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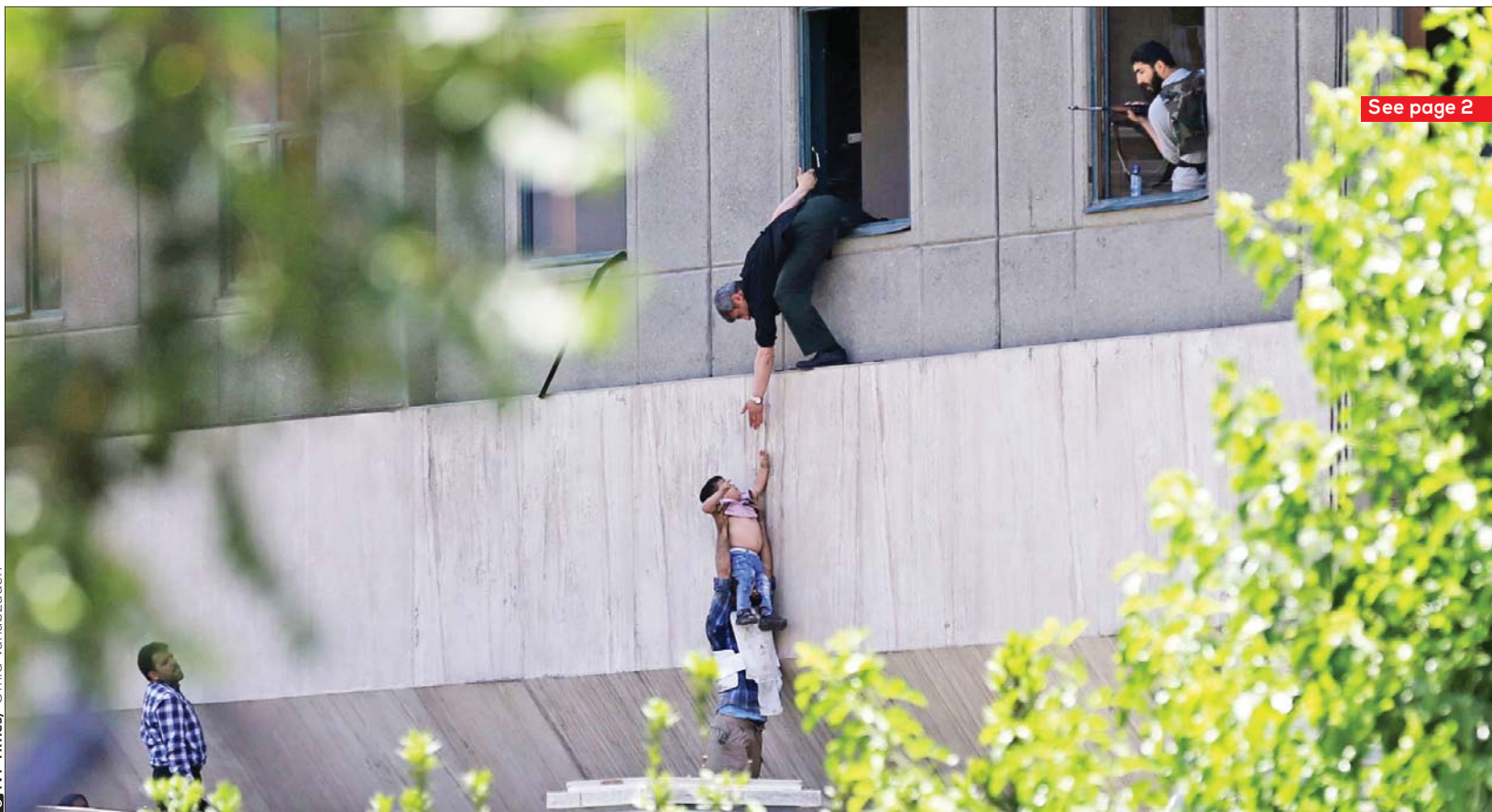


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# Terrorism targets sole democracy in region



© NY Times/ Omid Vahabzadeh

Iranian police officers helping civilians leave the Parliament building in Tehran after terror attacks on June 7, 2017.

## OECD says global economic outlook has improved

The global economic outlook is doing better than it was, but has not yet improved sufficiently to make a material difference to people's lives, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development said on Wednesday in its twice yearly assessment of the world economy.

The Paris-based international organisation has improved most of its forecasts but warned politicians against complacency because it thinks the improved growth outlook is temporary without signs yet of an improvement in underlying performance.

Speaking to the Financial Times, Catherine Mann, chief economist of the OECD, said: "The global economic outlook is better, but we are concerned that policymakers will look at the broader-based cyclical upturn, become complacent and think that our job is done."

Against a backdrop of heightened hostility to globalisation from the Trump administration and other nationalist governments, the OECD also argued that economies and people's lives would be improved by a global trade recovery and more globalisation so long as countries help those hit by greater competition.

In its forecasts, the OECD predicted global growth rates will rise to 3.5 per cent in 2017 and 3.6 per cent in 2018 from a recent low of 3 per cent in 2016, its lowest since 2009.

This improving outlook slightly is more optimistic than the organisation's report last November, which put 2017's growth at 3.3 per cent. The prospective expansion of the world economy still falls short of rates seen before the financial crisis when it used to exceed 4 per cent.

After a weak first quarter for the US economy, the OECD has revised down its US GDP growth forecast for 2017 from its November prediction of 2.3 per cent to 2.1 per cent now. With a less optimistic assessment of the Trump administration's plans for infrastructure spending and fiscal stimulus, it has reduced its US growth forecast for 2018 from 3 per cent to 2.4 per cent. The Trump administration is aiming for a 3 per cent growth target. **→4**

## Trump has no real foreign policy strategy: American expert

By Javad Heirannia

**TEHRAN** — Prof. William O. Beeman, head of the anthropology department at the State University of Minnesota, is of the view that Donald Trump "has no real comprehensive foreign policy strategy".

"He (Trump) views foreign policy as a series of 'deals' between him and foreign leaders," Beeman tells the Tehran Times.

Following is the text of the interview:

### What are Trump's priorities?

A: President Trump is currently under attack for his personal behavior and management style. This is currently preventing many things from getting done on the legislative side.

If the problems with his treatment of classified information (conveying[as1] strategic information to the Russians), his contradictions of his own pronouncements, and the chaos of his own White House organization were resolved he would still face many problems in getting his agenda passed. His chief agenda items are:

1. Reduction of taxes for the wealthiest Americans and for American corporations. This would be "paid for" by reductions in spending for social services, culture, scientific research and other public benefits, making ordinary Americans much poorer.
2. Elimination of the Affordable Care Act, the current Health Care legislation

in the United States. The Republican proposals for change in the Health Care Act will result in poorer, more expensive health care for all Americans, but it will give a huge tax cut to the wealthiest Americans. This is why President Trump's critics claim that the health care reform is really a tax cut in disguise.

3. Restriction of immigration, and expulsion of immigrants who are undocumented (about 11 million people). This consists of restrictions on visas, building a "wall" on the Mexican border, and rigorous enforcement of immigration laws against those who are in the United States "illegally." **→13**

## Qatar asking Turkey, Iran about providing food, water

Qatar is talking to Iran and Turkey about securing food and water supplies to stave off possible shortages two days after its biggest suppliers, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, cut trade and diplomatic ties, a government official said on Wednesday.

"We are in talks with Turkey and Iran and other countries," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the subject, adding that the supplies would be brought in through Qatar Airways cargo flights.

The official said there were enough grain supplies in the market in Qatar to last four weeks and that the government also had large strategic food reserves in Doha.

Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain severed relations

with Qatar and closed their airspace to commercial flights on Monday, charging it with financing militant groups. Qatar vehemently denies the accusations. It is the worst split between powerful Arab states in decades.

The moves isolating Qatar are disrupting trade in commodities from crude oil to metals and food, and deepening fears of a possible jolt to the global gas market, where the tiny Gulf state is a major player.

Food imports are affected as Saudi Arabia closed its land border with Qatar, stranding thousands of trucks carrying supplies. Qatar, a desert country heavily dependent on food imports to feed its mostly foreign population of 2.6 million, has assured residents it has taken measures to assure that normal life continues.

The Ministry of Economy and Commerce released a video on Tuesday that showed supermarket shelves stocked with food and other goods after Qataris crowded into stores on Monday to stock up fearing shortages.

An Indian worker in one Doha supermarket who declined to give his name told Reuters TV on Tuesday: "I've come today and I am feeling that shortage of fresh chicken, which we eat quite often. Fresh milk is another thing that I feel in shortage".

Turkey is a key ally of Qatar and is setting up a military base in the country which also hosts the largest U.S. air base in the Middle East.

Iran shares access with Qatar to the world's biggest natural gas field.

(Source: Reuters)

## Zarif makes surprise visit to Turkey amid Arab rift

POLITICS

**TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif made an unannounced visit to neighboring Turkey on Wednesday as the row between Qatar and other Arab countries is further altering Middle East politics.

"Dr. Zarif's visit to Turkey was made as part of continuous consultations between officials of the two countries on bilateral relations and regional issues, particularly Syria," Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi said.

Turkey and Iran do not agree on the situation in Syria. Tehran backs Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, as opposed to Turkey which demands

him step down.

The two, coupled with Russia, are main players of the Astana talks which seek to work out a political solution to the crisis, on for seven years now.

On May 4, the three countries signed a document during the fourth round of the Syrian talks in Astana, Kazakhstan, to form four "de-escalation zones" in Syria.

The most significant achievement of a three-pronged diplomatic effort since the beginning of 2017 to reduce bloodshed in a war now in its seventh year, the deal brought together three consequential actors in the conflict from opposite sides. **→2**

## Iran, Malaysia set to triple trade to \$2b

ECONOMY

**TEHRAN** — Iran and Malaysia signed a cooperation agreement in Tehran on Wednesday, preparing the ground to triple bilateral trade to around \$2 billion.

Iranian Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mahmoud Vaezi and Malaysian Minister of International Trade and Industry Mustapa Mohamed signed the agreement, IRNA reported.

On the sidelines of the signing ceremony, Vaezi put the current value of trade between the two countries at around \$700 million. The Malaysian minister and his accompanying dele-

gation arrived in Tehran on Monday.

On Wednesday, Vaezi and Mohamed paid a visit to a medicine factory, which has been established through a joint venture, 70 percent financed by Iran and 30 percent by Malaysia. "The factory will supply its products to the Iranian market within four months," the Iranian minister said.

In February 2017, Iran and Malaysia called for boosting of bilateral trade ties using Japanese yen and Chinese Yuan. Earlier in the same month, Malaysia's Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities Mah Siew Keong visited Tehran, leading a 25-member trade delegation.



## EDITORIAL

By Hassan Lasjerdi

Tehran Times editor-in-chief

## Honesty needed to get rid of terrorism blight

Twin terrorist attacks on Iran's most potent symbols, the Parliament and the mausoleum of the Islamic Republic's founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, on Wednesday provide perfect evidence to identify the predators, their headquarters, and the architects behind the scene.

This is not the first time the Islamic Republic is targeted by acts of terrorism, already having lost 17,000 of its nationals in savage raids by domestic groups such as the Mujahedin-e Khalq and agents of foreign spy agencies. The immense death toll testifies to the Iranian nation that they are threatened by terrorist acts.

In order to fight radical groups and their sympathizers, Tehran has been for some time now providing advisory help to certain regional countries in a bid to not only protect its nationals but also extend a supportive blanket to neighboring nations, particularly Syria and Iraq.

The pre-emptive policy, to which fountainheads of terrorism in the regions have shown open opposition, has been ironically censured with a barefaced rhetoric. Even recently, one of the statesmen in the Arab states has defended conducting terrorist operations inside Iranian soil.

The cheeky rhetoric, paired with anti-humane and heinous performance of certain regional countries who are implicated directly or indirectly in the bloodsheds in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Bahrain, Yemen and the 9/11, bears the closest watching.

Now that the world has woken up to the killing of innocent human beings by radicals and extremists, all nations who want to uproot terrorism seriously and honesty have to join hands to get rid of terrorism blight. Only in doing so, the victims of blind terrorism can smile to life once more, a moment we all long for.



© IRNA/ Alireza Soleymani

## Martial arts on the distaff side

**TEHRAN** — A gaggle of females, called Ninja, are seen practicing martial arts in Boroujerd, western Iran.

In doing so, they have already challenged traditional concepts of femininity in a context, where women's sports is not usual.



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



**Iranian deputy FM meets Afghan president, chief executive officer**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s deputy foreign minister for Asia and Pacific affairs held separate talks with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah in Kabul on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

In his meeting with Ghani, Ebrahim Rahimpour offered his condolences over the recent terrorist attacks in Kabul and condemned acts of terrorism committed by extremist groups in the neighboring country.

The Afghan president, for his part, stressed the need to promote the relations between Iran and Afghanistan in all spheres.



**Iran Navy planning 25 drills before March 2018**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Navy commander announced on Tuesday that 25 naval exercises have been planned to be held by the end of the current Iranian year, which ends on March 20, 2018.

Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari underlined that the naval exercises will be held in the Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea, leading ultimately to the massive Velayat-96 naval drills, Fars reported.



**Government submits bill to Majlis on dividing ministries**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian government has presented the Majlis with a bill to break down three ministries, President Hassan Rouhani’s parliamentary deputy said on Wednesday.

The bill was presented with two urgency notes, Hosseinali Amiri said, expressing hope that the Majlis puts it on agenda on Sunday, Mehr reported.

He added that if the Majlis puts the bill on agenda, the next cabinet will be named according to the proposed changes.



**Iran has fired 50 dual-national managers**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s minister of intelligence has said that the government has laid off 50 dual-national managers over the past months, Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee spokesman Hossein Naqavi Hosseini said on Wednesday, briefing a session of the committee with the minister.

According to Naqavi Hosseini, Mahmoud Alavi said the 50 were identified as dual-nationals out of a list of 300 suspects, Mizan reported.

Alavi said there are 100,000 dual-national Iranians around the world, the MP added.



**‘Ongoing tensions among Arab nations just tip of the iceberg’**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — A former Iranian ambassador to the UAE and France has discussed the outcomes of cutting ties between Doha and some other Arab countries, saying it shows just the “tip of the iceberg.”

“It seems that the tensions are just the tip of the iceberg. Some countries are interested in resolving the dispute through mediation, but the Saudis refuse to accept it,” Hamid-Reza Asefi said in an interview with the Khabaronline news website.

Asefi added Iran should hold talks with other countries to settle the conflict, without siding with any of the states involved.



**‘It is necessary to address electoral crimes’**

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Mohammad Hashemi, a moderate political activist and brother of the late Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, has said it is a necessity that the Judiciary address reports of electoral crime in the May 19 presidential and council polls.

“If crimes are pursued in an unbiased way it can help build trust with all currents and strengthen the establishment,” he told the Mehr news agency on Wednesday.

“What irritates people and political currents is prejudice. If the law is enforced and justice is upheld, no one will be unhappy and everyone will be thankful.”

# Terrorism targets sole democracy in region

12 civilians are killed and 42 others injured in vicious terrorist attacks on Majlis administrative office and Imam Khomeini shrine

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s parliament and the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Revolution, were targeted on Wednesday morning by two simultaneous gun and suicide bomb assaults.

The attacks unfolded as a number of gunmen stormed the main gate of the parliament building in central Tehran and opened fire. At the same time, a shooting spree targeted Imam Khomeini’s shrine about 25 kilometers away in south Tehran.

According to reports, the attackers took a number of hostages and detonated suicide bombs. All attackers were killed after nearly four hours of clashes with security forces.

The incident marks one of the most brutal terrorist attacks to hit the Iranian capital Tehran in decades. A third attack was also foiled, according to the Intelligence Ministry.

The Interior Ministry issued a statement afterwards, saying two terrorist teams targeted the shrine of Imam Khomeini and the parliament to bring terror and destabilize the country.

“The first terrorist team, comprising of two persons, entered the premises of the Imam Khomeini shrine at 10:30 (local time). One of them exploded himself and the other one was killed in clashes with security forces,” the statement said.

It also said that the second team, comprising of four, simultaneously attacked the office building of the parliament, adding that one of them was killed in a suicide blast and the other three were gunned down during clashes with the security forces.

12 civilians were killed and 42 others sustained injuries, the ministry added.



**Nathalie Goulet, French senator and vice-chair of the Senate’s Foreign Affairs Committee, said the terror attacks targeted Iranian government and democracy symbols in Iran.**

Mohammad Hossein Zolfaghari, the deputy interior minister, had said earlier that the attackers were dressed as women when they entered parliament’s main gate.

Daesh (ISIS) has claimed responsibility for the coordinated attacks. Its media wing, Amaq, claimed “fighters with the Islamic State” carried out the attacks.

Only hours before the attacks in Iran, the Saudi foreign minister, Adel al-Jubeir, said Iran must be punished for its interference in the region and called

Tehran the world’s leading supporter of terrorism.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif who was on an official visit to Turkey, strongly condemned the deadly attacks, lamenting that the entire region has been plagued with terrorism and insecurity.

“Today’s terrorist moves in Tehran will strengthen Iran’s will in fighting terrorism,” Zarif noted.

Meanwhile, the European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini

## Iran plans to ship heavy water abroad

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iran announced on Tuesday that it would ship 20 tons of heavy water abroad to avoid breaching a limit on its stock of that substance under a landmark deal with six world powers.

“Twenty metric tons of its stock of heavy water will be transferred out of the country,” Reuters quoted an official as saying.

The official attended an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) meeting at which the UN watchdog said Tehran had informed it of the plan on Tuesday.

The IAEA did not specify where the heavy water would be transferred to or when that would happen, but it said it would be soon, three officials who attended the meeting said on condition of anonymity.



A quarterly IAEA report on Iran on Friday said Tehran’s stock of heavy water had reached 128.2 tons. Tehran has agreed to keep its heavy water stockpile below 130 metric tons.

In its report the IAEA once again confirmed that Iran has abided by its commitments under the 2015 nuclear agreement.

Based on the nuclear agreement Iran is obliged to limit its nuclear program in return for termination of sanctions. The deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, was signed between Iran and the 5+1 group (the U.S., Britain, France, China, Russia and Germany) in July 2015 and took effect in January 2016.

## Qatar blockade aimed to whitewash Saudi support for terrorism: Kharrazi

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Kamal Kharrazi, former Iranian foreign minister and current head of the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, has said that Saudi Arabia’s plot to put pressure on Qatar is aimed at clearing itself of the blame as the biggest sponsor of terrorism, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

“Everyone knows that takfiri terrorist ideologies and the emergence of al-Qaeda and Daesh [terrorist] groups are rooted in Wahhabism which itself is a product of Saudi Arabia,” Kharrazi said, adding that such groups enjoy the financial and political support of the Saudi government.

On Monday, Saudi Arabia and its regional friends, including the UAE and Bahrain, ended their diplomatic ties with Qatar and blocked routes leading to the Persian Gulf country after accusing Doha of supporting terrorism.



Kharrazi, who served as Iran’s foreign minister from 1997 to 2005, further said that through this move, Riyadh is serving the interests of Israel.

Trump has supported Saudi Arabia against Qatar and Israel has not concealed its happiness over the action, he said.

## Iran, Russia have proved game changer in war on terrorism: security official

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Shamkhani said on Wednesday that “constructive” cooperation between Iran and Russia has changed the security situation against the terrorists in the region.

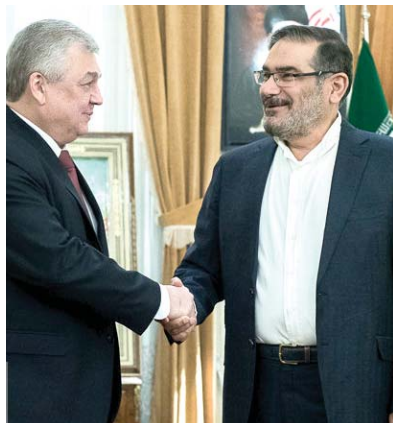
During a meeting in Tehran with Alexander Lavrentiev, the Russian special envoy on Syria, Shamkhani cited liberation of the Syrian city of Aleppo as a game changer in regional equations.

He also said the conflicts in the Middle East spread after visits by U.S. officials to the region.

The security official reiterated Tehran’s position on the need to avoid double standards in the war against terrorism.

For his part, Lavrentiev said Russia supports Iran’s constructive role in the political process to establish peace in Syria.

He added that Iran and Russia have



done “constructive cooperation” to helping establish peace and stability.

Iran and Russia - which back the legitimate Syrian government against terrorists - along with Turkey have succeeded to bring the armed opposition groups and the Syrian government to the negotiating table and broker ceasefire between them.

## Zarif makes surprise visit to Turkey amid Arab rift

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

A fierce spat between Qatar and leading Arab nations has shifted Qatar closer to Turkey and Iran.

Seven countries, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Bahrain, severed diplomatic ties with the energy-rich monarchy on Monday, accusing it of backing Tehran and Islamist groups such as the non-violent Muslim Brotherhood.

Doha now faces an acute economic situation as it imports 80 percent of its food, mainly from Arab neighboring countries.

Tehran and Ankara have denounced the move, backing Doha.

“Neighbors are permanent; geography can’t be changed. Coercion is never the solution.

Dialog is imperative, especially during blessed Ramadan,” Zarif tweeted, reacting to the development.

Also, Iranian officials have offered to send food to Qatar by sea.

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

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

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

Turkey and Qatar share similar stances on Syria.



# German FM blasts ‘Trumpification’ of Qatar-PGCCC dispute

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel accused the United States President Donald Trump of stirring up conflicts in the Middle East and risking a new arms race as Qatar’s neighbors cut ties with Doha.

The House of Saud regime and allies including Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain announced on Monday they were severing diplomatic relations and closing air, sea and land links with Qatar.

The dispute comes less than a month after Trump visited Saudi Arabia and called for Muslim nations to unite against “extremism”.

“U.S. President Trump’s recent giant military contracts which Persian Gulf monarchies raise the risk of a new spiral in arms sales,” Gabriel warned in an interview with the Handelsblatt daily to appear on Wednesday.

