



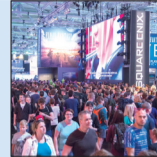
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Zarif: U.S. pressure on IAEA violates JCPOA

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that any move of the U.S. to exert pressure on the International Atomic Energy Agency is "violation of the 2015 nuclear deal and independence of the IAEA".

"We are sure that the IAEA is aware of regulations on its behavior as an international body and will not let its independence and status be undermined by the U.S. ambassador's visit given terms of the JCPOA [the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action] and mechanisms of monitoring Iran's compliance to the deal," he told ISNA in an interview published on Friday.

U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley traveled to Vienna on Wednesday to meet with officials of the IAEA and discuss the nuclear deal.

Her trip was part of an initiative by the Trump administration to review the JCPOA.

Iran's permanent mission to the IAEA issued a statement on Thursday saying the objectives and the results of Haley's trip to Vienna "contradict" the JCPOA and Resolution 2231.

The statement said that Iran is abiding by its duties and responsibilities in dealing with the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, IAEA Safeguard Agreements, **->2**



Great Amano Test

The recent visit of the United States representative of the Security Council to the headquarters of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna and her visit to Yukio Amano has been addressed by the authorities of our country.

Obviously, Washington's pressure on the IAEA to inspect Iran's military sites is a real violation of the JCPOA and UN Security Council resolution 2231. Beyond that, it means Washington's public blackmail from Amano and other Agency officials.

During the nuclear negotiations between Iran and 1 + 5, the issue of inspection of Iranian military sites became one of the key issues in the talks. Even the controversy over the issue between the parties led to a prolonged process of reaching a nuclear deal. However, Ayatollah Khamenei at the time emphasized that the inspection of military places in our country is considered Iran's red line.

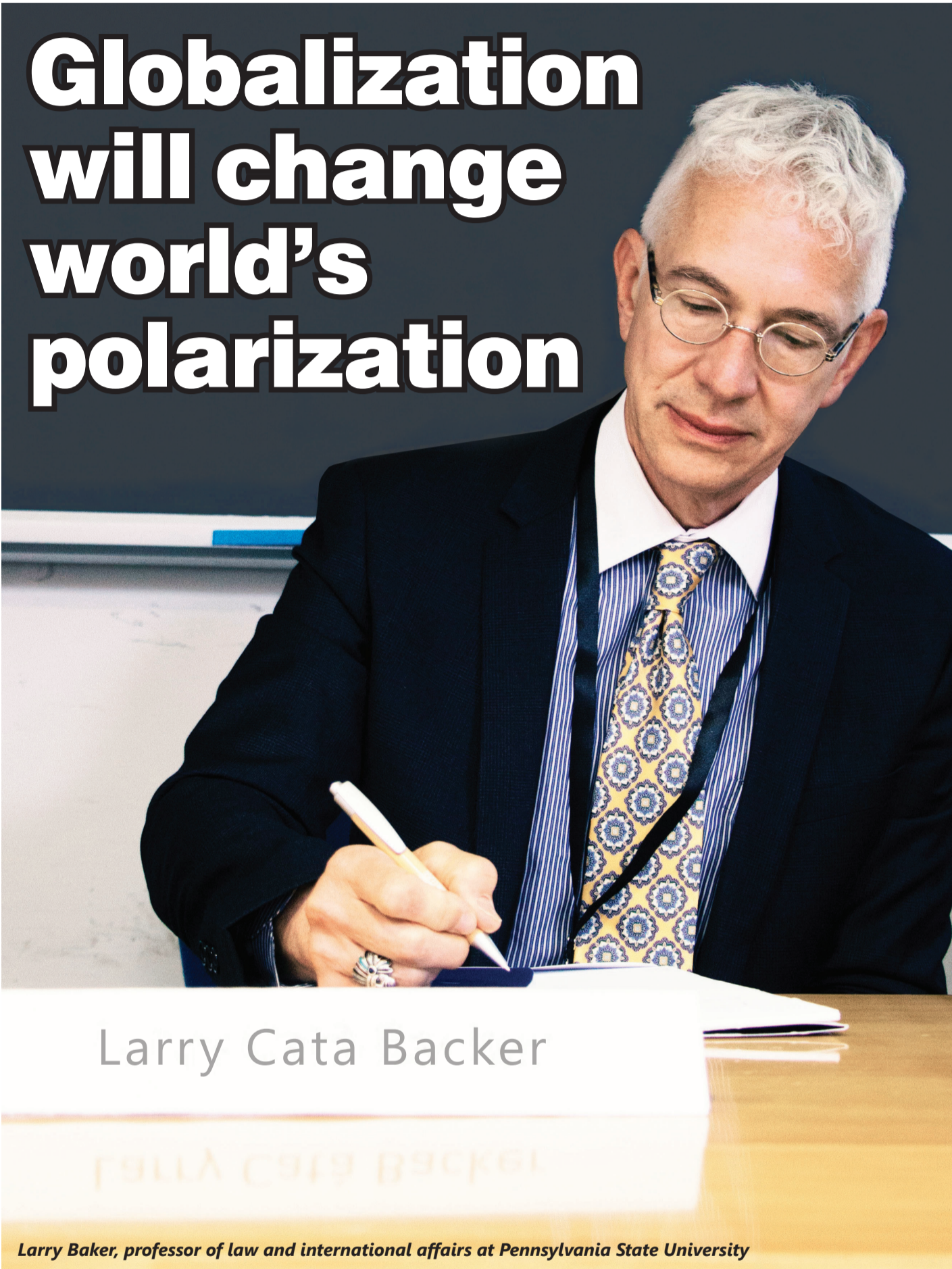
After victory of Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election and his move to the White House, he set up a committee to examine how to quit and disrupt the nuclear deal.

Trump has the intention of breaking the nuclear deal under the pretext of organizing an inspection of Iran's military sites by the IAEA. Over the past weeks, some U.S. media have said it is scheduled to accuse Iran of violating a nuclear deal in October, in a White House's to Congress.

Yukio Amano's silence about Nikki Haley's trip has a clear message for many people who have watched his approach in recent years! The reality is that Amano's approach to the IAEA has been a function of pressures and political games, rather than being dependent on the legal principles.

However, Amano and his entourage face a tough test. If Amano succumb to the pressures of the U.S. and the government of Trump, it will be one of the main factors behind the collapse of the nuclear deal.

In this case, Amano should be responsive to non-impartial performance against one of the most important international agreements. What is certain is that Amano's performance and other Agency officials are under the pretext of public opinion in Iran and the world.



Globalization will change world's polarization

Larry Cata Backer

Larry Baker, professor of law and international affairs at Pennsylvania State University

Erdogan fires 928 public workers, tightened grip over MIT, clamps down on media

The Turkish government has fired over 900 officials with the public sector and boosted President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's powers over the country's national intelligence agency.

In a decree issued on Friday, a total of 928 of people were dismissed, among them academic staff, servants working in the defense, foreign and interior ministries as well as military personnel.

Under a separate decree, Erdogan's permission will be required for the head of the National Intelligence Organization (MIT/Milli ?stihbarat Te?kilat?) to be investigated or to act as a witness.

Erdogan will also chair the national intelligence coordination board, while the Ankara chief prosecutor's office will have the authority to investigate members of parliament for alleged crimes committed before or after an election.

According to one of the decrees the pro-Kurdish news agency Dihaber and two newspapers, all based in the southeastern city of Diyarbakir, will be shut down.

The decrees will also allow the Turkish government to recruit 32,000 new police, along with 4,000 judges and prosecutors -- a move seen by critics as a measure to reshape the Turkish police force and judiciary in favor of Erdogan.

The decrees are the latest outcome of the emergency rule imposed in Turkey after last year's botched military coup.

Turkey witnessed the coup attempt on July 15, 2016, when a faction of the Turkish military declared that the Erdogan government was no more in charge of the country.

However, over the course of some two days, the putsch was suppressed. Almost 250 people were killed and nearly 2,200 others wounded in the abortive coup.

Ankara blamed the United States-based opposition cleric, Fetullah Gulen, for the coup. (Source: Press TV)

while Choi was sentenced to three years in prison in June.

Samsung, South Korea's largest business group, has acknowledged making contributions to two foundations as well as a consulting firm linked to Choi Soon-sil, a close confidante of the embattled South Korean leader who is also facing corruption charges.

At a December parliament hearing, Lee denied that the company paid bribes to pave the way for a merger in 2015.

Samsung made the biggest contributions of \$16.8m to Choi's foundations.

Samsung is separately accused of funneling millions of dollars to Choi to bankroll her daughter's equestrian training in Germany.

Prosecutors said the donations were made in exchange for government favors, allegations that Lee and Choi had denied.

Other former Samsung executives charged with Lee were also found guilty.

Choi Gee-sung, Lee's mentor, and Chang Choong-ki were sentenced to four years in prison. Two other former executives received suspended jail terms. (Source: agencies)

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Choi Gee-sung, Lee's mentor, and Chang Choong-ki were sentenced to four years in prison. Two other former executives received suspended jail terms. (Source: agencies)

IR-40 in 2nd re-design phase

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Islamic Republic re-designing of Khondab reactor, aka IR-40 and Arak reactor, has entered the second phase.

Behrouz Kamalvandi, the spokesman of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), told local media that Iran in cooperation with Russia and under the supervision of China and the U.S. are involved in the project.

The AEOI spokesperson said Chinese experts have endorsed Iran's contribution to Khondab project — what he said marked a significant technical achievement for the Islamic Republic.

Kamalvandi said the operations to re-design the reactor are proceeding according to the schedule, adding that the project would finish before 2022.

Elsewhere, he said Iran expects to see a new nuclear power plant which it is building in cooperation with Russia to be launched before 2025.

Kamalvandi added that a second plant would be made operational two years later than the first one.

He noted that the projects could generate a collective of 2,100 megawatts — 1,050 megawatts each — once fully operational.

Last September, Iran said it had started a 10-year project to construct a new nuclear power plant with Russia's help. **->2**

Iran Navy commander meets with Bangladeshi counterpart

TEHRAN — The Commander of Iran's Navy Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari met with his Bangladeshi counterpart on the sidelines of the 3rd International Maritime Security Symposium underway in Bali, Indonesia.

Also, in addition to a bilateral meeting with the commander of naval forces of Indonesia, Sayyari had met with some high ranking naval delegations from China, Pakistan, Thailand, and India, before his meeting with his Bangladeshi counterpart.

During these bilateral meetings and negotiations, the two sides discussed the necessity to expand relations, and cooperation in areas of education, and technical and operational issues.

(Source: Mehr)

Qatar closes Chad embassy in tit-for-tat move

Qatar's foreign ministry on Thursday said it was closing Chad's embassy in Doha and ordered all staff to leave the emirate within three days. The retaliatory move came just 24 hours after the central African state announced it was closing Qatar's embassy in N'Djamena, accusing Doha of seeking to destabilize the country.

Qatar foreign ministry official Ahmed bin Saeed al-Rumaihi said in a statement the emirate had decided "to close the Embassy of the Republic of Chad in Doha and to give diplomats and embassy staff 72 hours to leave the country". Rumaihi added that Qatar rejected as "baseless" claims made by Chad on Wednesday.

Chad said it was expelling Qatar's mission to "safeguard peace and stability in the region", accusing the Middle Eastern state of "attempts at the destabilization of Chad from Libya".

Qatar's diplomatic staff were given 10 days to leave Chad, Mauritania and Senegal all recalled their ambassadors from Qatar in June. They acted after the House of Saud regime, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Egypt broke off diplomatic and trade ties with Qatar, accusing it of supporting Islamist extremists, a charge the tiny, gas-rich state denies.

(Source: AFP)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Rouhani congratulates Ukraine on national day

POLITICS TEHRAN — In a Wednesday message to his Ukrainian counterpart, President Rouhani congratulated the 26th anniversary of Ukraine's independence and expressed the hope that Tehran-Kiev relations would develop day by day in line with the interests of the two countries.

Rouhani also wished health and success for President Petro Poroshenko and prosperity and glory for the people of the European country.

Independence Day of Ukraine is the main state holiday in modern Ukraine, celebrated on 24 August in commemoration of the Declaration of Independence of 1991.



Terrorists behind Tuesday attack arrested: police chief

POLITICS TEHRAN — The terrorists behind Tuesday attack in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan have been arrested, provincial police commander, General Mohammad Qanbari, said on Friday.

According to IRIB News, Qanbari said the attack had occurred on Tuesday morning when two assailants stormed a government building, killing a soldier as well as a Basiji militiaman.

"Two suspects were arrested soon after the incident, as a result of close cooperation between police and the IRGC," he said, adding that the suspects confessed their crime later on.



Fifty million passengers fly over Iran airway: commander

POLITICS TEHRAN — More than 50 million foreign passengers have flown over Iran during the previous Persian year, says Brigadier General Farzad Esmaili, the commander of Iran's Air Defense Force.

Boasting Iranian airway's security in a region filled with conflicts, Esmaili said more than 1400 foreign passenger planes fly over the country each day.

"The safest and most important airway in the Middle East is that of our beloved country," he said, stressing that this is despite all the threats and unjust sanctions against Iran by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).



Iran urges U.S. to stop meddling in regional countries' affairs

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Thursday that the U.S. must stop meddling in domestic affairs of Middle East countries.

"What the U.S. blames other countries for is the result of its wrong policies in the region, especially in Afghanistan, which have just led to increase in tension and spread of terrorism and extremism," he said.

Earlier this week, U.S. President Donald Trump said he was committed to a prolonged U.S. military presence in Afghanistan.

He also warned Pakistan against providing terrorists with "safe havens."



Iraqis, Syrians should determine their destiny: Iran

POLITICS TEHRAN — Brigadier General Masoud Jazayeri, the deputy chief of Iran's armed forces, said on Thursday that the Iraqi and Syrian people have the right to determine their destiny.

"The neighboring countries should accept that it is the Iraqi and Syrian people's right to determine their destiny," he said.

He also said Iran makes efforts to root out terrorism with cooperation of the countries in the Middle East region.

He added that Iranian Armed Forces Chief of Staff Mohammad Hossein Bagheri's recent visit to Turkey was in line with Iran's efforts in countering terrorism.



Justice minister voices readiness to pursue Karoubi's demand

POLITICS TEHRAN — Justice Minister Alireza Avayi has voiced readiness to pursue the demand of Mahdi Karoubi, a former parliament speaker who had been under house arrest since the 2009 presidential unrest.

Days ago, Karoubi went on hunger strike to protest the presence of security forces in his home and demanded to be tried before an open court. He ended his hunger strike the following day.

"Until this moment, neither the executive nor the judiciary has raised the issue so that I pursue the case," ISNA quoted Avayi as saying on Friday.

'Iran welcomes Qatari diplomat's return'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on Thursday that Iran welcomes the Qatari government's act in returning its ambassador to Tehran.

He described the decision as "logical" and "positive".

"As we have repeatedly announced, Iran's principled policy has been and will be expansion of relations with all neighbors. Iran is always ready to have better relations with its neighboring countries within the framework of mutual respect," he said.

He said that "normalization" and "expansion" of ties among the regional countries without interference of the extra regional countries are the only ways to provide security and stability in the region and also lay grounds for economic developments.

Iran is ready to make the necessary political efforts in line with expanding



interaction with regional countries and helping solve problems, he added.

Elsewhere, Qassemi noted, "The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes any constructive and positive step by the

neighbors to expand relations."

Qatar Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Thursday, saying that the Qatari government was restoring diplomatic ties and sending its ambassador

back to Tehran as part of an "aspiration to strengthen bilateral relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran in all fields".

Doha recalled its ambassador to Tehran in January 2016 following attacks on Saudi Arabia's embassy in Iran by some demonstrators in protest to Riyadh's execution of a prominent Shiite cleric.

Bahraini Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmad Al Khalifa and Emirati Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Mohammed Gargash have blasted Qatar's move in Twitter messages.

Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain and Maldives severed ties with Qatar in June, accusing it of supporting terrorism.

Iran has helped Qatar cope with the trade and travel restrictions.

To stop boycotting Qatar, the Arab countries issued 13 demands including curbing relations with Iran.

Iran rejects Manama claim on gang members' origins

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman has slammed as baseless and ludicrous recent allegations raised by Bahrain that suspected members of a terror cell it has arrested recently have links with Iran.

Spokesman Bahram Qassemi, speaking on Friday, recommending the Al Khalifa to abandon its failed policies and stop repressing the peaceful protests.

He dismissed the accusations that Iranian organizations are involved in the conflicts in Bahrain.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has never promoted violence or destabilizing measures in the neighboring countries, including Bahrain," he underlined.

His comments came after the Manama government said in a statement on Thursday that it has arrested seven suspected members of a terror cell allegedly backed by Iran on the island nation.

In response, Qassemi said the Al Khalifa regime has once again resorted to putting the blame on the others



and to false and unprovable claims as the international human rights organizations have disclosed documents showing Bahrain's widespread use of torture against political prisoners.

The spokesperson further advised the Bahraini rulers to abandon the policy of "oppression and torture" that is

aimed at drawing attention away from the peaceful protests by people of Bahrain.

Denouncing the Manama regime for the employment of "failed security approaches and for seeking assistance from the foreign military and security forces," Qassemi called on the Bahraini government to settle its problems through "dialogue, interaction and civil and peaceful methods."

Bahrain, a close ally of the U.S. in the Persian Gulf region, has been witnessing protests against the ruling Al Khalifa dynasty since early 2011, with Manama using heavy-handed measures in an attempt to crush the demonstrations.

Scores of Bahrainis have been killed and hundreds of others injured and arrested in the ongoing crackdown on the peaceful demonstrations.

Amnesty International and many other international rights organizations have frequently censured the Bahraini regime for the rampant human rights abuses against opposition groups and anti-regime protesters.

OFAC fines Singaporean firm over Iran transaction

POLITICS TEHRAN — A Singapore-based subsidiary of a Chinese oil field services company has agreed to pay \$415,350 to settle claims that it violated U.S. sanctions against Iran by exporting oil rig supplies from the U.S. that allegedly ended up in Iranian territorial waters, the U.S. Treasury Department announced Thursday.

COSL Singapore Ltd., a subsidiary of China Oilfield Service Ltd., agreed to pay the money to settle its 55 alleged violations of the Iranian Transactions and Sanctions Regulations from October 2011 to February 2013.

COSL Singapore has several oil rigs

Economic Sanctions & Export Controls



in its fleet and enters into time charter agreements with third-party drill-

ing companies to allow the third-party drilling companies to use the oil rigs

for their drilling operations for a specified term and within a specified territory. COSL Singapore provides the oil rig and oil rig crews to the third-party drilling companies and is responsible for maintaining the oil rig, including by procuring equipment and spare parts for the oil rig's operations.

OFAC determined that COSL Singapore did not voluntarily disclose the apparent violations and that the apparent violations constitute a non-egregious case. The statutory maximum penalty amount for the apparent violations is \$13,750,000, and the base penalty amount for the apparent violations is \$923,000.

Pakistan lauds Iran's supportive stance against U.S.

POLITICS TEHRAN — Pakistani government spokesman appreciated Iran's firm stance on U.S. President Donald Trump's comments against Pakistan in his new South Asia strategy.

Mariyum Aurangzeb made the remarks while speaking to reporters during her visit to Iran-Pakistan Persian language study center in Islamabad.

She also expressed willingness for closer ties between Iran and Pakistan, saying her country highly values its relations with the Islamic Republic.

Earlier, the Iranian Foreign Ministry denounced the United States for its anti-Pakistan stance, and called on Washington to stop interfering in the internal affairs of regional

countries and making decisions in their stead.

"The U.S. condemns other states for what is the result of its own wrong and inappropriate policies for years in the region, particularly in Afghanistan," Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Bahram Qassemi said in a statement on Thursday.

He went on to say that Washington's opportunistic strategies as well as its unilateral and meddlesome policies have only contributed to the current chaos and tensions and paved the way for growth of terrorism and extremism in the region.

"The regional states enjoy a high capacity to cooperate in fight against terrorism and restore stability and security to the region, and there is no need for the U.S.



destabilizing strategies which lead to the spread of terrorism," he added.

Zarif: U.S. pressure on IAEA violates JCPOA

1 → JCPOA as well as additional protocol and under no circumstances let misuse of these rules and regulations for ill-wishing political means of a specific country and reserve the rights to remind all parties to remain committed to their pledges with regards to JCPOA.

Iran expects the IAEA head and its inspectors to perform their tasks regarding the JCPOA with professionalism and honesty, the statement said.

Zarif on Wednesday wrote similar letters to IAEA Chief Yukiya Amano and European foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini warning that Haley's visit is meant to violate the nuclear agreement.

"This visit with its announced purpose, is not in conformity with several provisions of the JCPOA and the UNSC Resolution 2231 which deal with the role of the Agency and the necessity of upholding its independence and protecting the sensitive information that comes to



its knowledge," Fars news agency quoted him as saying in his letters.

"Regrettably, this visit, with the stated purpose to

'press the Agency', is widely perceived by the international community as a manifest and blatant attempt by a Permanent Member of the Security Council -- openly hostile to the JCPOA and determined to undermine and destroy it -- to put pressure on the Agency and adversely affect the professional and impartial nature of the work of the IAEA in carrying out the job entrusted to it by the UNSC Resolution 2231 and the resolutions of the Board of Governors, thereby undermining the independence and credibility of the work of the Agency."

Iran, the European Union, Germany and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia - finalized the text of the nuclear agreement on July 14, 2015. The deal went into effect on January 16, 2016.

On July 20, 2015, the UN Security Council turned the JCPOA into international law by endorsing a resolution.

IR-40 in 2nd re-design phase

1 → The Islamic Republic already runs one Russian-built nuclear reactor at Bushehr, which is the country's first nuclear energy project.

Russia signed a deal with Iran in 2014 to build up to eight more reactors in the

country.

Kamalvandi further added that the construction of nuclear power plants required an investment of at least \$5 billion. The figure, he said, is at least three times higher than that required for the construction of

regular plants.

The official further said that Iran burns at least two million barrels of oil each year to produce enough electricity to answer its energy needs. This, he added, would cost at least \$100 million if each barrel of oil is

sold at \$50.

Using the nuclear technology, Kamalvandi stressed, would both preserve national resources and would also help prevent the annual release of around 7 million tonnes of pollutants into the environment.

Bomber, gunmen attack Shia Imam Zaman mosque in Kabul

A suicide attack followed by gunfire as Shia Muslims gathered for Friday prayers at a mosque in the Afghan capital, Kabul, has killed and injured several people.

Interior ministry spokesman, Najib Danish, told Al Jazeera that after the blast at the Imam Zaman mosque in the Qala-Najara neighborhood, three gunmen entered and began shooting.

Danish said there were 14 victims overall, without specifying how many among them had died.

More explosions and gunfire echoed from the site of the attack, which police official Mohammed Jamil said was still underway.

Mir Hussain Nasiri, a member of Afghanistan's Shia clerical council, said the cleric who was performing the prayers was killed, but did not give his name.

Al Jazeera's Jennifer Glasse, reporting from Kabul, said police were trying to clear the mosque.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

There have been several attacks against Shia Muslim mosques in Afghanistan in recent weeks. Last month, 32 people were killed when gunmen stormed a Shia mosque in western Herat province.



The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group claimed responsibility for that attack and vowed to carry out more attacks against Afghanistan's minority Shia Muslims. (Source: agencies)

Children among dead as fresh Saudi carnage in Sana'a

The House of Saud regime fighter jets have pounded a neighborhood in the Yemeni capital of Sana'a, massacring 14 people, including women and children.

The Friday bombing hit residential buildings in the Faj Attan neighborhood of Sana'a, Yemen's al-Masirah television network reported.

