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Zarif: Sardasht chemical attack was crime against humanity

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif issued a statement on Saturday saying the chemical attack on people of Sardasht was a “clear example of war against humanity and war crime” by the Saddam regime.

On June 28, 1987, Saddam Hussein’s army dropped chemical weapons on the city of Sardasht, a Kurdish populated city in Iran’s West Azerbaijan province.

Following is full text of the statement published by the website of the Iranian Foreign Ministry:

On the 30th anniversary of Sadd-

am Hussein regime’s use of chemical weapons against the defenseless and oppressed people of Sardasht, we commemorate the memory of the victims of this crime against humanity. Meanwhile, our thoughts and prayers are with the pure souls of these loved ones. The attack was a bitter and heart-breaking crime which once again revealed the innocence of the great Iranian nation during the eight-year-old Sacred Defense. It also generated a key document in the history on the absurd and unfounded claims raised by the so-called human rights advocates. **→2**

Asian imports of Iranian oil surge in Jan.-May

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Imports of Iranian crude by its four main buyers in Asia jumped 30.5 percent in January-May 2017, government and ship-tracking data showed.

Iran’s top four Asian buyers - China, India, South Korea and Japan - imported 1.765 million barrels per day (bpd) in the 5-month period, up from 1.353 million bpd in the same period in 2016, Reuters reported.

China was the biggest buyer, importing 600,597 bpd. India, South Korea and Japan ranked next, importing 548,200 bpd, 444,185 bpd, and 172,974 bpd, respectively.

However, imports fell 2 percent in May from a year ago, marking the first year-on-year decline since January

2016, when Western sanctions were lifted leading to a spike in Tehran’s exports.

The top four Asian buyers imported 1.60 million bpd in May.

Iran was exempted from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries agreement to reduce output by 1.2 million bpd that began this year, as Tehran needs to regain the market share it lost under Western sanctions over its nuclear program.

Overall Iranian oil output was hovering at more than 3.9 million bpd and is expected to reach 4 million bpd by March 2018, Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh said this month. Iran’s crude oil exports in July are set to fall 7 percent from this month’s three-month high, mainly due to a decline in exports to Europe.

Scholar predicts Bin Salman will intensify war on Yemen

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — A professor of political science at Georgetown University is of the opinion that Mohammed bin Salman, who was suddenly promoted to the second ranking person in the Saudi Kingdom, will intensify war against Yemen and assert a tougher policy toward Iran.

“The appointment of Bin Salman means that Saudi Arabia’s hardline approach towards the war in Yemen as well towards Iran will continue,” Shireen Hunter tells the Tehran Times.

Following is the text of the interview:

■ What were the reasons that King Sal-

man deposed the sitting crown prince and replaced him with his son Mohammed bin Salman?

A: The appointment of Prince Muhammad Bin Salman to the position of Crown Prince was accepted. For some time now following the dying off of Abdul Aziz’ sons and the very old age of few remaining sons it was expected that the system of succession in Saudi Arabia would change from lateral to vertical. In other words, the son of the ruling king would succeed his father and so on and on. The fact that King Hussein of Jordan bypassed his brother, Prince Hassan, who was the crown prince in favor of his own son

Abdullah seems to have also contributed to King Salman’s decision.

Moreover, Prince Mohammad Bin Nayef seems to have some personal issues and rumors about his problems with drugs have been circulating for some time.

■ What might be the reaction of the supporters of Mohammed Bin Nayef who was stripped of all his positions?

A: It has been reported that 31 of the 34 prince members of the Beyat Council have pledged allegiance to the new crown prince, including Muhammd Bin Nayef himself. Therefore, although many princes might be unhappy with the change, **→3**

OPEC oil output jumps to 2017 high: survey

OPEC oil output has risen in June by 280,000 barrels per day (bpd) to a 2017 high, a Reuters survey found.

High compliance by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait helped keep OPEC’s adherence with its supply curbs at a historically high 92 percent in June, compared with 95 percent in May, the survey found.

But extra oil from Nigeria and Libya, exempted from the cut because conflict curbed their output, means supply by the 13 OPEC members originally part of the deal has risen far above their implied production target.

The recovery adds to the challenge the OPEC-led effort to support the market is facing from a persistent inventory glut. If the recovery lasts, calls could grow within OPEC for the exempt countries to be brought into

the production deal.

As part of a deal with Russia and other non-members, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries originally pledged to reduce output by about 1.2 million bpd for six months from Jan. 1.

Oil prices have gained some ground but high stocks and rising U.S. output kept them in check. To provide additional support for prices, the producers decided in May to prolong the deal until March 2018.

June’s biggest rise came from Nigeria, where output extended a recovery after being curtailed by militant attacks on oil installations. The second-biggest was from Libya.

Nigerian output is expected to rise further in coming weeks. Planned exports in August

are scheduled to reach at least 2 million bpd, a 17-month high.

In Libya, output was on average higher despite fluctuation and has now exceeded 1 million bpd, a four-year high. Production remains some way short of the 1.6 million bpd Libya pumped before the 2011 civil war.

Aside from a rise in Angolan exports, no other significant change in output occurred elsewhere in OPEC.

OPEC announced a production target of 32.5 million bpd last year, which was based on low figures for Libya and Nigeria. The target includes Indonesia, which has since left, and does not include Equatorial Guinea, the latest country to join OPEC.

(Source: Reuters)

Iraqi PM hails top Shia cleric Ayatollah Sistani’s role in terror fight

The Iraqi premier has thanked top Shia cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani for his contribution to the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ Daesh) terrorists, saying his 2014 religious decree (fatwa), which mobilized volunteer forces behind army troops on the battlefield, “saved” the state.

In June 2014, shortly after ISIL unleashed its terror campaign in Iraq, Ayatollah Sistani issued a fatwa calling on all Iraqi citizens to defend their country.

“Citizens who are able to bear arms and fight terrorists, defending their country and their people and their holy places, should volunteer and join the security forces to achieve this holy purpose,” said a Sistani representative in his sermon at Friday prayers in the holy Iraqi city of Karbala at the time.

The fatwa helped Shia fighters, Sunni tribesmen as well as Christian and Yazidi volunteers gather under one umbrella of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), commonly known as Hashd al-Sha’abi, to prevent ISIL’s advances.

In the early days of ISIL emergence, Iraqi government forces, who overwhelmed by the terrorist group’s lightning advances, suffered heavy blows on the battle ground.

However, Popular Mobilization Units fighters helped the army regain strength and achieve an upper hand in the fight against ISIL terrorist.

The Iraqi parliament last year recognized Popular Mobilization Units as an official force with similar rights as those of the regular army.

In a statement issued on Friday, Abadi offered his “deep thanks” to Ayatollah Sistani for “his great and continuing support to the heroic fighters.” He also stressed that the Shia cleric’s 2014 call “saved Iraq and paved the way for victory” over ISIL.

Abadi’s remarks came one day after he announced an end to ISIL’s “state of falsehood” following the recapture of Mosul’s landmark Grand al-Nuri Mosque, from where the terror outfit proclaimed its so-called caliphate three years ago.

(Source: Press TV)



ARTICLE

By Seyed Hossein Mousavian
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The real security threats on Iran’s periphery

Pressure has once again become the name of the game in regards to U.S. policy on Iran. The Senate has passed sweeping new sanctions, and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has declared that the U.S. will “counter Iran’s aspiration of hegemony” and work towards a “peaceful transition” of the Iranian government. As U.S.-Iran tensions increase in eastern Syria, murmurs are growing of a potential disastrous war on the horizon.

Tillerson’s call for regime change in Tehran violates international law and the 1981 Algiers Accords, which binds the U.S. to nonintervention in Iranian affairs. It also stands to put U.S.-Iran relations—which under President Obama were characterized by regular high-level diplomatic contact and the landmark nuclear deal—on the path to all-out confrontation.

In blaming Iran for sowing regional discord, the Trump administration has latched onto the self-serving narratives of Saudi and Israeli leaders, which amount to baseless scapegoating and the rewriting of contemporary history.

Iran has been a nation under siege ever since Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein invaded the country shortly after the 1979 revolution. During the resulting eight-year war, the aggressor enjoyed support from the U.S. and other western powers as well as regional states like Saudi Arabia, which provided Saddam roughly \$97 billion over the course of the war. Since that time, Iran has struggled to establish security for itself and safeguard its borders, all the while subject to draconian U.S.-led sanctions.

To its east, Iran shares a 921-kilometer border with Afghanistan, a country ravaged by war for decades. Since the 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan—triggered by the 9/11 hijackers, 15 of the 19 of whom were Saudis—the country has been host to a major U.S. and NATO presence and plagued by terrorism. **→13**



© IRNA/ Ali Karimi

Harvest season starts on Sabalan slopes

A farmer ties a pile of forage he has just harvested from the greenish lower slopes of Mount Sabalan in the extreme northwest Iran. The area offers some favorable vegetation coverage due to considerable annual rainfall. It has high capacity for agriculture and animal breeding as well. Sabalan is the third elevated peak after Damavand and Alam-Kuh across the county. It is also higher than Mont Blanc in the Alps.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Recently-arrested terrorists in Iran to stand trial

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Terrorists who have been arrested in the aftermath of the last month's attacks in Tehran will be handed over to the Judiciary to face trial.

The announcement was made by Iran's Attorney General Mohammad Jafar Montazeri in a press conference on Saturday, IRNA reported.

He did not mention the number of the people he was talking about, but said investigations are being made at security organizations into their cases before they are handed over to the Judiciary.



Qatari airplanes allowed to fly over Iran

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's Supreme National Security Council has granted Qatari airplanes permission to fly over the Islamic Republic as the planes are banned from Saudi, Egyptian and UAE airspace.

Qolliollah Qolizadeh, a member of the presiding board of the Parliament Civil Committee, told Tasnim on Saturday that given the recent disputes between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, the Qatari flights have used Iranian airspace over the past days.

On June 5 Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt introduced land, sea and air sanctions against Qatar.



Defense minister warns of harsh response to threats

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Defense Minister Hossein Dehqan on Saturday warned any possible aggression against Iran will face Tehran's harsh response.

"As we witnessed, Iran will never retreat in the face of enemy, and the threats posed by the enemy will face Iran's most crushing response," Dehqan said, Fars reported.

He also referred to U.S. sanctions against Iran over its missile program, saying, "America's moves cannot leave serious impact on our activities."



Cooperation needed to form more powerful government: VP

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran's first vice president has said a calm and cooperative atmosphere is needed to form a more powerful government for the four years ahead.

"We do not want to occupy ourselves with some (sideline) issues," Es'haq Jahangiri said on Saturday, ISNA reported.

He added that the May 19 presidential election brought about a very precious social capital for the system.

"This capital can enable statesmen and policy-makers to make plans with more ease," he emphasized.



Esmail Kosari takes over security role in IRGC

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Esmail Kosari, a former member of the Majlis, has been appointed as the deputy chief of Sarallah unit, a division of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps that is responsible for maintaining security in the metropolis of Tehran and the larger Tehran province, ISNA reported on Saturday.

Kosari was a member of the parliament from 2008 to 2016 for two consecutive terms. Before that he served in the IRGC.



Tehran hosts chemical weapons conference

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Tehran is hosting an international conference on fighting the use of chemical weapons today.

The event is attended by Head of Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Ahmet Uzumcu, high-ranking Iranian officials, and foreign ambassadors, the Foreign Ministry announced on Saturday.

The event is a special meeting on the occasion of the 20th year since the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as the 30th anniversary of Saddam Hussein's chemical attack on the Iranian town of Sardasht.

Iran to hold intl. conference on dust storms, details announced

By M.A Saki

TEHRAN — Representatives from thirty countries will convene this week in Tehran to look collectively into dust and sand storms, what Iran's environment chief Masoumeh Ebtekar hailed as "a very key event for" Iran and the entire region.

Due to take place on July 3-5, the meeting entitled "International Conference on Combating Sand and Dust Storms: Challenges and Practical Solutions" will be hosted by Iran's Department of Environment and Foreign Ministry, with the cooperation of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, UN Environment and the UN Development Program among others.

"The international event is backed by a number of UN resolutions," Ebtekar briefed media outlets on Saturday on the conference, expressing hope that it proves "a step forward."

Iran's initiative to host the international event was taken note of last year in a resolution ratified by the United Nations General Assembly.

UN organizations passed four resolutions of combating dust and sand storms, with Tehran playing a key role.

International participants will consist of 14 ministers, senior officials, country experts, international resource persons and policy makers from all regions as well as experts from regional and international organizations and UN entities.

According to a UN document, the running themes of the conference include reviewing global and regional trends of sand and dust storms and their social, economic and environmental impact and costs, observing, monitoring, predicting and early warning systems, exploring policy options, technology innovations and investment opportunities and looking into global, regional and cross-sectorial cooperation.



© Tehran Times/Majid Asgaripour

Iran's Environmental Chief Masoumeh Ebtekar (L) and UN Representative to Iran Gary Lewis (R) brief reporters on an international conference on dust storms in Iran on July 1, 2017.

Over the past years, due to its geography Iran has been taking the brunt of devastating dust and sand storms.

"Nearly 80 percent of the storms originate from external hotspots," Ebtekar said, citing Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

Over the past 15 years, there has been a significant increase "in the frequency and the intensity of sand and dust storms" in the Middle East, said Enric Terradellas, a meteorologist with the World Meteorology Organization's sand and dust storm prediction center for the region.

Mismanagement of land and water has been a key factor, as well as climate change.

Iran has undertaken "immense effort" to combat the phenomenon, Gary Lewis, the UN resident coordinator in Iran, said in the briefing session, describing Iran as a "world leader to draw attention to and

combat sand storms."

The conference seeks to achieve three goals of coming up with a "ministerial declaration", discussing "a set of policy options and technical recommendations" and leaving participants with "an understanding of the efforts Iran is already undertaking."

However, these takeaways are not "bounding" and countries will decide if they abide by fully or partially, Lewis said in response to a question by The Tehran Times.

Providing some hints into the content of the declaration, to be named the Tehran Declaration, Ebtekar told The Tehran Times: "The ministerial declaration is going to reflect some of the deliberations we will have in the conference. It will deal with different dimensions and broader aspects of sand storms at regional and international levels."

"It will deal with some actions that should be taken by governments to address the is-

Cheerful Iran congratulates Iraqis over Mosul liberation

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — Iran has expressed great happiness over the liberation of the Iraqi city of Mosul from the hands of Daesh terrorists who took control of the city in June 2014.

President Hassan Rouhani on Friday sent separate messages to Iraqi President Fuad Masum, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and top Shia cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani to congratulate them over the historic event.

"Positive and security-building developments in Iraq and victory in relentless fight against terrorism and extremism are results of constant efforts by the people and military forces and the neighboring countries' help in defeating Daesh and destroying their supporters," Rouhani said in his message to the Iraqi president.

"It is obvious that we will be able to restore security and peace to the Middle East region and rescue the

innocent Muslim people from the nightmare of war and carnage if we continue fighting terrorism with this energy," he added.

In his message to Abadi, Rouhani said that the victory in liberating Mosul shows "importance of real fight against those criminals who kill people and practice violence under the name of Islam".

"The Iraqi people's victory in liberating Mosul once again showed [important] status of religious figures and decrees," the Iranian president said in his message to Ayatollah Sistani.

It was the religious figures who raised hope among the Iraqis and made them determined in countering terrorists, Rouhani stated.

Shortly after Daesh unleashed its terror campaign in Iraq in 2014, Ayatollah Sistani issued a fatwa calling on all

Iraqi citizens to defend their country.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi also issued a statement on Friday congratulating the defeat of Daesh in Mosul. He also called for continued collective efforts to root out the ideology of terrorism.

The ministry official also said that Iran is ready to help the regional countries in fighting terrorists.

Abadi issued a statement on Thursday declaring an end to self-proclaimed caliphate of Daesh.

Iran provided advisory help to the Iraqi security forces in their three years of war against Daesh militants in Iraq who were mainly composed of terrorists from different countries as well as former Baathist officers loyal to Saddam Hussein.

In their first months of capturing certain Iraqi cities and villages Daesh militants committed despicable crimes against people.

Majlis to take reciprocal measures against U.S.

POLITICS **TEHRAN** — The Iranian parliament will hold a session on Sunday to discuss a reciprocal motion against the United States for its anti-Iran sanctions.

Hossein Naghavi Hosseini, the spokesman for the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, told IRNA news agency on Saturday that the motion consists of a number of recent reciprocal measures taken by the parliament against Washington's hostile behavior towards the Islamic Republic.

Tension between Iran and the U.S. has intensified over past several months since Donald Trump, who promised to take a harsher tone against Iran, became president. Since assuming office, he has accused Iran of supporting terrorism and called on regional Arab states to take action against what he called Iran's unfavorable regional role.

Tehran and Washington disagree on some other issues as well, including the implementation of the nuclear agreement, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was reached in July 2015 between Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council – the United States, France, Britain, Russia and China – plus Germany and the European Union.

Two weeks ago, the U.S. Senate voted for a legislation to impose non-nuclear sanctions on Iran for developing its missile program and over allegations of support for terrorism and human rights violations.

In order for the new Senate bill to become law, it must also pass the U.S. House of Representatives and be signed by Trump. The bill, if ratified, will target the individuals and entities linked to Iran's missile activities.

"The Americans continue with their hostile, hateful and aggressive behavior against our nation," Naghavi Hosseini said, referring to Senate's new sanctions against Tehran.

He further said the Islamic Republic will respond to such aggressive behavior.

Alaeddin Boroujerdi, chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, has also slammed the U.S. for its anti-Iran move.

Boroujerdi underlined that his country will not be the first side of the nuclear deal to violate the JCPOA, adding that Tehran will, nevertheless, stand up to Americans' greed.

He also stressed that Iran's missile program is of deterrent nature intended to bolster the country's defensive capabilities.

During the Thursday meeting of the United Nation Security Council, the U.S. envoy slammed the Security Council for failing to take any action against Iran,

which she claimed had "repeatedly and deliberately violated" sanctions imposed by the world body.

"The Security Council has failed to even take minimal steps to respond to these violations," Haley told a council briefing on Iran. "We must ... show Iran that we will not tolerate their egregious flaunting of UN resolutions."

This is while the UN political chief Jeffrey Feltman, EU Ambassador to the world body Joao Vale de Almeida, and envoys from all the signatories to the deal – except Washington – verified Tehran's adherence to its commitment under the accord.

Feltman told the council that the International Atomic Energy Agency had issued seven reports, the latest in early June, documenting Iran's continued implementation of its nuclear-related commitments.



the use of chemical weapons in Syria under a suspicious and dangerous scenario are the same powers which not only closed their eyes to the use of illegal chemical weapons and weapons of mass destruction against the Iranian civilians and troops but also got involved in the equipping process and providing support for the criminal regime of Saddam and therefore are complicit in Saddam's crimes.

Unlike the hypocritical policies and double-

standards of some self-proclaimed advocates of human rights including the U.S., the Islamic Republic of Iran vehemently condemns any use or threat to use weapons of mass destruction including chemical weapons. Iran also condemns resorting to such means as a pretext to prepare the ground for a set of illegal moves against the independent nations and governments across the world. Iran is against any use of such weapons by anybody, anywhere and anytime.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry commemorates the victims of the Sardasht chemical attack and their relatives, and marks the National Day of Fighting Chemical and Biological Weapons while reiterating the Islamic Republic's determination to fight against any use of chemical weapons of any kind. It also calls on the international community to use all available capacities to stop the production, proliferation and use of any chemical weapons and to become more sensitive to the use and the threat to use of such weapons by such terrorist groups as ISIS and their regional and international supporters.

Britain's Jeremy Corbyn: Halt arms sales to Saudi Arabia

Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of Britain's main opposition Labour Party, has called for a halt in arms sales to the House of Saud regime and a ceasefire in Yemen.

Since the start of war in Yemen, Britain has approved arms export licenses to Saudi Arabia worth \$4.1bn, according to London-based Campaign Against the Arms Trade.

In an exclusive interview with Al Jazeera, Corbyn said: "We have constantly condemned the use of these weapons by Saudi Arabia in Yemen, and called for the suspension of the arms sales to Saudi Arabia to show that we are wanting a peace process in Yemen, not an invasion by Saudi Arabia."

"We've made that very clear."

Yemen has been devastated by a Saudi regime led war. More than 10,000 people have been killed and at least 40,000 injured in Yemen since March 20, mostly from Saudi regime-led air strikes, according to the United Nations.

The Saudi regime-led air campaign and subsequent blockade has created a humanitarian disaster in the world's poorest Arab state. Cholera is on the rise and nearly 70 percent of the population is dependent on aid.