“This policy is completely wrong and is certainly not Germany’s policy,” he added, in extracts of his interview released on Tuesday. “I am very concerned with the dramatic escalation and the consequences for the whole region.”

Trump on Tuesday backed the regional efforts to isolate Qatar, supporting the Saudi regime and its allies and suggesting the key U.S. ally - home to the largest American airbase in the Middle East - has been funding “extremism”.

During his recent visit to Saudi Arabia, Trump signed arms contracts worth \$110bn with Riyadh.

Gabriel warned against completely isolating Qatar and said the move is an attack on the Persian Gulf state’s very existence.

“Apparently, Qatar is to be isolated more or less completely and hit existentially. Such a ‘Trumpification’ of relations in a region already susceptible to crises is



particularly dangerous,” Gabriel said.

He added the nuclear deal agreed with Iran in 2015 had allowed just such an escalation to be avoided.

“A toxic conflict between neighbors is that last thing

we need,” Gabriel warned.

He met his Saudi regime counterpart Adel al-Jubeir in Berlin on Wednesday.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Saudi FM: Qatar must stop supporting Hamas, Brotherhood

Qatar must end its support for the Palestinian group Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood before ties with other Persian Gulf Arab states could be restored, said the House of Saud regime’s inexperienced foreign minister.

Bahrain, Egypt, the House of Saud regime and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) severed diplomatic ties and transport links with Qatar on Monday, accusing it of supporting “extremism”.

The dispute between Qatar and the Arab states escalated after a recent hack of Qatar’s state-run news agency.

“We want to see Qatar implement the promises it made a few years back with regard to its support of extremist groups, to its hostile media and interference in affairs of other countries,” Saudi regime’s Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir told reporters in Paris.

“Nobody wants to hurt Qatar. It has to choose whether it must move in one direction or another direction. We took this step with great pain so that it understands that these policies are not sustainable and must change.”

Jubeir added that Qatar was undermining the Palestinian Authority and Egypt in its support of Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood.

“We don’t think this is good. Qatar has to stop these policies so that it can contribute to stability in the Middle East,” he said.

Jubeir declined to say exactly what he wanted Qatar to do immediately, but said the measures taken by Arab states,



including a sea, land and air blockade would have a considerable cost on the country.

“We believe that common sense and logic will convince Qatar to take the right steps. The decisions that were made were very strong and will have a fairly large cost on Qatar and we do not believe that Qataris want to sustain those costs,” he said.

Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip, said it was “shocked” by Saudi Arabia’s call on Qatar to stop supporting the group.

Jubeir’s remarks “constitute a shock for our Palestinian people and the Arab and Islamic nations”, according to a Hamas statement released on Wednesday.

It alleged that Israel “exploits these statements to carry out more violations against the Palestinian people”.

Kuwait’s Emir, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, visited Saudi Arabia on Tuesday to hold talks with the Saudi King Salman bin Abdul Aziz on ways of defusing the escalating crisis.

No details were given on the talks.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Comey told Sessions: Don’t leave me alone with Trump

The day after the United States President Donald Trump asked James B. Comey, the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) director, to end an investigation into his former national security adviser, Comey confronted Attorney General Jeff Sessions and said he did not want to be left alone again with the president, according to current and former law enforcement officials.

Comey believed Sessions should protect the FBI from White House influence, the officials said, and pulled him aside after a meeting in February to tell him that private interactions between the FBI director and the president were inappropriate. But Sessions could not guarantee that the president would not try to talk to Comey alone again, the officials said.

Comey did not reveal, however, what had so unnerved him about his Oval Office meeting with the president: Trump’s request that the FBI director end the investigation into the former national security adviser, Michael T. Flynn, who had just been fired. By the time Trump fired Comey last month, Comey had disclosed the meeting to a few of his closest advisers but nobody at the Justice Department, according to the officials, who did not want to be identified discussing Comey’s interactions with Trump and Sessions.

Comey will be the center of attention on Thursday during testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee, where he is expected to be quizzed intensely about his interactions with



Trump and why he decided to keep secret the president’s request to end the Flynn investigation.

Comey’s unwillingness to be alone with the president reflected how deeply Comey distrusted Trump, who Comey believed was trying to undermine the FBI’s independence as it conducted a highly sensitive investigation into links between Trump’s associates and Russia, the officials said. By comparison, Comey met alone at least twice with President Obama.

A spokesman for the FBI declined to comment on Comey’s request. A Justice Department spokesman, Ian Prior, said that “the attorney general doesn’t believe it’s appropriate to respond to media inquiries on matters that may be related to ongoing investigations.”

The Justice Department typically walls off the White House from criminal investigations to avoid even the appearance of political meddling in law enforcement. But Trump has repeatedly interjected himself in law enforcement matters, and never more dramatically than in his private meetings with Comey.

(Source: New York Times)

## Pro-Assad alliance threatens to hit U.S. positions in Syria

A military alliance fighting in support of the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said on Wednesday it could hit the United States positions in Syria, warning that its “self-restraint” over U.S. air strikes on government forces would end if Washington crossed “red lines”.

The threat came in a statement in the name of the “commander of the operations room of the forces allied to Syria”, and was circulated by a military news unit run by the Lebanese group Hezbollah, one of Assad’s military allies, Reuters reported.

“America knows well that the blood of the sons of Syria, the Syrian Arab Army, and its allies is not cheap, and the capacity to strike their positions in Syria, and their surroundings, is available when circumstances will it,” the statement said.

Meanwhile, Syria and Russia have condemned the latest deadly attack by the U.S.-led coalition targeting an army position in Syria’s Homs Province, saying it proves Washington’s support for terrorism.

On Tuesday, U.S.-led warplanes attacked a Syrian military position on the road to the town of At-Tanf, where the U.S. forces are based, killing a number of people and causing some material damage.

The Syrian army command has warned



against the risks of such escalations and urged the coalition to not carry out similar aggressive actions under any pretext, the official SANA news agency quote a military source as saying.

“This aggression once again demonstrates these forces’ support for terrorism, at a time when the Syrian Arab Army and its allies are making daily progress against ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Daesh) terrorist group,” the source added.

He further affirmed the resolve of the Syrian army and its allies to continue fighting terrorist groups, primarily ISIL and

Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, formerly known as al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra).

Separately on Wednesday, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said the U.S. air raid violates international law, Interfax news agency reported.

Viktor Ozerov, the chairman of the Defense and Security Committee of the Federation Council, the upper house of the Russian parliament, said such strikes empower militants.

“Eventually, such actions by the United States undermine the process of political settlement, because they give the terrorists grounds to think that they are not

alone in fighting the government forces, that a great power like the United States is also on their side. It may give them some additional power to continue fighting on the territory of Syria, and in Iraq too,” Ozerov said.

Syria is entitled to initiate a United Nations Security Council debate on the issue, he noted, rejecting as baseless the coalition’s claims that its airstrike was defensive.

The coalition had said in a statement that the Syrian forces who came under the attack posed a threat to U.S. and U.S.-backed forces in Syria.

“Despite previous warnings, pro-regime forces entered the agreed-upon de-confliction zone with a tank, artillery, anti-aircraft weapons, armed technical vehicles and more than 60 soldiers,” the statement read.

The U.S.-led coalition had carried out a similar strike on a Syrian military convoy near At-Tanf last month.

The U.S. and its allies have been bombarding what they call ISIL positions inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a United Nations mandate.

They have been accused of targeting and killing civilians, while failing to fulfill their pronounced goal of destroying ISIL.

(Source: agencies)

## Jordan downgrades ties with Qatar

Jordan has announced it is scaling back its diplomatic ties with Qatar and that it will close the Amman office of Doha-based Al Jazeera TV channel.

Jordanian government spokesman Mohammed Momani said in a statement that the decision was made to ensure regional stability, coordinate the policies of Arab countries and “end the crises in our region.”

Tuesday’s decision came a day after the House of Saud regime, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain cut ties with Qatar.

The four nations alleged that Qatar harbors “extremists” and backs Saudi Arabia’s regional rival, Iran. Qatar has denied the allegations.

Saudi Arabia is a key financial backer of Jordan.

### ■ Erdogan criticizes Qatar sanctions

Meantime, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan defended Qatar after several countries severed diplomatic ties with it, saying he personally would have intervened if accusations that the tiny Persian Gulf emirate supports “terrorism” were true.

Erdogan stood by Qatar, saying he intends to “develop” ties with the embattled Persian Gulf state hit by sanctions from the House of Saud regime and its allies.

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

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

Turkey has close ties with Qatar but also has good relations with the other Persian Gulf Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia.

Erdogan was careful not to criticize Riyadh, calling on the member nations of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council to “resolve their differences through dialogue”.

“Efforts to isolate Qatar ... will not solve any problem,” said Erdogan, praising Doha’s “cool-headedness” and “constructive approach”.

### ■ Qatar asking food, water

Elsewhere, Qatar is talking to Iran and Turkey about securing food and water supplies to stave off possible shortages two days after its biggest suppliers, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, cut trade and diplomatic ties, a government official said on Wednesday.

“We are in talks with Turkey and Iran and other countries,” said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the subject, adding that the supplies would be brought in through Qatar Airways cargo flights.

The official said there were enough grain supplies in the market in Qatar to last four weeks and that the government also had large strategic food reserves in Doha.

## United Arab Emirates tightened the squeeze on fellow Persian Gulf state Qatar on Wednesday threatening anyone publishing expressions of sympathy towards it with up to 15 years in prison

The moves isolating Qatar are disrupting trade in commodities from crude oil to metals and food, and deepening fears of a possible jolt to the global gas market, where the tiny Persian Gulf state is a major player.

Food imports are affected as the House of Saud regime closed its land border with Qatar, stranding thousands of trucks carrying supplies.

Qatar, a desert country heavily dependent on food imports to feed its mostly foreign population of 2.6 million, has assured residents it has taken measures to assure that normal life continues.

The Ministry of Economy and Commerce released a video on Tuesday that showed supermarket shelves stocked with food and other goods after Qataris crowded into stores on Monday to stock up fearing shortages.

### ■ UAE turns screws on Qatar

In another development, the United Arab Emirates tightened the squeeze on fellow Persian Gulf state Qatar on Wednesday threatening anyone publishing expressions of sympathy towards it with up to 15 years in prison, and barring Qatari passport or resident visa holders entry.

On top of a possible jail term, offenders could also be hit with a fine of at least 500,000 UAE dirhams.

UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash threatened more curbs if necessary and said Qatar needed to make “iron-clad” commitments to change policies on funding militants. Qatar vehemently denies giving such support.

Kuwait’s emir has also been seeking to mediate, meeting Saudi’s king on Tuesday.

Qatar’s isolation from fellow Arab states advanced, however.

Since the diplomatic row erupted, slogans against and in support of Qatar have dominated Twitter in Arabic, a platform used widely in Arab states, particularly in Saudi Arabia.

Newspapers and television channels in the region have also been engaged in a war of words over Qatar’s role.

The UAE’s state-owned Etihad Airways, meanwhile, said all travelers holding Qatari passports were currently prohibited from travelling to or transiting through the emirates on government instructions.

Foreigners residing in Qatar and in possession of a Qatari residence visa would also not be eligible for visa on arrival in the UAE, Etihad spokesman said in an email.

“This ruling applies to all airlines flying into the UAE,” the spokesman said in the statement.

Those breaking ties with Qatar are the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, the Maldives, Mauritania and Libya’s eastern-based government. Jordan has downgraded its diplomatic representation and revoked the license of Doha-based TV channel Al Jazeera.

(Source: agencies)



NEWS IN BRIEF



Iranian ports open to Qatari-flagged ships

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Ports and Maritime Organization of Iran (PMO)'s Deputy Managing Director for Port Affairs Jalil Eslami said that Iranian ports are ready to receive Qatari vessels if they wish to go through Iran.

As Mehr News Agency reported on Wednesday, Iran has not yet received any request from Qatari officials in this regard.

"Iran welcomes the idea, if presented, because it is in line with the country's economic interests, especially in ports and maritime industries" Eslami said.



90 dam projects underway across country

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — Iran's energy ministry announced that 90 dam construction projects are underway across the country, IRIB news reported on Wednesday.

According to Iranian Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian the projects are at different levels of progress, "some are just started and some almost completed."

Iran is completely self-sufficient in dam construction and the country even exports engineering services in this area to other countries like Iraq, Sri Lanka, Kenya and Tajikistan.

Romanian premier banks on economic zip to tame budget shortfall

The European Union's second-fastest growth rate will help Romania keep its budget deficit within the trading bloc's limits, according to the country's prime minister.

With industry and exports reinforcing a boom in consumption, Sorin Grindeanu said this year's government forecast for 5.2 percent economic expansion, which surprised analysts when it was published, no longer seems optimistic. No tax increases or spending cuts will be required to keep the fiscal gap below 3 percent of gross domestic product, he said, even pledging more cash to fund state pay rises next year.

"We'll take all the measures needed to support the pace of growth," Grindeanu said Tuesday in an interview in his office in Bucharest. "The minister of finance and I are monitoring budget revenue and spending on a weekly basis so we can make sure we meet the targets and any potential slippages are corrected in due time."

Ignited by tax cuts and salary increases for state employees, Romania's economy jumped 5.7 percent from a year earlier in the first quarter. While the consumer-led surge has raised concern from the central bank about whether the growth is sustainable, further fiscal easing is on its way.

(Source: Bloomberg)

India keeps interest rates steady as it monitors inflation drop

India kept interest rates unchanged as expected, as the central bank shrugged off slowing growth and vowed to continue to assess whether a drop in inflation to a record low in the \$2 trillion economy was transitory.

The Reserve Bank of India, led by Urjit Patel, kept its benchmark repurchase rate at 6.25 percent while maintaining its neutral stance, according to a statement in Mumbai on Wednesday. The move was predicted by all but two of the 50 economists in a Bloomberg survey who expected a cut to 6 percent.

"The easing of inflation excluding food and fuel may be transient in view of its underlying stickiness in a situation of rising rural wage growth and strong consumption demand," the bank said in a statement released on its website.

In a media conference following the statement's release, Patel said: "The reading for April surprised on the downside and imparted high uncertainty to the outlook. This necessitated a revision to our projections."

(Source: Bloomberg)

ECB said to cut inflation outlook after energy prices slide

The European Central Bank is preparing to cut its inflation outlook across its forecast horizon at this week's policy meeting because of weaker energy prices, according to euro-area officials familiar with the matter.

The ECB's draft projections now show consumer-price growth at roughly around 1.5 percent each year in 2017, 2018 and 2019, the officials said, asking not to be identified because the information is confidential. The previous projections in March foresaw rates of 1.7 percent, 1.6 percent and 1.7 percent, respectively.

The outlook will be presented to the Governing Council at its two-day meeting in Tallinn that starts Wednesday, and the numbers aren't final until they are published on Thursday. Forecasts for core inflation, excluding energy and food, are likely to be little changed, and predictions for economic growth are likely to be revised up by about a tenth of a percentage point, the people said. A spokesman for the ECB declined to comment.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Iran, Azerbaijan, Georgia to coordinate railway freight traffic

Railway authorities of Iran, Azerbaijan and Georgia will create a working group to coordinate the transportation of cargo from the Persian Gulf region and India to Europe and in the opposite direction.

Azerbaijan Railways reported that the decision was made in Tbilisi at a meeting of Chairman of Azerbaijan Railways CJSC Javid Gurbanov with CEO of Georgian Railways Mamuka Bakhtadze and Chairman of the Board and President of Iran Railways Saeed Mohammadzadeh.

The meeting focused on the organization of the transportation of cargo by land from the Persian Gulf region and India (passing through Azerbaijan and Georgia) to Europe and in the opposite direction, as well as the organization of cargo transportation via Azerbaijani and Iranian ports.

They noted that a large volume cargo from the Persian Gulf region and India to Europe and in the opposite direction is being currently transported by maritime transport, and this takes about 30-40 days. Transporting the cargo through Georgia, Azerbaijan and Iran will reduce the transportation time too, they said.

The meeting participants also decided to organize the movement of container trains on the Poti/Batumi - Astara - Poti/Batumi route, and in the future – on the route Qazvin - Tehran/Bandar-Abbas - Qazvin.

A trilateral protocol was signed at the end of the meeting.

(Source: Azer News)



India flights take Iran route to Qatar after travel ban

With some Persian Gulf countries imposing airspace restrictions on flights to and from Doha, Indian minister of state for civil aviation, Jayant Sinha, on Tuesday said the government is working with airlines on how best to handle the flight operations, including emergency landings.

In a major face-off in the Persian Gulf region, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and some other countries have cut ties with Qatar, accusing the

latter of extending support to extremists.

The development has impacted flight operations in the region with airspace restrictions in place and the UAE imposing curbs on flights to and from Doha using its airspace.

Sinha said at this stage, the government is working with airlines on what are the best routes given the situation in the Middle East and also "what (can be) the emergency landing airports (in the region)".

"We are working with our airlines as well as other international airlines to see how best we can handle flight operations," Sinha said.

Noting that there is inconvenience for all passengers flying to that region, Sinha said, "Our hope is that things will settle down soon".

Jet Airways, Air India Express and IndiGo are now operating flights to Qatar's capital Doha through Iran and Pakistan

airspace following restrictions imposed by the UAE.

With the new route, travel time would increase due to longer flight duration and operational costs would also spike as more fuel is used. As many as seven countries—Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Yemen, Libya's eastern-based government and the Maldives—have severed diplomatic ties with Qatar.

(Source: livemint.com)

Hong Kong now Asia Pacific's most expensive city for expats

Hong Kong tops the list as the most expensive city in Asia Pacific for expatriates to reside, according to a cost of living survey conducted by consultancy firm ECA International.

The city is also the second most expensive city globally — behind Luanda in Angola — and its ranking on the list has steadily increased in the last 7 years.

"Hong Kong has continued to get more expensive for expatriates. Over the past few years, the HK dollar has appreciated against most major currencies, owing to its peg to the US dollar, which has pushed up the price of goods and services relative to those in locations whose currencies have weakened against the greenback," said Lee Quane, ECA International's regional director for Asia, said in a release accompanying the ranking.

Stable prices in Japan coupled with a weaker yen against major currencies also accounted for why Hong Kong overtook Tokyo this year as the most expensive city in Asia.

"This means that for many companies, the cost of maintaining their assignees' purchasing power while posted here has fallen and international assignees based in Japan may see their cost of



living allowances decrease," Quane said in the release.

ECA gathered the results by collecting price data across 464 cities, comparing a pre-determined basket of goods and services that are commonly purchased by expatriates globally.

This basket includes groceries, meals, leisure activities and expenditure on clothing and general services. It excludes certain expenses such as rent, utilities, automobile purchases and tuition fees that are usually provided by companies when their employees relocate overseas.

Most of the cities featured in ECA's top 25 most expensive locations in Asia Pacific this year are concentrated in East Asia — with Seoul as the third expensive city, Shanghai as the fourth and Macau at the 11th position.

(Source: cnbc)

Goldman Sachs boost rates for savers in bid to attract deposits

U.S. savers who routinely scour personal finance sites for the best deposit rates are soon going to see an unusual bank at the top of the list: Goldman Sachs Group Inc.

The Wall Street bank's consumer arm, Goldman Sachs Bank USA, plans on Wednesday to raise the rate it offers customers on deposits to 1.2 percent, slightly higher than rivals Synchrony Bank, CIT Bank and New York Community Bank's My Banking Direct.

Goldman had previously offered savers 1.05 percent. The average national rate for savings accounts is currently 0.06 percent, according to the U.S. Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.

The move makes Goldman the highest interest paying bank, according to personal finance website Bankrate.com. The firm is aggressively trying to boost its deposit base and attract Main Street clients.

Goldman's online deposits from individuals total \$12 billion, a small but growing fraction of the \$128 billion in overall deposits on the firm's overall balance sheet. Still, that is far less than large commercial banks like JPMorgan Chase & Co with \$1.4 trillion in deposits.



Goldman hopes increasing its deposit base will help it boost profits if it can find ways to lend them profitably. The bank is looking to make further inroads into lending broadly across wealth management and investment banking, as businesses like trading struggle to generate the type of returns they once did.

Deposits also represent a more stable type of funding and are less likely to disappear during times of stress than other funding sources. Regulators may have been pushing banks to rely more on deposits since the 2008 financial crisis.

Last year, the bank launched Marcus, its first major foray into consumer lending. It also acquired Honest Dollar, an online retirement savings platform for small businesses and startups.

(Source: Reuters)

European bank bailout soothes anxious markets

The smoothly executed rescue of Spain's struggling Banco Popular prodded European banking stocks higher on Wednesday in financial markets dominated by caution ahead of a trio of major events on Thursday.

The absorption of Popular by Spain's biggest bank Santander (SAN.MC) for a nominal one euro was the first use of a regime to deal with failing banks adopted after the 2008 financial crisis and made barely a ripple in Europe's stock and debt markets.

Indeed, as the morning wore on the success of the process pushed shares in many major banks higher, supporting a recovery for Madrid's stock market and fending off this week's broadly weaker mood.

But the rescue also underlines the risks to growth, banking and government debt

burdens that are likely to delay a major switch in language and policy direction by the European Central Bank at its meeting on Thursday.

That in turn has kept the euro in check this week and it was down 0.15 percent against the dollar in morning trade in Europe.

"Maybe tomorrow's ECB meeting sees nothing but platitudes and disappoints a market that is getting ahead of itself," said Societe Generale analyst Kit Juckes.

"But (for us) that would be a huge euro buying opportunity, because ECB normalization IS coming. And when it does, the euro simply won't be able to sustain undervalued levels for long."

European blue chip shares had risen by 0.1-0.2 percent by 0850 GMT .STOXX50E



.FTEU3 and Madrid's IBEX recovered from early losses to trade flat on the day. IBEX European banking shares rose 1.2 percent .SX7E

Oil prices, however, were again almost 1 percent lower and the flood of money into the perceived security of Japan's yen this week continued.

