friend, a tactical partner, an ally even in the fight against terror.

How much must we all lose to finally see the hate Saudi Arabia has projected onto the global narrative? More importantly what will it take for us to dare face to our own complacency?

Terror we must admit was allowed a space it should have long been denied. Terror I would argue, whether anchored in religiosity, politics or ethnicity can only exist out of our inability to denounce tyranny.

Tyranny ... I have written that word more times than I care to count and yet it appears my arguments were never compelling enough to provoke more than a murmur of outrage against those we should drown in our anger.

Forget political discourses and those rhetorics that ambition to conflate faith and nationality to better exploit western capitals' misgivings towards Iran, to really grasp at the many grave and great horrors Shia Muslims have had to endure by Saudi Arabia's hands.

For all of Saudi Arabia's claims, Iran neither speaks nor represents Shia Islam. Whatever alignment Riyadh has projected through its many echo-chambers is no more than the expression of theo-political bigotry and one imperious desire to demonise a faith to better justify its victimization.

What of the persecution of a cleric? How can anyone stand by the victimisation of a man of God, a man whose lineage speaks of Islam traditions and not recognise the hands of fascism?

Back in 2007, as he prayed before the Kaaba in Mecca - one of Islam's holiest of sites back, with several other Shia pilgrims, Seyed Jawad Qazwini was savagely attacked by Saudi police.

How is that relevant today? Why should anyone care of the mistreatment of a few men when so much blood has flowed since?

Beyond the status and religious authority Seyed Qazwini represents lies the reality of Saudi Arabia's ideology - that which allows persecution on account of a man's faith. Beyond the act of torture and death threats it is the declaration of intent Saudi Arabia made against all religious minorities we must see.

It is not just Shia Islam Riyadh targeted when its henchmen aimed their wrath at one of Iraq's most prestigious clerics but freedom of religion. The kingdom merely counted on mainstream media prejudices to fly unchallenged in the face of human decency.

So yes to answer my own question I will say that that this incident is relevant. I would go as far as say that this particular incident epitomises Saudi Arabia's hatred for all that or whom it deems unworthy.

One may argue that in the case of Seyed Qazwini justice came by way of release after the US embassy intervened. But what of those innocent men and women whose nationality cannot guarantee salvation from barbarism? What of those voices we will never hear because they were snuffed out by a system that strives on religious bias and ignorance?

It is only when acts of Terror will be challenged and heard that we stand a chance at defeating its ideology ... it begins with the acknowledgement that Freedom is not tethered to a flag or a particular faith, but rather all that call for it.



Wikileaks documentary makers accuse Assange of censorship

By Brenda Coughlin, Yoni Golijov and Laura Poitras

The Trump administration's threats against WikiLeaks and attacks on press freedom are chilling. As Margaret Sullivan recently argued in the Washington Post, prosecuting WikiLeaks under the Espionage Act would set a dangerous precedent for all journalists.

We were disturbed, however, to learn that Julian Assange

and WikiLeaks sent cease and desist letters to our distributors demanding they stop the release of Risk: "We therefore demand that you immediately cease the use and distribution of all images of the Named Participants and that you desist from this or any other infringement of the rights of the Named Participants in the future."

In WikiLeaks' efforts to prevent the distribution of Risk, they are using the very tactics often used against them –

legal threats, false security claims, underhanded personal attacks, misdirection – and with the same intentions: to suppress information and silence speech.

Since 2016, Assange and his lawyers have repeatedly demanded that we remove scenes from the film in which Assange speaks about the two women who made sexual assault allegations against him in 2010 and Sweden's investigation which has since been discontinued.

In response to our refusal to remove these scenes, Assange and his lawyers are now claiming that Risk threatens the safety of the staff who consented to being filmed, and furthermore, that we are being sexist by including Assange's own comments about women in the film.

Arguments not false

These arguments are not only false, they are a deliberate effort at misdirection. ➔13

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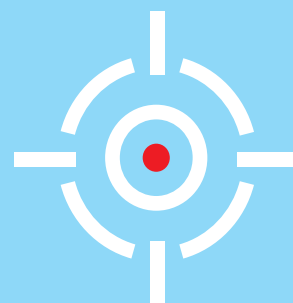
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Why happiness is healthy

By Elizabeth Landau

Happiness -- you know it when you see it, but it's hard to define.

You might call it a sense of well-being, of optimism or of meaningfulness in life, although those could also be treated as separate entities. But whatever happiness is, we know that we want it, and that is just somehow good.

We also know that we don't always have control over our happiness. Research suggests that genetics may play a big role in our normal level of subjective well-being, so some of us may start out at a disadvantage. On top of that, between unexpected tragedies and daily habitual stress, environmental factors can bring down mood and dry up our thirst for living.

Being able to manage the emotional ups and downs is important for both body and mind, said Laura Kubzansky, professor of social and behavioral sciences at Harvard School of Public Health.

"For physical health, it's not so much happiness per se, but this ability to regulate and have a sense of purpose and meaning," Kubzansky said.

■ Why be happy?

Many scientific studies, including some by Kubzansky, have found a connection between psychological and physical well-being.

A 2012 review of more than 200 studies found a connection between positive psychological attributes, such as happiness, optimism and life satisfaction, and a lowered risk of cardiovascular disease. Kubzansky and other Harvard School of Public Health researchers published these findings in the journal Psychological Bulletin.

It's not as simple as "you must be happy to prevent heart attacks," of course. If you have a good sense of well-being, it's easier to maintain good habits: Exercising, eating a balanced diet and getting enough sleep, researchers said. People who have an optimistic mindset may be more likely to engage in healthy behaviors because they perceive them as helpful in achieving their goals, Kubzansky said.

Lower blood pressure, normal body weight and healthier blood fat profiles were also associated with a better sense of well-being in this study.

For now these studies can only show associations; they do not provide hard evidence of cause and effect. But some researchers speculate that positive mental states do have a direct effect on the body, perhaps by reducing damaging physical processes. For instance, another of Kubzansky's studies found that optimism is associated with lower levels of inflammation.

If what you mean by happiness is specifically "enjoyment of life," there's newer evidence to support that, too. A study in the Canadian Medical Association Journal found that people ages 60 and older who said they enjoyed life less were more likely to develop disability over an eight-year period. Mobility was also related to enjoyment of life. This study does not prove that physical problems are caused by less enjoyment of life, but suggests a relationship.



■ Where happiness comes from: genes + environment

There is substantial evidence that genetics play a big role in happiness, according to Nancy Segal, psychologist at California State University, Fullerton, and author of "Born Together -- Reared Apart."

Research has shown that identical twins tend to have a similar level of happiness, more so than fraternal twins. And in identical twins, one twin's happiness is a better predictor of the other twin's current or future happiness than educational achievement or income, Segal said.

"If you have happy parents and happy children, I think that people usually assume it's because the children are modeling the parents," she said. "But that's not really so. You need to make the point that parents pass on both genes and environments."

What's more, there seems to be a certain level of happiness that individuals have generally, to which they usually gravitate, Segal said. That level depends on the person, and the situations he or she is in.

Even if genetics has a big influence, though, that doesn't mean anyone is biologically stuck being unhappy, she said. It might take more work if your baseline mood is low, but certain therapies have proven useful for elevating psychological well-being.

The environment is still quite important for psychological well-being, too, Kubzansky said.

"To say to someone, 'Don't worry, be happy,' is kind of not looking at the whole picture of what are the environmental constraints on things they can do?" Kubzansky said.

■ Money and time

You might be thinking: "Maybe I would be happier if I had more money." There's that old cliché "money doesn't buy happiness" -- but is it true? A 2010 study in Proceedings of the National Academy

of Sciences found that emotional well-being rises with income up to a point, which seems to be a household income of \$75,000. Day-to-day happiness did not increase with higher incomes.

But when participants were asked about overall satisfaction with their lives, that did continue to rise in conjunction with income, even after \$75,000, Princeton University researchers Daniel Kahneman and Angus Deaton found. Their results show a sharp distinction between how people see themselves in terms of happiness "today" vs. life satisfaction.

"More money does not necessarily buy more happiness, but less money is associated with emotional pain," Kahneman and Deaton wrote. "Perhaps \$75,000 is a threshold beyond which further increases in income no longer improve individuals' ability to do what matters most to their emotional well-being, such as spending time with people they like, avoiding pain and disease, and enjoying leisure."

Would you be happier if you bought the car you always wanted? Several studies suggest experiences make us happier than possessions. That's partly because once you have purchased something, such as a new car, you get used to seeing it every day and the initial joy fades, experts say. But you can continue to derive happiness from memories of experiences over time.

Experiences form "powerful and important memories that I wouldn't trade for anything in the world," Thomas Gilovich, professor of psychology at Cornell University, told CNN in 2009.

Research has also found that some sense of happiness may come with age.

Older adults may be able to better regulate their emotions than younger people, expose themselves to less stress and experience less negative emotion, Susan Turk Charles, a psychologist at the

University of California, Irvine, told CNN in 2009. More science needs to be done on whether the diminished negative response is also associated with a feeling of happiness.

■ Happiness: Living in the moment

But what about right now -- what can we do to make ourselves feel more positive?

If you're seeking to increase your own sense of happiness, try mindfulness techniques. Mindfulness means being present and in the moment, and observing in a nonjudgmental way, Susan Albers, psychologist at the Cleveland Clinic, told CNN in 2010.

■ Can mindfulness help manage pain and mental illness?

Mindfulness comes from Buddhism and is key to meditation in that tradition. Therapies for a wide variety of conditions, including eating disorders, depression and PTSD, incorporate mindfulness. Focusing on the here and now is a counterbalance to findings that mind-wandering is associated with unhappiness.

Activities such as keeping a gratitude diary and helping other people are also associated with feelings of well-being, Kubzansky said.

A variety of smartphone apps are also available that claim to help you monitor and enhance your moods. But don't feel you have to face emotional challenges alone; a professional therapist can help you get to where you want to be.

If a sense of well-being makes a healthier person, then policy-makers should also promote large-scale initiatives to encourage that, Kubzansky said. Creating parks to encourage exercise and insituting flexible work-family initiatives are just some of the ways that communities can become healthier as a whole.

So remember: A glass half full might be healthier than a glass half empty.

(Source: CNN)

To age well--you need friends

Your health depends on stable friendships.

By Temma Ehrenfeld

Who is likely to be happier and healthier at 90? A woman who moves across the country to live with her daughter and sees a grandchild every month, but rarely interacts with friends—or a woman who socializes with friends all the time, and sees family members mainly on holidays?

With any two real people, the answer depends on all kinds of factors. But most people assume that strong family ties are a bigger influence on well-being in old age than friendship. If you don't have much family, you might worry that you're likely to end up old and sick and alone. That assumption is wrong, according to an April, 2017 study sponsored by the National Institute on Aging. Actually, as you age, friendship is thicker than water.

Over the years, much research shows, your friends influence your happiness and habits--whether you'll smoke or drink, work out, stay thin or become obese. The new research found that the importance of friendship increases with age. This works both ways--quarrels with friends, it suggests, are tied to chronic health problems. The key is to keep friendships in good order. You may need to repair, or replace, friendships as you age.

But if you don't have a husband or devoted child, don't despair.

The study, designed by Michigan State University psychology professor William J. Chopik, looked at two sets of data—one drawn from people around the world at different ages, and another from older Americans.

The first data set came from more than 270,000 volunteers ages 15 to 99, from nearly a hundred countries. The volunteers

If you don't have much family, you might worry that you're likely to end up old and sick and alone. But as you age, friendship is thicker than water.

answered questions about how highly they valued different kinds of relationships and how happy they were. Instead of tracking the same people over time, it tracked "representative" groups of different ages at intervals over the years.

The result: from about age 65 on, valuing friendship highly turned out to make a bigger difference than it did when you were younger. Strong family ties were linked to happiness, but their importance stayed about the same over the life span.

In a separate analysis, researchers examined data from close to 7,500 American volunteers in their sixties and seventies. This time, the data followed the same people over time.