"I'm totally shocked by the war in Yemen. Totally shocked, by the bombardment that's taken place, by the killings that have happened, by the cholera outbreak that's now rife. And the numbers who are affected, the numbers who have already died," Corbyn said.

More than 1,300 people have died of cholera since late April, in the second outbreak of the infection in less than a year.

In March, the UN's World Food Program said that nearly half of Yemen's 22 provinces were on the verge of famine.

Corbyn said the Labour party had called on the previous British government



to suspend its arms sales to Saudi Arabia, and would continue to do so in the next.

"We have already put that resolution to parliament in the last parliament. We'll continue to do that when there's a new parliament formed after this general election. Our policy of the Labour Party is unchanged," he said.

The Labour leader also touched on alleged instances, revealed in two separate investigations last week, of forced disappearances, arbitrary detention, torture and abuse by troops backed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Yemen.

"All of those allegations have to be investigated, and the evidence has to come forward," said Corbyn.

"And arms sales policy has to reflect that we do not believe those countries that commit abuses of human rights or kill civilians with the use of those weapons should continue to receive British arms."

Last week rights groups and activists called on Britain to end arms sales to the House of Saud regime and its allies, warning that continuing to do so may be a violation of international law.

A statement issued by the Arab Organization for Human Rights in Britain (AOHR) said British manufactured weapons sold to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt were being used to carry out abuses in Yemen and Libya.

"[AOHR] is calling on the UK govern-

ment to review its role in the sale of arms to a number of Arab governments that are known for gross human rights violation," the statement read.

"A Saudi-led coalition has killed hundreds of Yemenis, destroyed scores of homes in addition to obliterating most of Yemen's core infrastructure," the AOHR said, adding: "Saudi Arabia has also turned a blind eye to the atrocities committed by UAE in southern parts of the country."

In Libya, the UAE has transferred British-produced arms to the renegade Libyan general Khalifa Haftar, who is also accused of a raft of abuses, including indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas and summary executions. (Source: Al Jazeera)

New U.S. presidential war powers would require new war authorization from Congress

A stunning move this week by a House panel to force a debate on new United States presidential war powers revealed mounting frustration that Congress has for too long dodged one of its most important responsibilities: to decide whether to send American fighting forces into harm's way.

The measure crafted by Rep. Barbara Lee of California, an anti-war Democrat and the only member of Congress to oppose the post-Sept. 11, 2001, authorization, demands a debate on new war powers to reflect how the dynamics of the battlefield have shifted. For example, American troops are battling an enemy – the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorists – that didn't exist 16 years ago in a country – Syria – that the U.S. didn't expect to be fighting in.

And there are concerns the U.S. is being tugged more deeply into Syria.

President Donald Trump warned on Monday that Syria will pay a "heavy price" if it carries out another chemical weapons attack. In April, Trump ordered the firing of dozens of Tomahawk missiles at an air base in central Syria, marking the first time the U.S. has directly struck Syrian forces during the country's six-year foreign instigated war.

The U.S. military earlier this month shot down a Syrian Air Force fighter jet, and the U.S.-led coalition claiming to fight the ISIL has hit pro-government forces in Syria with airstrikes.

The Trump administration also is sending close to 4,000 additional American forces to Afghanistan, America's longest war.

Members of the Republican-led House Appropriations Committee voted overwhelmingly on Thursday to add Lee's amendment to its version of the 2018



military spending bill. Her measure would repeal the 2001 authorization – it has been broadly interpreted by Trump and his predecessors to permit military operations beyond those envisioned at the time – 240 days after the spending bill is enacted.

Lee said the eight months "would allow plenty of time for Congress to finally live up to its constitutional obligation to debate and vote on any new AUMF," using the acronym for authorization for the use of military force. To underscore how the 2001 authority has been stretched beyond its intended limits, she said the authorization has been invoked to deploy troops to eight different countries, including Yemen and Syria.

"Any administration can rely on this blank check to wage war," Lee said.

Lee won the vocal backing of several conservative lawmakers, highlighting the breadth of support for debating new war powers. Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla., said Congress has avoided its war-making responsi-

bilities for years.

Rep. Chris Stewart, R-Utah, and Lee are about as far apart on the political spectrum as two people could be. But Stewart, a former Air Force B-1B bomber pilot, voted for her amendment. He said U.S. service members are watching Congress.

Yet if history is a guide, the amendment to cut off the 2001 authorization for the use of military force against the terrorist groups who carried out the 9/11 attacks will be scratched from a Pentagon spending bill before the legislation ever reaches the House floor.

Robert Chesney, an expert on national security law and a professor at the University of Texas law school, said there's little incentive for congressional leaders and the Trump White House to open the 2001 authorization to changes. Properly or not, he said, the law has been read expansively to cover all current military operations, whereas a rewrite may put limits and barriers on what the Pentagon can do.

Rep. Kay Granger of Texas, the chairwoman of the panel's defense subcommittee, opposed the measure and warned her colleagues they were making a serious mistake. She called the amendment a "deal breaker" that would tie the hands of the U.S. to act on its own or with other countries to attack and defeat terrorist groups.

Granger added that Lee's provision would make a major policy change and doesn't belong in legislation designed to fund the armed forces.

AshLee Strong, a spokeswoman for House Speaker Paul Ryan, said of Lee's amendment: "There is a way to have this debate, but this, which endangers our national security, is not it."

(Source: AP)

Yousef al-Otaiba linked to Malaysia 1MDB scandal: WSJ

Companies connected to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) ambassador to the United States received \$66 million from offshore accounts that contained money allegedly embezzled from Malaysia's 1MDB investment fund, according to documents reviewed by The Wall Street Journal.

In 2015, allegations emerged that billions of dollars were stolen from Malaysia's state-owned 1MDB.

The WSJ said leaked emails of ambassador Yousef al-Otaiba included "descriptions of meetings between Shaher Awartani, an Abu Dhabi-based business partner of Mr. Otaiba, and Jho Low, the Malaysian financier the [US] justice department says was the central conspirator in the alleged \$4.5 billion 1MDB fraud."

The U.S. justice department said that the billions had been stolen from 1MDB by people close to Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak.

The fund is also at the center of investigations in many other countries, including the United Arab Emirates and Singapore.

Najib has denied any wrongdoing and 1MDB officials have said it has found no evidence of misappropriation.

According to the WSJ, in addition to the meetings between Awartani and Low, "a Singapore criminal case against a Swiss banker disclosed \$50 million of payments made to the companies connected to Mr. Otaiba, includ-



ing Densmore Investments Ltd. in the British Virgin Islands and Silver Coast Construction & Boring in the UAE."

The WSJ added: "In separate documents reviewed by the Journal related to Singapore's investigation of alleged 1MDB-linked money laundering, authorities describe Densmore as controlled by Messrs. Otaiba and Awartani. Those documents also describe another \$16

million of separate payments to Densmore in the form of loans from a company connected to the alleged fraud."

Hackers from a group that calls itself "Global Leaks" began leaking emails from Otaiba's inbox earlier this month.

According to the WSJ, a number of those emails show communications between Otaiba, Awartani and Low.

"On May 5, 2015, a Dubai-based financial executive working at a company controlled by Messrs. Otaiba and Awartani told Mr. Otaiba in an email that Mr. Low had instructed the men to close their accounts at BSI Bank, a private Swiss bank that investigators in the U.S., Switzerland and Singapore say played an instrumental role in the alleged 1MDB fraud. Densmore held an account at BSI," the WSJ said.

The WSJ said Otaiba declined to comment on its findings, but a spokeswoman for the UAE embassy told the news organization that the embassy "noted the existence of numerous orchestrated dossiers that have been prepared ... targeting the ambassador and which are purported to contain hacked emails."

She also said the embassy notes "the context of the role of the UAE in the current suspension of diplomatic and economic relations with the state of Qatar" and as a result, the embassy "will not talk to or respond to any of these dossiers". (Source: Al Jazeera)

Trump calls for firm response to North Korea, targets Seoul on trade

The United States President Donald Trump called for a determined response to North Korea after talks with South Korea's President Moon Jae-in where he stressed the importance of their alliance but took aim at Seoul over trade and sharing the cost of defense.

Trump said the United States was renegotiating what he characterized as a "rough" trade deal with South Korea agreed to five years ago by his predecessor, Barack Obama, and reiterated that an era of "strategic patience" over North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs had ended.

"Together we are facing the threat of the reckless and brutal regime in North Korea," Trump said as he stood alongside Moon in the White House Rose Garden. "The nuclear and ballistic missile programs of that regime require a determined response."

Despite the tough rhetoric, it remains unclear how Trump will find a way forward on North Korea, which is working to develop a nuclear-tipped missile capable of hitting the United States.

U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis has warned the consequences of any military solution would be "tragic on an unbelievable scale." Trump had pinned his hopes on persuading China, North Korea's neighbor and main trading partner, to do more to rein in Pyongyang, although he has lately grown frustrated that Beijing has not taken stronger action.

Trump called on regional powers to implement sanctions and demand North Korea "choose a better path and do it quickly."

Moon, who warned of a "stern response" to any provocations, urged Pyongyang to return promptly to talks.

"Our two leaders will employ both sanctions and dialogue in a phased and comprehensive approach," Moon said of South Korea and the United States.

Trump and Moon have said they are open to renewed dialogue with North Korea but only under circumstances that would lead to Pyongyang giving up its weapons programs.

Moon told an event at the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank that moves by North Korea that could create conditions for dialogue could include a freeze on its nuclear and missile tests, or the release of three Americans it is holding in the country.

To be successful, talks would have to involve North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un and have as their ultimate aim the complete dismantling of North Korea's nuclear program, he added.

Trump sought to woo China since a summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping in April but the honeymoon period appears to be over. On Thursday, the United States targeted a Chinese bank and sanctioned Chinese individuals and a firm for dealing with North Korea and approved a \$1.42 billion arms deal with Taiwan – decisions that angered Beijing.

■ Steel and Autos

South Korea is a long-standing American ally but Trump has spoken harshly about U.S. trade imbalances and threatened to tear up the bilateral trade pact.

"We will do more to remove barriers to reciprocal trade and market access," Trump said, adding that the two leaders had talked about the thorny trade areas of steel and autos.

Trump said he was encouraged by Moon's assurances that he would seek a level playing field for American workers and businesses, particularly automakers.

A joint statement said the two sides had agreed to work together to reduce over supply of basic materials such as steel and non-tariff barriers. It also said Trump had accepted an invitation from Moon to visit South Korea this year.

Trump also emphasized the need to ensure equitable sharing of costs for defense, returning to a theme he raised during his campaign and brought up with other allies, including NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) countries and Japan.

A senior U.S. official said in a briefing before the president's meeting with Moon that South Korea was in many respects a "model ally," given its spending of 2.7 percent of Gross domestic product (GDP) on defense and Moon's plan to grow capabilities.

The U.S. goods trade deficit with South Korea has more than doubled since the U.S.-Korea free trade pact known as KORUS took effect in 2012. The agreement was forecast to boost U.S. exports by \$10 billion a year, but in 2016 they were \$3 billion lower than in 2011.

At the start of Friday's talks, U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said the largest component of the deficit was automotive trade and many non-tariff barriers to U.S. auto exports to South Korea remained. (Source: Reuters)

Scholar predicts Bin Salman will intensify war on Yemen

It is unlikely that they would attempt to unseat either the new crown prince or the king. Despite their differences, the Saudi princes' interests are best served by their unity rather than unnecessary squabbling among themselves.

■ Wasn't the crown prince's dismissal a soft coup with a green light by the U.S. and the UAE?

A: The appointment of Muhammad bin Salman to the position of crown prince was widely expected. Therefore, the change cannot be characterized as a coup. It is more like a generational change with younger princes replacing the remaining and old sons of Abdul Aziz. This is especially the case as bin Salman has effectively been running the country since his father became king.

■ What might be the repercussions of such a major reshuffle on Saudi foreign policy in the region?

A: The appointment of Bin Salman means that Saudi Arabia's headline approach towards the war in Yemen as well towards Iran will continue, and so will its push to expand its influence in the Arab world, especially the Persian Gulf region. Relations with Iran, in particular, could seriously deteriorate as Bin Salman might increase destabilizing efforts inside Iran.

■ Was the reshuffle somehow related to Trump's recent trip to Riyadh?

A: Prince Bin Salman has tried very hard to portray himself as America's best ally. It also seems to have indicated that he might be able to help resolve the Palestinian dispute and bring peace between Israel and Arabs. Therefore, the United States seems to have a positive view of him. However, there is no direct connection between President Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia.

NEWS IN BRIEF

**PPI inflation
increases %0.4
in a month: CBI**

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The average Producer Price Index (PPI) in the third month of the current Iranian calendar year, Khordad (May 22-June 21, 2017), witnessed a 0.4 percent rise and reached 237.2 compared to its preceding month, IRNA reported on Saturday.

According to the latest report of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), year-on-year PPI inflation stood at 8.7 percent in Khordad.

The figure, in the 12-month period ending June 21, grew 6.5 percent, the same report confirmed.

Euro zone inflation eases less than expected, core measure up

Euro zone inflation eased in June because of more moderate energy price rises, but the slowdown was less than expected by markets and the core measure of price growth the ECB keenly watches increased by more than anticipated.

The European Union's statistics office Eurostat estimated that consumer prices in the 19 countries sharing the euro rose 1.3 percent year-on-year in June, decelerating from 1.4 percent in May and 1.9 percent in April.

But economists polled by Reuters had expected a steeper deceleration to 1.2 percent.

They also expected inflation excluding unprocessed food and energy - the two most volatile components - at 1.0 percent, the same as in May.

But in fact core inflation accelerated to 1.2 percent in June, Eurostat data showed.

The European Central Bank wants to keep headline inflation below, but close to two percent over the medium term and has been buying billions of euros worth of government bonds on the secondary market to inject cash into the economy and spur faster rice growth. (Source: CNBC)

ECB to inspect Greek banks' progress on cutting bad loans

The European Central Bank plans to inspect Greek banks this year to monitor their progress in working off their huge pile of unpaid loans, ECB director Sabine Lautenschlaeger said.

Greek banks have been cutting their share of non-performing loans (NPL) to companies and households, which account for slightly more than half of their books as a result of a severe economic crisis, to meet targets set by the ECB.

The ECB supervises Greece's four largest banks, or significant institutions (SIs), and is one of the three bodies responsible for the country's bailout, along with the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund.

"The ECB will perform on-site missions at the Greek SIs during the second half of 2017, a period in which the main operational measures to address NPLs ... have to be already implemented," Lautenschlaeger said in a letter to IMF chief Christine Lagarde.

She was responding to an IMF request for information on the ECB's supervisory work in Greece in the context of a possible IMF program for the country.

Greece secured a credit lifeline from euro zone governments earlier this month. The IMF offered Athens a standby arrangement but said it won't disburse any money until it obtains greater detail on debt relief for the country. (Source: Reuters)

South Pars phase 12 annual output nears 20bcm

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Some 19.865 billion cubic meters of gas was produced in phase 12 - the biggest phase - of Iran's South Pars gas field during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

As Mohammad-Mehdi Hashemi, the operator of this phase said, phase 12 also produced about 100,000 tons of sulfur in the past year, ILNA reported on Saturday.

Phase 12, which is the largest development phase of South Pars gas field in terms of operation, investment and production, has the capacity of producing 75 million cubic meters per day (mcm/d) of sweet

gas, 120,000 barrels per day of gas condensate and 400 tons per day of sulfur.

The phase, which was inaugurated in March 2015, is located in southeast part of South Pars gas field and covers a 206 square kilometers area.

The field, shared by Iran and Qatar in the Persian Gulf, contains a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate. The Qatari part is called North Dome.

The field is divided into 24 standard phases. Most of the phases are fully operational at the moment.

S. Korea's exports jump 13.7% in June

South Korea's exports extended their winning streak for the eighth month in a row by expanding 13.7 percent last month on recovering global commerce, the trade ministry said Saturday.

Outbound shipments came to \$51.4 billion in June, up from \$45.2 billion tallied a year earlier, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy.

The latest number marked the second-largest monthly volume since October 2014, when shipments reached \$51.6 billion, while it posted double-digit growth for six months in a row for the first time in nearly six years.

The average export value per working day advanced 13.7 percent on-year to \$2.24 billion to record the seventh consecutive month of growth, with won-denominated shipments also rising 9.8 percent, marking eighth months that this number has advanced.

The country's exports have been rising steadily since November led by



an upturn in oil prices and recovering global trade.

Imports also soared 18 percent on-year to \$40 billion in June.

Last month's trade surplus came to \$11.4 billion, the 66-straight month that the country's exports have exceeded imports, the ministry said.

The trade ministry said the rally in exports is led by rising global demand for South Korea's key export items including semiconductors, ships, petrochemicals and flat displays. (Source: Yonhap)

UK consumers suffer longest decline in spending power since 1970s

British consumers have suffered the longest decline in their spending power since the 1970s, raising questions about whether the Bank of England really is likely to raise interest rates any time soon.

Official data published on Friday confirmed that the world's fifth-biggest economy went into a sharp slowdown in early 2017.

While there was a hint of an improvement in the dominant services sector as the second quarter began, the picture was bleak for consumers who are Britain's main drivers of growth.

They are facing the double hit of accelerating inflation, caused in large part by the fall in the pound since the Brexit vote, and slowing wage growth.

The Office for National Statistics said household disposable income, adjusted for inflation, fell for a third straight quarter. That was the worst run in 40 years and took the household savings ratio down to an all-time low.

Consumers have suffered a sharp loss of confidence, according to the first GfK survey published since the inconclusive outcome of this month's national election. The weak data comes just as some policymakers at the BoE have started to signal that a first rate hike in a decade might be approaching in order to curb the sharp rise in inflation.

An unexpectedly close 5-3 vote to keep rates on hold this month was followed up by comments from the central bank's chief

economist that he might vote for a hike soon too, surprising investors who had been expecting no hike until 2019.

Governor Mark Carney says he is watching to see how the economy copes with the launch of Brexit talks and whether investment can help compensate for the weakness among consumers, something that did not appear imminent in Friday's data.

The ONS said business investment grew by a quarterly 0.6 percent in the first three months of 2017, only partially offsetting a fall in the fourth quarter.

The ONS also said Britain's giant services sector grew by a monthly 0.2 percent in April, slightly slower than in March. But growth was up 0.2 percent in the three

months to April, faster than 0.1 percent in the first three months of the year.

Alan Clarke, an economist with ScotiaBank, said that was consistent with the BoE's forecast of a pickup in overall economic growth in the second quarter and meant a rate hike at the BoE's next meeting in early August remained on the table.

The ONS confirmed the economy grew by just 0.2 percent in the January-March period from the previous three months, down from growth of 0.7 percent in the fourth quarter of 2016.

The sudden slowdown meant Britain went from being one of the fastest-growing economies among the Group of Seven rich nations to its weakest performer in the first quarter. (Source: Reuters)

U.S. crude oil production may not be growing quite so fast

U.S. crude production fell for the first time this year in April, reining in exuberance over rapidly growing domestic output.

April output fell slightly to 9.08 million barrels a day, and was 190,000 barrels lower than the Energy Information Administration's preliminary weekly estimates. Earlier in June, the agency also lowered its Permian oil production estimates for every month in 2017.

U.S. shale drillers have boosted production at a rapid pace, undercutting OPEC's efforts to pare a global supply glut. EIA projects that U.S. output will grow every quarter this year before tipping past 10 million barrels a day in 2018. Rig counts rose for 23 straight weeks this year, before falling by two this week.

"Generating estimates for domestic crude oil production is a challenge, given the large number of rigs/wells across the various plays, each with their own characteristics," EIA analyst Robert Merriam said in an email. "Most months we are reasonably close, some better than others, and we use those results to inform changes we may want to make to improve those models going forward."

The biggest drop was in the Gulf of Mexico, where output fell 6 percent to the lowest since October. In Texas and North Dakota, production rose 1 percent and 2 percent, respectively. (Source: Bloomberg)

Australia, New Zealand start free trade talks with Latin American bloc

MOSCOW (Sputnik) — Australia and New Zealand have launched free trade talks with Mexico, Chile, Peru and Colombia, who make up the Pacific Alliance, their trade ministers announced Saturday.

"Australia's experience negotiating with three of the Pacific Alliance members positions us well to conclude an agreement relatively quickly," Australia's Steben Ciobo said in a statement.

Australia is seeking a "comprehensive, high quality" pact to create new export opportunities for its farmers, miners, manufacturers, educators, service providers and investors, drive economic growth and create jobs, the minister said.

Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski said on Friday that Australia, Canada, Singapore and New Zealand had lined up to join the trading bloc as associate members.

