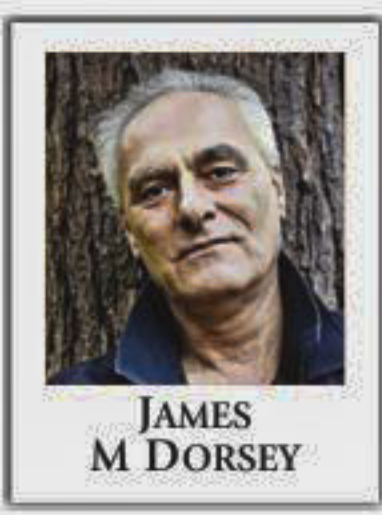


With Trump's withdrawal from Iran deal, what's at stake?



JAMES M DORSEY

PRESIDENT Donald Trump's abrogation of the 2015 international nuclear agreement with Iran is likely to put his America First policy to the test.

Trump's decision to walk away from the agreement that curbed Iran's nuclear programme risks fuelling a nuclear race in the Middle East, particularly if Iran decides that the US withdrawal has rendered the deal unbeneficial.

Competition for a slice of the Middle East's nuclear pie is already in full swing with Saudi Arabia emerging as one of the world's largest and most immediate export markets.

To ensure that the United States remains competitive, Trump is likely to have to compromise on strict US conditions that have governed US nuclear exports until now. Failure to do so could deprive America's nuclear industry of its best option for recovery from the fallout of overregulation, foreign competition and the rise of rival energy sources, including gas and renewables.

Raising the spectre of a nuclear race, Saudi foreign minister Adel Al-Jubeir last week reiterated the kingdom's warning that it would develop a nuclear weapon if Iran were to pursue military aspects of its programme.

Al-Jubeir as well as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have not

defined what they would consider Iranian efforts to develop a nuclear weapon if Iran too decides to walk away from the 2015 agreement and revitalise its nuclear effort unfettered by the deal's restrictions.

Saudi distrust of Iranian intentions has been reinforced by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent disclosure that the Jewish state's intelligence service had laid hands on 100,000 Iranian files that document Iranian efforts to develop a nuclear weapon prior to the 2015 agreement.

Iran has consistently denied that it wanted to develop a nuclear weapon. The Islamic republic has also said it would remain committed to the nuclear agreement despite the US withdrawal and re-imposition of

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Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir said last week that Saudi Arabia will seek to develop its own nuclear weapons if Iran does.

PHOTO: AFP

sanctions if the other signatories—Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China—fulfilled their obligations and ensured that Iran would benefit economically.

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif is visiting Beijing, Moscow and Brussels to ascertain whether the signatories are committed to defying Trump by doing business with and investing in Iran despite the risk of their companies suffering the wrath of the US Treasury.

US Energy Secretary Rick Perry is meanwhile hoping that Saudi Arabia's ambitious civil nuclear programme will create opportunities for American companies. The

programme entails building 16 reactors by 2032 with a capacity of 17.6 gigawatts (GW).

Al-Jubeir said in March that the kingdom was engaged in talks with 10 nations about its nuclear programme, including Russia and China, countries that likely would be more amenable than the United States to reduced safeguards and broader arrangements.

Saudi Arabia has demanded in discussions with the Trump administration the right to enrich uranium and reprocess spent fuel into plutonium, potential building blocks for nuclear weapons, as part of any agreement with a US company. The Saudis argue that Iran has that

right under the 2015 agreement.

Perry, in a first step to ensure that Westinghouse, the US company most immediately concerned, would have a fighting chance, persuaded Saudi Arabia to include American firms in a bid for its first two reactors. The kingdom had initially invited only Chinese, French, Russian and South Korean bidders.

The energy secretary is at the same time negotiating a non-proliferation trade or 123 Agreement with Saudi Arabia that is required by US law as a precondition for participation of American companies. A sticking point in the negotiations is the fact that the United Arab Emirates set a high benchmark when it accepted to forswear enrichment and reprocessing as part of its 123 Agreement.

The UAE this year completed construction of the Arab world's first commercial nuclear reactor. UAE ambassador Yousef al-Otaiba warned in 2015 after the conclusion of the Iran deal that it may want to amend its agreement to have the same right as Iran to enrich uranium.

"Your worst enemy has achieved this right to enrich. It's a right to enrich now that your friends are going to want, too, and we won't be the only country," al-Otaiba was quoted as saying at the time.

The UAE has not publicly raised the issue since but could well do so if the Iran nuclear deal is definitively cancelled or Saudi Arabia is given the right to enrich.