Getting support--be it from spouses, children and friends--predicted greater well-being over an 8-year period, although more extended family didn't seem to make much difference.

These questionnaires asked about "strain" within relationships, among other questions. It turned out that people who experienced strain within friendships were more likely to suffer from chronic illnesses like diabetes, heart disease, and psychiatric problems. This was true even if they also had support from immediate family. Strain with family, surprisingly, wasn't tied to more illness.

To add this all up, valuing your immediate family is good for your health and happiness at any age. But the older you become, the more important it is to have strong friendships. You're happier and healthier when they're happy--and you're more likely to be sick when you don't value friendship or your friendships are in trouble.

Other research has found what might seem to be a contradictory observation—we tend to socialize with fewer people as we age. But, as Chopik points out, we also invest more in a choice few. Those choice few help to keep us healthier, not just happier. "Friendship quality," he writes, "often predicts health more so than the quality of other relationships."

Some of us take friendship for granted—friends are supposed to be "easy," while we work at family relations. But over the years, friendships run into trouble as well. You can decide to work through those trouble spots—ideally, getting closer—and move away from friendships that drag down your health. Don't meet the old drinking buddies at the bar if you overdrink; see your girlfriend who eats a box of cookies at midnight for a morning walk instead.

As you get older, people move away, divorce and die. You no longer may see work buddies if you retire. You may find yourself needing to make new friends. Community organizations, religious groups and volunteer work may make all the difference.

In my neighborhood on the Upper West Side in New York City, volunteers created Bloomingdale Aging in Place, which now offers more than 50 activity groups, from knitting to soup making, poetry and juggling. BAIP also organizes dinners and parties. These groups are all run by volunteers and the overhead is the cost of a website. Get some friends together and do this yourself!

Invest in friendships that inspire you to stay healthy and you have a good chance at being healthy—in fact, this is probably the best bet you can make, the older you get.

(Source: psychologytoday.com)

High-intensity exercise may be bad for the bowels

Hydration and proper food intake might help prevent gut trouble, researcher says

By Don Rauf

When it comes to stomach discomfort during exercise, forget that old adage "no pain, no gain." New research suggests that excessive strenuous exercise may lead to gut damage.

"The stress response of prolonged vigorous exercise shuts down gut function," said lead author Ricardo Costa.

"The redistribution of blood flow away from the gut and towards working muscles creates gut cell injury that may lead to cell death, leaky gut, and systemic immune responses due to intestinal bacteria entering general circulation," Costa added. He's a senior researcher with the department of nutrition, dietetics and food at Monash University in Australia.

Researchers observed that the risk of gut injury and impaired function seems to increase along with the intensity and duration of exercise.

The problem is dubbed "exercise-induced gastrointestinal syndrome." The researchers reviewed eight previously done studies that looked at this issue.

Two hours appears to be the threshold, the researchers said. After two hours of continuous endurance exercise when 60 percent of an individual's maximum intensity level is reached, gut damage may

occur. Costa said that examples of such exercise are running and cycling.

He said heat stress appears to be an exacerbating factor. People with a predisposition to gut diseases or disorders may be more susceptible to such exercise-related health problems, he added.

Dr. Elena Ivanina is a senior gastroenterology fellow at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City. She wasn't involved with this research but reviewed the study. She said that normal blood flow to the gut keeps cells oxygenated and healthy to ensure appropriate metabolism and function.

If the gut loses a significant supply of blood during exercise, it can lead to inflammation that damages the protective gut lining. With a weakened gastrointestinal (GI) immune system, toxins in the gut can leak out into the systemic circulation -- the so-called "leaky gut" phenomenon, Ivanina said.

But, she underscored that exercise in moderation has been shown to have

many protective benefits to the gut.

"Specifically, through exercise, patients can maintain a healthy weight and avoid the consequences of obesity," she said. Obesity has been associated with many GI diseases, such as gallbladder disease; fatty liver disease; gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD); and cancer of the esophagus, stomach, liver and colon. Regular moderate physical activity also lowers the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and depression.

To prevent exercise-related gut problems, Costa advised maintaining hydration throughout physical activity, and possibly consuming small amounts of carbohydrates and protein before and during exercise.

Ivanina said preventive measures might help keep abdominal troubles in check. These include resting and drinking enough water. She also suggested discussing any symptoms with a doctor to ensure there is no underlying gastrointestinal disorder.

Costa recommended that people

Preventive measures might help keep abdominal troubles in check which include resting and drinking enough water.

exercise within their comfort zone. If you have stomach or abdominal pain, "this is a sign that something is not right," he said.

Individuals with symptoms of gut disturbances during exercise should see their doctor.

The study authors advised against taking nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs -- including ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or naproxen sodium (Aleve) -- before working out.

Costa said there's emerging evidence that a special diet -- called a low FODMAP diet -- leading up to heavy training and competition may reduce gut symptoms. FODMAP stands for fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides, and polyols. FODMAPs are specific types of carbohydrates (sugars) that pull water into the intestinal tract.

The International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders suggests consulting a dietitian familiar with FODMAP diets. Such diets can be difficult to initiate properly on your own, the foundation says.

Costa also said there's no clear evidence that dietary supplements -- such as antioxidants, glutamine, bovine colostrum and/or probiotics -- prevent or reduce exercise-associated gut disturbances.

(Source: webmd.com)

10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

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

1 Microsoft shares could jump 46% in the next year
Microsoft shares could be set for a huge bump, according to Keith Weiss, an analyst at Morgan Stanley. Weiss raised his price target for Microsoft from \$72.00 to \$80.00 but said it could go as high as \$102, a 46% increase from its current price.

2 Apple and Ikea are launching an app that lets you virtually try out furniture in your home — and then buy it.
Ikea is also looking to leverage digital tools to help boost its sales. Beyond pilots with third-party e-commerce sites, Ikea caused a stir with a foray into AR together with Apple.

3 Shares of Snap Inc. jumped nearly 3% following the news that the maker of Snapchat had entered an agreement to make original shows with Time Warner.
The deal means Time Warner will pay Snap \$100 million to develop shows and advertise in the app over the next two years

4 Amazon’s new dirt-cheap gadget is a Trojan horse built to beat Google and invade your home.
Amazon has launched a new \$20 gadget that comes with its AI assistant Alexa built in: The Dash Wand.

5 Apple’s HomePod is not artificial intelligence — but it is a great speaker.
Sometime later this year, Apple’s \$349 smart speaker, called HomePod, will go on sale.

6 Japan Display announced the mass production of LCD panels with 18:9 aspect ratio. The company, partially owned by Sony, said it is 6 inches in diagonal, carries the name “Full Active” and comes with 1080 x 2160 resolution.

7 LG launched a new version of its G6 flagship, dubbed the LG G6+, with more storage, B&O headphones and new color options. The Korean company also announced the first major software update for the original LG G6 that will bring a few cool new features.

8 Group in Colorado wants to prevent kids under 13 from owning a purchased cellphone.
Children under 13 would not be allowed to be the recipient of a purchased cellphone in Colorado under a proposed ballot measure backed by a group called Parents Against Underage Smartphones. To make the 2018 ballot, the group will need to get 300,000 voter signatures. Dr. Tim Farnum, an anesthesiologist in Denver, is leading the group.

9 Huawei applies for “4D Touch” trademark.
A new trademark doesn’t necessarily mean a new technology, so it is still difficult to say if Huawei’s 4D Touch will be some sort of pressure-sensitive solution or something entirely different.

10 Samsung patents smartphone case that could wirelessly charge your Gear watch.
The document describes a smartphone case that may prove to be a fantastic addition for any fan of the brand, especially those, who own a Gear watch.

Nokia unveils 2 new devices in digital health ‘rebirth’

Nokia unveiled a new smart scale and digital blood pressure monitor as part of a “rebirth” of the company Nokia VP of Digital Health Cédric Hutchings told VentureBeat in an interview at Nokia offices in San Francisco. As the company continues to transition away from a core business of selling phones, digital health will play a larger role in the Nokia portfolio in the future.



Nokia acquired Withings in April 2016 for \$192 million, and today the entire Withings product line of activity and sleep trackers, scales, even its smart hair brush, will adopt the Nokia brand name.

What’s cool about the Nokia Body Scale is that it can track the weight and body mass index (BMI) for up to eight people, and, starting at \$59, comes in at a lower price than other Nokia scales, which cost \$99 and \$179 respectively.

The Nokia BPM+ blood pressure monitor costs \$129 and is controlled through the Health Mate app. The device stores blood pressure and heart rate readings whether or not the smartphone is connected to the internet.

(Source: venturebeat)

Tech CEOs meet with Trump on government overhaul



President Donald Trump met on Monday with the heads of 18 US technology companies including Apple , Amazon.com and Microsoft Corp, seeking their help to make the government's computing systems more efficient.

The White House wants to update government information technology systems, cut costs, eliminate waste and improve service. Trump on Monday cited estimates that the government could save up to \$1 trillion over 10 years through such measures.

“Our goal is to lead a sweeping transformation of the federal government's technology that will deliver dramatically better services for citizens,” Trump said. “Government needs to catch up with the technology revolution.”

The executives are part of the so-called American Technology Council that Trump formed in May to support efforts to modernize the US government.

“The US should have the most modern government in the world. Today it doesn't,” Apple Chief Executive Officer Tim Cook said

Amazon Chief Executive Officer Jeff Bezos said he wanted the Trump administration to make use of commercially available technologies, worker retraining, machine learning and artificial intelligence.

Before meeting with Trump, the CEOs met in 10 small group sessions with Vice President Mike Pence, Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, along with the presidents of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Ohio State University.

Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and adviser, said the administration wanted to “unleash the creativity of the private sector to provide citizen services in a way that has never happened before.”

He said the administration was scrapping unneeded regulations for government computing systems, such as a rule

on preventing Y2K issues. Most of the government's 6,100 data centers can be consolidated and moved to a cloud-based storage system.

The White House is seeking to shrink government, reduce the federal workforce and eliminate regulations.

Trump in March signed an order to overhaul the federal government and tapped Kushner to lead a White House Office of American Innovation to leverage business ideas and potentially privatize some government functions.

Many of the tech executives are eager to get White House help in dealing with regulatory and other policy issues such as visas for highly skilled workers.

Others attending include Alphabet Inc Executive Chairman Eric Schmidt, venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins Chairman John Doerr and the CEOs of Microsoft Corp International Business Machines Corp, Intel

Corp, Qualcomm Inc, Oracle Corp and Adobe Systems Inc. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg was invited but could not attend because of a conflict, the company said.

A 2016 US Government Accountability Office report estimated the US government spent more than \$80 billion in IT annually, excluding classified operations. In 2015, the US government made at least 7,000 separate IT investments and some agencies were using systems that had components at least 50 years old. “This structure is unsustainable,” Kushner said.

The CEOs and White House also planned to discuss Trump's review announced in April of the US visa program for bringing high-skilled foreign workers into the country. Cook plans to raise immigration, a person briefed on the matter said Sunday.

The council also seeks to boost the security of US government IT systems and wants to learn from private-sector practices. In 2015, hackers exposed the personal information of 22 million people from US government databases.

The White House thinks it can learn from credit card companies about significantly reducing fraud. A 2016 government audit found that in Medicaid alone there was \$29 billion in fraud in a single year.

Following Trump's June 1 decision to withdraw from the Paris climate accords, Tesla CEO Elon Musk and Walt Disney CEO Robert Iger stepped down from White House advisory panels. White House officials said the dispute had little impact and that they had to turn away tech leaders from Monday's event because of lack of space.

(Source: venturebeat)

Facebook and Twitter being used to manipulate public opinion

Propaganda on social media is being used to manipulate public opinion around the world, a new set of studies from the University of Oxford has revealed.

From Russia, where around 45% of highly active Twitter accounts are bots, to Taiwan, where a campaign against President Tsai Ing-wen involved thousands of heavily co-ordinated – but not fully automated – accounts sharing Chinese mainland propaganda, the studies show that social media is an international battleground for dirty politics.

