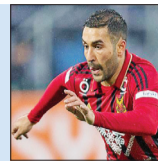




Iran to experiment  
photon entanglement **2**



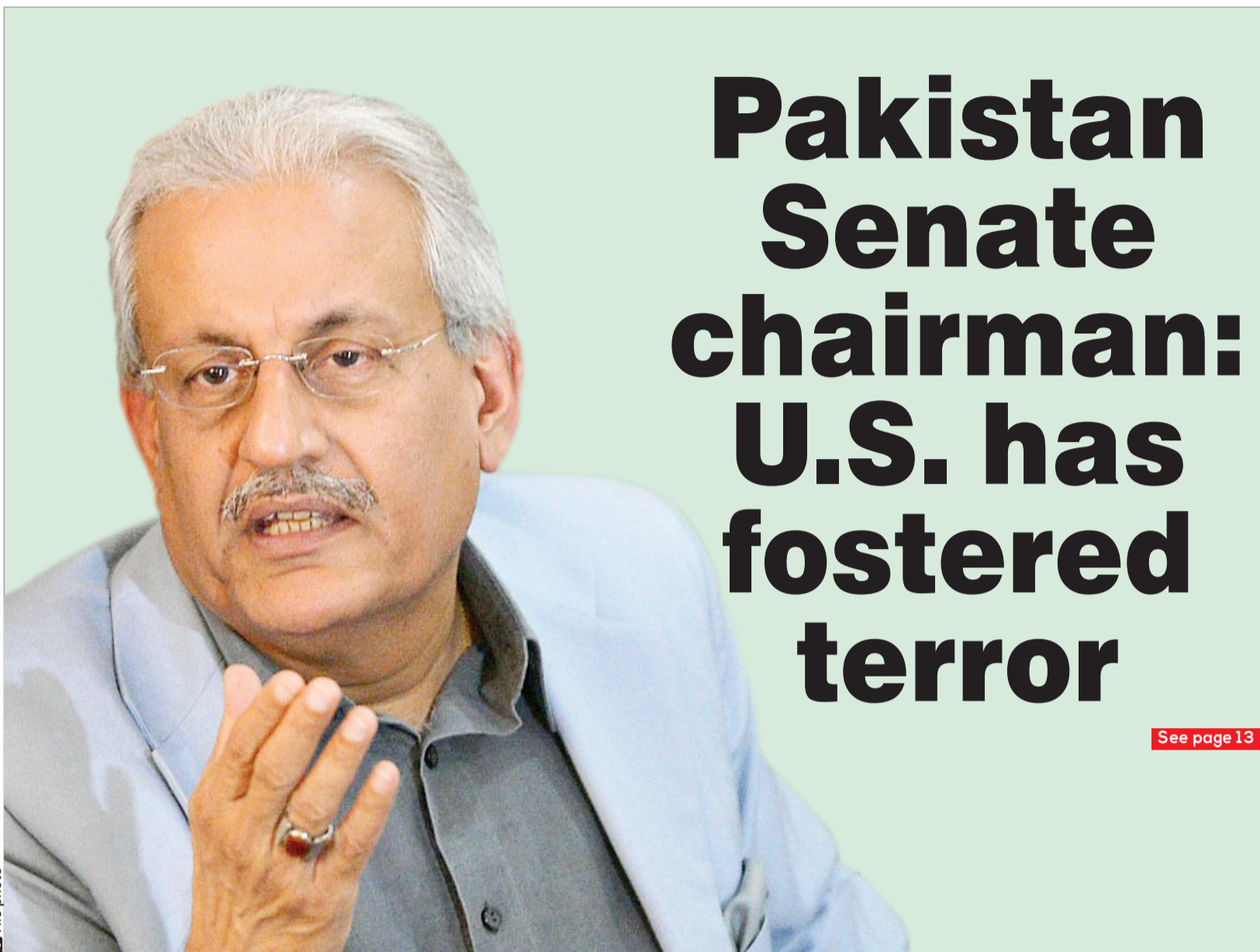
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# Pakistan Senate chairman: U.S. has fostered terror

See page 13

## Govt. more resolute to meet public demands: Rouhani

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday that his new administration is ready to meet the people's demands more determinedly. During a ceremony held to renew allegiance to founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini, Rouhani said, "Imam taught us to believe in people

along with believing in God and religion." He added Imam Khomeini taught us that there is no contrast between "national sovereignty" and "democracy". "The Imam always paid attention to the people's concerns, demands and needs and considered underprivileged people's role as being more important than the wealthy people." **→2**

## Iran launches study into S-300 missile

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Iran has started studies into the Russian-made S-300 missile system in order to know its workings, according to the deputy commander of the Khatam al-Anbia air defense unit.

General Abolfazl Sepehri-Rad on Sunday said the S-300 system is cur-

rently in service in Iran, fully integrated into Iran's air defense network. The air defense missile system has been stationed in temporary locations across the country, the commander added, saying it is ready for any practical operation. Iran took delivery of missiles of the S-300 system in July 2016. **→2**

## Iraqi forces retake most of Tal Afar from ISIL: military

Iraqi forces have retaken almost all of Tal Afar, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group's stronghold in the country's northwest, the Iraqi military said on Sunday.

After just eight days of fighting, all 29 neighborhoods in Tal Afar city had been taken back from the terrorist group, the military said in a statement

on Sunday. However, fighting was ongoing in al-Ayadiya, a small area 11 kilometers northwest of the city, where militants who fled the district's city center were hiding out, Iraqi military spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Rasool said. Iraqi forces were waiting to retake the area before declaring complete victory in the offensive, he said. **→3**



**PERSPECTIVE**  
Mahmood Monshipouri  
University of California  
professor

## The post-hegemonic era: Greater uncertainty or sustainable security?

Two contrasting scenarios paint radically different visions in a world after hegemony. Richard N. Haass ("World Order 2.0") notes that at the global level, the international community is no longer heavily influenced by a sole superpower and/or hegemonic power. There is overall less consensus among the major world powers concerning governance and the new order. The fall of trade agreements, or as some would like to say the demise of the Transpacific Partnership (TPP), points to several convergent trends with potentially uncertain consequences. The decentralization of decision-making at the global level since the post-Cold War period has created a different balance of economic and political powers. The U.S. invasion of Iraq has thrown the Middle East into a region festering sectarian tensions. Subsequently, the Arab Spring uprisings, which led to a significant authority void in Libya and civil war in Syria, indicated that an emerging new regional disarray that often spills over into other countries. The rise of populism and the resiliency of authoritarian in the Middle East are likely to shape its political climate in the coming years. The spread of oligarchic rule and/or power throughout different regions will produce an alarming order for those interested in the persistence of human rights and liberal governance.

While Asia has come to dominate the global scene in terms of population and trade size, the European Union has encountered new challenges, some of which undermine its promise of unity, prosperity, and security. The old glue that held Europe together has weakened if not totally faded away. What is striking at this stage of world history is the absence of a hegemonic power capable of sustaining an order upon which world security can steadily balance. **→13**

## Envoy: Iran supports Kuwait's efforts to resolve regional problems

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Alireza Enayati described the crisis among the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) as "harmful and destructive", stressing that his country supports Kuwait's efforts to solve problems.

"Kuwait has always played a balanced policy to settle different regional issues, including in Yemen, Iraq and Syria," Enayati said on Sunday.

Noting that Kuwait's mediation could somehow deescalate the PGCC crisis, he said, "We have welcomed Kuwaiti Emir's efforts in this regard because the regional issues

are difficult and complicated and we should make our utmost efforts to resolve them."

In relevant remarks earlier this month, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Jaber Ansari underlined the necessity for the settlement of differences between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, but meantime, said that Tehran doesn't accept Riyadh's hegemonic policies against Doha.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran doesn't support exacerbation of the crisis between Doha and Riyadh, and it clearly states that it doesn't accept any policy that is based on the hegemony of an actor in relations with other

neighbors," Jaber Ansari said.

Stressing that Iran itself doesn't pursue hegemonic policies either, he said, "Therefore, the Islamic Republic of Iran believes that the two sides should move to decrease tension and conflicts through direct negotiations."

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt cut off diplomatic ties with Qatar early June, and suspended air and sea communication one week after the Arab Islamic American Summit in Riyadh, accusing Doha of supporting terrorist organizations and destabilizing the situation in the Middle East.

## 10-day anti-White Supremacy march to demand Donald Trump's removal

Anti-White Supremacy protestors will march for 10-days from Charlottesville, Virginia to Washington, DC on Monday to demand the United States President Donald Trump's removal.

The March is set to start on August 28 from Charlottesville, Virginia and end in Washington, DC on Wednesday, Sept 6.

Organizers say the march will be followed by an occupation of Washington, DC with daily nonviolent demonstrations, reported The Hill.

"This is the time to confront white supremacy in our government and throughout our history. We demand that President Trump be removed from office for allying himself with this ideology of hate and we demand an agenda that repairs the damage it's done to our country and its people," the website for the march reads.

A number of activist groups such as the Women's March, Working Families Party, the Action Group Network, United We Dream, Color of Change, and others will be participating in the March to Confront White Supremacy.

Violence erupted in Charlottesville earlier this month at a protest when a man with alleged ties to white nationalists killed one person and injured dozens more by ramming his car into a crowd of counter-protesters. Tensions were further inflamed when Trump responded to the violence by blaming "many sides" for the violence.

The Charlottesville Police Department has charged three people in relation to the violence that followed the "Unite the Right" rally there on August 12.

Police said the Criminal Investigations Di-

vision charged Daniel Borden, 18, of Ohio with malicious wounding.

He was arrested on Friday and is currently in the custody of the Hamilton County Criminal Justice Center in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Police also charged Alex Michael Ramos, 33, with malicious wounding and is currently wanted by the police department.

Both of these charges are in relation to an assault that happened in the 500 block of East Market Street in Charlottesville.

Police charged Richard Wilson Preston, 52, of Maryland, with discharging a firearm within 1,000 feet of a school. Police said this is in relation to a shots fired incident on August 12 in the 100 block of West Market Street in Charlottesville.

(Source: agencies)



**ARTICLE**  
By Mahnaz Abdi  
Head of the Economy Desk  
of the TehranTimes

## Transport projects take center stage in 'Government Week'

Government Week (August 24-30) marks the martyrdom anniversary of President Mohammad-Ali Rajaei and Prime Minister Mohammad-Javad Bahonar on August 30, 1981, just two years after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

Every year a number of development projects in different sectors are launched or inaugurated during this week across the country.

This year, transportation sector is apparently gaining the lion's share of development projects which have been or are to come on stream.

As reported, the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development plans to inaugurate 711 kilometers of newly-built roads nationwide within the framework of 75 projects.

The projects include constructing 44 highways and 26 main roads, and conducting maintenance operations and removing five accident-prone spots along the roads.

In addition, the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) in cooperation with the Iranian Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructures Company will inaugurate 14 rail projects valued at 8,447 trillion rials (about \$220 million) during the Government Week.

Railway development is of very high importance for Iran, as Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has emphasized the issue when outlining the Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021). Moreover, President Hassan Rouhani has promised big achievements in the railway sector and Transport Minister Abbas Akhoundi has a special focus on railway development as well.

The minister has said that the national railway network is projected to be expanded by 838 kilometers by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2018).



## Darreh Khazineh a tourist hub in western Iran

People cross an elevated suspension bridge that spans Darreh Khazineh, a steep canyon in western Iranian Lorestan province, August 26, 2017. The 112-meter-long bridge is said to be the most elevated one in the Middle East, with an altitude of more than 85 meters over Seymareh River.

The bridge is named after Khazeh village, itself a tourist hub located somewhere in the middle of a road that connects Andimeshk to Pol-e Dokhtar.

© IRNA/Behzad Seilahvarzi

**MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS**



**Rouhani to attend live TV interview late on Tuesday**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani **d e s k** will be attending a live TV program on Tuesday at 21:30 to speak about his new administration's plans and the country's important issues, IRNA reported. Parviz Esmaeili, the presidential office director for communications and information, said on Sunday that Rouhani will speak about the new administration's principles, strategies, and plans regarding the economy, society, politics and culture. He will also elaborate on Tehran's stance on the newest regional and international issues, Esmaeili said.



**Iran felicitates Moldova on national day**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Vice President Es'haq **d e s k** Jahangiri sent a message to Moldovan Prime Minister Pavel Filip on Sunday, congratulating him and all Moldovans on national day. Jahangiri expressed hope to witness expansion of relations between Iran and Moldova based on the two countries' interests. The Iranian vice president also wished success and prosperity for the Eastern European nation. On 27 August 1991, as part of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Moldavian SSR declared independence and took the name Moldova.



**Cleric urges new mayor to avoid vilifying predecessor**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Mohammad Mousavi **d e s k** Khoeiiniha, a prominent reformist cleric, has congratulated Mohammad Ali Najafi as new mayor of Tehran, urging him to avoid doing a hatchet job on the former mayor Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf. In a message, Khoeiiniha called Najafi to do away with passing the buck to the previous mayor, and instead, promise to do a good job as Tehran's new mayor. He also congratulated Mohsen Hashemi for being elected the new chairman of Tehran City Council in a separate message.



**UN special envoy in Iran to discuss Syrian crisis**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — United Nations Special **d e s k** Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, was set to visit Tehran to discuss the Syrian crisis with top Iranian officials, Press TV reported. De Mistura plans to hold talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his deputy for Arab and African Affairs Hossein Jaber Ansari to exchange views on the latest developments in Syria. The visit will come ahead of the next round of Syrian peace talks in Astana which is scheduled to be held in mid-September.



**British delegation to visit Iran for consular talks**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Alireza Rahimi, a member **d e s k** of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of Iran's Parliament, said on Saturday that a delegation from British Foreign Office is to visit Iran to hold negotiations on consular affairs, IRNA reported. Rahimi expressed hope to increase the number of visas the British embassy issues for Iranian nationals. Pointing to a meeting of Iran-UK parliamentary friendship group, he said during the meeting, the British ambassador explained about executive obstacles in the way of issuing visa for Iranians.



**Pilgrims need visa to attend Arba'een ritual in Iraq**

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Pilgrims need to obtain **d e s k** entry visa in order to attend this year's Arba'een ritual in Iraq, an official said on Sunday. Hossein Zolfagari, who is in charge of Arba'een ritual, said due to the importance of this day, proper pre-planning is needed. Millions of Iranian nationals travel to Iraq annually to attend the pilgrimage, known as Arbaeen, which marks the end of a 40-day mourning period that commemorates the seventh-century death of Imam Hussein (AS), the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH).

# Iran pushing for 5+1 meeting to address U.S. harassment

**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Iran **d e s k** is trying to call a meeting of the foreign ministers of the 5+1 group – the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany – to address the Trump administration's policy toward the nuclear deal on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly summit in New York, to be held September 12 to 25.

"Our foreign minister is likely to take action over convening a meeting of the foreign ministers of Iran and 5+1," Ali Akbar Salehi, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, told reporters on Sunday.

"What I say is based upon the foreign minister's recent letters to the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the European Union foreign policy chief, which indicate the Foreign Ministry" is taking actions against "the harassing acts of Americans," Salehi explained.

Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the UN, met with International Atomic Energy Agency officials in Vienna on Wednesday for what she described as a fact-finding mission, which is part of President Donald Trump's review of the deal Iran made with world powers to curb its nuclear program in return for the lifting of sanctions.

After returning from Vienna, Haley said she had pressed the IAEA to seek access to Iranian military bases. There is the belief that the U.S. is pushing for access to information that Iran does not want to have.

"We are encouraging the IAEA to use all the authorities they have and to pursue every angle possible" Haley said.



**Iranian FM Mohammad Javad Zarif (R) still in office to protect his and former counterpart John Kerry's (L) legacy, now harshly tested by a new administration in Washington. (Photo: AFP, April 2015)**

On Wednesday, the Washington Post said Iran's Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, complained to IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano that Haley's visit was intended to sow doubt about the nuclear agreement.

Reports by the IAEA have shown Iran to be in compliance with its landmark agreement with six major powers. The deal and a corresponding UN resolution are only related to Iran's nuclear program. However, the U.S. is trying to wedge in Iran's missile program as well.

In April, Trump ordered a review of whether a suspension of sanctions on Iran related to the nuclear deal – negotiated under President Barack Obama – was in the U.S. national security interest.

The U.S. Treasury Department imposed new sanctions on six Iran-based satellite companies on July 28 after Iran launched the Simorgh (Phoenix) satellite carrier rocket into space a day earlier.

On August 15, President Hassan Rouhani in reference to the sanctions said that Iran will quit the nuclear agreement "in hours" and return to the previous stage if sanctions are re-imposed on the country.

A few days later, Salehi said that Iran can resume uranium enrichment to the purity of 20 percent in five days in the Fordow plant if necessary. The statement made it to the headlines around the globe.

Zarif also responded to the rising U.S.

pressure, saying on Friday 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 Zarif explained.

■ **'Iran will not cross its red lines in co-op with IAEA'**

The most recent statements on Haley's demand of the IAEA came Sunday when the Foreign Ministry spokesman said Iran's cooperation with the agency will not take the country across its previously established "red lines".

"We will pursue our course of cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency within the framework of our past obligations and we will surely not surpass the Islamic Republic of Iran's red lines," Bahram Qassemi said.

"We will not surrender to the excessive demands of certain governments," the spokesman asserted.

"The agency, considering its level of independence and (role to have in) safeguarding its international stature, is unlikely to give in to the illogical and unrealistic demands that others may (try to) force on them."

"We will not permit any entry into the zones forbidden under the JCPOA. The agency's inspections will for sure be conducted within the frame of our internal policies," the spokesman stated.

## Moniz: Abrogating nuclear deal will be a 'very bad decision'

**POLITICS** Ernest Moniz, the former U.S. secretary **d e s k** of energy, has said that withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear deal is a "very bad decision" which will isolate the United States.

"It [withdrawing from the nuclear deal] would ironically isolate the U.S. Because as long as Iran complies, the Europeans and others will continue to deal with Iran," he said in an interview with Bloomberg published on Saturday.

He said that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action has turned out as he had hoped "in the sense that the International Atomic Energy Agency continues to provide the data that indicate full compliance [of Iran]". 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.

According to the nuclear deal, referred to as the JCPOA, financial and economic sanctions against Iran must be terminated in exchange for limits on Tehran's nuclear activities.

The IAEA, as the UN watchdog body tasked to monitor Iran's compliance with the terms of the JCPOA, has confirmed six times that Tehran has fully honored its commitments.

The U.S. administration said in April it was launching

an inter-agency review of whether the lifting of sanctions against Iran was in Washington's national security interests.

Reports indicate that President Donald Trump may refuse to certify Iran's compliance with the JCPOA in October.

Last month, the president — after a long, drawn-out battle with his top national security officials — reluctantly agreed to certify the deal for the next three months. But according to a recent report in Foreign Policy, the president has assembled a special team of White House aides whose sole task is to figure out a way to claim that Iran is violating the deal. That way he can say it was Iran's fault the deal fell apart, not his.

## Govt. more resolute to meet public demands: Rouhani



➔ It is essential to respect the people's dignity, he noted.

Rouhani also said that the "constitution, election, people's votes, liberal parliament, powerful government and independent judiciary" are all the Imam's legacy.

Elsewhere, he said, "The important point is that the people should remain hopeful about the future and also their trust on the system and government should last."

"We will definitely pass the problems with guidance of the Leader and the people's support," the president remarked.

He said that the time to practice trial and error has gone and "fundamental actions" should be taken more determinedly.

Elsewhere, Rouhani called the

May 19 presidential elections a "great political epic".

"Today, the government is ready to take actions with the support of Majlis (parliament) and its vote of confidence to the 12th cabinet ministers," he said.

Parliament approved picks for ministerial posts on August 20.

During a meeting of cabinet with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khomeini, Rouhani said on Saturday that his government prioritizes cutting unemployment and creating over 900,000 job opportunities per year.

Rouhani said that "unemployment" and "economic problems" are the most serious challenges to the government.

## Iran to experiment photon entanglement



**POLITICS TEHRAN** — Ali Akbar **d e s k** Salehi, director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, announced on Sunday that Iran will be the first country in West Asia which will experiment photon entanglement in future months.

"The experiment of photon and ion entanglement is the first test that we should carry out in line with the issue of quantum technology," he said during a conference on quantum technology.

"We have held talks with Europeans in this respect. We are a member to Euratom which works on advanced technologies," Salehi explained.

He noted that Iran become a member to the Euratom after concluding a deal in July 2015 with the 5+1 group on its nuclear program.

He expressed hope that Iranian

scientists would be sent to Europe to get training in the area of quantum technology.

According to Wikipedia, Euratom is an international organization founded in 1957 with the purpose of creating a specialist market for nuclear power in Europe, developing nuclear energy and distributing it to its member states while selling the surplus to non-member states.

Science Daily describes the quantum entanglement as a quantum mechanical phenomenon in which the quantum states of two or more objects have to be described with reference to each other, even though the individual objects may be spatially separated. This leads to correlations between observable physical properties of the systems.

## Iran launches study into S-300 missile

➔ In March 2017, during a war game dubbed Damavand, Iran conducted a successful test of the S-300 anti-aircraft missile system.

The system can detect 20 targets simultaneously and directly engage with 12 separate hostile flying objects, including missiles, fighter jets or helicopters.

Iran's then army chief Major General Ataollah Salehi said the Islamic Republic has manufactured a missile defense system superior to S-300.

"While the Islamic Republic has purchased S-300, it has also manufactured and will manufacture models superior to it," he stated.

Iranian military experts and technicians have in

recent years made great headways in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient in the arms sphere.

Tehran has insisted that its military might poses no threat to regional countries, saying that the Islamic Republic's defense doctrine is entirely based on deterrence.

# Assad is here to stay, West tells Syrian opposition

In a significant policy shift on the foreign instigated war in Syria, Britain and its western allies have finally dropped their long-standing demand that President Assad must step down — and may even accept elections in which he is allowed to stand again, a report said.

Ministers confirmed a turnaround in policy towards Syria, The Times reported. The British daily said the Syrian opposition leaders were told this week in Riyadh that they now had little choice but to accept that Assad was in Damascus to stay.

"There was no longer any point in holding up talks over Syria's future by sticking to the position that he (Assad) had to step down before negotiations could begin."

Boris Johnson, the foreign secretary, hinted at the change in an interview on Radio 4's Today program, according to the daily.

"It is overwhelmingly in the interests of the Syrian people that Assad should go," the Times quoted Johnson as saying.

"We used to say he has to go as pre-condition. Now we are saying that he should go but as part of a transition. It is always open to him to stand in a democratic election," the British foreign secretary added.

In the same context, the daily quoted diplomats as saying that Johnson was confirming a gradual shift forced on the opposition and the West by events on the ground.

The new position was shared by Britain's allies and the opposition's regional backers, the daily reported.

It said that Yahya al-Arabi, an opposition spokesman was disappointed with western countries.

