

TEHRAN TIMES



GOODBYE TIRELESS PRESIDENT

TEHRAN PAPERS

The lost dream of the Zionists

In the following column, we take a look at some important contents and views in yesterday's Iranian newspapers.

In a note, Kayhan addressed the happiness of the Zionists over the bitter accident that happened to Iran's president and said: The host of the Zionist Channel 14 television expressed his happiness over the accident that happened to the president of Iran, and shared sweets in his program. But when this host happily asked the opinion of the experts of his program about this incident, he was faced with a disappointing answer: "He will bring another person to replace him and it will be the same as before." This Zionist expert admitted that such changes do not affect the functioning of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the best way to deal with Iran is to invest in the opposition factions inside Iran. Zionist television experts are talking about their dream to create chaos and anarchy, and finally sabotage the Islamic Republic of Iran, while these days the most intense disputes and protests are going on inside the occupied territories and among the members of the fake Israeli government. Therefore, it seems that the sabotage within the Zionist regime is much closer to reality than their imaginary dream about changing the government of Iran.

Etemad: Iran and America and indirect diplomacy

In an analysis, Etemad discussed the indirect negotiations between Iran and the United States and wrote: The content of the negotiations can cover many issues. The sanctions of the United States against Iran and the nuclear issue are among the issues in which Iran's direct interests are involved. It is also possible that the topic of recent negotiations will be issues such as Iran's nuclear enrichment, resistance movement and regional stability because in recent months, many claims and warnings have been raised about Iran's nuclear power, especially after the missile and drone attacks on Israel when the severity of concerns in this regard has increased.

The price of the dollar decreased in the last week, especially after its price peaked in the days after Iran's missile and drone attack on Israel. That is a great sign of the effect of the talks between Iran and the United States on the situation of the markets and the economy of Iran.

Although the martyrdom of the president and foreign minister of Iran and their entourage can disrupt the negotiation process, the positive effects of the negotiations on regional tensions and its positive results on Iran's economic situation require that this process continue so that regional conflicts can be managed in a promising manner.

SCO extends condolences to Iranian Leader amidst high-level meeting

TEHRAN – Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has expressed his heartfelt condolences over the recent martyrdom of the Iranian President and Foreign Minister.

The Council of National Coordinators (CNC) of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) convened in Kazakhstan's capital to deliberate on the forthcoming SCO Foreign Ministers' Council meeting.

During the opening session, in light of the tragic deaths of the Iranian president and foreign minister, Tokayev extended his sympathy and condolences to the Iranian nation.

Mehdi Safari, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Coordination on Economic Diplomacy, attended the meeting in place of the late Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

Tokayev underscored the significance of the CNC meeting as a crucial forum within the SCO for addressing pressing issues on a comprehensive agenda.

Despite the difficult period, Iranian representatives participated actively in the discussions, Tokayev noted.

The meeting aims to facilitate an exchange of views on international and regional matters, security concerns, and the enhancement of political, trade, economic, cultural, and humanitarian cooperation within the SCO framework.

Kazakhstan is steering the SCO from July

Sazandegi: Iran does not intend to change its strategy

In an article, Sazandegi dealt with Iran's strategy regarding Iran's nuclear program, and quoted Abdolreza Farjirad, a former diplomat and professor of geopolitics, as saying: Iran has not shown any change in its policy and the propaganda that has been started abroad about the production of nuclear weapons by Iran is not the right topic. Westerners are responsible for the process of achieving 60% enrichment. They had made some commitments regarding the JCPOA and this agreement was being implemented, but the United States withdrew from the JCPOA and severe sanctions against Iran were implemented. Therefore, Tehran went step by step towards enrichment so that it could exert pressure on the West to come back to the JCPOA. If the Biden government had decided to return to the JCPOA at the very beginning of its work, we would not have witnessed these events. For this reason, according to the events that have happened, Iran's ability to enrich has increased, and this has caused Iran to use this ability and change its strategy when the threats of Israel increase or become public. Until now, Iran has not been based on the production of nuclear weapons, and the recent positions have only been in the face of the threats that have been raised, and Iran has responded to the threats in this regard.

Javan: Kurdistan Regional President's trip to Tehran and Western concern

In a commentary, Javan wrote about the fear and concern of the German government and security institutions about the recent visit of the president of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to Iran. The paper said: Anti-revolution Kurds have a large presence in Germany and the foreign intelligence system of this country in supporting the anti-Iranian and separatist Kurds plays a special role. So, this trip has been seriously considered and analyzed by the information and media of this European country. They are very worried about the agreement between Tehran and the Kurdistan Region to get rid of this region of anti-revolution Iranian Kurds. It is obvious that the Islamic Republic of Iran has assigned a security and strategic red line in facing anti-revolution groups on its borders, and will confront any threats in this regard. Obviously, Iran's diplomacy is to create stable security in Iran's bilateral and multilateral relations with other players and countries in the region. The concern and anger of the Germans about Barzani's trip to Iran shows the correctness and effectiveness of our country's current policy towards Baghdad and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

2023.

Tokayev highlighted that the SCO now includes ten Eurasian countries, representing nearly half of the global population, a quarter of the world's GDP, and 15% of global trade. As the current chair, Kazakhstan is committed to bolstering the organization's capabilities.

Addressing cyber security, Tokayev stressed the importance of early identification of cyber threats and developing mechanisms to ensure the stability of the information infrastructure among SCO member states.

The official inclusion of the Islamic Republic of Iran into the SCO was declared on July 4, 2023, through the efforts of the late President Raisi and the late Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

Iran's membership was initially agreed upon during President Raisi's visit to Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on September 17, 2021, and later ratified by the Iranian parliament on November 27, 2022. The formal announcement of Iran's membership occurred during a virtual summit of SCO heads of state on July 4, 2023.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, an intergovernmental entity formed in 1996 by the leaders of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, aims to foster multilateral security, economic, and political cooperation. Established to counterbalance U.S. and NATO influence in the region, the SCO expanded with Uzbekistan's inclusion shortly after its founding, adopting its current name.

Iran's Assembly of Experts selects new chairman, opens with Leader's message

TEHRAN – Iran's Assembly of Experts commenced its session on Tuesday with the reading of a message from the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, followed by the election of Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Movahedi Kermani as the new chairman.

Movahedi Kermani replaces Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati and will hold the position for two years.

The message of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution was delivered at the opening of the session highlighting the profound significance of the Assembly within Iran's political landscape. Describing it as the epitome of Islamic democracy, Ayatollah Khamenei underscored the pivotal role of the 88-member body in Iran's Islamic establishment.

In his message, Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized the dual responsibility of the Assembly of Experts: to elect the Leader according to Islamic criteria and to



itself be chosen by the people. He lauded this unique electoral process as a clear manifestation of the principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran, portraying it as a beacon of democratic governance intertwined with Islamic values.

Furthermore, Ayatollah Khamenei extolled the Assembly as one of the main pillars of the democratic Islamic establishment. He emphasized that the Assembly, strengthened by the

nation, serves as a guarantor of the system's soundness.

However, the commencement of the Assembly's new term was overshadowed by the tragic absence of two esteemed members, President Ebrahim Raisi and Friday Prayers leader of Tabriz, Seyyed Mohammad Ali Al-e Hashem. Both individuals met an untimely demise in a helicopter crash in Iran's northwestern province of East

Azerbaijan. Ayatollah Khamenei, in his message, paid tribute to their memory, expressing profound sorrow and extending prayers for their divine mercy.

In addition to mourning the loss of these officials, Ayatollah Khamenei addressed the ongoing humanitarian crisis unfolding in the Gaza Strip. He condemned the Zionist regime's brutal campaign, characterized by the indiscriminate killing of thousands of innocent Palestinians.

Furthermore, he criticized the support extended by purportedly liberal Western governments to the "bloodthirsty wolf," highlighting the glaring disparity between Western rhetoric on freedom and human rights and their actions on the global stage.

In essence, Ayatollah Khamenei's message underscored the pivotal role of the Assembly of Experts in Iran's political landscape, while also mourning the loss of two esteemed members and condemning the ongoing atrocities in the Gaza Strip.

Constitutional Council confirms new president will serve for four years

TEHRAN – The spokesperson for Iran's Constitutional Council has affirmed that in accordance with the nation's constitution and historical precedents set after the Islamic Revolution, the presidency will continue to have a four-year tenure.

Hadi Tahan Nazif clarified that the president's four-year term commences immediately following the election. He also expressed condolences over the tragic helicopter crash that resulted in the martyrdom of President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian earlier this week.

"This is an unfortunate and painful loss for

the Iranian nation," Nazif remarked. "However, the constitution has provisions in place for such events." Tahan Nazif referenced the Leader of the Islamic Revolution's statements, assuring that national affairs will proceed uninterrupted and according to established legal protocols.

He cited Article 131 of the Constitution, which stipulates that in the event of the president's death or similar circumstances, the First Vice President, with the Leader's approval, will assume the president's duties and powers.

Following the fatal helicopter crash, Interim President Mohammad Mokhber convened a critical

meeting with the heads of Iran's legislative and judicial branches. The meeting, held on Monday and attended by Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Judiciary Chief Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i, underscored the necessity of sustained coordination and cooperation among the three branches of government to navigate the nation's challenges.

In the end, Tahan Nazif emphasized that all presidential responsibilities are now vested in the First Vice President. He also addressed the timing of the upcoming presidential election, stating that it must be conducted within 50 days.

Yemen's Supreme Political Council praises Martyr Raisi's administration

TEHRAN – The Secretary of Yemen's Supreme Political Council has commended the administration of the late President Ebrahim Raisi, highlighting its exceptional diplomatic achievements amidst regional and international developments.

In a statement on Tuesday, Yasser Al-Houri lauded the efforts of Martyr Raisi and Martyr Hossein Amir Abdollahian, emphasizing that their actions within a brief period brought significant changes.

Al-Houri noted that these efforts

rekindled relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and several regional countries, attributing this success to the cooperation between the two distinguished figures.

Al-Houri remarked that during Raisi's tenure, Iran notably enhanced its international standing, particularly by strengthening ties with Russia and China and effectively managing opposition to the Zionist regime and the United States.

He highlighted the pivotal roles played by Raisi and Amir Abdollahian

in defending Palestinian rights, especially since the launch of Operation Al-Aqsa Storm on October 7.

He further stressed that the Islamic Republic of Iran, guided by the directives of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, gained significant strategic influence on the global stage due to the efforts of these two figures.

Al-Houri underscored Amir Abdollahian's critical role in supporting Palestinian resistance groups, asserting that his

performance epitomized the commitment of Muslim leaders to the interests of the Islamic Ummah and key issues, particularly the Palestinian cause.

Al-Houri also praised the wise leadership of the Islamic Republic and its extensive experience in confronting adversaries, particularly the American-Zionist axis. He concluded by affirming that the martyrdom and assassination of leaders would not disrupt the continuation of the Islamic Revolution's mission.

Memories of friend of Pakistan

By Muhammad Mehdi

LAHORE- My younger son Raham, who is still nine years old, came running to me and paused to catch his breath. I was just looking at him when he suddenly said, "A few days ago, you met the Iranian uncle in Lahore and your photos were also published with him, his helicopter has gone missing."

I started looking at his face in surprise, then he put the mobile phone in front of me. The news of the disappearance of the helicopter of the President of Iran, the Minister of Foreign Affairs

of Iran along with his colleagues was circulating. Tears came to my helpless eyes and I started telling my young son that he is the president of Iran and a friend of Pakistan. All of us in the family prostrated in the court of All Mighty Allah like other millions of Pakistanis and started praying for the safety of the President of Iran, Foreign Minister and others, but the decision of the All Mighty had already been issued, which one day or the other day will be issued for every soul.