The reports, part of the Oxford Internet Institute's Computational Propaganda Research Project, cover nine nations also including Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, Poland, Ukraine, and the the United States. They found “the lies, the junk, the misinformation” of traditional propaganda is widespread online and “supported by Facebook or Twitter’s algorithms” according to Philip Howard, Professor of Internet Studies at Oxford.

At their simpler end, techniques used include automated accounts to like, share and post on the social networks. Such accounts can serve to game algorithms to push content on to curated social feeds. They can drown out real, reasoned debate between humans in favour of a social network populated by argument and soundbites and they can simply make online measures of support,



such as the number of likes, look larger – crucial in creating the illusion of popularity.

The researchers found that in the US this took the form of what Samuel Woolley, the project's director of research, calls “manufacturing consensus” – creating the illusion of popularity so that a political candidate can have viability where they might not have had it before.

The US report says: “The illusion of online support for a candidate can spur actual support through a bandwagon effect. Trump made Twitter centre stage in this

election, and voters paid attention.”

Russian propaganda on social media is well known in the west for its external-facing arm, including allegations of state involvement in the US and French presidential elections. But the nation's social media is also heavily infiltrated with digital propaganda domestically according to the report on that country.

Woolley adds: “Russia is the case to look to to see how a particularly powerful authoritarian regime uses social media to control people.”

The reports suggested an apparent disinterest from the social media firms in how their networks were being used. Facebook, for instance, leaves most of its anti-propaganda work to external organisations such as Snopes and the Associated Press, who operate semi-autonomous fact-checking teams aimed at marking viral news stories as true or false while Twitter's anti-bot systems are effective at fighting commercial activity on the site, but seem less able or willing to take down automated accounts engaging in political activity.

The researchers are presenting their findings to a group of “senior” representatives from the technology industry in Palo Alto. They say that the social networks need to do more, and fast.

(Source: Guardian)

This is the OnePlus 5



The OnePlus 5 borrows the dual camera configuration from the iPhone 7 Plus — revealed by The Verge to have 16-megapixel and 20-megapixel Sony sensors with f/1.7 and f/2.6 apertures, respectively.

Thanks to a partial slip-up from Amazon India, we also know that this 5.5-inch device is powered by Qualcomm's Snapdragon 835 chipset — and that at least one configuration sports a whopping 8GB of RAM (paired with 128GB of storage) pricing at between \$479 and \$539, depending on the configuration.

(Source: theverge)

Now you can initiate a Duo call right from Allo

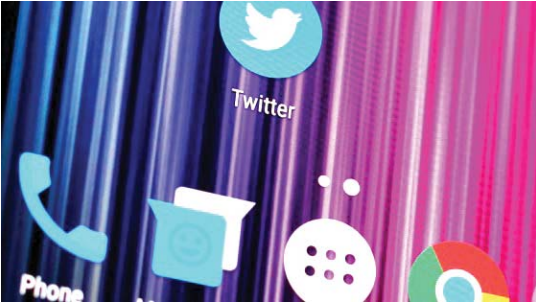


Google first announced Allo and Duo at the same time last year at Google I/O. Strangely, there was no kind of integration between Duo and Allo, Google launched them as two completely separate applications. Today's update to Allo allows you to start a Duo call directly from the Allo recipient screen.

We didn't see the update appear on our device's Play Store just yet, so the update it likely rolling out gradually. With added functionalities like chat backup, document support, and link previews, Google has slowly been adding features to Allo, which was pretty much a barebones messaging app when it first launched.

(Source: droid-life)

Twitter’s night mode is now automatic for Android



Twitter for Android is about to make night mode a “set it and forget it” feature. Starting with Twitter's beta users, the app will be getting an automatic night mode that switches at sunrise and sunset for those who tweet around the clock.

Automatic Night mode will come with Twitter 7.2. Upon updating, you'll be forced to the regular model and once you hit night mode again, you'll be prompted to set night mode to automatic if you so choose. The feature should hit the Twitter's public release very soon.

(Source: 9to5google)

New book reveals that Steve Jobs wanted a back button for the Apple iPhone

Had Steve Jobs’ original design for the iPhone been used on the device, there would have been two buttons on the handset instead of the one home button. The late CEO and Apple co-founder wanted the device to

come with a back button for navigation. Imran Chaudhri, who worked as a designer at Apple for over 19-years, revealed that originally the iPhone was to sport no buttons at all. Eventually, it was determined that a home button

was necessary and Jobs wanted to add the back button.

The comments made by Chuadhri are found in the new book, “The One Device: The Secret History of the iPhone.” According to the book, Chaudri was able

to talk Jobs out of this notion. He did this by telling him that to make people trust that the device will do what they want it to do, there should be no second button available on the iPhone.

(Source: Amazon)

NASA has discovered hundreds of potential new planets — and 10 may be like Earth

NASA scientists on Monday announced the discovery of 219 new objects beyond our Solar System that are almost certainly planets.

What's more, 10 of these worlds may be rocky, about the size of Earth, and habitable.

The data comes from the space agency's long-running Kepler exoplanet-hunting mission. From March 2009 through May 2013, Kepler stared down about 145,000 sunlike stars in a tiny section of the night sky near the constellation Cygnus.

Most of those stars are hundreds or thousands of light-years away, so there's little chance humans will ever visit them — at least anytime soon. However, the data could tell astronomers how common Earthlike planets are and what the chances of finding intelligent extraterrestrial life might be.

Planets similar to Earth

"We have taken our telescope, and we have counted up how many planets are similar to the Earth in this part of the sky," Susan Thompson, a Kepler research scientist at the SETI Institute, said during a press conference at NASA Ames Research Center on Monday.

"We said, 'How many planets there are similar to Earth?' With the data I have, I can now make that count," she said. "We're going to determine how common other planets are. Are there



other places we could live in the galaxy that we don't yet call home?"

Added to Kepler's previous discoveries, the 10 new Earthlike planet candidates make 49 total, Thompson said. If any of them have stable atmospheres, there's even a chance they

could harbor alien life.

Scientists wouldn't say too much about the 10 new planets, only that they appear to be roughly Earth-size and orbit in their stars' "habitable zone" — where water is likely to be stable and liquid, not frozen or boiled

The transit method of detecting planets that Kepler scientists use involves looking for dips in a star's brightness, caused by a planet blocking a fraction of the starlight (similar to how the moon eclipses the sun).

away. That doesn't guarantee these planets are habitable, though. Beyond harboring a stable atmosphere, things like plate tectonics and not being tidally locked may also be essential.

However, Kepler researchers suspect that almost countless Earthlike planets are waiting to be found, because the telescope can "see" only exoplanets that pass in front of their stars.

The transit method

The transit method of detecting planets that Kepler scientists use involves looking for dips in a star's brightness, caused by a planet blocking a fraction of the starlight (similar to how the moon eclipses the sun).

Because most planets orbit in the same disk or plane, and because that plane is rarely aligned with Earth, Kepler can see only a fraction of distant solar systems — those angled even slightly are invisible to the transit method.

Despite those challenges, Kepler has revealed the existence of 4,034 planet candidates, with 2,335 of those confirmed as exoplanets — and these are just the planets found in 0.25% of the night sky.

"In fact, you'd need 400 Keplers to cover the whole sky," Mario Perez, a Kepler program scientist at NASA, said during the briefing.

(Source: Business Insider)

Cholesterol-lowering vaccine jab to stop heart attacks could be close

A vaccine jab that prevents heart attacks could be imminent after promising early research shows how the immune system can be directed to lower cholesterol.

Patients have already been enrolled into a phase one trial to see if the approach, so far tested on mice, will work in humans.

A cholesterol-lowering vaccine could theoretically provide a more effective and reliable alternative to statins.

The vaccine, known as AT04A, triggers the production of antibodies that target an enzyme involved in regulating levels of blood cholesterol. The enzyme, PCSK9, has been shown to impede the clearance of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) — the "bad" form of cholesterol that is largely to blame for blocked arteries — from the blood.

Western-style fatty diet

In tests, mice fed an unhealthy western-style fatty diet had their total blood cholesterol lowered by 53% by the vaccine.

Atherosclerotic damage, the build-up of hard fibrous deposits on the walls

of arteries, was reduced by 64%, and biological markers of blood vessel inflammation by up to 28% compared with unvaccinated mice.

The new results, published in the European Heart Journal, open up the prospect of a yearly vaccine jab to keep cholesterol under control in at-risk patients.

Dr. Gunther Staffler, researcher and chief technology officer at the Austrian biotech company AFFIRIS, which developed the vaccine, said: "AT04A was able to induce antibodies that specifically targeted the enzyme PCSK9 throughout the study period in the circulation of the treated mice. As a consequence, levels of cholesterol were reduced in a consistent and long-lasting way, resulting in a reduction of fatty deposits in the arteries and atherosclerotic damage, as well as reduced arterial wall inflammation."

Patient compliance

"If these findings translate successfully into humans, this could mean that, as the induced antibodies persist for months after a vaccination, we could



develop a long-lasting therapy that, after the first vaccination, just needs an annual booster. This would result in an effective and more convenient treatment for patients, as well as higher patient compliance."

PCSK9 is made in the liver and blocks LDL receptor molecules on cells that allow the body to get rid of harmful cholesterol. The vaccine causes the body to produce antibodies that lock on to and immobilize the enzyme, so that the LDL receptors can remain ac-

tive.

Essentially it is an immunotherapy treatment. Unlike a conventional vaccine that targets foreign invaders such as bacteria and viruses, AT04A marshals the immune system to attack one of the body's own proteins.

A phase one trial testing the safety and activity of the vaccine in 72 healthy patients was launched at the Medical University of Vienna in 2015. The trial is due to finish at the end of this year.

(Source: The Guardian)

Worst global coral bleaching event eases, as experts await next one

The worst coral bleaching event in recorded history, which has hit every major coral region on Earth since 2014, appears to be coming to an end, with scientists now worrying how long reefs will have to recover before it happens again.

After analyzing satellite and model data, and finding bleaching in the Indian Ocean no longer appeared widespread, the U.S. National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has announced the event is no longer occurring on a global scale, and appears to be coming to an end.

Over an unprecedented period of three years, unusually warm water spread around the world, bleaching and killing coral.

Coral bleaches when the water is too warm for too long. The coral polyps get stressed and spit out the colorful algae that live in inside them, leaving them white. Since the algae provides the coral with 90% of its energy, the coral starves and — unless the temperatures quickly return to normal — dies.

Worst bleaching event

In Australia, the Great Barrier Reef suffered the worst bleaching event in recorded history in 2016 and then again in 2017. It was estimated about half of its



coral was killed between the two events.

In the Indian Ocean, reefs were badly hit. One survey in the Maldives found all reefs there were affected, with between 60% to 90% of coral colonies bleached. Christmas Island had virtually all its coral bleached, and 85% of its coral died.

In some other reefs, virtually all the coral was killed, with 98% of the coral around Jarvis dying, for example. Japanese reefs were badly hit, as were reefs in every other coral region.

"We know it has been the longest-lasting event and it has been the most widespread," said Mark Eakin, coordinator of

NOAA's coral reef watch program. "And it probably has been the most damaging. In some places it definitely has been."

Eakin said the data on total reef damage had not yet been analyzed, so he could not say for sure whether it had been the worst but he said he would bet it had been.

The event started in 2014 when waters in the Pacific Ocean started to warm, in a pattern that resembled El Niño. The El Niño never fully kicked in, but the warming caused widespread bleaching.

In 2015 an El Niño did occur, which spread the bleaching even further, and the effects continued all the way until now.

Although the El Niño cycle tipped water temperatures over the edge, and triggered the bleaching, Eakin said there was no doubt the underlying cause of the bleaching was climate change. There have been two recorded global bleaching events previously, both of which occurred when strong El Niño events warmed oceans around the world — in 1998 and then 2010.

Eakin said the underlying warming was priming the ocean for coral bleaching, potentially with every El Niño.

