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# Glorious Farewell

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Trucks carrying the bodies of President Raisi and his companions waded through the crowd during the funeral ceremony held in Tehran on Wednesday, May 22, 2024.

## Ayatollah Khamenei leads funeral prayer for late President, companions



Ayatollah Khamenei performing the funeral prayer in Tehran on Wednesday, May 22, 2024, on the bodies of President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian along with other victims who lost their lives in the recent helicopter crash.

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## Leader assures foreign officials of policy continuity



Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani meeting Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, in Tehran on Wednesday, May 22, 2024.

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## World leaders in Tehran to pay tribute to late president, FM



Tunisian President Kais Saied paying homage to President Raisi, Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian, and the head of their security detail during his visit to Tehran on Wednesday, May 22, 2024.

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## Raisi: a brief presidency with an enduring legacy

By Xavier Villar

MADRID- In the early hours of May 20, Iranian media announced the death of President Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, the governor of East Azerbaijan province, Malek Rahmati, the Leader's representative to the province, Mohammad Ali Al-e Hashem, and the president's security detail head.

The announcement of this tragic loss was made 16 hours after contact was lost with the helicopter carrying them back from an inauguration ceremony of a water dam project with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on Saturday, the 19th. At least 73 rapid response and rescue teams were deployed for search operations. Azerbaijan, Russia, and Turkey also participated in these search efforts.

The Iranian cabinet issued an official statement expressing: "The beloved President of Iran, Ayatollah Raisi, has been martyred on the anniversary of the birth of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Shia Imam. The president, tireless and hardworking, made the ultimate sacrifice in his path of serving his nation."

In his condolence message to the nation, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei highlighted President Raisi's dedication to public service. According to Khamenei, "Beloved President Raisi knew no fatigue." ▶ Page 3

## Tehran hosts 15th Meeting of Heads of ECO Railway Authorities

TEHRAN - The 15th Meeting of Heads of ECO Railway Authorities, and 9th Meeting of Railway Committee of the Transit Transport Coordination Council was held in Tehran on Tuesday.

The event was attended by senior railway officials from Turkey, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Republic of Azerbaijan.

Speaking at the meeting, the head of the Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran (RAI) said Iran's railway is regarded as a linking bridge between East and West Asia and also acts as a crossing point between the two important continents of Asia and Europe.

Miad Salehi expounded the position of the Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the international rail sector.

Considering that Iran has the shortest route connecting the countries of Central Asia with international waters and Europe and has a high security and safety route, most of the international rail corridors of the ECO region pass through Iran's rail route including the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), Almaty-Istanbul-Tehran transport corridor, Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul corridor, Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran (KTI) transport corridor, Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran corridor, he noted. ▶ Page 4

## Domino effect: Three European countries recognize Palestinian state

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN - The decision by three European countries to formally recognize Palestine as a state will lead to a heightened sense of isolation for both Israel and the United States, as they face growing international pressure over Tel Aviv's brutal onslaught on the Gaza Strip.

On Wednesday, the leaders of Ireland, Spain and Norway announced that they will formally recognize a Palestinian state on May 28.

The announcements were coordinated moves amid Israel's genocidal war on Gaza that was launched on October 7. Israel has slaughtered more than 35,700 Palestinians since then, defying international calls for a ceasefire and ending the brutal war.

### No peace without recognition

Norway was the first to announce its decision. "There cannot be peace in the Middle East if there is no recognition," the Scandinavian country's prime minister said.

Jonas Gahr added, "By recognizing a Palestinian state, Norway supports the Arab peace plan". He said his county regards Palestine as an independent state "with all the rights and obligations that entails." ▶ Page 5

## Israeli ministers 'banned' from sensitive info

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN- Israeli media has revealed that some ministers in the "Political-Security Cabinet" have been banned from receiving sensitive information that has been leaked amid the genocidal war on Gaza.

The regime's newspaper Israel Hayom, cited "major" sources as saying some of the classified information leaked in the past "exposed Israeli military operations and put soldiers' lives in danger".

Experts have repeatedly pointed out that the tight media censorship on Israeli coverage of the war on Gaza can be used by Palestinian factions resisting the invading forces in the enclave.

Under this same context, the newspaper quoted an Israeli security source as saying that leaking secret material by some ministers "endangers security, instead of preserving it".

The paper cited the source who also said, "It's not just the leaks that endanger national security, but the fact that the cabinet cannot fulfill its role in times of war because of them."

Sources pointed out that the exclusion of ministers from the "Political-Security Cabinet" meetings when secret information is shared raises the fear of these ministers making decisions "without being provided with the full briefing and its dimensions." ▶ Page 5

Leader receives top foreign officials

## Divine promise of Palestine's liberation 'from the river to the sea' will be fulfilled



TEHRAN – Ismail Haniyeh, head of the political bureau of Hamas Resistance Movement, met with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei on Monday to convey his condolences over the martyrdom of President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

During the meeting, Iran's Leader thanked the Palestinian nation, especially the people of Gaza, for offering their condolences. He also extended congratulations and condolences for the martyrdom of Haniyeh's children and commended the Palestinian official for his patience.

Referring to the remarkable resistance displayed by the people of Gaza, which has

surprised the world, Ayatollah Khamenei remarked, "Who would have believed that one day, slogans in support of Palestine would be raised in U.S. universities and that the flag of Palestine would be raised there? Who would have believed that one day in Japan and demonstrations in support of Palestine, the slogan "Death to Israel" would be chanted in Persian?" He highlighted that there may be future events related to Palestine that may seem unimaginable at present.

The Leader referenced Quranic verses regarding the realization of God's two promises to the mother of Prophet Moses (pbuh). "Now God's first promise about the Palestinian people has been fulfilled, and that is the victory of the people of Gaza, who are a small group, against the big, powerful group [consisting of] the U.S., NATO, England, and a number of other countries. Accordingly, the second promise, which is the elimination of the Zionist regime, can also be realized. With God's grace, the day will come when Palestine will be established 'from the river to the sea.'"

## Iran will continue to expand relations with Armenia

TEHRAN - During a meeting on Wednesday, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan expressed his condolences to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei for the tragic passing of President Ebrahim Raisi.

The two leaders discussed the historical ties and shared interests between their nations, with Ayatollah Khamenei affirming that Iran's policy of strengthening relations with Armenia will persist under the guidance of caretaker President Mohammad Mokhber. He also emphasized the strategic importance of the Iran-Armenia relationship and cautioned against potential opposition to the two countries' cooperation.

"My emphasis on expanding cooperation is based on the strategic nature of relations, but what is important is that the relations between Iran and Armenia have opponents, which is why matters related to the two countries must be handled with caution and care," the leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei also stressed the need for careful handling of bilateral matters, particularly in light of border issues.



"Our late president was very sensitive to the border issues related to Armenia and the events surrounding them. This sensitivity and caution should continue to be observed, and we must be able to secure our own interests."

Pashinyan, for his part, conveyed his shock over the loss of President Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, expressing confidence in Iran's continued stability under Ayatollah Khamenei's leadership. "We were shocked and astounded to hear the news of the passing of the Iranian President and the Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister and their entourage in the air crash. However, as you mentioned, we are confident that under your guidance and leadership, there will be no disruption to Iran's affairs."

## Iraqi PM expresses deep sorrow over passing of Raisi



TEHRAN - Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani met with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei on May 22, 2024, to offer condolences on behalf of the Iraqi government and nation following the tragic passing of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

"In these upsetting circumstances, I have come to pay my respects to Your Excellency and convey the deep sorrow, grief, and condolences of the government and people of Iraq to the government and people of Iran. What we have seen from Mr.

Raisi, the martyred President of Iran, was nothing but honesty, sincerity, purity, hard work, and service to the people," Al-Sudani stated.

The Prime Minister of Iraq also pointed to the large turnout at the funeral ceremony of the martyred Iranian president. "The televised footage I witnessed today conveyed clear messages, the most important of which is the depth of the strong relationship between the people and the officials in the Islamic Republic, despite all the pressures, sanctions, and this tragic incident," said Al-Sudani.

Mr. Al-Sudani emphasized, "Another message conveyed by the presence of millions of people attending the funeral ceremony is that we must serve the people. This magnificent funeral procession is a testament to the impact of serving the people, and this lesson should serve as our guiding principle in Iraq as well."

## President Raisi's recent trip to Pakistan turning point in bilateral ties

TEHRAN- In a meeting with Pakistan's Prime Minister Mohammad Shahbaz Sharif, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution lauded Islamabad for its heartfelt condolences over the martyrdom of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

Ayatollah Khamenei highlighted the potential for a new peak in relations under Pakistan's new government and referenced President Raisi's recent visit to Pakistan as a significant step towards enhancing cooperation.

"Relations with Pakistan are very important for the Islamic Republic of Iran, and we view this country in a completely brotherly manner. However, the relations between the two countries have had ups and downs in recent years, and we believe that under the new government of Pakistan, there is the possibility of a renewed peak



in these relations," the Leader stated.

"Friendly relations between brotherly countries are not always easy, and obstacles must be overcome to advance cooperation and progress diligently and practically," he added.

Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif echoed Ayatollah Khamenei's sentiments, describing President Raisi's visit as a catalyst for deepening ties between Iran and Pakistan. Both leaders also expressed optimism about the prospects for increased cooperation across various sectors.

# Glorious Farewell

Millions of Iranians bid heartfelt farewell to President Raisi and Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian



By Alireza Akbari

TEHRAN - In a poignant and sorrowful display, the people of Tehran gathered in overwhelming numbers to participate in the funeral ceremony for the late President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

The air was thick with grief as mourners from every corner of the city came together to honor their martyred president and foreign minister. Their presence and collective sorrow spoke volumes, reflecting a deep sense of loss and reverence for the men who had served their nation with such dedication. The streets echoed with heartfelt tributes, as the populace expressed their profound mourning and unwavering respect for President Raisi and Minister Amir Abdollahian.

In a stirring display of collective grief and solidarity, the streets of Tehran overflowed with mourners on Wednesday morning, an hour before the official commencement of the funeral ceremony. The unprecedented turnout was a testament to the profound impact of the late president on the Iranian people.

Long before the ceremony's start, a sea of sorrowful citizens moved toward Tehran University, their voices echoing with chants that conveyed their deep mourning for President Raisi. From all walks of life, they

scorching sun, lined the streets to pay their last respects. Heartfelt messages adorned their hands, bearing inscriptions like "I am proud that I voted for a martyr," "We will not forget the servant of the nation," and "Our chosen one was chosen by God."

This historic gathering not only honored the legacy of President Raisi and Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian but also underscored the enduring bond between the figures and the people they served with unwavering dedication.

**Iranian figures praise late President Raisi's legacy of humility and service**

Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani has underscored the guiding principles of the late President Ebrahim Raisi, emphasizing his dedication to serving the Iranian people.

Speaking on the sidelines of President Raisi's funeral ceremony on Wednesday, General Ashtiani reflected on the legacy of the revered president.

"President Raisi's foremost recommendations included unwavering service to the people, sincerity, and courage," he remarked, praising Martyr Raisi's embodiment of these values.

The general noted that President Raisi's leadership was characterized by a profound sense of duty, faith, and belief.

General Ashtiani highlighted



gathered to offer prayers over his body, united in their grief.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, led the funeral prayers for the late president and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, with prominent Iranian officials and military commanders in attendance. The solemnity of the moment was palpable as the nation bade farewell to its esteemed figures.

