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## S. Arabia pursuing hysterical gunboat diplomacy: scholar

By M.A. Saki

**TEHRAN** — A professor of global thought and comparative philosophies tells the Tehran Times that "Saudi Arabia pursues a form of hysterical gunboat diplomacy that is the outgrowth of an anxious state."

In an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times, Arshin Adib-Moghaddam says "Saudi Arabia is not pursuing a knowledge based, strategic foreign policy exactly because the state is cloistered and impenetrable".

Following is the text of the interview with Adib-Moghaddam, chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies:

■ **What are the reasons behind the**

**Saudi King's decision to depose the sitting crown prince and replace him with his son through a royal decree?**

A: King Salman wanted to resolve the succession issue at a turbulent stage of the kingdom's history. Mohammad bin Salman is his favorite son, and his appointment at a tender age is meant to signal a generational change in Saudi Arabia which goes hand in hand with several grand initiatives of the state, in particular the privatization of Saudi Aramco and the Vision 2030 project. Saudi Arabia intends to present itself as a reformed state, a progressive country which is capable of dealing with the challenges of a rapidly changing world order. **->3**

## South Pars deal with Total, CNPC to be signed today

ECONOMY

**TEHRAN** — Iran **d e s k** will sign a deal today with France's Total and China's state-owned National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) for development of phase 11 of its South Pars gas field.

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh and directors from National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), Total, CNPC, and Iran's Petropars Group and Pars Oil & Gas Company (POGC) are expected to attend the signing ceremony, Tasnim news agency reported.

The deal was expected to be signed weeks ago but apparently the process of finalizing the details took more time than expected.

Earlier in November, Total and CNPC had signed a heads of agreement with NIOC to develop the field.

Total holds a 50.1 interest in the South Pars project with CNPC owning 30 percent and Iran's Petropars 19.9 percent.

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

Total has decided to return and develop phase 11 of the South Pars project, which will cost up to \$5 billion.

## Who is going to run for Tehran mayor?

SOCIETY

**TEHRAN** — When the pro-reform candidates for the fifth Tehran city council election on May 19 captured all 21 seats, speculations ran rife as who would be chosen the capital's next mayor.

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, a principlist who has been the mayor of Tehran for almost 12 years, is now nearing the end of his rather lengthy career and now with all seats at the city council won by reformists, a heated discussion is revolving around Tehran's would-be mayor.

As announced by councilor Majid Farahani, the city council has so far put up 30 candidates. "Over a session which will be held on Wednesday, five candidates with the highest votes would be selected to submit their plans. Eventually, two final candidates will vie for the office," ISNA quoted Farahani as saying.

Below is a brief introduction to some names who stand out among the prospective candidates.

■ **Mohammad Ali Najafi**

As a former education minister, Mohammad

Ali Najafi, 66, has served as vice-president and head of the Budget and Planning Organization.

■ **Hossein Mar'ashi**

Serving as a member of the parliament, the 60-year-old Hossein Mar'ashi was a former director of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization, and Kerman province governor general.

■ **Mohsen Hashemi**

The eldest son of the late Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani - the fourth president of Iran - Mohsen Hashemi, 56, has received the highest number of votes in the fifth Tehran city council election.

He competed for the post in 2013, but lost to Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf. He also served as CEO of Tehran Metro for 13 years, from 1998 until 2011.

■ **Habibollah Bitaraf**

Bitaraf, 61, has previously served as deputy energy minister and Yazd province governor general. He currently is the deputy oil minister for engineering, research and technology.

■ **Mahmoud Hojjati**

Hojjati, 62, has previously served as transport minister and governor general of Sistan-Baluchestan province. He is currently the agriculture minister.

■ **Abbas Akhoundi**

Akhoundi, 60, is the current transport minister. He is a critic of Qalibaf's performance, saying the mayor has been "selling Tehran" by allowing building of high rise apartments and skyscrapers.

■ **Shahindokht Molaverdi**

Ms. Molaverdi, 44, is an academic, jurist, scholar, and the current vice-president for women and family affairs.

■ **Masoumeh Ebtekar**

Ms. Ebtekar, 57, is the incumbent environment chief. She is the first woman who served as vice-president after the 1979 victory of the Islamic revolution in the country. She was a member of the Tehran city council from 2007 to 2013. She was the head of the environment committee of the council.

## UNESCO starts assessing Iran's Yazd for World Heritage

HERITAGE

**TEHRAN** — The UNESCO **d e s k** World Heritage Committee on Sunday commenced assessing 35 nominees, including Iran's historical city of Yazd, for possible inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

The committee will also review the state of conservation of 99 World Heritage sites and of 55 others inscribed on the List of World

Heritage in Danger during the 41st session, which runs through July 12 in Krakow, Poland.

Historical Centre of Mbanza Kongo in Angola, Valongo Wharf Archaeological Site in Brazil, Caves with the oldest Ice Age art in Germany, Historic City of Ahmadabad in India are amongst the nominees for inclusion in the prestigious list.

Yazd is wedged between the northern

Dasht-e Kavir and southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain ringed by mountains. Its historical structure enjoys a very harmonious public-religious architecture that dates from different eras.

In August 2016, Mariana Correia at the head of a UNESCO technical evaluation mission paid a visit to Yazd as part of the decision-making process for inscribing the ancient city.



## ARTICLE

By Mahmood Khaghani  
Oil expert

## Iran: Energy First

The recent UN Security Council meeting on Thursday, June 29, may have marked a turning point in Iran's relationship with the global community of nations. The U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley found herself in an impossible position diplomatically. On the one hand she announced that the U.S. would adhere to the JCPOA deal while on the other hand when she criticised Iran's allegedly "destructive and destabilizing" actions she found virtually no support.

Meanwhile, EU Ambassador Joao Vale de Almeida and ambassadors from Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany approved Iran's adherence to the nuclear agreement while UN political chief Mr. Feltman told the UN Security Council that Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "is deeply encouraged by the continued commitment by all participants to the agreement," calling it "the embodiment of successful multi-lateral diplomacy, political will and perseverance."

Even the pro-U.S. United Kingdom's deputy U.N. ambassador, Peter Wilson, is reported as saying that the Iran agreement represents "one of the most important diplomatic achievements in recent memory," and (in a message apparently directed at the U.S.) added that the UK encourages all parties to the agreement — "to uphold their commitments, including ensuring that the Iranian people gain further tangible benefits from sanctions relief."

■ **Europe returns to Iran**

It appears clear that President Trump's competitive 'America First' foreign policy doctrine runs against a historical global tide now flowing towards economic cooperation. While Germany, France and Italy in particular have all been heavily engaging with Iran, they have not until now had the collective political power and will of the European Union behind them. **->4**



Tehran Times/ Abbas Pustinduz

## National Orchestra performs in Isfahan

Fereidun Shahbazian (R) conducts the National Orchestra during an open-air concert in the courtyard of Isfahan's Chehel Sotun Palace on July 1, 2017. Singer Ali-Asghar Shahzeidi (C) also accompanies the orchestra that performed works by Ali Tajvidi and Hossein Dehlavi. The performance was repeated on Sunday night.

## Yemen's cholera death toll rises to 1,500: WHO

The death toll from a major cholera outbreak in Yemen has risen to 1,500, Nevio Zagaria, the World Health Organization's (WHO) representative in Yemen, said, and appealed for more help to put an end to the epidemic.

Speaking at a joint news conference with representatives of the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank, Zagaria said that had been some 246,000 suspected cases in the period to June 30.

The WHO said this week that the outbreak had reached the halfway mark at 218,798 cases as a massive emergency response has begun to curb its spread two months into the epidemic.

Although most of Yemen's health infrastructure has broken down and health workers have not been paid for more than six months, the WHO is paying "incentives" to doctors, nurses, cleaners and paramedics to staff an emergency cholera network.

With funding help from the World Bank, the WHO is setting up treatment centers with 50-60 beds each, overseen by shifts of about 14 staff working around the clock. The aim is to reach 5,000 beds in total.

Cholera infection first became epidemic in Yemen last October and spread until December, when it dwindled. The second outbreak began in the Arabian Peninsula country on April 27.

Latest UN figures show that the conflict in Yemen has left 18.8 million of the country's 28 million population in need of humanitarian aid and almost seven million on the brink of famine.

Saudi Arabia has led a brutal military campaign against Yemen since two years ago in a bid to eliminate the Houthi Ansarullah movement and re-install the Riyadh-friendly former president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi. The Saudi military campaign has, however, failed to achieve its goals.

The protracted war has already killed over 12,000 Yemenis, with the US and the UK assisting the Saudis in the aggression.

(Source: Reuters)



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Army launches drills in Caspian Sea

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — The Iranian Army on Sunday started military exercises dubbed “Security and Power” in the Caspian Sea.

The massive drills are underway in five stages, the commander of Iran’s First Naval Zone Ahmadrza Bagheri said, IRNA reported.

The first stage consists of planning and designing, the second one deals with holding briefing session and launching the exercise, he explained.

The commander went on to say that after dividing the units into two groups, all exercises and joint operations will start.



Iranian Navy to Test New Gears in Caspian Sea Drills: Commander

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Deputy Commander of Iranian Navy Rear Admiral Mahmoud Mousavi said the naval forces are planned to test the country’s new weapons and military equipment in the ongoing military drills in northern Iran, Tasnim news agency reported on Sunday.

The war game code-named “Sustainable Security and Power 96” is part of annual exercises of the Nay in the waters of the Caspian Sea, Admiral Mousavi said in a press conference on Sunday.

Sea and air units of the Navy, shore-to-sea missile systems, diving teams, healthcare, intelligence systems, and commando units specialized in marine warfare have been deployed to the drills, he noted.



Liberation of Iraq’s Mosul sign of U.S. defeat: Iranian MPs

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iranian lawmakers praised the recent recapture of Iraq’s northern city of Mosul from the Islamic State, saying it proved the defeat of the U.S. government that had provided massive support for the terrorists.

Issuing a statement on Sunday, 160 Iranian parliamentarians offered their congratulations to the Iraqi people and government as well the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps’ advisory wing in the Arab country over the recent liberation of Mosul, Tasnim reported on Sunday.



IRGC official: Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi most likely killed

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — A commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps on Sunday said all indications strongly suggest that Daesh leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has been killed.

“Russia says that he has been killed.... Also, the behavior of the Daesh members shows that he has been killed; that is whenever his name is said it comes with weeping and mourning (among Daesh members),” Mohammad Reza Zahedi, the lieutenant commander of the IRGC for General Operations, told Fars news agency.



UN team to visit Iran to assess status of refugees: envoy

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — A delegation from the United Nations Refugee Agency is going to visit Iran next month to make an assessment of the situation of refugees, especially the Afghans, the United Nations high commissioner for refugees said on Sunday.

In an interview with Tasnim in Mashhad, Sivanka Dhanapala said the UN delegation will comprise of envoys and representatives of UNHCR member states.

The delegation will also visit Mashhad due to the large number of the Afghans the city is hosting, he added.



Smugglers kill 1, wound 3 Iranian soldiers

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — An Iranian soldier with a border police post near Piranshahr, a town in the northwestern province of West Azerbaijan, was killed on Sunday in clashes with traffickers of alcoholic drinks.

According to the Young Journalists Club, three other border guards were wounded, as well.

Alcoholic drinks are forbidden in Iran and their trade and possession are considered as contraband items under the Islamic law.

Northwestern borders of Iran are a common route for the smuggling of foreign liquor, where the country shares a 500-km border with Turkey, wherein drinks are allowed.

Revolutionary soul seeks to isolate U.S.

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday that to be revolutionary means to “isolate” the U.S. and talk to the world in a way that “our words are understood and accepted”.

The U.S. should not get a free hand and become powerful, Rouhani said during a speech at a conference organized on the occasion of Judiciary Week.

“We are not supposed to help enemy. Enemy seeks to prevent the Middle East region from having peace, stability and development, and also wants the region to always be in war to sell weapons and have the excuse to interfere,” the president noted.

He said that Iran should adopt foreign policies that if the U.S. seeks to stand against Iran, other countries such as European ones, China and Russia will not stand beside Washington.

The UN Security Council on Thursday renewed support for Iran’s nuclear deal with world powers, underscoring that Tehran has shown full commitment to the accord and the resolution supporting it.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad



© Tehran Times/Mohammadreza Abbasi

*Heds of the three branches of government insisted on the need to avoid division, reinforce unity and build a prosperous economy.*

Javad Zarif welcomed the UN support, tweeting: “The UN & entire world say Iran is in full compliance with its commitments, but US visceral hatred of Iran compels it to deny the obvious.”

UN political chief Jeffrey Feltman, EU

Ambassador Joao Vale de Almeida and ambassadors from Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany focused on Iran’s adherence to the nuclear agreement in spite of claims made by U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley about Iran’s “destructive and

Here’s why President Rouhani will extend Zarif’s tenure

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — As re-elected President Hassan Rouhani is nearing inauguration on August 5, there is increasing guessing work about his cabinet makeup.

Individuals close to the moderate president has anticipated a major reshuffling. Early June, Mohammad Ali Najafi, an aide to Rouhani, said: “My forecast is that 50 percent of the incumbent cabinet will change.”

Critiques have particularly taken a swipe at the administration’s economic record, arguing that unemployment among others lingers.

So, most probably ministers with an economic mission should give way to younger, more energetic options.

Unlike the lesser reappointment chance for economic ministers, certain other ones, including foreign, oil, and health ministers, are indisputably assured of a second term, unless they decline to continue themselves.

“By what we have heard, ministers of foreign affairs, health, and intelligence will be kept in their posts,” Fatemeh Zolghadr, an MP who representing Tehran in Parliament, said recently.

From among the above, one can double down on Zarif. There are at least four reasons why he will remain as foreign minister for a second four-year term.

Very importantly, Zarif has the trust of Rouhani and Ayatollah Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

Frequently, Ayatollah Khamenei has spoken highly of the 58-year diplomat, calling him a “conscientious and pious”, for whom he “keeps praying”.

“In the nuclear negotiations, Mr. Zarif and his colleagues passed a good test,” the Leader was quoted as having said at the wake of the fruitful talks between Iran and six world powers on Tehran’s nuclear activities in 2015.

Meanwhile, Rouhani has thrown his full support behind Zarif and the policies he has been pursuing in the region and larger world.

“Had anybody other than Dr. Zarif been heading the



**Zarif is well familiar with the structure of international bodies, has a perfect command of the English language, and has been involved in a multi-pronged effort to militate against Washington’s hostile measures which can derail the nuclear deal.**

negotiation team, we wouldn’t have stood where we are today,” Rouhani had said of him.

A second reason for reappointment of Zarif is the very nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

For the nuclear accord to endure over a maximum of 15 years, as agreed upon by the signatories, a clear-minded, there is need for an intelligent politician who manages to insulate the deal from those ill-disposed to the deal.

He is well familiar with the structure of international

bodies, has a perfect command of the English language, and has been involved in a multi-pronged effort to militate against Washington’s hostile measures which can derail the nuclear deal.

Receiving the Chatham House prize in November 2016, former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said: “I want to make it clear that Javad is a very tough, very capable negotiator, a patriot all the time, who fought hard for his nation’s interests, while always trying to find a constructive way to solve the problems that we both understood were huge obstacles for both of our countries, for both of our people, for our politics, and the divisions that exist at home for each of us.”

It has been due to this multi-pronged and fluid strategy that he succeeded to fight back U.S. President Trump’s harsh rhetoric about the deal with a European antidote.

The bespectacled, smiley Zarif has also other unaccomplished missions, which require his full engagement in his capacity as foreign minister. A priority issue is the Syrian crisis and the Astana initiative mediated by Russia, Iran, and Turkey. Tehran has been seriously involved in the negotiations and is one of the “peace guarantors” in the beleaguered country, and is in the middle of finalizing the “de-escalation zones” plan with Turkey and Russia.

Aside from the Syrian agenda, strained relations between Iran and certain Arab countries, including archrival Saudi Arabia, need to be seriously addressed, otherwise costs for both sides are unavoidable.

To this, one has to add the handling of the Qatar siege in such way to avoid further complicating Arab ties.

Last but not least, Zarif was and continues to be a heavyweight for Rouhani. During the presidential campaign, Zarif wholeheartedly did canvassing for Rouhani in video ads, helping to tip balance in favor of him.

Without the nonchalant foreign policy mastermind, Rouhani will be less likely to deliver his pledge for a regional détente and will face difficulty to pursue a hands-off approach to external events.

Zarif says Iran opposes use of chemical arms under any condition

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Sunday voiced the Islamic Republic’s strong opposition to use of chemical weapons, saying its use is “totally “unacceptable under any condition and at any time.”

Zarif made the remarks in a meeting in Tehran with Ahmet Uzümcü, the director general of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

He noted that Iran itself is a victim of chemical weapons.

Former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein gassed Iranian civilians and security forces during his war against Iran in 1980s, he said.

“Based on our main principles, we always reiterate our opposition to any use of chemical weapons,” the foreign minister insisted.

Iran has always stressed that no group is allowed to use chemical weapons in any armed conflict across the globe, he added.

“It is regrettable that the Daesh

terrorist group (ISIS) has used chemical weapons in its war against the Syrian government,” Zarif said.

The foreign minister also expressed Tehran’s readiness to cooperate with the OPCW in investigations into use of chemical weapon agents in Syria’s Khan Sheikhoun.

For his part, the OPCW chief lauded the Islamic Republic for its record of cooperation with the organization, and thanked Zarif for offering help to probe into the Khan Sheikhoun attack.

The chemical attack on Khan Sheikhoun in Idlib province on 4 April 2017 claimed the lives of dozens of people, including women and children.

Üzümcü also pointed to the fact that his visit to Iran coincided with the 30th anniversary of the Saddam regime’s chemical attack on the city of Sardasht in northwestern Iran.

He added that as the head of the OPCW, he has annually issued a statement on the incident.

Iran’s parliament to support missile program: Boroujerdi

**POLITICS** TEHRAN — Alaeddin Boroujerdi, chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said on Sunday that Iran’s parliament will firmly support missile programs as the only pre-emptive weapon against constant threats.

Iran is against having nuclear and mass destruction weapons and develops its missile capability as a “pre-emptive policy” against threats, he told reporters on the sidelines of an open session of the parliament.

On June 18, Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps fired six missiles into eastern Syria, targeting Islamic State strongholds in retaliation for the ISIS terrorist attacks in Tehran on June 7.

Elsewhere, Boroujerdi said that the reason behind the U.S. Senate action in imposing new sanctions on Iran is its failures in Iraq and Syria.

On 15 June, the U.S. Senate voted nearly unanimously for legislation to impose new sanctions on Iran

over its ballistic missile activity, its alleged human rights violation and claims of support for terrorist organizations.

Boroujerdi said such actions are intended to stop Iran’s influence in the region, the top parliamentarian said.

He added, “Our policy is clear. We will firmly fight terrorists based on our strategic policy... and will not back down from our position.”



# As anti-G20 protests begin, Merkel says growth must be inclusive

With an eye on anti-globalization protests brewing in Hamburg before this week's G20 summit, Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Sunday leaders will have to focus on sustainable and inclusive economic growth rather than their own prosperity.

In her weekly podcast, the German chancellor said this year's G20 summit will delve into issues championed by protesters such as distribution of wealth and consumption of resources - alongside related issues like climate change, free markets, consumer protection and upholding social standards.

Tens of thousands of demonstrators marched against the meeting in the rain in Hamburg on Sunday in a prelude to the July 7-8 gathering, where 21,000 police from across Germany will protect the meetings of the world's 20 largest economies.

"It's not only going to be about (economic) growth but rather sustainable growth," Merkel said. "We've got to have a 'win-win' situation for everyone. The issues obviously revolve around: how do we achieve inclusive or sustainable growth?"

Merkel, seeking a fourth term in a Sept. 24 election, outlined the issues as: "What are we doing with our resources? What are the rules for distribution of wealth? How many people are taking part? And how many countries are able to profit from that?"

Without mentioning the protests that have German security officials worried about possible acts of sabotage this week in the country's second-largest city, Merkel noted that these non-traditional issues were forced onto the G20 agenda.

"If we simply try to carry on as we have in the past, the worldwide develop-



ments will definitely not be sustainable and inclusive," she said. "We need the climate protection agreement, open markets and improved trade agreements in which consumer protection, social and environmental standards are upheld."

In a speech to parliament last week, Merkel promised to fight for free trade and press on with multilateral efforts to combat climate change at the summit, challenging the "America First" policies of U.S. President Donald Trump.

The G20 meeting follows a G7 summit in Sicily a month ago that exposed deep divisions between other Western coun-

tries and Trump on climate change, trade and migration. Trump later announced he was pulling the United States out of a landmark agreement to combat climate change reached in 2015 in Paris.

German authorities are bracing for trouble in Hamburg, worried that the protests could turn violent as they did outside a G8 summit in Genoa, Italy in 2001 when one person was shot dead and hundreds injured.

The German Federal Crime Office warned that violent G20 opponents could carry out arson and sabotage at infrastructure targets such as the Ham-

burg harbor and airport, newspaper Welt am Sonntag said on Sunday.