(Source: The Guardian)

Exxon says scientists boost lipid content from algae in lab study

Exxon Mobil Corp and Synthetic Genomics Inc said on Monday they had found a way to more than double the amount of lipids produced by algae in a lab, moving a potential alternative to fossil fuels closer to commercial viability.

The development comes as Exxon, the world's largest publicly traded oil producer, fights accusations by environmentalists and others that it misled investors and the public for years about the risks of climate change from fossil fuels.

In the past decade, Exxon has boosted investment in fuel cells, biodiesel, algae and other alternative energy technologies, in collaboration with private partners. The company also has invested in television advertisements to tout its renewable energy investments, including during last summer's Olympic Games.

"Algae can be a viable, renewable source for volumes of oil at scale," said Vijay Swarup, Exxon's vice president for research and development.

"We like algae because it's fast-growing, doesn't compete for food and water and can grow in all sorts of climates and brackish water."

The oil company's ultimate goal is to make an oil from algae that can be processed by existing refineries, though that goal remains elusive.

Exxon began working with California-based Synthetic on algae research in 2009. The lab work is conducted at Synthetic facilities and funded by Exxon, which declined to disclose its financial investment.

Scientists studied the way that algae cells partition carbon — typically from carbon dioxide — and produce lipids, a kind of hydrocarbon. Algae converts carbon dioxide into lipids much in the same way the human body converts sugar into fat.

(Source: Reuters)

How a fungus turns beetles into killer zombies

A fungus worthy of its own horror film is on the loose, taking over the bodies of goldenrod soldier beetles and turning them into contagious zombies that can infect their beetle brethren, a new study finds.

The fungus has a creepy but foolproof modus operandi: About two weeks after it infects the goldenrod soldier beetle (*Chauliognathus pensylvanicus*), it orders the beetle to climb up a plant and clamp its mandibles around a flower.

Then, the beetle dies, swinging like a scarecrow from the flower and giving the fungus ample opportunity to infect nearby beetles, said study lead investigator Donald Steinkraus, a professor of entomology at the University of Arkansas.

Steinkraus first spotted these bizarre, zombie-like beetles on a research farm in Fayetteville, Arkansas. He remembers seeing hundreds of yellow-and-black soldier beetles on a patch of blooming wild asters. The beetles were eating pollen and mating — the "flowers were sort of like a dating site that also offered food," Steinkraus told Live Science in an email.

But the bucolic scene took a startling turn when Steinkraus took a closer look.

"On the flowers, I noticed that many beetles were dead, hanging onto the flowers just by their mandibles," Steinkraus said. "Their wings were dramatically opened and their abdomens were distended with what I recognized as an insect pathogenic fungus."

(Source: Live Science)

Tiny fossils reveal backstory of the most mysterious amphibian alive

Researchers have determined that the fossils of an extinct species from the Triassic Period are the long-missing link that connects Kermit the Frog's amphibian brethren to wormlike creatures with a backbone and two rows of sharp teeth.

Named *Chinlestegophis jenkinsi*, the newfound fossil is the oldest relative of the most mysterious group of amphibians: caecilians. Today, these limbless, colorful serpentine carnivores live underground and range in size from 6 inches to 5 feet.

"Our textbook-changing discovery will require paleontologists to re-evaluate the timing of the origin of modern amphibian groups and how they evolved," said Adam Huttenlocker, senior author of the study and an assistant professor in the Department of Integrative Anatomical Sciences at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

The study, published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences on June 19, expands the known history of frogs, toads and salamanders by at least 15 million years and closes a major gap in early caecilian evolution by connecting them to stereospondyls, animals with toilet-seat heads that were the most diverse amphibian group during the Triassic era more than 200 million years ago.

Scientists previously believed the story of the stereospondyl order was a dead-end because, although widespread during the Triassic Period, the animals were believed to be unrelated to anything alive today. The two recently discovered fossils dispel that theory and suggest that the amphibian lineage of today evolved from a common ancestor some 315 million years ago.

Before C. jenkinsi, scientists had found only two other caecilian fossils from the Age of Dinosaurs and — unlike the two recently unearthed — those came later and had reduced limbs, more closely resembling their contemporary living relatives.

(Source: EurekAlert)



SINA Bank Opens Account with Two Italian and Spanish Banks

SINA Bank inaugurated an account with two foreign banks named "Italian Banca Popolare di Sondrio" and Spanish Ares Bank, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Developing and boosting foreign exchange activities of the bank in international level and taking maximum advantage of capacities of the foreign banks have been cited as the main aim behind launching an account with

two foreign banks.

Earlier, SINA Bank had opened separate accounts in foreign banks based in Oman, "Hulk Bank" and Active Bank in Turkey and also Swiss BCP Bank, the report added.

With the opening of these accounts, SINA Bank is ready to fulfil money transfer of its dear customers in euro through these banks.

In addition, all banking activities, ranging from open-

ing, receiving credits to issuing guarantee letter and foreign exchange remittance, can be done via these accounts.

It is worth mentioning that the bank has initiated various programs for the development of its foreign exchange activities, the most important of which is referred to the cooperation with international banks, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank ended.

How to recognize one's temperament



ARTICLE

By Seyed Mahdi Mirghazanfari, MD, PhD

The Iranian-Islamic traditional medicine is a holistic medicine which has been based on individual differences, a determinant basic concept named as Mizaj (temperament). Generally, Mizaj represents the excess or lack of warmth and humidity in one's body and is classified into four categories- also called four qualities- of warmth, coldness, dryness and wetness.

The tempers (Amzajeh) are classified totally into nine categories: Moderate, warm, cold, wet, dry, warm and dry, warm and wet, cold and dry, cold and wet.

Displaying some identifying behavioral and physical characteristics would describe one's temperament.

■ Frame

Being stout, sturdy, big-boned and prone to gain weight are signs of wetness while not gaining weight and being thin are the distinguishing characteristics of dryness.

■ Body parts

Bigger faces, fingers, lips, noses, organs, and body parts are defining characteristics of people

with wet Mizaj whereas people with dry Mizaj have smaller body parts.

■ Complexion

Rosy and ruddy complexion is a sign of warmth and wetness, while having a yellow cast is sign of warmth and dryness, on the other hand light and fair complexion is a distinctive characteristic of people with wet and cold Mizaj. And last but not least people with cold and dry Mizaj have a dark complexion.

■ Hair

People with dry Mizaj have coarse, curly and coily hair; warmth cause the hair to grow faster and people with warm Mizaj have thick black hair, with thick density and more volume. Silky, straight, smooth, thin and fair hair which grows slower is a distinctive characteristic of people with cold Mizaj. Wetness would cause the hair to easily hold a curl or style. ➔13

INTERVIEW

Setareh Behroozi

TEHRAN — The 27-year-old Iranian teacher, Meqdad Baqerzadeh, is renowned for his active role in providing deprived children in remote schools with aids through photos he shared on Instagram.

In March 2015, he started sharing his daily life with children at Marefat School in Ayerqayeh, a village located near the Iran-Turkmenistan border, on his page under the title of 'mbs.counselor' on Instagram.

"People were informed of Marefat School through Instagram and it paved the way for us to collect aids for other deprived schools in rural areas as well," Baqerzadeh explained in an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times.

Through his page, he collected money and some other facilities and equipment for a number of schools in nomad areas.

"At first, my page had 50 to 60 followers but from the very first I did my best to document all activities done with the help of people. Now we have followers from 37 countries who offer help for the children."

He said that although through his Instagram page he aims to provide children living in deprived areas with assistance, but it also makes him reputable as well.

"My page encourages many of my colleagues to collect help for rural schools in other parts of Iran and I am happy for that," he said.



Meqdad Baqerzadeh poses for photo with children of Marefat School in Ayerqayeh, Iran-Turkmenistan border village (mbs.counselor/Instagram)

However, he stressed the need for good intention for doing such works. He said that one should not begin doing so to become renowned himself.

■ It was my choice!

"I am from an educated family. My mother and brothers were teachers and I was acquainted with ups and downs of this job," he said.

Meqdad has selected teaching for studying at the university after giving the university entrance exam.

"I studied math in high school but teacher education was my only choice in university," he explained.

He said that he do love to teach in remote places during his youth so he selected Ayerqayeh when he finished university.



"In fact, I chose the place out of curiosity in 2011 but stayed these years out of interest," he explained.

■ Smiling children is my reward!

He lives nine months of the year in a place where there is no mobile network but he believes that it is worthwhile.

"I spend days of my life amongst children who live in remote places but what I earn is kindness which gives you an incomparable energy," he said, adding that feedbacks from followers motivated him to continue.

He plans to publish a book which is composed of writings of 100 children with their own handwritings in Tehran this September.

"It is a great motivation for children in rural areas as they understand that they are seen.



We will also bring a number of them to the book's unveiling ceremony as well," he said.

He said that details about the book and its publisher will be announced in the near future.

He said that he wants to hold courses for nomads who live in Aq-Tappeh in the northern province of Golestan in the coming academic year.

"I think I will continue my way at least until I am 30. I think children in remote places need teachers with high level of energy and motivation," he said.

"The smile on the faces of children is the best reward for me and it eases all problems and difficulties," he said.

In the end, he appreciated people from different parts of the world for their helps to make children happy.

Demand for legal guardianship high in Iran

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The number of eligible families who are asking for taking legal guardianship of orphans is nine times more than the number of children who are kept at centers of the state-run Social Welfare Organization.

"About 10 thousand children are kept at the centers but 85 to 87 percent of the children have parents. So, we are not allowed to offer the children's guardianship to others," the deputy director of the organization Habibollah Masoudi Farid told IRNA on Tuesday.

Their parents are either addicted or in prison and after

they become qualified, they can return their children to their home, he explained.

He said that the organization do the best to return children to their own families after they become eligible.

"Most families ask for babies under one year old however the number of these children is very low. If they ask for children between 6 to 7 years old the waiting time for the family decreases," he explained.

Those interested in adoption need to meet the qualifications set by the organization, including having Iranian nationality, being Muslim, possessing parental

skills, enjoying excellent mental and physical health and being good-tempered.

Illiterate families cannot adopt a child, while those with a degree in psychology, sociology and social work are prioritized.

Adopters must possess the minimum financial means defined by the organization. They should be between 25 and 50 years of age.

Women without a husband can also adopt one to three girls after their qualifications are verified by experts.

Significant Increase in Export of IKCO's Products to Regional Markets

As one of the main components of country's economy, booming automotive industry causes growth of economic indicators in macro level. Export-oriented production is one of the main pillars of automotive industry, so that its objectives are on the verge of materialization in cooperation with leading automakers in international level.

As a pioneering car manufacturing industry in the country, Iran Khodro Industrial Group (IKCO) is leader in this field and has thus far taken giant strides to manufacture high-quality cars. Focusing on exporting its products and manufacturing high-quality cars, IKCO has taken effective measures to expand its target markets. With obtaining foreign exchange income, the company intends to get rid of government's financial resources.

With the implementation of international agreements, this prestigious car manufacturing company in the country intends to export its products manufactured in cooperation with world's leading automakers as joint venture. In general, IKCO has taken effective steps to turn domestic 80-million market into regional 300-million market.

Yielding currency is one of the important capacities of automotive industry and exporting car is one of the important issues which is at the focal attention of all automakers in the world. Obtaining profit through selling car, spare parts and also after-sales services is the main goal which is followed up by all car manufacturers. As far as concept of export is concerned, terms and conditions are not the same for all car manufacturers, so that exporting car faces many ups and downs.

As one of the largest and leading manufacturer of car in the Middle East region, IKCO has obtained relatively successful standing in this sector especially in recent years.

Given the above issue, the company has established sound cooperation and coordination with world's leading automakers in order to expand and develop its export market. In the same direction, Iran Khodro Company is going to export its product, manufactured with France's Peugeot Company jointly, to



some countries in the world.

