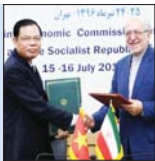




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# Rail reform plan seeks efficiency



© File photo

## Iran blasts Israel's closure of al-Aqsa Mosque

Iran has censured the Israeli regime's recent move to shut down al-Aqsa Mosque and cancel Friday prayers at the holy site, warning against the “dangerous repercussions” of such measures.

According to the Press TV, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Saturday said the Israeli regime's move runs counter to “fundamental principles of human rights and humanitarian law.”

In addition to all crimes and acts of aggression against and violations of the Palestinians’ basic rights, the Israeli regime has “targeted the religious freedom and rights of the Palestinian Muslims with a new alarming precedent, which will lead to dangerous consequences,” he added.

The Iranian spokesperson stressed the importance of the re-opening of al-Aqsa Mosque as soon as possible and called on all independent countries across the world and international circles to exert pressure on the Tal Aviv regime to observe “the least rights” of people in the occupied territories.

The Israeli regime on Friday shut down al-Aqsa Mosque after a deadly shooting at the holy mosque's compound in the Old City of occupied East Jerusalem al-Quds.

The gunfight took place just outside the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount) and left three Palestinians and two Israeli police officers dead.

Following the incident, the Israeli police closed the al-Aqsa Mosque compound, briefly detained Sheikh Muhammad Hussein, the grand mufti of Jerusalem al-Quds, and cancelled Muslim Friday prayers at the site.

“The closure of al-Aqsa Mosque compound, the occupation in itself and the prevention of the call for prayers are all unfair and unjust and constitute a violation to the United Nations resolutions and the international agreements,” Omar Kiswani, director of al-Aqsa mosque, told reporters outside the site.

“We hold the Israeli government responsible for the changes they have made in the al-Aqsa Mosque and taking its control away from us. We will stay outside the mosque until we get back the way it was taken from us,” Al-Jazeera quoted Kiswani as saying.

## Tehraners to pay taxi fares electronically

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — People in the city of Tehran will be able to pay taxi fares electronically by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2018).

Currently, passengers are able to pay taxi fares electronically in some neighborhoods and soon all taxis will be equipped with e-pay system, Tehran transport fleet vice chairman Shahryar Afandizadeh said on Sunday.

On the subject of scrapping of clunker taxis, Afandizadeh explained that some

11,583 old taxis were scrapped and replaced by new models last year, Mehr reported.

He further expressed hope that Peykan taxis (very old, high-emission cars which are not being manufactured anymore) will be completely scrapped and replaced by low-emission cars.

“Out of 17,000 Peykan taxis only 960 are remaining,” he said.

Peyman Sanandaji, Tehran bus operating company's director general, also highlighted that some out of 6,227 buses in Tehran trans-

port fleet some 4,258 are out of order.

We are short of some 3,000 buses in Tehran and despite the fact that some 8,653 buses are needed for public transportation in the city there are merely 6,227 buses of which 4,258 are out of order, Sanandaji regretted.

Tehran persistent air pollution, mostly hitting the city during cold seasons, is blamed on numerous factors namely clunkers, sand mines, sand and dust storms originating from dried up wetlands, pollutant industries, carburetor motorcycles, etc.

## Divided Kurds have conflicting agendas: SISU professor

**By Aria Moghanloo**

**TEHRAN** — A professor of Shanghai International Studies University (SISU) says “Kurds are divided into many factions with overlapping territorial aspirations and conflicting social agendas.”

Robert R. Bianchi also tells the Tehran Times that “the Americans have no great plan” concerning the Kurds.”

Following is the text of the interview:

**■ What are the purpose of the U.S. and its allies, especially Jordan, by taking some military steps in Syria's southern borders?**

A: The U.S. is encouraging Jordan to support stronger attacks on IS positions in Syria and Iraq. Jordan is trying to cooperate without alienating Moscow and Damascus. Jordan needs more Western aid to cope with refugees who include potential opponents of the monarchy, but Amman is also looking beyond the eventual defeat of IS and trying

to avoid becoming caught up in a protracted proxy war between Iran and the U.S.

**■ Why is the U.S. supporting the Kurds especially as the Iraqi Kurds plan to hold an independence referendum in autumn and the Syrian Kurds have raised the Kurdish flag in the cities they have conquered?**

A: The U.S. supports many Kurdish groups with competing goals and alliances. Washington's primary concern is simply to control as much territory as possible through friendly militias. There is no consensus in Washington on how to deal with Kurdish political demands. Kurdish leaders are unlikely to unite behind a single project of nationhood and they trust no great power to provide consistent support.

**■ The U.S. is neglecting its traditional ally Turkey which is strongly opposed to establishment of an independent Kurdish country. What great plans do Americans have in mind**

**about playing with the Kurdish card?**

A: The Americans have no “great plan” concerning the Kurds. Turkey's worry is not that the U.S. will create an independent Kurdistan, but that it will embolden Kurdish militias and separatists to escalate attacks across the country, spreading to all of the major cities and undermining confidence in the ruling party.

**■ What are the Kurds’ aims in seeking closer ties with the United States?**

A: Kurds are divided into many factions with overlapping territorial aspirations and conflicting social agendas. These divisions make Kurdish groups susceptible to manipulation by would-be patrons in many countries who want to benefit from Kurdish discontent without empowering any particular faction too much. This leads to repeated cycles of making and breaking quasi-alliances with multiple great powers and regional states. The U.S. is merely one of many partners in this ongoing dance.



© IRNA/ Mojtaba Mohammadloo

## Iran Air first female CEO inaugurated

Farzaneh Sharafbafi was inaugurated on Sunday as the new CEO of the Iranian flag carrier, Iran Air. Sharafbafi, 44, holds a PhD in aerospace engineering and previously served on the board of Iran Air. She replaced Farhad Parvaresh who will represent Iran at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

## Shahnameh audiobook with introduction by Francis Ford Coppola released

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — An audio version of the Shahnameh, the epic masterpiece of Persian poet Ferdowsi, has been released in English with an introduction by U.S. filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola in the United States.

American voice actor Marc Thompson has narrated the stories based on the latest translation by Ahmad Sadri published by Quantuck Lane Press in 2013. Kingorama, the U.S.-based publisher of “Shahnameh, the Epic of the Persian Kings”, has announced.

In his introduction, Coppola, one

of the greatest filmmakers of the 20th century who is mostly known for his classics such as “The Godfather” and “Apocalypse Now”, says, “Creating this audiobook breathes new life into the Shahnameh stories.”

“It is an immersive experience, making these ancient tales tangible for those who are new to these incredible heroic stories and a delight for those already familiar with the poem.”

The sonic landscape designs have been created by the New York-based Iranian graphic artist Hamid Rahmani-an, and Melissa Hibbard was the editorial director of the project. **→16**

## UN treaty puts ‘moral pressure’ on nuclear-armed states: ex-WH official

**By Javad Heirannia**

**TEHRAN** - A former assistant director for national security in the White House Office of Science and Technology says a global treaty to ban nuclear bombs will put “moral pressure” on nuclear-armed states to disarm.

“At the moment, it is primarily moral pressure, which could have an effect in the long term,” Frank N. von Hippel tells the Tehran Times in an exclusive interview.

The treaty was endorsed by 122 countries at the United Nations headquarters in New York on July 7 after months of talks in the face of strong opposition from nuclear-armed states

and their allies.

“It increases the pressure but no one can foresee how long it will take (to disarm),” notes

Von Hippel, now a professor of Princeton University.

The 10-page treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons will be open for signatures from any UN member state on September 20 during the annual general assembly. While countries that possess nuclear weapons are not expected to sign up any time soon, supporters of the treaty believe it marks an important step towards a nuclear-free world by banning the weapons under international law. **→13**

## Activists protest Israeli premier's planned visit to France

French activists have launched a protest rally against the planned visit by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Paris, slamming Bibi's human rights violations across the occupied Palestinian territories.

The protesters gathered in Place de la Republique square in Paris, wearing T-shirts and holding portraits of Netanyahu with signs reading (in French) “fascist,” “murderer,” “racist” and “torturer.”

The activists also chanted slogans against Israel's continued settlement construction in the Palestinian occupied territories and the blockade of Gaza.

President Emmanuel Macron has invited Netanyahu to visit France.

Addressing the gathering, President of EuroPalestine Olivia Zemor lashed out at Macron for “rolling out the red carpet” for “a criminal, a torturer - the torture of men and children exists - a land thief, to someone who does not respect international law and human rights, which is embarrassing.”

“How can Macron invite such a person? Netanyahu is someone who, if you even only take into consideration the international convention on torture, should be brought to justice the moment he sets foot in France. Because France has signed this convention, which states that anyone who is suspected of committing acts of torture, or to turn a blind eye to these acts, or ordering them, must be brought to justice. So what is he doing here?” she asked.

“He is not being brought to justice, we are rolling out the red carpet for him, what kind of image of France do we want to give?” Zemor pointed out.

In late June, pro-Palestinian campaigners from the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement and Les Désobeissants (the disobedient) held another protest rally in Paris to express their solidarity with the Palestinians.

The activists called for an immediate arms embargo against Tel Aviv until it ends its occupation of the Palestinian territories and complies with international law. **→13**



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Two Iranian locals killed by Pakistan-based terrorists

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Two Iranian local workers **d e s k** have been killed by terrorists based in Pakistan who fired projectiles at Iran's border region of Saravan, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said in a statement on Saturday.

The statement said the terrorists were associated with foreign intelligence services.

"The IRGC Ground Force at the Quds base reacted to the terrorist move, killing one of the terrorists and wounding two others," it added.



Rouhani brother arrested on financial charges: Judiciary

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The brother of President **d e s k** Hassan Rouhani, Hossein Fereydoun, has been arrested on charges of financial crime, the Judiciary announced on Sunday.

"Multiple investigations have been conducted regarding this person. Also other people have been investigated, some of whom are in jail," Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei said in a televised press conference.

Ejei noted that that bail was issued for him on Saturday, but since he failed to secure it, he was sent to prison.



Minister: U.S. hampering Iran's accession to WTO

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Industry, Mining, **d e s k** and Trade Minister Mohammad Reza Nematzadeh has criticized the U.S. for its attempts to obstruct Tehran's accession to the World Trade Organization.

"We have fallen behind in joining the WTO because of U.S. opposition, while we have no technical problem," Nematzadeh said in a meeting with Vietnam's minister of agriculture and rural development in Tehran on Sunday.

Hindering Tehran's membership in the WTO is merely a political issue, Nematzadeh noted, calling on Vietnam to support the country's efforts in that process.



Final draft of anti-U.S. bill ready, lawmaker says

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The final draft of a bill to **d e s k** take reciprocal measures against the United States for its misadventures and terrorist activities in the region is ready to be introduced to the parliament for approval, a lawmaker said on Sunday.

The draft will be introduced to the parliament if the U.S. Congress finalizes an anti-Iran sanctions bill, Alireza Rahimi added.

Rahimi predicted the reciprocal motion to receive backing by the majority of lawmakers.



Iran sentences American to 10 years in prison on spy charges

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Judiciary spokesman **d e s k** Gholamhosein Mohseni Ejei announced on Sunday that an American citizen has been sentenced by the Judiciary to 10 years in prison for "infiltrating" the country and gathering intelligence.

"The person was identified and arrested by the intelligence forces. The court has sentenced the person to 10 years," he told a press briefing.

He did not provide details on the suspect's identity, saying only that the person was a dual national.



Iran says not seeking to form regional coalition

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry **d e s k** spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Sunday that Iran is not seeking to establish coalitions against other countries, noting Tehran instead is pursuing a policy that would contribute to regional peace.

Asked whether Iran was open to the idea of forming a coalition with Iraq, Syria and Turkey to counter threats and resolve regional crises, Qassemi said what Iran is after is to maintain peace and security in the region.

"There is no need to build such a coalition against others," he noted, adding that Tehran has a positive outlook that would help security, peace and stability in the region.

# Zarif: U.S. regional allies feed terror financially, ideologically

By Ali Kushki

**TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Sunday that it is U.S. cronies in the Middle East rather than Iran who promote terrorism financially and ideologically, rapping Washington's policy toward his country as "misplaced and misguided."

"We know those who attacked the World Trade Center were citizens of which countries in the region – I can tell you none of them came from Iran. None of the people who engaged in acts of terrorism since 2001 came from Iran.

Most of them came from U.S. allies," Zarif said in an interview with the CNN correspondent Fareed Zakaria.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation in September 2016 that would allow the families of victims of the Sept. 11 attacks to sue Saudi Arabia's government for damages.

Fifteen of the 19 hijackers were Saudi citizens.

"Look at ISIS, look at Nusra, look at Al-Qaeda, look at other terrorist organizations... none of them have anything to do with Iran and all of them receive not only their ideology but their financial assistance, their weapons, their arms from others who call themselves U.S. allies."



**Look at ISIS, look at Nusra, look at Al-Qaeda, look at other terrorist organizations...none of them have anything to do with Iran and all of them receive not only their ideology but their financial assistance, their weapons, their arms from others who call themselves U.S. allies.**

## Trump and a nuclear ball in his court

By Mehdi Sepahvand

**TEHRAN** — Holding a high head after some trailblazing accords with giant European and East Asian companies, Iran is now introducing the United States as the isolated party to the landmark 2015 nuclear deal, the country that has to make some move to put itself in a more synchronized pace with the rest of the world.

"America putting a spoke in the wheel, but on the other side cooperation with Europe is booming," Iran's nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi said on Sunday, implying the ball is now in the U.S. court.

He dramatized that cooperation with Europe is growing so fast that in some fields "we don't have enough men" to carry things out.

Salehi's remarks come against the background of the United States having imposed new sanctions on Iran in contrast to the terms of the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Recently Senate passed a legislation which would sanction Iranian entities involved in the Islamic Republic's missile program. This defied UN Resolution 2231 which endorsed the JCPOA and also specified that new sanctions on Iran would violate the deal.

Since President Trump took office, Europe and the United States have pursued increasingly different



courses on Iran, casting doubt over the future of the nuclear accord, which limits Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief.

The U.S. fumbling with the post-JCPOA situation has been coming in the form of narrow-margin approval of the nuclear deal in late-moment quarterly instalments. In April, the administration informed Congress that Iran was in compliance with the deal, a certification it must make every 90 days. But it also put the accord under review — with the option to abandon it entirely. On Monday, the administration plans to certify again. Officials have said the policy review should be completed before the next

certification is due in October.

As with Europe, a couple of weeks ago Iran signed its most recent landmark post-JCPOA deal with the European oil giant Total worth about \$5 billion. Elsewhere, just this week the French carmaker Group PSA said its sales nearly tripled in the Middle East and Africa in the first half of the year because of new production in Iran.

Ellie Geranmayeh, a senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, recently told The Washington Post, "There is a clear division between where the Europeans are going and where the Americans are going on Iran. The Europeans have embarked on a path of rapprochement. The U.S. is looking at a policy of isolationism and containment."

The optics of Total's \$5 billion investment, which analysts say has the backing of the French government, "were seen as, 'We're going ahead despite all the uncertainties of the U.S. administration,'" Geranmayeh said. "The Europeans are messaging: 'Our foreign policy on Iran now is different to yours in Washington. We're not just going to automatically follow suit.'"

As Iran and the rest of the world are attending to the real expected advantages of the JCPOA, the U.S. is still involved in testing its reliability, only to be represented by Tehran as the one party which has not crossed the threshold yet.

## Oman, Iran enjoy 'very close' ties: top diplomat

By Negar Asadi

**TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Jaber Ansari has said that relations between Iran and Oman are "very close" and based on good neighborliness.

In an interview with ISNA published on Sunday, he said that recent visit by Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah to Tehran was within the framework of constant consultations between the two countries.

Foreign Minister Bin Alawi visited Tehran on Wednesday for talks with President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

Iran and Oman are separated by the narrow Strait of Hormuz.

Jaber Ansari, Iran's point man for Arab affairs, said the two countries insisted on their

common position to resolve problems among the countries in the Middle East region.

"Initiatives for a proper management of the regional developments" were also discussed, Ansari added.

Oman acted as an intermediary between Iran and the United States during the Barack Obama presidency. Oman relayed the message of dialogue from the U.S. to Iran to resolve the decade-old nuclear dispute between Tehran and Washington. Oman also helped release three U.S. hikers who had infiltrated into Iran in July 2009 while a tour of Iraq.

During the meeting with the Omani foreign minister, Rouhani said that the two countries have had "friendly" and "brotherly" relations in the past years "and the best must be made of these good relations to reinforce them".

The rift between Saudi Arabia and Qatar has made consultation between Tehran and Muscat more pressing.

Rouhani told Bin Allawi said that Tehran welcomes any attempt to end the conflicts in the region, renewing Tehran's opposition to the Saudi-led blockade of Qatar.

Rouhani said that threats and imposition of sanctions against Qatar are a "wrong approach".

"Threatening, pressing and imposing sanctions on a neighboring country like Qatar is a wrong approach and all should make efforts to end the tension in the region," Rouhani remarked.

On June 5 Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Bahrain cut diplomatic ties with Qatar and closed land, sea and air routes to the country as a punishment for supporting the Muslim Brotherhood,



Hamas, and having good relationship with Iran. A few days later they set certain conditions to end the blockade including curtailing ties with Iran, closing Al-Jazeera network, removing Turkish troops from Qatar's soil, and ending contact with groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

## Majlis votes to limit death penalty for drug traffickers

**POLITICS** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian parliament **d e s k** approved a bill on Sunday to limit death penalty for drug offenders.

182 out of 245 MPs present in the parliament voted in favor of the bill.

The bill will be turned into a law when it is studied

by parliament's Judicial Committee and after being confirmed by the Guardian Council.

A lawmaker said that those who committed crimes related to drug trafficking due to poverty and unemployment will not be sentenced to death.

However those offenders who carry deadly weapons

while trafficking drugs as well as drug lords will get death sentence, he explained.

The bill to limit death penalty for drug offenders was introduced last year. Reportedly, more than 100 lawmakers have helped draw up the legislation.

## Iran denies shinning laser at U.S. aircraft

By Mohammad Homaeifar

**TEHRAN** —The Iranian navy "categorically" denied on Sunday that it had shined laser at a U.S. Marine Corps helicopter in the Persian Gulf back in June.

"Recently, the U.S. Navy has claimed that the Iranian Navy had shined laser at a helicopter of its Fifth Fleet while it was flying over the Strait of Hormuz, an issue the Navy of Islamic Republic of Iran Army strongly denies," said Rear Admiral Hossein Azad, the commander of Iran's First Naval Zone.

The comments come one month after U.S. Navy Commander Bill Urban said an Iranian naval patrol boat had shined a laser at a U.S.

Navy's helicopter flying over the Strait of Hormuz.

The commander further said the Iranian vessel had turned its spotlight on two Navy ships that were moving through the strait, claiming the Iranian boat had come within 800 yards of the USS Bataan, scanned it from bow to stern with the spotlight and shined the light on the USS Cole. The helicopter had automatically fired flares in response.

The denial follows a measure on Thursday

by the U.S. House of Representatives to which requires the Pentagon to consider options for negotiating an Incidents at Sea Agreement with Iran and other countries operating in the Persian Gulf. The communication hotline is expected to soothe concerns over de-escalation of sea incidents in the Persian Gulf into direct military engagement between Iranian and U.S. naval forces.

Both the Iranian navy and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps keep regular

**A senior commander of the Iranian navy rejects claims by the U.S Navy about laser being shinned at its helicopter while it was flying over the Strait of Hormuz.**

patrols in the region around the clock.

Iran says the U.S. Navy's strong presence in the Persian Gulf has jeopardized the security and stability of the Strait.

The world's most important oil chokepoint, the Hormuz Strait is a transit route for nearly 40 percent of the world's seaborne oil exports out of the Persian Gulf.

Iranian and U.S. warships had nearly 30 "dangerous" and "unprofessional" encounters in 2015, according to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, with a 50-percent increase by August 2016.

The fleet conducts operations in the Middle East that are focused on reassuring regional partners of the United States' commitment to their security.



# Huge rallies in Turkey mark failed 2016 coup

## Erdogan attacks EU, promises to bring back death penalty

Tens of thousands of people gathered at a massive rally in Istanbul, marking one year since the defeat of the coup aimed at ousting President Recep Tayyip Erdogan from power.

Joining the crowd gathered at the Bosphorus Bridge, now known as the July 15 Martyr's Bridge, Erdogan threatened to "chop off the heads" of those involved in the coup.

"First of all we will chop off the heads of those traitors," Erdogan said as reaffirmed previous comments to sign any bill passed restoring capital punishment.

"We are a state governed by rule of law. If it comes to me after parliament, I will sign it," he said. Restoring the death penalty would effectively end Turkey's European Union membership ambitions.

Erdogan also praised the "people's faith" in facing up the armed coup plotters.

Erdogan arrived from the capital Ankara on his official plane accompanied by an F-16 fighter jet, AFP news agency reported.

The authorities declared July 15 an annual national holiday of "democracy and unity", billing the foiling of the putsch as a historic victory of Turkish democracy.

"It's one year since the darkest night was turned into an epic," Binali Yildirim, Turkey's prime minister, told a special session of parliament that kicked off a day of celebrations set to last until dawn.

He said the night of July 15 was a "second War of Independence" after the war that led to the creation of the modern Turkish state in the ruins of the Ottoman Empire in 1923.

About 249 people, not including the plotters, were killed when a disgruntled faction of the army sent tanks into the streets and war planes into the sky in a bid to overthrow Erdogan.

But they were thwarted within hours as the authorities regrouped and people poured into the streets in support of Erdogan, who blamed followers of his ally turned nemesis, the United States-based preacher Fethullah Gulen.

Tens of thousands carried the Turkish flag while others brandished pictures of the "martyrs" who died defeating the coup bid as a sea of people stretched from the bridge.

People chanted "we are soldiers of Tayyip [Erdogan]" and called for the



reinstatement of the death penalty for the coup plotters, with some even brandishing nooses.

At 21:00 GMT, people across Turkey took part in "democracy watches", rallies commemorating how people poured out into the streets.

### ■ Post-coup purge

In the wake of the failed coup bid, authorities embarked on the biggest purge in Turkey's history, arresting 50,000 people and sacking almost three times as many.

Erdogan also shored up his position by winning a referendum on enhancing his powers earlier this year.

In the latest dismissals, another 7,563 police, soldiers and other state employees were fired late on Friday under the state of emergency that has been in place since July 20 last year.

Turkey's opposition put political disputes aside on the night of the putsch.