It said the fatalities include two women and six children, adding that the strike targeted two residences.

The network had earlier put the death toll at five, saying search operations were underway for other potential casualties.

However, the death toll was feared to rise even further as rescuers pull more victims from the rubble.

"There is no military base anywhere near the site of the attack, it's a residential area," Hakim Al Masmari, the editor in chief of Yemen post, told Al Jazeera.

"The entire country is mourning the deaths. It is unexpected and unbearable when civilians are killed."

Riyadh's warplanes have in recent days stepped up the bombardment of Sana'a, which is controlled by the Ansarullah (Houthi) movement.

The fresh carnage came days after at least 60 people were killed in Saudi regime airstrikes that hit a hotel



north of Sana'a on Wednesday.

Witnesses said the hotel in the Bait al Edhari area of Arhab District north of the city was hit with two missiles. The collision of the projectiles with the structure shattered its roof, leaving at least two bodies dangling from the building.

On Thursday, hundreds of thousands of people flooded the streets of Sana'a to condemn Riyadh's bloodshed.

The United Nations is investigating the assault.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' spokesman Stephane Dujarric reacted to the incident, saying, "What is clear is that any attack on civilians is unacceptable. This is a message we have often repeated, and we will continue to repeat."

The House of Saud regime and its allies began the military campaign against Yemen in March 2015 to restore its former Riyadh-allied authorities. Over two years on, more than 12,000 people have perished and the good part of the country's infrastructure blown to smithereens.

Ansarullah has been running state affairs since 2014, when the then president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi resigned and fled to Riyadh. Backed by army troops and popular forces, the movement has also been defending the nation against Saudi regime aggression.

The Saudi regime-led coalition has been under fire for failing to protect the civilians in Yemen. Activists and international rights groups have urged Western states, particularly the United States and Britain, to stop their military support for the so-called Saudi alliance.

(Source: agencies)

71 killed in overnight violence in Myanmar Rakhine

Myanmar says at least 71 people have been killed in attacks on police posts in the western state of Rakhine.

At least 59 Rohingya Muslims and 12 policemen were killed overnight on Thursday in the restive state, where the military is accused of committing atrocities against the persecuted Rohingya Muslim community.

A government statement said militants staged coordinated attacks on at least 24 police posts, while some 150 men were also attempting to break into a military base.

"The extremist Bengali insurgents attacked a police station in Maungdaw region in northern Rakhine state with a handmade bomb explosive," said the statement.

Using the derogatory term "Bengali," the government refers to the Rohingya Muslims, who are denied citizenship in Myanmar.

The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) claimed responsibility for the attacks in a Twitter post, but did not mention casualty figures or how many fighters were involved.

ARSA, accusing the Myanmar forces of killings and rape, said on Friday it was "taking defensive actions" in more than 25 different locations.



Myanmar's government brands the 1.1 million-strong Rohingya population in the country as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Rohingya Muslims, however, claim roots in the region that go back centuries. Considered by the United Nations as the "most persecuted minority group in the world," the Rohingyas have been under a military siege in Rakhine since October 2016. The government used a militant

attack on border guards back then as the pretext to enforce the blockade.

There have been numerous eyewitness accounts of summary executions, rapes, and arson attacks by the military since the crackdown began.

The crackdown has resulted in some 87,000 Rohingya Muslims fleeing the Buddhist-majority country to Bangladesh since last year.

Over 400,000 Rohingya refugees are already living in overcrowded squalid camps and makeshift settlements in the bordering district of Cox's Bazar.

Bangladesh has recently stopped thousands of Rohingyas on the border. Only this week, it turned back a boat carrying dozens of refugees, including children.

Bangladesh says it is no longer capable of hosting the refugees.

Rakhine state has also been the scene of communal violence at the hands of Buddhist extremists since 2012. Hundreds of Muslims have been blockaded inside their villages in recent weeks.

Aid workers and residents in the area said Muslims in the village of Zay Di Pyin are under siege by the armed forces and the Rakhine extremists.

A commission, led by former United Nations chief Kofi Annan, has warned of an escalation of violence in the restive Rakhine state, if ethnic tensions are not addressed urgently. The commission urged Myanmar to end restrictions on movement and citizenship for its Muslim Rohingya minority.

In its final report, the nine-member commission described the Rohingya as "the single biggest stateless community in the world". (Source: agencies)

U.S. helicopters transfer ISIL terrorists from eastern Syria: SOHR

The United States has airlifted a number of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorists near the eastern Syrian city of Dayr al-Zawr, where Syrian troops are closing in on the Takfiri terrorists, the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) says.

The London-based group said two United States helicopters conducted the operation in Beqres, a suburban area east of Dayr al-Zawr on Thursday morning, taking four ISIL terrorists and a civilian from a house used as an arms depot.

According to the report, the five people transferred during the operation included a foreign bomb expert, three

Egyptian ISIL members and a civilian.

Witnesses found shaved hair of the five individuals near the area, the observer said, adding that after airlifting the ISIL terrorists, troops blew up the arms depot.

The U.S. and its allies have been conducting airstrikes against what are said to be ISIL targets inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from the Damascus government or a United Nations mandate.

The military alliance has repeatedly been accused of targeting and killing civilians. It has also been largely incapable of fulfilling its declared aim of destroying

ISIL.

The U.S. has long been accused of colluding with ISIL to provide safe passage and logistic support to the members of the Takfiri group in conflict zones.

In June, the commander of the Russian forces in Syria, Colonel General Sergei Surovikin, accused U.S.-led forces in Syria of colluding with the ISIL leaders who surrender the areas under their control and head to provinces where Syrian government forces operate.

The Russian commander also criticized Washington for trying to block Syrian government forces from taking control of the country's southern border.



Political observers warn that the U.S. is using ISIL to create chaos in the Middle East and pursue Israel's plan to change the Middle East map by disintegrating the regional countries. (Source: Press TV)

UN calls for halt in fight against ISIL in Raqqa

The United Nations has called for a pause in the fighting for the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh)-held Syrian city of Raqqa to let thousands of civilians escape the battle.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an alliance of Kurdish and Arab fighters backed by United States-led coalition fighter jets, has retaken 60 percent of Raqqa from the group. Yet, about 20,000 civilians remain trapped in five ISIL-controlled neighborhoods, according to UN estimates.

Jan Egeland, head of the UN's humanitarian taskforce for Syria, said on Thursday that the ISIL terrorist outfit was doing its "absolute best to use [civilians] as human shields".

"Now is the time to think of possibilities, pauses or otherwise, that might facilitate the escape of civilians, knowing that Islamic State fighters are doing their absolute best to use them as human shields," he said in the Swiss city of Geneva.

"People that come out cannot risk [being killed by] air raids."

Amnesty International said in a report published on Thursday that Raqqa residents face a "deadly labyrinth", coming under fire from all sides, as the death toll from coalition air raids and SDF shelling continued to mount.

Diplomats at the UN reacted cautiously to the call for a temporary ceasefire.



On Tuesday, the Britain-based so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said 42 civilians, among them 19 children, were killed in U.S. coalition-led strikes on Raqqa.

Residents told Al Jazeera on Tuesday that at least 100 civilians were killed over a 48-hour span by U.S.-led air attacks on the city.

The U.S.-led coalition says it takes all possible precautions to avoid civilian casualties, but rights groups have said it is not enough.

"We are the good guys and the innocent people on the battlefield know the difference," U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said on Tuesday.

The coalition earlier this month acknowledged the deaths of 624 civilians in its attacks in Syria and Iraq since 2014.

But rights groups say the actual figure is much higher, and Amnesty criticized the coalition's investigation methods for failing to include site visits or witness interviews. (Source: agencies)

Shout 'Allahu akbar' and you will be shot, warns Luigi Brugnaro, mayor of Venice

The right-wing mayor of the Italian city of Venice has said anybody who shouts "Allahu akbar" in the city's famous St Mark's Square will be shot.

Luigi Brugnaro said at a press conference in northeast Italy that he ordered police to shoot to kill what he called suspected terrorists.

The controversial mayor said Venice was safer than the Spanish Catalan city of Barcelona where 13 people were killed earlier this month in a car-ramming attack.

The mayor's warning came as the European countries have faced a string of terrorist attacks recently.

He went on to recall the arrest in March of four suspected extremists who allegedly planned to blow up the Rialto bridge.

"They wanted to go to Allah," he said. "We'll send them straight to Allah before they can do any damage."

"I have never been politically correct, I am incorrect. I would shoot, we would shoot," the right-wing official said at another conference in defending his order to police.

Brugnaro's controversial order in Venice, known as Italy's floating city, has been likened to the Israeli regime's shoot-to-kill policy against the Palestinians. (Source: agencies)

Venezuela's Maduro calls for military loyalty after U.S. threat

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has warned the country's armed forces against "fissures" in their ranks amid United States threats of military action.

Addressing the country's top military officials ahead of military drills, which are seen as a show of strength and unity, Maduro urged the officials to "be prepared to fight fiercely... in the face of an eventual" invasion.

The U.S. President Donald Trump, who has promised to "continue to take strong and swift actions against the architects of authoritarianism in Venezuela," said earlier this month that Washington has "many options for Venezuela, including a possible military option if necessary."

Maduro said, "We must be clear, especially for the youth in the military, that we must close ranks within the homeland -- that this is no time for any fissures and that those with doubts should leave the armed forces immediately."

"You are with Trump and the imperialists, or you are with the Bolivarian national armed forces and the homeland," he said on Thursday. "Never before has Venezuela been threatened in such a way."

Washington has imposed economic sanctions directly targeting Maduro, accusing him of "dictatorship." Maduro says the U.S. is seeking to stifle oil exports through sanctions.

Venezuela has been the scene of deadly protests against Maduro's government for the last four months. More than 120 people have been killed and thousands arrested so far. (Source: agencies)

Iran secures €8b loan from S. Korea Eximbank

Iran has secured an €8-billion credit line from South Korea's Eximbank, the Islamic republic's biggest loan deal since its 2015 nuclear accord, the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) announced on Thursday.

"The biggest contract since the nuclear accord was signed with South Korea's Eximbank today for the amount of €8 billion," said CBI Governor Valiollah Seif, in a statement carried by state news agency IRNA.

A spokesman for South Korea's export credit bank, contacted by AFP, said the deal would finance projects in Iran by companies from the Asian country.

"We started signing with Iranian banks a framework agreement today. We did it with three Iranian banks today and will do so with nine other Iran banks in the coming week to complete the agreement," he said.

"Under the agreement, Eximbank will provide an €8-billion credit line for those banks so that they can help finance various projects in Iran that are awarded to South Korean companies," said the bank spokesman.

Seif said the loan would facilitate "several development and production projects", and it showed the international community was ready to restore "long-term" banking ties with Iran.

Under the landmark July 2015 nuclear accord signed by Iran and world powers, Tehran has curbed its nuclear program in exchange for an easing of international sanctions from January 2016.

"One of the problems created by international sanctions was they put a halt to financial accords," said the central bank chief.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who took office in January, is a fierce critic of the nuclear deal, acting as a deterrent to a normalization between the Iranian banking sector and major international banks.

But with the Eximbank agreement sealed, "I hope we will be able to announce more good news in the days and months ahead," said Seif. (Source: thesundaymy)

Japan's July consumer prices rise for 7th straight month

Japan's core consumer prices rose 0.5 percent in July from a year earlier to mark a seventh straight gaining month, a sign the economy is making slow but steady progress toward meeting the central bank's 2 percent inflation target.

But the increase was still largely driven by higher fuel bills as subdued wage growth discouraged consumers from increasing their spending, underscoring the challenge the Bank of Japan faces in achieving its ambitious price goal.



The rise in the nationwide core consumer price index (CPI), which includes oil products but excludes volatile fresh food prices, matched a median market forecast and followed a 0.4 percent gain in June.

Core consumer prices in Tokyo, available a month before the nationwide data, were up 0.4 percent in August from a year earlier, against a 0.3 percent gain projected in a Reuters poll.

Japan's economy expanded at the fastest pace in more than two years in the second quarter as consumer and company spending picked up.

But price and wage growth remain stubbornly weak with firms still wary of passing more of their profits to employees, raising doubts over whether the second-quarter's bounce can be sustained.

The BOJ has had to push back the timing for reaching its price target six times since it deployed a massive stimulus program in 2013.

It now expects inflation to hit 2 percent in the fiscal year ending in March 2020, arguing that a tightening job market and solid economic growth will gradually push up prices. (Source: Reuters)

Stocks heading for best weeks in six ahead of Yellen, Draghi speeches

World stocks climbed toward their best week in six on Friday, as a near three-year high in emerging market shares and a roaring rally in metals bolstered the year's global bull run.

Moves were mainly small ahead of speeches later by Federal Reserve and European Central Bank heads Janet Yellen and Mario Draghi at one of the highlights of central banking calendar, the Jackson Hole, Wyoming, symposium, but there was some traction.

European shares overcame an early wobble after reassuring business confidence data from Germany and as the week's 3 and 7 percent rises in metals copper and nickel [MET/L] gave the region's miners .SXPP a 4 percent weekly gain.

London's FTSE .FTSE, which has a heavyweight mining contingent, led the way with a 0.4 percent rise on the day and 1.5 percent for the week. It was also being boosted by the fourth straight weekly drop in the Brexit-bruised pound GBP=, which helps internationally-earned profits.

Fast charging emerging markets helped Asia secure a 1.6 percent weekly rise, while Wall Street looked set to open higher despite a rumbling row for Donald Trump as the United States approaches its self-imposed government debt limit. [N]

"Our current assessment of the overall risk and reward picture keeps us overweight global equities in our tactical asset allocation," UBS Wealth Management chief investment officer, Mark Haefele, said in a monthly note.

"Earnings and economic growth are strong enough, and central bank policy is still sufficiently loose to suggest that, in the absence of a shock, markets are likely to trend higher over the next six months." (Source: Reuters)

Numerous development projects to be inaugurated in 'Government Week'

ECONOMY TEHRAN — On the occasion of the Government Week (August 24-30), several development projects in different sectors including road, rail and electricity are set to go operational across Iran.

According to IRNA, 75 road construction projects valued at 8.057 trillion rials (about \$212 million) are among the projects scheduled by the Ministry of Transportation and Urban Development to be inaugurated across the country in the mentioned week.

With a total length of 711 kilometers, the mentioned projects include 44 highway construction plans, 26 main road construction and maintenance projects as well as removing five accident-prone spots.

Meanwhile, Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) cooperating with Iranian Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructures Company will inaugurate 14 rail projects with a total value of 8.447 trillion rials (about \$222 million) during the Government Week.

The projects include railway construction, constructing unlevel crossings, as well as buildings and installations.

In another report, IRNA quoted the managing director of Iran's Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Management Company (known as Tavanir) as saying that 22 trillion rials (near \$579 million) worth of power related projects are set to go online during the Government Week.



Arash Kordi noted that the mentioned projects include

establishment, optimization and modification of networks and joining rural areas to the country's electricity network.

European carmakers determined for business in Iran

ECONOMY TEHRAN — While the Western companies are cautious about investing in Iran because of the remained U.S. sanctions against the country, European car manufacturers are steady for business in this market.

In a Friday report, Financial Times wrote many sanctions on Iran were lifted after the nuclear deal came into effect. But western companies have been wary of investing in the country because U.S. sanctions remain in place. International banks avoid doing business there. But European car manufacturers appear undeterred.

There is a flurry of interest in Iran by European carmakers keen to tap into an oil-rich nation with a largely urban population of 80 million, the report added.

The auto industry is one of the few sectors outside oil in which multinationals are backing their talk of



interest in the Islamic republic with substantial investment, 20 months after a nuclear deal Tehran signed with world powers was implemented.

The share of Iran's auto industry in the country's gross domestic product (GDP) is projected to rise by 70 percent in the current Iranian calendar year (to end on March 20, 2018). Based on a strategic plan drawn out by the industry ministry, the automotive sector's added value share of GDP will grow from 1.8 percent in Iranian calendar year 1392 to 3 percent in the current year.

According to a report by Fitch Group's BMI Research in April, Iran's auto production growth will average 11 percent through 2021 and the return of European carmakers will boost the sector.

Es'haq Jahangiri, Iran's first vice-president, said last week that there was a time when foreign carmakers were reluctant to come to Iran's market but now, "it is us putting conditions [on them]".

Iran has signed six joint ventures for the sector since the nuclear deal came into effect, government officials say.

Inflation rate up 0.1% in Iran

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Statistical Center of Iran announced that the inflation rate for the 12-month period ended in the last day of the fifth Iranian calendar month Mordad (August 22) compared to the period ended in the last day of the fourth month Tir (July 22) rose 0.1 percent.

The center put the inflation rate at 7.7 percent in the 12-month period ended in Mordad while the figure was 7.6 percent for Tir, IRIB reported.

Point-to-point inflation rate stood

at 8.1 percent in Mordad, falling 0.8 percent from 8.9 percent in Tir, the Statistical Center added.

The center has put the country's inflation rate at 9.8 percent in the past Iranian calendar year 1395 (ended on March 20), showing 4.5 percent drop from its preceding year.

It is while the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has put the country's inflation rate at nine percent during the past calendar year.

Iran, accordingly, could manage to experience a single-digit inflation rate after 26 years in 1395.

Stock market index rises 2.1% in a month

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE)'s main index (TEDPIX) gained 1,702 points or 2.1 percent to 82,372 in the fifth Iranian calendar month Mordad (July 23-August 22), Tasnim news agency reported on Friday.

As reported, 18.083 billion securities worth 46.335 trillion rials (about \$1.216 billion) were traded through 1.104 million deals in the stock market.

Number of securities and number of trades show 14.7 percent and 30.1 percent growth, respectively, while the worth of trades indicates



15.7 percent rise compared to the previous month.

Britain heads back to the Brexit table

LONDON (Reuters) — Britain's economy is beginning to feel the Brexit pinch, or perhaps given the strong performance of the rest of the world economy, it should be punch.

After a prolonged period of relatively benign economic numbers following last year's vote to leave the European Union, there are now signs of a potentially serious slow down.

They stretch from retrenching households to hesitant businesses, from a widening trade deficit to lackluster manufacturing. They also come just as the EU and Britain return to the negotiating table, the latter with a handful of new post-Brexit position papers.

Since mid-August, London has been releasing official papers on issues such as trade, customs, the European Court of Justice, and what the province of Northern Ireland's future border with EU member Ireland will look like.


The performance of Britain's pound over that period suggests few people were impressed enough with them -- or with the likelihood they will come to pass -- to overcome the economic signs.

Running through the release of five official Brexit papers, the pound has lost more than 1.4 percent against the dollar since Aug 14 and the euro has gained the same against sterling.

While the pound weakness is not directly linked to the papers, their release has clearly done nothing to improve confidence in the currency.

That is at least in part because the UK economy is starting to feel the impact of Brexit.

"Economic momentum looks uncertain. Monthly factory orders this year suggest that the sector is failing to capitalize from a weaker sterling and a pick-up in global trade," Jaisal Pastakia, investment manager at Heartwood Investment Management, said in note.



IN THE NAME OF GOD

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

Sales Renewal Notice of International Documents

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NO. 96-05/125

Tender Holder:
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Two-Stage Tender:
Purchasing four sets of Mobile TV (Broadcasting) Units according to the tender documents

Place of Receiving Documents:
Secretariat of Tenders' Commission, Technical Purchasing (KALA) Dept., Media Technology and Development Deputy Office, Bldg. No. 2, IRIB, Jam-e Jam St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran
Please be informed that the tender notice dated **August 19, 2017** and **August 20, 2017** for selling the abovementioned documents is extended from **August 26, 2017** to **Sept. 2, 2017**.

It should be noted that bidders should hold license from the authorized bodies.

For more information, please contact the following phone number: **0098-21-22166313**

Public Relations Dept. of IRIB

Billions in oil deals shield Iran from U.S. sanctions

By Tsvetana Paraskova

Since many of the Western sanctions on Iran were lifted early last year, Tehran has been trying to restore its crude oil exports to a pre-sanction level and attract foreign investments in its energy sector. Companies are still cautious and not rushing into deals with Iran, but many European, Russian, and Asian firms have signed preliminary agreements or letters of intent with Iran that would turn into billions of dollars of investments.

The pledged and potential investments could help Iran cushion the impact of any move by U.S. President Donald Trump to end the nuclear deal with Iran that the U.S. had agreed together with China, France, Germany, Russia, and the UK.

While the U.S. has slapped new sanctions on Iranian companies in response to a ballistic missile program and President Trump has signed into law an act imposing new sanctions on Iran, some of the biggest European and Chinese oil companies have walked into preliminary deals with Iran's energy sector.

In recent weeks, the war of words between the U.S. and Iran has intensified, with Tehran warning it could quit the nuclear deal "within hours" if the United States were to impose further sanctions.

If the U.S. does step up sanctions or if it were to revisit the nuclear deal, Iran has a cushion of the investments from companies from France, China, Russia, the UK, and Germany. These countries are crucial to the nuclear accord, and their companies have signaled they want the access to Iran's market open, according to experts who talked to Bloomberg earlier this week.

"There is pressure coming from the business establishment in these countries to maintain access to the Iranian market," Sanam Vakil, an associate fellow at Chatham House's Middle East & North Africa Program in London, told Bloomberg. Many of those governments "recognize that marginalizing and isolating Iran is not in their interest," Vakil noted.

The deals with European, Russian, and Asian firms are unlikely to be undone, and Iran is betting on that, according to experts.

Iran aims to sign \$50 billion-\$60 billion worth of oil and gas contracts by March 20, 2018—the end of the current Iranian year, its Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh said last weekend, as reported by Iran's Tasnim news agency.

Last month, France's energy major Total signed a contract to develop phase 11 of the South Pars gas field in Iran—the world's biggest gas field—marking the first Iranian Petroleum Contract (IPC) with a Western major



since most sanctions on Iran were lifted. Total has 50.1 percent and Chinese state-owned oil and gas company CNPC owns another 30 percent of the project worth a total of \$5 billion in investments.

Apart from Total's deal, other European companies have signed provisional agreements to explore the potential of various Iranian oil and gas fields. According to Iran's oil ministry news service, Shell, Total, Petronas, and Inpex have submitted studies for the potential development of Iran's biggest oil field Azadegan, which Tehran claims has 37 billion barrels of oil and which is shared with neighboring Iraq.

Italy's oil and gas major Eni signed last month a memorandum of understanding with the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) to explore a potential investment in the Kish gas field in the Persian Gulf and the third phase of development of the Darquain oil field.

Earlier this month, Shell submitted to Iran the results of its feasibility studies for the potential development of the South Azadegan and Yadavaran oil fields.

From Asia, South Korea's SK Engineering & Construc-

tion has signed a US\$1.6-billion deal to revamp Tabriz Oil Refining Company's 110,000-bpd refinery northwest of Tehran.

Last week, Turkish energy company Unit International, Russia's Zarubezhneft, and Iran's non-governmental firm Ghadir Investment Company pledged to invest a combined US\$7 billion to drill at three oil fields and one natural gas field in Iran.

Iran has also signed deals with European firms in sectors other than energy.

Two of the biggest European carmakers, France's Renault and Germany's Volkswagen, are also committing presence and investments in Iran. In the past two months, Renault set up a joint venture, while Volkswagen said it was returning to the Iranian market after more than 17 years.

While the U.S. is stepping up Iran sanctions, Europe, Russia, and Asia are signing agreements—albeit many are only preliminary—to invest in Iran's energy and industry. This could provide Tehran with a buffer if the U.S. further ramps up sanctions. (Source: oilprice.com)

Shell joins solar push in coal country of world's top exporter

Royal Dutch Shell Plc is investigating a solar power project in an Australian region better known for its fossil fuels, particularly coal.