■ IKCO Plans to Develop and Spur Exports

Iran Khodro Company (IKCO) is planning to expand and develop its export market in international level. In this regard, focusing on Euro-6 emission standards, high engine volume and automatic transmission coupled with observing requirements of international standards are of the attractions that cause market development for products of automakers in international level. In general, IKCO eyes developing its export market and in this way, it has tried to observe requirements of international standards in manufacturing high-quality cars.

Given the above issue, IKCO has taken effective measures in line with exporting its products to the international markets, the most important of which is as follows: it is expected that automatic-transmission products of the company will be added, by IKCO's Research and Development (R&D) Unit, to the basket of its products before termination of the current Iranian calendar year in 1396 (to end March 20, 2018).

With the studies made in this regard, automatic transmission cars will be manufactured by the company for exporting to Leba-

non, Syria, Iraq, Algeria and Tunisia according to their vehement request.

Currently, there is a growing demand for manufacturing and exporting automatic transmission cars instead of manual transmission ones by these countries. For example, most African countries demand for automatic transmission cars ONLY. Accordingly, IKCO tries to manufacture and export its products with automatic transmission to its target markets. Presently, the company has negotiated with France's Peugeot Company for manufacturing automatic transmission Peugeot "207" passenger car in the very near future. Manufacturing automatic-transmission PARS passenger car is the other project followed up at the company which will hit the consumer market by the yearend.

Once the aforementioned objectives are materialized in the field of manufacturing automatic transmission cars, the company will be able to export 20,000 automatic transmission cars to other countries in the current Iranian calendar year in 1396 (started March 21, 2017).

Under the contract inked with Peugeot Company, 30 percent of products, manufactured with Peugeot Company as joint venture, should be exported.

■ Revival of IKCO's Export Markets

Considering the ease of customs restrictions in Iraq, IKCO launched new production line for manufacturing SAMAND passenger car in this country in the current Iranian calendar year in 1396 (started March 21, 2017). The dashboard of new version of SAMAND passenger car, manufactured in Iraq, was similar to the dashboard of SOREN passenger car. The first consignment of dashboard of SAMAND passenger car has been exported to IKCO's new production line in neighboring Iraq. Exporting cars to Iraqi Kurdistan market has been ceased especially in recent three years due to high-level standards as defined by them in this respect. Relying upon the assistance of the Almighty God, IKCO managed to export PARS and Peugeot "405" passenger cars again at this target market. It is worth mentioning that the company has reactivated export of its high-quality cars to Syria as of last year.

With the incessant follows up and efforts made in this regard, IKCO managed to obtain EAC (EurAsia Conformity) standard for its six products in the past Iranian calendar year in 1395 (ended March 20, 2017).

In addition, IKCO has negotiated with Kazakh officials for exporting its products to Kazakhstan in order to meet demand of country's taxi network fleet. Moreover, IKCO exported 300 DENA passenger cars to Algeria in the past Iranian calendar year in 1395 (ended March 20, 2017) and is eyeing to revitalize export of its high-quality cars to this lucrative market.

On the other hand, IKCO has planned to export RUNNA passenger car to Tunisia, so that mutual talks will be finalized in the very near future for exporting IKCO's luxury car to this country. Moreover, IKCO intends to commission a representative office in neighboring Afghanistan which has been neglected and fallen into oblivion for years.

■ Launching IKCO's Production Lines in Target Countries

Change of approach in Iran Khodro Company (IKCO) from direct investment to present quality technical and engineering

services and investment of mutual contract party in export target markets has caused the company to hold negotiations with different countries for launching production lines.

Accordingly, IKCO has negotiated with Azerbaijan for manufacturing car in this country, so that company's production line will be launched in Azerbaijan's Neftcala city in very near future. Currently, construction operation of IKCO's production line is underway in this Asian country and effective steps have been taken in order to install related equipment and machinery in the site. Since Azeri people are well aware of specifications of SAMAND passenger car, it is expected that SAMAND passenger car will first be manufactured in this country.

Given the above issue, SAMAND passenger car will be manufactured in IKCO's production line in Azerbaijan at the first phase while other products of the company including "DENA" and "SOREN" will be manufactured in the production line at the second phase within the framework of a three-year program.

With the coordination made in this regard, IKCO will first prioritize to export its quality cars to Eurasian Customs Union including Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Armenia and Kazakhstan.

With the current procedure taken in export of its products to target markets, Iran Khodro Company (IKCO) is after playing a key and important role in international markets within the framework of constructing production line with the investment of opposite contract party and/or sending product as Completely Knocked-Down (CKD) to these countries. Broadly speaking, IKCO has targeted export of 30 percent of products manufactured with other companies as joint venture basis.

This important effect requires competitive and high-quality production, so that objectives of which will be materialized with the development and supply of high-quality products to its target markets observing requirements of international standards.

by: A.Saeidi

Iran's support for Iraq is support for intl. community: ambassador

2→

Regarding the issue of dust storms, Iran's Environmental Protection Organization chief, Ms. Ebtekar, has announced that Iran will hold educational courses for Iraqi citizens on how to counter the problem. What measures has the Iraqi government taken in this regard?

A: As you know, the issue of dust storms is an international problem which has various international causes and is not limited to Iran or Iraq. We cannot fight this dangerous issue without international cooperation. It has very complicated side effects on both Iranian and Iraqi nations and also imposes serious risks on their economy and even political relations. Five days ago, we signed some agreements with our Iranian brothers in this regard, and as far as I know, she (Ms. Ebtekar) has signed a deal and when its translation to Arabic and Farsi is finished, she will sign another deal. We are committed and determined to implement the agreement due to its crucial importance.

Wars have had great impacts on this issue. The draining of Iraq's wetlands have had a [negative] impact on the region's environment.

A big strategic project stretching from Iraq's north to its south has been put forward, among other proposals. There are some solutions such as applying some chemical agents to the surface of soil to prevent soil erosion and planting a massive number of trees. But all these important steps to solve this issue cannot be taken without international cooperation. The important thing is that meetings are be-



© Tehran Times/ Majid Hashdoust

Resolving the issue of dust storms requires international cooperation

ing held in this regard; attention is paid to it and agreements are being signed to solve the issue. I think we're making progress towards reaching the two countries' objectives as well as those of other regional countries.

■ Has Turkey's dam building exacerbated the situation?

A: All these complexities exist. There's an international law under which countries which share headstreams cannot carry out their projects across the shared rivers without considering other neighboring countries' share of water. But unfortunately, some countries have built dams across rivers. Iraq and Turkey had signed an agreement but the situation is complicated in the region and we hope this issue be solved through dialogue. UNESCO has decided that

Iraq's wetlands are among the world's heritage sites, a move that can have an impact on Turkey's actions. We are of the opinion that all of the regions' problems can be solved through dialogue and we insist that our first and last path is dialogue with neighboring countries, because the foreigners do not care about our region's interests and welfare.

■ In order to resolve the issue of sectarianism, what measures has the Iraqi government envisioned?

A: There are conflicts within each and every religion and this is a natural thing. The Iraqi nation is united more than ever, and at the moment, the Popular Mobilization Forces are comprised of all Iraqi tribes and sects – including Shias, Sunnis, Kurds and Christians – who fight against ter-

rorism alongside the Iraqi army and security forces. The Iraqi nation is united for building their country and fighting against the enemies. The Iraqi government and parliament are also comprised of representatives from all sects and political groups.

■ Economic issues have direct impact on citizens' conduct. What measures has the government taken for the citizens' well-being?

A: Despite the decline in oil revenues and some neighboring countries' conspiracies as well as the fight against terrorism, the Iraqi government has not reduced the salaries of employees. Iraqi markets are active and busy across the country. Economic activities are still underway even in Mosul – both eastern and western parts. The economic pressure exists in Iraq, as in other countries. Iraq is a persistent country despite all of its problems. We have many big plans to carry out after the liberation of Mosul.

■ "Attacks in Tehran are a sign of terrorists' frustration"

In the end, the Iraqi ambassador condemned the recent terrorist attacks in Tehran on behalf of the Iraqi government and nation and offered his condolences to the Iranian government, nation and the bereaved families of the victims of the June 7 attack.

"This is a sign of the terrorist groups' frustration, and shows that our Iranian brothers are determined in fighting against terrorism. I believe that Iran is a great country with a united nation against whom the perpetrators cannot do anything. I wish for peace, progress and prosperity for the Islamic Republic."

Philippines launches offensive in hope of recapturing Marawi by weekend festival

Philippine aircraft and troops launched a renewed push against militants in a southern city on Tuesday and a military spokesman said the aim was to clear the area by the weekend Eid festival, although there was no deadline.

The offensive came amid worry that rebel reinforcements could arrive in the city after Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Fighting in Marawi City has entered a fifth week, and nearly 350 people have been killed, according to an official count. Fleeing residents have said they have seen scores of bodies in the debris of homes destroyed in bombing and cross-fire.

"We are aiming to clear Marawi by the end of Ramadan," said military spokesman Brigadier-General Restituto Padilla, as army and police commanders met in nearby Cagayan de Oro city to reassess strategy and operations against the militants, who claim allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist outfit.

But he added: "We are not setting any deadlines knowing the complexity of the battle. We are doing our best to expedite the liberation of Marawi at the soonest time possible."

The seizure of Marawi and the dogged fight to regain control of it has alarmed Southeast Asian nations

which fear ISIL – on a back foot in Iraq and Syria – is trying to set up a stronghold in the Muslim south of the mainly Roman Catholic Philippines that could threaten the whole region.

President Rodrigo Duterte visited a school where people who fled from Marawi are being housed and apologized for their plight, especially since it was Ramadan.

"I will help you, I will rehabilitate Marawi, it will be a beautiful city again," he said at the school in Iligan City, about 40 km (25 miles) from the battle zone.

Padilla said the military aimed to prevent the conflict from escalating after Ramadan ends.

"We are closely watching certain groups and we hope they will not join the fight," Padilla said.

Some Muslim residents of Marawi said other groups could join the fighting after Ramadan.

"As devout Muslims, we are forbidden to fight during Ramadan so afterwards, there may be new groups coming in," said Faisal Amir, who has stayed on in the city despite the battle.

■ Gaining ground

Fighting was intense early on Tuesday as security forces made a push to drive the militants, entrenched in Marawi's commercial district, south toward a lake on the edge of the city.

Planes flew overhead dropping bombs while on the ground, automatic gunfire was sustained with occasion-

al blasts from artillery. Armored vehicles fired volleys of shells while the militants responded with gunfire and rocket-propelled grenades.

Fighting later died down as heavy rain fell but had resumed by evening.

Military sources said troops were attacking the militants from three sides and trying to box them toward the lake.

"We're gaining ground and we're expanding our vantage positions," said Lieutenant Colonel Jo-Ar Herrera, another military spokesman, although he declined to comment on specifics.

"We are moving toward the center of gravity," he added, referring to the militants' command and communications center.

An army corporal near the front line told Reuters soldiers were tagging houses and buildings that had been cleared.

"We still have to clear more than 1,000 structures," he said, adding infantry units were left behind at "cleared" areas to prevent militants from recapturing lost ground.

As of Tuesday, the military said 258 militants, 65 security personnel and 26 civilians had been killed. Hundreds of people are unaccounted for, with many believed to be hiding in the basements of the city.

(Source: Reuters)

World Refugee Day commemorates strength, courage, and perseverance of refugees

1→

There are outstanding examples of this in villages, towns and cities in countries on every continent. In big and small ways, communities around the world are standing together #WithRefugees – recognizing that when people

work together, everyone wins.

So on World Refugee Day, when we pause to contemplate the fate of the millions of people who cannot return to their homes tonight because of war or persecution – it's also a mo-

ment to ask ourselves what each of us can do to overcome indifference or fear and embrace the idea of inclusion, to welcome refugees to our own communities, and to counter narratives that would seek to exclude

and marginalize refugees and other uprooted people.

Because, when we stand together #WithRefugees, we also stand for respect and diversity for all.