New Zealand's Trade Minister Todd McClay also announced his country started talks with the alliance, which accounts for 38 percent of Latin America's population and 57 percent of its total imports.

First Announcement

Quality Assessment Announcement for

Manufacture, Purchase, Shipment and Delivery of Three
80T Harbor Rail-Mounted Crane Units for CHABAHAR Port
(Tender No: 96/HE/1069)
Ports and Maritime Organization

This is hereby to announce that Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) of I.R. Iran intends to proceed with Manufacture, Purchase, Shipment and Delivery of Three 80T Harbor Rail-Mounted Crane Units for CHABAHAR Port by qualitative assessment method and via international two-phase public tender.

*Therefore, in order to carry out qualitative assessment of the manufacturers of Harbor Rail-Mounted cranes, all local and foreigner Manufacture companies are invited to refer to JETS.MPORG.IR website and maximum till **Tuesday 11th July 2017** to receive the relevant qualitative assessment file of documents and forms.

All foreigner companies shall receive the aforesaid documents either from their local Iranian agent.

*Place and deadline for submitting the documents and completed forms: Central Secretariat of the PMO, located at the Ground Floor of PMO Building at the below address and to the last working hour on **Saturday 12th August 2017**. It should be emphasized again that the relevant receipt against submitting of the said documents and forms must be kept for further steps.

* Meanwhile, the question & answer session of the qualitative assessment call will be held at **10 A.M on Saturday 22nd July 2017** at the conference room located in the 12th floor of the PMO Building and therefore, attendance of the informed technical and commercial representatives of all manufacture companies of the which are willing to participate in Qualitative Assessment of tender is obligatory (together with an official introduction letter).

*** The tender winner shall pay for newspaper advertisement costs.**
Address of the announcing organization: Ports and Maritime Organization, No.1, Dr. Shahidi

St., Haghani Highway, Vanak Sq., Tehran, Iran.

Tel: (+98) 21-84932351 and 84932357 Fax: (+98) 21-88651191
E-mail of PMO: Technical@pmo.ir

First Announcement

Quality Assessment Announcement for

Manufacture, Purchase, Shipment and Delivery of One Unit
80T Rubber – Tired Yard Mobile Crane Lattice – Boom Type
For Shahid Beheshti Chabahar Port
(Tender No: 96/HE/1071)
Ports and Maritime Organization

This is hereby to announce that Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) of I.R.Iran intends to proceed with Manufacture, Purchase, Shipment and Delivery of One Unit 80T Rubber – Tired Yard Mobile Crane Lattice – Boom Type For Shahid Beheshti Chabahar Port by qualitative assessment method and via international two-phase public tender.

*Therefore, in order to carry out qualitative assessment of the manufacturers of Rubber – Tired Yard Mobile Crane, all local and foreigner Manufacture companies are invited to refer to JETS.MPORG.IR website and maximum till **Sunday 16th July 2017** to receive the relevant qualitative assessment file of documents and forms.

All foreigner companies shall receive the aforesaid documents either from their local Iranian agent.

*Place and deadline for submitting of documents and completed forms: Central Secretariat of the PMO, located at the Ground Floor of PMO Building at the below address and to the last working hour on **Wednesday 16th August 2017**. It should be emphasized that the relevant receipt against submitting of the said documents and forms must be kept for further steps.

* Meanwhile, the question & answer session of the qualitative assessment call will be held at **10 A.M on Sunday 5th August 2017** at the conference room located in the 12th floor of the PMO building and therefore, attendance of the informed technical and commercial representatives of all manufacture companies of the which are willing to participate in Qualitative Assessment of tender is obligatory (together with an official introduction letter).

*** The tender winner shall pay for newspaper advertisement costs.**
Address of the announcing organization: Ports and Maritime Organization, No.1, Dr. Shahidi
St., Haghani Highway, Vanak Sq., Tehran, Iran.

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Iraqi Kurdistan independence is illegal

By Amir A. Amirshékari

On 8 June 2017, Masoud Barzani the president of Iraqi Kurdistan called for a referendum for independence of the region on 25 September 2017. Some days ago, he said in his interview with France 24 Television that every attempt to prevent the referendum will result in "catastrophe" and "bloody war". Also, before two months, on 2 April 2017, a meeting held amongst Kurdish political parties, mainly between Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and a delegation of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), in Erbil, with the aim of holding a referendum on Kurdish independence this year in Iraq. The Kurdish parties issued a joint statement declaring the Kurdish nation was entitled to implement its right of self-determination and it was the: "natural right of the nation of Kurdistan to decide on its political and administrative path in a referendum and an entity of an independent state".

It is while that on 28 March, 5 days before the meeting, the Kurdish flag, according to the decision of Kirkuk council, was raised in Kirkuk, although on 1 April, the Iraqi parliament rejected the decision and the governments of Iran and Turkey declared clearly that they could not tolerate the decision.

It seems that the process of Kurdish claim to independence is an ongoing process. On 19 January 2017, Masoud Barzani, the president of Iraqi Kurdistan Region, stated in his interview with Washington Post that an independent Kurdistan is "neither a rumour nor a dream".

On 22 March 2016, he declared, in his interview with Al-Monitor website, that the independence referendum for Iraqi Kurdistan would be held before October 2016, the date one month before which the U.S. presidential election would take place. It is worth noting that there exist many interviews of Mr Barzani and the other Kurdish leaders in which they were calling for the independence of Iraqi Kurdistan. On the other hand, external interventions have put severe pressures on the territorial sovereignty of Iraq, amongst which the remarks of Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli prime minister, and Ayelet Shaked, the Israeli minister of justice, are remarkable who called for the formation of an independent Kurdistan. It has been reported that Israeli military and intelligence operatives had been active in Iraqi Kurdistan, without the permission of the central government of Iraq, providing training for Kurdish commando units.

The extinguishing of ISIS, which has united the Kurds against a common artificial enemy, and the anon falling of Mosul, as well as the operations happened recently by Kurdish militants in Turkey and Syria, strengthen the presumption that Iraqi Kurdistan statesmen propound their demand for independence again. Is Iraqi Kurdistan independence legally permissible?

■ A federal region

Article 1 of Iraqi constitution states: "The Republic of Iraq is a single federal, independent and fully sovereign state in which the system of government is republican, representative, parliamentary, and democratic, and this Constitution is a guarantor of the unity of Iraq." Iraqi constitution recognises the region of Kurdistan, just as a federal region (Article 117). According to article 141 of the constitution of Iraq, legislation enacted in the region of Kurdistan and decisions issued by the government of the region of Kurdistan shall be considered valid provided that they do not contradict with the Constitution. Therefore, according to the explicit text of the constitution, Iraqi Kurdistan Region is not allowed to declare independence.

The raison d'être of each state requires the right to existence of that state, from which the principle of territorial integrity is deduced. Therefore, territorial integrity, which generates the right to conservation and the right to freedom, is the cornerstone of international law, although the principle is always exposed to internal and external threats. The right to perfectibility, to defence, and to security are derived from the right to conservation; and the right to independence or sovereignty is inferred from the right to freedom.

One of the most important exceptions to the territorial integrity of a country is the right to self-determination, which is coming into force when peoples are under colonialism and/or foreign occupation. But recently, after the emergence of partially recognised entities such as Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Kosovo, a new discussion on the denial of territorial integrity has emerged in international law, when the grave systematic continuous breach of fundamental human rights of a group, or some groups, of people has come into existence. This theory has been called remedial secession premised on the priority of human rights over territorial integrity; but it has not been accepted as a reliable recognised theory in international law to be cited in different international disputes.

In 2014, Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli prime minister, stated that the Kurds were "worthy of their own independence". Also, on 19 January 2016, Ayelet Shaked, justice minister of Israel, called for an independent Kurdistan. She also expressed that Israel had to openly call for the establishment of a Kurdish state that separated Iran from Turkey, one which would be friendly towards Israel. In 2016, a Kurdish delegation, on behalf of Masoud Barzani, visited Washington, DC, meeting with Jewish lobbyist as well as some U.S. officials there, to request financial assistance from them in fighting against ISIS and to seek support in declaring an independent Kurdistan in Iraq. ➔13

It has been reported in several resources that Israeli military and intelligence operatives had been active in Iraqi Kurdistan, without the permission of the central government of Iraq, providing training for Kurdish commando units.

Mosul defeat leaves ISIS 'unlikely to survive' three years after declaring caliphate in Iraq, analysts say

In a sermon on 29 June 2014, ISIS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi declared the creation of an Islamic caliphate from Mosul's grand mosque after his forces swept across a third of Iraq from neighboring Syria.

Exactly three years later, Iraqi troops have wrested the site of the 12th century building back from the terrorists.

Even though its infamous black flag was still flying from the minaret, ISIS blew up al-Nuri last week in an attempt to rob the security forces of the symbolic victory.

Nonetheless, the authorities were keen to stress the importance of retaking the compound. "Their fictitious state has fallen," military spokesperson Brigadier General Yahya Rasool told state TV.

The footage of Iraqi soldiers clambering around the ruins are bittersweet for Mosul's long suffering residents, and militants left in the city are intent on fighting to the death. But on the third anniversary since the city was conquered, ISIS' leaders can no longer hide the fact their caliphate is crumbling away.

"Islamic State's project lies in ruins. To see just how bad things are going, consider that they even destroyed the historic mosque where Baghdadi first emerged to declare his caliphate," Dr Shiraz Maher, deputy director of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization at King's College London, told The Independent.

New analysis from IHS Markit's Conflict Monitor shows that while at the height of its powers ISIS controlled 90,800 square kilometers (56,421 square miles) of territory, thanks to aggressive U.S.-backed ground and air campaigns across both Syria and Iraq the organization's territory has shrunk by 60 per cent to an estimated 36,200 km² (23,000 m²).

■ Territorial losses

Territorial losses have added to financial woes: while in the second quarter of 2015 ISIS' average monthly revenue was estimated to be \$81m (£63m), by the same period in 2017 it had fallen to \$16m (£12m) – a reduction of 80 per cent.

While ISIS has always relied heavily on excessive taxation, fines and often outright stealing from populations under its control – never a reliable source of income – its oil revenue is also down 88 per cent, IHS Markit said.

U.S.-led coalition bombing has destroyed the once lucrative illicit oil trade by targeting wells, refineries and pipelines, as well as ISIS trucking routes to Turkey.

"The Islamic State's rise and fall has



Iraqi forces claim the destruction of the caliphate after retaking Mosul's wrecked al-Nuri mosque - but the deep problems that drive violence in the country will be harder to address.

been characterized by rapid inflation, followed by steady decline," said Columb Strack, a senior Middle East analyst at IHS Markit.

"Three years after the 'caliphate' was declared, it is evident that the group's governance project has failed.

"By the end of the year, [the quasi-state will be reduced to a] string of isolated urban areas that will eventually be retaken over the course of 2018."

Pressure is mounting on the group in every direction. The fall of Mosul is dovetailing with the fight over the border for Raqqa, ISIS's de facto Syrian capital, and the last Iraqi ISIS pockets in Hawija, Tal Afar and al-Qaim are now in the coalition's crosshairs.

While the fall of the Iraqi half of the caliphate is cause for celebration, ISIS is far from defeated, Dr Maher warned.

"The collapse of Islamic State as a proto-state or governing body, will not signal its overall demise as a group. It will continue to linger as both an insurgency and terrorist movement. Defeating it in those terms is an altogether more complicated

and longer-term ambition which will still take many years."

"As the state project fails the global jihadist narrative will go into overdrive," Dr Andreas Krieg of King's College London's Department of Defense Studies said. "ISIS didn't originally have the al-Qaeda ambition of targeting the far away enemy. It was localized, forming alliances with local Sunni tribes against the common Shia enemy. But now they have moved in that direction, and if it means attacking the West they will do that."

Iraq itself remains markedly unstable. ISIS sleeper cells have already emerged to attack supposedly safe areas of Mosul – and as Dr Dylan O'Driscoll of Manchester University's Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute points out, Iraqi society has become increasingly militarized.

Christian and Yazidi armed units have emerged – and no group trusts another. "Another pressing issue is the recent call for a referendum for independence by the Kurds," Dr O'Driscoll said in an email.

"Every faction [is] linked to a militia of some kind. The competition between militias for the support of the population builds divides in a society that needs to come together to address the wider political and structural problems," he added.

While the fall of Mosul is an important victory against ISIS, the scars the group's rule and the bitter fighting has left on Iraq and its people will last for decades to come.

There is no coherent Syrian, Iraqi or Western strategy for defeating the group's potent ideology – just military force. Even if ISIS is completely vanquished, Dr Kreig said, Iraq is "fertile ground" for a new anti-government Islamist narrative to spring up.

"ISIS is not the root cause of Iraq's problems, it's a symptom of it," he said.

"The common denominator of an enemy in ISIS may be disappearing bit by bit, but the old grievances will remain, and because of that, we are likely to see Iraqi society splinter further."

(Source: Independent)

A senator takes charge in the Qatar mess

By Barin Kayaoglu

With Trump and Tillerson getting nowhere, Bob Corker puts Saudi Arabia on the spot.

Some three weeks after Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf Arab states cut off trade and diplomatic ties with Qatar, an American official finally seems to have a plan to resolve the standoff. Unsurprisingly, it is not someone from the Trump administration.

Senator Bob Corker of Tennessee intends to block all U.S. arms sales to Persian Gulf Cooperation Council nations until they end the dispute (and as chairman of Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he has the authority). This includes the \$110 billion in sales agreements announced during President Donald Trump's visit to Riyadh last month.

Foreign policy is ordinarily more under the purview of the executive than the legislative branch. But on this dispute, which harms both U.S. interests and regional stability, Trump and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson have been on different pages since the beginning -- with Trump tweeting firm support for the Saudis and Tillerson urging conciliation.

It's true that Qatar, seeking to punch above its weight in foreign affairs, has made some mistakes



Trump and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson have been on different pages since the beginning -- with Trump tweeting firm support for the Saudis and Tillerson urging conciliation.

Brazil's president could be saved by politicians also under suspicion

By Marina Lopes

On Monday, Brazil's president became the country's first sitting leader to be charged with corruption. Now the fate of his administration lies in the hands of Brazil's Congress — a body that is also enmeshed in the country's huge corruption scandal.

Brazil's chief prosecutor accused President Michel Temer of accepting millions of dollars in bribes from the world's largest meatpacking company, JBS. The company's executives testified to police that the president took money in exchange for facilitating tax breaks and loans from state banks.

The charges are the latest blow to the unpopular president, whose administration is hanging on by a thread after secret recordings emerged last month that appeared to show him endorsing bribery in a conversation with the meatpacking company's CEO. Prosecutors accuse Temer of orchestrating a \$11.5 billion

bribe scheme with JBS over the past nine months.

Brazil's lower house, packed with congressional members facing their own corruption probes, must now decide whether to green-light the president's trial before the Supreme Court. If they vote to send him to trial, Temer will be placed on a six-month leave, and the speaker of the house, Rodrigo Maia — himself under investigation — will take over as interim president.

"It's the corrupt judging the corrupt," said David Fleischer, an expert on Brazilian politics and professor at the University of Brasilia.

Temer rose to office in 2016 after his predecessor, Dilma Rousseff, was impeached. Before taking office, he vowed to crack down on corruption. He quickly fired key advisers and cabinet members suspected of graft. Despite pressure from his allies, he publicly supported Operation Car Wash, a sprawling corruption

probe that threatened his base in Congress. But less than a year into his term, Temer finds himself at the heart of the investigation and at the mercy of some of these very congressional members.

While Temer's allies say he can muster the 172 votes needed to block the trial from going forward, his base may crack as new accusations emerge. The chief prosecutor is expected to charge Temer with separate counts of obstruction of justice and organized crime activity in the coming weeks.

"If this drags out for four or five months, we may see a lot of new accusations. It will build up and add gasoline to the fire," Fleischer said.

By that point, the congressional members, who face elections next year, may bow to mounting public pressure to oust Temer. His approval ratings hover at 7 percent, a record low for a Brazilian president.

The president vehemently denied the charges as baseless in an impassioned

speech on Tuesday afternoon. "Just as we were putting the country back on track, we've become victims of these politically motivated lies," Temer said, surrounded by his remaining allies.

The corruption charges mark the second threat to his mandate this month. The president narrowly escaped conviction by one of the country's top courts after he was charged with accepting illegal donations during his 2014 campaign.

Even if he survives this round of scandals, however, the political gridlock has jeopardized Temer's ability to mediate between Brazil's 35 political parties and paralyzed the pension and labor reforms he has promised. As members of his own coalition call for him to step down, Temer may realize Brazil is ungovernable under his mandate.

"Michel Temer is pretending to govern the country," said Renan Calheiros, leader of Temer's Democratic Movement Party. "Where is he taking us?"

(Source: The Washington Post)

By Jim Lobe

The Washington elite is waking up to the increasingly real possibility that the Trump administration may be moving the country into yet another Middle East war. And much more quickly than anyone had anticipated. And through sheer incompetence and incoherence rather than by design.

At the moment, attention is focused on the situation in eastern Syrian, the details of which are spelled out well in a growing number of accounts such as Mohamad Bazzi's piece in the Atlantic as well as a recent action alert by the National Iranian American Council. In addition, the New Republic's Jeet Heer posted an excellent piece that quotes former key Obama policymakers (Colin Kahl and Ilan Goldenberg), as well as Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT), who have been well ahead of other national-security analysts in warning about the gathering storm clouds.

Eastern Syria is indeed the focus of the moment, particularly since a U.S. fighter jet shot down a Syrian warplane in Syrian territory and Iran launched a mid-range missile attack on an Islamic State (ISIS or IS) target. Russia subsequently warned that it will target U.S.-led coalition aircraft flying in Syrian territory west of the Euphrates. Then, on June 20, an Iranian-made drone was shot down close to the border with Iraq and Jordan where the various rival proxy forces are all converging to fill the vacuum in anticipation of the IS collapse.

No doubt the Pentagon is gaming out the various scenarios in which a wider war could soon break out, but it certainly sees Iran and its allies in the area as the main post-ISIS threat to Washington's interests in and around Syria. See, for example, this little memo published recently by a senior policy adviser to the U.S. Central Command and, remarkably, a visiting fellow at the staunchly pro-Israel Washington Institute for Near East Policy (hat tip to Barbara Slavin). Or this helpful new contribution by WINEP's long-time counselor and "Israel's lawyer," Dennis Ross.

Although the fireworks in eastern Syrian have rightfully captured our immediate concern, they shouldn't distract too much from the highly volatile situation in the Persian Gulf following both the stunning ISIS terrorist attack in Tehran on June 7 — which senior Iranian officials blamed on Saudi Arabia — and the weeks-old crisis in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) between Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain on the one hand and Qatar (backed by Turkey and Iran) on the other. Although Tehran justified its unprecedented missile strike by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary

Guard Corps (IRGC) in eastern Syria as retaliation for the terrorist attacks, it was also widely interpreted as a shot across the bow of the most anti-Iranian GCC states to remind them of their own vulnerability if war breaks out either in the Gulf or elsewhere.

In this context, the recent announcement by Riyadh that its navy had seized an explosives-laden boat and three members of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) allegedly planning to blow up a Saudi offshore oil drilling rig does not bode well. According to The New York Times, the incident occurred when Iran's state media reported that Saudi border guards fired on boats belonging to "simple fishermen," killing one of the occupants. The Saudis reported some details of the incident over that weekend, but only on the following Monday did it come out with its new and far more sensational account.

That incident may of course be relegated to less than a footnote in the region's history. But it nonetheless suggests that things are not moving in a favorable direction and that whatever behind-the-scenes attempts at defusing tensions — whether between Saudi Arabia and Iran or, for that matter, Qatar — are not bearing much fruit. Of course, charges by Bahrain and the Saudis that Iran is constantly shipping weapons and terrorists to Yemen and other Gulf Arab destinations are nothing new. But, in the current atmosphere, the risks of an incident escalating out of control seem higher than ever.

Moreover — and this is the main point — the possibilities for catastrophic miscalculation are skyrocketing. It's not just the proximity of rival armed forces in both eastern Syria and the Gulf. It's also the lack of direct communication among key parties and the lack of clarity as to their actual policies.

That applies in spades to what passes for the Trump "administration."

■ The blockade

Take, for example, the Saudi-led blockade of Qatar, which came just two weeks after the president's visit to Riyadh — and which Trump not only applauded but initially appeared to claim credit for in his tweets.

Clearly, the Saudis, the Emiratis, and the Bahrainis had come to believe that Trump — even if he had not explicitly greenlighted such a drastic action during or after Riyadh summit — would support them against Doha. How shocked they must have been when the Pentagon and the State Department immediately voiced their reservations (not to say, their opposition)!

Almost as shocked as Secretaries Mattis and Tillerson and National Security Adviser McMaster must have been when they first heard about Trump's tweets. Here's what the State Department spokesperson — to the extent you believe she speaks for the "administration" — said about Riyadh's and Abu Dhabi's action:

Now that it has been more than two weeks since the embargo started, we are mystified that the Gulf States have not



Some White House officials reportedly favor "regime change" via covert action, and it was just a few days before the ISIS attack in Iran that it was disclosed that the CIA had picked Michael D'Andrea (aka The Dark Prince or Ayatollah Mike), a particularly aggressive covert operator, to run the agency's Iran program.

released to the public, nor to the Qataris, the details about the claims that they are making toward Qatar. The more that time goes by the more doubt is raised about the actions taken by Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

At this point we are left with one simple question: Were the actions really about their concerns regarding Qatar's alleged support for terrorism or were they about the long, simmering grievances between and among the GCC countries?

Assuming the State Department really speaks for the US government, this rather stunning statement begs a host of rather critical questions. How exactly did the Saudis and their allies come to think that Washington would support them? Who exactly gave them that impression and under what circumstances? Or are Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) and UAE Crown Prince (and apparent MbS mentor) Mohammed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan (MbZ) so deluded or hubristic that they just assumed that Washington, including the Pentagon, was on board with this?

And, if so, how prone to miscalculation are they in this moment of sky-high

regional tensions?

After all, MbS has risen in influence in Saudi Arabia largely because of his pet foreign policy project, the war in Yemen, which, according to the latest reports, hasn't been going particularly well (unless his original idea was to completely destroy the Arab world's poorest country). He now finds himself in a very difficult spot.

Moreover, the Saudi king just elevated the hyper-ambitious MbS to crown prince overnight, placing him next in line in the royal succession. Like Trump, the 31-year-old is falling upward more through sheer audacity than palpable successes. Unless in his new exalted position he can somehow still impose his will on Qatar — an increasingly doubtful prospect in the absence of U.S. and Western diplomatic support — MbS looks ever more like a two-time loser (in Trumpspeak), and an extremely reckless one at that. And that perception makes him even more dangerous under the circumstances.

■ Meanwhile in Iran

How is all this perceived in Tehran, where various competing factions may also be prone to miscalculation? What

do they think U.S. policy is?

They know the Trump "administration" is united in its conviction that the Islamic Republic is irredeemably hostile to the U.S., but they also know there are degrees of difference among senior officials. Some White House officials reportedly favor "regime change" via covert action, and it was just a few days before the ISIS attack in Iran that it was disclosed that the CIA had picked Michael D'Andrea (aka The Dark Prince or Ayatollah Mike), a particularly aggressive covert operator, to run the agency's Iran program.

Tehran was also deeply offended by Trump's shocking reaction to the June 7 terrorist attack and further taken aback by Tillerson's statement of support for a "peaceful transition" of government in Iran one week later. These statements no doubt served to strengthen hardliners in Tehran who already believe the worst about U.S. intentions as well as those of its regional allies.

At the same time, Tehran knows that top officials — notably Mattis (who appears to have been granted virtually unprecedented discretion in military decision-making) and McMaster — are keenly aware of the risks of getting dragged into a war with Iran (or becoming bogged down in Syria) even as they believe Washington should "push back" against Tehran's "malign" behavior in the region.

And then there's the commander-in-chief's own impulsiveness, ignorance, and macho pose. At a moment of crisis a half a world away, Trump may actually welcome some serious fireworks as a useful diversion from his deepening political and legal problems at home. After all, those missiles strikes in Syria back in April gave him something of a reprieve, at least for a few days.

Given the latest head-spinning twist in Washington's reaction to the KSA/UAE-led Qatar quarantine, it seems quite reasonable to ask how key Iranian policymakers will know who's running policy in the White House when it's faced with an incident that escalates quickly, and the Saudis, Emiratis, and Sheldon Adelson are on the phone insisting that Trump's manhood is on the line? The likelihood of miscalculation by one or more of the major players is virtually certain.

It's a very scary — but increasingly imaginable — prospect. (Source: Lobelog)

Are there any limits to U.S. hypocrisy?

By Anna Jaunger

Having ordered to attack the al-Shayrat air field near the western Syrian city of Homs, U.S. President Donald Trump knew that the Syrian government hadn't used any chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun. At the same time the current U.S. administration was making every effort to develop an information campaign against Damascus.

This was reported by Die Welt am Sonntag, a German Sunday newspaper. US investigative journalist and political writer Seymour Hersh stressed that, actually, Syrian Air Force had targeted a two-story building, where extremists from various terrorist groups held meetings. According to Hersh, a bomb, dropped by the Syrian aircraft in Khan Shaykhun, caused a number of detonations. The explosion led to the formation of a cloud of noxious vapour. Washington was knowledgeable about that.

The attack became an ideal occasion for the U.S. further accusations against Damascus. After a short time, the world media started to spread staged footages and photos from Khan Shaykhun. Those materials showed injured people, who were allegedly dying in a suspected sarin chemical attack.

Permanent representatives of a number of Western countries to the UN also made every effort to put all responsibility for the incident on the Syrian government, headed by President Bashar Assad. Thus, Nikki R. Haley, the United States ambassador to the United Nations, at a Security Council meeting even showed photos, allegedly proving the 'crimes' of the Syrian authorities against Syrians.

In addition, the U.S., France, Britain proposed the UN SC several draft resolutions on Syria gas attack. The documents were aimed to provide an international investigation with flight plans and logs, the names of all helicopter squadron commanders and provide access to air bases where investigators believe attacks using chemicals were launched.

It also should be mentioned that despite Syria's readiness to cooperate with the specialists from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), an official investigation into the incident in Khan Shaykhun has not been launched yet. Moreover, Western countries continue to expand sanc-

tions against Syria to escalate the economic situation in the country and drag it into an endless war.


Seymour Hersh, referring to information received from a senior adviser in the U.S. intelligence services, reported that Washington had no evidence of the Syrian Army used sarin gas. The CIA also informed the White House about no poisonous substances were found in the al-Shayrat air field, and Assad had no reason to commit political suicide.

According to many Syrian experts, it is possible that the world will soon become aware of the United States' participation in other major scandals and incidents in Syria.


Seymour Hersh, referring to information received from a senior adviser in the U.S. intelligence services, reported that Washington had no evidence of the Syrian Army used sarin gas.



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President Trump, melting under criticism

Maybe we should all take a moment to feel a little sorry for Donald Trump, who reacted to criticism on Thursday by tweeting a stream of coarse insults at the television journalist Mika Brzezinski.

After all, he so clearly lacks the toughness of George Washington, who once privately observed that his critics "arrows ... never can reach the most vulnerable part of me." He lacks the confidence of Dwight Eisenhower, who said, when asked if he thought his press coverage was fair, "Well, when you come down to it, I don't see what a reporter could do much to a president, do you?"

And — are we really about to write this sentence? — Mr. Trump lacks the grace Richard Nixon showed, at least in public.

At the height of Watergate in late 1973, Mr. Nixon blurted at a news conference, "I have never heard or seen such outrageous, vicious, distorted reporting in 27 years of public life." Yet he added, "I am not blaming anybody for that. Perhaps what happened is that what we did brought it about."

■ Trump not taking the heat

Mr. Trump may be a more tender soul, or less resilient. In any case, he can't seem to take the heat.

Probably no one in the world draws as much scrutiny and criticism — even mockery — as an American president,



and each president understandably chafes.

For Mr. Trump, every barb seems to hit home, and he vengefully attacks his tormentors in full view of the world.

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He does not appear to realize that he is embarrassing himself. This is what both Republicans and Democrats have been trying to tell Mr. Trump since his tweeted attacks on the MSNBC co-hosts Joe Scarborough and Ms. Brzezinski.

"People may say things during a campaign, but it's different when you become a public servant," Senator Susan Collins, Republican of Maine, told The Times. "I see it as embarrassing to our country." Senator James Lankford, Republican of Oklahoma, said Mr. Trump's tweets "do not provide a positive role model."

Add to the nastiness of the attack its creepy misogyny. Here again was Mr. Trump, whose casual boasting of sexual assault nearly upended his candidacy, denigrating women.

■ Empowering women

"This is not okay," Representative Lynn Jenkins, Republican of Kansas, said on Twitter. "As a female in politics I am often criticized for my looks. We should be working to em-

power women."

Mr. Trump's advocates are trying, implausibly, to present his online demonstrations of self-pity as feats of macho toughness. The spokeswoman for Melania Trump (who has named anti-cyberbullying as a potential advocacy project) said the tweets showed that "when her husband gets attacked, he will punch back 10 times harder."

Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the deputy White House press secretary, said Mr. Trump was "fighting fire with fire."

Mr. Trump's behavior sabotaged a day that included critical talks on the Senate health care bill, a speech on energy policy and the arrival of South Korean President Moon Jae-in for talks on the North Korean nuclear threat.

The big question for all of us is whether with his foot-stamping and his vulgarity Mr. Trump, in defiance of all his predecessors, is creating a new model for future presidential behavior.

Can the etiquette of professional wrestling and reality television truly pass as acceptable for the Oval Office? The breadth and depth of bipartisan repugnance for this president's insults suggests, thankfully, that the answer may prove to be no.

(Source: The NYT)

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Benefits of using coffee grounds for your skin and face

Is coffee good for acne, oily skin, or anti-aging?

By Angela Palmer

Most of us wouldn't dream of starting our day without a hot cup of coffee. But the benefits of coffee may go beyond just your morning pick-me-up. It may have surprising benefits for your skin.

But coffee isn't a do-all miracle ingredient, either. Let's take a look at what the science says and what coffee can, and can't, do for your skin.

■ Coffee contains antioxidants and helps fight aging

Antioxidants help protect your skin from free radical damage, and coffee just happens to be packed with antioxidants.

This is good news for your skin, as antioxidants fight aging.

Some studies have shown that coffee (specifically coffee oil) has similar effects on the skin as the anti-aging skin care ingredient hyaluronic acid. Coffee seed oil increases collagen and elastin, making the skin look and feel firmer.

Coffee can also help keep the skin hydrated by reducing trans epidermal water loss, (a fancy way of saying moisture that evaporates from the skin).

And these qualities aren't just coming from the roasted bean. Extracts made from coffee silverskin (a solid by-product of roasting coffee beans) were shown to have antifungal and antimicrobial qualities, in addition to being a good source of antioxidants.

■ Coffee may protect your skin from UV rays

OK, so you probably don't have a supply of coffee silverskin just sitting in your kitchen. But I bet you have coffee grounds left over from your morning pot. Spent coffee grounds also have skin care benefits.

Several studies have shown spent coffee ground extract helps protect the skin against damage from UV-B rays. So, when included in skin care preparations, coffee extract may help protect your skin against wrinkle formation and sun damage.

Interestingly, drinking coffee may also help protect the skin from the sun.

Coffee-drinkers are less likely to develop skin cancer, especially melanoma.

This isn't a substitute for sunscreen, though. You'll still need to use sunscreen to protect yourself from sunburn and the aging effects of the sun. This is especially true if you're using medications that cause sun sensitivity.

■ Your spent coffee grounds do have some skin care benefits

Will the coffee grounds left over from your morning cup of java give you the same results as coffee extract? Probably not. Coffee extract is much more potent than what's left



behind in your filter.

But those spent grounds can be used in DIY treatments and can have benefits for your skin. Obviously, the grounds can be incorporated into handmade scrubs to help smooth and soften the skin naturally. It's especially good for rough, dry places like elbows, knees, and feet.

The caffeine in coffee grounds can also improve the look of the skin, albeit temporarily. Caffeine constricts the skin, making it look firmer and tighter (again, temporary). This tightening effect can help fight puffy eyes, and can make cellulite look less obvious in the short-term.

■ Coffee scrubs won't clear up acne and may actually hurt your skin

Hang on, coffee lovers. It may seem amazing and leave your skin super soft, but—contrary to what a plethora of online videos say—coffee is definitely not going to clear up your acne.

Scrubs, even all-natural ones, won't clear acne themselves. You see, while scrubs can remove the surface layer of dead skin, they don't penetrate the pore. And it's inside the pore where acne blemishes start.

Acne isn't caused by oil or dirt on the skin's surface. Instead, it's a blockage deeper inside the pore (technically called the pilosebaceous unit). This—along with a proliferation of acne-causing bacteria—and inflammation causes those pimples we all know and hate.

Scrubbing, no matter how often, won't eliminate those factors that

cause acne. What's more, a coffee grounds scrub can be quite aggressive and can irritate those already inflamed breakouts.

Truly, the best choice for clearing acne are proven over-the-counter products (if your breakouts are mild) or prescription topical acne treatments or oral medications (for moderate to severe acne). They may not be DIY or trendy, but they work, and you'll be happier with the end results.

■ Try these DIY skin care treatments with your spent coffee grounds

For a fast and fun DIY treatment to smooth and soften your skin, don't toss those spent coffee grounds. Whip up some of these recipes instead.

Be careful if you have sensitive skin, though. Coffee grounds can be fairly harsh on delicate skin, so you may want to skip the DIY coffee ground scrub if your skin is sensitive.

And, no matter your skin type, don't scrub too aggressively with the coffee treatment. You definitely don't want to irritate your skin. Redness, stinging, and sensitivity are all signs that you're overdoing the scrub.

These treatments should be made fresh each time, and discard any leftovers. It probably goes without saying, but make sure your grounds are cool enough to handle so you don't burn yourself.

■ Exfoliating facial mask

Mix 1/4 teaspoon spent coffee grounds (finely ground) with 1 tablespoon of another breakfast staple, yogurt. The yogurt flavor isn't

particularly important, but plain or vanilla works especially nice with the natural coffee scent.

Gently massage over your face and neck and let set five minutes. Rinse well with warm water to reveal bright, soft skin. Use it no more than once or twice per week.

■ **Coffee and sugar body polish**
Mix 1/2 cup granulated sugar (white or brown), 2 tablespoons spent coffee grounds, and 1/4 cup sweet almond oil.

In the shower, massage over your entire body. Pay attention to those rough and dry areas like elbows and knees. Rinse well. Doesn't your skin feel silky smooth?

The oils in this recipe can make your shower floor or tub slippery, so please take care.

■ **Exfoliating foot scrub**
Feet need a little extra TLC, and can handle a more aggressive scrubbing than other areas of the body. Try mixing 1/4 cup each of spent coffee grounds, Dead Sea salt or Epsom salts and olive oil. Use this as a scrub to give your feet a nice treat.

■ **Lip smoother**
Dry lips? Mix a small amount of spent coffee grounds with a dab coconut oil. Massage the mixture lightly over the lips and remove with a damp washcloth.

■ **Reduce puffy eyes**
A teaspoon of spent grounds in a dampened paper towel and laid over the eyes for 20 minutes or so will help reduce puffiness.

(Source: [verywell.com](#))

Science backs up these pregnancy superstitions

By Cari Romm

Most of the folk wisdom that well-meaning older relatives offer up to expectant mothers can be easily ignored: Carrying the baby lower in the abdomen isn't a sign that it's a boy, or a girl, or anything other than an indication your abdominal muscles have loosened up a bit.

Your cravings won't manifest themselves as birthmarks on the kid's skin. Long walks won't induce labor.

And no, the full moon has nothing to do with the timing of the birth.

But in recent years, a handful of studies have found that some of the most outlandish old ideas concerning babies and pregnancy may have some scientific merit after all.

Here are a few that superstitious grandmothers everywhere can put in the win column.

■ A long, difficult labor means the baby's a boy

Researchers aren't quite sure why this one's true, but nonetheless: In 2003, a team of doctors analyzed more than 8,000 births at a single hospital in Ireland between 1997 and 2000, excluding women who delivered prematurely or needed to induce labor. When they crunched all the numbers, the difference between the sexes was small but noticeable.

On average, labor for boy births lasted a little over six hours, while girl births took a little under six. Women delivering boys were also more likely to run into complications during delivery, requiring C-sections 6 percent of the time (compared to 4 percent for girls) and forceps in 8 percent of cases (as opposed to 6 percent).

Overall, 29 percent of boy deliveries ended up requiring some sort of extra intervention; for girls, it was 24 percent.

You really can get pregnant a second time while pregnant

One possible reason for the discrepancy: Boys, on average, weigh three and a half ounces more at birth than girls do. And a small 2003 study found that women carrying boys also consume more calories during pregnancy, suggesting that male babies are a little more demanding even before delivery starts.

■ **To have a girl, stay away from bananas**
It's not just that women carrying boys will eat more; eating more in the lead-up to pregnancy may also make it more likely that the baby is a boy.

In 2008, a study published in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society Basked 740 women who were pregnant for the first time to describe their diets over the year before they conceived, then divided them into three groups based on calorie intake.

The women in the top third of the study, calorie-wise, had boys 56 percent of the time; among the third that consumed the fewest calories, 55 percent had girls.

Here's where the old line about bananas -- that eating them before conception will up your chances of having a boy -- comes in. The study authors found that sheer calorie intake wasn't the only thing that made a difference; specific nutrients did, too.

Eating plenty of potassium (which bananas are chock-full of) was linked to boys, as were diets high in calcium and sodium.

Though as the Guardian noted, overhauling your diet to influence the sex of a future kid can be a risky move, health-wise, spurring people to overload on some nutrients and to ignore others -- a safer idea may be to focus on eating healthily in general, and leaving the rest up to chance.

■ Heartburn is a harbinger of a hairy baby

Here's a horrifying fact about babies: Sometime in the second trimester of pregnancy, they develop a coat of fine hair all over their bodies, called lanugo -- and sometime in the third trimester, they shed it and eat it. A baby's first poop, in fact, is the digested remains of their own body hair.

The hair on their heads, though, is another story. While all babies have lanugo in the womb, not all babies are born with anything up top -- and mothers looking to know ahead of time whether their kid will be fuzzy-headed or bald may be able to use their own heartburn as a clue.

In 2006, for a study in the journal Birth, a team of researchers from Johns Hopkins University followed 64 women throughout their pregnancies, 28 of whom reported moderate or severe heartburn.

Within that group, 23 women ended up having babies of average or above-average hairiness. On the opposite end of the spectrum, of the 12 women who reported no heartburn at all, ten of them gave birth to kids who were less hairy than the average newborn.

But here's a perfect example of correlation not equaling causation. The heartburn wasn't a result of the hair, or vice versa. Rather, the study authors argued, both were caused by a third factor: pregnancy hormones.

Specifically, the same hormones that contribute to hair growth in the womb have also been shown to relax the muscles that keep stomach acid contained in the stomach.

So you can technically blame the baby for that fiery pain in your chest, but the link isn't quite as direct as the old wives' tale implies.

(Source: CNN)



5 surprising things that will give your relationship staying power

By Susie Moore

"Actually, I'm divorced". That felt like a terribly wrong thing for me to say a few years ago as a 20-something divorcee. Especially if the conversation was with an attractive male who was presumably (hopefully!) interested in me.

And even though I was young when I got divorced, I felt like having a relationship fall apart made me strangely wise about what makes one work. If you speak to any of my fellow divorcees, they will often nod in agreement, grateful in unlikely ways for what their unsuccessful marriages taught them. The secret to lasting relationship success is not about big gestures and theatrical drama. It's the subtle thoughts and actions that could go unnoticed on the daily.

So after losing money, face, and, most importantly, my romantic naïveté in my younger years, I've come to observe what tends to hold a relationship together over time.

■ Here are five habits people in long-lasting partnerships often have:

1. **They offer unwavering support.**
Job loss. A death in the family. Illness. It's a matter of time before life serves you one of these challenges. Will your spouse be there for you no matter what—and vice versa? If it's even a question, that's something you might want to think about. Support is the foundation of every great relationship.
2. **They're generous.**
Sounds simple, right? That's because it should be. Do you go out of your way to make your partner's life a little bit easier? Do you think of ways to make him or her laugh? Do you help find the car keys even



Successful relationships are centered around kindness, friendship, and consideration. Simple stuff.

when you're both running late? Do you surprise your S.O. with a small gift, a note, or an unexpected act during the day? These things are important, especially over time, to make your person feel desired and appreciated. Generosity in any form is almost always received as love. Are you giving enough?

3. **They know their love language.**
According to the best-selling author of The Five Love Languages, Gary Chapman, we all communicate love through five key ways: physical touch, words of affirmation, acts of service, quality time, and/or gifts. Knowing your own love language—and your partner's—helps you communicate your affection in

best ways for your relationship. Unsure of yours?

4. **They're present (even when they're tired).**
Nicole Moore, relationship coach and founder of the Love Works Method, says, "The more present you are, the more attractive you are." So listen. Pay attention. Be grounded. These are important factors in showing your love and respect for your partner. Moore says she always stops what's she's doing and turns her attention to her husband when he arrives home. Put simply, it's "being loving" that counts most. And your presence is your power.

5. **They keep the dating vibe alive.**
Tony Robbins says, "Do what you did in the beginning of a relationship, and there won't be an end." What can you do to keep your relationship fresh? Can you go away for a weekend? Can you have a date night out (or in)? Can you go for a walk without your cell phones and really connect? Can you go see a funny movie together?

Lasting relationships do not revolve around red roses, grand gestures, or even a lack of disagreements. They involve being realistic and showing up emotionally (even when you don't feel like it). Successful relationships are centered around kindness, friendship, and consideration. Simple stuff.

The other night I tried Moore's tip and warmly welcomed my husband when he arrived home (in the form of a playful pounce). He was surprised and happy. He said later, "That was nice before, ya know, me coming home to that big hug. You can do that again."

And that was all it took: a big hug. It's the little things.

(source: [greatist.com](#))

Iran pursues World Heritage listing for Meybod

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — The Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization is following up on possible inscription of the central city of Meybod, Yazd province, and its cultural landscape on the UNESCO World Heritage list by 2020.



A view of Meybod's traditional Kalar cistern, the adobe water reservoir is surmounted by several wind towers.

"We are going to compile a dossier on the historical city in the near future for [potential] UNESCO inscription in 2020," said Fatemeh Danesh-Yazdi who presides over the provincial CHTHO department.

Situated some 50km north of Yazd, the capital of the province, Meybod is a sprawling mud-brick town that with hundreds of years of history. It is home to some historical mosques, caravanserais, mansions, with the pre-Islamic Narin Castle amongst one of the most celebrated.

Iran expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous natural beauties and historical sites, including 21 ones that have been inscribed on the UNESCO list.

Cuba expects tourism growth despite Trump's crackdown on U.S travel

Cuba earned more than \$3 billion from tourism in 2016 and expects to better that this year despite President Donald Trump's tightening of restrictions on U.S. travel to the Caribbean island, a government official said on Wednesday.

"In 2016, revenue reached more than \$3 billion in all activity linked to tourism in the country," Jose Alonso, the Tourism Ministry's business director, told state-run media.

"We think that, given the growth the country is seeing at the moment, we will beat that figure this year," Alonso said.

Tourism revenue totaled \$2.6 billion in 2015. The number of foreign visitors to Cuba was up 22 percent in the first half of 2017 compared with the same period last year, according to Alonso, who said that put it on track to reach its target for a record 4.2 million visits this year.

Tourism has been one of the few bright spots recently in Cuba's economy, as it struggles with a decline in exports and subsidized oil shipments from its key ally Venezuela.

A surge in American visitors has helped boost the sector since the 2014 U.S.-Cuban detente under the Obama administration and its easing of U.S. travel restrictions, even as a long-time ban on tourism remained in effect. (Source: Reuters)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Garrison Border Town of Elvas and its fortifications

Guarding the key border crossing between Portugal's capital Lisbon and Spain's capital Madrid, in an undulating, riverine landscape, the Garrison Town of Elvas was fortified extensively from the 17th to the 19th centuries to become the largest bulwarked dry ditch system in the world, with outlying forts built on surrounding hills to accommodate the changing needs of defensive warfare.



The historic center with its castle, remnant walls and civil and religious buildings demonstrate the development of Elvas as three successive walled towns from the 10th to the 14th century and its subsequent incorporation into the major fortification works of the Portuguese War of the Restoration period (1641-68), when a wide range of military buildings were built for its role as a garrison town.

These surviving fortifications were begun in 1643 and comprise twelve forts inserted in an irregular polygon, roughly centered on the castle and making use of a landscape of hills.

In the 18th century the Fort of Graca was constructed in response to the development of longer-range artillery, as well as four fortlets to the west.

As the remains of an enormous war fortress, Elvas is exceptional as a military landscape with visual and functional relationships between its fortifications, representing developments in military architecture and technology drawn from Dutch, Italian, French and English military theory and practice. Elvas is an outstanding demonstration of Portugal's desire for land and autonomy, and the universal aspirations of European nation States in the 16th-17th centuries. (Source: UNESCO)

Explore fascinating wonders of Iran with The Telegraph tours

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — The Telegraph in close collaboration with Wild Frontiers is set to embark on all-inclusive package tours to Iran in 2018 in a manner that offers sightseers a deeper soaking up into the history and culture of the ancient land.

Wild Frontiers, the Telegraph's partner for these special trips, is brilliantly placed to give guests the most exclusive experiences in the country, having organized trips to Iran for many years.

To make the excursion more enriched, Richard Dalton, a former British ambassador to Iran, is also scheduled to share his exclusive experiences with the explorers before they take a flight to Tehran. Dalton still continues to write and broadcast on issues affecting Iran and the Persian Gulf. He is President of the British-Iranian Chamber of Commerce.

Tehran, Abyaneh, Yazd, Shiraz, Persepolis, and Isfahan make up main destinations on the itinerary that is designed for 13 days 12 nights.

According to the Telegraph, they would be such special tours that only experts with the Wild Frontiers know how to set up, from private access to the National Museum of Art to poetry readings in Shiraz.

"One of the world's most enigmatic and beguiling countries, Iran long seemed tantalizingly beyond reach of outsiders. That has changed in recent years. Since 2015, it has opened its doors in a way unseen since the 1970s, allowing more Britons to see its spectacular cultural and historical sights," the British daily reported.

One of Iran's oldest cities, Isfahan served as Persia's capital from 1598 to 1722. Once known as "half the world," it was a crossroads of international trade and diplomacy. The



A file photo shows people visiting the three-story Amir Chakhmaq Complex in Yazd, central Iran.

journey will include a private tour of the city's most striking buildings – which include some of the region's finest Islamic architecture – and tea houses, and a demonstration of the art of miniature painting.

Spend time in sophisticated Shiraz, exploring its mirrored mosques, fortresses, gardens and tea-houses. Celebrated as the heartland of Persian culture, Shiraz was the Iranian capital during the Zand dynasty in the 18th century. The tour includes a poetry reading taken from the works of Hafez, Iran's

most famous poet.

Persepolis, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, embodies the architectural legacy of the ancient First Persian Empire, with its monumental staircases, immense columns and imposing gateways. Travelers will have a whole day to explore the site as well as the magnificent Achaemenid tombs, carved in a rock face at Nagsh-e Rostam.

Following a landmark nuclear deal Tehran and world powers clinched in 2015, Iran is repeatedly named as a hot travel destination

by a circle of international media outlets in terms of its rich history, picturesque sceneries, traditions, cuisine and hospitable people.

Such array of encouraging accounts help to amend the global image of the country, which had been partly tarnished by some Western media over the past decades.

Iran has launched extensive plans to bolster its tourism sector. Under its 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, the country is expecting to increase the number of tourism arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

Airlines face new security rules in summer scramble

New directives from the Department of Homeland Security require airlines that fly to the United States to step up screening of passengers for trace amounts of explosives and, in some cases, impose more stringent security checks.

The department, in announcing the directives on Wednesday, laid out generally what the measures would do. But the additional details were disclosed in an airline industry memo obtained by The New York Times.

Aviation specialists and industry officials predicted that the new mandates would add to the challenges of airports and airlines, particularly smaller ones, during the busy summer travel season. The directives said the airports must have the explosive detection devices in place in 21 days and conduct the tougher security checks by the fall.

"I don't expect everything to go smoothly because it never does," said Ben Baldanza, the former chief executive of Spirit Airlines. "But I do expect the new directives to be implemented, and implemented well."

To comply with the new rules, some airlines and airports will need to buy explosive-detection equipment, hire more staff and spend time training employees. Besides the added costs, the challenge is putting the technolo-

gy and workers in place at hundreds of airports across the globe.

In the short term, the aviation specialists said, passengers may run into additional delays as they go through security. And as the airlines and airports absorb the higher costs of complying with the new rules, the industry officials said, ticket prices could increase.

The rules require that 280 airports that are the last point of departure for flights to the United States have explosive-detection technology, such as devices that can detect bomb residue on passengers' hands, in place within weeks, according to a memo the International Air Transport Association sent to airlines on Wednesday. A spokesman for the association declined to comment.

Foreign airlines operating flights to the United States must, within months, show that they are carrying out certain security measures, including interviewing passengers as part of the security check, the memo obtained by The Times said. Overseas airlines must bring their security procedures in line with the standards for American airlines, the memo said.

Some of the largest American airlines expressed fear that the changes could complicate their operations in the next few months.

(Source: The New York Times)

'Final warning': Liverpool's UNESCO status at risk over docks scheme



The ferry terminal in front of the Three Graces – the centerpiece of the UNESCO site.

"This is the final warning shot," says Henrietta Billings, director of the campaign group Save Britain's Heritage.

She's talking about Liverpool and the oversized buildings that are threatening to do a lot more damage to the city than just clog up its waterfront. "Losing world heritage status because of crass planning decisions would be an international embarrassment, as well as a hugely costly mistake."

Billings wants the city planners of Liverpool to heed the warnings of UNESCO, the international organization that has threatened to scrub the city from its coveted list of world heritage sites unless it reconsiders the regeneration plans for its historic docks. In its strongest warning to date, the watchdog has announced that

this could happen as early as 2018. If the site is struck off, it will only be the second such deletion in UNESCO's history.

The principal "crass planning decision" that Billings identified can be found rendered in glistening perspex in a marketing suite overlooking the historic Prince's Dock, a stone's throw from the Three Graces, the trio of buildings forming the centerpiece of the UNESCO site.

Resembling a row of gaudy crystal ornaments, the model shows the 9,000 flats, offices and shops of Liverpool Waters, a £5.5bn regeneration scheme to transform 60 hectares of redundant docklands into a "world-class destination". Sails and spires, arches and cones all try to outdo each other.

(Source: The Guardian)

The right way to pack for travel

Checked baggage fees, tight airline bins and long waits at the luggage carousel are just a few reasons it pays to pack light.

If your flight is canceled or delayed, having your bag in hand can be the difference between getting on with your travels or being stuck at the airport. And who hasn't brought multiple outfits and three extra pairs of shoes along only to spend most of your vacation in a bathing suit and flip-flops?

Whether you're going on a three-day business trip or preparing for a two-month outdoor adventure, here are some guidelines for maximizing suitcase space, minimizing your load and cutting down on wrinkles.

Invest in a compact carry-on. The bigger your suitcase, the more you will put into it. The simplest way to limit your pack-rat habit is to buy a hard-sided suitcase no taller than 22 inches, with a structured shell, so you can't squeeze in any extras. While there is no universal carry-on bag size, many domestic airlines, including American, Delta and United, restrict bags to 22 inches tall, 14 inches wide and 9 inches deep. The size is often even smaller for international flights.

Do the clothing countdown. If you need a mantra to help streamline your wardrobe, use the "5, 4, 3, 2, 1" rule for a weeklong trip, limiting yourself to no more than five sets of socks and underwear, four tops, three bottoms, two pairs of shoes and one hat. The list can be modified



to suit your needs, with a swimsuit and exercise gear or a suit jacket and dress thrown in, depending on the trip.

Many road warriors recommend rolling your clothes in order to maximize space and minimize wrinkles. Some like packing cubes to keep their outfits ordered. Others prefer the more exacting bundle technique, which involves carefully wrapping each article of clothing around a central core, with underwear and T-shirts at the center and large, tailored items like blazers and dresses as the outermost layer. Whatever your method, the goal should be to fill every inch of space.

For example, footwear should be stuffed with socks and packed heel to toe at the bottom of the bag and enclosed (a plastic shopping bag will do) to protect your

clothes from dirt. Rolled-up T-shirts, shorts and jeans make for a good base for stiffer garments like blazers and dress shirts, which can be bundled or folded on top.

Keep liquids in easy reach. "Toiletries should always be placed on top in a clear bag since you never know when T.S.A. might be interested in looking," said Matthew Klint, a frequent flier and the award expert at Live and Let's Fly. "In some airports, like any in the U.K., toiletries will be inevitably closely scrutinized. Thus, it is vital to keep them easily reachable and easily separated from your other items."

Got kids? The more gear you can leave behind, the better. Cribs, car seats and other baby gear are often provided at hotels or available for rent. Any extra cash you may spend will be offset by what you save in checked bag fees and hassle. You can buy extra formula, suntan lotion and Cheerios when you arrive. Diapers are one exception; you'll want more, not less, on hand when your flight is delayed.

Another must-have on board: a change of clothes for the child and yourself. That way you'll have options when she spills juice all over you. To reduce your load while keeping the kids entertained, load up your phone or tablet with movies and games. And for toddlers who are too young to sit through an in-flight movie and too old to nap in your lap, Play-Doh is a godsend.

(Source: The New York Times)

World's sharpest laser created

The sharpest laser in the world has been created by scientists, with the light it emits able to travel 2 billion miles before it goes out of sync.

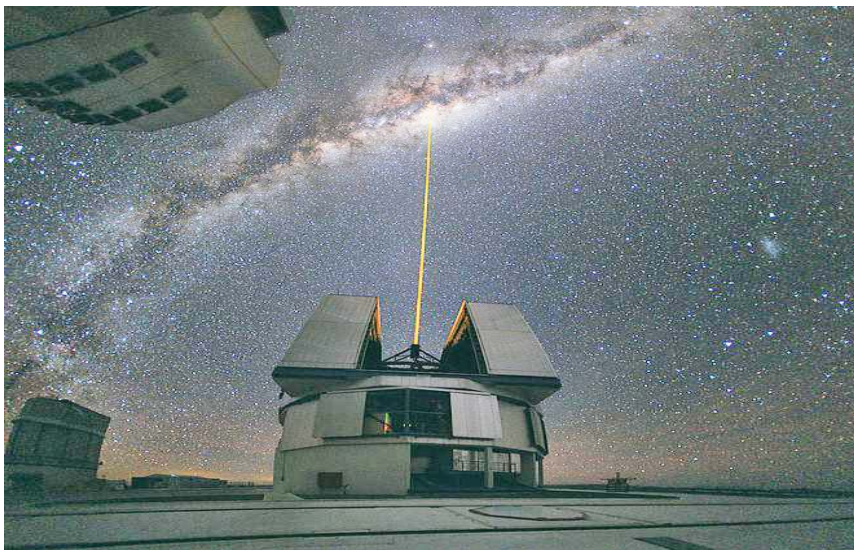
This breakthrough has widespread applications, and it could be used for high-precision experiments to make atomic clocks more accurate, to collect better radio astronomy data and to test Einstein's theory of relativity.

The first laser was built in 1960. Since then they have captured the public imagination and have been prominent in popular culture — from James Bond to Star Wars. Lasers emit light through optical amplification — it is an acronym for "light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation."

Being able to focus a laser on a tight spot has numerous applications in science, and lasers now feature in many aspects of industry, medicine and information technology. For example, the discovery of gravitational waves (ripples in space-time predicted by Einstein 100 years ago) was made possible by beaming two lasers into space to detect tiny fluctuations in space-time.

■ More precise lasers

It was once thought the first lasers to be developed would not require refining, but as the need for increasing accuracy grew, scientists and engineers had to de-



velop more precise lasers.

Now, researchers from Germany and the U.S. have created the sharpest laser in the world.

Light from a laser ideally has one fixed frequency (or wavelength) and a linewidth

— the width of the band of frequencies of radiation. But the linewidth of most lasers is too big to carry out high-precision experiments. As a result, scientists must find ways to develop lasers with greater frequency stability and a narrower linewidth.

Scientists must find ways to develop lasers with greater frequency stability and a narrower linewidth.

In a study published in Physical Review Letters, the team announced the development of a laser with a linewidth of just 10 megahertz.

■ Atom's frequency

Thomas Legero, from the Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt in Germany, was one of the physicists involved in the research. The "smaller the linewidth of the laser, the more accurate the measurement of the atom's frequency in an optical clock," he said in a statement. "This new laser will enable us to decisively improve the quality of our clocks."

As well as its small linewidth, the team also showed that the frequency of the light emitted from the laser was more precise than anything achieved before. They found it only goes out of sync after 11 seconds of beaming it.

The American and German researchers are now using the lasers to improve optical atomic clocks, which could potentially be used to tell the time with unparalleled precision. At present, GPS devices, communication systems, power grids and financial networks rely on atomic clocks to synchronize. Optical atomic clocks are thought to be a far more accurate way of timekeeping, but creating them is extremely difficult.

(Source: Newsweek)

Global forest network cracks the case of tropical biodiversity

If aliens sent an exploratory mission to Earth, one of the first things they'd notice -- after the fluffy white clouds and blue oceans of our water world -- would be the way vegetation grades from exuberance at the equator through moderation at mid-latitudes toward monotony at higher ones. We all learn about this biodiversity gradient in school, but why does it exist?

Even Charles Darwin wondered. Though the pattern is striking, it is difficult to explain. Since it is global in scale, the initial tendency was to suspect long-term or large-scale mechanisms, such as climate stability (no glaciers in the tropics), rates of speciation (higher in the tropics) or rates of extinction (lower in the tropics according to the fossil record).

In 1970 and 1971, two ecologists independently proposed a radically different mechanism, one that operates at scales not of kilometers but of meters. Daniel Janzen and Joseph Connell suggested that host-specific natural enemies which kill seeds and seedlings clumped near parent trees might keep locally common species from dominating a forest and give locally rare species space to flourish.

■ The global scale

The Janzen-Connell hypothesis is now nearly 50 years old, but it has been hard to evaluate, especially at

the global scale. Few studies have explicitly looked at the connection between self suppression and species diversity, and no study has looked at this relationship across temperate and tropical latitudes.

A year ago, however, Jonathan Myers, an assistant professor of biology at Washington University in St. Louis, and Joe LaManna, a postdoctoral research associate at Washington University's Tyson Research Center, proposed a test of the Janzen-Connell hypothesis to the principal investigators of an international network of long-term forest dynamics research sites called the Smithsonian Center for Tropical Forest Science-Forest Global Earth Observatory (CTFS-ForestGEO).

Over the next year, LaManna analyzed the data from 24 research plots, including one at Washington University's Tyson Research Center. Together these plots are home to more than 3,000 tree species and roughly 2.4 million trees.

■ First evidence

The analysis provided the first evidence that the Janzen-Connell effect contributes to the biodiversity gradient across tropical and temperate latitudes. The paper, which has 50 authors from 12 countries, was published in the June 30, 2017, issue of the journal Science

"This is the first time we've had the data to do this kind of in-depth analysis and to look across temperate



and tropical latitudes," said LaManna, who is the corresponding author on the paper.

The analysis also provided a delicious twist on the hypothesis, namely that the plant predators that kill rare species may also keep them from going extinct. "When species get too rare, their enemies also thin out, and they have what is known as a rare species advantage," Myers said. So the specialized predators ultimately stabilize rare species instead of wiping them out.

(Source: EurekAlert)

Darwin's 'strangest animal ever' finds a family

Charles Darwin, Mr. Evolution himself, didn't know what to make of the fossils he saw in Patagonia so he sent them to his friend, the renowned paleontologist Richard Owen.

The "bones looked different from anything he knew," said Michael Hofreiter, senior author of a study published Tuesday in Nature Communications that finally situates in the tree of life what Darwin called the "strangest animal ever discovered".

"Imagine a camel without a hump, with feet like a slender rhino, and a head shaped like a saiga antelope," Hofreiter, a professor at the University of Potsdam, told AFP.

Macrauchenia patachonica -- literally,

"long-necked llama" -- also had a long rubbery snout and with its nostrils high on the skull just above its eyes.

For nearly two centuries, biologists and taxonomists argued over the pedigree of this bizarre beast, which weighed 400 to 500 kilos (850 to 1100 pounds), lived in open landscapes, and snacked on grass and leaves.

■ Body fetures

But its mixed bag of body features, and a paucity of DNA evidence, made it nearly impossible to determine whether M. patachonica was truly related the llama after which it was named.

A new kind of genetic analysis revealed that Macrauchenia was more akin to an an-

cient placental order known as Perissodactyla that includes horses, rhinos and tapirs.

"We had a difficult problem to solve here," said lead author of the new study Michael Westbury, also at the University of Potsdam.

"When ancient DNA is so degraded and full of unwanted environmental DNA, we rely on being able to use the genomes of close relatives as a kind of scaffold to reconstruct fossil sequences," he said in a statement.

But Macrauchenia -- itself an evolutionary dead end -- didn't have any close cousins that we know of.

To solve the puzzle, Westbury and a 20-strong team of scientists used mito-

chondrial DNA extracted from a fossil found in southern Chile to decode the extinct mammal's origins.