The company is studying the feasibility of a solar development on its land in the Western Downs area of Queensland, which is subject to a final investment decision, a spokeswoman said by email. Though Shell's statement didn't elaborate on timing or size, the regional council this week said it had approved construction of the 250-megawatt Delga Solar Farm project proposed by Shell at Woleebee, near Wandoan.

Shell plans to spend as much as \$1 billion a year on its New Energies division as the transition to renewable power accelerates, and will partner with Sunseap Group Pte to invest in solar throughout the Asia Pacific. Equis Energy earlier this month approved a 1,000-megawatt solar plant near Wandoan, a region long associated with a potential large coal mine development

by Glencore Plc.

"Investment in Australia's large-scale solar sector has had a record-breaking 12 months with around 1,678 megawatts worth of new projects currently under construction across the country," said Leonard Quong, an associate with Bloomberg New Energy Finance in Sydney. Falling technology costs and surging electricity prices are helping to drive a boom in the sector, Quong said.

Equis' A\$1.5 billion (\$1.2 billion) Wandoan South Solar Project will be one of the largest in the country and is scheduled to start delivering power in 2019, the Singapore-based company said Aug. 7. Australia is the world's biggest exporter of thermal and metallurgical coal.

There are 38 solar plants operating in Australia with a capacity to generate 411 megawatts of power, and a further 29 under construction, according to BNEF.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Brazil pre-salt tenders attract 10 oil companies' initial interest

Two tender rounds for exploration rights in the pre-salt areas of Brazil have attracted the attention of ten oil companies, according to a government official who spoke to Reuters on Thursday.

The second and third rounds of auctions for the area – considered to be one of the world's most promising oil reserves – will take place on October 27th. Eight blocks in the Santos and Campos basins are up for tender.

"Today we have nine that have expressed interest in the second (auction) and ten that have expressed interest in the third," Waldyr Barros, director of the industry watchdog ANP said during an event in Rio de Janeiro.

This means nearly a dozen companies turned in a form expressing their interest in the bidding process. To become officially eligible to participate in the round, the firms would have to submit to a further registration process with Brasilia by September 8th.

The term "pre-salt fields" refers to areas where oil assets are buried under thick layers of salt on the surface of the ocean floor.

Discovered only 10 years ago, Brazil's pre-salt area has rapidly become the biggest oil-producing area in the country. Just earlier this month, Petrobras discovered commercial oil in a whole new pre-salt area known as the Marlim Sul Field in the Campos Basin, located about 70 miles off the shore of Rio de Janeiro.

Because pre-salt layers—the geological layers that were laid before a layer of salt was created by the Gondwana breakup about 160-180 million years ago—are so deep underground that they are quite costly and difficult to drill. But according to Petroleo Brasileiro SA Chief Executive Officer Pedro Parente, in recent weeks, oil has been extracted from the pre-salt offshore wells at the jaw-dropping cost of just \$8 per barrel. (Source: oilprice.com)

Oil up as U.S. rigs and refineries brace for hurricane

Oil prices rose on Friday as the U.S. petroleum industry braced for Hurricane Harvey, which may become the biggest storm to hit the U.S. mainland in more than a decade.

Harvey became a category 2 storm as it crossed the Gulf of Mexico with winds of 105 mph (169 kph), 220 miles (355 km) off Corpus Christi, Texas, the National Hurricane Center said.

The hurricane is forecast to make landfall late Friday or early Saturday between Corpus Christi and Houston, both important oil refining centers.

U.S. light crude, also known as West Texas Intermediate or WTI, was up 40 cents at \$47.83 a barrel by 0840 GMT. Brent crude was 45 cents higher at \$52.49.

Energy companies have pulled workers from offshore oil platforms and halted onshore drilling in south Texas.

Just under 10 percent of offshore U.S. Gulf of Mexico crude output capacity and nearly 15 percent of natural gas production had been halted by



midday on Thursday, government data showed.

"Damage and flooding to refineries and shale fields, disrupted production in the Gulf of Mexico and infrastructure damage are unlikely to be bearish for WTI," said Jeffrey Halley, market analyst at brokerage OANDA.

U.S. gasoline prices have risen al-

most 10 percent since Wednesday to a high of \$1.74 a gallon, their highest since April as refiners shut down in preparation to the storm.

The Port of Corpus Christi, Texas, was closed to vessel traffic, a spokeswoman for the city's Port Authority said.

Oil refineries in the city run by Cit-

go Petroleum, Valero Energy Corp and Flint Hills Resources also began shutting down.

Beyond the storm's potential impact on the oil industry, crude remains in ample supply globally despite efforts led by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries to hold back production in order to prop up prices.

OPEC, together with non-OPEC producers including Russia, has pledged to cut output by 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) this year and during the first quarter of 2018. But not all producers have kept to their pledges and supplies remain high.

A joint OPEC, non-OPEC monitoring ministerial committee said on Thursday that an extension to the supply-cut pact beyond March was possible, though not yet decided.

Part of the reason for the crude glut has been rising U.S. production, which has jumped by 13 percent since mid-2016 to 9.53 million bpd, close to its 9.61 million bpd record from June 2015. (Source: Reuters)

Venezuela's oil minister and state oil firm chief to switch roles, Maduro says

Venezuelan oil minister Nelson Martinez and state oil company president Eulogio Del Pino will switch roles as the South American country's production wanes and money dries up.

Del Pino will soon go on a series of foreign trips to strengthen alliances ahead of a meeting of heads of state which will seek accords on oil and gas prices, President Nicolas Maduro said on state television.

"Eulogio, you will do battle in the world," Maduro said. "That is your main mission."

Maduro's moves come after the almost 90 percent drop in profits at Petroleos de Venezuela SA last year amid declining output and a drop in oil prices. Venezuela and PDVSA are under intense scrutiny from investors as U.S. sanctions against key government officials and a power grab by President Nicolas Maduro threaten to disrupt financial flows.

Del Pino, who has worked for PDVSA for about 30 years, had been in charge of the company from 2014 until January, when his dual roles of president and oil minister were split to make Martinez, previously the head of U.S.-based unit Citgo Petroleum Corp., the new minister.

Del Pino was said to plan departing PDVSA to run as a delegate for a constitutional convention called by Maduro, according to a company official who asked not to be named. Petroleos de Venezuela SA has been preparing for Del Pino's departure for several months.

The move would come after a board shakeup in January and the subsequent replacement of some refining managers. Maduro said Martinez as head of PDVSA will seek to strengthen partnerships with foreign companies operating in the Orinoco Belt by improving their stakes, while increasing refining capacity and boosting production. (Source: Bloomberg)

South Korea's S-Oil signs LNG contract with Malaysia's Petronas

South Korea's third-largest refiner S-Oil Corp signed a long-term liquefied natural gas (LNG) supply contract with Malaysia's Petronas for 15 years starting from next year, the North Asia company said on Friday.

S-Oil expects to buy 700,000 tonnes of LNG per year from state-owned Petronas from March 2018 through March 2033, it said in a stock filing exchange. "We have inked the deal on good terms for our company amid the current favorable LNG market conditions," said the refiner in the filing.

S-Oil, whose main shareholder is Saudi Aramco, declined to provide price details for the deal.

The refiner said in a separate statement the deal was part of its efforts to ensure stable supplies of LNG.

S-Oil plans to use LNG as fuel to run the refiner's plants and as a feedstock for petrochemical products.

The company said it will take fuel oil it had previously used to power its plants and use it to produce more expensive fuels such as gasoline, increasing profitability when its expanded facilities start operations in 2018, according to the statement.

S-Oil's expansion project is set to be completed in the first half of next year.

Under the project, the company is building a residual fuel oil upgrading system to produce higher quality oils, and an olefin production system that will churn out 405,000 tonnes of polypropylene a year, along with other high-value products.

S-Oil runs a 669,000 barrels-per-day refinery in Ulsan, south-east of Seoul. (Source: Business Times)

New kid on Europe's power block turning into giant killer

Time may soon be up for Europe's most influential power price.

For 15 years, futures based on Germany and Austria's shared electricity market have dominated power trading and anchored wholesale energy rates across Europe. With the joint price area due to end next year, a successor is emerging.

Trading this month in German-only futures for 2020 is set to surpass the volume in the benchmark for the first time since the contract's launch in April on the European Energy Exchange AG. The shift may hasten the end of the German-Austrian standard, which still has more than 30 billion euros (\$35 billion) of futures outstanding.

The market split will be particularly problematic for Austrian factories and utilities. Not only will prices in the country be higher than in its larger neighbor, trading in a new Austria-only contract has been almost non-existent, with only one contract changing hands since its start on EEX.

"Until now, everything has been transparent," said Johannes Paeffgen, head of energy trading at Next Kraftwerke GmbH in Cologne. "An Austrian customer with a hydro power plant knew which price he would get. But now we can't simply point to one price on a website anymore."

The German-Austrian power futures contract, born out of the liberalization of Europe's electricity markets in the 1990s, is based on a measure of average hourly prices known as the Physical Electricity Index, or Phelix. Germany sought the split in order to reduce the cost of keeping grids balanced and to end Austria's unbounded access to cheap electricity from its wind and solar plants.

EEX started to offer contracts for Germany in April, followed by those for Austria two months later. While German-only trading makes up only a fraction of this month's volume for electricity deliverable next year, the portion increases to more than 80 percent of the German-Austrian futures expiring in 2019. For 2020, trading in the German contracts has overtaken that for the benchmark this month, data on the Leipzig, Germany-based exchange show.

The market split isn't expected to affect German prices much, with German-only futures for 2019 trading in line with the combined benchmark rate. Austria-only contracts are about 5 percent higher, based on indicative, end-of-day price data on EEX. (Source: Bloomberg)

Safe protests and uncomfortable conversations

Last weekend's protests in Boston showed the growing tendency to invalidate those on the other side instead of engaging in tough – but needed – conversations.

Boston avoided violence at its "free speech" rally on Saturday by keeping right-wing organizers and counter-demonstrators strictly separate. Some 500 Massachusetts police officers lined up along barricades to enforce a large "neutral zone."

The security plan largely worked. Boston saw no repeat of the deadly violence at a similar event in Charlottesville, Va., a week earlier.

But the view from those barricades suggested that the "neutral zone" for free speech in America is becoming harder to defend.

Supporters of the event saw it as an affirmation of the right to speak out on controversial issues. Counter protesters saw it as an apology for white nationalism. The space between

them was generally inhabited only by police.

Organizers of the counter protest urged activists to not engage in discussion with the other side but rather to shame them.

Shame works

"Shame works," said activist Shel Raphen, on the barricades at Boston Common to support the counter protest. "Research shows that if you feel bad about what you're doing, you'll stop doing it."

When a protester activist tried to engage counter protesters on the other side of the barricades, he was shouted down with chants of "don't engage."

In the few moments when those with strong views met and talked, the contact was often militant.

Retirees James and Susan Reilly held an American flag on ground occupied by the counter protesters. Some who passed by jeered, and they were pushed down twice and spat on once, they said. But one young man in a mask stopped to listen. The conversation went something like this:

"The flag is our history. It's how we became free," said Mr. Reilly. "How do you feel about that?"

"The flag is a slave symbol," said the masked activist.

"For you to say that the American flag is a sign of slavery – I don't get that. We the people here right now had nothing to do with slavery," Reilly said.

"I would expect them to think about history and think about all of the deaths, destruction that was caused [by slavery]," the activist said, and moved on.

Did that conversation matter?

Reilly's response: "There is a lot of work to do." What would help? "God. Having faith. Having a good debate."

And the activist's: "I have absolutely nothing in common with them. They fly the same flag they fled with slavery. They preach hate and violence."

After the protesters wound down their event early, Boston Mayor Martin Walsh declared a victory over "bigotry and hate." President Trump, widely criticized for blaming "both sides" for the violence in Charlottesville, tweeted his congratulations: "Our great country has been divided for decades," he wrote. "Sometimes you need protest in order to heal, and we will heal, and be stronger than ever before."

The absence of violence in Boston deserves praise. Maintaining the safety of protesters and counter protesters will be essential in the days and months ahead. Yet the conversation between the Reillys and the activist was essential, too. As uncomfortable as it was, it was the basis of some small spark of understanding – and in that way, a small step away from a nation in need of barricades.

"I honestly went there because I'm somewhat ignorant about what some of these groups think and why they feel the way that they do," Reilly said after the event. "If I don't talk about it and go where they are, I'll stay ignorant about it." (Source: CSM)

Islamic State send murderers to us so easily - they must be laughing

By Peter Hill

We can build £3billion aircraft carriers with the firepower to wipe out whole countries (well, when the strike planes eventually arrive) and our satellites can send pilotless drones to kill enemies in the remotest places but neither Britain's nor any other security force can seemingly prevent people living on their doorstep from driving vehicles into innocent passers-by.

As with many similar attacks, it is emerging that some of those involved in the Barcelona atrocity were "on the radar" but perhaps not making enough noise to warrant arrest. Our extremely liberal regimes mean that terrorists have to make a very big noise before police feel able to intervene.

But we do not help ourselves. Quite the opposite. Men with North African connections have been involved in most of the massacres, precisely the migrants for whom European nations including Britain have set up a free ferry service to facilitate their journey here. We are making it so easy for Islamic State [ISIS] to send murderers into our midst. They must be laughing at us.

Politicians will say these monsters will never win, that we have faced and overcome much worse threats, but these are excuses for not tackling the enemy head-on because to do so would be to point the finger at specific ethnic groups. Our leaders appear to fear accusations of racism far more than they value the lives of their citizens.

(Source: express.co.uk)

Will Steve Bannon's war tear apart the Republican party?

Bannon has now decamped to Breitbart to wage 'war' – his words – on those on the right who oppose his agenda. This could prove fatal to conservatives

By Corey Robin

Once upon a time, conservatives plotted a path that began with the magazines and ended in the White House. With Steve Bannon's departure from the Trump administration last Friday to head the Breitbart News Network, we seem to be witnessing the reverse: an unspooling of history that begins in power and ends in print.

In 1955, William F Buckley launched National Review, declaring war against liberalism and the Democratic party but also, and more immediately, a civil war on the right.

Buckley and his allies opposed the "well-fed right" and the Eisenhower administration and favored the more radical and revanchist elements orbiting around McCarthyism and the burgeoning conservative movement. Then, 25 years later, well into maturity and middle age, the movement Buckley helped birth sent Ronald Reagan to the White House.

The proverbial ink on Bannon's resignation was barely dry when the media began reporting his plans to mount an insurrection against the "Republican establishment" in Congress and the "globalists" in the White House.

Bannon has now decamped to Breitbart to wage "war" – his words – on the forces in Washington that have prevented Trump from turning the Republican party into a populist movement of economic nationalism, and even on Trump if he strays from the path. A source close to Bannon analogized the coming struggle to the French Revolution.

Since Charlottesville, pundits and historians have wondered whether we're headed for a civil war. With Bannon's exit, it's clear that we are. Only it won't be between North and South or right and left. It will be within the Republican party itself.

The question is: will it be like the war Buckley launched, a purgative struggle as a prelude to a new era of conservative power and rule? Or will it mark the end of the Reagan regime, unveiling a conservative movement in terminal crisis as it strives to reconcile the irreconcilable?

In his war against the Republican establishment, Buckley repeatedly raised the populist banner, speaking on behalf of the forgotten (white) man besieged by liberalism in the academy, the media, the civil rights movement and the Eisenhower administration.

The founding statement of National Review declared the conservative "out of place." Buckley wasn't pleading powerlessness. His was a claim to power, for that badge of exclusion, Buckley shrewdly realized, made the conservative "just about the hottest thing in town."

The new radicals

So long as the left had the frisson of rebellion and the right the stench of the firm, conservatism was doomed. If conservatives could affirm their identity as "the new radicals," they could take over the Republican party and transform the country.

For more than a half-century, conservative politicians and movement activists have



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been reading from Buckley's playbook. The words have changed – once it was segregation and school prayer; now it's immigration and Confederate statues – but the script has remained the same: we are the party of the outsider, exiled from our country, trying to take it back from pointy-headed professors and liberal elites.

With the help of that script, conservatives stopped the Equal Rights Amendment and transformed the right to an abortion into a provisional privilege of the geographic few. Schools in the South are today more racially segregated than they were under Richard Nixon, and the United States is more economically unequal than it has been in nearly a century.

Right-wing populism, in other words, has served the cause of privilege. Can it continue to do so, as Bannon and Trump seem to believe? Various signs suggest it cannot.

For starters, right-wing populism isn't that popular. Richard Nixon, who first rode the hard-right racial populism of the conservative movement into the White House, was reelected with 61% of the popular vote. At the height of their power, Reagan and George W Bush received 59% and 51% of the popular vote, respectively.

Trump came into office with 46% of the popular vote, and his approval ratings in the opening months of his presidency have consistently been the worst of any modern president's at this moment in his term.

And while the Republican party won five out of six presidential elections between 1968 and 1988, in the last 25 years, it has won only three out of seven presidential elections – twice without the popular vote,

something that had not occurred in this country since the 19th century.

It's true that the Republican party controls all the elected branches of the federal government, all the elected branches of 25 state governments and the legislatures of seven other states. Yet less than two years before the election of Reagan and the Republican realignment of 1980, the Democrats also led all the elected branches of the federal government – and by far greater margins in Congress than the Republicans do today – and all the elected branches of government in 27 states and the legislatures of nine other states.

By the standards of modern presidential history, Trump and Bannon have remarkably little to show for their wild ride of revanchism. There's one Supreme Court justice, whose ascension owes far more to the savvy maneuvering of Mitch McConnell than to any right-wing populism of Trump or Bannon, and a host of regulatory measures that can be overturned by a Democratic successor.

These measures can do great damage, but as an index of presidential accomplishment, they're unimpressive. Legislatively, the record is barren, with little sign, thanks in part to Trump's Charlottesville remarks, of changing any time soon.

With his departure, Bannon claims "the Trump presidency that we fought for, and won, is over." Trump's "ability to get anything done – particularly the bigger things, like the wall, the bigger, broader things that we fought for," he adds, is "gonna be that much harder."

But that narrative of his exit disguises how pyrrhic Bannon's victory has been,

from the very beginning. Virtually none of the signature elements of the populism Bannon claimed to be fighting for – the border wall, massive infrastructure, higher tax rates on the wealthy, trade wars with China, higher tariffs – is anywhere near coming to fruition.

And while Trump has managed to ramp up hardcore immigration measures (though his deportation rate is nowhere near what Obama's was, even at its nadir), his legislative proposal to cut immigration in half is, by most accounts, dead on arrival, even among Republicans.

In the wake of the Charlottesville controversy, Bannon laughed at liberals and leftists who called for taking down Confederate statues. "Just give me more," he told the New York Times. "Tear down more statues. Say the revolution is coming. I can't get enough of it."

American Prospect

As he explained to the American Prospect, "the longer [the Democrats] talk about identity politics, I got 'em. I want them to take about racism every day. If the left is focused on race and identity, and we go with economic nationalism, we can crush the Democrats."

Ironically, as the Republicans flounder in their attempt to get anything done – much less enact a program of economic nationalism – Trump emits tweet after plangent tweet about "the removal of our beautiful statues." It is the Republicans, in other words, and not the Democrats, who are saddled with identity issues, while their economic program (on healthcare, the debt, and taxes) remains stalled.

Before he left, Bannon's parting words to Trump were to resist the siren calls of so-called moderates, who were pushing him to soften his stance on things like Charlottesville. Moderation would never win over Democrats or independents. The best thing was to appeal to the base: "You've got the base," Bannon said. "And you grow the base by getting" things done.

But appealing to that base is precisely what is preventing things from getting done. As one top Republican strategist told the Wall Street Journal: "By not speak out against" Charlottesville and the white supremacy of the Republican party, "it is bleeding into the party, and that is going to make it far more difficult to pass anything."

The right-wing racial populism that once served the conservative cause so well is now, as even the most conservative Republicans are acknowledging, getting in its way. Whatever the outcome of the civil war Bannon intends to fight, it'll be waged against the backdrop of a declining rather than an ascendant movement, with the tools of yesterday rather than tomorrow.

That is why, having had seven months in the White House to prosecute his populist war on the Republican establishment – something Buckley and his minions could only dream of in 1955 – Bannon now finds himself staring into the abyss of a website, hoping to find there a power he couldn't find in the most powerful office of the world. (Source: The Guardian)

Kurds' risky dream of independence

After yearning for independence for generations, Kurds in Iraq are scheduled to take a major step in that direction with a nonbinding referendum set for Sept. 25. The vote, expected to endorse a separate state, would be a mistake, increasing turmoil in a part of the world roiled by the fight against the Islamic State [ISIS] and further threatening Iraq's territorial integrity. Postponement makes better sense.

In many ways, independence is a logical next step for the five million Iraqi Kurds, who carved out their semiautonomous enclave after the 1991 Persian Gulf war. Now that their military forces have played a pivotal role in helping to defeat the ISIS, the Kurds think they are entitled to this long-promised referendum.

Kurdistan has evolved into a relatively peaceful region. It was lucky enough to have oil and gas resources that opened up trade with Turkey and Iran and brought needed revenue. After the 2003 American invasion, Washington worked with the Iraqis to draw up a constitution that ensured Kurdistan's semiautonomous status.

Serious problems

There are also serious problems. Two families, the Barzanis and the Talabanis, control politics; corruption is widespread. Because of political infighting, Kurdistan's parliament has not met since October 2015; the region's president, Masoud Barzani, remains in office four years after his term ended. Declining oil prices and disputes with Iraq's central government have left the Kurdistan government in debt. Could Kurdistan make it as an independent state if Iraq and neighboring states stayed hostile to the idea?

The Kurds have sought an independent state since



Iraq's prime minister said the vote would be "illegal" because it conflicts with Kurdistan's constitutional commitments as part of Iraq's federal government.

at least the end of World War I. While the Constitution guarantees them a role in the federal government as well as regional autonomy, the Kurds don't believe the Shiite majority has given them a fair shake. But the referendum would heighten tensions, make it harder to stabilize Iraq and divert attention as the United States, Iraq and their partners work to defeat ISIS and rebuild Iraqi communities.

Some Kurds have dreamed of merging the whole

community — 30 million people across Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran — into a single entity. That's not feasible now and worries leaders in Turkey and Iran who see a greater Kurdistan as a territorial threat. Turkey's deputy prime minister recently warned that the Iraq vote would "contribute to instability." Iraq's prime minister said the vote would be "illegal" because it conflicts with Kurdistan's constitutional commitments as part of Iraq's federal government.

One sore point is that the boundaries in the referendum include Kirkuk, an oil-rich area the Kurds control and want to incorporate.

The better option

The Americans and Europeans have urged the Kurds to postpone the vote until after next year's Iraqi elections. Barzani responded by assuring critics the vote would not lead immediately to independence but rather a prolonged negotiation with Baghdad over a split. At this point, postponement is the better option. A Kurdish breakaway is risky; without sufficient preparation.

On Sunday, a Kurdish official told Reuters the Kurds may delay the vote in return for concessions from Baghdad.

Self-determination is an understandable goal. But just voting for independence is no guarantee that whatever state emerges will govern fairly or well. It does the Kurds little good if their leaders do not make a strong effort to first ensure that Kurdistan's democratic institutions are functioning, the economy is strong and they have support from Iraq and other countries before striking out alone.

(Source: The NYT)

The globalization of power components will change the world's polarization

In the next world, the greatest hegemonies are those who cover their power and apply their hegemony through others.



By Payman Yazdani

Any period of history evidencing a dramatic change in world political thought and the balance of power is referred as New World Order.