Erdogan, who was present at the session, gazed down stonily from the VIP (very important person) balcony.

Erdogan later returned to Ankara and, at 23:00 GMT, gave a speech in parliament to mark the time the building was bombed last year.

Al Jazeera's Sinem Koseoglu, reporting from Ankara, said Erdogan, in his speech in front of the parliament, said the fight against the treason will con-

tinue.

The coup bid also frayed ties between the U.S. and European Union with NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) member Turkey, which accused its allies of failing to show solidarity.

Gulen has always denied involvement and, in a new statement on Friday that condemned the "witch-hunt" of Erdogan's critics, dismissed the accusations as "baseless, politically motivated slanders".

### ■ Erdogan attacks EU, promises to bring back death penalty

Meantime, Erdogan on Sunday stepped up his attack on the European Union, saying Turkey had to go its own way and vowing to bring back the death penalty if parliament passes it.

Erdogan, who was at the opening ceremony for a memorial dedicated to the roughly 250 people who died during last year's failed coup, accused Brussels of "messing about" with Turkey's decades-long bid to join the bloc.

The speech, in front of the presidential palace in Ankara in the early hours of Sunday, wound up a marathon session of public appearances by Erdogan in both the capital and Istanbul to mark the anniversary of last year's failed coup.

"The stance of the European Union is

clear to see... 54 years have passed and they are still messing us about," he said, citing what he said was Brussels' failure to keep promises on everything from a visa deal to aid for Syrian migrants.

"We will sort things out for ourselves, there's no other option."

Ties with Europe were strained after the coup, given the West's alarm about the scale of the government crackdown that followed. Some 150,000 people have been sacked or suspended from their jobs and more than 50,000 detained on suspicion of links to the U.S.-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen, whom Ankara blames for the attempted putsch.

He also said he would approve, "without hesitation" the death penalty, if parliament voted to bring it back -- a move that would effectively end Turkey's bid to join the European Union.

"I don't look at what Hans and George say. I look at what Ahmet, Mehmet, Hasan, Huseyin, Ayse, Fatma and Hatice say," he said, to cheers from a flag-waving crowd.

Erdogan, the most popular and divisive politician in recent Turkish history, sees himself as the liberator of pious millions who were deprived for decades of their rights and welfare by Turkey's secular elite.

(Source: agencies)

## Israeli forces shoot dead Palestinian man in West Bank

Israeli soldiers and policemen have fatally shot a Palestinian in the West Bank, alleging that the man attempted to open fire on them.

The incident took place in the village of Nabi Salih, northwest of the city of Ramallah, early on Sunday. Israeli police identified the victim as 34-year-old Amar Hallil.

"The forces encountered the suspect, who attempted to open fire at them. In response to the immediate threat forces fired towards the attacker resulting in his death," the Israeli army said in a statement.

It further accused the victim of having shot at Israelis in two separate incidents in Nabi Saleh and the Israeli settlement of Ateret on Saturday.

During Sunday's gunfight, another Palestinian was lightly wounded and arrested, the army statement went on to say.

Also on Friday, Israeli forces raided the Dheishah refugee camp, south of the West Bank city of Bethlehem, and clashed with Palestinian residents during which Bara Hamamdah, an 18-year-old Palestinian, was shot dead.

Additionally on Friday, a shooting happened at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the Old City of al-Quds (Jerusalem), leaving three Palestinians and two Israeli policemen dead.

Tensions have hit the occupied lands ever since Israeli forces imposed restrictions on the entry of Palestinian worshippers into the al-Aqsa two years ago.

Tel Aviv has been trying to change the demographic makeup of al-Quds through constructing settlements, destroying historical sites and expelling



the local Palestinian population.

Over 300 Palestinians have lost their lives at the hands of Israeli forces since October 2015, when the tensions flared up.

### ■ Israel reopens al-Aqsa Mosque compound

Elsewhere, Israeli authorities gradually reopened the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in al-Quds's Old City on Sunday following a two-day closure, as religious officials condemned new security measures put in place following a deadly gun battle.

The ultra-sensitive compound was closed on Friday after three Palestinian citizens of Israel shot two Israeli officers dead in the Old City before fleeing to the al-Aqsa compound where they were killed by Israeli police.

Palestinian worshippers on Sunday refused to enter the holy site for midday prayers after metal detectors and cam-

eras were added to the compound's gates.

Dozens of worshippers gathered to pray at an entrance to the compound next to the Lions' Gate entry to the Old City.

"We reject the changes imposed by the Israeli government," Sheikh Omar Kiswani, the director of al-Aqsa Mosque, told reporters outside.

"We will not enter through these metal detectors."

Some women wailed and cried, calling on worshippers not to enter.

Earlier in the day, Kiswani told Voice of Palestine radio station the additional security measures were part of a "dangerous and unprecedented move" by Israeli authorities "to impose control over al-Aqsa Mosque".

Israel's highly unusual decision of closing the al-Aqsa Mosque compound for Friday prayers triggered anger from

Palestinians and authorities in Jordan, the holy site's custodian.

The Jordanian government released a statement on Friday demanding Israel immediately open the mosque and warning against steps that could "change the historic status quo in Jerusalem and the mosque".

Proposals to change security measures at the compound have sparked controversy in the past. Palestinians have long feared what they see as Israeli moves to change the status quo at the holy site.

After Israel occupied East Jerusalem (al-Quds) in 1967, Israeli authorities have maintained an agreement with the Islamic Endowment that runs the al-Aqsa Mosque compound. Non-Muslims are allowed to visit the site, but are not allowed to pray.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced the additional security measures on Saturday, saying they gave Israel "almost complete control over what goes on" in the compound.

The site remained closed on Saturday, while parts of Jerusalem's Old City were also under lockdown.

Israeli authorities said the closure was necessary to carry out security checks.

Police said on Sunday that so far two gates leading to the holy site had been opened, equipped with metal detectors and cameras, adding that more than 200 people had entered.

The mosque compound is known to Muslims as al-Haram al-Sharif while Jews call it Temple Mount.

(Source: agencies)

## EU officials seek sense of urgency as Brexit bargaining begins

European Union officials hope the British government shows more urgency about a Brexit deal when its negotiators come to Brussels on Monday for a first full round of talks aimed at smoothing Britain's departure.

"The hard work starts now," European Union chief negotiator Michel Barnier said on Wednesday, again sounding a note of alarm that London has yet to provide detailed proposals on a range of key issues, with barely a year left for bargaining.

A year after the referendum vote to leave, Prime Minister Theresa May still faces a complex task in finding consensus at home on what kind of Brexit Britain wants. That job was made all the harder by losing her parliamentary majority last month.

Her Brexit minister, veteran anti-EU campaigner David Davis, will meet Barnier, a French former cabinet minister, at the European Commission's Berlaymont headquarters at 9:15 a.m. (0715 GMT) on Monday for a brief public handshake before formal business begins.

Their teams will spend most of the next four days in smaller working groups, trying to identify areas of accord and discord on a set of issues agreed on during an initial day of talks on June 19. On Thursday afternoon, Davis and Barnier should hold a news conference, to fix publicly what has been agreed so far.

The priorities, notably rights for expatriate citizens, how much Britain may owe to the EU budget and how to manage the new EU-Britain border, especially with Ireland, are ones both sides want to settle in a withdrawal treaty. Barnier says this must be ready by about October next year if it is to be ratified on both sides of the Channel before Britain leaves in March 2019.

"The clock is ticking," he said on Wednesday, displaying a degree of impatience with British ministers who continue to dismiss EU demands that they first must agree in principle that London will owe the Union a hefty amount -- probably in the tens of billions of euros -- to cover its existing commitments.

"The first serious test of the negotiations will be them agreeing to pay the bill," a senior EU official said -- the coming week is a vital moment to establish rapport among the senior civil servants who will handle what is arguably the most convoluted and far-reaching diplomatic deal of modern times.

### ■ Progress Required

Without "significant progress" on all three priorities in the divorce, Barnier warns, EU leaders will not let Davis open talks on a free trade relationship, which May and much of British business want to have ready by the time Britain leaves.

For now, the EU says May's offer to guarantee the rights of 3 million Europeans in Britain falls short. It is also unhappy at Britain's refusal to accept EU judges as ultimate arbiters of disputes -- an issue that could get an early airing as London seeks a quick fix to prevent its withdrawal from the Euratom pact disrupting its nuclear industry and medical imaging.

EU leaders unanimously speak of rare harmony among them on how to deal with Britain so that Brexit does not unravel the EU further. Electoral setbacks for anti-EU parties and the arrival of the Europhile Emmanuel Macron as French president have lifted their mood. But British diplomats will try to exploit divergent interests among the 27, using Britain's hefty economic clout.

A quarterly EU summit in mid-October could see leaders tell Barnier to prepare trade negotiations; but that will require good progress this week and in three further rounds of talks.

On that timetable, Barnier reckons, a broad political deal on the outlines of a new, open trading relationship could be in place by late next year, allowing for a transitional phase of up to a few years after Brexit to negotiate all the details.

Brussels has assumed for the past year that Britain needs a transitional period to avoid a "cliff edge" loss of EU access. But in a mark of the cross-Channel gulf in perceptions, many in London have questioned the need for a transition, during which Britain would have to follow EU rules and pay into the Brussels budget.

On Sunday, finance minister Philip Hammond, an advocate for a transition to Brexit, said most ministers now agreed with him: "Five weeks ago the idea of a transition period was quite a new concept. I think now you would find that pretty much everybody around the cabinet table accepts that there will be some kind of transition," he said, saying it would be at least two years.

(Source: Reuters)

## Fire kills 22 at residential building in eastern China

A pre-dawn fire in a two-story residential building in eastern China killed 22 people and injured three on Sunday, authorities said.

The officials of Changshu, a city in Jiangsu Province, about 80 kilometers northwest of Shanghai, announced in a brief social media post that the fire broke out around 4:30 a.m. local time. The post said authorities put out the fire and finished cleaning the scene.

The cause remains under investigation.

It was not clear how many residents survived.

An earlier report by the official Xinhua News Agency said more than 20 people lived in the house, citing unnamed sources.

Phones at the city's publicity department rang unanswered.

(Source: AP)



NEWS IN BRIEF



**Stock market index loses 38 points in a day**

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Stock index lost 38 points to 79,620 in Iran's stock exchange market on Sunday, Tasnim news agency reported.

The report said 742 million shares worth 2.05 trillion rials (about \$54.089 million) were dealt in the stock market.

Also, IFX, the main index of Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), slid one point to 910 on Sunday, as 264 million securities worth 1.16 trillion rials (about \$30.606 million) were dealt.

Britain says to link business rates tax to consumer prices from 2020

Britain's finance ministry will help companies by indexing the business rates tax against consumer prices rather than faster-rising retail prices starting in 2020, a spokesman said on Saturday.

Business rates are taxes to help pay for local services, such as police and firefighters, charged on most non-domestic properties, including shops, warehouses, pubs, cafes and restaurants.

Traditional retailers have argued the tax unfairly benefits online retailers, as they tend not to have many large properties.

"We are committed to switching business rates indexation from RPI (retail price index) to CPI (consumer price index) from 2020 and will introduce legislation in due course," the spokesman said in a telephone call.

While consumer price inflation hit an almost 4-year high of 2.9 percent in May, the old retail price inflation gauge rose to 3.7 percent from 3.5 percent.

(Source: Reuters)

Euro zone needs joint budget, Germany must do more: SPD leader

The euro zone needs a joint budget to increase investment and Germany should be prepared to do more in Europe, possibly by increasing its financial contribution to the bloc, SPD leader Martin Schulz said in a strategy paper presented on Sunday.

"Germany is a great country. But Germany can do more," Schulz, whose SPD is the junior party in Germany's coalition government, said in the introduction of his ten-point-plan for a modern Germany and a better Europe.

Schulz, a former European Parliament President, said EU countries outside the single currency bloc should not be able to veto further euro zone integration and that those ignoring solidarity on important issues must face financial sanctions. Schulz is hoping to beat Chancellor Angela Merkel in a Sept. 24 election but the SPD has lost momentum in the polls after gaining at first following his nomination in January.

(Source: Reuters)

U.S.-China trade talks sputtering at 100-day deadline

Bilateral talks aimed at reducing the U.S. trade deficit with China have yielded some initial deals, but U.S. firms say much more needs to be done as a deadline for a 100-day action plan expires on Sunday.

The negotiations, which began in April, have reopened China's market to U.S. beef after 14 years and prompted Chinese pledges to buy U.S. liquefied natural gas. American firms have also been given access to some parts of China's financial services sector.



More details on the 100-day plan are expected to be announced in the coming week as senior U.S. and Chinese officials gather in Washington for annual bilateral economic talks, rebranded this year as the "U.S.-China Comprehensive Economic Dialogue."

"We hope to report further progress on the 100-day deliverables next week," a U.S. Commerce Department spokesman said on Saturday. "That will be the basis for judging the extent of progress."

The spokesman declined to discuss potential areas for new agreements since a May 11 announcement on beef, chicken, financial services and LNG.

Earlier in April, when Chinese President Xi Jinping met U.S. President Donald Trump for the first time at his Florida resort, Xi agreed to a 100-day plan for trade talks aimed at boosting U.S. exports and trimming the U.S. trade deficit with China.

The U.S. goods trade deficit with China reached \$347 billion last year. The gap in the first five months of 2017 widened about 5.3 percent from a year earlier, according to U.S. Census Bureau data.

"It is an excellent momentum builder, but much more needs to be done for U.S.-China commercial negotiations to be considered a success," said Jacob Parker, vice president of China operations at the U.S.-China Business Council (USCBC) in Beijing.

(Source: Reuters)

Iran, Vietnam sign MOU on economic co-op

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Minister of Industry and Trade Mohammadreza Nematzadeh and the visiting Vietnamese Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) Nguyen Xuan Cuong signed an MOU on economic cooperation on Sunday, IRNA reported.

As reported, the MOU was inked on the sidelines of 9th meeting of Iran-Vietnam Joint Economic Committee in the building of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO).

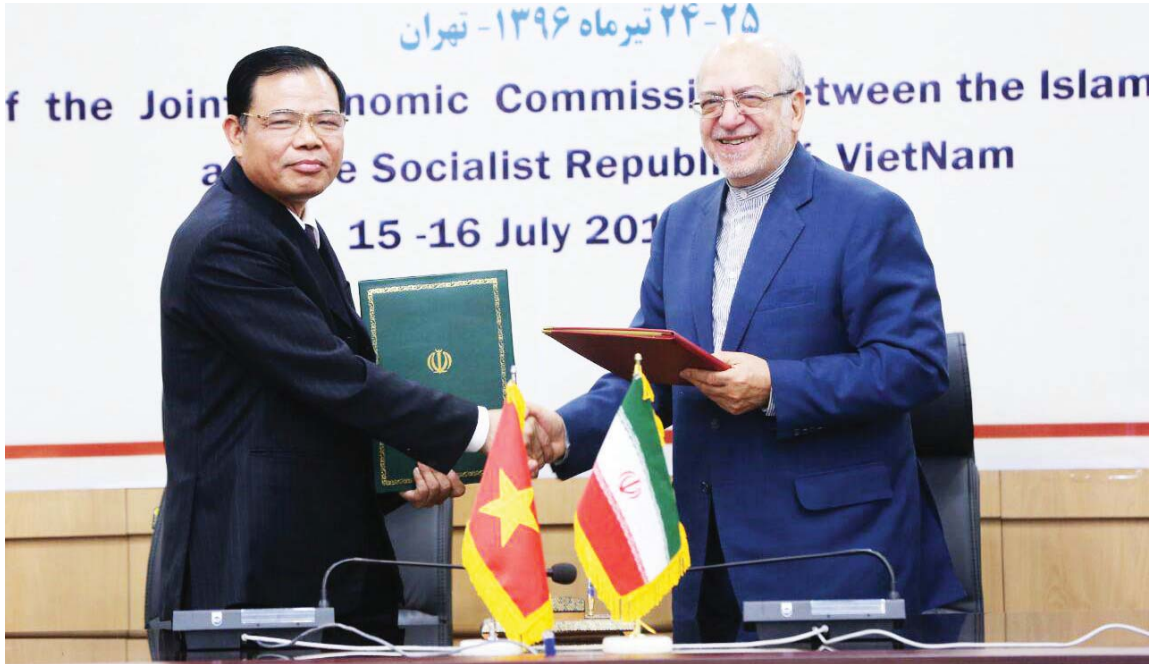
Addressing the event, Nematzadeh expressed satisfaction that the joint committee has resumed operation after four years, calling for bilateral trade volume to reach \$2 billion.

The Vietnamese minister, for his part, underlined the necessity of tightening economic ties between the two countries and vowed that his government will put reaching two-billion-dollar trade with Iran on its agenda.

"Iranian and Vietnamese trade and economic officials, in four working and technical groups, came to some agreements yesterday and we seek to put their agreements on operation in the framework of the Joint Economic Committee," Cuong said.

"Vietnam is experiencing its economic growth era and is in need of Iranian construction materials, oil, and energy," he added.

Vietnam and Iran established diplomatic relations in 1973. The relationship was strengthened with the establishment of the Vietnam-Iran Friendship Association in September 2009.



Vietnamese Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Nguyen Xuan Cuong (L) and Iranian Minister of Industry and Trade Mohammadreza Nematzadeh shaking hands after signing economic MOU

Iran, Iraq agree on establishing industrial parks

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran and Iraq signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on establishment of industrial parks, Shata news agency reported.

The MOU was signed by Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammadreza Nematzadeh and his Iraqi counterpart Mohammed Shia 'Al Sudani on Sunday.

In the signing ceremony, Iranian minister said Iran is determined to expand its economic and trade ties with Iraq.

As Mehr news agency reported, Nematzadeh also noted that lacking of banking relations between the two countries has imposed serious problems on both sides' private sectors.



Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammadreza Nematzadeh (L) and his Iraqi counterpart Mohammed Shia 'Al Sudani signing an MOU on establishing industrial parks

Rail reform plan seeks improved efficiency

By Mahnaz Abdi

**TEHRAN** — Railways used to account for the major part of transportation in the world for many years, until decline in demand for railway transportation in the countries throughout the globe set the railways thinking about making some kind of transformation and reform in their structures. Germany, Britain and France were among pioneers in this regard. They embarked on reforms during 1990s.

Since then, many countries have carried out such transformation in their railway structures. Some of them have gone to the second and third transformations, as Germany has passed three rounds of transformation in its railway, in 1994-1996, 1999 and 2006, Britain in 1996, 2006 and 2012-2014 and France in 1997, 2006, and 2015.

The railway sector in Iran, despite its old age (90 years) has not experienced such transformation, but it is strongly in need of it.

Such need brought officials in the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) to the idea of implementing an organizational transformation in the railway structure. They started measures to implement this plan two years ago; it is mainly based on benefiting from the experiences of other countries.

To this end, RAI has signed two memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with foreign companies, one with France's Roland Berger (RB) six months ago and the other one with Germany's DBI in February 2016.

To get a comprehensive view of Iran's current railway condition which makes implementation of this plan necessary, the Tehran Times conducted an exclusive interview with Seyed Hassan Mousavinejad, the previous managing director of Raja Passenger Trains Company (an associate of RAI), and the current person in charge of change management (CM) in Islamic Republic of Iran Railways Organizational Transformation. His viewpoints come as follows.

**■ Future belongs to railway transportation**

Future belongs to railway transportation due to a number of factors. The followings are two of them.

One factor is speed. In our country, for example, it's a long time that speed has remained unchanged, something around 120-140 kilometers per hour in road transportation. It is because of safety is-



sues. But there is not such limitation in rail transportation, as many big high-speed train projects are underway throughout the globe.

There is another factor when compared to air transportation. It is air pollution, because air transportation consumes huge amount of fuel which creates huge pollution as well. And 50 percent of the cost goes to the fuel.

It is why rail transportation is a priority in the world's cities; urban development is being planned for rail-based cities and in establishment of new cities transportation priority is attached to railway.

**■ Railway share low in Iran's transportation**

Iran is among the 30 countries in the world where railway is older than 90 years. But, the share of railway both in cargo and passenger transportation is very low in the country, as 12-13 percent of public transportation is via railway, and when transportation by private cars is concluded the figure is less than three percent. And about cargo, rail transportation accounts for 25 percent of the cargos that can be transported via railway and the figure is 2.5-3 percent of the total cargo transportation in the country, which could rise to 30 percent.

Near 80 percent of cargos is transported by containers in the world. Iran's share of cargo transportation by container is 40 percent, of which just three percent is via railway because of lacking container wagons in the fleet. The figure could be increased to 10 percent.

**■ Railway development a privilege**

Considering our country's geographical condition, rail transportation has privilege for us.

And it should be paid attention both in passenger and cargo sectors. Most of

the railway projects are long-term, the average implementation duration is over five years in the world and it is more than 10 years in Iran; therefore we should have macro plans for these projects.

Transportation account for a big part of air pollution in the country, especially in mega cities with Tehran on top of them and development of railway could play a significant role in reducing air pollution.

It also plays role in safety. Development of railway could reduce road casualties, which are high in Iran, by one third in the country.

**■ Near 50 railway projects underway**

We have near 50 railway projects underway in the country and all those centers of provinces which are not still connected to the railway network are planned to be joined.

About our rail connection to the regional countries, we are currently connected to Turkey, Turkmenistan and Pakistan. The railways to Afghanistan and also to Azerbaijan are being built. We were connected to Armenia in the past and negotiations are underway to be reconnected. And two rail tracks from different paths are being built to Iraq.

Qazvin-Rasht railway is a significant project to be completed in the current Iranian calendar year (to end on March 20, 2018), and Mianeh-Tabriz, Hamedan-Sanandaj, Khorramshahr-Basra, Chabahr-Zahedan are some other important projects underway.

All these require very high investment and if we want to use governmental budget it will take a long time; therefore attraction of foreign investment is of high significance in this due. It is hoped that the condition created after implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - in January 2016- paves

"Despite the agreement which the two countries' central banks made last year, there has not been any progress in this regard," he added.

Al Sudani for his part expressed his country's eagerness for cooperating with Iran in various areas especially gas imports.

He also discussed the establishment of five industrial parks in border areas between the two countries.

Earlier in February, Iran signed an agreement with Iraq's Ministry of Industry for the design and establishment of industrial parks in a number of Iraqi provinces.

"Iraq is keen on cooperation with Iran in this regard due to the experiences of Iran in the construction of industrial cities," Sudani said.

the way for attraction of foreign investment.

And it has more priority in developing the fleet.