Following the prayers, the funeral procession commenced from Tehran University to Azadi Square. Thousands of Tehranians, enduring hours under the

that throughout his tenure, President Raisi was committed to the welfare and development of Iran. "Every moment of his life was dedicated to the service and comfort of the people, and the progress and development of our nation," the general stated.

He added that President Raisi's lifelong devotion and sincere efforts were ultimately rewarded by the Almighty God.

Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy, has paid tribute to the late President Ebrahim Raisi, emphasizing his grassroots

approach, tireless work ethic, and deep commitment to the principles of velayat.

Tangsiri highlighted the essential qualities that Raisi embodied. "The next president must possess the attributes of this noble martyr, including a deep love for velayat, tirelessness, and a strong grassroots connection," he stated.

He also commended the late Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, acknowledging his dignified and noble conduct during his tenure, noting that Amir Abdollahian's diplomatic

referring to him as the "foreign minister of the field."

Former Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani has highlighted the reasons behind the widespread admiration for Martyr Ebrahim Raisi, noting his exemplary morals and humility. "The late president's humble demeanor will remain etched in the memory of the Iranian nation," Larijani stated.

Mohsen Rezaei, head of the Supreme Council of Economic Coordination, echoed these sentiments, emphasizing Raisi's morality, piety, deep devotion



efforts strengthened the Islamic Republic's foreign relations, even rekindling ties with some regional countries.

The remarks underscore the significant impact both Raisi and Amir Abdollahian had on Iran's political landscape and their enduring legacies of dedication and service.

Ali Akbar Ahmadian, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, has praised the late President Ebrahim Raisi for introducing a new style of governance and management.

Ahmadian emphasized that his legacy will be remembered for his dedicated service to the Iranian nation.

"President Raisi demonstrated through his actions that he was a true servant of the Iranian people," Ahmadian remarked. "He has left behind a distinctive approach to governance and management that will be remembered and emulated by future leaders."

Ahmadian also highlighted the contributions of the late Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, noting his unique ability to merge diplomatic protocol with the principles of the Islamic Revolution.

"Amir Abdollahian was a voice for the oppressed on the global stage and effectively combined field operations with political strategy," Ahmadian stated,

to velayat, and dedication to serving the people as his defining qualities.

Mohammad Hosseini, sociocultural advisor to the president, praised Raisi as a model of efficient management. "Martyr Raisi was a compassionate figure who tirelessly worked for the betterment of the Iranian people," Hosseini remarked.

Ali Akbar Salehi, former Chief of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, reflected on the enduring legacy of Raisi and the late Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian. He described their contributions as "a good name and a method of serving the people."

The funeral processions for Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian began on Tuesday and will continue until Friday.

The two officials, who tragically died in a plane crash earlier this week near the northwestern city of Tabriz, will be laid to rest in their respective hometowns.

The nation mourns the loss of these prominent figures, whose deaths, along with those of their entourage, have sent shockwaves through Iran and the world.

The ceremonies mark a period of national grief and reflection on the contributions and legacies of Raisi and Amir Abdollahian.

## Ayatollah Khamenei leads funeral prayer for late President, companions

TEHRAN - Amidst an outpouring of grief and reverence, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei solemnly led the funeral prayer for the late President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian on Wednesday morning.

The University of Tehran campus was filled to capacity as Iranians from all walks of life gathered to pay their final respects to the beloved officials. Tens of thousands of

people prayed behind Ayatollah Khamenei inside the university, while thousands more filled the streets outside, unable to enter the overcrowded venue.

Prominent Iranian officials and military commanders were present at the funeral prayer, mourning the tragic loss of President Raisi and Minister Amir Abdollahian, who perished in a helicopter crash in northwestern Iran on Sunday. Additionally, leaders from

various resistance groups, such as Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh and Islamic Jihad chief Ziad al-Nakhala, were in attendance at the ceremony.

The Leader's representative to East Azarbaijan Province and the provincial governor were among the dead. President Raisi and his entourage were on their way back from the opening ceremony of a joint major dam with the Republic of Azerbaijan.

# World leaders in Tehran to pay tribute to late president, FM

TEHRAN – In a display of international solidarity, high-ranking officials from 68 countries and several international organizations have traveled to Iran to honor the late President and Foreign Minister of Iran, who tragically died in a helicopter crash on Sunday.

The incident took place as President Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, along with their companions, were returning from an inauguration ceremony in Azerbaijan.

This unprecedented gathering includes representatives from many countries, some making their first official visits to Iran since the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

The Iranian government has organized a series of commemorative events to honor the memory of the late president and his deceased companions on the helicopter, drawing a diverse array of international dignitaries to Tehran. The tragic incident has prompted countries to send high-level delegations to the capital.

Among the attendees is Sameh Shoukry, the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs. His visit is particularly notable as it marks the first time an Egyptian Foreign Minister has traveled to Tehran in over four decades, signaling a potential thaw in relations between the two countries. Shoukry also had a meeting with Iran's acting president, Mohammad Mokhber, where the two sides discussed growing opportunities for enhancing bilateral ties between Iran and Egypt.

Kais Saied, President of Tunisia, made a historic visit to Tehran, marking the first time a Tunisian leader has visited the country. President Saied met with his Iranian counterpart on the sidelines of multiple summits, during which the two agreed to expand cooperation and strengthen ties between Iran and Tunisia.

Qatar's Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, and the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, attended the funeral of the late Iranian President.

President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon was among the attendees



of the funeral ceremony. Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Muhriddin, Presidential Adviser for Foreign Ties, and other high-ranking Tajik state officials also arrived in Iran for the ceremony held on May 23 in the Iranian city of Mashhad.

Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, National Leader of Turkmenistan, was also present, emphasizing the strong ties between Turkmenistan and Iran. Additionally, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze and Foreign Minister Iliia Darchiashvili attended the funeral.

Prime Minister of Iraq Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani, Prime Minister of Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Azerbaijan Ali Asadov, and the Prime Minister of Syria paid tribute to the late Iranian president, showing their deep respect and condolences.

Vice President and Foreign Minister of Turkey Hakan Fidan, Foreign Minister of Cyprus Constantinos Kombos, Foreign Minister and Special Envoy of Sri Lanka Ali Sabry, and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Serbia Ivica Dacic also arrived to express condolences and show support.

Nechirvan Barzani, head of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, came to pay his respects. Other high-ranking attendees included the Special Envoy of Oman, the Special Envoy of Jordan, the Minister and Special Envoy of Nicaragua, the Minister and Special

Representative of the Maldives, the Minister and Special Envoy of Malaysia, along with representatives from the Turkish Saadet Party (Felicity Party) and the Turkish Patriotic Party.

The Deputy Prime Minister of Afghanistan was also present, reflecting Afghanistan's support. Ismail Haniyeh, the head of the Hamas political bureau, Sheikh Naim Qassem, the deputy secretary-general of Hezbollah in Lebanon, Osama Hamdan, a leader of the Hamas movement, the spokesperson of Ansarullah of Yemen, and the head of Iraq's Hashd al-Shaabi, also known as Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), also attended the funeral hall.

The Speaker of the Algerian Parliament, the Chairman of the Supreme Assembly and Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, and the Speaker of the Parliament of Kazakhstan were also present, showing their respective countries' support.

Kuwait's Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya traveled to Tehran as the envoy of the Emir of Kuwait, accompanied by a delegation to express condolences and solidarity, marking a significant diplomatic gesture from Kuwait.

From Russia, Vyacheslav Volodin, the Chairman of the Russian State Duma, arrived to participate in the memorial ceremonies. Lebanon was represented by Nabih Berri, the

Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, who arrived with an accompanying delegation.

Belarusian Foreign Minister Sergei Aleinik also made the journey to Tehran, highlighting Belarus's solidarity with Iran during this period of mourning.

India sent its Vice President, Jagdeep Thakkar, who led a senior delegation of Indian officials.

Tamaki Tsukada, the Japanese Ambassador to Iran, also paid a visit to the funeral hall, offering condolences to the officials of Iran. These visits collectively represent a moment of international unity and support for Iran during a time of national tragedy.

Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, the foreign minister of the United Arab Emirates, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, the Saudi foreign minister, and Abdullatif al-Zayani, the foreign minister of Bahrain, also traveled to Iran to convey messages of condolences.

The attendance of such a diverse group of international leaders underscores the global significance of the late president and foreign minister of Iran and highlights a potential opening for renewed diplomatic engagements with Iran from countries that have had limited relations since the Islamic Revolution. This unprecedented gathering marks a poignant moment in international diplomacy, driven by shared grief and respect for the deceased Iranian officials.

The funeral processions for Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian began on Tuesday and will continue until Friday.

The two officials, who tragically died in a plane crash earlier this week near the northwestern city of Tabriz, will be laid to rest in their respective hometowns.

The nation mourns the loss of these prominent figures, whose deaths, along with those of their entourage, have sent shockwaves through Iran.

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the leadership and people of the Islamic Republic. We affirm that Iraq stands by the Iranian people during this difficult time."

King Abdullah II of Jordan, President of the United Arab Emirates, Mohammed bin Zayed, and the Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, also extended heartfelt condolences to the Islamic Republic.

On its part, Lebanon announced three days of national mourning for the deaths of Raisi, Amir Abdollahian, and the rest of their team.

Special mention should be made of the condolences expressed by members of the Resistance Axis.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

Leader receives top foreign officials

### Iran's course will not change despite latest tragedy

TEHRAN – In a meeting with the Emir of Qatar, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei highlighted Iran's determination to carry on the path initiated by the late President Ebrahim Raisi.

"Despite this loss, the country's course will not change, and the same spirit of affection and confidence between Iran and Qatar that prevailed during the reign of the late president will continue under Dr. Mokhber," the Leader explained.

He pointed out the regional conditions and the efforts of enemies to disrupt stability and peace. "Regional countries have no other option but to support and show solidarity with each other," he stated.

Ayatollah Khamenei also expressed gratitude for Qatar's solidarity and sympathy over the demise of President Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, on his end, expressed that the longstanding ties between Iran and Qatar have always been strong and will continue to remain robust.

He considered cooperation and unity among regional countries as the only way to counter existing threats in the region. "We do not set any limits on expanding relations with Iran," the Qatari Emir noted.



President Raisi placed great emphasis on fostering and expanding diplomatic ties with neighboring and regional countries. During his presidency, Iran's long-standing relationship with Qatar witnessed a remarkable strengthening, reaching new heights of cooperation.

Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian played a pivotal role in this diplomatic endeavor, frequently consulting with Qatari officials on a wide range of issues.

He undertook multiple visits to the Persian Gulf nation over the past three years, contributing to unprecedented levels of dialogue and understanding between Iran and Qatar.

This enhanced engagement extended beyond bilateral relations, as Minister Abdollahian also played a key role in facilitating dialogue between Iran and other Arab states

### Iran-Lebanon ties rooted in kinship and brotherhood



TEHRAN – Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, hailed the public mourning period in Lebanon that was announced over the passing of President Ebrahim Raisi as a testament to the closeness of ties between Iran and the Arab country.

He made the remarks during a meeting with Nabih Berri, the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, on Wednesday.

"The declaration of public mourning in Lebanon is a sign of the utmost solidarity between the two countries, and we consider our relationship with the Lebanese brothers and Mr. Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah as one of kinship and brotherhood," the Leader stated.