New World Order term was mostly used after the end of cold war. To describe the post cold era situation and the spirit of the cooperation between two super powers both Mikhail Gorbachev and George Herbert Walker Bush used New World Order term. Initial definitions and preferences of the New World Order brought up by Gorbachev included a wide range of issues and were mostly idealistic, but his capabilities to insist on them were very limited due to internal crises in former Soviet Union. Contrary to Gorbachev's viewpoint, Bush's viewpoint didn't include a wide range of issues and was more realistic.

Robert Cohen, a leading theoretician of neoliberal institutionalism believes that the U.S. hegemonic power has begun to decline after 1970s. While the U.S. leadership power has decreased, he believe all international regimes created after Second World War would continue to remain.

How the world order from the viewpoint of the polarization would be like, is one of the most important issues in forming the states' foreign policy.

The possible next world order has been discussed with Prof. Larry Baker, Professor of Law and International Affairs in Penn State University through an interview by Payman Yazdani.

Following is the full text of this interview:

■ Some believe after possible decline of the U.S. hegemonic power, there would be no other hegemonic power in the world because the other states would not be going to accept hegemonic power any more. What do you think of this?

When it comes to the exercise of hegemonic power, states have little choice in the matter. Powerful states are hegemonic precisely because they have power and the will to exercise it for whatever objectives suit them. For the exercise of hegemony, both are necessary, and both must be exercised and projected outward. This is ancient knowledge: Thucydides understood the essence of hegemony as power plus the exercise of will when he described the hegemony of Athens during the Peloponnesian Wars. The Athenians, seeking the submission

of the Melians, dismissed their arguments about equity and right: "For ourselves, we shall not trouble you with specious pretenses . . . since you know as well as we do that right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must." Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* 331 (Rex Warner trans., Cassell & Co. Ltd., 2nd ed. 1962) (1954). Weak states are forever arguing equity and right against power, but equity and right is reserved to equals in power. That has been the shape, for example of the Cuban approaches to contesting the perfectly legal occupation by the United States of the land that constitutes the Guantanamo Naval base. It might equally describe relations between Russia and Georgia and the Ukraine. That long background is necessary to understand my answer to the question, which I divide into six parts:

First, there is a difference between the perception of loss of hegemony and the actuality of such a loss. What may appear to be bumbling abroad and instability at home may actually mask changes that strengthen hegemony to the extent they produce greater power and stronger national will. And what may appear to be fracturing of power may be the expression of a willingness to mask power by using others to serve hegemonic interests. The difficulty is that it is impossible to know for sure until well after a hegemon ceases to exercise such power. And former hegemonic states sometimes to continue to use the language of hegemony even as they lose the power to act on their words.

Second, hegemony requires constant attention—most of the great hegemonies of earlier eras lost their position and declines precisely when they became lazy and lose the unifying sense of themselves. The great Arab philosopher Abd-ar-Rachman Ibn Khaldun spoke of the *asabiya* or group feeling and the patterns of vigor and decay that foreshadow great empire and decline (*The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (Franz Rosenthal, trans., N.J. Dawood, ed., 1967) (1377) (Muqaddimah (Introduction) to *Kitāb al-'Ibar* (Book of the History of the World) at 97-119).

Third, assuming a perceived or actual loss of hegemony by the United States, only states with the will and the power to replace the United States (or to join it as co-hegemonies within smaller fields of influence, which in more ancient times would have delimited Empire) will have any say in the constitution of hegemony. The rest of the community of nations can only "suffer as they must" (and to the extent of their relative power and will). But as long as local interests are protected and internal stability maintained, that complaining will also produce broad obedience to the requirements of the hegemon.

Fourth, as a result, it seems to me that hegemony will continue to be broadly exercised in the world even if the hegemony of the United States declines. But at the same time, because hegemony and its exercise has become more subtle, it will be more difficult to discern the exercise of hegemony. Indeed, in the future the greatest hegemon may be the one whose power is masked and exercised through others—states and non-state actors.

Fifth, but it is also clear that the character of hegemony changes as the number of hegemonies changes. One sees this already. Subordinate states will tend to have a broader range of independence where hegemonies compete, especially at the borders of their influence. States can seek to play hegemonies off against each other, but also suffer

China and Russia.

■ If we face a multi-polar world in the future, what will be its effect on world order? Can we witness a more stable world under the shadow of a multipolar world?

Assuming that we face a multi-polar world in the future, there will be potentially substantial consequences on the world order. But these consequences may not result in a new stable global ordering.

Let us for a moment return to Thucydides: within the "global order" of the Greek "world" he described the inevitable cycle that marked a global order with two large hegemonies—Sparta and Athens—stability, competition, confrontation, war, and the destruction of the ordering on which their respective hegemonies were dependent.

Indeed, their stability was not restored until an outside hegemon projected in and substantially obliterated the "Greek World Order" embedding it into a Hellenistic World order that was far different. One can see that also in the great struggles between the Greek Byzantine and Sassanian Empires, whose contests eventually exhausted both and paved the way for the establishment of a *dar al Islam*. One could also see in the contests between English and German Empires the obliteration of the European world order before 1945.

The brilliance of the post 1945 world order system was its ability to order the relations between hegemonic and subordinate states in a way that appeared to give them enough voice that they could concede hegemony to a large extent.

That required the predictability and certainty of legalization (rule of law in the global sense institutionalized the exercise of hegemonic power in ways that offered a measure of freedom and protection to all participants). It also transformed the markers of hegemony in a profoundly revolutionary way.

Where before 1945 hegemony was necessarily bound to territory, after 1945 hegemony was liberated from the burden of territory for the exercise of its power. A hegemon, after 1945, did not have to control territory to control population; it did not need troops to ensure its domination of trade or the trajectories of wealth transfer. It just required a substantially preclusive voice in the institutions through which power could be exercised. The free movement of goods, capital and investment—and the control of the rules for its movement across borders—did more for the consolidation of power than any prior acquisition of territory. In the past only religions (not states) could

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of the Melians, dismissed their arguments about equity and right: "For ourselves, we shall not trouble you with specious pretenses . . . since you know as well as we do that right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must." Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* 331 (Rex Warner trans., Cassell & Co. Ltd., 2nd ed. 1962) (1954). Weak states are forever arguing equity and right against power, but equity and right is reserved to equals in power. That has been the shape, for example of the Cuban approaches to contesting the perfectly legal occupation by the United States of the land that constitutes the Guantanamo Naval base. It might equally describe relations between Russia and Georgia and the Ukraine. That long background is necessary to understand my answer to the question, which I divide into six parts:

First, there is a difference between the perception of loss of hegemony and the actuality of such

consequences when hegemonic core interests are threatened. More on this aspect of hegemony in answer to the next question.

And lastly, modern hegemony must be understood as power and will manifested in a way that is to some extent completely different from the exercise of empire before 1945. One speaks to hegemony now in the control of production chains, in the domination of financial markets, and in the control and construction of systems through which states and their people interact. One understands hegemony as the domination of the global institutional and societal spheres. And one feels the disciplinary power of modern hegemony in the ability and willingness of the hegemony to project targeted military might abroad. In these respects, it may still be too early to conclude that the U.S. has lost substantial hegemony, though many now believe that the U.S. must learn to share or divide hegemony with at least two other states—the People's Republic of

have claimed this deep control within which territorial states could be subsumed (though that power was also contested).

It is possible that the emerging hegemonies might continue to operate under the current systems of complex interlocking networks of law, norms, enterprises, organizations and institutions.

In that case, the rise of multi-polarity would merely shift (decisively) the center of influence from one to a number of states. And contests would revolve around the extent of that influence within these global governance systems and among client states. The European Union suggests how that might work. Thus, just as it is possible to see in the movement toward multi-polarity a rise of instability and threats to global order, so one can see in that movement the possibility of greater stability as more states institutionalize their sharing of influence (and power). The structures for that movement from single to multiple hegemonies is already in place.



Larry Baker, professor of law and international affairs at Pennsylvania State University

States can seek to play hegemonies off against each other, but also suffer consequences when hegemonic core interests are threatened.

It would require nothing more a reordering of driving forces within those institutions. And, indeed, for example, China has indicated a willingness to move toward power through these established institutional vectors. And it has offered alternative variations on those institutions—from its program of internationalizing its currency, to its more state oriented trade system, the One Belt One Road Project. But at the same time, its contested territorial claims appear to suggest the possibility of a more destabilized model. The same applies to Russia—on the one hand deeply embedded in global institutions, and on the other producing an older style instability through its territorial agendas.

■ Some believe that a multi-polar world will result in more obscure alignment of states. What do you think of this?

In some sense, this is true. The obscurity is not a product of an inability to discern alignment as much as it derives from the reality that alignments can become more fluid and short lived. The fluidity of Pakistan provides a hint of what may become more common. There is a state that is embedded within regional hegemonic contests—between Iran and India, and then deeply embedded within the higher stake contests for hegemonic territory between the United States and China (and sometimes Russia). At the same time, the state is itself a fragile amalgamation of ethnicities united perhaps to some extent only by their distaste for alternative political arrangements in a world bounded by Afghanistan, Iran and India.

Yet obscurity also suggests opportunity for regional powers—India, Iran, Brazil, and Turkey, for

example. There is a precedent during the last period relatively stable period of contested or shred hegemony (1945-1989) during which so-called non-aligned states were able to play a politics of obscurity to their advantage. The problem, of course, is that it is not possible to re-create this in the modern era. The cause is globalization, and the obstruction is the rise of non-state based power that makes analysis grounded only in the state now less useful.

This last point requires emphasis. Important, and often overlooked, is the reality that multi-polarity will also make possible (and obscure) the alignment of the great non-state actor powers. These include not just private enterprises, but also religions and civil society organs. All of these actors now have the power to mobilize popular sentiment in ways that can challenge state control over their populations. In a world in which territory is important but not essential to the constitution of power (and the will to assert it) these non-state actors will also begin to play a more decisive role—one recognized by states across that globe that have been seeking to manage or control their actions within their territories. In any case, one should never underestimate the power of these non-state collectives to play important roles in the balancing of interests and actions among hegemonies.

■ If we believe in multi-polar world for future, which power components will affect world polarization? Basically which countries or organizations will form those poles?

My answer to the last question suggests the answer to this one: globalization will change the power

components of any future re-polarization of global politics. It is impossible to turn back the clock and re-institute the world before globalization. At least it is impossible without causing major shocks to the living standards of substantial portions of individuals. That alone should make political leaders (who wish to preserve their power) cautious about inflaming their populations along reactionary lines. However, globalization is not a unified concept and it is quite malleable within the logic of its own organization. The realities of open borders to goods, capital and investment (however they may be used as weapons of conflict among states from time to time), suggests that the emerging multi-polar global order will operate under conditions of substantial fracture, where no state nor large enterprise or religious organization will be entirely dominated by any other apex global stakeholder. States will remain central actors but state power hierarchies will operate in a context of global production chains in which none will have full control of the wealth production overseen by apex enterprises whose center of operations can be diffused globally.

Global social organizations will remain potent especially as agents for the construction of societal, cultural and political narratives that can uphold or undermine the legitimacy of other actors. And it is likely that the model of regulation—either by states or enterprises—will shift from law and regulation, to management grounded in data, assessment reward and punishment. For that, China's social credit project may well be a harbinger of things to come in the public and private sector.

Global social organizations will remain potent especially as agents for the construction of societal, cultural and political narratives that can uphold or undermine the legitimacy of other actors.

After Trump's U-turn, Afghans' suffering now has no end

By Lucy Morgan Edwards

In a major speech on Monday night at Fort Myer, in Virginia, Donald Trump performed a U-turn on his electoral promise to pull troops out of Afghanistan and cut military spending in what has become the U.S.'s longest war.

Given Trump's 2013 tweets about getting out of Afghanistan and cutting wasteful military spending there, his decision now to raise troop levels (without specifying by how much – there are currently 8,500 U.S. service members in the region) indicates a neutering of his presidency.

This was hinted at last week by Steve Bannon, who abruptly departed his job as White House chief strategist just days before the speech and who – like Trump during his campaign – had long advocated a non-interventionist approach.

Bannon said, rather ominously, that the presidency, as voted for by the majority of Americans, was now "over".

The speech, which marked the end of a month-long review "of all strategic options in Afghanistan and south Asia" by General James

Mattis and the national security team, was a clear victory for the military-industrial complex and the generals.

Non-ending war

The script could have been written by the generals themselves, and heralds a period of escalation and never-ending war (there will no longer be emphasis on meeting temporal objectives, but instead on vague "conditions" being fulfilled). In particular, "Mad Dog" Mattis, infamous for laying waste to Falluja in 2004 (complete with the use of banned weapons and depleted uranium, which still causes birth defects to children born there) has now been told that the "gloves are off" in the Afghan war.

For as well as raising troop levels Trump's speech clarified that he has now given his generals the green light to conduct operations in any way they see fit, without "micromanagement from Washington". This approach is ominous for the Afghan people, and will inevitably lead to further increases in civilian casualties. According to a report by the UN assistance mission in Afghanistan, deaths of Afghan women and

children in the conflict reached a new high for the first six months of 2017.

Other remarks made by Trump revealed contradictions between U.S. policy in Afghanistan and what is happening on the ground. This included inconsistency over Saudi Arabia, a key sponsor of terror groups, which Trump called a partner.

Today, Islamic State in Afghanistan drive around in Japanese jeeps apparently the same as those issued to the Taliban by the Saudis prior to 11 September 2001, when I was based in Kandahar, working for the UN.

In comments likely to infuriate Afghans, Trump also talked of the need for them to "take ownership" of the future direction of their country (for anyone who has seen the vast military apparatus, watchtowers and "green zone" of occupied Kabul, these comments are blatantly absurd). He added disingenuously that "we will no longer use American military might to construct democracies in faraway lands or try to rebuild other countries in our own image. Those days are now over." Given

what unfolded in Afghanistan from the days immediately after the 11 September 2001 attacks onwards, in my view these comments are a complete mischaracterization of what the U.S. went into the country, using the pretext of the attacks, to do.

Tackling criminality, corruption

He also talked of the need for the U.S. to tackle criminality and corruption in Afghanistan despite the fact that from the outset the U.S. allied itself with unindicted warlords who have since presided over the growth of the opium trade (now affecting U.S. citizens to an unprecedented degree), and the trafficking of women, children and artefacts. They also created illegal armed groups that roam the countryside, contributing to the security problem.

When Trump said that the U.S. was not interested in nation-building, but solely in "killing terrorists", he sounded as Manichean as George Bush. I wonder if this script will pass muster with the American people – because Afghans are long since jaded by it.

Interestingly, Trump failed to mention the increasingly significant Silk Road project, which is championed by China and other Central Asian countries as a motor for economic development. The project would bring a vast peace dividend to the region. If he really wants peace in Afghanistan, Trump and the other NATO countries he is pressuring to put more into vast military budgets to fight endless expensive and tragic wars would do well to follow China's lead.

When I was in Kabul in 2013 as a political adviser to the EU ambassador, an Afghan commander I knew from Wardak Province, a veteran of the war against the USSR, told me that the Americans were transporting terrorists to his region. Clearly, Afghans believe that the Americans have long been backing both sides in this, the U.S.'s longest war. Trump's speech, which invoked children, the September 11 attacks and terror in Europe as justification for a continued war in Afghanistan, will do little to change their minds.

(Source: The Guardian)

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What causes your hands falling asleep during night?

By Kara Mayer Robinson

Sometimes you may wake up with a tingling feeling in your arms. The feeling disappears after a short while and is not a sign of any circulatory or neurological condition. However, this feeling could be a symptom of a stroke or ulnar nerve entrapment if it is frequent. You should seek medical attention and pay attention to any other symptoms.

Causes of hands fall asleep while sleeping

1. Sleeping on your hand for long

You are likely to experience a tingling arm or hand if you sleep on it for a long period. Your body weight will exert pressure on your nerves and disrupt the circulation of blood to your arm. Sleeping on your arm may compress the arteries and restrict the flow of blood with nutrients to your arm tissue. Consequently, your arm will not send signals to your brain or understand signals from your brain. Your arms or hands fall asleep while sleeping until normal blood circulation resumes.

2. Lack of vitamin B

A vitamin B deficiency may result from an incorrect or deficient diet. The consequences of this deficiency are often overlooked and include continued fatigue, skin paleness, and drowsiness. Other symptoms include numbness and tachycardias sensations in the legs and hands especially at night.

3. Working throughout the day

Manual work such as sewing, typing, using scissors and other tools overload the wrists and affect the nerves in the hands. Bending and unbending motions overload the wrist and leads to pain when the wrist relaxes at night. Tendons and nerves release pressure intensely when relaxed.

4. Fluid retention

Excess weight from an unhealthy diet and lack of exercises may cause swelling in your hands and feet. Fluid retention causes this swelling. The tingling sensation is intense at night. It results from the disruption of circulation and the resultant pressure leads to the tingling sensation.

5. Entrapment of the ulnar nerve

Extended pressure on the ulnar nerve in your arm interferes with the function of the nerve and makes the hand numb. Sleeping with a bent elbow compresses the ulnar nerve. The symptoms are worse if you suffer from an ulnar nerve entrapment. You will wake up with



Statistics indicate that one in every seven strokes occurs when a patient is sleeping. A stroke is an obstruction of the flow of blood to the brain.

tingling arms or hands. It is not always possible to establish the cause of ulnar nerve entrapment. The main cause of this condition is swelling of the elbow, which may result from bone spurs, fractures in the arm, cysts and arthritis.

6. Stroke

Statistics indicate that one in every seven strokes occurs when a patient is sleeping. A stroke is an obstruction of the flow of blood to the brain. This obstruction may result from hemorrhage in one of the cerebral arteries or blockage of any artery that supplies blood to the brain. Stroke symptoms including blurred speech, headache, tingling or numbness, feeling disoriented, and failure to understand a conversation. You should seek medical attention immediately if the tingling feeling in your hands is accompanied by these stroke symptoms.

7. Carpal tunnel syndrome

Pressure on the median nerve compresses the nerve. This nerve gives sensations to the fingers and innervates forearm and hand muscles that enable you to hold an object between

your forefinger and the thumb. Any numbness, tingling, impingement, or pinching in the median nerve will lead to pain in the fingers, hand, and forearm. The first symptom is fingers falling asleep or becoming numb at night. The numbness and pain may extend to the forearm and sometimes to the shoulder.

8. Other causes

- Diabetes causes arms or hands and feet to fall asleep even when one is awake and relaxed.
- Hand surgery and arthritis damage or irritate the nerves.
- Other causes of numbness include spinal cord injury, ganglion cyst, Raynaud's disease, syphilis, amyloidosis, chronic alcohol use, Lyme disease, HIV/AIDS, peripheral neuropathy, Guillain-Barre syndrome, brachial plexus injury, cervical spondylosis, sclerosis, vasculitis, and syringomyelia.

How to deal with it

When hands fall asleep while sleeping, you can use the following remedies:

- Take a tablespoon of linseed oil before sleeping.
- Take ginger tea to boost circulation.
- Fill your bathroom sink with water

and ice cubes and then dip your hands.

- Eliminate acidic drinks and salt from your diet.

Stay hydrated by drinking at least two liters of water daily. Take an artichoke drink to prevent fluid retention.

- Ensure your diet is rich in Vitamin B. Leafy green vegetables, potatoes, bananas and tuna provide this vitamin.

Wear a compression wristband when required to use your wrists and hands for a long time.

- Do exercises that strengthen your arms, shoulders and neck.

Take anti-inflammatory drugs to relieve tendonitis or carpal tunnel symptoms.

- Wake your hands by placing them above your heart.

Avoid sleeping on your arm. Avoid sleeping when your hands are curled or in a fist.

- Practice sleeping on your back and use soft pillows.

Do not sleep with your hands under your head or pillow.

- Use nocturnal braces for your hands and wrists such as splints.

(Source: newhealthadvisor.com)

How to eliminate PMS in 5 simple steps

By Mark Hyman

Seventy-five percent of women suffer from headaches, mood swings, bloating, and other problems that threaten their relationships, work life, and well-being.

It's a statement that most of us unconsciously accept without a second thought. But it doesn't have to be this way. Here is 5 Simple steps to eliminate PMS

1. Clean up your diet.

This means:

- Stop eating refined flour, sugar, and processed foods.
- Balance your blood sugar by eating protein, such as a protein shake, eggs, and nut butters, for breakfast.
- Eat evenly throughout the day and don't skip meals.
- Don't eat within three hours of bedtime.
- Cut out all dairy and consider eliminating other common allergens for a few months, especially gluten.

Increase fiber in your diet from vegetables, fruit, nuts, seeds, beans, and whole grains. Two tablespoons of ground flax seeds a day are especially helpful in correcting constipation and balancing hormones. Put them in a shake or sprinkle them on salads or food.

- Increase omega-3 fats by eating more wild fish like sardines, herring, and wild salmon, as well as omega-3 eggs and walnuts.
- Eat organic food, especially animal products, to avoid environmental estrogens from pesticides.

2. Take supplements.

A number of supplements have been shown to help ease PMS symptoms by improving metabolic function and hormone metabolism. Here are the superstars:

- Magnesium citrate or glycinate — Take 400 to 600 mg a day.
- Calcium citrate — Take 600 mg a day.
- Vitamin B6 — Take 50 to 100 mg a day along with 800 mcg of folate and 1,000 mcg of vitamin B12.
- Evening primrose oil — Take two 500mg capsules twice a day.
- EPA/DHA (omega 3 fats) — Take 1,000 mg once or twice a day.
- Taurine — Take 500 mg a day to help liver detoxification.
- A good daily multivitamin (all the nutrients work together)

Herbs and phytonutrients can also be very helpful. Here are the best studied and most effective:

- Chasteberry fruit extract (Vitex



Natural Remedies for PMS & Cramps

Agnus-castus) can help balance the hormones released by the pituitary gland that control your overall hormone function. Studies of over 5,000 women have found it effective. Take 100 mg twice a day of a 10:1 extract.

- Wild yam (*Dioscorea villosa*) and cramp bark (*Viburnum opulus*) can help regulate cycles and relieve menstrual cramps.

Dandelion root can help with liver detoxification and works as a diuretic.

- Isoflavones from soy, red clover, or kudzu root improve estrogen detoxification by boosting the activity of specific detox enzymes. They can be taken as supplements or consumed in the diet.
- Flax seeds contain lignans that

help balance hormone metabolism and block the negative effects of excess estrogens.

- Chinese herbal formulas may also help. One of the most effective is Xiao Yao San, or Rambling Powder.

Replacing healthy bacteria in the gut also helps normalize estrogen and hormone metabolism. Take 5 to 10 billion live organisms in a daily probiotic supplement.

For intractable cases, I will occasionally use topical, natural bioidentical progesterone in the last two weeks of the menstrual cycle. The usual dose is 1/2 tsp (20 to 40 mg) applied at night to thin skin areas for the last two weeks of the menstrual cycle.

3. Get moving.

Exercise is very important for balancing hormones. Aim for 30 minutes of aerobic exercise, 4 to 5 times a week.

4. Address stress.

Dealing with stress is also critical. Take a hot bath at night, get a massage, try yoga, learn deep breathing or meditation. These techniques and others can help balance hormones.

5. Try alternative therapies.

Therapies such as acupuncture and homeopathy may help. One clinical trial showed that individualized homeopathy is effective in treating PMS. Five homeopathic medicines were used: Lachesis, Natrum muriaticum, Nux vomica, Pulsatilla, and Sepia.

If my patients are any indication, a plan such as this can have impressive effects on premenstrual symptoms.

Remember, women are not defective. You can thrive and be healthy by paying attention to a few natural laws of biology. You don't need drugs to survive!