It was up another 0.2 percent at 109.17 yen per dollar - a 7-week high. The green-

fall from 1.6 per cent this year to 1 per cent in 2018, as households are squeezed by prices rising faster than incomes, following the EU referendum and sterling's sharp depreciation

Hanging over the global economy were still significant risks, Ms Mann added. Bullish equity markets had diverged from the more mediocre real economic performance in many countries, financial markets were expecting a "huge gap" in interest rates between the US and the eurozone and Japan and a third of government bonds were trading at negative yields. "Big corrections in various asset prices

would weigh on economic activity," Ms Mann said.

Growth in the Chinese economy is anticipated to ease from 6.7 per cent last year to 6.6 this year and 6.4 per cent in 2018. The significance of China's slowdown was underlined by Ms Mann, who emphasised that dependence on China in particular "clouds the stability of the overall global upturn".

Meanwhile, growth in India is expected to increase to 7.3 per cent in 2017 and 7.7 per cent in 2018 maintaining its position as the world's fastest growing economy.

(Source: The Financial Times)



# Oil dips on glut concerns, but Mideast tension supports

Oil prices dipped on Wednesday, with Brent crude futures falling below \$50 per barrel, as fuel markets remained oversupplied, although tension in the Middle East and falling U.S. inventories lent some support.

Brent crude futures were at \$49.95 per barrel at 0710 GMT, down 17 cents, or 0.3 percent, from their last close. Brent is almost 8 percent below its open on May 25, when OPEC and other producers agreed to extend oil output cuts through to the first quarter of 2018.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were at \$48.02 per barrel, also down 17 cents, or 0.3 percent, from the previous close, and more than 6 percent below their May 25 open.

Traders said an ongoing fuel glut was keeping prices under pressure despite a pledge by Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers to cut almost 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) of output.

"Disappointed that the oil cartel and Russia could not come up with a bolder plan to reduce the global crude surplus, market participants have been selling into every bounce," said Fawad Razaqzada, analyst at futures brokerage Forex.

World fuel production and consumption is roughly in balance, at almost 98 million bpd, although inventories remain bloated, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) said on Tuesday.

"Where oil (price) ultimately goes is going to be driven by inventories," said Greg McKenna, strategist at Ax-iTrader, another futures brokerage.

OPEC's efforts to tighten the market could be undermined by U.S. production, which the EIA said could hit a record 10 million bpd next year, up from 9.3 million bpd now. That would nearly match the output level of top exporter Saudi Arabia.

In the near-term, however, the market was supported by escalating tensions in the Middle East and by signs



of a gradual drawdown of bloated U.S. fuel inventories.

A campaign by leading Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, to isolate Qatar is disrupting trade, including oil.

"Port restrictions on Qatari flagged vessels are going to cause loading disruptions," said Jeffrey Halley, analyst at brokerage OANDA.

"That said, the disruptions are seen as inconvenient rather than systematic and thus will maybe only put a floor on crude in the short-term rather than starting a panic rally," he added.

In the United States, official inventory data from the EIA will be published later on Wednesday, with expectations of falling stocks.

"Any further sharp reductions in U.S. stocks could put a floor under oil prices in the short-term," said Razaqzada.

(Source: Reuters)

## Australian state may back floating LNG import plan

Australia's Victoria state is working with AGL Energy to study building a liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal to beef up local gas supply, even as the country is set to become the world's largest LNG exporter.

Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews is under pressure to bolster regional gas supplies after barring all onshore gas drilling, as the southeast Australian state looks to save manufacturing jobs threatened by soaring energy prices.

LNG exports from northeastern Australia - particularly the Gladstone LNG plant run by Santos Ltd - have been pulling gas out of the domestic market, and the nation's energy market operator warned earlier this year that without new supply, the local market could face a shortfall by late 2018.

The two other export plants in northeastern Australia are Queensland Curtis LNG, run by Royal Dutch Shell, and Australia Pacific LNG, run by ConocoPhillips.

To help avert gas and power cuts, the state government said it is studying the development of an LNG import facility with AGL, most likely a floating terminal off the coast of Victoria.

"An LNG terminal would allow the eastern market to bring in lower cost global gas or lower cost gas from WA



(Western Australia)," the government said in an emailed statement.

The state said it would be cheaper to transport LNG by ship to a terminal near a major demand center like Melbourne than transporting it by pipeline from the Cooper Basin in South Australia or Queensland State further north.

Andrews plans to take the proposal to a meeting with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and state leaders on Friday.

AGL has said it aims to decide by June 2018 whether to go ahead with an LNG import terminal, which it has estimated would cost between A\$200 million and A\$300 million (\$150 million and \$230 million).

An AGL spokesman was not immediately available to comment on the state's role in the project.

(Source: Reuters)

## Indian solar panel makers demand anti-dumping duty against China

In a fresh attempt to bar Chinese solar panel makers from flooding the Indian market at an ultra-low price, the domestic companies approached the Directorate General of Anti-Dumping (DGAD), requesting an imposition of a duty on imports.

The application has been filed against China, Malaysia and Taiwan. The domestic industry via the Indian Solar Manufacturer's Association (ISMA) pleaded that as the imports led to considerable damage to the indigenous sector; a retrospective duty should be imposed.

Business Standard recently reported that among other measures, anti-dumping is one of the attempts to filter out low-quality solar imports in the country.

This is the third attempt by the Indian panel makers to approach the DGAD for anti-dumping duty. The domestic industry has alleged that around 80 percent of the market has been taken away by imports.

The first case was filed in 2012 against the U.S., European Union, China, Malaysia and Taiwan. The case ran for two years saw solar cell makers, allied electronics industry and even glass makers asking for protection against the import of solar pan-



els.

The domestic industry had alleged imports consume 60 percent of the market.

While DGAD finalized duties from \$0.48 per unit to \$0.81 per unit on solar cells imported from the above mentioned countries, the ministry of finance did not impose the same and let the duty lapse in May last year.

In 2014, the makers filed a complaint with Directorate General of Anti-Dumping (DGAD) under the ministry of commerce and Directorate General of Safeguards (DGS) under the ministry of finance. The ministry of commerce in 2014 identified a dumping margin range of 50-60 percent from the U.S. and around 100-110 percent by China, the largest exporter of solar cells worldwide.

(Source: Business Standard)

## Qatar's dispute with Arab states puts LNG market on edge

Saudi Arabia and key allies on Monday cut ties with Qatar, the world's top seller of liquefied natural gas (LNG), stoking concern over any supply disruptions to neighboring countries spilling over into global gas markets.

Saudi Arabia, along with the United Arab Emirates and Egypt - both highly reliant on Qatari gas via pipeline and LNG - and Bahrain said they would sever all ties including transport links with Qatar, an escalation on past diplomatic spats.

They accuse Qatar, which supplies roughly a third of global LNG - natural gas that has been converted to liquid form for export - of supporting extremism.

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who accompanied President Donald Trump on his trip to Saudi Arabia last month, was CEO of Exxon Mobil - Qatar's key Western partner in building its giant LNG export plants.

As the rift lifted oil prices, LNG traders took a wait-and-see approach, alert to potential disruption of regional energy flows but erring on the assumption that any trade shocks could be contained given well supplied global markets.

Qatar's top clients in Japan and India quickly received reassurances that supplies would continue as usual.

Within hours of the diplomatic break, the UAE barred all vessels coming to or from Qatar using its popular anchorage point off Fujairah.

The ban impacts about six LNG vessels linked to Qatar now anchored in the Fujairah zone which may need to be moved out, according to shipping data on Thomson Reuters.

But there was little sign yet of LNG supply being hit.

"I cannot see this impacting exports of Qatari LNG outside the Arab world at all and it won't likely impact LNG and gas pipeline exports within the Arab world ei-



ther," Morten Frisch, an independent LNG and gas industry consultant, said.

Still, traders startled by the development began to plan for all eventualities, especially any upsets to piped gas supplies from Qatar to the UAE.

The UAE consumes 1.8 billion cubic feet/day of Qatari gas via the Dolphin pipeline, and has LNG purchase agreements with its neighbor, leaving it doubly exposed to tit-for-tat measures, industry sources and traders said.

So far flows through Dolphin are unaffected but traders say even a partial shutdown would ripple through global gas markets by forcing the UAE to seek replacement LNG supply just as its domestic demand peaks.

With LNG markets in bearish mood and demand weak, the UAE could cope with Qatar suspending its two to three monthly LNG deliveries by calling on international markets, but Dolphin piped flows are too large to fully replace.

"A drop off in Dolphin deliveries would have a huge

impact on LNG markets," one trader monitoring developments said.

Spot LNG prices have not yet reacted.

Egypt, while relying heavily on Qatari LNG brought in by Swiss commodity trade houses, is less vulnerable than the UAE because it has no direct deals with Qatar, domestic gas output is squeezing out the need for imports, and traders would be liable for any moves by Qatar to restrict exports.

"Trafigura, Glencore and Vitol frequently take LNG from Qatar and deliver it to Egypt but they take ownership of the cargoes at the Qatari port and don't use Qatari ships, meaning technically that Qatar shouldn't have sway," one trade source said.

In reality though, Qatar can block exports to certain countries by issuing so-called destination restrictions.

"It's not clear yet," another LNG trader said of potential impacts to deliveries from Qatar to Egypt.

Egypt is halfway through its annual LNG cargo delivery program for the year, with 50 shipments left to arrive, of which at least 10 are of Qatari origin, a Cairo-based energy source said.

Retaliatory measures such as suspending LNG supply deals would leave Qatar free to push more volumes into Europe where it has access to several import terminals.

Under that scenario, trade houses with supply commitments to Egypt could turn to the United States, Algeria and Nigeria for replacement cargoes, traders and industry sources said.

The deterioration in ties between Qatar and Egypt contrasts with 2013 when the producer gifted five LNG cargoes to Egypt - when Mohamed Mursi, leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, served as president.

(Source: Reuters)

## Trump suggests border wall with solar panels

President Donald Trump suggested his oft-promised border wall could be covered in solar panels in a meeting with congressional leaders, according to sources familiar with the conversation.

Trump had convened Republican leaders at the White House for a conversation about their legislative agenda, largely on health care and the debt ceiling.

But during the meeting Trump also suggested his border wall could be built with solar panels as a way to pay for it, according to sources familiar with the conversation.

Trump was meeting with House Speaker Paul Ryan, Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, Whip Steve Scalise and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Whip John Cornyn.

In a joint statement, McConnell and Ryan called the meeting "good, productive" and "focused on ... how we can accomplish our goals."

Though Trump repeatedly promised a wall along the entire southern border during the campaign -- paid for by Mexico, he said -- Congress has yet to appropriate any money to the administration to follow through.

The Department of Homeland Security was allowed by congressional appropriators to move \$20 million from elsewhere in the budget to support the construction of some prototypes for wall options.

In the pitch process this spring, at least two companies proposed designs that included solar panels, per designs that were shared with CNN. DHS has yet to select its top proposals.

After being rebuffed by Congress for money to build any wall in fiscal year 2017, the administration has asked appropriators for \$1.6 billion to build 74 miles in 2018, according to DHS: 32 miles of wall in the Rio Grande Valley, 28 miles for levee wall in the Rio Grande Valley and 14 miles of replacement for secondary fencing in San Diego.

(Source: CNN)

## Investors increasingly hot on solar projects in S.E. Asia

Investors are increasingly excited about the prospects for much faster growth in the solar power industry in Southeast Asia, which has until now been a backwater for renewable energy.

They say that the region is in a perfect position to benefit from rapidly declining prices in solar panels. It has strong economic growth, relatively high costs of electricity and a shortage from traditional sources, undeveloped infrastructure in more remote areas, plenty of sunshine, and backing for more renewable energy from many of Southeast Asia's governments.

By the end of last year, Southeast Asia had installed solar capacity of only just over 3 gigawatts (GW), a mere 1 percent of global capacity, according to data from the International Renewable Energy Agency (Irena).

Steve O'Neil, the chief executive of Singapore-based solar panel maker REC, said he expects that to grow by 5 GW of new installations every year between 2017-2020. That's the equivalent of building five standard fossil-fuel power stations annually.

"People don't realize what is about to happen, when you're in the middle of exponential growth," said REC's O'Neil. "It's transformational."

Some European funds are among those looking at the region.

"The projects on offer in Europe are stagnating, so European investors are looking in that direction with great interest," said Armin Sandhoevel, chief investment officer for Infrastructure Equity at Allianz Global Investors, whose team manages 1.6 billion euros (\$1.76 billion) worth of renewable investments.

"In Asia, you'd expect double-digit returns. That's hard to achieve in Europe," he said.

Southeast Asia has a population of more than 600 million and annual power demand growth of 6 percent, which most countries struggle to meet.

(Source: Reuters)

## U.S. sees crude output breaking 48-year-old record in 2018

U.S. crude production will average more than 10 million barrels a day for the first time in 2018, breaking a record almost five decades old and keeping prices from rising as much as previously estimated, government forecasts showed.

Output will average 10.01 million barrels a day next year, topping the previous high of 9.6 million in 1970, according to the Energy Information Administration's monthly Short-Term Energy Outlook. That's up from 9.96 million barrels projected in May. The agency cut its 2018 forecast for West Texas Intermediate crude, the U.S. benchmark, by 2.7 percent from May.

"Increased drilling activity in U.S. tight oil basins, especially those located in Texas, is the main contributor to oil-production growth," acting EIA Administrator Howard Gruenspecht said in an emailed statement.

U.S. drillers have added rigs for 20 straight weeks, the longest streak in at least three decades, undercutting efforts by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries to cut production and eliminate a global supply glut. Rigs in the U.S. have more than doubled in the past year, according to Baker Hughes Inc., with Texas' prolific Permian Basin leading the surge.

WTI will average \$53.61 next year, down from last month's estimate of \$55.10, the report showed. The agency raised its 2017 estimate to \$50.78 a barrel from \$50.68. Brent crude, the benchmark for more than half the world's oil, is projected to average \$55.61 next year and \$52.69 this year, compared with prior estimates of \$57.10 and \$52.60.

For 2017, production is forecast to rise to 9.33 million barrels a day, compared with a May estimate of 9.31 million.

(Source: Bloomberg)



## Angela Merkel's challenge to Europe



By Joschka Fischer  
Former FM of Germany

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has never been regarded as an especially inspiring orator. In fact, she has a reputation for gently talking her audiences to sleep. But that all changed a few days ago. While campaigning in the Munich suburb of Trudering, Merkel delivered a powerful speech that dominated headlines on both sides of the Atlantic.

With Whitsunday fast approaching, many wondered if Merkel had been inspired by the Holy Spirit. If not that, she may have been spurred to action after having spent many hours in the company of U.S. President Donald Trump during the recent NATO and G-7 summits. And Germany's upcoming federal election undoubtedly loomed large in her mind.

She was not emulating former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, who, campaigning in the town of Goslar in January 2003, declared that Germany would not participate in the Iraq War, regardless of whether it had the United Nations Security Council's backing. There was far more to Merkel's Trudering speech than mere electioneering.

"The times when we could completely rely on others are, to an extent, over," Merkel said, "and therefore I can only say that we Europeans must really take our fate into our own hands." Some might take this to mean that Germany is turning away from the trans-Atlantic alliance, pursuing a strategic realignment, or entering a new era of insecurity. But Merkel's statement meant nothing of the sort.

Anyone who has been paying attention has known for some time that the historic changes taking place today did not originate in Germany. Rather, they are emanating from the geopolitical West's two founding members: the United States and the United Kingdom. Prior to Trump's election and the UK's Brexit referendum, Germans saw no reason to make fundamental changes to the existing geopolitical order.

### ■ Europe's peace

But those two events have shaken the foundation upon which Europe's peace and prosperity have rested since World War II. Britain's decision to withdraw from the European Union could inspire other countries to follow suit. And Trump's isolationist, "America first" agenda implies that the U.S. will abdicate its leadership role in the world, and possibly abandon its security guarantee for Europe.

Europeans avoided a disaster of historic proportions in last month's French presidential election. If Marine Le Pen of the far-right National Front had been elected, she would likely have brought an end to the euro, the EU and the common market. Continental Europe would now be mired in a deep economic and political crisis.

Those who still support a unified Europe need to take a lesson from the near-miss in France, lest history repeat itself. Europe must expand its capacity to act, and to respond to crises and changing circumstances. That was the message at the heart of Merkel's remarks.

At the same time, Merkel was addressing ongoing debates among pundits and press commentators about what Brexit and Trump's presidency might mean for the future of trans-Atlantic and European cooperation. When Merkel observed that "we Europeans must really take our fate into our own hands," she was stating a plain fact.

Still, only those who have hopelessly underestimated Merkel could think that she would turn away from trans-Atlanticism. Merkel knows that the U.S. is indispensable to Europe's security. But she also knows that Trump's presidency has cast doubt on both the American security guarantee and the shared values that, until now, firmly linked the two sides.

### ■ A stronger Europe

A careful analysis of Merkel's words shows that she was not questioning the future of the trans-Atlantic alliance. Rather, she was calling for a stronger Europe. Merkel knows that if the U.S. sacrifices its place at the top of the international order for domestic political reasons, it will not be replaced by a new leading power, nor will a new world order emerge. What we will have is a power vacuum, marked by chaos. And as the world becomes less stable, we Europeans will have no choice but to come together to defend our interests. No one else will do it for us.

So, Merkel's speech was first and foremost about strengthening Europe. And, fortunately, she has found a partner in French President Emmanuel Macron. Both leaders want to stabilize the Eurozone, restore economic growth and strengthen Europe's security with a joint border force and a new refugee policy.

Merkel surely meant what she said in Trudering. Given the tumultuous international environment and the EU's own recent close call, there is no alternative but to take action, and her remarks could have far-reaching consequences for Germany's place in the EU, and for its relationship with France. Germany's current role as the Eurozone's penny-pinching know-it-all is at odds with the new approach that it must take. To demonstrate real leadership within the French-German partnership, Germany will have to make political concessions.

Moreover, just because Trump says something does not automatically mean that it is wrong. Germany, and Europe generally, will have to do far more to ensure its own security, and to reinforce the trans-Atlantic bridge that sustains European peace and prosperity. And as we pursue that project, we must stick firmly to the liberal values that make us the envy of aspiring democrats, and the bête noire of authoritarians, around the world.

**Europe must expand its capacity to act, and to respond to crises and changing circumstances. That was the message at the heart of Merkel's remarks.**

(Source: The Daily Star)

# Turkey can't afford to take sides in Qatar crisis



**Yasar Yakis, a former foreign minister and AKP deputy, declared in a statement to Hurriyet that Turkey is already seriously isolated in foreign policy and said that taking sides would only increase this isolation.**

Meanwhile, Turkish exports to Qatar are valued at over \$400 million.

Turkey's second problem is that the Saudi Arabia-led alliance against Qatar includes not just Egypt but also Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Yemen, Libya and the Maldives.

The official Saudi Press Agency has reported that Riyadh expects its allies "to start immediate legal procedures ... to implement the same procedure as soon as possible" against Qatar. Ankara will have to tread delicately on the middle ground.

Erdogan's spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, said in a written statement, "The members of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, with whom Turkey is in a strategic business alliance, should solve their problems through negotiation, dialogue and communication." Kalin noted that Erdogan would do what he could to help resolve the matter.

The third major problem for Ankara is the fact that the alliance against Qatar is also an alliance against the Muslim Brotherhood, seen by Riyadh and Cairo as a terrorist organization. Erdogan, his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its Islamist support base, however, consider the Brotherhood to

be a kindred organization, and it remains a contentious issue not just with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, but also with the UAE. Ties between Ankara and the UAE, which has accused Turkey in the past of supporting extremist groups, also remain tense, even though the sides are trying to overcome their differences. Diplomatic sources indicate that Ankara has also been lobbying Washington with a degree of success to prevent it from declaring the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization.

Most Turkish analysts say Turkey has little to do with this dispute and should remain neutral for its own sake. Yasar Yakis, a former foreign minister and AKP deputy, declared in a statement to Hurriyet that Turkey is already seriously isolated in foreign policy and said that taking sides would only increase this isolation.

Verda Ozer, a foreign policy analyst for Hurriyet, argued that there is a perception among many regional countries that Turkey inclines toward Qatar. If not managed well, this connection could also leave Turkey facing charges from the West and the Persian Gulf region of "supporting terrorism."

Pro-government analysts, on the other

hand, see a conspiracy against Qatar and claim Turkey is next in line to be victimized. Ufuk Ulutas, who heads the foreign policy department at the government-sponsored Political Economic and Social Research Foundation, claimed that efforts will be made to force Turkey into taking a side. Ulutas declared in an article for Aksam, "The fact that they will want to apply pressure on Turkey after Qatar shows that Turkey will have problems with the countries involved in the coming period."

This dispute has shown again that the Middle East is a far more complex place than either Erdogan or former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu — the architect of much of Turkey's failed regional policies — seem to have believed. It has also shown that Arab countries will never consider Turkey part of the Arab world, even if it is predominantly Islamic. For example, reports indicate that Qatar is leaning toward Kuwait as mediator in this crisis, rather than Turkey.

Political commentator Murat Yetkin summed it up for Hurriyet, saying, "There is benefit for Turkey in continuing not to touch the Qatar crisis with its bare hands, but using diplomatic tongs instead."

(Source: Al Monitor)

## Why James Comey's testimony will be must-see TV

The president's conduct has yet to be indicted, but his judgment surely has been.

By Matt Purple

James Comey's firing is the scandal with the most potential to damage Donald Trump. Not accusations of Russian collusion, which are hopelessly overblown and keep returning innuendoes but no concrete evidence. Not the Twitter tantrums against various world figures like London mayor Sadiq Khan — those are unseemly, but within the presidential prerogative. Only Comey's unceremonious pink slip, distributed while the FBI was in the midst of an investigation into the Trump presidential campaign, can set tolling the words "obstruction of justice" and raise the Nixonian question of whether the cover-up is worse than the alleged crime.