Ayatollah Khamenei stressed that while the martyrdom of President Raisi was a heavy and devastating loss, it could be turned into

an opportunity. "This issue is difficult for us, but by the grace of God, the Iranian people will use this bitter incident as an opportunity, as has been the case in the past years when hard events have turned into opportunities," he noted.

The Leader, referring to the vast presence of the Iranian people in mourning the late President and his companions, added, "Our people, thanks be to God, are a standing and vigilant nation, and our trust and reliance on the Almighty God are great, and God willing, the Iranian people will benefit from this incident."

Ayatollah Khamenei also expressed satisfaction with the solidarity among resistance groups in Lebanon and affirmed previous statements by Berri on the occurrence of an "existential" war in the region. "The current conditions in the region are such that it is a matter of life and death for the Zionist enemy as well as for the side of truth."

The Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament expressed sadness and deep sorrow on behalf of the people and government of Lebanon over the demise of President Raisi.

### Tunisia's political position should expand to the Arab world

TEHRAN – Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei received the President of Tunisia and his accompanying delegation on Wednesday and expressed gratitude for the brotherly and heartfelt sentiments of President Kais Saied.

"The loss of the President and a number of officials and their companions in the recent incident is heavy, but throughout the era of the Islamic Republic, we have always seen that based on divine wisdom and with the patience and perseverance of the people, bitter events have turned into opportunities for progress and movements," the Leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei expressed joy at Saied's visit to Tehran, considering it a turning point in ties between Iran and Tunisia. "The presence of a distinguished and knowledgeable figure like Mr. Kais Saied at the helm of Tunisia is an opportunity for this country to show a new and positive face after years of authoritarian rule and cutting ties with the Islamic world," he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei hailed the Tunisian people's social and political movements in the past years, which in his opinion, acted as catalysts for major changes in North Africa.



"The Tunisian people have great potential for progress and advancement, and we hope that with the wisdom of Mr. Kais Saied, necessary unity among different factions in Tunisia will be achieved, paving the way for further progress."

The Leader lauded the anti-Zionist positions of the Tunisian President, stating, "Such positions should be expanded in the Arab world because unfortunately, these issues are not given enough attention in the Arab world, and we believe that the only way to success is through resilience and stability."

The President of Tunisia, referring to the common will of the two countries to expand relations in all areas, expressed hope that with the implementation of agreements reached during the tenure of President Raisi, practical cooperation will be realized.

### Defense minister highlights President Raisi's commitment to service

TEHRAN – Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani has underscored the guiding principles of the late President Ebrahim Raisi, emphasizing his dedication to serving the Iranian people.

Speaking on the sidelines of President Raisi's funeral ceremony on Wednesday, General Ashtiani reflected on the legacy of the revered president.

"President Raisi's foremost recommendations included unwavering service to the people, sincerity, and courage," he remarked, praising Martyr Raisi's embodiment of these values.

The general noted that President Raisi's leadership was characterized by a profound sense

of duty, faith, and belief.

General Ashtiani highlighted that throughout his tenure, President Raisi was committed to the welfare and development of Iran. "Every moment of his life was dedicated to the service and comfort of the people, and the progress and development of our nation," the general stated.

He added that President Raisi's lifelong devotion and sincere efforts were ultimately rewarded by the Almighty God.

The funeral ceremony in Tehran drew significant attention, reflecting the deep respect and admiration for President Raisi's contributions to the country.

### Raisi: a brief presidency with an enduring legacy

From Page 1 ▶ In this painful incident, the people of Iran have lost a sincere, dedicated, and valuable servant. For him, the well-being and satisfaction of the people, reflecting divine satisfaction, prevailed above all." Additionally, in the same condolence message, the Leader decreed five days of national mourning.

As soon as the death of the president and his companions was confirmed, several international political leaders began to express their condolences.

From Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov expressed, "Our thoughts and hearts are with Iran at this time." Additionally, he noted that both President Ebrahim Raisi and Hossein Amir-Abdollahian "were known as true and reliable

friends of Russia."

Chinese President Xi Jinping described the "tragic death" of Raisi as "a great loss for the Iranian people."

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was "deeply saddened and shocked by the tragic death" of Raisi, Amir Abdollahian, and their accompanying delegation, who were returning from an official trip to Azerbaijan. "My heartfelt condolences to their families and the people of Iran. India stands with Iran in this time of sorrow."

Pakistan's Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, extended his condolences "for this terrible loss" and expressed, "The great Iranian nation will overcome this tragedy with its customary courage."

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, who met with the Iranian delegation just hours before the accident, expressed being "deeply shocked by the news of the tragic loss suffered by our friendly and sisterly Islamic Republic of Iran and its people" in a statement addressed to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Meanwhile, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed, "I remember my brother, President Raisi, with all respect and gratitude," in reference to the deceased Iranian president.

From Iraq, President Abdul Latif al-Rashid said in a statement: "Our heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, and

## Iran-Turkey Joint Economic Cooperation Commission to be held soon



TEHRAN - The Director General of the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe Department of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mohammadreza Nazeri said the Iran-Turkey Joint Economic Cooperation Committee meeting will be held in the coming days to bolster bilateral ties in trade and economy.

The 4th session of the Coordinating Headquarters of Foreign Economic Relations was held with the participation of Nazeri, some of the senior managers of the ministry, deputies, and representatives of the executive organization on "Reviewing Latest Situation of Foreign Economic Relations with Turkey and Cuba".

In this meeting, Nazeri submitted a comprehensive report on relations between Iran and Turkey and stated that the two countries have a high potential to enhance their ties in trade and economic fields.

Mahmoud Heidari pointed to the amicable relations between Iran and Turkey and called the organizing of the 4th Iran-Turkey Joint Economic Cooperation as an opportunity for promoting the level of cooperation in all fields.

Iran and Turkey have been taking serious measures to expand the trade relations between the two countries.

The trade exchanges between Iran and Turkey in the first two months of 2024 reached \$930 million, showing a one percent increase compared to the same period last year.

According to the latest figures released by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT), Iran's trade with the neighboring country stood at \$919 million in January-February 2023.

According to TURKSTAT, Turkey's exports to Iran in the mentioned two months reached \$580 million, recording a 23 percent increase compared to last year's corresponding period.

Turkey exported over \$469 million worth of products to the Islamic Republic in the first two months of 2023.

## CBI provides industrial sector over \$900m of subsidized foreign currency in a year

TEHRAN - The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) supplied \$921 million of subsidized foreign currency for the country's industrial sector in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), IRNA reported.

Based on the CBI data, some \$335 million of the mentioned figure was allocated for the imports of raw chemical goods.

Various sectors of the industry including tires received \$180 million, polymer materials \$120 million, cellulose products \$92 million, petroleum oils and oils derived from bituminous minerals \$77 million, textile products \$57 million and other items \$47 million, the report said.

Back in April, the CBI reported that the bank also provided \$4.3 billion of foreign currency to the importers of medicine and medical equipment in the previous Iranian calendar year.

As IRNA reported, the figure was 26 percent more than the preceding year, in which \$3.4 billion was allocated for the imports of the mentioned products.

From the beginning of the current year (March 20) up to May 22, the central bank provided more than \$3.143 billion of foreign currency for the imports of four groups of essential commodities including food and agricultural products, and medicine.

Back in March, Iran's Expediency Discernment Council authorized the government and the state management apparatuses, including the CBI, to spend 13.6 billion euros at a preferential exchange rate for the import of basic items such as agricultural products, medicine, and its raw materials as well as medical equipment.

The council members decided on the import

Turkey's imports from Iran however registered a 22 percent decline and fell from \$450 million in January-February 2023 to \$350 million in the first two months of 2024.

The trade exchange between Iran and Turkey stood at \$5.490 billion in 2023 with a decrease of 14 percent.

Based on the data previously released by the Turkish Statistical Institute, the value of Iran's exports to Turkey increased by 19 percent to reach \$3.35 billion in 2022.

Turkey had imported over \$2.82 billion worth of commodities from the Islamic Republic in 2021.

Based on the mentioned data, Iran's imports from the country also marked an 11-percent rise to hit \$3.07 billion in the past year, in comparison with 2021, when the figure was \$2.77 billion.

According to the Turkish Statistical Institute, the trade between the two countries registered a 15-percent rise in 2022 compared to 2021.

The value of trade between the two neighbors reached \$6.42 billion in 2022, while the figure stood at \$5.59 billion in the preceding year.

Iran's trade balance with Turkey was \$280 million positive in favor of Iran in the past year.

Last July, Iran, and Turkey discussed ways of expanding economic relations along with political ties at the Turkish-Iranian High-Level Cooperation Council in Tehran.

During the meeting, which was co-chaired by Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the two sides negotiated the extension of the gas export contract between the two sides for the next 25 years.

In the meeting, President Raisi noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to expand economic relations with neighboring countries.

The president also evaluated Tehran-Ankara ties as positive and progressive, saying that the two countries should pursue appropriate policies to move towards increasing their annual trade exchanges to \$30 billion.

On the sidelines of the mentioned meeting, Iranian Energy Minister Ali-Akbar Mehrabian also held talks with Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Fatih Dunmez in which the two sides exchanged views on cooperation in energy fields.



fund allocation while meeting under the chairmanship of Ayatollah Amoli Larijani to discuss and review the budget for the current financial year.

They stressed that the government would offer preferential rates for clearing or exchanging foreign resources resulting from the export of oil, gas, and gas condensates for the import of "only basic agricultural goods and medicine", the list of which, will be approved by the Council of Ministers by the end of April.

As reported, the imports will be overseen by a working group consisting of the first vice president, the head of the central bank, the head of the country's planning and budget organization, the minister of economic affairs and finance, the minister of agricultural as well as the minister of mining industry and trade.

The Minister of Health along with other relevant bodies are also required to implement and monitor the allocation, distribution, and use of currency for medicine and equipment.

In addition, the central bank is obliged to prepare monthly reports on the implementation of Clause 4(A) of the Budget Law.

# Tehran hosts 15th Meeting of Heads of ECO Railway Authorities

TEHRAN - The 15th Meeting of Heads of ECO Railway Authorities, and 9th Meeting of Railway Committee of the Transit Transport Coordination Council was held in Tehran on Tuesday.

The event was attended by senior railway officials from Turkey, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Republic of Azerbaijan.

Speaking at the meeting, the head of the Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran (RAI) said Iran's railway is regarded as a linking bridge between East and West Asia and also acts as a crossing point between the two important continents of Asia and Europe.

Miad Salehi expounded the position of the Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the international rail sector.

Considering that Iran has the shortest route connecting the countries of Central Asia with international waters and Europe and has a high security and safety route, most of the international rail corridors of the ECO region pass through Iran's rail route including the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), Almaty-Istanbul-Tehran transport corridor, Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul corridor, Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran (KTI) transport corridor, Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran corridor, he noted.

The deputy roads minister said facilitating border transit operations and strengthening the logistics centers and border terminals are the main programs of the Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran to increase the capacity of transit and international transportation, IRNA reported.

Iran is pursuing to make rail transport competitive with the sea route, launch this train on both sides, and export Iranian products and goods to China by train, Salehi added.

Over the past few years, the Islamic Republic has been implementing a plan to implement major railway projects for completing North-South and East-West international transport corridors that pass through the country.

According to Abbas Khatibi, the deputy head of the country's Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructures Company (CDTIC), the Iranian Transport and Urban Development



Ministry's main priorities in the railway transportation sector are the development of the INSTC, the East-West corridor, and the development of transit infrastructure in the country.