(Source: drhyman.com)

Possible health benefits of watermelon

Consuming fruits and vegetables of all kinds has long been associated with a reduced risk of many lifestyle-related health conditions.

Many studies have suggested that increasing consumption of plant foods like watermelon decreases the risk of obesity and overall mortality, diabetes, and heart disease.

Other benefits of the watermelon include promoting a healthy complexion and hair, increased energy, and overall lower weight.

Asthma prevention

The risks for developing asthma are lower in people who consume a high amount of certain nutrients. One of these nutrients is vitamin C, found in many fruits and vegetables, including watermelon.

Blood pressure

A study published by the American Journal of Hypertension found that watermelon extract supplementation improved the health of the circulatory system in obese middle-aged adults with prehypertension or stage 1 hypertension.

Diets rich in lycopene - found in watermelon - may help protect against heart disease.

Cancer

As an excellent source of antioxidants, including vitamin C, watermelon can help combat the formation of free radicals known to cause cancer. Lycopene intake has been linked with a decreased risk of prostate cancer in several studies.

Digestion and regularity

Watermelon, because of its water and fiber content, helps to prevent constipation and promote regularity for a healthy digestive tract.

Hydration

Made up of 92 percent water and full of important electrolytes, watermelon is a great snack to have on hand during the hot summer months to prevent dehydration. It can also be frozen in slices for a tasty cold Popsicle-style snack.

Inflammation

Choline - found in watermelon - is a very important and versatile nutrient; it aids our bodies in sleep, muscle movement, learning, and memory. Choline also helps to maintain the structure of cellular membranes, aids in the transmission of nerve impulses, assists in the absorption of fat, and reduces chronic inflammation.

Muscle soreness

Watermelon and watermelon juice have been shown to reduce muscle soreness and improve recovery time following exercise in athletes. Researchers believe this is likely due to the amino acid L-citrulline contained in watermelon.

Skin

Watermelon is great for the skin because it contains vitamin A, a nutrient required for sebum production, which keeps hair moisturized. Vitamin A is also necessary for the growth of all bodily tissues, including skin and hair.

Adequate intake of vitamin C is also needed for the building and maintenance of collagen, which provides structure to skin and hair. Additionally, watermelon contributes to overall hydration, which is vital for healthy looking skin and hair.

(Source: medicalnewstoday.com)

How to lose belly & leg fat

By Kevin Rail

Belly fat has a tendency to develop into deep visceral fat, which can pack around the organs and increase your chances for cardiovascular disease. Leg fat does not offer the same physical threat as belly fat, but it can still cause embarrassment and low self-esteem. Lose both types of fat by changing your eating habits and exercising. Fat-burning and muscle-building exercises will give your legs and belly a leaner appearance.

Step 1

Eliminate the fattening foods from your diet. These include toaster pastries, candy, meatball hoagies, pies, cakes, sundaes, wings and cheeseburgers. Stick with foods that have high nutrient values, such as fruits, vegetables, lean meats, beans, whole grains, nuts and seeds.

Step 2

Cut 500 to 1000 calories a day to lose one to two pounds a week.

Step 3

Increase your metabolism by eating small, frequent meals. Combine protein and complex carbs with each meal and eat every two to three hours. This will also keep your appetite under control. Cottage cheese with chopped-up fruit and sunflower seeds mixed in is a balanced meal.

Step 4

Perform cardiovascular exercise to burn the fat in your belly and legs. Do any form of cardio as long as it is at a moderate to high intensity. Rowing, running, elliptical training, swimming, kickboxing, inline skating and brisk walking are examples. The Centers for Disease Control recommends 150 to 300 minutes of moderately-intense aerobic exercise or 75 to 150 minutes of vigorous cardio a week to lose weight. Exercise a few times during the day if you do not have time to do it all at once.

Step 5

Execute leg exercises that work all your major muscles. The quadriceps, hamstrings and calves are the major muscles in the legs. Do exercises such as squats, step-ups, lunges, leg presses and calf raises to target these muscles. Perform 10 to 12 reps, and do three to five sets. Work your legs three days a week on the alternating days of your cardio.

Step 6

Perform abdominal exercises for your entire stomach area. This includes the lower abs, obliques and upper abs. The obliques are on the sides of the stomach. Incline crunches, alternating leg raises, side crunches, Russian twists and stability ball sit-ups are examples. Aim for 15 to 20 reps, and do three or four sets and work out three days a week. Do your ab exercises right after your leg exercises.

Tips

Spot reducing your belly and legs with exercise is not possible; but the definition you create with your leg and ab exercises will be more visible after you lose weight overall.

Warnings

Check with your health-care provider before beginning an exercise program for the first time or if you have been away from fitness programs for a while, or if you have any chronic health issues.

(Source: livestrong.com)

10 hot titles of IT world

By Alireza Khorasani

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

1 The billionaire head of South Korea's Samsung Group, Jay Y. Lee, was jailed for five years for bribery after a six-month trial over a scandal that brought down the president. Lee, the 49-year-old heir to one of the world's biggest corporate empires, has been held since February on charges that he bribed Park to help secure control of a conglomerate that owns Samsung Electronics, the world's leading smartphone and chip maker, and has interests ranging from drugs and home appliances to insurance and hotels. In the meantime, Samsung Galaxy Note 8 Unveiled with 6.3-inch AMOLED and Dual Cameras.

2 Twitter launched on the Xbox One last fall, and did so with a focus on video. Today, an update adds some new video types, most notably live 360-degree video. Given that just about every platform has been focusing on 360 video lately, so it's not surprising to see Twitter look to expand the places where users can watch it.

3 Tesla Inc next month plans to unveil an electric big-rig truck with a working range of 200 to 300 miles, Reuters has learned, a sign that the electric car maker is targeting regional hauling for its entry into the commercial freight market. Daimler has been joined by a handful of startups such as Chanje, a Los Angeles-based manufacturer that has a partnership with Ryder to build 100-mile-range electric trucks for package delivery.

4 WeWork Cos said it received an additional \$3 billion investment from Japan's SoftBank Group (9984.T) and its Vision Fund, helping the shared-office startup ramp up its expansion globally. SoftBank's investment will be through new shares and the acquisition of existing shares of the startup's parent company, WeWork said in a statement.

5 China's JD.com has invested in Indonesian ride-hailing startup Go-Jek, people familiar with the matter told Reuters, in the latest move by China's second-largest e-commerce firm to tap growth in Southeast Asian mobile-based services. The startup is raising up to \$1 billion from existing and new investors in its latest funding round and has a pre-money valuation of about \$2.5 billion.

6 Amazon announced that its acquisition of Whole Foods will close on Monday August 28th and the finalized deal will come with a few perks to both the grocery chain's and Amazon's customers. First, starting on Monday, prices on a slew of Whole Foods items will drop.

7 Judge orders DreamHost to hand over data from anti-Trump site. He granted the DoJ's amended warrant request with some added stipulations.

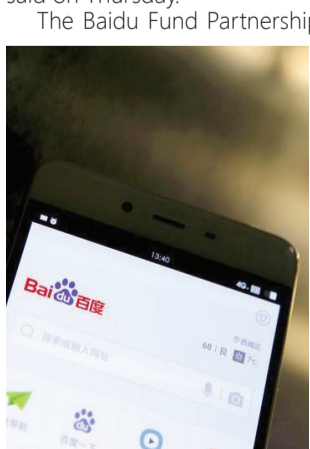
8 Apple might announce a 4K TV box at next month's iPhone event. Apple is unveiling another new product with its latest iPhones and Apple Watches in September, according to Bloomberg. Cupertino is reportedly announcing its 4K- and HDR-capable Apple TV, as well.

9 Microsoft's Xbox One X is still a tough sell. Being the most powerful console ever isn't enough. The Xbox One X is a particularly tough sell because it comes a year after the PlayStation 4 Pro, which also made 4K and HDR a big part of its appeal. It's not powerful enough to play most games natively in 4K, but it still gives developers the ability to push past 1080p and cram in more visual effects.

10 The new story mode in 'FIFA 18' is all about choice. EA is building on the mode with a "second season" for rising star Alex Hunter. It promises a "global" story with more football clubs, branching pathways and some character customization, culminating in a campaign that should feel less scripted but no less cinematic.

China Life and Baidu to launch \$1 billion internet fund

China Life Insurance Group Co and Baidu Inc will form a 7 billion yuan (\$1 billion) private equity fund, targeting internet and other technology investments, China Life's listed arm said on Thursday.



The Baidu Fund Partnership will be capitalized by China Life through a special partnership, which will contribute up to 5.6 billion yuan, China Life Insurance Co Ltd said in a Hong Kong Stock Exchange statement. Baidu, the Chinese language internet search provider, will contribute as much as 1.4 billion yuan. The Baidu Fund Partnership will focus on middle to later stage investment, including unlisted companies with "significant association" with China, in the internet sector, including mobile internet, artificial intelligence, and internet finance, the statement said. The partners are responsible for paying 30 percent of their capital contributions initially, it said. (Source: Reuters)

The Internet of Things Pushes Enterprises to Think Bigger

By Joe McKendrick

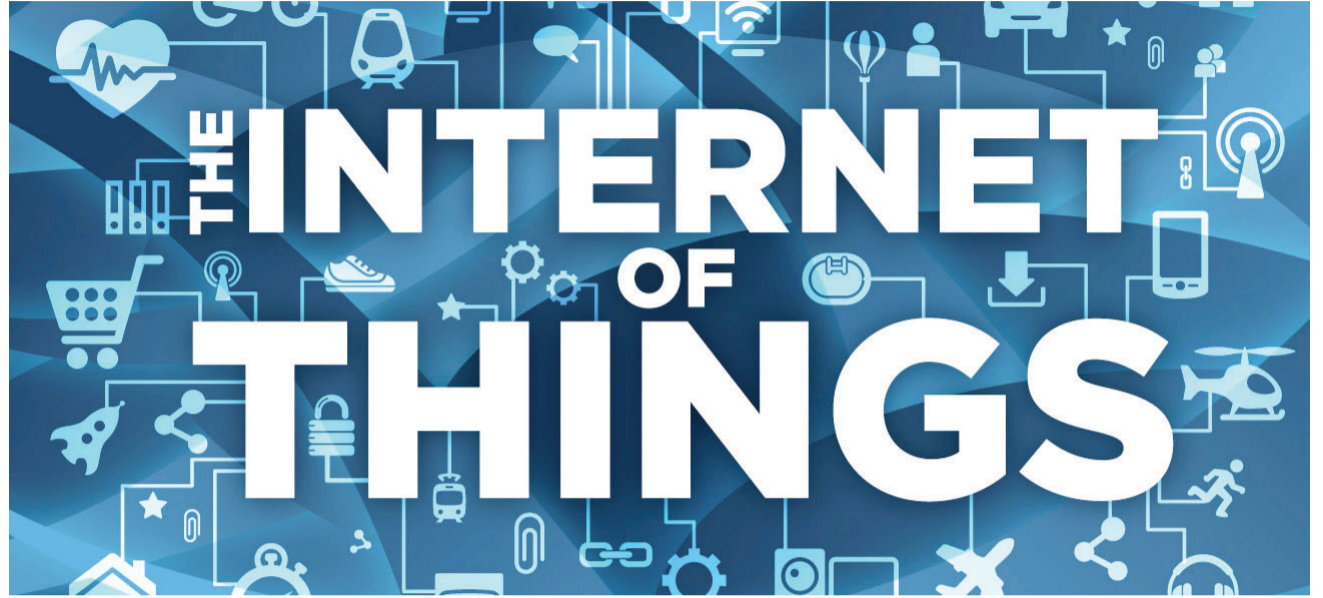
The enterprise Internet of Things (IoT) is poised for strong growth. But are enterprises ready for IoTification? (A term first coined by IoT thought leader Tony Shan.)

That's the gist of recent surveys, which suggest that executives understand the potential of IoT, but recognize that it's going to take a lot of work to embed it into their businesses. IoT, of course, is that rapidly expanding mesh of devices, sensors and applications that generate on-point data streamed into more centralized locations for reporting, aggregation, analysis or action.

A recent survey out of McKinsey & Company, for one, suggests that just about everyone has gotten IoT religion. The survey finds that 98 percent of executives include enterprise IoT initiatives somewhere within their strategic road maps. Areas slated for IoTification include those "related to improving service operations, increasing visibility into operations, enabling new business models, and creating new product and service offerings," the survey shows.

Another survey from Canonical detailed some of the benefits executives expect from these efforts. For example, 25 percent expect to achieve greater insights into their businesses, while 25 percent see it opportunities to launch new products and services.

However, it's too soon to tell how IoT is progressing, as many IoT initiatives are still in the single-focus pilot stage. Things are too narrow at this stage, the McKinsey report's authors, Michael Chui, Vasanth Ga-



nesan, and Mark Patel, point out. As anyone experienced with pilot programs know, things change when it comes to scaling to a larger segment of the enterprise.

Plus, there's a question about the data -- namely, that there will be a lot of it needed to make IoT viable. Respondents agreed that information from IoT sensors was valuable, with 60 percent stating that it "provides significant insights, such as data on customer demographics or shopping patterns." But an almost equal number--54 percent--claimed that companies used 10 percent or less of this information, the McKinsey team adds.

Demonstrating return on investment is also seen as a current weak spot in IoT,

as cited by 53 percent of the respondents to the Canonical survey. Another 45 percent worry about security, and, tellingly, 40 percent say lack of infrastructure is holding them back. Plus, the survey's authors say the "Internet of Talent" also needs to be strengthened.

As IoT scales to the enterprise, there will be a need to evaluate and be proactive in engaging organizational capabilities and change-management programs, the report's authors continue. They are optimistic, however, that IoT will begin to shine as its proponents learn to evangelize, energize and expand their efforts. "We are also optimistic that more companies will make a greater effort to incorporate enterprise IoT into their daily op-

erations as its benefits become clearer," they add, citing the example of Boeing workers, who "now use IoT wearables and augmented-reality tools on wiring-harness assembly lines, which has resulted in up to 25 percent improvement in productivity."

Nevertheless, executives are extremely positive about IoT. Most, 92 percent, feel IoTification would have a positive impact over the next three years, "either by improving operations or by allowing companies to develop new products with embedded IoT capabilities." In addition, 62 percent expect IoT will mean transformation for their enterprises. And that's where the story really begins. (Source: Forbes)

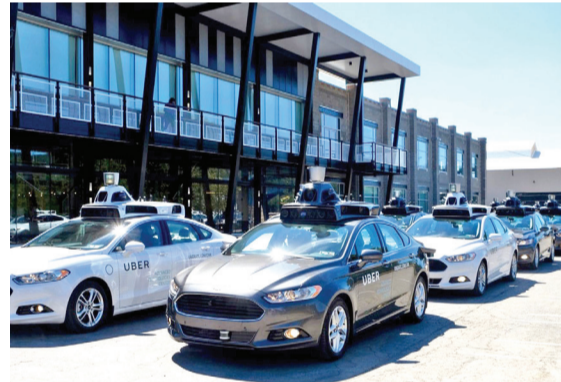
Germany will implement ethical guidelines for self-driving tech

By Mallory Locklear

Germany is working on implementing a handful of new rules for autonomous cars that address ethical questions that come with the technology. In June, the ethics commission of the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure -- made up of 14 scientists and legal experts -- released a report with guidelines it believed self-driving vehicles should be designed to follow. This week, the ministry said it would implement and enforce those guidelines.

One of the proposed rules says that human life should always have priority over property or animal life and another stipulates that a surveillance system, like a black box, should record the activity so that it can be determined later on who was at fault during an accident -- the driver or the technology. Additionally, drivers should get to decide what personal information is collected from their vehicle, so that data can't be used to customize advertising, for example.

Another guideline takes on the ethics thought experiment the "trolley problem." One version of the trolley problem asks what should one do if they were driving a trolley and headed towards five people that will surely



die if hit. The trolley driver can divert the trolley to another track where only one person would die. Should they actively choose to kill the one person over the five or not intervene and just let the train continue on its original path? What if they had information on the moral character of those individuals -- should that change anything? You can test yourself with various versions of this dilemma through MIT's Moral Machine.

This question has come up before with self-driving car makers. In 2015, the head of Google's self-driving auto project at the time said that Google's cars won't have the ability to decide who is a better person, morally, to lose in an unavoidable collision. Instead, the company is working to protect the most vulnerable person, like a pedestrian over another vehicle. And in 2016, a Mercedes Benz executive said that if given the choice between saving the person in the car or, say, a pedestrian outside of it, the car should choose to protect its driver because it's the only one you can be sure of surviving. But Germany's ministry says that in a situation where an accident can't be avoided, autonomous cars can't decide who to save, all human lives matter.

In a statement, Germany's transport minister, Alexander Dobrindt, said, "The interaction between man and machine raises new ethical questions during this time of digitization and self-learning systems. The ethics commission has done pioneering work and has developed the world's first guidelines for automated driving. We are now implementing these guidelines." (Source: Theregister)

CIA uses a secret tool to spy on NSA, FBI and other intel partners



Apparently, nobody's exempt from the CIA's intelligence gathering, not even its own intelligence partners. According to a set of documents published by WikiLeaks, the CIA uses a tool called "ExpressLane" that hides behind a fake software update to collect information from agencies around the world that use its biometric collection system. In the US, the list includes fellow government agencies like the FBI, the NSA and Homeland Security. These partners are supposed to share data with the CIA, but clearly, the intelligence service wants to make sure they're not keeping anything from the agency.

Based on the info written in the documents, the CIA pre-installed ExpressLane in the systems of newer partners. For older ones, it gets installed by an agent personally visiting a partner site under the guise of installing a software update. ExpressLane

disguises itself as a harmless exe file in Windows' System 32 folder, but it actually collects files of interest. When an agent inserts a thumb drive to run the fake software update, ExpressLane automatically uploads the compressed and encrypted files it gathered.

That thumb drive will also install a "kill date" that disrupts the system by a certain date, forcing the partner to call the CIA for service. This tactic guarantees agents can collect data even if a partner refuses the shady software update. It's unclear what the CIA plans to do with all that biometric data -- it could be using them for a secret operation, but it could also be collecting them for no particular reason. Either way, the more info it gathers, the more powerful it becomes, so it's not really surprising for the agency to ensure that nobody can keep secrets from it. (Source: theverge)

Robotic exoskeletons improve mobility for kids with cerebral palsy



Kids with cerebral palsy (CP) can have limited movement (and therefore independence) throughout their lives. Some of them who experience the related set of neurological and movement disorders have what's called "crouch gait," which is characterized by excessive bending at the knee; up to 50 percent of people with cerebral palsy stop walking by adulthood. Researchers at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have been testing robotic leg exoskeletons that help kids with CP walk more easily. According to the researchers, six of the seven study participants showed improved knee extension and were able to walk with robotic assistance after just six trials. The exoskeletons are more than just a brace; they actively support a walking posture in kids with cerebral palsy without taking control away from the children themselves. The team wants to do more long-term studies to see if kids' walking will improve over time by

using the robotic assistive devices. They also want to see if using exoskeletons for gait training can improve natural walking, even without the exoskeleton. "We want to transfer the walking patterns we see with the exoskeleton to walking without the exoskeleton," the NIH's Thomas Bulea told StatNews. "If we can correct or treat this crouch gait at a young age, then throughout their life, we may be able to increase their mobility."

Exoskeletons aren't new, of course. Lowe's has been testing prototypes to help workers lift heavy objects, Harvard has a soft unit that could help soldiers with heavy packs, Lockheed Martin has tested exoskeletons for the US Navy and Hyundai is looking for ways to make them less expensive. This is the first study to bring the concept to children with cerebral palsy, however, and could end up helping tons of kids for their entire lives. (Source: Statnews)

Ocean is so noisy, whales starting to talk on a new frequency

The ocean is a noisy place. Beyond the typical noises like crashing waves there is the increasing presence of ships to make things even louder. Above the water, this might not seem like a big deal, but below the waves, noise from ocean liners and large container ships can travel for miles and upset organisms like whales and dolphins that depend on their own noises to communicate and survive.

New research from Oregon State University suggests that blue whales are learning to adapt by changing the frequency of their songs. Essentially, they're starting to communicate on a different audio band. The researchers believe that the whales are doing this deliberately to avoid interference from human sounds.

Whale songs have been dropping in pitch for a while now, and scientists have been noticing it for about two decades. They found that whale songs were produced by blowing air over the animal's vocal cords, and that whales can change the frequency of their calls by blowing air faster or slower.

Frequency of whale songs

Previously, scientists thought the frequency of whale songs was controlled by the size of certain resonating chambers, making the pitch of a whale song an unchangeable part of the whale's biology. This study shows that whales can control the pitch, deliberately changing it up or down when they want.

"Our study shows that blue whales in particular—and perhaps other baleen whales in general—may be making their harmonious sounds in a much different



way than previously thought," says lead author Robert Dziak.

So why are whales deliberately lowering the frequency of their calls? The scientists aren't completely sure, and one theory states it might be due to rebounding populations after the decline of commercial whaling. But another possible cause is the increase in noise from ocean ships.

Long-term studies

"In addition to vibrant natural sounds—especially waves breaking on the beach—a few long-term studies have documented a substantial increase in ocean noise over several decades from expanding container shipping traffic," says study author Joe Haxel.

"It may be possible the whales are modulating their vocalization frequency

in response to an increase in human-generated noise. They are essentially trying to find a radio channel that has less static to communicate in."

There's no way to find out for sure right now, but it might be possible to find an answer in a decade or two. At least one shipping company is building autonomous, electric ships, and if battery-powered container ships become more common it'll greatly cut down on ocean noise.

With any luck, the ocean will be a little quieter in a few years and whales can go back to singing their normal tunes.

(Source: Popular Mechanics)

It may be possible that whales are modulating their vocalization frequency in response to an increase in human-generated noise.

Life cycle of the mysterious and long-dead dodo revealed by bone study

Bulbous-beaked, plump and puny-winged, the dodo has been immortalized by humans in art, literature and song.

But while the peculiar animals have inspired a panoply of research, not least as to whether they were really bird-brained or as corpulent as portraits implied, much about the dodo's life has remained a mystery until now.

Scientists studying remains of the extinct avians say they have managed to put flesh on the bones of the dodo's existence, revealing aspects of their life from when they laid eggs to how quickly they reached adulthood, and even that they shed and regrew their plumage each year.

Ecology of birds

"Before our study the only things we knew about the ecology of these birds was that they were a big pigeon [with a body mass of] about 10 kilos," said Delphine Angst, a paleontologist and first author of the research from the University of Cape Town.

Native to the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean, the dodo was wiped out in the 17th century after the arrival of Dutch sailors and the animals that came with them, with hunting, competition for food and habitat destruction all contributing to the bird's demise.

But, despite contemporary records—including those from one Thomas Herbert who after dropping by Mauritius described the dodo in 1634 as having eyes like diamonds, "her clothing downy feathers, her train

three small plumes, short and inproportionable"—little is known about the birds, with most records far from scientific.

Writing in the journal *Scientific Reports*, Angst and colleagues from the Natural History Museum in London and Tring describe how they examined under a microscope thin cross-sections of 22 leg and wing bones, thought to be from 22 different dodos.

The results reveal that, like the majority of modern birds, dodo bones have three layers of tissue. However, previous research in modern birds has shown that the outermost tissue is only found in adults.

Bone tissue develops

"As soon as they achieve sexual maturity (the) bone tissue (develops) very slowly—and we can see that in the cross-sections," said Angst.

The finding proved illuminating. "For the first time we can say that for sure these specimens are juvenile, even if it looks like it is almost an adult in terms of size," said Angst, adding that the results showed that the chicks grew rapidly after hatching.

And there's more. Female birds, notes Angst, lay down a special type of tissue inside their bones when they ovulate, with the tissue providing a supply of calcium for egg production. "In our samples we found several specimens with this specific kind of central bone and then we (can tell) for sure that this specimen is a female and it is a female during ovulation, which is quite cool," said Angst. (Source: *The Guardian*)

A good ear for speech could be sign of mental health issues

Having unusually good hearing could be a sign of mental health problems, new research has found. People able to make out conversation across a noisy bar or untangle a garbled sounding sentence are more likely to hear hallucinatory voices in their head, according to scientists at University

College London and Durham University.

Experiments found that those with a history of hearing imaginary voices had a three in four chance of discerning a meaningful sentence in computer-distorted sounds, compared to less than half a chance among those without a history.

MRI scans confirmed that the region of the brain responsible for monitoring and attention responded better in "voice-hearers".

Bipolar disorder

Up to 15 percent of the population hear voices when no one is speaking, although only a fraction of these suffer to a clinically problematic extent, many with linked diagnoses such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

The research team believe their discovery of an association between auditory verbal hallucinations and better hearing for real-world language will one day lead to treatments for some mental health problems.

Published in the journal *Brain*, the study involved 17 participants with a history of voice hearing and 17 without.

They were played distorted speech known as sine waves, "alien-like" noises which can normally be understood only

if a hearer is told to listen out for certain words.

Without even being told the purpose of the exercise, the voice-hearers picked out the sentence 75 percent of the time, compared to 47 percent of the non-voice hearers.

They also detected the sentence quicker than the non-voice hearers who were able to make it out.

The MRI scans showed that the voice-hearers' brains automatically responded to the sine waves containing language, but not the meaningless waves.

Perceptual processes

Professor Sophie Scott from the UCL Speech Communication Lab added: "This is a really exciting demonstration of the ways that unusual experiences with voices can be linked to, and may have their basis in, everyday perceptual processes."

The Research was led by Durham University Hearing the Voice project, a unit devoted to building an understanding of auditory verbal hallucinations.

Dr. Ben Alderson-Day, a research fellow on the project, said the study "suggests that the brains of people who hear voices are particularly tuned to meaning in sounds, and shows how unusual experiences might be influenced by people's individual perceptual and cognitive processes."

The study also involved researchers from University of Porto in Portugal, University of Westminster and University of Oxford.

(Source: *The Telegraph*)

Man-made fossil methane emission levels larger than previously believed

In 2011 a team of researchers led by Vasilii Petrenko, an assistant professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of Rochester, spent seven weeks in Antarctica collecting and studying 2,000-pound samples of glacial ice cores that date back nearly 12,000 years. The ancient air trapped within the ice revealed surprising new data about methane that may help inform today's policymakers as they consider ways to reduce global warming.

In a new paper published in *Nature*, the researchers report two important findings regarding methane, a powerful greenhouse gas and large contributor to global warming:

First, the risk that warming will trigger methane release from large natural reservoirs of ancient carbon seems to be low.

Second, humans are probably contributing more methane to the atmosphere through fossil fuel use and extraction than scientists previously believed.

Reducing methane emissions from fossil fuels may therefore be an even more important factor in reducing global warming.

Anthropogenic Methane emissions

"Our results are suggesting that anthropogenic (man-made) fossil fuel methane emissions are even larger than previously thought," Petrenko says. "This means we have even more leverage to fight global



warming by curbing methane emissions from our fossil fuel use."

Today's atmosphere contains methane that is emitted naturally -- from wetlands, wildfires, or ocean and land seeps -- and methane emitted from human activities like fossil fuel extraction and use, raising livestock, and generating landfills, with human-emitted methane accounting for 60 percent or more of the total.

Scientists are able to accurately measure the total methane level in the atmosphere and how this has changed over the last few decades.

The challenge? Breaking down this total into the

specific sources.

Methane sources

"We know rather little about how much methane comes from different sources and how these have been changing in response to industrial and agricultural activities or because of climate events like droughts," says Hinrich Schaefer, an atmospheric scientist at the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) in New Zealand, where a key part of the sample processing took place. "That makes it hard to understand which sources we should target specifically to reduce methane levels."

Scientists can use measurements of different isotopes of methane (methane molecules with atoms of slightly different mass) to fingerprint some of the sources.

But even this approach doesn't always work because the isotope "signatures" of some sources can be very similar. For instance, fossil methane is methane emitted from ancient hydrocarbon deposits, typically found at sites rich in fossil fuels. Fossil methane that leaks naturally from these sites -- "geologic methane" -- has an isotope signature that is identical to fossil methane emitted when humans drill gas wells.

Separating the natural and anthropogenic sources and estimating how much humans emit has therefore proven difficult. (Source: *EurekaAlert*)

Get your Sagan on with awe-inspiring photos of the final frontier

Once Sputnik 1 was successfully hurled into orbit in 1957, spaceflight was no longer a mere pipe dream reserved for the pages of pulp fiction. Not long after the peculiar satellite's stunning series of orbits, an entire planet watched as mankind, against all odds, set foot on the moon, marking the dawn of the spacefaring age and leading to some of the best space photos to date.

In the ensuing half century since these historic achievements, we have launched a panoply of instruments into outer space, allowing us to better understand our infinitesimal sliver in the infinite void of the cosmos.

At times, the space agencies around the globe have proposed some rather bizarre missions to whet our curiosities in the name of science. While many of these more, we'll say, "far out" programs never left the launchpad — let alone the drawing board — there have been plenty of other pioneering probes that have blasted through our atmosphere, into the Solar System, and, at least on one occasion, drifted into interstellar space. We have rendezvoused with asteroids, sailed through the rings of Saturn, and quite literally roved robotic marathons on the red planet.

While most of us will probably never escape Earth's gravity, a joint partnership between the International Space Station (ISS) and Google recently unveiled an interactive Space View platform — a variation of Google Street View program. This allows those of us who never fully achieved our childhood dream of becoming an astronaut to virtually tour the ISS and even peer out at a panoramic Earth from the Cupola bay.

Luckily for us, some of the most sophisticated imaging technology is currently making its way through our Solar System, transmitting breathtaking images of the final frontier back to Earth for our gawking pleasure. (Source: *Digital Trends*)

Largest-ever asteroid is about to fly by Earth

Near-Earth objects make passes by our planet on a fairly regular basis, but the space rock that's going to cruise by on September 1st is a real goliath.

Named Florence, the massive asteroid is thought to be the largest object to make such a close approach to Earth since NASA decided to start keeping records for that sort of thing. The good news is that scientists don't believe it poses much of a threat — at least this time around.

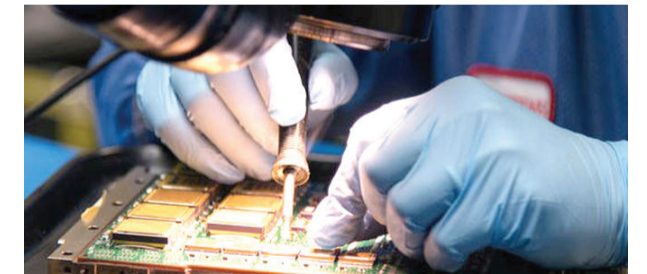
While many near-Earth asteroids that safely pass our planet are comparable in size to busses or even houses, Florence is quite a bit larger than any of those.

The asteroid, which is named for Florence Nightingale, measures a whopping 2.7 miles across, making it a real world-killer if it were to ever actually collide with us. Thankfully, NASA doesn't believe that's going to happen any time soon.

When Florence makes its pass on September 1st it'll be at a distance of about 4.4 million miles. That's approximately 18 times the distance between our planet and the moon, but it's still close enough for NASA and astronomers from around the world to grab some great observations of the colossal space rock.

NASA has also forecasted Florence's movements in the future and, assuming the calculations are accurate (it's NASA, so we'll guess that they are), Florence won't make it this close to Earth again for several hundreds of years. In fact, the asteroid won't make another approach like this until sometime after the year 2500, so don't lose too much sleep over it. (Source: *BGR*)

New radiation-hardened computers are ready to blast off on space missions



If you think getting knocked around in your backpack on the subway is tough on a computer, try going into space, where radiation and cosmic rays can cause sensitive computer equipment to degrade and fail.

Aerospace company BAE Systems has just announced a new computer it calls "radiation-hardened." According to the company, the new RAD5545 "provides next-generation spacecraft with the high-performance onboard processing capacity needed to support future space missions," and is faster and more power-efficient than its predecessor.

A single RAD5545 SBC replaces multiple cards on previous generations of spacecraft. It combines high performance, large amounts of memory, and fast throughput to improve spacecraft capability, efficiency, and mission performance. With its improved computational throughput, storage, and bandwidth, it will provide spacecraft with the ability to conduct new missions, including those requiring encryption processing, multiple operating systems, ultra high-resolution image processing, autonomous operation, and simultaneous support for multiple payloads — missions that were impossible with previous single-board computers.

Because it's a single-card computer with all the components on one circuit board, it's smaller, with fewer parts to potentially fail, and it uses specially insulated components to protect against radiation. Long-term trips, such as to Mars, would especially require computer hardware that could stand up to the long-term rigors of space travel.

Hewlett Packard Enterprise meanwhile is trying a different approach to dealing with radiation. It's space-testing relatively ordinary computers with software to detect and correct radiation-induced computing errors. (Source: *CNET*)

Fighting your weaknesses!

Conventional wisdom says, "Build on your strengths." And I agree, but some common weaknesses usually must at least be mitigated or you may not get a chance to use your strengths.

Quick tips are particularly likely to yield more net good per-minute of reader time. There are plenty of long articles and books on each of the following but perhaps these quick tips add something to the corpus. With that as underpinning:



● Lack of drive/procrastination. Baby steps? Picture the benefit to you and to others? Pair up with a driven person who lacks something you bring to the table, perhaps calm, detail-orientees, people skills? Realize that everyone has strengths, so it's no shame to want to work with people with complementary ones.

● Lack of intelligence. Find easier work? Pair up with a smarter person who might value what you bring?

● Lack of emotional intelligence. Should you live by this mantra: Make people feel good about themselves unless you have good reason not to? Monitor people's non-verbal reactions to you: sighing, pursed lips, disagreeing gratuitously. Ask for feedback from trusted people?

● Lack of technical chops. Courses usually are time-ineffective because the content and pace rarely are well-oughted to your needs. Best is self-study perhaps augmented by a tutor or study partner.

● Public speaking. Key is to, guided by a brief outline, act as though you're having a conversation. The only deviation from conversational tone is to speak a bit more slowly and ensure you're not monotonic. Scripting virtually ensures failure, diminished sense of authenticity, and certainly boring your audience.

● Disorganization. Start by cleaning up one small area at a time: your desk, one corner of a room? To keep your activities straight, use one simple system, for example, writing your immediate to-dos on a memo cube and longer-term ones on a calendar (Outlook or Google Calendar or a week-at-a-glance engagement book.)

● Fear of failure. Sometimes that fear is to be honored: when the task truly is too hard or there's a better use of your time. But more often, it's wiser to risk failure. Is sadness about rejections worth it, knowing you guarantee failure by not trying?

● Substance abuse. For you, is the right answer cutting back? Going cold turkey? With help from family? A professional? Or have you concluded that for now at least, the benefits of the drug outweigh the liabilities?

● Fatigue. Would it help to have a sleep ritual such as: exercise 1 to 3 hours before bedtime, keep the bedroom cool, do the same pre-bed activities each night, and if you're having trouble clearing your mind, saying a mantra or even, yes, counting sheep?

(Source: Psychology Today)

LEARN ENGLISH Planning a Bank Robbery

A: All right, so this is what we are going to do. I've carefully mapped this out, so don't screw it up. Mr. Rabbit, you and Mr. Fox will go into the bank wearing these uniforms. We managed to get replicas of the one the guards wear when they pick up the money.

B: Got it.

C: No problem, boss.

A: When you get inside, tell them that you are filling in for Carl and Tom, and say that they are on another route today. Don't lose your cool. Just act natural.

B: What if they want to call and confirm?

A: You let him.

C: What?!

A: Don't worry, we have the phones tapped, so the call will be patched through to me, and I'll pretend to be the transport company.

B: Ha ha, you are so clever boss!

A: Okay, shut up. Only take as much money as you can fit in these bags. Don't get greedy! Are you ready? Let's go.

Key vocabulary map out: planned, thought of screw up: mess up, make a mistake, fail replica: a reproduction or copy of a product loose (someone's) cool: to not control your feeling or emotions tap: attach a device to a phone line to listen secretly patch (someone) through: connect or communicate over the telephone clever: smart, intelligent greedy: want too much; always wanting more Supplementary vocabulary heist: the act of stealing something from a shop or a bank (AmE, Informal) bust: an event where the police catch people doing a crime bandit: criminal who attacks and steals from people who travel burglary: illegally entering a house or building to steal escape route: a planned way of going from one place to another and escaping

(Source: irlanguage.com)

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

Legal action against Apple on agenda: Iran's telecom minister

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iran's telecommunications minister has said the country will legally pursue a recent decision by Apple for removing Iranian apps from its App Store.

"Apple holds 11 percent share of the Iranian cellphone market. Observing the consumer rights is today a principle, which has not been fulfilled by Apple. We will legally pursue [the issue of] removing of apps," Mohammad Javad Azari-Jahromi wrote in his twitter account.

Jahromi, 36, who became Iran's youngest-ever minister this week, did not provide details on the procedure for the legal pursuit.

Due to American sanctions, Apple has no official presence in Iran and its iPhones are not legally available for sale. Millions of Iranians use iPhones smuggled in from different countries and thousands of apps created for Iranians in App Store.

On Thursday, Apple removed Snapp, a ride-hailing app similar to Uber that is popular in Iran, from its app stores. That followed the removal in recent weeks of apps for food delivery, shopping and other services, The New York Times reported.

In a message to Iranian developers



An Apple store in central Tehran. Apple has no official presence in Iran but as Iran's telecommunications minister says it holds 11 percent share of the country's cellphone market

whose apps were affected by the ban, Apple said, "Under the U.S. sanctions regulations, the App Store cannot host, distribute or do business with apps or developers connected to certain U.S. embargoed countries."

The takedown appears to be an expansion of efforts to restrict Iranian titles that offer in-app transactions, AppleInsider, the news website for Apple products published.

"In January, Apple pulled a number of

Iran-based iOS apps from the App Store, including online e-commerce service Digikala, citing noncompliance with Iranian Transactions Sanctions Regulations.

"Since Apple takes a cut of all App Store purchases, sales from Iranian apps generate revenue and are thus in violation of U.S. law," it continued.

■ Talks for unblocking Twitter "Negotiations are underway for unblocking Twitter in Iran," Jahromi told ILNA on Monday.

"Twitter is not an immoral environment needing to be blocked, however there are some national security issues," he added.

The micro-blogging platform was barred in Iran since the debated 2009 presidential election.

He called Twitter as a proper media for announcing public diplomacy, improving relation with world and sharing opinion about different issues.

"Limiting ourselves to Telegram app, which is popular inside Iran, is not appropriate," he added.

According to Telegram app CEO Pavel Durov, it has 40 million active users among Iran's 80-million population.

Jahromi added that the final decision on unblocking sites lay with Supreme Council for Cyberspace.

Mother on why she isn't teaching her son to read before starting school

It's not uncommon for parents to try and give their children a head-start by teaching them to read before starting school.

Whether it's simply learning the alphabet or actually reading simple sentences, the thought is that the children will have an easier time in the classroom.

But one mum has now spoken out to explain why she's deliberately not teaching her son to read before he starts school.

Stand-up comedian and writer Crystal Lowery wrote a lengthy post on Facebook explaining why she's focusing on developing her five-year-old son's creative, explorative and communication skills.

She reads to her son a lot, but is not yet teaching him to read because "he's too busy learning other things," she wrote.

"He's learning how to be a good sport - how to wait his turn in Candy Land and not gloat when he makes it to the King's Ice Cream Castle before his sister does.

"He's learning how to build. From blocks, to sticks, to Legos, he feels the weight of the different materials



in his little sausage fingers, and examines the physical integrity of the various structures he has made.

"He's learning how to exercise. He chases the dog, plays tag, climbs on playground equipment, dances (well), and practices karate (poorly). He's going to need his body for a long time, so he builds his muscles through activity instead of sitting at a desk all day."

And Lowery went on to explain how her son is learning how to take care of things, how to be creative,

how to apologies, how to forgive and "that the key to happiness is to focus on his blessings rather than complaining about what he doesn't have."

While some people argue that teaching a child to read and developing other skills needn't be mutually exclusive, Lowery believes that her approach will mean her son arrives at school with lots of important other capabilities:

"The ability to try new things without getting frustrated.

"The ability make friends, even though friendship can be a messy business.

"The ability to listen to others and follow instructions.

"The ability to problem-solve.

"The ability to concentrate on a task."

Lowery points out that much of what children learn can't be measured by a test, but she isn't concerned with teaching him academics yet.

"Today he has more important things to learn. (Source: The Independent)

Russian tanker sails through Arctic without icebreaker for first time

A Russian tanker has travelled through the northern sea route in record speed and without an icebreaker escort for the first time, highlighting how climate change is opening up the high Arctic.

The \$300m Christophe de Margerie carried a cargo of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Hammerfest in Norway to Boryeong in South Korea in 19 days, about 30% quicker than the conventional southern shipping route through the Suez Canal.

The tanker was built to take advantage of the diminishing Arctic sea ice and deliver gas from a new \$27m facility on the Yamal Peninsula, the biggest Arctic LNG project so far which has been championed by the Russian president, Vladimir Putin.

On its maiden voyage, the innovative tanker used its integral icebreaker to cross ice fields 1.2m thick, passing along the northern sea section of the route in the Russian Arctic in a record six-and-a-half days.

"It's very quick, particularly as there was no icebreaker escort which previously there had been in journeys," said Bill Spears, spokesperson for Sovcomflot, the shipping company which owns the tanker. "It's very exciting that a ship can go along this route all year round."

Environmentalists have expressed concern over the risks of increased ship traffic in the pristine Arctic but Sovcomflot stressed the tanker's green credentials. As well as using conventional fuel, the Christophe de Margerie can be powered by the LNG it

is transporting, reducing its sulphur oxide emissions by 90% and nitrous oxide emissions by 80% when powered this way. "This is a significant factor in a fragile ecosystem," said Spears.

The northern sea route between Siberia and the Pacific is still closed to conventional shipping for much of the year. But the Christophe de Margerie, the first of 15 such tankers expected to be built, extends the navigation window for the northern sea route from four months with an expensive icebreaker to all year round in a westerly direction.

In the route's busiest year so far, 2013, there were only 15 international crossings but the Russian government predicts that cargo along this route will grow tenfold by

2020. This link with the Pacific reduces its need to sell gas through pipelines to Europe.

"There has been a steady increase in traffic in recent years," said Spears. "There's always been trade along this route but it's been restricted a lot by the ice. It's exciting that this route presents a much shorter alternative than the Suez route. It's a major saving."

Simon Boxall, an oceanographer at the University of Southampton, said that shipping companies were making a "safe bet" in building ships in anticipation that the northern sea route will open up. "Even if we stopped greenhouse emissions tomorrow, the acceleration in the loss of Arctic ice is unlikely to be reversed," he said.

(Source: theguardian.com)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

HIV infection risk rising in Iran: health official

Psychedelic drugs and high-risk sexual behaviors are increasing the risks of HIV infection among people in Iran, head of HIV/AIDS department affiliated with the health ministry has said. Currently the HIV prevalence rate among those who have risky behaviors such as injecting drugs and unprotected sex has gone up to 5 percent, IRNA news agency quoted Mino Mohraz as saying. Right now transmission of HIV through high-risk sexual behaviors is increasing in the country and in case the current trend continues the risks of developing the infection among the general population is threatening the country, Mohraz said. "Once the prevalence among the general population hits 1 percent we are seriously in trouble," she warned.

رئیس مرکز تحقیقات ایدز: ایران را در خطر شیوع عمومی ایدز قرار داده است

رئیس مرکز تحقیقات ایدز گفت: با رواج و افزایش مصرف روانگردانها و گسترش انتقال جنسی، خطر افزایش شیوع ویروس ایدز به بالای یک درصد جمعیت بسیار جدی است. مینو محرز روز چهارشنبه در گفتگو با خبرنگار سلامت ایرنا افزود: در مورد عفونت ایدز از مرحله شیوع کم عبور کرده و اکنون به مرحله متمرکز بالای ۵ درصد در گروه دارای رفتارهای پر خطر همچون معتادان تزریقی و افراد دارای بی بند و باری های جنسی هستیم. وی گفت: در مورد عفونت ایدز از مرحله شیوع کم عبور کرده و اکنون به مرحله متمرکز بالای ۵ درصد در گروه دارای رفتارهای پر خطر هستیم. در جمعیت کل هنوز شیوع ابتلا به این ویروس زیر یک درصد است ولی اگر وضعیت انتقال جنسی ایدز همین طور پیش برود و الگوی ابتلای جنسی ایدز گسترش پیدا کند ممکن است در آینده نزدیک به مرحله سوم که مرحله شیوع بالای یک درصد در جمعیت عمومی است برسیم و این خطر بزرگی است.

ENGLISH PROVERB

After a storm comes a calm

■ Explanation: things often improve after a difficult, chaotic, or stressful time
■ For example: Bankruptcy is very emotionally taxing, but try to remember that after a storm comes a calm.

PHRASAL VERB

Do something over

■ Meaning: to do something again, especially because you did it wrong the first time
■ For example: If you make too many mistakes, you'll have to do it over.

ENGLISH IDIOM

Best bet

■ Explanation: the action most likely to succeed is called one's best bet
■ For example: Your best bet would be to try calling him at home.

Report: Netanyahu to lift ban, allow MPs to visit Al-Aqsa Mosque

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly plans to lift a year and a half ban on Knesset (parliament) members visiting the al-Aqsa Mosque in East al-Quds (Jerusalem), which was the scene of intense confrontations between Israeli forces and Palestinians last month.

A member of Netanyahu's office told AFP on condition of anonymity that Netanyahu "decided to open the Temple Mount to MPs' visits, for one day at this stage, on Tuesday, August 29," following consultations with security officials.

He claimed "the decision was taken in light of the improvement in the security situation at the site."

In 2015, Netanyahu barred Israeli members of parliament from visiting the site in the Old City of Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem, which houses the al-Aqsa Mosque complex.

The order was meant to calm unrest that erupted in part over Palestinian fears that Israel was planning to assert further control over the mosque complex.

However, Yehuda Glick, an American-born Israeli Orthodox rabbi from Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party, petitioned Israel's Supreme Court in March against the ban.

Glick performed prayers outside al-Aqsa under the protection of Israeli police early on Wednesday, and more than 130 Israeli settlers entered the compound.

The site, holy to both Muslims and Jews, is central to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israeli Jews are allowed to visit the compound but not pray there, and the site has



been the scene of regular confrontations over any attempt to break the rule.

In the most recent round of tensions, violence erupted after a deadly shootout on July 14 outside the compound, known as Haram al-Sharif, which Jews call Temple Mount.

Using the gunfight as a pretext, Israel first closed the compound for three days, and then set up metal detectors and surveillance cameras at entrances to the compound, outraging Palestinians and Muslims around the world.

Kushner arrives in Palestine amid protests

Elsewhere, the United States President

Donald Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner, arrived in Palestine amid protests over Washington's favoritism towards Israel in resolving the decades-long stalemate in the occupied territories.

Dozens of angry protesters marched in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah on Thursday, as Kushner entered the city to meet with Palestinian authorities in hopes of sealing the "ultimate deal" that Trump has so ardently touted ever since taking office.