"New and creative forms of attack have to be watched out for," the report said. It added Hamburg police are bracing for attempts by activists to disrupt electrical power in Hamburg.

Sunday's demonstration was organized by a group called "Protest Wave G20", with 50,000 to 100,000 protesters expected on an afternoon march through the city center. Other demonstrations this week are called "Welcome to Hell" and "G20 Not Welcome".

(Source: Reuters)

## UAE ambassador funded journalist to sue Al Jazeera

Former Al Jazeera journalist Mohamed Fahmy received significant funding from an Emirati official to start his legal battle against the media network, the New York Times has reported.

According to a report published by the Times, Fahmy received a substantial "loan" from the UAE's ambassador to the U.S., Yousef al-Otaiba, to cover his legal campaign against Al Jazeera following his release from an Egyptian prison in 2015.

Fahmy, along with nine other colleagues, were accused of spreading "false news" during their coverage of the aftermath of the military overthrow of then-president Mohamed Morsi in 2013, the year they were taken into custody.

Fahmy spent 437 days in jail before being released.

The Egyptian judge who sentenced the journalists said they were brought together "by the devil" to destabilize the country.

Fahmy is currently taking legal action against Al Jazeera and is suing for over \$100m, saying the network knowingly



endangered his life.

In February 2015, Fahmy began corresponding with Otaiba who offered to arrange coverage on the UAE-based TV channel SkyNews Arabia, according to the New York Times.

"SkyNews to take it live would be awesome, I think a nudge to their C.E.O. could make it happen," Fahmy wrote.

"Already done," Otaiba responded.

"Let's hope they can get there."

After the news conference, Fahmy is reported to have written to the ambassador, "I plan to keep the pressure on through the media" and alluded to documents from Qatari opposition that would "embarrass the government".

The Times also reported that Fahmy

asked for money: "I am looking for a personal loan with a written agreement to pay back on success plus interest, and or a profit margin."

According to the paper, in October 2015 Otaiba emailed an Egyptian businessman, Tawfik Diab, to arrange a transfer of \$250,000 to an account under Fahmy's name.

A few days later, Fahmy confirmed the transaction.

"The money is in," Fahmy wrote, and he promised "a progress report that we were planning to send to AD" - presumably Abu Dhabi, the capital of the UAE.

"My team here will start working on the media blitz to revive the case in U.S. media," he added.

In May 2016, Fahmy emailed information about his personal checking account in Vancouver to Otaiba, the report said. But it is unclear how Otaiba responded.

Fahmy claimed that the money for the lawsuit had gone to a third party, whom he refused to name.

"I have not received a penny from Yousef," he told the Times.

The newspaper also reported that Fahmy falsely denied coordination with Otaiba in a news conference the journalist held in Washington on June 22 under the banner, "Al Jazeera on Trial".

At the conference, Fahmy added his voice to Saudi and UAE accusations that Qatar and Al Jazeera have conspired with "extremists".

"Qatar has been given so many chances, and they have been warned so many times," he said, commending the Saudi-led blockade.

Asked if he had consulted Saudi or Emirati officials, or if he was close to Otaiba, Fahmy said, falsely, "to simply answer your question, no." Fahmy said this past week that he was protecting a friend.

Since the start of the Persian Gulf crisis, Fahmy has been vocal in his support for the blockade and has praised the Saudi offensive.

In an apparent attempt to spur unrest in Qatar, Fahmy also launched the hashtag #GoodbyeTamim.

(Source: New York Times)

## S. Arabia pursuing hysterical gunboat diplomacy: scholar

➔ Yet the appointment of Mohammad Bin Salman itself, is an indicator for the arbitrariness of this absolutist form of governance: As you rightly imply the appointment was made possible because of several royal decrees which supersede any other legal system in Saudi Arabia. Such sudden and rather hectic announcement is only possible in an absolute monarchy. This form of governance remains the country's Achilles Heel at a time when Arabs, Iranians and other peoples of the region demand democracy, social justice and human rights. Saudi Arabia is simply not a model to emulate for any country in the region. Any system of governance based on overt forms of suppression is unsustainable in the long run in the current juncture of world history. In particular mainstream Muslim politics, as the Arab revolts showed, cannot be bought or ideologically manipulated to be compliant with forms of tyranny. Politics today is interrogated by functioning and globally networked civil societies and a caste of intellectuals whose duty remains to interrogate the state in order to promote a rather more just form of politics devoid of psycho-nationalism. I have explored these dynamics in my new book which will be published by Cambridge University Press by the end of this year.

■ Can the Saudi reshuffle be considered a soft coup d'état backed by the U.S. and the UAE?

A: Neither the UAE, nor the United States has the power to determine the politics of Saudi Arabia. It is true that the U.S. is a chaperone of the Saudi monarchy, but the current world order is not only post-American, it is non-American. In

**"Current world order is not only post-American, it is non-American."**

**How can you hand nuclear weapons over to someone like Trump? It is comparable to giving a gun to a toddler to play with.**

actual fact, the Trump Presidency has accelerated the demise of the United States as a global power. He remains the most dangerous man on the planet, because he was elected as commander in chief of the most dangerous military power in the world. But his danger is not due to these potential military resources, it is because he is politically illiterate. It remains surprising to me that a man with such obvious stupidity can be voted into office. The progressive strata of society in the United States must ask themselves serious questions. How can you hand nuclear weapons over to someone like Trump? It is comparable to giving a gun to a toddler to play with. And yet, in analytical terms the Iraq war in 2003 demonstrated that raw military power does not guarantee strategic gains. The U.S. won the war on the battlefield, but the country lost strategically. Iraq is now firmly placed on the right side of history.

■ What might be the influence of such a major reshuffle in Saudi foreign policy especially in the region? Is the shakeup somehow related to Trump's recent trip to Riyadh?

A: Saudi Arabia has pursued an assertive foreign policy in recent years and this is likely to continue in the short run. The confrontation with Qatar is an obvious outcome, the strategic competition with Iran another. Saudi Arabia pursues a form of hysterical gunboat diplomacy that is the outgrowth

of an anxious state. Anyone with a sense of strategy would have advised against alienating Qatar at this stage of regional politics. The condescending tone adopted towards Doha (and Tehran) is a reflection of the authoritarian mentality that permeates the Saudi state. Such psycho-politics never succeed; history has proven that. Saudi Arabia is not pursuing a knowledge based, strategic foreign policy exactly because the state is cloistered and impenetrable. There is no breathing room for strategic thinking, because the palace is hermetically closed to a knowledge based society.

I anticipate that the country will be further drained in Yemen, that it will understand very soon that Syria is lost to the axis that will connect Beirut and Damascus to Baghdad and Tehran and that it will be forced to accept those emerging realities. There is no doubt in my mind, that once Saudi Arabia is politically marginalized further and economically drained, the United States will withdraw its support. There is no loyalty in U.S. foreign policy. The shah of Iran is one example, other dictators such as Hosni Mubarak and Ben Ali in Tunisia are others. The Trump administration is not even loyal to longstanding allies such as Germany which is why Angela Merkel recently announced that Europe must rely on its own resources, rather than merely on the United States. In this multipolar world order, Iran is well advised to stand firmly with the Europeans. Berlin, Paris, Rome are valuable partners to Iran, in terms of technology transfer, cultural affinity, economic prospect and political stability.

**"The Trump Presidency has accelerated the demise of the United States as a global power."**

## Lebanon will benefit from Daesh defeat: Hezbollah

Deputy head of Hezbollah's executive council Sheikh Nabil Qaouk said Sunday that the results of the war in Syria would shape the future of the region, and that Lebanon will not be intimidated by Israel's moves.

"All the maneuvers made by Israel to build walls along the border with Palestine, and the aerial operations it carries out, do not succeed in scaring Lebanon," Qaouk said, according to the state-run National News Agency.

While Israel is intensifying its actions on the ground in Syria, it cannot ignore Hezbollah's growing influence, the Sheikh said - adding that the group is prepared to face any threat coming from Israel.

Qaouk also said that "the defeat of Daesh [ISIL] is deeply intertwined with the future and identity of the region and that Lebanon will be the first beneficiary" from the group's eradication. "It is time to uproot the terrorist strongholds," he said.

(Source: Daily Star)

## Dem proposes panel to remove President if unfit to lead

Pointing to the outcry over President Donald Trump's latest controversial tweets, freshman Rep. Jamie Raskin is urging his colleagues to get behind a bill that could potentially oust the President if he was mentally or physically unfit.

The Maryland Democrat wants to create an 11-member commission made up of mostly physicians and psychiatrists -- more formally called the "Oversight Commission on Presidential Capacity." The panel would carry out a medical examination and determine whether the President was physically or mentally able to do the job.

Two of the commission's members would also be former high ranking officials, such as presidents, vice presidents, attorneys general or secretaries of state.

It's a provocative and long-shot effort, but Raskin is citing as his legal backup the 25th Amendment of the Constitution, which was adopted in 1967 after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy to establish procedure in the case a president is incapacitated. About two dozen Democrats have signed on to the effort as of Thursday.

Raskin is zeroing in on one section of that constitutional amendment, which allows the vice president to assume powers if either the majority of the Cabinet or "such other body as Congress" finds that the President is "unable to discharge the powers and duties of office." (The vice president would also have to agree to the assessment of the President's abilities.) Raskin is proposing his commission to serve as that "body."

The President could appeal the decision, and a whopping two-thirds of both the House and the Senate would then need to agree with the commission's assessment in order to keep the President out of office. If two-thirds fail to agree, then the President would be allowed to resume the powers and duties of the office.

CNN reached out to the White House for comment on the proposal and has not yet received a response.

Raskin, a former professor of constitutional law, first introduced the bill in April and before this week it had 20 co-sponsors (all Democrats). Another three Democrats joined as of Thursday, according to Raskin's office.

Amid a heated health care debate, Trump made headlines Thursday when he tweeted stunningly personal insults of the co-hosts of the MSNBC show "Morning Joe," a move that drew criticism from members of both parties and renewed concern about the President's Twitter habits.

(Source: CNN)

## Russia stresses need for diplomacy in Persian Gulf dispute

Russian President Vladimir Putin has stressed the need for diplomacy to end the dispute between Qatar and several other Persian Gulf states.

"Vladimir Putin stressed the importance of political-diplomatic efforts aimed at overcoming differences of opinion and the normalization of the difficult situation that exists," said a statement released by the Kremlin on Saturday.

While noting that the conversation was initiated by Qatar and Bahrain, it noted that boosting cooperation in the field of energy and investment was also discussed.

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates 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 the normalization of ties. Among them was that Qatar should shut down Al Jazeera, a media network that has reportedly been critical especially of Saudi Arabia, close a Turkish military base, limit its ties

Meanwhile, Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani has stressed that Doha will not give in to any of the demands made by Riyadh and its allies, noting that the requests were "meant to be rejected."

"Everyone is aware that these demands are meant to infringe the sovereignty of the state of Qatar, shut the freedom of speech and impose auditing and probation mechanism for Qatar," he added.

"We believe that the world is not governed by ultimatums, we believe that the world is governed by the international law, it is governed by an order that does not allow large countries to bully small countries," he noted.

(Source: TASS)



NEWS IN BRIEF



### Russian company to construct airport complex in Qom

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Russian Company Region-desk transneft is in charge of a €2.8 billion-project on construction of an airport complex in Iranian central city of Qom.

According to Tasnim news agency's Sunday report, the Russian company has commenced implementation of the project, which originally belonged to an Iranian holding company and plans to build passenger and container terminals in the airport's location as well.

According to the Russianconstruction news website, Regiontransneft has also embarked on the implementation of an integrated project for construction and launching of several real estate projects on Kish Island.

## India's Modi says cancelled registration of 100,000 companies

India has cancelled the registration of more than 100,000 companies which were "in violation of laws", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, in the latest effort by the government against "black money" and tax evasion.

The decision was taken based on an extensive data analysis conducted by the government after Modi in November announced a sudden ban on high-value currency banknotes.

More than 300,000 firms had come under scanner for irregular transactions following the banknote ban, while licences of more than 100,000 firms had been cancelled, Modi said, without naming any company.

"This is not an ordinary decision," Modi said late on Saturday while addressing a gathering of accountants, hours after launching the country's landmark sales tax reform.

"Further stern measures will be taken in the coming days against companies which are violating the law."

While the decision to outlaw 500- and 1,000-rupee bank notes last year was part of a broader crackdown on corruption, the sudden withdrawal of 86 percent of currency in circulation left businesses, farmers and households suffering.

Modi defended his decision, calling it a "fight" for the poor.

The government's "data mining" exercise initiated after the November decision was still ongoing, Modi said.

The government will also take action against more than 37,000 identified "shell companies" which were found to be engaged in illegal transactions.

"The ones who have looted the poor, will have to return to the poor," Modi said.

(Source: Reuters)

## Wells Fargo unsettles mortgage bond market by holding back funds

Wells Fargo & Co. surprised investors this week by withholding more than \$90 million due to buyers of pre-crisis residential mortgage-backed securities.

The bank said it invoked its right as trustee to hold back funds to cover legal costs. The 20 transactions had a principal balance of \$540 million and are among more than 2,000 deals involved in a lawsuit brought by bondholders including BlackRock Inc. and Pacific Investment Management Co. in 2014 to recover losses from the financial crisis.

It's only the second time that proceeds from bonds involved in that litigation have been withheld from investors. Wells Fargo's move caused losses for some bondholders and sent others scrambling to assess risks for similar deals in a market still recovering from the bursting of the housing bubble in 2008.

"I expect the market to somewhat freeze until there is more clarity on the bonds with that clause or similar," said Guillermo Roditi, a portfolio manager at New River Investments in Los Angeles. "I expect there to be a bit of chaos."

### ■ Clean-up call

Wells Fargo withheld some funds after New Residential Investment Corp. exercised a so-called clean-up call on the debt. The deals were originally sold in 2004 and 2005 and include loans made or acquired by Bank of America Corp. to prime and non-prime U.S. borrowers.

About \$3,000 per loan was held back, according to analysts at JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Webbs Hill Advisors LLC. The amount withheld was determined by the "scope of the plaintiffs' claims," said Jen Hibbard, a Wells Fargo spokeswoman.

"Wells Fargo, in its capacity as trustee, has been named as a defendant in lawsuits claiming the trustees breached certain duties to investors," she said. "Wells Fargo has incurred and will incur legal expenses, even though it continues to believe it is not responsible for any losses in the relevant trusts and that these lawsuits are without merit."

Investors are suing six banks over their roles as mortgage-bond trustees, claiming they knew the loans underlying trillions of dollars of RMBS were misrepresented and failed to force the sellers to buy them back. Wells Fargo is trustee for 261 deals, according to JPMorgan.

### ■ New risk

"This trustee lawsuit and others that are pending have created a new risk for legacy buyers," said JPMorgan analysts led by John Sim. "We expect the trustees to continue to hold onto these reserves and to take on more reserves for called deals until there is more legal clarity."

Wells Fargo's decision is already being felt in the wider market for crisis-era mortgage securities that don't come with a government guarantee. About 400 deals are "somewhat similar" to the redeemed deals, with Wells Fargo acting as trustee for 34, Morgan Stanley analysts led by James Egan wrote in a note to clients on Wednesday.

The outstanding stock of so-called non-agency RMBS has shrunk by about 70 percent in the past decade to \$823 billion, according to the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association.

(Source: Bloomberg)

# Gas to be supplied to 900,000 subscribers by Mar. 2018

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — Gas will be supplied to 900,000 subscribers throughout the country by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2018), according to an official at the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC).

Saeid Mo'meni, the director for gas supplying in NIGC, said gas supplying to these subscribers will be conducted through an estimated fund of 65.19 tril-

lion rials (about \$1.74 billion), IRNA reported on Sunday.

Supplying gas to this number of subscribers will economize on consumption of over 1.8 billion liters of oil products in the villages.

Gas has been supplied to a noticeable number of cities and villages in the country over the past four years.

As the result of vast efforts made in this due, some 1,085 cities and 23,208 vil-

lages enjoy gas at the moment, Mo'meni further announced.

### ■ Settlement in Energy

Iran pioneered the concept of settlement in energy many years ago using what became known as **energy swaps** firstly by exchanging gas for power with Armenia and gas for gas with the Republics of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan and secondly through the Caspian Oil Swap where oil from the Caspian region was exchanged for oil from the Persian Gulf. Since then, many nations have followed Iran's lead even including the U.S. and oil swaps with Mexico.

Total's South Pars 11 includes settlement through a new form of energy swap which Mr. Cook terms a "Smart Energy Swap". This comprises the exchange of the use of Total's valuable technology, skills and experience (intellectual capital – referred to by ExxonMobil as the Fifth Fuel) for the use of a flow of valuable Iranian hydrocarbon energy.

As Chris Cook observes based upon his research at University College London: **"there is nothing new about such Smart Energy Swaps: in 1778, the great Scottish engineer James Watt provided the use of his new steam engine to pump water from Cornish tin mines in exchange for a third of the value of the coal saved by the mine-owners. In other words, Watt did not sell his new pumps for profit to the mine owners; he supplied pumping as a service and shared in the value his intellectual capital created."**

### ■ Energy Economy

The beauty of the Total smart energy swap deal according to Mr. Cook is that the most difficult subject of all - pricing – becomes irrelevant. Why? As he explains: **"Conventional contract pricing in U.S. dollars for sales of energy will invariably become, over time, more advantageous for either the buyer or the seller as their economies diverge from that of the U.S. economy."** He further said: **"this divergence arising from the variability of the U.S. dollar as a pricing unit or benchmark leads to disputes at best and to the end of the contract at worst."**

He went on to emphasise the crucial advantage of freedom from dollar pricing: **"with a smart energy swap, sale prices and conflicts are not involved, because Iran's energy is not sold for dollars which are then paid to Total but is simply supplied as a flow of raw energy instead."**

created by authorities trying to create growth by printing money," Kganyago said.

Credit downgrades by two of the top three ratings agencies, based on the economic and political turmoil, have dented business and consumer confidence in South Africa, which has just suffered two quarters of economic contraction.

Public Protector Busisiwe Mkhwebane set-off a political row this month when she called for an overhaul of the bank's mandate - to focus on growth rather than inflation and the currency - rattling investors and hitting the rand hard.

## Hong Kong, China regulators to start trial bond connect trading Monday

**BEIJING (Sputnik)** — The People's Bank of China, along with the Hong Kong Monetary Authority have agreed on the launch of the mechanism of mutual access to the bond market and set the start of the trial Northbound trading through the bond connect for Monday, July 3, the People's Bank of China said in a statement Sunday.

"In order to promote the development of the bond markets in Mainland China and Hong Kong SAR, the People's Bank of China (PBC) and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) have approved China Foreign Exchange Trade System & National Interbank Funding Centre, China Central Depository & Clearing Co., Ltd, Shanghai



lages enjoy gas at the moment, Mo'meni further announced.

The official also announced, "The NIGC's requirements in implementation

## Iran: Energy First

In support of the sustainability of energy swaps, he added: **" moreover, Total appears to be comfortable enough with this partnership relationship to have agreed a 20 year contract term rather than the much shorter term of perhaps 5 years originally envisaged which would have limited investment and financial exposure."**

### ■ Who Decides?

After the issue of pricing in the IPC, the issue of dispute resolution is probably the most contentious, and in particular what legal framework and jurisdiction should be used to resolve disputes effectively and at reasonable cost in time and resources?

It was in 2004, in the context of the oil market proposal which became known as the Kish Oil Bourse that Mr. Cook innovated a new legal and neutral legal framework agreement within which economic international and commercial relationships may take place without any market participant having dominant rights over any other. Instead, the governance principle of what is known as a Nondominium agreement is that each participant shall have agreed veto rights over matters which concern him.

In his view, there is a need for a neutral and global energy/petroleum market user agreement and market-specific mediation/arbitration platform.

As an excellent proof of concept the parties concern to apply it for the Arash gas field to which Iran, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia all lay claim.

### ■ Energy Diplomacy

The effect of the recent assumption of power in Saudi Arabia by Mohammed Bin Salman (generally known as MBS) in what is essentially an intra-family coup is still being assessed. In many observers' view, Saudi action in Yemen and recent ultimatum to Qatar constitutes the muscular show of force necessary within Saudi culture to attain power. The question now MBS has attained power is whether this young man will use it to conduct smart or dumb foreign policy.

In the brief period while new MBS appointments consolidate their positions in the Saudi hierarchy, observers like Mr. Cook believe, there is a window of opportunity for Iran to launch a constructive energy diplomacy initiative aimed at defusing the high tensions from regrettable incidents in the Persian Gulf.

### ■ Competition, Cooperation or Both?

While nations compete fiercely for val-

uable resources such as land, fossil fuels and water, it is increasingly the case they cooperate to conserve such resources. Such energy cooperation forms the basis for the strategic foreign policy doctrine of resource resilience using energy swaps which Minister Zangeneh during his term with Iran's sitting government referred to as energy diplomacy.