Inherited from the mother alone, the mitochondrial genome is smaller and has more copies in the cell -- and thus in fossils -- than DNA from the more complex nuclear genome, Hofreiter explained.

■ Relatedness in species

"Mitochondrial DNA is very useful for evaluating the degree of relatedness among species," he said.

The team eventually pieced together almost 80 percent of the total genome, making it possible to situate Macrauchenia in an evolutionary timeline.

(Source: AFP)

A NASA rocket blasted colorful clouds into space

For the last month, NASA had been waiting for the right moment to launch clouds of red and blue-green vapor out into space.

On June 29, that moment finally came. A NASA sounding rocket launched at 04:25 A.M. EST from the agency's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia, and shot out 10 canisters about the size of a soda can, according to the agency.

The cans deployed blue-green and red vapor, which brightly colored puffs of "tracer vapors" that were seen from New York to North Carolina. These clouds allow scientists on the ground to visually track how and where particles move in space.

The rocket was originally supposed to launch on May 31, but poor visibility and bad weather conditions delayed the mission a number of times. These space clouds weren't merely for show, however.

The experiment was one of many missions in an international "Grand Challenge" initiative aimed at helping scientists probe two gaping holes in Earth's protective magnetic shield, called cusps.

■ Invisible shield

The two holes in our invisible shield leak nearly 100 tons of air per day, according to Astronomy Now.

The magnetic bubble that surrounds our planet is vital to life, since it deflects the sun's constant wind

of high-energy particles — and protects against the occasional solar storm. Without this invisible force field, Earth may have gone the way of Mars, which lost its magnetic dynamo billions of years ago. That allowed the sun to blow most of the Martian atmosphere into deep space, turning a once wet and potentially habitable world into a dry and nearly airless global desert.

Scientists are still struggling to understand how the cusps work. In particular, they want to make them visible — which is where the colored clouds came into play.

(Source: Business Insider)

Increasing Trend of BMI's Capital at a Glance: Official

* Capital of state-owned banks doubled in the 11th government dubbed "Hope and Prudence".

Speaking among private sector activists and industrialists, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani announced the above statement and said: "With the coordination made in this regard, capital of state-owned banks increased up to twofold in the 11th government."

He termed the move taken by the 11th government in this respect as "unprecedented and unique of its kind".

In general, giant steps were taken by the eleventh government in the field of increasing capital of the banks, the president ended.

For his part, Chief Executive and Chairman of the

Board of Directors of the bank pointed to the capital increase of his bank and said: "With the coordination made in this regard unanimously, Bank Melli Iran (BMI) increased its capital from reconsidering assessment of assets."

In accrual accounting, value of assets is registered according to the historic cost price i.e. the prices that have been purchased.

Given the above issue, capital of Bank Melli Iran (BMI) increased from 2,260 billion rials to 22,400 billion rials at large, he observed.

In inflation-prone countries like Iran, tangible fixed assets find the value different from what has been registered after a few years since the establishment of the company, he opined.

Given the above issue, these corporations can reassess their tangible fixed assets such as land, building, equipment and machinery, he highlighted.

As a center for financing, bank requires cash money, he said, adding: "Unfortunately, suitable cash resources had not been injected top the bank in previous years, but objectives of the said issue were materialized in the 11th government"

In the end, Chief Executive and Chairman of Board of Directors of the Bank Melli Iran (BMI) expressed his thanks to all directors and managers of the bank especially respected President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Dr. Hassan Rouhani for his unsparing and unflinching support for materializing objectives of capital increase at the bank.

Heatwave sparks huge rise in severe hay fever attacks

The recent heatwave sparked a huge rise in severe hay fever attacks, with the number of people visiting their doctors rising by 50 percent in the last year.

Data from the Royal College of GPs (RCGP) reveals that in the first week of June, 11,353 people visited their GP with hay fever symptoms, rising to 37,568 in the week ending June 25.

In the same week at the end of June last year, 25,097 people visited their GP with hay fever - a difference of 50 percent.

The data for England suggests that recent high temperatures across the country may have led to more people suffering hay fever or seeing their symptoms worsen. Rates are at their highest for 2017 so far.

Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard, chairwoman of the RCGP, said: "Each year, seasonal hay fever can cause untold misery to thousands of people across the country.

The "weather may have taken a turn for the worse, but we are still seeing a steep rise in allergic rhinitis presentations in our surgeries - the highest so far in 2017 and higher compared to this time last year, which was surprisingly low.

"Hay fever can be awful but the discomfort should only be temporary and there should be no long-term ill effects."

Tree pollens tend to affect people from March to May and weed pollens from early spring to early autumn.

Patients that suffer from hay fever should help minimize their exposure to pollen, by wearing a hat with a wide brim and sunglasses, and applying Vaseline to nostrils to help trap pollen particles.

(Source: The Telegraph)

Japan reveals plans to put a man on moon by 2030

Japan has unveiled ambitious plans to put an astronaut on the moon around 2030 under new proposals from the country's space agency.

Japan has revealed ambitious plans to put an astronaut on the Moon around 2030 in new proposals from the country's space agency.

This is the first time the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) has said it aims to send an astronaut beyond the International Space Station, an agency spokeswoman told AFP on Friday.

The idea is to first join a NASA-led mission in 2025 to build a space station in the moon's orbit, as part of a longer-term effort by NASA to reach Mars.

Tokyo hopes that contributing to the multinational mission and sharing Japanese technology will land it a coveted spot at the station, from which it could eventually send an astronaut to the Moon, the spokeswoman said.

The plan was presented at an education ministry panel this week, with a more formal blueprint expected next year, according to public broadcaster NHK.

The announcement comes as China and India develop their space programs.

In November, China's Shenzhou-11 spacecraft returned to Earth, bringing home two astronauts from the rising power's longest-ever orbital mission.

Beijing has also unveiled illustrations of a Mars probe and rover it aims to send to the Red Planet at the end of the decade.

NASA and other global space agencies are working hard on sending astronauts to Mars by the 2030s.

(Source: phys.org)

'Moth eye' smartphone coating doesn't reflect sunlight

Unusual structures on moth eyes that help the insects see at night have inspired a new anti-reflection film for electronic devices. The new technology could help users see their screens even in bright daylight.

The film significantly reduces glare as well as the need to duck into the shade to read what's on the screen.

"For most commercial smartphones, the moth-eye film can improve the readability of the screen by 10 times under a clear sky. Under direct sunlight, the readability can be improved by five times," said physicist Shin-Tson Wu, a professor in the College of Optics and Photonics at the University of Central Florida (UCF).

The nature-inspired film is expected to be inexpensive to manufacture, he said, and has the added benefits of being scratch-resistant and self-cleaning. Users could finally rid their phones of the dust, fingerprints and grime that tend to collect on regular touch screens, the researchers report.

Wu's team, including Guanjan Tan, the study's lead author, and Jiun-Haw Lee's team from National Taiwan University (NTU), were inspired to develop the anti-reflective film after hearing about the so-called moth-eye effect.

The nanostructures allow light to pass into the eyes, but don't allow it to reflect out. This helps moths see in the dark but also prevents their eyes from reflecting light that might give the insects away to predators.

Other scientists inspired by this adaption in moths made solar cells with nanostructured surfaces to reduce the amount of sunlight that reflected away from the panels. This helps boost efficiency. Wu and Tan thought the technique could serve as a low-cost solution to improve the readability of electronic displays.

(Source: Live Science)

Snow tunnel collapse leaves one dead

SOCIETY TEHRAN — A snow tunnel in Iran's **d e s k** western city of Azna collapsed on Friday, leaving one dead.

The snow tunnel is visited every year by many tourists, mountaineers and nature lovers. It has been naturally formed



in the snow and ice on the outskirts of the great and towering Oshtorankuh Mountain, Lorestan province.

Right after the accident two rescue and relief helicopters and Red Crescent rescue and relief forces were dispatched to the scene, YJC quoted Mohammad-Baqer Mohammadi, an official with Lorestan Red Crescent Society, as saying.

According to Mohammad Mohammadi, Azna governor, unfortunately out of the four visitors, who were all locals, one died while trying to take a photo being buried under 12 meters of snow.

"Due to the hot weather ice that forms the tunnel was getting increasingly thin and resulted in the collapse," Mohammadi added.

Thankfully all other visitors who were also trapped under the snow are fine, he highlighted.

LEARN ENGLISH Presentation Series 1 - The Overview and the Agenda

A: Hi everyone, Can everyone hear me? Can you guys at the back hear everything?

A: Okay great. Well I think all of you know why we are here this afternoon. As most of you are aware 2010 **marks** an important moment for Alpha computers.

A: We have **bounced back** from the **recession** and now we are set to **launch** our new line of laptop and desktop computers.

A: I'm really pleased to welcome Michael Ford, the Global Marketing Manager for Alpha computers, who has flown in from California to give all of you an **overview** of the **marketing campaign** and to answer any questions you may have. So please give a warm welcome to Mr. Ford.

B: Thank you Jonathan. It really is a pleasure to be here today. It has been three years since I visited Beijing, and it's clear to me that operations here are obviously going from **strength to strength**.

B: The Alpha brand continues to grow **in leaps and bounds** in China, and that is certainly **down to** the hard work of all of you here. So congratulations to all of you.

B: I'd like to start by **outlining** the key points of my presentation this afternoon and giving you an idea of the topics that will be discussed. The **presentation** today is divided into five main parts.

B: **First of all**, I'd like to briefly **touch** on the background of the new x420 line; how the whole concept has **come about** and how the new product fits into our existing brand line.

B: Secondly I'd like to present data on **projected sales** for the x420. We will then go on to discuss our key **rivals** in this sector. Then I would like to **go on** to outline the campaign concept for the x420.

B: Finally I'm happy to open up the discussion for any questions or points you might have for me.

■ Key vocabulary

mark: if a particular year, month, or week marks an important event, the event happened on that date during a previous year

bounce back: recover

recession: a difficult time when there is less trade, business activity etc. in a country than usual

launch: to begin

overview: a general explanation

marketing campaign: an organized course of action to promote and sell a product or service

strength to strength: more and more successful

by/in leaps and bounds: if something increases, develops, grows etc. by leaps and bounds, it does it very quickly

be down to somebody/something: to be the result of one person's actions or one particular thing

outline: to describe something in a general way, giving the main points but not the details

presentation: an event at which you describe or explain a new product or idea

first of all: phrase used to introduce a series of ideas, starting with the first one

touch: deal with

come about: to happen, especially in a way that is not planned

projected sales: the amount of revenue a company expects to earn at some point in the future

rival: a person, group, or organization that you compete with in sport, business, a fight etc.

go on: continue, go forward

■ Supplementary vocabulary

PowerPoint presentation: a presentation using a computer program called PowerPoint

projector: a machine used to project a large digital image onto a plain white surface

podium: a small usually wooden table used to hold a microphone for use of a speaker

speech: a public discourse

graph: graphic image that represents variations and numbers

(Source: irlanguage.com)

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

Consequences of global warming over Iran and the Middle Eastern countries

By Iman Babaeian

Two-hundred years following the Industrial Revolution, the density of greenhouse gases including CO2 has increased to an unprecedented level compared to the past 800,000 years. Increased greenhouse gases, resulting from the use of fossil fuels in industries, vehicles, and household consumptions, as well as land use change, has raised the temperature on Earth at the rate of approximately 0.2 °C per decade. According to the fifth report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which was the scientific basis of the decisions made at Paris Agreement during the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21), there is no doubt about temperature increase on the Earth and most recorded temperature since 1950 are unprecedented compared with past decades or even millions of years. Moreover, in the Northern hemisphere, the 1981-2010 period was the warmest 30-year period in the past 1400 years.

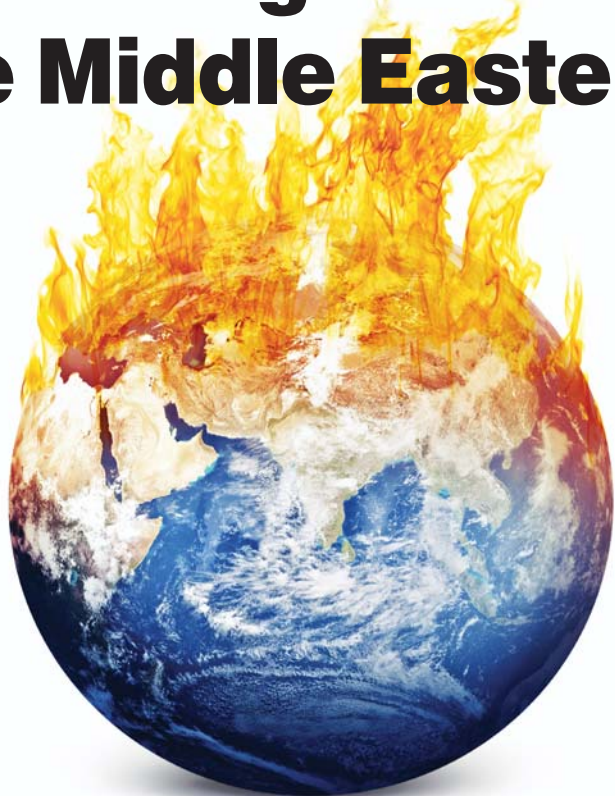
Mean temperature in Iran has increased by 1 °C in the past decade (2006-2015) compared with the 1970s. In the past 50 years, precipitation has decreased in Iran at the rate of approximately 1 mm/year, snowfall has significantly declined, and temperature has increased at the rate of 0.03 °C/year. Such a condition increases potential water requirement at the rate of over 5 mm/year. In the past 5 years, the volume of total renewable water resources has been decreased by 15%. Aquifers in Iran face approximately 100 billion m3 of shortage in ground water reservoirs, 80% of which has occurred in the past 15 years. In recent years, despite the increase in the number and depth of wells, their yield has not increased, indicating improper feeding for the aquifers and severely declining groundwater levels.

Based on climate prediction models, the average temperature in Middle Eastern countries will increase by 1.8-5.5 °C by the end of the 21st century

compared to the 1970s in the most optimistic and pessimistic scenarios, respectively. In case of applying a balanced scenario, temperature increase is estimated to be 2.1-2.9 °C. Contrary to the Earth's general response, global warming will decrease precipitation in the Middle East, with the most severe decrease in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. Nevertheless, extreme precipitation events such as torrential rains, heavy snows, hailstorms, cloudbursts, and thunderstorms will be increased. In addition, fall precipitation will be delayed until the end of the cold season. A significant number of models have predicted an increase in precipitation in the Southern regions of Iran and the states around of Persian Gulf-Sea of Oman in future decades. Despite the increase in average annual precipitation in these regions, the number of days with precipitations will not increase, indicating

heavy and torrential rains in the future decades.

Because of the increase in sea surface temperature, tropical storms will increase in the coastal regions of countries located in the north of the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea, e.g. Iran, Oman, Yemen, and Pakistan. Such a conditions necessitates the mentioned countries to retrofit their coastal infrastructure in order to resist and decrease the damages caused by rogue sea waves resulting from tropic storms and consider the effects of climate change in all their long-term development plans in coastal areas. Although precipitation increase is probable in Southeastern Middle East, but potential water requirement in the mentioned countries will be increased by 15-25% due to temperature increase. In other words, to combat the effect of temperature increase, a 25% increase in precipitation is required, which is



For Iranian-Americans, Trump travel ban keeps families apart

Weddings have been moved and family visits delayed.

The Trump administration's travel ban, while a shadow of its original self, has dealt a harsh blow to the Iranian-American community, where family ties run strong and friends and loved ones regularly shuttle between Los Angeles and Tehran.

But it isn't the only immigration hurdle facing the community. Iranians allowed to seek visas to visit family in the United States may still have a hard time getting them with a screening process that can take months or longer, immigration lawyers said.

In the meantime, families are being kept apart. Iranian-American homemaker Mina Thrani, 38, had hoped to invite her aunt to visit her in Irvine over the Christmas holiday but can't because of the ban.

Xena Amirani, an 18-year-old college student from Los Angeles, said her family has been grieving since her grandmother died after being struck by a car while crossing the street. They traveled to Iran to bury her. Now, her uncle and his wife want to travel together to visit the family in California to help console them, but the travel ban is in the way.

"It is pointless," Amirani said.

The scaled-back version of President Donald Trump's policy that took effect this week places new limits on



visa policies for citizens of six Muslim-majority countries, including Iran. The temporary ban requires people who want new visas to prove a close family relationship in the U.S. or an existing relationship with an entity like a school or business.

The U.S. has nearly 370,000 Iranian immigrants, according to U.S. Census Bureau estimates, far more than the other countries targeted by the order — Syria, Sudan, Somalia, Libya and Yemen.

Despite a lengthy history of friction between Tehran and Washington, personal ties between residents of the two countries have held strong.

"Everyone is being hit by this because everyone has a relative in Iran, and there is quite a lot of travel in between," said Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian American Council.

But travel isn't always easy, and the challenge predates the Trump administration. Because there is no U.S. embassy in Iran, Iranians must go to other countries for visa interviews, requiring time and money.

And it can take longer to get visas approved for Iranians than for citizens of many other countries, immigration attorneys said, while U.S. officials conduct screenings.

"Even under Obama, it was very hard to get these visas and get the background checks cleared. But now, it is official policy," said Ally Bolour, an immigration attorney in Los Angeles.

The Department of Homeland Security said this week that the Supreme Court's decision to allow a partial reinstatement of the ban will help protect the U.S.

Trump's initial travel ban in January was broader, affecting current and new visas, which sparked chaos at airports around the world.

(Source: Bloomberg)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ↔ E

Healthcare reform plan available to Islamic, regional countries: minister

Iran's healthcare reform plan is available to Islamic and regional countries, Health Minister Hassan Qazizadeh-Hashemi said on Tuesday.

Iran's healthcare reform plan which was endorsed by the World Health Organization twice has led to a decrease in medical and health-related expenses for Iranians, Qazizadeh-Hashemi added, IRIB reported.

He further highlighted that "as Iran's Health Minister I declare our readiness to share our achievements and experiences with world leaders and my colleagues, active in healthcare sector, worldwide."

ENGLISH PROVERB

Man is known by the company he keeps

■ **Explanation**: a person tends to associate with people who are like him or her.

■ **For example**: If you want to know what kind of person George is, look at his friends. A man is known by the company he keeps.

PHRASAL VERB

Cream somebody/ something off

■ **Meaning**: to choose the best people or things from a group, especially so that you can use them for your own advantage

■ **For example**: The best students are creamed off by the large companies.

ENGLISH IDIOM

Behind closed doors

■ **Explanation**: if something takes place behind closed doors, it is done privately, with no observers or intruders

■ **For example**: The matter was discussed behind closed doors.

Qatar lobbying with UNSC members to lift Saudi-led bans

Qatar has been lobbying with the non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) against a House of Saud regime-led embargo of the country.

Qatar's Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani met with the representatives of the UNSC member states at the Qatari mission to the United Nations in New York on Friday, urging them to press the sanctioning countries to lift the blockade and to speak out publicly in support of his country, Al Jazeera reported.

The House of Saud regime, Bahrain, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) severed diplomatic ties and cut all land, sea, and air contacts with Qatar on June 5. The four countries accused Qatar of supporting terrorism and destabilizing the region, allegations denied by Doha.

The countries later issued a list of demands for Qatar to meet in return for a normalization of ties. Among them was that Qatar shut down Al Jazeera, a media network that has reportedly been critical especially of Saudi Arabia, close a Turkish military base, limit its ties with Iran, and "compensate" the sanctioning countries.

Doha has refused to meet the demands, calling them unreasonable, and said it would not negotiate with the countries unless the blockade has been lifted.

Separately, the House of Saud regime's Foreign Ministry reacted to the refusal, saying this was not the first time Qatar was standing up to Riyadh's demands, Saudi paper Okaz reported. The Ministry claimed that Doha had "endangered" Saudi national security, and that it continued to lend support to "terrorist groups."

Al Thani told Al Jazeera that he had given the UNSC members "updates on the situation" and urged "all of them to call for a lifting of the blockade on Qatar." Qatar was "trying to encourage all the parties to enter a serious dialog to try to put an end to this," he said.

A day earlier, he had met with his American counterpart Rex Tillerson.

Tillerson reportedly promised to try to help resolve the Persian Gulf crisis.

The Qatari top diplomat was set to return to Doha soon, where "his country will continue to press its case with a number of different organization like the [UN] International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Maritime Organization, and the Human Rights Council in Geneva," Al Jazeera added.

The blockade has forced Qatar to re-route certain flights, and the country's



Minister of Transport and Communications Jassim Saif Al Sulaiti has met twice this past week with ICAO officials at the body's headquarters in Montreal, asking it to intervene in the crisis.