Chanting "the American is not welcome," the protesters expressed their disappointment with the Trump administra-

tion and its Israel-first approach.

The pessimism is prevalent among Palestinian authorities as well, who at first welcomed Trump's election, thinking he was going to change things around.

A problem called Trump

More than eight months into his presidency, Trump has yet to make a clear stance on the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In fact, the Republican president's statements have always been tainted by a degree of bias towards Israel.

In a White House press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Trump made a U-turn on decades of U.S. policy in favor of a so-called two-state solution by saying he would not insist on it if it seemed too out of reach.

Trump's lax stance on Israel's settlement activities has deteriorated the situation by encouraging the Tel Aviv regime to approve thousands of more units, drawing fire from Palestinians and the international community alike.

Seemingly undisturbed by the consequences of his policies, Trump has promised to relocate the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv to al-Quds, a move guaranteed to prompt a strong response.

The prospect of Trump's promised "ultimate deal" on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict fades away even further when a wide array of his domestic struggles, such as the ongoing Russian "collusion" case, the Democratic obstructionism and a widely divided Republican Party, are factored in.

(Source: Press TV)

Uganda jails Muslim leader Sheikh Kamoga over 'terrorism'



A Ugandan court sentenced a Muslim group leader and three associates to life in prison on terrorism charges, a judgment denounced by some as the latest in a series of anti-Muslim rulings.

Sheikh Mohammad Yunus Kamoga, who heads the Tabligi group, and 13 others were arrested and charged with terrorism and the murder of other Islamic group leaders.

In a High Court session on Tuesday, Kamoga and three Tabligi members were sentenced to life, while two others were given 30 years each.

But a day earlier, six of them were convicted on terrorism charges but all were cleared of murder. The court had acquitted the group of murder because prosecutors failed to place any of them at the scenes of crime.

This week's conviction is the latest in a series of cases where Muslims have been blamed for the murders of officials and Islamic clerics.

The cases include the murders of nine Muslim clerics since 2012; of Joan Kagezi, a prosecutor working on the 2010 Kampala bombings case, in March 2015; of an army officer in November 2016 who had defected from a Ugandan-led rebel group in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo; and of a prominent policeman in March.

In each case the victims were shot dead by motorbike-riding assassins, and in each case Muslim suspects were rounded up.

In a three-and-a-half-hour judgment over Kamoga and his associates, Justice Muhanguzi said that while the men were not proven to have killed anyone, they had used threatening leaflets and loudspeakers to intimidate rivals.

Those threats amounted to terrorism against the entire community, he ruled.

A spokesman for Tabligi, Siraje Nsamu, said the charges were trumped up. He denounced the ruling against them as "purely political".

About 13 percent of Uganda's 35 million population is Muslim.

Uganda is tough on suspected fighters since deadly suicide bombings in 2010 carried out by the al-Qaeda-linked al-Shabab rebel group in their first attack outside of Somalia. At least 74 people died in those attacks.

Solomon Muyita, the spokesman for Uganda's judiciary, said if lawyers had evidence that judges were politically influenced, they should bring it to court.

Government spokesman Ofwono Opondo dismissed allegations that Muslims were unfairly targeted.

(Source: agencies)

Saudi Arabia's foreign reserves resume falling in July



The House of Saud regime's foreign reserves resumed falling in July, according to data published by the country's central bank on Thursday.

The figures suggested that the government may remain under pressure to draw reserves down to cover a budget deficit caused by low oil prices.

Riyadh began liquidating the reserves in late 2014 and they dropped sharply from a record \$737bn in August that year.

In June 2017, they rose month-on-month for the first time in over a year, prompting speculation that Riyadh might have cut its deficit enough to no longer need cash from the reserves.

But Thursday's data showed the central bank's net foreign assets fell by \$6.3bn from June to \$487bn in July, their lowest level since early 2011.

The reserves shrank 12.8 percent from a year earlier.

The fall occurred despite the government's launch of monthly domestic issues of Islamic bonds in July, which raised 17bn riyals.

Officials have not commented in detail on the reasons for the reserves drop, though some have suggested

it is due to private sector activity, not government spending.

Some analysts have speculated the fall is due to spending on Saudi Arabia's military intervention in Yemen. But this is unlikely.

In June, an international banker in touch with Saudi authorities said much of the decline in foreign assets appeared due to the transfer of money to state funds investing abroad - particularly the main sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund (PIF).

Riyadh has said it wants to cover the deficit through debt sales as much as possible rather than by running down the reserves.

Riyadh sold foreign securities in July to raise money, the data showed.

The central bank's holdings of foreign securities shrank by \$4.3bn from June to \$333bn, while deposits with banks abroad edged up by almost \$1bn to \$95bn.

Thursday's central bank data also pointed to a weak Saudi economy.

Outstanding bank loans to the private sector shrank from a year earlier for the fifth straight month in July; they fell 1.3 percent, after a 1.4 percent drop in June.

(Source: Reuters)

ISIL terrorists under siege along Syria-Lebanon border: Hezbollah chief

Leader of the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement says armed members of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) Takfiri terrorist group are now under siege over an area of about 60 square kilometers, which straddles Lebanon's border with Syria, after scores of them killed by resistance fighters.

Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah made the remarks on Thursday when addressing supporters of the resistance movement through a televised speech broadcast live from the Lebanese capital, Beirut.

Nasrallah also touched upon the Lebanese army's counter-terrorism operations against Takfiri militants in Ras Baalbek village and Christian-majority town of al-

Qaa, located in the Bekaa region of northern Lebanon and on the border with Syria.

At the beginning of his address, the Lebanese Hezbollah leader said main goals of anti-ISIL operations included to secure Lebanon's border with Syria and also to determine the fate of Lebanese soldiers taken into captivity by the terrorists.

He added that another goal of the operation was to gain full control over western border of Lebanon and entirely drive out ISIL terrorists.

Nasrallah stated that ISIL terrorists were using civilians as human shield as they had already done in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. He emphasized that the terrorists have extended a proposal for negotiation only as

a way to get out of their current predicament.

He went on to say that Hezbollah had embarked on negotiations with ISIL terrorists in western Qalamoun in order to peacefully obtain the same objectives that its anti-terror campaign was meant to accomplish.

The Hezbollah chief stressed that the Lebanese government had to be coordinated with Syrian authorities as to any deal that its officials might strike with ISIL terrorists.

He also lashed out at the United States embassy in Lebanon for threatening local media outlets against presenting Hezbollah as the guarantor of the country's security.

(Source: Press TV)

Saudi crown prince plans to replace 'hardline' foreign minister: report

The House of Saudi regime Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is reportedly considering replacing the country's incumbent foreign minister with his 28-year-old younger brother Khalid bin Salman.

The crown prince's likely plan to appoint Khalid bin Salman, who currently serves as the Saudi regime ambassador to the United States, is considered partly due to Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir's "hardline" stance against Iran, reported Stratfor, an American geopolitical intelligence platform and publisher.

The decision would also enable the newly-appointed crown prince to further consolidate power as he seeks to balance Riyadh's priorities abroad with controlling dissent at home, the report added.

(Source: Press TV)

Former Thai PM Yingluck Shinawatra 'fled country' ahead of trial verdict

Thailand's former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra has fled the country as a court was about to deliver a verdict in a two-year trial over agricultural subsidies, a source close to her family says.

The source declined to say where she had gone, but Thailand's top immigration official said there were no records of Yingluck having left through proper channels.

Yingluck failed to show up to hear the verdict being delivered. Her lawyer said she was ill but the court rejected the explanation and Thailand's Supreme Court issued an arrest warrant.

The lawyer, Norawit Larleang, told CNN that he didn't know whether the former prime minister was in Thailand or had left.

Yingluck -- ousted by a military coup in 2014 -- had been barred from leaving Thailand without court approval since 2015, when her trial started.

Her bail of 30 million baht (\$900,000), posted when the trial began more than two years ago, has been confiscated.

Yingluck faced up to 10 years in prison for alleged negligence over a rice-buying scheme, which cost the country billions of dollars. The court has set a new date for the verdict of September 27.

Yingluck in 2016: I've never thought of fleeing

In 2016, Yingluck pledged to see through her trial, and said that she had not considered leaving the country.

"I stand firm to fight my case. All eyes are on me. I have duties and responsibilities to carry on. I assure you, I've never thought of fleeing." The rice subsidy program, introduced in 2011, pledged to pay farmers well above the market rate for their crop, and ended up costing the country billions.

But critics said it wasted large amounts of public funds trying to please rural voters, hurting exports and leaving the government with huge stockpiles of rice it couldn't sell without losing money.

Yingluck said the rice subsidy scheme was "beneficial for the farmers and the country" and that claims it lost money were wrong and motivated by political bias against her.

Meantime, hundreds of Yingluck's supporters who'd been waiting outside the court for the verdict quickly dispersed once word spread the former Prime Minister hadn't appeared.

Thai police had deployed 3,000 officers to the streets ahead of the hearing to guard against potential protests. At one stage, lines of police stood ready to repel any demonstrations.

As many as 1,000 supporters had gathered to hear the verdict, lining up behind barricades and crowding footpaths in nearby streets. Many were dressed in black to mourn the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who died last October.

The crowds came despite a plea from Yingluck on Facebook to stay away from the court due to security concerns.

Reporters outside the government complex which houses the Supreme Court said her supporters were ignoring police requests to stay in predetermined protest areas.

When she was inaugurated in 2011, Yingluck became Thailand's first female prime minister and its youngest in over 60 years. After the 2014 coup, she was impeached by Thailand's military-appointed National Legislative Assembly. The ruling barred her from political office for five years.

At the time, Yingluck said she had behaved with integrity and honesty during her time as prime minister.

Amid the outcry over the rice subsidy scandal, Yingluck was investigated by Thailand's National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) for the rice subsidy issue and put on trial. Proceedings have lasted more than two years.

Thaksin Shinawatra, Yingluck's brother, was overthrown as Prime Minister in a military coup in 2006. Thaksin is living in self-imposed exile to avoid corruption charges.

(Source: CNN)

White South African farmers guilty in 'coffin assault'

A South African judge on Friday found two white farmers guilty of attempted murder after they filmed themselves forcing a black man into a coffin and threatening to burn him alive.

"For attempted murder of Mr [Victor] Mlotshwa, I hereby find you both guilty," Judge Segopotje Mphahlele told the accused, before supporters of the victim burst out in celebratory songs in the courtroom.

Willem Oosthuizen and Theo Martins Jackson, both wearing jackets and ties, were also found guilty of kidnapping, intimidation, and assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm.

They pleaded not guilty over the incident last year in the eastern province of Mpumalanga, saying they only intended to scare Mlotshwa after he allegedly stole copper cables from their farm.

Two clips of footage taken on their mobile phones showed the assailants showing Mlotshwa down into the wooden coffin and pressing the lid closed with their boots as he begged for his life.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Schumacher' son to honor Dad with tribute drive

Michael Schumacher' son Mick will take to the Spa track on Sunday to honor the 25th anniversary of his father's first Formula One victory.

Mick Schumacher, 18, son of the stricken seven-time world champion, will drive his father's Benetton B194, his 1994 title-winning car, ahead of the 2017 Belgian Grand Prix.

"No doubt, I wanted to do that," said Mick Schumacher in an Instagram post.

Mick is a promising racer and lies 11th in the F3 European Championship this season, having graduated from the F4 circuit.

It is more than three years since Michael Schumacher's life-changing skiing accident.

His medical status still remains unclear, having suffered serious head injuries in a freak accident on December 29, 2011.

The 48-year-old continues to receive specialist treatment at his home in Switzerland. His manager Sabine Kehm said in a statement in December: "Michael's health is not a public issue, and so we will continue to make no comment in that regard."

Michael Schumacher made his F1 debut at Spa in 1991 and won his first race at the Belgian track a year later.

He went on to score a record 91 grands prix victories in a glittering 21-year career.

One of Schumacher's records could be matched this weekend if Lewis Hamilton can score his 68th F1 pole position.

(Source: CNN)

Olympic silver medalist Bobridge arrested for drug dealing

Australian cyclist Jack Bobridge, who won silver medals in the team pursuit at the last two Olympics, was arrested in Perth this week on charges of dealing in ecstasy, local media reported on Friday.

Bobridge, who was forced into retirement last year because of the effects of rheumatoid arthritis, was arrested after police raided his home in the western Australian capital on Wednesday, the ABC reported.

"The investigation led detectives to charge the 28-year-old man with two counts of sell and supply a trafficable quantity of MDMA and three counts of sell and supply MDMA," Perth police said in a statement to the national broadcaster.

Bobridge was bailed to appear at a Perth magistrates court to face the charges next month, ABC added.

In a highly successful career, Bobridge rode in four versions of the Giro d'Italia and won the Australian road race national title for the second time in Ballarat in January 2016.

On the track, he competed in three Olympics, won three world championship gold medals, four Commonwealth Games titles and still holds the world record for the 4km individual pursuit with the time he set in Sydney in 2011.

(Source: Reuters)

Mo Farah wins final track race in dramatic fashion

Mo Farah brought the curtain down on his track career with a thrilling victory over 5000m in the Zurich Diamond League.

A queue of athletes lined up on the Brit's shoulder in the final straight, but he somehow held them off to win in 13:06.05 – perhaps his most thrilling finale ever.

World champion Muktar Edris was among those to apply pressure on Farah in the final straight, but he stumbled in the final metres to finish third behind Paul Chelimo. Just 0.13 seconds separated the top four.

"It's amazing to come away with a win today," Farah told reporters. "I've been resting up and watching Edris, what tactics he normally uses, studying, working out and tonight the game plan was to sit on him and make him do a lot of the work," he added.

"Going into the last lap, the plan was not to give anyone an inch, and that's what I did."

"I will really miss it but everything must come to an end sometime." While the win is unlikely to atone for his shock defeat to Edris over the same distance at the IAAF World Championships in London, it did at least ensure the 34-year-old bowed out on top.

Farah will now switch his attention to road races, where he plans to compete under his full name Mohamed.

He bows out from the track with a hugely impressive haul of four Olympic gold medals, six world titles and seven European golds.

(Source: Eurosport)

Pique : Neymar sale inflating Coutinho, Dembele prices

Gerard Pique believes Barcelona's pursuit of big-money targets Philippe Coutinho and Ousmane Dembele have been held up due to the high prices being demanded following Neymar's sale to Paris Saint-Germain.

Barcelona were caught off guard by PSG's audacious move for the Brazil superstar and turned their attentions to Borussia Dortmund winger Dembele and Liverpool midfielder Coutinho to replace the superstar forward.

Dembele is widely expected to complete his move to Camp Nou, but a deal for Coutinho is proving troublesome with Liverpool playing hardball over their star playmaker.

Barcelona centre-back Pique has little doubt both players want to join the LaLiga giants and feels that Barca are struggling to complete deals due to the vast outlay they received for Neymar.

"I think players still want to join Barcelona, and they are showing that as is the case with Coutinho and Ousmane Dembele," Pique told reporters at a PokerStars event in Barcelona.

"One by putting in a transfer request and the other with his actions at Dortmund. It suggests that they are both delighted about the idea of coming; they want to come."

"The problem is, we sold Neymar and the clubs know we have the money from that, and the market is the way it is."

"I don't think it's because the players don't want to come, they are keen to come to Barca, but right now to sign whatever player the club wants, it seems to cost more."

(Source: Mirror)

Floyd Mayweather v Conor McGregor 'Money Fight' poised to generate \$600m

Say what you like about undefeated boxing legend Floyd Mayweather and mixed martial arts star Conor McGregor's upcoming contest ("boring" and a "farce" are two of the kinder previews) but the so-called "Money Fight" looks set to be one of the most lucrative in history.

Tickets, TV sales, sponsorships and betting could generate close to \$600m in sales, according to experts, when the two meet on Saturday night. The fight may not go down in history as a classic but it is poised to be the richest since Mayweather took on Manny Pacquiao in 2015, a fight that generated \$623m in overall revenue.

■ Ticket sales

There have been reports that ticket sales for the fight have been slower than expected. Tickets were sold out in less than a minute before Mayweather-Pacquiao's fight (despite a botched rollout due to an impasse between the promoters) and the cheapest was \$4,000, more than double current prices for Mayweather-McGregor. Tickets on the secondary markets are selling at a steep discount.

The fight will be held at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, which lists a capacity of 20,000 for boxing. Mayweather-Pacquiao's 2015 fight generated a record \$72.2m from the sale of 16,219 tickets at the smaller MGM Grand Garden Arena.

Patrick Ryan of Eventellect, a ticket management firm, expects Mayweather-McGregor to generate around \$70m in ticket sales but said that he wouldn't be surprised if the fight does generate more than Mayweather-Pacquiao. "They can't sell as many \$10,000 seats but there are more at a lower level. This is an exhibition not a title fight, people don't pay premium prices for an exhibition," he said.

■ Pay-per-view

UFC president Dana White believes the fight will be the most lucrative pay-per-view of all time, surpassing the record-shattering figures of Mayweather-Pacquiao. "We're gonna do the numbers that everyone has been talking that we're going to do," White said recently. "Everything is tracking right now to say that we're going to kill this thing. So it's looking really good. It is the most distributed event in pay-per-view history, in over 200 countries on pay-per-view. This fight will reach over a billion homes worldwide."

White, who was instrumental in making this fight happen, would say that but other PPV sellers agree. Tim McManus, director of marketing for Joe Hand



Promotions, one of the US's largest sellers of pay-per-view special events to commercial clients such as bars and restaurants, said the company had never experienced anything like it. "We started selling this at the end of July and we are still getting 1,000 calls a day. We have people working 12-hour shifts to keep up," he said.

He predicts it will be the biggest PPV event the company, which was founded in the 1970s, has ever handled. "My mum has asked me questions about this fight. It has crossed over into the mainstream in a way few fights have," he said.

Mayweather-Pacquiao attracted 4.6m PPV at an average price of \$99, that equaled \$455m. White is expecting around 4.9m buys for Mayweather-McGregor which would be \$485m at \$99 a pop.

■ Sponsorship sales

Both Mayweather and McGregor like their bling – and their bling likes them. Mayweather even turned his love of Swiss watchmaker Hublot into a taunt during one

of the fighters' press conferences.

Getting Hublot's name on Mayweather's shorts will reportedly cost the company \$3.5m and the fighter will make millions more from splashing brands on other areas of his shorts, his cape, boots and even the pillow where he will rest his head between bouts.

Until recently McGregor had a lucrative, but limiting, sponsorship deal with Reebok. For this fight he is a free agent and, given the hype for this fight, sponsors are clamoring for a piece of the action. The Irishman also recently signed a deal with Beats By Dre, Monster Energy and Rolls-Royce, which gave him a custom-made car last year.

On the eve of the fight, official sponsorship deals were still in the works, which left little time for activations. But ESPN reckons the pair could walk away with \$22m in sponsorship. Enough to keep both of them in diamond-encrusted Hublots.

(Source: Guardian)

Dembele's Barca deal 'on its way' - Dortmund CEO



Ousmane Dembele's transfer to Barcelona is "on its way", but the deal is not yet done.

That was the declaration of Borussia Dortmund chief executive officer Hans-Joachim Watzke as the Bundesliga club prepared to offload one of its prized assets for a deal reported to be worth up to €150million.

"The possible transfer from Ousmane Dembele is on its way, but the path is not yet over," said Watzke.

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"The possible transfer from Ousmane Dembele is on its way, but the path is not yet over," said Watzke. With the 20-year-old forward's future having been the subject of prolonged conjecture, Watzke cited the need for the timing of the transfer

window to be reconsidered.

"I think that we have to find a solution that completes the transfers before matchday one," he added.

"If there is a transfer for Dembele, that weakens us. We may be doing something else in the transfer market, but a player like Ousmane cannot be easily replaced."

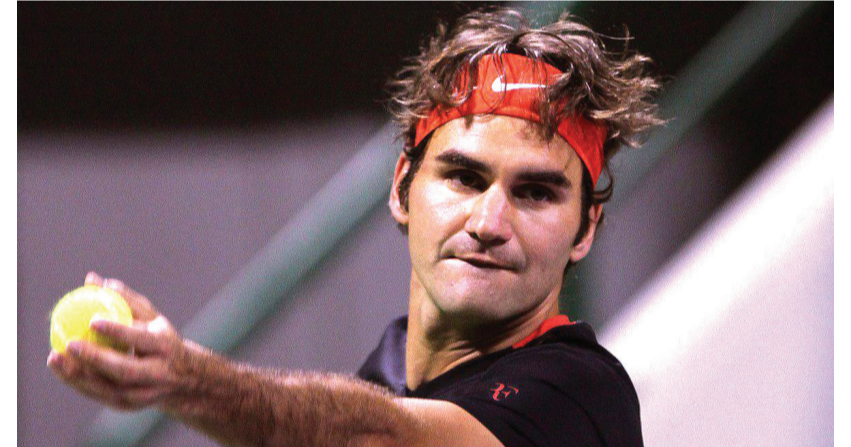
Dortmund suspended Dembele – who will be expected to help fill the void left by Neymar's Camp Nou departure – after he skipped training this month amid the speculation over his switch to LaLiga.

The France international moved to the club from Rennes for €15m last year and quickly impressed, scoring 10 goals in 49 appearances across all competitions and laying on 20 assists.

He was named in the Bundesliga team of the season and landed the man-of-the-match award after opening the scoring in Dortmund's 2-1 DFB-Pokal final triumph over Eintracht Frankfurt.

(Source: Goal)

Federer says 3rd major of year would be surreal



Even Roger Federer finds it all a little surprising.

After going 4 years without collecting a major championship, now firmly in his mid-30s, he heads into Monday's start of the U.S. Open with a chance to win his third such trophy of 2017.

"I mean, I have a hard time thinking I could win three Slams in one year. It just sounds totally surreal to me," Federer said in an interview with The Associated Press. "But I'll prepare myself the best way possible, so that I will have the best chance to really excel there in New York."

Yes, Federer is most certainly back. All the way back. He's back in the field at Flushing Meadows after sitting out the hard-court tournament a year ago while taking off the last half of the season to let his surgically repaired left knee heal. And he's back in the role of Grand Slam title favorite after winning the past two majors he entered, the Australian Open in January and Wimbledon in July.

Is he playing as well as – or perhaps better than – ever?

"I don't know. It's hard to tell. It doesn't really matter to me. I would hope that I'm a better player today, just (by) virtue of time that's gone by and I've had time to practice and train and all that stuff," he said with a sigh. "But better? In a way I would hope so."

Federer turned 36 on Aug. 8, making him older than all but two men to have ever won the most important tennis tournament held in the United States, an event first held in 1881.

"People who've been waiting for me to come back strong, maybe one more time, I've given them even more now by winning a couple of Slams this year. So it's extremely special times. I'm aware of that. I know it's just only bonus, whatever is about to come," Federer continued, with a hint of a smile. "So I hope I can keep this level up and then maybe good things can continue. We'll see."

(Source: Independent)

Ronaldo wins UEFA Player of the Season award for third time in four years

Cristiano Ronaldo laid hands on the latest of more than 150 personal accolades in his remarkable career when he was voted UEFA's Player of the Season for the third time in four seasons.

Barcelona's Lionel Messi and veteran Italy and Juventus captain Gigi Buffon were second and third in the annual rankings voted by last season's UEFA club group stage coaches and a journalists' jury organised by European Sports Media. Dutch European champion Lieke Martens won the women's player prize.

Ronaldo ended 2016-17 in triumph with Real Madrid having become the first club to win the modern-era Champions League two seasons in a row to add to their world and Spanish league prizes.