Khatibi noted that the Chabahar-Zahedan railway is the major project underway in the East-West corridor, while Rasht-Caspian and Rasht-Astara railways are the major projects underway in the North-South corridor in Iran.

He said that the North-South corridor is 13,000 kilometers expanding from the Indian port of Mumbai to Finland's capital Helsinki.

A significant section of this corridor, stretching from Bandar Abbas in southern Iran to the northern city of Astara, is located in the Islamic Republic. So far, this railway has been constructed from Bandar Abbas to Rasht in northern Iran and from Rasht, it is divided into two branches, one of which goes to

the Caspian Sea coastal region including Caspian and Anzali ports and the other branch goes to Astara to be connected to the railway network of Azerbaijan, according to Khatibi.

He put the physical progress of the Rasht-Caspian railway which is 35 kilometers at 70 percent, saying: "We hope this railway will be operational in the first six months of the next [Iranian calendar] year (begins on March 20)."

The official further mentioned the complexity of the Rasht-Astara project, saying that it is a megaproject that requires over \$20 billion of investment to be completed.

"The Rasht-Astara railway project is going to be financed through three methods of domestic financing, foreign investment, and bartering, and we are negotiating to finalize the resources through these methods," Khatibi explained.

Mentioning the Chabahar-Zahedan railway project, the official said the resources needed for the implementation of this project have been provided by the National Development Fund (NDF), and the project is being implemented on schedule.

He finally noted that the Transport Ministry is expected to put into operation 1,000 kilometers of new railways in the next Iranian calendar year provided that the necessary funding will be provided by the government.

## Iran's agricultural sector to apply 'metaverse' to increase productivity



TEHRAN - The head of Iran Agricultural Information Sciences and Technology (IAIST) said the agricultural sector of the country will enter the world of metaverse to improve productivity.

Hossein Farazmand made the comments on the sidelines of the Iran Efficiency Exhibition, adding that the use of communications and information technology is one of the issues raised to increase efficiency and productivity in the agricultural sector.

In this regard, giant steps have been taken in the country to make the agricultural sector smarter, he said, adding that projects like smart irrigation and the use of the Internet of Things (IoT) are underway.

Farazmand pointed out that the first 'metaverse' platform in Iran's agricultural sector was launched in cooperation with a knowledge-based company so that the agricultural and horticultural products

of Iran's Ministry of Agriculture can be presented on this virtual space.

It is also hoped that the agricultural companies of the private sector would supply their products in this virtual space as well, the head of Iran Agricultural Information Sciences and Technology (IAIST) stated.

Earlier this month, Iran's Minister of Agriculture said his ministry is concentrating on export-based production in the current Iranian calendar year (started March 20, 2024).

Speaking in a meeting with senior managers of the ministry, Mohammad Ali Nikbakht said more than \$1.0 billion of agricultural products were exported from the country in the previous Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2023, to March 19, 2024), showing a 13 and 23 percent hike in weight and value respectively compared to a year earlier.

He pointed to the current year's motto "Production Jump with the People's Participation" and added that his ministry will make efforts to materialize the objectives of the motto.

Nikbakht called on the responsible organizations and companies to provide exporters of agricultural products with the necessary facilities in order to spur exports and export activities.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the agriculture minister termed investing in the aquaculture and fisheries sectors as an opportunity for realizing the goals of the production jump, noting that fisheries and aquaculture sectors have ample capacities and can also improve the productivity of soil and water.

The value of Iran's exports of agricultural and foodstuff products increased by 22.5 percent in the previous Iranian calendar year, the spokesman of the International Relations and Trade Development Committee of Iran's House of Industry, Mining and Trade said.

According to Ruhollah Latifi, Iranian producers managed to export about \$6.3 billion worth of the mentioned products in the said year.

As reported, agro-food products accounted for 12.8 percent of the country's total non-oil exports in the previous year.

Iraq was the top destination for Iran's agro-food products in the mentioned year importing \$1.986 billion worth of the said items. The Arab neighbor accounted for 31.5 percent of the total exports of food and agricultural products from Iran.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) stood in second place, importing \$751 million of the mentioned products, followed by Russia with \$521.5 million.

## Iran joined major international organizations during Raisi's tenure

TEHRAN - Less than three years after the late Ebrahim Raisi took power as Iran's president, the country has gained great achievements in joining major international organizations.

Iran had long been seeking to secure full membership in Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) but it did not happen before the rule of President Raisi.

The country first applied for membership in the alliance 17 years ago, but it took until 2021 - shortly after the start of Raisi government - for the request to be approved.

Iran's full membership was finally ratified in the 23rd virtual

summit of the bloc in early July 2023.

The Organization is of key international and regional significance as it is the world's largest regional organization in terms of geographic scope and population.

In another achievement for Raisi administration, the Islamic Republic of Iran officially became a member of the BRICS bloc of emerging economies on August 24, 2023.

The group is aimed to bring together the world's most important developing countries, to challenge the political and economic power of the West.

Addressing the 15th BRICS

Summit after Iran's joining the bloc, President Raisi said that the benefits of Iran's membership in the bloc would become historic.

This membership will mark a new chapter and a stronger step towards justice, fairness, morality, and lasting peace in the international scene, President Raisi said.

Raisi praised the decision of the BRICS members to expand the bloc, calling it an admirable measure that paves the way for global development based on justice.

From the very beginning, President Raisi stressed that his foreign policy would focus

on the expansion of ties with neighboring and friendly countries.

In line with this policy, the Raisi administration had been reaching out to the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

Raisi's efforts finally led to the signing of a long-awaited free trade agreement (FTA) with the union on December 25, 2024.

Although the FTA has yet to be ratified by the parliaments of all the six parties to the agreement before it can take effect, it is seen as a major step in the enhancement of trade between Iran and the five-member bloc.

# “Civilized world” demands prosecution for uncivilized war criminals

By Parviz Rashidi

TEHRAN - Israel's war minister Yoav Gallant on Tuesday urged "nations of the civilized world" to oppose the request by the International Criminal Court Prosecutor Ahmad Khan for arrest warrants against Israel's leaders and to declare they would ignore the warrants.

Khan told CNN on Monday that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Gallant would be charged with "starvation of civilians as a method of warfare as a war crime" and "extermination and/or murder... including in the context of deaths caused by starvation, as a crime against humanity" in the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.

Gallant is presenting war criminals like himself and Netanyahu among civilized figures and those who are seeking prosecution for the criminals as uncivilized.

Gallant also said it is "disgraceful" to interfere in Israel's more than seven-month-old war against Hamas.

Writing in a post on X, Gallant said, "The attempt by Prosecutor Karim Khan to deny the State of Israel the right to self-defense and to free its hostages must be rejected out of hand."

Contrary to Gallant's claims, Khan didn't reject the right to defense.

He just said the right to defense "does not absolve Israel or any state of its obligation to comply with international humanitarian law."

Israel is not just fighting Hamas which launched an attack on southern Israel on October 7. It has primarily launched an ethnic cleansing against the Gazans to drive them out of the Gaza Strip.

If Israel is really fighting Hamas, why is it starving 2.3 million people as a collective punishment?

"The fact that Hamas fighters need water doesn't justify denying water from all the civilian population of Gaza," Khan said.

During its relentless bombardments and land invasion, Israel has made numerous atrocities that are clear examples of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. It has prevented or delayed the delivery of humanitarian aid, exterminated entire families, attacked ambulances and medical staff, shot dead people struggling to reach aid trucks to get food for their starved families, and many other atrocities.

Gallant is not only intentionally distorting the meaning of civilization he is also justifying dropping hundreds of thousands of bombs on civilians, who take shelter in UN-run facilities, schools, churches and



hospitals, as self-defense.

Despite what it claims, Israel is mostly fighting the civilian population to force them to flee the remaining Palestinian lands, both in Gaza and the West Bank.

So far European countries such as France, Belgium and Slovenia have backed the ICC's move to issue arrest warrants against war criminals in the Gaza war.

Based on the views of Gallant and other Israeli officials these three countries are uncivilized. Likewise, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, who has also said "all States that have ratified the ICC statutes are bound to execute" the rulings of the court "as an independent international institution", is an uncivilized person.

Even Germany which comes after the United States in supplying arms to Israel in the war against Gaza is caught in a quandary. It can neither flatly reject ICC's move to issue arrest warrants nor it can abandon Israel which it has ardently and blindly supported.

While an unnamed government spokesperson has told the Bild newspaper published on Wednesday that "the chief prosecutor's allegations are serious and must be substantiated," Germany on Monday said it "respects the independence and procedures" of the ICC.

Contrary to what Gallant claims the civilized world wants those who have been committing crimes in Gaza to face justice and consider the offenders as uncivilized, sadistic, and war criminals.

## WORLD HEADLINES

### Hamas: Resistance spurred recognition

A senior member of Hamas's political bureau says it was the "brave resistance" of the Palestinian people that spurred Norway, Ireland and Spain to announce that they will recognize Palestine as a state.

"These successive recognitions are the direct result of this brave resistance and the legendary steadfastness of the Palestinian people," Bassem Naim told AFP.

"We believe this will be a turning point in the international position on the Palestinian issue," he said.

### Barghouti: Israeli fascists received a blow

Longtime Palestinian politician Mustafa Barghouti said recognition of the Palestinian state by Ireland, Spain and Norway was a "powerful political and symbolically significant step" that moved the achievement of "freedom and justice" closer for the Palestinian people.

"It is a very important step in determining the rights of the Palestinian people - our people - for self-determination," Barghouti told Al Jazeera.

"Also, it blows away a lot of the de facto effects that Israel has created through settlement building on the ground - by confirming that Palestine today is a state under occupation," Barghouti said.

"So, any efforts of the occupying power to change facts on the ground is meaningless and will not have an impact in the long run," he said.

"This is also a blow to Netanyahu and his extreme government, and to the fascists in his government... It means the acts of fascism and extremism in the Israeli government has no future," he added.

### OIC: Historic step in line with intl. law

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) applauded announcements from Spain, Norway, and Ireland to recognize Palestine as a state.

"This important historic step is in line with international law and relevant United Nations legitimacy resolutions, and contributes to the affirmation of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and enhances the status of the State of Palestine at the international scene," the pan-Islamic grouping said in a statement.

This stance "supports international efforts aimed at ending Israeli colonial occupation of Palestinian land, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and push in the direction of achieving justice and freedom for the Palestinian people."

### Lapid acknowledges Israel's "political failure"

Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid decried a Palestinian state recognition by Spain, Norway and Ireland as an "unprecedented political failure."

He termed in a post on his X account the move by the three European countries as "disgraceful," saying it was the product of a "crisis", in reference to the policies of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet.

### Hamas official calls for uprising in West Bank

The ongoing crimes in the West Bank, especially in the city and refugee camp of

Jenin, "forewarn of an imminent popular storm against these Israeli invasions that have targeted all aspects of Palestinian life", Haroun Nasser al-Din, a member of Hamas's political bureau, has said, according to Al Jazeera.

In a statement, Nasser al-Din said that the group is calling on Palestinians in the occupied West Bank to "engage in an intifada in response to these ugly crimes, and to confront occupation forces".

On Tuesday, Israeli gunfire in Jenin killed eight people, including a doctor, a teacher and a student. At least 12 people were wounded in the deadly Israeli raid.