The Comey fracas will come to a televisual head on Thursday, when the former FBI director sits down with the Senate Intelligence Committee for a round of public testimony. Ideally, the hearing will be a workmanlike pursuit of the truth; realistically it will be a partisan Mad Max rumble, with Dianne Feinstein on flame throwing electric guitar. ABC and CBS have already announced they'll cut into their daytime programming to carry the Comey testimony live, which is all the indication you need of the thunderdome to come. Expect pyrotechnics from the senators; do not expect to have your faith in the United States Congress restored.

The reason is that most of the legislators will be under intense party pressure: Republicans to run cover for the president, and Democrats to flay him alive. The first half of the hearing, open to the public, will be when lawmakers preen for the cameras, while more serious business will likely be conducted in the second half, which will be behind closed doors so that classified information can be sorted out. Republicans are betting that the nearly universal criticism leveled at Comey over his investigation into Hillary Clinton's emails will be enough to impeach his credibility. Democrats will



capitalize on an opportunity to further discredit the president.

### ■ Two big questions

Two big questions will form the basis for the partisan brickbats. The first is how Trump made the decision to fire Comey. Initial reports insisted the president had innocently followed the advice of Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who wrote a generic memo listing Comey's various professional sins — but Rosenstein has since noted that he didn't actually recommend that Comey be let go, and anyway he knew the FBI chief would be canned no matter what he put to paper. Trump later confirmed this by telling NBC's Lester Holt that he intended to sack Comey irrespective of Rosenstein, trampling all over his own explanation. Comey is unlikely to be a wellspring of information about the machinations behind his own firing, but senators will litigate it nonetheless.

The second and more relevant question is whether Trump pressured Comey to drop the FBI's investigation into former national security advisor Michael Flynn. As with the rest of the Trump bonfire, the kindling here has been anonymous sources, who allegedly read to the New York Times notes that Comey had allegedly made

after Trump allegedly told Comey he hoped Flynn would be let off easy. It will be the task of the committee to dispel the weaselly A-words from that preceding sentence. If Comey confirms that Trump made those remarks — that he interpreted them as pressure to drop the investigation — and if he can satisfactorily explain away previous testimony in which he said no such pressure had been applied, it will unleash a political poltergeist against the White House.

It will also pit the former FBI director's word against the president's, and how fitting. As I've written before, it's difficult to imagine two figures less alike than Trump and Comey: the former a glowworm even in ostentatious Manhattan whom voters sent to the White House to be bad, the latter a law-enforcement lifer with a hallowed view of civil service who seems almost naively resolved to remain good. Both are tarnished in the eyes of official Washington: Comey for his spasmodic hopscotches across the presidential minefield, Trump for just about everything he's ever done. But presented with this clash of the titans, the elites will side wholeheartedly with Comey, happy to see him make recompense for his treatment of Hillary Clinton and pleased to have found a way to endanger Trump without ever having to confront the forces behind his election.

Comey won't destroy his nemesis on Thursday. With special counsel Robert Mueller leading a separate investigation, there will be plenty of questions he simply won't be able to answer. And given his prior mistakes in the congressional hot seat and the inevitable public scrutiny he'll face, his every word will be carefully weighed. But he will be the most high-profile witness against the White House yet, one who knows a good deal more than the president wishes he did. And Trump wanted him outside the administration rather than in? The president's conduct has yet to be indicted, but his judgment surely has been.

(Source: The National Interest)



# Policy differences emerge among Persian Gulf states days after wooing President Trump

By James M. Dorsey

Cracks have appeared in a Saudi-led, U.S.-backed anti-terrorist political and military alliance days after U.S. President Donald J. Trump ended a historic visit to Saudi Arabia. The cracks stem from Qatar's long-standing fundamental policy differences with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates about Iran and the role of political Islam.

The cracks emerged as the result of an anti-Qatar media and cyber campaign involving a spate of anti-Qatar articles in U.S. and Persian Gulf media; the blocking of Qatar-backed media websites and broadcasts in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt; statements by prominent former U.S. government officials; and a recent seminar by the Washington-based Foundation for the Defense of Democracies that has long asserted that Qatar supports militant groups.

Seemingly emboldened by Mr. Trump's blanket endorsement of Saudi Arabia's proxy war against Iran and UAE Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed visceral opposition to political Islam, Persian Gulf states appear to believe that the time is right to again pressure Qatar to alter policies it sees as key to its national security. The crown prince reportedly maintains a close working relationship with powerful Saudi Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

An earlier attempt by Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain to force Qatar to align itself with the three states' hard line positions failed in 2014 when Qatar refused to bow after they withdrew their ambassadors from Doha. The ambassadors returned to their posts after a 10-month absence with little, if any, change in Qatari policies.

The policy differences have rekindled a long-standing rift within the six-nation Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC), the regional association that groups Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman that is rooted in geography and history. Qatar unlike other Persian Gulf states shares the world's largest gas field with Iran.

The differences reflect concern among many non-Arab members of the Saudi-led, 41-Muslim nation military alliance that the grouping is becoming an anti-Iranian grouping rather than one focused on combatting jihadism. They also erupted at a moment that Saudi Arabia is looking at attempting to destabilize Iran by fomenting unrest among the Islamic Republic's ethnic minorities – a move that worries Pakistan and other coalition members.

Qatar's ability to mediate in conflicts involving militant groups like the Taliban and various jihadist groups is a pillar of its troubled effort to project soft power. Its relationship with controversial groups like the Muslim Brotherhood is strategic and goes back to the founding of the Persian Gulf state. The Brotherhood populated key educational and government institutions in Qatar and other Persian Gulf states at a time that they did not have needed professionals of their own.

In Qatar, a country sandwiched between regional giants Saudi Arabia and Iran, both of whom it views as potential threats, the Brotherhood, however, offered something far more strategic:



**Qatar's ability to mediate in conflicts involving militant groups like the Taliban and various jihadist groups is a pillar of its troubled effort to project soft power.**

the ability to chart a course of its own. Looking at Saudi Arabia's power sharing agreement that empowers an ultra-conservative Sunni Muslim religious elite, Qatar used the Brotherhood to avoid falling into what it saw as a Saudi trap.

As a result, Qatar has no powerful religious establishment of its own. Its most prominent Islamic scholar, Sheikh Yusuf Qaradawi, is a naturalized Qatari citizen of Egyptian origin who is associated with the Brotherhood. Qatar's ruling Al Thani family retains absolute power that it does not have to share.

In one of many contradictions in Qatari policy, Qatar unlike other Persian Gulf states and despite being an autocracy, supported the anti-autocratic popular Arab revolts of 2011, and backed Islamist forces like the Brotherhood in Egypt. Its support explains why Egypt this month joining Saudi Arabia and the UAE in blocking Qatari-backed websites and broadcasts like Al Jazeera and The Huff-

ington Post's Arabic edition.

Qatar, along with Saudi Arabia the world's only country that adheres to Wahhabism, a puritan, intolerant interpretation of Islam, has had strained relations with Egypt since general-turned-president Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi in 2013 toppled Mohammed Morsi in a military coup and brutally cracked down on the Brotherhood. Mr. Morsi, a Muslim Brother, was Egypt's first and only democratically elected president.

The most recent PGCC crisis erupted after Qatar charged that remarks attributed to Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani that stroked with Qatari policy and were broadcast by state-run Qatar television as well as carried by the Persian Gulf state's official news agency and various Twitter accounts, were the result of a cyberattack.

Sheikh Tamim was alleged to have suggested that Mr Trump's administration could be short lived because of problems

at home, questioned the wisdom of increasing tension with Tehran and defended Islamist groups Hamas, Hezbollah and the Brotherhood. Qatar has said it is investigating the hack.

In a bid to tarnish Qatar's already troubled reputation, Saudi and UAE media gave prominent coverage to the alleged remarks. The two states' media outlets rejected Qatari assertions of a cyberattack. They accused Qatar of having ties to Al Qaeda and reported that Qatari Foreign Minister Shaikh Mohammad Bin Abdul Rahman Al Thani had met secretly in Baghdad with Qasim Soleimani, the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' notorious Al Quds Force.

Adding fuel to the fire, Robert Gates, a former U.S. defence secretary and director of central intelligence, this week warned at a Foundation for the Defense of Democracies gathering on Qatar and the Brotherhood that Qatar risked losing its hosting of U.S. forces at the Al Udeid Air Base, the largest U.S. military base in the Middle East. "The United States military doesn't have any irreplaceable facility," Mr. Gates said.

Ed Royce, the Republican chair the House Foreign Affairs committee, told the gathering that "if it doesn't change, Qatar will be sanctioned under a new bill I'm introducing to punish Hamas backers."

Qatar has struggled to downplay the crisis and prove that the remarks attributed to Sheikh Tamim were fake news. Qatar's problem is that it doesn't matter whether the news was true or fake. The Persian Gulf state is caught in a Catch-22. It is confronting a concerted Saudi and UAE effort to force it to align itself with the policies of a majority of the PGCC. Qatar is doomed if it does and doomed if it doesn't.



## U.S. to lure ISIL terrorists out of Raqqa and eliminate them

By Anna Jaunger

On Friday May 26, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) spokeswoman called upon ISIL militants in Raqqa to surrender till the end of May.

"No harm would come to the group's fighters in Raqqa who turned themselves in by the end of the month. The safety of ISIL militants' families is also guaranteed," Ahmed stated.

According to Inside Syria Media Center's anonymous source in the SDF command, the U.S.-led



coalition is already maintaining corridors to evacuate terrorists towards Palmyra and other towns controlled by the Syrian government.

However, Washington is said to not just capture Raqqa but to lure as much terrorists and their families out of the city to eliminate them with mass airstrikes.

The U.S. will possibly target the unarmed militants to accuse the Syrian government of the attack. If the White House's plan is implemented, we may soon witness the western media blaming Bashar al-Assad for 'atrocities' and 'killing civilians' with U.S. ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley wrathfully shaking the footages of the militant children's bodies.

Accusing the Syrian AF and the Syrian president personally, Washington will get a motive to invade Syria and initiate a full-scale ground op-

eration against the legitimate government. This is confirmed by the recent proofs of U.S. and Great Britain building up their forces at the Syrian-Jordan and Syrian-Iraqi borders.

Unfortunately, Washington doesn't seem to be caring for the fact that the conflict will gain momentum as captured Raqqa will become a success the White House can boast within months. Recently, OIR commander U.S. general Stephen J. Townsend has said he is planning to end the liberation of the city as soon as possible, and if his words come true at last, this will be a present for Donald Trump whose rating is still at the bottom.

Obviously, the 'liberation' of Raqqa by pro-American forces shall become a breath of fresh air for the U.S. administration whose 'achievements' include for now only airstrikes on civilians.

**Accusing the Syrian AF and the Syrian president personally, Washington will get a motive to invade Syria and initiate a full-scale ground operation against the legitimate government.**

## Saudi Arabia main loser of self-made diplomatic crisis against Qatar

INTERVIEW

By Lachin Rezaian

Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Yemen, Libya, Bahrain, and Maldives severed their ties with Qatar on Monday, accusing it of supporting terrorism and opening up rift in years among some of the states in the Arab world.

The internationally acknowledged energy consultant Chris Cook, a senior research fellow at the Institute for Security and Resilience Studies at University College London, addresses in this exclusive interview to Tehran Times, the impacts and consequences of the split between Doha and its closest allies, saying it can have repercussions around the Middle East, where Persian Gulf states have used their financial and political power to influence events in Libya, Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

He discussed that the al-Sauds can no longer rely upon U.S. support unconditionally, and they have lost the chance to pivot to the EU instead.

"This is because the EU recognizes where the roots of terrorism actually lie and are focusing on Iran and Caspian nations in pursuit of a Petroeuro to rival the Petrodollar," Cook underlined.

Here is the full text of his answers to Tehran Times' Lachin Rezaian:

■ **How do you evaluate the cutting ties of Saudi Arabia and a number of other Arab states with Qatar?**

Qatar has been pursuing an independent and adventurist foreign policy, which was clearly in line with, and executing the Obama administration's regional foreign policy. Current events reflect the emergence of the Trump administration's policy, but this is as yet too incoherent to discern any organizing principle beyond increased sympathy to Israel and increased antipathy to Iran.

■ **What do you think are the reasons behind Riyadh's move against Doha? Do you think U.S. President Donald Trump's recent trip to Riyadh has set the stage for the conflict? Does U.S. pull the strings, in the situation that immediately after the move, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson told reporters in Sydney on Monday that the spat would not affect the fight against terrorist militants and that Washington has encouraged its [Persian] Gulf allies to resolve their differences?**

U.S. definitely pulls the strings in Qatar, a fact reinforced by the massive - and geostrategically crucial - U.S. military base there which Israel and Saudi Arabia have been agitating to remove. The U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia on the other hand, changed beyond recognition during the Obama administration, due in my view to a deliberate and very smart policy to support the oil price between 2009 and 2014 at levels high enough to develop U.S. shale oil and gas, funded by the petrodollars, which resulted from high prices.



In simple terms, the al-Sauds can no longer - post U.S. shale - rely upon U.S. support unconditionally, and they have lost the chance to pivot to the EU instead. This is because the EU recognizes where the roots of terrorism actually lie and are focusing on Iran and Caspian nations in pursuit of a Petroeuro to rival the Petrodollar.

The so-called fight against militants has of course, as Iran well knows, been a sham throughout since both the Saudis and Qataris were funding and supporting logistically different factions, while U.S. support of the Muslim Brotherhood was against Saudi wishes. As with the failed State/CIA-backed Gulenist coup in Turkey, the U.S. aim was to create a region of compliant and non-nationalist neo-Islamist governments allowing U.S. corporations access on privileged terms.

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

Saudi Arabia has much more to lose from cutting ties than does Qatar for as long as Qatar retains its strategic relationships with the U.S. and India in particular, noting here that 90% of India's natural gas comes from Qatar, while 650,000 Indians work in Qatar.

■ **What would be the repercussions of cutting ties for the regional stability and security?**

This depends upon U.S. strategy. If the U.S. pulls out and abandons Qatar to Saudi control that would have a very negative regional impact. However, there are other constructive strategic policy options available in which Iran could take a lead.

■ **More than half a dozen Arab nations have cut ties with Qatar. Would any other states join the move against Doha?**

Possibly, but I do not think it would have more than a cosmetic effect.

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

Only arms manufacturers and their financiers have an interest in conflict, and the scope for energy diplomacy is clear. Certainly, Qatar's LNG customers can be expected to support them, particularly India and China.

I believe that the U.S. presence in Qatar is pivotal to their regional energy strategy and that they will maintain it. I think that Trump's genuine anti-ISIL/Islamist policy will finally bury Obama's destructive Qatari-sponsored adventurism, and there is now a window of opportunity for constructive energy diplomacy for which Trump may take the credit (he has no motivation other than taking the credit for successful policy).

Iran is very well placed to make constructive and collaborative Natural Grid proposals for least resource cost energy development - using regional energy swaps and energy instruments - to fund reduction of the staggering cost of wasted energy resources. There is no reason why even Saudi Arabia, no matter what their ideological differences with Iran and others, would not cooperate in such an initiative.



# Homegrown terrorism and why the threat of right-wing extremism is rising in America

By Arie Perliger

The murder in College Park, Maryland of Richard Collins III, an African-American student who had recently been commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army and was days away from his graduation from Bowie State University, underscores the violence of America's far-right wing. Sean Urbanski, the University of Maryland student who allegedly stabbed Collins to death, belongs to a racist Facebook group called Alt-Reich: Nation.

It makes sense that the FBI is helping the police investigate this incident as a suspected hate crime. But my 15 years' experience of studying violent extremism in Western societies has taught me that dealing effectively with far-right violence requires something more: treating its manifestations as domestic terrorism.

While attacks such as the recent suicide bombing in Manchester that left 22 people dead and several dozen injured will probably continue to garner more headlines, this

growing domestic menace deserves more attention than it's getting.

Terrorism is a form of psychological warfare. Most terrorist groups lack the resources, expertise and manpower to defeat state actors. Instead, they promote their agenda through violence that shapes perceptions of political and social issues.

## ■ Act of domestic terrorism

Collins' murder, if it was motivated by racist sentiments, should be treated as an act of domestic terrorism, which I define here as the use of violence in a political and social context that aims to send a message to a broader target audience. Like lynching, cross-burning and vandalizing religious sites, incidents of this kind deliberately aim to terrorize people of color and non-Christians.

I consider domestic terrorism a more significant threat than the foreign-masterminded variety in part because it is more common in terms of the number of attacks on U.S. soil. For example, my report published by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point identified hundreds

of domestic terror incidents per year between 2008 and 2012.

Another report initially published in 2014 by New America Foundation on domestic incidents of extremist violence shows that excluding the Orlando nightclub massacre, between 2002-2016, far-right affiliated perpetrators conducted 18 attacks that killed 48 people in the United States, while terrorists motivated by al-Qaida's or the Islamic State's ideology killed 45 people in nine attacks.

The Orlando mass shooting, given its mix of apparent motives, is hard to categorize.

## ■ law enforcement

In briefings with law enforcement and policymakers, I have sometimes encountered a tendency to see U.S. right-wing extremists as a monolith. But traditional Ku Klux Klan chapters operate differently than skinhead groups, as do anti-government "patriot" and militia groups and anti-abortion extremists. Christian Identity groups, which believe Anglo-Saxons and other people of Northern European de-

scent are a chosen people, are distinct too.

Certainly, there is some overlap. But these groups also differ significantly in terms of their methods of violence, recruitment styles and ideologies. Across the board, undermining the threat they pose requires a more sophisticated approach than investigating their criminal acts as suspected hate crimes.

In an ongoing study I'm conducting at the University of Massachusetts Lowell with several students, we have determined that, as apparently occurred with Collins' recent murder in Maryland, many attacks inspired by racist or xenophobic sentiments may appear spontaneous. That is, no one plans them in advance or targets the victim ahead of time. Instead, chance encounters that enrage the perpetrators trigger these incidents.

Sporadic attacks with high numbers of casualties that are plotted in advance, such as Dylann Roof's murder of nine African-Americans in a Charleston, South Carolina church, are always big news. More typical incidents of far-right violence tend to draw less attention. ➔13

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# South Beach Diet facts you need to know



By Malia Frey

**■ 1. South Beach Diet plan – facts**  
Are you considering The South Beach Diet for health or weight loss? The diet program first became popular in 2003 when preventative cardiologist Dr. Arthur Agatston published The South Beach Diet book in 2003. Since that time the program has been modified to reflect current research and health trends. But myths and misunderstandings about the diet persist.

Before you invest in the South Beach Diet, be sure to get the most current facts and guidelines. You can visit the South Beach Diet website or read any of Dr. Agatston's more recent books including South Beach Diet Supercharged (2008) or South Beach Diet Gluten Solution (2014). But there are seven facts, in particular, that you should know before you choose this diet plan.

**■ 2. The South Beach Diet is not a quick fix**  
You might think that a diet named for a famous beach in Florida would be the perfect plan for quick weight loss. But the South Beach Diet is not a quick weight loss plan. Instead, the lifestyle program is a structured 3-step plan for long-term health improvement.

"The South Beach eating plan is not about quick weight loss, but rather encourages a positive change in lifestyle," says South Beach Diet nutritionist Marie Almon, MS, RD. "The principles encourage losing weight slowly and steadily as you learn to make the right food choices over time."

During Phase 1 of the South Beach Diet, dieters often lose weight quickly. During this two-week stage, dieters avoid all grain products, starches, sugars (including fruits and fruit juices), and alcohol. But despite the rapid weight loss, dieters are not encouraged to stay in Phase 1. Almon explains that it's important to move to Phase 2 where weight loss slows to a more gradual pace. If dieters stay in Phase 1 she says, "they are not getting the full complement of healthy nutrients that

## “The South Beach eating plan is not about quick weight loss, but rather encourages a positive change in lifestyle.”

comes from reintroducing more high-fiber phytonutrient-rich vegetables, as well as fruits and whole grains."

**■ 3. Phase 1 is not for everyone**  
As you might imagine, the most difficult phase of the South Beach Diet is Phase 1. During this phase, the list of foods to avoid is extensive and dieters may feel sluggish or experience headaches. Critics of the South Beach Diet often say that this phase is too restrictive and complicated for many dieters to follow. But not everyone has to do Phase 1. In fact, this phase is only designed to be used by certain individuals.

"Where you begin the program depends on how much weight you have to lose," explains Almon. "Phase 1, which typically lasts just two weeks, is designed for people who have more than 10 pounds to lose and/or have cravings for sugary and starchy carbohydrates."

Some dieters start the South Beach Diet in Phase 2. "If you have less than 10 pounds to lose and don't have cravings, you can start the program on Phase 2 and lose 1-2 pounds a week until you reach a healthy weight. Studies show that it is slow and steady weight loss that results in keeping the weight off over time."

**■ 4. South Beach is a Mediterranean style diet**  
The South Beach Diet is often referred to as a low-glycemic diet in the media. But that's not necessarily the most accurate description. According to Almon, the weight loss program more closely resembles the Mediterranean Diet.

"While the South Beach Diet has often been termed low-glycemic because it recommends eating well-timed foods and snacks with a low-glycemic index and combinations of food that have a low-glycemic load in order to help prevent the swings in blood sugar that can cause hunger and cravings, it is actually closer to a Mediterranean style of eating, with its focus on lean sources of protein (including plenty of omega-3 rich seafood), nutrient- and fiber-rich vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes, and healthy fats, including extra-virgin olive oil, avocado, and nuts."

She goes on to explain that, like a low-glycemic diet, the program is designed to help control the hunger and cravings that typically happen when individuals over consume simple sugars and refined starches.

**■ 5. Not all low-glycemic foods are approved**  
So if the South Beach Diet helps you to control blood sugar swings just like a low-glycemic diet, what makes it different than other low-glycemic diets? Almon explains that on the South Beach eating plan, low-glycemic foods are selected because they are heart-healthy choices." That means you can't eat just any low-glycemic food when you're following the South Beach Diet. Instead, you eat from a list of approved foods.

While the South Beach Diet food lists may be hard for some dieters to follow, they may help you select better low-glycemic foods. In fact, some low-GI foods are heavily processed and

may not work well in a weight loss diet. During a recent interview with nutrition expert Susan Kleiner, she explained that using the glycemic index may not always be the best method to find healthy diet foods. She pointed out that some foods may contain cheap fats or fillers to get the low GI symbol, and those foods are not always healthy choices.