■ Qatar blockade amounts to 'bloodless declaration of war'

Meantime, Qatar says the Saudi regime-led blockade against Doha is a "bloodless declaration of war," a day after the Persian Gulf country rejected as "unreasonable" the demands presented by the House of Saud regime and its allies to end the unprecedented diplomatic row with the emirate.

Qatari Defense Minister Khalid bin Mohammad al-Attiyah made the remarks in an interview with Britain-based Arabic-language al-Araby al-Jadeed newspaper published on Friday.

He added that what Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt had done against Qatar, including closing the land, sea and air borders, were in fact "harming the citizens and damaging the social fabric" of the Persian Gulf.

Attiyah arrived in the Turkish capital Ankara to hold talks with his Turkish counterpart Fikri Isik and the country's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the issue of a Turkish base in Qatar.

"Qatar and Turkey maintain historic ties and my visit comes in the context of boosting defense cooperation between the two countries," Attiyah said in Ankara.

To further pressure Qatar, Saudi Arabia has totally closed its land border with its tiny neighbor, through which much of Qatar's food supply crossed. Iran and Turkey are now providing Qatar's required food supplies.

■ Turkey base closure not on agenda

Throughout the current standoff between Doha and the Saudi regime-led

bloc, Ankara has resisted pressure to close its military base in the emirate.

"The current issues between the (Persian Gulf) countries, who are brothers, must be resolved soon on the basis of a sincere dialogue and respect for Qatar's rights," the Turkish defense minister said on Friday.

"Re-evaluating the base agreement with Qatar is not on our agenda," Isik further said in a televised interview, adding that Turkey's presence in the emirate should be seen as a "benefit for the whole Persian Gulf."

President Erdogan, for his part, has already said the sweeping demands were "against international law", and described the Saudi regime-led bloc's demand for the withdrawal of Turkish troops from Qatar as "disrespect to Turkey."

The punitive measures against Qatar have drawn condemnation from rights groups, including Amnesty International, which says the diplomatic dispute has been toying with thousands of lives.

The coordinated move against Doha is spearheaded by Riyadh, which often manages to have its vassal states fall into line. Saudi Arabia itself is known as the main sponsor of the violent Wahhabi terrorists it has accused Qatar of supporting. Some analysts believe the Saudi anger is rather because Qatar acts more independently of Riyadh.

■ Britain banks join Saudi-led push to pressure Qatar

Elsewhere, British banks have rallied behind the House of Saud regime and its allies which are coaxing financial institutions into joining an economic and trade blockade on Qatar.

Barclays, Lloyds and Royal Bank of Scotland say they have halted trading Qatari riyals following similar moves by

the Post Office, a major high street currency exchange in Britain.

Officials for the banks said the problem was related to their third-party suppliers who had stopped buying and selling the Qatari currency.

The London-based Financial Times newspaper said the decision in Britain reflected the "growing difficulties being caused by the Saudi and UAE-led blockade of Qatar."

With the economic fallout starting to bite, international rating agencies have lowered Qatar's credit rating and put it on "negative watch".

The country is on damage control, with its central bank saying the riyal is stable and guaranteed at its peg rate to the dollar. The bank have pledged to guarantee foreign-exchange transactions inside and outside Qatar without delay.

Britain-based currency-exchange provider Travelex Group, meanwhile, said it has resumed trading in Qatari rials after suspending purchases for a short period.

Nevertheless, banks in the United States, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan whose governments have close relations with the Saudi regime have reportedly stopped trading in Qatari riyals.

The countries of the Subcontinent have a huge diaspora of workers in the Persian Gulf countries and an interest in Saudi Arabia's sprawling patronage system.

The U.S. and Britain, on the other hand, covet the region for lucrative arms deals. Last month, U.S. President Donald Trump clinched a record \$110 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia in Riyadh, which will grow to \$350 billion over the next 10 years in military cooperation.

The fallout from the crisis has caused the riyal to hit lowest levels but Qatar's central bank has abstained from intervening. One option is to flood the market with dollars in order to keep riyal spot rates consistently in line with the peg and deter offshore speculation.

The central bank, however, apparently sees no need to spend part of its reserves and get drawn into a battle with offshore banks.

Qatar's central bank reportedly had net foreign reserves of \$34.8 billion in May. The world's top gas exporter is also estimated to have over \$200 billion of liquid assets in its sovereign wealth fund.

Analysts say Qatar's reserves are enough to defend the peg for years, even if there is a mass withdrawal of foreign bank deposits from the country.

(Source: agencies)

World leaders bade Kohl farewell, hailing a force behind united Europe

Leaders from the United States, Russia and across Europe paid tribute to Helmut Kohl as the architect of German reunification and a driving force for European integration on Saturday.



The former German Chancellor, who died on June 16 at 87, was remembered at a memorial ceremony at the European Parliament as a dedicated European who abhorred war by ex U.S. President Bill Clinton, Russia Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and others.

"Helmut Kohl gave us the chance to be involved in something bigger than ourselves, bigger than our terms in office and bigger than our fleeting careers," Clinton said of the man who was German chancellor from 1982 to 1998 and oversaw German reunification in 1990.

The two-hour memorial, in a city that has often changed hands and now lies in France symbolized the role Kohl played in reconciling the two erstwhile enemies France and Germany while driving European integration forward.

"He was the architect of the world order," said Medvedev of Kohl, who skillfully negotiated reunification with communist East Germany with former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. "In Russia, we'll remember him as our friend -- a wise and sincere person."

Afterwards, Kohl's casket was flown by helicopter across the Rhine to his hometown of Ludwigshafen, where his body was later carried in procession before being transported by riverboat to his final place of rest in Speyer.

The resting place of many rulers of the Holy Roman Empire, itself a Europe-spanning polity, Speyer Cathedral was seen by Kohl as a symbol of European unity -- a place he showed to contemporary leaders including Gorbachev and Britain's Margaret Thatcher.

"Helmut Kohl was a German patriot and a European patriot," said Juncker, a former Luxembourg prime minister and close friend of Kohl who switched between German and French in his tribute. "We've lost a giant of the post-war era."

Chancellor Angela Merkel, who served as a minister under Kohl in the 1990s but later had a falling out over his role in receiving \$1 million in illegal campaign cash donations, remembered Kohl as an at-times controversial figure with numerous enemies.

"I could tell you stories as well," she said. "But all that paled in comparison to his life's achievements."

Merkel said Kohl had changed the lives of millions across all of Europe.

"The lives of millions of people would have been a lot different without Helmut Kohl -- including my own life," the former East German said. "Dear Helmut Kohl, thanks to you I'm standing here today. Thanks for the chance that you made possible for me and many others."

The ceremony concluded with the German national anthem and excerpts from Beethoven's 9th symphony "Ode to Joy," used as the anthem of the European Union.

The proposal to hold a European ceremony was enthusiastically advocated by Juncker, and by Kohl's second wife Maïke Kohl-Richter, who survives him.

His sons, however, will boycott the Cathedral's funeral mass, since their father will not be laid to rest alongside Hannelore Kohl, his wife of decades.

(Source: Reuters)

Nearly half a million displaced Syrians return home: UN

Nearly half a million displaced Syrians have returned to their homes since the beginning of the year, mainly to find family members and check on property, the United Nations refugee agency said.

The agency said it had seen "a notable trend of spontaneous returns to and within Syria in 2017".

Since January, about 440,000 people who had been displaced within the war-ravaged country had returned to their homes, mainly in Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Damascus, Andrej Mahelic, a spokesman for the agency, known as the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), told reporters in Geneva on Friday.

In addition, around 31,000 refugees in neighboring countries had also returned, he said, bringing to 260,000 the number of refugees who have returned to the country since 2015.

But Mahelic said this is a mere "fraction" of the five

million Syrian refugees hosted in the region.

He said the main factors prompting the displaced to return home were "seeking out family members, checking on property, and, in some cases, a real or perceived improvement in security conditions in parts of the country."

He said it was too early to say if the returns might be directly linked to a palpable drop in violence since Turkey agreed at talks in Astana in May with Russia and Iran, allies of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, to establish four safe zones across Syria to ban flights and ensure aid drops.

But this week, the UN's special envoy for Syria, Stefan de Mistura, told the Security Council that since the May 4 deal, "violence is clearly down. Hundreds of Syrian lives continue to be spared every week, and many towns have returned to some degree of normalcy".

Mahelic nonetheless cautioned that "while there is overall increased hope linked to the recent Astana and Ge-

neva peace talks, UNHCR believes conditions for refugees to return in safety and dignity are not yet in place in Syria".

"The sustainability of security improvements in many return areas is uncertain, and there remain significant risks of protection thresholds for voluntary, safe and dignified returns not being met in parts of the country," he said.

"Access to displaced population inside Syria remains a key challenge," he added.

But "given the returns witnessed so far this year and in light of a progressively increased number of returns", the agency had begun scaling up its operations inside Syria to better be able address the needs of the returnees, he said.

Syria's foreign instigated war has killed more than 320,000 people and forced millions from their homes since it began in March 2011.

(Source: agencies)

The real security threats on Iran's periphery

➡ Nearly 16 years after the initial U.S. invasion, the Taliban control almost half the country's territory. In addition to these security concerns, Iran has also hosted roughly three million Afghan refugees for decades and has become a major destination for Afghanistan-grown narcotics.

On its 959-kilometer border with Pakistan, a strategic U.S. and Saudi ally and a hub Saudi proselytization of its extremist Wahhabi ideology, Iran has long faced instability and attacks by Pakistan-based terrorists, such as Jundullah and Jaish al-Adl. Pakistan's status as a nuclear-armed power wracked with domestic instability and anti-Shia violence also represents an inherent security concern to Iran.

To its west, Iran shares a 1600-kilometer border with Iraq, which has been war-torn since the 2003 U.S. invasion and a source of hundreds of thousands of refugees to Iran. In recent years, the territorial integrity of Iraq has also come under serious challenge—threatening Iran and other regional states—and large parts of the country have been occupied by the

Islamic State, which recently launched a brutal attack in Tehran.

Iran also shares a 534-kilometer border with Turkey, the region's only NATO country and home to the Incirlik airbase and its U.S.-controlled nuclear weapons. In recent years, Turkey's internal stability has come under question as the government has battled Kurds in its southeast, suffered a major uptick in terrorist attacks, and fended off a coup attempt. Increased turmoil in Turkey threatens regional security as a whole.

To its south, Iran borders the Persian Gulf and the Arab states opposite it. For decades, the Persian Gulf has been an area of massive U.S. militarization at the behest of its local autocratic allies. It's where the U.S. houses its main regional military bases and frequently patrols Persian Gulf waters with aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines. The monarchies of the southern Persian Gulf have also been a major recipient of U.S. weapons, with Obama selling more weapons to Saudi Arabia—totaling some \$115 billion—than any previous U.S. administration.

President Trump, meanwhile, has already reportedly reached a \$110 billion arms deal with the Saudis.

The Arab Persian Gulf powers have long toed a hardline against Iran and pushed their U.S. patron to go to war with Iran. Former U.S. Secretary of States John Kerry has recently revealed that even during the period of the nuclear negotiations—as Iran and six major world powers were working towards a diplomatic resolution of the Iranian nuclear dispute—"leaders in the region" were telling Kerry and Obama that the U.S. should "bomb these guys."

Contrary to the Trump administration's claim that Iran is destabilizing the region and pursuing hegemony, Iran has in fact been a victim of regional instability—which has largely been a legacy of U.S. policies—and has legitimate security threats and needs. As one Iranian military officer has said, roughly 60 percent of Iran's border are "not controlled by the neighboring country."

Rather than choosing to build on the nuclear deal and pursue cooperation

with Iran on areas of mutual interest, such as combating terrorism, the Trump administration believes that Iran's supposed regional activities, which Tillerson has termed "destabilizing," are behind escalating tensions in the region.

President Trump should learn from the failure of past aggressive policies towards Iran. It should not take sides in regional rivalries by giving the Arab Persian Gulf states carte blanche to advance their narrow, sectarian agendas. Instead, Trump should acknowledge Iran as a geographical reality and foster regional cooperation by pushing U.S. regional partners to reciprocate the Iranian foreign minister's calls for dialogue.

Ambassador Seyed Hossein Mousavian is Middle East Security and Nuclear Policy Specialist at Princeton University and a former Chief of Iran's National Security Foreign Reactions Committee. His latest book, Iran and the United States: An Insider's view on the Failed Past and the Road to Peace, was released in May 2014.

Djokovic adds Mario Ancic to coaching team ahead of Andre Agassi arrival

Novak Djokovic's plans for his assault on Wimbledon took another twist on Saturday when he appointed Mario Ancic to his coaching team.

Croatian Ancic is only three years older than Djokovic at the age of 33 after being forced to retire due to injury in 2011.

Djokovic has already said 1992 Wimbledon champion Agassi will be at the All England for the duration of the third Grand Slam of the season which begins on Monday after the American advised him for the early part of the French Open last month.

He is seeded second at an event he has won three times over the past six years.

Ancic is a former world number seven who won the Davis Cup 12 years ago while he also reached the last four of Wimbledon in 2004.

He was forced to retire at the age of 27 before moving into the world of banking as a financial advisor with Credit Suisse in the USA.

Ancic has apparently accepted Djokovic's call to help at Wimbledon, but according to reports will not be giving up his job to help Djokovic on a full-time basis.

(Source: Eurosport)

Stephen Curry's supermax deal becomes richest in NBA history

Two-time NBA MVP Stephen Curry has agreed to a five-year, \$201 million extension -- the richest contract in league history -- with the Golden State Warriors, his agent Jeff Austin of Octagon told ESPN.

Curry is the first NBA star who will sign a supermax contract, the crossing of a \$200 million threshold that eventually will become the norm for the NBA's biggest superstars.

Golden State general manager Bob Myers said Friday that the Warriors will finalize the contract once the free-agency moratorium ends Thursday.

An eight-year veteran, Curry has been the foundational star for the Warriors, who recently won their second NBA championship in three years.

The Golden State point guard had been playing on a four-year, \$44 million contract, an extension that he signed when there were grave concerns about the sturdiness of his ankles.

Curry's new deal received accolades from LeBron James, whom he has faced in the past three Finals.

While Curry officially was one of the off-season's top unrestricted free agents, there was never a doubt he would return to the Warriors. Golden State owner Joe Lacob made that much clear after his team won the NBA title last month.

"We're going to do whatever it takes to keep Steph here and happy," Lacob told the Bay Area News Group. "And I know he wants to be here and we want him here. So I do not anticipate any issues with him staying."

Curry has emerged as one of the NBA's best players -- and arguably the greatest pure shooter of all time -- since Golden State drafted him seventh overall in 2009 out of Davidson.

Now 29, Curry holds career averages of 22.8 points, 6.8 assists, 4.4 rebounds and 1.8 steals per game over his eight seasons.

He has led the league in 3-pointers for five consecutive seasons, and his career total of 1,917 ranks 10th all time. His career 3-point shooting percentage is 43.8, the third-highest all time.

As Curry's shooting has awed, the accolades have rolled in. He is a two-time league MVP, a four-time All-Star and a three-time All-NBA first-team performer.

He was ranked No. 1 on the list of top available free agents this offseason by ESPN's Kevin Pelton.

(Source: ESPN)

Argentina hosts Lionel Messi's 'wedding of the century'

Argentine football star Lionel Messi has married his childhood sweetheart in his hometown in what has been called the "wedding of the century".

A civil ceremony for Messi, 30, and Antonela Roccuzzo, 29, was held at a luxury hotel in the city of Rosario.

Football stars and celebrities were among the 260 guests, with hundreds of police deployed for the event.

Messi, the Argentina and Barcelona forward, met Roccuzzo as a child before he moved to Spain aged just 13.

Among the guests at Friday's wedding were Messi's Barcelona teammates Luis Suárez, Neymar, Gerard Piqué and his wife, Colombia's pop star Shakira. A number of guests flew into Rosario on private jets.

Argentina's Clarín newspaper has variously called the wedding "the wedding of the year" and "the wedding of the century".

Earlier, crowds gathered at the local airport to try to spot some of the famous guests.

A private security firm was working inside the hotel to keep out potential gatecrashers.

About 150 journalists received accreditation to enter a special press area, but were not given full access to the venue, organizers said.

(Source: BBC)

Putin is a phenomenon, Trump is a cartoon character – Maradona

Russian President Vladimir Putin is a phenomenon who can bring peace to many across the globe, football legend Diego Maradona told journalists in Moscow, adding that he views US leader Donald Trump as a cartoon character, who can't be treated seriously.

"I think that after [Hugo] Chavez and Fidel [Castro], Putin – together with [Ariel] Ortega and Evo [Morales], represent the 'top league' of political leaders, said Maradona, who arrived in Moscow on Friday.

"Putin is a man who can bring peace to many in this world," he added, describing the Russian leader as "a phenomenon; simply a phenomenon."

The legendary Argentinean said he didn't see US President Donald Trump among the elite, saying, "For me, he's more of a comic."

"He's like a cartoon to me, if we talk about politics... Every time I see him on TV, I switch the channel," he added.



The 56-year-old footballer said he didn't believe that America is currently the dominant force on the international arena.

"One shouldn't forget about Russia, China, about North Korea. The US isn't the county sheriff anymore. We'll find a gun to match the one they have," he said.

Maradona stressed that no one wants war, but "when you see such cartoon characters like Trump, you begin thinking that if such a man takes it into his head we may all become enemies."

Latin America is feeling "increasing pressure from the right. By right, I mean the US," which is bad for the continent, he said.

"The right is stronger now. The right has more money. They can buy a lot of things. And I'm outraged because of it – as under previous presidents, the people at least had food, but now in Argentina there are people who are starving. It's sad. Very sad. And it's not only Argentina. Brazil, as well," he said.

(Source: RT)

Russian minister angrily denies doping allegations



Russian Deputy Prime Minister Vitaly Mutko reacted angrily to a question about doping on Saturday and sarcastically offered to perform a Russian dance if the media distortion asking him about the topic.

Meanwhile, FIFA president Gianni Infantino, sitting alongside Mutko at a Confederations Cup press conference, said Russian players were regularly tested in international competition and results always came up negative.

A report by Canadian sports lawyer Richard McLaren last year said more than 1,000 Russian athletes competing in summer, winter and paralympic sport were involved in or benefited from an institutional conspiracy to conceal positive doping tests.

The report, commissioned by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), said that soccer was among more than 30 sports involved.

The scheme included switching and changing samples by opening "tamper-proof" bottles -- using a method devised by the Russian secret service -- and numerous other methods to bypass and cover up drugs tests.

In an answer which lasted nearly nine minutes, Mutko, who is also head of the Russian Football Union (RFU), repeated previous denials concerning alleged doping in Russian football.

"If I perform a Russia dance here in front of you, will you stop asking?" he said, speaking through a translator.

"I don't know how to react to this,"

added Mutko, whose country will host next year's World Cup. "We are investing a lot of money into sports and we don't need doping to win a bronze medal that doesn't mean much."

"We have never been supporting people who are using doping."

FIFA has said that it was still investigating the allegation that footballers were among the 1,000-plus athletes mentioned in the McLaren report.

Infantino said he did not know how long this would take, adding that there were "a few facts, the rest is all speculation".

Infantino said that all Russian players at the last World Cup were tested by FIFA and that the results were negative.

He added that the same applied to last year's Euro 2016 tournament in France, where European body UEFA conducted the tests, and to international club competitions.

"These tests are not done in Russia," he said. "It's all done outside Russia in WADA-accredited laboratories and they have given negative results."

"These are the facts that need to be remembered. We have all seen the different reports, we are collecting information and if there have been any anti-doping violations, measures will be taken."

"We always have a zero-tolerance policy for doping."

Chile will face Germany in the Confederations Cup final in St Petersburg on Sunday.

(Source: Reuters)

Gianni Infantino insists confusing VAR will be used at 2018 World Cup in Russia



The Fifa president, Gianni Infantino, signaled that he is in favor of introducing video assistant referees (VARs) at next year's World Cup following its success at the Confederations Cup, although he conceded the system needs to be improved.

"Nothing is standing in the way of using VARs (at the World Cup), as far as I'm concerned," Infantino told a news conference in the Russian city of St Petersburg on the eve of the Confederations Cup final. "So far it has been successful. We are learning, we are improving, we are continuing the tests."

The system involves two video assistant referees watching the action remotely and then drawing the match referee's attention to officiating mistakes. Fifa said the system corrected six game-changing decisions during the Confederations Cup.

"Without the VARs, we would have had a different tournament," Infantino said. "And a tournament which would have been a little less fair."

But Infantino, who said that the system had been tested so far in 74 matches, added that certain aspects needed to be refined. "We need to work still on some of the details, on the communication and the speed of the decisions being taken," he said.