### Guardian: Meta allows hate speech against Muslims

The Facebook and Instagram owner Meta approved a series of AI-manipulated political adverts during India's election that spread disinformation and incited religious violence, according to a report shared exclusively with the Guardian.

Facebook approved adverts containing known slurs towards Muslims in India, such as "let's burn this vermin" and "Hindu blood is spilling, these invaders must be burned", as well as Hindu supremacist language and disinformation about political leaders.

Another approved advert called for the execution of an opposition leader they falsely claimed wanted to "erase Hindus from India", next to a picture of a Pakistan flag.

The adverts were created and submitted to Meta's ad library - the database of all adverts on Facebook and Instagram - by India Civil Watch International (ICWI) and Ek?, a corporate accountability organization, to test Meta's mechanisms for detecting and blocking political content that could prove inflammatory or harmful during India's six-week election.

According to the report, all of the adverts "were created based upon real hate speech and disinformation prevalent in India, underscoring the capacity of social media platforms to amplify existing harmful narratives".

During his decade in power, Modi's government has pushed a Hindu-first agenda which human rights groups, activists and opponents say has led to the increased persecution and oppression of India's Muslim minority.

### Russia: Hotheads in Congress escalate tensions

Hotheads in the US Congress look determined to further provoke tensions around Ukraine and follow Washington's general policy of continuing the war to the last Ukrainian, Russian Presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov has told the media while commenting on the idea of a group of congressmen about strikes on Russian territory with US weapons.

"There are many hotheads in Congress who would like to further provoke tensions and who follow the general fairway of Washington's foreign policy aimed at provoking war to the last Ukrainian," Peskov said, Tass reported.

On Tuesday, the Politico newspaper cited a letter by lawmakers from both parties in the US House of Representatives demanding the Joe Biden administration allowed Ukraine to strike Russian territory using US weapons. The letter called on US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin to authorize "the use of US-provided weapons to strike strategic targets within Russian territory under certain circumstances". According to the congressmen, "It is essential the Biden Administration allows Ukraine's military leaders the ability to conduct a full spectrum of operations necessary."

The letter was authored by Mike Turner (Republican from Ohio), Jim Himes (Democrat from Connecticut) and Gerald Connolly (Democrat from Virginia).

Earlier, The Wall Street Journal reported, citing US officials, that Ukraine had asked the Biden administration to identify targets on Russian territory that Kiev could strike. According to it, Kiev had also asked Washington to lift restrictions on the use of US weapons against targets inside Russia.

## Israeli ministers "banned" from sensitive info Occupation regime facing a "leaking disaster"

From page 1 ▶ The news outlet also clarified the role entrusted to the "Political-Security Cabinet", indicating that it is tasked by the government to formulate policy on sensitive issues, especially in the fields of security and foreign relations.

According to the paper, the goal of this "Cabinet" is to be a small and secretive body, where in-depth discussions can take place, and decisions can be made on delicate matters.

The "Political-Security Cabinet" includes six permanent ministers: the Prime Minister, the Minister of Security, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Justice, and the Minister of Internal Security, while additional ministers can be added to it, provided that their number does not exceed half the number of government ministers.

In the past, government leaders used to present sensitive decisions to the cabinet to expand the

circle of consultations and responsibilities. There were also cases where sensitive consultations were conducted in other unofficial forums.

According to the newspaper, decisions made in these forums "had to be presented to the cabinet or the government for approval to become official."

In other cases, the cabinet allowed a small body to make decisions instead, aiming to streamline the process or maintain the secrecy of a specific operation's timing.

Israel Hayom noted that a prominent example of somebody sharing classified material that has been plaguing the cabinet was the "almost complete leak of details of a preemptive attack discussed on October 11 last year against Lebanon".

It said in some cases "this information exposed operational activities and soldiers on the ground to danger." In other cases, "secret intelligence information was revealed," the newspaper added.

The paper confirmed that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "is well aware of the leak problem," noting that heads of the security and military establishment have raised this issue with him several times.

Although Netanyahu "has indicated that he intends to take measures to identify those leaking secret information and promote legislation on this issue, his promises have not been translated into actions so far," the newspaper said.

The news outlet also revealed the Israeli prime minister "has rejected or diluted proposals to conduct lie detector tests for ministers, citing various reasons".

The newspaper further noted that the issue of discussions in the cabinet and withholding information from ministers will be the focus of the investigation committee, which will probe the failures that led to the October 7 attack and the management of the war on Gaza.

## Domino effect: Three European countries recognize Palestinian state

From page 1 ▶

### Historic day for Palestine

The Irish premier described the move as "historic and important day for Ireland and for Palestine."

Simon Harris said it was intended to help move the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to resolution through a two-state solution.

He added that other countries will recognize a Palestinian state "in the weeks ahead."

Since 1988, 139 of 193 United Nations member states have recognized Palestinian statehood.

### Sánchez blasts Netanyahu

Addressing the parliament in Madrid, the Spanish prime minister said, "We are going to recognize Palestine for many reasons and we can sum that up in three words - peace, justice and consistency."

"We have to make sure that the two-state solution is respected and there must be mutual guarantees of security," Pedro Sánchez said.

He also made a blistering attack on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the Israeli massacres of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

"Prime Minister Netanyahu is still turning a blind eye and bombing hospitals, schools, homes. He is still using hunger, cold and terror to punish more than a million innocent boys and girls - and things have gone so far that prosecutors at the international criminal court have this week sought his arrest for war crimes."



Sánchez was referring to Monday's comments made by ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan.

Khan said his office had applied for arrest warrants for Netanyahu and war minister Yoav Gallant, citing their responsibility in war crimes and crimes against humanity that the Israeli army has committed in the Gaza Strip over the past seven months.

Earlier this month, the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly approved a resolution that backed the Palestinian bid for full UN membership.

But last month, the US vetoed a widely backed Security Council resolution that would have paved the way for full UN membership for Palestine. The US was the only country that blocked the resolution. Britain and Switzerland abstained while 12 other countries voted in favor. The US move threw a

### Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez accused Benjamin Netanyahu of presiding over massacres in the Gaza Strip and reiterated demands for a ceasefire.

spotlight on Washington's growing global isolation over its unwavering support for Israel.

The United States claims it backs the idea of an independent Palestinian state. It, however, says Palestinian independence should come as part of negotiations

between Israelis and Palestinians.

Nonetheless, Israel has opposed the establishment of a Palestinian state. Leaked Israeli documents show that Israel has been seeking to forcibly transfer Gaza's population to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula after the Gaza war erupted.

US-mediated talks between Israel and Palestinians which led to the signing of the Oslo Accords in the early 1990s did not lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Since then, Israel has used peace talks as a smokescreen to expand its illegal settlements and grab more Palestinian lands.

It is clear that negotiations only help Israel carry out its ethnic cleansing plans in the Palestinian territories.

Presently, the recognition of Palestine by Spain, Norway and Ireland is rooted in the Palestinian resistance against Israel amid the regime's genocidal war in Gaza and its deadly attacks in the West Bank.

The Palestinian resistance indeed has been instrumental in amplifying the voices of those who are fighting against the Israeli oppression and tyranny.

By sharing their stories and struggles, the Palestinian resistance has inspired widespread solidarity and outrage, galvanizing people across the world to take action against Israel's brutality and oppression, the manifestation of which is seen in global pro-Palestine protests.

## WCC president extends condolences over martyrdom of Iranian president

TEHRAN - The President of the World Crafts Council (WCC), Sa'ad al-Qaddumi, has expressed profound condolences following the martyrdom of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, in a helicopter crash.

The accident also claimed the lives of Foreign Minister Hossain Amir Abdollahian as well as the governor of East Azerbaijan province, Malek Rahmati, and Tabriz's Friday prayer leader, Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Al-e Hashem, along with flight crews.

In a heartfelt letter addressed to Maryam Jalali Dehkordi, Deputy Minister for Handicrafts, al-Qaddumi conveyed his deep sorrow and extended his sympathies to the government and the people of Iran.

He stated, "In my name and the name of the World Crafts Council AISBL, we extend with great sorrow to your Excellency, and to the Government and people of Iran our deepest condolences on the sad demise of President Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Dr. Hossain Amir Abdollahian, and the accompanying delegation in the tragic helicopter crash."

Al-Qaddumi also offered prayers for the deceased officials, asking God to grant them mercy and forgiveness.



The late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in an undated photo

"In these difficult times, we relay our heartfelt sympathies to their families and pray to Allah the Almighty to give them the strength and solace to endure their great loss."

Currently, a selection of 13 cities and three villages in Iran have been registered by the World Council of Handicrafts as "world cities of handicrafts".

The World Crafts Council is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that was founded in 1964 to promote fellowship, foster economic development through income-generating craft-related activities, and organize exchange programs, workshops, conferences, and exhibitions.

## Japan blocks iconic Mt Fuji view to deter tourists

The snowy Mount Fuji, a stunning backdrop for those in search of their next favourite selfie or instagrammable moment is now behind a black mesh screen, about the same length as a cricket pitch.

The barrier is the result of a chorus of complaints from locals, who say their lives have been disrupted by jaywalking and littering tourists.

The picturesque town of Fuji Kawaguchiko has been feeling the impact of a surge in tourism - arrivals to Japan crossed a record three million in March and April, driven up by a weak yen and a post-pandemic travel boom.

The screen is a desperate move and a sign of Japan's struggle to accommodate this many visitors while protecting its streets, its famous spots and its particular way of living.

It has been an eventful Tuesday in Fuji Kawaguchiko.

Japanese officials had announced in late April that they would be putting up a screen - but the hour of installation brought more attention to this rural corner of central Japan. As workers fixed poles and hung up wires to hold the screen, they were surrounded by a scrum of cameras. Tourists gathered as well, curious to capture the hubbub.

If the screen is meant to keep them away, it isn't doing that - yet.

Around us, visitors wonder how effective it will be: "It may work for a few days. But I'm sure someone will make a hole [in it] and take a picture at some point," says Kazakh tourist Yuri Vavilin.

He is disappointed he missed the crucial shot but he says he shall return tomorrow and try from either end of the screen.

This dedication is surprising to 65-year-old Kazuhiko Iwama who has lived his entire life in Fuji Kawaguchiko. His house sits opposite the ubiquitous convenience store, with its fluorescent lights and famous blue sign that says Lawson.

"I see it every day from my window, so I really don't have much to say about it," he says, looking at the volcano that draws tourists from around the world. "I guess I take it for granted."

It's what many have dubbed a "very Japanese" scene - the banal Lawson shouldering such a spectacular view. It is even known online as "Mount Fuji Lawson".

Mr Iwama isn't convinced the screen would deter the most determined of tourists. With the pavement gone, he fears more of them will step on to the street to take pictures.

He says this is precisely the problem - he wouldn't mind tourists, if they followed the rules.

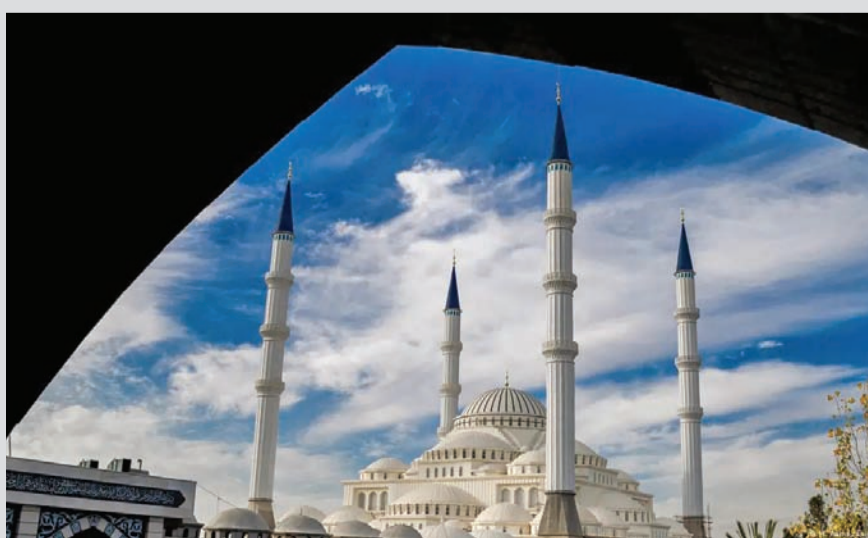
"They cross the street and they don't seem to care about the cars at all, it is dangerous. And they leave trash and cigarette butts everywhere."

This is seen as especially rude and careless in a country with few bins on the street - you are expected to carry your trash home and dispose of it there.

The screen was a last resort for local officials. One of them had said earlier in May, "It's regrettable we have to do this because of some tourists who can't respect rules."

(Source: BBC)

## Iran in frames



A view of Makki Mosque in Zahedan, southeast Iran, showcasing its stunning architecture and serene ambiance under a cloudy blue sky.

# Ecotourism to take center stage in Miankaleh

TEHRAN - In a bid to preserve the pristine ecosystem of the Miankaleh peninsula while fostering sustainable tourism, a pioneering initiative is in the pipeline.

Visiting Miankaleh wetland on Wednesday, Mazandaran's governor-general emphasized the importance of attracting national investments and addressing environmental issues as a priority in developing and implementing an ecotourism plan on the Miankaleh peninsula.

Yusef Noori stressed that this plan must be prepared based on environmental and tourism standards, adding that the special nature tourism and ecotourism plan for the Miankaleh peninsula should rely on the presence of park rangers, who play a pivotal role in preserving the region's environment.

"The biome is one of a kind," Noori brought to light the global significance of the peninsula's ecosystem. "Which is a reason to ramp up every ef-



fort with an eye toward exploiting the region's capacities in ecotourism plan."

The late President Ebrahim Raisi, during his first provincial visit to Miankaleh wetland on March 11, 2022, issued directives for the revival of this habitat. He emphasized the need for serious attention to wildlife conservation and bird habitats in the region, stating that all necessary measures for the revival and pres-

ervation of the Miankaleh area must be taken, and opportunities for ecotourism in the region should be provided by the public within the framework of environmental regulations.

On May 17, in his last visit to Mazandaran province, the president advocated serious attention to the region's ecotourism capacities, emphasizing there should be serious pursuit and follow-up of the

implementation of the revival plan for Miankaleh and attracting investments to boost tourism.

Situated in eastern Mazandaran with an area of 68,800 hectares, the long and narrow peninsula is home to over 320 species of migratory and native birds and 180 species of plants.

Miankaleh was designated a Ramsar site in 1975. Major habitats include wetlands, inter-tidal mud with sandy shores, shallow marine waters, forests, peatlands, and agricultural areas.

It is home to many unique Caspian birds and reptile species native to this region. It's also a very important internationally recognized refuge for migratory birds.

Boasting a wide array of natural capacities, the Miankaleh peninsula is believed to be an ecotourism diamond in the rough, which could be a possible well-trodden destination, absorbing both domestic and inbound enthusiasts.

## Expert illuminates crucial role of lab studies in historical coin conservation

TEHRAN - Sheiba Khadir, a senior expert affiliated with the Research Institute for Conservation and Restoration of Historical and Cultural Artifacts, has emphasized the importance of laboratory studies in the restoration of historical coins.

She made the remarks on Monday addressing the 13th Biennial Conference on the Conservation and Restoration of Historical-Cultural Artefacts and Architectural Decorations, in which many experts delved into the practical actions for the ongoing and future projects.

In her lecture, Khadir highlighted significant findings from recent research conducted at the Institute's Metal Conservation Workshop, CHTN reported.

In addition, the expert explained that many coins, appearing silver due to environmental deposits and tarnishing, were often mistaken for pure silver. "However, detailed laboratory analysis revealed different alloys or silver-coated coins."

She also noted the challenges posed by heavily corroded copper-silver coins buried underground, where copper corrosion products sometimes obscure identification.

Khadir emphasized the use of various methods in coin studies to illuminate the economic, social, and political conditions at the time of minting. Techniques like PIXE (Particle Induced X-ray Emission) and X-ray fluorescence are particularly favored due to their accuracy and non-destructive nature.

In addition, the expert stressed that coins must first be meticulously cleaned to remove any contamination. This underscores the critical role of systematic restoration processes in preserving historical findings.

Khadir also introduced different methods for studying coins produced through both hammer and machine minting, highlighting the significance of laboratory studies in this field.

In 2022, the Museum of Bank Melli Iran published a book on coins and coinage during the Sassanid era (224-651).

Co-authored by senior researchers Daryoosh Akbarzadeh and Nikolaus Schindel, the book titled "Catalogue of the Sassanian Coins" turns the spotlight on the precious Piruzan Collection, which is kept at the major museum in downtown Tehran.

Around 220 CE, the Sasanian dynasty of Iran introduced the concept of thin flan coins, issues that were struck in relief on both sides. In order not to produce intolerable stresses on the dies, since the thinner the material the more force necessary to make it flow into the recesses of the die's design, the depth of relief on such coins was of necessity much shallower than with earlier currency.

Moreover, such techniques spread by way of Byzantium to Northern Europe, where the emperor Charlemagne struck thin flan deniers (small silver coins), or pennies, which became characteristic of both his own and neighboring kingdoms.

## Gerdoo valley: a landscape adorned with walnut trees

TEHRAN - Home to a great number of walnut trees, Gerdoo (meaning walnut in Persian) valley, located in southern Arak, Iran, is a pleasant ambiance to escape from the hustle and bustle of big cities.

Spanning approximately 100 hectares in southern Arak, the valley is renowned for its breathtaking landscapes, picturesque villages, and diverse natural attractions. Known for its mild weather, the valley welcomes visitors from far and wide in four seasons, allowing them to fully appreciate the natural beauty of the area. With rich biodiversity, the valley offers a spectacular display of na-

ture's tranquility to visitors.

The valley is also famous for its meandering rivers and lush walnut trees lining its banks. With captivating stone pavements adorning certain sections of the rivers, the region provides a delightful setting for picnics and family gatherings. As a popular weekend destination for both tourists and locals, the Gerdoo valley offers a tranquil retreat for relaxation and recreation.

Visitors of all ages can revel in the joyous atmosphere and engage in outdoor activities within the touristic zone. Standing out as one of the

tallest mountains within the region, the Sorkhe mount, situated adjoining the valley, adds allure to the exploration of the area for who are into hiking.

Moreover, the valley boasts a rich diversity of flora, with an array of blossoms and plants visible during the spring season. Unique and rare species thrive in the heights of the valley, providing captivating subjects for nature enthusiasts and photographers alike.

Several cascading waterfalls adorn the valley, accessible via well-constructed bridges for the

convenience of tourists and locals alike. Surrounding these waterfalls are crafted rock formations, enhancing the picturesque allure. During periods of heavy rainfall, the soothing sound of cascading water echoes throughout the valley, creating a truly enchanting ambiance.

The valley stands as a testament to nature's splendor, inviting visitors to immerse themselves in its tranquil embrace and discover its hidden treasures. Whether seeking adventure or solace, this remarkable destination never fails to captivate the hearts and souls of all who venture within its bounds.

## Global tourism nears full recovery, reaching 97% of pre-pandemic levels in early 2024

TEHRAN - Global tourism has made a remarkable comeback, reaching 97% of pre-pandemic levels in the first quarter of 2024, according to the latest data from the UN Tourism.

Over 285 million tourists traveled internationally between January and March, marking a significant 20% increase compared to the same period in 2023. This surge highlights the near-complete recovery of the sector from the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN body reported.

In 2023, international tourist arrivals had already rebounded to 89% of 2019 levels, with tourism export revenues hitting 96% of pre-pandemic figures. Direct tourism GDP matched 2019 levels, setting the stage for further growth in 2024. UNWTO projects that international tourism will fully recover this year, with arrivals expected to surpass 2019 levels by 2%.

The first quarter of 2024 saw varying degrees of recovery across different regions. The Middle East led the way with international arrivals soaring 36% above pre-pandemic levels, continuing its exceptional performance from 2023. Europe, the world's largest tourist destination, recorded a 1% increase over Q1 2019, welcoming 120 intra-regional tourists, driven by strong intra-regional demand.

Africa also showed robust growth, with a 5% in-

crease in arrivals compared to Q1 2019 and a 13% rise from Q1 2023. The Americas nearly matched pre-pandemic numbers, reaching 99% of 2019 levels. Meanwhile, Asia and the Pacific, still on the path to full recovery, saw arrivals reach 82% of pre-pandemic levels, up from 65% in 2023.

In a recent statement, the UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili hailed the sector's recovery as beneficial for global economies and millions of livelihoods. However, he emphasized the need for sustainable tourism policies and effective destination management to mitigate the sector's impact on resources and communities.

Looking ahead, international tourism is expected to achieve full recovery in 2024, driven by strong demand, improved air connectivity, and the ongoing recovery of

key Asian markets, including China.

The UN Tourism's latest Tourism Confidence Index reflects a positive outlook for the upcoming summer season, scoring 130 out of 200. About 62% of tourism experts surveyed expressed optimistic expectations for May-August 2024, with only 31% predicting performance similar to 2023.

The data underscores a resilient and rapidly recovering global tourism industry, poised to surpass its pre-pandemic success and contribute significantly to economic stability and growth worldwide.

### Public tender announcement

Shirin Daru Company (public joint stock) intends to purchase 500 (five hundred) tons of dried licorice root with foreign origin from a qualified supplier in order to meet the raw materials needed by its factory.

Therefore, applicants are invited to visit the buyer's website at [www.shirindaru.com](http://www.shirindaru.com) for 10 days from the date of publication of the advertisement and call 071-37442301 extension 129 for more information. In addition, the type of guarantee for participation in the tender is cash deposit, bank guarantee, promissory note or check and the amount is eight billion Rials. (Advertising costs are the responsibility of the tender winner)

# Isfahan Science, Technology Town recognized as SDG model zone partner

TEHRAN – The Global Alliance of Special Economic Zones (GASEZ) has recognized Isfahan Science, Technology Town (ISTT) as a 2023 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) model zone partner for its commitment towards sustainable development.

The 2nd GASEZ Annual Conference took place on November 9, 2023, in Barcelona, Spain, IRNA reported.

Two hundred stakeholders from the SEZ community from 26 countries across Africa, Europe, and Latin America attended the event, reiterating their support for the alliance and contributing to its work agenda.

The conference concluded with the recognition of the 2023 list of 50 SDG Model Zones that have been selected as partners on the basis of three criteria including attracting investment in SDG-related sectors; adopting environmental, social, and governance standards; and building strong linkages with the local economy.

Isfahan is the only science and technology town selected from Iran.

Other SDG model zones are from Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the United States, China, the United Arab Emirates, South Korea, and Canada.