It has to happen and the confirmation of the martyrdom of the Iranian President, Foreign Minister and their colleagues started playing on

the TV screen. Iranians are a brave nation and know how to face challenges. When Ayatollah Khomeini died, Iran handled itself with courage even then and now again Iran will soon be out from this painful situation.

Recently, when the late President Raisi visited Pakistan, I had an opportunity to meet with him and the late Iranian Foreign Minister. I was already an admirer of Ebrahim Raisi's wisdom since when I met him in Iran in 2016 and he had not yet assumed the position of the President of Iran.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Martyrdom of Raisi and Amir Abdollahian, a great loss to the Islamic nation and humanity

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT- In the wake of the shocking incident that befell President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi and his companions, the Lebanese people spent the night before their martyrdom pleading to the Almighty for their safety. This tremendous loss has revealed the wide popularity this exceptional scholar has among them. It also reflects Iran's great status in

the hearts of the Lebanese especially that Seyed Ebrahim Raisi had various economic, developmental, political and strategic achievements, and a remarkable presence in a number of international and regional forums, particularly those related to the Palestinian cause recently at the Riyadh summit and at the United Nations.

Throughout his presidency,

extending from August 3, 2021 to May 20, 2024, the martyr was keen to revitalize the Islamic nation and reduce the artificial gaps by promoting unity and rapprochement. During his tenure, the Islamic Republic also took advanced steps in normalising bilateral ties with its opponents and reassuring them that there was no truth to the American myth of an "alleged Iranian ambition" in West Asia.

For his part, the unprecedented diplomat, Dr Amir Hossein Abdollahian, had, since the onset of the "Battle of the Al-Aqsa Flood," multiple tours as he moved between Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad, Riyadh, Doha, Muscat, Beijing, etc., stressing Iran's position in support of the Palestinian people, and seeking to unify Arab and Islamic viewpoints.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran resolute in continuing the path of Raisi: minister

TEHRAN – The Iranian minister of the Interior says the nation stands resolute in continuing the legacy of the martyred President Ebrahim Raisi.

Speaking with the Al Mayadeen network at the funeral procession of the late Iranian president and his companions in Tabriz on Tuesday, Ahmad Vahidi echoed this sentiment.

He emphasized Iran's firm commitment to upholding the path of president Raisi.

Furthermore, he underscored the significance of the funeral procession, stating that while the Iranian people mourn the loss of their president, the event symbolizes yet another historic chapter in their collective narrative.

Addressing concerns about the absence of the late president, the minister of the interior reassured that it does not disrupt the administration of the country's affairs.

He affirmed that the Iranian nation remains steadfast in its dedication to preserving the legacy of the martyred officials.

Tabriz, the first stop for the funeral procession, witnessed a massive turnout as Iranians bid farewell to the late President Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, and their companions. A helicopter carrying the Iranian president crashed in Iran's province of East Azerbaijan on May 19.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Goodbye Tireless President

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN- Ebrahim Raisi might be one of the only leaders in the world whose encounters with ordinary citizens are gaining more momentum than his diplomatic and economic gains after his death.

It's not like the late president wasn't active in those fields. It was during President Raisi's tenure that Iran managed to finally rein in inflation, see economic growth, and become a member of prominent international organizations like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The country's ties with important partners like Russia and China flourished like never before, and it found new associations in Africa, South America, and Asia.

But when the people of Iran recall the three-year incumbency of President Raisi, it is not these remarkable accomplishments that evoke the fondest memories. Instead, they recount the unexpected encounters they had with him in their secluded villages, where he would appear unannounced to see the locals. They vividly recall witnessing him alongside workers in factories, farms, and refineries. And they cherish the rare occasions when they were allowed inside his van to personally share their aspirations and worries.

It is these deeply personal interactions that have left an enduring impression on the majority of people



in Iran. They remember President Raisi not only for his outstanding achievements but also for his profound connection with the grassroots.

His unwavering belief in their inherent worth and his conviction that his power was bestowed upon him solely to serve the nation's welfare resonated deeply with his countrymen. President Raisi's legacy lies not merely in the policies he implemented but in the enduring bond he forged with the Iranian people, reminding them that even in the highest echelons of power, true leadership stems from compassion and a genuine desire to uplift those he was entrusted to serve.

And perhaps all this is the reason for the immense pain and sorrow felt in every corner of the country. As Leader of the Islamic Revolution

Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei stated, Iranians have lost a sincere and valuable servant who truly yearned for his country, religion, and people.

Raisi for the oppressed

The untimely demise of President Raisi sent shockwaves of grief and sorrow not only throughout Iran but also across the region and beyond. Muslims mourn his passing because they recall his unwavering commitment to the sanctity of the Holy Quran, exemplified by the iconic moment when he held up a copy of the holy book before the United Nations General Assembly.

Beyond West Asia's borders, President Raisi's reputation as a staunch advocate for the rights of Palestinians has earned him widespread admiration in recent

months. Those who have not personally encountered him and don't share religious similarities with him feel a deep connection to the official for his unwavering support for the oppressed.

Across the globe, Raisi's legacy resonates with ordinary citizens. Despite holding the second-highest office in West Asia's most powerful nation, he remained grounded, never losing sight of his role as a servant of humanity. His genuine compassion and dedication to the well-being of others transcended national boundaries, making him a beloved figure in the hearts of countless people worldwide.

Raisi's passing left a profound void, but his unwavering commitment to justice, peace, and human dignity continues to inspire and guide those who knew him and those who were touched by his unwavering spirit.

Azeri, Kazakh, Irish presidents visit Iran's embassies to condole Iranian counterpart's passing



President Raisi at the shared border of the two countries to inaugurate a dam just hours before the tragic incident took place.

During a call with Iran acting Foreign Minister Ali Baqeri Kani, Azerbaijan's top diplomat Jeyhun Bayramov said the Azeri leader's visit to the Iranian embassy is telling of his country's deep sorrow over the incident. Bayramov also emphasized the need to implement the bilateral agreements reached during President Raisi's tenure which will help strengthen ties between the two countries. Baqeri, for his part, said Iran is committed to the expansion of relations between Tehran and Baku.

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev also left a note in a book of condolences opened at the Iranian embassy in Astana. Tokayev wrote that he had received the news of the tragedy with "great sadness and sorrow," adding that he will always remember President Raisi as a "wise leader, high-profile politician, and eminent personality who contributed greatly to strengthening cooperation between the two countries."

President of the republic of Ireland Michael D. Higgins paid a visit to Iran's embassy in Dublin to offer

condolences on the passing of Iran's late president.

Expressing heartfelt sympathies, the Irish president extended solidarity and support during this difficult time.

President Raisi placed great emphasis on the expansion of cooperation with neighboring and regional countries during his three-year tenure. He made 29 visits to 23 foreign nations in a bid to strengthen bilateral ties and boost Iran's presence in international organizations. During his stint, Iran gained memberships in BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Minister Amir Abdollahian was also a well-rounded diplomat who spent his years in office trying to bring regional countries closer together. He held multiple tours in West Asia in the past 8 months to help bring an end to the plight of Palestinians. Media outlets affiliated with resistance forces in the region mourned the passing of Amir Abdollahian as a loss for all freedom fighters.

Experts believe that the late president and minister's efforts will act as a stepping stone for future advances by upcoming leaders.

TEHRAN - The leaders of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Ireland visited Iran's embassies in their countries on Tuesday to offer condolences over the martyrdom of President Ebrahim Raisi and his Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

Azeri President Ilham Aliyev signed a memorial book in tribute to the martyrs who lost their lives in a helicopter crash on Sunday. Aliyev met with

Intl. bodies hold minute's silence for martyrdom of Iranian President, FM

TEHRAN - International organizations across the world observed a minute of silence on Monday and Tuesday in honor of the tragic passing of President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

The members of the UN Security Council held a minute of silence at the beginning of their meeting on Monday at the request of Russia, China, and Algeria. The heartfelt act drew the ire of the Zionist regime's representative, who hit the headlines last week for

shredding the UN Charter in front of the world. The fanatic and hysteric representative had also held up a placard against President Raisi in the public hall of the General Assembly for a few seconds during his speech there in 2022.

President Raisi and Minister Amir Abdollahian lost their lives after a helicopter carrying them in northwestern Iran's mountainous region crashed on Sunday due to severe weather conditions.

Their remains were found a day

later after hours of rescue and search operations.

The United Nations also lowered its flag to half-mast at its headquarters in New York. "On Tuesday, 21 May 2024, the UN Flag will be lowered to half-mast as a mark of respect for the passing of His Excellency Mr.

Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. All offices and duty stations are encouraged to lower their flags on this occasion," the body declared in an earlier statement.

On Tuesday, foreign ministers of several countries including Russia, China, India, and Pakistan stood for a minute's silence at the start of a Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan. Iran joined the SCO last year.

A minute of silence was also observed at the beginning of the sessions of the Diplomatic Conference on Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge and Armenian Parliament on Tuesday.

Pipe Dream

Economist's unrealistic analysis

and mitigating societal concerns. In the wake of President Raisi's and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian's martyrdom, Vice President Mohammad Mokhber was swiftly appointed as interim president, and Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Ali Bagheri Kani became the acting foreign minister. As Hadi Tahan Nazif, spokesperson for the Constitutional Council, confirmed, all presidential responsibilities now lie with the First Vice President.

Secondly, the Iranian political spectrum unanimously expressed condolences over the tragic loss, demonstrating a united front rather than signs of discord. This collective mourning underscores a national alliance prioritizing the country's stability and unity over individual ambitions.

By Alireza Akbari

TEHRAN - In a recent article, The Economist delved into what it described as a "power struggle" following the martyrdom of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. However, the analysis appears more like wishful thinking than a grounded assessment.

The May 19th piece speculated on the potential fallout from President Raisi's death, suggesting a fierce contest among Iran's elite to fill the power vacuum. It predicted that this struggle could exacerbate internal tensions and result in stricter government controls.

Yet, labeling this scenario as a "power struggle" seems far-fetched for several reasons:

Firstly, the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran has established clear protocols for such situations, ensuring a smooth transition of power

MAY 22, 2024

Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

3

SPORTS

Expert optimistic about Iran at 2024 Volleyball Nations League

TEHRAN - Dr. Mahmoud Afshardoust, member of Iran's volleyball federation executive board, believes that 2024 Volleyball Nations League (VNL) will be tough competition, however, Iran team are capable of getting good results in the first week to be held in Brazil.

Team Melli led by Mauricio Motta Paes, will face Serbia in their opening match, slated for May 22. Iran will then meet Italy, Cuba and Argentina, respectively.

"The 2024 VNL is very important because it also serves as Olympics qualification. On the other hand, the qualified teams consider the competition as warm-up games for the Olympics," Afshardoust said.

"Iran have very difficult matches in the first week because they have to meet Serbia, Italy, Cuba and Argentina. They are the teams that are higher than us in the volleyball rankings and they also try to book their place at the Olympics. Team Melli should fight with them and collect points for the second week. And the third can make it to the Olympics. I hope that the team will advance to the Olympics but to move up in the ranking is important as well," he added.

"In every tournament the first game is the most important game and it means we have to defeat Serbia but, as you know, their coach is familiar with our team and knows our team very well and it makes our job difficult. However, our players also know Serbian players and they can take advantage of this," the former coach of Iran volleyball team stated.