When Iran's next government begins its official work in few weeks' time one of the key questions is what will be its new energy diplomacy & policy?

Mr. Cook response to this question is: **"my advice to Iran is to build on the innovative South Pars 11 contract by extending the underlying Danish principle of resource resilience (least resource cost) to South Pars gas production. By this I mean that the more locally that South Pars natural gas is converted to power then the less gas is wasted by energy intensive transmission, whether domestically in Iran via pipeline or CNG, or internationally via pipeline or LNG."**

He adds: **"a constructive – and probably unexpected - energy diplomacy proposal by Iran to Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council would be for an energy swap of gas for oil or oil products. So Iran would supply natural gas or even power in exchange for the crude oil which is being wasted to provide cooling at summer rates of more than 1.5 m barrels per day."**

In fact, the establishment of Energy Free Zones/Hubs on national borders for power generation would facilitate energy cooperation in a very practical way. When I shared this idea with Ambassador Dr. Shams Ardekani (head of ICCIMA Energy Commission) he welcomed it as part of a broader strategy of the proposed resilient Caspian Energy Grid energy infrastructure.

So to conclude, when I asked Chris Cook for his final comment, he said: **"in the same way that Iran's newly introduced smart energy contract supersedes dumb Western energy contracts, so smart Iranian energy diplomacy based on cooperation could come to supersede dumb U.S.-led Western diplomacy based on conflict and competition."**

I believe there is a window of opportunity to leave behind destructive 20<sup>th</sup> Century doctrines of energy competition whether for America First, EU First or even Iran First and to construct a new

21<sup>st</sup> Century global settlement based on networked energy cooperation- Energy First.



South Africa's Reserve Bank Governor Lesetja Kganyago

grow stronger and more consistently at lower inflation rates," Kganyago said.

(Source: Reuters)

## Kong's and international investors trade mainland China's bonds, whereas the Southbound Trading provides the investors from the mainland China with the opportunity to trade Hong Kong's and foreign bonds.

No information on the launch of the Southbound Trading has been provided to date.



# OPEC's crude exports to the U.S. near all-time lows

OPEC's share of U.S. oil imports has been declining, and has dropped sharply over the last few years. In 1990, OPEC supplied 62 percent of all crude imported into the U.S. This share gradually declined until 2008, as Canadian output grew and displaced imports from overseas.

After 2008, the combination of the financial crisis and booming U.S. shale output caused OPEC's global market share to decline sharply, falling to 36 percent in 2015. Decreased domestic production in 2016 led the U.S. to import more from OPEC in 2016, but at 40 percent, OPEC's share of U.S. crude oil imports is the second-lowest on record.

After discovering that its strategy to push out U.S. shale producers with low oil prices didn't work, OPEC's efforts to stabilize the global oil market have been a popular news subject in recent months. Production cut extensions aim to reduce global inventories, but have not been as successful as hoped. And recent reports suggest that Saudi Arabia may specifically cut oil shipments to the U.S. in an attempt to improve inventory data.

The EIA has kept thorough records on all oil imports into the U.S. since 1986, compiling data on all 91.2 billion barrels of oil the U.S. has imported in the last 31 years.

## Imports from individual nations declining

Saudi Arabia is the largest OPEC supplier of oil to the U.S., shipping a total of 14.5 billion barrels of oil since 1986.

The Kingdom has been the U.S.'s foremost oil supplier, among OPEC nations, in 23 of the past 31 years. Imports from the country have recently been in decline, however, as rising domestic production reduces the need for imports. In 2016, the U.S. imported just over 400 million barrels of crude from Saudi Arabia.

Venezuela is the second-most important provider of OPEC crude to the U.S., with 11.9 billion barrels sent to the U.S. over the past 31 years. Venezuela's heavy oil is in decline, likely being displaced by similarly heavy oil from Canada. Venezuela provided the U.S. with about 271 million barrels of oil in 2016.

Nigeria is third-largest among OPEC crude import partners, and has shipped a total of 7.8 billion barrels of crude oil since 1986. Once the once the second-largest provider of oil to the U.S., imports from Nigeria are typically lighter crude, similar in grade to the oil produced in U.S. shale operations. The shale boom and domestic unrest quickly forced Nigeria out of the U.S. oil trade. In 2010 the U.S. imported 983 MBOPD of oil from Nige-



ria. Only four years later, though, this value had fallen to merely 58 MBOPD, a drop of 94 percent.

## Only two OPEC countries provide heavy oil

The types of crude imported from OPEC varies widely among the different countries in the group. Oil with an API gravity lower than 25 is often defined as "heavy oil," while oil between 25 and 35 is "medium" and oil with an API gravity above 35 is typically called "light oil."

Venezuela provides the heaviest oil of any of the U.S.'s major trading partners, averaging around 20°API. Ecuador is the only other OPEC member that exports heavy oil to the U.S., providing about one tenth of the oil that Venezuela does. Unlike almost every other OPEC country, U.S. oil imports from Ecuador have gradually increased in recent years.

The U.S. needs heavy oil because its refineries are not set up to process the grades of oil that are produced from shale formations. Most American refineries were set up to process heavy crude before the shale boom began, and have not changed since unconventional oil

began to enter the market.

Medium grade crude dominates imports from OPEC members, with Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Angola, Kuwait and Iran supplying medium oil.

Imports of light oil from different OPEC members almost all follow the same story. While Nigeria is by far the most prominent supplier of light oil, Algeria, Libya, Gabon and Qatar also produce light oil for export to the U.S. Imports from most of these countries peaked around 2007, before the U.S. shale oil boom really took off. Production from fields like the Bakken and Permian quickly made light oil imports unnecessary, and none of these countries are major suppliers of oil to the U.S. anymore.

U.S. production, by contrast, represents a wide variety of crude oil grades. California and GOM production provides heavy oil, and imported oil from Canada oil sands is heavy oil. Unconventional production, on the other hand, is almost exclusively light oil.

(Source: oilprice.com)

## All eyes on July for U.S. oil demand to drain glut

U.S. oil traders are hoping the sweltering days of July are also hot ones for demand, believing the new month is the last best opportunity this year to see the overhang of inventories finally subside.

Export opportunities to Asia and big U.S. summer driving demand - expected to hit a record this weekend - are seen as the primary drivers for a drawdown in stocks that have remained stubbornly above seasonal averages.

July is usually a big month for drawdowns: Over the last five years, inventories of crude oil have dropped by an average of 2.9 million barrels per week in July, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

But analysts warn that if inventories do not draw down in earnest, it may dash the hopes of many in the industry of seeing higher prices by the end of this year.

"Typically June/July represents the seasonal peak in refinery demand for crude," said David Thompson, executive vice-president at Powerhouse, an energy-specialized commodities broker in Washington. "It gets tougher to use up all that crude as refinery utilization starts to ease off as we move past the peak of summer driving season."

A record number of motorists are expected to hit the road for the Fourth of July holiday. U.S. gasoline demand was up 0.4 percent in April from the year-ago period, the first year-over-year increase since December, according to the latest U.S. government data.

In addition, a window has opened for U.S. crude exports to Asia, after prices made it uneconomical to send U.S. supplies offshore in recent months. Robust appetite from Japanese and South Korean buyers could help soak up excess supplies.

Investors came into this year optimistic, and indeed, U.S. crude prices CLC1 topped out near \$55 a barrel in February in the wake of the deal struck by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries with other key producers to reduce supply by 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) that began in January.

But OECD total oil inventories are still above 3 billion barrels due to an unexpected recovery in Libyan and Nigerian supplies and a rebound in U.S. shale production.

Several banks in the last week cut their oil price projections for the rest of the year, with analysts from Bank of America-Merrill Lynch on Friday saying the "the much trumpeted OPEC output deal has been a complete flop."

U.S. crude futures have slumped about 15 percent so far this year to about \$46 per barrel, and as of Friday, ended its worst half-year performance in 19 years.

"We expect to get real clues in the next 4-5 weeks about second half 2017 oil market sentiment," Credit Suisse said in a note on Thursday.

"If stocks do not fall much next month, at the very least we would worry that bearish sentiment again would come to the fore."

(Source: Reuters)



## SAIPA's Newly-Manufactured Car "CS35", the Most Economical among Rivals

### ● "Changan CS35"

"Changan CS35" is known as a small Cross-Over. Manufacturing this car started in SAIPA's Kashan Branch in the past year (ended March 2017). This car has attracted the attention of many customers to itself. This product is a small SUV, urban CUV, which is economical for Iranian families with modern style. Of the other specifications of this car, it should be referred to the easy driving and economical consumption of fuel. Engine of this car (H16) is powerful, low noise and environment-friendly drivetrain. In addition to the large interior compartment, driver has wide spectrum of view with very low noise inside the NVH chamber, equipped with soft steering wheel and very suitable handling. The brake system of this car is equipped with disc brake (four wheels) with very good performance. Of the other specifications of this car, it should be referred to: leather-coated and very comfortable seats, air bag (special of driver, passenger), immobilizer (anti-theft system), electronic steering wheel, automatic air-conditioning system, side electric mirrors, electric sunroof, cruise control, audio system with high-quality sound broadcasting system installed on the steering wheel, etc.

### ● CS35

This masterpiece is a result of global R&D and equipped with Blue Core 1.6L Engine. This CUV has an excellent performance, beautiful appearance and comfortable ride. In-call 2.0 is a state of the art travel system with Safety Assistance, Trip Computer and Infotainment.

### ● Strong and Powerful Engine

"Cs35" is equipped with 1.6-lit. Engine with 123 horsepower (HP) that can produces torque of 160 Newton/meter. The engine installed on the car is equipped with "Blue Core" technology which creates a suitable power for an engine with low volume.

### ● High safety

"Changan CS35" is the new product of SAIPA Car Manufacturing Company. As a small Cross-Over, the car has high safety, observing requirements of international standards. This vehicle is equipped with four air bags with controlling systems such as BA, ABS, EBD installed on it.

### ● High Quality

It is enough to experience driving with "CS35" for once. This car has a soft and comfortable driving without producing any noise at the time of driving. In general, you will feel sense of calmness and comfort when driving this luxury car.

### ● Cabin

This car has a suitable quality both inside and outside cabin, so that high quality materials, according to the international standards, have been used in manufacturing this car.

### ● Gaining Customers' Satisfaction

Among other SUV (Sport Utility Vehicle) cars available in the country, "CS35" will meet demand of drivers and passengers to a great extent. Relatively complete equipment and facilities is one of the salient advantages of this car as compared with others at the market. Therefore, this car is a proper option for customers who think of driving high-quality parts and equipment.

### ● Growing Production

With the coordination made, SAIPA Car Mfg. Company's branch in Kashan manufactured 4,686 units of "Changan CS35", standing at proper position as compared to their rival companies.

### ● Different Transmission

"CS35" is equipped with four-speed automatic gearbox. The gearbox is equipped with Japanese "Aisin" Company which has motorization far lower than competitors. The high quality of Tip-Tronic capability has been considered in this gearbox.

### ● Good Facilities for More Comfort

The "Cross-Over" assembled in SAIPA's Kashan Branch is equipped with the following amenities and facilities: leather trimming, daylight, cruise control, sunroof, light sensor, foldable electric side mirror, rear park sensor, etc. Owners of "CS35" also can install monitor, TV, GPS, rear camera as bespoke and custom on car in authorized sales agencies.

### ● Smart Production Line

"CS35" is assembled in a unique production line. The assembling line of this car "Changan" based in company's Kashan branch is considered as one of the most modern and advanced production line in the country. It should be noted that almost all parts of the car are controlled by the smart robotic machinery.

### ● Fair and Reasonable Price

The factory price of automatic Model of "Changan" CS35" 2017 is estimated at 65,990,000 tomans in car market of the country. The price of car at free market is estimated at 670 million rials.





## Urban warfare, then and now

By Amir A. Amirshकारी

A few weeks ago, the Atlantic Monthly Press released Mark Bowden's excellent book, Hue 1968, A Turning Point of the American War in Vietnam. As he did previously in Black Hawk Down, Bowden brings the reader down the deadly streets of a savage urban battle, meticulously describing the action from the points of view the participants. Currently, the roughly yearlong battle for the Iraqi city of Mosul is drawing to a close. Although a half century separates these two classic battles, the similarities in urban combat far outweigh differences. Why is this so and what does it portend for the future?



### ■ The enemy's strength

After 10,000 North Vietnamese soldiers slipped into the poorly guarded city of Hue in February of 1968, it took a month of intense fighting, principally by American Marines, to root them out. One reason was gross negligence by the high command in estimating the enemy's strength. A deeper reason was the physical reality of urban density, trapped civilians, stout houses, and massive stone walls. There was no avoiding house-to-house fighting to force back a determined enemy. In terms of total fatalities among friendly and enemy troops and civilians, the result was, to quote Bowden, "well over ten thousand, making it by far the bloodiest [battle] of the Vietnam War."

Similar ferocity marked the Marine assaults against the Iraqi city of Fallujah in 2004. Eighteen thousands of the city's 39,000 buildings were damaged or destroyed. More than 120 Americans and thousands of Iraqi civilians and insurgents died. Had it not been for modern medical techniques, about as many Americans would have been killed in Fallujah as in Hue. And over a decade later, it has taken 100,000 Iraqi forces (to include the Kurdish peshmerga soldiery) a year to kill or drive out the estimated 5,000 terrorists called ISIS from Mosul. Undoubtedly the toll, if ever accurately assessed, will be much higher than in Hue of 1968.

Urban warfare remains characterized by slow, massive destruction. Yet 50 years ago, there were no computers, no internet, no GPS, no UAVs, no digital communications, no night-vision devices, and no precision strikes.

### ■ Lack of change in tactics

Two facts account for the lack of change in tactics. First, cities are constructed of steel and concrete, with streets providing the open spaces, which are usually linear. Any fighter in the open is quickly cut down. No technology can accurately detect and count humans inside buildings and tunnels. So the attacker must advance by blasting through the sides of buildings and slowly, slowly search every room. Second, tens to hundreds of thousands of civilians can be trapped in the cities.

The terrorists in Mosul have prevented the civilians from leaving in order to use them as shields.

Most remarkable about the current city battle is that it is happening at all. In 2014, the Iraqi Army (IA) fell apart, surrendering Mosul to ISIS. Now they are on the verge of taking it back. The American advisory effort, to include consistent air and artillery support, was probably the key ingredient in the resurrection of the IA.

On the terrorist side, the only "new" weapon is the re-emergence on a massive scale of the type of kamikaze attacks used during the 1945 invasion of Okinawa. While no systematic data are available, the terrorists are employing suicide murderers on a scale and at a rate of historic proportions. In Mosul, advances by a friendly unit have included bulldozers to throw up defensive barriers, and every group of escaping civilians has to be carefully isolated and searched.

### ■ Battle of annihilation

On the coalition side, the major change in urban warfare has been operational. In both Hue and Mosul, the attackers left an escape route for the defenders, rather than fight a trapped and desperate force. Next up looms Raqqa, the Syrian redoubt of ISIS, where Secretary of Defense James Mattis has ordered encirclement for a "battle of annihilation," rather than allowing the terrorists to pull out and fight elsewhere. Whether the attacking Kurdish and Sunni forces will actually pursue that course will be seen over the course of the next several months.

Beginning with Desert Storm in Kuwait in 1991, American air superiority to detect and destroy enemy vehicles and troops has given the U.S. an enormous edge in conventional force vs. force warfare in open terrain. Looking forward, however, more fighting will occur in cities simply because the global trend is toward urban immigration. Urban battle will remain a slugfest, with the basic ingredient remaining heavy doses of high explosives. No technology is emerging to replace that.

(Source: The Atlantic)

# Stakes high for Kuwait as mediator in Qatar crisis

By Giorgio Cafiero

Kuwait has asserted itself as the key mediator amid the three-week-old Qatar crisis. Since three Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states — Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — severed economic and diplomatic relations with Doha earlier this month, Kuwait (as well as Oman) has been committed to an impartial role in the rift, with Emir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber Al Sabah quickly becoming a negotiator in the simmering row.

Kuwait's "neutrality" in the GCC rift should come as no surprise given the country's track record of seeking to bridge gaps between opposing sides in regional crises. Its efforts last year to resolve the Yemeni civil war by hosting several UN-sponsored meetings of leaders from warring factions highlighted the Arab state's diplomatic approach to the Middle East's raging conflicts, despite the talks proving futile.

### ■ A general consensus

Although successful mediation by Kuwait is not guaranteed when it comes to the Qatar crisis, there is a general consensus in the Middle East that Emir Sabah Al Ahmad is the leader in the region with the best chances of negotiating a swift resolution to the ongoing row. Across the region, Kuwait's monarch is a respected mediator seen as wise given his longevity, his place in the GCC's leadership order and his service as Kuwait's foreign minister (1965-2003) and prime minister (2003-06).

In the early 1990s, Kuwait began seeing Iran as a bulwark against Iraqi aggression, and it has since maintained relatively normal relations with Tehran. Such ties with Iran position Kuwait to serve as a diplomatic bridge between Saudi Arabia and the other Sunni Arab states on one side and Tehran on the other. On Jan. 25, Kuwait played such a role when its foreign minister, Sheikh Sabah al-Khaled al-Ahmad Al Sabah, traveled to Tehran to deliver a letter from the emir to President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. The rare visit concluded with a Kuwaiti declaration on behalf of the GCC that Iran and the Arab Persian Gulf states must work toward mending relations.

Ultimately, Kuwait maintains a careful balancing act when it comes to Iran. Pressure from Saudi Arabia and other GCC states limits its ability to deepen ties with Iran, as underscored by the events of early 2016 — Saudi Arabia's execution of a Shiite cleric and the subsequent storming of the Saudi Embassy in Tehran



Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad al-Sabah (L) met with Qatar's Sheikh

**Ultimately, it remains to be seen whether the emir's mediating and negotiating will achieve a breakthrough in talks aimed at restoring the ties severed in the Qatari crisis.**

— that prompted Kuwait to recall its ambassador from Tehran in solidarity with Riyadh. The ambassador has yet to return although Kuwait and Iran maintain diplomatic relations.

Yet Kuwait's domestic sectarian situation — Shiites constitute roughly one-third of the population and are loyal and supportive of the Al Sabahs — has prompted the government to avoid aligning too closely with Riyadh on certain regional issues divisive within Kuwaiti society. For example, to minimize the risk of sectarian temperatures rising at home, Kuwait's military support for Bahrain's ruling Al Khalifas amid unrest in the island sheikdom in 2011 was limited to deploying naval forces to Bahrain despite Salafist parliamentarians calling on it to join Saudi Arabia and the UAE in sending ground troops into Bahrain to counter Shiite protesters in the street.

Once the Qatar crisis erupted, Kuwait quickly declared its impartiality while also offering itself as a mediator in the row. The emir met with Saudi and Emirati officials in Jeddah and Dubai during June 6-7 before leaving for Doha to discuss the rift with Qatari leaders. As a mediator this month, the monarch of Kuwait has

received support from a host of countries, including the United States, Oman, Morocco and Sudan.

### ■ A swift resolution

Ultimately, it remains to be seen whether the emir's mediating and negotiating will achieve a breakthrough in talks aimed at restoring the ties severed in the Qatari crisis. The 13 demands issued June 23 by Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE for resolving the crisis and the prolonging of this row decrease the prospects for a swift resolution, leaving the emir with a major challenge in mediating the rift as a "neutral" leader. It is difficult to imagine Doha accepting its adversaries' list of demands.

Difficulties aside, Kuwait has vested interests in resolving the Qatar crisis. Determined to maintain good relations with Qatar as well as Saudi Arabia and its allies joining Riyadh in punishing Doha, Kuwait seeks to enhance its reputation in the region and across the world as an international arbitrator that contributes to the peaceful resolution of Middle Eastern conflicts.

Kuwait's experience during the Iraqi occupation demonstrated how Kuwait's failure to balance its geopolitical posture

between the country's larger and more powerful neighbors subjected the country to its gravest crisis since independence. Today, Kuwait is serving as a mediator in the region as noted above with the aim of cooling the tensions that threaten the country's security and long-term interests. For Kuwait, the risks of the ongoing crises escalating pose a major threat that the Al Sabah royals would prefer to head off.

With the still-brewing Qatari crisis, the focus has been on the consequences for those on both sides of the conflict, but the stakes are also high for those in the middle, including the primary mediator: Kuwait. If Kuwait is successful, its status as an international arbitrator will likely be solidified. Yet if the emir's efforts to mediate the GCC rift prove futile and the Qatari crisis drags on too long, Kuwait could find itself increasingly vulnerable to the new geopolitical fault lines pitting the Arab Persian Gulf countries against one another. If the targeting of Doha by the Saudis, Bahrainis and Emiratis pushes Qatar closer to Iran, Kuwait may come under greater pressure from its GCC allies to surrender its neutrality and ultimately pick a side.