**■ Foreign finance for implementation projects**

Two big railway projects are currently underway in the country through foreign finances. One is signaling Tehran-Mashhad railway by Chinese finance and the other one is establishing the high speed train of Tehran-Qom-Isfahan by German and French finances.

We have also two MOUs with foreigners. One with Italy on Qom-Arak high speed train and the other one with Russia on signaling and increasing the speed of Garmsar-Incheh Boroun railway.

**■ Factors making organizational transformation necessary**

The main factor that makes implementation of organizational transformation necessary is that railway is continuously losing its share of cargo and passenger transportation in the country.

Meanwhile, the whole railway transportation is not considered an economic industry at the present, many railway sectors are loss making and economic reforms should be done in them both in infrastructure and boosting efficiency.

We require revising laws, regulations and bylaws of rail transportation and defining new ones that include entrance of private sector and foreign investment.

**■ Barriers to transformation plan**

The first obstacle in the way of conducting transformation plan is resistance to changes which is normal whenever a reform is to happen, especially in the old systems. People should be justified that this plan will bring fruitful results.

Changing laws and regulations is the other obstacle and we hope that new laws and regulations will be set during the proper time.

Also, reforming the structure needs new investment that we hope the government will allocate more funds to this issue.

**■ High determination for changes**

There is serious will for implementation of this plan in Iran as Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei emphasizes the importance of railway development. Also President Hassan Rouhani has several times mentioned that his administration will bring big achievements in three sectors of health, IT, and railway. Transport Minister Abbas Akhoundi has special focus on railway development as well.



# Low oil prices push OPEC producers to public markets

The United Arab Emirates plans to list part of its national oil company on public markets in order to create new revenue streams and gain access to new markets amid low oil prices. The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) is considering an IPO of minority stakes in some of its services business, reports CNBC.

How much of the company Abu Dhabi plans to list is still unclear, but its chief executive Sultan al-Jaber said "ADNOC will remain fully owned by the government of Abu Dhabi."

ADNOC has been talking to banks about the listings, with the company's profitable businesses likely to be floated, reports Reuters. Abu Dhabi plans to offer equity in its business sometime this year.

ADNOC is seeking "large trading houses, international pension funds, private equity investors and global infrastructure specialists rather than just national oil companies and international oil companies," the National, an Abu Dhabi-based newspaper, reported.

It is looking to the new investors to support it in securing market access for its products, especially in Asia and a new co-investment approach would lead to a "more open partnership model," Jaber said.

The company would remain the major shareholder but would offer "strategic partnerships and co-investments across our service and refining businesses and



select infrastructure assets, such as ADNOC pipelines and storage facilities," he said.

Potential areas for partnership include the development and expansion of a leading, regional drilling company and a new energy infrastructure venture as well as downstream ventures, The National reported.

"Shifting global trends are creating a new energy landscape where new rules

of engagement are required," Jaber said in a statement. "In this new energy era, we need more creative strategies and more flexible business models to capture growth."

OPEC's largest producer, Saudi Arabia, also hopes to enter public markets in the future, with the country believing an offering could amount to a valuation of \$1 to \$2 trillion for its state-run Saudi Aramco. Unlike the planned ADNOC offering,

Saudi Arabia plans to offer shares in the main business and will list internationally, while the U.A.E. producer plans to list domestically.

Oman, the largest non-OPEC oil producer in the Middle East, also said it plans to sell shares in some state-owned downstream energy companies to the public, joining its neighbors in the Persian Gulf in approaching public markets.

Low oil prices have forced many countries in the Middle East, which rely on income from exported crude oil for the majority of their budget, to dig deep into their sovereign wealth funds.

With low oil prices persisting, many are now having to turn parts of their state-owned oil giants public to generate income. Investors are often wary of putting money into international oil companies, however, for fear that the state will use its majority stake to further political goals rather than economic ones.

For the countries offering equity, the goals are more than an immediate influx of cash, says Helima Croft, global head of commodity strategy at RBC Capital Markets. Many of these countries hope to reduce the dominant role oil plays in their economies over the next decade.

"It's about diversification," said Croft. "They need oil money to build world-class investment vehicles."

(Source: oilprice.com)

## Venezuela signs deal with U.S. company to improve oil production

Venezuela has signed an agreement between the state-owned oil company Petroleos de Venezuela, PDVSA, and a U.S. oil company, which is intended to improve oil production in the South American country.

The document was signed by the Minister of Popular Power for Petroleum, Nelson Martinez, and the chairman of Oklahoma-based Horizontal Well Drillers, Todd Swanson, at the Miraflores Palace in Caracas.

The agreement proposes a joint venture for the development of oil in Venezuela. Martinez announced that the

deal will include an initial investment of \$200 million for a three-year project, which will eventually be expanded to \$1.3 billion.

"We discussed the creation of two work teams to initiate in the next 90 days a joint plan identifying opportunities, defining levels of investment and creating at least one joint venture in that time," Martinez said.

During the ceremony, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said the strategic alliance will strengthen the technology of the PDVSA.

He added that Venezuela is a country whose Constitution and laws create conditions of security and legal stability for these agreements, citing deals signed with China, India, Russia and other nations as examples.

"I invite all U.S. capital in all areas of economy and energy to come to Venezuela. We are ready to broaden the horizons of all investments," Maduro said.

Maduro also reiterated his willingness to establish respectful relations with U.S. President Donald Trump, despite political and ideological differences. (Source: telesurtv.net)

## Kuwait says oil supply-cuts deal is 'working well'

Crude oil inventories will decline at a faster pace worldwide in the second half of the year as demand increases and OPEC members comply better with a global agreement to cut output, Kuwait's OPEC Governor Haitham al-Ghais said.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and other major producers including Russia agreed in May to extend their supply-cuts deal through March 2018 because stockpiles hadn't fallen to their five-year historical average -- the goal of the agreement. Yet for the past two weeks, U.S. crude inventories have declined, exceeding analyst expectations.

"I see this trend continuing with more conformity from OPEC and non-OPEC producers, coupled with a further growth in demand," said al-Ghais, who was appointed Kuwait's OPEC governor last month. It would be "illogical" for OPEC to change strategy now, he said in a phone interview in Istanbul. Kuwait leads the committee monitoring the output curbs.

OPEC's compliance with the supply cutbacks fell in June to the lowest level since the deal started in January, the International Energy Agency said July 13. Rising production from OPEC is threatening a re-balancing of the market, with the group's output last month at the highest level this year, the IEA said. Benchmark Brent crude prices have slumped this year amid concerns that increased supply from Libya, Nigeria and the U.S. is negating the impact of OPEC's cuts.

### Unwarranted concerns

Concerns that supplies will keep climbing in Libya and Nigeria, both exempt from the cuts deal, are "not justified" because their production is fluctuating within a range of 300,000 to 500,000 barrels a day on average, al-Ghais said. "We need to see if these increases will be sustained and stable," he said.

Libya's production has risen to 1.05 million barrels a day, a person with direct knowledge of the matter said July 12. That's the highest level since June 2013, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Nigeria is producing 1.7 million barrels a day, Minister of State for Petroleum Resources Emmanuel Kachikwu told reporters Wednesday. The nation's output has climbed 17 percent this year, data compiled by Bloomberg show.

Libya and Nigeria were invited to send representatives to the next meeting of the OPEC and non-OPEC Joint Technical Committee in Russia later this month to discuss their production, according to al-Ghais, who chairs the committee. He is also head of research at Kuwait Petroleum Corp.

"OPEC is interested in knowing more about the situation in its member countries and their attendance doesn't mean that OPEC is concerned by their recovery," he said.

The committee reviews conditions in the market and sends findings to the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee led by Kuwait's oil minister. (Source: Bloomberg)



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## What Democrats are getting wrong about Trump-Russia scandal

The Trump-Russia scandal may be the greatest political gift to Democrats since Watergate. And the news of Donald Trump Jr. meeting with a Russian lawyer in June of 2016 is the latest shiny bauble under the tree.

The bad news for the Democrats is that they're squandering this political gift of almost endless bad publicity for President Donald Trump by overplaying their hand.

The right and wrong ways to handle a scandal-ridden administration are all laid out very clearly in Washington history. Democrats should follow an almost ready-made script to take full advantage.

At one point or another, the Clinton, Reagan, and Nixon White Houses were under big clouds of scandal that threatened their abilities to govern and lead the nation.

Many might conclude that the Democrats' general conduct during Nixon's Watergate is the path to follow since Nixon actually did resign from office in 1974 and two years later the Democrats won the White House back.

But did they really win? Remember that the winner in that election was Jimmy Carter, an ex-Governor of Georgia who won in large part because he was a Democrat who had not been a part of Washington and the push back on the White House in Congress during the Watergate scandal.

But he won only a razor thin victory over President Gerald Ford, the man who actually pardoned Nixon for his potential Watergate crimes! The fact that Ford missed getting elected by just 30 electoral votes goes to show how ambivalent the American people were about the Democrats even after a Republican president had just been forced to resign in disgrace. And four years later, Carter was badly routed out of office himself.

Writing in Politico in May, author Geoffrey Kabaservice even said Watergate actually helped Republicans in the long run:

Ultimately, the aftereffects of the biggest scandal in American politics ended up helping the Republican Party — giving us unprecedented levels of polarization, distrust in government institutions and, leading, ultimately, to President Donald Trump.

Another failure for the Democrats came in 1986-87, when they obsessed over the Reagan Iran-Contra Affair. Not only did Reagan not resign, he never really suffered a major blow to his popularity. His hand-picked successor, George H.W. Bush, won a 400-plus electoral college/eight percentage point popular vote landslide in 1988. While the Democrats should have been spending more time crafting their national message and finding a winning candidate, they were off chasing Colonel Oliver North and international arms dealers.

### ■ Embarrassing scandal

That brings us to the Bill Clinton Whitewater/Monica Lewinsky scandals and the simultaneous right way/wrong way path to dealing with an administration hampered by embarrassing scandal.

At first, the Republicans took the wrong path on President Clinton. They harped on the fact that he won only 43 percent of the popular vote. They broke tradition and filibustered his initial economic stimulus plan presented to Congress during the initial "honeymoon" period for a new president. And in early 1994, they seized on the Whitewater land deal scandal and attempted to connect it to President Clinton and Hillary Clinton by successfully pushing for the appointment of Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr to investigate the matter.

All of that eventually led to Clinton's impeachment in the House of Representatives and close-call avoidance of a conviction in the Senate. Along the way he was re-elected with wider majorities in 1996 than he enjoyed in 1992, and he left office close to his all-time high in popularity ratings.

The result was not only a Republican takeover of both houses of Congress for the first time since the 1950s, but the GOP actually passed the major parts of the Contract with America.

Fast forward to today and we have a similar opportunity for the Democrats in Congress. As we get closer to the 2018 midterms, they can start to craft their own true agenda or they can keep running on a scandal and opposition-based agenda that's seemingly consuming them 24/7.

If they can't pursue the political points to be scored from the Trump scandal while also addressing the more enduring challenges they were elected to take on, what good are they to the voters? After all, the independent counsel and the news media are already there to make sure the Trump scandals don't go away.

As for finding a compromise issue like Gingrich did with the White House years ago, it turns out there's a pretty good ready-made script for that too.

Either way, the Democrats desperately need to do something different. And unlike the Republicans who are straddled with an ambiguous Republican like President Trump in the White House, they are free to do so. They must come to realize that their brand as we've known it for decades not only lost the general election, but almost lost the primary election to career back-bencher Senator Bernie Sanders who at least offered a different message.

Chances like this don't come very often. When the public is convinced that all the politicians care about are scandals and investigations, real solutions for the countries problems will stand out. It did in 1994, and it would now if the Democrats are smart enough to seize the day.

(Source: CNBC)

## The Trump/Russia scandals are already giving the Democrats as much political capital as possible.

# How Saudi Arabia has slowly realized it can't play the Trump card on Qatar

The Saudis thought they had the Trump administration, especially the Republicans, on their side

By Anthony Harwood

The casual remark by a senior U.S. politician will have left the Saudi Crown prince enraged but the point was well made.

Talking about how the isolation of Qatar has been dominated by accusations from a Saudi-led alliance that the tiny [Persian] Gulf [Arab] state was world's biggest supporter of terrorism, the Republican senator Bob Corker noted: "The amount of support for terrorism by Saudi Arabia dwarfs what Qatar is doing."

Now, Bob Corker isn't just anybody on Capitol Hill. He is the Chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, so is as qualified as anyone to speak about the current Middle East crisis.

But it's what he said next which is more telling, when he addressed the decision by Mohammed bin Salman, or MBS, to launch a diplomatic and transport blockade of Qatar last month.

"I think this is quite possibly a rookie mistake by a crown prince who I think could be the future for Saudi Arabia."

### ■ The future of Saudi Arabia

So there is implicit praise for the new young leader who represents 'the future of Saudi Arabia', a reformer who could set his country on a more modern and stable path.

But it's the patronizing putdown that you remember, this 'rookie' crown prince who it's suggested has blundered into potentially the biggest Middle East crisis in years.

On June 5th Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut off all ties to Qatar, including food supplies, accusing it if cozying up to Iran and supporting terrorism.

It's not the first time that the impulsive 'Prince Hal' behavior of the new Saudi ruler has been identified as a potential source of trouble.

As David Ignatius in the Washington Post put it: "A half-dozen prominent Saudi watchers who have met MBS told me they think he has the potential to re-build Saudi Arabia into a more dynamic country that's much more able to protect its security and that of its neighbors."

"But many worry that he's also capable of driving his country off a cliff with his headstrong, sometimes reckless behavior."



the Republican senator Bob Corker noted: "The amount of support for terrorism by Saudi Arabia dwarfs what Qatar is doing."

Some observers have depicted the tussle between Saudi Arabia and Qatar as battle of wills, or egos, between the countries' two new young leaders.

At 31, MBS is six years younger than the 37-year-old Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

But as the attacks from Saudi Arabia have increased so has the popularity of the Emir whose people have rallied round their leader in the face of hostility.

### ■ Stop all arms sales

So incensed was he by the aggression displayed towards Qatar at the outset of the crisis last month that Corker announced he would stop all arms sales to the countries caught up in the dispute while it continued.

The country that stood to lose most from this action was Saudi Arabia which had just signed a deal to buy £100bn of weapons from the U.S.

Corker is a close ally of U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who is returning home empty-handed from a week's shuttle diplomacy in the region trying to broker a deal.

There was no real expectation of a

breakthrough but it was clear where Tillerson's sympathies lie.

"I think Qatar has been quite clear in its positions and I think those have been very reasonable," he said.

Corker's remark that Saudi terrorism support "dwarfs" Qatar's echoed a report earlier this month which called for an inquiry into "Saudi Arabia's funding of Islamist extremism in the UK".

The Henry Jackson Society said: "While entities from across the [Persian] Gulf have been guilty of advancing extremism, those in Saudi Arabia are undoubtedly at the top of the list"

Last week's decision by the British government not to publish its own investigation into terrorist funding in the UK also led to accusations that the ministers wanted to avoid criticizing Saudi Arabia.

Prime Minister Theresa May, who visited the kingdom in April, has been accused of "kowtowing" by suppressing the report because she needs to secure post-Brexit investment from the UK's biggest trading partner in the Arab world.

But with Qatar just announcing it is to

invest £5bn in the UK Mrs May won't want to alienate Doha either.

In its bullishness towards its much smaller Arab rival the Saudi-led alliance has threatened to escalate the situation by stopping all trade with countries which continue to do business with Qatar.

"One possibility would be to impose conditions on our own trading partners and say you want to work with us then you have got to make a commercial choice," said Omar Ghobash, the UAE's ambassador to Moscow.

But it has since emerged that any American businesses that do this might fall foul of U.S. anti-boycott laws.

Under rules drawn up decades ago to protect Israel, U.S. companies can be punished if they accept a foreign country's demand to comply with a blockade that is not supported by America.

So not to trade with North Korea is allowed, but you cannot just stop trading with a country like Qatar which Washington does not have any issue with.

All in all, this leaves the 'rookie' crown prince with little room for maneuver if Qatar does not back down, which it shows no signs of doing given its huge reserves of wealth.

The more troops Turkey pours into the tiny [Persian] Gulf [Arab] state and the more Qatar and the U.S. co-operate on anti-terrorism funding the less likely the risk of a violent resolution to the crisis.

As the chief architect of the blockade, all eyes are on the Saudi crown prince to bring about a solution.

But, as Andreas Krieg, a political risk analyst at King's College London, pointed out this could involve substantial loss of face which the new young leader may not be prepared to countenance.

"Saudi Arabia actually thought they had the Trump administration, especially the Republicans, on their side," he said.

"That's why they escalated so quickly and now they realize they actually don't and the Trump administration has actually rolled back from earlier comments, and that is quite something to swallow for the UAE and Saudi Arabia."

(Source: IBT)

## Congress shouldn't let Burma backslide on democratic reforms



As a political prisoner, Aung San Suu Kyi relied on the exiled television station Democratic Voice of Burma and magazine Irrawaddy to tell her story. But in June, her government arrested three reporters from these organizations after they covered an ethnic insurgency in Shan state. They have been charged under the Unlawful Associations Act — a law that was used by the military junta to silence critics — and could face up to three years in prison. The arrests are a sign that, though military rule in Burma officially ended in 2011, the legacy of repression lives on.

Burma's new government is no stranger to allegations of human rights abuses. Its scorched-earth campaign against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state led to reports of torture, mass rape and extrajudicial killing, forcing 65,000 civilians to escape to Bangladesh. Many other members of that minority people live in squalid camps with little or no access to humanitarian aid. Most recently, the World Food Program announced that thousands of Rohingya children are suffering from acute malnutrition because of the government's arbitrary restrictions on movement.

Now, a new report from Amnesty International shows that the violations extend well beyond Rakhine state. Civilians in the country's Kachin and northern Shan states have reportedly been tortured, abducted, arrested and summarily executed by military forces. Researchers also identified a culture of impunity among government troops. While ethnic minorities have faced the most persecution, the imprisonment of the three re-

porters in Shan state suggests that not even the independent media — Aung San Suu Kyi's erstwhile ally — is safe. In the face of these allegations, Aung San Suu Kyi has remained largely silent. She rejected the necessity of a UN fact-finding mission, however, and claimed that it could create "greater hostility between the different communities." It is hard to imagine how this could be possible. She may be wary of alienating the country's military leaders — who are guaranteed by the constitution one quarter of the seats in parliament, key cabinet positions and control of the armed forces — but she should not stand in the way of an international mission.

(Source: The Washington Post)

## Amid the rubble of Mosul, Iraqi reconciliation



In contrast to ISIS's rule over the city, Iraq's government has already shown a path to reconcile Iraqis, especially its minority Sunnis.

When the Islamic State (ISIS) took over Iraq's second-largest city in 2014, one of its first acts was to kill any Mosul resident who merely thought differently. Now compare that murder spree on individual conscience to what has happened since Iraqi forces recaptured the city on July 9.

Civilians are returning, not fleeing or being killed — and they are speaking their mind. Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi promises to create stability for Mosul and extend the political unity among Iraqi leaders in fighting ISIS. Foreign donors have offered reconstruction aid for the city. On July 15, leaders of the country's minority Sunnis will meet to discuss ways to reconcile with the majority Shiites. And with Mosul's liberation, more Iraqis are eager for elections in September.

For all its problems — including the need to suppress remaining ISIS insurgents in smaller cities — Iraq has shown an improved focus on national reconciliation after three years of witnessing the alternative of mass slaughter and undemocratic governance in ISIS-run areas. At its height of power, ISIS controlled 40 percent of Iraqi territory and some 10 million people. Now it is on the run in the face of Iraq's renewed

sense of national identity.

Every country emerging from violent conflict has to find a path to reconciliation. Sometimes the need is for forgiveness, justice for victims, or simply land restitution. For Iraqis, the need is to build on its successes since 2015 in overcoming religious divides in politics, curbing corruption, and creating the kind of trust that allows for differences and the rights and freedoms for minorities.

Sunni parliamentary speaker Saleem al-Jubouri has called on the government to adopt a "well-defined approach to social justice." Mr. Abadi admits that corruption is as harmful as terrorist groups or sectarian distrust.

The most remarkable restoration of unity has been in the Iraqi security forces since their defeat by ISIS three years ago. More officers are being promoted by merit than political affiliation. And even though Shiites dominated Iraqi forces, they have generally treated Sunnis well in liberated areas.

Iraq may have finally learned that it cannot afford to ignore its minorities or leave a political vacuum. ISIS, like Al Qaeda before it, was adept at playing on Sunni grievances. While military action was needed to retake Mosul, what is needed even more is the rebuilding and reintegrating of Iraq. In a word, reconciliation.

(Source: CSM)



# Muslim Americans slam Saudi destruction of world religious heritage

By Catherine Shakdam

It has been estimated so far that in Saudi Arabia alone, the birthplace of Islam, over 7,000 Islamic sites have been destroyed.

"History will be kind to me for I intend to write it." — Winston S. Churchill

Those are chilling words indeed if we consider that such has been Saudi Arabia's theocracy's intent upon the Islamic world and by extension the world at large.

From the moment Al-Saud was raised as a giant onto the Hijaz at the turn of the 18th century — so that it could affirm itself holiest and most legitimate upon the teachings of two heretic scholars: Ibn Taymiyah and Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab — Islam has been wielded as a weapon of war, its tenets betrayed, its verses defiled and decontextualized to rationalize bloodshed.

Powered by the wealth of Al-Saud and the religious might of Al-Saud's bought-out clergy, those schools of thoughts that existed on the fringe: Wahhabism, Salafism, and Deobandism devolved into the expression of a hate that since has decimated communities, destroyed pluralism, and most of all claimed our collective religious heritage.

We cannot hope today to speak of counter-terrorism if we cannot admit to the one genocide that has eluded us — that of our history, that of our right to recall our forefathers' beliefs and traditions, so that we would remember who we are and how we came to be.

I once wrote, "We are all products of our History, and without those markers, without the pluralism of our collective past experiences we would have no civi-



lization to speak of, no culture to claim, and no spirituality to experience. History is more than the recollection of past events. History is the very fabric of our memory, a canvas upon which communities have been weaved so that they could affirm themselves." I stand by those words!

If we cannot see what irreparable damages are being perpetrated against the World Religious Heritage then truly we have failed to understand the nature of this hate, which legions have slain, hacked and exploded at our treasures.

The Islamic Heritage Research Foundation in London estimates that over 98 percent of Saudi Ara-

bia's historical and religious sites have been destroyed since 1985. "It's as if they wanted to wipe out history," said Ali Al-Ahmed, of the Institute for Gulf Affairs in Washington, D.C., in a comment to the Shafaqna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies.