The Times also quoted another source as saying: "Our policy is based around pragmatism and realism. It's hard to see any future stable and peaceful Syria with



Assad still there, given how much damage he has caused. But whether or not he is staying is no longer a precursor to discussions."

The United States and the House of Saud regime diplomats have reportedly been urging the armed Syrian opposition to come to terms with President Bashar al-Assad's role in Syria's future, a report said, indicating the major policy U-turn in the western stance from the Syrian crisis.

In an article published on Thursday, the Associated Press said the Syrian army holds the upper hand on the battlefield against militant groups, pointing to the major shift in the strategies of Western and regional supporters of Syrian oppo-

sition groups and militants with regard to the developments in Syria.

"Western and regional rebel patrons, currently more focused on advancing their own interests rather than accomplishing regime change in Damascus, are shifting their alliances and have ceased calls on Assad to step down," the report said.

Former U.S. ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford, who is widely considered as Washington's civil war engineer in different parts of the world and a key instigator of the Syrian conflict in 2011, has ruled out the likelihood of Assad's removal, saying, "There is no conceivable military alignment that is going to be able to remove him."

"Everyone, including the U.S., has recognized that Assad is staying," said Ford, who is currently a fellow at the Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C.

According to an interlocutor, who mediates between the opposition and state capitals and requested anonymity, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir told the opposition it was time to formulate "a new vision."

"He did not explicitly say Bashar [Assad] is going to stay, but if you read between the lines, if you say there needs to be a new vision, what is the most contentious issue out there? It is whether Bashar stays," said the interlocutor, according to the article.

(Source: agencies)

## French ministers on Iraq visit as terrorists hit Europe

A French delegation has paid a visit to Iraq at a time that the Iraqi forces' operation against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group enters its final stages.

France's Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian and Defense Minister Florence Parly met with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)'s President Massoud Barzani on Saturday.

Before the meetings, Le Drian said Iraq faced the dual challenge of "a war that is coming to an end and the beginning of the stabilization and reconstruction of the country," stressing that Paris would continue to take part in the United States-led fight purportedly against ISIL.

The U.S. and some of its allies have been carrying out airstrikes in Iraq since June 2014 allegedly targeting ISIL. The raids, which have done little to dislodge the terror outfit, have on numerous occasions claimed many civilian lives and inflicted damage on Iraq's infrastructure.

Speaking at a joint news conference with the French defense minister and his Iraqi counterpart in Baghdad, the top French diplomat said, "We are present in the war and we will be present in the



Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)'s President Massoud Barzani (C) receives French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian (L) and Defense Minister Florence Parly in Erbil, Iraq, August 26, 2017. (Photo by AP)

peace."

A French diplomatic source also said that said Paris would grant a \$513 million loan to Iraq before the end of 2017.

For years, the European states, including France, turned a blind eye to the inflow of militants to ISIL-held territory despite warnings that the Takfiri elements' home countries would face risks upon their return.

The French minister's announcement of support for the fight on Takfiri terrorists comes as Europe is facing its worst security problem in decades following a spate of deadly attacks in a number of countries in the continent.

ISIL unleashed a campaign of death and destruction in Iraq in 2014, seizing Mosul and declaring it as its so-called "capital" in the country.

### Weapons in diplomatic flights

An investigative report by a Bulgarian journalist says the House of Saud regime and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have supplied Eastern-European-made weapons to armed groups in Syria and Iraq using different intermediaries and diplomatic cover to mask their points of origin and final destinations.

The report, authored by Dilyana Gaytandzhiev, claims Saudi Arabia, UAE, the United States military and several countries have used Azerbaijani state-owned airlines Silk Way Airlines to transport large quantities of weapons that ended up in the hands of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group, Kurdish fighters in the Middle East and armed groups in Africa.

"At least 350 diplomatic Silk Way Airlines flights transported weapons for war conflicts across the world over the last 3 years," says the report, published in Trud, Bulgaria's largest circulated newspaper.

"The state aircrafts of Azerbaijan carried on-board tens of tons of heavy weapons and ammunition headed to terrorists under the cover of diplomatic flights."

According to the report, "Saudi Arabia has purchased huge quantities of Eastern European weapons and exported them using Silk Way Airline's diplomatic flights."

"In 2016, 2017 there were 23 diplomatic flights carrying weapons from Bulgaria, Serbia and Azerbaijan to Jeddah and Riyadh."

Gaytandzhiev says in the report: "The Kingdom [of Saudi Arabia] does not buy those weapons for itself, as the Saudi army uses only Western weapons and those weapons are not compatible with its military standard."

"Therefore, the weapons transported on diplomatic flights end up in the hands of terrorist militants in Syria and Yemen that Saudi Arabia officially admits supporting."

Citing leaked documents that detail flight paths and weapons cargo of the diplomatic flights, the report shows one aircraft loaded with mortars and anti-tank grenades including SPG-9 and GP-25 which were later discovered by the Iraqi army a month ago in an ISIL warehouse in Mosul.

The U.S. news outlet Buzzfeed published an investigation in 2016 detailing how obscure and small American defense contractors were awarded big contracts by the U.S. military to arm and equip Syrian opposition fighters using eastern European weapons.

The House of Saud regime has publicly expressed its support for Syrian fighters trying to topple the Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad.

Multiple attempts by Al Jazeera by phone and email to reach Silk Way Airlines in Baku for a reaction to the Trud story proved unsuccessful.

## Lebanon Army declares ceasefire in fight on ISIL

Lebanon's Army has announced a ceasefire in its operation against the terrorist group of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) near the country's border with Syria to help start negotiations over the fate of captive soldiers.

The ceasefire takes effect at 7:00 a.m. (0400 GMT) on Sunday, a week into the offensive, a statement issued by the military said. A security source said the Lebanese Army began mediated talks with the ISIL terrorist outfit at the north-east border.

Lebanon's Al-Manar television said Hezbollah and the Syrian Army had also announced a ceasefire in their offensive against ISIL on the Syrian side, namely the west Qalamoun mountainous region.

Under the ceasefire, Hezbollah members have entered an area of west Qalamoun to confirm that Lebanese soldiers held by ISIL are buried there, the source said.

The operation began after the Lebanese resistance movement of Hezbollah forced militant concentrations, and ISIL's al-Qaeda-linked fellow Takfiri outfit of the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham out of the border area last month.

The triumph was followed by departure from the area of another terrorist outfit named Saraya Ahl al-Sham, a development which left ISIL in a more vulnerable position.

Hezbollah and the Syrian Army then took on the group's gatherings inside Syria.

ISIL and the other terrorist outfits broke into Lebanon in 2014, taking over the border town of Arsal. They were ousted from the town, but started taking positions close to Ras Baalbeck, another border town, which has been the focus of the recent counter-terrorism operations.

The Takfiri group currently holds nine Lebanese soldiers.

A ceasefire brokered by the national police and security force of Lebanon -- Internal Security Forces Directorate, helped release three Hezbollah fighters from the clutches of Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, which, in return, was offered to take its operatives and their families to Syria in buses.

(Source: Daily Star)

## Iraqi forces retake most of Tal Afar from ISIL: military

➔ Tal Afar was the latest objective in the war on the terrorist group following the recapture in July of Mosul, where it declared its self-proclaimed caliphate over parts of Iraq and Syria in 2014.

### Car bombs hit Baghdad

Meanwhile, explosives loaded onto vehicles go off in two different locations across the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, killing five people and injuring eight others.

A car bomb went off in the al-Shorte Raaba'ah neighborhood in the city's south, killing three women and inflicting injuries on five other people, Iraq's al-Sumaria television network reported on Sunday.

Another such device blew up in Abu Disher, also a southern Baghdad neighborhood, killing two people and wounding three more, the source added.

Iraq sources said the number of the casualties could go up due to severe injuries among the wounded.

No party has claimed responsibility for the attacks so far, but they bore the hallmarks of the sporadic assaults carried out by the Takfiri terrorist group of the ISIL.

The ISIL launched its campaign of terror against Iraq in 2014, seizing large swathes of it during lightning attacks. The Army enlisted the assistance of Shia-majority militiamen in the following years, flushing the group out of its major turfs.

Now, the country is on course to oust the outfit from the entirety of its territory.

The Army and its allies fully liberated the northern city of Mosul, which ISIL had dubbed its so-called headquarters in Iraq, last month.

On August 20, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announced the commencement of a major offensive to retake the city of Tal Afar, near Mosul, as the latest of counter-terrorism operations targeting ISIL.

The combined forces have reportedly cleansed 90 percent of the city.

(Source: agencies)

## U.S. airlifts terrorists in Syria for 2nd time in a week: SOHR

For the second time this week, a helicopter operating under the United States-led coalition has transferred members of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group in Syria's eastern Dayr al-Zawr Province, a Britain-based monitoring group says.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said the airlift was conducted in the town of al-Tabani, on the western outskirts of Dayr al-Zawr.

Syrian sources said that the operation was accompanied by the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces' artillery fire.

The sources speculated that the airlift was possibly meant to transfer U.S. mercenaries fighting alongside ISIL or the terrorist outfit's ringleaders who sought to defect.

On Thursday, the SOHR reported a similar operation, during which U.S. helicopters took four ISIL terrorists and a civilian from a house used as an arms depot in Beqres, a suburban area east of Dayr al-Zawr.

The five people transferred during the operation included a foreign bomb expert, three Egyptian ISIL terrorists and a civilian, the report added.

The developments come at a time when ISIL has retreated from much of the territory under its control amid sweeping advances by Syrian army soldiers and allied fighters on the battlefield.

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

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

(Source: Press TV)

## Report: Saudi, UAE weapons end up with armed groups

An investigative report by a Bulgarian journalist says the House of Saud regime and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have supplied Eastern-European-made weapons to armed groups in Syria and Iraq using different intermediaries and diplomatic cover to mask their points of origin and final destinations.

The report, authored by Dilyana Gaytandzhiev, claims Saudi Arabia, UAE, the United States military and several countries have used Azerbaijani state-owned airlines Silk Way Airlines to transport large quantities of weapons that ended up in the hands of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group, Kurdish fighters in the Middle East and armed groups in Africa.

"At least 350 diplomatic Silk Way Airlines flights transported weapons for war conflicts across the world over the last 3 years," says the report, published in Trud, Bulgaria's largest circulated newspaper.

"The state aircrafts of Azerbaijan carried on-board tens of tons of heavy weapons and ammunition headed to terrorists under the cover of diplomatic flights."

According to the report, "Saudi Arabia has purchased huge quantities of Eastern European weapons and exported them using Silk Way Airline's diplomatic flights."

"In 2016, 2017 there were 23 diplomatic flights carrying weapons from Bulgaria, Serbia and Azerbaijan to Jeddah and Riyadh."

Gaytandzhiev said on Thursday in a tweet that she was fired from her job at Trud after she was interrogated by the Bulgarian national security which tried to find out her sources.

She said she first got suspicious of the weapons transferred to Syria when she found Bulgarian-made weapons at the hands "terrorists" in Aleppo while reporting on the Syrian war there.

She said that she then traced those weapons to its Bulgarian manufacturer only to find out that those weapons were legally exported to Saudi Arabia, which in turn supplied it to "terrorists" in Syria.

### Hands of terrorists

Speaking to Al Jazeera by phone on Sunday from Bulgaria, Gaytandzhiev said: "Saudi Arabia, UAE and the U.S. must stop using the cover of Silk Way Airlines diplomatic flights to supply Eastern European weapons which end up in the hands of terrorists around the world. Diplomatic flights are exempt from checks and inspection."

A joint investigation of Al Jazeera and the New York Times revealed a joint Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)-Saudi operation that supplied weapons to Syrian fighters by shipping through Jordan.

Many of the weapons, the investigation revealed, were stolen by Jordanian officers of the General Intelligence Department.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

NEWS IN BRIEF



**Iran to start gas exports to Basra in near future**

**ENERGY TEHRAN** — National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) plans to start exporting natural gas to the Iraqi city of Basra in near future, ISNA reported on Sunday quoting an NIGC official as saying.

According to Mohammadreza Qodsizadeh, the planning director of NIGC, the country's annual gas exports will also reach 68 billion cubic meters soon.

Iraq, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Armenia are among the neighboring countries with which Iran has signed agreements regarding gas exports, imports, swap and exchanging gas with electricity.



**Annual pistachio exports to hit 150,000 tons by Mar. 2018**

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — "Iran is expected to export 150,000 tons of pistachio, worth \$1.5 billion, by the current Iranian yearend (March 20, 2018), Mohsen Jalalpour, the chairman of Iran Pistachio Association, told IRNA on Sunday.

"Producing 253,000 tons of pistachio, Iran will improve its production this year and register a record of six years," he said.

As Jalalpour described, the country could produce 170,000 tons of the product last year, 135,000 tons of which, at the value of \$1.2 billion, were exported.

**France plans \$513m Iraq loan**

France will give Iraq a 430 million-euro (\$513 million) loan this year after the nation's budget was crimped by the fight against Islamic State and the drop in oil prices, according to Agence France-Presse reported, citing the French government.

Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, visiting Baghdad, told Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi at a meeting Saturday that the money will be delivered before the end of the year, AFP said.

The loan, like those of the World Bank, requires an improvement in Iraq's management of its public finances and the governance of state-owned enterprises, as well as greater energy efficiency, the news agency said. (Source: Bloomberg)

**China industrial profits keep pace as factory inflation holds**

Chinese industrial firms maintained a profit surge, underscoring the economy's resilience even amid slowing factory output and investment.

Industrial profits increased 16.5 percent in July from a year earlier, versus the 19.1 percent pace a month earlier, the nation's statistics bureau said Sunday.

The robust earnings are giving policy makers room to combat excessive industrial capacity and curb speculative borrowing ahead of the key Party Congress this fall. That picture may not be sustainable though, as slowing producer inflation and rising real interest rates may squeeze factories and mills in the coming months. (Source: Bloomberg)

**India's new tax system hit by severe teething pains**

Millions of Indian businesses have not paid their tax for July as the country's new system struggles to cope with the weight of demand from companies trying to use it for the first time.

Taxpayers have reported a range of problems with the on-line platform for the country's national goods and services tax, including poor connectivity, insufficient space to file invoices and payments not being registered.

The complaints are the latest set of teething problems with the system, which was rolled out in July after a decade of political debate but just three months of detailed planning.

It has replaced a local levies and taxes, turning India into a single market for the first time.

GST is a key part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's promise to modernise India's economy, but critics say the rush to implement it has led to unnecessary complexity in the rules and weaknesses in the IT platform underpinning it. They warn that the early problems with the new system risk undermining confidence in Mr Modi's entire economic platform.

By Wednesday, the GST Network, which runs the online platform, said 2m people had made their payments. Reports in local media suggested that by the end of the deadline, that had gone up by a further 1m. Accountants reported that fewer than half of their clients had been able to complete their payments.

bhishek Jain, a tax partner at EY, said: "Most of our clients have had problems. The main complaint is that when people make their payments, they are not being updated on the system."

K E Raghunathan, the president of the All India Manufacturers Organisation, said he had encountered problems making payments for his own company, which makes solar power systems.

"I made my tax payment last Saturday, but it did not show up on the system until Tuesday, and no one replied to my queries about it," he said. "Over the weekend I had thousands of calls from members making similar complaints." (Source: The Financial Times)

**Gas condensate export from PSEEZ up 28% in a year**

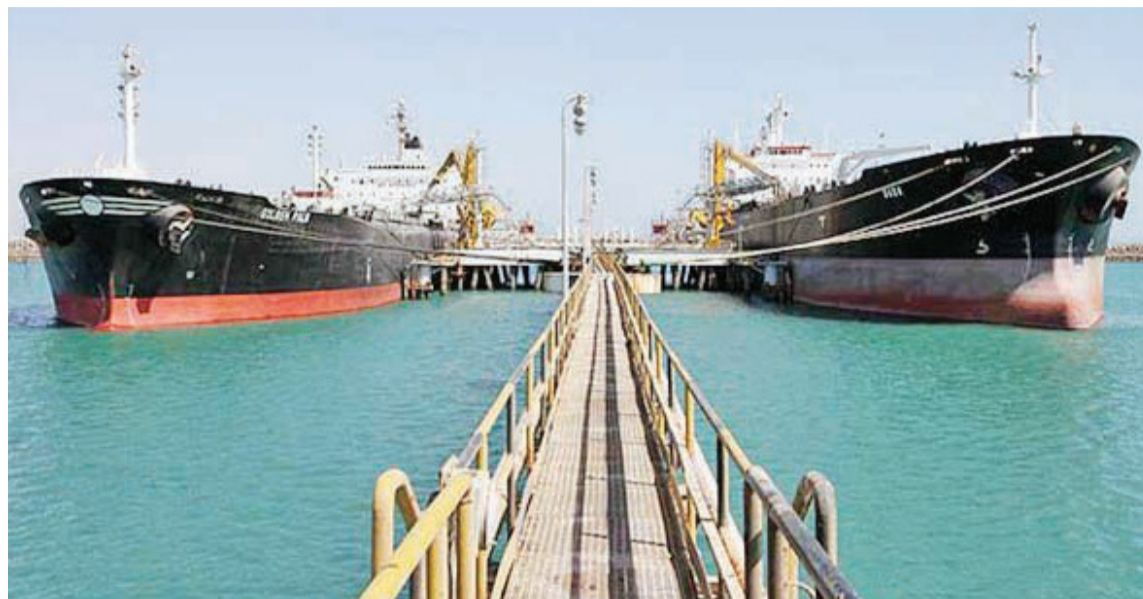
**ENERGY TEHRAN** — The value of gas condensate export from Pars Special Economic Energy Zone (PSEEZ) during the 12-month period ended on this Iranian calendar year's Government Week (August 24-30), rose 28 percent compared to the same time span in the past year, according to a regional official.

Iran exported 17.812 million tons of gas condensate worth \$6.979 billion from the zone during the 12-month period, showing also 31 percent growth in weight compared to the same period of time in the preceding year, Ahmad Pour-Heydar, director general of PSEEZ's customs administration, told IRNA on Sunday.

He mentioned China, Japan, South Korea, India, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Turkey, Egypt, the UAE and Kuwait the main targets of the exported products.

PSEEZ is an energy hub in Iran's southwestern Bushehr Province with 105 kilometers distance from South Pars gas field, a huge field Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf.

The field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.



**Increasing productivity top priority for Agriculture Ministry**

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Iranian Agriculture Minister Mahmoud Hojjati named increasing productivity as the main target of his ministry in the new government during the next four years, IRNA quoted him as saying on Sunday.

Highlighting the 8-percent economic growth predicted for the country according to the Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021), the minister put the achieved growth in agriculture sector at 5.3 percent during the past four years.

"With an increase of 21 million tons in production of agricultural products from its previous 97 million tons in Iranian calendar year of 1392 (ended on March 20,



2014) to 118 million tons in 1395 (ended on March 20, 2017), Iran's food trade balance grew up \$5 billion from -\$8.1 billion to -\$3.09 billion," Hojjati said.

He elsewhere called for the government to provide domestic agricultural sector with enough facilities as well as making investments in water and soil infrastructure and insurance.

**Inflation rate stands at 10% in Iran: CBI**

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has 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 same period in the previous year hit 10 percent, IRNA reported on Sunday.

The Statistical Center of Iran has previously put the country's inflation rate at 7.7 percent for the 12-month period ended in Mordad.

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 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.

**Ceylon tea: A journey to the land of green magic**

By Ebrahim Fallahi

**Travelogue**

When earlier this month I got an invitation to attend the 150th anniversary of Ceylon tea industry in Sri Lanka, I didn't know much about the country.

Despite the fact that "Ceylon" has always been a very popular brand of tea among Iranians and the idea of Ceylon tea was very familiar to me, I was really surprised by how little I knew about "Ceylon" itself.

During my weeklong journey I learned so much about the country and its tea industry. I think I was really blessed to get such an invitation to the land of green magic.

What comes below is a brief account of my short but definitely fruitful visit.

**Colombo Tea Auction**



For the first two days of my visit to Colombo along with other invited journalists I visited some of Sri Lanka Tea Board's facilities in Colombo including the Board's shop and laboratories in which tea goes through different kinds of tests and analysis.

The third day of my journey (August 8), coincided with one of Colombo's weekly tea auctions.

The Colombo Tea Auction is considered the largest tea auction in the world. Auctions are held every Tuesday and Wednesday, except for the national holidays like New Year and at Christmas. Around 6.5 million kilograms are traded on a weekly basis.

The first recorded tea auction in Colombo goes back to 1883, since then this Auction has become the main channel through which tea journeys from producer to consumer.

Sri Lanka tea industry is made up of three main sectors, namely buyers, sellers and brokers. As the main players of the tea auction, brokers act as an intermediate between the sellers and buyers. Before the auction all the tea produc-

ers are obliged to present samples of their products for assessment and approval. In this stage the quality of the samples is controlled and the presented samples are evaluated and categorized for bidding.

**Colombo International Tea Convention**

The next day we were guests to the Colombo International Tea Convention's opening ceremony as the biggest social event of Sri Lanka's tea industry.

Organized by Sri Lanka Tea Board at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) the convention was attended by hundreds of the industry's scholars, experts, entrepreneurs and prominent figures from all around the world as a realization of the fact that Sri Lanka tea industry has achieved a very significant position among the world's tea producing countries.

During the opening ceremony the attendees were addressed by the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremesinghe and also Navin Dissanayake, minister of plantation industries.

Delivering his speech, the minister of plantation talked about the transformation of Sri Lankan tea industry over the last five decades.

He also mentioned the importance of re-emerging markets like Iran and China and urged the industry to unite in order to regain the market share they have lost over the past few years.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on the other hand skipped the past all together and went to the future asking the crowd to imagine Sri Lankan tea industry in 2050. "With another two billion people added to world population how Sri Lanka will address their need?" he said.

Wickremesinghe further emphasized



the issue of climate change as one of the main challenges of Sri Lanka tea industry in the future.

The tea convention went on for three days during which so many technical and theoretical issues were addressed by numerous scholars and experts who attended the event.

**Tea production processes**



There are several active tea factories all around Sri Lanka. In the past each estate owner would build its own factory to process the tea plucked in the state plantations to minimize the costs and time between plucking and processing. So nowadays most of the tea factories are located in the middle of vast tea plantations and still process their own state-specific teas.

For one of our next destinations during the trip to the island, we visited Pedro Tea factory which is located on top of a hill and it was established in 1885 during the British era.

In the factory we were given a thorough tour to learn how tea is processed to become what we use in our households. After being plucked from the nearby plantations, within a two hour period, the tea is taken to the muster sheds for weighting and appearance monitoring after which it will be delivered to the factory.

The factory was a three-storied building in which the tea leaves were taken to the upper floors to be spread in troughs, in a process called withering during which the excess moisture is removed from the leaf. After withering, the tea leaves go through various other processes including, rolling, heating and fermentation as well as grading and drying, during fermentation the enzymes in the leaves react with the oxygen in the air to release aroma and flavor.