(Source: Al Monitor)

## Congress can remove Trump from office without impeaching him

By Samuel Breidbart & Vinay Nayak

Presidential psychology is quickly becoming a bipartisan issue. Recently, Senator Al Franken said that he and several of his GOP colleagues shared the opinion that President Donald Trump is "not right mentally." Shortly thereafter, 35 mental health professionals — psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers — took to the pages of the New York Times to register their own concerns that the President was demonstrating "grave emotional instability."

These controversial armchair diagnoses are powerless on their own. But what if there was something that Senator Franken and his concerned colleagues could actually do? Constitutionally speaking, there might be.

Much has been written in recent weeks about a provision in Section 4 of the 25th Amendment that allows the Vice President and a majority of the Cabinet to send a letter to Congress stating that the President is "unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office." This letter would immediately initiate a transfer of power to the Vice President, subject to additional Congressional review.

While theoretically possible, it is highly unlikely that the Vice President and the Cabinet would unite to remove the President absent a clear incapacitation along the lines President Woodrow Wilson experienced after a stroke. Even if there was a bipartisan consensus that he was unfit to serve, the President would have broad authority to remove his Cabinet before it could take any action.

But there is another provision in the Amendment that has received much less popular attention — one that could allow Congress to play a role in removing the President. And no, it isn't impeachment. Instead, a little-known provision in Section 4 empowers Congress to form its own body to evaluate the President's fitness for office, eliminating the need for the Cabinet's involvement in the process (emphasis ours):

Whenever the Vice President and a majority of either the principal officers of the executive departments or of such other body as Congress may by law provide, transmit to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives their written declaration that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President shall immediately assume the powers and duties of the office as Acting President.



**Congress could deem the President "unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office" if he is unable to be trusted with classified information by intelligence agencies.**

### ■ Congress flexibility

But what constitutional constraints are put on this power? Remarkably, there aren't any. The framers of the 25th Amendment left the provision purposely vague, allowing Congress flexibility to decide on its specifics at a later date. It should come as no surprise to those who bemoan Congress's frequent inactivity to find out that in the 50 years since the Amendment passed, it has never made such a decision.

However, there are two ways that Congress could still act on this provision.

The first approach would be to appoint a panel of independent medical practitioners to judge the health of American presidents. Former president Jimmy Carter has been a strong advocate for this approach, noting the advanced age and poor health of many U.S. presidents. Since the 1990s, Carter has expressed particular concern about the conflict of interests faced by the personal

physicians to the President, who might otherwise be tasked with making a determination about medical fitness. These physicians often have personal relationships with the presidents they treat. (Carter's was his tennis partner.) This seems to be the case with President Trump, whose own personal physician, Dr. Harold Bornstein, famously wrote a bizarre four-paragraph letter raving about Trump's "astonishingly excellent" health. He later said that he wrote this letter in five minutes while riding in a limousine paid for by Trump himself.

A second approach would be for Congress to appoint a body with no medical expertise whatsoever. Because the 25th Amendment does not require a medical diagnosis or consultation with medical professionals, Congress could even appoint members of its own ranks to the panel. This approach could give Congress the ability to enforce its own criteria for presidential fitness. For example, Congress could deem the President "unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office" if he is unable to be trusted with classified information by intelligence agencies. Congress could even use the threat of removal to exercise additional leverage over the President's actions.

This approach would raise grave constitutional and moral questions about the proper role of Congress in our democracy. Moreover, in addition to sign-off from the Vice President, this path would likely require supermajorities in both houses of Congress to override a presidential veto, further underscoring the improbability of such a move.

Despite the long odds, President Trump's erratic behavior in recent weeks has led many — including constitutional scholar and Harvard Law Professor Laurence Tribe — to start talking about whether the President is fit to discharge the duties of his office under the meaning of the 25th Amendment. While such conversations may be premature, it is important to understand the constitutional mechanisms that would allow removal of a president if a broad bipartisan consensus emerges that he or she is unable to lead our nation.

In the heat of the 2016 Presidential campaign, Donald Trump's physician assured the American people that his 70-year old patient would be "the healthiest individual ever elected to the presidency." Congress might have a different opinion.

(Source: Time)



# Why the West will not and cannot let Syria live in peace

By Marcus Godwyn

For all those who have become awake and conscious or otherwise put; have escaped the western media pit of lies and brainwashing, the six-year-long resistance of the Syrian people in the face of the U.S. Deep State and its terrorist proxy troops ISIS, Al Qaeda et al has been a deeply tragic but historically heroic inspiration to us all. They survived four years almost totally alone until Russia entered to fight the U.S., EU, Israeli proxy terrorist fighters that were gaining ground on government held territory in Syria.

The Russian campaign has been exemplary, resulting in, at the time of writing, in a total reversal for the aggressors. Many are rightly praising the Heroic Syrian Arab army and its Russian, Iranian and Hezbollah allies. I have been saying all along however that this optimism is misplaced as the forces that actually run the western world simply cannot let Syria rise from the ashes.

A re-built Syria which controls its own central bank and can issue its own currency as it needs with no outside control and no debt to the International Monetary Fund or anyone else, (The most fundamental and essential of freedoms that most western countries have not experienced for at least a hundred years,) which, because of this, is able to offer its citizens, even during the war, free education and higher education, health care and extremely low or nonexistent utility charges is totally anathema to the real leaders of the western world. The fact that different branches of Islam and above all, the fact that the many Orthodox Christians in Syria live in peace with each other burns the western, fractional reserve, debt enslaving banking elites as holy water burns a vampire.

The neo-cons, i.e. the people who

often total reality inversions and whose powers of thought and objective reasoning, as well as a sense of any meaningful self and a place in history have been reduced to almost zero.

A resurgent Syria will be a shining example to the whole world of what life can be like without the neo-con iron grip on the money supply, education system, media, sport, art and all the rest.

A resurgent, whole Syria will be a block to the much touted "Greater Israel" and to the western plans for gas pipes from Qatar to Europe (whatever may or may not be happening with Qatar right now). Last but anything but from least, is the fact that Syria's survival will be a massive spanner in the works of their ultimate goal of subduing, conquering and dismembering Russia which is of course the number one reason why Russia came to Syria's aid in the first place! That is why they will not and from their Satanic point of view, cannot, allow it to allow Syria to survive!

At the time of writing (evening June 26 in Europe) seemingly coordinated reports are coming in from the U.S., UK, France that another chemical attack on the Syrian people and "innocent little children" by its own government and president is being prepared and is due any minute and that the West will make President Assad and his military "pay a very heavy price" "when or maybe even before it occurs". (preemptive strike)

Now all sane, informed, awake people in the world know that the government of Syria has never used chemical weapons on anybody and never will. We know that this was only ever western lies to help domestic public opinion accept yet another western destruction of free humanity and culture as with Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya and now Syria hence bringing them ever closer to their absolute domination of the entire world



actually run the U.S. Deep State are hell bent on total world domination and they are achieving this through control of every country's central bank and their freedom to issue their own currency as they need and a ruthless war on culture facilitated by the ever increasing rate at which education is dumbed down with the help of main stream media. In just thirty years they have succeeded in turning the average westerner into a zombie whose "understanding" of the world is completely founded on lies and

and the enslavement of every human soul. Hence what we are seeing here is yet another attempt to use the same tired old lie to justify a western regime change action followed by the destruction of secular, civilized Syria.

Were a major western, Israeli attack on Syria to take place, that would put Russia in a difficult position which is precisely why some of the hotter heads in the western elite may just decide to risk it.

The Russian government and people absolutely do not want war and Russia



**A re-built Syria which controls its own central bank and can issue its own currency as it needs with no outside control and no debt to the International Monetary Fund or anyone else, is totally anathema to the real leaders of the western world.**

has repeatedly shown a very "Zen" ability to dissolve all the aggressive provocations the West has thus far thrown at her in Ukraine as in Syria. One does not have to be a military or geopolitical expert to see that if Russia resists militarily, this could risk escalating very fast all the way to WWIII. This is something that Russia wants to avoid at nearly all costs but were the situation to become existential, that would be another matter and as many have already commented, the Russians are informed and ready which cannot be said in any way of western populations.

The Russian campaign in Syria has resulted in a very low casualty count so far but a very high profile one. All deaths of male and female Russian service personnel in Syria (Except secret agents we may presume) have been publicized on mainstream media. All are felt as a great loss but some were especially moving. The young reconnaissance soldier who found himself hopelessly surrounded by ISIS fighters who called down a missile strike on himself to avoid being captured and to make sure the terrorists were all killed: which they were. The pilot who was shot down by a Turkish fighter and then machine gunned by western backed terrorists as he parachuted to earth hanging helplessly in the air. All Russia saw his legs kicking out as the bullets entered him. It would be very hard, maybe even impossible for Russian public opinion to except that all that heroism and sacrifice was for nothing. That Russia must just let the West and Israel overthrow the legitimate government, hand the country over to the Islamist terrorists and their masters and come home with her tail between her legs and start to reinforce the Russian borders.

The Russian government has always said that it is in Syria to defeat the terrorists rather than to "prop up", as the Western media likes to say, the Assad government. Recent polls say that if there was an election in Syria tomorrow, Assad would get close to ninety percent and the fact on the ground is that if he goes, the terrorists will win. A fact that is perfectly understood in Washington,

London, Paris, Tel Aviv as it is in Damascus, Moscow, Tehran and Beijing. If that happens, next step, Iran!

If the West goes for an all-out regime change attack in Syria and should Russia decide that its long term interests are best served by retreating, then this could be more destabilizing for Russia's internal unity than anything the West has thrown at her so far. The West's use of so called "liberals" and "Clinton, Soros worshiping and funded dissidents" to effect regime change in Russia has spectacularly failed. However, if there is any undercurrent of doubt in the leadership of Vladimir Putin in the country it is among those who feel frustrated by his "Zen" way of dealing with the West and who would like to see a much more full-on, robust countering of western aggression around her borders and protection of Russia's interests worldwide.

These people would find it impossible to stomach a Russian defeat, retreat from Syria and internal tensions would certainly rise more than they have done to date. I would certainly not envy President Putin, his ministers and advisers given such a choice. True! A firm, decisive rebuttal of western aggression might cause the West to back down as it is in much more disarray than Russia or Syria itself for that matter. On the other hand, it might not and then what?

Let us pray that such a decision will not have to be taken. That the few remaining non neo-con people in the Pentagon and the U.S. administration manage to thwart this ridiculous false flag creation or, as Alexander Mercouris noted, that it looks like a heavy handed attempt to distract public attention from Seymour Hersh's devastating article exposing the last "chemical attack false fag as a total lie!"

The next few hours and days will be crucial! Someone recently wrote and I'm paraphrasing as I can't find the original.

"The neo-con desire for world domination has zombified them to such an extent that they cannot stop on this path. Until someone shoots them in the head, they will continue moving forward!" (Source: Oriental Review)

## Kurds May Face Turkish Army in Syria One-to-One

By Sophie Mangal

Recently Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced his readiness to conduct a new military operation in the north of Syria to prevent the emergence of a Kurdish state there.

Turkey has already confirmed its seriousness on this issue by the recent air strikes carried out by Ankara at the positions of the Kurds and by continued armed clashes between the opposition sides. Moreover, Turkey has redeployed some of its armored units in the area of Azaz settlement.

In this regard, the Kurdish officials urged Assad and his partners to protect them from external threats.

According to the Syrian expert Ziad Shibli, the Syrian Kurds can face the Turkish aggression all alone due to some objective causes.

In fact, Kurds continue playing a double game in their own interests. By playing along with the U.S., the Kurdish authorities do their best to break ties



with the Syrian government and its allies. They have sold their loyalty for arms supplies. Particularly, the Pentagon delivered more than 100 trucks loaded with weapons including 12,000 rifles, 10,000 machine guns, 4,000 grenade launchers and 300 mortars only for the past week.

However, these weapons are used not for fighting ISIS. It's not a secret that the Kurdish formations let terrorists flee from besieged Raqqa to strengthen

their positions in Palmyra and Deir ez-Zor. Later these facts were confirmed by al-Arabiya. The channel also announced that Raqqa Civilian Council established by Kurds under the support of the U.S. amnestied dozens ISIS-terrorists.

Obviously, the actions of the Kurdish formations contradict the interests of Damascus and its main ally in fighting terrorism, Russia.

According to the Russian media, SDF-leaders ignored Russian military advisers who had persuaded the Syrian High Command to use its units to protect the Kurdish enclaves near Afrin and Manbij. But collaborating with the U.S. Kurds rose against the SAA.

Yet, just after a threat of direct clashes with Turkey appeared, SDF-leaders started thinking about the assistance of Damascus and Russian AF. Clearly, Kurds realize that they shouldn't rely on the U.S. help in this issue. Unlikely, Washington will be against its NATO ally. If the contradictions on the Kurdish issue between Turkey and the U.S. get worse Ankara would ban using the Incirlik Air Base by the U.S. military.

Nobody likes traitors. Apparently, Kurds will stay alone with Turkish armed forces. Neither Damascus nor Moscow will provide any assistance to them. And only Kurdish leaders are responsible for that.

## Persian Gulf crisis set to escalate

By James M. Dorsey

The Persian Gulf crisis that pits Saudi Arabia and the UAE against Qatar is set to escalate with Doha certain to ignore Monday's deadline that it complies with demands that would undermine Qatari sovereignty and humiliate Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani at a time that he is riding high on a wave of Qatari nationalism sparked by the Persian Gulf crisis.

Four weeks into the crisis, the demands appear to have been crafted for what is becoming a longer battle that the two Persian Gulf states hope will end with Qatar, with or without Sheikh Tamim, adopting policies crafted in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have declared the demands to be non-negotiable, offered Qatar no face-saving way out of the crisis, and appear to have designed them to be deliberately insulting.

The Saudi-UAE-led coalition against Qatar is likely to further tighten the boycott of Qatar once the Monday deadline passes. However, UAE State Minister for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash's prediction of a parting of ways, which ultimately could include Qatar leaving the six-nation Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) that groups the Persian Gulf's monarchies, would neither reduce tensions or end the crisis. Neither would an effort to suspend Qatar's membership of the Arab League.

Saudi and UAE perceptions of Qatari policies as a threat to the survival of their regimes would not be allayed by a divorce that would allow Qatar to continue to chart its own course. It is those perceptions that drove the two countries to launch their zero-sum game. Moreover, a Qatar capable of defying its more powerful neighbors would put on public display limits to Saudi and UAE power.



The lesson of the past weeks is that Qatar can survive the boycott as long as countries like Turkey and Iran help it meet its food and water requirements, retains access to international shipping lanes, maintains its oil and gas exports; and has uninterrupted, normal dealings with the international financial system.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar have so far exempted oil and gas from their fight. Qatar continues to pump natural gas to the UAE through a partially Emirati-owned pipeline. Dubai is dependent on Qatar for 40 percent of its gas.

Similarly, Saudi Arabia has been careful not to disrupt the tanker market and complicate Qatar's energy exports by blocking shared vessel loadings. Such a move would create logistical challenges not only for Qatar but also for the kingdom's own clients who would be forced to reorganize dozens of cargoes. It could also reduce the number of available vessels and drive up shipping costs.

Qatar hopes that its ability to defy the boycott will force Saudi Arabia and the UAE to tighten the boycott in ways that could backfire. Potentially, that could happen if Saudi Arabia and the UAE act on a threat to take a you-are-with-us-or-against-us approach towards their trading and commercial partners. That would put to the test, Saudi Arabia and the UAE's ability to impose their will on others.

So far, it's not been easy going for Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Qatar refuses to bend, most Muslim countries are unwilling to follow the Saudi-UAE lead, and many in the international community are irritated by the two countries' approach that threatens to complicate the fight against the Islamic State, risks volatility in energy markets, and increases instability in what is already the world's most unstable region.

Despite denials, Saudi Arabia and the UAE's take-it-or-leave-it approach appears to include the option of fostering an environment conducive to regime change if Qatar proves capable of circumventing the boycott for an extended period of time.

State-controlled media in the kingdom and the Emirates contributed to efforts to undermine Sheikh Tamim's position with for the Persian Gulf almost unprecedented attacks on Qatar's ruling Al Thani clan and interviews with little known dissident family members as well as former military officers opposed to the emir's policies.

The Saudi and UAE strategy risks drawing the two countries into a corner with Qatari support for Sheikh Tamim complicating suggestions voiced by a prominent Saudi journalist with close ties to the government and a Washington-based Saudi lobbyist that the brutal 2013 Egyptian coup that brought general-turned-president Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi to power could be repeated in Qatar in some form or fashion.

Saudi and UAE tactics as well as some of the demands that include halting support for militants and Islamists, closing a Turkish military base in the Persian Gulf state, reducing relations with Iran, and shuttering Qatar-sponsored media, including the controversial Al Jazeera television network, could however prove to be a double-edged sword.

In a move that likely contributed to turning Qatari public opinion against them, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, citing unsubstantiated allegations that the Persian Gulf state supported Houthi rebels, expelled their nemesis from the Saudi-led military coalition fighting the insurgents in Yemen a day after six Qatari soldiers were wounded defending the kingdom's southern flank.

The two Persian Gulf states implicitly included Houthi rebels in Yemen in their demand that Qatar break off its relations with militants and Islamists. While there is little doubt that Qatar at times went too far in nurturing those relationships, it is equally clear that some of them enjoyed tacit Western and Saudi backing.



# Seeking the truth, not the tragedy, in journalism

By James Rupert

London's Grenfell Tower fire victims aren't furious just with local authorities for ignoring safety concerns raised before this month's blaze killed at least 79 residents. They're angry with journalists too.

As reporters covered the fire at the apartment block last week, some residents turned on Jon Snow of Channel Four News, the most senior of Britain's news presenters, and accused journalists of being vultures attracted to death and tragedy. "You didn't come here when people were telling you that the building was unsafe!" one man told Snow. "That is not newsworthy. You come here when people die. Why?"

The Grenfell residents are hardly alone in accusing the media of not serving their needs. It's no secret that trust in the media has declined. But the latest Reuters Institute Digital News Report, published last week, provides sobering insights into how the digital revolution has disrupted the way we gather the information we believe we need to orient ourselves in the world, or in our neighborhood.

The report shows that trust in the media varies from country to country, from over 60 percent in the Scandina-

vian countries to the low 20s in Greece and South Korea.

In the United States, trust in the media has risen from 33 percent during last year's election campaign to 38 percent this year.

## Value of professional journalism

That may be because, as the Reuters report notes, "concern about the spread of false news online" increased the perception of the value of professional journalism.

Most sobering is the report's comment that the "economic outlook for most media companies remains extremely difficult." That statement doesn't include the communications giants like Twitter, Facebook and Google, the latter two of which garner more than 80 percent of the advertising that used to go to traditional media.

But two issues are likely larger. One is what Janine Gibson, the chief editor of Buzzfeed UK, calls "representation without judgment." Speaking at a seminar in London last week, Gibson said that the digital and social media world implicitly equates what news organizations spend time and money verifying, with the "guy in an attic" who puts out a piece of opinion masquerading as news, without having had to exercise his judgment on the veracity of his narrative.

The latter, said Gibson, "is of course much quicker than

the news which checks, because checking takes time." The result, too, can be duller. The more careful is the reporter, the more complex becomes the story. But the guy in the attic can be simple, dramatic – and attract the eyeballs.

At an extreme, the attic-writer is putting out "fake news" – a commodity popularized by President Trump, who seems to see all news which does not praise him as "fake." Fake news may have won Trump the presidency. Even if not, his use of it gives credence to a tendency to distrust news we don't like.

## Measuring trust in news media

It's also becoming clearer that measurements of "trust" in the news media don't really measure trust in the news media. They measure pleasure gained from the media. The Digital News Report says that there exists a "strong connection between trust in the media and perceived political bias." That is, people trust the reports which flatter and further their views.

This isn't new: people have chosen publications which line up with their political choices throughout the history of news. But for most of that history, those who consumed journalism did so passively. There was no comeback, except through a letter to the editor (probably unpublished) or a cancelled subscription.

Now readers are empowered by technology, often aggressive in their distrust and disgust, to intervene in stories. James Harding, director of news at the BBC, speaking at the same event as Buzzfeed's Gibson, said that "we at the BBC are very careful to make clear what we don't know as well as what we know. But people now can fill the space of 'don't know' themselves".

We still live in the first phase of a revolution, not just of journalism but also in the ways in which we seek and use information, and in what we place our trust. As printing disrupted the late medieval world, so the replacement of print by digits has disrupted the 21st century. It is presently calling into question the nature of truth, and the trust we can place in it.

Truth is hard to get right, especially at times of tragedies like that at Grenfell Tower. Finding and publishing it won't always avoid anger directed at the messenger, but journalists need to show they are truth seekers rather than vultures feeding on tragedy.

That will give substance to journalism's necessary democratic role – and perhaps answer the "why" asked by the man who confronted Jon Snow.

(Source: Reuters)

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# 10 things to stop doing if you want to live longer

## Which behaviors to ditch

By Sharon Basaraba

There are a number of things you can resolve to do in order to “slow down” your biological clock and live longer, whether you’re in your 20s or 30s, all the way to your 60s, 70s, and beyond. In fact, research has shown it’s never too late to start healthy habits.