It has been estimated so far that in Saudi Arabia alone, the birthplace of Islam, over 7,000 Islamic sites have been destroyed to assuage Wahhabis' own sense of self-righteous bigotry. But not only that, Christianity and Judaism only to name those two faiths, were driven out of the country altogether, a betrayal so few have attested to.

**It has been estimated so far that in Saudi Arabia alone, the birthplace of Islam, over 7,000 Islamic sites have been destroyed to assuage Wahhabis' own sense of self-righteous bigotry.**

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It may well be that the world cannot remember a time when Saudi Arabia was not exclusively Islamic ... and yet it was. The Hijaz was once multicultural and pluralist. Religious communities moved alongside one another and with each other on the basis that they all shared in the same rights and obligations to recognize each other's humanity in their respective differences. And while disputes did in fact at times erupt, no one faith imagined itself so grand as to disappear the other.

Al Saud's theocratic model made sure that such memory was forever erased ... where have the churches, temples and synagogues gone to? What of the rich religious past of a region that witnessed several prophets walk upon its sands and roads? Such history was claimed to intolerance and re-

ligious exclusionism.

Our silence has been those treasures' tombstones. It is this silence of ours that claimed the shrines of Prophet Jonah in Nineveh, Prophet Daniel, Prophet Idris and Prophet Seth in Mosul, Iraq by those acronyms we came to fear: Al-Qaeda, ISIS, al Nusra.

But one organization has rallied to denounce such genocide so that one community could be set free from religious oppression. Every year the Baqee Organization has held a demonstration before the White House and the Saudi Embassy in Washington D.C., demanding that one of Islam's holiest of grounds be restored to its former glory: al-Baqee cemetery.

"Our duty is not only to the reconstruction of the Baqee Cemetery, in that its ground is holiest of all to Islam, but the preservation

as a whole of all our religious historical heritage. The right to religious freedom does not stop at the practice of one's faith, but all that made a faith: its history, its culture, its traditions, its monuments, its art. Losing our past to sledgehammers and exclusionism would be tragedy too far! We will not stand for it," the organization said.

The last resting place of some of Islam's most brilliant and respected personalities, al-Baqee cemetery was reduced to rubble by al-Saud's clergy on account it spoke of a legitimacy al-Saud coveted for themselves. For al-Saud to sit atop the Islamic world the house of the Prophet Muhammad had to be denied. Beyond such a religious exercise lies an imperious political will — whoever can claim power over Islam would control over a billion souls to their flag. That of, course, has been Saudi Arabia's ruling elite ambition all along.

And so one must ask: why sit by a power and an ideology which is anchored in destruction and negation? Why tolerate the intolerable and allow for our past to be raided, never to be seen again?

Sameera Khan's words I believe best describe the United States' cognitive dissonance vis a vis Saudi Arabia. "It is necessary to ask this administration why Saudi Arabia, a terrorist state, isn't included in the 'Muslim Ban,' especially when they've been funding and arming terror groups all over the world — and when its state ideology has been named as the global source of terror? And we should also ask why (President Donald) Trump has held Islam as a whole responsible for terror attacks — when these very terror groups were non-existent prior to the proliferation of Wahhabism?"

There is a point in time ... and surely such time has come, we must realize terror seeks to erase our individualities to drown us in the collective and rule over a monotone society.



Energy Minister:

## Following Up Measures to Ratify Bylaws on Supplying Drinking Water to Khuzestan Provincial Cities, Atop Agenda



**Drainage and Irrigation Networks Inaugurated in Shalamcheh and Arvand and Arvandkenar, Khuzestan Province in Presence of Energy Minister**

Construction operation of dam in downstream part of Bahmanshir and drainage irrigation network in palm groves in northern Shalamcheh, Arvand and Arvandkenar and Choebdeh were inaugurated in Abadan on Monday by July 10 in the presence of Minister of Energy Hamid Chitchian, Chief Executive of Khuzestan Water and Power Authority (KWPA), representatives of people of Abadan in the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Iranian Parliament) and also a number of provincial officials.

Energy Minister Eng. Hamid Chitchian was the first speaker in the inaugural ceremony of inauguration of the aforementioned projects in Abadan and said: "With the supply of water from drainage and irrigation networks and also construction of cellular dam, land area as large as 32,000 ha of palm groves around Arvandrud and Bahmanshir will be revived."

He pointed to the salient achievements taken by his ministry to the noble people and citizens of Abadan and Khorramshahr during the 11th government dubbed "Hope and Prudence" and said: "Moreover launching projects in Abadan and Khorramshahr, Ministry of Energy has also launched projects in Ahvaz Shush and Ramhormoz, so that supply of agricultural water on a land area as large as more than 27,000 ha, costing 265 billion toman, will solve many problems in this area to a great extent."

"We are vehemently following up necessary measures in order to settle problems facing the city in the field of supplying water," he said, adding: "For this purpose, the Ministry of Energy has employed the most experienced, efficient and export engineers in order to carry out the relevant activities appropriately."

Turning to the use of cellular dams for the prevention of penetration of saline water to the rivers and said: "In this regard, we have



followed up the issue of shared dam with the neighboring Iraq and it is hoped that this giant project will be finalized at the unsparing cooperation of the two sides mutually."

He put the physical progress of the projects at 96 percent (96%).

Turning to the supply of water to the cities of province, he said: "The government has ratified a bylaw on the supply of potable water to the provincial cities, the issue of which has been taken into consideration seriously."

At the end of his remarks, the Energy Minister Eng. Chitchian pointed to the supply of water to the cities of this southern province in the country and said: "We have ratified bylaws in this regard and it is hoped that all cities of the provinces will be supplied with hygienic potable water in very near future."

Chief Executive of Khuzestan Water and Power Authority (KWPA) Mohammad-Reza Shamsaei was the next speaker who thanked efforts taken by the Ministry of Energy in the field of materializing economic objectives of this province in the field of supplying potable water to the cities of this province.

Despite burdening financial problems for the country, credits of these two dams were

provided through the FOREX (Foreign Exchange Reserves), he maintained.

Undoubtedly, this project is considered as one of the largest drainage and irrigation project in the country, he said, adding: "Due to the drought occurred in 1960s and despite existence of current dams, feasibility studies were conducted by a leading foreign company for Iran and Iraq in order to deal with salinity at the time of reduced discharge rate in Arvand and prevent damages to the palm groves located at the margin of Arvand."

Preventing Karun freshwater and saline seawater from mixing with each other has been considered in this project, he said, adding: "In this project, Bahmanshir will be turned into a long-term reservoir of freshwater in the cities of Abadan and Khorramshahr, he said, adding: "Under such circumstances, Abadan and Khorramshahr will be supplied with potable water in all sectors."

He put the current cost spent for the construction of this project in Abadan and Khorramshahr at approx. 2,000 billion toman.

In the end, chief executive of KWPA said: "Relying upon the assistance of the Almighty God, water-supply project to the cities of Abadan and Khorramshahr will be put into operation before termination of the current year in 1396 (to end March 20, 2018)."

For his part, Nour-Aldin Bazgir Deputy KWPA for Development and Operation of Dams in this province said: "This area is very complicated due to the high water level and high efficiency of seawater."

He put the water abandoned in Arvand River at 82 billion cubic meter annually. Currently, Arvandrud suffers from water shortage problem despite the dams constructed in this area by neighboring Iraq and Turkey, the issue of which has created many problems in this region.

Construction of the two dams in upstream and downstream parts of Bahmanshir is underway in order to prevent saline water from entering the rivers, he maintained.

By: A.Saeidi

Also, the largest world's water pumping station with the production capacity of 120 cubic meter/second was conducted, he reiterated.

This water-supply project can meet the water demand to industrial and agricultural sectors in Abadan and Khorramshahr in the best form possible, he said, adding: "Transiting in Bahmanshir will not be limited in upstream and downstream parts at all."

According to the designs made, suitable ways will be provided for vessels in order to transit the river through dam mobile valves.

In the end, he said that palm groves at two sides of Bahmanshir will be fed with the construction of six other pumping stations as well.

Hamid-Reza Khodabakhshi Deputy Khuzestan Water and power Authority for Drainage and Irrigation Networks Development Affairs said: "As main contractor for the said water-supply projects in cities of Abadan and Khorramshahr, Jahad Nasr Company managed to supply drinking water and overhaul irrigation network system

of the regions in the best form possible."

He put the costs spent for the operation of this water-supply project at more than 100 billion toman.

"We are in dire need of approx. 120 billion toman for the construction of Bahmanshir network and also notification of 58 billion toman worth of credit to transfer sugar cane wastewater," he opined.

According to the drainage and irrigation network project in palm groves of Abadan and Khorramshahr, it is expected that 32,000 ha palm groves around Arvandrud and Bahmanshir Rivers will be revitalized.

Preventing from the destruction of 32,000 ha palm groves in Abadan and Khorramshahr as well as revival of palm groves located at the margin of Arvandrud and Bahmanshir rivers have been cited as the main aim behind implementation of this giant project, he emphasized.

In the end, he pointed to the feasibility studies of this project and said: "Feasibility studies of this giant project started in 1973 and finalized in 1975."





# Guantánamo child soldier Omar Khadr was a victim twice over

The Canadian government's formal apology and reported CAD\$10.5million (\$7.7 million) compensation payment to Canadian citizen Omar Khadr, alleged former child soldier affiliated with Al-Qaeda and one of Guantánamo Bay's youngest ever detainees, has sharply polarized public opinion.

As the horrific exploitation of children by Islamic State, Boko Haram and other armed groups draws increasing

global condemnation, Khadr's case brings the challenge of responding to the use of child soldiers into timely focus.

According to U.S. allegations, Khadr's father Ahmed, who took him to Afghanistan, introduced him to Al-Qaeda leaders at age 10, and sent him for military training at 15 and into the battlefield shortly afterwards, making him a child soldier under national and international law.

In 2002 at age 15, Khadr was captured in Afghanistan

by U.S. forces after a firefight, in which he allegedly threw a grenade that killed U.S. Army Sergeant Christopher Speer. Khadr was seriously wounded and transferred to Guantánamo, where he was held for a decade.

As a lawyer appointed to represent Khadr said in 2010: "He was there (Afghanistan) because his father told him to go there. He was there because Ahmed Khadr hated his enemies more than he loved his son."

## A vulnerable child

Khadr was a vulnerable child who was callously exploited by the people who should have protected him.

Whatever else Khadr is alleged to have done, he is first and foremost a victim. The notion that children are particularly vulnerable and therefore in need of special protection, especially in situations of armed conflict, is a hallmark of justice and child protection systems the world over. →13

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When you are truly committed to running, it can start to define you. When injury takes that away, even temporarily, you can find yourself adrift.

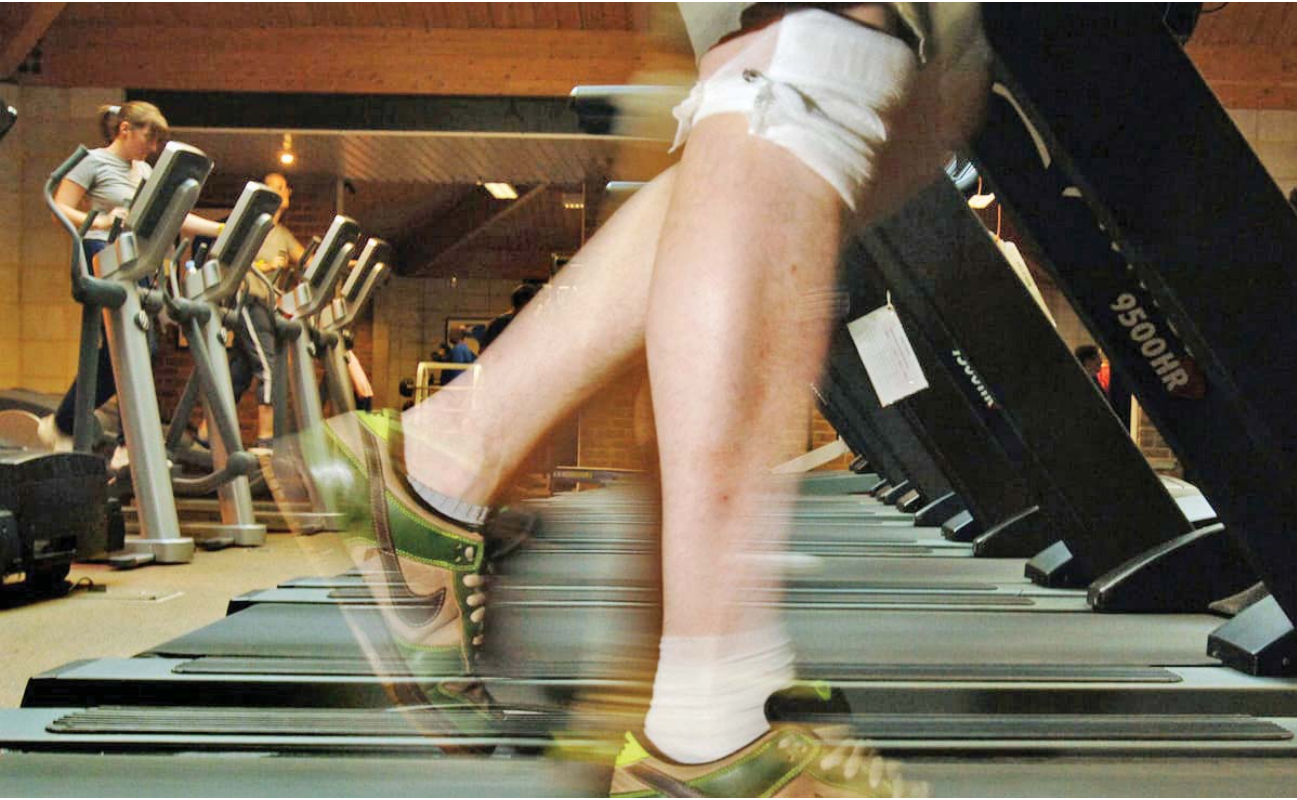
Two hundred meters did it. Not even that. It was a couple days before a big mile race, and we were on the sixth of eight 200-metre reps. Rounding the bend in lane two, I was getting ready to straighten up and push for home, when something snapped. It felt as though someone had got to the back of my leg with a pair of pliers. I faltered, hopped, and tried to get back into some kind of a stride but found I couldn't. It hurt too much. Out in lane eight, and subject to the inquiring glances of clubmates, I tried desperately to sound cheerful: "Not a biggie – be all right in a mo."

I maintained just the slightest hope that perhaps I could run this off, and made a desultory attempt at a jog to the finish line, but the truth – and the pain – was swift and conclusive. Something had happened to my hamstring, and my hamstring didn't want me to run. It wouldn't be wanting me to run for quite some time, in fact. I was injured.

Nothing about this is all that serious. I'm not a professional athlete. No money will be lost, no career will be damaged, no sponsorship deal will be affected. Nor is the injury terribly bad. It will heal and I will run again and may one day even be a better runner for having had this experience (and many others like it). I do not expect or deserve sympathy. But I do want to talk about what being an injured runner is like, at least for me, and I suspect others.

When you are truly committed, irrespective of ability, running can start to define you. You don't necessarily mean for it to happen, but as you run more and you get better, and the challenges build up and you continue to meet them, it gives you a lift. Much of the time you spend away from home or at work is based around running. Before you know it, your sense of identity is inextricably linked with your standing as a runner. The regular challenges, the immediate feedback and the real accomplishments that running can provide are all a major boost to your self-esteem. All of which is fine when you're doing well, but take running away suddenly and you can find yourself feeling adrift.

Unable to go out and run, you are left without the social network that has given you so much support. And there are constant reminders of the things you



**The regular challenges, the immediate feedback and the real accomplishments that running can provide are all a major boost to your self-esteem.**

can't do. You don't want to look on Strava, for example, but you can't help it and the loneliness and the frustration get worse. Running injuries are mostly internal things, and because there are no visible wounds you can't see the healing process. You never really know how long it will be.

In my own case, it couldn't have happened at a worse time. It was mid-summer and the races were piling up. The mile race we were training for when the injury happened is one of the highlights of my year, a few days after this there was the last in a league of 10k races and I was in the overall lead. The following Saturday I was planning to run my first fell race, and a few more track races were lined up for the weeks after. It was immediately obvious I wouldn't be running the mile race, and one by one, as the day of each of the other races approached, I would be forced to admit that I wouldn't be able to do it.

Missing the mile, and losing the lead of the 10k series, and not doing the fell race that had been in the diary for six

months were not what really hurt though. The day after I got injured was my seven-year-old's sports day. There was a dad's race; he'd asked me if I'd do it and I'd told him I would. Seven-year-olds don't think about hamstrings much, nor should they. All he knew was the race was on and his dad was taking part. It was only about 50 meters. All of his friends' dads were doing it. He'd even gone and won his own race (massively proud moment, that one). How could I let him down?

I couldn't. What followed might just have been the most painful few moments of my life. Every stride was agony, and to make matters worse the other dads were really going for it. I think I finished fourth in the end, sandwiched between a heavy smoker and an overweight bloke. But the damage to my ego was not quite as bad as the damage to my leg.

"You're an idiot," my physio said when I explained why I thought the pain had started to get worse. The net result being a longer layoff. A longer time spent not getting those regular challenges, that

steady stream of feedback and support.

I hate to admit it, but when I can't run myself, there are few experiences less appealing than scrolling down the Strava dashboard handing out endless kudos to friends for races (and 10k leagues) won, and PB's gained and all the rest of it. But I do it anyway, because it means I'm still involved, and being involved is the best remedy I've found for the loneliness of being injured. Staying at home and licking wounds, although a natural response, only deepens the sense of isolation. I did go to support the mile race, despite my disappointment at not being able to run, and was there marshalling at the 10k race the week after. It's always good to give something back to the running gods by getting involved in ways other than running, and supporting others do what I can't – albeit temporarily – is undeniably enjoyable. There are plenty of races ahead. I may not be in them for a while, but that doesn't have to mean I'm not still part of the team.

(Source: The Guardian)

## The alarming rise of female genital mutilation in America

By Michelle Krupa

It's a brutal practice that's inflicted on thousands of girls and women every year. Female genital mutilation, or female ritual cutting, involves altering or injuring female genital organs. It's often done by people with no medical training and in filthy places, posing horrendous health risks that can linger for decades. Most victims are told never to talk about it -- and some don't survive to tell their stories. Even as girls and women across the globe faces these risks every day, misconceptions abound. To end the practice, experts and survivors say this practice must be drawn out of the shadows. Here's what you need to know:

It's often painful and harrowing ... Some women say they have no memory of being cut and don't feel any pain at the incision site. Others end up ravaged and require special medical procedures just to be able to menstruate or give birth. It all depends on the type of FGM, which experts have classified by the part or parts of the body that get cut. Cases run the spectrum, from pricking the clitoris to removing it completely to sewing up skin around the vagina. • and yet millions are subjected to it. Across at least 30 countries, more than 200 million girls and women alive today have been subjected to FGM. That equals the entire populations of

**Girls and women most at risk in the US come from or have relatives who come from the African nations of Egypt, Ethiopia and Somalia, where three-quarters or more of all girls and women have been subjected to female genital mutilation.**

France, Germany and Italy, combined. More than half the survivors live in Indonesia, Egypt and Ethiopia. The procedure is usually carried out between birth and adolescence by community elders, traditional health practitioners or trained health-care providers. About 44 million of the survivors are younger than 15.

Worldwide, more than 3 million girls are estimated to be at risk every year of being subjected to the procedure, even though it is outlawed in 42 countries, including 24 nations in Africa.

• It has no basis in religion ... No religious texts require FGM. Yet some cultures and sects believe the practice makes for better wives by making girls more acceptable in their communities, thus improving their eligibility for marriage. The practice aims to reduce a woman's libido to ensure premarital virginity and marital fidelity, and can be associated with being "feminine," "modest," "clean" and "beautiful."

It's practiced in households at all educational levels and all social classes and occurs among many religious groups, including Muslims, Christians and animists. The origins of the practice are unclear, with historians citing evidence of it in Egyptian mummies and in the fifth century BC.

In 13 African countries, more than

**Since 1990, the estimated number of girls and women in the US who have undergone or are at risk of the practice has more than tripled. The increase is due to rapid growth in the number of immigrants from countries where risk of FGM is greatest.**

half of women aged 15 to 49 have undergone the procedure. • and zero health benefits.

Experts across the globe agree that the practice has no medical benefits whatsoever. Ten global agencies issued a joint statement in 2008 branding the practice a human rights violation and calling for its elimination within one generation.

Meantime, the health risks -- including death -- are plentiful. There is some good news abroad ... A survey of countries where FGM is common shows a steady decline in the percentage of teenagers who have undergone the practice.

And opinions are changing. A strong majority of women and men in countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia where the procedure is most often practiced think it should be history.

• but an alarming rise in the US. Since 1990, the estimated number of girls and women in the US who have undergone or are at risk of the practice has more than tripled. The increase is due to rapid growth in the number of immigrants from countries where risk of FGM is greatest. These girls and women are concentrated in California, New York and Minnesota.

US statistics don't distinguish between survivors of the practice and people at risk, though there's an effort underway to change that.

Girls and women most at risk in

the US come from or have relatives who come from the African nations of Egypt, Ethiopia and Somalia, where three-quarters or more of all girls and women have been subjected to female genital mutilation.

The feds have taken steps ...

After the US granted asylum to 17-year-old Fauziya Kassindja, who fled female genital mutilation and a forced marriage in Togo, a federal law was passed in 1996 making it illegal to perform the practice in the US. The law was amended in 2013 to make it illegal to knowingly transport a girl out of the US to inflict FGM abroad.

But it took more than two decades for the first prosecution to happen. Two Michigan doctors and the wife of one of the doctors were charged in 2017 with performing the banned procedure on two 7-year-old girls.

• but half the states have no law against it.

Though at-risk girls and women are thought to live in every state but Hawaii, just 25 states have enacted laws against female genital mutilation. Prosecution depends on the age of the victim, who performed the procedure, whether the victim was taken out of the country for FGM, and whether the accused uses cultural reasons as a defense. Punishments include as many as 30 years in prison and fines that top out at \$250,000.

(Source: CNN)

## The workout that's just as effective as physical therapy for back pain

By Christa Sgobba

A barking back can do more than derail your gym plans—it can make even everyday activities feel insurmountable. But popping pills for back pain can do more harm than good, as we reported. So what can you do to feel better?

You might want to incorporate a new kind of workout into your routine, a new study in the Annals of Internal Medicine suggests. Yoga might be just as effective at treating chronic low back pain as physical therapy is, the researchers discovered.