"Italy, who have won the title in the 2022 FIVB Volleyball World Championship, have not yet qualified for the Olympics. Now, they are determined to book their place in the Games. Cuba are an energetic team that play very explosive and will be a tough opponents for our team but I think we can defeat them. And our last rivals Argentina, the 2020 Olympic Games' bronze medalist, are a team to beat but I believe in our team," he added.

"I hope Mr. Paes can lead our players in the best possible way regarding that he has had short time to know his players. Of course, his assistants can definitely play a decisive role so that, God willing, the team will get good results in the first week," Afshardoust concluded.

Safarzadeh, Motaghian snatch medals at 2024 World Para Athletics

TEHRAN - Hajar Safarzadeh and Hashemiyeh Motaghian of Iran won a gold and a silver medal at 2024 World Para Athletics Championships on Tuesday.

Safarzadeh crossed the finish line first in the Women's 400m T12 with a time of 57.56 second, breaking Asian record as well.

Brazilian athletes Lorraine Gomes De Aguiar and Ketyla Teodoro claimed silver and bronze medals with 58.26 and 1:00.21, respectively.

Motaghian also finished in second place at the Women's Javelin Throw F56 Final with a throw of 22.74 meters.

Brazilian thrower Raissa Rocha Machado claimed the gold medal with 24.22 meters and the bronze medal went to Chinese athlete Sitong Lin with 22.68 meters.

The 2024 World Para Athletics Championships are organized by the World Para Athletics subcommittee of the International Paralympic Committee.

It's the 11th edition of the event and are being held in the Kobe Universiade Memorial Stadium in Kobe, Japan, from May 17 to 25.

The event was initially scheduled for September 2021 but it was rescheduled to avoid clashing with the 2020 Summer Paralympics which were rescheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Held in East Asia for the first time and a crucial qualifier for the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, the Kobe 2024 Para Athletics World Championships attracted over 1,000 athletes from 100 countries

and regions to compete in 168 events.

Sitting volleyball handed tough group in Paris 2024

TEHRAN - With about 100 days to go until the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, World ParaVolley (WPV) has announced the pools for the men's and women's sitting volleyball competitions.

Hosts France claimed the first position in Pool A, while the remaining qualified teams were positioned according to their World Rankings as of 1 March 2024, using the serpentine system.

In the men's tournament, France joined Tokyo 2020 bronze medalists Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt and Kazakhstan in Pool A. Defending Paralympic champions Iran will face Brazil, Germany and Ukraine in Pool B for a place in the semifinals.

In the women's tournament, France were drawn against Tokyo 2020 gold medalists the U.S., silver medalists China and Italy in Pool A. Reigning Paralympic bronze medalists Brazil will take on Canada, Rwanda and Slovenia in Pool B, paralympic.org wrote.

The pools were announced on 21 May following the conclusion of the 2024 World ParaVolley Final Paralympics Qualifier, which took place in Dali, China last month.

Ukraine's men's team and Slovenia's women's team clinched the final qualification spots for the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, which will take place from 28 August to 8 September.

Preliminary round matches will be held from Aug. 29 to Sept. 3, followed by classification matches and the semi-finals. The bronze medal and gold medal matches are scheduled for Sept 6-7.

Iran earn two wins at 2024 Men's Indoor Hockey Asia Cup

TEHRAN - Iran defeated Singapore 8-0 and Thailand 10-4 in the 2024 Men's Indoor Hockey Asia Cup on Tuesday.

The Persians will play Tajikistan in Pool A on Wednesday.

Pool B consists of Indonesia, Malaysia, Kazakhstan and Oman.

The 2024 Men's Indoor Hockey Asia Cup is the tenth edition of the Men's Indoor Hockey Asia Cup, the biennial international men's indoor hockey championship of Asia organized by the Asian Hockey Federation.

The tournament is taking place from May 21 to 25 in Taldykorgan, Kazakhstan.

The top two teams will qualify for the 2025 Men's FIH Indoor Hockey World Cup.

Iran are most decorated team in the tournament, winning eight times out of nine editions.

Iran start 2024 CAFA U15 Women's C'ship on high

TEHRAN - Iran defeated Kyrgyzstan 5-1 in the 2024 CAFA U15 Women's Championship on Tuesday.

Maryam Khalilifar scored three goals as well as goals from Yasna Jafarnia (two goals) and Setina Forouzanfar.

The team are scheduled to play Uzbekistan and Tajikistan on Thursday and Saturday.

The 2024 CAFA U15 Girls Championship is the fourth edition of the Championship, the biennial international women's football youth championship of Central Asia organized by the Central Asian Football Association (CAFA) for the women's under-15 national teams of Central Asia.

The tournament takes place in Dushanbe, Tajikistan from May 21 to 25.

A total of four teams are playing in the tournament, with players born on or after 1 January 2009 eligible to participate.

Uzbekistan are the defending champions having won the last edition.

Iran, SCA of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan ink MOU to boost trade

TEHRAN - At the initiative taken by the Iran Trade Center in Moscow, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was inked between Iran and the Shopping Center Association (SCA) of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan with the aim of facilitating the trade activities for the Iranian merchants and trader.

The MOU was inked on May 17 in Russia's Sochi city in a ceremony attended by the Director of the Iran Trade Center in Moscow Nikpour and the Head of the Union of Shopping Centers Bular Shakirov.

Given the extensive capacities of the bilateral trade between Iran and the Commonwealth Independent States (CIS), the MoU was signed with the aim of easing the trade activities for the Iranian industrial production units and businesspersons.

Benefiting from more than 500 shopping centers, this union has a high capacity for distributing products worldwide.

Monitoring and conducting joint research on the Iranian market and products to develop common opportunities for Iranian-Russian projects, facilitating the attraction of Iranian companies and investors in Russia, etc. have been cited as the most important provisions of the MOU.

Once this MOU is implemented, Iranian industrial and production units will take advantage of the opportunity created and can embark on increasing their market share in the markets of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan.

Iran and Russia have been taking serious steps to boost their mutual trade over the past few years.

In late January, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said that the Islamic Republic and Russia have reached an agreement to boost the trade between the two countries up to \$10 billion.

"We agreed to remove trade barriers and boost the economic exchanges between the two countries. Currently, the level of mutual trade is not acceptable, so the two countries agreed to increase trade to \$10 billion a year," Raisi said on January 21, upon arrival to Tehran after a two-day visit to Moscow.

As major players in the world and West Asia's political and economic scene, Iran and Russia have been expanding political and economic ties for many years, however, the relations between the two countries have entered a whole new level over the past few months.

The imposition of sanctions on both countries has been a major factor in bringing the two sides closer together, making them a strong alliance against U.S. pressures.

Over the past few months, senior officials from the two sides have been meeting and visiting each other to consolidate bilateral cooperation in various fields, including energy, oil, gas, and transit, as well as diplomatic and political relations.

As the most significant event among the mentioned exchanges, Russia's President Vladimir Putin visited Tehran on July 19 to attend

the 7th Summit of the Guarantor States of the Astana Process.

During his visit to Tehran Putin met with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei and President Raisi and exchanged views on the recent development in the world and the relations between the two countries.

In these meetings, the two sides reached new agreements and stressed the need to take the necessary measures for broadening political and economic ties between the two countries to nullify the impacts of the U.S. sanctions.

Among other issues, Tehran and Moscow have been negotiating a free trade agreement to ensure acceleration in the economic relations between the two countries.

The value of Iran's exports to Russia rose 26 percent in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), as compared to the preceding year, an official with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) said.

Akbar Godari said that 2.185 million tons of products worth \$946 million were exported to Russia in the previous Iranian year, while a year earlier the Islamic Republic had exported only 1.436 million tons of goods valued at \$751 million to the country.

According to the official, Iran's exports to Russia also increased by 56 percent in terms of weight during the previous year.

Agricultural products, petrochemicals, and oil-based products were the top exported products to Russia in the mentioned year.

Referring to the volume of imports from Russia in the past year, Godari stated: "3.353 million tons of goods worth \$1.691 billion were also imported from Russia in the previous year."

The imports have grown by nine percent in terms of value and 27 percent in terms of weight, he said.

In line with the two countries' determination to increase the level of trade exchanges, during a video conference meeting between the deputy transport ministers of Iran and Russia on November 28, 2023, the two sides discussed ways of increasing annual transit through Iran to 10 million tons.

In this virtual meeting, the two sides discussed transportation cooperation between the two countries in all areas including rail, road, and sea.

Speaking in this meeting, Iranian Deputy Transport Minister Shahryar Afandizadeh referred to the high potential for port cooperation between the two countries, especially in the Caspian Sea, and noted that there is a good capacity in Iran's northern ports for receiving goods sent from Russia and sending them to desired destinations using combined transportation methods.

The officials also discussed the Rasht-Astara railway project and the representative of the Iranian contractor of the project, namely the Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructures Company, presented a report on the project's physical progress.

Iran's proven iron ore reserves are 2.7 billion tons (about 0.8 of the world's total reserves), while the country's copper reserves are 2.6 billion tons (about 0.4 of the world's reserves). The country also has 11 million tons of zinc reserves (about four percent of the world's total reserves).

The total proven reserves of Iran's mines are estimated at about 60 billion tons, which is expected to reach more than 100 billion tons with the implementation of the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry's exploration programs over 500,000 square kilometers of new mineral zones.

Despite the country's huge potential in this area, due to some issues like the lack of necessary machinery and equipment and the lack of access to financial resources and foreign investment because of the U.S. sanctions, the Iranian mining sector has been struggling to operate at its maximum capacity over the past few years.

So, the government programs for promoting this industry are mainly focused on relying on domestic sources to help the mining sector overcome its current problems and hit its ideal targets.

IMIDRO investing \$38m in mining infrastructure development

TEHRAN - The Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) is making 19 trillion rials (about \$38 million) of investment to develop infrastructures and supply electricity to the country's mines.

According to IMIDRO, the organization has signed 28 deals for the development of infrastructure of private mines across the country, of which 21 projects are related to road construction and seven projects are related to electricity supply to mines.

Back in March, the director of IMIDRO's plan for building necessary infrastructure in large mines and mining areas said the necessary infrastructure would be provided for 30 mines across the country by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (started in late March).

Having 68 different types of minerals, including the world's largest copper, zinc and iron reserves, Iran is one of the top 10 mineral-rich countries across the globe. In this regard, the Iranian government has been seriously pursuing several programs for promoting the mining sector as a major contributor to the country's economic growth.

Iran exporting rail equipment to Europe: official

TEHRAN - The chief executive of the Iranian Rail Equipment Manufacturing Company said the country exports rail parts and equipment to Europe.

Highlighting the capacity to manufacture locomotives in the country, Morteza Mollanejad described it as a matter of regret to see some domestic companies purchasing secondhand locomotives from China and Brazil.

Morteza Mollanejad said his company has held negotiations with Iraq, Turkey, Cuba, Poland, and Afghanistan in the previous year for exporting rail parts and equipment to these countries.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been inked with Afghanistan for exporting the rail equipment to this neighboring country, Mollanejad added.



In addition, Iran Rail Equipment Manufacturing Company is offering quality repair and maintenance services to Iraqi companies, the official noted.

The 11th International Exhibition of Rail Transportations & Related Industries Equipment dubbed "IRAN RAILXPO 2024" was inaugurated at

the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on Saturday, May 18.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpush and the head of Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran Miad Salehi.

More than 100 domestic

companies and five foreign companies from China, Russia, India, and the Republic of Azerbaijan have participated in this exhibition to showcase their latest achievements and technologies in the railway industry.