But what about the things you might stop doing—in the name of your longevity.

### 1. Stop eating mainly processed foods

One of the major dietary changes that’s taken place in many countries over the last 30 years has been a shift to consuming more processed foods. Along with processing comes an increase in added sodium, more saturated fat, more sugar, and less fiber. The result? More cardiovascular disease, hypertension, cancer, and diabetes.

For example, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) recommends consuming no more than 2,300 mg (less than 2.4g) of sodium each day—less for many seniors and other people with certain health conditions, like high blood pressure. Still, in a survey of more than 7,000 Americans, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) found people consume an average of 3,300 mg of sodium per day. Most of the salt comes from restaurant and convenience foods, like baked goods, cured meats and soup.

Do your body a favor, and try to eat “clean” more often, including foods high in fiber (which are linked to greater longevity) and other ingredients you purchase and prepare yourself. If you’re short on time (and who isn’t?), cook ahead in big batches, or splurge on ready-made salads and other fresh or frozen vegetables, while watching the sodium and sugar contents on the label.

### 2. Stop smoking

If you’re a smoker, you know how hard quitting can be, but here’s some inspiration: The NIH says tobacco use remains the most preventable cause of death. Some estimates suggest smoking can rob you of a decade of life.

Whether you quit cold-turkey or phase out your habit, your body is surprisingly forgiving; blood pressure and circulation improve soon after quitting, and your risk of getting cancer decreases every year thereafter. Keep in mind that your family members will also benefit from your staying tobacco-free because they’ll no longer be exposed to dangerous second-hand smoke. You’ll look younger, too.

### 3. Stop sitting still

If you don’t feel you have time to exercise, consider this: You may not need to hit the global minimum recommendations of 30 minutes a day, five or more times per week, to extend your life. A study published in 2011 in *The Lancet*, examining the activity habits of more than 416,000 men and women in Taiwan, found that getting just 15 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise each day helped subjects live three extra years. The longevity boost went up to four years of longer life for people achieving the threshold of 30 minutes a day. The results held true even for those with health problems like cardiovascular disease—and for overweight people who didn’t lose any pounds through their activity.

Brisk walking was one of the “moderate intensity” exercises cited in the Taiwanese research. You might have to make a conscious effort to work it into your daily routine, but 15 minutes



## Study shows that genetics may be responsible for only about a third of your longevity potential.

of activity for an extra three years of life sounds like a longevity bargain.

### 4. Stop holding a grudge

Anger can be a tough emotion to release, especially if you feel justified in your outrage. Maybe the best question to ask yourself is this—is it worth the cortisol? Levels of this stress hormone go up when you’re stressed or angry, with negative effects on your heart, metabolism, and immune system. High cortisol has been associated with greater mortality in a number of studies.

### 5. Stop keeping to yourself

Staying social can be a good longevity booster, mostly by helping you manage stress and by strengthening your immune system. Good relationships keep you strong, while bad relationships can leave you in a negative frame of mind, and put you at risk of depression and even heart attacks.

Staying connected can be a tough one if you are feeling down, have lost someone close to you, or live far away from extended family and friends. There are ways to re-engage and meet new people even if you are in a new city, including volunteering and reaching out to others with similar interests through networks like business groups and book clubs.

### 6. Stop thinking that only big changes count

Sweeping, radical changes in lifestyle might be inspiring, but they can also be too daunting—and therefore, short-lived—for ordinary mortals. The next time you resolve to eat healthier or exercise more, try aiming low! Try choosing just one small change at a time, like getting up 10 minutes earlier in the morning to fix yourself a healthy lunch for work, instead of a major life makeover. Like the exercise advice above shows, even short spurts of activity each day can reap big benefits for your lifespan.

Small shifts can fly under your own

radar, adding up to big benefits over time without causing stress in your busy world. Consistency is more important than a short-term, grand gesture. Besides, looking at what’s already working in your day-to-day routine can help you feel energized and motivated to tweak a little more in a healthy direction.

### 7. Stop letting fear (or denial) keep you from being healthy

Of all the personality traits that could affect your longevity, conscientiousness consistently ranks as an important one, perhaps the most important one. Why? Well, conscientious people tend to engage in healthy behaviors like eating well, exercising, and following their doctors’ advice, while avoiding risky behaviors like smoking and driving too fast.

However, don’t confuse being conscientious or diligent with being neurotic about your health, a trait that may be linked to negative emotions like anxiety, anger, and depression. A simplified example might be that a neurotic person worries he might have cancer, and fearing the worst, doesn’t go to his doctor. By contrast, a conscientious person may still worry, but gets screened or tested, learns about the disease, and gets treated in a timely fashion.

### 8. Stop cheating your night’s sleep

The amount of sleep you get can affect your lifespan, and not just because a sleepy driver is at risk of a car accident. In epidemiological studies, sleeping too little (fewer than six hours) or substantially more (over nine hours) has been shown to put people at greater risk of death. Quality of life is also on the line: A good night’s sleep can help you ward off stress, depression, and heart disease.

You can learn to fall asleep more quickly and take measures that can help, like keeping your bedroom dark

and distraction-free, and having the temperature on the cool side. Meditation exercises can set the stage for a good night’s sleep, and an inexpensive noise machine can help with relaxing sounds. If you’re still having trouble getting to sleep, or staying asleep, see your health provider for further help.

### 9. Stop stressing

Like anger, stress takes its toll on your body and may actually shorten your life. By trying to reduce stress, you can improve your health in the long-term, and quality of life in the meantime.

Journaling or writing in a diary, meditating (a practice with multiple longevity benefits), and learning to relax are wonderful ways to de-stress. Working in just a few minutes of meditation a day—even at your desk—can give your brain the mini-vacation from anxiety and tension it needs.

### 10. Stop relying on—or blaming—your genes

Having parents, grandparents, or other family members live into their nineties and beyond might suggest that you will too, but don’t rely too heavily on that family history. Studies conducted on twins in Scandinavia suggest that genetics may be responsible for only about a third of your longevity potential.

This is, of course, good news for those of us without that exceptional ancestry. Environmental and lifestyle factors like diet, how much exercise you get (what researchers call modifiable risk factors), whether you’re exposed to workplace toxins, how much stress you experience, how conscientious you are about medical tests and screenings, and even the strength of your social relationships all play a huge role in how fast you age and how long you might live. Besides, why focus on the genetics you can’t control, when the factors you can will benefit from your attention?

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

## Try to eat “clean” more often, including foods high in fiber (which are linked to greater longevity) and other ingredients you purchase and prepare yourself.

## Keep your health care directives up to date

If you decide to change something in your living will or health care power of attorney, the best thing to do is create a new one. Once the new document is signed and dated in front of appropriate witnesses — and notarized, if necessary — it supersedes your old directive.

The American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging suggests that you re-examine your health care wishes whenever any of the following “five d’s” occurs:

### Decade:

When you start each new decade of your life.

### Death:

When you experience the

death of a loved one.

• **Divorce:** When you experience a divorce or other major family change. (In many states, a divorce automatically revokes the authority of a spouse who had been named as agent.)

• **Diagnosis:** When you are diagnosed with a serious medical problem.

• **Decline:** When you experience a significant decline or deterioration from an existing health condition, especially when it diminishes your ability to live independently.

Once your new document has

been signed, make sure anyone with a copy of your old directive returns it to you so you can destroy it. Then distribute the new one. Take the time to discuss the changes with your doctor and your health care agent to be sure everyone is clear on what has changed. Make sure a copy of your revised advance directive gets filed in your medical records, especially if you’re planning on entering an assisted living facility or nursing home. A growing number of states are creating medical registries in which you may record your directive so that it will be directly available to

health care providers when needed.

If you move to another state, check that your advance directives are still valid. Although states may be legally required to honor any advance directive that clearly conveys your wishes, it’s best to verify that your form meets the requirements specific to that state.

For more advice on creating advance directive documents that reflect your values, beliefs, and preferences, buy *Advance Care Planning*, a Special Health Report from Harvard Medical School.

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

## Tea: A cup of good health?

Tea drinking isn’t harmful and fits well with a healthy lifestyle. Tea, especially green tea, is often said to be good for your health. But if tea is good for you, how good? And why?

It turns out that tea does contain substances that have been linked to a lower risk for heart disease, cancer, and other health problems that affect men. But if you just don’t like tea, take heart: Tea drinking alone will never come close to the most potent health promoter we know of—a healthy lifestyle. And coffee may provide a similar health boost.

“Tea consumption, especially green tea, may not be the magic bullet, but it can be incorporated in an overall healthy diet with whole grains, fish, fruits and vegetables, and less red and processed meat,” says Qi Sun, assistant professor in the Department of Nutrition, Harvard School of Public Health.

### What’s in your cup?

Tea contains certain substances linked to better health. The main players are chemicals called polyphenols, in particular catechins and epicatechins. “These are enriched in tea, especially green tea,” Sun says.

The fermentation process used to make green tea boosts levels of polyphenols. Black and red teas have them, too, but in lesser amounts and types that are less strongly tied to improved health.

What do polyphenols do? For one thing, they are antioxidants. Antioxidants latch on to and neutralize chemicals called oxidants, which cells make as they go about their normal business. Elevated levels of oxidants can cause harm—for example, by attacking artery walls and contributing to cardiovascular disease.

The catch is that in studies of antioxidants in humans, as opposed to experiments in rodents and test tubes, “the effect has not been substantiated,” Sun says.

### What’s the evidence?

Some of the best circumstantial evidence on tea and health has come from large, long-term studies of doctors and nurses based at the Harvard School of Public Health: the female Nurses’ Health Study and the male Health Professionals Follow-up Study.



By following these groups for long periods, researchers determined that tea drinkers are less likely over time to develop diabetes, compared with people who drink less tea. That makes sense, in light of research showing that polyphenols help regulate blood sugar (glucose).

## Stay away from processed sugar-sweetened tea beverages and chai concoctions. These products may be loaded with extra calories, and consuming more than the occasional sweetened tea drink will tip you in the wrong direction.

As glucose rises in the blood, insulin shoots in from the pancreas to signal the cells to start metabolizing the glucose. Polyphenols seem to assist this process. “It makes cells more sensitive to insulin’s effects,” Sun says.

Some research suggests that tea drinking might be associated with lower risk of cardiovascular disease. That’s consistent with the lower risk of diabetes, which contributes to heart disease and stroke. Also, substances in tea may help to lower blood pressure or improve cholesterol.

### What’s the bottom line?

Drinking tea regularly seems to be associated with better health. However, it remains unclear whether the tea itself

is the cause and, if so, how it works its magic. The studies attempt to rule out the possibility that tea drinkers simply live healthier lifestyles, but it’s difficult to be sure.

That said, tea itself appears to have no harmful effects except for a case of the jitters if you drink too much caffeinated brew. It fits in perfectly fine with a heart-healthy lifestyle. So if you drink tea, keep it up, but don’t take up the habit thinking it will have a dramatic impact.

Although green tea has a high concentration of polyphenols, it does have a slightly bitter edge. You may find a weaker green tea brew more palatable if you are used to black tea.

But whatever you do, stay away from processed sugar-sweetened tea beverages and chai concoctions. These products may be loaded with extra calories, and consuming more than the occasional sweetened tea drink will tip you in the wrong direction. “If there are any health benefits to green tea consumption, it’s probably completely offset by adding sugar,” Sun says.

### A healthy sip for java junkies, too

• Coffee contains a complex mix of chemicals with known biological effects.

• As with tea, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory substances called polyphenols may account for coffee’s purported health benefits.

• Animal studies suggest the polyphenol chlorogenic acid, which is abundant in coffee, could reduce risk of diabetes.

• Recent research pooled 36 studies involving over 1.2 million people and found that people who drank three to five cups of coffee per day had the lowest risk of heart attacks and strokes.

(Source: [health.harvard.edu](#))



## 10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

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

**1** The dark economy is moving into the light. In a few scattered places, 40 or so in London, one in Manchester, another in Birmingham, Bitcoin ATM machines have appeared, issuing the cryptocurrency from an unlikely array of convenience stores, vaping outlets and barbershops.

**2** Skype Preview for Android update adds option to share links and photos from other apps. Although the app appears as “unreleased” in the Google Play Store, you can download it on your Android smart-phone for free.

**3** Telegram 4.1 brings improved iOS sharing experi-ence and Android Pay support. On iOS, users will now get an improved experience while sharing from other apps. You can now add a comment while sharing and then share to more than one contact at once.

**4** The HTC U11 has surpassed the iPhone 7 Plus in Antutu's overall performance benchmark. With an average score of 180,079, the U11 is well above the iPhone 7 Plus' average score of 174,299. Trailing behind are the Xiaomi Mi 6 in third at 172.4k points, the Galaxy S8 and S8+ in fourth and fifth at around 172.3k points.

**5** Scientists create ride-hailing tech that hides your travel data. The researchers call their software ORide for “Oblivious Ride,” because the only people who can see the details of your transaction are you and the driver you choose.

**6** As more customers complain their OnePlus 5 de-vices are affected by the “jelly scrolling” issue, the Chinese company is trying to address the problem. After claiming past week the so-called jelly effect is in fact “natural,” OnePlus support is now saying that its engineers are working to address the problem.

**7** The folks behind Nova Launcher, one of the most ap-preciated third-party launchers available on Android, released a new stable version of the software: 5.3. Coming only several weeks after version 5.2, Nova Launcher 5.3 introduces support for Google Now, although users won't get this by default.

**8** Six teenage girls from Afghanistan planned to come to the US to compete in the First Global Challenge robotics competition this month, but those plans were canceled after they were denied visas to enter the country. Forbes reports that the girls traveled 500 miles to Kabul for their visa interviews, and that their robot's supplies were held in customs for months.

**9** The Chevrolet Bolt EV, outfitted with General Motors' self-driving electric car technology, has finally hits the streets. GM is about to become one of the first automakers to build and mass produce a self-driving electric car that you will actually be able to purchase and drive in the near future. Since January, the American multinational automaker has created 180 cars for testing purposes in places like San Francisco and Detroit.

**10** Night Mode feature coming to WhatsApp to im-prove pictures snapped in low-light? The Night Mode for WhatsApp works with the camera UI to enhance the quality of photographs taken in low-light conditions. This new button could also be added to the video calling feature as well.

## Pokémon Go passes \$1.2 billion in revenue and 752 million downloads

Pokémon Go may no longer be the worldwide phenomenon it was when it launched for mobile last summer, but the app is still making plenty of money.



Pokémon Go has now earned a total of \$1.2 billion in revenues and 752 million downloads, according to Apptopia, an app intelligence startup based in Boston. Its total revenues for 2016 were at \$950 million. So, while 2017 may not see the app making as many headlines in mainstream news, the pocket-monster catcher still has plenty of traction.

The Niantic development studio's continued support, which includes adding new Pokémon and reworking the gym feature, has likely helped keep users engaged and give them reasons to come back to the app. Niantic has also help special promotions during holidays like Halloween that increase the appearances of certain types of Pokémon.

Apptopia also reported that Pokémon Go had about 60 million monthly players in June, with 20 percent of them opening the game at least once a day. While that's down from the app's peak last August, which was at 100 million monthly users, it's still a huge number.

According to Apptopia, 57.4 percent of the game's players are male, while 38 percent are millennials (ages 19 to 34). But Pokémon Go still attracts plenty of younger players, with 32.5 percent of its users being 18 or younger. Pokémon is such a powerful brand because it can capture the attention of children while also appealing to nostalgic demographics that grew up with it.

(Source: nintendotoday)

# Are cryptocurrencies about to go mainstream?

By Edward Helmore

Last Sunday a message posted on message board 4Chan started the rumor that Vitalik Buterin, the founder of cryptocurrency Ethereum, had been killed in a car crash. News of the 23-year-old, Russian-born programmer's demise was soon proved false – but not before 20%, or roughly \$4bn, had been wiped from Ethereum's soaring market value.

The hoax not only drew attention to Ethereum, the second largest digital currency after bitcoin, which had seen its value rise fiftyfold since the start of the year to \$300 a coin, but also to the booming market in other so-called cryptocurrencies that could now be on the cusp of mainstream financial credibility.

Last week Barclays' CEO for personal and corporate banking, Ashok Vaswani, revealed the lender had opened discussions with UK regulators about adopting digital currencies.

“We have been talking to a couple of fintechs [financial technology companies] and have actually gone with the fintechs to the FCA [the Financial Conduct Authority, the UK regulator] to talk about how we could bring the equivalent of bitcoin, not necessarily bitcoin, but cryptocurrencies into play,” Vaswani told CNBC at a conference in Copenhagen, Denmark.

“Obviously [it's] a new area, obviously an area we've got to be careful with. We are working our way through it”

Vaswani's comments came after several central banks from across Europe and Asia said they were looking into establishing digital-only currencies in addition to traditional denominations.

The People's Bank of China has reportedly run trials, while the Danish central bank is considering a digital-only e-krone.

On 19 June, the International Monetary Fund issued a staff discussion note stating that banks should consider investing in cryptocurrencies, saying: “Rapid advances in digital technology are transforming the financial services landscape, creating opportunities and challenges for consumers, service providers and regulators alike.”

At the same time, IBM announced it had made a deal with the Digital Trade Chain



Consortium – a group of seven European banks that includes Deutsche Bank, HSBC, KBC, Natixis, Rabobank, Societe Generale and Unicredit – to build a digital trade platform that will run on IBM's cloud.

Andrew Levin, professor of economics at Dartmouth and co-author of a study on central bank digital currencies, told the Guardian that the concept of private institutions creating new forms of payment was not in itself new, “but the greater need is for consumers and businesses to have access to money that has a stable value and is practically costless to use. We think there's a strong case for central banks to issue digital currencies that would be free to use.”

Crypto- or cyber-currencies are digital-only currencies in which encryption and registry techniques, often called blockchains, are used to regulate the generation of units of currency independent of a central bank.

It is a booming, dizzying market. Since the start of the year, bitcoin, the world's biggest cryptocurrency, has almost tripled in value to \$2,565. By some estimates, the cryptocurrency business could be worth \$5tn by 2022. There are now close to 800 cryptocurrencies worth, in total, around \$96bn.

One of the newest offered to market is Tezos, backed by billionaire venture capi-

talist and early bitcoin investor Tim Draper of Draper Fisher Jurvetson. According to a prospectus, a total of US\$893,200.77 worth of XTZ tokens will be issued on 1 July. The best thing I can do is lead by example,” Draper told Reuters last month. “Over time, I actually feel that some of these tokens are going to improve the world, and I want to make sure those tokens get promoted as well. I think Tezos is one of those tokens.”

Tezos' founders, Kathleen and Arthur Breitman, anticipate their ICO will become a “digital commonwealth” or “self-governing network”. The couple's background in finance speaks to the seriousness of the endeavor: Arthur worked at the high-frequency trading desk at Goldman Sachs; Kathleen at Bridgewater Associates, the world's largest hedge fund.

“We think our competitive advantage is in our ability to assign governance,” Kathleen told the Observer. “The thing about blockchain is it's very interdisciplinary. You have to have an understanding of finance and economics, but also game theory, pure science and networking theory.”

She concedes that blockchain complexity is also cause for investor skepticism. “A lot of people struggle to understand its value proposition, because it offers some-

thing different to everyone. I like the idea of putting business logic in a decentralised network, and hopefully, it will help people to conduct business more easily.”

Brock Pierce, managing partner of Blockchain Capital and a relative veteran of the ICO market, recently launched a tradeable, digital securities token called BCAP that he considers “the next giant leap in the democratization of venture capital and liquidity where everybody has equal access”.

Three days ago, Pierce launched the token distribution of EOS, a blockchain coin (or token) offering that's already taken in \$100m. “This is a 340-day project that's already broken every record. It's 100% certain we're going to surpass Bancor, the most successful ICO to date.”

Pierce predicts that the underlying technology of blockchain – essentially a public record of actions – “is going to impact our world more than the internet has”.

He added: “The implications are huge, and it's going to have huge implications not only on venture, but private equity, real estate, digitizing currency. This is going to be the technology that democratizes the global financial system so everybody has equal access.”

But such rapid increases in value is cause for concern. Five-year-old Ripple XRP, which is connected to 75 banks, including Bank of America and Royal Bank of Canada, has increased in value by 40 times this year alone. According to CNBC, 100 billion XRP are in existence, each priced 26 cents.

“A lot of lessons will be learned and a lot of money will be lost, before a lot of money can be made,” Peter Denious, head of global venture capital at Aberdeen Asset Management, told Bloomberg last week. “Prices right now aren't being driven by network usage, they're being driven by speculation that tokens are going to appreciate. It's a gold-rush mentality.”

But Les Borsai, an early investor in Ethereum, believes that what is under way is a re-ordering of the financial systems. At root, he argues, blockchain technology shows “we don't need a centralized solution for anything. It's a liberated attitude and the implications are huge”.

(Source: Guardian)

## Wearable AI is the next hot tech trend

By Kayla Matthews

It wasn't long ago that personal computers were the height of technology. While significantly smaller than the industrial-sized mainframes of the past, modern desktop PCs are still bulky objects that take up a lot of space. Laptops and notebooks are considerably more portable, but even these are becoming a hassle for the on-the-go minimalist.

If you're in that crowd, you might want to take a look at some of the latest in wearable technology.

Smartwatches are quickly becoming the preferred option for those who want to enjoy the latest in IT without having to lug around a laptop computer. Industry analysts are predicting 18 percent growth in the smartwatch market by 2021. This amount of growth, according to the experts, is a result of increasing smartwatch functionality as well as lower prices across the board.

App developers are even starting to turn away from traditional smartphones in favor of smartwatches. Researchers with the Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL) at MIT recently engineered a Samsung smartwatch with next-gen AI, effectively giving it the ability to provide social coaching to those who suffer from severe anxiety or Asperger syndrome.

Although the utility is currently limited to a very specific model of watch, the MIT team hopes to make the app available on other popular market options.



Kiwi, a new tech startup that specializes in AI, recently developed an app known as Cue. Designed to help users quit smoking, the tool provides a program that works over the course of time. By sensing exactly when and where you engage in the habit, Cue makes it possible to set your own goals and keep track of your progress toward quitting smoking for good.

Although the number of cigarette smokers in the U.S. is at an all-time low, the marriage of wearable tech and highly useful apps can help reduce these figures even further.

And smartwatch apps aren't just for consumers. The Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport launched a

trial to explore the usefulness of smartwatches within their day-to-day operations.

Enterprises across the globe are forecasted to spend over \$140 billion on cloud services by 2019. Representing a massive increase from the \$70 billion spent in 2015, the top cloud providers like Amazon, Microsoft, and Google are set to see substantial profits in the next few years.

As smartwatches and many other tech devices support cloud connectivity, we're even seeing companies that are interested in moving entire data centers to the cloud. Not only would this make it easier for consumers to integrate wearable tech data into infrastructure like the cloud and the Internet of Things, but cloud-based data centers would also make it easier to automatically collect, track, and collate enterprise data. The collected data could be used to ensure the performance of individual staff members or entire teams, forecast timelines for future projects, and reward achievements to top-performing employees.

Nobody can deny the progress that mobile technology has made, and it's done so in a remarkably short amount of time. With smartwatches among the most popular options in wearable tech, other devices, including smart eyeglasses, are just on the horizon. Exactly what we'll see next in the form of wearable IT is anybody's guess, but the innovation is certainly here to stay.

(Source: venturebeat)

## Sony to introduce a “truly” bezel-less phone on August 31st just prior to IFA?



According to a posting on Weibo, Sony will be unveiling a “truly bezel-less” handset at IFA in Berlin. Sony has already announced an event scheduled for August 31st, the day before the 2017 version of the trade show is scheduled to begin.

This all ties in with an announcement made earlier this month by Japan Display (JDI), introducing a 6-inch “Full Active” display with a 1440 x 2560 QHD resolution and an 18:9 aspect ratio.

(Source: Weibo)

## Microsoft will shut down Windows App Studio on December 1



Microsoft announced it is killing off its Windows App Studio service. The free web-based tool, which is designed to let anyone build Universal Windows Platform (UWP) apps, will be shut down on December 1, 2017.

Windows App Studio users should look to transition quickly. Although you have until December 1 to download your projects and data, there are two more dates that Microsoft has outlined as part of the sun-setting process.

(Source: neowin)

## 3DLook launches a smartphone body scanner to help apparel retailers



Buying clothes and apparel over the internet is still a tricky business, but it is hugely lucrative. And increasingly, smartphones are driving retail growth.

Today, 3DLook has announced SAIA, an AI-powered smartphone body scanner that can be easily added to existing apps and mobile websites.

The consumer uses their smartphone to take a front-facing photo. They then take a profile view. From those two images, SAIA calculates an accurate body profile that is used to match the size of the consumer to the retailer's products.

(Source: 3dlook)



# NASA unveils plan to test asteroid defense technique

Humanity could face one less doomsday scenario if NASA has its way.

On Friday, the space agency announced plans to redirect the course of a small asteroid approaching Earth, as part of the Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART), according to a NASA press release.

The release notes that asteroids hit Earth nearly every day, but most are small enough to burn up in the atmosphere.

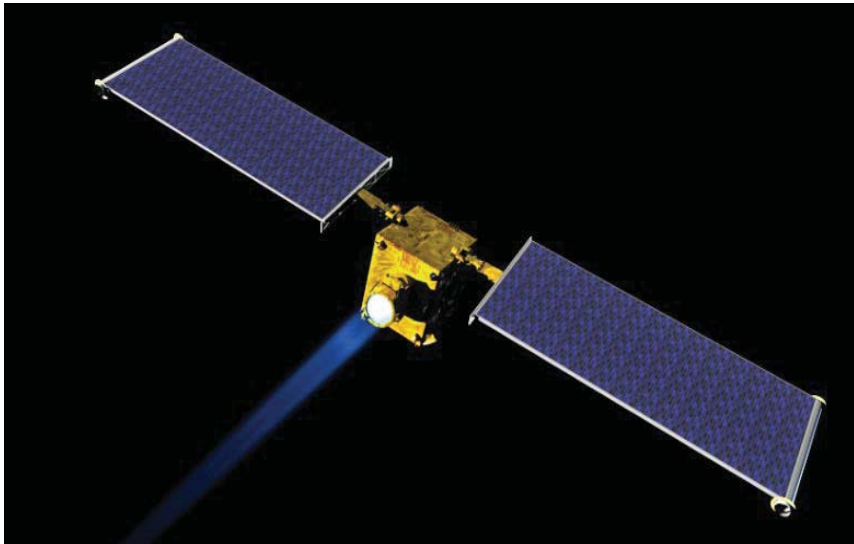
But the DART project -- a joint effort between NASA and the John Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory in Maryland -- is for the asteroids that are too big to break up -- those that could have severe consequences for the Earth if they hit.

"DART would be NASA's first mission to demonstrate what's known as the kinetic impactor technique -- striking the asteroid to shift its orbit -- to defend against a potential future asteroid impact," said Lindley Johnson, NASA's planetary defense officer in Washington, in the press release.

## ■ Historic test

"This approval step advances the project toward an historic test with a non-threatening small asteroid."

The target of the test is an asteroid



system called Didymos, the release said. Didymos -- Greek for "twin" -- is a binary asteroid system, made up of one asteroid, Didymos A, and a smaller one, Didymos B, which orbits its larger neighbor.

In October 2022, as Didymos makes an approach near Earth, NASA will launch a refrigerator-sized spacecraft towards the asteroids, aimed at Didymos B, the

release said. When the DART spacecraft and the asteroid collide, the spacecraft will be traveling at a staggering 3.7 miles per second.

The "kinetic impact technique works by changing the speed of a threatening asteroid by a small fraction of its total velocity," the release says, "but by doing it well before the predicted impact so that

this small nudge will add up over time to a big shift of the asteroid's path away from Earth."

## ■ The impact and effect

Back home, scientists will study the impact and the effect is has on Didymos B's orbit around Didymos A, to determine whether this technique is a feasible method for saving the planet from asteroids that could otherwise have devastating impacts.

"DART is a critical step in demonstrating we can protect our planet from a future asteroid impact," said Andy Cheng, one of the leaders of the Johns Hopkins team. "With DART, we can show how to protect Earth from an asteroid strike with a kinetic impactor by knocking the hazardous object into a different flight path that would not threaten the planet."

The announcement coincided with International Asteroid Day, which commemorates the largest recorded asteroid impact in Earth's history, when in 1908 a meteorite hit Russia's Podkamennaya Tunguska River in a remote forest, leveling trees and knocking over people in a town 40 miles away.

(Source: CNN)

## Texting on the move turns your walk into an ungainly lollop

Texting on the move may sometimes be essential, but be warned, it turns your gait into an ungainly lollop, scientists have found.

Researchers from Anglia Ruskin University found texters adopt a cautious and exaggerated stepping strategy to avoid tripping over hazards.

Subjects were fitted with eye trackers to record where they looked and motion analysis sensors to record how they walked as they used a phone while negotiating a floor-based obstacle similar in height to a roadside kerb.

They found all phone use, whether texting, phoning or scrawling through contacts, causes users to look less frequently and for less time at the obstacle on the ground.

## ■ Cautious strategy

They adopt a cautious strategy, it said, which involves lifting their lead foot higher and slower over the obstacle to reduce the risk of tripping.

Lead author Dr. Matthew Timmis, senior lecturer in sport and exercise science at Anglia Ruskin, said: "We found that using a phone means we look less frequently, and for less time, at the ground, but we adapt our visual search behavior and our style of walking so we're able to negotiate static obstacles in a safe manner."

"This results in phone users adopting a slow and ex-

aggerated stepping action. Our findings indicate that phone users adopt a cautious approach when faced with fixed objects on the ground.

"Accidents are likely to be the result of objects suddenly appearing that phone users were not aware of, for example other pedestrians or vehicles."

The problem of text-walkers has become such a problem that cities such as Antwerp in Belgium, has introduced 'text-walking lanes' so that they do not irritate or endanger other pedestrians.

## ■ Brainchild of mobile business

The scheme is the brainchild of a local mobile phone business, Mlab, which says many smartphones are broken in collisions between pedestrians.

China has already started segregating footpaths with special lanes for those using their phones.

Initiatives are also being introduced in a number of European countries to place fixed warnings on the ground to alert pedestrians to the presence of roads and tram tracks.

In the study, published in the journal PLOS ONE, the relative amount of time spent looking at the obstacle reduced by up to 61 percent when using a phone.

The study found that writing a text message resulted



in the greatest adaptations in visual search behavior and walking style, or gait, compared to reading texts or talking on a phone.

When writing a text the lead foot is 18 per cent higher while clearing the obstacle compared to not using a phone, and is 40 percent slower.

Similar, but less extreme, results are seen when reading texts and talking on the phone.

(Source: The Telegraph)

## New material uses solar energy to remove man-made dye pollutants from water

A novel composite material has been developed by scientists in the Energy Safety Research Institute (ESRI) at Swansea University which shows promise as a catalyst for the degradation of environmentally-harmful synthetic dye pollutants, which are released at a rate of nearly 300,000 tons a year into the world's water.

This novel, non-hazardous photocatalytic material effectively removes dye pol-

lutants from water, adsorbing more than 90 % of the dye and enhancing the rate of dye breakdown by almost ten times using visible light.

The researchers, led by Dr. Charles W. Dunnill and Dr. Daniel Jones at the Energy Safety Research Institute in Swansea University, reported their discovery in the Nature open access journal Scientific Reports.

By heating the reaction mixture at

high pressures inside a sealed container, the composite is synthesized by growing ultra-thin "nanowires" of tungsten oxide on the surface of tiny particles of tantalum nitride.

As a result of the incredibly small size of the two material components - both the tantalum nitride and tungsten oxide are typically less than 40 billionths of a meter in diameter - the composite pro-

vides a huge surface area for dye capture.

## ■ Harmless molecules

The material then proceeds to break the dye down into smaller, harmless molecules using the energy provided by sunlight, in a process known as "photocatalytic degradation". Having removed the harmful dyes, the catalyst may simply be filtered from the cleaned water and reused.

(Source: EurekAlert)

## NISOC Offers Most Desirable and Specialized Transportation Services: Oil Min.

Senior officials at the Ministry of Oil are of the opinion that National Iranian South Oilfields Company (NISOC) has offered the most desirable and specialized transportation services in line with production oil.

This Management Bureau is missioned to provide various types of specialized vehicles, equipment, machinery and devices with relation to the pipeline operations in the Company and subsidiary companies of the Oil Ministry, the report added.

Unlike many ups and downs experienced, the company has fulfilled its obligations in the best form possible.

Dispatching expert engineers, manpower and laborers to the operational units using light vehicles' fleet and also sending students and families of industrial personnel of the oil industry with bus and minibus



fleets to different parts of the country have been cited as the other salient achievements of the National Iranian South Oilfields Company (NISOC).

The company is equipped with heavy trucks and vehicles with the capability of moving different traffic and non-traffic loads, carrying out well-logging operations, mobile core-transport trailers, etc., offering quality services in this respect.

Moreover, this prestigious company is equipped with lifting equipment and machinery, ranging from 1.5 to 165 tons, including fork-lift trucks, cranes, tube loaders, pipe layers, road-building equipment and machinery such as loaders, bulldozers, mechanical shovels, rollers, etc.

Benefitted from the most experienced engineers and manpower, the company offers quality logistics and transport services to the Ministry of Oil in the best form possible, the report ended.

## SAMSUNG GALAXY "S8" and "S8+" Named MWC Smartphones in 2017 Shanghai Exhibition

The two mobile phone brands of SAMSUNG "S8" and "S8+" were selected as the best MWC smartphones in 2017 Shanghai Exhibition.

SAMSUNG Electronics Company announced the above statement and said: "The two mentioned smartphones received Asian Mobile Awards (AMO)."

It should be noted that this prize is

awarded every year to the most influential innovations of mobile arena in the course of the most prestigious Asian mobile event i.e. "World Congress of Mobile in Shanghai".

World Congress of Shanghai Mobile was held in the current year from June 28 to July 1 in coordination and cooperation with GSMA and is the best

chance for activists in mobile industry and leader companies in Asia in order to showcase their latest achievements in this exhibition.

It is worth mentioning that "The Best Smartphone" is selected by a group of top journalists, analysts and influential figures of mobile market who evaluate the nominees of the award according to

the various criteria, ranging from physical design and applicability to the function, simplicity of applicability and value of comparison with fair and reasonable prices.

For further information, enthusiasts and interested individuals may log on the following website: <http://news.samsung.com>

## €25m Worth of Contract Inked between EDBI and Paris-Based TEJARAT Bank

A credit line contract, worth €25 million, was concluded between Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI) and Paris-based TEJARAT Bank, the Public Relations Dept. of the bank reported.

Given the above issue, Export Development Bank of Iran inked a short-term credit line contract, valued at €25 million, with Paris-based TEJARAT Bank for import-

ing goods and services from France.

The credit line has been established in order to present facilities to customers out of credit of foreign banks especially in the Eurozone.

Under the deal, Paris-based TEJARAT Bank is committed to finance 100 percent of value of Letters of Credit (L/Cs) opened by the Export Development Bank

of Iran (EDBI) with the annual 2% interest rate.

The financing period has been determined for a one year since conclusion of transport documents, the bank added.

It should be noted that EDBI, moreover financing export of Iranian goods and services, backs imports of goods and services to create value added.

## Humans can live for more than 115 years: study

In October 2016, molecular geneticist Jan Vijg of Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York published a paper claiming that the human lifespan was limited to 115 years, kindling a vigorous debate among scientists.

However, on June 28, a group of scientists published papers in which they presented formal rebuttals of Vijg's claims and said that humans could very well live beyond 115 years, the Scientist magazine reported.

Five separate research teams launched the critiques of the earlier claim in the paper, which was published in the journal Nature. They stated that the notion that there is a hard limit on human lifespan was false.

However, these studies have only analyzed maximum lifespan (maximum reported age at death for humans) and not maximum life expectancy, the statistical measure of the average time an organism is expected to live.

The report quoted Maarten Pieter Rozing, a professor at the University of Copenhagen's Center for Healthy Aging, who co-authored one of the rebuttals, saying:

"It's an extreme claim they make that there is a limit to human lifespan, and I think an extreme claim deserves extreme scrutiny. There is an alternative explanation, which is that maximum age is simply increasing over time. What we see as a decline in the extension of lifespan is actually a spurious finding. It based on visual inspection and statistics that should not have been used in that way."

Vijg's work analyzed demographic data from the 20th century, taken from across the world, and demonstrated that peak age rose steadily till the 1990s, and attained a stable, non-progressive gradient at about 115 years, starting in the mid-1990s.

(Source: IBT)

## Exceptional ancient lizard fossil astonishes scientists

Prehistoric creatures may have been dead for millions of years but they can still surprise you.



An exceptionally well-preserved fossil found in the Swiss Alps in Europe has made scientists change their understanding of an ancient reptile species — Eusaurosphargis dalsassoii, first discovered in 2003. Now scientists believe that the armored reptile crawled on land rather than swam in the water, according to a paper published in Scientific Reports Friday.

The specimen, found in the Prosanto Formation at Ducanfurrga, south of Davos in Switzerland, is just 20cm (8 inches) long and constitutes the remains of a juvenile.

The first example of the species was described in 2003, but the fossil was only partially complete. It was found near remains of fish and marine reptiles, so researchers thought the animal it represented was aquatic.

But the new discovery is much more complete, described by the study's authors as "exceptionally preserved," and shows that Eusaurosphargis had a non-streamlined body and limbs that were not adapted for swimming, suggesting the creature was entirely or almost entirely land-based—even though its closest relatives were more waterborne.

It also boasts "extensive, complex body armor, mostly preserved in situ, along its vertebrae, ribs, and forelimbs," according to the study, described as the "most outstanding" feature of the fossil. The creature also had a "deep skull with a short and broad rostrum," the researchers say.

"Until this new discovery we thought that Eusaurosphargis was aquatic, so we were astonished to discover that the skeleton actually shows adaptations to life on the land," said James Neenan, a research fellow at Oxford University Museum of Natural History.

(Source: Newsweek)

## Scientists create a circuit board that self-destructs when cooled

Dissolving circuit boards could be used in the military, or in more conventional uses like hospitals, too.

The idea of a circuit board that dissolves the moment it is cooled totally sounds like something out of the Mission: Impossible movies, or maybe a mystery heist flick where a rare computer disappears after being removed from its air-conditioned safe.

In fact, it sums up the work being done by researchers at Vanderbilt University, described in a new paper published in the journal ACS Applied Materials and Interfaces. What they have been working on is a way of building transient electronics that come apart when you stop heating them.

"What we have done is produce a composite system that behaves like a regular circuit board when immersed in warm water, but if the water cools below a threshold temperature, the entire system disintegrates, dissolves, and stops working," Dr. Leon Bellan, assistant professor of mechanical and biomedical engineering at Vanderbilt, told Digital Trends.

"We have achieved this behavior by coupling two separate materials: networks of silver nanowires, and a polymer that exhibits the odd behavior of being insoluble in warm water, but soluble in cold water."

(Source: Digital Trends)



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# Iraqi army completely surrounds ISIL in Mosul

Iraqi spokesman: U.S. had no role in Mosul victories

The Iraqi army says it has completely surrounded fighters of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist group in Mosul as it continues to make gains in its final push to retake the city.

According to the military, federal police units recaptured the last bridge over the Tigris River on Saturday, effectively cutting off ISIL's last remaining escape route.

Iraqi troops also recaptured a number of neighborhoods in the Old City.

"Daesh (ISIL) now holds control over a few small residential areas. Iraqi forces are advancing into the Old City," Yahia Rasoul, Iraqi joint forces spokesman, told state-run TV on Saturday, using the Arabic acronym for ISIL, also known as ISIS.

According to him, "victory in the western part [of the city] will be announced soon".

The latest developments come two days after Haider al-Abadi, Iraq's prime minister, declared that ISIL's "state of falsehood" had ended after Iraqi forces retook al-Nuri Mosque where the group proclaimed its self-styled caliphate three years ago.

"The return of al-Nuri Mosque and al-Hadba minaret to the fold of the nation marks the end of the Daesh state of falsehood," Abadi said in a statement on Thursday.

A large part of the mosque, which held major significance in the history of ISIL in Iraq, was blown up by the fighters last week.

Officials from Iraq and the U.S.-led anti-ISIL coalition said the destruction of the site was a sign of the group's imminent loss of Mosul, with Abadi calling it an "official declaration of defeat".

■ **U.S. had no role in Mosul victories**

An Iraqi military spokesman says the



U.S. had no role in the Arab country's recapture of Mosul despite Western reports characterizing American troops as leading the operation to retake the city from Daesh.

Recent gains in the Old City of Mosul have brought Iraqi troops closer to victory against Daesh, with the three branches of the country's security forces fighting the last remnants of the Takfiri group.

The spokesman for Hashd al-Sha'abi fighters Karim al-Nouri told Iran's Mehr News Agency that "a few remaining terrorists are awaiting their deaths and this is definite."

"Washington wants to have a share in the final victory announcement against Daesh and benefit from it, but I have to emphasize that this victory was won by the Iraqi people and the United States did not play any role in it," he said.

Hashd al-Shaabi fighters, incorporating members of all ethnic and religious groups, have joined government forces

in operations against Daesh across the country. They were given legal status by Iraq's Parliament last November.

Hashd troops, Nouri said, have helped re-establish security in Iraq and prevent Mosul's break-up along ethnic lines.

"This is because Turkey and some of the local parties sought to break up Mosul, but Hashd al-Sha'abi foiled their plot. It also did not allow the conspiracy of the enemies to divide Mosul and other parts of the region to realize."

Nouri said all of the liberated areas will be under the control of the Iraqi government like before the Daesh terrorist attack, adding there will be no change in the demographic make-up of the city, which has an array of Turkmen, Arab and Kurdish communities.