The time needed to make decisions has been criticized. There has

also been debate about which circumstances it should be used for as some close calls are decided without consulting the VARs.

The use of the system has caused controversy at times, such as during Germany's 3-1 group stage win against Cameroon when referee Wilmar Roldan needed two reviews of an incident to send off the correct Cameroon player.

Chile were denied a legitimate-looking goal after video review in their 2-0 win against Cameroon on 18 June, and it was again used at the end of the same match to overturn a linesman's offside call and award Chile a goal.

The former World Cup final referee Pierluigi Collina, the chairman of Fifa's referees committee, said on Saturday that the system was a "very positive tool" to help referees make the right calls and took pressure off them.

"We are in a sort of work in progress," Collina said. "We see the very positive result we had but we are aware that we can improve. This is normal."

Football's law-making body, Ifab, is expected to decide next March whether to allow video assistant referees to become part of the game on a permanent basis. Chile face World Cup holders Germany in Sunday's Confederations Cup final.

(Source: Guardian)



laliga #OTD in 2012... Spain hit four past Italy to win a second consecutive European Championship title!



manchesterunited Smiles all around during our #LegendsAreBack clash with Barcelona last night



realmadrid Happy birthday to @lucasvazquez91 who turns 26 today!!

Iran win Asian Para Taekwondo Open title

S P O R T S
d e s k Iran finished in first place at the 3rd edition of the Asian Para Taekwondo Open on Saturday.

Iran took part in the one-day competition in Chuncheon, South Korea with seven participants.

Saeid Sadeghian won the gold medal after defeating his Turkish rival 25-2 in the men's K42 up to 61kg final match.

Iran's reigning world champion Mahdi Pourrahnama snatched the gold medal, beating his Russian opponent 15-8 in the men's K44 up to 75kg.

Iran's third gold medal was won by Asghar Azizi in the men's K44 over 75kg after the Persian defeated his Russian fighter 28-10.

Ahmad Narimani claimed one more gold medal for the Iranian delegation.

He defeated a fighter from Kazakhstan 27-6 in the men's K42 over 75kg.

Sajjad Javanbakht bagged a silver medal in the men's K44 up to 61kg after losing to Mongolian participant 31-16 in the final match.

Mahmoud Jafarzadeh claimed a bronze medal in the men's K42 up to 75kg after defeating his Turkish opponent 27-11 in the third-placed match.

Around 90 athletes took part at the competition, including participants from 11 Asian countries.

The Asian Open is the first time this year that all three champions have competed in the same event, ahead of October's WTF World Para Taekwondo Championships in London, Great Britain.



Women's sitting volleyball advances to world championships



S P O R T S
d e s k Iranian women qualified for the 2018 Sitting Volleyball World Championships to be held in Netherlands.

The Iranian team finished in third place at the 2017 ParaVolley Asia Oceania Sitting Volleyball Championships and booked a place in the world championships.

Iran defeated Kazakhstan in straight sets (25-13, 25-14, 25-15) in

Hangzhou, China.

The competition feature the best teams in the zone, all vying for spots at the 2018 World ParaVolley Sitting Volleyball World Championships in the Netherlands.

The Iranian men's team are also favorite to win the title.

The 2017 ParaVolley Asia Oceania Sitting Volleyball Championships kicked off on June 27 and will finish on July 3.

Barimanlou wins bronze at IJF Grand Prix of Hohhot



S P O R T S
d e s k Mohammad Mohammadi Barimanlou from Iran claimed a bronze medal at the International Judo Federation (IJF) Grand Prix in China on Saturday.

The Iranian judoka finished in third place in -73kg weight category.

Saiyinjirgal from China won the gold medal after beating Canadian Arthur Margelidon in the final match.

The IJF Grand Prix of Hohhot is the biggest annual IJF World Tour judo competi-

tion in China, until 2017 held in Qingdao.

Mohammad Rashnonezhad (-60kg), Mohammad Mohammadi Barimanlou and Mehdi Fathipour (-73kg), Saeid Molaei (-81) and Vahid Nouri (-90kg) are representing Iran in the competition.

The team is headed by Mohammad Mansouri.

The Hohhot Grand Prix is the final IJF World Judo Tour event before the 2017 Suzuki World Judo Championships in August.

Chile the world 's best if they beat Germany, says Vidal

Arturo Vidal believes Chile will stake a claim of being the best international side around if they lift the Confederations Cup on Sunday.

Vidal and his team-mates are aiming to continue a golden era for La Roja, who had never won a major honour until they beat Argentina on penalties in the final of the 2015 Copa America.

With current boss Juan Antonio Pizzi at the helm, having succeeded Jorge Sampaoli, they repeated the feat at the Copa America Centenario last year.

Another shootout victory this week over Portugal set up a meeting with world champions Germany in St Petersburg and Vidal said claims by Alexis Sanchez and Mauricio Isla that Chile were aiming for a position at the top of the elite was not idle talk.

"I do agree with Mauricio and Alexis because we are not just saying it, we've shown it against every single national team we've played against," the Bayern Munich midfielder told a pre-match news conference at Krestovsky Stadium.

"We beat Argentina, who is one of the best national teams, two years in a row and Portugal, who are the European Champions, three days ago. And if we win tomorrow [Sunday] I think we would be the best national



team in the world.

"I don't think any of us have the possibility of a defeat in our minds. We're optimistic for winning any challenge ahead and we are just looking forward to giving our best. I don't think about defeat."

Such a stance echoed the stir Vidal caused when he claimed the Under-20 World Cup side he played in alongside the likes of Sanchez, Isla and Gary Medel could win the real thing after a third-place finish in 2007.

"I remember clearly when I spoke those words and everybody was slightly scared by what we were

saying," he recalled.

"We had Alexis, Mauricio, Gary and others. Our effort has helped us to reach this final in the Confederations Cup.

"This is the waiting room for the World Cup and if we win against Germany it sends a clear message to the other teams that we are going [to the World Cup] to win it, even though we still need to qualify."

Head coach Pizzi was understandably more reserved than his midfield driving force as he prepares for a rematch with Joachim Low's youthful and exciting side, after the teams shared a 1-1 draw in Kazan during the group stages.

"I don't pay attention to things in that way," said the former Valencia boss. "We try to be the best versions of ourselves, that's the best thing you can strive to do – to beat ourselves, so to speak.

"After that, competition always defines who is best or worst by who wins and who loses. I've always believed in looking at the games and defining the best as those that win.

"We are a team who can play on an equal footing with any squad."

(Source: Soccerway)

Kobe Bryant: I support Barcelona and Milan, and of course the U.S. too

When it comes to being a soccer fan, former NBA great Kobe Bryant says he has divided loyalties between Barcelona and AC Milan.

Bryant, a legendary basketball player for the LA Lakers who retired last year, says he still supports AC Milan -- a result of having lived in Italy for seven years as a kid while his father, Joe Bryant, played professionally there.

But in recent years, he has also embraced Barcelona due to his friendships with former Blaugrana star Ronaldinho, and current icon Lionel Messi.

Speaking exclusively to ESPN FC via telephone while doing promotional work for the sports drink, BODYARMOR, Bryant said: "I still love AC Milan -- though they



don't wear my brand of choice -- and FC Barcelona. If you cut my arm open, man, you'd see four colors; blue and [garnet], and then you'd see red and black."

At international level, there is no such conflict. Bryant says he supports the United States all the way, and is looking forward to the start of the CONCACAF Gold Cup, which starts in just over a week.

"It's always exciting if you're going to get a U.S. vs. Mexico matchup," he said. "But I'm looking forward to it.

"The more we can have the best players in the world come here and play, and show their skills here in America, the more the game picks up, the more the understanding of the game picks up."

(Source: Soccernet)

Esteghlal's Omid Ebrahimi ruled out of action for eight weeks

S P O R T S
d e s k Esteghlal iconic defensive midfielder Omid Ebrahimi underwent surgery for torn abdominal muscle on Saturday.

Ebrahimi has been ruled out for at least eight weeks after undergoing the surgery.



The new season of Iran Professional League will kick off on July 26 and it seems Ebrahimi will be out for the first three weeks.

He was discovered by coach Amir Ghalenoei and joined Sepahan in 2010.

Ebrahimi became Esteghlal's best scorer with seven goals last season.

The 29-year-old defensive midfielder had also caught the attention of Sepahan football team.

Ex-Bayern midfielder Karimi appointed Naft Tehran coach

Former Bayern Munich and Persepolis midfielder Ali Karimi has been named as new head coach of Naft Tehran.

Karimi has penned a one-year contract with the Iranian football team.

He replaced Ali Daei, who was appointed Saipa coach last month.

Karimi will head Naft Tehran in the match against Persepolis in Iran's Super Cup scheduled for July 21.

It will be Ali Karimi's first experience in coaching career as he has worked as Carlos Queiroz's assistant in Team Melli.

Former Persepolis coaches Hamid Estili and Afshin Peyrovani were also candidates to take charge of Naft Tehran. (Source: Tasnim)

Iran beat Argentina at FIVB Volleyball U21 World Championship

Iran played in the first classification playoff for the fifth place at the FIVB Volleyball Men's U21 World Championship in Brno on Saturday and, hardly to anyone's surprise, it went over five sets. This was the sixth consecutive five-setter for the Iranian team at the tournament and this time it was Amirhossein Esfandiar who led the team to victory – 3-2 (25-23, 15-25, 18-25, 25-22, 15-10) over Argentina.

Esfandiar was the winning side's most prolific player with 14 points, while Argentina's Juan Horacio Bucciarelli was the best scorer of the match with 24 points.

In the first set Argentina made more mistakes and it cost them – 25-23 to Iran. However, in the second set they completely crushed the opponent on the way to a 25-15 win. Iran started well in the third set, taking a solid five-point lead, but, led by Juan Bucciarelli, the South Americans not only found the way the catch up, but also to break far away again and close the set at 25-18. The Iranians improved their spiking again in the fourth set and this time they managed to come from behind towards a 25-22 win. Argentina continued making abundant unforced errors in the tie-breaker and now it cost them the match – 15-10 and 3-2 Iran's way.

(Source: FIVB)

Iran beach soccer team maintain place in world rankings

The national Iranian men's beach soccer team have kept position as the best Asian squad in the latest edition of the Beach Soccer Worldwide (BSWW) rankings, and stayed put in the world's third spot.

According to the latest monthly rankings released by the BSWW, the organization responsible for the founding and growth of beach soccer, Team Melli gained 3,208 points.

Japan occupied the second place in Asia and sat in the ninth slot in the global rankings with 1,759 points.

The Japanese squad was followed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman teams, who landed in the 10th and 14th spots respectively, having accumulated 1,425 and 1,086 points.

The 2017 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) Beach Soccer World Cup champion Brazil stood on the top of the rankings with 4,658 points.

Portugal earned 3,751 points to claim second position. Fourth-placed Russians notched 3,109 points. Tahiti stood fifth, having tallied 3,090 points.

The national Iranian men's beach soccer team put a highly commendable end to their campaign at the 2017 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in the Bahamas, and ranked third at the end of the high-status international event.

On the final day of the tournament at National Beach Soccer Arena of Malcolm Park in Nassau on May 7, the Iranian team defeated the Italian squad 5-3 in the third-place play-off.

In the title game, Brazil also overwhelmed Tahiti 6-0 and finished as the champion.

(Source: Press TV)

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7th Islamic Film Market opens in Mashhad

A R T **TEHRAN** — The 7th Islamic Film Market opened in Mashhad, the Capital of Islamic Culture for 2017, on Saturday.

The market opened on the sidelines of the 9th General Assembly of the Islamic Radios and Televisions Union (IRTVU), which also opened on Saturday.

A collection of 800 of the latest TV productions by IRTVU members will be offered at the market, secretary of the assembly Farshid Shakiba has said in a press release.

Representatives of radio and television channels and institutes from Islamic countries are attending the conference this year.

The Islamic Radios and Televisions Union was established by Iran, and 220 radio and TV channels have become members of the organization.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Iranian films to compete in Zanzibar festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — Two Iranian films will go on screen at the 20th Zanzibar International Film Festival, which will run in Tanzania from July 8 to 16.

"Rabies" by Amir-Ahmad Ansari will compete in the official section of the festival, while "Tomorrow Land" by Sarvenaz Alambeigi will be screened in the documentary section.



New Zealand festival to screen "Starless Dreams"

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Mehrdad Oskui's acclaimed documentary "Starless Dreams" will go on screen at the New Zealand International Film Festival, which will be held in Auckland from July 14 to August 6.

The documentary, which has been awarded at many international events, shows the lives of seven young teenage girls sharing temporary quarters at a rehabilitation and detention center on the outskirts of Tehran.



Iranian, Italian orchestras team up for Ravenna concert

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Giovanile Luigi Cherubini Orchestra and the Tehran Symphonic Orchestra will join together in the Italian city of Ravenna to perform a concert on July 8.

The performance entitled "The Roads of Friendship" will be held at the Pala de André Center, the conductor of the Italian orchestra, Riccardo Muti, has announced on his official website.

Long-awaited "Jumanji" sequel puts new twist on magical board game

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — In the verdant rain forests of Hawaii, Jack Black, Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Kevin Hart and Karen Gillan simulated dodging rampaging rhinos and hungry hippos as they filmed the long-anticipated sequel to the Robin Williams 1995 adventure film "Jumanji".

The first trailer for "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle," released on Thursday, shows how four high school teenagers are transported into a Jumanji video game as adult avatars and find themselves pursued by jungle creatures and motorcycle assailants, jumping into waterfalls and encountering perilous caves.

The first "Jumanji" told the story of a boy trapped in the magical board game for 26 years. He is released as a grown man (Williams) when two children discover the game.

As they start playing again, stampeding elephants and wild creatures escape from the Jumanji jungle into the real world, causing havoc in a small town.

In the sequel, due out in theaters on Dec. 20, viewers are meant to get a sense of being pulled back into alternative world of the board game jungle.

Winners of 10th Regional Music Festival honored

A R T **TEHRAN** — Winners of the 10th Regional Music Festival were honored at the closing ceremony held at the Fat'habad Garden in the southern Iranian city of Kerman on Friday.

The ceremony was attended by a large number of musicians and cultural officials, including Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Ali Moradkhani.

Speaking at the ceremony, Moradkhani said that the organizers plan to dispatch the top selected musicians to other countries to help promote Iranian art and culture to the world.

He also thanked the officials of the province for their collaboration in better organizing the festival and paid tribute to the deceased regional musicians who had held performances in previous editions of the festival in the past.

Honoring the veteran musicians was part of the ceremony.

Hosseinali Qadami from Markazi Province, Habibollah Haddadian from Khorasan Razavi Province, Haqreza Fetri from Hamedan Province, and Khodadad Zangshahi from Sistan Baluchestan were among the honorees.

Ahmad Maleki from West Azarbaijan, Faraq Rahmani from Sistan-Baluchestan, Manuchehr Tatari from Ilam, Ahmad Hosseini from Golestan, and Bahman Sharifi and Mohammad Alami from Mazandaran were the top music researchers who were honored in another part of the program.

The musicians and groups who were honored in this edition include Alireza



A musician (L) from the Azarbaijan region shakes hands with Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Ali Moradkhani before accepting his award during the 10th Regional Music Festival at the Fat'habad Garden in Kerman on June 30, 2017. (Honaronline)

Mohavelati from Khorasan Razavi, Hassan Kuhi from Sistan Baluchestan, Nima Shafiei from Kermanshah, Safar-Ali Ramezani from Gilan, Javad Hosseini from Golestan and Ali Shah Joshanpur from Kerman.

The ceremony was brought to an end with a performance by a group from Ilam Province with sorna player Ehsan Abdi, kamancheh player Hamed Feizian and dohol player Sam Abdoli.

Master musician of Kyrgyzstan

Kutman Sultanbekov, Mohammad Wali Khalaj from Afghanistan, and German scholars Lisa Gaupp and Lutz Dollereeder from Leuphana University of Lueneburg were among the foreign musicians who attended the festival this year.

"The End of Dreams" receives nomination at APSA



Mohammad-Ali Talebi (L) and his colleague direct Amir-Hesam Rezaei (C) in a scene from "The End of Dreams".

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian filmmaker Mohammad-Ali Talebi's latest movie "The End of Dreams" has been nominated in the Best Youth Feature Film category at the 11th Asia Pacific Screen Awards.

The film will be contending for the award with four other films in the category, the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) that is the producer of the film announced in a press release on Saturday.

The movie is about a boy who lives with his family in a village in northern Iran. After his father buys a horse, he

falls in love with it. He makes a mistake along the way but keeps it to himself. This creates even more troubles for him as time goes by.

Iranian cinema has always been among the major competitors at the APSA every year.

"Breath" by Narges Abyar received a nomination in the Best Youth Feature Film category last year.

The 11th Asia Pacific Screen Awards will be presented in Brisbane on November 23 as the competition is currently open.

"Daughter" by Reza Mirkarimi was also nominated for the awards for best screenplay and best film.

Hafez Awards launches new prize in memory of founder Ali Moallem

A R T **TEHRAN** — The organizers of the Hafez Awards announced on Saturday that will present a new prize in memory of Ali Moallem, the founder of the Hafez Awards, who died of a heart attack in March.

The prize will be awarded to a person representing an outstanding national achievement, Moallem's widow, Azar Memarian, and son, Omid, said during a press conference.

The 17th edition of the Hafez Awards, Iran's first and only private awards in the film industry that is being organized every year by the Persian cinematic monthly Donya-ye Tasvir (Picture World), will be held in August.

"We all know Ali Moallem was the founder of this celebration, a man whose knowledge about the world of cinema was quite obvious for all to see," Memarian said.

She added that she had been collaborating with Moallem as the executive and will organize the 17th edition without him but the event will be in his name and draw on his energy.

"Omid will take the helm as the producer and the secretary of the celebration, and we hope to hold a good celebration this year as in the previous ones," she remarked.

For his part, Omid also said that they have tried to follow his father's attitudes and policies in this year's judgments of the films.

"This year was a difficult year for



A poster for the 17th Hafez Awards

us since we did not have my father with us, but what encouraged us to continue was that this celebration has been founded for people and my father used to emphasize that it must be organized based on people's tastes," Omid said.

A poster for the 17th Hafez Awards bearing an image of a white dove was also unveiled at the press conference.

Omid said that the white dove symbolizes his father since he often used to appear in a white suit in public.

"The white dove also symbolizes peace and we aimed to show that the world needs to move toward peace," he added.

The exact date of the celebration has not been announced yet.

Paul McCartney settles with Sony/ATV over Beatles music rights

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Paul McCartney has reached a confidential settlement of his lawsuit against Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC in which he sought to reclaim copyrights to songs by the Beatles.

The accord disclosed on Thursday in filings with the U.S. District Court in Manhattan ends the 75-year-old McCartney's pre-emptive effort to ensure that the copyrights, once owned by Michael Jackson, would go to him starting in October 2018.

U.S. District Judge Edgardo Ramos signed an order dismissing the case, but agreed to revisit it if a dispute arose.

The dismissal request had been made by Michael Jacobs, a lawyer for McCartney, on behalf of the singer and Sony/ATV.

It is unclear how the accord affects McCartney's copyright claims. The singer's representatives could not immediately be reached on Friday for comment.

McCartney had sued on Jan. 18 for a declaration that he could reclaim more than 260 copyrights, including for songs credited to him and John Lennon such as "I Want to Hold Your Hand", "Yesterday" and "Hey Jude".

The registrations at issue also covered "Maybe I'm Amazed" and several other songs McCartney recorded as a solo artist.

They even covered such titles as "Scrambled Egg", which is close to the working lyric "Scrambled Eggs" that McCartney once used for the song that became "Yesterday".

"Gypsy" star Naomi Watts promotes new TV thriller

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Actress Naomi Watts says her new television series "Gypsy" is part of a recent trend of productions with strong female characters.

Watts, who is also an executive

producer of "Gypsy," plays a Manhattan therapist who dangerously inserts herself into the lives of her patients' acquaintances and family.

"Gypsy," a 10-part series created and written by Lisa Rubin, is mainly driven



Paul McCartney celebrates after performing with Ringo Starr (not pictured) during the 2015 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in Cleveland, U.S. on Ohio April 18, 2015. (Reuters/Aaron Josefczyk)

McCartney had been outbid by Jackson in 1985 for the Beatles' song rights, which were later rolled into Sony/ATV, a joint

by female characters.

"It's a cautionary tale, more than a psychological thriller," said Watts, adding that it was "very encouraging" to see more women in such strong roles.

"It really feels like we're watching a change take place in the last few years," she said in New York on Thursday.

The cast includes actresses Sophie Cookson, Lucy Boynton and Melanie Liburd.