**■ 6. You can eat bread and cereal on the South Beach Diet**  
One of the most common misconceptions of the South Beach Diet is that bread, grains and cereals are permanently banned. But South Beach dieters can eat these foods in moderation.

One Phase 1 of the South Beach Diet, dieters avoid all grain products (including whole grains) in order to "get rid of the cravings caused by exaggerated swings in blood sugar in order to gain control of your appetite," according to Almon. But healthy whole grains are gradually added back into your eating plan in Phase 2 and Phase 3.

Of course, that doesn't mean that South Beach dieters should fill their plates with bread and cereal at the beginning of Phase 2. In fact, Almon says that this is a common mistake that can cause weight loss to stall.

"When a person suddenly floods their system with carbohydrates, even good ones, it can sometimes trigger the same cravings that got them into trouble in the first place."

For that reason, she recommends that dieters add healthy carbs gradually.

**■ 7. There is a South Beach Diet exercise plan**  
If you're afraid of exercise, don't worry. The interval training program that is included in the newest version of the South Beach Diet starts at a slow pace and gradually increases in intensity. Dr. Agatston explains that the exercise component is designed to help speed up metabolism so weight loss happens faster and to help limit weight loss plateaus that often plague consistent dieters.

**One of the most common misconceptions of the South Beach Diet is that bread, grains and cereals are permanently banned. But South Beach dieters can eat these foods in moderation.**

## Out with empathy It's actually part of the problem

By Tim Carey

Almost universally, empathy is considered to be a desirable, even admirable, quality to exude. The online dictionary at dictionary.com defines "empathy" as: the psychological identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another. From this perspective, we might be able to appreciate why it has come to be such a highly prized quality.

For personal friends or helping professionals to be skilled empathisers means that they would be able to genuinely identify with, and even vicariously experience, the feelings, thoughts, and attitudes of their friends or the people they are helping. Just to be clear about what it is we are discussing, the first two (of four) definitions of "vicarious" in dictionary.com are: 1. performed, exercised, received, or suffered in place of another; and, 2. taking the place of another person or thing, acting or serving as a substitute.

Putting the definitions of "empathy" and "vicarious" together might help to explain why I've come to feel so crotchety about empathy. There's an inconvenient detail with regard to empathy. The fact is, it's impossible to experience the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another. It can't happen genuinely, vicariously, or any other way. This isn't just an academic problem or a pedantic quibbling over semantics. When we believe we know what another person has gone through or how they're feeling, we can then make assumptions about them and feel justified in advising them as to what they should do to improve their situation.

Presuming to know how other people should live their lives, and telling people, even very nicely, what they should do to make things better for themselves, would be a useful strategy if we could legitimately ever know how another person is making sense of their world. But we can't. We all experience the world uniquely. We can certainly think about how we might have felt or responded if we'd gone through the situation being described to us, but it is a big mistake to assume that our imagined reactions are a close approximation to the authentic experiences of the other person.

So, I'm going to boldly suggest that, by inventing the concept of "empathy", we have given ourselves the license to substitute our own ideas about what went on in place of the actual descriptions of what occurred. To be sure, the substitution doesn't always occur straight away. We often obtain some information from the other person before we "know what they mean" and begin to think about our own experiences. Perhaps the best empathisers, are the worst listeners, because they're the quickest to "know" what the other person is going through.

Have you ever been in a conversation with another person in which you were explaining a difficulty to them and they responded with something like "I know how you feel", and then started talking about an incident that occurred to them? The value we place on empathy needs to be seriously reconsidered.

Rather than moving ever nearer to a closer identification with, or vicarious experiencing of, another person's situation through the use of razor

sharp empathy skills, we could be more helpful by maintaining a stance of sustained ignorance. "No, I have no idea how it must have been for you. From what you've said, it sounds awful. Can you tell me some more about how you got through it?"

Curiosity, not empathy, might be the most useful attitude to adopt based on our design as creatures who control their own experiences. Each of our livings is sui generis. Lives that have been deeply entwined for decades remain unique. Not even identical twins have identical experiences. Nor can these twins live through the experiences of each other. From the very beginning, the environments of identical twins are different because Identical Twin A resides in the environment of Identical Twin B, and Identical Twin B inhabits the environment of Identical Twin A.

Since we are unique, and given that the first (of four) dictionary.com definitions of "curiosity" is: 1. the desire to learn or know about anything, it seems to make sense that curiosity, instead of empathy, would be the most appropriate approach to take when interacting with others. What I have in mind here is a genuine curiosity that is fuelled by a desire to know or learn more. I'm not thinking of some kind of a "hidden agenda" curiosity where questions are only being asked to guide or lead the person to some conclusion that the asker has already thought of. The spirit of genuine curiosity is a humble acceptance of our innocence when it comes to the experiences of others, coupled with an eagerness to know more driven only by the marvel of life itself.

(Source: psychologytoday.com)

## Unsafe delivery of measles vaccine kills 15 children in South Sudan

By Susan Scutti

In a remote village in South Sudan, 15 children died from severe toxicity caused by contaminated measles vaccines, government health investigators said Thursday. The National Adverse Events Following Immunization Committee, supported by the World Health Organization, and UNICEF vaccine safety experts examined the cases and those of 32 other children who suffered fever, vomiting and diarrhea.

About 300 people had received inoculations against measles in the village of Nachodokopele during a recent four-day vaccination campaign. The village is in Namorunyang state, which borders Ethiopia and is part of South Sudan's Equatoria region.

Evidence gathered by the investigators indicates that vaccination team members, who were neither qualified nor properly trained, did not adhere to immunization safety standards approved by the WHO.

A single syringe was reused during the campaign instead of being discarded after a single use. The investigators say that reuse caused a syringe to become contaminated, and this contaminated the measles vaccine vials, which then infected the children.

**■ Following aseptic technique**  
Measles is a highly contagious, serious disease caused by a virus, yet a safe and cost-effective vaccine is available. "Measles vaccine is supplied as a freeze-dried product. It's like a powder in a vial," said Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious disease specialist and professor of preventive medicine at Vanderbilt University. This powder must be mixed with an approved diluent -- or diluting liquid -- that comes in another vial, and once combined, "you have an active vaccine that can be used."

The process requires "good aseptic technique," an approved health care method to prevent contamination, said Schaffner, who is also a spokesman for the Infectious Diseases Society of America. Aseptic technique would include not reusing a syringe.

The vaccination team also failed to follow temperature range recommendations to preserve the quality of the inoculations. Instead, they stored the vaccines in facilities that lacked proper temperature control for four days, the investigation found.

"The measles vaccine is a live virus vaccine," Schaffner said, which has been weakened, so it provides protection without making people sick.

"It's also heat-sensitive, so if you reconstitute it and then leave it around -- lying around in hot temperatures -- if you delay administering it, then the vaccine's effectiveness diminishes," he said.

If you somehow contaminate the vaccine, an improper temperature "gives an opportunity for the bad germs that have been introduced into the vaccine to multiply. It's like putting them into an incubator. So then the bad germs can actually grow up, and then when you do administer the vaccine, you're administering a much larger dose of the germ itself"

This is much more likely to lead to a serious infection, such as sepsis.

The South Sudan Ministry of Health has commissioned an administrative committee to review the report and offer suggestions for actions to improve vaccine delivery going forward, according to the WHO.

The Ministry of Health could not be reached for comment for this report.

**■ Struggles in South Sudan**  
A country in east-central Africa, South Sudan borders Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic. In 2011, South Sudan gained its independence from Sudan, yet it has struggled with governance, according to the CIA World Factbook. Though a peace agreement was signed by warring parties in 2015, fighting broke out between the two principal parties that signed the agreement, and the country re-entered conflict in July.

As of July, the total population of South Sudan was 12.5 million. In February, the UN announced a formal declaration of famine in parts of Unity state, where 4.9 million are in need of help.

Risk of measles and other preventable diseases is extremely high in South Sudan due to a backlog of unvaccinated children in areas of insecurity. The country has experienced significant measles outbreaks.

"In 2013, there were 145,700 measles deaths globally," the WHO said. "In refugee settings, the death rate from measles may be as high as 30%."

Worldwide, more than 2 billion children have been protected against measles by the vaccine.

"The vaccine is extraordinarily effective in preventing these infections. We'd like to give it to every child in the world," Schaffner said. In use since the late 1960s, the vaccine offers children lifelong protection against the measles virus.

"It's likely there were a whole series of errors in the administration of the vaccine (in Nachodokopele) for something this tragic to occur," he said. "It's, fortunately, enormously rare."

(Source: CNN)

**Worldwide, more than 2 billion children have been protected against measles by the vaccine.**



## Artisans promoting skills at Tehran's intl. Quran exhibit

**HERITAGE TEHRAN** — Several Iranian artisans are showcasing their handicrafts at the 25th International Holy Quran Exhibition, which opened to the public at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Mosalla on May 29.



People look at handcrafted calligraphy panels at the 25th International Holy Quran Exhibition in Tehran, June 4, 2017.

Five stalls have been dedicated to the exhibit that showcases tableaux made of leather, semi-precious stones, enamel works, textile printings, traditional jewelry, and embellished Quran book covers most of which bear spiritual themes, IRIB reported on Tuesday.

The International Holy Quran Exhibition features copies of the Holy Quran printed by various worldwide publishers and it runs until June 16.

## U.S. Labor Dept to ramp up fraud probes of foreign visa programs

The U.S. Labor Department said on Tuesday it is stepping up efforts to root out potential fraud in its visa programs for foreign workers, a move that will include increases in both civil investigations as well as criminal referrals.

The announcement by Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta follows President Donald Trump in April ordering a review of the U.S. visa program as part of his "America First" campaign pledge.

The April executive order specifically entailed a review of the H-1B visa program, which is routinely used by technology firms like Tata Consultancy Services Ltd, Cognizant Technology Solutions Corp and Infosys Ltd to bring skilled foreign workers, such as engineers and programmers, to jobs in the United States.

Critics of the program, including Trump senior adviser Stephen Miller, have argued that the laws governing these visas are lax and make it too easy for companies to replace U.S. workers with less-expensive foreign labor.

The U.S. Labor Department and Department of Homeland Security each play a role in reviewing the applications for foreign guest workers.

In April, Homeland Security said it was planning to take steps as well to prevent fraud in the H-1B visa program.

On Tuesday, the Labor Department said its new policy will be to "enforce vigorously all laws within its jurisdiction governing the administration and enforcement of non-immigrant visa programs."

(Source: Reuters)



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Rapa Nui National Park

Rapa Nui National Park, the indigenous name of Easter Island, bears witness to a unique cultural phenomenon. It is a protected Chilean wildlife area which concentrates the legacy of the Rapa Nui culture.

This culture displayed extraordinary characteristics that are expressed in singular architecture and sculpture within the Polynesian context. Easter Island, the most remote inhabited island on the planet, is 3,700 kilometers from the coast of continental Chile and has an area of 16,628 hectares while the World Heritage property occupies an area of approximately seven thousand hectares, including four nearby islets.



The island was colonized toward the end of the first millennium of the Christian era by a small group of settlers from Eastern Polynesia, whose culture manifested itself between the eleventh and seventeenth centuries in great works such as the ahu –ceremonial platforms- and carved moai - colossal statues- representing ancestors.

Rapa Nui National Park most prominent attributes are the archaeological sites. It is estimated that there are about 900 statues, more than 300 ceremonial platforms and thousands of structures related to agriculture, funeral rites, housing and production, and other types of activities. Prominent among the archaeological pieces are the moai that range in height from 2 m to 20 m and are for the most part carved from the yellow-brown lava tuff, using simple picks (toki) made from hard basalt and then lowered down the slopes into previously dug holes.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan lures tourism investors: official

**TOURISM TEHRAN** — The southeastern Iranian province of Sistan-Baluchestan is more and more attracting tourism investors in particular in its ecotourism and hospitality sector, the provincial tourism chief says.

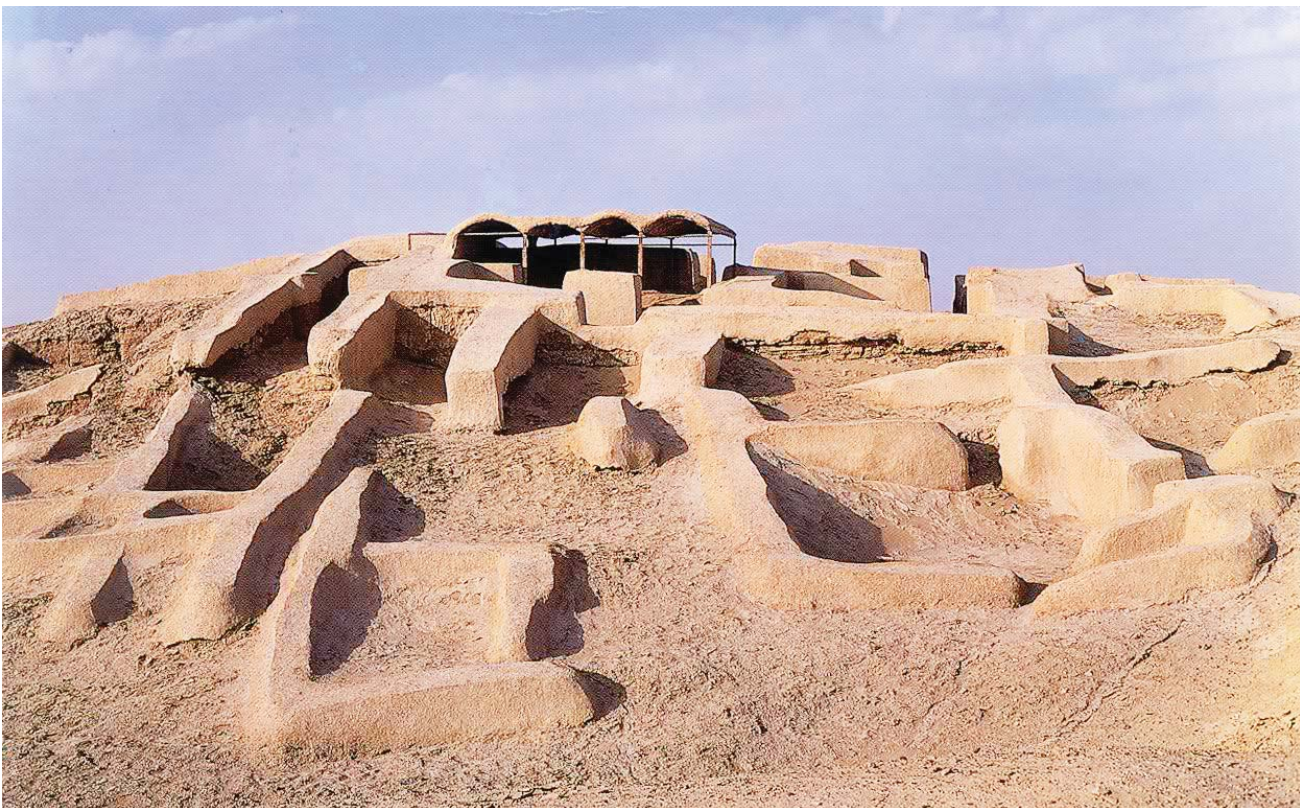
A Dubai-based Iranian individual aims to invest \$500 million in building a tourism town in the region, ISNA quoted Kambiz Moshtaq-Gohari as saying on Wednesday.

The tourism hub will be constructed on the outskirts of Tis, an ancient village near the port city of Chabahar, Moshtaq-Gohari added without giving further details.

Iranian tourism authorities seek to put a new face to the province in a bid to turn the vast region into a tourist destination.

"Given what's out there [in the media] about Sistan, the province needs to completely revamp its image," Sistan-Baluchestan Governor Ali-Osai Hashemi said on March 8.

The province has long been shunned by potential foreign travelers though it is home to several distinctive archaeological sites and natural attractions, including two UNESCO World Heritage sites, namely Shahr-e-Soukhteh (Burnt City) and Lut Desert, shared between it and Kerman



A general view of the Burnt City, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Sistan-Baluchestan Province.

Province.

A strip of land stretching along the

southern border of Sistan-Baluchestan is home to mangrove forests that are

replete with diverse species of seabirds such as flamingos and herons.

## London's tourism industry counts cost of latest terrorist attack



London as seen from the Thames east of City Hall (Credit: Sergey Borisov/Sergey Borisov)

The capital's increased popularity, however, forms part of a longer-term trend rather than a spiked response to favorable fluctuations in the exchange rate. Last year London welcomed a record 19.1m overseas visits to the city and is now welcoming 25 percent more overseas visits, compared to five years ago - itself a particularly notable year with the 2012 Olympic Games being hosted in Stratford.

The manager of one Knightsbridge luxury hotel told me today he remained optimistic about the city's enduring high popularity. His hotel has so far noticed

no impact from the terrorist attack at all, with no increase in the number of cancellations or a dip in the volume of booking enquiries. Data from Forward Keys, used by London & Partners and Visit Britain to monitor travel-agent bookings to London and the UK, has recently also provided indications that interest in the country hadn't dipped as a consequence of the atrocities on Westminster Bridge and in Manchester. As of May 27, two months after the former attack and five days after the latter, visits to the UK were up 11 percent year on year.

But while few in London's tourism in-

dustry have publicly suggested the capital will suffer a long-term degradation in its popularity due to these events, there have been some indicators that confidence in the sector has dipped. Travel Weekly reports that shares across the sector fell this week, with Merlin - operator of the London Eye and Madame Tussauds - dropping 13p to 524p and British Airways owner International Airlines Group dropping 15.5p to 592p.

One of the few companies to confirm to Telegraph Travel that they had seen a significant hit to their business in the wake of the UK terrorist attacks is HenHeaven, which organizes hen parties and counts London as its most popular destination. According to CEO Rob Hill, they "have seen a 60 percent drop in London traffic on the site...[though] we are expecting this to recover after not too long".

While businesses nationwide will be keen to assess the commercial impact of these terrible events, London & Partners' Laura Citron is urging tourists to continue to support the city: "Londoners and visitors are resilient and we are confident that tourists will stand by the city and our values. Today, London is up and running as normal, and it is great to see people out enjoying our unbeatable array of museums, restaurants, shops and theatres. Some 700,000 Londoners rely on tourism for their livelihoods and visitors have never been more important or more welcome here." (Source: The telegraph)

## Kenya tourist lodge shuts after land invasions and wildlife killings

A lodge owned by a murdered British rancher in Kenya's northern Laikipia region announced its closure on Monday after being overrun by herders for months, ahead of August polls in which some politicians have made land reform a campaign issue.

Tristan Voorspuys, a British army veteran, was shot dead on Sosian in March, one of dozens killed and injured in Laikipia as armed herders searching for grazing have

driven their cattle onto private farms and ranches from poor quality communal land.

"Since the beginning of the year Sosian, amongst other properties in West Laikipia, has been battling mass land invasions, violence and vandalism," the Laikipia Farmers Association (LFA) said in a statement on Monday.

"Attempts by government forces to rebuff the invaders on a large scale have been unsuccessful thus far."

## Greening your summer vacation

One new resource, the Travel Better Club from Sustainable Travel International, a non-profit focused on green travel, aims to develop an online community of travelers sharing experiences and recommendations (the fee is \$25, waived if the coupon code iTravelBetter is used). The group has about 2,000 members, and the site offers a 30-minute online training course on evaluating sustainability in travel.

Geared toward millennial travelers, the new app Adventure Junky makes a game of sustainable travel practices, awarding points for low-impact experiences and showcasing destinations and travel operators that offer them. Friends can play against one another or compete globally for bragging rights.

Sustainability is a big-umbrella term that addresses the economy, communities and the environment. Here are three aspects to consider as you plan.

### ■ Transportation

According to the United States Environ-

mental Protection Agency, transportation accounts for 27 percent of annual greenhouse gas emissions, the kind that trap heat and warm the planet. Transportation, which includes everything from food trucked across the country to car commuting, is second only to electricity production in those emissions. Since 1990, total emissions are up about 4 percent, and the agency attributes the increase in transportation emissions to the growth in travel.

The remedy isn't to stop traveling, which is a major economic driver, particularly in emerging countries, but "to do it smarter," said Ms. Honey of Crest. "Look for larger, more fuel-efficient engines. Try to travel on nonstops. Going down and coming up creates more emissions. And where there are alternatives like trains and buses, do those. Try not to do short-haul flights."

Carriers like United Airlines and tour companies such as AdventureSmith Explorations offer carbon calculators on their

websites that allow travelers to determine the impact of travel and make a commensurate donation to carbon reduction projects such as wind farming and reforestation. The adventure travel company Wild Frontiers includes the offset fee in its airfare.

Costs depend on the programs supported. At United, the nearly 10,000-mile round trip between Newark and Honolulu could recently be offset with a \$14.78 donation to a wind farm, or \$17.74 to help protect a forest in Peru.

(Source: The New York Times)





# Increased sea ice drift puts polar bears on faster moving treadmill

A new study led by the U.S. Geological Survey and the University of Wyoming found that increased westward ice drift in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas requires polar bears to expend more energy walking eastward on a faster moving "treadmill" of sea ice.

These findings represent the first assessment of the consequences of changing drift rates for polar bears; one of several previously unexplored effects of sea ice loss.

"Increased sea ice drift rates likely exacerbate the physiological stress due to reduced foraging opportunity already experienced by many polar bears in the warming Arctic," said Dr. George Durner, research ecologist with the USGS and lead author of the report, "adding yet another 'straw to the camel's back.'"

**■ Radio-tracking data**  
The results were derived from radio-tracking data of collared adult female polar bears in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas coupled with sea ice drift data from the National Snow and Ice Data Center. The data, comprising of over 77,000 bear locations and matching ice drift values, were collected during two periods with different sea ice characteristics, 1987-1998 and 1999-2013.  
"These were very intensive analyses requiring advanced computational capabilities," said Dr. Shannon Albeke a spatial ecologist with the Wyoming Geographic Information Science Center. "It was prob-



ably the most complicated analysis of my career."  
"This study demonstrates the unparalleled value of long-term uninterrupted data collection," said Dr. Merav Ben-David from the Department of Zoology and Physiology at the University of Wyoming. "Without access to the ice data from NSIDC, and the interagency and international cooperation, we could not have

**The study estimates that polar bears must catch and consume one to three more seals per year (a 2-to 6-percent increase) in order to compensate for the higher expenditure of living on faster drifting ice.**

conducted this project."