(Source: UNHCR)

Blockading Qatar, targeting Iran

3→

That Zionists see that dream as a nightmare is, of course, natural. That the Saudis and their sidekicks have now joined forces with these Zionists in crushing that dream is an obscenity beyond words. The marriage of convenience between Israel and Saudi Arabia as two garrison states, armed to their teeth by the U.S. to spread menace and to pit one group of Muslims against another, overcomes all other disparities between the odd couples.

The simultaneous targeting of Qatar and Iran

should forever put an end to the false flag that this is a battle between Arabs and Persians or else between Sunni and Shia Muslims. Qatar is both an Arab and a Sunni country, and is today the target of a most pernicious blockade and defamation by its own Arab and Sunni neighbours, while planeloads of food are being flown to Doha from Turkey and Iran.

For now, let it be remembered that Israel, with all its ridiculous claim to be "the only democracy in the Middle

East" (built on stolen Palestinian lands), is today in active alliance with the most retrograde and backward-ruling regimes in the region against the democratic aspirations of their nations. Let it also be remembered that the ruling family in Saudi Arabia are now in active alliance with the European settler colony that has stolen Palestine from its rightful inhabitants. Everything else from this point forward must commence with these two sobering facts.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Iran wants 'all states' to condemn Tillerson remarks in letter to UN

1→

On Thursday, the U.S. State Department declassified documents on the role it played in the 1953 coup against the democratically-elected government of Mohammad Mosaddegh.

The 1,000-page "Foreign Relations of the United States, Iran, 1951-1954" provides information on the use of covert operations in Iran by the Truman and Eisenhower administrations.

The documents cover the period

around the 1953 coup d'état, which saw the overthrow of Mosaddegh and the

strengthening of the monarchical rule of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

Iran says Tillerson's remarks are "a brazen interventionist plan that runs counter to every norm and principle of international law, as well as the letter and spirit of UN Charter, and constitutes an unacceptable behavior in international relations."

Foreign Ministry also summoned the Swiss charge d'affaires to Tehran to protest at Tillerson's remarks. A note handed to the envoy, whose country represents U.S. interests in Iran.

Washington and Tehran have had no diplomatic ties since the 1980 hostage crisis, when a number of U.S. nationals were held in Iranian captivity for more than 400 days for espionage activities inside the U.S. embassy in Tehran.

Wikileaks documentary makers accuse Assange of censorship

8→

Risk was filmed over the course of many years, beginning in 2011. Assange and WikiLeaks freely consented to participating in the film, knowing we were making an independent documentary. Neither WikiLeaks nor Assange have any editorial control of Risk. There were individuals who requested from the beginning not to appear in the film, and those requests were respected.

WikiLeaks and their lawyers were shown the film before each public screening, most recently inside the Ecuadorian Embassy in London on April 1, 2017. Each time, we invited their responses.

WikiLeaks' comments have consistently been about image management, including: demands to remove scenes from the film where Assange discusses sexual assault allegations against him; requests to remove images of alcohol bottles in the embassy because Ecuador is a Catholic country and it looks bad; requests to include mentions of WikiLeaks in the 2016 U.S. presidential debates; and, requests to add more scenes with attorney Amal Clooney because she makes WikiLeaks look good.

■ Objections raised

It is only after we declined to make the changes they tried to impose that WikiLeaks raised objections to Risk. Their attempts to censor the content of the film are an effort to prevent reporting on Assange's own words. They also constitute a saddening break with WikiLeaks' own ideals.

Last month, WikiLeaks' lawyers published an op-ed saying they object to our editing in the United States. However, Assange has known since 2015 that we were editing in the U.S. In 2016, he signed an agreement to license WikiLeaks' own footage to us and raised no objection to mailing a hard drive with footage directly to our editing room in New York City.

WikiLeaks has also repeatedly publicized their participation in risk, most recently re-tweeting a link to the film's trailer on April 10, 2017 (a tweet that has since been deleted), without raising any concerns. In their cease and desist letter, lawyers for WikiLeaks and Assange state: The "unauthorized release of the Film has caused our clients to suffer ongoing irreparable harm, and exponentially increasing damages every time a new viewer sees the Film."

All the participants in Risk agreed for years to be in the film. We have no obligation to seek WikiLeaks' or Assange's authorization to release the film. In fact, our rights under the First Amendment are protected precisely because we are engaging in independent journalism. Assange himself has criticized the media for seeking permission from public figures before releasing stories.

Like WikiLeaks, our journalism has been the target of U.S. government investigation, secret grand jury, and threats by elected officials. We fully understand and empathize with the dangers WikiLeaks is facing, and we stand in solidarity with all journalists and publishers around the world currently under attack.

(Source: Newsweek)

How to recognize one's temperament

12→

■ Skin

People with dry Mizaj Have dry skin and people with wet Mizaj have soft and squishy skin. Having naturally high body temperature once someone touches people with warm Mizaj tells they are warm. People with cold Mizaj feel cold and run colder than the other people and once someone touches them can tell they are colder than normal.

■ Activity

Warmness brings about increase in exuberance and energy level which boost speech and body movements speed while coldness causes quite the reverse symptoms as people with cold Mizaj don't have much energy and are generally slow, they take their time speaking and acting.

■ Mental trait

People with warm Mizaj are normally and usually more extrovert, sociable, and maybe less patient but people with cold Mizaj are more introvert, calmer, and more patient. People with warm Mizaj are more inclined to suffer stress and restlessness; however, people with cold Mizaj have a tendency to experience depression and melancholic thoughts and have hallucination or sometimes delusions.

However, keep in mind that one's personality traits may be modified or changed due to various factors such as upbringing, religion, spirituality, and one's striving to change their attitude. Therefore one's personality may not necessarily match their temperament.

■ Sensitivity

People with warm Mizaj are more sensitive to warmth (surrounding environment, foods and drinks); those with cold Mizaj are more sensitive to coldness; those who have dry Mizaj are more sensitive to dryness and those with wet Mizaj are more sensitive to humidity.

■ Sleep

Sleeping too much or sleepiness is a sign of wetness and needing much less sleeping hours is a defining characteristic of dryness.

■ Waste matter

Waste matters (e.g. urine, sweat, and feces) in those with warm Mizaj have strong color and odor while in people with cold Mizaj the waste matters don't have strong color or odor.

Manchester United are cautious over move for Ronaldo

Manchester United are wary of a move for Cristiano Ronaldo and are continuing to focus on Jose Mourinho's list of targets – which does not include their former player.

Ronaldo, 32, has been linked with a return to Old Trafford after it emerged last week that he wanted to leave Spain. The forward has reacted angrily to accusations that he avoided paying £12.9m in tax between 2011 and 2014.

However, while United are acutely aware of the player's talents, they remain cautious over the situation.

One school of thought is that Ronaldo and his advisers are trying to force Madrid to take care of the issue with the taxman.

And after a previous move for the player collapsed, United do not wish to become involved in another lengthy and potentially fruitless pursuit.

Executive vice chairman Ed Woodward has been working on a list of summer targets – which does not include Ronaldo – for some time.

He has already completed a £30.7m move for Benfica defender Victor Lindelof. There is also a hope that moves for Real Madrid striker Alvaro Morata and Inter Milan winger Ivan Perisic will also be completed in time for the forthcoming season.

Speaking on Spanish radio station Onda Cero on Monday night, Real Madrid president Florentino Perez said that he was not expecting Ronaldo's departure.

'Not I nor anyone at Madrid is contemplating that Cristiano could leave the club,' he explained.

'We are very relaxed about this.'

(Source: Daily Mail)

Conor McGregor has giant mural of Mayweather painted on gym wall

If Conor McGregor needs any added motivation for his fight with Floyd Mayweather, he need only glance at his gym wall.

For there is a giant mural which depicts the UFC champion landing a punch on the boxing legend.

The Irishman showed off the painting on Instagram alongside the caption "I am a filthy Irish animal".

McGregor will earn close to £100m when he takes on Mayweather in Las Vegas on August 26.

But he faces an uphill task against Mayweather.

The American won all 49 of his fights before retiring following his win over Andre Berto in 2015.

He has come out of retirement to face McGregor at the age of 40. And he told BSOTV: "McGregor is a tough competitor. People all around the world demanded this fight so I had to give them what they wanted to see.

"They asked for this fight. I was in retirement, but they wanted me back and I'm back.

"You're supposed to stand behind your man. Stand behind the fighter that you believe. He's a hell of a competitor."

(Source: Mirror)

Rafael Nadal pivotal in Asensio's Madrid transfer, Perez reveals

Real Madrid received help from an unusual source to acquire the services of Marco Asensio in 2014, with tennis superstar Rafael Nadal acting as a go-between, Florentino Perez has revealed.

Asensio impressed in his first full season in Mallorca's senior side, attracting the interest of Madrid and Barcelona.

Los Blancos won the race for his signature in December 2014, before loaning him back to Mallorca and then Espanyol.

And Madrid president Florentino Perez has revealed Nadal – a huge fan of the 2016-17 double winners – played a crucial role in convincing the young midfielder to move to the Santiago Bernabeu.

"I called Rafa Nadal and asked him to talk to his uncle [former Barca player] Miguel Angel, who was Mallorca's sports director," Perez told Onda Cero.

"[I told Nadal] to tell him that we wanted to buy him [Asensio].

"He behaved perfectly and we closed the deal quickly."

Asensio has since broken into the Madrid first team and scored the fourth goal in their Champions League final victory over Juventus earlier this month.

(Source: Soccerway)

Bennell charged with 14 further counts of non-recent child sexual abuse

Former football coach Barry Bennell has been charged with 14 further counts of non-recent child sexual abuse against boys aged between 11 and 14.

The charges include 10 counts of indecent assault and four of buggery, which are alleged to have taken place between 1983 and 1990. The 63-year-old will appear before South Cheshire Magistrates' Court on June 28.

Bennell, a former youth coach with English side Crewe Alexandra, has now been charged with 55 offences against eight complainants.

He pleaded not guilty to 20 charges in March of this year.

The Crown Prosecution Service said in a statement: "The Crown Prosecution Service reminds all concerned that criminal proceedings against Mr Bennell are live and that he has a right to a fair trial.

"It is extremely important that there should be no reporting, commentary or sharing of information online which could in any way prejudice ongoing proceedings."

(Source: Soccerway)

Jose Mourinho accused of £2.9m tax fraud during his time at Real Madrid

Jose Mourinho has been accused of defrauding tax authorities by Spanish prosecutors for a sum of £2.9million (€3.3m) during his time at Real Madrid.

Spanish prosecutors said on Tuesday they had filed a claim against the Manchester United manager on two counts of tax fraud dating back to when he coached Real.

The Portuguese manager owes Spanish tax authorities €3.3m, a Madrid prosecutor said in a statement, adding it had presented a claim to a local court.

Mourinho left Real Madrid in 2013 to manage Chelsea for a second spell before signing with United last year.

He had arrived in the Spanish capital from Inter Milan three years previous.

Prosecutors said he had failed to declare revenue from his image rights in his Spanish income tax declarations from 2011 and 2012, 'with the aim of obtaining illicit profits'.

They said Mourinho had already settled a previous claim relating to his Spanish taxes, which resulted in a penalty of £1m (€1.15m) in 2014. But tax authorities later found that some of the information presented in that settlement was incorrect, the prosecutors said.

The claims against Mourinho come amid a lengthening list of tax fraud cases involving football stars in Spain.

Real were not immediately available for comment on the allegations against Mourinho or Ronaldo's hearing.

Gestifute, a Portuguese-based soccer agency which represents Mourinho and



Ronaldo, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Jose Mourinho is far from the first sporting star to face accusations over tax issues in Spain in recent months.

Cristiano Ronaldo, who played under Mourinho at Real Madrid, has been called

to testify on July 31 over allegations that he hid £12.9m income from tax authorities.

Barcelona's Lionel Messi and his father Jorge were convicted of defrauding the Spanish state of £3.6m in unpaid taxes last year in a case similar to that of Ronaldo. They were handed 21-month jail terms

which are likely to be suspended.

Former Liverpool defender Javier Mascherano, now also of Barcelona, escaped a jail term with a one-year suspended sentence after appearing in court and admitting £1.1m tax fraud back in January.

(Source: Daily Mail)

Azarenka relishing future 'battle of mums' with Serena



Victoria Azarenka cannot wait to renew her rivalry with close friend Serena Williams in what could shape up to become a future battle of the tennis mums.

For a change, Azarenka, who has four wins and 17 defeats against Williams, is a step ahead of the American having given birth to son Leo in December -- a day, she says, represented a "180 degree" turn in her life.

While the former world number one and twice Australian Open champion resumes her career this week in Mallorca, Williams's baby is due in September with the American to return next year.

"I've been friends off the court with Serena for a long time and I'm very happy for her," Azarenka told Reuters as she prepared for her comeback on the Mallocan grasscourts.

"First of all I was so happy when she said she was pregnant but when I first heard I thought, 'Oh my God, I'll never have the chance to play against her again.' I was a little sad.

"But it's incredible that she's coming back and I know that hopefully we'll face

each other more times."

Azarenka, 27, has always been one of the most ferocious competitors on the women's circuit.

Tennis has been all-consuming -- a diet of practise, tournaments, gym sessions and the all-too-regular rehabilitations from injury.

Since becoming a mum, however, there is a new Azarenka.

"Having Leo has changed my life 180 degrees," the Belarusian explained. "I love every moment of being a mum. But now I have two different mentalities.

"When I'm on the court, the only reason I'm there is that I love the game and I still have so much potential to improve. When I'm there I give 100 percent every time.

"But after that I'm in a different mode. I switch off. That has always been so hard in the past.

"I used to come back and watch tennis or talk about tennis, or check tennis on the internet. Now with Leo, it's easy to forget it.

(Source: Reuters)

AC Milan fans urge Gianluigi Donnarumma to fire agent Mino Raiola



An AC Milan fans' group has told Gianluigi Donnarumma they will forgive him if he fires agent Mino Raiola and signs a new contract.

Last week, Raiola told the club that the 18-year-old goalkeeper, who has a year left on his contract, would not be signing a new deal.

But Milan are refusing to sell Donnarumma and have threatened to leave him on the bench for a season.

A statement on the website of the Milan fans from the Curva Sud at the San Siro said:

"We know that the last few days must have been difficult, to defend himself from the criticisms and insults he will have received, but when you make vows of love and betray them this is the only way the situation can be.

"Obviously we do not condone any threats, which have nothing to do with the position we are taking.

"Football today is even further detached from people's passion and even closer to people like Raiola; people who are capable of influencing an entire career and clubs' histories without scruple, with just one interest -- their own.

"We still believe there is a chance to

put things right, but now it depends on you withdrawing from your affairs with the person who has pushed you to do wrong and ruined your image."

Donnarumma is on international duty with Italy's under-21s, but has not escaped criticism in Poland.

During the opening group game against Denmark on Sunday, fake dollar bills were thrown at him and a banner bearing the name "Dollanumma" was hung behind his goal.

On Monday, Raiola said Milan were responsible for Donnarumma's decision not to extend his contract, but the Milan fans' group said only the agent could be blamed.

"We find it strange that such a competent agent is unable to act in the best interests of his client but has instead destroyed his image in the eyes of all football fans, who now discover that an 18-year-old can show no respect towards the club who launched his career just because of the interest of a man behind him who is promising him mountains of money," the statement said.

(Source: Soccernet)

aubameyang97 Aubameyang Kids
♥ Gang #batman #aubacap
#aubameyang #future #17

fcbayern Robert LewanJETSki!
♥ @_rl9 #Lewandowski #MiaSanMia
#FCBayern #RL9#MiaSunMia

chelseafc Wishing Chelsea legend
♥ @franklampard a very happy birthday!
#SuperFrank#CFC #Chelsea

Fenerbahce show interest in signing Persepolis keeper Beiranvand

S P O R T S Turkish club Fenerbahce d e s k Istanbul have shown interest in signing Persepolis international goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand.

Fenerbahce's Brazilian goalkeeper Fabiano has left the team and they are searching to find a replacement for him.

Beiranvand, 24, started his goalkeeping career in 2009 in Naft Tehran.

He joined Persepolis in 2016 and helped the Iranian giant win Iran Professional League and qualify for the AFC Champions League quarter-final.

Beiranvand has played a key role in Iran national football team, since Team Melli have yet to concede a goal in the previous eight matches.

Fenerbahce Spor Kulübü, also known as Fenerbahçe and Fener, is a professional football team based in Istanbul, Turkey. They are part of Fenerbahçe Sports Club. Founded in 1907 by a group of local men, they are one of the most successful and best supported football teams in Turkey and currently compete in Süper Lig, Turkish Cup and UEFA Champions League.

They are nicknamed Sari Kanaryalar (Turkish for 'The Yellow Canaries') and play their home games at Sükrü Saracoglu Stadium in Kadıköy, Istanbul.

Fenerbahçe have won a total of 27 Turkish national championships including 18 Süper Lig trophies, in addition to 6 Turkish Cup, 8 Turkish Super Cup, 8 Chancellor Cup and 12 TSYD Cup trophies. In international club football Fenerbahçe have won one Balkans Cup trophy.



Persepolis, Al-Ahli to be held in Muscat



S P O R T S Persepolis of Iran d e s k and Saudi Arabia's Al-Ahli will play at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat, Oman in the 2017 AFC Champions League Quarterfinals stage.

The two clubs have chosen Oman as the neutral venue to host the forthcoming matches.

The first leg will be held on August 22, where the Persian Gulf country will host the match and the second leg has been scheduled for

September 12.

Persepolis have already faced Al-Hilal in the stadium in ACL group stage because of diplomatic tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The Iranian team were going to choose Kyrgyzstan as the neutral venue but changed the decision due to the country's low-quality stadium.

The 2017 AFC Champions League has started on January 24 and will run until November 25.

Esteghlal midfielder Omid Ebrahimi extends contract



S P O R T S Esteghlal defensive d e s k midfielder Omid Ebrahimi has extended his contract with Esteghlal for more one season.

Ebrahimi was discovered by Amir Ghalenoei and joined Sepahan in 2010. He became Esteghlal's best scorer with seven goals last season.

The 29-year-old defensive midfielder had also caught the attention of Sepahan football team.

Furthermore, Esteghlal right-back Vouria Ghafouri has extended his con-

tract for more one season.

Ghafouri played his entire career for Pas Hamedan until 2010 when he signed with Shahrdari Tabriz. He later signed with Naft Tehran.

Ghafouri joined Sepahan in 2014 and lifted Iran Professional League's trophy with the Isfahan-based football team.

He has also made 15 appearances for Iran national football team.

Esteghlal became runners-up in Iran Professional League last season.

Dani Alves set to agree two-year deal with Manchester City despite interest from Chelsea

Dani Alves is ready to agree a two-year deal with Manchester City once he resolves his departure from Juventus.

Chelsea also plan to speak to the Brazilian's representatives but his mind is set on a reunion with his former coach Pep Guardiola.

The 34-year-old's agents held talks with Juventus in Turin on Monday about cancelling his contract by mutual consent to enable him to leave on a free transfer.

Juve had initially discussed a £5million fee for the defender as he has one year left on his contract, but he now hopes to leave for nothing.

The 34-year-old is still considered one of the best right backs in the world and will look to fill a space left by Pablo Zabaleta and Bacary Sagna, both of whom have been released.

He will, however, likely be considered a short-term option with Guardiola maintaining a long-term



interest in Tottenham star Kyle Walker and Arsenal's Hector Bellerin.

With Alves and Guardiola sharing a close relationship from their Barcelona days and City pushing for a total-football revolution, the move comes as no surprise.

However, in 2014 Alves admitted that he didn't realise City existed until around 2009.

'I didn't realise until about five years ago that Manchester had two teams' he said.

'Of course Manchester United have been one of the most famous and successful clubs in Europe for many years - but I thought they were the only one.

'When Manchester City got new owners and started buying some of the best players in Europe everybody knew who they were - but until then I must be honest I didn't know about them.'

(Source: Daily Mail)

Ferdinand hoping Manchester United can seal Ronaldo return

Rio Ferdinand hopes Manchester United can complete a sensational deal to take Cristiano Ronaldo back to Old Trafford.

Ronaldo's future at Real Madrid looked guaranteed after lifting his third Champions League title with the club earlier this month, the Portugal international scoring twice in a 4-1 win over Juventus.

That secured a double for Madrid having already pipped Barcelona to the LaLiga title by three points in May.

However, allegations of tax fraud - denied by the forward - have brought Ronaldo's future into question and United have been heavily linked with a swoop for their former star.

And Ferdinand, who played with Ronaldo at United for six seasons, hopes his former club can finalise a deal for the four-time Ballon d'Or winner.

'I hope [he'll return],' the former England international is quoted as saying by the Manchester Evening News at an event in Belfast.

'I'm a Man United fan, and my kids love him, so I hope that he'll be back.

'But will he leave Real Madrid? I don't know.'

Madrid president Florentino Perez has dismissed any talk of Ronaldo leaving the Spanish capital, stating he would only consider a deal if a club met his €1billion buyout clause.

(Source: soccerway)



I wish Ronaldo was Argentine, but still prefer Lionel Messi - Diego Maradona

Diego Maradona says he wishes Cristiano Ronaldo was Argentine, but still prefers Lionel Messi to lead the Albiceleste.

Maradona famously led Argentina to the 1986 World Cup title with decisive performances in the knockout stages of the competition.

Ronaldo, who was recently awarded his fourth Ballon d'Or, has won four Champions League titles -- equalling Messi's haul -- and led Portugal to their first major tournament crown in last summer's European Championship.

And while Maradona has praised the Real Madrid superstar, he would still choose Messi, who, though he has yet to win a title with Argentina, has led his country to three consecutive finals over the past three summers.

"Cristiano is an animal," Maradona told TyC Sports. "I wish he was Argentine.

"But I still prefer Messi. He is enjoying playing football and goes by opponents with ease.

"I don't remember seeing Messi play badly. Even if Messi does not win a World Cup, he will be remembered in football history.

"Leo cannot deliver the World Cup on his own. Even if he does not win a World Cup, we will still remember him."

Maradona, meanwhile, has taken a swipe at Argentina coach Jorge Sampaoli for leaving out Sergio Aguero from the latest squad and including Mauro Icardi instead.

Sampaoli signed a five-year contract earlier this month to guide the national team after leaving Sevilla and the decision by the Argentine Football Association to appoint him was not well received by some former Argentina coaches, including Maradona.

Manchester City striker Aguero, who has scored 33 goals in 82 appearances for Argentina, was left out of the squad for the recent international friendlies against Brazil and Singapore. Instead, Inter Milan forward Icardi returned to the group after a four-year absence.

Aguero scored 20 goals and set up three more in 31 Premier League appearances for City last season yet still lost his place in the squad, and Maradona, who is grandfather to his son, has taken the decision personally.

He said: "To take out Aguero from the national team and to bring Icardi was madness. Aguero gives you more speed; he is more electric. That is why it hurts me that to give me a football slap, they call Icardi."

Sampaoli succeeded Edgardo Bauza, who was dismissed on April 10 after a poor run of results, and has taken over at a difficult time with Argentina fifth in their World Cup qualifying group.

Only the top four are assured of spots in Russia next summer with the fifth-placed team heading to a continental playoff. Argentina resume their campaign away to Uruguay on Aug. 31.

"As things stand right now I would sign for the playoffs," Maradona said. "Sampaoli doesn't know more than Bauza about football, I can assure you.

"I hear he takes eight coaches with him. If you have to take eight coaches, you might as well stay home. Sampaoli is false and it's crazy the contract they [the AFA] have given him."

Maradona also attacked former Argentina midfielder Juan Sebastian Veron, who was recently appointed coordinator of the nation's youth team.