Arguing in favour of boosting US nuclear exports to the Middle East, Katie Tubb, an analyst with the

Washington-based Heritage Foundation that prides itself on two-thirds of its recommendations having been adopted by the Trump administration, noted that US support has helped "dissuade Saudi Arabia from extremism, boost its ability to defend itself against a rogue Iran, and enable it to fulfil its commitment to quell terrorism."

Tubb went on to say that "contributing to Saudi Arabia's economic growth can be another powerful and persuasive answer to extremism by offering opportunity, greater freedom, education and jobs, social mobility, stability, and a dynamic, innovative future. Engaging with Saudi Arabia's new nuclear power industry through a 123 Agreement can play a big role in making that happen."

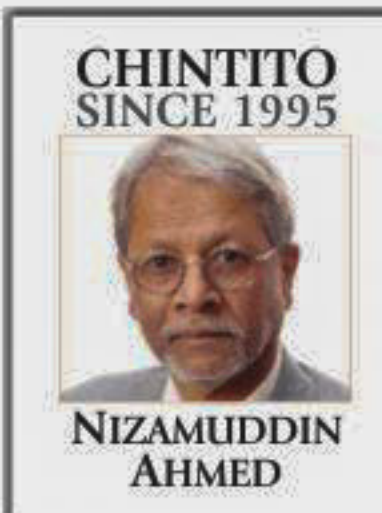
Saudi demands for the right to enrich and a potential UAE backtracking on its arrangements that have been declared the gold standard for nuclear exports potentially leave Trump with a stark choice, Tubb's reasoning notwithstanding.

He either lowers the bar and risks fuelling a nuclear race in the Middle East or sticks to the high ground at the expense of opportunity for America's nuclear industry.

If Trump's record is anything to go by, his choice would seem a foregone conclusion.

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Elbowed out by mind block



NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

THE morning was laden with an overcast sky, yet a brazen sunburst rifling through the haze bode a promising day. Despite the overwhelming laziness and considerable reluctance, I moved my gaze away from the engaging serenity. With much disinterest I leafed through the pages of a newspaper lying beside me. There she was spread all across the front page, affording me a perchance face-to-face meeting. However virtual, the famed Indian silver screen infatuation of millions was in my hands.

Now Katrina Kaif does not have to know this, but I was then being driven along the curvaceous River Turag, silvery ripples on its darkened bed defining the placidity of the vicinity. That ambience and my paper as company should have been an exalting combination but for the irritation creeping in at the thought of a need-less cultural invasion.

The commercial message carried by Kat's tinsel presence could have been easily conveyed by any of our *deshi* artistes, that too with aplomb and an effective native appeal. But, that is how the infantile minds of some advertisers have been working (or not) for some years now. And, yes, the point had been raised in this column in the past.

Considering that we have a bevy of able and popular actors, these *phoren* ingredients are not indispensable, although the likes of Alia Bhatt might perhaps be upset with the alien tag, what with them invading liberally the privacy of our homes to qualify as

chicken of the house, read *ghar ka murgi*, although she may prefer being *Badrinath ki Dulhaniya*.

I also loved another Dulhaniya, Kajol. In the record-breaking blockbuster DDLJ she was closer to body wash while lip-synching "*Mere khwabon mein*" in a towel wrap. Unfortunately, now she is selling us hand wash. Our very own Mousumi could have equally promoted children's hygiene without a bother. For the not-so-much-of-a-movie-buff, DDLJ is a quicker way of saying *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*.

Riding on her meteoric rise in the TV serial *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*, Tulsi (aka Smriti Irani) is now the Indian Information and Broadcasting Minister, but, more importantly to us, she also made it to our public billboards, as if the product she marketed would not have sold had our Poppy done the smile. Now those of you who do not know Sadika Parvin *orofey* Poppy of *Prem Korechi Besh Korechi* should repeat their national vows. *Arrey Bhai*, she won the Bangladesh National Film Awards three times, and a damn good actor she is.

Due to the manmade cultural chaos, I am having to meet some Indian idols on a regular basis (you too) as well as cope with their dance moves and wide smiles on Bangladeshi TV channels. Why someone should be so happy to use a certain washing powder, whitening cream, hair colourer, or face wash is beyond my quiet time in the bathroom.

It's not only the female artists, but Ram Kumar of *Bade Achhe Lagtey Hai*, Tiger Shroff of *Baaghi* and Hrithik Roshan of *Krrish*, to name a few, are doing their half best with their Hindi ads voiced in accented Bangla for the

hatovaggo Bangalee clientele. Then there are some ads, performed by international non-entities, dubbed by people who do not speak Bangla with a Bangladeshi accent. Yes, we have younger artists who could fill up those gaps.