Concurrent with organizing this exhibition, the 15th Meeting of the Heads of Railway Authorities of the ECO Member States and the 9th Rail Committee Meeting of the ECO Transit Transport Coordinating Council will be held with the participation of Iran, Turkey, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

The domestically-manufactured GM locomotive engine, Model GT26, and Locomotive Microprocessor Control System (LCS) will also be unveiled in the exhibition.

GECF secretary general offers condolences on tragic loss of Raisi

TEHRAN - Following the incident of a chopper crash on May 19, that led to the tragic loss of Iranian president, Ayatollah Ibrahim Raisi and his companions; General Secretary of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), Mohamad Hamel, sent a message to the Iranian Minister of Petroleum, Javad Oji, expressing heartfelt condolences on the sad incident.

The chopper carrying the Iranian president and his companions, including the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Hossain Amirabdollahian, crashed on Sunday while returning from a mission in which the Iranian president and his counterpart from Azerbaijan Republic, Elham Aliyev, inaugurated a dam on Aras River along the common border of the two neighboring countries.

As part of his message, Mohamad Hamel, said: President Raisi was a leader of great vision and dedication, and his untimely passing is a profound

loss not only for Iran but for the Middle East and the international community. His passionate defense of the oppressed people of Gaza will always be remembered and appreciated for years to come.

The full text of the GECF's Secretary General is as follows:

Your Excellency,

It is with deep sorrow and a heavy heart that, on behalf of the GECF, I extend my sincerest condolences to you and the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the tragic loss of President Sayyed Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Dr. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, and all the passengers who perished in the helicopter crash on 19 May 2024.

President Raisi was a leader of great vision and dedication, and his untimely passing is a profound loss not only for Iran but for the Middle East and

the international community. His passionate defense of the oppressed people of Gaza will always be remembered and appreciated for years to come.

In this time of immense grief, I wish to convey my deepest sympathies to the families of the deceased. May they find the strength and courage to endure this difficult period. Our thoughts and prayers are with them and with the entire nation of Iran.

May the souls of the departed rest in eternal peace.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration and esteem.

*With heartfelt condolences,
Eng. Mohamed Hamel
Secretary General*

Annual tea output expected to reach 145,000 tons



TEHRAN - Tea production in Iran is expected to reach 145,000 tons in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20), Head of Iran's Tea Organization (ITO) Habib Jahansaz told IRNA.

The official noted that so far about 45,000 tons of tea leaves have been harvested by tea farmers, of which about 39,892 tons were high quality and 5,525 tons were low-quality second-grade leaves.

According to the official ITO has purchased all

of the abovementioned harvested tea from the farmers.

He put the country's annual tea consumption at about 100,000 tons, of which 30,000 tons are supplied through domestic production and the rest through imports.

The demand in the domestic market indicates that there is a good potential to increase tea production in the country, he said.

Tea harvest season in Iran starts in farmlands across the northern provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran in early May.

More than 55,000 families grow tea over 28,000 hectares of farmland in the two provinces, accounting for 90 percent of the country's total tea production.

In late December 2019, Jahansaz named

Azerbaijan, Iraq, and Afghanistan as the top destinations for Iranian tea exports.

Iran also exports tea to India, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Canada, Australia, Spain, the Czech Republic, and Georgia.

The value of Iran's tea import has declined 62 percent in the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2023-January 20, 2024), as compared to the same period in the past year. Based on the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration, during this period, about 33,683 tons of tea worth \$185.75 million were imported from eight countries.

Meanwhile, Iran exported about 12,828 tons of tea to 25 countries with a value of about \$15.8 million, 58.1 percent less than the figure for the previous year's same period.

Heads of Iran's chambers call for establishing model for developing industrial parks

TEHRAN - Heads of Iran's chambers of commerce have called for establishing a model for cooperation between Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) and the private sector for developing the country's industrial parks, the portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) reported. In a meeting with the board of directors of the ICCIMA, the heads of the country's chambers stressed the need for the private sector to have a more significant role for the development of the country's industrial parks and zones.

Speaking in this meeting, ICCIMA Head Samad Hassanzadeh said cooperation between the government organizations and the private sector will help the government to get more

familiar with the capacities of the private sector. ISIPO Head Farshad Moghimi also said the government plans to unveil a support package for businesses in late June on the occasion of National Industry and Mining Day.

According to Moghimi, there are currently 870 active industrial parks across the country in which more than 61,000 units are operating.

Back in 2023, ICCIMA members had stressed the need to allocate a portion of the national budget for maintaining the infrastructure in industrial parks across the country.

During a meeting of the ICCIMA Industries Committee, the committee members examined the issues related to the country's industrial parks which were mainly concerned with the reconstruction,

repair, and maintenance of the infrastructure in these parks.

The attendees of the meeting emphasized that in order to resolve the infrastructure-related issues in the country's industrial parks a separate credit line must be defined in the national budget bill in this regard. Speaking in this meeting, Industries Committee Head Alireza Samadi-Kolahi mentioned the old regulations for financing industrial parks, saying: "We tried hard to revive the old law that allowed the government to allocate a share of municipal value-added tax to industrial parks. But this law is no longer approved. But perhaps part of the provincial development budget can be allocated for this purpose."

The government used to allocate a portion of the Municipalities'

value-added tax to industrial parks, however, the law has been changed and this funding is no longer provided. Further in the meeting, the attendees pointed to the government's plans for allocating about \$2.2 billion for a new fund called Iran Progress and Justice Fund, which is aimed to finance developing infrastructure in various provinces and noted that a portion of the mentioned funding can be allocated for maintaining the infrastructure in industrial parks.

According to the ICCIMA committee members, the infrastructures in industrial parks including sewage, water, treatment plants, access roads, etc., are worn out and have practically lost their efficiency, while there is no budget to reconstruct or maintain these infrastructures.

TEDPIX gains 1,200 points on Tuesday

TEHRAN - TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), gained 1,237 points to 2,113,726 on Tuesday, which is the fourth day of the Iranian calendar week.

TSE is one of the four Iranian stock exchanges, and the most important one. The other three ones are the Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB).

Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO)

halted its activities on Monday over the martyrdom of President Ebrahim Raisi and his accompanying team in a helicopter crash a day earlier.

The organization announced the halt of all transactions at the TSE as well as over-the-counter and commodity-based transactions on Monday.

The SEO, however, said that physical market activities at mercantile exchanges go on as normal, adding that it will make more announcements regarding market activity in the coming days.

President Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and seven others were on board a helicopter when it crashed in Varzaqan region of East Azarbaijan Province on Sunday.

Their aircraft and two other copters were en route to Tabriz City hours after Raisi, along with his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev, inaugurated the joint Qiz Qalasi Dam at the border between the two countries earlier on Sunday.

Israeli criminals in ICC's crosshairs

How the US pursues "my way or the highway" policy to obstruct justice

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN- The move by the International Criminal Court (ICC) to seek arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and war minister Yoav Gallant represents a watershed moment and landmark decision in line with efforts to hold the regime accountable for its appalling atrocities and human rights violations in the Gaza Strip.

On Monday, ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan said his office had applied for arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant citing their responsibility in war crimes and crimes against humanity that the Israeli army has committed in the Gaza Strip since declaring war on the besieged Palestinian territory on October 7.

Palestinian rights organizations say genocide as an additional crime should be included in an amendment to the war crime charges against Israeli officials.

Netanyahu, who has demonstrated utter disregard for international organizations, condemned the ICC's move as outrageous and vowed to continue the genocidal war on Gaza, which has claimed the lives of more than 35,600 Palestinians.

Unsurprisingly, the United States made a blistering attack on the ICC. President Joe Biden said the effort to arrest the Israeli officials is "outrageous".

Palestinian rights groups, however, welcomed the decision.

Crucial step

Three rights organizations namely Al-Haq, Al Mezan, and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights described the ICC chief's move as "a crucial step" towards ending impunity in Israel's brutal onslaught in Gaza.

"While we welcome the issuing of charges for crimes against humanity, there is also a public catalogue of genocidal statements of intent to destroy Palestinians in Gaza, including through the intentional denial of aid. For these



reasons, genocide as an additional crime should be included in an amendment to the charges," the organizations added in a statement, according to Al Jazeera.

Historical day

The UN special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory also told the Doha-based news network that the ICC's measure marks a "historical day".

"It's not a small thing that the ICC prosecutor [is seeking] arrest warrants for two Israeli leaders and it's not just for war crimes... it's for crimes that have been committed intentionally and willfully - the all-state policy that has animated this campaign against the population in Gaza is put into question," Francesca Albanese added.

A leading human rights group in Israel also hailed Khan's request to seek the arrest warrants.

Russia says the US reaction to ICC's potential arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant resembles the behavior of a scorpion that has stung itself.

"The era of impunity for Israeli decision-makers is over. The international community is signaling to Israel that it can no longer maintain its policy of violence, killing and destruction without accountability," B'Tselem said in a statement.

Khan's announcement has sparked widespread international reactions too.

China demands impartiality

China hoped the world's top war crimes court will uphold an "objective" position.

"It is hoped that the ICC will uphold its objective and impartial position and exercise its powers in accordance with the law," foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said. The official made the comment while calling for an end to the "collective punishment of the Palestinian people."

Russia criticizes US reaction to ICC decision

The Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman took a jab at Washington for its reaction to the ICC's decision.

Maria Zakharova said the US reaction to the charges against the Israeli officials resembles the behavior of a "scorpion that has stung itself or a spider tangled in its web".

Zakharova further said, "The catastrophic situation in the Middle East (West Asia) is the work of American political engineers."

Israel isolation

Following Khan's request, a panel of three ICC judges will decide whether to issue the arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant and allow a case to proceed which could take two months.

Hence, Netanyahu and his war minister do not face imminent arrest.

But Khan's announcement is a significant blow to Israel and further isolates the regime as the threat of arrest could make it difficult for them to travel abroad.

If the ICC finally decides to issue the arrest warrants more than 120 countries that have signed the Rome Statute are obliged to arrest Netanyahu and Gallant and then

transfer them to The Hague.

Comments made by the EU foreign policy chief shed light on the matter.

"The mandate of the ICC, as an independent international institution, is to prosecute the most serious crimes under international law. All States that have ratified the ICC statutes are bound to execute the Court's decisions," Josep Borrell wrote on X.

Israel is now struggling to prevent the ICC from issuing the rulings. Washington's stance against the court is also in line with efforts to help the regime's embattled leaders.

Republican lawmakers have now called for sanctions on the court.

Then US President Donald Trump had authorized economic and travel sanctions on the ICC prosecutor and another senior prosecutor in 2020. The ICC staff were looking into possible war crimes perpetrated by the United States and its allies in Afghanistan.

Borrell: All States that have ratified the ICC statutes are bound to execute the Court's decisions.

The reactions of the US and Israel to the ICC prosecutor's move indicate that they use all available means to maintain their own interests and ensure that justice is not served.

The United States considers itself as a role model for democracy around the world. Israel also claims to be the only democracy in West Asia. But their actions show that they flagrantly violate democratic values.

The US and Israel have something in common; both of them have no scruples about committing crimes and demonizing those who expose their atrocities.

In short, the US and its protégé Israel pursue a "my way or the highway" policy with regards to dealing with international organizations.

WORLD HEADLINES

BBC: Gazans shackled, blindfolded at Israel hospital

Medical workers in Israel have told the BBC that Palestinian detainees from Gaza are routinely kept shackled to hospital beds, blindfolded, sometimes naked, and forced to wear nappies - a practice one medic said amounted to "torture".

A whistle-blower detailed how procedures in one military hospital were "routinely" carried out without painkillers, causing "an unacceptable amount of pain" to detainees.