Isfahan's scientific and research



This Certificate is hereby awarded to



## Isfahan Science & Technology Town (ISTT)

recognized by the Global Alliance of Special Economic Zones (GASEZ) as a 2023 "SDG Model Zone Partner" for its commitment towards sustainable development

James Zhan  
Chief Adviser  
United Nations Conference  
on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)  
Co-Chair of GASEZ

Samir Hamrouni  
Chief Executive Officer  
World Free Zones Organization  
(World FZO)  
Co-Chair of GASEZ

community is an independent organization with the goal of nurturing knowledge-based development through the establishment of growth centers in Isfahan, one of Iran's industrial hubs.

ISTT is the first organization to establish growth centers and science and technology parks in the country.

The idea of establishing science and technology parks was taken from ISTT in the Iranian year 1380 (March 2001-2002).

ISTT provides an environment for commercializing technology and attracting domestic and foreign investment.

Its main activities include research

and development facilities to link the resources and skills of universities and research and industrial centers, guidance to the scientific community on strategic research areas, planning and creating the appropriate field for the application and commercialization of research results, and creating an appropriate scientific and research space to attract scholars and specialists both at home and abroad, as well as strategies for the effective transfer of knowledge.

With a share of more than 9 percent of all knowledge-based companies, it ranks second in the country.

Currently, ISTT is one of the largest industrial estates for

knowledge-based companies in Iran, with about 700 firms and some 9,000 employees.

ISTT is home to the UNESCO Centre for Technology Incubator and Science Park Development (IRIS).

### GASEZ

The global Alliance of GASEZ is dedicated to advancing a new generation of SEZs for sustainable development. The alliance was launched in Montego Bay in 2022 by the Africa Economic Zones Association of the Americas (AZFA), the Green Partnership for Industrial Parks of China (GIPIPC), the International Association of Science Parks and Areas of Innovation (IASPI), the National Association of Foreign Trade Zones (NAFTZ), the United Nations on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Free and Special Economic Zones Federation (FEMOZA), and the World Free Zones Organizations (World FZO).

The GASEZ SDG model zone partnership initiatives seek to achieve three main objectives: raise awareness on contributions of SEZs to sustainable development, recognize the efforts of the zones that are leading the way in this space, and share best practices by SEZs that can serve as an inspiration and be replicable by other zones.

## Loss of biodiversity – a hidden threat to food security and habitat

By Jong-Jin Kim, FAO Assistant Director-General

In recent months, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and others have pointed to an increase in food insecurity and 'hunger hotspots' in various parts of Asia and the Pacific. While conflicts and climate crises can carry some of the blame, we must acknowledge that the slow but steady erosion of our region's biodiversity is an equal or even greater threat to our future food security.

FAO's most recent outlook report on Asia-Pacific's Forest Sector found that biodiversity and ecosystem resilience in natural forests are declining along with the capacity of these forests to deliver water and soil protection, climate regulation, amenity and cultural values, and wood, foods, and medicines. Reversing this trend must be a priority for all countries in the region now and in the next decade to ensure our survival, especially in the face of dangerous climate change.

While this biodiversity loss is a crisis for Asia and the Pacific in many ways, the impact it can have on our ability to achieve future food security poses a serious threat. We know from FAO's recent reports, that the Asia-Pacific region is home to half of the world's undernourished people and that nearly 45% cannot afford a sustainable and healthy diet. At the heart of some of these nutrition challenges is a food system that is currently founded on a narrow genetic base of 10-15 crops. We have lost much of the diversity that was, historically, commonplace in our diets and increasing dietary diversity is a key part of the solution to ending malnutrition.

According to the 'The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture', published by the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture Assessments, biodiversity

for food and agriculture (BFA) contributes to food security and nutrition in many ways. This includes the enabling of food to be produced in a wide range of environments, helping to maintain the stability of food supplies throughout the year and resilience to shocks such as droughts and pest outbreaks, supplying a wide variety of nutritionally diverse foods.

Indeed, wild biodiversity is an important source of food for many people, particularly in poorer parts of our region. It also provides raw material for crop breeding programmes and contributes to the supply of many ecosystem services that support food production.

So we all need to wake up to this urgent need to better protect Asia-Pacific's biodiversity, for the good of ourselves, our food security and nutritional health, our environment, and to safeguard those of our future generations.

This month we observe the International Day for Biological Diversity. Its slogan, indeed its call to action, is that we must all "Be part of the Plan" to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity by supporting actions called for in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

At FAO, we are working to that end in our efforts to help our Member Nations enhance efforts at biodiversity and sustainability in agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, and forestry, particularly through our updating of action plans to reach the 2030 biodiversity targets. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure a sustainable food systems transformation across the region, to achieve food security, nutrition, and livelihoods – especially for local communities and indigenous people who rely on the existing biodiversity.

Given the importance and the increased demand of aquatic foods in our region, and worldwide, FAO has committed to a vision for Aquaculture Transformation for Asia and

the Pacific. This will enable the sustainable intensification of aquaculture by improving sustainability and reducing the environmental impacts of production. It also aims to harness the rich and diverse cultural foundation of aquaculture in this region, by strengthening its contribution to food security and improved nutrition, while also securing livelihoods and socioeconomic development, and environmental recovery.

Halting deforestation and forest degradation, while enabling forest and landscape restoration, are also vital components of addressing the challenge of biodiversity loss and climate change. Some 15 years ago, FAO and its partners UNDP and UN Environment launched the REDD+ Programme. 'REDD+' is the abbreviation for 'Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries.' FAO, as co-lead for the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and host of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission, is working to support countries in upscaling restoration with an aim for better livelihoods and environment. FAO also provides technical expertise directly linked to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

With food security as our mandate, along with ending poverty and reducing inequalities, FAO in Asia and the Pacific is responding to help shape national pathways for a food systems transformation. As part of these transformative efforts at country and regional levels, it is imperative to promote sustainable natural resources management, as well as protecting critical ecosystems to conserve biodiversity, protect land, soil, and water – while reducing food loss and energy use.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

## ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

### Iran pioneer in cancer research among Islamic countries

Iran has the most research and innovation in the field of cancer both in the region and among Islamic countries, deputy health minister Reza Malekzadeh has stated.

Referring to the great progress in cancer research, he said that "We have been able to play a role in this area globally."

He added that one of the hopes for early detection of cancer is the use of urine and blood tests for people who are susceptible to cancer.

### ایران پیش‌تاز تحقیقات در زمینه سرطان بین کشورهای اسلامی است

معاون تحقیقات و فناوری وزیر بهداشت، درمان و آموزش پزشکی گفت: ایران هم در منطقه و هم بین کشورهای اسلامی بیشترین میزان تحقیقات و نوآوری‌ها در حوزه سرطان را داشته است. دکتر رضا ملک‌زاده روز شنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار علمی ایرنا با اشاره به اینکه ما در زمینه تحقیقات سرطان پیشرفت‌های خیلی خوبی داشتیم، گفت: ما در سطح جهانی هم توانستیم در این حوزه نقش آفرین باشیم. وی افزود: یکی از امیدهای خیلی روشن برای تشخیص زودرس سرطان، استفاده از آزمایش ادرار و خون برای افرادی است که استعداد سرطان را دارند.

## 'Be part of the plan' to preserve environment

By Maryam Tavassoli

TEHRAN – Loss of biological diversity, upon which human existence and wellbeing depend, threatens the whole earth, while each individual can play a key role in its preservation.

The International Day for Biodiversity is celebrated every year on May 22, it highlights that biological diversity resources are the pillars upon which humans build civilizations.

In December 2022, the world came together and agreed on a global plan to transform humans' relationship with nature.

The adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, also known as The Biodiversity Plan, sets goals and concrete measures to stop and reverse the loss of nature by 2050.

This year's theme 'Be Part of the Plan' underscores the need for a collective and coordinated approach to address and reverse the loss of biodiversity and support the implementation of the Biodiversity Plan.

Iran is considered a crossroad between Asia, Africa, and Europe. This geographical situation has led to the climatic diversity of the country.

Despite the country's rich biodiversity, some species have been severely damaged over the past years.

A total of 1036 vertebrate species are identified in the country. Out of 209 mammals, 560 birds, 242 reptiles, and 25 amphibians, around 75 species were included in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List in 2022.

Bustards and Asiatic cheetahs are among critically endangered species, there are roughly 19 species of bustards and 25 species of cheetahs identified in the country.

Moreover, a total of 35 out of about 62 endangered species of birds are aquatic and water-side.

Some 8,000 plant species have been identified so far in the country, which, in terms of their diversity and number, equals 80 percent of the plant species of the European continent.

The diversity of plants in Iran is unique in West Asia to the extent that the country ranks second following Turkey.

In addition to native plants, there are also



some other species in the country known as endemic species which are much more limited than native species. Out of 8,000 native species, some 1,800 are endemic. These species are found only in a certain geographical area.

Due to human activities, biodiversity has faced numerous threats, including habitat loss and fragmentation, overexploitation of natural resources, pollution, invasive species, and climate change, which has led to the extinction of many species and the degradation of ecosystems worldwide.

Habitat destruction is one of the main factors that affects the extinction of a species. Road construction, mining, overgrazing, and land use change greatly damage wildlife habitats and reduce population size and genetic diversity within a species.

Drought has resulted in decrease vegetation diversity and lack of food for herbivorous species.

Several measures can be taken to mitigate the impacts of climate change, particularly drought, on the destruction of plants, such as managing the exploitation of natural resources and preventing the destruction of ecosystems to prevent severe conditions and lessen pressures on plants.

Also, raising public awareness to protect nature is an important step that helps governments to preserve nature.

By improving local communities, private sectors, and individuals' roles in preserving wildlife along with the help of today's science and technology, we can make sure that ecosystems can thrive and plant and animal species can exist for future generations.

In addition, it is essential, for all countries, to reduce greenhouse gases by making comprehensive, decisive, and coordinated decisions.

## First yellow deer born in natural habitat

TEHRAN – A Persian yellow deer was born in Dez National Park, southwestern Khuzestan province; it is the first yellow deer born in its natural habitat, not in captivity.

The forests around Karkheh and Dez rivers in Khuzestan province are the primary habitats of the Persian yellow deer, IRNA reported.

A few days ago, camera traps happened to record a female deer with her calf, which is estimated to be three months old, indicating that the yellow deer was born during their natural breeding season, February-March.

The yellow deer birth has raised hopes for the revival of this unique animal species in its natural habitat.

The birth proves the success of the policies of the Department of Environment (DOE) in reviving the yellow deer in its original habitat, the forests of Dez National Park.

Almost half a century ago, it was thought that the yellow deer species was extinct in the world. However, about 50 years ago, four yellow deer were observed in Dez and Karkheh forests. They were released in different regions of Iran for better reproduction.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, the Iranian yellow deer is categorized as an endangered species.

On April 1, a Persian yellow deer was born in the Arsanjan breeding site, in southern Fars province, the first of this species born since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19).

This 300-hectare site was launched in the Iranian calendar year 1390 (March 2011-March



2012) with seven yellow deer, Rokna news agency quoted Hassan Ebrahimi, an official with the Department of Environment as saying.

The number of yellow deer has now reached 118, including live-caught deer and those transferred to neighboring provinces, 95 yellow deer were identified in the region, showing an increase of 30 percent year on year, IRNA reported.

Creating a safe and comfortable breeding environment is a key factor for boosting the deer population in the center, Ebrahimi said.