Researchers split 320 people with chronic low back pain into three groups: The first did 12 weeks of weekly yoga classes, the second had 15 physical therapy visits, and the third simply read through educational books and leaflets on back pain.

The yoga classes included gentle poses, like knees to chest, cat/cow, child's pose, and sphinx pose.

After 12 weeks, the people who did yoga and those who went to physical therapy showed greater improvement in back-related function than those given educational materials. And there was no difference in function or pain between the yoga group and the physical therapy group.

What's more, yoga participants and physical therapy participants were 21% and 22% less likely, respectively, than the education group to use pain killers after 12 weeks.

The improvements seen in both the yoga and physical therapy group were maintained after one year, too.

The findings suggest that a structured yoga program may be a reasonable alternative to going to physical therapy, the study authors say. But don't join any yoga class blindly—researchers and experts specifically chose the poses for this experiment for safety and efficacy. So talk to your doctor first about what kinds to stick with.

(Source: prevention.com)

## Hypermobility syndrome facts

By William C. Shiel Jr.

- The joint hypermobility syndrome is a condition that features joints that easily move beyond the normal range expected for that particular joint.
- Hypermobile joints tend to be inherited.
- Symptoms of the joint hypermobility syndrome include pain in the knees, fingers, hips, and elbows.
- Often joint hypermobility causes no symptoms and requires no treatment. Treatments are customized for each individual based on their particular manifestations.

### ■ What is the joint hypermobility syndrome?

The joint hypermobility syndrome is a condition that features joints that easily move beyond the normal range expected for a particular joint. The joint hypermobility syndrome is considered a benign condition. It is estimated that 10%-15% of normal children have hypermobile joints or joints that can move beyond the normal range of motion.

Hypermobile joints are sometimes referred to as «loose joints,» and those affected are referred to as being «double jointed.»

### ■ What causes joint hypermobility syndrome?

Hypermobile joints tend to be inherited in specific genes passed on by parents to their children. It is felt that these certain genes predispose to the development of hypermobile joints. As a result, there is a tendency of the condition to run in families (familial). Genes that are responsible for the production of collagen, an important protein that helps to glue tissues together, are suspected of playing a role.

### ■ What diseases are risk factors for joint hypermobility syndrome?

Joint hypermobility is also a feature of a rare, inherited, more significant medical condition called Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS), which is characterized by weakness of the connective tissues of the body. Joint hypermobility is commonly seen in people with Down syndrome and in people with Marfan syndrome.

### ■ What are joint hypermobility symptoms and signs?

Because the joints are capable of excessive motion in people with the joint hypermobility syndrome, they are susceptible to injury. Symptoms of the joint hypermobility syndrome include pain in the knees, fingers, hips, and elbows. There is a higher incidence of joint dislocation and sprains of involved joints. Scoliosis (curvature of the spine) occurs more frequently in people with hypermobile joints and can lead to back pain. Joint hypermobility tends to decrease with aging as we become naturally less flexible.

Signs of the syndrome are the ability to place the palms of the hands on the floor with the knees fully extended, hyperextension of the knee or elbow beyond 10 degrees, and the ability to touch the thumb to the forearm.

### ■ How do health-care professionals diagnose joint hypermobility syndrome?

Joint hypermobility syndrome is diagnosed by examining affected joints and noting that they easily move beyond the normal range expected. For example, the middle of the fingers may bend backward more than usual. There is no blood test for hypermobility syndrome.

(Source: medicinenet.com)



## 10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

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

**1** AT&T Inc will run its wireless and DirecTV satellite television businesses separately from Time Warner Inc's media assets following its \$85.4 billion acquisition of the entertainment group.

**2** HTC has pushed out a new update to the Edge Sense app that brings along a couple of changes, key among which is support for Alexa. This means that U11 users will now be able to launch the digital assistant by squeezing their phone.

**3** General Motors Co. said it was testing its car-sharing operation, Maven, in Australia through a pilot program with ride-hailing company Uber Technologies Inc. The leasing agreement will allow Uber drivers to rent cars produced by GM's Australian manufacturer GM Holden, the company said.

**4** A spat between Rome and Telecom Italia's (TIM) chief executive over the rollout of ultrafast broadband has been resolved, Italian industry minister Carlo Calenda said in an interview. In an interview with Il Sole 24 Ore newspaper, Calenda said he considered Cattaneo, who has cut costs in just over a year at the helm of the indebted firm, "an excellent manager".

**5** With iOS 11 comes Core NFC. This allows developers to access NFC so that the tool can be used inside apps. With the latest build of Apple's mobile operating system, NFC tags can be read on certain iPhone models.

**6** Samsung exec confirms August unveiling for Galaxy Note8, US to get it in September. The confirmation came from the tech giant's president of mobile communications Gao Dongzhen.

**7** The Essential Phone (or PH-1) was announced on May 30, with a shipping date promised for a month after that. Well, we're two weeks past the deadline and the Phone's nowhere to be seen. What's raising more questions now is the news that the company's VP of marketing, Brian Wallace, has left the company. He's not the first one too, following Andy Fouché, Head of Communications, Business Insider reports.

**8** The long overdue new-Nokia flagship will be called Nokia 8 and it's reportedly coming on July 31. The info comes from an unnamed Scandinavian retailer that also discloses the price - €589.

**9** Google Maps now shows a travel time graph to your destination. Google Maps has gained a new feature which appears to be active now, at the very least for the US and UK. Upon looking up driving directions, you can swipe up on the lower bar right before starting your trip to check if the travel time will change over the course of a few hours.

**10** Just as Amazon Fire TV devices gain updates to work with Amazon Alexa, another lineup of Android-powered Sony TVs will gain full hands-free controls via voice commands with the Amazon Echo. With voice control like this, you probably won't even need to dig under the couch cushions to find the remote when you can just ask Alexa to: fire up to the TV, change the input/channel, or even control DVR playback.

## McAfee CTO says human-machine teams will stop cybercrime better

Cybersecurity firm McAfee was born before the current artificial intelligence craze. The company recently spun out of Intel at a \$4.2 billion valuation, and it has become a giant among tech security firms. But lots of rival AI startups in cybersecurity (like Deep Instinct, which raised \$32 million yesterday) are applying the recent advances in deep learning to the task of keeping companies secure.



Steve Grobman, chief technology officer at McAfee, believes that AI alone isn't going to stop cybercrime, however. That's in part because the attackers are human and they're better at determining outside-the-box ways to penetrate security defenses, even if AI is being used to bolster security. And those attackers can employ AI in offensive attacks.

Grobman believes that including human curation — someone who can take the results of AI analysis and think more strategically about how to spot cyber criminals — is a necessary part of the equation.

"We strongly believe that the future will not see human beings eclipsed by machines," he said, in a recent blog post. "As long as we have a shortage of human talent in the critical field of cybersecurity, we must rely on technologies such as machine learning to amplify the capabilities of the humans we have."

The machines are coming, which could be a good thing for security technologists and cybercriminals alike, escalating the years-old cat-and-mouse game in computer security.

(Source: venturebeat)

# How a new wave of machine learning will impact today's enterprise

By Jake Bennett

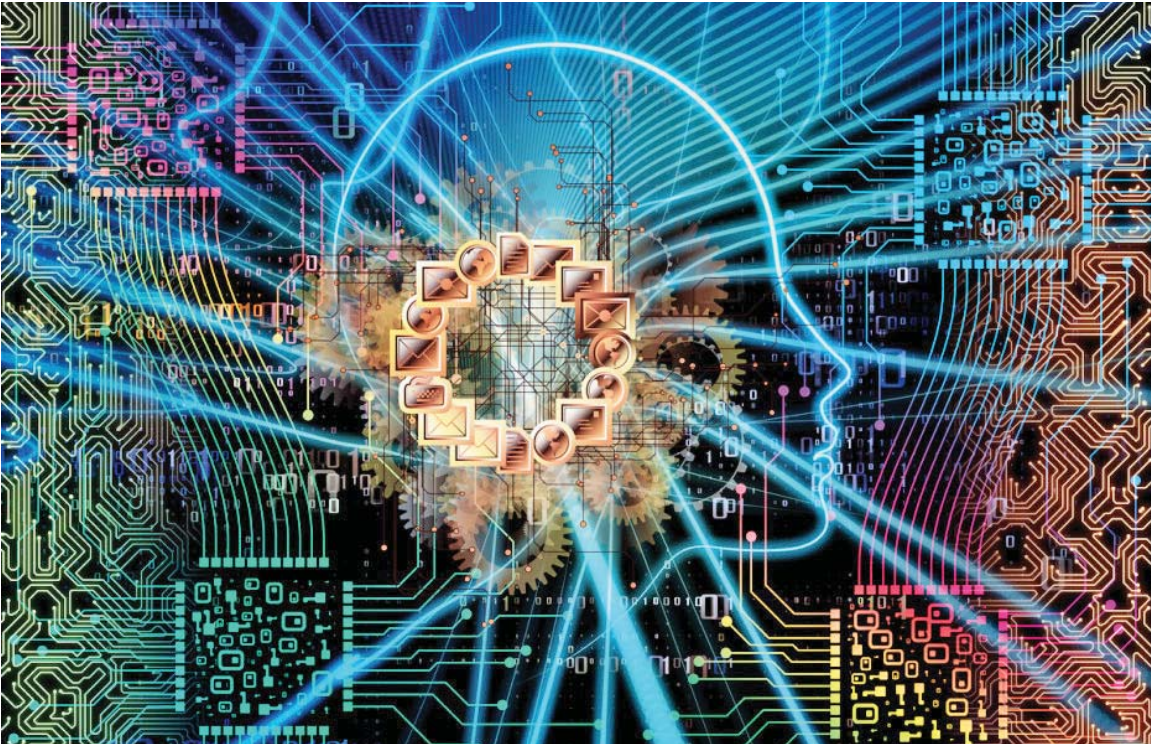
Advances in deep learning and other machine learning algorithms are currently causing a tectonic shift in the technology landscape. Technology behemoths like Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Facebook and Salesforce are engaged in an artificial intelligence (AI) arms race, gobbling up machine learning talent and startups at an alarming pace. They are building AI technology war chests in an effort to develop an insurmountable competitive advantage.

Today, you can watch a 30-minute deep learning tutorial online, spin up a 10-node cluster over the weekend to experiment, and shut it down on Monday when you're done — all for the cost of a few hundred bucks. Betting big on an AI future, cloud providers are investing resources to simplify and promote machine learning to win new cloud customers. This has led to an unprecedented level of accessibility that is breeding grassroots innovation in AI. A comparable technology democratization occurred with the internet in the 1990s and, if AI innovation follows a similar trajectory, the world will be a very interesting place in five years.

First, advances in computing technology (GPU chips and cloud computing, in particular) are enabling engineers to solve problems in ways that weren't possible before. For example, chipmaker NVIDIA has been ramping up production of GPU processors designed specifically to accelerate machine learning, and cloud providers like Microsoft and Google have been using them in their machine learning services.

These advances have a broader impact than just the development of faster, cheaper processors, however. The low cost of computation and the ease of accessing cloud-managed clusters have democratized AI in a way we've never seen before. In the past, building a computer cluster to train a deep neural network would have required access to capital or a university research facility. You would have also needed someone with a PhD in mathematics to understand the academic research papers on subjects like convolutional neural networks.

Although everybody points to improvements in CPU/GPU as the primary driver of AI innovation, this is only half the equation. Advances in AI algorithms in the mid-1980s broke the spell of the AI winter of the 1970s. The work of deep learning pioneers like Geoffrey Hinton and Yann LeCun solved some of the critical shortcomings that plagued earlier algorithms. In many ways, algorithms like Hinton's backpropagation opened the floodgates for future algorithmic innovations, albeit these improvements happened at a slower, academic pace. DeepMind's AlphaGo program, for example, combined deep learning with reinforcement learning to enable a computer that beat the world's highest-ranked Go player in 2017 — a full 20 years later.



Historically, AI has been defined by the ability of a computer to pass the Turing test, which meant the public wasn't going to be happy with AI until they had a walking, talking robot. Anything less was considered a failure. We're still far away from creating this kind of general AI, but we're already solving some types of advanced problems with machine learning, a subset of AI proper. Rather than focus on general intelligence, machine learning algorithms work by improving their ability to perform specific tasks using data. Problems that used to be the exclusive domain of humans — computer vision, speech recognition, autonomous movement — are being solved today by machine learning algorithms.

In fact, machine learning has become such a huge area of focus and, for all practical purposes, the term machine learning has become synonymous with AI. Ultimately this is a good thing. The more consumers and companies start associating the term AI with real-world applications of machine learning like self-driving cars, the more they realize that AI is a real thing. It's here to stay, and it holds the promise of reshaping the technology landscape over the next several years.

Enterprises should take advantage by aligning their cloud and technology stacks with providers who are leaders in AI. The gap between the AI haves and have-nots will continue to widen, so picking the right technology providers is critical. For example, a non-AI

powered CRM system might allow your sales team to find prospective customers based on the last time they were contacted, helping sales reps search for potentially fruitful leads. But an AI-powered CRM system, in contrast, could proactively feed leads to sales reps in real time using algorithms designed to maximize the likelihood of a sale, based on breaking information about the customer, their company, and the sales rep herself. Choosing the right CRM vendor in this case could have a direct and significant impact on revenue.

This year will, if it hasn't already, bring the realization that if we don't develop strong in-house machine learning capabilities now, we'll end up on the wrong side of the future of technology. However, rather than hire teams of AI innovators like the first wave of AI tech giants have done, today's technology companies must build their AI capabilities using out-of-the-box machine learning tools from AI-focused platform providers like Microsoft and Google.

The increasing demand for AI-driven technology, combined with the dearth of machine learning talent in the labor pool, will force the democratization of data science. Indeed, Google and Microsoft are betting the farm on this trend, which is why they're making such huge investments in machine learning education and easy-to-use AI tools.

(Source: Venturebeat)

## Best and worst gaming laptop brands 2017

Choosing the right notebook is hard, but selecting the perfect gaming laptop is even more challenging. In addition to specs like the processor, graphics card and storage drives, you need to consider the special sauce that each manufacturer adds to its systems in the form of design, software, keyboards and even warranty coverage.

When you're potentially investing more than \$1,000, the brand matters as much as the specs and features.

In order to help you choose wisely, we've evaluated the top nine gaming laptop brands and given each a score on a 100-point scale. In order to determine the winners and losers, we rated them on eight different criteria: Design, Review Scores, Keyboards, Displays, Software, Innovation, Warranty and Customization/Selection Options.

Due to its consistently high review scores, beautiful displays, willingness to innovate and wealth of configuration options, Dell/Alienware earned first place. MSI took second place, thanks to a diverse lineup of laptops, powerful specs and impressive mechanical keyboards. Razer rounded out the top three, due to its sleek designs and useful software.

(Source: engadget)



## Amazon may unveil its own messaging app



AFTVnews claims to have customer survey info revealing that Amazon is working on Anytime, a messaging app for Android, iOS and the desktop that promises a few twists on the usual formula. It has mainstays like message encryption, video, voice and (of course) stickers, but it reportedly has a few hooks that would make it easy to sign up and participate in group chats.

You would only need a name to reach out to someone, for one thing -- no WhatsApp-style dependence on phone numbers here.

You only have to use Twitter-style @ mentions to bring people into conversations or share photos, and you can color-code chats to identify the most important ones.

(Source: techcrunch)

## The world of 'Toy Story' is coming to 'Kingdom Hearts 3'



Kingdom Hearts 3 has been slow in coming, but you'll at least get a reward for your patience. Square Enix took to Disney's D23 stage to announce that the action role-playing game will have our heroes visit the world of Pixar's Toy Story -- yes, you'll be helping Buzz Lightyear and Woody clear the neighborhood of villainous toys.

There's even a bit of Titanfall-style action as you jump into plastic robots to do battle. Oh, and did we mention that KH3's release has finally been narrowed down, to 2018? That could still put a release well into the future, but it's a relatively short wait given that fans of the Disney/Square crossover series have already gone more than a decade without a sequel.

(Source: PlayStation Blog)

## Lenovo made an augmented reality headset for 'Star Wars' games



Here's something you probably weren't expecting out of a Disney fan event: a Star Wars augmented reality headset.

Lenovo and Lucasfilm have teased headgear that uses your smartphone to bring the space epic into the real world.

There's precious little to know about the hardware (not even a release date), but we already know a bit about the games you'll play.

Lenovo and Disney are teasing holochess, for a start, but there's also a real-time ground battle game and Jedi Challenges, which will (naturally) have you wielding a lightsaber. In short: you're about to live out a lot of Star Wars fantasies.

(Source: Lenovo)



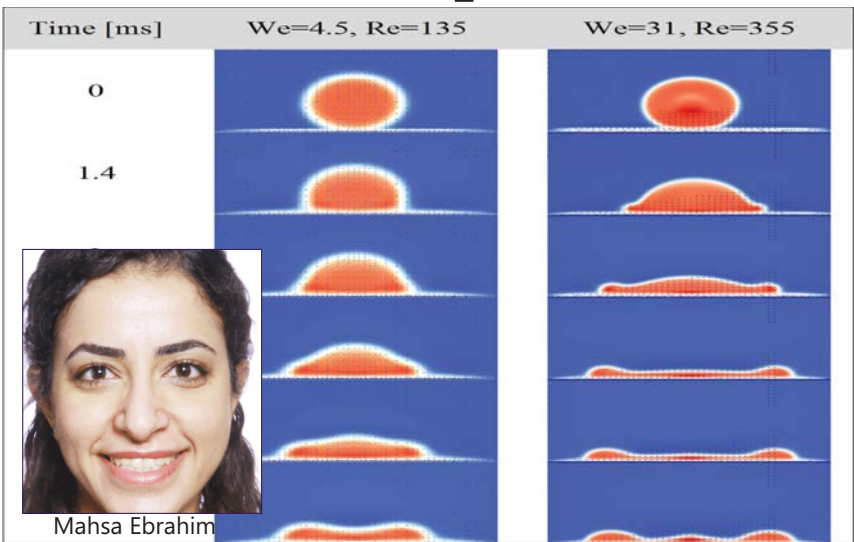
# Simulating splash at the microscopic level

Spray cooling is one of the most promising methods for cooling high heat flow electronics. Two-phase spray cooling, in particular, has been shown to cool heat fluxes that are orders of magnitude higher than traditional cooling methods like fans and heat sinks. The complex physics of two-phase spray cooling, in which droplets are atomized with a secondary pressurized gas phase, demands deeper understanding.

To tackle this, researchers from the United States and the United Kingdom investigated the basic physics of droplet impingement both experimentally and computationally. They used a computational approach called the lattice-Boltzmann method (LBM) to simulate the impact of a single microdroplet on a dry surface.

Their findings, reported this week in the journal *Physics of Fluids*, from AIP Publishing, could benefit many other applications in addition to spray-cooling, including inkjet printing, paint coating, plasma spraying and microfabrication.

**■ Practical reasons**  
For practical reasons, most research so far has been based on studying millimeter-size droplets and the hydrodynamic impacts on dry solid surfaces. However, droplet sizes in spray cooling are three orders of magnitude smaller, which means that the physics of liquid



dispersion and the dynamics of the impact could be vastly different.

To find out, the researchers turned to LBM algorithms, which are used for the computational modeling of fluid flow in complex geometries and multiphase flows. It also incorporates a mesoscopic approach that covers the gap between

the microscopic molecular dynamics and the macroscopic fluid mechanics.

"As a result of the LBM, we were able to distinguish the appropriate scales of the problem and therefore successfully normalize the dynamics of the spreading phase, which has complicated physics at the microscopic level," said Mahsa Ebra-

**"In the literature, there are many correlations and analytical models for high-impact droplet dynamics."**

him, postdoctoral fellow at the University of Villanova in Pennsylvania and a co-author of the paper. "In the literature, there are many correlations and analytical models for high-impact droplet dynamics. However, most of them failed in the lower impact regimes because of the distinct physics at the microscopic level."

**■ Spray cooling**  
For single-phase spray cooling, a liquid is sprayed in ambient air without significant air pressure or forces acting on the droplet surface. The researchers were able to develop a correlation for the system that can reasonably predict the instantaneous droplet diameter after the low-impact regimes.

In two-phase spray cooling, the atomizing gas forms smaller droplets, which impact the surface under an atomizing gas flow, called a stagnation jet. It had previously been hypothesized that the jet would affect the spreading in all impact conditions. However, through LBM, the research team showed that there are no significant effects for certain cases, which gave way to an entirely new way to characterize such systems. The jet had no such effects for capillary number ratios below 0.35, and thus defined a new dimensionless metric ( $Ca^*$ ) as the ratio of jet-to-droplet capillary numbers.

(Source: sciencedaily.com)

## Algal bloom this year will be big, scientists say

Lake Erie's harmful algal bloom this summer will be a big one, bigger than the relatively small bloom in 2016, scientists predict.

But they say it won't be as large as the record HAB recorded in 2015, or as big as the second-largest one in 2011.

The scientists, speaking at an annual forecast event held at Stone Laboratory on Gibraltar Island near Put-in-Bay, said the bloom is forecast to measure 7.5 on the severity index for how large it will be, compared to 10.5 in 2015 and 10.0 in 2011.

The possible range for this year's bloom is 6.5 to 9.5, so the scientists appear pretty confident that the bloom this year won't set a record.

Richard Stumpf, an algal bloom expert from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, said that the size of the bloom and the toxicity of the bloom are too different measurements. Scientists don't have a way to forecast the bloom's toxicity, although they are working on that, he said.

### ■ Purification process

Harmful algal blooms, aside from producing a blue-green goo that covers the surface of the lake, can produce toxins that have to be removed during the water purification process.

Stumpf noted that the bloom will be concentrated in the western basin, and that much of the lake should be fine. Even the effect on the western basin will depend upon winds, he said.

Laura Johnson, a Heidelberg University professor at the school's National Center for Water Quality Research, said the amount of phosphorus placed in the lake to feed harmful algal blooms seems to track closely with the amount of rain and with severe storm events.

She said concentrations of phosphorus in the water haven't changed very much.

Scientists understand what needs to be done by farmers to reduce the phosphorus runoff feeding harmful algal blooms, she said.

That includes good practices for using fertilizer, including putting the right amount on at the right time, planting cover crops, and managing water that drains from the fields. But the data shows that not enough of that is being done yet, she said.

### ■ Harmful algal bloom

Although Thursday's event focused on the harmful algal bloom forecast for this summer, experts also were brought in to discuss related topics. Here is some of what they said:



A new study suggests that it is safe to eat yellow perch and walleyes caught in the lake during harmful algal blooms, said Stuart Ludsins, a scientist at The Ohio State University's Aquatic Ecology Laboratory who is the lead author of the study.