Another whistle-blower said painkillers were used "selectively" and "in a very limited way" during an invasive medical procedure on a Gazan detainee in a public hospital.

He also said critically ill patients being held in makeshift military facilities were being denied proper treatment because of a reluctance by public hospitals to transfer and treat them.

Their accounts are supported by a report, published in February by Physicians for Human Rights in Israel, which said that Israel's civilian and military prisons had become "an apparatus of retribution and revenge" and that detainees' human rights were being violated - in particular their right to health.

Police break up pro-Palestinian camp at Michigan University

Police broke up a pro-Palestinian encampment Tuesday at the University of Michigan.

Officers wearing helmets with face shields moved in before sunrise to clear the Diag, known for decades as a site for campus protests, AP reported.

Video posted online showed police at times using what appeared to be an irritant to spray people, who were forced to retreat.

The encampment had been set up in late April near the end of the school year and as families arrived for spring commencement.

After the camp was cleared, nearby buildings, including the undergraduate and graduate libraries, were closed, and police turned away students who showed up to study.

Protesters have demanded that the school's endowment stop investing in companies with ties to Israel.

Students and others have set up tent encampments on campuses around the country to press colleges to cut financial ties with Israel. Tensions over the Israeli war on Gaza have been high on campuses since the fall, but demonstrations spread quickly following an April 18 police crackdown on an encampment at Columbia University. Arrests at campuses have surpassed the 3,000 mark nationwide.

Ben-Gvir promotes future Gaza settlements

Israel's far-right national security minister has again advocated for a full military takeover of Gaza after the war, even saying Israel should push Palestinians to "voluntarily" leave to make way for settlements.

"Israel should be the one that controls the Gaza Strip, unequivocally, and no one else," said Itamar Ben-Gvir in comments carried by Israel's Maariv news site.

Most important, he said, is "encouraging voluntary emigration of Palestinians" from the enclave, adding that Israel could then facilitate the return of settlements.

"I would love to live in Gaza if possible," said Ben-Gvir.

Israel seizes AP equipment

Israeli officials seized a camera and broadcasting equipment belonging to The Associated Press in southern Israel on Tuesday, accusing the news organization of violating

a new media law by providing images to Al Jazeera.

The Qatari satellite channel is among thousands of clients that receive live video feeds from the AP and other news organizations. The AP denounced the move.

"The Associated Press decries in the strongest terms the actions of the Israeli government to shut down our longstanding live feed showing a view into Gaza and seize AP equipment," said Lauren Easton, vice president of corporate communications at the news organization. "The shutdown was not based on the content of the feed but rather an abusive use by the Israeli government of the country's new foreign broadcaster law. We urge the Israeli authorities to return our equipment and enable us to reinstate our live feed immediately so we can continue to provide this important visual journalism to thousands of media outlets around the world."

Yemen shoots down US MQ-9 drone

The spokesperson for the Yemeni Armed Forces said the country's air defense units have successfully shot down an American MQ-9 Reaper drone while it was conducting hostile activities in the airspace over the central province of Bayda.

Yahya Saree said in a televised statement on Tuesday that the unmanned aerial vehicle was targeted with a locally made surface-to-air missile, Press TV reported.

According to Saree, this is the fifth aircraft that the Yemeni air defenses have shot down since the start of the operations in support of Palestinians in Gaza amid the Israeli regime's genocidal war.

The spokesperson affirmed that Yemeni Armed Forces will continue to enhance their defense capabilities in order to confront the joint US-British aggression against their homeland, and will carry on conducting pro-Palestine operations until the Israeli aggression against Gaza ceases and the all-out siege on the coastal siver is fully lifted.

Germany calls for more military support for Ukraine

Germany's foreign minister arrived in Kyiv on Tuesday in the latest public display of support for Ukraine by its Western partners.

Annalena Baerbock renewed Berlin's calls for partners to send more air defense systems as Ukraine's depleted troops are trying to hold off a fierce Russian offensive along the eastern border in a critical phase of the war, Euro News reported.

"The Russian attacks are directly targeted at the civilian infrastructure. Infrastructure like electricity is what you need for daily life, and air defense is so important, but we still need way more air defense because some of the rockets and missiles could be brought down by air defense, but obviously not all of them," Baerbock said in Kyiv.

"It's directly and strategically a direct attack on infrastructure to enable the life and survival here in Ukraine, and this is why I am calling worldwide to increase the air defense support, but also to increase support for reconstruction."

Germany is the second-biggest supplier of military aid to Ukraine after the US. In 2023, it provided around €5 billion in military assistance.

China: Israel must cease Rafah offensive

China's permanent representative to the United Nations said Israel must immediately cease its military offensive in Rafah city in the Gaza Strip.

Facing strong opposition from the international community, Israel is still pushing ahead with its large-scale offensive on Rafah, once again driving hundreds of thousands of Gazans into displacement, said Fu Cong, expressing China's grave concern about and strong opposition to the operation.

Palestinians in fierce clashes with Israeli invaders

Yemen and resistance forces in Lebanon and Iraq wage operations against Israel in solidarity with Gaza

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN- The Palestinian resistance forces have engaged in fierce clashes with the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) in the Gaza Strip, as other fronts show no sign of easing down.

Palestinian factions in Gaza have engaged the IOF in what has been described by local reports on the ground as heavy battles east of Deir al-Balah in the central regions of the enclave while operations continue against an Israeli infantry force in Jabalia in the northern part of the Strip.

The al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, announced it is confronting an Israeli infantry force accompanied by an armored personnel carrier near a mosque in the Jabalia refugee camp, confirming casualties among the Israeli forces.

The media office of the al-Quds Brigades also published footage from an Israeli "quadcopter" drone that was captured while carrying out reconnaissance missions in the skies of Gaza City, showing the al-Quds Brigades firing a missile towards it in retaliation.

Another Palestinian faction in Gaza, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades confirmed targeting an assembly of occupation vehicles and soldiers east of Jabalia refugee camp with mortar shells.

While the resistance continues its qualitative operations, documented through footage showing Israeli soldiers being injured, the IOF has been forced to acknowledge the extent of some losses within its ranks.

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has announced it has targeted the Israeli city of Eilat (Umm al-Rashrash), using drones as reaffirming its commitment to targeting enemy strongholds.

In concise statements, the Iraqi resistance claimed responsibility for targeting Israeli vital targets in Umm al-Rashrash (Eilat) with two separate drone operations carried out on Monday.

On Tuesday evening, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq issued a statement that said an Israeli drone base has been targeted in the occupied Golan Heights with drones. The statement added that the operation resulted in a "direct hit".

The Iraqi resistance group emphasized that these operations are part of its ongoing operations against the Israeli occupation, in support of the people of Gaza, and in response to the massacres committed by the "occupying entity against innocent Palestinian civilians, including children, women, and the elderly".

Israeli media outlets acknowledged the detection of "aircraft bodies off the coast of Eilat," as confirmed by the Israeli army radio, in addition to detecting drones over the occupied Golan Heights, claiming that the Israeli Air Force "intercepted hostile targets launched from Iraq and Syria."

In recent days, Iraqi factions have targeted Eilat multiple times using drones, prompting the Israeli army to repeatedly confirm its detection of "drones coming from the east and south."

This comes as Lebanon's Hezbollah announced that its fighters targeted the Israeli Galilee site with rocket weapons and directly hit it.

In separate statements, the Lebanese resistance movement confirmed it had targeted the Israeli Metula and Marj sites with suitable weapons. It also targeted the Ramia military site, achieving a direct hit.

Hezbollah also declared hitting the Malikiyah military site, causing the Israeli soldiers to flee the base, with artillery shells and achieving direct hits. The resistance in Lebanon also targeted a gathering place for officers in an Israeli army center at the eastern entrance of Ghajar village, causing direct hits and casualties among them, confirming the sight of the evacuation of the wounded from the scene.

The resistance movement has also mourned three of its members who fell in the exchange of fire with the Israeli military.

The resistance group had earlier confirmed targeting the headquarters of the 91st Brigade of the occupation army at the Branit barracks with a heavy "Volcano" missile, indicating that the operation resulted in the injury of a number of Israeli soldiers and the destruction of part of the barracks, igniting fires within it.

It pointed out that the operation came in response to Israeli attacks on "steadfast southern Lebanese villages and safe homes, especially the attack on the town of Naqoura, in support of Gaza and its resistance."

(See full text at www.tehrantimes.com)

UN Tourism Chief offers condolences following demise of President Raisi in helicopter crash

TEHRAN – The UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili has sent a condolence message to Iran over the death of President Ebrahim Raisi and his companions in a helicopter crash on Sunday.

Taking to Instagram on Monday, Pololikashvili posted a heartfelt message: “I send my condolences for the tragedy involving President of Iran Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, their delegation and crew. Our thoughts are with all those in mourning today.”

The deadly crash is currently under investigation, with preliminary reports suggesting



technical failure as the cause. The incident happened in a remote mountainous area, complicating immediate rescue and recovery efforts.

Empowering rural communities: UN Tourism launches STAR assessment tool

TEHRAN – Aimed to boost sustainable tourism in rural areas, UN Tourism has launched the UN Tourism Self-assessment Tool to Assist Rural Destinations, known as STAR.

This innovative tool empowers local public authorities in rural destinations to evaluate their level of tourism development and receive tailored recommendations to enhance their tourism policies and practices.

The STAR tool, available to all rural destinations in UN Tourism Member States, allows local authorities to measure their tourism development comprehensively.

According to the UN body, it offers insights into areas such as tourism governance, economic, social, and cultural sustainability, environmental sustainability, tourism development, and infrastructure.

Through a robust self-assessment framework, STAR helps stakeholders focus on strategic planning, marketing, training, policy-making, product diversification, environmental and cultural preservation, collaboration with local actors, and more.

Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of UN Tourism, heralded the tool's launch as a pivotal moment for rural tourism development. “The UN Tourism Self-assessment Tool is a game-changer for rural destinations. It empowers local authorities with a tool that allows them to self-evaluate their policies

and actions, providing actionable insights fostering sustainable tourism development, and contributing to the overall growth of rural communities,” Pololikashvili stated.

Key features of the STAR tool include:

Self-Assessment: Rural destinations can evaluate their policies and initiatives across five critical areas, enabling a comprehensive understanding of their tourism development status.

Tailored Recommendations: Users receive a customized guide with recommendations aligned with UN Tourism standards, considering the unique attributes of each rural destination.

Benchmarking Excellence: The tool facilitates the benchmarking of policies and practices, allowing local authorities to evaluate their performance against other destinations.

Data and Insights: The digital tool provides extensive data and analytics, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of local tourism policies and strategies, and offering a foundation for improvement.

With STAR, UN Tourism continues to support the advancement of rural tourism, ensuring that rural communities worldwide can thrive through sustainable and well-managed tourism practices.

Glimpses of World Heritage sites

Forts and Castles in Volta and Greater Accra

The remains of fortified trading posts, erected between 1482 and 1786, can still be seen along the coast of Ghana between Keta and Beyin.

These fortified trading posts, spanning a distance of approximately 500 km along the coast of Ghana between Keta in the east and Beyin in the west, were links in the trading routes established by the Portuguese in many areas of the world during their era of great maritime exploration. The castles and forts were built and occupied at different times by traders from Portugal, Spain, Denmark, Sweden, Holland, Germany, and Britain. They served the gold trade of European chartered companies. Latterly they played a significant part in the developing slave trade, and therefore in the history of the Americas, and, subsequently, in the 19th century, in the suppression of that trade.