"This is our red line and we will not retreat from it in any way," the spokesman said as he dismissed claims by Iraqi Kurdish leaders to parts of the city.

"Everyone agrees on the Constitution,

and the Kurdish regional government cannot oppose the Constitution. Mosul is a red line," he said.

The spokesman said the U.S.-led coalition, which has been bombing Iraq and Syria for the past couple of years, is not serious about fighting Daesh.

"Daesh is working in line with U.S. national security interests," he said, adding that contrary to its claims of fighting Daesh, the international coalition sometimes even helps the group.

"The Americans are not reliable. U.S. leaders, for the sake of their public opinion, claim to be fighting terrorism but in practice this is not the case," he added.

The Hashd al-Sha'abi spokesman further praised Iran and the commander of the Quds Force General Qassem Soleimani for their role in Iraq's victories.

"Iran was the first country to stand with Iraq and support us. General Qassem Soleimani has been and continues to serve as the best adviser on the battlefield against Daesh," he said.

"There were not many Iranians, but the very few who were in Iraq have had a huge impact on the fight against Daesh through presenting good plans," he added.

Nouri said Soleimani's occasional presence on the frontline was causing a wave of panic and fear among Daesh terrorists and leading to Iraqi victories.

"Haji Qassem has a high humanitarian character," he said, using an affectionate nickname by which Soleimani is known to his admirers in the region. "He would not allow any harm to the Iraqi people in any way. He defended Iraq and the oppressed. We thank Iran's position and the actions of Haji Qassem Soleimani," Nouri concluded.

(Source: agencies)

## Multiple blasts, mortar rounds hit Damascus

Israel targets Syrian artillery position

A car bomb and two booby-trap explosions have hit Syria's capital Damascus, killing at least 20 people and injuring a number of others.

Syria's state television reported on Sunday that a car bomb had gone off at Bilal Mosque near Tahrir Square. It said the bomber detonated his payload after being surrounded by security forces.

Security forces also chased and detonated two other explosives-laden vehicles before they reached their targets.

Damascus Governor Bashir al-Sabban said the attackers were heading to the city center where they hoped to cause maximum damage.

Meanwhile, Minister of Local Administration Hussein Makhoul said the response marked a "major success" in foiling the plot to cause mass casualties.

Two booby-traps were also set off near the city's al-Baitarah Square and Shuhada' School.

A mortar round further landed in the area between the al-Saadat and Bab al-Salam neighborhoods, while several others hit the Bab Touma Borough and Baghdad Square at the capital's al-Qadir Square.

Damascus has been largely immune to rampant violence by foreign-backed terrorist groups, which have been operating in the country since 2011.

In recent days, Syrian troops and allied forces have been fighting to drive terrorists out of Ain Terma and

adjacent Jobar, on the city's eastern outskirts.

■ **Israel targets Syrian artillery position**

Meanwhile, Israel has attacked Syrian military positions for the sixth time in over 10 days in response to alleged errant mortar fire from Syria's Golan Heights.

"In response to projectiles launched earlier today at Israel from Syria, Israeli forces targeted the Syrian military artillery position that was the source of the previous fire," read a statement released by the Tel Aviv regime on Saturday.

It added that both of errant rounds which landed in the occupied Golan Heights were the "result of internal fighting in Syria."

No casualties have been reported from either of the incidents.

"Israel holds the Syrian regime responsible for any breach of its borders and will act accordingly," read a statement released earlier by Tel Aviv.

Today's incident is the sixth time in over ten days that Israel has attacked Syrian positions, claiming their move to be in response to errant mortar fire.

The border separating Syria and the Israeli-occupied part of the Golan Heights has been tense since foreign-backed militancy gripped the Arab country in 2011, claiming the lives of hundreds of thousands of people so far.

During the past few years, Israel has frequently at-



tacked military targets in Syria in what is considered as an attempt to prop up terrorist groups that have been suffering heavy defeats against Syrian government forces.

Damascus says Israel and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri terrorist groups operating inside the Arab country, while the regime's military carries out such sporadic strikes against Syrian government forces. The Israeli regime has even set up field hospitals to treat wounded militants evacuated from Syria.

(Source: SANA)

## Deadly fire hits Syrian refugee camp in Lebanon

At least one child has died after a big fire engulfed a camp for Syrian refugees in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, according to the Red Cross, who believe that there may be two more casualties.

Flames and thick clouds of black smoke rose on Sunday from the site near the town of Qab Elias, which is an hour's drive from the capital Beirut.

The explosion of gas canisters could be heard from a distance.

Reuters TV footage showed little was left by the blaze as a fire truck doused down the still smouldering ground. A Syrian refugee said many of the people

living at the camp had fled to Lebanon from the Raqqa area of Syria.

Al Jazeera's Imtiaz Tayeb was at the scene and described scenes of "utter devastation".

"This is really quite shocking for refugees," he said. "These are people who fled war and conflict, people who left behind their homes, and the homes they built here from bits of wood and sheets of plastic have been reduced to ashes."

"First responders told us they believe this fire was started by some sort of cooking accident," he continued.

"They believe one of the residents of this camp had been cooking food inside their home and that it had somehow caught fire."

The fire spread rapidly and all that is left is smouldering ruins, he added.

"We've started the assessment as to how many tents have been damaged. As soon as the assessment is done we will provide the families with all the help they need," UNHCR spokeswoman Dana Sleiman said.

Ahmed Salloum, of the emergency services in Qab Elias, said the fire turned the tent camp into "ashes," with only the

bathrooms at the edge of the settlement left standing.

The Red Cross added at least six people were injured.

About 100 tents were also destroyed in the blaze.

Lebanon is hosting at least one million Syrian refugees officially registered with the UN, many of them living in informal tented settlements scattered around the country.

But the government says the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is closer to 1.5 million.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Qatar FM: The list of demands was meant to be rejected

Qatar's foreign minister has said Doha will not meet any of the 13 demands made by Saudi Arabia and its allies, offering instead "a proper condition for a dialogue" to resolve the Persian Gulf crisis.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, speaking at the news conference in the Italian capital Rome, said the list "was meant to be rejected", pointing to the fact that it arrived with a 10-day expiration date.

"Everyone is aware that these demands are meant to infringe the sovereignty of the state of Qatar, shut the freedom of speech and impose auditing and probation mechanism for Qatar," he said.

"We believe that the world is not governed by ultimatums, we believe that the world is governed by the international law, it is governed by an order that does not allow large countries to bully small countries."

Sheikh Mohammed spoke less than 48 hours before the deadline for the demands issued last week was due to pass.

It was not clear what would come next. Sheikh Mohammed said Qatar did not fear any military retaliation for rejecting the ultimatum.

The list of demands include downgrading ties with Iran, shutting down Al Jazeera media network and Turkish military base in Doha.

The ultimatum came more than two weeks after Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut diplomatic ties with Qatar on June 5 and imposed sanctions, accusing it of supporting "terrorism".

Sheikh Mohammed said on Saturday that "those parties brand any party of state who opposes their designs as terrorists".

He also said that Trump was manipulated into believing that Qatar was not doing enough to crack down on funding "extremists".

"The United States administration and institutions firmly believe in the state of Qatar, yet the statement made by President [Donald] Trump was based on false allegations and the false impression given to him by the heads of states who imposed blockade on Qatar," he said.

Trump would be able to find "the true established facts" from the U.S. institutions, according to Sheikh Mohammed.

"The state of Qatar has been subjected to unlawful measures on the basis of false allegations without the submission of evidence," he said.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## Central America hit by massive power outages

A huge power outage plunged millions of people across Central America into darkness, as authorities from Panama to Costa Rica to El Salvador scrambled to restore electrical service.



The blackout affected some five million people in Costa Rica alone, where officials largely had managed to restore service after a nationwide power outage lasting about five hours.

Authorities pinned blame for the power outages on a downed Panamanian transmission line that adversely affected the power supply for much of the region.

Countries in the region, from Guatemala to Panama, are connected by the same power grid, covering an expanse of some 1,800 kilometers (1,100 miles).

But that interconnectedness means that the countries of Central America are vulnerable when there are power grid malfunctions in any one.

Chaos reigned in the Costa Rican capital after traffic lights ceased to function, while the main airport in San Jose had to run on backup power until the power system was up and running again.

The blackout was the first experienced in Costa Rica, among the most developed countries in Latin America, since 2001.

Officials said as many as two million people were left in the dark in Panama, with an undetermined number affected in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Details were not immediately available about how many people were affected by the blackout elsewhere in Central America, or whether they had managed to get their power systems back up and running.

Officials at the Costa Rican Institute for Electricity said power was disrupted throughout the entire country, but was restored in most places by 6:00 pm (0000 GMT).

"ICE is trying to diagnose the problem," Communications Minister Mauricio Herrera, said earlier Saturday referring to the office by its Spanish acronym. He said that workers succeeded in restoring power to some areas of Costa Rica.

ICE said that the origins of the blackout were outside of the country and urged the public to remain indoors while they try to fix the problem.

In Panama, the ETESA government power authority said via Twitter that the nation had experienced just a "partial blackout" and that workers were trying to restore power to the affected areas.

Much of the power was restored about three hours after the blackout started, officials said.

The blackout in Panama occurred about 15 minutes into a major speech delivered by President Juan Carlos Varela to the country's legislature.

Nicaragua for a time had to tap the grid in neighboring Honduras to keep the lights on.

(Source: AFP)

## Persian Gulf crisis set to escalate

➔ In the case of the Houthis, Qatar likely maintained clandestine contacts while joining the Saudi-led fight against them given Qatar's repeated efforts over a period of more than a decade to mediate between the rebels, the Saudi-backed Yemeni government and the kingdom. Qatar negotiated since 2004 various ceasefires in intermittent wars between the government and the Houthis only to see them thwarted with the support of Saudi Arabia.

Former US diplomats in cables to the State Department while serving in Yemen and more recently in interviews suggested that Saudi Arabia's obsession with the Houthis pre-dates the rebels closer relationship with Iran since the invasion began in 2015. If anything, Saudi obsession drove them further into the hands of the Iranians.

Moreover, closer analysis of the Saudi and UAE demands creates the impression that certainly in the case of the kingdom the pot at times is blaming the kettle. Abd al-Wahhab Muhammad Abd al-Rahman Al-Humayqani, the only Yemeni on the Saudi-UAE list of alleged terrorists associated with the two Persian Gulf states' demands, is a US Treasury designated terrorist linked to Al Qaeda who, reportedly lives at least part-time in the Saudi capital.

The Treasury designation in 2013 did not prevent the Saudis from including Mr. Al-Humayqani in the delegation of the Saudi-backed government to failed peace talks in 2015 or from serving as an advisor to Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, who is resident in the kingdom.

All of this makes hopes for a negotiated solution of the Persian Gulf crisis all but an illusion. Maintaining the status quo is not an option for Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Escalation of the crisis is risky not only for the Persian Gulf states themselves but also for the international community. Yet, pulling the protagonists back from the brink without loss of face is a non-starter as long as both sides of the divide target absolute victory at whatever cost.



## Roma president Pallotta slams fans for ‘lack of faith’

Roma president James Pallotta has criticized the club's fans for a perceived "lack of faith" in their ambitions following a tough close-season to date.

Last season's Serie A runners-up sold Mohamed Salah to Liverpool for an initial €42million before allowing highly-rated Leandro Paredes to join Zenit for a fee that could reach €27m.

Speculation that defender Antonio Rudiger is close to a move to Chelsea has prompted outrage from a number of supporters, who are furious that new sporting director Monchi is selling the club's strongest assets despite proclaiming "Roma is not a supermarket" last month.

Pallotta, however, insists that the club are building a stronger side in the long term.

"Are they really saying we are weaker now? Just look at the players we've bought so far," he told *Il Tempo*.

"I don't understand why the fans have this lack of faith. We are certain that we're building a stronger Roma."

Roma have signed Rick Karsdorp, Maxime Gonalons, Hector Moreno and Lorenzo Pellegrini since Monchi took up his role in April. *(Source: Soccerway)*

## Man City's signing of teenager Benjamin Garre set to be heard by CAS

Manchester City's signing of teenager Benjamin Garre will be heard by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) on Monday.

City signed Garre at the age of 16 but the teenager's Argentine club Velez Sarsfield claimed the move breached world governing body FIFA's rules over the signing of minors from outside the European Union.

Velez appealed to CAS after FIFA ruled in City's favour following a complaint about Garre's move to the Premier League club in July 2016.

The Argentine outfit claim FIFA rules allow players under 18 to move between clubs only in European countries.

City argued Garre held an Italian passport and was entitled to move after his 16th birthday.

Barcelona, Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid have all been subjected to transfer bans in the past few years after being found guilty of breaching rules around the signing of international players under the age of 18.

Press Association Sport reports it could be several weeks before there is an outcome from the CAS hearing. *(Source: Soccernet)*

## Jose Mourinho splits Manchester United squad into three transfer groups

The Manchester United manager is busy reshaping his first team ahead of a return to the Champions League next season.

He has added just one new face to the party so far this summer - central defender Victor Lindelof from Benfica - but is hoping to complete the captures of Chelsea midfielder Nemanja Matic, Real Madrid forward Alvaro Morata and Inter Milan winger Ivan Perisic.



A number of players could be shown the door to make room for the new additions.

And Mourinho has prioritized his players in order of importance and value to the club.

ESPN report that first-team regulars such as Eric Bailly and Marcus Rashford will not be sold at any price.

A number of squad players including Matteo Darmian could be sold if United's valuations are met.

Finally, there is the deadwood that the club are actively looking to sell.

Academy graduate Adnan Januzaj, who flopped on loan at Sunderland last term, is a part of that group. *(Source: Star)*

## Klopp still ‘not sure’ on Liverpool’s best formation after Salah buy

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp is yet to decide on his first-choice formation for the 2017-18 season.

Klopp has brought in Mohamed Salah from Roma in a deal that could reach a value of €50million, but the winger and young striker Dominic Solanke, signed from Chelsea, are the only fresh arrivals so far ahead of the new Premier League campaign.

As well as adding more names to Liverpool's ranks, the former Borussia Dortmund boss is hoping to increase the squad's tactical flexibility, as he decides on the strategy that will work best with the Reds looking to improve on a fourth-place finish last year.

"Tactically-wise, getting more flexible - depending who is there and when - and introducing different systems," Klopp told the club's website when asked for his pre-season aims.

"[In 2015-16], we played most of the time kind of 4-2-3-1, [in 2016-17] most of the time 4-3-3 or 4-5-1. In our opinion, it fitted best to the players we had.

"I'm not sure which way we have to play next year, there will be a few different ones."

Klopp added: "And we will prepare for European football also, so we need a bigger squad of course. We will be good. I'm looking forward to it."

"Usually you always want to take the next step from one year to the next year. You have to see how things fit and when the new players are in." *(Source: Soccerway)*

# Wimbledon 2017: Roger Federer wary of main rivals despite their form and injury issues

Roger Federer warned on Saturday that he and the rest of the big four of men's tennis were going to be as tough to beat as ever at Wimbledon this year as they seek to continue their astonishing monopoly of the event.

In the last 14 editions, one of either Federer, the seven-times champion, double winners Rafael Nadal and Andy Murray, or triple victor Novak Djokovic has lifted the men's singles title at The All England Club.

While reporters quizzed Federer on Saturday about who in the game's young brigade could become the first man outside that quartet to win since Lleyton Hewitt in 2002, the Swiss felt it would be best to keep faith with the usual suspects.

Federer's rivals have had mixed preparations for Wimbledon. Murray's harbored hip trouble after an early exit at Queen's, Nadal decided to skip grass court warm-ups to rest his body after winning the French Open while Djokovic burst into life earlier on Saturday by winning the Eastbourne title.

Do not be fooled, suggested Federer. All these 30-something luminaries would again be "tough to beat".

"Depending how fit it is, if he's anything close to 100 percent physically, I consider him (Murray) one of the big favorites to win the tournament. It's that simple. It's the same for Novak and the same for Rafa," reckoned Federer.

"I think it's very even when we put it all out on the line. Everybody has their own little story right now.

"Queen's for Andy (where he was knocked out early) doesn't matter so much because I feel like he's one of the best players in the first week at Wimbledon, so I don't worry too much for him there. He can play himself into shape for week two.

"Novak is just coming back from winning Eastbourne now. Rafa is coming in red hot from the clay. So I see it positive for them rather than negative in some shape, which I'm sure people will try to see that way.

"But I see that they are going to be tough to beat here."



Federer himself seemed to have recaptured a touch of his fantastic early-season spark which saw him down Nadal in an epic Australian Open five-set final as he lifted his favorite pre-Wimbledon grass court title in Halle.

Yet the 35-year-old is too old a hand to insist that this is going to be a four-horse race.

"Yeah, it's been very dominant by a few players here at Wimbledon. That's surprising. It's like that -- but it can change tomorrow very quickly."

It is not just the younger guns, headed, he says, by Milos Raonic, Kei Nishikori, Grigor Dimitrov, Alexander Zverev, Nick Kyrgios and Dominic Thiem who "are in a good spot right now where they can go very deep".

"Then, I do believe the favorites are the other players."

I include the likes of (Marin) Cilic into that, Stan (Wawrinka), guys who have done it before," added the Swiss.

Nobody, of course, has done it before as often as the 18-time grand slam champion Federer himself, who admitted it "hurt" to miss out on competing on the sapping clay of the French Open when he knew he was fit and raring to go.

"No compromise really. I gave myself the best chance for the grass, so I would never look back and have regrets once I came here," he said.

"Even though I was happy on the clay for a couple days, I just felt like, you know what, anything other than winning there feels like I'm not giving myself the best chance for Wimbledon."

*(Source: Reuters)*

## Blatter plans to visit soccer World Cup in Russia



Disgraced former FIFA president Sepp Blatter will travel to Russia when the country hosts the soccer World Cup in 2018, he told Swiss newspaper SonntagsBlick.

Blatter is currently serving a six year ban from all soccer-related duties imposed by FIFA's ethics committee after a corruption scandal at the Zurich-based body and has said he has been advised by lawyers not to travel abroad amid international probes.

"Yes, definitely, said Blatter when asked if he would go to Russia for the tournament next year. "(Russian President) Vladimir Putin has invited me."

"I may only not be used as a referee, but everything else is possible," the 81-year-old added.

Blatter said earlier this year he was not a suspect in the soccer-related corruption investigations underway in the United States.

He is, however, the subject of a criminal proceedings in Switzerland, although has not been formally indicted.

Several dozen soccer officials, including some from FIFA, were indicted in the

United States in 2015 on corruption-related charges. Blatter was not among them, although he subsequently said his lawyer had advised him not to travel abroad.

Blatter and ex-UEFA president Michel Platini were banned from all official soccer-related duties in 2015, initially for eight years, over a 2 million Swiss franc (\$2 million) payment FIFA made to Platini in 2011, with Blatter's approval, for work done a decade earlier. Blatter's ban was later reduced to six years.

Blatter, meanwhile, said he was sure that Russia would play in the World Cup in 2018, despite doping allegations.

FIFA is still investigating claims that footballers were among the Russian athletes who were involved in or benefited from an elaborate state-sponsored doping scheme, it said last week.

"The Russians will play," Blatter said in the interview on Sunday. "For the World Cup in 2014 there were extensive doping tests carried out, also on the Russians."

"I don't believe that any were doped, but let's wait."

*(Source: Reuters)*

## ISIS says Manny Pacquiao's shock defeat was an ‘act of God’!



An ISIS operative has allegedly spoken out over boxer Manny Pacquiao's defeat in the ring on Saturday, calling it an act of God that has now demoralized the Filipino army fighting the war on terror.

Boxing star turned politician Manny Pacquiao was defeated in the fight for the WBO Welterweight title after a controversial decision was made by judges to hand the victory to newcomer Jeff Horn.

The judges awarded Horn the fight even though he came off second-best by almost every measure in front of 50,000 in Brisbane's Lang Park on Sunday.

Horn landed just 15 per cent of his shots compared to Manny's 32 per cent, a total of 92 compared to 182.

Fans were devastated by the loss, which, according to SITE Intelligence Group, ISIS is now claiming was an act of God, something that has now demoralized the soldiers in the Filipino army.

It seems public morale was so bad that presidential spokesperson, Ernie Abella, was forced to release a statement confirming that the Filipino people would still stand behind the sports star.

The statement said: " Manny Pacquiao's loss in Brisbane would not diminish the honors he bestowed to the people and to the flag.

"Nothing will change: Senator Manny Pacquiao will remain our people's champ, Pambansang Kamo and national treasure in global sports."

The statement ended with the words "Mabuhay ka, Manny!" which translates to: "Long live Manny!"

In June 2016, Pacquiao was elected as senator under the United Nationalist Alliance party and is currently serving a six-year term in office.

Earlier this year, Pacquiao backed the Philippines president in the war on ISIS, saying the country should be 'grateful' for having such a strong leader in Rodrigo Duterte.

In May, Duterte declared martial war - the imposition of a military government, meaning ordinary law is suspended - in the Mindanao region of the country in a bid to target the rising influence of ISIS terrorists after they triggered a number of deadly battles.