He scored 12 goals in Europe's elite club competition including two in the 4-1 defeat of Juventus in the final in Cardiff. They took his total to a record 106, comprising 16 with Manchester United and 90 with Madrid.

The Portugal skipper then led his European national

team champions to the semi-finals of the FIFA Confederations Cup in Russia in June and July.

Ronaldo also helped Madrid to victory over Messi's Barcelona in the season's curtain-raising Spanish Supercup despite being sent off.

The 32-year-old's angry push of referee Ricardo de Burgos as he left the pitch landed Ronaldo with a five-game ban which meant he missed last weekend's LaLiga kickoff.

Madrid coped. They defeated Deportivo 3-0 last Sunday in La Coruna without Ronaldo who then scored what proved the winning goal in Tuesday's 2-1 victory over Italy's Fiorentina in the annual Santiago Bernabeu trophy game.

Ronaldo, who had won the UEFA award in 2014 and 2016, was also voted the European body's Forward of the Season. Positional prizes went to team-mates in defender Sergio Ramos and midfielder Luka Modric. The only exception to Real's rule was Juventus' Gigi Buffon, UEFA's Goalkeeper of the Season.

Ronaldo and Madrid will launch the defence of their

record 12th European Champions' crown against Borussia Dortmund, Tottenham Hotspur and APOEL of Cyprus. The draw, at UEFA's traditional club season launch, matched a simultaneous further celebration for Madrid whose coach Zinedine Zidane has agreed a contract extension until 2020.

Zidane has guided Madrid to seven national and international titles since taking over from Rafa Benitez in January last year. A club statement described him as extending his contract as "conditions that the club leaders have deemed appropriate."

Champions League history is being made this season with no fewer than five English clubs involved in Madrid's initial rivals Tottenham as well as Chelsea and Manchester City plus Liverpool and Manchester United. Liverpool earned their presence through a qualifying victory over Germany's Hoffenheim while United entered the draw by virtue of their victory in last season's Europa League.

(Source: World Soccer)

Persepolis controls 60 percent possession against Al Ahli: AFC

Al Ahli let a two-goal lead slip late in their clash with Persepolis in their 2017 AFC Champions League quarter-final first leg on Tuesday evening, with the removal of attacking talents Leonardo and Omar Al Soma in favor of more defensive options eventually proving costly.

Persepolis enjoyed over 60 percent of possession overall, but as their opponents removed their leading counter-attack threats their pressure eventually told with two goals in the space of 12 second-half minutes.

New signing Leonardo made an instant impact for Al Ahli with what had appeared to be a match-winning performance upon his 66th minute substitution.

The Brazilian may have flitted in and out of the action, but in scoring on his AFC Champions League debut besides creating three opportunities for his teammates he proved to be a major influence on the tie.

Cutting in from his role on the left-flank, Leonardo proved a menace throughout. Two efforts from outside the area flew close while he ghosted beyond full-back Saeed Al Muwallad to finish for his goal to make the score 2-0.

With Al Ahli 2-0 up in the second half of the encounter, Persepolis ramped up the pressure on the visitors with their share of possession rising to a high of 72.6 percent between the 60th and 75th minute.

The increased attacking pressure saw cracks begin to appear in the Ahli defense with both goals conceded in the final half hour coming from individual defensive errors.

Between the 72nd and 84th minute, Persepolis managed six of their 12 shots on target as Al Ahli's removal of attacking players in favor of extra defensive options failed to pay dividends.

Syrian forward Omar Al Soma began the night with a bang, scoring Al Ahli's opener after just two minutes of the clash. However, he was unable to provide the target man presence his side required



Despite playing 82 minutes of the clash, the target forward touched the ball just 33 times and was successful with a disappointing 44.4 percent of the 18 passes he attempted. Too often, he lost the ball (as shown) rather than hold up play for his side.

Yet, for all that, Al Soma remained a major threat when given the ball in the final third—with four shots on goal and two chances created on a night of few clear opportunities.

(Source: AFC)

Juan Cichello happy to finish with victory at Men's U23

TEHRAN — Iran coach Juan Cichello is happy that Iran has finished the 2017 Men's U23 World Championship with a victory.

The Iranian team came seventh at the competition underway in Cairo, Egypt after defeating China 4-1 (17-15, 15-5, 15-11, 17-19, 20-18) in the ranking match.

"I think we won a difficult match, because China played very well in the 4th and 5th sets. We lost the fourth set because the players lost confidence as they are young," Cichello said in the post-match news conference.

"At least we finished with a victory and this is satisfying," the Argentine added.

Iran captain Rahman Taghizadeh also said, "This was a good match and I am very happy that at this tournament we were the winners of the 7th place. After two sets we felt we were already the winners so we relaxed and China took advantage of this to snatch the fourth set, but we were able to come back and win."

(Source: FIVB)



Iranian sports journalist Babahaji dies at 47



S P O R T S Iranian sports journalist Iraj Babahaji passed away at the age of 47 on Thursday.

Babahaji died because of heart attack in Tehran's Imam Khomeini Hospital.

He will be laid to rest in Tehran's Behesht-e Zahra cemetery on Saturday.

The long-serving football writer was working at Iranian sports newspaper Gol.

Babahaji started his career for nearly two decades before.

He was also working at sports newspaper Iran Varzeshi and Iranian sports sites.

Iranian sports family express condolences over the death of the veteran journalist.

The Tehran Times staff also offer heartfelt condolences to his bereaved family.

Iran overwhelm China for 7th place at Men's U23



S P O R T S Iran captured the seventh position at the 2017 Men's U23 World Championship following their victory over China 4-1 (17-15, 15-5, 15-11, 17-19, 20-18) in the ranking match at Cairo Stadium Complex in Egypt on Friday.

Now Iran stayed in the same po-

sition they finished in the last edition in 2015, while China concluded in the eighth place in their first participation at this age category.

Outside hitter Saeed Javaheri of Iran led the match scorers with 17 points, while Chinese middle blocker Hongbin Jiang led the losers with 14 points.

Hamilton hungry for 'blood' ahead of 200th race

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS, Belgium (Reuters) — Triple world champion Lewis Hamilton says he is hungrier than ever, and out for 'blood', as the Mercedes driver prepares for his 200th race in Formula One this weekend.

The 32-year-old Briton is 14 points behind Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel with nine races remaining and has yet to take an outright lead in the championship against a formidable opponent.

But he expects to remedy that, starting in Belgium on Sunday.

"One thing for sure in this second part of the season... is that I'm here for blood. I'm here to win and I'm here to stay," he said.

"It's strange. When you're racing for so long, it's my 200th race, you would think that maybe your passion or your desire to win would fade. But it's stronger than ever. And that's exciting for me."

The most successful current racer, in terms of wins if not titles, Hamilton can also equal seven-times world champion Michael Schumacher's all-time record of 68 pole positions at Spa on Saturday.

That would be a symbolic milestone to reach, with Spa also marking the 25th anniversary of Schumacher's first grand prix win, but Hamilton's thoughts were focused on the task at hand.



Reinvigorated by his August break, and smitten by his first visit to Cuba, Hamilton said he was ready for anything and determined to raise his game.

"I want the next nine (races) to all be 10s. I want you guys to be standing there with those boards: 10, 10, 10," he said.

"I'm going to be ahead of him (Vettel) in every single race from now on, that's my goal. No games. I'm here to win. I want it just as much if not more than anyone else this year."

HISTORY

Hamilton made his debut with McLaren in 2007,

missing the title by a single point but winning in 2008 - again by one point after making a crucial overtake on the last corner of the last lap in Brazil.

His move to Mercedes in 2013 brought two more championships - in 2014 and 2015 - but he missed out last year to now-retired German team mate Nico Rosberg. He has won 57 of his 199 races, four this year, and could soon become the first Briton to win four titles - the same number Vettel has.

Hamilton said he still felt young at heart, despite the 'crazy' 200 race milestone, and also privileged and grateful.

Not that he could remember all of his races, or even select a favorite.

"My first grand prix was such a huge highlight. My first grand prix win, Silverstone grand prix win, Monaco grand prix win. Winning the title in Brazil was a highlight. It wasn't actually a great experience but it was still a highlight in my career," he said.

"I think a favorite would probably be a wet race... when you've come from 10th or fourth and you out-smart the guys ahead of you and exploit the car as no-one thought you could.

"When you come back and your engineers didn't expect to see the speed you had, that's an amazing feeling."

Queiroz names Team Melli roster for FIFA World Cup qualifiers

Head coach of Iran's national football team Carlos Queiroz has announced the names on the final roster of the squad for the forthcoming encounters against South Korea and Syria at the third round of the 2018 FIFA World Cup qualification tournament.

On Wednesday, the 64-year-old Portuguese picked Alireza Beiranvand and Hamed Lak as goalkeepers.

Saeid Aghaei, Mohammad Ansari, Rouzbeh Cheshmi, Vouria Ghafouri and Seyyed Jalal Hosseini and will join the Iranian outfit, domestically known as Team Melli, as defenders.

Vahid Amiri and Omid Noorafkan will be playing as midfielders.

Moreover, Mehdi Taremi and Mehdi Torabi have been selected to play as forwards during Team Melli's upcoming matches.

The Iran men's national football team will play against South Korea in the third round of the 2018 FIFA World Cup qualification tournament on August 31.

The game will start at the Seoul World Cup Stadium, also known as Sangam Stadium, in the South Korean capital city at 9 p.m. local time (1200 GMT).

Iran's national football team will take on the Syrian side at Tehran's Azadi Stadium at 7:30 p.m. local time (1500 GMT) five days later.

On June 13, Team Melli, which has so far kept its clean sheet record unblemished at the third round of the 2018 FIFA World Cup qualification tournament, became the first Asian team - and the third team after Brazil and hosts Russia - to secure its place at the quadrennial international football tournament.

Iranian national football team defeated Uzbekistan 2-0 at Azadi Stadium.

This is the second time in a row that Team Melli has won the ticket for the FIFA World Cup finals under the tutelage of Queiroz.

(Source: Press TV)

Persepolis 8th in Club Asia Ranking

Iran's Persepolis is eighth in the latest Club Asia Ranking, released by footballdatabase.com.

Iran Professional League title-holder Persepolis is the country's sole representative in the AFC Champions League.

Branko Ivankovic's team sits eighth in the ranking with 1559 points.

Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia leads the table with 1639 points, followed by Al Ahli (1620), China's Guangzhou Evergrande (1614), South Korea's Jeonbuk (1611), Japan's Kashima Antlers (1601), the UAE's Al Ain (1593), Kawasaki Frontale (1569) and Persepolis (1559).

Iran's Esteghlal is 16th in Asia with 1518 points and Tractor Sazi sits 23rd with 1495 points.

Real Madrid leads the Club World Ranking with 2124 points, followed by Bayern Munich (1998) and Barcelona (1990).

Persepolis ranks 152 in the Club World Ranking, while Esteghlal sits in 232nd place and Tractor Sazi is 283rd.

(Source: Tasnim)

ACL 2017 Allianz Goal of the Week: Leonardo (Al Ahli) The-AFC.com has announced that Al Ahli's Leonardo is the winner of the Goal of the Week presented by Allianz for the 2017 AFC Champions League quarter-finals first leg after a public vote amongst the fans on the AFC's social media networks.

The four selected goals from this week are as follows, with the winner highlighted in bold:

- * Wu Lei (Shanghai SIPG vs Guangzhou Evergrande)
- * Leonardo (Persepolis vs Al Ahli)
- * Godwin Mensha (Persepolis vs Al Ahli)
- * Yu Kobayashi (Kawasaki Frontale vs Urawa Red Diamonds)

(Source: Tasnim)

Paykan completes signing of Senegalese striker

Iranian top-flight football club has completed the signing of Senegalese striker Arfang Boubacar Daffé

The 26-year-old player has joined Paykan on a one-year contract.

The details of the fee contract have not been released. Daffé was a member of Georgian football club Kolkheti Poti last year.

He is Paykan's second African player after the Iranian team signed Nigerian Kenneth Ikechukwu in July.

Paykan sits 12th after five matches in the Iran Professional League new season.

(Source: IRNA)

Pars Jonoubi Jam moves provisionally top of IPL

Pars Jonoubi Jam football team defeated Esteghlal Khuzestan to move provisionally top of the Iran Professional League (IPL) on Thursday.

Omid Sing scored the only goal of the match for the visiting team in the 7th minute.

Elsewhere, Siahjamegan drew 1-1 with Naft Tehran and Paykan edged past Foolad 1-0.

Newly-promoted Pars Jonoubi Jam sits top of the IPL table with 13 points.

Persepolis is second with 10 points with one game in hands.

(Source: Press TV)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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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

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University of California screening Iranian films

TEHRAN — The University of California, Irvine (UCI) is organizing the Celebration of Iranian Cinema, which opened on Friday.

A lineup of five movies, including "Daughter" by Reza Mirkarimi, "Life+1 Day" by Saeid Rustai and "Breath" by Narges Abyar, has been selected to be screened at the three-day celebration. The acclaimed documentary films "Starless Dreams" by Mehrdad Oskui and "Hey, Humans" by Rakhshan Bani-Etamed will also be reviewed. The event is organized by the Farhang Foundation, an institute in Southern California that promotes Iranian art, culture and history.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Iranian, Romanian cultural officials meet in Bucharest

TEHRAN — The director of the Majlis Library, Museum and Documentation Center, Ali Emad, met with the president of the Science and Information Technology Section of the Romanian Academy, Florin Gheorghe Filip, in Bucharest on Thursday. Ways to expand bilateral cooperation between the two centers were discussed during the meeting. Emad and a number of his colleagues also paid a visit to the Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books at the Romanian Academy.

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Photo

Works by Hufar Haqiqi, Aria Abolhassani, Shirin Rezaei, Puya Sediqi, Mehran Farid and several other photographers are on display in an exhibition at Mehrva Gallery.

The exhibit named "Museum of Patriotism" will run until September 4 at the gallery located at 38 South Aban St. off Karim Khan Ave.

Arte Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of photos by Nirvan Rezaei.

The exhibit entitled "Abstract on the Road" runs until September 3 at the gallery located at Molla Sadra St. near Vanak Square.

Painting

An exhibition of paintings by Ali Zakeri is currently underway at Homa Gallery.

The exhibit titled "Omitted or the Birth of Christ" will run until September 5 at the gallery located at No. 8, 4th Gharbi Alley, Sanai St., off Karim Khan Ave.

Paintings by Mostafa Khan-verdi and Mansureh Kalhor are on display in an exhibition at Ava Gallery.

The exhibit titled "Shadow" will be running until August 30 at the gallery that can be found at 9 Ramin Alley, Sharifmanesh St. in the Elahieh neighborhood.

Not Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Sheida Qolipur.

The exhibition entitled "Birth in Silence" runs until September 2 at the gallery located at 3 Shabnam Alley, Qaem Maqam St.

A collection of paintings by Mohammadreza Atashzad is on display in an exhibition at Atashzad Gallery.

The exhibit titled "The Joy of Life" will run until September 3 at the gallery, which can be found at 23 North Abbaspur (Tavanir) St., near Vanak Sq.

Iranian companies display new offerings at Gamescom

TEHRAN — Nine Iranian companies are displaying their latest productions at the 9th edition of Gamescom, a major trade fair for video games at the Koelnmesse in Cologne, Germany.

Raspina, Nova Game, Simulator Developer, Fanafzar, Ano Resanye Honar, Paeezan, Tapsell, Arna, and Gorbehaye Tanbal are participating in the exhibition under the auspices of Iran's National Foundation for Computer Games (NFCG).

The NFCG selected the companies during the Tehran Game Convention (TGC), an exhibition of computer games that the foundation held in April.

"By participating in Gamescom, the foundation aims to promote Iran's game development industry, to attract international investors, and also to introduce the TGC," a NFCG deputy director Farzad Fathi told the Persian service of MNA on Thursday.

"The NFCG has supported the companies to participate in Gamescom in order to help the game developing technology and industry progress in our country," he added.

The NFCG has placed its main focus on Gamescom, which was inaugurated by Chancellor Angela Merkel last Tuesday, to attract more companies to the TGC 2018.

Mehrdad Ashtiani, a TGC advisor on international affairs, held meeting with representatives from many companies at Gamescom, discussing ways to establish relations with their companies.

"The representatives of the companies paid visits to Iran's pavilion at Gamescom to gather information about the TGC," he said.

The representative of G-Star, a South Korean game exhibition, has announced its readiness to expand relations with the TGC, he added.

Gamescom will wrap up today as "Super Mario Odyssey" from Nintendo has been announced as best game at the event.



People visit the 2017 Gamescom, a major trade fair for video games at the Koelnmesse in Cologne, Germany. (Photo by Gamescom)

The Gamescom award for best add-on/DLC was presented to "Battlefield 1: In the Name of the Tsar" from Electronic Arts, which also won the award for best booth.

"Bench Cinema" competing in Marco Polo festival



Photo Hooman Barqnavard (L), Ali Omrani (C) and Ashkan Khatibi act in a scene from "Bench Cinema" by the Iranian director Mohammad Rahmanian. (Photo by Ehsan Neqabat)

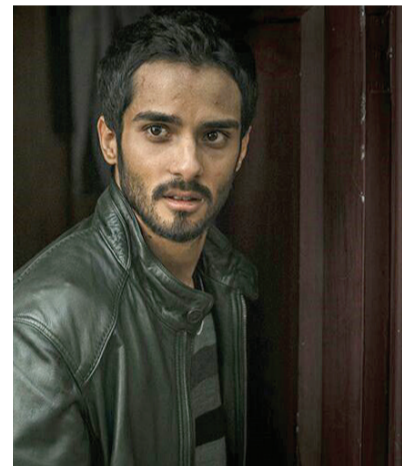
TEHRAN — "Bench Cinema" by the Iranian director Mohammad Rahmanian is competing in the Marco Polo International Film Festival in Korcula, Croatia. The film is about Nasi who, after being released from prison, spends months watching films and memorizes all the lines. He then travels around to perform the films as a one man show on a bench. Gradually he forms a theater group called Cinema Bench.

The festival, which will come to an end on August 27, intends to promote, build and present cinematography dealing with the Silk Road, which helped a dialogue among different civilizations during the ancient times. The event is also taking place in Korcula, which is known as the mythical starting point of Marco Polo's travels.

Toronto Regent Theatre to review "Bridge of Sleep"

TEHRAN — Iranian director Oktay Baraheni's debut film "Bridge of Sleep" will be screened at Regent Theatre, a venue for art-house films in Toronto, Canada on September 16. Baraheni, producer Jahangir Kowsari and actor Hooman Seyyedi are scheduled to attend the screening, which will be followed by a review session, Baraheni's publicist announced in a press release on Friday.

The script had been written by Baraheni based Russian author Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel "Crime and Punishment". It is about Shahab, who is about to get married. He enters a business deal along with his friend in order to help his financial situation. However, he loses all his money and finds himself in financial hardship. Creditors chase him after he fails to repay the high-interest loan he owes. His dad,



Saedi Soheili acts in a scene from "Bridge of Sleep".

a high school teacher, tries helping him but his fiancé puts pressure on him. As a result, Shahab decides to do something very unusual.

Russian theater director who irked establishment given house arrest

MOSCOW (Reuters) — A theater director whose edgy work angered traditionalists in the Russian establishment was placed under house arrest on Wednesday in a fraud case his supporters say is part of a government crackdown on artistic freedoms.

Ignoring character witness statements in his favor from high-profile figures in the arts world and an offer from one to pay any amount of bail, a Moscow court ruled award-winning director Kirill Serebrennikov should be placed under house arrest until Oct. 19 ahead of his trial on embezzlement charges.

The director, who has used his work to poke fun at the authorities, lampooning what he sees as the pernicious role of the church and state in Russian society, told the court he was innocent as supporters outside, including some of the country's most famous actors, chanted his name and demanded he be freed.

"All the accusations made against me are absurd," Serebrennikov, 47, said from inside a metal cage in the courtroom. "I've been working honestly. I need to finish filming a movie and put shows on."

But the court rejected his appeal to be freed on bail and granted a request from state prosecutors to place him under house arrest. Investigators say Serebrennikov led a criminal group and embezzled at least 68 million rubles (\$1.15 million) in state funds earmarked for an art project.

Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky was quoted by state-run RIA news agency as saying of the case: "I know



Russian theatre director Kirill Serebrennikov, who was detained and accused of embezzling state funds, stands inside the defendants' cage as he attends a hearing on his detention at a court in Moscow, Russia August 23, 2017. (Reuters/Tatyana Makeyeva)

for sure this is not a frame-up."

Serebrennikov, art director at Moscow's avant-garde Gogol Center theater, faces up to 10 years in jail if found guilty. He says the funds were used to stage bona fide productions.

His case has raised an outcry among the liberal cultural elite who say they fear the director is being persecuted for his work.

In July, the Bolshoi Theater postponed the world premiere of Nureyev, an edgy ballet about the famous Russian dancer directed by Serebrennikov.

What the authorities are doing with him is a disgrace," Pavel Kaplevich, a theater producer, said after the ruling in Serebrennikov's case. "A great director of modern times is being treated like a terrorist."

Writer and director Viktor Shenderovich said he thought the case was meant to be a warning to others.

"This is a clear signal before the elections," Shenderovich told Russian broadcaster TV Rain.

"(The signal is that) no global profile ... or elite will save you from the interests of a repressive state if it decides that it is in its interests to put you on the ground face down."

Russia is to vote in a presidential election in March next year, with incumbent Vladimir Putin expected to run.

Serebrennikov's supporters believe the authorities, in preparation for the vote, want to cow the liberal arts world into suppressing political criticism.

Serebrennikov was working on a film about a Soviet rock star when detained. The conditions of his house arrest mean he will only be allowed to communicate with close relatives and his lawyers, and cannot visit his place of work without investigators' permission.

A spokesman for the foreign ministry of France, where his productions have been presented, said Paris was concerned about his detention and hoped the case would be handled swiftly in line with the law.

Serebrennikov's legal team said they would appeal.

Mark Wahlberg named world's highest-paid actor in 2017

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Mark Wahlberg soared to the top of the world's highest paid actors on an annual Forbes magazine list that highlighted a huge disparity between male and female Hollywood stars.

Wahlberg, 46, earned an estimated \$68 million in 2017 thanks to his pay days for movies "Daddy's Home 2" and "Transformers: The Last Knight", according to the Forbes ranking released on Tuesday.

The rapper-turned-actor knocked 2016 leader Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson into second place, with estimated 2017 earnings of \$65 million.

Forbes estimates earnings, before taxes and management fees, from movies, TV

and commercial endorsements.

The Forbes list again highlighted Hollywood's gender pay gap. Last week, the magazine named "La La Land" Oscar winner Emma Stone as the world's highest paid actress with an estimated 2017 take of \$26 million.

Forbes said the 10 highest-paid leading men earned a combined \$488.5 million before tax in its June 2016-June 2017 scoring period, nearly three times more than the \$172.5 million earned by the top 10 scoring women.

Forbes attributed the disparity to the prevalence of superhero and action blockbusters that earn big at the box office for

Hollywood studios but tend to have fewer leading roles for women.

"Pirates of the Caribbean" star Johnny Depp, who for years has been among the top five paid actors, did not make the top 20 this year, Forbes said. Depp is currently embroiled in a bitter lawsuit with his former business managers who have detailed what they describe as his lavish spending habits.

Last December, before the May 2017 release of "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales," Forbes named Depp the most overpaid actor for a second straight year as films such as "Alice Through the Looking Glass" and "Mortdecai" did not fare well.



Actor Mark Wahlberg poses as he arrives at the European premiere of "Deepwater Horizon" at Leicester Square in London, Britain, September 26, 2016. (Reuters/Dylan Martinez/File Photo)