**Coconut Rubber and Tea Trade Fair**

Sri Lanka's Coconut, Rubber and Tea Trade Fair (CRT 2017) which was held from 11th to 13th August in Colombo was another big event which I had the



chance to attend. Sri Lankan Government has recently embarked on an ambitious economic growth program and in this regard the CRT was conducted for the promotion of the country's coconut, rubber and tea industries. Organized by the Ministry of Plantation Industries (MPI), the trade fair was held at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH).



There were also other programs held on the sidelines of the CRT fair, like Sri Lanka Tea Festival, workshops, tea testing programs and speeches which we couldn't make them all.

**Sri Lanka Tea Museum**

Located in an old tea factory site among the teagardens of Kandy, Sri Lanka Tea Museum provides an informative insight into development of the tea industry which has made the country famous today.

As visitors walk through the place in different floors, they can appreciate the educational tea history the place has to add to their knowledge.

It was wonderful to see historic photos, machines and handicrafts used by tea planters and how the equipment used to process tea changed through time.

What came here was just a glance of my experiences in amazing Sri Lanka, although in this short travelogue I haven't been able to cover all the aspects, but I will leave that for the readers to discover on their own visit to this magical country. However there is one other piece to come in which I will cover the tea trade between Iran and Sri Lanka.

To be continued...

# Blockchain tech as a hedge against low oil prices

The "paradox of plenty," natural resources are both a gift and a curse to emerging economies. Rather than providing a flourishing economy, often the result of discovering an abundance of new resources is quite the opposite.

The story is repeated over and over again throughout the world. Countries rich in natural resources have fallen victim to poverty, unrest, and tyranny.

In the 1997 study of Jeffrey D. Sachs and Andrew M. Warner, the writers suggest that rather than bolstering economic growth, countries with substantial resources often experience slower economic growth with little to no evidence to suggest geographical location or climate has any impact on this phenomenon.

There seems to be a direct relationship between reliance upon energy resources and authoritarianism. Larry Diamond of Stanford University said: "There are twenty-three countries in the world that derive at least 60 percent of their exports from oil and gas and not a single one is a real democracy."

Venezuela may be the most striking example of this occurrence right now. The country has the largest oil reserves on the planet, but is now experiencing one of the worst economic crisis in its history. Once the richest economy in South America, the country at present resembles one in the midst of a civil war. In 2014, the country saw its murder rate skyrocket.

Venezuela's overdependence on oil has led the country into a difficult position. Oil accounts for 96 percent of the country's exports, leaving the country especially vulnerable to changes in the price of oil. Not only that, the country's reliance on the resource has created a toxic relationship between the oil industry and the government, with corruption rampant and leaders unwilling to part with their cash cow.

On the other side of the world, Iraq has suffered a similar dilemma.



Over half of Iraq's GDP comes from oil, in fact, the country's reserves represent 10 percent of the entire world's total proven oil reserves.

In Saddam Hussein's Iraq, the country suffered similar effects to Venezuela. Hussein's regime used revenue generated from the country's abundant resources to oppress citizens, boost the military, and funded fruitless wars with neighboring Iran and Kuwait. Additionally, the regime built large palaces and siphoned cash into their personal bank accounts.

These actions derailed the country's economic promise and led to one of the deadliest wars in recent times.

In Africa, Nigeria was once set to breach the world's top 20 economies. The country was experiencing a promising surge in growth. Beginning in 1956, when oil was first discovered in the Niger Delta, the country began down the dangerous path of oil reliance.

Nigeria was hit especially hard the fluctuation of oil prices which took projects offline and crushed the nation's GDP. Now, the country faces a negative growth rate and unrest. It must look toward other industries if it hopes to return to its former

glory. Former Governor, Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Prof. Charles Soludo noted: "For too long, we have lived with borrowed robes, and I think for the next generation, for the 400 million Nigerians expected in this country by the year 2050, oil cannot be the way forward for the future."

It is true, diversification of a country's economy is essential to combat this curse. There are several countries which have identified their own overreliance on non-renewable natural resource and have begun to diversify their economies through new technological developments.

Saudi Arabia, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates are notable examples. Each has embarked on a path involving technology to ease their dependence on oil and gas.

The United Arab Emirates has recently invested \$163-billion in renewable energy projects. Additionally, the UAE has unveiled its Energy Strategy 2050. Sheikh Mohammed, Vice President of UAE and the ruler of the emirate of Dubai explained: "The plan aims to increase usage efficiency by 40 percent and increase clean-energy contributions to 50 percent."

The UAE is also at the forefront of a

move to streamline its government and banking sector by using blockchain technology with the goal to shift to a diversified and "knowledge-based" economy.

In UAE's Vision 2021, the country looks to blockchain technology to completely revamp the way the government tracks and processes data. Through the process of eliminating unnecessary complications in its bureaucratic process, the country aims to streamline its education system, healthcare, and banking sectors.

Russia may be one of the most interesting examples of diversification away from natural resources. Instead of completely abandoning its reliance on oil, the country is embarking on a path to create its own \$100-billion Bitcoin mine.

The Russian government has developed a plan to create an initial coin offering (ICO) to fund a large-scale Bitcoin mining operation in which miners will use the country's 20GW excess power capacity to mine Bitcoin in order to compete with China. "RMC plans to use semiconductor chips designed in Russia for use in satellites to minimize power consumption in computers for crypto-mining," Putin's internet ombudsman, Dmitry Marinichev, said at a news conference in Moscow. Marinichev added that the country has the potential to reach up to a 30 percent share in the global cryptocurrency market.

In this ambitious effort, the mining hardware is given to individuals, each of whom receive a share of the Bitcoin mined, providing not only incentive to participate, but a drastic economic shift, the outcome of which is yet to be seen.

While there may not be one simple solution in shifting away from natural resources, following these nations in their individual paths may provide solid examples moving forward. Through technology, there is now more opportunity than ever to diversify away for non-renewable natural resources.

(Source: Bloomberg)

## About 25% of U.S. Gulf oil output offline due to Harvey

About 25 percent of U.S. Gulf of Mexico oil production is offline due to Tropical Storm Harvey, the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement said on Saturday.

That equates to roughly 428,568 barrels of oil per day out of the roughly 1.75 million bpd pumped from the Gulf. The amount of oil production offline increased from Friday, when roughly 22 percent of output was affected.

About 26 percent of Gulf natural gas production is offline, or about 835 million cubic feet per day, BSEE said.

Roughly 112 platforms have been evacuated in the Gulf so far as a result of Harvey, about 15 percent of those in the region. Half of the drilling rigs in the Gulf have also been evacuated, BSEE said. (Source: Reuters)

## Sinopec half-year profit rises 41% to 27.1b yuan

**BEIJING, (Reuters)** — China Petroleum and Chemical Corp., known as Sinopec, reported its best six-month profit since the second half of 2014 on Sunday, the latest Chinese state oil major to report a surge in results due to a big recovery in crude prices from last year.

The country's largest refiner reported a first-half net profit attributable to equity shareholders of 27.1 billion yuan (\$4.08 billion), up 40.7 percent on a year prior, based on Chinese accounting standards. Revenue for the period rose 32.6 percent to 1.166 trillion yuan.

Profit rose 40.1 percent to 27.92 billion yuan during the period based on international accounting standards.

The company attributed the strong performance to higher prices and sales of downstream products compared to the year-earlier period.

The data comes after China's largest oil producer PetroChina and offshore oil and gas producer CNOOC Ltd each released on Thursday their best results in years.

Sinopec said it expects second half crude oil production to total 148 million barrels.

Sinopec also said it expects global oil prices to continue to fluctuate at low levels the rest of this year, while structural adjustments in China's energy sector mean natural gas demand will continue to grow quickly.

Sinopec has a larger downstream business than PetroChina, which focuses on upstream oil and gas production. But the refiner is facing headwinds from a glut in the domestic fuel market.

Total domestic fuel sales inched up 0.82 percent to 87.22 million tonnes in the first half.



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## The challenging road ahead for the new Saudi ambassador

Ever since the U.S.-Saudi relationship began 84 years ago, 10 Saudi ambassadors to the U.S. have represented Saudi interests to Capitol Hill. The latest one was appointed recently, and has already taken the post of highest ranking Saudi diplomat in Washington, DC.

As we've witnessed with President Donald Trump's recent visit to the kingdom, it is clear that Riyadh allots great importance to its relationship with the United States, and by extension, its embassy in Washington. The Saudi embassy is arguably one of the most important in the world, especially considering the historic, strategic, security and military relationship between the two countries.

### Two major challenges

To that effect, the ambassador has recently expressed that there is a "huge improvement in the Saudi-U.S. relationship" under Trump's administration. Despite its time-tested resilience, this relationship is facing myriad challenges and difficulties, much like any other. These challenges will undoubtedly find their way to the desk of the new Saudi ambassador. They all revolve around two major challenges: one caused by Washington, and another by Riyadh.

The challenge created by Washington is the infamous Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA) bill, which was signed into law in September of last year. The law is considered by Riyadh and by most of the world's capitals as a violation of international sovereignty and immunity. This view is shared by many members of the American political fabric itself, as this law sets a precedent that will have enormous implications for the United States.

The U.S. has maintained an expanded global influence, and its strategic global military presence may introduce the possibility of prosecuting and undermining its service members and security personnel around the world. As such, the law may irrevocably cause a breach of U.S. relations with its allies.

The problem for Saudi Arabia is not only with this law but with its consequences on the basis and roots of the relationship between Riyadh and Washington. In my view, Riyadh believes that this law serves only the parties hostile to both countries, especially since Washington relies heavily on Riyadh with regards to sharing sensitive intelligence, as well as working on high-level security projects to counterterrorism in all its forms, such as the recently inaugurated Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideologies. Most importantly, there is no conclusive evidence to prove Saudi involvement in the horrific events of Sept. 11.

The challenge that Riyadh has created for itself is its institutional neglect for many years to a crucially important aspect: reaching out to American society and public opinion. Quite simply, American citizens are no longer as indifferent to foreign affairs as they were in the past. From the abundance of online information, to the social media revolution, the average U.S. citizen is now inundated with U.S. foreign policy issues.

Every civil, cultural, human rights and media organization has used every facet of technology and social media to communicate their mission to the American citizen, which has not only made the average American more politically aware but more politically influential than ever before, especially with regards to their country's foreign policies. In other words, the American citizen has become the most powerful political card in the deck of American politics.

Many members of Congress are well aware of the strategic importance of the relationship between Riyadh and Washington, but they simply cannot pass any law that favors the relationship for fear of alienating their political base. It is as if congressmen are saying: " Saudis, please serve yourselves in our communities so that we are better able to serve you." Riyadh has long been keen on reaching out to political elites, whether they're from the executive or legislative branches, yet the increasingly important high-level cultural communication strategies with the American people have long been neglected.

That said, none of this absolves Saudi Arabia of its responsibility to reform many social and legal issues internally. However, it is clear that in the last two years there have been fundamental and increasingly rapid reforms in both legal and economic affairs, none of which have been communicated properly to the American or global society. This is entirely due to an unholy combination of incompetence and embarrassing lack of effort, which is only exacerbated by not empowering highly talented yet underutilized Saudi cadres that can foster cultural understanding and artistic exchange between the Saudi and the American public.

The subject has nothing to do with elaborate, exorbitantly expensive public relations campaigns. Rather, it has everything to do with introducing Saudi Arabia to the American public by drawing their attention to the Kingdom's positions at every level in a civilized and objective way through Saudi's own citizens.

Shortly after attending a conference in Washington, one U.S. political scientist told me in rather blunt terms, "Where exactly are you Saudis? The only people that speak for you are non-Saudi employees of companies that don't employ a single Saudi. It's as if you're ghosts."

In any case, the new ambassador, Prince Khalid bin Salman, must deal with these challenges in an innovative and unconventional way, especially since he has tremendous support behind him. Being the King's son, he is also the brother of the spearhead of change and reform in Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The new ambassador is a young man with administrative, consulting and military experience, and has cultivated a deep interest in American society by virtue of his previous residency in Mississippi, Nevada and Washington, DC. As a 29-year-old, Prince Khalid is also a prime candidate for the Saudi leadership to represent Saudi youth, the largest demographic in the Kingdom, with more than 70 percent of the Saudi people under the age of 30.

(Source: The Hill)

# Germany must abandon its military reluctance and lead

By Anne Applebaum

We wanted to leave as soon as we heard the news. But back in that now impossibly distant era of fuel shortages, pointless regulations and bad roads, it was not so easy to drive a car from Warsaw to Berlin. By the time we arrived, it was the night of Nov. 10, 1989 -- or rather, very early on the morning of the 11th. East Berlin was dark, lit only by eerie, orange streetlights, and mostly silent. Without a map, we drove straight to the city center, through Checkpoint Charlie -- the guard let us through, against the rules, after we shouted at him: "The Wall's open, who cares about the rules?" -- and arrived at the Brandenburg Gate.

We were late to the party. The champagne corks had stopped popping; instead of cheering, the crowd was taunting the East German guards, still dressed in riot gear, who were still standing along the border. One man suddenly stood and jumped off the Wall, from the west to the east. Immediately, the guards rushed over, picked him up and threw him back over. The crowd hissed. This wasn't a cheerful game: The established order had broken down, men with guns -- and without clear orders -- were facing a hostile crowd.

This was the moment when something violent could have happened -- and it almost did. Years later, a German historian told me what he had read in Party documents: The men of the East German Politburo had debated whether to shoot at the crowd along the Wall.

They did not shoot. Nor did they shoot in Leipzig, although the hospitals were told to prepare for casualties. There was no violence at all in Germany in 1989. Instead, the East German state just gave up. It did so in part because the regime had lost confidence, and was no longer willing to use violence to stay in power. But it also gave up because it was inexorably drawn to West Germany. The attractions were clear: West Germany was peaceful and rich, open and generous, an integral part of a great Western, democratic alliance. Even from the very first days, unification seemed obvious: Why would anyone want anything else? And with amazing speed, it happened.

That midnight trip was the beginning of my relationship with Berlin, a city whose archives I've since worked in and whose politicians I've since interviewed, a city where my son chose to spend this past summer, studying German. A lot has changed over the past three decades. The city I saw in November 1989, with that surreal empty space at its center, looks nothing like the city that I know today. Bureaucrats and politicians now jostle with the hipsters -- and even the hipsters seem a lot busier and better dressed



than they used to be.

But some things have not changed. The country I saw that night -- the Germany that avoided violence; the Germany that immediately embraced reunification; the Germany that remains skeptical of all forms of extremism, the Germany that is firmly anchored in the trans-Atlantic democratic community -- that Germany is still there. You can still hear it in German political debate; you can still see it in the German press. The question, now, is whether that Germany can survive.

I realize that might sound like an odd thing to say right now. If anything, Germany's claim to be an integrated member of the Western alliance has never been stronger. Some even speak of Germany as the West's new leader. As Donald Trump's America turns inward, possibly abandoning its free trade agenda and its long-standing commitment to democracy, Germany seems like a possible replacement. A poll taken in 2013 showed Germany to be the most admired country in the world; Chancellor Merkel is one of the most trusted public figures in Europe. Germany's public commitment to environmentalism, multilateralism and human rights give Germany moral standing; Germany's industrial strength and export clout have given Germany economic power as well.

But in a world where American power is weakening and authoritarian powers are rising, how long can this last? From 1945 to 1989, the American army gave West Germany the safety and security to develop its unique political culture. But now there are many, many countries, including some right on Europe's borders, that don't share reunified Germany's national commitment to pacifism and non-violence. And there are many, many reasons to doubt that America will confront them. Trump may be an aberration, but he does reflect a very real American exhaustion, and real American doubt about

the worth of the trans-Atlantic alliance. Germans should have a plan to deal with threats in America's absence. Right now, you don't.

At the very least Germany, by itself, lacks the military power and therefore the foreign policy clout to keep Europe safe from future Russian aggression; to help bring peace -- and thus an end to the refugee crisis -- to the Middle East; to do anything about the reconstruction of Libya except talk about it. Germans once confronted the problem of unification, and they spent time and resources on solving it. But when it comes to problems in the wider region, Germany has been absent.

Instead, Germans sometimes seem determined to pretend they don't exist. President Trump has been rightly criticized for his verbal attacks on NATO, but German politicians have also helped undermine the West's defenses. In 2013, Russian jets simulated an attack on Stockholm; in 2016, Russia transferred nuclear-capable missiles to Kaliningrad, in range of Germany. Yet when NATO announced a series of military exercises in Europe in that same year -- designed to deter Russian intervention -- Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier denounced them as "warmongering." More recently, Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel has made Germany's defense budget into an electoral issue. Given the poor condition of Germany's armed forces, the Bundeswehr, this seems extraordinarily irresponsible.

Nor is the problem merely one of military defense. Today's authoritarian powers, whether in Islamic State (IS) or the Kremlin, are more sophisticated than the Soviet state that once occupied the eastern half of Germany and that built the Berlin Wall. They seek to recruit supporters or impact politics through social media. Wealthy foreigners, Russians as well as

others, seek to shape German policy and opinion through money and corruption. You are rightly proud that rule of law is so strong in Germany -- but of course it can be undermined here, just like anywhere else, if you are not vigilant in defending it. But vigilance requires knowledge: Before you can defend against a challenge, you need to realize that it is under attack, and I am not sure that Germans do.

I can understand the historical reasons for Germany's reluctance to think about confrontation. And I respect them: As I've said, the postwar Federal Republic's belief in the non-violent resolution of conflicts, its conviction that problems can be resolved through institutions is the most admirable thing about it. But that is no excuse for naivete. If Germany does not want a powerful army, it should still, as a matter of urgency, work with the institutions it has built, most notably the European Union, and especially with France and even Britain (this might be a way to give Britain a future European role) to create a multinational European force that can be deployed in defense of Europe's borders, and in Europe's name, at any time. It could be part of NATO, and should work with NATO. But the era of total dependence on the U.S. military is over.

The same is true in the sphere of cyberdefense and information warfare. Germans worry a great deal about American cyberspying, even though there is no evidence that the United States, even under President Trump, seeks to undermine the German political system. By contrast, there was very little outcry when Russian hackers stole thousands of documents from Germany's parliament, the Bundestag. The purpose of that theft could only have been political: The Russian government wanted information on the German political system precisely in order to try to help shape it. We know about Russian efforts to corrupt and manipulate political life in Poland, in the Czech Republic and Ukraine -- and now, of course, the United States.

Here too, Germany does not have to tackle these issues alone: in Scandinavia, in central Europe and, particularly since the recent election, in France, Germany will find partners, both in online counterterrorism and in counterdisinformation. But while it's true that the best responses will be European responses, it's also true that they require Germany, Europe's richest country -- and its most admired country -- to lead them. Or at least to co-lead them. And this, I know, will require an effort of imagination on the part of many Germans. But this is not the moment to become complacent: As in 1989, if you want to keep what you have achieved, you will have to change.

(Source: Spiegel)

## Why Trump's Afghanistan strategy risks the worst of both worlds

By Simon Tisdall

Donald Trump has probably never heard of the Grand Old Duke of York and his 10,000 men. But in spelling out his new Afghan strategy, the U.S. president gave a good impersonation of that symbol of military muddle-headedness, incompetence and futility immortalized in the English nursery rhyme.

By marching U.S. troops back up the Afghan hill, having previously solemnly vowed to march them down and out of the country, Trump risks the worst of both worlds: leaving the U.S. and its allies neither up nor down, without a clearly defined mission, and stuck in the middle of a worsening conflict.

His speech on Afghanistan on Monday night was long delayed, and it is easy to see why. White House advisers had been arguing for months over what to do about the 16-year-old war, America's longest. When the speech came, there were no new ideas or initiatives. Instead Trump retained the main planks of Barack Obama's policy and tried to dress it up as something fresh.

### Two things have changed

One is that Trump has agreed with his generals that troop levels must be increased, reversing the drawdown during the Obama years. There are nearly 10,000 U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan, mostly Special Forces, advisers and trainers. That figure looks likely to rise by about 4,000, though Trump gave no number.

The other change is more dangerous. After the searing U.S. experience in Iraq, policymakers broadly agreed that future overseas missions should have attainable objectives, a fixed duration, and a clear exit strategy. Not setting such parameters in advance was George W. Bush's big mistake in Iraq. Obama was careful not to repeat it.

Trump has ignored that hard-won knowledge. He has committed the U.S. to waging an open-ended conflict with no limit on its scope or duration, and with no

agreed measure of what constitutes victory. Now Britain and other NATO allies will be under pressure to perform a similar volte-face, and increase their combined troop deployments above the current level of roughly 6,500.

Trump's repeated assertion that the U.S. would "fight to win" is misleading at best and reckless at worst. Obama almost trebled U.S. combat troop levels to around 100,000 after taking office in 2009, in an all-out attempt to finish the war. It did not work, although Obama claimed it did, and he slashed troop levels accordingly. The history of warfare in Afghanistan suggests nobody ever "wins".

The U.S. has hardly any combat regulars in theatre now, and Trump's proposed reinforcement of about 4,000 is a drop in the ocean. The security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated sharply. The Afghan government faces a resurgent Taliban, a continued al-Qaeda menace and a rising Islamic State (ISIS) presence. Kabul, once relatively safe, has been targeted by repeated suicide bombings.

According to U.S. estimates, government forces control less than 60% of Afghanistan, with the remainder of the country either contested or under the control of the insurgents.

In an indication of how increasing troop numbers can make matters worse, the annual total number of civilian deaths and injuries has broken previous records each year since Obama's "surge" in 2009. According to the UN's mid-year report for 2017, there were 1,662 civilian deaths and 3,581 casualties. Armed conflict has claimed the lives of 26,512 civilians and injured 48,931 since 2009.

**Open-ended commitment to send in more troops leaves U.S. and allies without clear mission in middle of worsening conflict.**

### The U.S. strategy

The U.S. strategy of training and equipping the Afghan army and police to bear the brunt of the fighting, which Trump indicated will continue, has also been costly. U.S. officials say an average of 20 Afghan national army soldiers are dying each month. The Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs says 1,302 police officers were killed between March and August, about nine a day.

Despite Trump's bald threat to cut financial support for Pakistan, which is accused by Washington of failing to suppress Taliban bases in the north-west of the country, he offered no reason as to why his warnings would be heeded when those of Obama and Bush were ignored. His tough words are likely to be seen in Islamabad as typical Trump bluster.

A parallel statement by Rex Tillerson, the U.S. secretary of state, that Washington is ready to conduct unconditional peace talks with the Taliban, similarly offered nothing new.

The Taliban dismissed the president's speech as vague and unhelpful, and have threatened to cause more American pain if the war is intensified.

Trump's political U-turn in recommitting to a war he has previously dismissed as a waste of time and resources marks a victory for the "realists" in the White House, notably HR McMaster, his national security adviser, and James Mattis, his defense secretary, both of whom are former generals.