The property consists of three Castles (Cape Coast, St. George's d'Elmina and Christiansborg at Osu, Accra), 15 Forts (Good Hope at Senya Beraku; Patience at Apam; Amsterdam at Abandzi; St. Jago at Elmina; San Sebastian at Shama; Metal Cross at Dixcove; St. Anthony at Axim; Orange at Sekondi; Groot Fredericksborg at Princesstown; William (Lighthouse) at Cape Coast; William at Anomabu; Victoria at Cape Coast; Ussher at Ussherstown, Accra; James at Jamestown, Accra and Apollonia at Beyin), four Forts partially in ruins (Amsterdam at Abandzi; English Fort at British Komenda; Batenstein at Butre; Prinzensten at Keta), four ruins with visible structures (Nassau at Mouri; Fredensborg at Old Ningo; Vredenburg at Dutch Komen-

da; Vernon at Prampram and Dorothea at Akwida) and two sites with traces of former fortifications (Frederiksborg at Amanful, Cape Coast and Augustaborg at Teshie, Accra).

The basic architectural design of the Forts was in the form of a large square or rectangle. The outer components consisted of four bastions/batteries or towers located at the corners, while the inner components consisted of buildings of two or three stories with or without towers, in addition to an enclosure, courtyard, or a spur. Many have been altered, during their use by successive European powers, and some survive only as ruins.

St. George's d'Elmina Castle, built in 1482, is one of the oldest European buildings outside Europe, and the historic town of Elmina is believed to be the location of the first point of contact between Europeans and sub-Saharan Africans.

The castles and forts constituted for more than four centuries a kind of ‘shopping street’ of West Africa to which traders of Europe's most important maritime nations came to exchange their goods for those of African traders, some of whom came from very far in the interior.

They can be seen as a unique “collective historical monument”: a monument not only to the evils of the slave trade but also to nearly four centuries of pre-colonial Afro-European commerce based on equality rather than on that of the colonial basis of inequality. They represent, significantly and emotively, the continuing history of European-African encounters over five centuries and the starting point of the African Diaspora.

Espi Mazget, a ruined Sassanid temple in northern Iran

TEHRAN – Nestled in the lush landscape of Gilan province, lies the ruins of Espi Mazget, which was originally a place of worship in the Sassanid era.

Espi Mazget, deriving its name from the Persian words ‘Espi’ meaning white and ‘Mazget’ meaning mosque, is located 80 kilometers west of Rasht, 22 kilometers south of Talesh, within the Dinachal rural district in Rezvanshahr.

The Sassanid era (224 CE–651) is of very high importance in the history of Iran. Under the Sassanids, Persian art and architecture experienced a general renaissance.

After the fall of Sassanids, the temple was turned into a mosque and served the local for several centuries.

According to Visit Iran, the renowned Iranian scholar Manuchehr Sotudeh has hailed Espi Mazget as one of the wonders of Gilan, underscoring its historical and cultural significance.

In terms of architectural significance, Espi Mazget showcases a unique architectural design with a central porch flanked by two side corridors. The corridors are three and a



half meters wide and rise to a height of six meters.

The base of the porch is octagonal, transitioning into a curved vault at the upper levels. The construction materials include stone, red brick, pottery, and lime mortar.

The walls, standing at 175 centimeters tall, are covered with stone up to one meter from the ground, with the upper sections featuring red bricks measuring 23 by six centimeters. These elements are meticulously joined with lime mortar, reflecting the advanced masonry techniques of the time.

Moreover, the temple features two columned porches with

semi-curved entrance gates on its north and west sides, and the curved walls and inclined ceilings combine elements of a barrel vault and fire temple architecture.

A traditional mortar covers the brick walls, adorned with Kufic inscriptions and floral motifs, remnants of which still survive from the Middle Ages. The construction date etched on the wall points to the fifth century AH, while discovered pottery fragments trace back to the Ilkhanid period of the eighth century AH.

Despite its grandeur, Espi Mazget has faced significant challenges over the centuries. Rooting jungle trees, floods from

the Dinachal river, and human interference have caused damage to this ancient monument. Efforts to preserve and restore the site are crucial to maintaining its historical integrity and cultural value.

For travelers seeking a deep dive into Iran's historical landscape, Espi Mazget offers a captivating journey through time.

The serene setting of its surrounding villages, combined with the mystical ambiance of nearby forests, provides a perfect backdrop for this ancient marvel.

Visitors can explore the architectural details such as ancient inscriptions, and enjoy the tranquil beauty of the surrounding nature.

Bounded by the Caspian Sea and the Alborz Mountain range, the Gilan region was within the sphere of influence of the successive Achaemenian, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian empires that ruled Iran until the 7th century CE.

The subsequent Arab conquest of Iran led to the rise of many local dynasties, and Gilan acquired an independent status that continued until 1567.

Darreh Khazineh: an epic adventure similar to the Grand Canyon

TEHRAN – For many Western travelers, Iran's Darreh Khazineh is reminiscent of the iconic Grand Canyon in the United States.

Shaped over millennia by water and wind erosion, the spectacular canyon, sprawling in the western Lorestan province, offers a breathtaking experience that rivals its more famous counterpart.

With towering cliffs and lush greenery, this natural marvel invites exploration and offers a glimpse into the geological richness of the ancient land.

Carved out by the Seimare River, originating from the Zagros Mountains, the valley's beauty is enhanced by its watercourse.

Drawing parallels to the iconic Grand Canyon in America, Darreh Khazineh captivates visitors with its dramatic rock formations and vistas. One particular section of the valley closely resembles the famous Horseshoe Bend, attracting attention with its stunning

rock formations sculpted by erosion and surrounded by flowing water.

Standing on the edge of Darreh Khazineh feels like being atop a 29-story building, with the river flowing below, creating a serene yet thrilling ambiance.

Lorestan province, known for its moderate climate during spring and summer, offers the ideal setting for exploring Darreh Khazineh. The best times to visit are during spring and early autumn when the weather is mild, allowing visitors to fully appreciate the natural beauty of the area without extreme temperatures.

Whether hiking along the riverbanks, camping under the stars, capturing breathtaking photographs, or simply immersing oneself in the tranquility of the surroundings, Darreh Khazineh offers a wealth of recreational opportunities for adventurers. Its lush vegetation and diverse wildlife add to its allure, offering visitors a glimpse into the



region's rich biodiversity.

Moreover, the nearby village of Khazineh provides a convenient base for exploration, offering insights into the local customs and traditions.

With its breathtaking landscapes and thrilling recreational opportunities, Darreh Khazineh is a haven for nature enthusiasts and adventure seekers alike, promising an unforgettable journey into the heart of Iran's natural wonders.

Kermanshah welcomes ecotourism fellows from across Iran

TEHRAN – A seminar on rural lodges and ecotourism in Iran's Kermanshah, on Sunday, saw the participation of over 250 ecotourism-related groups, sharing experiences, each representing a region of the country.

The seminar took place at the Kermanshah Chamber of Commerce, where attendees were greeted with stunning displays of Iranian ethnic costumes, IRNA reported.

The main objective of the seminar, as stated by the head of the Association of Eco-lodges Professional Associations, was to educate and empower the position of ecotourism lodges at an international level.

Addressing the event, Yavar Abiri referred to the beauty of rich local cultures nationwide, saying, “Ecotourism in Iran has the potential to go global.”

Conversations between the participants were rich with pride in their culture, dialects, language, and traditional attire, showcasing the beauty of their homeland, the report added.

“We've come to see and learn more,” said a man, representing a Golpayegan's eco-lodge.

“As an Iranian, I'm proud to support indigenous authenticity,” Mrs. Khojestehepour from Naz Khatoon eco-lodge in Mashhad noted. “And I'm eager to share rich culture and traditions of my homeland with others and demonstrate how we've preserved our authenticity even in this modern age.”

Moreover, the chief of “Angoran” eco-resort in Zanjan highlighted the development of accommodations and the acquisition of knowledge as their goals in the seminar.

He described Angoran village as a beautiful area nestled between two salty and sweet rivers, adorned with pine forests, and located near Takht-e Soleiman.

Home to diverse natural landscapes and cultural heritage gems, Iran has already taken steps to promote ecotourism that focuses on minimizing the negative impact of conventional tourism on the environment in a sustainable approach.

Eco-lodges play a significant role in the tourism industry by offering travelers a sustainable and immersive experience in

nature. As concerns about environmental conservation and responsible travel continue to grow, eco-lodges have become increasingly popular among eco-conscious tourists.

One key aspect of eco-lodges is their ability to attract travelers who are seeking authentic and environmentally friendly experiences. These travelers are often drawn to the resorts because of their commitment to sustainability, which aligns with their values and desire to minimize their ecological footprint while traveling.

Eco-lodges also cater to a niche market of travelers who are looking for unique and off-the-beaten-path accommodations. Unlike traditional hotels, eco-resorts are often situated in remote or pristine natural locations, offering guests a chance to disconnect from the hustle and bustle of urban life and reconnect with nature.

Furthermore, eco-lodges contribute to the diversification of tourist offerings within destinations. By promoting sustainable tourism practices and supporting local communities, eco-resorts help to preserve natural



and cultural heritage while generating economic opportunities for residents.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the economic potential of ecotourism and sustainable travel. Governments, tourism boards, and conservation organizations are increasingly supporting the development of eco-lodges as a means to promote sustainable tourism and preserve natural resources.

Overall, eco-lodges occupy a unique position in the tourism industry, offering travelers an alternative to conventional accommodations while promoting environmental conservation and supporting local communities. As the demand for sustainable travel continues to rise, eco-lodges are likely to play an increasingly important role in shaping the future of tourism.

Cheetahs forecast to breed in captivity

TEHRAN – Thanks to the necessary measures that have been taken to standardize breeding sites for cheetahs, it is expected to witness breeding by the end of the current year (March 2025), Hassan Akbari, an official with the Department of Environment (DOE), has said.

Akbari pointed out that there are currently three female cheetahs at the breeding site, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

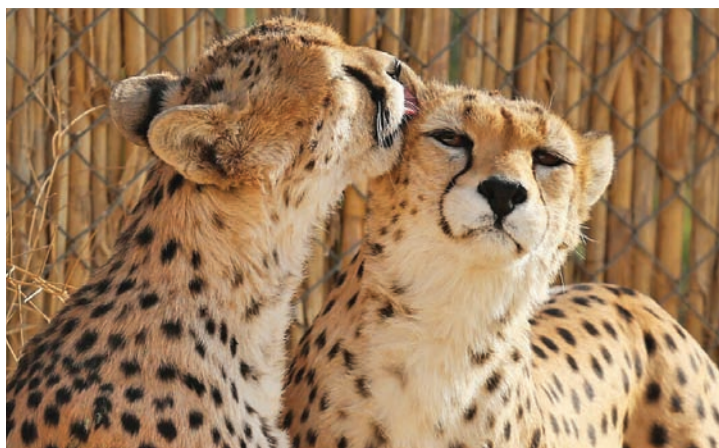
The priority of the DOE is to protect the habitat, but in order to be able to grow their population, the breeding site in captivity needs to be standardized, he added.

The problem facing cheetahs is multifaceted including small population, there are currently no more than 20 cheetahs in nature; limited territory and habitat while the species is territorial and needs a wide variety of habitats with wide-ranging movements; and loss of prey, there used to be herds of over 10,000 deer in the plains of Iran, but not anymore. So sometimes the cheetah is forced to hunt for rams and sheep and even goats, which are not normally the animal's prey.

Challenges and threats

Loss or lack of food and habitat makes it practically hard to save species. In other words, it will be highly costly and require diligence to save them.