**■ Polar bears**  
The study estimates that polar bears must catch and consume one to three more seals per year (a 2-to 6-percent increase) in order to compensate for the higher expenditure of living on faster drifting ice. This elevated energy expenditure is concurrent with a diminished availability of sea ice suitable for hunting seals, due to early ice melt in spring and expansive ice melt during summer.

The need to travel longer distances coincides with deterioration of the ice surface, on which polar bears walk, creating a complex and difficult environment to transverse. The study showed that during the recent period, a solitary adult female polar bear required between 2,800,000 and 3,200,000 kcal annually. This was 51,000-to 107,000-kcal more than during the early period and is 3 ½ to 4 times greater than total energy requirements of a moderately active adult human female.

The paper entitled "Increased Arctic sea ice drift alters polar bear movements and energetics" was published Tuesday by the journal Global Change Biology. Partners in this research included the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and Polar Bears International.

(Source: usgs.gov)

## Even moderate drinking linked to changes in brain structure, study finds

Drinking even moderate amounts of alcohol is linked to changes in brain structure and an increased risk of worsening brain function, scientists said on Tuesday.

In a 30-year study that looked at the brains of 550 middle-aged heavy drinkers, moderate drinkers and teetotallers, the researchers found people drank more alcohol had a greater risk of hippocampal atrophy - a form of brain damage that affects memory and spatial navigation.

People who drank more than 30 units a week on average had the highest risk, but even those who drank moderately - between 14 and 21 units a week - were far more likely than abstainers to have hippocampal atrophy, the scientists said.

The research team - from the University of Oxford and University College London - said their results supported a recent lowering of drinking limit guidelines in Britain, but posed questions about limits recommended in the United States.

U.S. guidelines suggest that up to 24.5 units of alcohol a week is safe for men, but the study found increased risk of brain structure changes at just 14 to 21 units a week.

A unit is defined as 10 milliliters (ml) of pure alcohol. There are roughly two in a large beer, nine in a bottle of

wine and one in a 25 ml spirit shot.

**■ Adverse consequences of drinking**  
Killian Welch, a Royal Edinburgh Hospital neuropsychiatrist who was not directly involved in the study, said the results, published in the BMJ British Medical Journal, underlined the "argument that drinking habits many regard as normal have adverse consequences for health".  
"We all use rationalizations to justify persistence with behaviors not in our long term interest. With (these results) justification of 'moderate' drinking on the grounds of brain health becomes a little harder," he said.

The study analyzed data on weekly alcohol intake and cognitive performance measured repeatedly over 30 years between 1985 and 2015 for 550 healthy men and women with an average age of 43 at the start of the study. Brain function tests were carried out at regular intervals, and at the end of the study participants were given a MRI brain scan.

After adjusting for several important potential confounders such as gender, education, social class, physical and social activity, smoking, stroke risk and medical history, the scientists found that higher alcohol consumption was associated with increased risk of brain function decline.



Drinking more was also linked to poorer "white matter integrity" - a factor they described as critical when it comes to cognitive functioning.

The researchers noted that with an observational study like this, no firm conclusions can be drawn about cause and effect. They added, however, that the findings could have important public health implications for a large sector of the population.

(Source: Reuters)

## NASA needs to develop new Mars missions to prevent stall in exploration

The next rover that NASA plans to send to Mars in 2020 has a big job to do: gather and prepare samples from the Red Planet that can eventually be returned to Earth. It's the first step toward a coveted "Mars sample return" — one of the highest priorities in the planetary science community right now. The only problem? There is no second step planned. Currently, the space agency doesn't have a procedure for getting these samples off Mars and back to our own planet.

That's a huge problem, according to the Planetary Society, which released a white paper today analyzing the current state of NASA's Mars Exploration Program. It's the space agency's long-term

initiative to explore the Red Planet with satellites, rovers, and landers. However, the paper, titled "Mars in Retrograde," paints a fairly bleak picture of the program's future.

After suffering underinvestment over the past decade, the program has seen cutbacks, such as the cancellation of a few planned missions. And essentially, NASA's exploration of Mars comes to a halt after the Mars 2020 rover, since there are no official follow-up missions in the works.

**■ Developing news missions**  
The Planetary Society argues that now is the time to start developing new missions to Mars if we want to keep up the amazing science that the U.S. has done at

the planet. To continue our study of Mars, we're going to need a new orbiter to provide communication capabilities, as well as a vehicle to get any future samples off of Mars. And since planetary missions take many years to come to fruition, we'd need to get started on these vehicles sooner rather than later in order to have them ready in the mid-2020s or 2030s.

For now, though, it looks increasingly likely that these new missions could fall by the wayside. The president's 2018 budget request for NASA doesn't call for the development of any new Mars mission — and it may be difficult to start anything new in the future, too. NASA is facing flat budgets for the next five years, without

any adjustments for inflation, according to a report in Space News. So the funds for new vehicles may be scarce.

The Planetary Society says if that's the case, we could be facing a significant gap in U.S. exploration of Mars in the decades to come.

"Right now we are unconsciously setting ourselves up for a very difficult Mars program in the 2020s, because of all these immediate needs," Casey Dreier, director of space policy at the Planetary Society, tells The Verge. "We don't want to have a problem where we've prepared these samples and then they just rot on the ground because we're unable to commit to bringing them back."

(Source: The Verge)

## One egg per day boosts growth in infants

An egg a day helps infants grow more quickly. New research shows that babies as young as six months develop faster when given one egg daily, and have a much reduced risk of stunting, a serious problem that impacts about 162 million children around the world under the age of 5.

In a study, researchers gave eggs to 80 infants between six and nine months of age for one year.

Another 84 weren't given eggs and served as a control group. Compared to these controls, the egg-eating youngsters had a 47 percent lower prevalence of stunting, which is defined as being too short for one's

age. Their length-for-age measurement also shot up by a significant margin.

Eggs have sometimes been called a "complete food" (or even a "perfect food"), and research continues to show that eating this food has health benefits. Eggs contain all of the necessary amino acids, as well as choline, various growth factors and DHA, a polyunsaturated fatty acid important for the brain.

All of these are necessary for proper growth and development, and the normal function of the body.

**■ Initial evidence**  
Study first author Lora Iannotti, a researcher at Wash-

ington University in St. Louis, says it's not clear yet which of these nutrients might be the most important, but the group plans further work to find out. Initial evidence suggests choline could have an important role in growth.

As a result of the study, the Ecuadorian government has already changed its recommendations, suggesting that infants as young as seven months can safely be given eggs. (Previously the recommendation specified not giving eggs to kids younger than 1 year old.)

"They're a high quality food that should probably be given to young children in all countries," Iannotti says.

(Source: Newsweek)

## IMIDRO Wins ISO 9001:2008 Certificate

Iranian Mines and Mining Industries and Development Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) managed to receive prestigious German "DQS" Company's ISO 9001:2008 certificate, Public Relations Dept. of the Organization reported.

ISO 9001:2008 certificate focuses on final auditing of Quality Management System (QMS).

For his part, Chairman of the Board of Directors and Managing Director of IMIDRO Mehdi Karbasian expressed his

satisfaction to the colleagues, staff and personnel of the Organization and said: "Benefitted from the most experienced and expert manpower, the company put the consecutive improvement of processes atop agenda."

A 30-member team at the Organization was given necessary consulting and training services in order to receive this certificate according to the world's latest standards, he maintained.

He reiterated: "Accordingly, IMIDRO

can use logos of ISO 9001 certificate at its letterheads within the framework of stipulated rules and regulations as of the issuance date of this certificate."

In the end, Chairman of the Board of Directors and Managing Director of IMIDRO Mehdi Karbasian said: "It is predicted that attaining this certificate will improve processes and correct executive measures and procedures."

Amir Khorramshad Representative of Senior Management in IMID-

RO Quality Assurance Systems was the next speaker who said: "With the implementation and deployment of Quality Management System (QMS) in IMIDRO, we are duty bound to offer quality services in this regard in line with gaining satisfaction of customers in the best form possible."

It is hoped that IMIDRO will take giant stride in strengthening deployment of this system at the Organization, he ended.

## Walking fish along the ocean floor is making scientists scratch their heads

Imagine taking an evening dive and seeing a fish casually strolling along the ocean floor ... on what looks like a pair of legs.



That's exactly what happened to a French diver off the coast of Bali, Indonesia on a recent night expedition. Luckily, he filmed the encounter so scientists (and the internet) could enjoy.

The diver, Emeric Benhalassa, said he suspected the creature was a type of stingfish (one of the world's most venomous fish), National Geographic reports. However, scientists have not been so sure, and have been unable to reach a consensus about what the bizarre creature actually is since Benhalassa's video surfaced on Monday.

The footage shows an orange-ish colored fish with billowy brown fins and what appear to be spiny legs scuttling around the ocean floor. While stingfish don't actually have legs, they do have "pectoral filaments" (a part of their pectoral fins which separated through evolution), which they use to root around for crustaceans and worms. Yum.

According to National Geographic, possible scientific identifications of the fish have included a striped stingfish, a painted stinger, a whitetail goblinfish, or even an undescribed species.

Without being able to hold the fish in their hands, scientists say it's hard to make an exact identification. It doesn't help that very little is known about the behavior of the stingfish, because they spend their days buried in the mud.

Stingfish are viewed as a delicacy in Japan and make expensive menu items, while in parts of Southeast Asia they are tossed back into the ocean because they are believed to be devils.

(Source: Mashable)

## Mystery of Cleveland dinosaur graveyard finally solved by scientists

The Cleveland-Lloyd Dinosaur Quarry (CLDQ) was first discovered in the 1920s and excavations soon showed it was the densest deposit of Jurassic theropod dinosaurs ever found. They also showed the fossil bed had an unusually large proportion of Allosaurus fossils — a 28- foot-long predatory dinosaur that lived in North America 155 to 150 million years ago.

The question of how so many dinosaurs ended up in such a small area has baffled scientists ever since. Some theories suggest there was a catastrophic event — potentially the dinosaurs were poisoned, died in a severe drought, or became trapped in the thick mud that would have been present at the site.

Another idea is that the site represents numerous events that would have brought dinosaurs to the site, either alive or dead, over different periods of time.

In a study published in the journal PeerJ, a team of U.S. researchers tried to reach a consensus about how the fossils ended up at the CLDQ by analyzing the processes that affected the remains as they were fossilized. As well as looking at the dinosaur fossils, the team examined the minerals in the sediments to better understand the environment of the period.

This allowed them to develop a reconstruction showing the history of the deposits.

Study author Jonathan Warnock, from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, tells Newsweek that before they began their research they did not know which result — evidence of single or multiple death events—to expect.

(Source: newsweek.com)

## Czech scientists see growing risk of asteroid hitting Earth

The risk is growing that Earth will be hit by an asteroid from a meteor stream known as the Taurids, Czech astronomers said on Tuesday.

The astronomers, from the Czech Academy of Sciences, drew their conclusion after analysing 144 bolides -- large meteors that explode in the atmosphere -- from the Taurids and detecting a new branch with at least two asteroids measuring 200-300 meters (220-330 yards) in diameter.

"Most probably, the branch also includes many undetected asteroids which are dozens of meters in diameter or larger," the Czech academy said in a press release.

"Hence, the danger of a crash with an asteroid grows markedly once every few years that the Earth encounters this stream of inter-planetary material."

The new branch comprises objects moving together around the Sun, and the Earth encounters it once every few years for a period of about three weeks.

"During this period, the probability of a collision with a larger object (of about dozens of meters in diameter) is markedly higher," the Academy said.


The asteroids are very fragile, but when they are this large they may penetrate deep into the atmosphere and pose a real threat of collision with Earth, it added.

The study urges further research to obtain a "better description of this real source of potentially hazardous objects large enough to cause a local or even continental disaster."

(Source: AFP)



## Health tips for Ramadan



ARTICLE

By Seyed Mahdi Mirghazanfari, MD, PhD

Part 4

The holy month of Ramadan contains the most blessed days and nights and is an opportunity for Muslims to practice abstinence and give up mundane desires for a short period of time.

On one hand, fasting is a way of developing self-control, gaining a better understanding of God's gifts and greater compassion towards the deprived.

On the other hand, from the Iranian traditional medicine's point of view it can also help the body to maintain health by getting rid of unwanted materials built up in the body over the past eleven months.



The meals of Suhur (eaten early in the morning before the dawn) and Iftar (eaten after breaking the fast at the sun set) are somehow ushering us to the best timing for eating during the day all year round which means to have an early breakfast and dine early at night right after the sunset.

Here are some eating tips to experience better fasting days.

■ **Cut back on leek, onion, tarragon**  
Try to cut back on some vegetables such as leek, tarragon and onion especially for Suhur meal as consuming them might work up a thirst during the day. It is better to eat salads especially lettuce with cucumber for Suhur.

■ **Not to eat much Ash-e reshteh, beef**  
Try to avoid consuming too much Ash-e reshteh (a type of thick soup featuring reshteh (thin noodles), vegetables, beans, chick pea, and lentil) or beef which are all considered as heavy meals.

■ **Spray face with water, rose water**  
During the day you can spray your face with some water and rose water to quench the thirst.

■ **Never breaking fast with cold water**  
Drinking cold water at the Iftar is the worst possible habit. As the stomach is pretty hot due to long hours of fasting drinking cold water can cause damage both to the stomach and the liver (which is in close proximity of the stomach as well). It is like pouring cool dater inside a hot glass container which could break or damage it.

Additionally cold water can cause constipation, poor digestion, unquenchable thirst and anxiety.

## LEARN ENGLISH The Weekend - Bowling

A: Alright, so the first thing that you need to know about **bowling** is that you should never cross that line where the lane begins.

B: Why not?

A: Because they **polish** and oil it to make the ball slide down. If you step there you will slip and fall.

A: OK, so I got my bowling shoes, my ball, our names on the scorecard, so now, how the heck do I play this?

A: You throw the ball down the **lane** and try to **knock** down all the pins. If you do, that is called a strike. If you don't knock them all down on the first try, then you get a chance to get the spare. After ten frames, we add up the points and see who has the most. Three hundred is a perfect score, but very hard to get.

B: Got it! OK, I'm gonna give it a go. Oh no! My ball went in the **gutter**!

A: I told you, its harder than you think. Now let a **pro** show you how it's done.

■ **Key Vocabulary**  
**bowling**: a game where you try to knock pins down with a ball

**polish**: to make smooth and glossy, esp. by rubbing or friction

**lane**: any narrow or well-defined passage, track, channel, or course

**knock**: to strike in collision

**gutter**: a sunken channel on each side of the lane

**pro**: an expert player

■ **Supplementary Vocabulary**  
**split**: separate or apart

**perfect game**: a game in bowling of 12 consecutive strikes.

**pin**: a small, slender, often pointed piece of wood, metal

**strike**: to hit, collide

**gutter ball**: A ball that goes into the gutter

(Source: irlanguage.com)



Have an idea?  
Be in touch!

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# At Ocean Conference, UN agencies commit to cutting harmful fishing subsidies

As the international community focuses this week on preserving the health of global oceans and seas, the United Nations agencies on agriculture, environment and trade are committing to the sustainable trade of fisheries.

The agencies – the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the UN Environment Program (UNEP) and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) – are due to announce the commitment today at The Ocean Conference, which opened Monday at UN Headquarters in New York and wraps up on Friday, 9 June.

“Trade and trade-policies can facilitate the transition to sustainable ocean-based economies by increasing resource efficiency, improving the environment, enhancing inclusiveness and creating new green business opportunities,” according to the voluntary commitment.

One of outcomes of the commitment is the removal or reduction of harmful fisheries subsidies which are estimated to be as high as \$35 billion.



The issue is “complicated and thorny,” according to the UN agencies. “For the majority of fisheries subsidies, there is a strong correlation with over capacity and

overfishing.”

The commitment likely involves requesting countries to provide information on what subsidies they provide and

prohibiting those that contribute to over-fishing, as well as potentially giving differential treatment to developing countries.

The Ocean Conference focuses on the targets outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by Governments in 2015. In particular among the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 14 highlights the need to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources to benefit present and future generations.

The commitment on fisheries is one of some 850 commitments made at the Conference so far. The voluntary commitments are meant to be taken individually or in partnership by Governments, the UN system, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and others, to support SDG14.

In addition to marking voluntary commitments, participants this week are also due to adopt, by consensus, a “Call to Action” to protect the world's oceans and seas.

(Source: UNIC)

## Human error blamed for Tehran metro collision



**SOCIETY TEHRAN** — The collision of two trains at Tehran's urban subway on Tuesday has been caused by human error, a city councilor has announced.

A technical failure in automatic train protection (ATP) system caused the incident and the train conductor turned the system off without any arrangement,

ISNA quoted Eqbal Shakeri as saying.

About 50 passengers were injured during the incident, which occurred when a train struck another, which stopped at the station.

ATP ensures safe operations in the event of driver's failure. It monitors train location, traffic condition and gives signal to follow certain speeds.

## Tehran to host festival on Latifii viper



**SOCIETY TEHRAN** — Tehran Zoological Garden will hold on Friday a festival on protection of Latifii viper, a venomous viper species endemic to Iran.

It is one of most rare vipers, which is classified Endangered (En) according to the Red List of Threatened Spices of the

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Tehran Zoological Garden vet Iman Memarian told Mehr news agency.

The specific name, Latifii, is in honor of Iranian herpetologist Mahmoud Latifi, who collected the holotype. It is found in Iran in the upper Lar Valley in the Alborz Mountains.

## Gorilla gives birth with help from doctors who treat people

A gorilla at the Philadelphia Zoo has given birth to a healthy baby after a difficult labor that required medical techniques typically used for delivering humans.

A keeper noticed 17-year-old Kira had gone into labor on Thursday. Gorilla labor is typically very quick, but by Friday, it had not progressed and she seemed unwell.

Concerned about her and the baby's health, the zoo brought in a team of veterinarians and doctors who treat people. They included an ob-gyn, surgeons and anesthesiologists from hospitals affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania and Thomas Jefferson University, as well as University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine.

A similar team was in place for a gorilla birth at the zoo last year, but the emergency response wasn't needed.

After 1 ½ hours, the team delivered the male baby



using forceps and an episiotomy, a procedure to enlarge the birth opening.

“It was an anxious and dramatic day at the zoo, but in the end a tremendously rewarding one,” said Andy Baker, the zoo's chief operating officer.

There have been several successful cesarean section deliveries for gorillas over the past few years, but assisted vaginal delivery isn't common, according to the zoo.

Kira was reunited with the baby by Saturday morning and has been continuously cradling and nursing him.

This is the first birth for Kira and third offspring for 32-year old Motuba, who is also father to baby Amani, a female born at the zoo last August.

Western lowland gorillas, which inhabit African forests, are listed as critically endangered species.

(Source: Associated Press)

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

## Charity event collects \$1m to free prisoners

Iranian benefactors have donated a total of 33.426 billion rials (nearly \$1 million) to help free prisoners who had committed involuntary crimes.

The money was collected during a charity fund ceremony, which was held at Tehran's Abgineh Hall on Tuesday, Tasnim news agency reported.

Every year concurrent with the holy month of Ramadan Iranians make generous donations to help free prisoners.

The leader and the president donated 3.13 billion rials (\$78,250) and 2.7 billion rials (\$67,500) respectively, while the parliament speaker and the judiciary chief each made 500 million rials (\$12,500).

Some 290 fundraising events are planned to be held nationwide, Blood Money Organization's director Asadollah Jolaei announced.

## ENGLISH PROVERB

### You can't teach an old dog new tricks

■ **Explanation:** a person who is used to doing things a certain way cannot change

■ **For example:** You're never going to teach your father at the age of 79 to use a computer. You can't teach an old dog new tricks, you know

## PHRASAL VERB

### Zoom in on

■ **Meaning:** focus more closely

■ **For Example:** Henry immediately zoomed in on the weakest part of my argument

## ENGLISH IDIOM

### Your wish is my command

■ **Explanation:** this is a humorous way of saying that you are willing to do whatever the other person asks.

■ **For example:** Breakfast in bed? Your wish is my command!



# Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units makes fresh gains near Mosul

Iraqi pro-government fighters from Popular Mobilization Units (Hashd al-Sha'abi) have registered more territorial gains against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists west of Mosul as they continue their joint operations with army soldiers to flush the extremists out of the country's second largest city.

The media bureau of the volunteer forces, Popular Mobilization Units, announced in a statement that the fighters had regained control over at least 17 villages, including Hassanana, Umm Kharab, Abu Rasin, Umm al-Zobaa', and Tal Mas'ada, near the mainly Shia-populated town of al-Ba'aj.

The statement added that Popular Mobilization Units fighters had earlier managed to rescue 200 families and 10,000 sheep from combat zones south of Ba'ja.

The pro-government forces evacuated all the families in addition to their livestock to safe areas.

Meanwhile, Shaker al-Rishawi, a senior commander of the tribal mobilization forces in the troubled western province of Anbar, told al-Sumaria television network that ISIL Takfiris had blown up two pivotal bridges on the international highway in the province.

Iraqi army soldiers and volunteer fighters from the Popular Mobilization Units have made sweeping gains against the Takfiri elements since launching the Mosul operation on October 17, 2016.

The Iraqi forces took control of eastern Mosul in January after 100 days of fighting, and launched the battle in the west on February 19.

Jens Laerka, the spokesperson of the



Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, said on May 30 that nearly 600,000 civilians have been displaced amid the operation by Iraq's military and volunteer fighters to drive ISIL terrorists out of western Mosul.

He added that there are still major humanitarian concerns regarding the protection of 180,000 people, who are still besieged inside Mosul's Old City and other districts north of the city.

■ **Iraq to block off border with Syria to terrorists**

Also, Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi says the country wants to wrest

control over the border with Syria in coordination with Damascus, as the Iraqi military along with pro-government fighters are pushing the ISIL Takfiri terrorist group to its final days in Mosul, the terrorists' last urban stronghold in Iraq.

The Iraqi premier made the remarks during his weekly presser in the capital Baghdad, adding that the government would definitely not allow ISIL terrorists or any other armed group operating in Iraq to cross into neighboring Syria. Abadi said Baghdad would not enter the years-long crisis in Syria.

His comments came eight days after

paramilitary fighters, consisting of some 40 mainly Shia Muslim groups, reached the Syrian border in the north in an attempt to block ISIL from crossing the common border.

Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq, fell to the ISIL in 2014, when the terrorist group began its campaign of death and destruction in Iraq, making the city its de facto capital in the country. However, Iraqi forces took control of its eastern part in January and the push for the western side, separated from the east by the Tigris River, began in February.

The ISIL terrorist outfit currently holds less than nine percent of western Mosul and is on the brink of total defeat in the city. Blocking the Syrian border means terrorists would no longer receive reinforcement and ammunition from Raqqa, the terror group's de facto capital in Syria, which is also waiting to be totally liberated by the advancing Syrian troops.

The full liberation of Mosul would likely spell the end for the Iraqi half of ISIL's so-called caliphate.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Abadi said Iraqi forces had never used chemical weapons in their counter-terrorism operations, instead they had used smoke grenades, which might be easily mistaken for chemical arms.

Gruesome violence has plagued the northern and western parts of Iraq ever since ISIL terrorists mounted an offensive there in the summer of 2014, and took control of portions of the Iraqi territory.

The terrorists have been committing heinous crimes against all ethnic and religious communities in Iraq, including Shias, Sunnis, Kurds and Christians.

(Source: agencies)

## Trump has no real foreign policy strategy: American expert

1→ 4. Increased employment-but there is no real strategy to accomplish this. Trump employs "supply-side" economic strategies, where by cutting taxes on the wealthy, he claims that economic activity will increase and the nation will have more tax income because of increased profits.

5. Increased enforcement of crimes, even very small crimes.

6. In foreign policy Trump is isolationist. Trump wants the United States to stop paying for military and foreign aid to other nations. He wants other nations to pay for their own defense, and take care of their own refugees. He wants to restrict immigration and erect trade barriers. He thinks this will make America great again. It is a stark retreat from the view of an interdependent world.

As you can see, most of these policies are designed to increase the wealth of the wealthiest Americans, and to reduce support for middle class, poor and immigrant Americans. Some people call this "Robin Hood in reverse" referring to the legendary English hero who stole from the rich to give to the poor. Trump and his Republican supporters are stealing from the poor to give to the rich.

■ **Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller were considered the most influential persons affecting Trump's decisions. However now the focus is on Jared Kushner. What is your opinion?**

A: Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller have been much less prominent in recent weeks. Bannon seems to have been active during the early part of Trump's administration when he was issuing executive orders. Now Trump must work with legislators to pass new laws and regulations, and Bannon is ineffective in this phase of Trump's work. Miller has proven to be antagonistic and unhelpful and has disappeared from the public scene. He may still be influencing Trump on Israeli policy, but because of the continuing scandals in the White House, it is hard to know what this means. Kushner is Trump's son-in-law, and it is generally felt that he is inexperienced and naive. He may have "influence" but his knowledge is very shallow. He

■ **Who determines Trump's foreign policy?**

A: This is a puzzle in the United States. It seems that Trump has no real comprehensive foreign policy "strategy." He views foreign policy as a series of "deals" between him and foreign leaders. He is improvising as he goes. So he meets with them individually and tries to solve big problems with a short meeting. This is a business model, not a political model, and foreign policy specialists are worried. He says one thing to one leader, and then something to another leader that contradicts his first dealing without understanding the consequences. Moreover, he reverses him-

**It is emerging that Trump does not really value expertise as much as he values "loyalty." Anyone in the White House who is not "loyal" is being eliminated. Being "loyal" means not telling Trump about his own mistakes or anything else that he doesn't like.**

self regularly. He has dropped bombs in Syria and Afghanistan that had essentially no effect, but got headlines in U.S. papers, and were popular. He liked that his popularity increased when he dropped these bombs, so he may try that again, as ridiculous as it may seem as a strategy. The Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, has very little knowledge of foreign policy. Jared Kushner is young and naive and has even less knowledge, so these individuals are not modifying Trump's views on anything.

President Trump is about to leave on a foreign trip. We will undoubtedly see him meeting with foreign leaders, with smiling pictures, and individual "deals." However, this is certain to be disruptive, and it may take years to stabilize American foreign policy after this trip—which I believe will be disastrous.

**"Trump has no cohesive policy on anything."**

■ **Which think tanks have effect on Trump's foreign policy?**

A: We see less activity from the right-wing think tanks, AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Council), WINEP (Washington Institute for Near East Policy) and the AEI (American Enterprise Institute) or the Heritage Foundation. Their representatives are not appearing on television or in the press as they did during the Bush administration. In fact some persons associated with these think tanks have been critical of President Trump. But the basic problem is that Trump has no cohesive policy on anything.

■ **What about the role of lobbies by certain countries such as Saudi Arabia?**

A: The Saudi Arabians have a strong supporter in Secretary of State Rex Tillerson who has extensive experience there because he was CEO at Exxon Mobil. Also, Trump's anti-Iran stance is supported by Saudi Arabia. Trump recently received the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, who is hostile toward Iran.

## May, Corbyn push for last votes on last day of election campaigning

British Prime Minister Theresa May and her main opposition rival, Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn, are touring the country on the final day of campaigning in a last push for general election votes.

May started the day with a stop in London and will proceed to visit the South Coast, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire and the West Midlands.

The premier was met with a chorus of boos and shouts of "vote Labor" as she visited London's biggest meat market in the early hours of Wednesday.

The PM's core message focuses on the exit from the European Union, the reason she called the June 8 election late in April. She argues that resources previously dedicated to EU projects would deliver "huge benefits" across Britain.

But in recent weeks, May has seen her popularity slide as the political debate shifted from Brexit to domestic policy in the wake of three terrorist attacks since March all involving assailants who were known to the authorities.

Corbyn has called on May to resign for reducing the number of police officers during her six years as interior minister.

With formal Brexit talks due to start on June 19, May is hoping to sweep up supporters from the Independence Party as well as taking some seats from Labor.

"Give me your backing to lead Britain, give me the authority to speak for Britain, strengthen my hand as I fight for Britain," the Conservative leader urged voters on Tuesday in Stoke-on-Trent.

Despite being seen as an unlikely leader, Corbyn has gained momentum in the polls and regularly attracts big crowds to his rallies.

Corbyn's opposition party has gained a boost since the prime minister released the Conservatives' manifesto on May 18, outlining elderly care costs which the media mocked as the "dementia tax."

May was subsequently forced to back-track on capping the costs, sparking criticism that she is an unreliable leader.

Speaking at a campaign rally in Bir-



mingham on Tuesday evening, Corbyn said May had triggered the general election promising strong and stable government, adding, "they don't say that very

often now, do they?"

"They just imagined everything was going to be all over by 8 June," he said.

(Source: AFP)

## No one would survive U.S.-Russia nuclear war to claim victory: Putin

Russian President Vladimir Putin says if the United States and Russia decided to use their nuclear weapons in a potential conflict with one another, no one would survive that war to claim victory.

"I don't think anyone would survive such a [nuclear] conflict," said Putin in an interview by American film director Oliver Stone, which is to be broadcast next week as a documentary titled "The Putin Interviews" by a U.S.-based cable network.

Stone had asked Putin whether the U.S. would emerge "dominant" in a "hot war."

In the interview, a short portion of which was made available to RT as a teaser for the documentary, Putin further described the U.S.-led NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) military alliance as an instrument of American foreign policy and said those states that join the organization as members inevitably become U.S. "vassals."

"Once a country becomes a NATO member, it is hard to resist the pressures of the U.S. And all of a sudden, any weapons system can be placed in this country. An anti-ballistic missile system, new military bases, and if need be, new offensive systems," said the Russian president.

Russia has long been concerned by the military alliance's expansion toward its borders.

In the interview, Putin said NATO was persistently looking for an enemy to justify its existence.

"There is no longer an Eastern Bloc, no more Soviet Union. Therefore, why does NATO keep existing?" he asked, adding, "My impression is that in order to justify its existence, NATO has a need of an external foe, there is a constant search for the foe, or some acts of provocation to name someone as an adversary."

He then argued that Russia "is forced to" take counter-measures over the ever-growing NATO threat and armed military build-up on Russian borders.

"We have to aim our missile systems at facilities that are threatening us. The situation becomes more tense," Putin said.

(Source: RT)

## Homegrown terrorism and why the threat of right-wing extremism is rising in America

7→ The fatal stabbing of Taliesin Myrddin Namkai Meche and Ricky John Best aboard a train in Portland, Oregon on May 26 seems to be emerging as an exception. The alleged killer of these two white men, Jeremy Joseph Christian, attacked them with a knife after they stood up to him for harassing two young women who appeared to be Muslim, police said. A third injured passenger is expected to survive. Much of the media coverage is focused on Christian's violent and racist background.

Given the spontaneous nature of so much far-right violence, U.S. counterterrorism policies should, in my view, target the dissemination of white supremacist ideology, rather than just identifying planned attacks and monitoring established white supremacy groups.

The number of violent attacks on U.S. soil inspired by far-right ideology has spiked since the beginning of this century, rising from a yearly average of 70 attacks in the 1990s to a yearly average of more than 300 since 2001. These incidents have grown even more common since President Donald Trump's election.

The Southern Poverty Law Center, a nonprofit that researches U.S. extremism, reported 900 bias-related incidents against minorities in the first 10 days after Trump's election — compared to several dozen in a normal week — and the group found that many of the harassers invoked the then-president-elect's name. Similarly, the Anti-Defamation League, a nonprofit that tracks anti-Semitism, recorded an 86 percent rise in anti-Semitic incidents in the first three months of 2017.

Beyond the terror that victimized communities are experiencing, I would argue that this trend reflects a deeper social change in American society.

The iceberg model of political extremism, initially developed by Ehud Shpritzak, an Israeli political scientist, can illuminate these dynamics.

■ **Far-right extremists**

Murders and other violent attacks perpetrated by U.S. far-right extremists compose the visible tip of an iceberg. The rest of this iceberg is under water and out of sight. It includes hundreds of attacks every year that damage property and intimidate communities, such as the recent attempted burning of an African-American family's garage in Schodack, New York. The garage was also defaced with racist graffiti.

Data my team collected at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point show that the significant growth in far-right violence in recent years is happening at the base of the iceberg. While the main reasons for that are still not clear, it is important to remember that changes in societal norms are usually reflected in behavioral changes. Hence, it is more than reasonable to suspect that extremist individuals engage in such activities because they sense that their views are enjoying growing social legitimacy and acceptance, which is emboldening them to act on their bigotry.

Despite an uptick in far-right violence and the Trump administration's plan to increase the Department of Homeland Security budget by 6.7 percent to US\$44.1 billion in 2018, the White House wants to cut spending for programs that fight non-Muslim domestic terrorism.

The federal government has also frozen \$10 million in grants aimed at countering domestic violent extremism. This approach is bound to weaken the authorities' power to monitor far-right groups, undercutting public safety.

How many more innocent people like Richard Collins III — and Taliesin Myrddin Namkai Meche and Ricky John Best — have to die before the U.S. government starts taking the threat posed by violent white supremacists more seriously?

(Source: Newsweek)



## Allegri signs Juventus renewal until 2020

Massimiliano Allegri has signed a new contract with Juventus that ties him to the Serie A champions until June 2020, the club have announced.

The 49-year-olds deal was due to expire at the end of next season, but he has decided to stay put for two additional years.

Allegri was linked with Arsenal earlier this campaign, but he always maintained he intended to stay at Juve and has now ended all speculation about his immediate future.

The former AC Milan boss arrived at the Bianconeri in 2014 to replace Antonio Conte and has since guided the Turin giants to seven trophies.

Juve have not only won the Serie A title in each of Allegri's three seasons at the club – a run which saw them claim an unprecedented

sixth successive Scudetto last season – but have also combined it with Coppa Italia success each year.

They narrowly missed out on a historic treble on two occasions, with Barcelona proving to be too strong in the Champions League final in 2015, before they were beaten by Real Madrid in this year's European showpiece.

(Source: Soccerway)

## Balotelli will play for Borussia Dortmund next season

Mario Balotelli will play for Borussia Dortmund next season according to his agent Mino Raiola.

The Italian is on the lookout for a new club following 17 goals for Ligue 1 side Nice and has been linked with a variety of landing spots.

Raiola linked the 26-year-old with the Bundesliga club recently and added more to fuel to the fire when he appeared at the unveiling of new boss Peter Bosz on Tuesday.

When asked about his client he responded: "Yes. Balotelli will play for Dortmund."

It remains to be seen how much truth there is in Raiola's statement with other clubs, including newly rich Marseille, also interested.

Dortmund have already been busy this summer with Wednesday's arrival, Maximilian Philipp of Freiburg, a fourth new signing.

Philipp follows the arrivals of Omer Toprak from Bayer Leverkusen, Mahmoud Dahoud from Borussia Monchengladbach and Dan-Axel Zagadou from Paris St Germain.

(Source: Independent)

## Nadal reaches semi-final after Busta retires with injury

Rafael Nadal is through to the semi-finals of the French Open after Pablo Carreno Busta retired with an injury.

The nine-time champion took the first set comfortably 6-2 before his Spanish compatriot took a medical time-out and returned to the court with strapping to his abdomen.

Carreno Busta then retired at 2-0 down in the second set to leave Nadal to face either Dominic Thiem or Novak Djokovic in the last four.

The 31-year-old Nadal has spent only around eight hours on court, dropping 22 games in the process, to reach his record-extending 10th semi-final at the French Open.

It is the fewest number of games Nadal has lost on his way to the last four on the Paris clay.

In 2008, he dropped 25. He will face either defending champion Novak Djokovic or Austrian Dominic Thiem next.

(Source: Eurosport)

## Man Utd overtake Real Madrid to top Forbes football rich list

Manchester United have overtaken Real Madrid as the world's most valuable football team, according to business magazine Forbes.

United were valued at \$3.69bn (£2.86bn) and returned to the top of the annual list for the first time in five years.

Spanish club Barcelona were second with a worth of \$3.64bn (£2.82bn) as Real \$3.58bn (£2.77bn) went down to third.

Six English teams were in the top 10, with Manchester City, Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool and Tottenham joining United.

German champions Bayern Munich were fourth, while Italian title winners Juventus were ninth.

Real, who won the Champions League and Spanish title, had been top for the past four years but saw their value drop by 2% as United's went up by 11%.

"Manchester United's return to the top spot is a testament to their powerful brand and marketing acumen," Forbes Media assistant managing editor Mike Ozanian said in a statement.

Leicester, who won the English Premier League in 2015-16, were 19th and West Ham 15th.

(Source: BBC)

# Djokovic weighing options — even a break from tennis — after early French Open exit

The Guardian called his performance "appalling." In his TV commentary, John McEnroe described it as "Tank City." And in a match that quickly got away from him Wednesday, second-seeded defending champion Novak Djokovic was bounced out of the French Open in the quarterfinals by sixth-seeded Dominic Thiem, 7-6, 6-3, 6-0, marking the first time since 2010 that the 12-time Grand Slam winner had failed to make it to the semifinals at Roland Garros.

"It's amazing for me. Before I had a 0-5 head-to-head against him. It was a dream," Thiem said afterward, per the Guardian. "It was a little bit tricky today, there was wind and it was colder than previous days. It's amazing how difficult it is to go deep in a grand slam because you have to play the best guys round after round and it's not getting easier on Friday."

Thiem, who also advanced to the final four at Roland Garros last year, will face nine-time French Open champion Rafael Nadal in the semifinals on Friday. The Austrian, ranked seventh in the world, is the only man to beat Nadal on clay this year, sweeping him in the Rome quarterfinals last month. He followed that up with a 6-1, 6-0 loss to Djokovic, making Wednesday's result all the more stunning.

It was a dreadful debut for Djokovic's pairing with Andre Agassi, whom he took on as coach after his loss in the Rome final to 20-year-old Alexander Zverev Jr. Djokovic had 35 unforced errors and looked "like he doesn't want to be on the court," McEnroe said on TV during the third set, which lasted all of 20 minutes. He hadn't been bageled in a Grand Slam



set since 2005 and hadn't lost in straight sets in a major since his three-set loss to Andy Murray in the 2013 Wimbledon final. With the loss, Djokovic will drop to No. 3 in the world rankings, the first time since 2011 that he hasn't been either No. 1 or No. 2.

Afterward, he said it was all about the first set, not the final one.

"It's hard to comment on the third set. Nothing was going my way. Just a pretty bad set," he told reporters. "All in all, it

was decided in the first set. I tried, I lost that crucial break at the beginning of the second and he started serving better. He deserved to win. He was definitely the better player today. I guess he made it difficult. He has really heavy spin and he can play very quick. He has an all-round game. You can easily lose the rhythm, especially from the backhand corner. It was not there for me."

Djokovic, whose lone tournament win this season came at the Qatar Open in Janu-

ary, also isn't ruling out a break from tennis.

"I know that but I'm working on my game and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't," he said. "This is a whole new situation for me, not winning any big tournaments, so it's not something that has never happened for any other player. All the big players go through it. You have to learn your lessons and get through it stronger. It's a big challenge, but I'm up for it."

(Source: Washington Post)

## Mourinho gives transfer ultimatum to Ed Woodward

The burden of signing players at Manchester United this summer will fall solely on the shoulders of CEO Ed Woodward after Jose Mourinho says he is "fed up" of football after an exhausting first year at Old Trafford.

United is expected to have another busy summer when the transfer window opens on June 9, with Mourinho reportedly giving Woodward a list of four players he wants. Reports have linked the club with strikers Romelu Lukaku, Alvaro Morata and Antoine Griezmann and defender Victor Lindelof.

Signing for United has become a more attractive prospect after the club qualified for next season's Champions League by winning the Europa League in May. Mourinho's third trophy of the season, after the League Cup and Charity Shield. And it was after the Europa League final in Stockholm that Mourinho revealed that Woodward knows the targets he wants.

"Ed Woodward has my list, what I want, what I would like for more than two months," he told BT Sport. "So now it's up to him and the owners. But I don't care about football for now."

He reiterated the message Tuesday, insisting the signings would be up to Woodward, who became executive vice-chairman at the club in 2012.

"This year, I had the most difficult season of my career," Mourinho told VLT, as quoted by the Manchester Evening News. "We played all of the games that



were possible minus two.

"I got fed up and tired of football until the last day. I promised that you would not see me in football stadiums, and I stopped negotiating for players and being worried.

"I handed my list to the CEO in April and he has until August 31 to give me what I want, or not."

If Everton striker Lukaku was on that list, United appears to have had a poor start to the summer after the Belgian chose a move back to Chelsea over joining Mourinho, The Times reported.

Woodward has delivered top transfers in the past. Last summer, he oversaw the signing of Paul Pogba from Juventus for £90 million (about \$116 million) that broke the world transfer record. That summer the club also signed Ibrahimovic, the top scorer last season, as well as Henrikh Mkhitaryan and Eric Bailly.

(Source: Newsweek)

## De Rossi: I am nearing the end for Italy and Roma

Roma star Daniele De Rossi says he could retire from football in 2019 and does not expect to be playing for Italy beyond next year's World Cup.

De Rossi is part of Italy's squad to play Uruguay in a friendly in Nice on Wednesday and will pass Dino Zoff for outright fifth in the Azzurri's list of most capped players on 113 if he plays.

The midfielder, 33, signed a new two-year deal with Roma last week and thinks he is nearing the end for club and country, even though Rome is a host venue for Euro 2020.

"Let's first get to the World Cup, and then in 2018 I will be 35 and I could even bid farewell to the Azzurri shirt," De Rossi told reporters.

"It is a real honour for me to go beyond Zoff, soon it will be Andrea Pirlo, so we are talking about legends of Italian football.

"I will be 34 in a couple of months and I'm absolutely certain that I could be an important player for the World Cup.

"But if I think of 2020, I would be 37 years old, so you have to be realistic. If I'm needed I will always be there, but I consider the World Cup to be my final experience [for Italy].

"This contract I have just signed could be the last contract of my



footballing career."

De Rossi expressed sadness at the departure of Roma boss Luciano Spalletti, who is set to be named as Inter head coach, but dismissed reports that emerged prior to his contract extension suggesting he could also move to San Siro.

"It doesn't bother me at all that I'm not going to Inter, because I never was an Inter player," he said.

"I have always worn the same shirt, and it would be a bit strange to see me wearing a different one of any colour.

"I'm sorry [he's gone] because he's a great coach I had a strong bond with. I hope that he doesn't show 100 percent of how good he is at Inter because they are going to be our rivals for the top places next year."

(Source: Soccerway)

## Russia steps up security as Confederations Cup looms

Russia has boosted security and scrambled to finish an \$800-million stadium as it banks on the eight-nation Confederations Cup to gauge its readiness to host the World Cup next year.

Russia will showcase four of its 12 World Cup venues, including the scandal-plagued St Petersburg Stadium, in a two-week tournament kicking off June 17 that will feature world champions Germany, the various regional champions and the host country.

Russia, now a record low 63rd in FIFA world rankings, have experienced upheaval with three managers in the last two years. But the country hopes to present itself as an able host in a far-flung tournament that will test the security and logistics of its soccer infrastructure.

The tournament, held in Moscow, St Petersburg, Sochi and Kazan, is also meant to ensure the 2018 World Cup in President Vladimir Putin's Russia runs smoothly as he faces political isolation over the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria.

Since clashes between Russian and English fans tarnished the European championship in France last year, Putin has approved legislation that toughens punishments for violence at sporting events as part of a broader crackdown on hooliganism.