"The center is known as one of the successful breeding sites in the country," he added.

According to Ebrahimi, ongoing monitoring of the region, providing security, ensuring timely feeding, and implementing optimal management practices are the most important indicators for the successful growth of this valuable species in this part of the country.

The 30 percent increase in the growth of this valuable species last year indicates that all the biological conditions have been met, and some 25 new deer calves are expected to be added to the current population this year.



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MAY 23, 2024

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*Patience is a fitting cover, and wisdom is a sharp sword. So cover your ugly conduct with patience, and kill carnal desires with wisdom.*

**Imam Ali (AS)**

Prayer Times > Noon:12:01 Evening: 19:29 Dawn: 3:12 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 4:53 (tomorrow)

## “The Secret Garden” appears in Iranian bookstores

TEHRAN- A new Persian translation of “The Secret Garden” by British-American novelist and playwright Frances Hodgson Burnett has recently been published by Now Publications in Tehran.

Originally published in 1911, the book has been translated into Persian by Shahla Arjang.

A classic children’s novel, “The Secret Garden”, follows Mary Lennox, a spoiled and lonely 10-year-old girl who is sent to live with her reclusive uncle, Archibald Craven, at Misselthwaite Manor in Yorkshire, England.

Mary’s parents, who were her only relatives, have died of a cholera epidemic in India, and Mary is left alone and without a home. She is sent to England to live with her uncle, whom she has never met, because she has no other living relatives.

At the manor, Mary discovers a neglected and hidden garden that has been locked away for 10 years since her uncle’s wife, Mary’s aunt, died. The garden had been her aunt’s sanctuary, and Mary’s uncle has been unable to bear the thought of entering the garden since her death.

Mary decides to restore the garden to its former beauty, with the help of Dickon, a kind and gentle boy who lives on the moors, and Colin, her sickly and wheelchair-bound cousin. Through their friendship and the process of gardening, Mary learns about friendship, hard work, and the healing power of nature.

As Mary and her friends work together to restore the garden, they also help Colin to recover from his illness and overcome his fear of death. The novel ends with a sense of hope and renewal, as Mary and Colin find new happiness and purpose in their lives.

“The Secret Garden” has been adapted into numerous forms of media, including film, television, stage, and radio. One of the earliest adaptations was the 1949 film, starring Margaret O’Brien as Mary Lennox and Maurice Evans as Archibald Craven. This black-and-white film is considered a classic adaptation and is still widely regarded as a faithful

interpretation of the novel.

In the 1970s, “The Secret Garden” was adapted into a made-for-TV movie, starring Amelia Shankley as Mary Lennox and Johnathan Kahn as Archibald Craven. This adaptation was followed by a 1993 film, starring Kate Maberly as Mary Lennox and Andrew Knott as Dickon.

The novel has also been adapted into numerous television series, including a 1952 BBC series starring Mollie Maureen as Mary Lennox, a 1968 Australian series starring Susannah York as Mary Lennox, and a 1987 ITV series starring Nicola Stapleton as Mary Lennox. More recent adaptations include a 1996 BBC series starring Emily Hamilton as Mary Lennox and a 2020 film, starring Dixie Egerickx as Mary Lennox and Edan Hayhurst as Dickon.

“The Secret Garden” has also been adapted into several stage productions, including a 1924 play, which was adapted by Frances Hodgson Burnett herself. This play opened on Broadway in February 1924.

In the 1990s, a musical adaptation was premiered at the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon, with music by Rachel Portman and lyrics by Carlisle Floyd. More recently, a new musical adaptation was premiered at the Royal Albert Hall in London in 2019, with music by David H. Bell and lyrics by Marsha Norman.

“The Secret Garden” has received widespread acclaim and has been a beloved classic since its publication in 1911.

The novel’s reception was immediate and enthusiastic, with critics praising its beautiful prose, well-developed characters, and timeless themes.

The novel’s portrayal of the strict social hierarchy of the time, as well as the struggles faced by women in a patriarchal society, is thought-provoking and nuanced. The novel has been recognized for its literary merit, with many considering it to be one of the greatest children’s books of all time.

# Mashhad mourns: city in sorrow after president’s tragic death, joyful celebrations turn to mourning

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

MASHHAD- For several days, the city of Mashhad was buzzing with excitement as it prepared to celebrate the grand anniversary of the birth of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Imam of the Shia. The usually vibrant streets were adorned with colorful decorations, and the sweet scent of traditional sweets and fruits wafted through the air, filling every corner with a sense of joy and anticipation. The atmosphere was electric, as people from all walks of life eagerly awaited the celebrations to begin.

But just as the festivities were getting underway, a somber message shook the city to its core. News of the tragic helicopter crash involving the Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, and his entourage sent shockwaves through the city, leaving many in a state of disbelief and dismay.

As the celebrations continued on Sunday night, speakers at various points in the Imam Reza shrine called upon the pilgrims to offer prayers for the president’s safety and well-being. Various groups of people formed throughout the shrine, coming together to pray for the president’s health and that of his companions, as a sense of unity and shared concern washed over the city.

On Monday morning, when news of the President’s death was confirmed, the city took on a



different tone. Despite the official announcement of mourning not yet being made, people, dressed in black attire, began to gather and head to the holy shrine.

The festive decorations and banners that had adorned the city for the birth anniversary celebrations were hastily replaced with mourning signs and black flags, as the city’s tone shifted from jubilation to somber reflection.

The holy shrine was soon filled with people who came not only to pay their respects to the president, but also to offer prayers for the peace of his soul and the comfort of his family.

The city’s streets have been

transformed into a somber landscape of black, as mourners from across the country converge to pay their respects to the president. The city’s iconic landmarks, including the holy shrine Imam Reza (AS), are now draped in black, a symbol of respect and mourning for the president.

Meanwhile, shop owners in the vibrant bazaars across the city have suspended their business activities, opting instead to join in the mourning process. However, as the city is known as a major tourist hub, various organizations are working together to provide essential services to pilgrims and tourists who had arrived in the city before the tragic incident.

As Mashhad says goodbye to its beloved president, it is clear that his legacy will live on in the hearts of its people. Despite the tragedy that has befallen them, the city’s residents will draw strength from their faith and their community, finding solace in the collective grief and unity.

In preparation for the outpouring of mourning, the city is gearing up to welcome thousands of mourners who will converge to pay their respects to the president on Thursday. In a poignant twist, Ebrahim Raisi, who was born in Mashhad, will be laid to rest in his hometown, a testament to the deep connection between the city and the president.

## Cinema Verite Intl. jury members condole passing of President Raisi



Milyausha Aytuganova (L) and Amrit Gangar

President Ayatollah Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian along and accompanying delegation in a tragic helicopter crash in the northwest of the country on Sunday.

Aytuganova, who served as a judge in the international section of the 17th Iran International Documentary Film Festival “Cinema Verite,” conveyed her sympathy for the loss, and said, “I am saddened by this loss and I extend my heartfelt condolences to the people of Iran for this bitter event,” Mehr reported.

Gangar, also a film critic and university professor who served as a jury member at Iran’s 7th Cinema Verite also expressed solidarity with the people of Iran and the documentary filmmaking community.

“Your country faced an unexpected tragedy with the loss of the President and his delegation. I offer my condolences and hope that difficulties come to an end. No one knows how death arrives; may God grant peace to him and other souls who have departed,” his message read.

## 3.5 million books sold at 35th TIBF

TEHRAN-The estimated number of purchased books at the 35th Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF) is around 3.5 million, with the total sales of the fair amounting to 5,920 billion rials (\$10 million), the spokesperson of the fair Ali Ramezani announced.

The 35th edition of the TIBF was held from May 8 to 18 in the Tehran’s Imam Khomeini Mosalla,

with the slogan “Let’s Read and Create,” ISNA reported.

“People from all over the country purchased books worth 3,600 billion rials (\$6.1 million) in the physical section and 2,320 billion rials (\$3.9 million) in the virtual section,” Ramezani added.

According to the spokesperson of the fair, the three best-selling publishers in this year’s edition are

children’s publishers.

Being Iran’s major trade fair for books, the TIBF has been turned into a landmark, momentous book fair in West Asia after 35 editions in a row. Millions of visitors inspect the fair every year, including thousands of university students, scholars, and their families.

The cultural event currently serves as the most significant

cultural event in Iran. This year, more than 2,600 domestic and 50 foreign publishers from 25 countries participated in the landmark event.

The foreign publishers offered their materials in English, Arabic, and Turkish; however, titles in Russian, French, German, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese were also presented.

## Artist’s display in Portland depicts number of children killed in Gaza

Ceramicist Mary McKone has created a display in recognition and mourning for the more than 10,000 children killed in Gaza in the last seven months of the Israel-Hamas war.

McKone spent three decades living and working in the Middle East, 10 of those years in Palestine as a sixth-grade art teacher. Living in Ramallah in the West Bank, she raised her children, Rami and Haneen, with her husband Fateh Azzam, a human rights consultant and researcher born as a stateless Palestinian, the Portland Press Herald reported.

Through the last seven months, McKone, her family and her former students with whom she keeps in touch have grappled with the scale of death and destruction in Gaza, and what it means for the lives and futures of Palestinians.

“The death of the children has really impacted me,” she said. “It’s heartbreaking to see so many dreams that parents have for their kids and kids have for themselves just be wiped out like that.”

She wanted to find a way to make people feel the impact of that many lives lost. The small white figurines in her “Gaza: Precious Lives, Stolen Dreams” in the window of SPACE on Congress Street are a visual representation of each life lost. She said she was inspired largely by the work of Ai Weiwei, a Chinese contemporary artist who has created similar visual displays, like arranging 9,000 children’s backpacks to represent children killed in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake.

“We hear numbers all the time, but what do they mean? What do they look like? We get so desensitized to that,” McKone said.

When she began her project, 5,000 children had been identified in Gaza. Currently, 7,797 have been identified, and still more remain unidentifiable, without living family to identify their bodies or trapped and buried under rubble. UNICEF and Save the Children estimate the total number of children killed to date at about 13,000.

McKone said that facing the

visual of what that number looked like was overwhelming. “I couldn’t believe how many pieces there were,” she said.

She soon realized this was a large undertaking that she couldn’t do alone and called in friends and community members to help make the figurines. A group of artists at Handful Studios in Portland jumped in to help. Currently, 5,000 figurines are displayed in the window, and she plans to continue until reaching 10,000 by the end of the exhibition.

“I hope that people will be hit by the actual volume of children killed,” she said. “I hope they will be more willing to demand a ceasefire and look at what the U.S. government is doing” by funding the war, she said.

“How can you justify killing this many children? It’s targeting the future for Palestinians,” she said. “These are things I want people to stop and think about.”

McKone said her former student, Fala Urfali, helped her brainstorm ways to curate the

space and portray the message affectively. “She really helped me think through texture, height and message, and I really appreciated that.”

Cinderblocks are arranged in the display to represent buildings that have collapsed and the rubble that many families are sorting through to find their loved ones. “I was also hoping with this installation to show the destruction. How do you deal with those psychological impacts?”

The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs’ current report estimates that around 35,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since October. Additionally, around 500 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank.

“We need to keep this front and center before we lose another 30,000 people,” said McKone. “Every parent wants the same things for their child. They want their safety, to provide a nice home, they want an education and they want to feed them.”

## Cartoon of Day



Netanyahu  
Cartoonist: Mohammad Sabaaneh from Palestine