Walleyes apparently aren't getting the toxins in their flesh (their livers do a good job of filtering the toxins out), while yellow perch get only small concentrations.

(Source: sanduskyregister.com)

## Cook Islands creates huge Pacific Ocean marine reserve

The Cook Islands has created one of the world's largest marine sanctuaries, protecting a vast swathe of the Pacific Ocean more than three times the size of France.

Legislation setting up the 1.9 million square kilometer (735,000 square mile) reserve passed through the tiny nation's parliament late Thursday.

Environmentalist Kevin Iro, who first proposed the idea more than five years ago, said it was a landmark achievement that would help preserve the ocean for future generations.

"It's a historic time, particularly because everyone supported it, including our traditional leaders who spearheaded

the whole thing," he told AFP.

The Cook Islands has a population of just 10,000 and its 15 islands have a combined landmass of 236sq km, barely the size of Washington DC.

### ■ Isolated position

But its isolated position in the Pacific, about halfway between New Zealand and Hawaii with no near neighbors, means it has a huge maritime territory.

Iro said Cook Islanders had an affinity with the ocean and viewed it as sacred but overfishing and pollution had damaged the marine environment, including the coral reefs that once ringed all the islands.

He said the marine reserve, known

as Marae Moana, would give the environment a chance to heal, allowing the islanders to protect their legacy.

"When I moved back here (from New Zealand) about 16 years ago I saw what was happening to the lagoons and reefs and really wanted to protect them for my kids," he said.

"I want them to have the same experience I did as a boy growing up."

The idea is not to ban commercial fishing or mineral exploration outright, but to ensure it is carried out in a sustainable manner.

### ■ Core no-fishing zone

However, there will be a core no-fishing zone totaling about 320,000sq km,

extending 50 nautical miles from the coastline of each island.

Prime Minister Henry Puna said Marae Moana provided a blueprint for managing ocean environments worldwide.

"Together we had a vision to turn our little country into the cleanest and greenest tourism destination in the whole wide world," the Cook Islands News quoted him as telling parliament.

"We not only recognize that the ocean brings us revenue in terms of fishery and tourism and potentially sea bed minerals — it also provides us with clean air, clean water, and clean food to nourish and sustain us."

(Source: AFP)

## Iran Comes 2nd in Significant DRI Production Volume in 2016 Worldwide

Islamic Republic of Iran stood at the second rank in terms of considerable increase in production of Direct Reduction Iron (DRI) dubbed "sponged iron" in 2016, Public Relations Dept. of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) reported.

According to the statistics in 2016, Iran came second only to India in the production of sponged iron in the world.

It should be noted that Iran's DRI production volume hit from 72,640,000 tons/year in 2015 to a partial growth of 72,760,000 tons/year in 2016, the report

added.

With a significant 9.7 percent growth in 2016 as compared to the same period of last year, Islamic Republic of Iran managed to produce 16,010,000 tons of DRI and registered its name as the second country in the worldwide.

The growing long-term trend of Iran's steel industry has been cited as the main aim behind increasing production volume of this product.

Considering the inauguration of sponged iron projects in the country, it is predicted that Islamic Republic of Iran will stand at the first rank in the worldwide.

The report put the DRI volume produced in India in 2016 at 18,470,000 tons, showing a considerable 4.5 percent hike as compared to a year earlier.

Given the above issue, India stood at the first rank in the world in terms of DRI "sponged iron" production.

It should be noted that Saudi Arabia, Russia and Mexico stood at 3rd to 5th ranks in terms of production of sponged iron in the world respectively.

Maximum production growth of sponged iron in the world has been reported in Iran, India and United States.

Production of sponged iron in U.S. increased more than 700,000 tons/year in 2016, the report ended.

## SARMAYEH Bank Hosts Organizing Foreign Exchange Seminar

A Foreign Exchange Seminar (special of managers and personnel of SARMAYEH Bank) was held on Wednesday July 12 at the venue of SARMAYEH Bank in the presence of chief executives and employees of the bank, Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Studying and clarifying performance of foreign exchange and currency branches of the bank in terms of volume of services and attraction of customers have been cited as the main aim of this

prestigious seminar, the report added.

Ahmad Kaveh Head of Currency Operations Department of SARMAYEH Bank was the first speaker who expounded on the performance of the bank in the Currency and Intl. Affairs and called on responsible officials to help improve bank's currency activities through their constructive complaints and proposals.

Ahmad Haji-Mohammadi Director of Intl. Affairs was the next speaker who delivered a comprehensive re-

port on the performance of affiliated departments over the past year and said: "Intl. Affairs Department of the bank is tasked with issuing currency guarantee letters, customs green card, concluding international contracts, following up currency demands, equipping and developing branch offices, compiling necessary instructions and also notifying to the currency branch offices, etc.

It should be noted that this semi-

nar was attended by Qobad Bahado-rinejad Deputy Chief Executive and Member of the Board of Directors of the bank, Mojtaba Zamanian Director of Management Bureau, Saeed Fallah Manager of Corporate Banking and Marketing Department, Ahmad Haji-Mohammadi Director of Intl. Affairs, Ahmad Kaveh Head of Currency Operations Department and also a number of senior directors, managers and personnel of the bank.

## Astronaut Buzz Aldrin rolls out the red carpet for Mars

Forty-eight years after he landed on the moon, Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin on Saturday rolled out a red carpet for the red planet at a star-studded gala at the Kennedy Space Center.



Aldrin, 87, commemorated the upcoming anniversary of the 1969 mission to the moon under a historic Saturn V rocket and raised more than \$190,000 for his nonprofit space education foundation, ShareSpace Foundation. Aldrin believes people will be able to land on Mars by 2040, a goal that NASA shares. The space agency is developing the Space Launch System and the Orion spacecraft to send Americans to deep space.

Apollo astronauts Walt Cunningham, Michael Collins and Harrison "Jack" Schmitt joined Aldrin, one of 12 people to walk on the moon, at the sold-out fundraiser.

"I like to think of myself as an innovative futurist," Aldrin told a crowd of nearly 400 people in the Apollo/Saturn V Center. The "programs we have right now are eating up every piece of the budget and it has to be reduced if we're ever going to get anywhere."

During the gala, the ShareSpace Foundation presented Jeff Bezos with the first Buzz Aldrin Space Innovation Award.

"We can have a trillion humans in the solar system. What's holding us back from making that next step is that space travel is just too darned expensive," Bezos said. "I'm taking my Amazon lottery winnings and dedicating it to (reusable rockets). I feel incredibly lucky to be able to do that."

The foundation also honored former NASA astronaut Mae Jemison, the first African-American woman to travel in space, with the Buzz Aldrin Space Pioneering Award.

(Source: Brown County Democrat)

## That huge iceberg should freak you out, say scientists

Last week, a trillion-ton hunk of ice broke off Antarctica.

You probably know that. It was all over the Internet.

Among the details that have been repeated ad nauseum: The iceberg is nearly the size of Delaware, which prompted some fun musing on Twitter about where exactly Delaware is and how anyone is supposed to approximate the square footage of that U.S. state. The ice, which has been named A68, represents more than 12% of the Larsen C ice shelf, a sliver on the Antarctic Peninsula. And most important: None of this has anything to do with man-made climate change.

I spent most of Thursday on the phone with scientists, talking to them about the huge iceberg off Antarctica and what it means. Here are my five takeaways.

There is no disagreement among climate scientists about whether humans are warming the Earth by burning fossil fuels and polluting the atmosphere with greenhouse gases. We are. And we see the consequences.

But there is some dispute about whether there is enough evidence to tie the breakoff of this particular piece of ice to global warming.

In a widely quoted statement, Martin O'Leary, a Swansea University glaciologist who was part of the team studying Larsen C, said that the iceberg calving was a "natural event" and that "we're not aware of any link to human-induced climate change."

"They're looking at it through a microscope" rather than seeing macro trends, including the fact that oceans around Antarctica are warming, helping thin the ice, said Kevin Trenberth, a distinguished senior scientist at the U.S. National Center for Atmospheric Research.

(Source: CNN)

## Yes, the sun is an ordinary, solar-type star after all

The Sun is a solar-type star, a new study claims -- resolving an ongoing controversy about whether the star at the center of our Solar System exhibits the same cyclic behavior as other nearby, solar-type stars. The results also advance scientists' understanding of how stars generate their magnetic fields.

The Sun's activity -- including changes in the number of sunspots, levels of radiation and ejection of material - varies on an eleven-year cycle, driven by changes in its magnetic field.

Understanding this cycle is one of the biggest outstanding problems in solar physics, in part because it does not appear to match magnetic cycles observed on other solar-type stars -- leading some to suggest the Sun is fundamentally different. Here, by carrying out a series of simulations of stellar magnetic fields, Antoine Strugarek and colleagues show that the Sun's magnetic cycle depends on its rotation rate and luminosity.

This relationship can be expressed in terms of the so-called Rossby number; they show that the magnetic cycle of the Sun is inversely proportional to this number. Comparing the results of their simulations with available observations of cyclic activity in a sample of nearby solar-type stars, the authors further find that the cycle periods of the Sun and other solar-type stars all follow the same relationship with the Rossby number. The results demonstrate that the Sun is indeed a solar-type star.

(Source: EurekAlert)



LEARN ENGLISH  
Returning a Product

A: Hi I would like to **return** this TV.

B: Sure, do you have the **receipt**?

A: Yeah here you go. Actually I also want to return this **keyboard**.

B: Ok, may I ask what the reason for returning these **products** is?

A: The TV **flickers** a lot when I am watching a movie and at times the image is not very clear.

B: I see, and what about the keyboard?

A: I **spilled** some coffee on it and now it won't work.

B: I am sorry sir, but we can only **exchange** or **refund** **defective** products, we cannot take responsibility for misuse or damages.

A: Fine! I don't know why they make these things so **delicate** anyways.

#### ■ Key vocabulary

**return**: go back to the original place

**receipt**: a piece of paper that proves you bought something

**keyboard**: controller device for computer

**product**: things that a company makes or sells

**flicker**: to move to and fro; vibrate; quiver

**spill**: to cause or allow to run or fall from a container

**exchange**: give something and receive something in return

**refund**: to get your money back

**defective**: having a mistake or error

**delicate**: fragile; easily damaged

#### ■ Supplementary vocabulary

**complaint**: an expression of discontent

**invoice**: a document issued by a seller to a buyer showing the goods or services supplied and money due

**policy**: a plan of action adopted or pursued by an individual, government, party, business

**quality**: degree or standard of excellence

**warranty**: guarantee given to the purchaser by the dealer, manufacturer will make repairs or replace defective parts free of charge for a stated period of time.

(Source: irlanguage.com)



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Be in touch!**  
**lifestyle.tehrantimes@gmail.com**

# Mirzakhani's contributions both significant and enduring: Stanford President

Stanford University President Marc Tessier-Lavigne has said contributions of Maryam Mirzakhani – the prominent Iranian mathematician who died at the age of 40 on Saturday – as both a scholar and a role model are significant and enduring.

"Maryam is gone far too soon, but her impact will live on for the thousands of women she inspired to pursue math and science," Tessier-Lavigne wrote in a statement posted on the university's website.

"Maryam was a brilliant mathematical theorist, and also a humble person who accepted honors only with the hope that it might encourage others to follow her path. Her contributions as both a scholar and a role model are significant and enduring, and she will be dearly missed here at Stanford and around the world."

Stanford mathematics Professor Maryam Mirzakhani, the first and to-date only female winner of the Fields Medal since its inception in 1936, died July 15 after a long battle with cancer.

Mirzakhani joined the faculty of Stanford University in 2008, where she served as a professor of mathematics until her death.

The quadrennial Fields Medal, which Mirzakhani won in 2014, is the most prestigious award in mathematics, often equated in stature with the Nobel Prize. Mirzakhani specialized in theoretical mathematics that read like a foreign language by those outside of mathematics: moduli spaces, Teichmüller theory, hyperbolic geometry, Ergodic theory and symplectic geometry.

Mastering these approaches allowed Mirzakhani to pursue her fascination for describing the geometric and dynamic complexities of curved surfaces – spheres, doughnut shapes and even amoebas – in as great detail as possible. Her work was highly theoretical in nature, but it could have impacts concerning the theoretical physics of how the universe came to exist and, because it could inform quantum field theory, secondary applications to engineering and material science. Within mathematics, it has implications for the study of prime numbers and cryptography.

Despite the breadth of applications of her work, Mirzakhani said she enjoyed pure mathematics because of the elegance and longevity of the questions she studied.



Maryam Mirzakhani is accepting a present from late Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the fourth President of Iran, upon her gold medal of International Mathematical Olympiad in 1995.

A self-professed "slow" mathematician, Mirzakhani's colleagues describe her as ambitious, resolute and fearless in the face of problems others would not, or could not, tackle. She denied herself the easy path, choosing instead to tackle thornier issues. Her preferred method of working on a problem was to doodle on large sheets of white paper, scribbling formulas on the periphery of her drawings. Her young daughter described her mother at work as "painting."

"You have to spend some energy and effort to see the beauty of math," she told one reporter.

In another interview, she said of her process: "I don't have any particular recipe [for developing new proofs]. ... It is like being lost in a jungle and trying to use all the knowledge that you can gather to come up with some new tricks, and with some luck you might find a way out."

Mirzakhani was born in Tehran, Iran, and – by her own estimation – was fortunate to come of age after the Iran-Iraq war when the political, social and economic environment had stabilized enough that she could focus on her studies. She dreamed of becoming a writer, but mathematics eventually swept her away.

She attended an all-girls high school in Tehran, led by a principal unbowed by the fact that no girl had ever competed for Iran's International Mathematical Olympiad team. Mirzakhani first gained international recognition during the 1994 and 1995 competitions. In 1994, she earned a gold medal. In 1995, she notched a perfect score and two gold medals.

After graduating college at Sharif University in Tehran, she headed to graduate school at Harvard University, where she was guided by Curtis McMullen, a fellow Fields Medal winner. At Harvard, Mirzakhani was distinguished by her determination and relentless questioning, despite the language barrier. She peppered her professors with questions in English. She jotted her notes in Farsi.

McMullen described Mirzakhani as filled with "fearless ambition." Her 2004 dissertation was a masterpiece. In it, she solved two longstanding problems. Either solution would have been newsworthy in its own right, according to Benson Farb, a mathematician at the University of Chicago, but then Mirzakhani connected the two into a thesis described as "truly spectacular." It yielded papers in each of the top three mathematics journals.

"The majority of mathematicians will never

produce something as good," Farb said at the time. "And that's what she did in her thesis."

"What's so special about Maryam, the thing that really separates her, is the originality in how she puts together these disparate pieces," said Steven Kerckhoff, at the time of her Fields Medal award. Kerckhoff is a mathematics professor at Stanford and was one of Mirzakhani's collaborators. "That was the case starting with her thesis work, which generated several papers in all the top journals. The novelty of her approach made it a real tour de force."

After her doctorate at Harvard, Mirzakhani accepted a position as assistant professor at Princeton University and as a research fellow at the Clay Mathematics Institute before joining the Stanford faculty.

"Maryam was a wonderful colleague," said Ralph L. Cohen, the Barbara Kimball Browning Professor of Mathematics at Stanford. "She not only was a brilliant and fearless researcher, but she was also a great teacher and terrific PhD adviser. Maryam embodied what being a mathematician or scientist is all about: the attempt to solve a problem that hadn't been solved before, or to understand something that hadn't been understood before. This is driven by a deep intellectual curiosity, and there is great joy and satisfaction with every bit of success. Maryam had one of the great intellects of our time, and she was a wonderful person. She will be tremendously missed."

In recent years, she collaborated with Alex Eskin at the University of Chicago to answer a mathematical challenge that physicists have struggled with for a century: the trajectory of a billiard ball around a polygonal table. That investigation into this seemingly simple action led to a 200-page paper which, when it was published in 2013, was hailed as "the beginning of a new era" in mathematics and "a titanic work."

"You're torturing yourself along the way," she would offer, "but life isn't supposed to be easy."

Mirzakhani is survived by her husband, Jan Vondrák, and a daughter, Anahita.

The university will organize a memorial gathering in the fall, when students and faculty have returned to campus.

(Source: Stanford University News)

## Supplying Drinking and Agricultural Water in Khuzestan Province, Government's Top Agenda / Long-Term Plan Underway to Supply Ramhormoz Water from Karun 3 Dam



Khuzestan  
Water and Power Authority  
(KWPA)

Elsewhere in his remarks, Minister of Energy Eng. Hamid Chitchian said: "Government has rolled up its sleeves in order to supply drinking and agricultural water in Khuzestan Province in line with materializing objectives of resistance economy."

Speaking in the inaugural ceremony of drainage and irrigation network project in Ramhormoz, he said: "Giant steps were taken for the construction of these projects in order to provide safe and healthy water available to farmers. Approx. 70 percent of lateral water-supply network has been constructed."

The aforementioned measures taken indicate due attention to the drinking

and agricultural water of the region, he reiterated.

He seized this opportunity to express his special thanks to the activists in this project and the responsible officials who rolled up their sleeves in order to materialize most objectives and added: "With focusing on short- and long-term objectives, it is tried to supply drinking water for the noble people of Ramhormoz qualitatively."

He pointed to the supply of power to the noble people of this province and said: "Presently, Khuzestan Province has the most important and widespread power distribution and transmission network in the country,

which is second only to Tehran Province in terms of consumption of power."

Due to the high consumption of power, this province needs huge investment in the field of supplying power and construction of new power substations in this province and the country, the energy minister opined.

Given the above issue, construction of power plants is underway in this province, he said, adding: "Construction operation of a power plant has started in Andimeshk while new power plants have been inaugurated in Behbahan and Mahshahr."

In the end, Minister of Energy pointed to the dam-construction industry and said: "Construction of dam has had a positive impact on the economy of country, so that Khuzestan Province stands at the first place in terms of development of water resources, the issue of which is pa paramount importance."

It is worth mentioning that two new dams will be put into operation in Ramhormoz while other four dams will also be inaugurated in Shush, Abadan and Khorramshahr which will bring about blessing and good omen for the people in Khuzestan Province.

#### Chief Executive of KWPA:

■ **Supply of Drinking Water to Ramhormoz Possible with Water Transfer from Kalageh River**

For his part, Chief Executive of



Khuzestan Water and Power Authority (KWPA) Mohammad-Reza Shamsaei said: "To supply drinking water to Ramhormoz in the short period, 30,000 cubic meter water is conveyed from Kalageh River to Ramhormoz within two years."

Widespread activities have been done in the field of supplying the drinking water to Ramhormoz in last year, he said, adding: "Water-supply transfer line, as long as 22 km, was conducted in the first phase within six months, construction operation of which will be completed by next year."

Transferring water pipeline from Karun-3 for all cities of the province has been put atop agenda, he opined.

Turning to the request of mayor of

the city in the field of extent of river for the construction of recreational centers, he said: "In this field, we are ready to establish cooperation and collaboration with the municipality, provided that problems facing noble people of the city should be resolved in the shortest time possible."

■ **In the end, Chief Executive of Khuzestan Water and Power Authority (KWPA) Mohammad-Reza Shamsaei said:**

"Water value added is currently considered as one of the most important priorities of the company. Relying upon the assistance of the Almighty God, the company will make all its utmost efforts in order to materialize relevant objectives."





# France calls for lifting of sanctions on Qatar citizens

France has called for a swift lifting of sanctions that target Qatari nationals in an effort to ease a month-long rift between the Persian Gulf country and a House of Saud regime-led group.

In his visit to the Qatari capital Doha on Saturday, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said his country is "very concerned by the sudden deterioration" of the situation in the region.

"France calls for the lifting, as soon as possible, of the measures that affect the populations, in particular, bi-national families that have been separated or students," Le Drian told reporters in Doha, after he met his counterpart Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani.

Le Drian also met Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, following the steps of the United States Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who was in the Persian Gulf this week to help to find a solution in the regional impasse.

He is scheduled to visit Saudi Arabia later on Saturday and visit Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Sunday.

"France should be a facilitator in the mediation" led by Kuwait, Le Drian told



reporters.

Kuwait is trying to mediate the Saudi regime led dispute.

"France is talking to all these countries to help in the search for a solution," he said, calling for "dialogue and calm" between the Arab states concerned.

Le Drian also said France counted on "reinforcing cooperation with Qatar in the fight against terrorism, particularly in combating terrorism financing".

## ■ Political, intellectual terrorism

For his part, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman said that the actions taken by

the House of Saud regime and its allies against Qatar are disrupting the regional effort to combat "terrorism".

"Combating terrorism also cannot be through practicing political and intellectual terrorism against a state," Mohammed bin Abdulrahman said.

Aside from France, officials from Britain and Germany also visited the region in recent weeks.

The House of Saud regime, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt imposed sanctions on Qatar on June 5, accusing it of financing armed groups, allegations that Doha denied.

On June 22, the Saudi regime-led group issued a 13-point list of demands, including the shutdown of Al Jazeera, limiting ties with Iran and expelling Turkish troops stationed in the country, as a prerequisite to lift the sanctions.

Doha rejected the demands and the countries now consider the list "null and void".

On July 11, U.S. and Qatar signed an agreement to help combat "terrorism financing". But the Saudi-led group called it "insufficient".

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Terrorists fight each other as Assad ouster fades away

Raging clashes between Takfiri terrorists in Idlib are raising fears of widespread violence in the northwestern Syrian province which is held by militant groups.

The fighting between Ahrar al-Sham (Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya/Islamic Movement of the Free Men of the Levant?), which is backed by the House of Saud regime, Qatar and Turkey, and al-Qaeda-linked Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (Organization for the Liberation of the Levant/Levant Liberation Committee) is the first major escalation of infighting among Takfiri groups since they reached a truce in February.

Idlib has become the base for thousands of terrorists who fled Syria's largest city of Aleppo after facing a rout against government forces in December in their worst defeat since March 2011.

Rival terrorist groups are now competing for clout in the territories they control after seeing their campaign to topple the Syrian government broadly in tatters.

On Saturday, Ahrar al-Sham said Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, also known as HTS, was sending reinforcements to the town of Saraqeb and the Jabal al-Zawiya region in preparation for an attack, accusing the group of acts of "tyranny".

The Ibaa News Agency of HTS, instead, accused Ahrar al-Sham of setting up checkpoints and detaining one of its commanders and his bodyguard.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), a Britain-based monitor which is sympathetic to militants, said the two groups had clashed near the village of Tel Touqan.