The authorities say the Confederations Cup's ticketing system, which requires ticket holders to apply for a personalized fan-ID, will ensure that fans are screened and hooligans kept away.



"Citizens who have committed gross legal violations during sporting events, demonstrated racism, set off fireworks, broken furniture, tried to start fights, are under our unwinking, constant stare," Anton Gusev, deputy head of the interior ministry department overseeing security at sports venues, told reporters on Tuesday.

"This also pertains to foreign soccer hooligans."

The ministry has blacklisted 191 fans, including 54 spectators involved in a pitch invasion at the Russia Cup final in Sochi, an incident that revived concerns about the readiness of Russian soccer venues to handle crowds.

A bombing in the St Petersburg metro that left 16 dead in April also sparked fears that a similar attack could hit

Russia during the tournament.

Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) tried to assuage concerns on Tuesday, saying terrorism did not pose a threat to Confederations Cup participants and spectators.

### ■ THWARTING PROTESTS

A decree signed by Putin last month sparked outrage among Kremlin critics after it imposed tighter restrictions on public gatherings and limited the use of air space and waterways over a 42-day period covering the Confederations Cup.

The decree also requires that foreigners be registered with Russian authorities within one day of their arrival in the country.

The limits on public gatherings, which will also be in force during the World Cup, mean that all rallies, pickets and protests unrelated to soccer in the host cities' regions can take place only at times and locations approved by the authorities.

Activists have decried the fact these restrictions will be in place during nationwide anti-corruption protests on June 12 called by opposition leader Alexei Navalny, after a first round of demonstrations in March saw thousands take to the streets.

A protester holding a sign that read, "I don't care about soccer, I picket where I want," was detained last week outside Moscow's Luzhniki stadium, which will host the World Cup's opening match and final, local human rights group OVD-Info said.

(Source: Reuters)



# Iran climb two spots in beach soccer world rankings

**S P O R T S** Iran have climbed two spots in the beach soccer world rankings published on Wednesday.

Brazil, who won the 2017 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup last month, leapfrogged former holders Portugal to the top of the world rankings.

Brazil's first world title since 2009 moves them up two places to first in a much-changed top six after all but one of the world's top 13 competed in The Bahamas.

While former champions Portugal slip to second place, Iran climb two spots into third ahead of Russia while FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup runners-up Tahiti are back into the top five following their run to the final, beachsoccer.com reported.

Iran made history in the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup, finishing in third place after defeating Italy 5-3.

Switzerland remain in seventh, eighth-place Paraguay swap places with Japan, who now sit ninth, while UAE end May in the top 10, having narrowly missed out on a place in the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup quarter-final.

Rankings:

1. Brazil 4658 points, 2. Portugal 3855 points, 3. Iran 3209 points, 4. Russia 3204 points, 5. Tahiti 3090 points, 6. Italy 3040 points, 7. Switzerland 2407 points, 8. Paraguay 1812 points, 9. Japan 1764 points, 10. UAE 1425 points



## Iranian-French swingman Niktash invited to Iran basketball team



**S P O R T S** Iranian-French basketball player Navid Niktash has been invited to Iran national basketball team.

The London Lions swingman is in preliminary list of the national team for the China basketball international tournament.

"I came to Iran last year to meet my family and also took part in Iran national team training. I hope to be a member

of Team Melli at the China tournament," Niktash told Varzesh3.com.

"I will do my best to be among the final 12 players.

I want to lift trophy in China as a member of Iran national basketball team. I think Iran deserve to win the title," the 26-year-old player added.

Iran national basketball team will be headed by Mehran Hatami.

## Nader Dastneshan named Malavan Bandar Anzali coach



**S P O R T S** Nader Dastneshan has been named as new head coach of Malavan Bandar Anzali football team on Wednesday.

The 57-year-old coach has penned a one-year contract with Iran's First Division team.

The details of the fee contract have not been revealed.

Dastneshan replaced former Iran coach Mohammad Mayelikhani in Malavan.

He started his coaching career in Payam Mashhad in 2004. Dastneshan helmed Sanat Naft win promotion to Iran Professional League in 2016 but was sacked at the middle of the last season.

Dast Neshan has coached Iranian football clubs including Steel Azin, Aboomoslem, Machine Sazi, Mes Kerman, Shahrdari Bandar Abbas and Nassaji Mazandaran.

## Morata decides to join Manchester United over Chelsea

Real Madrid striker Alvaro Morata has decided to join Manchester United this summer, according to reports.

Spanish television show Deportes Cuatro claims that the 24-year-old trusts Jose Mourinho having handed him his first-team debut for Real Madrid in December 2010.

And the Spain international is now ready to make the move to Old Trafford this summer.

Morata is also wanted by AC Milan but the striker is

not interested in a switch to San Siro as he doesn't want to join one of Juventus' rivals.

Last week, United were forced to drastically change their transfer plans after Antoine Griezmann made it clear he would not be joining after Atletico Madrid's transfer ban.

United are understood to be in the market for a No.9 with Morata, Torino's Andrea Belotti and Romelu Lukaku

all shortlisted, although the Belgian striker is closing in on a return to Chelsea.

Morata, meanwhile, has made it clear that he has been unhappy with a lack of playing time under Zinedine Zidane this summer, although after the Champions League final, the striker made it clear he wanted to stay with Madrid.

(Source: Metro)

## Iran taekwondo fighters win 7 medals in Asian Cadet Championships



Young Iranian taekwondo fighters have demonstrated praiseworthy performances at the 2nd Asian Cadet Championships & 2nd Asian Cadet Poomsae Championships in Vietnam, and received seven medals, including five precious golden ones.

On Tuesday, Shayan Rostami and Ali Esmaeilpoor got the gold medals in the male minus 49-kilogram and minus 53-kilogram weight divisions after they managed to overcome their opponents in final encounters at the Military Zone 7 Stadium in southern Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City.

Mobina Nematzadeh, Maryam Vasilbar and Ghazal Soltani were also awarded gold in the female minus 37-kilogram, minus 44-kilogram and 47-kilogram weight categories.

Mobina Kolivand got the silver medal in the female minus 41-kilogram class, and Amir Arsalan Khanzadeh settled for the bronze in the male minus 45-kilogram section.

The 2nd Asian Cadet Championships & 2nd Asian Cadet Poomsae Championships started in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, on June 5 and will finish on June 7, 2017.

Dozens of male and female taekwondo practitioners from various Asian countries, including Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Palestine, the Philippines, South Korea and Uzbekistan, have taken part in the event.

(Source: Press TV)

## Iranian freestyle wrestler Rahimi top-ranked in world



Iranian freestyle wrestler Hassan Rahimi has been named the world's best athlete in the 57-kilogram weight category in the June 2017 edition of the United World Wrestling rankings.

The 27-year-old claimed the top ranking spot of the weight class, standing ahead of the biggest European wrestling star Giorgi Edisherashvili from Azerbaijan.

Turkish freestyle wrestler Suleyman Atli, Zaur Uguev from Russia, Mongolian sportsman Erdenebat Bekhbayar and Romania's Andrei Dukov landed in the third to the sixth places.

On August 19, 2016, Rahimi downed his Cuban opponent Yowlys Bonne Rodriguez in the third-place contest of men's 57kg weight category.

While Rahimi had a 9-0 lead over

his Cuban opponent, he pinned Rodriguez's shoulders to the mat to win the bout by a fall in the third round and collect the bronze medal.

Rahimi, who had a bye in the first round, overpowered Armenian wrestler Garnik Mnatsakanyan 13-0 in the second, before overcoming Russia's representative Victor Lebedev 6-1 in the quarterfinals.

The 27-year-old Iranian sportsman however conceded a 5-10 defeat from Japan's Rei Higuchi in the semifinal, and had to appear in the bronze medal bout.

Wrestling bouts at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games began at Hall 3 of the Olympic Training Center in Barra da Tijuca on August 14, and ran through August 21, 2016.

(Source: press TV)

## Beckham gets green light over Miami land purchase for MLS team

David Beckham's hopes of launching a Major League Soccer franchise in Miami took a giant step towards becoming reality Tuesday after city officials approved the sale of land crucial to a proposed stadium project.

Miami-Dade County commissioners voted by 9-4 to approve the transfer of a three-acre parcel of land worth \$9 million to Beckham's consortium, which reportedly hopes to launch its MLS team by 2021.

Beckham's group had already purchased six acres of land next to the site for some \$19 million in Miami's Overtown district.

"We look forward to working with the Miami community to bring our vision for the neighborhood to life," Miami Beckham United said in a statement, describing the deal as a "major milestone" towards its MLS team.

"Our loyal fans in Miami and around the world have been waiting for this moment for years, and we're thrilled that we're getting closer to our kick-off"

The group hopes to build a 25,000-seat stadium on the site. Beckham's group has said the cost of the stadium, which still needs to be approved by city planners, will be met by private investors with no public funds being used in its construction.

"We are not here to take money from the county or the city, we will pay for this project ourselves, privately, we will pay property taxes and we will be good neighbours," Miami Beckham United official Tim Leiweke said.

Beckham announced in 2014 that he intended to bring a team to the South Florida city, exercising an option he was granted when he joined the Los Angeles Galaxy in 2007.

(Source: AFP)



## What Messi has asked each of his guests for as a wedding present?

There was speculation a few months ago that Gerard Pique had not made the cut for Lionel Messi's wedding invite.

Spanish newspaper El Pais, as per the Daily Mail, believed that a rift between Messi's fiancée Antonella Rocuzzo and Pique's girlfriend Shakira meant the centre-back would not be included on the guestlist.

The two Barcelona stars have been close friends since Messi was just 13-years-old so the Argentine was put in a potentially very awkward position.

However, ahead of the wedding on June 30, another Spanish publication have provided a welcome update on the situation.

According to Sport, Messi has invited every single one of his Barcelona teammates - including Pique - to attend his special day.

Unfortunately for Messi, he has already had one notable RSVP returned with a 'no'.

His club captain Andres Iniesta will not be in attendance, although his reasoning is not yet known.

Recently departed Barca boss Luis Enrique has also missed the cut, along with various members of his coaching staff and the entire board of the Catalan giants.

To avoid being given five different toasters, Messi has come up with a very unselfish wedding list too.

The soon-to-be 30-year-old has asked his guests to make a donation to his foundation instead of your more traditional presents.

Messi will marry Rocuzzo in his native Rosario, Argentina in just over two weeks' time.

The couple already have two sons with Thiago and Matteo born in 2012 and 2015 respectively.

(Source: Givemesport)

## Ronaldo could leave Real Madrid for £157m

Portuguese newspaper A Bola have published a stunning report on the front page of their newspaper this morning.

It claims Ronaldo could leave in the world's biggest transfer ever this summer.

And they add that Manchester United - as well as Monaco and Paris St-Germain - are among the clubs who could lodge an offer.

A Bola sources say clubs in China are also interested - despite Ronaldo now being 32.

The Portuguese superstar is under contract until 2021 but that's said not to put off the mega-bucks owners of the world's biggest clubs.

A Bola add that club chiefs from around the world will soon be ready to negotiate with Real Madrid.

If a deal is done, it would smash the £86m world transfer record set when United signed Paul Pogba last summer.

But despite the huge claims from Portugal, Express Sport understand the world star isn't keen on a move back to Old Trafford.

United sold Ronaldo to Real Madrid for £80m in 2009 and he has gone on to establish himself as one of the greatest players of all time.

He scored twice in Cardiff on Saturday to help Real win the Champions League and secure his fourth winners medal.

Ronaldo has won every major honour with Real and United and is still close to former boss Sir Alex Ferguson.

(Source: Express)



# London Close-Up Film Centre reviewing Kiarostami films

**A R T TEHRAN** — The d e s k Close-Up Film Centre in London is reviewing films by legendary Iranian auteur Abbas Kiarostami.

Rarely seen films made in the 1970s and 1980s for the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults are screening during six programs, which began on Monday, the center announced.

The first program titled “Beginnings and Journeys” is dedicated to a review of “The Traveler”, “Bread and Alley” and “Breaktime”.

“The Report”, a highly influential and compelling marriage drama from 1977, is scheduled to be reviewed in the second program.

“The Experience” and “A Suit for the Wedding” have been selected for the third program, which spotlights Kiarostami’s cinema on adolescence and poverty.

His school films are slated to be screened in the fourth program that will review “Homework”, “Two Solutions for One Problem”, “Colors”, “So I Can” and “Orderly or Disorderly”.

“First Graders”, “Solution No. 1” and “The Chorus” will review Kiarostami’s political allegories in the fifth part.



A scene from Abbas Kiarostami’s “Take Me Home”

The programs will come to an end on June 19 by screening “76 Minutes and 15 Seconds with Abbas Kiarostami”, a

montage film made by Kiarostami’s close friend Seifollah Samadian.

Kiarostami’s “Take Me Home”, in which

he takes his camera to the south of Italy to show a beautiful and playful video of alleys and stairs, will also be screened.

## Tehran to host intl. meeting on set and custom design in summer

**A R T TEHRAN** — The d e s k second edition of the Tehran International Symposium on Set and Custom Design will be held by the end of summer.

“The first edition was held in April 2016, reviewing the set and costume designs in the theatrical productions; however, cinema has been added to the second edition,” the secretary of the symposium, Akbar Jalili, who is also the founder of the symposium, said in a press release on Wednesday.

He added that the Iranian Society of Film Art Directors and the Iranian Society of Stage and Costume Design



are expected to cooperate in the second edition of the event.

A variety of workshops and exhibitions will be organized on the sidelines of the symposium.

## Banksy’s art-for-votes offer erased after police warning

**LONDON (Reuters)** — The pseudonymous British graffiti artist Banksy has withdrawn an offer of free artwork in return for tactical voting in Thursday’s general election after police warned it would invalidate the result.

The artist, who found global fame with his pop-up street art, offered prints of his famous “girl with balloon” for those who voted against Prime Minister Theresa May’s Conservative party in six constituencies near his Bristol home.

Voters were supposed to provide photographic

evidence of their ballot to get the print, but the secretive Banksy withdrew the offer on Tuesday after police said it was a criminal offense to accept gifts in return for votes.

“I regret to announce this ill-conceived and legally dubious promotion has now been canceled,” the artist, whose work often features a political edge, said in a statement.

Five of the six constituencies where Banksy’s art offer had applied were held by the Conservative party, who have a narrow lead over Labour in polling before Thursday’s election.



A gallery technician adjusts Banksy’s artwork ‘Balloon Girl’ (1975) at Sotheby’s auction house at Olympia in London February 2, 2007. (Reuters/Luke MacGregor/File Photo)

## Marrakech’s historic booksellers once again face eviction

**MARRAKECH, Morocco (Reuters)** — Lined up against shopkeepers hawking everything from fresh parsley to colorful socks, Marrakech’s historic booksellers face an uncertain future as authorities plan an urban makeover in one of Morocco’s tourist hubs.

In the shadow of the 12th century Al Koutoubia mosque - also known as the Mosque of Booksellers - the bustling shops once specialized in handwritten manuscripts and religious texts. It is a business that has been passed down from generation to generation.

Only 26 booksellers remain in Bab Doukkala on the edge of the old city. Their stocks include Arabic translations of Karl Marx, modern Moroccan cookbooks as well as centuries-old manuscripts of Islamic law, some of which sell for thousands of dollars.

Now they face eviction by authorities who plan to move them for the sixth time in 40 years as part of a city replanning project for Marrakech, a former imperial capital and home to some of Morocco’s finest mosques, palaces and gardens.

Many of the vendors believe they belong in Jamaa El Fna square inside the old historic medina. They had plied their trade in the popular tourist district for years before being kicked out to make way for food stalls decades ago.

The uprooted booksellers were



Bookseller Omar Zouita poses in his bookshop in Bab Doukkala in the city of Marrakech, Morocco May 13, 2017. (Reuters/Youssef Boudlal)

forced to settle in Bab Doukkala square on the outskirts of the old town about 10 years ago. The line of shops resemble a shantytown, with books packed among the dusty plastic sheeting and rusty metal frames.

Authorities are planning to tear down the Bab Doukkala souk and replace it with a public garden, according to locals.

“This is ‘hogra,’” said Fethat Belkharichi, 66, using a colloquial term to describe the abuse of power and injustices. The word is commonly used in anti-government protests.

Interior ministry officials and local Marrakech authorities did not respond to calls seeking comment.

Trying to form a united front, Omar Zouita, who was among the traders uprooted from Jamaa El Fna, established the “Association of Awareness.” But after two more similar bodies were established, some believe attempts are being made to split their ranks.

“They don’t want anyone defending booksellers here,” Aqdad said.

Their trade has also suffered because of global trends. The popularity of the internet and digital versions of books have led to a steady decline in demand for printed materials.

## Ariana Grande becomes British heroine with Manchester concert

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — U.S. pop star Ariana Grande, hardly a household name in Britain before a suicide bomber killed 22 people at her Manchester concert in May, has emerged as a national heroine there following an emotional televised benefit performance.

In the days following Grande’s sold-out show on Sunday, which raised some \$3 million for a victims fund and became the UK’s most-watched TV broadcast of the year, Britons have embraced the 23-year-old singer. They have called for her to be formally honored by Queen Elizabeth and the city of Manchester.

At the One Love Manchester concert, Grande hugged a weeping schoolgirl as they performed her hit “My Everything” before a crowd of 55,000 people.

The tiny performer ended the show alone on stage, singing “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” in tears.

Her team is working to release that emotional final number as a single to raise even more money for victims, the UK’s Independent newspaper reported on Tuesday.

The concert served as a catharsis for many in Manchester and all of Britain, moving British tabloid journalist Piers Morgan to write Grande a lengthy public apology for doubting her courage.

“By coming back to Manchester so soon, shrugging off the latest attack in London, standing on that stage and performing with such raw emotion and power, you showed more guts, resilience,

strength of character and ‘Blitz spirit’ than every sniveling, pathetic ISIS coward put together,” Morgan wrote in the Daily Mail.

Grande was herself a survivor of the May 22 bombing, still inside Manchester Arena when an explosion ripped through the lobby area following her encore. Morgan had criticized the apparently shaken singer for quickly returning home to Florida instead of staying to console victims.

But within days Grande and her team began organizing the benefit, which overcame considerable logistical and security obstacles to take place less than two weeks later. Days before the show, she turned up unannounced at a Manchester-area hospital to visit young girls wounded in the attack.

Grande carried on with Sunday’s show despite the attack in London the night before in which seven people were killed. She enlisted fellow entertainers such as Justin Bieber, Katy Perry, Coldplay and Oasis frontman and Manchester native Liam Gallagher.

Daily Telegraph columnist Victoria Lambert similarly apologized for dismissing Grande, who first gained fame on the Nickelodeon teen comedy “Victorious,” as a lightweight pop star not fit to be a role model for her daughter.

“Because far from being a cliched child star, Grande has shown herself to be a perfect role model for our daughters after all,” Lambert wrote.

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## NEWS IN BRIEF



### Illustrations to depict ancient Iranian religious tales at Art Feast

**A R T TEHRAN** — Illustrations depicting d e s k ancient Iranian religious tales will be showcased during the Art Feast, an exhibition that will open at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran on Friday.

Works by over 170 illustrators created since 1968 have been selected for the 10-day exhibition, the Forum announced on Wednesday.

Among the illustrators are Farshid Mesqali, Nureddin Zarrinkelk, Manuchehr Dehqan, Parviz Kalantari, Rashin Khairieh and Akbar Nikanpur.

The Forum is located on Musavi St., off Taleqani Ave.



### “Being Born” competing in Granada film festival

**A R T TEHRAN** — Iranian director Mohsen d e s k Abdolvahab’s “Being Born” is competing in the official section of the Granada International Film Festival Cines del Sur, which is currently underway in the Spanish city.

The film tells the story of a couple, who are struggling financially when the wife finds out she is pregnant with their second child. So they opt for an abortion.

The festival will come to an end on Saturday.

## Filmmaker Michael Moore launches ‘TrumpiLeaks’ website for whistleblowers

**NEW YORK (Reuters)** — Documentary filmmaker and liberal activist Michael Moore launched a website called “TrumpiLeaks” on Tuesday to allow whistleblowers to securely leak information to him about U.S. President Donald Trump and his administration.

“Patriotic Americans in government, law enforcement or the private sector with knowledge of crimes, breaches of public trust and misconduct committed by Donald J. Trump and his associates are needed to blow the whistle in the name of protecting the United States of America from tyranny,” Moore wrote in an open letter on the Huffington Post.

“I know this is risky. I knew we may get in trouble. But too much is at stake to play it safe,” Moore wrote.

Moore, 63, said that while no digital communication was 100 percent secure, he and his team had used the most secure technology possible to protect anonymity.

“TrumpiLeaks” was announced one day after the U.S. Department of Justice said that a 25-year-old U.S. intelligence contractor had been arrested and charged with leaking classified National Security Agency material related to Russian interference in the 2016 American presidential election to a news organization. [nL1NJ316M]Trump has called for a crackdown on leaks to the media.

Moore, a longtime champion of liberal causes and outspoken critic of Trump, is working on a documentary about the 2016 presidential election. His other films include “Fahrenheit 9/11”, which was a critical look at the presidency of George W. Bush and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The filmmaker gained fame with the 1989 documentary “Roger and Me”, about his hometown of Flint, Michigan, and 2002’s “Bowling for Columbine.”

The TrumpiLeaks site is a portal on Michael Moore’s personal website. His open letter was also posted on his homepage.

Some U.S. news organizations including The Washington Post, Huffington Post, The New York Times, and ProPublica have links on their websites for the public to send information to journalists.

## Ron Howard to direct documentary on Pavarotti

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Following his successful Beatles documentary, Ron Howard is sticking with music. The Oscar winner is directing a documentary about Luciano Pavarotti, the Italian tenor who rose to superstar status.

Howard’s Imagine Entertainment and White Horse Pictures announced the untitled project last week.

Pavarotti transcended opera to become a leading tenor. Howard says Pavarotti’s life is full of great drama and contradictions.

The tenor became a best-selling classical artist, with more than 100 million records sold, and he had the first classical album to reach No. 1 on the pop charts. He died from pancreatic cancer in 2007 at age 71.