*(Source: Mirror)*

## Arsenal star donates £19,050 to support Grenfell Tower victims after pledging £50 for every minute he played at Under 21 Euros

Arsenal star Hector Bellerin has donated £19,050 to help the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire.

The defender pledged to give £50 for every minute he played at the European Under 21 Championships to help support those affected by the deadly blaze.

Eighty people are currently presumed dead after the tower block fire in north Kensington last month. And after racking up 381 minutes as his side reached the final in Poland, Bellerin stayed true to his word and gave £19,050 to the British Red Cross.

"I promised to donate £50 for every minute I played at #U21Euro. I will be donating to @BritishRedcross. Please support in any way you can," the Arsenal defender wrote on his Twitter page.

Bellerin was a key figure in the Spain squad that reached the final of the Championships in Poland last month.

The 22-year-old started all-bar one of their five matches, racking up 381 minutes of action. Unfortunately for Bellerin, however, his side were beaten by Germany in the final



in Krakow on Friday.

Southwark-born Southampton defender Ryan Bertrand, who came through the ranks at Chelsea, also pledged to help victims by working with the Rugby Portobello Trust to

help those displaced by the fire.

In a series of posts on Twitter last month, Bertrand vowed to offer more than financial support to the victims.

Bertrand wrote: "I went to Grenfell Tower yesterday [Friday]. I want to help, not just donate. I can't think of all the answers but I can do what I feel is needed."

"Starting with rehousing the victims, and making sure they don't leave the W11 post code. And remain on the emergency housing list."

"Monday I will be around @RugbyPortobello [the Rugby Portobello Trust] putting this plan into action. From 10:30am until progress has been made."

Bertrand and Bellerin follow fellow Premier League star Raheem Sterling in offering support to Grenfell Tower victims.

Manchester City winger Sterling, who grew up in North West London and began his football career at Queens Park Rangers, located just a mile from the Kensington estate, made a 'substantial' contribution according to a BBC report.

*(Source: Daily Mail)*



# Tehran derby to be held in Bielefeld

**S P O R T S** Iranian giants Persepolis and Esteghlal d e s k will play a pre-season friendly in Bielefeld, Germany.

The match was originally scheduled to be held in Munich.

Tehran derby will reportedly take place at the Arminia Bielefeld Stadium on July 16, 10 days before the new Iranian league season kicks off.

Iran Professional League champions Persepolis and runners-up Esteghlal will hold a training camp in Germany and could earn from TV revenue from broadcasting the match in Germany.

It will be for the first time the two teams will play in a foreign country.

Tehran derby also known as Red-Blue Derby is a football match between the two prominent Tehran clubs Esteghlal Tehran and Persepolis Tehran of Iran.

It is widely considered the major crosstown derby in the Persian Gulf Pro League, and also in the world.

This match was declared as the most important derby in Asia and 22nd most important derby in the world in June 2008 by World Soccer magazine.

It is considered as one of the world's most intense derbies. Despite being a derby between two teams from Tehran, the match has been played in other Iranian cities as well. Taking place at least twice during the year via the league fixtures, this cross-town rivalry has extended to the Hazfi Cup, as well as in minor tournaments and friendlies.



## Iranian sports photographer deported from Egypt



**S P O R T S** An Iranian sports d e s k photographer was detained on his arrival at Cairo airport and deported from Egypt.

Ashkan Mehryar was going to cover FIBA U19 World Cup underway in Cairo, where the Iranian team have been grouped with the U.S., Angola and Italy.

"The Egyptian officials detained me in the airport and then told me my

passport needs security code but my passport is valid," Mehryar said.

"They detained me for hours and interrogated me and took my mobile. Finally, I was deported from Egypt to Iran," he added.

It seems the Iranian photographer was deported due to political reasons and it's while sport has nothing to do with politics.

## Iran golden at ParaVolley Asia-Oceania Men's Sitting Volleyball Championships



**S P O R T S** Iran claimed the title d e s k of the 2017 ParaVolley Asia-Oceania Men's Sitting Volleyball Championships on Sunday.

The six-time Paralympics champion defeated Kazakhstan in straight sets (25-15, 25-19, 25-12) in the final match.

Iran had also defeated Kazakhstan 3-0 on Saturday.

On Saturday, Iran's women's sitting

volleyball team defeated Kazakhstan in bronze medal match and finished in third place. China also defeated Japan to win the title.

Iranian men's and women's teams advanced to the 2018 World ParaVolley Sitting Volleyball World Championships which will be held in the Netherlands next year.

The competition took place in Hangzhou, China from June 26 to July 2.

## Andy Murray says he is fit to play despite hip injury

World number one Andy Murray says he will be fit to defend his Wimbledon title, despite struggling with a hip injury.

The Briton, 30, picked up the problem earlier this week and was hobbling during practice sessions at the All England Club.

Murray plays Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik in Monday's opening match on Centre Court.

"I'll be fine to play the event and play seven matches," the Scot said.

"If I feel like I am today, I'd be delighted and have no issues getting through.

"If necessary, I can take some anti-inflammatories if my hip flares up. Hopefully that's not the case."

Murray pulled out of two exhibition matches last week and missed three days of practice, preferring instead to rest the injury and work with his physio.

"It's been sore for a little while now and with each day that I was practising it was feeling a little bit worse," Murray told the BBC. "It was hampering my movement and therefore I wasn't getting things out of my practice



session.

"Obviously I would have liked to have trained the whole week and got a couple of exhibition matches but the positive from it is that I'm fresh.

"I certainly haven't played too much tennis - but I'm certainly going to have to work my way into the tournament. I'm probably not going to come out and play great straight off the bat.

"It's just a little bit stressful. Right before the biggest tournament of the year for me as a Brit, you want to be out there practicing, and I haven't been in that position before really"

Murray has visibly struggled at times between points since returning to practicing at Wimbledon under the watchful eyes of coaches Ivan Lendl and Jamie Delgado.

However, the two-time Wimbledon champion believes his recent run to the semi-finals at the French Open sets an encouraging precedent.

"The last few days have been very good," Murray said.

"Practice each day has got a little bit better. It's been slightly stop-start preparations. But each day I've felt better.

"A little bit like at the French Open, where maybe I didn't come in as well-prepared, I still found a way with each match to feel a bit better, and built confidence each day.

"So, you know, I'm hoping that's the case here."

(Source: BBC)

## Valverde has successful surgery on broken kneecap



Alejandro Valverde had successful surgery on a broken kneecap after this crash on Saturday's opening day of the Tour de France and will need a few months to recover, his Movistar team said on Sunday.

"Alejandro Valverde successfully underwent surgery last night at Duesseldorf's University Hospital to fix some of the injuries sustained in his race-ending crash," Movistar said in a statement.

"The operation not only consisted on healing his most serious fracture -- the kneecap of his left leg -- but also took care of and closed two important wounds in Alejandro's tibia and gluteus."

The 37-year-old Valverde, who was to be Colombian Nairo Quintana's key team mate in the three-week race, crashed into a safety barrier during Saturday's opening time trial.

(Source: Reuters)

## Portugal claim third place at Confederations Cup



Portugal finished third at the Confederations Cup with a 2-1 extra-time win over Mexico after Pepe scored in injury time to deny their opponents victory.

The European champions trailed to Luis Neto's own goal on 54 minutes but efforts from Pepe in the first minute of added time and an Adrien Silva penalty on 104 turned the match in their favor.

Both teams ended the match with 10 men with Nelson Semedo sent off 106 minutes and Raul Jimenez of Mexico also seeing red six minutes later for a second booking.

Portugal were without Cristiano Ronaldo who left the tournament after his country's semi-final defeat to Chile on penalties to meet his new-born twins.

(Source: Eurosport)

## Iran finish in fifth place at FIVB Volleyball U21 World Championship

Iran claimed the prestigious fifth place in the final standings at the FIVB Volleyball Men's U21 World Championship Czech Republic 2017.

In an all-Asian clash in Brno, the Iranians cruised to a 3-0 (25-19, 25-20, 25-21) shutout of China with great contribution from middle blocker Aliasghar Mojarad.

Mojarad tallied five kill blocks for a total of 12 points, which made him the best scorer for Iran. He was topped only by China's Jingyi Wang with 13 points, fivb.com wrote.

China blocked really well in the first set, but not well enough to stop Amirhossein Esfandiari and his teammates on the way to a 25-19 win. While the Iranians improved their blocking in the second set, the Chinese committed far too many unforced errors. Closing the set at 25-20, Iran doubled their lead in the match.

Coach Behrouz Ataei's squad stayed in control in the third set as well, despite a strong showing by Wang. Mojarad was unstoppable, contributing in both spiking and blocking, well assisted by sub-in Porya Yali, who scored six points with 100% success rate in attack, including the last one that closed the match at 25-21.

## Sarmayeh Bank defeat Beijing BAIC Motor at Asian Club Volleyball C'ship

Sarmayeh Bank of Iran defeated Beijing BAIC Motor at the 2017 Asian Men's Club Volleyball Championship on Sunday.

The Iranian team defeated the Chinese club 3-1 (25-14, 19-25, 25-18, 25-15) in Pool F.

Sarmayeh Bank will face Toyoda Gosei Trefuerza from Japan on Monday.

Mostafa Karkhaneh's men had already defeated Taichung Bank from Chinese Taipei in Pool B.

The competition is being held in Vietnam's Nam Dinh and Ninh Binh from June 28 to July 6.

At the previous edition in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar last year, Samayeh Bank Club handed Iran their 11th title following a hard-fought 3-1 win over Al Arabi of Qatar in the final clash. Japan's Toyoda Gosei Trefuerza finished third place after edging past Shanghai Golden Age of China in an exhausting five-set thriller.

(Source: asianvolleyball)

## Iran's Ehsan Haji Safi joins Panionios

Iranian international midfielder Ehsan Haji Safi joined Greek Panionios football team.

The 27-year-old player will undergo a medical to complete his move to the Greek team.

Haji Safi is set to team up with fellow countryman Masoud Shojaei at Panionios.

Haji Safi started his career in Zob Ahan in 2000 and left the club in 2006 and has played in Sepahan, Tractor Sazi and FSV Frankfurt.

He has represented Iran at the 2011 AFC Asian Cup, 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2015 AFC Asian Cup, in addition to Sepahan at the 2007 FIFA Club World Cup.

He has scored six goals in 82 caps for Iran.

(Source: Tasnim)

## Real Madrid expect Cristiano Ronaldo to make statement within next seven days

Cristiano Ronaldo is expected to make a formal statement regarding his future within the next week, according to reports.

The Times suggest that Real Madrid are preparing for their star player to clarify his situation.

It will end weeks of uncertainty surrounding the four-time Ballon d'Or winner.

It emerged last month Ronaldo was unhappy at Real Madrid and was angling for a move away after he became embroiled in a tax fraud scandal. The Portugal international felt the club did not offer him enough support over claims he swindled tax officials -- a charge he vigorously denies.

In addition he's thought to have grown frustrated with supporters who are quick to turn on him despite his outrageous contribution to the team since joining in 2009.

It led to suggestions he could make a sensational return to Manchester United, while Paris St Germain and Chelsea have also been linked with the four-time Champions League winner.

However it would seem Ronaldo has decided to remain at the Bernabeu.

Having been given permission to leave the Confederations Cup early and miss today's third-place play-off Ronaldo returned to Madrid. While there he held brief discussions with Real Madrid officials. According to Marca, the mouthpiece of the club, he gave assurances that his immediate future is at the Bernabeu.

Ronaldo then travelled to the United States to be united with his newly born twins.

It's possible the two new additions to the Ronaldo family may have swayed his decision to remain in Madrid as he looks to provide a stable home situation.

Everything should become clear over the next week with one of the biggest transfer sagas of the summer coming to an end.

(Source: Metro)



# Iranian institute organizing cartoon contest on Donald Trump

**A R T TEHRAN** — The d e s k Organization for Sacred Defense Artistic and Cinema Affairs is holding a cartoon contest on U.S. President Donald Trump.

Artists from 75 countries have submitted over 1,600 works to the competition titled the International Trumpism Cartoon and Caricature Contest, the director of the organization, Ali-Asghar Jafari, said in a press conference on Saturday.

He added that the competition is being organized to acknowledge Trump since "he represents the real image of America."

"Trump's behavior clearly sets out Iran's reasons to distrust the U.S., consequently, we decided to use art's capacity for displaying the behavior," he added.

"Aside from his personal characteristics, Trump has also posed different challenges to the world and treats Iran and the Islamic world unconventionally in particular," he lamented.

Masud Shojaei-Tabatabai, who was an organizer of the International Holocaust Cartoon Contest in Iran, presides over the International Trumpism Cartoon and Caricature Contest.

"This contest considers Trump as a symbol of U.S. capitalism and hegemony that many intellectuals compare with Nazism," Shojaei-Tabatabai said.

Racism and Islamophobia in Trump's



Trophies are seen during a press conference for the International Trumpism Cartoon and Caricature Contest in Tehran on July 1, 2017. (Tasnim/Mohammad Hassanzadeh)

behavior are the main themes of the contest, which is scheduled to announce winners during a ceremony at the Art

Bureau in Tehran today.

A selection of the submissions will be showcased during exhibitions in Iran

and eleven other countries, including the Netherlands, Belgium, Indonesia, Brazil and Turkey.

## Tehran hosts art festival on American human rights



A poster for the 2nd International American Human Rights Festival

**A R T TEHRAN** — The 2nd d e s k International American Human Rights Festival is currently underway at Tehran's Art Bureau.

Works by artists from the U.S. Canada, Australia, France, Turkey and several other countries are on display at the festival aimed at denoting the misuse of the concept of human rights by the American government in the world, the director of the exhibition, Esmail Ajorlu, said in a press conference on Sunday.

"Trump and Human Rights" is the main

subject of the festival, which will put on display posters, cartoons, and works in several other media.

The organizers also plan to hold exhibitions of the artworks at the Iranian embassies in ten countries.

Esfandiar Qarabaghi, the singer of "USA, USA, Shame on Your Deceits!" and several other revolutionary songs, and Parviz Sheikhtadi, the director anti-Zionist movie "Saturday's Hunter", will be honored during the closing ceremony of the festival on Wednesday.

## Iranian writers to join Peace March in Bosnia and Herzegovina

**CULTURE TEHRAN** — Nine Iranian writers d e s k will join the Annual Peace March or Mars Mira in Bosnia and Herzegovina organized in memory of the victims of the 1995 Srebrenica genocide.

Thousands of Bosnians and foreigners gather each year to mark the anniversary of the genocide. Majid Qeysari, Morteza Qazi, Radman Rasuli Mehrbani, Hamed Askari, Afruz Mahdian and Maryam Baradaran are among the Iranian participants, Iran's Poetry and Fiction Foundation has announced in a press release on Sunday.

The writers will arrive on July 6 and will stay for 10 days. Meetings with literary figures have also been arranged during their 10-day visit.

The three-day walk running from July 8 to 10 starts from a village called Nezuk (Sapna Municipality) and over a three-day period covering a distance of some 90 kilometers reaches Potocari, the final resting place for many of those massacred.

A memorial ceremony, arranged at the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial Center and Cemetery (SPMCC), takes place on July 11.

## Adele cancels remainder of world tour with damaged vocal cords

**NEW YORK (Reuters)** — Singer Adele has canceled the last two sell-out shows of her world tour due to take place at London's Wembley Stadium this weekend after damaging her vocal cords.

Adele, 29, said she went to see a throat doctor on Friday night, who advised her not to perform.

She had already performed two nights to crowds at Wembley, but said that she had been struggling vocally.

"To say I'm heartbroken would be an understatement," Adele, said on her Twitter page.

One of the biggest selling artists in the world, she said she was so desperate perform that she had even considered miming at the shows.

"I've never done it and I cannot in a million years do that to you," she said.



Adele sings 'Hello' at the 59th Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, California, U.S., February 12, 2017. (Reuters/Lucy Nicholson)

"It wouldn't be the real me up there."

Adele said refunds would be available if the shows could not be rescheduled.

The Grammy-award singer has previously had to cancel concerts due to problems with her throat following vocal cord surgery in 2011.

## Film critic Barry Norman dies

**LONDON (BBC)** — Film critic Barry Norman has died aged 83, his family says.

The journalist and former BBC presenter died in his sleep on Friday night.

A statement from his daughters, Samantha and Emma, called him "remarkable", adding: "He had a great life, a wonderful marriage and an enviable career."

Norman hosted BBC One's "Film..." show between 1972 and 1998 - its longest running host - as well as writing for the Daily Mail and the Guardian.

His literary agent described him as "the defining voice of film criticism and insightful interviewing of screen legends from both sides of the camera".

Norman's daughters added: "He

leaves behind a family who adore him and a great roster of friends who love him too. We will miss him more than we can say."

Norman's literary agent, Gordon Wise, said the presenter had been living with lung cancer for a number of years, but that he would be remembered as "one of the true greats" of film.

"It was probably that background as a newspaper journalist, interviewer and features writer that all came together to make him such a gifted film critic," he told BBC News.

"He could not only appreciate the story of the film but all the talents that had gone into making the film. That is what we all remember from the three decades of the Film program - that he brought you perspectives from every side of the camera."

INTERNATIONAL DAILY

www.tehrantimes.com

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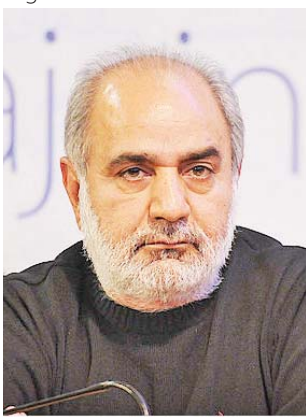
» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895  
editor@tehrantimes.com  
» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000  
» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450  
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» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603  
» www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.  
Tel: 88911433  
» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com  
» Printed at: Kayhan - ISSN: 1017-94

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran  
P.o. Box: 14155-4843  
Zip Code: 1599814713



## Actor Parviz Parastui asks Iranians to condemn U.S. downing of Iran Air Flight 655

**A R T TEHRAN** — Actor Parviz Parastui d e s k asked Iranians to send posts on social networks in condemnation of the U.S. downing Iran Air Flight 655 in 1988 on the anniversary of the tragedy.



Actor Parviz Parastui (Cinemapress/ Amir-Hossein Ghazanfari)

On July 3, 1988, the U.S. Navy guided missile cruiser U.S.S. Vincennes shot down an Iranian passenger jet loaded with pilgrims headed for Mecca over the Persian Gulf, killing all 290 passengers and crew members, including 66 children.

The following year, President George Bush awarded William C Rogers, captain of the U.S.S. Vincennes, America's Legion of Merit medal.

In a statement published on Sunday, Parastui wrote, "Let's do something to turn these medals into a black mark on the history of the world."

## Italy's Claudia Castellucci to direct play in Iran

**A R T TEHRAN** — Italian theater expert and d e s k choreographer Claudia Castellucci will direct a play in Iran in collaboration with the Iranian troupe Moj.

"In a meeting I had with Castellucci in Italy, we agreed to produce and stage a play with Iranian actors in Iran," Moj leader Arash Abbasi told the Persian service of MNA on Sunday.



This joint project is scheduled to be staged in autumn.

"The troupe will be doing rehearsals in a desert and this is why we chose autumn for its cooler weather," he added.

A number of seminars have also been arranged by Castellucci to be held during her stay, Abbasi said.

The Italian expert has already held several workshops in Iran.

Castellucci along with her brother Romeo and two

siblings Chiara and Paolo Guidi established an experiential theater company in 1981.

The company, which is named "The Societas Raffaello Sanzio" and has performed in various venues across Europe, is based near Bologna, Italy where it has its own theater.

Castellucci is also the author of "The Theater of Societas Raffaello Sanzio", which is about the background and development of the company.

## Olivia de Havilland sues FX Networks over depiction in "Feud"

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — Oscar-winning actress Olivia de Havilland filed a lawsuit against FX Networks on Friday, saying she did not give her permission to be portrayed in the miniseries "Feud: Bette and Joan" and that her depiction in the show had harmed her reputation.

Lawyers for de Havilland, whose 101st birthday was on Saturday, said the network and Ryan Murphy Productions did not consult with her and that she is the only living person to be depicted in the eight-part miniseries.

De Havilland was portrayed by Catherine Zeta-Jones in "Feud", which starred Jessica Lange as Joan Crawford and Susan Sarandon as Bette Davis. The series explored the complex tension and bad blood between the two Hollywood screen legends in the later years of their life, especially during their filming on 1962's "What Ever Happened to Baby Jane."

Critics warmly received the series, touting it as a strong contender for next month's Emmy nominations.

De Havilland's complaint was filed in Los Angeles Superior Court. Representative for Murphy and FX Networks, a unit of Twenty-First Century Fox Inc did not immediately respond to Reuters' requests for comment.

In an April interview with The Hollywood Reporter, Murphy said he did not contact de Havilland because he "didn't want to be disrespectful and ask her, "Did this happen? Did that happen? What was your take on that?"