More clashes loom as the two sides are rushing militants to the frontlines, with the United States news agency Associated Press expressing worries that the infighting could affect their fight against Syrian troops who have been gaining ground over the past year.

Further confrontation could also draw other terrorist groups into the infighting, especially after Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham reported the deaths of two more members near the Sarjeh village and blamed Suqour al-Sham, a strong Ahrar al-Sham ally.

Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham is part of a Takfiri coalition spearheaded by Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, which was formerly known as al-Nusra Front or al-Qaeda's Syria offshoot.

Due to the barbarity of their actions, al-Nusra and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) are not subject to an all-Syria truce deal clinched late last year with the mediation of Russia, Iran and Turkey.

The infighting among terrorist groups comes as international efforts to bring more Syrian areas under the ceasefire gain track and more militant groups

desist from their campaign to topple the Syrian government.

On Saturday, Russia's Ambassador to the United Nations Office in Geneva, Alexey Borodavkin, said UN-led Syria talks have a chance of making progress because demands for the overthrow of President Bashar al-Assad have receded.

He said the seventh round of talks which ended on Friday had produced positive results, especially a "correction" in the approach of the main opposition delegation, the Saudi regime-backed High Negotiations Committee, whose mantra before was "Assad must go".

"The essence of this correction is that during this round the opposition never once demanded the immediate resignation of President Bashar al-Assad and the legitimate Syrian government."

Borodavkin said the HNC and its backers in Western and Persian Gulf capitals have realized that peace needs to come first, and then political reforms could be negotiated.

Over the past year, the opposition has suffered military defeats at the hands of Syrian forces and neither U.S. President Donald Trump nor French President Emmanuel Macron is calling for Assad's immediate ouster.

(Source: agencies)

## Poll: Trump's six-month approval rating hits historic low

The United States President Donald Trump's six-month approval rating is the lowest of any president in polls in 70 years, a new survey shows.

An ABC News/Washington Post poll released on Sunday surveyed people's opinion about Trump's competence on the world stage, his effectiveness, the GOP (Grand Old Party) healthcare plan as well as his handling of Russia's alleged role in the 2016 election.

Only 36 percent of Americans approve of Trump's job performance, down 6 points from his 100-day mark, which itself was a low.

The previous president, whose ap-

proval rating was very close to this level at or near six months, was Gerald Ford, who received 39 percent in February 1975.

Sixty-three percent of Americans polled believe it was not appropriate for Trump's son, son-in-law and campaign manager to have meetings with a Russian lawyer during the campaign for the presidential election last year.

Also, 6 in 10 believe Russia sought to influence the campaign, and among those who believe so, 67 percent say Trump's aides helped, similar to results released in April.

Nonetheless, the Russia controversy

is only one of Trump's troubles. Just 38 percent say he is making significant progress toward his goals, while 55 percent believe otherwise.

Two-thirds do not trust his ability to negotiate with other world leaders specifically with Russian President Vladimir Putin on America's behalf.

And about half argue that the U.S. leadership has become weaker under Trump, whereas just 27 percent say it has grown stronger.

With regard to his party's signature campaign issue which is to replace Obamacare, Americans by a 2-1 margin prefer it over the Republican plan, 50-24

percent.

Overall, Trump's job approval rating, after six months in office, is 4 points lower than his predecessor Barack Obama's career low, which came in his sixth year, according to the poll.

Forty-eight percent "strongly" disapprove of Trump's job performance, again slightly surpassing the strongest disapproval of Obama's career, in his fifth year.

The president's 58 percent overall disapproval is 7 points higher than the next-highest disapproval rating at six months which belongs to President Bill Clinton in 1993, the poll shows.

(Source: agencies)

## Britons want Britain to release report on Saudi funding of extremism

Britons urge the government of Prime Minister Theresa May to release a report about the House of Saud regime's funding of extremists operating in Britain, and to stop selling arms to the kingdom.

An exclusive poll for The Independent showed on Sunday that an overwhelming majority of the public believe it is wrong for Britain to provide the Saudis with billions of pounds worth of weapons being used against innocent civilians in Yemen.

The poll by BMG Research has found that only 18 percent of people support those sales "while the Middle Eastern state is engaged in Yemen's civil war" — while 58 percent are against it.

"Instead of giving the Saudis a stern talking to, ministers are flogging them arms," Tom Brake, a Liberal Dem-

ocrat frontbench MP, said.

"They are desperate for shady Middle Eastern trade deals because they are hell-bent on taking us out of the world's most lucrative single market, in Europe, with nations who share our values."

The House of Saudi regime has been incessantly pounding Yemen since March 2015 in an attempt to reinstate former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, a staunch ally of Riyadh, and to undermine the Ansarullah (Houthi) movement. The Riyadh regime has, however, failed to reach its goals.

Last week, the UK High Court issued a ruling, saying that the government was not breaking the law by continuing to sell arms to the House of Saud regime.

Apart from selling arms to the Saudi kingdom, British

government has refused to release its report on Saudi regime and other foreign funding for extremism in Britain.

The new study now shows that most people want the government to release the report, even if it damages diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Sixty-four percent want the report to be made "publicly available in full", while only 11 percent back its suppression. "Liberal Democrats forced the Conservatives to commission a report into Saudi funding of extremism, so where is the full report?" Brake asked.

"It is totally hypocritical of ministers to condemn terrorism if they won't also tackle the causes of terrorism. The public sees that, but scandalously the Conservatives don't want to offend the world's largest funder of" extremism.

(Source: agencies)

## Guantánamo child soldier Omar Khadr was a victim twice over

8 → International human rights law recognizes that due to their immaturity and relative under-development, children alleged to have committed crimes deserve to be treated with special care, taking into account their age, capacity for rehabilitation and lower degree of culpability. Any justice system dealing with children must have their best interests at its heart.

However, in Omar Khadr's case, the U.S. flouted its obligations under national and international juvenile justice standards, subjecting him to years of unlawful detention, abusive interrogation and unfair trial in one of the most notoriously abusive detention centers in the world.

Under international law, children can only be detained as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate time, and their cases must be dealt with promptly. They must be held separately from adults, allowed contact with their families, granted access to a lawyer and be able to challenge the legality of their detention. They have an inalienable right not to be tortured or held arbitrarily.

Khadr was detained with adults, held for over two years before having access to a lawyer, and for more than three years before he was charged by a military commission that the U.S. Supreme Court later judged to have violated U.S.

law and the Geneva Conventions.

While in Guantánamo, Khadr was subjected to sleep deprivation and held in prolonged solitary confinement. He told his lawyers that interrogators shackled him in painful positions, threatened him with rape, and used him as a "human mop" after he urinated on the floor during one interrogation session.

## ■ Share of responsibility

The U.S. is primarily responsible for the treatment of Khadr.

Khadr's case serves as a reminder that child soldiers are first and foremost victims of grave abuses of human rights. National authorities must prioritize their

rehabilitation and reintegration, while holding those who recruited them to account. If they choose to prosecute former child soldiers, including those accused of terrorism offenses, they must strike a delicate balance between ensuring accountability for their actions as alleged perpetrators and protecting their fundamental human rights as victims.

In Khadr's case, an egregious failure to do so has only served to add one grave injustice to another, leading to a lengthy and divisive miscarriage of justice. No child exploited in armed conflict should ever be treated this way again.

(Source: Newsweek)

## Venezuela opposition holds unofficial plebiscite to defy Maduro

Venezuela's opposition held an unofficial referendum on Sunday to increase pressure on President Nicolas Maduro as he seeks to create a legislative super-body that his adversaries call the consolidation of a dictatorship.

The symbolic poll, which will also ask voters if they want early elections, is intended to further dent Maduro's legitimacy amid a crippling economic crisis and three months of anti-government protests that have led to nearly 100 deaths.

The opposition has cast the vote, which begins at 7 a.m. local time at some 2,000 centers around the country, as an act of civil disobedience to be followed by "zero hour", a possible reference to a national strike or other escalated actions against Maduro.

But the vote does not appear to augur a short-term change of government or a solution to the country's political stalemate.

Maduro, 54, says Sunday's plebiscite is illegal and meaningless. Instead, the leftist leader is campaigning for an official July 30 vote for the new assembly, which will be able to rewrite the constitution and dissolve state institutions.

"(Even with) rain, thunder or lightning, Sunday's poll will go ahead!" said opposition leader Henrique Capriles in a Friday evening broadcast. "We Venezuelans are going out to vote for the future, the fatherland and the freedom of Venezuela."

Voters will be asked three questions: if they reject the constitutional assembly, if they want the armed forces to defend the existing constitution and if they want elections before Maduro's term in office ends in 2018.

Some public employees, under government pressure not to participate in opposition events, are seeking creative ways to vote in the plebiscite without being noticed.

The vote will also include participation of the swelling ranks of Venezuelans who have moved abroad to escape the OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) nation's increasingly dire economic panorama.

The opposition is hoping millions will turn out and promises the results will be available on Sunday evening.

But the opposition faces some major obstacles.

It will not have access to traditional electoral infrastructure for the hastily convened plebiscite, and the elections council — which the opposition calls a pawn of Maduro — is simultaneously holding a test-run for the July 30 vote.

Also, state telecommunications regulator Conatel has ordered radio and TV stations not to use the word "plebiscite" on air and has told them to pull opposition ads for the vote, according to Venezuela's main organization of media workers.

## ■ Street Violence

A high turnout would reflect widespread national dissatisfaction with Maduro and boost the opposition campaign to remove him, while low attendance would give the ruling Socialist Party a boost for the constitutional assembly.

Government officials say the plebiscite violates laws requiring elections to be organized by the elections council.

"We are not going to let the Venezuelan right wing impose themselves and harm the people," said Socialist Party Vice President Diosdado Cabello during a Saturday rally for the constitutional assembly.

The vote comes against the backdrop of near daily opposition protests, in many of which masked youths with stones, Molotov cocktails and homemade mortars have battled riot forces using tear gas, water cannons and rubber bullets.

The unrest has caused fatalities among both demonstrators and security forces, mostly from gunshots, as well as hundreds of arrests and thousands of injuries since April.

Last week, seven National Guard troops were injured by an explosion along an avenue in Caracas, which the government blamed on the opposition.

And on Friday, a video circulating on social media showed a man being punched, kicked, stomped and hit in the head with weapons and riot shields after being thrown on the ground by a half-dozen security officials. He was then loaded onto a motorcycle and driven away with blood on his face.

A second video shows men in uniform smashing the windows of a car after what appears to be a scuffle with a woman on the sidewalk. Reuters was unable to independently confirm the veracity of the videos.

Maduro has repeatedly refused to recognize the authority of the National Assembly since the opposition won it in a 2015 landslide election, which his critics call evidence he is eroding democratic institutions in order to retain power.

(Source: Reuters)

## UN treaty puts 'moral pressure' on nuclear-armed states: ex-WH official

1 → Von Hippel says the treaty was adopted so late "because the non-weapon states became tired of the weapon states not fulfilling their commitment to nuclear disarmament in the Nonproliferation Treaty."

On why the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAE) has not been seeking nuclear disarmament, the Princeton professor says, "The IAEA has been authorized to verify nonproliferation but not yet nuclear disarmament, with the exception of South Africa, which unilaterally disarmed."

## Activists protest Israeli premier's planned visit to France

1 → Countries that have typically been supporting Israel in the past seem to be growing restless with Tel Aviv because of its defiant settlement activities on occupied territories. Such impatience was displayed in the passing of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 in 2016, during which the United States — Israel's staunchest ally — uncharacteristically decided not to wield its veto power and allowed the adoption of the text with a mere abstention, much to the chagrin of Tel Aviv.

The resolution calls on Israel to immediately and completely cease all settlement activities on occupied Palestinian territories, including the West Bank.

(Source: agencies)



## Hamilton slashes Vettel's lead to one point

Lewis Hamilton won his home British Grand Prix for the fourth year in a row on Sunday while a penultimate-lap puncture slashed Sebastian Vettel's championship lead to a single point.

The Briton's drive from pole to flag on an overcast afternoon was lonely, uneventful and dominant -- in complete contrast to his Ferrari rivals' afternoon -- with Mercedes team mate Valtteri Bottas finishing 14 seconds behind to secure the one-two.

"The support has been incredible this weekend. I am so proud I could do this for you all," said Hamilton, who threw himself into the fans for some «crowd surfing» after the podium celebrations.

"The team were faultless this weekend, Valtteri did an incredible job as well so it's the perfect weekend for us."

Far behind in his wake, as Hamilton cruised to a 57th career win and soaked up the applause from an army of flag-waving fans, came sudden drama.

Vettel, who had battled on worn tires but looked like securing the final podium position until the blowout, finished seventh after an emergency pit stop with a shower of sparks from the wheel rim.

"There was no sign of that happening," said Vettel over the team radio. "There were vibrations but I had it for 20 laps and it didn't get massively worse. The tires didn't look great but they never look great."

The German's Finnish team mate Kimi Raikkonen, who had been second before also being hit with a late puncture that sent Bottas and Vettel ahead of him, took third.

At the halfway stage of the 20-race season, Vettel has 177 points to Hamilton's 176 with Bottas on 154.

Hungary, a circuit where the Briton has won five times before, is next up.

Hamilton became only the third driver, after his late compatriot Jim Clark and Frenchman Alain Prost, to win the British Grand Prix five times and the first to take four successive victories at Silverstone.

(Source: Reuters)

## Barzagli to Bonucci: 'We know truth'

Andrea Barzagli has broken his silence to say goodbye as Juventus teammate Leonardo Bonucci joins Milan. "We know the truth."

So far, only Gianluigi Buffon has publicly saluted the defender, who left for their Serie A rivals after seven years in Turin.

"We had fantastic years together as teammates, full of victories and great achievements," wrote Barzagli on Instagram.

"We improved each other, supported and found a rapport together with Gigi and Giorgio that I'd never experienced before.

"It seems strange not to see you in the locker room, that same locker room that some, with inventions and fantasies on rows and clashes.

"But we know the truth. Good luck for your new adventure, Leo."

(Source: Football Italia)

## Luiz Felipe Scolari slams Spanish newspaper over Paulinho 'lies'

Luiz Felipe Scolari launched a scathing attack on Spanish newspaper Mundo Deportivo on Saturday evening as his Guangzhou Evergrande side returned to winning ways to maintain their position at the top of the Chinese Super League standings.

Scolari's side handed Shandong Luneng a 2-1 defeat to maintain their one-point lead over Shanghai SIPG before the top two teams meet in the league next week.

But while the Brazilian's team celebrated their win, the World Cup winner turned his ire on the Spanish newspaper over reports that Barcelona target Paulinho had been kicked out of training by his head coach during the week.

"This newspaper, Mundo Deportivo, is a liar," Scolari said. "Paulinho has been training throughout the whole week and you saw how he played in today's game too.

"I saw the report, it said I kicked Paulinho out of the training session. Actually, I sent Paulinho, Yu Hanchao and Li Xuepeng out to rest, but they only saw Paulinho.

"If they think one report full of lies can get between me and Paulinho they are naive. And if they don't think Paulinho is a professional player and that he would treat the game with such a negative attitude, they are beyond naive.

"These lies won't have any influence on our team."

Guangzhou are believed to have rebuffed two approaches by Barcelona to sign Paulinho. But the club have told the former Tottenham Hotspur midfielder, who has a buy-out clause of 40 millions euros, that he will not be allowed to leave until the end of the season.

The issue did not stop Scolari from picking the 28-year-old for the meeting with fifth-placed Shandong with Ricardo Goulart giving the champions the lead in first-half injury time.

Graziano Pelle levelled for Shandong on the hour mark before Zou Zheng claimed the winner 10 minutes from time following a mistake by the Shandong defence.

The win was Guangzhou's first in three games and ensured they stayed a point clear of SIPG, who defeated last-placed Yanbian Fude 3-1, thanks to goals from Elkeson, Wu Lei and Hulk.

Beijing Guoan notched up their second win in a row under new coach Roger Schmidt with a 2-0 victory over Guizhou Zhicheng.

Manuel Pellegrini's Hebei CFFC lost for the second game in a row as they were handed a 2-1 loss by Chongqing Lifan to slip further off the pace set by the leading duo.

Elsewhere, Henan Jianye defeated Liaoning Whowin 2-1 as Ma Lin's side lost their sixth game in a row.

(Source: Soccernet)

# Boycott nations demand FIFA strips Qatar of 2022 World Cup



**LONDON, (Reuters)** — The six Arab countries who last month cut ties with Qatar are reported to have written to world soccer's governing body FIFA to demand it be stripped of hosting the 2022 World Cup because they consider the Gulf state to be a "base of terrorism".

FIFA president Gianni Infantino told Swiss website The Local that Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Mauritania, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt had collectively written to FIFA asking it to remove Qatar as hosts under Article 85 of the FIFA Code, which allows for such action in the case of emergency.

"The countries warned FIFA of the risks threatening fan and player security in a country that is 'the base and the castle of terrorism,'" The Local quoted Infantino as saying.

Infantino also said the countries have threatened to boycott the tournament should their request not be acted upon.

Reuters has not seen a copy of the letter and FIFA did not respond to a request for confirmation.

A source familiar with the Qatari government's World Cup activities said Qatar is aware the Saudis and others are engaged in such a move but understands

Qatar has not yet received the letter.

People in the United States who represent and advise the Saudi government have also not yet responded to Reuters' request for confirmation or comment.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt cut diplomatic and transport ties with Qatar in June, accusing it of supporting terrorism. Doha denies the charges.

Qatar, a country with a negligible soccer background or infrastructure, was a controversial winner of the right to host the 2022 World Cup, which will be held in November and December to minimize the impact of the desert state's harsh climate.

## Mourinho defends Lukaku after £75m signing misfires on debut against LA Galaxy



Jose Mourinho defended Romelu Lukaku after Manchester United's new £75million signing misfired on his debut against LA Galaxy in Carson.

United won comfortably 5-2 at the StubHub Center in the opening game of their summer tour as Marcus Rashford scored twice in the opening 20 minutes.

But Lukaku, who replaced the young England striker at half-time when United changed their entire starting line-up, missed a wonderful chance to get off the mark within four minutes of coming on and scuffed another opportunity wide.

Mourinho still made a point of praising the Belgian, saying: 'He didn't score goals, but he played better than the ones who did score goals.

A good thing for me today is he's a team player and was not worried about himself. He was worried about the improvement of the team.'

Asked to compare Lukaku with Rooney, who has moved in the other direction to Everton, Mourinho added: 'They are incomparable. Rooney, for us, was not a striker. Lukaku is more of a target man with his back to the opponents. It's a point of attack to everyone who has the ball in defensive lines. He's really fast.'

In contrast to Lukaku, Rashford showed clinical finishing to score in the second and 20th minutes. He had a great chance to complete his hat-trick just before coming off at half-time, but failed to beat the keeper when through on goal again.

Mourinho insists that Rashford is not a target man but acknowledged that the youngster has bulked up significantly from the rookie striker who burst on the scene at Old Trafford 17 months ago.

He said: 'It's just natural evolution of a kid accumulating minutes on the pitch. You change your body when you're a young kid.

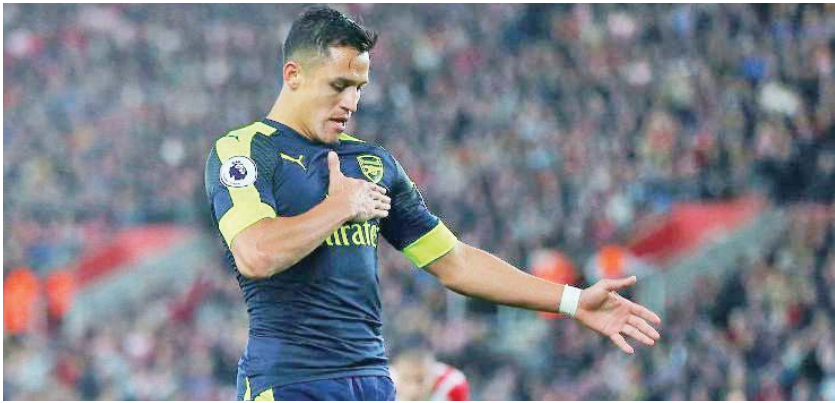
'He's already taller than when I arrived 13 months ago, He's three centimeters taller and he has put on some muscle, but without any kind of specific work because his speed is his most important quality.

'Today he was in a different team than Lukaku. We will also try both in the same team, which I think can also work.

'Last season everyone was saying it would be difficult for me to play Marcus, but he was one of the top in appearances for the team. He's learning a lot, a great professional, great attitude.

(Source: Daily Mail)

## Alexis Sanchez says 'I want to play in Champions League' amid Arsenal talks



Alexis Sanchez says he has "made my decision" on whether to stay at Arsenal as he stressed the importance of playing in the Champions League.

Arsenal missed out on Champions League football for next season after finishing fifth in the Premier League, and the Gunners will play in the Europa League instead.

Sanchez has played in the Champions League every year since moving to Barcelona in 2011 but has never won the competition, and he told reporters in his native Chile on Saturday that he would accept nothing less than a spot in Europe's top competition.

"I want to play in the Champions League," he said at a charity youth tournament in Tocopilla. "The decision isn't up to me, I need to wait for Arsenal.

"I've made my decision, now I wait for Arsenal's reply. The idea is to play and win the Champions League. I've dreamt about it since I was little.

"For now I am at Arsenal and I finish my contract in one more year"

Sanchez has so far resisted signing a new long-term deal reportedly worth in excess of £250,000 a week, but manager Arsene Wenger said on Friday that

he was confident that Sanchez would decide to stay on.

"Of course. There is not a lot to resolve at the moment with the player," Wenger said. "I have spoken through text and it was very positive. My thoughts are always positive."

Meanwhile, Arsenal's club captain Per Mertesacker has told the Daily Mail that Sanchez needed to be left alone so he can decide on his future.

"I have not spoken to him. He needs a break now. He needs to relax. He has done a lot for us," Mertesacker said.

"He played almost every game last season and then the Confederations Cup. You need to leave him alone to make up his mind about what he wants to do.

"He has one more year here and then he makes his mind up. It's his decision."

Sanchez returned home following his participation at the Confederations Cup, and he said he was proud of Chile's performance in Russia, even though La Roja fell to Germany in the final.

"We feel sad and proud at the same time for losing the final, but the players left everything on the pitch and we hope to keep showing who we are," he added.

(Source: ESPN)

## Wimbledon champion Muguruza eyes more trophies not rankings

Newly crowned Wimbledon women's champion Garbine Muguruza says she would rather be ranked tenth in the world and win more Grand Slams than focus on reaching the top of the rankings.