Unfortunately, cheetahs' limited



habitat in Turan national park is undergoing serious changes. There are more than 5,000 camels, other livestock, and over 30 animal husbandry with legal grazing permission.

The cattle and their herdsmen's commutes in the region have made the habitat unsafe.

The camels consume most of the food for gazelles, which are the main prey for cheetahs. They severely destroy the water resources, and springs in the area which are very important for both the prey and the predators.

In the last two decades, at least 10 cheetahs have been killed in car collisions, an almost 40-kilometer area with the highest rate of animal-vehicle collisions.

Taken measures

To increase the number of cheetahs, we have to lower the threats.

Health services provided by President Raisi administration

TEHRAN – Since August 2021 - the beginning of the administration of late President Ebrahim Raisi - many health projects have been implemented to facilitate access to healthcare and medical services, removing the face of deprivation, particularly from rural and underprivileged areas.

The outcome of these plans and programs is clearly evident in the country.

President Ebrahim Raisi was concerned about justice, in education, and justice in access to medical and pharmaceutical services, doctors, and hospitals. He always emphasized that people's lives are more important than anything else.

Procurement of vaccine

When the president took office, the health sector was going through challenging times; the fourth and then fifth waves of corona were raging and killing people.

However, the positive efforts facilitated the process of procuring the vaccine for the country, and with the help of the Iranian Red Crescent Society, up to 10 million doses of coronavirus vaccine were brought into the country in each flight, accelerating immunization in the country.

Vaccination centers operated actively in the country; six different types of vaccines were produced and vaccines were imported.

Taking necessary measures, the health ministry successfully mitigated the pandemic.

Free health insurance coverage

The astronomical costs of treatments and medicines, especially for low-income and disadvantaged people, and access to economic medical

services were among other concerns of the late president.

In this regard, many individuals are covered by insurance free of charge and many others benefit from discounts to receive health insurance services.

The Law on Family and Youth Support and the contribution incentives for childbearing was the other program conducted under the supervision of the president. It resulted in offering free infertility treatment to couples to benefit from numerous services.

There are about 400 hard-to-treat diseases. Currently, the number of diseases covered by insurance has reached 107.

The frequency of these 107 diseases is higher than other diseases.

According to the authorities, the chance to come down with the rest of the diseases is so low that there are less than 100 cases of individuals suffering from them.

Family health program and referral system

Family Health Program and Electronic Referral System is one of the most important priorities of the health ministry, which is designed and implemented in order to increase access to health services and strengthen the country's health network system.

According to the program, a health team comprised of two caregivers and a physician is responsible for 3,000 individuals.

Construction of big hospitals

Over the past two years, hospitals have been

equipped with about 16,000 beds.

The construction of mega-hospitals was one of the important priorities of the administration of President Raisi and the health ministry.

Two mega hospitals with 1000 and over 821 beds were built.

Also, the first specialized hospital for children, named Hakim, after the Islamic revolution was built in 27 months.

About 79 other important hospital projects are also on the agenda, and between 8 and 10 hospitals with 1,000 beds are under construction.

Other services

In an effort to boost the health of society, the treatment of children under seven years of age is free of charge, and now medical centers are obliged to implement it.

Fighting against the smuggling of economic Iranian medicines and also reducing the treatment costs by increasing insurance coverage as well as the implementation of the nursing services tariff law after 15 years of delay, opening, and inaugurating 2000 health projects in two years to rebuild the health network system are other implemented plans of the President Raisi administration.

Additionally, providing free services to improve the nutrition of pregnant mothers and children, free cochlear implantation for deaf children for the first time in the country, and dispatching 2,800 specialist doctors to deprived and less privileged areas are part of the offered services.

Iran, the last habitat of Asiatic cheetahs

Also known as the 'Persian cheetah', the species became extinct in virtually all countries in Asia and only a small population continues to live in Iran. It is categorized as critically endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.

The shocking decline in Cheetah populations in the last decades, due to the expansion of human settlements, poaching, and habitat loss, stresses the need for a global effort to preserve these iconic cats.

Education and awareness campaigns are crucial, as fostering a sense of responsibility and understanding is key to securing the future of cheetahs

Considering the fact that Iran is the last remaining habitat of the Asiatic cheetah, this species is of particular importance.

The Department of Environment has focused on breeding in captivity, and maintaining the cheetah population in the habitat.

Stating that in the last two years, many good things have been done to revive the cheetah population, Akbari went on to say that the situation of the cheetah, in general, is concerning in the country, but it does not mean to give up hope for the increase in Asiatic cheetah population.

UNICEF helps Afghan children in Iran master essential life skills

TEHRAN – The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has provided safe and supportive spaces for Afghan children in the Torbat-e Jam Refugee Settlement in Khorasan Razavi Province to develop skills essential for dealing with life challenges.

UNICEF-supported Child-Friendly Space (CFS) in Iran is one of the three centres made possible by the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations' financial aid.

CSFs provide children the chance to play and grow, UNICEF website announced in a press release on April 30.

Play is not just a pastime for children; it is a fundamental part of their development.

Through play, children and grow intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically.

In the course of play, children build relationships and learn leadership skills, resilience, social navigation, and fear management.

Play provides comfort and safety, helping children make sense of the world around them.

It is also a platform for children to express and nurture their imagination and creativity.

UNICEF Iran reached 5,354 vulnerable children, including Afghan refugees.

This is especially important for refugee children, who need a safe place to explore and develop life skills.

These spaces also provide support in managing the anxiety and trauma that come with the displacement of children from their home countries.

Those enrolled in the Child-Friendly Space, engaged in very various activities.

In addition to playing with their peers, they learn poems, how to greet and converse with others, and basic hygiene practices like brushing teeth.

Zahra Mostafaei, a local NGO staff member working with the children in Torbat-e Jam, says, "In Torbat-e Jam settlement, 870 youngsters aged 3 to 12 are enrolled in this program.

Here, they receive crucial life-skill training and psychological support. Initially, the parents were uncertain about the space.

However, when they came here, brought their children with them, and saw the activities, they became quite welcoming and enthusiastic."

Iran, UNICEF agree to draft MOU on refugees

In December 2023, Ruhollah Qaderi, the National Organization for Migration's director for international affairs, and Robin Nandy, the representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Iran, in a meeting, emphasized the need for drafting a memorandum of understanding on refugees.

Referring to the enhanced cooperation between UNICEF and the National Organization for Migration, Qaderi said, "We are talking about refugees as they are imposing heavy costs on the government and the people of Iran."

The Islamic Republic of Iran has practically no role in the crisis created in Afghanistan. However, displaced Afghans and refugees have kept flowing to the country, he added, IRNA reported.

Despite Iran's generous hosting of the refugees, who are mainly Afghans, the international community has failed to support the country. They have paid for less than one percent of the costs of hosting refugees, which is not acceptable at all, Qaderi explained.

Nandy, for his part, appreciated Iran for supporting refugees residing in the country.

Confirming that the amount of foreign aid is not proportionate to hosting costs and highlighting the need to depoliticize humanitarian issues, particularly children in a polarized world, Nandy said UNICEF's support will be tailored to the needs of Iran.

Protection for refugee children is encouraging

In May 2023, Nandy said the country's comprehensive program for the protection of



refugee children is encouraging.

Making investments in programs and services to better care for and support children affected by migration and asylum will reduce costs in the future, he added.

He made the remarks in a meeting with Ali Kazemi, the deputy justice minister, IRNA reported.

Emphasizing the important role of non-governmental organizations in supporting refugee and immigrant children and teenagers, Nandy expressed hope that holding educational workshops will lead to the promotion of children's rights and justice for children.

A total of 870 youngsters aged 3 to 12 enrolled in the program.

Kazemi, for his part, said some 63 percent of Afghan refugees have selected Iran as their destination and the government does its best to settle the refugees with dignity.

The situation of non-Iranian children and adolescents and their families who have sought refuge in the Islamic Republic of Iran due to migration or injuries caused by unforeseen events and natural disasters or issues such as war has always been of concern to Iran, IRNA quoted Kazemi as saying.

"It is expected that international organizations and other countries will also provide more assistance in this field in line with their humanitarian responsibilities and duties arising from human rights conventions," he added.

The Law on the protection of children and adolescents considers protection as the right of all people under the age of 18 who live within the borders of the Islamic Republic, Kazemi highlighted.

"According to the law, equal and non-discriminatory treatment in terms of color, race, religion, language, health, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and family status is the right of every child living in Iran.

The indisputable principle that governs all measures related to children and various legal protections have been considered for non-Iranian children and adolescents."

The Islamic Republic of Iran is host to one of the largest and most protracted refugee populations in the world, the majority of whom are Afghan refugees.

The country is home to over 800,000 registered refugees and some 2.6 million undocumented Afghans. Today, more than 500,000 Afghan children- including undocumented Afghans and those who have newly arrived in Iran following the Taliban-takeover-are benefiting from Iran's inclusive education policies, one of the most progressive in the world.

Many of the refugees living in Iran are second and third-generation, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Iran spent more than \$352 million in the current school year, started on September 23, 2023, on the education of Afghan students.

Over 670,000 students of Afghan nationals are studying in Iran, and the cost of educating these students is more than \$352 million, IRNA reported.

In the current school year, \$17 million of international aid and \$335.631 million from internal sources have been spent on the education of Afghan nationals.

However, international organizations have paid less than 3.9 percent of the cost of education for Afghan students in Iran in the last two years.

ENGLISH IN USE

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Iran reopens schools under strict health protocols

Over 15 million students attended schools nationwide on Saturday for the new school year under strict health protocols against the coronavirus pandemic.

The opening bell of the new academic year was rung symbolically by President Hassan Rouhani at a high school in Tehran.

Mohsen Haji Mirzaei, Education Minister, symbolically attended the virtual festival.

More than 15 million students started the new school year in 116,000 schools across the country, he said.

This year, education is followed in three forms of in-person, virtual, and television-based, but our priority is school attendance, he noted.

بازگشایی مدارس با پروتکل های سختگیرانه بهداشتی

بیش از ۱۵ میلیون دانش آموز سال تحصیلی جدید را با رعایت پروتکل های سختگیرانه بهداشتی آغاز کردند.

زنگ آغاز سال تحصیلی به صورت ارتباط تصویری در مراسمی به دستور رئیس جمهور در دبیرستانی در تهران نواخته شد.

محسن حاجی میرزایی وزیر آموزش و پرورش در این مراسم گفت: بیش از ۱۵ میلیون دانش آموز سال تحصیلی جدید را در ۱۱۶ هزار مدرسه آغاز کردند.

وزیر آموزش و پرورش در این مراسم گفت: امسال آموزش دانش آموزان به سه شکل حضوری، مجازی، و تلویزیونی دنبال می شود، اما اولویت ما آموزش حضوری دانش آموزان است.



Managing Director: **Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati**
 Editor-in-Chief: **Mohammad Sarfi**

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
 Email: info@tehrantimes.com
 Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Patience is two in kind: one against what you dislike, and the other before what you like and seems beautiful.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:01 Evening: 19:28 Dawn: 3:14 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 4:54 (tomorrow)

Musicians, artists boycott UK cultural events over Israel ties

Every May in Brighton, the UK's music industry descends on the seaside town for the Great Escape, the "showcase" event that has helped to launch the careers of many singers.

Crowds pile in to dozens of venues, as punters and A&R spotters try to get a glimpse of acts who may have the unique spark needed to become break-out stars, but at this year's event something was missing: more than a third of the bill, The Guardian reported.