They were opposed by Steve Bannon and other champions of Trump's nationalist, "America first" platform, which pledged to end foreign entanglements. Bannon was dismissed from his post as chief strategist last week.

Despite his efforts to justify his about-turn in his prime time TV speech, Trump will find it difficult to convince his domestic supporters, and his foreign allies, that he has a workable policy. And his bad relations with NATO mean he may struggle to get the European troops he wants as the U.S. once again marches up the Afghan hill.

(Source: The Guardian)

# United Europe after french presidential election

By Hanif Ghaffari

Over time, there are many interpretations of the French presidential election (2017). The fact of the matter is the European Union has not won the French election. From now on, we will be witnessing dialogues between European leaders and French President-elect Emmanuel Macron which, at times, may take on the form of disputes. Macron is not an inactive and weak politician like Francois Hollande is. Macron knows well that, in order to maintain power at the Elysée Palace, he will sometimes need to be ready for standoffs with European countries.

## Five Key Points Regarding French Presidential Vote

The French presidential election shed light on the decline of traditional and moderate political parties in the country's political arena. At the moment, both Socialist and Conservative parties have a tough road ahead in order to redefine themselves in France's political landscape. The failure of the candidates of Socialist and Republican parties to make it to the second round shows French citizens do not trust the two parties. This came as both traditional parties in France believed political and executive power in the country would always change hands between these two very parties.

Vote count results show Le Pen managed to secure some 34% of the vote in the runoff. Around 4.2 million people also preferred to cast blank ballots. The tally has given Le Pen hope to plan for the 2022 presidential election. Moreover, the National Front of France have Europe's parliamentary and France's municipal elections ahead. Anyway, Le Pen's securing 34% of the ballot has made her determined to continue her path.

Indubitably, from now on we will be witnessing far-right groups in Europe consolidate their stances and nationalist groups in the European Union forge closer ties with one another. During France's presidential election, nationalist groups across Europe supported Le Pen. One way or another, she will, from now on, be seeking to maintain the unity which has emerged among far-right groups. In this equation, she will play the role of a pivot. Nationalist groups and far-right currents in such countries as the Netherlands, France, Sweden, Austria, etc, have managed to make recruitments in their countries in recent years. The election in France showed a united



Europe has but to pay a heavy price to contain far-right currents. In the recent vote, the whole Europe had to enter the scene in order to keep Le Pen from winning.

In the French presidential election, the European Union openly trampled its commitments underfoot. European officials' overt support for Macron's presidency amounts to Europe's interference in the political equations of a country. In the election, senior EU officials, including European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker, officially expressed their backing for Macron. Naturally, even many of Macron's supporters did not approve of the EU's backing for Macron and considered it a kind of meddling in France's internal affairs. That is why rifts have been growing between the EU and the public opinion in France in the wake of the recent election. Creating the impression that the EU has been the victor in France's presidential vote will further widen the chasm.

A united Europe seeks to create the impression

that it is the winner of the French presidential election. Most European media outlets have tried to equate Le Pen's defeat with the European Union's triumph. This comes as Macron, while remaining committed to basic tenets of the European Union, and is critical of the current situation in a united Europe. He has promised to trigger the process of reforms in the Eurozone and European Union in the coming months. Incontrovertibly, some European politicians like German Chancellor Angela Merkel will not have a positive view toward this issue. Basically, the fact that French citizens have generally turned their back on Socialist and Republican parties means the EU has been defeated in the election. Needless to say, EU leaders cannot equate Le Pen's defeat with their victory in the election. The defeat of a united Europe came about in the very first round of the presidential vote when traditional parties supporting the status quo in Europe failed to make it to the runoff.

## A review of an open case

### The secret dimensions of the US-Israeli spy on nuclear negotiations

By Karim Soltani

About 2 years ago, Russian cyber security giant Kaspersky Lab has found that a virus, mainly developed by the Zionist regime, had been traced in spy case in five hotels where Iran and the 5+1 held nuclear negotiations; these hotels were located in Vienna, Montero, Geneva, and Lausanne, cities where nuclear negotiations had been regularly held. Those used for talks include the Beau-Rivage Palace in Lausanne, Switzerland, the Intercontinental in Geneva, the Palais Coburg in Vienna, the Hotel President Wilson in Geneva, the Hotel Bayerischer Hof in Munich and Royal Plaza Montreux in Montreux, Switzerland.

Kaspersky Lab announced that three hotels had been hit by a virus, dubbed Duqu and originally developed by Israeli spies to collect information about nuclear negotiations; the virus hit the systems two or three weeks before talks. Large bulk of commentary has been addressing the case in the international and local media; however, what matters here and relating to the discussion, is the liaison between the US and Israeli intelligence systems in carrying out this spying operation. A review of the US officials' behavior and psychology about the spy case and Israel's role would be quite revealing.

The principle of 'observe victim's reaction'

During the eavesdropping of Iran and the 5+1 nuclear negotiations by the Zionist regime, not only the host countries, but also all six states engaged in nuclear negotiations with Iran shall be considered as victims of the espionage; yet (after 2 years) their behavior does not

properly seem as victims of a security action hitting them. The natural reaction of a victim of security attack includes the following:

- Harshly condemning the spying party;
- Disclosing everything about different aspects of the spying party to the media and official outlets;
- Bringing the case to court and other official legal authorities;
- If possible, embarking on a retaliation attempt.

But the question is whether the US ever displayed one of such reactions as a possible victim of spying. In any case, the US is seen as one of the victims of spy case. A review of official remarks by the US officials about spying by Israel from nuclear negotiations venues promising of interesting findings and clue to the nature of reactions; "We take steps, certainly, to ensure that confidential, classified negotiating details stay behind closed doors in these negotiations," former State Department Spokesman Jeff Rathke said. "We are always mindful of the need... to take steps to keep our discussions confidential," he added.

The US reaction about spying case would clearly show the following inferences possible to make:

- They would not deny the case in its entirety;
- They would not address the details;
- They would not bring the case to a court or judicial body;
- They would only superficially and mildly condemn the act of espionage.

The next important question is whether the Zionist officials would be able to carry out spying operations in nuclear

negotiation venues without a US green light.

#### Overlapping in targets

The US and its intelligence bodies had been aware of the spying case; they themselves had been an accomplice in the spy operation and setting targets. Tamir Pardo, the former Mossad Chief, was the major player in intelligence arrangement and policy targeting closely worked with US intelligence organizations. Benjamin Netanyahu nominated him for the position in 2010 after he agreed to supervise the policies on Iran's nuclear dossier. Within a nuclear negotiations in their high frequency, Pardo's secret operations had been also intense.

#### Overlapping in operations

In operations, it should be noted that the US had operated in its own spying arrangements from nuclear negotiation venues. In November 2013 (just ahead of Geneva Joint Plan of Action) in Hotel Intercontinental in Geneva, the US spy case leaked to the media. Michael Mann, Spokesman to Catherine Ashton, former EU Foreign Policy Chief responded the press when posed the question whether the nuclear negotiations venue was secure enough (given the US spying on the negotiations): "to find the answer, ask US officials; I am not their spokesman, but EU spokesman and not in a position to answer this and I do not like to answer."

His answer was not very unlike reaction the US Department of State spokesperson made about Israel's spying on nuclear negotiations venues.

In any case, in tactical and operational issues, there is an overlapping between US and Israel intelligence organizations.

There is a division of work between two parties benefiting from spying. The first party would work in policy targeting and the second party would operationalize the policy. The red, yellow and green lines are totally explained and mutually agreed. The Zionist regime is responsible for operations to avoid unnecessary expenses. However, it has on its side US tactical support in place in policy targeting.

The nature of US reaction, Washington's records in spying on nuclear negotiations, the EU Troika meaningful silence, and ultimately, US soft handling the issue through simply ignoring the event raises the possibility that they were an accomplice in the spy case. Obviously, there will be future reports and leaks about the spy case; this would be very disturbing prospect for the US, Israel and the EU Troika.

#### Brennan met with Tamir to find a way out of crisis

Brennan (the former CIA chief) met his counterpart Tamir Pardo and other intelligence officials, as well as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Haaretz reported, citing 'senior Israeli officials'. The meeting reportedly aimed to end the spy case through cooperation with Zionists. However, many mainstream media in the US base coverage of the issue on joint Washington and Tel Aviv circumlocution of the spying case, they will report commentary on Brennan's visit to Israel and meeting with Pardo and Netanyahu as a legitimate visit to coordinate Washington's policies with Tel Aviv; the reality still exists on the ground: The visit sought to prevent any possible further leaks to the media of the spy case and Washington's complicity to that.

## Contemporary global arrangements depend on continuity of capitalism: Professor Onuf

By Javad Heirannia



TEHRAN – Professor Nicholas Onuf, a primary figure among constructivists in international relations, tells the Tehran Times that ...

Onuf says "..."

Following is the text of the interview:

**Some believe after possible decline of the US 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?**

A: This is a difficult question to answer because hegemony is not a simple power relation. The Greek term basically means leadership. If someone or some institution possesses overwhelming power, then leadership is effectively automatic, and nobody has any choice but to accept the consequences of such a power relation.

It is surely the case that US power has become less overwhelming in recent years. While Trump's election suggests a wish to escape the burdens of leadership, the privileges and prestige that go with leadership are not so easy to give up, as Trump's recent behavior reveals. Officials in other states realize that US power, however measured, is still far greater than that of any other state, that US ambivalence results in unpredictable behavior, and that the already considerable costs challenging US leadership are all the greater for this reason.

**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?**

A: It is no longer clear what it means to talk about a 'multi-polar world.' What I do see is a pronounced turn to regionally-bound power relations. There is a hierarchical, implicitly coercive character to major regional blocs (and always has been), since they are formed to fend off the rest of the world. Yet today it is striking the degree to which regional arrangements becoming hegemonial in their intra-bloc relations. While a world of regional hegemonies might be more stable than a world of regional hierarchies, the current-day mix of hegemonial and hierarchical elements in regional power relations is not, in my opinion, likely to be stable.

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

A: In today's media-saturated world, no state can hide where it stands in relation to other states.

**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?**

A: I, for one, do not think that power exercised by states (including 'soft power') suffices to characterize the world of the future. The rise of professional, largely technical expertise within and above states has resulted a world in which functional considerations distort and even replace political-territorial dynamics. It is a mistake to ignore the effects of globalization on planetary politics. Furthermore, contemporary global arrangements depend on the continued capacity of capitalism as a mode of production and distribution to finance a world of bourgeois prosperity and large-scale political arrangements (the so-called multipolar world). In the face of global warming, population growth etc., I have grave doubts about capitalism's capacity to solve its internal contradictions yet again; the center cannot hold indefinitely.

## Missile deterrent power

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN — Former Zionist Premier **d e s k** Ehud Olmert has admitted that there are scores of nuclear weapons in the Israeli arsenal. That means the occupying regime of Israel is at the center of Iran's legitimate defense concerns. Under such circumstances, Iran's support for Islamic resistance groups in Lebanon and Palestine and our efforts to shore up resistance are both religiously and realistically justifiable.

If international theorists took a realistic and unbiased look at the Middle East and the record of the Zionist regime, they would understand that Iran's defense concerns are legitimate and our concentration on defensive weapons and long-range missiles are part of efforts to promote our deterrence in the face of a serious threat.

The fact of the matter is that White House officials are not in a legal position to label Iran's defense measures as legitimate or otherwise. Neither do they have the authority to set limits for Iran. Legally speaking, the US is not even entitled to recognize such legitimacy.

The decisions our country makes about its defense capabilities are on the one hand based on religious instructions and, on the other, on regional equations. Besides, Trump should not forget the fact that his respective country is not only not in a position to pass judgment on the legitimacy of Iran's defense measures, but the US itself is an integral part of Iran's legitimate defense concerns.

## Trump against united europe

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN — As predicted, Donald Trump's presence at the head of the political and executive equations of the United States has created a series of crises in the bilateral relationship between Washington and united Europe.

Over the past seven months, European leaders have repeatedly made tentative positions on Topics on globalization, the environment, US commitments and, most importantly, on the European Union, and calls for a modification of the White House's approach and behavior

The truth is that Trump sees himself as an outsider Europe! In other words, one of the main intentions of the President of

the United States in the international system is to confront the European Union and promote nationalism again. In the run-up to the 2016 presidential race, the overwhelming majority of extremist right-wing extremists in Europe announced their support for Trump's positions.

communications between White House and radical and nationalist parties in Europe have reached their peak after the recent presidential election in the United States. Trump's support of Brexit and encouragement of other European countries to separate from the European Union is another sign of Donald Trump's anti united euro policy. Therefore, Trump is a real "Anti-European".



# How Germany deals with neo-Nazis

By Anna Sauerbrey

To many Germans, the violence in Charlottesville, Va., this month and the American president's reaction to it came as a shock. Even those who have come to expect little of Donald Trump — he's a uniquely unpopular figure among Germans — were aghast. "It's racist, far-right violence, and that requires determined and forceful resistance no matter where in the world it appears," Chancellor Angela Merkel said.

What a strange moment, when the German chancellor lectures the American president on how to deal with neo-Nazis. But it's also an instructive one, in that it highlights how the two countries deal with extremism.

In Germany, the very presence of neo-Nazis openly marching through a city bearing swastika-embellished flags, as in Charlottesville, is unthinkable. Unlike the United States, Germany places strict limits on speech and expression when it comes to right-wing extremism. It is illegal to produce, distribute or display symbols

of the Nazi era — swastikas, the Hitler salute, along with many symbols that neo-Nazis have developed as proxies to get around the initial law. Holocaust denial is also illegal.

The law goes further. There is the legal concept of "Volksverhetzung," the incitement to hatred: Anybody who denigrates an individual or a group based on their ethnicity or religion, or anybody who tries to rouse hatred or promotes violence against such a group or an individual, could face a sentence of up to five years in prison.

These laws apply to individuals, but they and others are also defenses against extremist political parties.

## ■ Destroying political order

The Constitutional Court, Germany's highest court, can ban parties it deems intent on impairing or destroying the political order. This year the court came close to banning the extremist right-wing National Democratic Party but determined the organization was too weak to outlaw.

This legal regime is backed by a political cul-

ture that effectively bans expression that might pass legal muster but still flirts with racist ideologies. The German right-wing-populist Alternative for Germany is a good example. Though its program and members do not openly embrace or reference Nazism, the party's program dabbles in ideas that might be construed as racist, and as a result the party is considered untouchable by mainstream voters and politicians.

Germans have long argued over whether this legalistic strategy has worked. On the one hand, Germany's democratic system is remarkably stable; on the other, it has a severe problem with right-wing extremist violence that again has been rising steeply since the refugee crisis of 2015. And our laws and cultural taboos have not prevented the Alternative party from gaining a small but steady 8 percent of voters ahead of the national election in September.

Furthermore, Germany's legal ban comes at a cost. Limits on speech are a blunt instrument. Though it seems a legitimate and necessary act of respect toward Holocaust victims and their

descendants to outlaw the denial of the Nazi atrocities, the American way of dealing with Nazism and its symbols always seemed to me the more mature way of handling threats to liberal democracy.

When in 1994, the Constitutional Court decided that denying the Holocaust was not covered by the constitutional right of freedom of expression, historians like Eberhard Jäckel argued that a truly liberal democracy should be able to allow for "stupidity" in its public debates. Germany's ban on the swastika seems like a permanent declaration of distrust in itself, and more important, to argument and to education. It feels like a hasty surrender.

In a way, it is pointless to compare political cultures. Each is unique and deeply rooted in each country's history. We won't be able to copy America's unique liberalism, and the United States probably won't adopt our legalistic approach. However, there may be some convergence.

Very cautiously, Germany is allowing itself

to confront Nazi thought. For decades, Hitler's infamous book "Mein Kampf" was banned in Germany. But in 2016, when the copyrights owned by the Bavarian government ran out, it appeared in a critical edition for the first time, and it is now sold freely in bookstores.

## ■ Anti-hate laws

In the wake of Charlottesville and Mr. Trump's comments, I've heard some Americans bemoan the lack of strict anti-hate laws akin to Germany's. And indeed, the episode is a reminder that an open and educated discourse cannot be taken for granted, anywhere. But it has also demonstrated the resilience of America's civil society — for now.

Steffen Kailitz, an associate professor at the Technical University of Dresden's Hannah Arendt Institute who studies extremism, authoritarianism and failing democracies, said he found the reaction to Mr. Trump's statement about Charlottesville encouraging, because the broad backlash showed that in the United States, the taboos against racism and extremism remain intact. **→13**

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## 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** Microsoft is rolling out big changes to its Premier Support plans and structure, which are meant to better support businesses adding cloud services to their mix. Up until recently, Microsoft Premier Support has been relying on 8,000 "world class support specialists" to provide these kinds of services for more than 11,000 enterprises worldwide, according to Microsoft's Premier Support datasheet.
- 2** expensive new ransomware targets organisations with specially crafted phishing lures. The Defray ransomware demands \$5,000 from victims and has targeted hospitals, manufacturing companies, and even an aquarium with small-scale but highly-customised campaigns.
- 3** Drones will watch Australian beaches for sharks with AI help. They'll spot sharks with greater accuracy than humans alone.
- 4** MIT researchers use drone fleets to track warehouse inventory. That's the new system developed by MIT researchers, which could prevent mismatches and help employees find particular items faster on top of looking really cool with a bunch of worker drones zipping around.
- 5** Microsoft has stopped selling new Xbox One consoles in the US and UK. Technically, it's listed as "sold out" on the Microsoft Store and doesn't even show up in searches for Xbox systems. It seems the original version of the console that launched in November 2013 has finally been retired; All hail the slimmer S and souped-up X versions.
- 6** The new version of Samsung Internet Browser has been improved with all the new features introduced in the beta app. Among the most important new improvements included is the night mode, which seems to have more and more fans among smartphone users.
- 7** The development team behind Google Chrome for computers is working on a neat new feature. In the future, the browser will let you permanently mute any specific website. The switch making this possible is currently being experimented with in Chrome's Canary branch, which is the most cutting edge of them all.
- 8** Uber has abandoned plans to move into massive California headquarters because it needs to cut losses. The company had planned to turn Uptown Station, a 380,000-square foot building which formerly housed a Sears department store, into an extension of its global headquarters. Uber's more modest current headquarters are located on San Francisco's Market Street.
- 9** Ex-CEO Nilekani appointed chairman in desperate attempt to stabilize Infosys. His ability to recruit a suitable CEO candidate may depend on how much of an arms-length agreement with the board and management the co-founders of the company agree to.
- 10** Russian researchers hope to crack RAM's power problem using magnetic materials. The new kind of memory module has improved bit reading and writing speeds, too.

## Philippines says will lift Uber suspension if hefty fine paid

The Philippine transport regulator said it would lift a one-month suspension on Uber Technologies Inc if it paid a penalty of 190 million pesos (\$3.7 million), a fine nearly 20 times greater than Uber had offered to pay.

The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board, or LTFRB, said Uber also needed to collectively pay its drivers nearly 20 million pesos daily as financial assistance during the suspension period.



"We're working hard to meet the conditions for the lifting of the suspension and hope to resume operations as soon as possible," Uber said in a statement.

The Uber freeze has attracted public attention because many Philippine commuters regard the ride hailing app as more reliable and competitive than mainstream transport services.

Uber recently said it had nearly 67,000 Philippine drivers. The LTFRB said the penalty was calculated by "taking into consideration the number of days that (Uber) should be suspended in relation to the daily average income."

Citing data submitted by Uber, the LTFRB said it had daily income of up to 10 million pesos from at least 150,000 trips. The fine took into account the remaining suspension period of 19 days, said LTFRB board member Aileen Lizada.

(Source: Reuters)

# Report shows that AI is more important to IoT than big data insights

By Eileen Brown

The problem with big data and business intelligence software is that it is reactionary and static. It is great for analysing things after the event -- but how do enterprises manage when they need real-time insight?

A recent survey from data analysis provider GlobalData showed that IoT professionals still have a heavy reliance on traditional business intelligence (BI) software. Around 40 percent of its 1,000 respondents ranked BI platforms well above all other means of analysing data.

Unfortunately, do-it-all BI software platforms have been usurped by smaller, more discrete ways of deriving value from enterprise data. It could be a direct SQL query, a predictive data modeller, an auto-generated data discovery visualisation, or an interactive dashboard that delivers insights in real-time.

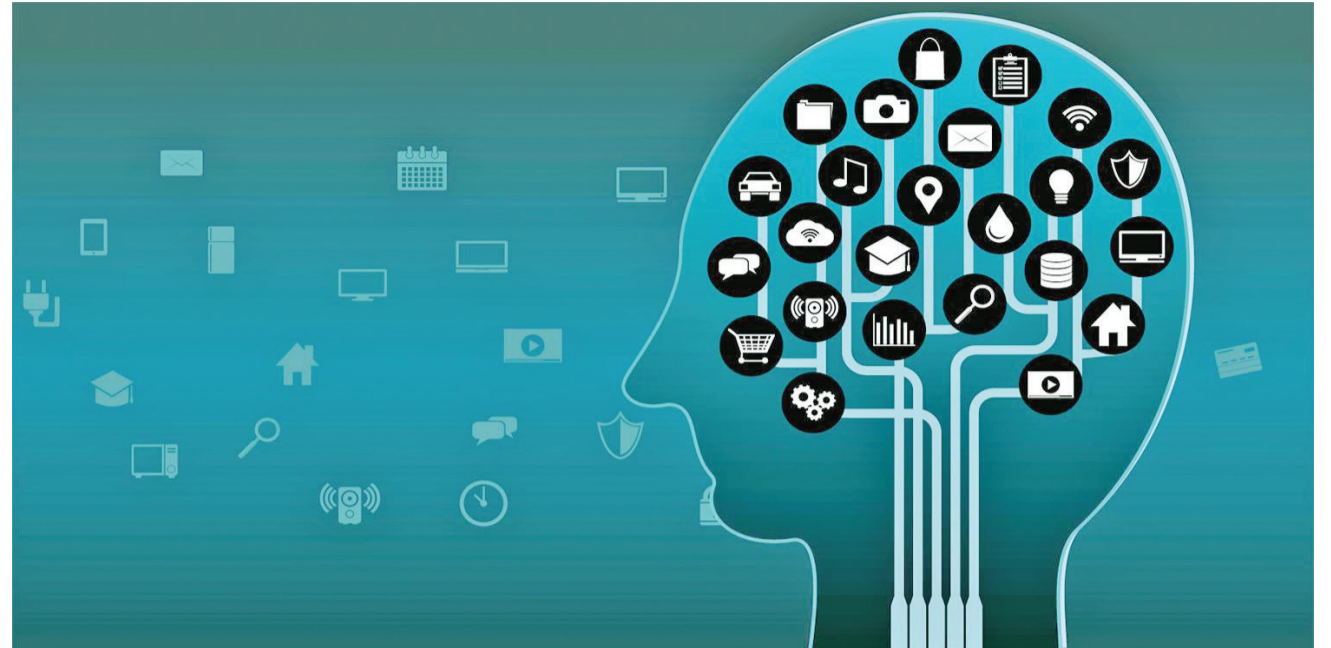
The reasons for this are that users rely on basic reporting mechanisms that use complex queries and reports. BI software tends to be reactionary and static. This brings costs into the enterprise to build and maintain systems.