Muguruza beat five-times champion Venus Williams in straight sets on Saturday to win her second major tournament after her triumph at the French Open in 2016.

The Spaniard went into Wimbledon ranked 15th in the world and her victory at the All England Club will push her up to fifth in the WTA Rankings when they are published on Monday.

The 23-year-old says she cares little for the ranking number next to her name, however.

"I think unless you are number one, because that is incredible... I have been number two, I have been three and failed to win a Grand Slam and there is no comparison," she told a small group of international reporters.



"It is just having the trophy, having to have played all the matches. You have to play seven matches and you can face the one, the three, everyone.

"It is a different feeling. I don't know what it feels like

to be number one; hopefully one day I can be and I can compare but for now I'd rather be 10 and win Grand Slams than be number one," said Muguruza, who beat Williams 7-5 6-0.

Czech Karolina Pliskova, who went out in the second round at Wimbledon, will take over from German Angelique Kerber in the top spot in the new rankings.

Muguruza says the points and calculations are far from her mind and it is the big events such as Wimbledon and next month's U.S. Open that fire her up.

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(Source: Reuters)



# Mohammadreza Akhbari wants to be Iran's No.1 in the World Cup

**S P O R T S** Saipa goalkeeper Moham-madreza Akhbari is dreaming to wear Iran's No. 1 jersey in the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

Akhbari, who was a member of IranU-23 football team from 2014 to 2016, played his first match for the senior team on 8 June 2016 in a friendly with Kyrgyzstan, coming as a substitute of first choice Alireza Haghighi in the second half.

Akhbari has an uphill task ahead since Team Melli have yet to concede a goal in eight matches with Alireza Beiranvand in the goal.

Iran became the second team to qualify for the 2018 World Cup by beating Uzbekistan 2-0.

"Being a member of Iran national team is a great honor and I am proud of that. I am so happy I've been invited to Team Melli for the last two years. I want to do my best to increase my chance of being invited to the national team once again," the 24-year-old goalie told Iran's Varzesh 3.

"It's every player's dream to play at a World Cup and I will do my best to wear No.1 jersey in the 2018 World Cup. I hope my dream will come true," Akhbari added.



## Iran to face Ukraine in Atlas Basketball Challenge opener



**S P O R T S** Iran will open the third edition of the Atlas Basketball Challenge with a match against Ukraine in Suzhou, China.

The match has been scheduled for Tuesday.

Iran will take part in the competition with 12 players but Team Melli's big man Hamed Haddadi will miss the competition.

"I already spoke with our coaches and our federation to give me time for rest. After the FIBA Asia Challenge last year, I had an injury and had to rest, but I still needed to play with Sichuan in China. My injury got worse after, and now I need to rest this summer and be ready for the Asia

Qualifiers," Haddadi told fiba.com.

The Atlas Challenge sees eight teams competing over six days at the Suzhou Sports Centre and the Dushu Lake Arena.

Iran have been drawn along with FIBA World Cup 2019 hosts China, Ukraine and Belarus in Group A.

Group B consists of Qatar, the U.S., Australia and Lithuania.

Iran, headed by Mehran Hatami, will participate at the tournament as preparation for the 2017 FIBA Asia Cup.

The FIBA Asia Cup will be held in Lebanon from August 8 to 20.

## Iranian Kumite teams win title at Asian championships

**S P O R T S** Iranian Male and Female Kumite Teams claimed the titles of the 14th Asian Karate Federation (AKF) Senior Championships on Sunday.

Kumite Male Senior consists of Bahman Asgari Ghoncheh, Aliasghat Asiabari, Sajjad Ganjzadeh, Ebrahim

Hassanbeigi, Saman Heydari, Mehdi Khodabakhshi and Zabihollah Poorshab won the title after defeating Saudi Arabia 3-0 in the final match.

The Iranian team also defeated India, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan.

The Iranian Kumite Female Senior

team also won the title, beating Chinese Taipei 3-2 in the final match.

The Iranian woman team previously beat Malaysia, Vietnam and Japan on the way to the final match.

The competitions were held in Astana, Kazakhstan.



## Roger Federer takes record eighth Wimbledon title

Roger Federer is a Wimbledon champion for a men's record eighth time, defeating Marin Cilic 6-3, 6-1, 6-4 in Sunday's final.

The win moves Federer past both Pete Sampras and William Renshaw, who each won seven titles at the grass-court major, for the most men's titles in the history of the event first held in 1877.

"It's disbelief that I can achieve such heights," Federer said in his postmatch on-court interview. "I wasn't sure if I was ever going to be here, in another final."

When it ended, with an ace from Federer after merely 1 hour, 41 minutes of play, he raised both arms overhead. A minute or so later, he was sitting on the sideline, wiping tears from his eyes.

Truly, the outcome was only in doubt for about 20 minutes, the amount of time it took Federer to grab his first lead. Cilic, whose left foot was treated by a trainer before the third set started, was never able to summon the intimidating serves or crisp volleys that carried him to his lone Grand Slam title at the 2014 US Open. Cilic beat Federer in the semifinals during that run, his only win over the Swiss player.

Federer, 35, became the oldest champion at the All England Club, and he won his second Grand Slam of the year in impeccable fashion by not dropping a set throughout the two-week run. Federer joins Bjorn Borg (1976) as the only men in the Open era to win Wimbledon without losing a set, according to ESPN Stats & Information.

Federer last won the grass-court major in 2012 but took the Australian Open title this year before skipping the French Open to focus on the remainder of the season.

That decision apparently paid off for the now-19-year-old Grand Slam champion.

With clouds overhead and a bit of chill in the air,



the match's first game offered a glimpse at Cilic's apparent plan: Go after Federer's backhand. All five points Cilic won in that opening stanza came via mistakes by Federer on that stroke. Conversely, all three points won by Federer in that game were thanks to forehand miscues by Cilic.

Understandably, there were signs of nerves for both.

Federer's early play, in general, was symptomatic of jitters. For everything he has accomplished, for all the bright lights and big settings to which he's become accustomed, the guy whom many have labeled the greatest of all time admits to feeling heavy legs and jumbled thoughts at important on-court moments to this day.

And so it was that Federer, not Cilic, hit a double fault in each of his first two service games. And it was Federer, not Cilic, who faced the match's initial break point, 15 minutes in, trailing 2-1 and 30-40. But Cilic

netted a return, beginning a run of 17 points in a row that Federer won on his serve.

It was as if the first indication of the slightest bit of trouble jolted Federer.

In the next game, Federer broke to lead 3-2 with the help of three errors by Cilic and one marvelous point. Cilic tried a drop shot; Federer got to it and replied at a tight angle. Cilic got that and offered a slick response of his own but slipped and fell to the court, allowing Federer to flip a winner, eliciting roars from the crowd.

Federer broke again to take that set when Cilic double-faulted, walked to the changeover and slammed his racket on his sideline chair. Cilic then sat and covered his head with a white towel.

After Federer raced to a 3-0 lead in the second set, Cilic cried while he was visited by a doctor and trainer. At that moment, it wasn't clear what might have been ailing Cilic. During a later medical timeout, Cilic's left foot was retaped by the trainer.

Federer would break to a 4-3 edge in the third set, and all that remained to find out was how he'd finish. It was with his eighth ace, at 114 mph. This caps a remarkable reboot for Federer, who departed Wimbledon a year ago with a lot of doubts. He had lost in the semifinals, yes, but more troublesome was that his body was letting him down for the first time in his career.

Earlier in 2016, he had surgery on his left knee then sat out the French Open because of a bad back, ending a record streak of participating in 65 consecutive Grand Slam tournaments. Then, after Wimbledon, he did not play at all the rest of the year, skipping the Rio Olympics, the US Open and everything else in an attempt to let his knee fully heal.

It worked. Did it ever.

(Source: ESPN)

## Eight confirmed dead after Senegal stadium brawl

African football is once again waking up to news of another stadium tragedy after eight people were confirmed dead and a further 49 injured after a wall collapsed following a fight between rival fans during the Senegalese League Cup final at the Stade Demba Diop in Dakar.

A brawl began among supporters during the match between US Ouakam and Stade de Mbour on Saturday evening, with police using tear gas to disperse the fans, according to BBC Sport.

This prompted panic and, as fans attempted to flee the stadium, a wall collapsed under the pressure, crushing supporters.

The stadium was built during the 1960s, and had raised concerns in recent years due to the antiquated

nature of the structure.

As seen on footage by local broadcaster TM2, spectators were throwing stones and other projectiles, with local news agency Agence de Presse Senegalaise reporting that firemen and ambulances were called to the stadium.

The violence began after an extra-time goal by Mbour following a 1-1 draw during 90 minutes.

"All of a sudden when the wall fell," said observer Cheikh Maba Diop, speaking to AFP as per BBC Sport. "We knew exactly that some of our own had lost their lives because the wall fell directly on to people."

Stadium tragedies are an all too common occurrence in African football, and Saturday's disaster is the latest in

a long string of such disasters.

In 2001, 43 fans lost their lives in the Ellis Park Stadium disaster in Johannesburg during a Soweto Derby between Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates, and a month later, 127 died in Accra when police fired tear gas to disperse fans during a match between rivals Hearts of Oak and Asante Kotoko.

22 supporters died and over 100 were injured at the Stade Felix Houphouet-Boigny in the Ivory Coast in March 2009 ahead of a World Cup qualifier, with the authorities later blaming a fan stampede, while in Lusaka, Zambia, 21 fans were killed over two incidents in 1996 and 2007.

(Source: Soccernet)

## Iranian judoka Khojasteh claims silver in Asian Cadet and Junior Judo Championships

Iranian judoka Alireza Khojasteh has displayed remarkable athletic skills at 11th Asian Cadet and 18th Asian Junior Judo Championships in Kyrgyzstan, and collected a silver medal at the sporting event.

On Saturday, Khojasteh prevailed over a representative from Chinese Taipei in his first under 66-kilogram weight class contest at Gazprom Sports Complex in the Kyrgyz capital city of Bishkek.

He overwhelmed a Kazakh contestant in the next bout and progressed to the semi-final round.

Khojasteh downed another competitor from Kazakhstan and found a place in the final showdown, where he fell to an opponent from Uzbekistan and got the silver medal.

The 11th Asian Cadet and 18th Asian Junior Judo Championships started in the Kyrgyz capital city of Bishkek on July 12, and will finish on July 16, 2017.

The competitions have attracted dozens of judo practitioners from various Asian countries, including China, Chinese Taipei, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Uzbekistan.

(Source: Press TV)



## Croatian-German Colak joins Iran's Siah Jamegan

Croatian-German central defender Jure Colak joined Iranian football club Siah Jamegan.

The 27-year-old player has joined Mashhad-based club on a one-year contract for an undisclosed fee.

Colak started his playing career at German club Karlsruher SC II in 2011 and after one year he signed a contract with FC Nürnberg II.

Colak has also played at German clubs 1899 Hoffenheim and FC Kaiserslautern.

He is Siah Jamegan's second foreign player after Frenchman Goran Jerkovic.

He is the brother of Antonio-Mirko Colak, who currently plays at Darmstadt 98.

(Source: Tasnim)

## Esteghlal Brazilian defender Robson Januario opts for Boavista

Robson Januario de Paula changed his mind to return to Iran's Esteghlal and joined Portuguese team Boavista.

Januario has penned a three-year contract with Boavista.

The 23-year-old Brazilian defender was expected to sign a new contract with Esteghlal but changed his mind.

Januario was a key member of Esteghlal last season and helped the team become runner-up in Iran Professional League (IPL).

In July 2016, Robson Januario signed for Esteghlal on loan until the end of the 2016-17 season. After joining Esteghlal, he quickly became a regular starter in the team. During the season, he made a good partnership with compatriot Padovani in central defense.

(Source: Tasnim)



## Iran B defeat Chinese Taipei White at William Jones Cup

Iran B basketball team defeated Chinese Taipei White in the 39th edition of the William Jones Cup on Sunday.

In the match held at the Taipei Peace International Basketball Hall, Taipei, Iran B beat Chinese Taipei White 77-59.

Iran B basketball team started the campaign with a loss to Atletas All-Star Lithuania.

The Iranian team will face South Korea on Monday.

The R. William Jones Cup, also known as the Jones Cup, is an international basketball tournament held annually since 1977 in Taipei, Taiwan.

It was named in honor of basketball promoter Renato William Jones, who was one of the founders of the International Basketball Federation (FIBA). Like the Olympics and the FIBA Basketball World Cup, it has both men's and women's versions.

Iran have won the William Jones Cup five times.

(Source: Tasnim)

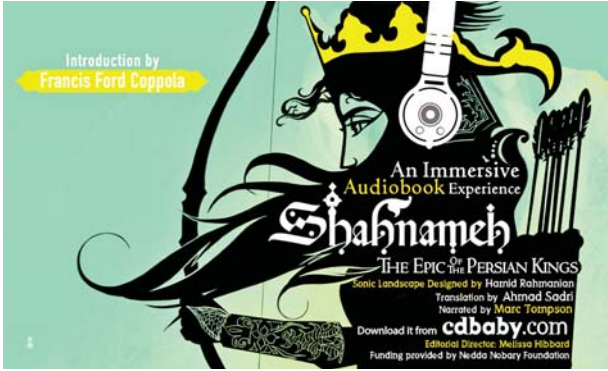


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Shahnameh audiobook with introduction by Francis Ford Coppola released

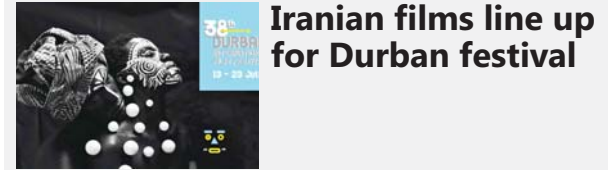


The audiobook is available for download on cdbaby.com.

“Our goal is that children’s imaginations will light up as they explore the myths and legends of Iran,” the publisher, Kingorama, wrote on its website.

The Brooklyn-based institute is dedicated to bringing the stories of the Shahnameh to a large and diverse audience.

NEWS IN BRIEF



TEHRAN — Six Iranian films are competing in various sections of the 38th Durban International Film Festival, which is currently underway in the South African city.

“A Long Day” by Babak Bahrambeigi, “Off-Key” by Amir Purkian and “The Sis” by Marjan Ashrafizadeh have been selected for the official competition, while “Retouch” by Kaveh Mazaheri is competing in the short film section.

“Advantage” by Mohammad Kart and “Butterfly” by Mehdi Zamanpur Kiasari have been picked for the documentary competition. The festival will run until July 23.



TEHRAN — The Film Museum of Iran in Tehran is hosting an exhibition of film posters entitled “The Second Step”. Posters for “Under the Moonlight” by Reza Mirkarimi, “Women’s Prison” by Manijeh Hekmat, “Mina’s Secret” by Abbas Rafei, “The Witch” by Davud Mirbageri and many other films that mostly were produced during the 1990s have been selected for the exhibition.

The exhibition is also showcasing posters for “The Third Day” by Mohammad Hossein Latifi, “Being Born” by Mohsen Abdolvahab, “Fish and Cat” by Shahram Mokri and “Hailstone and Sunlight” by Reza Karimi.

Mark Hamill and Carrie Fisher honored as “Legends” by Disney

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Mark Hamill has been bestowed one of Disney’s highest honors, but he can’t believe Carrie Fisher wasn’t there to see it.

Hamill and Fisher were named Disney Legends during a ceremony Friday at the company’s biannual fan convention, the D23 Expo in Anaheim, California. He said Fisher would have been making him laugh at the event.

Fisher died unexpectedly in December. Hamill said she would want the event to be celebratory and not sad.

“I really wish she were here,” he said. “But, she would also want us to be having a good time and not be sad.”

Hamill said that even hours before the ceremony, he hadn’t wrapped his head around receiving the honor, which was also bestowed Friday to Oprah Winfrey, Marvel Comics legend Stan Lee and others. “Star Wars” creator George Lucas and Johnny Depp were among the Disney Legends inductees in 2015.

“When they told me, I said are you sure they’re not wanting Mark Harmon or Jon Hamm or even Dorothy Hamill?” Hamill said.

Hamill, 65, reprises his role as Luke Skywalker in “Star Wars: The Last Jedi,” which will be released December. Fisher also appears in the film as Skywalker’s sister, Leia Organa, a princess-turned-general.

“Life of Desert” to display artists’ concern about the environment

TEHRAN — A group of artists have come together in an art project titled “Life of Desert” to express their concern about species in danger of extinction.

The artworks created for the project are scheduled to be showcased in an exhibition at Tehran’s Art Center in early August, the director of the project, Mina Mohitian, said in a press release on Sunday.

“In September 2016 a team of 25 artists took a three-day trip to Kharturan National Park, a large biosphere reserve in Iran southeast of Shahrud in Semnan Province, to observe and study the unique, endangered species in the region,” she added.

“The region is home to some rare and critically endangered species such as the Asian panther. The artists first filmed and took photos of the region to create their artworks later on. They were next accompanied by rangers who gave additional information to the artists,” she said.

Afterwards, the artists drew upon their observations and impressions and created their artworks within a limited amount of time, she added.

The exhibit features 25 works including paintings, photos, installations and sculptures by 25 artists, while it also contains a video art, an audio art and one performance artwork.

Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art plans to publish a book covering the exhibit, which will be unveiled at the opening ceremony.

A documentary by director Mohammad Hamzei is also slated to be screened at the ceremony.

Kambiz Derambakhsh, Gizella Varga Sinai, Behruz Darash, Jamshid Moradian, Ali Nedai and Behzad Shishegaran are among the artists whose works will be exhibited in the center located at North Salimi St., Andarzgu Blvd. in the Farmanieh neighborhood.

This is part of the project “Life of the Earth”, a



This file photo shows an Iranian cheetah chasing a deer in Kharturan National Park, Semnan Province.

project, which aims to protect the environment in collaboration with the Department of Environment, through holding exhibits and selling books.

In 2014, some of these artists made a journey to Kish Island in the Persian Gulf where they went diving and saw a variety of fish and coral in danger of

extinction, and displayed their artworks the next year at Tehran’s Niavannan Cultural Center.

The first trip was to Ashuradeh, a region on the protected Island of Miankaleh in Gorgan Province in northeastern Iran, where over 130 species of birds are living.

“Khayyam” opera puppet show goes on stage in Tehran



A poster for “Khayyam” opera puppet show by director Behruz Gharibpur

TEHRAN — Director Behruz Gharibpur took the “Khayyam” opera puppet show on stage at Tehran’s Ferdowsi Hall on Sunday.

The puppet show focuses on the life story of the Persian mathematician, astronomer and poet Omar Khayyam (1048-1131).

The Aran Puppet Theater Group along with composer Amir Behzad, vocalist Mohammad Motamedi and conductor Farnush Behzad are collaborating with Gharibpur in this project.

Khayyam, a Persian mathematician, astronomer and poet, was renowned in his own country and in his own lifetime for his scientific achievements, but is chiefly known to English-speaking readers through the translation by the English writer Edward Fitzgerald of a collection of his Rubaiyat (“quatrains”) in “The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam” (1859). Gharibpur has previously staged the puppet shows “Hafez”, “Rumi” and “Macbeth”, all of which have been warmly received in Iran and at international events.

Movies from Iran on screen at Croatia Supertoons festival



TEHRAN — The Supertoons International Animation Festival in Croatia is screening two short animations from Iranian cinema.

“Inflated Head” co-directed by Amir-Puya Afzalipur and Ruhollah Saadatmand will be screened in the short animation section, while “Ascribed Achievements” by Samaneh Shojaei will go on screen in the student film section.

“Ascribed Achievements” is about

a man who is dissatisfied with his hereditary appearance so he decides to end his life. But his failed suicide creates a new situation in his life.

“Inflated Head” is about voices that make people’s heads bigger. Every night people blow the voices from their heads into balloons and send them into the sky.

The festival opened in Sibenik on Sunday and will come to an end on July 21.

Disney builds buzz with superheroes, “Star Wars” and “Mary Poppins”

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Avengers, Mary Poppins and Luke Skywalker brought star power to Walt Disney Co’s annual D23 fan convention on Saturday, as the studio drummed up excitement for upcoming films including a live-action “Lion King”, “Aladdin” and “Dumbo”.

From Iron Man to Spider-Man, the cast of the upcoming ensemble “Avengers: Infinity War” gathered on stage for a superhero-sized selfie and debuted new footage for fans.

The May 2018 film, which Marvel studios President Kevin Feige said was the biggest production so far in the franchise, will unite Marvel superheroes from the last decade, including Captain America, Thor, Hulk, Black Panther and Doctor Strange, to battle intergalactic overload Thanos.

New scenes showed Thor being rescued by the Guardians of the Galaxy, teaming up with Iron Man and Doctor Strange in ravaged other-worldly landscapes where Loki wages destruction.

Disney has dominated the box office with animated and live-action films, which include the Marvel superheroes, “Star Wars”, princesses, pirates and musicals.



Jury member Will Smith reacts on stage at the closing ceremony of the 70th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France on May 28, 2017. (Reuters/ Stephane Mahe)

For the lead role in live-action Arabian tale “Aladdin”, Disney introduced newcomer Mena Massoud, after trade publications reported this week that the studio had trouble finding an actor of the right ethnicity. Naomi Scott will star as Princess Jasmine and Will Smith will play the Genie.

Upcoming films include writer-director Ava Duvernay’s star-studded reimaging of “A Wrinkle In Time”, “Mary Poppins Returns”, “Mulan” and “Dumbo”.

Fans on Saturday expecting a new trailer for the upcoming “Star Wars: The Last Jedi” were instead shown behind-the-scenes footage that included scenes

Woman in Dali paternity suit says just seeking the truth

MADRID (Reuters) — A woman whose paternity suit has prompted a Spanish court to order the exhumation of surrealist artist Salvador Dali’s body said she was simply seeking the truth about her family.

Dali, who died in 1989 aged 84, will be disinterred on July 20 so that DNA samples can be taken after protracted attempts by Maria Pilar Abel to prove she is his daughter.

“I’m searching) for my identity, to find out who I am. I just want the truth to be known,” Abel told Reuters in an interview.

In tears, she added: “I’m not motivated by money. My father deserves more than that.”

Abel was born in 1956 in the northern Spanish town of Figueras, where Dali is buried.

Dali was one of the 20th century’s most famous artists and

is best known for his dream-like surrealist paintings depicting flying tigers and melting clocks, though he also turned his hand to film and sculpture.

He became notorious for his eccentric behavior and style, such as his trademark sculpted black moustache, and pulled off stunts such as giving a lecture in a deep-sea diving suit, which almost caused him to suffocate.