Veron, who played under Maradona at the 2010 World Cup, was heavily critical of his management after that tournament and the two have not been on friendly terms since.

Reports in Argentina claimed that it was Veron who selected Argentina's latest squad back in May as Sampaoli had not been officially unveiled.

Maradona said: "Veron must have done that squad list. It would be better if Veron did the England list than the Argentina squad."

(Source: ESPN)

Cycling: Lappartient to oppose Cookson for UCI presidency

European Cycling Union president David Lappartient will stand against Britain's Brian Cookson for the presidency of the sport's governing body (UCI), he said on Tuesday.

The 65-year-old Cookson, who took over in 2013, faced criticism during a difficult period for the sport, including doping scandals, and his younger challenger, the vice-president, is promising "fundamental changes".

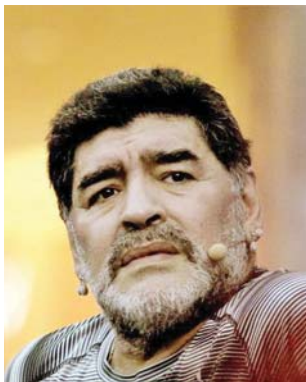
"I have great passion for cycling and have clearly demonstrated it through my vision, my achievements, my leadership capabilities, and my commitment to make cycling a sport of the 21st century," Frenchman Lappartient said in a statement on his website (www.ourpassion.org), 24 hours before the deadline for entering the race for the presidency.

"I want to make UCI a strong and well-respected federation by improving its governance and regain its capacity of influence in the Olympic movement," Lappartient added.

"We must be unshakable when dealing with technological fraud, doping or the potential manipulation of results related to sports betting."

The election will take place on Sept. 21 during the UCI road world championships in Norway.

(Source: Reuters)



Sara Bahrami crowned best actress at Porto7 festival

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian actress Sara Bahrami was crowned best at the 10th Porto7 International Short Film Festival in Portugal on Sunday for her role in “You Just Be My Mother”.

Bahrami portrays Sara, a mother who lives with a man after separating from her husband but his son is against their relationship. Sara is forced to choose between her son and her love.

Directed by Roqieh Tavakkoli, the film has been screened at several international events, including the Delhi International Film Festival and the Athens International Digital Film Festival.

The Porto7 festival also picked Alexander Bobrov as best actor for his role in “The Secret to a Happy Marriage” by Russian director Andrey Bulatov.

The award for best film went to “#Selfie” by David M. Lorenz from Germany and “The Fourth Kingdom” by Adan Aliaga and Alex Lora from Spain was named best documentary.

“Mecanismo Diabólico” by Spanish director Fernando Escribano won the award for best animation.

“Refugee Camp” by Iranian director Saeid Naqavian was also screened in the official competition of the festival.



Sara Bahrami and Sajjad Esmaili act in a scene from “You Just Be My Mother”.

Detmold festival picks three Iranian short films

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The International Short Film Festival in the German city of Detmold (ISFF Detmold) have picked three Iranian shorts.



A poster for “Refugee Camp” by Saeid Naqavian

“Autumn Leaves” by Mehdi Fardqaderi, “Refugee Camp” by Saeid Naqavian and “Unveiling Ceremony” by Mehdi Bustani will be competing in the festival, which will be held from June 30 to July 2, the organizers have announced.

“Autumn Leaves” tells the story of a man who runs through several options in his head, imagining different futures for himself on a rainy night.

In the low-tech film “Refugee Camp”, the complicated issue of refugees is made simple, it is an exploration of war, immigration and humanity.

In “Unveiling Ceremony”, the scales of justice are going to be unveiled during a public ceremony, while all are unaware that the scales are out of balance.

Short films from all over the world take part in the festival that also welcomes a great number of international filmmakers and artists.

Video installations, concerts and workshops are also arranged on the sidelines of the event every year.

NEWS IN BRIEF



“Anna Karenina” on stage at Tehran theater

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Iranian theater troupe Moj led by writer and director Arash Abbasi is performing an adaptation of Russian writer Leo Tolstoy’s novel “Anna Karenina” at the Nazerzadeh Kermani Hall of the Iranshahr Theater Complex in Tehran.

The 1878 novel is about Anna, the wife of a senior government official, who creates a high-society scandal by an affair with an officer, Count Vronsky.

Masumeh Rahmani and Behnam Sharafi are the main members of the cast for the play, which will be on stage until July 18.

Jack Black leads star-studded cast for “Jumanji” reboot

BARCELONA (Reuters) — U.S. actor Jack Black has some big comedic shoes to fill in his forthcoming project, which sees him take the lead role in “Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle”, a star-studded reboot of the hit 1995 comedy that starred the late Robin Williams.



Actor Jack Black arrives at the People’s Choice Awards 2016 in Los Angeles, California January 6, 2016. (Reuters/Danny Moloshok)

Black said that he only watched the original film after being cast in the follow-up. He described Williams as a “genius” who was “at the peak of his powers” in the movie.

The original “Jumanji” saw Williams play a man who escapes from captivity inside a magical jungle-themed board game. The new film sees that premise reversed, with the lead characters journeying into the game’s fantastical world.

“In this one we actually travel with the characters into the jungle and it’s gorgeous and treacherous and exciting”, Black told Reuters.

In another twist away from the original, which saw Williams’ character enter the game as a child an emerge as an adult, this film sees child characters transform into adults when they get pulled into the game.

Black and co-star Nick Jonas were promoting the film at Cine Europe 2017, an annual cinema convention held in Barcelona.

In addition to Black and Jonas the film features screen muscleman Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, and comedian Kevin Hart.

“Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle” is due out in Cinemas in December.

Works by Iranian artists on display at Malaysian gallery



Art enthusiasts visit an exhibition of works by Iranian artists at White Box Gallery in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. (IRNA)

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The White Box Gallery at the Publika Mall in Kuala Lumpur is playing host to an exhibition of works by Iranian artists.

The collection includes Quranic calligraphy works, miniature paintings, illuminations and calligraphic paintings, the Persian service of IRNA reported on Tuesday.

Mohammad-Ali Qorbani, Mohammad Tariqati, Neda Zoqi, Fatollah Marzban, Anahita Ghazanfari and Hojjatollah Ranjbar are among the artists whose works are featured at the exhibit.

The showcase, which has been organized by Iran’s Cultural Office in Kuala Lumpur, will be running until June 24.

Box Office: “Cars 3” races past “Wonder Woman” to No. 1

LOS ANGELES (Variety) — This weekend featured a heated race between four new films that opened in wide release. As of Sunday morning, it appears some have fared better than others.

The big winner is Disney and Pixar’s “Cars 3,” which is speeding to \$53.5 million from 4,256 locations, putting it in first place. That’s a lower opening than “Cars” (\$60.1 million) and “Cars 2” (\$66.1 million), but still enough to win the weekend. The first two “Cars” movies combined have made more than \$435 million in the U.S. and \$1 billion globally. The “Cars” films are far from Disney and Pixar’s highest earners, but “Cars 3” is another example that even a decent opening for the duo is a victory in the big picture.

The movie comes from director Brian Fee, who was a storyboard artist on the first two “Cars” films, as well as “Ratatouille” and “Wall-E.” The ensemble voice cast of “Cars 3” includes Owen Wilson, Cristela Alonzo, Armie Hammer, Larry the Cable Guy, Bonnie Hunt, Nathan Fillion, Kerry Washington, and Lea Delaria.

“Cars 3” bumps “Wonder Woman” out of first place, but the super hero movie continues to show strong. With an estimated \$40.7 million from 4,018 locations, the Warner Bros. and DC Comics film is seeing another extremely low drop of 32% from last weekend.

Livestreams, bad blood drive Katy Perry’s “Witness” to No. 1

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — After weeks of promotion, a 96-hour livestream and an attempt to end some bad blood with Taylor Swift, Katy Perry’s “Witness” made its debut atop the U.S. Billboard 200 chart on Monday, the singer’s third chart-topping album.

“Witness”, in which Perry infused political themes into pop music, sold 162,000 albums, 51,000 songs and was streamed more than 19 million times in its opening week, totaling 180,000 album units, according to figures from Nielsen SoundScan.

The Billboard 200 album chart tallies units from album sales, song sales (10 songs equal one album) and streaming activity (1,500 streams equal one

album).

Perry’s promotional tour included numerous performances, interviews and a four-day livestream on YouTube before the album’s release.

In one interview, Perry said she was ready to bury the hatchet on her long-running feud with Swift.

Swift has yet to respond, but she released her back catalog to streaming services on the same day as Perry’s “Witness” release in what was widely seen as a bid to steal Perry’s thunder.

On Monday, Swift’s 2014 album “1989” climbed to No. 31 on the Billboard 200 chart on the strength of nearly 19 million streams, just under the streaming figures for Perry’s “Witness.”

IRIB to broadcast TV series version of “Standing in the Dust”



Hadi Hejazifar in a scene from “Standing in the Dust”

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting’s Channel 1 plans to air the TV serial version of Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian’s acclaimed movie “Standing in the Dust” in six episodes from June 30.

The film tells the life story of Ahmad Motevasselian, an IRGC commander who was kidnapped by the Zionist regime in 1982 in Lebanon.

“Standing in the Dust” is Mahdavian’s debut film produced in 2015 and received awards at several festivals, including the 34th Fajr Film Festival.

The film also brought Mahdavian the award for Best Innovative and Promising Filmmaker at the 10th Celebration of Iranian Cinema Critics and Screenwriters.

In addition, the 14th International Resistance Film Festival picked “Standing in the Dust” as best film.

“47 Meters Down” is opening to \$11.5 million from 2,270 locations. It’s the first major release from Entertainment Studios, which acquired the project from its original distributor, Dimension Films. Mandy Moore and Claire Holt star as sisters who decide to go cage diving, and end up at risk of being attacked by sharks.

Finally, “Rough Night,” a raunchy, fem-centric R-rated comedy from Sony, is on track to earn only \$8.1 million from 3,162 locations. The project combines the talents of director and co-writer Lucia Aniello, co-writer and actor Paul W. Downs, and star Ilana Glazer -- the three are frequent collaborators on Comedy Central’s “Broad City” and “Time Traveling Bong.” Scarlett Johansson, Kate McKinnon, Jillian Bell, Zoe Kravitz, and Glazer make up a rowdy girl gang who reunite for a bachelorette weekend that goes horribly wrong.

“It is genuinely a funny movie that was made at the right price, and there is a place for Rough Night as summer counter-programming in the coming weeks,” said Sony’s distribution chief Adrian Smith.

“Rough Night” will land in seventh for the weekend behind its fellow newcomers, “Wonder Woman,” the second weekend of “The Mummy” (\$13.9 million) and “Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales” (\$8.5 million).

Lynyrd Skynyrd sues ex-drummer over movie about 1977 plane crash

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Surviving members of Lynyrd Skynyrd have filed a lawsuit against the Southern rock band’s former drummer to halt the production of a movie depicting the 1977 plane crash that killed lead singer Ronnie Van Zant.

Lead guitarist Gary Rossington, Ronnie’s brother and current lead singer Johnny Van Zant, and others contend that “Street Survivors: The True Story of the Lynyrd Skynyrd Plane Crash”, based on recollections of former drummer Artimus Pyle, violated a 1988 consent order governing the use of the band’s name.

The lawsuit against Pyle and co-defendant Cleopatra Records Inc was

made public on Friday in the U.S. district court in Manhattan. A trial is scheduled for July 11, court records show.

Pyle could not immediately be reached for comment. It is unclear whether he has a lawyer.

Brian Perera, Cleopatra’s president, said in an interview he would be willing to settle, but added, “I understood my First Amendment rights. Filmmakers can make biopics.”

Known for such songs as “Sweet Home Alabama” and “Free Bird,” Lynyrd Skynyrd went on hiatus after its touring plane crashed in Mississippi on Oct. 20, 1977, killing Ronnie Van Zant, guitarist Steven Gaines and four others. Twenty people, including Pyle, survived.