For the Internet of Things (IoT), enterprises need to focus their efforts on the basics of business optimization rather than innovate from insights. But businesses are reluctant.

This reluctance to follow the broader market away from BI platforms within IoT is concerning. The survey noted a subtle shift over time with IoT deployment fails.

In 2016, no failures were noted post-deployment. In 2017, however, that number had increased to 12 percent.

The top reason IoT deployments fail or



are abandoned prior to deployment are deployment and maintenance costs.

Encouragingly, however, nearly 70 percent of enterprises who had already implemented an IoT solution indicate that the project had already met their return-on-investment (ROI) expectations, regardless of the initial goals.

AI could be the answer to the IoT problem. It could prove the value of IoT as a means of optimizing existing business processes.

Even with a simple AI Machine Learning (ML) framework and model, IoT practitioners would be able to detect anomalies and predict desired outcomes. This would enable them to solve two prob-

lems at once.

The survey shows that enterprise buyers are eager to improve operational efficiencies. Forty three percent of survey respondents indicated that the best role for AI is to centrally automate and optimise business processes.

Although centralization is part and parcel to traditional BI analysis, reporting, and predictive modeling, where AI tends to be most useful is at the edge of deployments. IoT deployments should use tools like ML, close to the device itself.

Any analytics endeavors should be brief and focused on solving specific challenges. IoT buyers want centralized, global visibility of the business but also

local optimization through AI.

This approach will not solve all problems, but it is affordable and it will have a direct impact on businesses. It will help to prove the value of IoT by not building an expensive monolithic analytics system centrally.

Brad Shimmin, service director for global IT technology and software at GlobalData, said: "It becomes clear, therefore, that IoT practitioners should emphasize tactical benefits over strategic analytical insights at least at the outset of a project as a means of proving ROI and securing future investment from the business."

(Source: zdnet)

## Qualcomm president Aberle leaving amid Apple legal battle

Qualcomm's president, Derek Aberle, will step down at the end of the year.

The departure marks the second high-level surprise change in the semiconductor industry after Intel announced on Tuesday evening that group president and former chief financial officer Stacy Smith would retire.

Aberle, who worked at Qualcomm for 17 years, decided to leave as the company is the midst of huge legal battles with antitrust regulators around the world plus one of its largest customers, Apple that challenge its core

business of charging royalties on mobile devices. But the company has been hinting that an out-of-court settlement with the iPhone maker may be near.

Qualcomm said another longtime veteran, executive vice president Alex Rogers, will begin reporting to CEO Steve Mollenkopf, likely setting him up to become the company's number two executive.

Mollenkopf issued a statement praising Aberle. "I want to thank Derek for the vision, creativity, dedication, and judgment he brought to the company and wish him

all the best in the future," Mollenkopf said.

Neither Mollenkopf nor Aberle, who said he was "very proud" of his work at Qualcomm, offered an explanation for the timing of the change.

Bernstein Research analyst Stacy Rasgon said the departure surprised him and could indicate deepening problems at Qualcomm.

Shares of Qualcomm, which have lost 19% so far this year, were up almost 1% in premarket trading.

(Source: Fortune)

## AccuWeather still shares precise location data with ad firms



AccuWeather is still sending precise geolocation data to a third-party advertiser, ZDNet can confirm, despite updating its app earlier this week to remove a feature that collected user's location data without their permission.

In case you missed it, AccuWeather was until this week sending the near-precise location of its iPhone app users to Reveal Mobile, a data monetization firm -- even when location sharing was switched off. Security researcher Will Strafach, who first reported the issue, also accused the company of sharing a user's precise GPS coordinates under the guise of providing local weather alerts.

The news sparked outrage and anger.

AccuWeather responded with a forced apology, which one leading Apple critic John Gruber called a "bulls\*\*t response."

However, tests conducted by Strafach show that the updated app, released Thursday, still shares precise geolocation data with a data monetization and advertising firm.

ZDNet independently verified the findings. We found that AccuWeather was still, with location sharing enabled, sending precise GPS coordinates and altitude albeit to a different advertiser, without the user's explicit consent.

A spokesperson for AccuWeather did not respond to a request for comment.

(Source: zdnet)

## Google search uses a medical quiz to help diagnose depression



Only half of Americans who face depression get help for it, and Google is determined to increase that percentage. As of today, it's offering a medically validated, anonymous screening questionnaire for clinical depression if you search for information on the condition. This won't definitively indicate that you're clinically depressed, to be clear, but it will give you useful information you can take to a doctor. And importantly, the very presence of the questionnaire promises to raise awareness and promote treatment beyond what a basic information card would offer.

The questionnaire is part of a larger effort from internet giants to provide helpful and potentially life-saving in-

formation to people with mental health issues. Facebook is testing AI that can detect suicidal comments and make it easier to get help, while its Instagram service recently started offering support to users when their friends report concerning posts.

In many cases, they're concerned both about offering a helping hand as well as making sure that you get accurate information. Google and others are determined to fight fake news, and they know that the consequences of false or incomplete medical information could be serious. If you need help, they want to be sure you get the appropriate support.

(Source: FinancialTimes)

## Trump's cybersecurity advisors resign en masse

Another Trump panel has taken a hit after eight out of 28 of its members resigned en masse. Members of the National Infrastructure Advisory Council (NIAC), which advises Homeland Security on matters of cybersecurity, have dropped out of the panel due to several reasons. In the resignation letter obtained by NextGov, they said the president doesn't give enough attention to the country's cyber vulnerabilities. "You have given insufficient attention to the growing threats to the cybersecurity of the critical systems upon which all Americans depend, including those impacting the systems supporting our democratic election process," the letter reads.

They also cited his failure "to denounce intolerance

and violence of hate groups" when asked about the "horrific violence in Charlottesville" as one of the reasons why they left. Instead, they said, the president chose to offer false equivalencies and question CEOs' motives when they decided to leave their respective advisory panels following the incident. In addition, they didn't appreciate his move to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

The members, who were appointed under the previous administration, resigned just before the panel was supposed to hold its quarterly business meeting. They include these Obama-era officials: the first ever White House Chief Data Scientist DJ Patil, Office of Science

and Technology Policy Chief of Staff Cristin Dorgelo and White House Council on Environmental Quality Managing Director Christy Goldfuss.

The president recently lost two other panels before the NIAC members resigned. His administration dissolved the Manufacturing Council and the Strategic and Policy Forum, but not before a good number of their members already left. Intel CEO Brian Krzanich resigned a few days after Charlottesville, along with a bunch of executives from other industries. Tesla and SpaceX chief Elon Musk left way back in June, however, right after the US dropped out of the Paris Accord.

(Source: Defenceone)

# Iranian, American nanosensor detects canned food toxics in 20s

A research team from Sahand University of Technology, Iran, in close collaboration with Tennessee University, USA, designed and manufactured a biological nanosensor capable of detecting the hazardous substances in canned foods with enhanced precision in just twenty seconds.

According to Iran Nanotechnology Initiative Council (INIC), the laboratory-scale production of this nanosensor costs only \$1, and its finished cost including electrical circuits will reach around \$16.

The studies confirm that the use of canned foods in a prolonged period of time results in many acute illnesses. It arises from the presence of hazardous substances in the production of canned cans.

## ■ Concentration of Bisphenol A

"This research effort aimed at monitoring the concentration of hazardous Bisphenol A in canned foods and beverages maintained in plastic containers.

The previous methods are costly and require highly specialized laboratories. In addition, they suffer from weak diagnostics and insufficient precision.

Therefore, in our research, we have tried to overcome the mentioned limitations in detecting this hazardous substance by designing and manufacturing a cheap and fast bio-nanosensor," said Dr.



Hadi Mirzajani, referring to the hazardous substance of Bisphenol A as one of the most commonly used substance in the production of canned cans.

**"Aptamer is used as a probe molecule in this sensor. These molecules are nanometric structures one of whose ends are attached to the sensor electrode and other one floats in an analyte-containing solution."**

Highlighting the cost-effectiveness of this sensor, he added the "fabrication expenditure of this sensor, even in laboratory scale, is about three thousand tomans, being decreased if the mass production is reached. One of the significant factors is the equipment needed to develop this sensor.

## ■ Well-established process

Since the proposed manufacturing process is well-established, it is possible to supply all equipment necessary for producing the sensor with a total amount of twenty million tomans. The application of this manufacturing method also leads to an exceedingly high sensitivity and short detection time of twenty seconds."

"Aptamer is used as a probe molecule in this sensor. These molecules are nanometric structures one of whose ends are attached to the sensor electrode and other one floats in an analyte-containing solution.

To use a specific sensor for a certain application, Aptamers should be selected such that they benefit from high connectivity and selectivity over a particular molecule," added Mirzajani, noting that the application of nanotechnology as one of the main reasons for the high accuracy of this sensor.

(Source: mehrnews.com)

## Exoplanet has a 'glowing water vapor' atmosphere

By Ashley Strickland

When astronomers looked toward the planet WASP-121b, they were searching for evidence of an atmosphere. What they didn't expect to see was a stratosphere made up of water so hot, it was glowing.

The stratosphere is a layer of atmosphere where temperature increases at higher altitudes. On Earth, ozone in our stratosphere captures UV radiation from the sun, warming that layer. Elsewhere in our solar system, methane warms the stratospheres of Jupiter and Saturn's largest moon, Titan.

But detecting these layers around exoplanets has been tricky.

WASP-121b, which is 880 light-years away from us, is considered a hot Jupiter-like planet. It has a greater mass and radius than Jupiter, making it "puffier."

Astronomers now have the strongest evidence yet that hot Jupiter-like exoplanets have stratospheres.

"The question of whether or not stratospheres form in hot Jupiters has been one of the major outstanding questions in

exoplanets since at least the early 2000s," said Tom Evans, research fellow at University of Exeter. Evans is also the author of a new study on WASP-121b, published in the journal Nature this week.

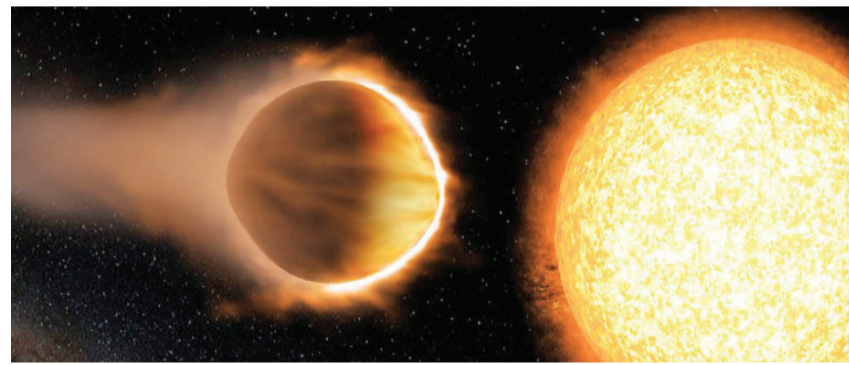
Astronomers studied WASP-121b with both the Hubble and Spitzer space telescopes to learn more about the planet and analyze how the planet's brightness changed at different wavelengths of light.

The researchers compare the water molecules to fireworks, whose colors come from chemicals emitting light. These water molecules were giving off radiation in the form of infrared light, which humans can't see. But Hubble could.

Hubble detected the glowing water molecules in the atmosphere, implying that the upper layers were hotter than the lower layers, to indicate a stratosphere.

## ■ Why are the water molecules glowing?

If WASP-121b were any closer to its host star, it would be ripped apart by the star's gravity. The top of the planet's atmosphere is heated to 2,500 degrees Celsius -- so hot that iron can exist only as a gas, instead of



a solid.

Exactly how the stratosphere can remain intact at such a high temperature is something the researchers want to investigate.

"We think there must be something heating the upper atmosphere of WASP-121b to cause the stratosphere, but we currently don't know what it is," Evans said. "On WASP-121b, the temperature is too high for ozone, but perhaps there's some other type of gas performing a similar role."

Two possibilities that have been suggested are titanium oxide and vanadium

oxide gases, which could survive the high temperatures of WASP-121b's atmosphere. They could also absorb starlight, raising the temperature of the stratosphere. But they haven't been detected, so further observation is needed, Evans said.

Needless to say, just because this exoplanet has an identifiable stratosphere doesn't mean it can support life. But being able to study hot Jupiters and search for atmospheres and stratospheres with the current technology could lead to something even more exciting. (Source: CNN)

## Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Co., after Constructing Three Large Iron Ore and Steel Projects

A number of three iron ore and steel projects will be put into operation by Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company.

Managing Director of Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company Eng. Mahmoud Nourian announced the above statement and pointed to the growing trend of this company and said: "With the coordination made in this regard, three large iron ore and steel projects will become operational."

Considering the remaining reserve of current iron ore of the company and the necessity of sustainable provision of iron ore and also continuous produc-

tion of concentrate in the long term, the initial license to use anomaly iron ore reserve (D19) with the approximate reserve of 70-100 million tons was issued for Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company and Central Iron Ore Company, he maintained.

In this regard, Dasht Youz Mining and Exploration Company has been established in 2016, he opined.

Using the mentioned reserve has caused sustainability of concentrate production in the long term, he said, adding: "Necessary follows up and different meetings were made in the presence of exports of the Department

of Environment. Once final license is received, preliminary steps will start for the operation of this iron ore mine."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the senior official of the company enumerated some growing activities of the company and added: "Like previous years, research projects were put atop agenda with the aim of reducing expenses and costs, optimizing and conserving energy resources, using latest technologies, etc."

In the end, Managing Director of Chadormalu Mining & Industrial Company Eng. Mahmoud Nourian said: "Pilot operation of Chadormalu Steel Ingot



Production Factory with the production capacity of one million tons started in Feb. 2017

## Mechanism of Settlement of Currency Transactions of Crude Oil Provided at the Capital Market

Mechanism for settling currency transactions of crude oil was provided at the capital market, Public Relations Dept. of Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI) reported.

CEO of Central Deposit Company Mohammad-Reza Mohseni announced the above statement and said: "For the

first time, the mechanism of settling currency transactions of crude oil was provided in the capital market, so that giant strides were taken for the international transactions of this strategic product."

Widespread measures commenced to layout necessary infrastructures for the international transactions of crude

oil in Energy Stock Market, he said, adding: "Fortunately, suitable ways have been provided for the transactions of this strategic products."

Under such circumstances, EDBI will be the first bank that will carry out the settlement of currency transactions of crude oil in the energy stock market, he

maintained.

It should be noted that the idea for launching Oil Stock Market was first raised in the late 1990s within the framework of the general policies of the 3rd Five-Year Socioeconomic and Cultural Development Plan, he ended.

## Official Reveals the Flourishing Period in Supply of Petrochemicals at IME

Supplying the required raw materials of downstream economic enterprises in the petrochemical industry is one of the major concerns of this industry.

In recent months, Competition Council as a governance system of regulator, has taken giant stride in order to solve the existing problem to some extent, Public Relations Dept. of Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) announced the above statements.

Pricing and supplying petrochemical products are made possible in a calm environment in cooperation with the

IME, Downstream Bureau of National Petrochemical Company (NPC) and petrochemical complexes.

Given the above issue, upstream economic enterprises supply their products at IME while NPC's Downstream Bureau is responsible for pricing petrochemical products.

Moreover, widespread distribution of petrochemical products is of the other issues facing this industry and necessary strategies and measures should be adopted in order to operating it.

For his part, Dr. Hamed Soltaninejad



Managing Director of Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) pointed to the situation of supplying petrochemicals at tis mar-

ket and said: "To me, IME is currently booming in the field of supplying petrochemicals as compared to the previous years, because, governance institutions such as Market Regulating Headquarters, Organization to Support Rights of Consumers and also Competition Council rolled up their sleeves in order to solve problems facing this market."

In the end, he said: "We managed to create a more stable conditions in the field of supplying petrochemicals in cooperation with the petrochemical production complexes."

## Researchers develop highly flexible, wearable display

How do you feel when technology you saw in a movie is made into reality? Collaboration between the electrical engineering and the textile industries has made video screens and displays on clothing a reality.

A research team led by Professor Kyung Cheol Choi at the School of Electrical Engineering presented wearable displays for applications including fashion, IT and healthcare. Integrating organic light-emitting diodes (OLEDs) into fabrics, the team developed the most highly flexible and reliable technology for wearable displays in the world.

As world trends are focusing on the Internet of Things (IoT) and wearable technology, the team drew a lot of attention by developing and commercializing clothing-integrated wearable displays. The research for realizing displays on clothing gained considerable attention from academia as well as industry when research on luminescence in fabrics was introduced in 2011; however, there was no technology for commercializing it due to its surface roughness and flexibility.

Because of this technical limitation, clothing-integrated wearable displays were thought to be unreachable technology. However, the KAIST team recently succeeded in developing the world's most highly efficient, light-emitting clothes that can be commercialized.

The research team used two different approaches, fabric type and fiber type, in order to realize clothing-integrated wearable displays. In 2015, the team successfully laminated a thin planarization sheet thermally onto fabric to form a surface that is compatible with OLEDs approximately 200 nanometers thick. Also, the team reported their research outcomes on enhancing the reliability of operating fiber-based OLEDs. In 2016, the team introduced a dip-coating method capable of uniformly depositing layers of polymer light-emitting diodes, which show high luminance even on thin fabric.

(Source: farsnews.com)

## Ringling in ears keeps brain more at attention, less at rest, study finds

Tinnitus, a chronic ringing or buzzing in the ears, has eluded medical treatment and scientific understanding. A new study by University of Illinois researchers found that chronic tinnitus is associated with changes in certain networks in the brain, and furthermore, those changes cause the brain to stay more at attention and less at rest.

The finding provides patients with validation of their experiences and hope for future treatment options.

"Tinnitus is invisible. It cannot be measured by any device we have, the way we can measure diabetes or hypertension," said study leader Fatima Husain, a professor of speech and hearing science at the University of Illinois. "So you can have this constant sound in your head, but nobody else can hear it and they may not believe you. They may think it's all in your imagination. Medically, we can only manage some symptoms, not cure it, because we don't understand what's causing it"

One factor that has complicated tinnitus research is the variability in the patient population. There are a lot of variables -- for example, duration, cause, severity, concurrent hearing loss, age, type of sound, which ear and more -- which have led to inconsistent study results.

"We have been so swamped by variability that finding anything that is consistent, that gives us one objective metric for tinnitus, is very exciting," said Husain, who also is affiliated with the neuroscience program and the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology at Illinois.

Using functional MRI to look for patterns across brain function and structure, the new study found that tinnitus is, in fact, in the hearers' heads -- in a region of the brain called the precuneus, to be precise. (Source: eurekalert.org)

## Kepler satellite discovers variability in the Seven Sisters

The Seven Sisters, as they were known to the ancient Greeks, are now known to modern astronomers as the Pleiades star cluster -- a set of stars which are visible to the naked eye and have been studied for thousands of years by cultures all over the world. Now Dr Tim White of the Stellar Astrophysics Centre at Aarhus University and his team of Danish and international astronomers have demonstrated a powerful new technique for observing stars such as these, which are ordinarily far too bright to look at with high performance telescopes. Their work is published in the Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society.

Using a new algorithm to enhance observations from the Kepler Space Telescope in its K2 Mission, the team has performed the most detailed study yet of the variability of these stars. Satellites such as Kepler are engineered to search for planets orbiting distant stars by looking for the dip in brightness as the planets pass in front, and also to do asteroseismology, studying the structure and evolution of stars as revealed by changes in their brightness.

Because the Kepler mission was designed to look at thousands of faint stars at a time, some of the brightest stars are actually too bright to observe. Aiming a beam of light from a bright star at a point on a camera detector will cause the central pixels of the star's image to be saturated, which causes a very significant loss of precision in the measurement of the total brightness of the star. This is the same process which causes a loss of dynamic range on ordinary digital cameras, which cannot see faint and bright detail in the same exposure.

The "solution to observing bright stars with Kepler turned out to be rather simple," said lead author Dr. Tim White. "We're chiefly concerned about relative, rather than absolute, changes in brightness. We can just measure these changes from nearby unsaturated pixels, and ignore the saturated areas altogether."

(Source: EurekAlert)

## One in four Iranians suffering from prediabetes

**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — While 10 percent of Iranians are diagnosed with diabetes, 25 percent of the population are suffering from prediabetes.

"That means if they don't get treatment, it will lead to type 2 diabetes," ISNA quoted the deputy health minister Reza Malekzadeh as saying.

In this case, about one third of Iranians would suffer from the disease in the next 15 years, he added.

He named urbanization and industrialization as the main risk factors for type 2 diabetes.

Having a body mass index (BMI) of higher than 25, a lack of regular exercise, and an unhealthy diet could also increase the risk of diabetes, he noted.

More than 80 percent of disabilities are caused by non-communicable diseases (NCDs), he said, referring to

IraPEN, as a national health reform plan, which was launched in 2014 by the health ministry to provide general health coverage, including access to NCD prevention and care, and mental health services.



## Teen hiker lost in Tennessee forest for 11 days turns up 'looking fine'

A teenager who went missing in a dense Tennessee forest for 11 days has been found in "good condition".

Austin Bohanan got lost after being separated from his stepfather during a hike in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The 18-year-old, who managed to survive for nearly two weeks without any food, said he was not "scared" and followed his instincts.

"The main thing was just keep my calm, keep my cool, and just keep moving. It's just instinct, I guess, that came out," the avid camper told ABC News.

"I prayed literally every night and day and it helped me drive forward."

The teenager told how he got lost while looking for his stepfather's glasses that he had dropped along the way.

"[I] was trying to search a little bit," he said. "I guess he went on a little bit, trying to find his lenses and I didn't see him again after that."

He said he tried shouting for his stepfather but found no signs of where he might have gone.

He also told how he stopped feeling hunger after the first two days, once his body realized there was no food available.

"I felt hungry the first couple of days and after that the hunger just kind of went away because I guess my brain figured it didn't need to send that signal," he said.

More than 100 people scoured the nearly 7,000 acre park looking for Austin, with helicopters, dogs and boats joining the search.

Austin said he followed a creek at the base of the mountain where he eventually spotted kayaks and a boat that came to his aid and alerted authorities.

(Source: Independent)

## LEARN ENGLISH Malfunction

A: Hey Carl, can you make a copy of this contract for me please? When you have it ready, send it out **ASAP** to our sub-branch.

B: Sure! Um... I think I broke this thing. Maxine, can you help me out here? I'm not really a **tech** guy.

C: Yeah, sure. I think it's just out of toner. You can go use the other one upstairs. **On your way** up, can you fax this while I try and fix this thing?

B: Sure! Dammit! Everything in this office seems to be **breaking down**! **Never mind**. I'll send this stupid fax later. Oh great! Is someone playing a **practical joke** on me? This is **ridiculous**!

D: The elevator has some sort of **malfunction**. Just take the stairs dude. What floor are you going to?

B: I have to go up fifteen floors! Never mind. Made it! There is the copier!

### Key vocabulary

**ASAP**: as soon as possible

**tech**: technology

**toner**: ink used in a printer or photocopier

**on (someone's) way**: while moving from one place to another

**break down**: suddenly stop working

**never mind**: forget the last thing I said; don't worry about it

**practical joke**: a joke where something is done, rather than said

**ridiculous**: very unreasonable or silly

**malfunction**: a problem causing a thing to stop working properly

### Supplementary vocabulary

**bug**: a technical problem that causes a computer or system to not work properly

**office equipment**: tools used in an office

**paper jam**: paper getting stuck in a photocopier, fax machine, or printer

**damage**: break or harm something, make something not work properly, or not look perfect

**power surge**: an increase in electrical current that can damage electric equipment

**breakdown**: the act of a machine suddenly not working properly

(Source: irlanguage.com)

# Opponents of GMOs have no scientific proof: environment chief

**ENVIRONMENT** TEHRAN — Those voicing their opposition to genetically modified organisms (GMOs) have no scientific or convincing proof, Iran's chief of the Department of Environment said on Saturday.

"Some 16 million hectares of land are planted with genetically modified crops worldwide," Isa Kalantari said, adding, seven years ago a comprehensive research was conducted in association with 70 universities worldwide by allocating \$500 million examining the possible disadvantages of GM crops on human health.

"The extensive research did not support any assumptions about the adverse effects of the genetically modified crops," Kalantari stated.

A great deal of cooking oil, corn, and soybeans imported to the country are genetically modified, "I personally do not oppose genetically modified crop domestic production and believe that those opposing it are all talk."

There is no rational reasoning behind such claims, those who are against the GM crop are merely relying on political reasons, he suggested.

In Iran, the biosafety working group (affiliated with the Department of Environment) is tasked with imposing regulations and investigating the negative impacts of GMOs both on environment and human health.

The working group is established in 2010 following Iran becoming a party to



Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity (an international agreement which aims to ensure the safe handling, transport and use of living modified organisms (LMOs)).

Further the ministries of health and agriculture are also in charge of providing consents for production of GMOs in the country.

Genetically modified food controversies are disputes over the use of foods and other goods derived from genetically

modified crops instead of conventional crops, and other uses of genetic engineering in food production.

The dispute involves consumers, farmers, biotechnology companies, governmental regulators, non-governmental organizations, and scientists.

The key areas of controversy related to genetically modified food are whether such food should be labeled, the role of government regulators, the objectivity of scientific research and publication,

the effect of genetically modified crops on health and the environment, the effect on pesticide resistance, the impact of such crops for farmers, and the role of the crops in feeding the world population.

Some scientists argue that in humans, the number one most common side effect of consuming GM foods is allergic reaction. A GM food may also increase its production of toxins at levels already harmful to humans.

Some genetically modified foods have been reported to be void of nutritional value. Because genetic engineering tends to focus more on increasing their production, prolonging their lifespan and ability to deter pest, the nutritional value of some crops is sometimes being compromised.

In terms of its environmental effects, toxicity is a huge issue concerning GM crops. In addition to that, the long term effects of GMOs are not certain. Scientists fear that excessive production of genetically modified foods that have toxin producing property will be rendered ineffective over time. This is because the pests that these toxins used to deter might eventually develop resistance towards them.

The production of GM foods imposes high risks to the disruption of biodiversity. This is because the "better" traits produced from engineering genes can result to the favoring of one organism. Furthermore, the introduction of genetically modified organisms can eventually disrupt the natural process of gene flow.

## New study finds that climate change costs will hit Trump country hardest

By John Abraham

Humans are causing Earth's climate to change. We know that. We've known it for decades. Okay so what? The follow-up questions should be directed to what the effects of warming will be. What will the costs be to society, to the natural biosystem, and to human lives? Let's be honest, if the consequences of warming are not large, then who cares? But, if the consequences are severe, then we should take action now to reduce the warming. This really comes down to costs and benefits. Are the benefits of reducing emissions greater or less than the costs?

But there is a nuance to the answer. The costs are not uniformly distributed. Some regions will suffer more and other regions will suffer less. In fact, some regions will actually benefit in a warming climate. We understand that the world is interconnected and costs will inevitably be shared to some extent. But it is clear we won't all suffer the same.

It is also clear that the natural biosystems won't suffer the same. Some areas are more susceptible to climate change, others less so. Coastal areas and tropical areas are great examples. We know that sea level rise and ocean acidification will impact coastal regions much more than where I live (Minnesota, USA). But tropical zones that experience a very small climate variation throughout the year (there is no winter, for instance, in the tropics) have biosystems that have evolved to survive in very tight climate ranges. The plants and animals just are not used to systematic changes to the climate.

In my opinion, the most interesting research deals with answering just these questions.

Fortunately, a really important paper just came out in Science titled Estimating Economic Damage from Climate Change in the United States. Granted, this paper focused on the United States, but the analysis method and lessons can be applied elsewhere.

So what did they find? First, even in a single country like the United States, the losses will be very uneven. In general, the more southern states will suffer most. In the figure, counties are colored by economic consequences from climate change under a business as usual scenario. The time period associated with the image is 2080-2099. Yellow, orange and red colors correspond to climate costs. Green colors are areas where climate change benefits will be seen.

There are a few takeaway messages. First, the color scale is not symmetric - that is the orange and red values represent pretty large economic losses whereas the green values are notably smaller economic benefits. Secondly, there are more regions that will lose than there are that will win. When interpreting an image like this, we have to be cognizant of the fact that more people live in the Southeast than in the central west. Robert Kopp, one of the authors of the study stated in a press release:

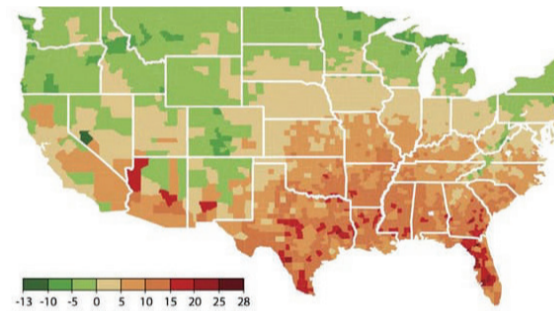
*In the absence of major efforts to reduce emissions and strengthen resilience, the Gulf Coast will take a massive hit. Its exposure to sea-level rise - made worse by potentially stronger hurricanes - poses a major risk to its communities. Increasingly extreme heat will drive up violent crime, slow down workers, amp up air conditioning costs, and threaten people's lives.*

This conclusion was echoed by Solomon Hsiang, the lead author:

*Unmitigated climate change will be very expensive for huge regions of the United States. If we continue on the current path, our analysis indicates it may result in the largest transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich in the country's history.*

In fact, the authors calculate that the end-of-century temperatures will lead to costs on par with the Great Recession (a recession that will be permanent).

But there is a silver lining that emerges from this



Total economic damage (% county GDP) study. It helps us plan. By identifying and quantifying the impacts, we can begin to create a social system and even biosystems that are more resilient. Thinking about creation of infrastructure that can withstand flooding along rivers and coasts, developing agricultural methods that are more resilient to heat and droughts, investing in technologies that reduce thermal stresses on humans and animals, reforestation both urban and rural regions to lower local temperatures, etc. The list goes on and on. There are things we can do right now to help

our fortunes in the future.

Something should be said about how this study was completed. A team with expertise in climate change, economics, big data, and risk modeling was assembled. Large scale climate models were used to predict the future climate that were coupled with historical observations. The probabilities of various given climate outcomes were calculated from models. Then, empirically based economic impacts were quantified with input taken from the most recent and highest quality scientific literature.

Among the outcomes considered were changes to crop yields (large decreases in the southeast, sizable increases in the northern states; labor reduction because of heat (basically reductions everywhere); increases to crime rates (increases almost everywhere); increased energy costs (enormous increases in the south and southeast with very small decreases in the northwest); and coastal damage (increases everywhere).

It really is a comprehensive study, one where I say "great work" to the authors. I can't wait to see if this type of analysis is going to be applied elsewhere in the world. (Source: The Guardian)

**N.I.O.C**  
1396.2359

**National Iranian Drilling Company**

**Public Calls For Quality Evaluating Of Tender(First Publish/Seconed Publish)**

**One-Stage(compressed)**

TENDER GUARANTEE		ESTIMATED VALUE (Rial)	Subject of Tender	Tenders Portal Reg. No.	TENDER NO. / INDENT NO	No
Euro	Rial					
30,365	1,180,000,000	23,580,194,291	PART FOR CORE BARREL ADJUSTABLE HEAD 4-3/4"X 2-5/8", HEAVY DUTY:XO	1/497/465	Tender No.:FP/23-96/035 Indent No.:9445035	1

**Brief discription of subject:**  
National Iranian Drilling Company(NIDC) address pasdaran Blev., Airport Saqare, Ahvaz, Iran hereby intends to purchase its requirements from qualified and interested tenderers through one-stage public tender (compressed) upon following terms and conditions:

**A) Qualitative evaluation of tenderer:**  
The evaluation is based on article (J) implementing regulations of the law of tenders and also carried out base on worksheets qualitative evaluation inquiry in the tender documents. Minimum acceptable point of quality is 60.

**B) Preparation of tender documents:**  
Purchasing of documents:  
In order to receive the tender documents, **510,000 Rials** should be paid to SIBA account number 2174652205004 of NIDC in Bank Meli Iran and providing the original deposit receipt.  
Notice: According to N.I.D.C technical and commercial committee rule, the limitation for job referrals in procurement field is four active and in process contract.

**Receiving of documents:**  
Tenderers must be obtain the quality evaluation documents along with tender documents maximum ten days after the date of second publication in person at the following address: Hall No.:113, 1thfloor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN  
Notice: Only the real or legal persons who apply to purchase and recieve tender ducments from foreign procurement department in due date and participates in tenderwill be known as tenderer from tender committee.

**C) Delivery of envelopes of bids and call quality evaluating:**  
Tenderers shall submit simultaneously envelopes of bids including bank guarantees(A), financial offer(C) and stamped and signed of tender documents(B) along with qualifaicion worksheets in form of software in CD and documentary within 40 days from last day of document received deadline to the following address: Hall No.:107, 1thfloor ,Tender Committee, Building operations, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahvaz, IRAN.  
Notice: The deadline for the refusal of bidders participation in the the tender is the last day of determined for submission of bids.

**D) Tender Guarantee:**  
**Type of guarantee:**  
A)Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that have activities licensed by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.  
B) The original cash deposit receipt paid to National Iranain Drilling Company.  
Duration of credit guarantee & quotation:  
This duration should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum For one time in initial credit amount.  
More on this & other tenders is accessible by click on. [WWW.NIDC.IR](http://WWW.NIDC.IR)

**Foreign Procurement Dept**  
**National Iranian Drilling Company**

تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۶/۶/۱۵ نوبت دوم ۹۶/۶/۱۶

# Pakistan Senate chairman: U.S. has fostered terror

By Marjan Golpira

**TEHRAN** — Mian Raza Rabbani, chairman of the Senate of Pakistan, sat with the Tehran Times in a one-on-one interview to discuss some of the latest issues in the region as well as ties between Iran and Pakistan.

Below is the complete text of the interview.

**■ Could you please give us an update on the latest development of Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline commonly called the 'peace pipeline' as Iran has completed its end of the deal and Pakistan is yet to hold its end of the bargain up.**

A: Pakistan has been working around gas pipeline for quite some time. But unfortunately, because of the sanctions that were in place against Iran in the initial stages, it ran into certain teething problems. And subsequent to that up to lifting the sanctions there were issues with the banking sector and so on and so forth.

But now we have an agreement which has been signed between the State Bank of Pakistan and the Central Bank of Iran. That agreement has almost seen the light of day in as much as Pakistan has issued the notification that was required after the signing of the agreement. Iran had given it the understanding [too]. In our meetings with Iranian officials it is in the process of having the relevant notification done. So, once that is in place, I think the last impediment should be out of way. We on our side have already worked out a strategy and a plan to complete the pipeline in Pakistan and we are estimating about a two-year period. Going over 2018.

**■ Lives of Iranian border security forces have been cut short over insecure Pakistan's borders with Iran. Smugglers find way into Iran through Pakistan loose border control. Afghanistan also complains of the same thing. What can Pakistan offer to secure its borders with Afghanistan and Iran?**

A: Pakistan has done more than its share and more than its bet as far as the war on terror is concerned. But I do agree with you most certainly on the issue of the border with regard to Afghanistan and Iran. Obviously, it is a long border. It is a border which for historical reasons and way back in time has been unattended. But given the new situation which has emerged up to the war on terror that was fostered on this region by the United States, new concerns have started to emerge.

As far as Afghanistan is concerned, Pakistan has started to fence in the borders at various places in particular where crossings used to take place, so we are now in the process of fencing that in. We have wanted to do this for a very long time. But obviously the Afghan government was not looking at it very kindly. That having been said, I still would be a little skeptic, because as I said it is a long border; the terrain there is difficult, at places it is mountainous. And therefore to have a claim that it is totally sealed is not possible. But to say that yes it is better managed than before is possible.

As far as Iran is concerned, we've had a number of commissions with Iran on the issue of border management. I know it's been a sticky point as far as the Iranians have been concerned. But then the feeling, let me put it, has been mutual on both sides.

Iran wanted us to put in place another high border commission which we did, and that border commission had its first meeting in the month of July and substantive progress has been made in that regard. In fact when the president of Iran visited Islamabad for the ECO summit, he expressed satisfaction with regard to the progress that has been made. As a consequence of that, inside the country, Pakistan has created a sudden command of rangers which would be patrolling in the area and again I would say that it would not be clean but it would be a total sealing of the border but of course it would be in a much better position.

**■ Donald Trump has recently said that Pakistan needs to change its "paradoxical policies" in supporting the militants who are causing great losses to the country. Your response to that please.**

A: Well, I think the least said about Donald Trump the better. I think he needs to have a clearer perspective on the region that he is talking about, and in particular about Pakistan. Had it not been for Pakistan the United States would have been high and dry as far as the region is concerned, be it the period beginning



from the Russian occupation of Afghanistan to the present state of affairs. And Pakistan even at that time came in despite the fact that its national security interest did not demand for Pakistan to play the role it did. But it came forward at the time the Russians were there. Then after that the Americans left us high and dry. Jihadis are today's terrorists and the price that Pakistan has had to pay in terms of its economy, in terms of its culture, in terms of its civil society, in terms of the country being torn apart is absolutely horrendous. And I think the Americans perhaps have failed to appreciate that. The introduction of gun culture or the kalashnikov culture, the introduction of the drug culture has all been because of the war in Afghanistan. We have not forgotten that the CIA had put up disutility along the Afghan-Pakistan border, and we had to pay for that. We have also not forgotten the fact that after the Americans pulled out, the jihadis settled into Pakistan and sort of webbed themselves into Pakistani society.

So I think to maintain that Pakistan is running with the head and hunting with the hound is totally incorrect. Pakistan has paid perhaps the highest price that any country in the world has paid in terms of terrorism. Our armed forces have carried out massive operations, both internally and externally [against terrorists]. And have been successful in stemming the tide, I would not say finishing it because I don't think it is possible to say that it can be eliminated so quickly, but we have stemmed the tide, and I take a strong exception on behalf of the parliament of Pakistan to these remarks of Donald Trump when we are on the front line and we are paying the price.

**■ Where does Pakistan stand on Trump's approach to the JCPOA?**

A: I believe that Obama has made substantive headway, and I think everyone throughout the world welcomed the agreement, and that we found that Iran till today has maintained and fulfilled all its commitments under the agreement. And I think that this policy of Donald Trump like all his other policies perhaps has no roots as such, because these were pronouncements which he made during his election campaign that he would review Obama's policy vis-à-vis Iran, and that he would try to scrap the agreement that was in place. And I think he is now trying to give deeds to his ill-founded policies that he announced at that time.

I think if he is able to succeed and I put that within the inverted commas it would create a tremendous amount of destabilization not only in the region, but its vibrations would be felt throughout be it Europe or be it America itself. So I think he needs to be cautioned, he needs to tread carefully and he needs to now realize the fact that he is the president of the United States of America and that he cannot afford to make off-the-cuff policies and remarks as he did during his campaign.

**■ Will new avenues of cooperation open up between Iran and Pakistan now that President Rouhani has begun his second term as president?**

A: I sure hope so. On the economic side, earlier on, when President Rouhani had a meeting with former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, they both had come to an agreement that the trade should touch the \$5 billion mark. But then it has been a sort of a seesaw, because of the tariff restrictions essentially in place by Iran on some of the imports from Paki-

stan. But I am hopeful in particular after having had these meetings here in Tehran and after listening to the officials that we would be able to move forward. They are very keen that some of the MOUs, the agreements that have been inked in by the two governments in electricity, gas pipeline... be implemented quickly.

So I am hopeful that the economic side will pick up between the two countries. And that I believe would go a long way in fostering or strengthening the ties between the two countries even further. And the banking agreement between the State Bank of Pakistan and the Central Bank of Iran has taken place. We've done our part of the notification and hopefully Iran will be doing its own in the near future so that would further facilitate the economic ties on both sides.

**■ Will the political ties between the two states stay the same with the new interim Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi?**

A: Well, although I belong to a different party, I think there will be a continuity of policy of Mr. Sharif. And I think as far as Iran is concerned like in connection with China, there is certain countries whose policy regardless of which party is in government is followed by all successive governments and I think Iran is one of those countries, because our relationship with Iran is time tested, it goes back into history, it goes back into culture, it goes back into religion. So I think it is a strong relationship and I think that with each successive government it will be stronger.

**■ How is Pakistan going to resolve issues with neighboring countries, for instance disputes with India over Kashmir and with Afghanistan over the Taliban?**

A: As far as Afghanistan is concerned, we have always believed that there is only a negotiated settlement to the Afghan dispute. We have always adhered to the policy that the Afghan dispute has to be an Afghan internal settlement and it has to be an Afghan led settlement and that no country can impose its settlement on it. We also believe that a multilateral approach of the region is required in that respect, and we have welcomed each and every initiative in that has come in that regard. These certain amount of chill that came in to the relationship between Kabul and Islamabad, we have tried to break that or we have tried to defrost the chill. We sent across a very high parliamentary delegation to Kabul which was led by the speaker of the National Assembly; it was a multiparty delegation. So the chief of the army staff has gone, the chief of ISI has gone; so we are moving in that direction. And we would like to allay the fears that Afghanistan has. But then there is certain fears that we also have. We believe that Afghanistan needs to address those issues as well. However, I am optimistic but I do feel that perhaps there is no quick solution to it. But if persistently with an open mind both countries approach the problem, I do not see too much of a difficulty.

As far as India is concerned, I think Pakistan's position is a principled one. Pakistan's position is a position which is substantiated by international law and by the UN resolution. It is unfortunate that on one side the UN resolutions with reference to Kashmir and Palestine continue to be the two oldest unresolved resolutions of the United Nations, and we have Western capitals sort of turning a deaf ear on it.

On the other side we find that you

have a resolution of the United Nations that justifies troops moving in to other countries. So this duality in the application of UN resolutions is something which I think is becoming far too stuck now and the world needs to realize that. The world also needs to realize that Pakistan has always talked about a dialogue for the settlement of the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. We have been talking about confidence building measures with India. And we have taken a number of confidence building measures with India. But it appears that the Modi government since it has taken over in India has a totally different agenda and perhaps for domestic consumption a secular India has now been converted into a theocratic India and the admiration that the West had that here you have a democracy that is secular is now gone under the waters.

So I think the policies there are driven more by the theoretical and theological bases of anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan, but nonetheless we believe that we are a responsible nuclear power, we will continue to give our unstinted political and moral support to the struggle of the Kashmiri people but at the same time we would like to have a better relationship with India, but India must realize that it can be an Indian and American dream that India has hegemony over the region. But we believe that we are ready to enter into a new relationship with India on the basis of sovereign equality and if and when the Indian government is ready for CBMs we would be ready to initiate those and to start talks with India.

As far as the talk of terrorism is concerned, India so far has been labeling vague allegations against Pakistan, no tangible proof of such has come forth, whereas Pakistan has arrested [Kulbhushan] Jadhav who has confessed to the fact that he is a serving commander in the Indian navy and he was stationed in Chabahar, he had to other accomplices with him, he was carrying on activities from here for a period of time, he would cross over into Pakistan in all probability for an operation when he was arrested. He confessed to a number of terrorism acts that he had undertaken or was planning to undertake in Pakistan... So here you have clear cut proof and these are not here allegations that Pakistan has leveled, take the city that these allegations have been worn out by India itself when it is taken the matter into international court of justice. So I think the shoe is on the other foot. It is for India to clarify its position not only to Pakistan but to the entire world that how it has been carrying out activities to destabilize Pakistan and in particular the province of Baluchistan by sending infiltrators into Pakistan.

Interjection: So you are hopeful that the matters can get resolved with India?

I am an optimist. I believe that the people of Pakistan want to live in peace. The people of Pakistan want to channelize their energies for their own development and for building economic bridges with countries; so I am optimistic, elections are around the corner in India. Hopefully, Modi would change his frame of mind or after that when a new government comes in. It is always easier to do business with a non-BJP government. So let's look forward to that.

**■ As the chairman of the Senate of Pakistan, how do you assess the parliamentary relationship between Iran and Pakistan?**

A: Well, we have a fairly good relationship even at the present moment with Iran, both the houses have friendship groups in place. He [Iran's Majlis speaker] and myself are fairly frequently in touch over the telephone. We have good cooperation at various other international parliamentary forums, like the IPU. We are bound together in the APA that is the Asian Parliamentary Association whose headquarters are here in Tehran. For in the last two years not this year but the last two years Pakistan has been the president of that. So our relationships are good. When I met Iran's Majlis speaker I offered to him a memorandum of understanding between the two parliaments which would not only cover the parliamentarians but would cover our standing committees as well, would cover the secretarial as well so that we could learn from exchanges and from the experiences of one another. He in principle agreed. I will go back and send a draft, they will probably send us a draft. So we are looking forward to a much richer period of parliamentary cooperation.

## Floods kill over 1,200 in India, Nepal and Bangladesh

The death toll from monsoon floods in India, Bangladesh and Nepal has climbed above 1,200, as rescue workers scramble to provide aid to millions of people stranded by the worst such disaster in years.

All three countries suffer frequent flooding during the June-September monsoon season, but international aid agencies say things are worse this year with thousands of villages cut off and people deprived of food and clean water for days.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi conducted an aerial survey of flood-hit Bihar state on Saturday and has pledged a relief fund of \$78m.

Government officials in India's eastern state of Bihar told Reuters news agency on Friday that at least 379 people had been killed over the past few days, with thousands sheltered in relief camps away from their inundated homes.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

## The post-hegemonic era: Greater uncertainty or sustainable security?

**➔** Absent a hegemonic power, multilateralism has become axiomatic or even inevitable. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and cybersecurity have revealed the dark side of globalization, producing both political tension and economic stagnation. The United States has lost its economic hegemonic status to China, yet still remains active in advancing its naval dominance and power across the globe. Absent a global consensus on rules, norms, laws, and sovereign obligations, the dangers of regional wars and the spread of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism would necessitate the active participation of U.S. leadership, only this time in a totally new context and with massive costs and unpredictable consequences. The United States may or may not be ready to fully take that mantle of leadership in large part because it can no longer afford to be in the business of nation-building and regime change, if for no other reason than the fact that those tasks have proven to be daunting, costly, and untenable over time.

Given these realities, several questions are raised: Who will then punish international criminal and terrorists? Who will intervene in the case of genocide or ethnic cleansing? Who will prevent the rise of another terrorist group such as ISIS? The alternative to the previous order or the status quo may be worse or better; however it is difficult to predict future trends at this juncture.

A different view of the rapidly changing international system is provided by Michael J. Mazarr ("The One and Future Order") who argues that the post-hegemonic order requires taking a more pluralistic approach to international relations and its institution, rules, and norms. In this new, multipolar order, U.S. leadership will still be critical to global stability.

Some of the proponents of this view regard the post-hegemonic world as one in which countries coalesced around key regional actors and blocs, namely China, Russia, India, the EU, Brazil, Japan, and the United States. China's "One Belt, One Road," project, which promises more than \$1 trillion in infrastructure, in over 60 countries across Europe, Asia, and Africa, and which connects Iran to Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, is the prime example. Still others such as Joseph Nye, Jr. ("Will the Liberal Order Survive?") argue that China is unlikely to exclude the United States from the western Pacific, much less exercise global military supremacy. U.S. security guarantees in Asia and Europe continue to provide critical reassurance for the stability essential to upholding the liberal order.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and NATO will prove to be crucial to the maintenance of the regional order. Global issues of climate change, poverty, pandemics, refugee crises, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and the campaign against terrorism render global cooperation between/among different regions all the more inevitable. Regional cooperation is imperative to prevent economic stagnation and the unraveling of the international system. Multilateralism becomes integral to sustainable security, economic development, and the rule of law. Cooperation is possible even when there is no hegemonic power. Under such circumstances, Robert O. Keohane (After Hegemony, 2005) claims that international "regimes" can work to foster cooperation between nations, even though there is no dominant power to enforce any agreements. Increased cooperation, Keohane goes on to argue, does not necessarily cultivate democratic or liberal values in contemporary world affairs. Different regional actors and blocs, therefore, will have to work together to maximize prosperity and minimize conflict. No major shift in international relations is conceivable beyond the general diffusion of power away from governments toward non-state actors. I tend to concur with such a vision, in part because the alternative would be far worse.

Mahmood Monshipouri, PhD, teaches Middle Eastern Politics at San Francisco State University and the University of California, Berkeley.

## How Germany deals with neo-Nazis

**➔** But, he added, frequent breaches of that taboo may slowly shift the boundaries between politically legitimate and illegitimate public expressions. Consider the number of Mr. Trump's supporters who approve of his position; many may not agree with white supremacy, but they are now less willing to condemn it because they are following the president's lead.

In recent days, people in my Twitter feed have passed around a passage from the Austrian philosopher Karl Popper's 1945 book, "The Open Society and Its Enemies," that in essence says that tolerance toward the intolerant cannot be infinite, or the tolerant risk eradication.

That's Germany's militant democracy in a nutshell. And there may come a day when the United States must embrace it as well. But for now, I have faith in a democratic public's ability to police itself. I wish Germany did.

(Source: The New York Times)

**we are ready to enter a new relationship with India on the basis of sovereign equality and if and when the Indian government is ready for CBMs we would be ready to initiate those and to start talks with India.**

## It's not football; it's water polo - Juventus great Buffon slams VAR

Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon is not a fan of using video assistant referees (VAR) in football and believes the technology is making Serie A matches akin to water polo.

The reigning champions finally benefited from the initiative, new to Italy's top flight this season, as Paulo Dybala netted the second goal of his hat-trick from the penalty spot in Saturday's 4-2 comeback win at Genoa.

The hosts went 2-0 up after Andrej Galabinov converted a VAR-awarded penalty, while last weekend Buffon was forced to keep out a spot kick from Cagliari captain Diego Farias that was awarded on review before Massimiliano Allegri's men closed out a 3-0 win.

Buffon's main criticism of VAR centres around the regularity of its use and fears the flow of matches is being unduly interrupted.

"You told us that VAR would be used in clear-cut incidents where there were mistakes, but now you are even checking the replays for a trodden toe or a finger in an ear," the veteran Italy international told reporters.

"It's no longer football... it's turning into water polo.

"It takes too long. I didn't celebrate when we were awarded a penalty because six minutes had passed.

"I am speaking as someone who represents a side that attacks a great deal and is often in the opposition penalty area.

"Last season we had three penalties in our favour, but if it carries on like this, we'll have 50.

"I'm happy with that as a Juventus player but it ruins the entertainment factor."

(Source: Four Four Two)

## Di Maria agrees to €50M Barcelona move but on one condition

Argentine midfielder Angel Di Maria is ready to make a move from Paris Saint-Germain to Barcelona but on one condition; and that is that he is a guaranteed starter in Ernesto Valverde's new-look side.

Aware that he was not the Blaugrana's first-choice target this summer, the 29-year-old Di Maria wants regular first-team action as we build up to next summer's World Cup in Russia and wants this confirmed before he makes the reported €50M switch from the French capital.

Di Maria has an important ally at the Camp Nou in international team-mate Lionel Messi who has been championing his cause with the new coach.

The former Real Madrid and Manchester United star is effectively Valverde's third-choice option after losing out on Liverpool's Philippe Coutinho and Borussia Dortmund's Ousmane Dembele and Spanish portal Don Balon writes that the player does not intend to head to Catalonia to spend his time sitting on the substitute's bench.

(Source: Calciomercato)

## Federer unconcerned by mounting injury toll

Nineteen-times grand slam champion Roger Federer does not believe the gruelling professional tennis schedule should be shortened, despite a rash of injuries, including to some marquee names.

"The guys who are hurt lately, it's mostly because they are 30-plus," 36-year-old Federer said during a press conference on Saturday ahead of the U.S. Open, which kicks off on Monday.

"I don't think there needs to be that much addressing because the players, they have the option not to play as much as sometimes they have to or want to."

"I don't think the tour is doing much wrong, to be quite honest," he said of the ATP schedule, which runs from January to November.

Federer made his comments a few hours before world number two Andy Murray announced he was pulling out of the tournament due to the hip injury that hampered him during his unsuccessful defence of his Wimbledon title in July.

Djokovic, also 30, is suffering from a bad elbow and 32-year-old Wawrinka is dealing with a long-term knee problem.

Federer said the absence of some of the sport's top players created an opening for lesser-known talent to emerge.

"It's a huge opportunity for guys ranked outside of the top 10 because there are less guys to beat, getting to quarters or semis, potentially, depending on your section," he said.

The world number three, who has won both the Australian Open and Wimbledon in 2017, said he had recovered from the back complaint that forced him to withdraw from the Cincinnati Masters earlier this month.

"I have been playing sets the last few days and I'm really happy how I'm feeling ... few days out of the first round here now," he said.

(Source: Reuters)

## Zlatan back for Man United in January - Jose Mourinho

Zlatan Ibrahimovic will return to action for Manchester United in January and bring "extra quality" to the team, manager Jose Mourinho has said.

Last week, United confirmed that Ibrahimovic was returning to Old Trafford on a one-year contract.

The 35-year-old former Sweden captain had been released after his prolific first season at United was brought to an end by a knee ligament injury.

But he is set to return to action in the New Year and, after watching his side secure a third straight Premier League win against Leicester on Saturday, Mourinho told BT Sport: "He will be back in January.

"When the market is open and people are spending money, we don't.

"But we get a player who was fundamental for us last season. He comes to give us extra quality in the second half of the season."

(Source: Soccermet)

# Mayweather silences McGregor with 10th round stoppage

A ruthless Floyd Mayweather scored a 10th round technical knockout over mixed martial arts champion Conor McGregor on Saturday, the American cementing his legacy as an all-time boxing great with his 50th win in as many fights.

Mayweather, who had guaranteed an early finish to the 12 round contest, made good on his promise when he pinned a brave-but-limited McGregor on the ropes and mercilessly hammered the Irishman before referee Robert Byrd stepped in to halt the bout.

The fight, which Mayweather insisted would be his last, sends the 40-year-old into his second retirement with a unblemished 50-0 record to surpass heavyweight legend Rocky Marciano's 49-0 mark for most wins without a loss or draw.

"This was my last fight tonight. For sure," Mayweather declared in the ring. "Tonight was my last fight. Tonight I chose the right dance partner to dance with.

"Conor you are a hell of a champion.

"A win is a win, no matter how you get it. Rocky Marciano is a legend and I look forward to going into the Hall of Fame one day."

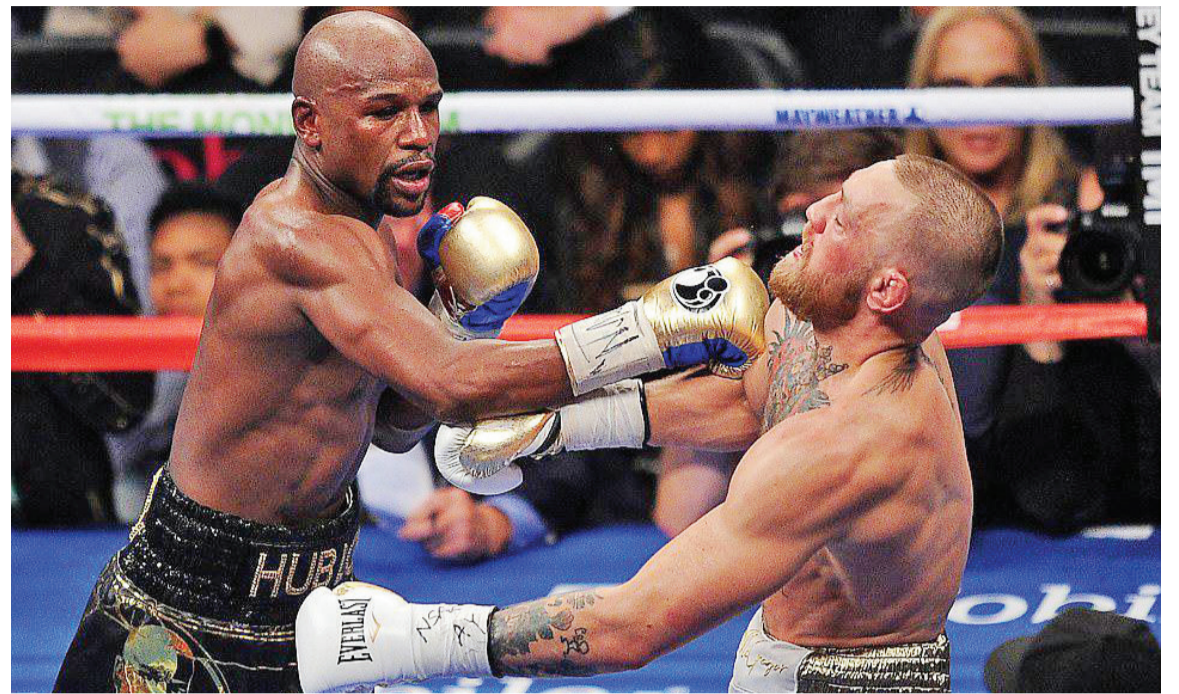
Whether the fight will be the richest of all-time as promoters had predicted will be decided later when pay-per-view numbers come in, but it certainly will not be included on any list of the great bouts in boxing.

On paper it would be hard to find a bigger mismatch, but it did not prevent millions around the globe from reaching for their wallets to purchase a pay-per-view package or the 14,623 spectators at T-Mobile Arena to part with big money for tickets.

In the end, the fight proved to be the one-sided contest many had predicted as Mayweather shook off the rust of two years of inactivity against an outclassed double UFC champion making his professional boxing debut.

### FEW OPENINGS

For months, the charismatic McGregor had boasted he would knock out Mayweather and his legions of loyal fans believed every word of a man capable of backing his supreme self-confidence with devastating power inside the



octagon.

However, McGregor's lack of ring savvy quickly exposed him as Mayweather clinically dissected the 29-year-old, who was soon reverting to his mixed martial arts roots — clutching, grabbing and hitting his opponent repeatedly on the back of the head.

McGregor did come out full of fury and menace but Mayweather, long regarded as one of the finest defensive fighters in history, left few openings as he used the first three rounds to feel out his opponent.

Once he had studied McGregor's technique, Mayweather took complete control of the contest by the fourth round and started to land blow after blow on his easy target as the Irishman bravely battled on.

The American's domination was complete by the 10th round as he moved in for the kill to record his first early finish since he stopped Victor Ortiz in controversial fashion almost six years ago.

"I thought it was close," a defiant McGregor argued. "I thought I had him in the early rounds. I thought he was getting me in the middle toward the end.

"But where was the final two rounds? Let me wobble back to me corner. Let me try and recompose myself. You've got to put me out.

"I thought it was a little early of a stoppage. I get like that when I am tired. I get a little wobbly and flow. But you got to give it to him, that's what 50 pro fights will give you."

(Source: Reuters)

## Bournemouth withdraw complaint that Sergio Agüero assaulted steward

Bournemouth have withdrawn a complaint alleging Sergio Agüero assaulted a steward in Manchester City's win on Saturday, after the striker insisted he "did not hit anyone."

Agüero and his teammates were celebrating Raheem Sterling's 97th-minute winner in the 2-1 victory at the Vitality Stadium. The City players went to celebrate in front of the away end, with stewards and police intervening as fans spilled onto the pitch, when the alleged incident took place.

Dorset Police took a statement from a steward who alleged he was struck by Agüero after the late winner in the game against Bournemouth, a source has told ESPN FC.

Agüero wrote on social media that the allegations against him were false.

A source said City had looked at the footage and are confident that the matter will not be taken any further, and a few hours later, Bournemouth said the complaint had been withdrawn, calling it "a misunderstanding."

"The club have been advised that due to a misunderstanding, an earlier statement alleging assault has been withdrawn

and no assault took place," a Bournemouth statement said.

"AFC Bournemouth recognises that stewards and police were carrying out their duties in preventing encroachment onto the pitch, with the safety of players and supporters in mind.

Dorset Police earlier said in a statement that two men had been arrested.

"Today, Saturday 26 August 2017, Manchester City scored a winning goal during the last minute of the AFC Bournemouth Premiership fixture.

"The goal was followed by excited celebrations where a number of Manchester City supporters encroached on to the pitch.

Two male spectators from Manchester were arrested as a result. No other arrests have been made in relation to this incident.

"Officers are reviewing CCTV of the pitch encroachment as part of an on-going investigation to establish whether any other offences may have been committed.

"This investigation is in the very early stages and if any further actions need to be taken, this will happen in due course."

(Source: ESPN)



## Schumacher's son drives old F1 car to mark 25th anniversary

Marking the 25th anniversary of Michael Schumacher's first Formula One win, his teenage son Mick drove demonstration laps in an old F1 car ahead of the Belgian Grand Prix on Sunday.

Schumacher, who is 18, drove 1994 F1 model of the Benetton B194 that his father drove that year to the first of his record seven world championships. The German driver's 91 wins and 68 pole positions are also records, although Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton equaled the qualifying mark on Saturday.

"It was awesome," Mick said after applause from the crowd in Spa. "To be able to drive the F1 car is amazing and I'm really honored."

Michael won his first career race on the vast Spa-Francorchamps track nestled in the Ardennes forest in 1992. He also made his debut there the year before and has a special affinity with the track. He has a record six wins — one more than another F1 great, the late Ayrton Senna.

"You can't come to Spa without thinking about Michael," said Ross Brawn, the

F1 managing director of motorsports, who was technical director on the Benetton team when Schumacher won in '92. "It was his circuit."

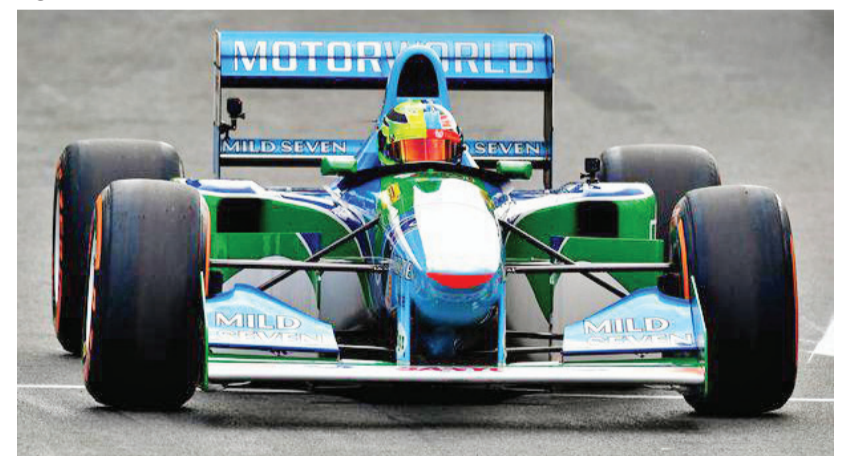
Mick, meanwhile, is driving in the F3 championship, and is touted for a bright future.

It was while skiing with his teenage son on a family holiday that Michael sustained severe head injuries in France on Dec. 29, 2013. He has been cared for at his home in Switzerland since September 2014.

His accident happened at the Meribel ski resort in the French Alps. The avid skier hit the right side of his head on a rock, cracking his helmet. Doctors operated to remove blood clots from his brain, but some were left because they were too deeply embedded.

His condition stabilized after he was placed in a drug-induced coma, from which he later emerged. The current condition of the 48-year-old Schumacher's health remains closely guarded among family and close associates.

(Source: AP)



## Murray pulls out of U.S. Open, may miss rest of season

Britain's world number two Andy Murray pulled out of the U.S. Open on Saturday, citing a hip injury.

The Scot, who had not played since Wimbledon, said he had tried everything to be fit for the final grand slam of the year, which starts on Monday.

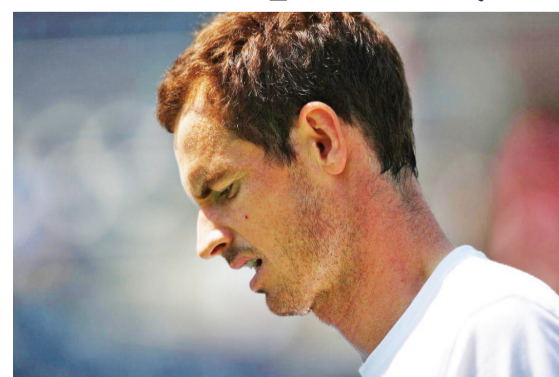
"I tried obviously resting, rehabbing to try and get myself ready here," an emotional Murray told a news conference at Flushing Meadows.

"I was actually practicing OK the last few days but it's too sore for me to win the tournament, and ultimately that's what I was here to try and do."

The three-times grand slam winner, who won the U.S. Open in 2012, has been struggling with the injury for much of the summer.

He was suffering during his French Open semi-final defeat by Stan Wawrinka in June and had to pull out of two exhibition matches in the run-up to Wimbledon.

It was clearly a big problem during his home grand slam tournament, when he bowed out, clearly in pain, in the quarter-finals, to Sam Querrey.



Murray withdrew from the Rogers Cup in Montreal and then the Western and Southern Open this month in the hope of giving his injury more time ahead of the U.S. Open.

The 30-year-old hinted that he may have to follow the example of Novak Djokovic and Stan Wawrinka in taking off the rest of the year to allow the injury to heal fully.

"I'll definitely make a decision on that in the next few days," Murray said.

"That's something that I'll sit down and decide with my team. But I'll decide on that in the next couple of days, for sure."

Murray held the number-one world ranking for 41 weeks before being overtaken by Rafa Nadal last week.

"I want to be back on court as soon as I can," he said. "If it means that ... I can play before the end of the year, then that's what I would love to do. I miss competing, and I'll try to get myself back on court as soon as I can.

"But obviously I'll need to make the correct decision and really think it through these next couple of days with my team, and then make that decision."

Murray began the year as the world number one, having hit top spot for the first time after a stunning end to last year, when he won five straight tournaments, including the ATP World Tour Finals.

Should Murray decide not to play for the rest of the year, his ranking is likely to slide to around 16th.

(Source: Reuters)

# Saman Ghoddos invited to Iran national football team

**S P O R T S** Iranian-Swedish midfielder Saman Ghoddos has been invited to Iran national football team.

Ghoddos is one of the 24 players called up by head coach Carlos Queiroz for Iran's last two matches in the final Asian qualifying round for the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

Team Melli will play South Korea in Seoul next Thursday and take on Syria five days later in Tehran.

"We have a 37 Elite Player Group that is our preparation basis for the World Cup and this call-up list, bringing some younger players, reflects our strategy of working on all this Elite Group," Queiroz wrote on his Facebook page.

"This doesn't mean we are in condition to (leave) behind experienced players that we are used to have with us, like Pejman (Montazeri), Masoud (Shojaei), (Andranik) Teymourian or (Khosro) Heydari, who continue in this 37 Elite Player Group as important options for Team Melli."

Iran lead Group A with 20 points from eight games, followed by South Korea and Uzbekistan with 13 and 12 points respectively.

#### Iran squad:

**Goalkeepers:** Alireza Beiranvand, Hamed Lak, Alireza Haghighi

**Defenders:** Vouria Ghafouri, Ramin Rezaei, Jalal Hosseini, Morteza Pouraliganji, Milad Mohammadi, Mohammad Ansari, Saeid Aghaei, Rouzbeh Cheshmi

**Midfielders:** Ehsan Haji Safi, Omid Nourafkan, Ali Karimi Saeid Ezzatollahi, Saman Ghoddos, Ashkan Dejagah

**Strikers:** Vahid Amiri, Mehdi Taremi, Alireza Jahanbakhsh, Mehdi Torabi, Reza Ghoochannejhad, Karim Ansarifard, Sardar Azmoun



## Tokyo 2020: Rest is training for Javanmardidodmani

Iran's Sareh Javanmardidodmani was the undisputed pistol shooting star the last Paralympic cycle. But before she began her campaign for another cycle toward Tokyo 2020 which are three years from today, Javanmardidodmani knew she needed a break.

"Before Rio, I felt so much pressure on my shoulders, particularly due to my past results," the 32-year-old said. "It was as if everyone was counting on me to win gold."

For those counting on her, she certainly did not let them down.

Javanmardidodmani bagged two Paralympic gold medals at Rio 2016. That topped off the world and Asian titles, plus the multiple world records she recorded in that Paralympic cycle.

Yet, even after her historic Rio victories in the P2 (women's 10m air pistol SH1) and P4 (mixed 50m pistol SH1), which made her become Iran's first female Paralympic champion in the sport,



the pressure did not subside entirely.

"Frankly, during the six months following Rio, I did not train on a regular basis. I needed time to process, to rest, to recharge. I also wanted to take my time to think about my future plans in the sport as well as about ways to continue being successful at what I do."

About two months ago, Javanmardidodmani started with light training and almost daily workouts again, saying: "I am trying to regain my former shape as quickly as possible."

Now, she does so with confidence and peace of mind, which was a long-term effect of the Rio golds, she stated.

"In terms of what I had wanted to achieve in my sport, the medals certainly have made me relax and feel a calmness I had not experienced before. Whatever competition I will participate in in the future, even in the next Paralympic Games, I will benefit from my experiences in Rio," she said.

Tokyo 2020 is unquestionably on Javanmardidodmani's agenda, as are the World Championships in Cheongju, South Korea, next year. In both events, defending her titles are her goals.

For her, a key prerequisite to do so, she said, is to be positive, to embrace every competition as a new experience – and also a new chance.

"If I look back on my almost 10 years in the sport, defeats and the approach that you learn from them, have been absolutely central for me. It were previous

defeats that made me into the athlete that was able to triumph at the 2014 World Champs in Germany, even at Rio 2016."

This season, Javanmardidodmani will continue to take it slow; only the World Shooting Para Sport World Cup in Croatia from 19-27 September is a current focus.

Her eyes are already set on the 2018 World Championships in May. Then come qualification events for the Paralympics, the Para Asian Games, and eventually Tokyo 2020.

"They are not finalised yet but I am currently developing my daily training programmes for Tokyo 2020. At least at this point in my shooting career I feel like nothing can really disappoint me."

The Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games will take place between 25 August-6 September. More information is available on Tokyo 2020's website.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

## Road To Russia 2018: Hopefuls all set for Asian Qualifiers

Kuala Lumpur: With the Islamic Republic of Iran securing the first of Asia's 2018 FIFA World Cup spots in June, things are heating up for the remaining three automatic places at the finals in Russia next summer when the 12 teams return to action this week for the penultimate round of fixtures.

#### Group A

Iran may have confirmed their place at Russia 2018 after beating Uzbekistan in Tehran on Matchday Eight, but Carlos Queiroz's unbeaten side will be anything but easy opponents for second placed Korea Republic in Seoul on Thursday.

However, should the Koreans go on to win, and Uzbekistan fail to get at least a point from their match with China in Wuhan, Shin Tae-yong's side will qualify from Group A as the second placed side and thus avoid a winners-take-all showdown in Tashkent on Matchday 10.

Fourth-placed Syria are four points behind Korea, and three off Uzbekistan, but they have not yet lost a game at their designated home venue in Malaysia and recently recalled powerhouse forward Omar Al Somari to the side for the upcoming match against Qatar.

While Qatar and China are no longer in the equation for automatic places in the World Cup, they still have a slim chance at third place and a route through the play-offs, but they must record victories on Thursday.



#### Fixtures

Korea Republic v IR Iran

Venue: Seoul World Cup Stadium, Seoul

Kick-off: August 31, 21:00 UTC+9:00

Syria v Qatar

Venue: Hang Jebat Stadium, Melaka

Kick-off: August 31, 20:00 UTC+8

China v Uzbekistan

Venue: Wuhan Sports Centre Stadium, Wuhan City

Kick-off: August 31, 20:00 UTC+7

#### Group B

The intriguing three-way battle for the two automatic qualification places from Group B endures into Matchday Nine and brings with it arguably the tie of the round when

first-placed Japan face third-placed Australia with just a point's difference between the sides on Thursday at Saitama.

The Samurai Blue have a poor record against the Socceroos but a win on home soil would ensure they become Asia's second team to qualify for Russia 2018.

Meanwhile, in the week's early game on Tuesday, second-placed Saudi Arabia will be looking for a victory away at the United Arab Emirates – who themselves could still mathematically qualify for the World Cup – that could put them in a strong position for a return to the World Cup for the first time since 2006.

And finally, the two bottom placed sides of Iraq and Thailand will face off in Bangkok with only pride on the line. Both sides chalked up encouraging results under their respective new coaches on Matchday Eight – Iraq drew with Japan and Thailand shared a 1-1 scoreline with the UAE – and they will be looking to build towards the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

#### Fixtures

United Arab Emirates v Saudi Arabia

Venue: Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain

Kick-off: August 29, 20:30 UTC+4:00

Thailand v Iraq

Venue: Rajamangala Stadium, Bangkok

Kick-off: August 31, 19:00 UTC+7:00

Japan v Australia

Venue: Saitama Stadium 2002, Saitama Kick-off: August 31, 19:35 UTC+9:00

(Source: AFC)

## Dominant Chelsea cruise to home victory over Everton

Chelsea secured their second Premier League win in a row as they cruised to a comfortable 2-0 triumph over Everton at Stamford Bridge.

Antonio Conte's champions were shocked at home by Burnley on the opening Saturday of the season but defeated Tottenham Hotspur at Wembley the following week to get their season up and running.

And after a scrappy opening spell at Stamford Bridge, during which Wayne Rooney was sent crashing by an N'Golo Kante challenge, Chelsea began to settle into their stride.

They threatened when Pedro sent an acrobatic bicycle kick off target and, after Idrissa Gueye was booked for a late challenge on Cesc Fabregas, had another

chance when Willian curled an effort wide of Jordan Pickford's post.

David Luiz strode forward from defence but saw a low strike held by Pickford, who repeated the trick when Pedro fired in a strike after Fabregas and Willian had set him up.

With 21 minutes gone, Rooney needed treatment after a strong challenge from Marcos Alonso but was struggling to get into the action as Everton failed to muster much threat to the Chelsea goal.

The Merseysiders were on the back foot again moments later as Pedro seized on a loose pass and led a Chelsea break but got his final pass to Willian, in space down the right, all wrong.

But after 27 minutes, Chelsea got the breakthrough their pressure merited

when Fabregas fired them ahead, side-footing past Pickford after Alvaro Morata had created the chance.

Everton midfielder Gylfi Sigurdsson tried his luck but saw a sliced strike sail off target -- but with five minutes remaining until the break, the visitors were two down as Morata headed Cesar Azpilicueta's perfect cross beyond Pickford.

Chelsea began the second half brightly, Pedro firing in another effort, before Everton made and missed a chance to get back into the match when Rooney played in Sandro only for the forward to scuff his shot.

Willian's backheel set up another opening for Victor Moses, who raced into the box before being crowded out as the home side continued to dominate

proceedings.

They again came close to finding a third goal on the hour mark when Azpilicueta's cross caused havoc but no home player was able to get the final touch, and soon afterwards Moses strode forward again but sent his low shot straight at Pickford.

Rooney scuffed a shot as Everton launched a rare attack, with the frustrated former England captain then picking up a yellow card after a clash with Fabregas.

And although defender Ashley Williams shot over as Everton mustered some late pressure, with Thibaut Courtois also tipping a Gueye effort over, but Ronald Koeman's side were unable to shake Chelsea out of their comfort zone. (Source: ESPN)

## Mehdi Taremi one to watch in World Cup Asian Qualifiers

**TEHRAN** — The-AFC.com takes a look at the key players from each of the 12 teams who will be in action as the Road to Russia nears its thrilling climax.

The site has chosen Persepolis striker Mehdi Taremi as one of the players to watch.

Striker Mehdi Taremi follows a long line of top class attacking players who have passed through the ranks of Persepolis while also showcasing their talents for Iran's national team on the Asian stage.

Taremi can play as an out-and-out striker or on the left side of the attack, as he often does for the national team in support of Sardar Azmoun, and his eye for goal has seen him excel in this year's AFC Champions League.

(Source: AFC)

## Masoud Soltanifar hopes for World Cup good draw

Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs Masoud Soltanifar hopes that the Iranian football team book a place in the 2018 World Cup next stage.

Team Melli is the first Asian team who has qualified for the prestigious event.

"First, I hope we have a good draw in the 2018 World Cup. Then we will have to qualify for the next stage for the first time," Soltanifar said in an interview with Iran's state-run TV.

"We are going to arrange about seven warm-up matches for Team Melli as part of preparation for the World Cup. We want to show a good performance in the competition in accordance with our dignity," he added.

"After the World Cup, we will focus on the 2018 Asian games since we want to make history in the competition.

"In the Olympics, we have claimed medals just in four sports so far. Iran has won medals in weightlifting, wrestling, taekwondo and athletic and we hope to win medals in more sports," Soltanifar said.

"We've been focusing on the area of women's sports development over the past nine months and I think we have so many talented sportswomen in our country. Kimia Alizadeh won a medal in the 2016 Olympic Games and I think our women are capable of winning three medals in the upcoming Olympics," the minister concluded.

(Source: Tasnim)

## Iran rock climber ranks 2nd in Italy World Cup

Iranian rock climber Reza Alipour grabbed the second title in Arco Climbing World Cup which was held in Italy, a sport official said.

In speed section, Alipour received silver medal, Head of Qazvin Mountaineering and Sport Climbing Committee Gholam Hassan Nekounam told the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA).

Due to sliding in final match he stood after Russian rival, Nekounam said.

Alipour with a record of 5.96 seconds advanced final match, according to the Iranian sport official.

The Iranian rock climber is also the winner of two rounds of China's Nanjing and Villars, Switzerland.

Alipour also snatched the gold medal in Poland games.

IFSC Climbing Worldcup (L,S) - Arco (ITA) 2017 was held on August 25-26 in Italy.

(Source: Irna)

## Muller not 'in demand' at Bayern Munich under Carlo Ancelotti

Thomas Muller said he does not feel valued by Carlo Ancelotti after the Bayern Munich coach left the forward out of the starting XI on Saturday.

Muller has spent his entire career with Bayern, but he spoke out after Ancelotti started Thiago Alcantara in his place for the 2-0 win over Werder Bremen.

"I don't know exactly which qualities the coach wants to see," Muller told ARD. "But mine seem not to be 100 percent in demand."

The 27-year-old did eventually come on for Franck Ribery in the 73rd minute, with Bayern already 1-0 up.

Ancelotti said tactics were the only reason Thomas Muller did not start the game.

"We tried to plan the game using the wide areas more and to have more possession in the middle," he said. "For this reason Thomas didn't start the game."

"He went in during the second part of the game and did well. It was only a technical decision."

Bayern's new sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic said that the club still considered Muller a talent, though he scored just five goals after Ancelotti took charge last season.

"We have many games this season and know what we have in Thomas," Salihamidzic told Sky Germany.

Bayern maintained their 100 percent start to the season, and Ancelotti told their website: "I'm very happy with the result. It was an important victory in a very difficult match."

"We struggled to find space for an hour. You always see room for improvement as a coach, but at the end of the day it's only the three points that count."

(Source: Soccernet)

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## Iranian films scoop awards at Indian festival

**A R T TEHRAN** — Four Iranian films were honored during the closing ceremony of the 2nd Kargil International Film Festival in the Indian city on August 23.



Yusef Jafari received the award for best director for his documentary "Chocolate Story", while Milad Jarmuz was picked as best director for his short film "Numbness".

"Light Sight" directed by Seyyed Moslem Tabatabai was selected as best animation and Marzieh Kheirkhah received the award for best director for her animation, "In the Crosshairs".

Movies from other countries also received awards at

the event.

The award for best documentary went to "Moonlight Princess" by Elke Margarete Lehrenkrauss from Israel, while "17 Years Together" by Javier Fesser from Spain was crowned best short film.

## Movies from Iran line up for Italian event

**A R T TEHRAN** — Nine Iranian films will be screened in the various sections of the 14th Salento International Film Festival, which will open in Tricase, Italy on Friday.



"Cold Breath" by Abbas Raziji and "Apricot Groves", an Iranian-Armenian production by director Purya Heidari-Ureh, will compete in the main section of the festival.

The main section also features "Dowry's Sugar Bowl" by Ali Mollaqaolipur, "The Descendants" by Yaser Talebi, "No Way out" by Negar Zoka and "Women of the Silk Road" by Yasmin Maleknasr.

The organizers have also selected short films "Alan" by Mostafa Gandomkar, "White House" by Arastu Mafakheri and "Parrot" by Mojtaba Qasemi.

The festival will come to an end on September 9.

## NEWS IN BRIEF



**Arizona Underground Film Festival to screen "Kupal"**

**A R T TEHRAN** — Iranian director Kazem Mouldesi's drama "Kupal" will be screened at the Arizona Underground Film Festival.

Starring Levon Haftvan, the film tells the story of a hunter and a taxidermist, called "Dr. Ahmad Kupal". On the last day of the year, moments before the arrival of the new year, he faces an unexpected challenge.

The festival will be held in Tucson, Arizona in the United States from September 15 to 23.

## Baldwin revives Trump impression for summer spinoff of 'SNL'

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Alec Baldwin has donned his blond wig to reprise his impression of President Donald Trump for NBC's summer spinoff of "Saturday Night Live."

Baldwin opened Thursday's episode of "Weekend Update: Summer Edition" by satirizing Trump's rally in Phoenix on Tuesday. In the skit, Baldwin's Trump gave a send-off to former presidential adviser Steve Bannon, who left the administration last week. Bannon was shown as the Grim Reaper, as he has been in earlier "SNL" episodes.

"SNL" announced on Twitter on Thursday night that it will kick off its 43rd season Sept. 30 with Ryan Gosling hosting and Jay Z as musical guest.

# Winners honored at first annual Davud Rashidi Awards

**A R T TEHRAN** — The winners of the first annual Davud Rashidi Awards, which was launched by late actor Davud Rashidi's family to honor cultural figures with outstanding achievements, were announced during a ceremony at the main hall of Tehran's City Theater Complex on Saturday evening.

In its design, the award is composed of a rectangular cube, the upper part of which is stair-shaped and decorated with a crystal plate bearing an inscription reading, "The Play Goes on."

Four awards were presented including one to actor and director Hassan Majuni in recognition of his contribution to theater.

"This award is very significant for me," Majuni said after accepting the award from actress Fatemeh Motamed-Arya.

Rashidi's widow, Ehteram Borumand, addressed Majuni onstage and said, "The idea of giving this award to you first came to my mind, because you, like Davud Rashidi, spend all your time thinking about theater and also observing theaters in other towns."

64-year-old director Alireza Davudnejad was another honoree who received the award from director Marzieh Borumand, who said, "Davudnejad displays all the good characteristics that Davud Rashidi considered important for an artist to have."

In his acceptance speech, Davudnejad recounted memories of his first meeting with Rashidi and expressed his happiness over receiving the award from his family.

The other two awards were presented to two veteran journalists Amid Naeini and Mohsen Mirzai.

Veteran actor Davud Rashidi, star of memorable



Director Alireza Davudnejad (R) receives his award from his fellow filmmaker Marzieh Borumand during the Davud Rashidi Awards at Tehran's City Theater Complex on August 26, 2017. (Mehr/Behnam Tofiqi)

movies like Kiumars Puraaham's "Bibi Chelcheleh", Ali "Hezardastan" and "Mokhtarnameh", died on August 26, Hatami's "Kamalolmolk", and the acclaimed TV series 2016 at the age of 83.

## Pallet performance opens art exhibition in Tehran



Akbar Nemati poses beside one of his artworks on display in an exhibition at Tehran's E1 Gallery on August 25, 2017.

**A R T TEHRAN** — The Tehran-based Iranian-rock fusion band Pallet performed pieces on Friday during the opening ceremony of an art exhibition by Akbar Nemati, the father of the band's singer, Omid Nemati.

Nemati is displaying his three collections built up over the past 45 years in an exhibition at E1 Gallery.

One of the series features paintings of desert houses created through wood burning art.

"This collection is born of a friendship between fire and wood," Nemati said at the opening ceremony of the showcase.

"No paint has been used in the crea-

tion of these paintings," he added.

Nemati is also showcasing a collection of his sculptures created with recycled materials.

In addition, the exhibition displays a collection that features huge nails fixed in various positions.

"I have been thinking about art over the past 50 years," Nemati, 70, said and added that these collections are the outcome of his thinking over the years.

All the money raised by the exhibition will be donated to charity.

The exhibition will run until September 1 at the gallery located at 1 Hamid Dead End, off Lesani Alley, Jebbeh St., off Mahdiah St. in the Elahieh neighborhood.

## Sweden Iranian Film Festival announces lineup

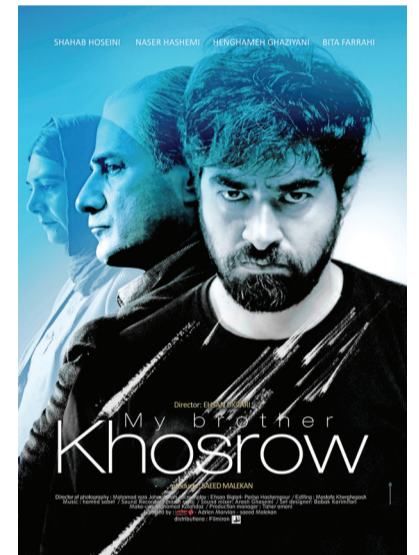
**A R T TEHRAN** — The Iranian Film Festival in the Swedish cities of Uppsala and Stockholm has announced its lineup.

Among the highlights of the lineup are "Being Born" by Mohsen Abdolvahab, "Inadaptable" by Ebrahim Ebrahimi and "Yellow" by Mostafa Taqizadeh.

"Blind Spot" by Mehdi Golestaneh, "My Brother Khosrow" by Ehsan Biglari and "The Season of Narges" by Negar Azarbaijani will also be screened at the festival, which is scheduled to be held on September 23 and 24.

In addition, the short movies "Whooping Cough" by Reza Tofiqju, "Save Me" by Mohsen Nabavi, "Hasti" by Kamal Parnak, "Pale Mirrors" by Salem Salavati, "Peroxide" by Abbas Nezamudust and "Limbo" by Qasideh Golmakani have also been selected for the event.

The festival is organized every



year by Yari, an Uppsala-based charity organization that helps street children in Iran to go to school and also raises funds for the construction of schools and libraries for children.

## French singer Charles Aznavour gets Hollywood star at age 93

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — French singer Charles Aznavour finally got a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on Thursday, capping a more than 70-year career as one of his country's most popular entertainers.

Aznavour, 93, who was born Shahnour Varinag Aznavourian in Paris to Armenian parents, has sold more than 100 million records in 80 countries. He has been described as France's equivalent to Frank Sinatra.

The singer on Thursday described himself as happy at the honor - with reservations.

"The word I can say is happy, and with a part of emotion, of course, because we are far away from my country, from my way of living, from my way of being received by the people," he said at



Armenian-French singer Charles Aznavour poses after unveiling his star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in Los Angeles, California, U.S., August 24, 2017. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

the Hollywood ceremony.

Aznavour began his career peddling his words and music to the Paris boulevardiers of the 40s and 50s - Edith Piaf, Maurice Chevalier and Charles Trenet.

He soon became adept himself at interpreting emotional love songs, recording hits like "She," "Hier Encore" (Yesterday When I Was Young), "Après l'Amour" (After Love) and "La Bohème."

Aznavour is also known for his humanitarian work in Armenia, especially after the 1988 earthquake that killed tens of thousands of people. He was granted Armenian citizenship in 2008 and was appointed in 2009 to be that country's ambassador to Switzerland, a position he still holds.

## NYT pulls book from best-seller list over suspicious sales

**NEW YORK (AP)** — A novel called "Handbook for Mortals" had a very brief reign at the top of a New York Times best-seller list.

The paper confirmed Friday that it had pulled Lani Sarem's book from its young adult hardcover list for Sept. 3 because of "inconsistencies" in the reporting of sales. The announcement came after online complaints that "Handbook for Mortals" had benefited from so-called "bulk sales," when hundreds or thousands of copies are ordered by a single buyer. On Twitter, young adult author Phil Stamper and others had questioned how a book they knew little about could reach No. 1 on the Times list.

"After investigating the inconsistencies in the most recent reporting cycle, we decided that the sales for 'Handbook for Mortals' did not meet our criteria for inclusion," the Times said in a statement issued through communications director Jordan Cohen. "We've issued an updated 'Young Adult Hardcover' list for Sep-

tember 3, 2017, which does not include that title."

Published Aug. 15, "Handbook for Mortals" is billed as the first of a fantasy series about a young woman with supernatural powers. It's also billed as the first release through the publishing arm of a Los Angeles-based web site, geeknation.com, which calls itself "an online entertainment destination serving up a fresh, daily dose of news, opinion, lifestyle and community." Requests for comment from Sarem and from her publisher were not immediately returned Friday.

Placement on a Times best-seller list is highly valued by authors and publishers, and efforts to manipulate sales through "bulk" purchases have occurred over the years. An "About the Bestsellers" note on the paper's web site reads that "Institutional, special interest, group or bulk purchases, if and when they are included, are at the discretion of The New York Times Best-Seller List Desk editors."

## Disney taps augmented reality for 'Star Wars' toy event

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — Walt Disney Co will send "Star Wars" characters into the realm of augmented reality next week to draw fans into stores as they release new merchandise tied to upcoming movie the "The Last Jedi," the company said in a statement on Thursday.

Starting at 12:01 a.m. PDT (0701 GMT) on Sept. 1, more than 20,000 retail locations in 30 countries will feature displays that fans can scan with their smartphones to reveal characters such as Rey or Chewbacca.

Using augmented reality technology, users will see the characters overlaid on their surroundings by looking through their phone's cameras, and can take photos or videos with them.

Disney is tapping into the trend of augmented reality, or AR, which first gained mass adoption in July 2016 with the release of Niantic Inc's Pokemon Go game.

The hunt for "Star Wars" charac-

ters is scheduled to last three days and will coincide with "Force Friday II," when retailers start selling toys and other products tied to "The Last Jedi."

Retailers include Wal-Mart Stores Inc, Target Inc, and Best Buy Co Inc stores. "Last Jedi" merchandise will also be sold online, and the AR characters will be accessible via some websites.

Apple Inc stores will sell new app-enabled "Star Wars" toys made by third parties but will not take part in the augmented reality hunt. Apple stores will hold other "Star Wars" events during the "Force Friday II" weekend.

"Star Wars," one of Disney's most important franchises, was the U.S. toy industry's top-selling property for 2015 and 2016, with \$1.5 billion in sales over the two years, according to research firm NPD. "The Last Jedi," the eighth movie in the "Star Wars" film saga, arrives in theaters in December.