Keynote speakers did not appear. Headliners refused to show up. Entire showcases were scrapped, as tensions caused by the Israel-Hamas conflict reached the south coast of England.

Many acts pulled out because of a pro-Palestinian boycott aimed at the event's sponsorship by Barclays Bank, which campaigners claim has increased its investment in arms companies that trade with Israel.

Bands Boycott Barclays (BBB), the group behind the campaign, said the bank was "laundering its reputation" by partnering with the music festival, an accusation Barclays denies.

The Great Escape was not the first cultural event to be affected by the conflict. In March, the Barbican backed out of hosting a London Review of Books lecture series because it included a talk by the writer Pankaj Mishra that was titled The Shoah after Gaza.

The decision to back out led to several artists withdrawing work from Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art, leaving large gaps in a major show, with the Barbican's chief executive acknowledging the decision had caused "significant concern about artistic freedom".

Arts Council England was accused of bowing to government pressure when it released guidance that said "political statements" could break funding agreements shortly after a meeting with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport where the Israel-Gaza war was discussed.

Home theater in Manchester and the Arncliffe arts center in Bristol backed out of hosting events featuring Palestinian artists or speakers, before u-turning or apologizing after sustained

pressure from campaigners.

At the same time as the Great Escape was held in Brighton, there were protests and counter-protests outside the Everyman theater in north London, as a Jewish film festival went ahead despite security concerns and calls for a boycott because it was partly sponsored by the Israeli government.

From music and film to visual arts and theater, there is nowhere in Britain's cultural landscape where the conflict in the Middle East hasn't spread and as the summer starts more boycotts and protests are on the horizon.

The genteel surroundings of the Hay literary festival in Powys, Wales, later this week will see political protest because the event is sponsored by the investment firm Baillie Gifford.

Last week, Fossil Free Books (FFB), a campaign group that says it is working to achieve "a genocide free, fossil-free books industry" renewed its call for the Hay sponsor to divest from fossil fuel.

Backed by authors Naomi Klein and Sally Rooney, FFB also called for Baillie Gifford to divest "from companies that profit from Israeli apartheid, occupation and genocide", as it believes that "solidarity with Palestine and climate justice are inextricably linked".

A spokesperson from Baillie Gifford said that two percent of its clients' money is invested in "companies with some business related to fossil fuels", compared with the market average of 11 percent. Baillie Gifford also believes FFB's assertion that the company has "nearly £10 billion invested in companies with direct or indirect links to Israel's defense, tech and cybersecurity industries" to be "seriously misleading". The figure is "based on conflating two different types of exposure", a spokesperson said. But despite its rebuttals some form of protest is expected at this week's event, which is the year's most important literary event.

The Labour MP Dawn Butler and author Grace Blakeley are among those who have withdrawn from scheduled appearances at Hay festival over its sponsorship by Baillie Gifford.

Int. filmmakers discuss censorship in Western media, challenges of making documentaries



From left: Hassan Yadegari, Radwan Mortada, Igor Lopatonok, Sean Murray, Dan Cohen, and Bahman Nouraei, at the specialized panel on documentary filmmaking during the 2nd Sobh International Media Festival in Tehran's Mellat Cineplex on May 20, 2024.

By **Mohamadreza Seyedagha**

TEHRAN—A specialized panel on documentary filmmaking was held during the 2nd Sobh International Media Festival on Monday in Tehran's Mellat Cineplex, where a group of documentary filmmakers from around the world discussed various matters regarding their field, media, and related issues.

Ukrainian-American film producer Igor Lopatonok, Libyan-Lebanese journalist and filmmaker Radwan Mortada, Irish documentary filmmaker Sean Murray, American journalist and filmmaker Dan Cohen, and Iranian documentary filmmaker Mohammad Hassan Yadegari participated in the panel hosted by Iranian cinema activist Bahman Nouraei.

The participant expressed their condolences over the death of President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian along with a number of local officials in a tragic helicopter crash in northwest of the country on Sunday.

"It is a tragedy for Iranian people and a real loss for Iran. But every time Iran takes a knock, they come back stronger," Murray said.

"We were all shocked by their loss. We feel the pain and share the sadness of the Iranian people. I believe that with the strong will and faith, the nation can become stronger again," Lopatonok said.

"It is an absolute tragedy and my heart goes out to the families of the president and everyone on board who were killed and to the people of Iran.

I think it is a setback in what is a revolutionary act for Iran, that has been going on for years under President Raisi.

But any good revolution does not rely on a single person but there is an ideology that goes beyond.

No doubt, Iran will continue its way. I am optimistic that Zionism and American imperialism are in decline," Cohen noted.

"It is a disaster for sure and we share your pain. I believe that Iran will jump over that and become stronger," Mortada stated.

For his part, Yadegari referred to one of his latest documentaries, which he made three years ago about President Raisi titled "Fire, Rosary, and Ebrahim," and said: "It is hard times. The news was shocking and sad. Iran has experienced lots of crisis in the past decades after the (1979) Islamic Revolution but I hope we become more powerful".

Answering the question by the Tehran Times about the U.S., Lopatonok said: "Filmmakers in Hollywood are not free to make what they dream about. They can only make films that studios want".

"That is why I never work for studios because I do not want to work this way.

I want to have my freedom of choice. I keep my final cuts close to my chest. No one from my investors or producers can tell me what to do with my films," he added.

Another issue is deleting the contents from various online video platforms or streaming services like Netflix. "My film 'Ukraine on Fire' was deleted from the platforms and their excuse was 'he is spreading the Russian propaganda,'" he explained.

Lopatonok began his career as a producer in the film business in 2005, by co-founding the production company Technomedia which specialized in offering new digital technologies to Ukrainian film professionals.

His production company is Global 3 Pictures. With Oliver Stone as executive producer, he directed the controversial documentary "Ukraine on Fire" about the Maidan Uprising during the winter months of 2013/14.

His 2019 documentary film "Revealing Ukraine," produced by Stone, featured interviews with Vladimir Putin.

In 2021, his film "Qazaq: History of the Golden Man" was released as both a feature film and an eight-hour miniseries, produced by Stone, who featured in it interviewing Kazakhstan's authoritarian former ruler, Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Also Speaking about censorship in the U.S., Cohen said: "There are so many ways that censorship operates. Generally, it tends to be softer and more subtle but we have seen recently it has become more extreme like deletion of films".

Dan Cohen is an independent journalist and filmmaker. He has contributed to Al Jazeera English, Alternet, Electronic Intifada, The Grayzone, Middle East Eye, Mondoweiss, The Nation, and Vice News.

The Washington DC correspondent for Behind the Headlines, he has produced video reports and print dispatches from Israel-Palestine, Latin America, and the US-Mexico border. He is the co-producer of the award-winning documentary Killing Gaza.

Regarding the same issue of censorship, Murtada also commented: "It is not just about Netflix or Hollywood. Just have a look at YouTube, Facebook, or Instagram. If you include the names of Qasem Soleimani, Moqawama, or Hezbollah, your video will disappear. Even the reach of your page will decrease gradually. This is a sample of censorship as well".

Radwan Murtada is a journalist who has written for Al Akhbar since 2007 and has contributed to many foreign media outlets on political, criminal, social and judiciary affairs in Lebanon and the wider region.

Since 2007, he has worked as a journalist, documentary filmmaker, researcher, writer, executive producer, and assignment producer.

Due to his extensive research, writing, and critical coverage of Islamic groups and the war in Syria, he has become an expert on these Islamic Jihadi groups and movements.

He has visited and interviewed

Al-Qaeda/ISIS leaders in Syria and Lebanon, inside and outside of Palestinian refugee camps. He has employed his vast knowledge and skills in creating and producing documentaries about the region, ISIS, Syrian war, and its warlords.

In 2014, he founded Blue House Film, a production company based in Beirut, Lebanon, specialized in the production of documentary films and ads.

In 2018, he published his first book titled "How the Syrian Revolution Grew Its Beard." The book is the result of his 6-year investigative work on different Jihadi groups, rebels, suicide bombers, and Syrian armed groups, in Syria and Lebanon.

In 2020, he founded "The Hub" with a group of journalists and producers.

The company is specialized in helping journalists and filmmakers, by providing needed news and media services in Lebanon and the Arab region.

Regarding the difficulties of documentary filmmaking, Murray said: "Working in a tense environment and trying to be the voice of the voiceless through film and media is tough".

"We must be careful not to lose our approach when there are paramilitary forces, and we should not allow any disruptions in our work. In Ireland, many filmmakers feel significant pressure," he added.

As another example, he named the UAE and Saudi Arabia, as allies with Israel, where filmmaking is challenging. "However, we knew that Iranian media could convey our narrative when making documentaries in these countries," he underlined.

Seán Murray is an award-winning film/documentary maker and director of Relapse Pictures, a Belfast-based production company specializing in a range of work including documentary, drama and commercial/promotional videos. His work focuses on post-conflict / testimony documentaries that address legacy issues pertaining to the recent conflict in the Northern Ireland.

He also holds a Ph.D. in documentary film, a project that researched the role of documentary in supporting victims of political violence.

This work demonstrated through both a critical and creative methodology how film can address, investigate, and act as an advocate in the issues and debates that are simplified and marginalized by mainstream film and broadcast media.

Also speaking at the meeting, Yadegari explained about the financial challenges for documentary filmmakers and said: "When making a documentary, you need financial support and then work to ensure it has an economic output".

"One important point is that, as a documentary filmmaker you need to know what you want to do, and variables should not affect you.

You need to research and examine the indicators.

Research is a fundamental element in documentary filmmaking," he asserted.

Hassan Yadegari is a writer and filmmaker. He has made about 10 documentaries on various social, cultural, and artistic issues including the life of Iranian writer Nader Ebrahimi, life of the Iranian satirist Kioumars Saberi Foumani (also known by his pen name Gol-Agha), the history of Olympic games, and the evolution of fashion, clothing, and style in Iran since 2000 BC.

The Sobh International Media Festival was established in Iran in 2023 with the goal of introducing a wide range of television producers present in the IRIB World Service, as well as giving local and international artists a platform to create art and facilitate positive interactions and cultural transformations.

The festival aims to foster artistic creativity in order to build a strong and influential media platform on a global scale by recognizing and rewarding talented individuals with a background in media.

Organized by the IRIB World Service, the festival covers various categories such as television and radio production, as well as podcasting and social media.

It also includes educational activities, including workshops and seminars, to help introduce the artists to a variety of media, broaden their vision, and encourage independent thinking.

The festival centers around "Media and the New World Order," delving into the significance of local and regional identities, spiritualism, cultural authority, as well as the influence of family origins.

Moreover, it explores the idea that discourse can give rise to resistance and opposition against oppressive powers.

This is the place where all artists, thinkers, activists, and creators strive for the dawn (Sobh) of justice, humanity, peace, and spirituality in a new world.

Since October 7, when Hamas unexpectedly started Operation Al-Aqsa Storm in the occupied territories in reaction to the Israeli regime's increased atrocities against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, Israel has been bombing Gaza.

It is reported that over 35,000 Palestinians, half of them children and women, have been killed in Israeli air strikes on the Gaza Strip since then.

The death toll does not include the approximately 10,000 people who are still missing and trapped under the rubble.

Israel's relentless bombings on Gaza have taken an alarming toll on the lives of the civilian population.

The sheer number of casualties, especially children, is deeply concerning and highlights the immense suffering inflicted upon the Palestinian people.

The 2nd Sobh International Media Festival was held in Tehran from May 17 to 21.

Cartoon of Day



Benjamin Netanyahu
 Cartoonist: Emad Hajjaj from Jordan