The content of some of these ads is unpalatable, particularly if one happens to be at the dining table, encountering with distaste the cleansing of a commode and the raising of sweaty underarms. My sympathies and anger however lie with the entire strength of our entertainment fraternity. How are they able to digest day in and day out Indian actors and technicians, music directors and producers, stealing their

call in local TV channels?

Presumably, this dubbing of ads in Bangla is done to save money on the side of the advert producers, but at the cost of giving our viewers, especially the young, a totally wrong impression about pronunciation and intonation, and even the location.

I am all for the global village, but with mutual respect. It is a matter of ironic poignancy that not a single TV commercial starring Bangladeshi actors is shown on any Indian channel. Or, has ever been shown. Perhaps no billboard in any city or rural area displays our Mosharraf Karim, Jaya Ahsan, or Abul Hayat. The fault could lie with our policymakers and deci-

sion-takers. Why is it that Indian TV packages include channels from all over the world except neighbouring Bangladesh?

Soon after our liberation, an initiative by some distributors to import Indian movies for screening in our cinema halls was met with stiff opposition. Our producers, writers, actors, singers, musicians and technicians beseeched Bangabandhu that such a move would stunt our film industry. In spite of the tremendous support of the friendly Indian Army in the just-concluded war, since then no Indian film, save at film festivals, has been shown in our cinema halls—not that such a prohibitive measure has pro-

duced an Aamir Khan or a Rekha this side of Benapole. The need to restrict Indian movies also died down with improved technology because all films were available on video cassettes since the 1980s and for some years now on the net.

As with the dependence on Indian stars for commercial gain, Bangladeshi restaurant owners in England too suffered from a similar mind block. They named (some still do) their property "Delhi Darbar" or "Calcutta Curry House", certain that the Indian legacy was great for business. Inside was either Rustam Ali of Golapganj or Suruj Miah from Habiganj. During my PhD studies in the early 1980s, as the host of the live programme *Balaka* for Bangalee listeners on BBC Radio Sheffield, I pleaded with the mainly Sylheti restaurant owners to tag their premises as "Bangladeshi". Whether my appeal worked or not is debatable, but the situation has changed for the better over the last 20 years.

Today, Matin Miah's Ruposhi Bangla is one of some 10,000 hitherto so-called Indian restaurants in the UK, 85-90 percent of them run by Bangladeshis. Catering to Britain's national dish of mainly *vindaloo* and *tikka masala*, the industry is worth close to four billion pounds with nearly three million customers per week.

Let us not unnecessarily suffer from trade deficit. Let advertisement companies invest in our human resources by employing local producers, artistes, and technicians. Let Bangla be spoken on television as it should be.

Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed is a practising architect, a Commonwealth Scholar and a Fellow, a Baden-Powell Fellow Scout Leader, and a Major Donor. Rotarian.



Leading Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone interacts with the audience on her Dhaka trip as part of a promotional campaign.

PHOTO: STAR

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

May 17, 1992
THAILAND'S BLACK MAY

Hundreds of thousands of protesters began demonstrations—later called *Black May*—in Bangkok, Thailand against the military rule of General Suchinda Kraprayoon. The military crackdown in the aftermath resulted in 52 deaths, many disappearances, hundreds of injuries, and over 3,500 arrests.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Explosions

7 Paddy crop

11 Slacken

12 First person

13 Museum events

15 Greek letters

16 Stratium

18 Refer to

21 Make one's way

22 Closing number

24 Termite's kin

25 Peach center

26 Place down

27 Berlin speech

29 Traffic marker

30 Work hard

31 Set of cards

32 Sherbet flavor

DOWN

1 Flower visitor

2 Indulgent

3 Volcano output

4 Confiscated

5 Yam or potato

6 Rotisserie part

7 Scone add-in

8 Wedding words

9 Soda serving

10 Print units

14 Unspoken

34 Organized hikes

40 Back

41 Parody

42 Says further

43 Like some

winter days

16 Doctrine

17 Lead-in

19 Hawk's grabber

20 African antelope

21 Funny fellow

22 Fish feature

23 Storm center

25 Showed fear

28 Some runners

29 Eyetooth

31 Travel stop

33 Overlook

34 Historic time

35 Crossed out

36 Small tablet

37 Pindar work

38 Bolt partner

39 Secret agent

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

V	I	E	W	S		C	A	R	T	S
I	N	G	O	T		O	P	E	R	A
A	D	O	R	E		R	E	S	I	N
G	O	B	B	L	E		T	O	E	
A	R	L	O		S	P	L	A	S	H
S	N	O	O	P		T	A	L	I	A
P	O	C	K	E	D		Y	E	L	L
C	A	B		S	N	O	W	B	E	L
A	L	I	B	I		R	O	G	E	R
M	E	T	O	O		S	K	A	T	E
O	C	E	A	N		E	S	S	A	Y

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT