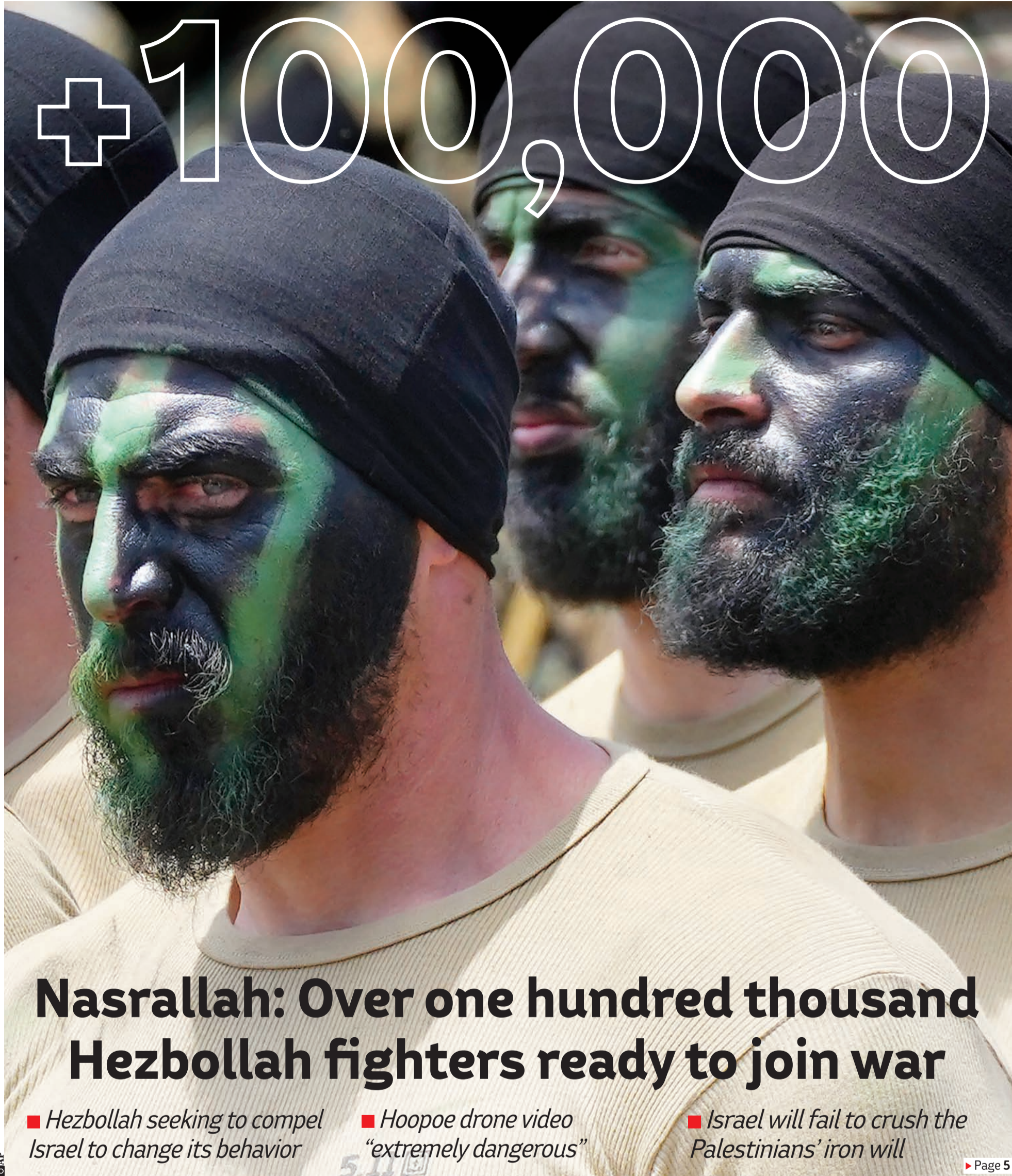


# TEHRAN TIMES

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## Nasrallah: Over one hundred thousand Hezbollah fighters ready to join war

■ Hezbollah seeking to compel Israel to change its behavior

■ Hoopoe drone video "extremely dangerous"

■ Israel will fail to crush the Palestinians' iron will

▶ Page 5

Hezbollah fighters carry out a training exercise in Aaramta village in the Jezzine District, southern Lebanon, May 21, 2023.

## Iran acting FM meets Qatari counterpart in Doha

TEHRAN – Ali Baqeri Kani, the acting Foreign Minister of Iran, has met with Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani in his brief visit to Doha, Qatar on Wednesday.

During his visit, Baqeri is expected to hold extensive consultations with Qatari leaders.

The primary focus of these discussions will be to strategize on mobilizing the resources and capacities of the Islamic world to address and halt the ongoing crimes and genocide perpetrated by the Zionist regime in Gaza. Additionally, a critical aspect of these talks will be to ensure rapid and effective humanitarian assistance to the beleaguered residents of Gaza.

This diplomatic mission underscores Iran's commitment to rallying regional support and coordinating efforts among Islamic nations to confront the crisis in Gaza. By engaging with Qatar, Baqeri aims to strengthen the collective response and facilitate swift relief operations, highlighting the urgency of international cooperation in alleviating the suffering of Gaza's population.

Israel initiated its current offensive against Gaza on October 7, following a surprise attack by Palestinian Resistance movements, named Operation Al-Aqsa Storm which came as an answer to years of Israeli wrongdoings in the occupied territories. ▶ Page 3

## Candidates hit the road for votes

Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – With less than ten days remaining before the June 28th presidential election, candidates have hit the road in a last-minute push for votes.

Presidential hopefuls departed Tehran on Tuesday and Wednesday, embarking on trips to multiple Iranian provinces as part of their campaigns.

Zakani visits President Raisi's last destination

Conservative candidate and current Tehran Mayor Alireza Zakani kicked off his campaign tour in Tabriz, a city in northwestern Iran. Late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi was on a helicopter ride to this city when the aircraft carrying him crashed and took his life.

On Tuesday, Zakani visited the father of Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Ale-Hashem, the Friday prayer imam of Tabriz who perished during the same chopper crash as President Raisi.

"The people of Tabriz and Azerbaijan have always played an important role in shaping Iran's history, and this has been particularly evident during the past few decades. The people of Tabriz have been the flagbearers in Iran's fight towards independence, freedom, progress, and development. My message to them is to actively participate in the elections and vote for a candidate who has precise plans for the country's future," he said during the meeting. ▶ Page 3

## Tourism ministry reveals special content aimed to boost arrivals

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – On Wednesday, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts held a ceremony to unveil innovative tourism content aimed at attracting more foreign visitors.

Speaking at the event, Moslem Shojaei, who presides over the office for Foreign Tourism Marketing and Development, provided detailed insights into the ministry's latest offerings and answered questions asked by the attendees.

The first product unveiled was a multimedia tourism booklet, comprising nine booklets and 108 PDF files in 13 foreign languages, all available in various formats. ▶ Page 6



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## 150 projects worth \$34b launched in past 3 years: Oji

TEHRAN – Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji has said that over the first three years of the 13th administration in office, 150 oil industry projects, worth \$34 billion, have become active.

Speaking during the signing ceremony of developing two oil fields on June 16, he commemorated the memory of late President Ibrahim Raisi, noting that "developing least-developed regions of the country and creating jobs for the people living in those areas was the top priority of the late president."

the majority of 153 projects that came to fruition were projects that had been ignored before the 13th administration took office, including South Pars gas field phase 11 ▶ Page 4

## Iran participating in 30th Beijing International Book Fair

TEHRAN-Iran is present at the 30th Beijing International Book Fair (BIBF) that commenced in Beijing, China, on Wednesday.

The pavilion of the Islamic Republic of Iran showcases more than 500 titles in various fields including literature, children's, history and art among others, IRNA reported.

This year's BIBF has drawn a wider participation of foreign exhibitors compared to last year. With an expanded exhibition area of 55,000 square meters this year, the five-day event has gathered around 1,600 exhibitors from 71 countries and regions, showcasing 220,000 Chinese and foreign publications to visitors, according to the organizers.

The fair has seen an increase of 150 overseas participants compared to the previous year, featuring 1,050 exhibitors from abroad, accounting for 66 percent of the total participants. ▶ Page 8



## TEHRAN PAPERS

## Diplomacy of honor and resistance

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

In a note, the Iran newspaper addressed the successful path of the 13th government in foreign policy and wrote: After the 13th government headed by Ayatollah Raisi came to power, the country's diplomatic apparatus changed course from western-centrism to multilateralism, developing cooperation with neighboring countries and resuming relations with neighboring countries. Iran's membership in international organizations, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the BRICS economic group, also happened as a result of this diplomacy.

In addition to creating interaction with countries that had no connection with Iran until now, expanding the dimensions of cooperation with the countries of the region, especially the countries bordering the Persian Gulf, was also on the agenda of the 13th government and successfully reached a desirable end. Basically, the determination of Ayatollah Raisi's government to change "diplomacy of begging" to "discourse of authority and dignity" was seriously put on the agenda. All of these were part of the efforts made by the 13th government to neutralize foreign measures to isolate the Islamic Republic of Iran in the international arena.

**Jam-e-Jam: Macron's pandering to the Zionists**

Jam-e-Jam analyzed the arrest of Bashir Biazar by the French police and wrote: Last week, an Iranian citizen named Bashir Biazar was arrested in France. He is in prison in France after being accused of "supporting terrorism and creating discord in society" for supporting the cause of Palestine and opposing Israel's genocide in Gaza. In fact, the indictment of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs against Biazar was based on unjustified accusations and had political motives and was condemned by Iranian analysts and officials. Because none of his posts in virtual space are related to the internal issues of France or the national security of this country. Since the beginning of the attack on Gaza, he has published hundreds of tweets about Palestine, the sufferings of Palestinians, criticism of the Israeli regime, and the inaction of Western governments. Similar to what many French people and citizens of Western countries do every day. The French indictment irrationally believes that it was the harmless tweets that escalated tensions, not the actions of the Israeli regime.

**Navy equipped with cutting-edge drones: commander**

TEHRAN – Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani announced on Wednesday that the country's naval forces have developed high combat and defense forces with the help of sophisticated homegrown drones.

"The Army Navy has successfully integrated some of the most advanced drones out there. This has significantly increased our capabilities and readiness," Rear Admiral Shahram Irani said during a visit to an Army base in Sirjan, Kerman.

The commander noted that a series of new equipment will join the Navy's fleet in the near future which will help maintain and promote its operational capabilities.

Iran has made a name for itself in the drone industry in the past few years. Military analysts believe Iranian drones are among the best in the world due to their low costs and high effectiveness.

The Shahed-136 Kamikaze drones, despite belonging to the older generations of Iranian-made drones, are especially popular with buyers, who are reportedly seeking to purchase the weapons from all across Asia, Europe, and South America.

On Tuesday, Lebanon's Hezbollah Resistance movement released a 9-minute-long and high-quality video taken by a drone that had been flown inside the occupied territories. The drone codenamed Hud Hud, is believed to be a copy of the Iranian Mohajer 4 UAV, a weapon that's already been in use for several years.

The Lebanese drone flew over the port of Haifa in the occupied territory, filmed strategic

**Sobh-e-No: Deception about negotiations**

In an article, Sobh-e-No discussed the issue of negotiations on the JCPOA during the presidential elections of Iran. The paper said: In the 2010s, especially in the two presidential elections of 2013 and 2017, we always witnessed the bipolarity of "JCPOA and negotiations with America" in the field of foreign policy, a futile bipolarity that only harms national interests and causes opportunism for enemies. Any government that comes into office cannot promise the dream of negotiating with America without considering the realities of the international system, because until now, it is the American government that is not ready to join the JCPOA. Today, when the war in Gaza is going on and there is even a danger of its flames spreading to the region, America will definitely not enter into an agreement with Iran that will bring economic benefits to our country. Therefore, the candidates should consider the reality of the international system in making their promises, and while having a plan to neutralize the sanctions, they should also use the international opportunities created to reduce the tension and lift the sanctions for the benefit of the people and the country's economy.

**Ham Mihan: Iran's security and sovereignty with strong deterrent tools**

In a commentary, Ham Mihan investigated Iran's public opinion about nuclear weapons. It wrote: Many Iranians believe that in a hypothetical war scenario between Iran and Israel, Israel will retaliate by targeting Iranian civilians on the battlefield, just like the genocide in Gaza. This concern increases the desire to have a formidable deterrent capability to protect Iran against a possible Israeli attack. In the conditions of power transfer in Iran and changes in the world order, which are often accompanied by war, Iranians are convinced of the necessity of a powerful deterrent. This belief goes beyond political systems and emphasizes that the country should be able to defend its existence. The collapse of the JCPOA and the imposition of new sanctions have prompted many Iranians to question the effectiveness of diplomatic solutions. The tangible failure of the JCPOA in providing economic help and security guarantees has provoked a sense of betrayal and pessimism toward future negotiations and strengthens the belief that only a strong deterrent tool can guarantee Iran's security and sovereignty.



sites, and returned to its departing point unscathed.

**Iranian presence to be boosted in oceans around the world**

Elsewhere in his comments, Rear Admiral Irani also emphasized the Iranian Navy's ongoing efforts to expand its global presence.

"We are preparing to expand our maritime capabilities, with a focus on effective presence in all oceans," he stated, adding that the navy's achievements are a source of pride for the people and the nation, serving as a representation of Iran on the global stage.

The Iranian Navy has undergone an unprecedented period of modernization and expansion in the past decade, marking a milestone in its capabilities.

For the first time in Iran's naval history, the Iranian Navy's 86th flotilla completed a round-the-world voyage in 2023. The "360 degrees" expedition took a total of 8 months with the flotilla sailing 63,000 kilometers and crossing the equator four times.

Shortly after the successful trip Tehran announced that it will be establishing a base in the South Pole.

# Foreign policy to continue pursuing demands of the nation: Baqeri

TEHRAN – The acting Foreign Minister of Iran says the country's foreign policy apparatus continues to actively pursue the demands of the country, its people, and the community.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Ali Baqeri Kani said, "The Foreign Ministry's activities remain vigorous. Next week, we will host the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) conference in Tehran, with participation from 32 member countries."

Addressing accusations from the European Union and the International Atomic Energy Agency regarding Iran's commitments, Baqeri stated, "Iran adheres to all its obligations under the NPT and the Safeguards Agreement. There are no violations. The IAEA's monitoring and inspection mechanisms are in place. If the other parties fail to comply with the JCPOA, we are also entitled to not fulfill our commitments, as stipulated in the JCPOA."



Baqeri Kani also underscored the effective coordination between military operations and diplomacy over the past three years and under the late President Ebrahim Raisi.

He continued, "Under late Raisi's administration, the Foreign Ministry's achievements are widely acknowledged. These include reducing tensions with neighboring and regional countries, emphasizing the neighborhood policy as highlighted by the Supreme Leader, stabilizing Iran's position in global

multilateral mechanisms like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and leveraging international capacities."

He highlighted Iran's significant role in the international arena, stating, "When Iran exercised its right to self-defense against Zionist crimes, the U.S. and Zionists could not use any international capacity against us. The coordination between military operations and diplomacy has been a reality for the past three

years. Without military operations, diplomacy would merely be a platform for declaring positions. These two must work together, which has been successfully established."

In conclusion, Baqeri said, "Resistance in the region has now become a norm, showcasing the art of Iranian diplomacy. The thirteenth administration's efforts, alongside the sacrifices of late President Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, are evident to all, and I hope these achievements will be cherished."

On May 19, a helicopter carrying the Iranian President Raisi and Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian crashed into the mountains in the East Azarbaijan province of Iran, causing the death of all those on board.

Rescuers found the wreckage of the helicopter after hours of extensive search which involved more than 70 teams.

## Sanctions hindering fight against illicit arms trade: Iran UN envoy



TEHRAN – Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, Saeed Iravani, has condemned U.S. sanctions as a hindrance to Tehran's efforts to combat the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons in the region.

During a speech at the UN Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Program of Action to Prevent Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, held in New York on June 19, Iravani argued that the sanctions unfairly restrict Iran's access to crucial technological assistance necessary for tackling this issue.

He stated that the sanctions are a major obstacle to Iran's contribution to regional security and stability, emphasizing the need for their removal to allow for more robust cooperation in combating the illicit arms trade.

The full text of the statement is as follows:

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Madam President,

First, let me congratulate you on your appointment as the President of the Fourth Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action. We commend you, your team, and UNODA for the tireless efforts carried out over the past year. The Islamic Republic of Iran stands ready to support you in your endeavor for a consensus outcome document of this Review Conference.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the NAM.

Madam President, Distinguished delegates,

I would like to reaffirm my country's commitment to fully implementing the United Nations Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNPoA) at the national, regional, and international levels.

As a victim of foreign-backed terrorists and constantly faced with the threat of organized crime and drug trafficking linked to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, the Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to the Programme of Action.

Currently, Iran has established appropriate laws and necessary mechanisms to provide policy guidelines and facilitate coordination among relevant national bodies. We have made significant progress in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, as well as the associated issues, particularly drug trafficking. Our dedication to implementing the Programme of Action is evident in the sacrifice of nearly 5,000 law enforcement personnel who have lost their lives in this fight.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has also established bilateral and trilateral agreements with several countries in the region to effectively prevent, combat, and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, along with the associated problems. Notably, we consistently focus on addressing

the root causes of this illicit trade and its related issues at the regional level. This is achieved, in particular, through investments in development programs and reconstruction plans in our neighboring countries.

Facilitating a non-discriminatory transfer of technology and equipment necessary to combat illicit trade and trafficking in SALWs to developing countries—such as x-ray machines, full-body scanners, advanced border control radars, etc., is urgent for strengthening Member States' capabilities for effectively implementing the POA.

Unfortunately, unlawful restrictions imposed on Iran, contrary to the commitments made in the UN Programme of Action, have limited our access to the technical and technological assistance necessary for combating the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons in the region.

Madam President,

It is clear that as long as the conditions fostering the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons persist, the demand for such weapons will continue to rise. Therefore, to find a viable long-term solution to this multifaceted challenge, it is essential to adopt a comprehensive approach.

As outlined in the Programme of Action, we must combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons from both supply and demand perspectives to succeed. For example, any efforts to address this issue will be ineffective without a significant reduction in arms production by major arms-producing countries, as the overproduction and oversupply of these weapons facilitate their diversion into illicit trade. Additionally, all States should ensure that the supply of small arms and light weapons is limited solely to governments or entities duly authorized by them.

We are of the view that the extensive transfer of SALW and irresponsible behavior by exporters constitute the primary issues contributing to the current state of international peace and security. Therefore, adherence to the provisions of the PoA and the ITI should be coupled with increased responsibility on the part of exporting countries and strict compliance with relevant international law.

Madam President,

My delegation welcomes the timely convening of the Fourth Review Conference of the UNPoA to take stock of the progress made since 2018. The Programme of Action represents the only international consensus framework to address the multifaceted challenges associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

This unique tool must retain its validity and relevance, which can only be achieved through its balanced, effective, and comprehensive implementation. Therefore, our primary focus at this Conference should be to identify challenges in its implementation and formulate concrete, results-oriented recommendations to address them.

We find that "Draft 1" of the outcome document lays a foundation for substantive discussions. At this stage, I would like to highlight the following priorities of my delegation that we wish to see reflected in the outcome document of this Review Conference:

First, we place great importance on maintaining the consensus spirit that has guided international agreements on small arms issues thus far. We hope that our discussions in the upcoming days will be guided by this spirit, allowing us to concentrate on consolidating the progress achieved by states rather than intensifying disagreements.

Second, given that States have affirmed their commitment to implement the PoA on a voluntary basis, after nearly 25 years since the adoption of the PoA, it is imperative that the outcome document of the fourth review conference reiterates from the outset the explicit voluntary nature of all outlined measures.

Third, it is now crucial to prioritize refining the implementation of the UNPoA on SALW and its ITI, rather than introducing new elements, concepts, and terminologies that could expand its scope. Our objective is to collaboratively address existing gaps rather than widen them or create new ones. We must temper our ambitions with prudence. Therefore, we strongly advocate for the utilization of agreed-upon language to the greatest extent possible within the outcome document of this review conference to enhance the possibility of achieving a consensus document.

Fourth, we firmly believe that one of the primary implementation challenges of the UNPoA on SALW and its International Tracing Instrument (ITI) is inadequate international cooperation and assistance, specifically insufficient financial support, technical assistance, and technology transfer. Despite nearly 25 years of implementation practice, it still seems difficult to match the needs of affected states with the resources of donor countries.

International assistance and cooperation should be promoted constantly and proportionately to meet the growing needs of developing countries. This is essential, mainly due to the rising magnitude of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the ongoing threats they pose. In this context, providing financial and technical assistance, as well as technology transfer, to states at the forefront of combating the illicit trade in small arms, light weapons, and drug trafficking is of particular importance.

Developing countries should have access to new technologies for manufacturing and marking SALWs through every available means. The Islamic Republic of Iran firmly opposes any measures that are inconsistent with the right of self-defense as outlined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, or that disregard legal trade in small and light weapons necessary to meet the national security needs of states.

It would be illusive and unrealistic to assume that by developing new and ambitious measures, which would only add to the undertakings of member states, without effectively helping them to address the main issues, the challenge of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons can be countered. Therefore, we urge this Review Conference to adopt concrete recommendations that ensure sustained, sufficient, non-discriminatory, and unconditional financial and technical assistance, as well as technology transfer, to developing countries.

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



**Mona Hojat Ansari**

TEHRAN – With less than ten days remaining before the June 28th presidential election, candidates have hit the road in a last-minute push for votes.

Presidential hopefuls departed Tehran on Tuesday and Wednesday, embarking on trips to multiple Iranian provinces as part of their campaigns.

**Zakani visits President Raisi's last destination**

Conservative candidate and current Tehran Mayor Alireza Zakani kicked off his campaign tour in Tabriz, a city in northwestern Iran. Late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi was on a helicopter ride to this city when the aircraft carrying him crashed and took his life.

On Tuesday, Zakani visited the father of Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Ale-Hashem, the Friday prayer imam of Tabriz who perished during the same chopper crash as President Raisi.

"The people of Tabriz and Azerbaijan have always played



an important role in shaping Iran's history, and this has been particularly evident during the past few decades. The people of Tabriz have been the flagbearers in Iran's fight towards independence, freedom, progress, and development. My message to them is to actively participate in the elections and vote for a candidate who has precise plans for the country's future," he said during the meeting.

**Qalibaf reunites with late comrade in Kerman**

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf who spent several years as a senior commander in the Islamic

Revolution Guard Corps, visited the tomb of Iran's anti-terror icon and commander of the IRGC Quds force Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in his southeastern hometown of Kerman.

In a gathering with his Kermani supporters, Qalibaf hailed the people of the city and the province for their unyielding support towards the Islamic Revolution and undying resistance against hardships.

Qalibaf pledged that if chosen as the next Iranian president, he would prioritize helping the less fortunate in the country's population. Kerman is believed

to be among the Iranian provinces with the highest rates of poverty.

"Each one of our people is those who, through careful consideration, make the right choice; if success is found, I pledge and covenant with the people of Iran that I will prioritize all social strata, especially those below the poverty line, retirees, villagers, workers, and those with fixed incomes," Qalibaf expressed.

**Zarif tags along with Pezeshkian to Esfahan**

The reformists' only hope for the presidency, Masoud Pezeshkian, chose the central city of Esfahan as his destination on Wednesday.

Former Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also accompanied the candidate throughout the trip, after first appearing beside him on a televised roundtable.

Zarif also posted a notice on his X account recently, announcing that he and a number of other prominent reformists are backing Pezeshkian in the 2024 presidential elections.

## Zakani says not averse to talks with West



TEHRAN – The mayor of Tehran who is currently running for president said he is not opposed to negotiating with the West to reduce tensions, but won't tolerate disrespect and deceit solely for the sake of engaging in talks with Western states.

"If the United States of America takes the right position and compensates for its past mistakes, there will definitely be no obstacle to dialogue. The world does not merely consist of America and two or three European countries. We emphasize that mutual respect must be observed in negotiations and we must respect each other," Alireza Zakani stated in response

to a question by the Tehran Times during a Tuesday press conference.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is currently one of the powers of the East. We have good relations with countries like China and Russia, which are also powerful," he said, explaining that Iran should enter negotiations from a position of power.

Zakani who is known to be an outspoken critic of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Actions (JCPOA) also commented on his repeated criticism of the deal. "I have mentioned the advantages and disadvantages of the pact in a previous report, and our perspective has been analytical, not black and white."

The mayor also condemned Europe for laying the blame for the JCPOA's collapse at Iran's feet. "Europeans have no right to view Iran with entitlement. They are the ones that possess nuclear bombs, not us," he said.

The JCPOA is a deal signed on Iran's nuclear program by Iran, the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, China, and Russia in 2015. It limited

the West Asian country's nuclear activities in return for the termination of sanctions. The JCPOA fell apart when Washington announced its withdrawal in 2018 and proceeded to re-impose sanctions against Iran. European signatories to the deals have also failed to uphold their commitments.

The rest of the presidential candidate's remarks throughout the press conference were focused on the economy and culture. Zakani said he had devised 14 "transformation packages" that would address different aspects of the Iranian citizens' lives in the span of 4 years.

"Iran faces challenges in areas such as costs of living, housing, employment, and healthcare. However, the country also has significant opportunities for development and progress that should be pursued to enhance its presence on the international stage.

By leveraging these opportunities effectively, Iran can serve as a model for others to follow and contribute to the formation of a new Islamic civilization," he said.

## Iran acting FM meets Qatari counterpart in Doha

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During his visit, Baqeri is expected to hold extensive consultations with Qatari leaders.

The primary focus of these discussions will be to strategize on mobilizing the resources and capacities of the Islamic world to address and halt the ongoing crimes and genocide perpetrated by the Zionist regime in Gaza. Additionally, a critical aspect of these talks will be to ensure rapid and effective humanitarian assistance to the beleaguered residents of Gaza.

This diplomatic mission underscores Iran's commitment to rallying regional support and coordinating efforts among Islamic nations to confront the crisis in Gaza. By engaging with Qatar, Baqeri aims to strengthen the collective response and facilitate swift relief operations, highlighting the urgency of international cooperation in alleviating the suffering of Gaza's population.

Israel initiated its current offensive against Gaza on October 7, following a surprise attack by Palestinian Resistance movements, named Operation Al-Aqsa Storm which came as an answer to years of Israeli wrongdoings in the occupied territories.

The conflict has been devastating, resulting in the deaths of at least 37,337 Palestinians, most of whom are women and children. An additional 85,299 have been injured, and over 1.7 million people have been internally displaced.

Currently, Israeli attacks are concentrated in the central region of Gaza. A month ago, Israeli forces advised Palestinians from Rafah to evacuate to this area, designating it as a safe zone. As a result, over one million Palestinians relocated to Nuseirat, Deir el-Balah, and other central locations. However, these areas are now also under attack.

The Gaza Government Media Office has issued warnings about the severe lack of aid, including

food, nutritional supplements, and vaccines, which puts 3,500 children at risk of dying from malnutrition.

The offensive has severely crippled Gaza's health sector. According to Gaza's Health Ministry, the conflict has reduced the enclave's clinical capacity by 70 percent. Consequently, Gaza is increasingly relying on field hospitals, which often lack basic services, to treat patients who cannot find spots in the remaining hospitals.

This dire situation highlights the urgent need for international intervention to address the humanitarian crisis and bring an end to the violence affecting countless innocent lives.

## IRGC commander praises national strength, resilience amidst challenges

TEHRAN – Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami says Iran has solidified the utmost level of national strength and resilience by reaching the peak of its military and political power.

Salami described the ongoing confrontation with powerful adversaries who have employed various strategies against Iran over the past few decades. "We have faced increasing domains of conflict, and the world powers came to fight this Revolution with all its capacities," he said.

Despite intense pressure, Salami asserted that Iran has managed to neutralize these pressures. "By divine grace, we have absorbed and neutralized all these diverse pressures,

imposing the magnificent power of a nation upon a world of assembled enemies," he declared.

Salami cited various indicators of Iran's power, including its ability to maintain security and conduct secure exports and imports despite sanctions. "If you see security amidst peak confrontation, it means you possess power," he stressed.

He praised the Leader's role in guiding the country through challenges, emphasizing that Iran's oil industry and national projects continue to thrive independently of foreign influence. "We, as the IRGC, are executing 360 national projects, with 100 awaiting inaugurations," Salami stated.

In conclusion, General Salami highlighted the recognition

of Iran's power on the global stage, stating that the enemies acknowledge Iran's strength.

In an unprecedented move, Iran launched over 300 missiles and drones targeting Israel during the True Promise operation.

This operation came amidst rising regional tensions due to the ongoing conflict in Palestine and the Israel's bombing of Iranian consulate in Damascus. Many anticipated that Israel would retaliate against these Iranian attacks, potentially broadening the conflict in Gaza to other areas of the region.

Experts suggest that Iran's anti-Israel operation has altered the military dynamics in the region, further undermining the Israeli regime and its allies in their ongoing conflict in Gaza.

JUNE 20, 2024

Straight Truth  
TEHRAN TIMES

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## SPORTS

### Thrilling Hazfi Cup final to conclude Iran's football season

TEHRAN – The Iranian football season is set to reach its climax with the exciting Hazfi Cup final between Sepahan and Mes, taking place on Thursday at the Azadi Stadium in Tehran. This high-stakes match will feature the use of VAR technology, ensuring fair and precise decision-making.

**'Sepahan's quest to end title drought**

Sepahan, clad in their signature gold jerseys, will enter the match eager to end their nine-year trophy drought. The last time they tasted championship glory was in the Persian Gulf Pro League nine years ago. Their last Hazfi Cup triumph dates back even further, to 11 years ago, when they defeated Persepolis to claim the coveted trophy.

**'Coach Morais' chance for redemption**

For Sepahan's head coach, Portuguese tactician Jose Morais, this match represents a golden opportunity to redeem himself. Despite his hefty price tag, Morais has yet to deliver a trophy to the passionate Sepahan fans during his two seasons at the helm. The Hazfi Cup provides him with the perfect platform to etch his name in Sepahan's history.

**'Mes Rafsanjan's underdog story**

Mes Rafsanjan, despite facing numerous challenges throughout the season, have defied the odds to reach their first-ever Hazfi Cup final. This remarkable achievement is a testament to the team's resilience and determination.

Adding a layer of intrigue to the clash is the presence of Mes Rafsanjan's head coach, Moharram Navidkia. A former Sepahan captain and legend, Navidkia will find himself in the unfamiliar position of facing his former team in the pursuit of glory.

**'AFC Champions League implications**

The Hazfi Cup winners will not only be crowned the champions of Iranian knockout football but will also secure Iran's third spot in the 2024/25 AFC Elite League. The road to continental glory will begin on Aug. 6, 2024, when the champions face UAE's Shabab Al Ahli in the Preliminary Round 2. The winners of this encounter will then take on Qatar's Al Gharafa in the Preliminary Round 3 on Aug. 13, 2024. The winners of this clash will join the 11 other teams in the AFC Elite League group stage. The losers of these two matches will drop down to the AFC Champions League Two.

The stage is set for an enthralling Hazfi Cup final, with both Sepahan and Mes harboring dreams of lifting the coveted trophy. The introduction of VAR technology promises to add an extra layer of excitement and fairness to the match.

### Iran edge the U.S. at 2024 VNL

TEHRAN – Iran defeated the U.S. 3-2 (26-28, 25-23, 25-18, 26-28, 15-13) in the 2024 Volleyball Nations League (VNL) Week 3 on Wednesday.

Poriya Hossein Khanzadeh collected 22 points for Team Melli, while Torey Defalco scored 32 points for the U.S.

Iran are scheduled to play the Netherlands on Thursday.

The VNL Preliminary Phase features three competition weeks per gender, with each of the 16 teams playing 12 matches.

The seven best-ranked national teams in the Preliminary Phase will join hosts Poland for the Finals, which will be held in Lodz from June 27 to 30.

### Moghanlou linked with Ittihad Kalba

TEHRAN – Iran and Sepahan international forward Shahriyar Moghanlou has been linked with a move to Emirati football club Ittihad Kalba.

Ittihad Kalba was going to sign the 29-year-old striker in the January transfer window but failed to hire the player.

Moghanlou has played 82 matches for Sepahan and scored 37 goals for the team.

Moghanlou helped Sepahan to advance to final match of 2023-24 Iran's Hazfi Cup, where the team will meet Mes.

Iran international winger Mehdi Ghaedi also plays in Ittihad Kalba.

### Beiranvand cancels deal with Persepolis

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand canceled his contract with the club on Tuesday over financial irregularities and unpaid salary.

The 32-year-old keeper had terminated his deal with Persepolis last season but signed a new contract with the Reds.

Beiranvand helped Persepolis win the Iran Professional League (IPL) for second successive year.

He has been linked with Tractor football team.

### Nategh Nouri elected president of Iran Sport Associations

TEHRAN – Abbasali Nategh Nouri was elected as president of Iran Federation of Sport Associations on Wednesday.

He was elected for a four-year term till 2028.

In the elections held at Iran's Academy Olympic in Tehran, Nategh Nouri secured 32 of 59 votes cast. Sohrab Azad came second with 20 votes.

Iran Federation of Sport Associations is the governing body for 21 minor sports in the country.

### Tabatabaei wins bronze at Avagyan memorial

TEHRAN – Mohammadamin Tabatabaei of Iran won a bronze medal at the 5th Stepan Avagyan Memorial 2024.

Indian chess player Arjun Erigais finished first with 6.5/9, followed by American Sevan Samuel and Tabatabaei 5/9. The memorial was held in Jermuk, Armenia on June 10-18.

A 10-player single round-robin, the tournament included five Armenian representatives and five international grandmasters.

### Azadi to join Al Urooba

TEHRAN – Nassaji football club forward Mohammad Reza Azadi has reportedly reached an agreement with Emirati club Al Urooba Club.

The 25-year-old forward has one year left on his current contract but the media reports suggest that he has reached an agreement with Al Urooba Club.

Azadi started his playing career in Tractor in 2017 and has also played in Greek side Panetolikos and Esteghlal.

In 1960 two clubs were founded in Mirbah and Qidfa, Al Wehda in Mirbah and Al Najma in Qidfa, both clubs were financially weak and by 1972, both clubs agreed to merge under the name Al Urooba to represent the Mirbah-Qidfa area of the Emirate of Fujairah.

### Paqueta shortlisted to lead Persepolis

TEHRAN – Marcos Cesar Dias de Castro, known as Marcos Paqueta, has been shortlisted to coach Persepolis. The 65-year-old coach has most recently worked as head coach in Algerian club CR Belouizdad.

Paqueta has also worked as head coach in Brazil U-17 and U-20 football teams.

Brazilian coach Osmar Loss Vieira parted company with the Iranian team last week. He led Persepolis to the title in the 2023-24 Iran Professional League (IPL) but did not agree to extend his deal due to family problems.

The 49-year-old coach had been appointed as Persepolis coach in January as a replacement for Yahya Golmohammadi.



## Iran exports medicines, pharmaceuticals to 50 countries



TEHRAN - Iran exports raw materials and pharmaceutical products to approximately 50 countries across the world despite the sanctions imposed against the country, the Iran Food and Drug Administration (IFDA) said.

"Iranian raw materials and pharmaceutical products are exported by nearly 100 companies to about 50 states," Secretary of IFDA's Export Policymaking Council Asef

Mahdavi said.

Iranian companies have the capacity to produce medicines several times more than meeting domestic needs, he added.

Mahdavi pointed out that export of medical equipment grew by 300 percent in the first four months of this year, according to Press TV.

Earlier, IFDA Head Heidar Mohammadi had said that Iran's pharmaceutical market exceeds \$2 billion, adding that 99 percent of drugs used in the country are produced domestically.

Over the past years, Iran has made giant strides in the medical sector despite illegal Western sanctions imposed against the country.

It has become self-reliant in producing medicines and health equipment and increased sales to many countries, he added.

## Iran to produce 1.5 million cars by March 2025

TEHRAN - Iran's minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade said 1.5 million cars will be produced in the country by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2025).

More than 1.5 million cars will be manufactured in the country by the end of the current Iranian calendar year, Abbas Aliabadi said, speaking at the 19th International Auto Parts Exhibition 2024 dubbed "IAPEX".

The industry minister criticized the poor

quality of cars produced in the country and called for boosting the quality of the cars to be competitive in the international arena, Mehr news agency reported.

He also stated that Iran should be industrialized and the country has a high potential for becoming industrialized.

The 19th International Exhibition of Automotive Parts, Accessories and Sets kicked off on June 18 and will run through June 21, 2024.

## Iran exports \$400m of home appliances in a year

TEHRAN - Iran exported \$400 million of home appliances in the previous Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2023 to March 19, 2024), showing an 18.2 percent hike compared to a year earlier.

Giant steps were taken in the administration of the late President Ebrahim Raisi in line with developing this industry through the compilation of strategies, launching the Comprehensive Trade System, etc., the secretary general of the Iranian Home Appliances Producers' Association said.

Omid Fazelinia added that 16.5 million different home appliances were produced in the country in 2022, and the number reached 19.5 million in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 19, 2024), showing an 18.2 percent hike compared to a year before.



Some 22.5 million home appliances are planned to be produced in the current year (started March 21, 2024), he stated, adding that it will mean this industry would witness 15 percent growth.

The domestically-manufactured home appliances have high quality and can compete with similar foreign ones in the global markets, he emphasized, according to IRNA.

## Iran's monthly PMI raises concern about industry sector

TEHRAN - Iran's new PMI data for the fiscal month of Ordibehesht (April 20 - May 20, 2024), released by the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) has raised concern about the industry sector.

The PMI data suggests that failing to allocate the currency needed for the purchase of raw materials as well as the new regulations for placing import orders can limit access to raw materials over the next months, affecting the industry sector and the improvement of economic conditions.

Iran's overall PMI was reported at 55.9 in the month under review which shows a significant month-on-month rise in the economic activities, while after seasonal adjustments, the PMI reading for this month was estimated at 50.7 which indicates a slight improvement in the Iranian economy.

The Statistics and Economic Analysis Center of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, the sponsor and coordinator of the survey, announces the whole economy PMI data in a report every month.

The headline PMI is a number from 0 to 100, such that over 50 shows an expansion of the

economy when compared with the previous month. A PMI reading under 50 indicates contraction and a reading of 50 implies no change.

PMI is an index of the prevailing direction of economic trends, aiming to provide information about business conditions to company directors, analysts and purchasing managers.

The "business activity" sub-index was reported at 57.7 which shrank to 50.4 after seasonal adjustment. Although the New Year holidays of the previous month has come to an end, this index remained almost the same of the preceding month.

The "new orders" sub-index (46.8) also shows a relative decrease in demand compared to figures of the preceding month.

The seasonally adjusted reading of the "raw material inventory" sub-index was reported at 47.5 which is indicative of a month-on-month decline in raw materials.

The survey also put the "sales of goods and services" sub-index at 48.9 after seasonal adjustment which show a remarkable drop in sales compared to the previous month when the figure stood at 53.6.

# 150 projects worth \$34b launched in past 3 years: Oji

TEHRAN - Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji has said that over the first three years of the 13th administration in office, 150 oil industry projects, worth \$34 billion, have become active.

Speaking during the signing ceremony of developing two oil fields on June 16, he commemorated the memory of late President Ibrahim Raisi, noting that "developing least-developed regions of the country and creating jobs for the people living in those areas was the top priority of the late president."

The majority of 153 projects that came to fruition were projects that had been ignored before the 13th administration took office, including South Pars gas field phase 11 which its development contract was exchanged for 20 years between the related sides, but when the 13th administration took office it decided to start its development which is now complete and operational, the



Minister of Petroleum said.

Oji continued: The country managed to acquire good revenues by implementing these kinds of projects in the oil, gas, refining, and petrochemical sectors.

According to him, while the oil industry's growth stood at 10 percent two years ago it reached 20 percent last year; the highest rate of growth among all sectors of the economy.

The oil industry has 300 projects on the agenda of which 80 projects are new ones, he said adding total value of these projects reaches 130 billion dollars, some of them are now operational.

Referring to cooperation with Russia, he said a satisfactory basis had been laid for expanding relations with Russia "and we will hear good news in this regard in the future."

The 13th administration so far has signed five billion dollars of oil contracts with Russian companies and 250 thousand barrels of oil per day the country produces, comes from the contracts have been already signed with Russian companies, Oji said.

The official has also said that the United States can no longer prevent the export and production of Iran's oil.

"With the measures that have been taken in President Raisi's government in the field of the oil industry, I should announce that any government that comes to power in the US cannot prevent the export and production of Iranian oil," Oji said while speaking at a parliament open session on Wednesday morning.

In his remarks, Oji highlighted the efforts of the 13th Iranian administration in improving the situation of the production and export of oil.

## Rasht-Caspian railway to be inaugurated this week

TEHRAN - The Rasht-Caspian Railway Project in Iran's northern province of Gilan will be inaugurated on June 20, 2024.

It will be launched in a ceremony to be attended by Iran's Acting President Mohammad Mokhber, Minister of Transport and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash, Aide to the President of the Russian Federation Igor Levitin, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan Shahin Mustafayev, Governor of Astrakhan Oblast

Igor Babushkin and the ambassadors of the neighboring countries.

The project will bring considerable benefits to Iran and regional transport networks. Upon operation of this rail project, which is part of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), the Persian Gulf will be connected to the Caspian Sea via rail, the website of Iran's Ministry of Transport and Urban Development (MRUD) reported.

The 37-kilometer Rasht-Caspian Railway completes the Qazvin-Rasht rail route and connects the city of Rasht to the Caspian Sea.

Located in the northern part of Iran, the primary purpose of the Rasht-Caspian Railway is to enhance connectivity to facilitate transportation and trade links between Iran and the Caspian Sea region northward and to the railway network southward. It provides a more efficient and cost-effective mode of transportation for freight and passengers.

## Tehran, Seoul share experiences in urban regeneration

TEHRAN - Tehran and Seoul discussed their experiences in urban regeneration with the centrality of community-based planning at Iran's Urban Regeneration Corporation on June 10.

It was within the cooperation framework of the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) for knowledge-sharing and exchange of experiences.

The session was dedicated to the experiences of South Korea in urban regeneration by the Counsellor of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Tehran, Dr. Ki Bum Park, through his book titled "Answer is in the Neighborhood".

Iranian Deputy Minister and Managing Director of Urban Regeneration Corporation Mohammad Aeeni, members of the board of directors of the Corporation, the acting head of the UN-Habitat office in Tehran, the secretary of the National Habitat Committee (NHC), and other experts, urban facilitators, and actors attended the meeting.

Presenting his book at the beginning of this meeting, Dr. Park explained the urban regeneration approach in Seoul for the development of middle housing as well as architectural solutions to provide greater accessibility in the neighborhoods.

This is considered a paradigm

shift in Seoul's policies from the high-rise building to middle housing in an attempt to rediscover the value of the neighborhood and bring diversity to the community.

Explaining Iran's approach to urban regeneration, Aeeni stated that Iran is following a similar path as it advances community-based planning and reviving the identity of the neighborhoods in the process of renovation of dilapidated (old) urban areas through the participation of people and the least intervention of government, website of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development (MRUD) reported.

Aeeni pointed to granting an

additional floor area ratio as a policy for the economic feasibility of the regeneration of old urban areas. In this sense, four to five floors are targeted for these areas. In parallel renovating the housing allows for providing public services and relief operations.

Iran is addressing affordability and diversification of housing models so that different income groups can afford housing based on their needs and budgets.

There are 2,600,000 unsustainable housing units in Iran, according to Aeeni.

## CBI looking into piloting digital currency

TEHRAN - The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) says it is planning to introduce a digital currency (CBDC) to facilitate purchases for the clients of the banking network in the country.

According to the CBI, a pilot version of

its digital currency is ready to be rolled out on the island of Kish, southern Iran, after several years of work and studies on the program.

The CBI hopes the pilot platform could

enable the bank to finally launch a digital form of Iran's national currency the rial.

Iran's Mellat and Tejarat banks will contribute to the pilot project in Kish, which is to be launched in July.

## CIPCC 2024 program closing ceremony held at Renmin University of China

By Mahnaz Abdi

BEIJING- The Closing Ceremony of the Program on China Development Studies and Media Exchange for the China International Press Communication Center (CIPCC)2024 was held at Renmin University of China (RUC) on Tuesday.

The ceremony hosted by Prof. Zhong Xin, Director of CIPCC-RUC Program, was held at the School of Journalism and Communication (SJC) of the RUC.

The ceremony started with the introduction of the participants, and then continued with the review of the 10th anniversary of the program.

Then, Prof. Zhang HuiFeng, Chairperson of School Council, SJC, RUC, and Mr. Liu Yutong, Counsellor, Department of Press, Communication and Public Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, delivered speech.

After that, the certificates of completion were awarded to the journalists participating in CIPCC 2024 program.

Prof. Yan Yan, Vice Chairperson of School Council, SJC, RUC, was the next speaker, who introduced the "One Belt One Road" Global Journalism and Communication (BRJC).

Then, Assistant Prof. Ma Xiaofen, SJC, RUC, introduced New Era International Communication Research Institute (NEICRI) and Global Public Opinion Research Center (GPORC).

Introduction of "Narrating China" Studio by Miss. Dong Xiruo, Editor-in-chief of "Narrating China" Studio, Undergraduate of SJC, RUC, was the last part of the ceremony, and after that there was a question and answer session.

At the end, the journalists visited different parts of the university compound and took some pictures.

It should be mentioned that these journalists have been participating in a four-month program organized by the China International Press Communication Center (CIPCC).

CIPCC, under the China Public Diplomacy Association (CPDA), has initiated a program to build a platform for the media from countries around the world, especially developing countries, to observe China and study development in this country.

In each edition of the program, journalists from all around the world gather together to get familiar with the modern China and exchange their experiences in the field of journalism.

In 2024 edition of the program, started in late February, over 100 journalists from more than 90 countries have been participating.

The program included different

activities such as visiting some important sites, and attending conferences and lectures.

Many of the lecturers in this program were from Renmin University.

Renmin University of China (RUC, also known as the People's University of China) is a key university in China.

The RUC's strengths emphasize the humanities and social sciences; however, the university also embraces disciplines in the area of natural sciences. The RUC is a comprehensive research-orientated university.

The RUC was established in 1937, during the resistance war against Japanese aggression. The University acquired its present name on October 3, 1950, which made it the first university to be established by the newly founded People's Republic of China.



# Nasrallah: Over one hundred thousand Hezbollah fighters ready to join war against Israel

TEHRAN- Hezbollah Secretary General Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah has played down Israel's threats of waging a full-scale war against the Lebanese resistance group.

Speaking at a ceremony to commemorate senior Hezbollah commander Taleb Abdullah as well as three other resistance fighters who were martyred in an Israeli airstrike in Lebanon over a week ago, the Hezbollah leader said Israel can only talk about waging such a war but is incapable of conducting it.

Nasrallah added that Hezbollah does not want a "total war" with Israel but issued a warning in the face of such a scenario.

He said Israel must prepare for attacks from the ground, air and sea, and that the "situation in the Mediterranean will change completely" if it decides to get engaged in a full-blown conflict with Lebanon.

The Hezbollah chief warned that "no place" in Israel would be spared from the resistance group's weapons in case of a direct war. He said Hezbollah would fight with "no rules" and "no ceilings".

He noted that the resistance group carries out attacks against the regime to support Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.



"We will continue to support Gaza and we are ready for anything. We are not afraid. Our demand is clear: A complete and permanent ceasefire in Gaza."

Hezbollah and Israel have been trading fire since October 8, the day after Israel declared war on Gaza following a surprise military operation conducted by Hamas in southern Israel.

Hezbollah has reiterated that it won't stop its attacks against Israel unless the regime ends the war of genocide on Gaza which has so far claimed the lives of some 37,400 Palestinians.

Israel has repeatedly warned that it will go to direct war with Hezbollah if it continues attacks against the regime.

The latest of such threats were made by Israeli Foreign Minister

Israel Katz.

"We are getting very close to the moment of deciding to change the rules of the game against Hezbollah and Lebanon. In an all-out war, Hezbollah will be destroyed, and Lebanon severely beaten," Katz claimed on X on Tuesday.

His threat came after Hezbollah released footage showing its reconnaissance drones flying over sensitive Israeli sites in areas such as Haifa port.

Hezbollah said the drones bypassed Israeli air defenses and returned to Lebanese airspace without being detected.

The footage captured by the Hezbollah drones stole the limelight at major news outlets.

Analysts have said the move has exposed Israel's vulnerability

and humiliated the regime.

Further in his remarks, Nasrallah said the footage is just a short and selected excerpt from long hours of recorded videos captured above Haifa.

The Hezbollah leader added that Israeli leaders are not willing to admit the magnitude of the military and economic damage they have received at the hands of Hezbollah resistance fighters.

Nasrallah also said the number of Hezbollah operatives who are ready to join the war has exceeded 100,000.

The Hezbollah chief also threw a spotlight on Israel's failure to achieve its military goals in Gaza.

Israel claims to be the strongest army in West Asia but has failed to defeat Hamas, he said.

Since declaring war on Gaza on October 7, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to achieve "total victory" over Hamas and "destroy" the resistance group. Netanyahu's dreams have so far remained elusive as Hamas has put up resistance against Israeli forces and dealt severe blows to the regime in the Gaza battlefield.

## WORLD HEADLINES

### UN official: Oct. 7 attack on Israel did not occur in vacuum

The October 7 attack on Israel and the subsequent military operation in Gaza did not occur in a vacuum as they were preceded by decades of violence and retribution against Palestinians, UN Commissioner Navi Pillay said Wednesday.

"In relation to Israel's military operations and attacks in Gaza from 7 October, we conclude that Israeli authorities are responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and violations of international humanitarian and human rights law," said Pillay.

These include "extermination, intentionally directing attacks against civilians and civilian objects, murder or willful killing, using starvation as a method of war, forcible transfer, gender persecution targeting Palestinian men and boys, sexual and gender-based violence amounting to torture, and cruel or inhuman treatment."

She said the Israeli military's "deliberate" use of heavy weapons in the Gaza Strip has been an "intentional and direct attack on the civilian population".

"Yet that is exactly what has happened," Sanders said.

"The right wing extremist Netanyahu government has killed more than 37,000 Palestinians and injured nearly 85,000. 60 percent of whom are women, children or elderly," he said.

"It is absurd that Netanyahu has been invited to address Congress. We should not be honoring people who use the starvation of children as a weapon of war," he added.

### Greece: Europe must host Gaza children

Europe has a duty to host children hurt and traumatized by war in Gaza for as long as the conflict continues, Greek Foreign Minister George Gerapetritis told Reuters on Wednesday.

Gerapetritis is seeking partners in what he hopes would be a project to temporarily bring the children to the European Union, and said he discussed the idea with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa this week.

"We need to face this tragedy very clearly," Gerapetritis said. "Europe should be open to injured people from (Gaza) but also to children who are now facing famine or other sorts of dangers."

Greece was elected as a member of the United Nations Security Council for 2025-2026 earlier this month, and Gerapetritis believes the country's historical ties with the Arab world give it credibility to act as a peace broker.

### Environmental impact of Israel's war on Gaza will take 'decades to unwind'

Patrick Bigger, a US-based climate policy researcher, said the destruction of Gaza's environment resulting from Israel's war on the territory will take decades to recover, if ever.

"The social and environmental crisis in Gaza did not start on October 7. It has already been deteriorating quite a bit for the past 15 years. But the unprecedented bombardment of Gaza by [Israeli forces] has created some really serious environmental challenges that are going to take decades to unwind," Bigger told Al Jazeera in an interview.

"The water situation is particularly dire," Bigger said, noting that the eastern Mediterranean region has already been identified as a "climate change hotspot that was already having serious impacts on both the quality and availability of water".

Gaza's water supply is now even further degraded "through the direct impacts of the bombardment" and the environment has been damaged by the "emergency responses that Gazans have had to take in order to just access whatever quantity of water that they can right now".

### Russia and North Korea sign partnership deal

Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un signed an agreement Wednesday that pledges mutual aid if either country faces "aggression," a strategic pact that comes as both face escalating standoffs with the West.

Details of the deal were not immediately clear, but it could mark the strongest connection between Moscow and Pyongyang since the end of the Cold War. Both leaders described it as a major upgrade of their relations, covering security, trade, investment, cultural and humanitarian ties, AP reported.

The summit came as Putin visited North Korea for the first time in 24 years and the U.S. and its allies expressed growing concerns over a possible arms arrangement in which Pyongyang provides Moscow with munitions for its war in Ukraine, in exchange for economic assistance and technology transfers.

### Sander: Stop military aid to Israel

US Senator Bernie Sanders said his country should withhold sending Israel "all offensive military aid" after the Israeli prime minister attacked the pace at which the US was supplying him bombs to use in Gaza.

Israel has a right to defend itself, Sanders said, but it "does not have the right to go to war against the entire Palestinian people".

### Hezbollah seeking to compel Israel to change its behavior

#### Hezbollah considers Israel's threats as mere bluster

By Xavier Villar

MADRID - Last week, the Lebanese newspaper Al-Akhbar, citing reliable sources, reported that Beirut had received diplomatic messages indicating an imminent attack by Israel.

According to these sources, the United Kingdom suggested mid-June as the date for this attack. In this context, the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, during a visit to the area under Israeli control near the Lebanese border, stated: "We are prepared for decisive action in the north. In any case, we will restore security in the region."

In recent weeks, the Israeli army has reduced the time interval between assassinations of se-

### 'Hoopoe' drone video "extremely dangerous" Israelis convey war threat to the Lebanese resistance movement

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN- Israeli media has described the drone surveillance footage released by Lebanon's Hezbollah as "extremely dangerous," saying that Israeli censorship prevented its circulation in Hebrew media and classified it as "disturbing".

The 9-minute video published by Hezbollah shows how a reconnaissance drone was able to capture footage and expose sensitive Israeli sites without being detected by the occupation regime's anti-air systems.

Israeli media reported that the drone entered Israeli regions and gathered important information about sensitive locations in the north. It filmed a series of sites such as Haifa port, the airport, military bases, the Rafael weapons factory, Kiryat Shmona Islands, iron domes, several residential neighborhoods, and commercial complexes.

Afterward, the drone returned safely to Lebanon.

Israeli media noted that Hezbollah conveyed a message through the video, responding to threats that if Israel takes action against Lebanon, the scope of Hezbollah's targets against Israel will not be small.

Israeli media pointed out that the Hezbollah video "clearly shows Haifa port, filmed mostly last Tuesday, from a Hezbollah drone."

Israeli media alluded to a false alert that was launched a week ago in the Haifa port area after an "interception operation" was conducted in the early hours of the morning, but the "false alert" has now been branded as a deception.

Reports highlighted that Hezbollah demonstrated the capability that surprised the "Israeli army" and security personnel, noting that viewers of the Hezbollah video can see many homes in Haifa "where we reside".

"Hezbollah, through its release of images of Haifa port, sent a threat to the port."

Other Israeli media outlets reported that "Hezbollah released aerial photos of important economic and military sensitive locations inside and near Haifa port, including photos of Sa'ar 4 and 5 missile ships," noting that "the new development is the most worrisome since the beginning of the war."

Hebrew news outlets also said, "Hezbollah published one of the toughest recordings in the war, not a video of dead or wounded, but a video revealing its intelligence capabilities."

The Hezbollah surveillance video included a full overview of the Israeli Rafael military-industrial complex, a massive military-industrial area for Rafael.

The footage included several factories, warehouses, and testing fields in which components of air systems are manufactured and assembled. The area is highly vital and sensitive. It occupies an area of around 6.5 km2 and is 24 km away from the Lebanese border.

Hezbollah's video also included an overview of Krayot, an Israeli suburb north of Haifa. It includes 6 towns and hosts around 260,000 Israeli settlers.

The video included the Haifa Bay area, a highly valuable economic and trade area that hosts massive military installations, industrial infrastructure, and commercial areas including the Haifa military base, the main naval base for the Israeli occupation forces - which is responsible for the northern naval front - Port of Haifa - the largest in the occupied territories - petrochemical facilities, oil silos, the Haifa power station and Haifa airport.

Touching on the timing of the video's release, Israeli media noted that it coincided with the U.S. mediator Amos Hochstein's trip to "Lebanon and Israel".

der the pretext of targeting Hamas fighters.

Health facilities have not been spared from Israeli attacks since the regime declared war on Gaza on October 7.

Israel has committed massacres at several hospitals after storming them.

The regime has accused the Hamas resistance movement of using these facilities as its command centers without providing any evidence to back up its claims.

Hundreds of bodies recovered from mass graves at three hospitals in the Gaza Strip show signs of mutilation and torture.

The mass graves have been found at the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis, al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City and the Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahiya.

Palestinian officials and several international organizations say the Israeli army has committed war crimes at these medical sites. (See full text at [www.tehrantimes.com](http://www.tehrantimes.com))

### Israel will fail to crush the Palestinians' iron will

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN - More than eight months into Israel's brutal onslaught on the Gaza Strip, about 37,400 Palestinians have lost their lives and nearly 86,000 others have been injured.

Thousands of bodies also remain under the debris of buildings destroyed by Israeli strikes in the besieged territory.

Israel has pounded residential buildings un-



## Iran, Iraq to host pilgrimage car rally

TEHRAN - This fall, Iran and Iraq will jointly host a pilgrimage car rally, a 4,000-kilometer journey from Karbala to Mashhad and back.

An official in charge of the automobile sector of the Touring and Automobile Club of Iran announced the first "pilgrimage family tourism rally" called "Haramain," has been organized in collaboration with the Iraq Automobile and Motorcycle Federation, on the Karbala-Mashhad-Karbala route.

Mohammad-Ali Erfani stated that the official agreement for this cross-border event was signed during a meeting on the sidelines of the General Assembly of the International Automobile Federation in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

Erfani further explained that the rally, designed and proposed by the Touring and Automobile Club, will commence in the upcoming fall.

"It will feature 25 vehicles and around 50 Iraqi families," he outlined. "Starting from Karbala after visiting the holy shrine of Imam Hussein (AS)."

Describing the rally, Erfani noted that participants will cross the Mehran border into Iran, traveling through the provinces of Ilam, Hamedan, Tehran, Mazandaran, Golestan, North Khorasan, and Khorasan Razavi, while visiting various tourist, historical, and cultural attractions along the way.

The aim of the event, he underscored, is to strengthen bilateral relations, conduct joint cultural programs, and promote a safe driving culture with a pilgrimage approach.

According to Erfani, upon reaching Mashhad, participants will visit the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS) and stay for two days.

"25 Iranian vehicles will join the group in Mashhad," he added. "With both Iranian and Iraqi participants united, the return journey from Mashhad to Karbala will commence."

In his final words, Erfani pinpointed that this international rally, covering nearly 4,000 kilometers of roads in both countries, will last about 15 days and will conclude in Karbala.

## Khorramabad launches virtual tourism with 360-degree views

TEHRAN - The ancient city of Khorramabad has introduced a virtual tour, featuring 360-degree photography and aerial views, to spotlight its key historical and natural attractions.

On Wednesday, an official with Khorramabad Municipality stated that the virtual tour is now operational, utilizing 360-degree photography and aerial imagery to highlight key tourist destinations.

Hanieh Nasiri added that with the introduction of the "My Khorramabad" app in the course of past Nowruz, which was designed to present the city's most important historical and natural attractions, the foundation for the virtual tourism tour has been laid out.

Khorramabad, the capital of Lorestan province in Iran, boasts a rich tapestry of historical and natural attractions, making it a

compelling destination for tourists.

The city is home to impressive historical sites such as Falak ol-Aflak Castle, a magnificent fortress dating back to the Sassanid era. The castle overlooks the city and provides a glimpse into Iran's ancient architecture.

The Brick Minaret is another touristic hotspot of the city, known for its distinctive brickwork and historical significance.

Nestled amidst picturesque landscapes, Khorramabad also boasts natural wonders such as Keeyow Lake, and Makhmalkouh National Park, ideal for outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers.

With its blend of history, culture, and natural beauty, Khorramabad presents a compelling destination for tourists seeking to explore Iran's beauty.

## Ming dynasty shipwrecks hide a treasure trove of artifacts in the South China Sea, excavation reveals

Divers have retrieved more than 900 artifacts from two centuries-old shipwrecks hiding in the depths of the South China Sea.

In October 2022, researchers discovered the shipwrecks around 4,900 feet (1,500 meters) below the surface of the sea, which is bound by China to the north, Vietnam to the west and the Philippines to the east, according to a statement from the Chinese government.

The twin wrecks, which date to the Ming dynasty (1368 to 1644), sit less than a mile (1.5 kilometers) off the coast of Sanya, a city on China's Hainan Island. The sites are about 14 miles (22 km) apart, the South China Morning Post (SCMP) reported.

In 2023, researchers began the arduous task of mapping and excavating the sites using a deep-sea submersible called the "Shenhai Yongshi," or "Deep Sea Warrior," The Guardian reported.

The second boat contained 38 artifacts, including lumber, porcelain and pottery items, spiral-shaped turban shells and deer antlers, according to the statement.

Both wrecks highlight the importance of "trade and cultural exchanges along the ancient Maritime Silk Road," Guan Qiang, deputy head of the NCHA, said in the statement.

No details were given about the cause of the shipwrecks.

(Source: Live Science)

## Iran in frames



Birdwatchers eagerly capture the beauty of migratory birds at Miankaleh Peninsula in the northern Mazandaran province.

# Tourism ministry reveals special content aimed to boost arrivals

From Page 1 ▶ "This content will be accessible offline and distributed to cultural attachés, embassies in Iran, Iranian embassies abroad, and tourism professionals to be disseminated in target markets," Shojaei said.

"This new content covers a wide range of tourist attractions along with various images from across the country's geographical landscape," Shojaei noted.

The official highlighted that these new collections represent a significant advancement from the traditional books and brochures previously produced by the ministry.

Arash Nouraghaei, a well-known tourism expert who played a crucial role in developing these materials, explained the meticulous process of categorizing the images and texts to achieve the desired result.

Nouraghaei also addressed the long-standing tourism brand "Majestic Iran," promoted by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage. He lamented that this brand has not gained significant visibility and is rarely seen.

"Compared to other countries that even display their tourism brands on paper tablecloths, we have a lot of work to do to highlight our brand," Nouraghaei stated.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Shojaei announced the second tourism content product: a motion graphic package introducing Iran, which will be sent to 28 countries with which Iran has established visa-free agreements. "Following Iran's unilateral visa waiver with 28 countries, we compared data from March and April 2023 with the same period last year, revealing a 20% increase in tourist arrivals," Shojaei reported.

He added that the visa waiver



has prompted some countries to reciprocate, resulting in mutual visa-free arrangements, as seen with Oman and recently Tunisia.

Shojaei also mentioned another marketing initiative.

"We found a more effective

The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots of which 27 are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

approach to roadshows, where Iranian and foreign private sectors meet and negotiate."

The official elaborated on the success of roadshows in Oman and China, which included government and private sector delegations.

Future roadshows are planned for Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and India, with preparations underway for Turkey and Russia, he added.

"Typically, tourism agencies involved in attracting tourists to Iran participate in these roadshows, meeting with agencies in target countries focused on outbound travel," Shojaei underlined.

Last year, the ministry produced 25,000 gigabytes of [multimedia] content distributed to various countries, with 7,400 gigabytes of diverse content shared at different tourism events or provided to various delegations.

In conclusion, Shojaei reminded the ministry's commitment to more accurately showcase Iran's attractions on a global scale.

Earlier in April, the tourism minister, Ezzatollah Zarghami said that the Islamic Republic had granted visa-free access to approximately half of the world's population, "totaling around four billion people." "Currently, half of the world's population can travel to Iran without visas," Zarghami said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the minister addressed concerns over negative portrayals of Iran in foreign media, attributing them to a phenomenon known as "Iranophobia."

"We are facing an issue called Iranophobia, and tourism can counteract this phenomenon," Zarghami said.

"Unfortunately, some foreign media outlets, by pursuing the Iranophobia project, seek to hinder the growth, development, and prosperity of tourism."

The visa-waiver program was approved for India, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Indonesia, Brunei, Japan, Singapore, Cambodia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brazil, Peru, Cuba, Mexico, Bolivia, Venezuela, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Belarus, Lebanon, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Mauritania, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Mauritius, and Seychelles.

Besides, the Islamic Republic has previously had visited cancellations with some countries like Turkey, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Oman, China, Armenia, Lebanon, and Syria, in various forms - unilateral, bilateral, and group visa cancellations, including airport visas, which were implemented in some cases. The privilege has been granted to tourist groups from Russia based on a mutual agreement inked between Tehran and Moscow.

According to available data compiled by the tourism ministry, more than six million foreign tourists arrived by air, road, and sea in the country during the past Iranian calendar year, which came to an end on March 19.

The figure marks a substantial year-on-year increase compared to a year earlier (1401) in which approximately 4.23 million tourists visited the Islamic Republic.

The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 27 are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

## From Sassanid temples to Seljuk mosques: discover rich heritage of Boroujerd

TEHRAN - The ancient city of Boroujerd, located in the western Lorestan province, is home to a rich collection of architectural gems.

The city, nestled in the Zagros Mountains, boasts a wealth of cultural heritage and a fascinating past that dates back to at least 3000 BC.

Boroujerd's historical core, mapped in 1850 by the Russian army, encapsulates the city's ancient heart. This area is home to numerous monuments and sites of interest, including the Imamzadeh Jafar, the Jameh Mosque of Boroujerd, the Soltani Mosque, a traditional bazaar, and several historical caravanserais. These landmarks reflect the city's significance through various eras, from the Sassanid period to the Seljuk Empire and beyond.

Among Boroujerd's architectural treasures are over 50 historic houses, each with its unique charm and story.

Notable examples include the Birjandi House, the Tabatabai House, and the Eftekhar Al-Islam House.



One of the most luxurious historic houses, Haj Agha Kamaluddin Nabavi Tabatabai's house, now serves as a museum of constitutional documents, offering visitors a glimpse into the opulence and history of the region.

Boroujerd's prominence rose during the Sassanid era when it was elevated to city status and a fire temple was constructed.

Its strategic importance continued through the Seljuk Empire in the 9th and 10th centuries, making it a vital industrial and commercial hub.

The city's resilience is evident in its history of withstanding invasions by Genghis Khan, the Mongols, and Timur, who at-

tacked and destroyed Boroujerd multiple times.

Despite these adversities, Boroujerd's strategic castles, including the Boroujerd Castle and Roomian Castle, played crucial roles in military defenses. The city also held a significant place during the Muslim conquest of Persia (637-651), where Boroujerd Castle supported Iranian troops during the final battle in Nahavand, just 55 km northwest of Boroujerd.

The Atabakan-e Lorestan, who governed from approximately 1000 to 1500, further contributed to its historical narrative.

Today, Boroujerd invites visitors to explore its ancient streets, marvel at its architectural marvels, and immerse themselves in a rich cultural heritage that spans millennia.

Whether wandering through the traditional bazaar, visiting the historic mosques, or exploring the beautifully preserved old houses, travelers will find a city that is a living museum of Iranian history and culture.

## Earthquake damages historical buildings in Kashmar

TEHRAN - On Tuesday, a magnitude 5 earthquake caused damage to several historical buildings in Kashmar, a historical city in eastern Iran.

A local official in charge of cultural heritage reported that the earthquake, which struck at a depth of 6 kilometers, inflicted damage on several historical buildings in the area.

Following the quake, Gholamhossein Mohammadian stated, an immediate assessment of the historical sites was conducted.

"Large cracks and partial collapses were observed in some

structures," the official elaborated.

"A thorough evaluation of the damage to the historical buildings will be carried out by my colleagues," he further brought to light. "Who will then provide a detailed report on the extent of the damage."

According to Mohammadian, damage and cracks have been identified in the walls and roofs of the Jameh Mosque of Kashmar, Haj Sultan Ulama Madrasa, and Haji Jalal Mosque due to the earthquake.

Kashmar is renowned for its

rich cultural heritage and historical architecture.

The Grand Mosque of Kashmar, a central religious site, is known for its intricate architectural design and historical significance, serving as a focal point for the local community. The Haj Sultan Ulama School, another vital landmark, represents the city's long-standing tradition of religious education and scholarship.

The Haji Jalal Mosque is also a key historical site, noted for its unique construction and cultural importance.



These buildings not only exemplify the architectural prowess of their time but also hold immense cultural and historical value, attracting tourists.

The outcome of damage, however, underscores an urgent need for preservation and restoration efforts to protect Kashmar's rich historical legacy.



# 20% of out-of-school nomad students start education

TEHRAN –During the past academic year (September 2023 – June 2024), the Ministry of Education managed to enroll about 20 percent of out-of-school nomad students, an official with the Ministry of Education has said.

With the help of Nomad Affairs Organization, the out-of-school students or dropouts were reached out for a possible return to school, IRIB reported Ali Tirgir Mal Khalifeh as saying.

There are three main reasons for nomad students, particularly girls, to drop out of school including the dominant culture within nomadic society, the distance to school, or the school's inaccessibility, the official stressed.

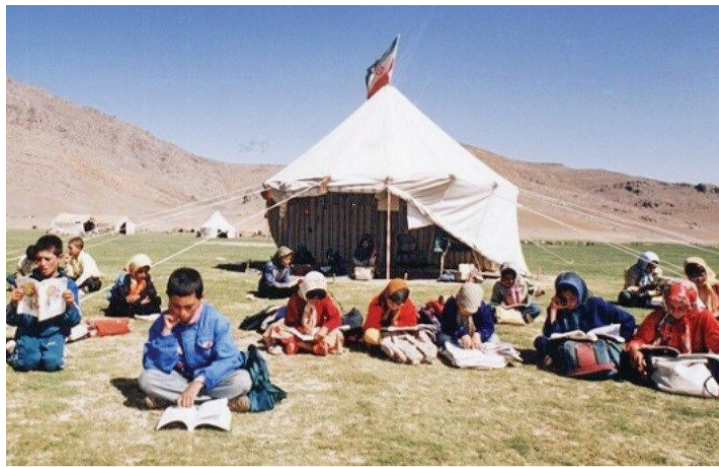
In order to prevent nomad students from dropping out of school and to return them to school, different measures have been taken.

Developing boarding schools, and establishing elementary schools even for one single student in nomadic communities are among these measures.

"Moreover, by empowering human resources, providing support and incentives for students and their parents, and making efforts to create a culture for education in nomadic areas, we were able to return nearly 20 percent of out-of-school and dropouts."

## Identified out-of-school children

According to a report on April 7, the Ministry of Education man-



aged to enroll about 50,000 out-of-school students.

"Despite some achievements in identifying students who have dropped out of school, the main challenge is still encour-

## The out-of-school students or dropouts were reached out for a possible return to school.

aging them to return to school," IRNA quoted Hamid Tarifi-Hosseini, an official with the Ministry of Education, as saying.

The ministry has assigned some staff to follow up on returning approximately 80,000 out-of-school students, he added.

countries. Each country follows a specific strategy to deal with the problem.

According to Article 30 of the Constitution, the government must provide all citizens with free education up to secondary school and must expand free higher education to the extent required by the country for attaining self-sufficiency.

Therefore, students should be prevented from dropping out of school and careful planning is needed to bring them back to school. Out-of-school children should be organized.

In this regard, the Ministry of Education is trying to implement the law of free education for all citizens by building and developing state-run schools, recruiting as many teachers as possible to educate students in all parts of the country, and finally developing a positive culture to maximize the attendance of students in classrooms.

Despite the efforts, there are still some children who are missing out on education in all parts of the country, including Tehran.

The extensive efforts of educational authorities over the past four decades have realized the goal of public education and expansion of educational spaces thanks to which Iran has been placed among the top five countries in the international Olympics.

The growth of literacy rate, especially among women, and per capita educational space are among the most important achievements of the country in the past four decades.

There are over 20 factors leading to dropping out of school, so not all those who have not enrolled in a school year can be classified as out-of-school, as about 5,000 of them found out to have passed away, he further noted.

The official went on to say that reforming the primary education administration system, boosting educational equity and opportunities, improving educational quality, and empowering school systems are the key objectives of the Ministry of Education.

On March 9, Education Minister Reza-Morad Sahraee said more than 200,000 out-of-school children have been identified in the current academic year, and measures are being taken to help them continue their education.

The number of out-of-school children identified in the country reached 900,000 by the end of the last [academic] year, IRNA reported.

School dropouts have always been one of the challenges in the education system of many

## 'Ranger Day' on national calendar

TEHRAN – The eighth day of Aban – the 8th Iranian calendar month, which falls on October 29, has been approved to be registered on the national calendar as the 'Ranger Day', Nourollah Moradi, an official with the Department of Environment, has said.

Rangers and environmental defenders are at the forefront of protecting wildlife, natural resources, and ecosystems, sometimes sacrificing their lives to preserve nature.

The day aims to honor these officials' key role in safeguarding natural resources and biodiversity.

"In the country, there is currently one ranger for every 30,000 to 40,000 hectares of protected areas, while usually there should be one ranger for 1,000 to 3,000 hectares, so to preserve our biological assets, we must take steps to recruit more rangers.

Over 100 species of vertebrates in the country are in danger of extinction, and about 160 species are protected."

In order to protect the country's environment well, the number of rangers should increase by 10 times, Hassan Akbari, deputy head of natural environment and biodiversity of the Department of Environment, said in September 2022.



Some species such as the Asiatic cheetah, great bustard, and fallow deer are at risk of extinction and are in a more critical situation, some species such as the Persian zebra have limited habitats, and some such as the bustards are damaged by trafficking, on the other hand, the habitats of some animals that have a large territory such as leopard are occupied, each of them faces specific problems and each of them needs its own methods, and packages for protection, Akbari highlighted.

He went on to note that illegal hunting takes place in the protected areas, especially the prohibited hunting areas, to a small extent and to a significant extent in the free areas, where there are not enough forces to protect them.

"We must move towards participatory con-

servation, livelihood change, or models in the world that provide a part of nature to the private sector for conservation," he suggested.

Late president Ebrahim Raisi highlighted the importance of environmental protection, emphasizing that the preservation of the environment is prior to every development.

Environmental protection will lead to power, security, investment, and production growth in the country, he said.

Both people and NGOs have an effective role to play in the protection of the environment, and they should be given a chance to play their role, he added.

### World Ranger Day

World Ranger Day is observed annually on the 31st of July and is celebrated by the International Ranger Federation's (IRF's) member Associations worldwide.

World Ranger Day both commemorates Rangers killed or injured in the line of duty and celebrates the critical work Rangers do to protect the world's natural and cultural treasures.

The first World Ranger Day was observed in 2007 on the 15th anniversary of the founding of the IRF.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## 5,000 clunker garbage trucks move in Tehran at night

Some 5,000 clunker trucks, aged over 40 years, move across the city of Tehran during the night to collect wastes, Tehran Governor Isa Farhadi has announced.

The renovation of the fleet requires high amount of budget. However, the Municipality of Tehran cannot afford the cost and the issue needs urgent measures, he stated.

The vehicles are extremely old resulting in huge amount of emission and contributing to air pollution.

Clunker garbage trucks aged 40 years or above which travel through the capital at night amounts to 5,000, he concluded.

## ۵۰۰۰ کامیون زباله‌کش قدیمی شب‌ها در تهران تردد دارند

فرماندار تهران از وجود ۵۰۰۰ کامیون زباله‌کش که شب‌ها در تهران تردد دارند و عمرشان بیش از ۴۰ سال است، خبر داد. به گزارش خبرنگار اجتماعی خبرگزاری فارس، عیسی فرهادی گفت: نوسازی این ناوگان هزینه بسیاری دارد که از توان ما و سازمان شهرداری خارج است و باید فکری برای آن اندیشیده شود. اکنون میانگین سن این خودروها بالا رفته است و به تبع آن آلودگی‌های ایجادشده نیز افزایش خواهد یافت.

فرماندار تهران افزود: ۵ هزار کامیون زباله‌کش شب‌ها در تهران تردد دارند که سن آنان بالای ۳۵ تا ۴۰ سال است.

## Iran's generous support for refugees

TEHRAN –Each year, World Refugee Day is celebrated on June 20 to honor people who have been forced to flee due to conflict, violence, or persecution.

This is a day dedicated to raising awareness about the challenges faced by refugees. These people are often seeking safety and the opportunity to rebuild their lives.

Iran's support for refugees is demonstrated through its inclusive policies, which encompass protection, assistance, education, and healthcare, inspiring the global community and positively impacting the lives of refugees.

As the second-largest refugee-hosting country, Iran is currently host to one of the largest and most protracted refugee populations in the world, the majority of whom are Afghan refugees.

The country is home to over 800,000 registered refugees and some 2.6 million undocumented Afghans.

Currently, more than 500,000 Afghan children – including undocumented Afghans and those who have newly arrived in Iran following the Taliban takeover – are benefitting from Iran's inclusive education policies, one of the most progressive in the world.

In total, Iran hosts some 4.5 million Afghans of varying status – including resident permit holders, undocumented Afghans, and family passport holders – many of whom have been in the country for an extended period and require support to strengthen their resilience.

Iran's generous and exceptional services for refugees despite unfair economic sanctions have exceeded expectations and international responsibilities.

The government of Iran has made a very generous effort to provide services to millions of refugees and foreign nationals despite difficult living conditions and oppressive economic sanctions imposed on the country.

In August 2023, Inna Gladkova, the officer in charge of the UNHCR in Iran, appreciated the country for generously hosting refugees.

She assessed the formation of the National Migration Organization as a positive step in improving the situation of refugees and organizing them.

She made the remarks in a meeting in Tehran on August 3, with Ruhollah Qaderi, the National Migration Organization's director for international affairs.

According to Qaderi, the share of international organizations is less than one percent of Iran's cost of about 10 billion dollars for hosting refugees, which is very small and should be seriously reviewed.

The official went on to say that humanitarian aid should be in line with the needs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the refugees, and priority should be given to supplies and equipment that cannot be accessed due to sanctions.

Gladkova has called on the international community to increase their support for Iran's humanitarian efforts, recognizing that no single country can bear the responsibility of hosting refugees alone.

She emphasized that more financial support, technical assistance, and innovative partnerships are essential to ensure the protection, well-being, and successful integration of refugees worldwide.

Despite its own domestic challenges, Iran has extended support to refugee children, allowing them to access education in public schools alongside Iranian children.

Iran's healthcare system promotes refugee integration by providing them with vital healthcare services, including access to insurance, and vaccinations, enhancing refugee well-being, and benefiting public health in host communities.

Iran's example showcases the transformative power of inclusive policies, enabling refugees to thrive as valued members of society.

### Provided services

Foreign nationals in Iran have citizenship rights and are subject to many protections, and one of the services provided to them is insurance.

In recent years, the number of insured foreign nationals has increased by 15 percent. Most of the insured are nationals of Afghanistan and China.

The long-term protections granted to insured persons include the retirement pension and the work-related disability pension.

Paying compensation for sick days, paying compensation for pregnancy, paying compensation for disability, and paying allowances are among other insurance services.

Foreign nationals who work in Iranian sports clubs as head coaches, trainers, assistant coaches, athletes, players, etc., are subject to compulsory insurance.

Also, foreign journalists in Iran can be covered by social security services without obtaining a work permit by submitting a confirmation from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

According to the law, people who have worked in hard and harmful jobs for at least 20 consecutive years and 25 alternate years can apply for a pension without an age requirement.

Male insured with at least 60 years of age and 10 years of insurance premium payment, or at least 50 years of age and 30 years of insurance premium payment, and female insured with at least 55 years of age and 10 years of insurance premium payment, or at least 45 years of age and 30 years of insurance premium payment can apply for a pension.

Up to 2,188 foreign nationals residing in Iran are currently receiving pensions from social security funds.

About 200,000 foreign nationals in the country have been provided with free health insurance with the financial support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, according to the managing director of Iran Health Insurance Organization.

Foreign nationals who are considered financially struggling can benefit from free health insurance services, Mehr news agency quoted Mohammad-Mehdi Nasehi as saying.

Stating that the number of refugees in the country is far more than the number of people who have been covered by free insurance, Nasehi added that legal refugees can enjoy insurance services by paying their insurance premiums.

Also, in November 2023, Jamshid Shayanfar, an official with the Health Insurance Organization of Iran said some 95,000 foreign nationals who hold legal residence permits and are suffering from hard-to-cure diseases receive free health insurance annually.

Their insurance contract will be renewed every year in the month of Esfand – the last Iranian calendar month ending on March 19, Fars quoted Shayanfar as saying.

He added, "The insurance premiums for these people are covered by the High Commissioner for Refugees, and the insurance premiums for about 60,000 citizens are paid to the health insurance organization based on the government budget."

Shayanfar went on to say that around 800,000 non-vulnerable nationals also have to pay their own insurance premiums; once they pay the insurance premium, they will enjoy health insurance services for a year.

Some 12,000 non-vulnerable nationals have already been covered by health insurance, he concluded.

### 'For a World Where Refugees Are Welcomed'

World Refugee Day serves as a reminder of our collective responsibility to support these individuals and advocate for their rights.

It was first celebrated on June 20, 2001, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

This year's theme is 'For a World Where Refugees Are Welcomed'.

Refugees need our solidarity now more than ever.

Solidarity means keeping doors open, celebrating their strengths and achievements, and reflecting on the challenges they face.

Solidarity with people forced to flee also means finding solutions to their plight – ending conflicts so they can return home in safety, ensuring they have opportunities to thrive in the communities that have welcomed them, and providing countries with the resources they need to include and support refugees.

World Refugee Day is an occasion to build empathy and understanding for their plight and to recognize their resilience in rebuilding their lives.

Every minute 20 people leave everything behind to escape war, persecution or terror.





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## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*Time wears out bodies, renews hopes, brings death nearer and takes away aspirations. Whoever gets anything from the world lives in anxiety for holding it and whoever loses anything passes his days grieving over the loss.*

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:03 Evening: 19:38 Dawn: 3:03 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 4:48 (tomorrow)

## “Service to Martyrdom” poetry festival to be held with international participation



By Samaneh Aboutalebi

TEHRAN- The first edition of the “Service to Martyrdom” poetry festival, a commemoration of the 40th day after the martyrdom of President Ebrahim Raisi and his companions, is set to take place in Robat Karim, Tehran province, in July with international participation; the organizers have announced.

During a press conference held in Tehran on Wednesday, Milad Erfanpour, the secretary of the event said that participants from the Arab World, particularly from neighboring Iraq, have already submitted their works to the festival.

The festival, organized by Robat Karim Municipality and the Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization, aims to bring together poets from around the world to express their feelings and thoughts about martyrdom.

The festival will be held in seven sections and three parts, with over 500 poems already submitted.

The deadline for submission is still open. “Our nation has shown that it can overcome even the toughest challenges and create opportunities from crises,” Erfanpour emphasized. “We are constantly seeking to utilize the capacity of our literary community to produce creative works.”

Erfanpour highlighted that this festival is distinct from other literary events as it is not merely a gathering of artists but a call to action for poets to come together and express their feelings.

He noted that many poems were written spontaneously after the martyrdom of President Raisi and his companions.

Awards worth \$800, \$500, and \$300 will be given to international poets, while Iranian poets will receive prizes worth 200 million rials (\$360), 150 million rials (\$270), and 100 million rials (\$180).

International guests from various countries, especially from Arab nations, are expected to attend the festival. The evaluation process will be conducted by prominent Iranian poets.

Despite being a memorial event, Erfanpour stressed that the focus of the festival is on themes related to revolutionary ideology, pursued by Haj Qassem Soleimani.

He concluded by saying that “Service to Martyrdom” is not just a tribute but also a call to action for poets to express their feelings and thoughts about martyrdom.

The “Service to Martyrdom” poetry festival will be a significant cultural event in Iran, bringing together literary enthusiasts from around the world to pay homage to those who have sacrificed their lives for the nation’s cause.

President Ebrahim Raisi was returning from a ceremony to officially open a new dam on the border between Iran and Azerbaijan on May 19 when his helicopter crashed in Varzaqan, northwestern Iran.

The tragic incident claimed the lives of not only the President but also Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and several high-ranking provincial officials, who were among those on board.

The loss of life has sent a wave of grief across Iran, with many government officials and ordinary citizens alike paying tribute to the victims of the crash.

As news of the tragedy spread, condolences poured in from around the world, with leaders from various countries expressing their sympathy and support for the Iranian government and people.

# Iran participating in 30th Beijing International Book Fair

TEHRAN-Iran is present at the 30th Beijing International Book Fair (BIBF) that commenced in Beijing, China, on Wednesday.

The pavilion of the Islamic Republic of Iran showcases more than 500 titles in various fields including literature, children’s, history and art among others, IRNA reported.

This year’s BIBF has drawn a wider participation of foreign exhibitors compared to last year. With an expanded exhibition area of 55,000 square meters this year, the five-day event has gathered around 1,600 exhibitors from 71 countries and regions, showcasing 220,000 Chinese and foreign publications to visitors, according to the organizers.

The fair has seen an increase of 150 overseas participants compared to the previous year, featuring 1,050 exhibitors from abroad, accounting for 66 percent of the total participants.

Compared to 2023, this year’s event has welcomed 15 new participating countries, including Azerbaijan, Qatar, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Nigeria.

Among the 550 domestic participants, including representatives from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, 38 new entities have joined, including the Shanghai Data Exchange, game publisher miHoYo, children’s



product developers, newspapers, and magazines.

In honor of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the BIBF is hosting an exhibition showcasing significant publishing achievements, particularly in the new era since the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in October 2022.

Saudi Arabia is the Guest of Honor for this year, presenting approximately 120 titles in Arabic and English, focusing

on literature, fairy tales, and educational materials. The country will also organize academic forums and a conference to promote copyright trading.

According to Lei Jianhua, assistant general manager of the China National Publications Import and Export (Group) Co, a co-organizer of the event, the Beijing International Publishing Forum, scheduled for June 21, will explore the potential innovations that new quality productive forces can bring to the publishing industry.

Furthermore, high-level forums like the PubTech Conference will delve into the integration of artificial intelligence in the publishing sector.

Established in 198, the Beijing International Book Fair is one of the world’s largest book fairs and serves as a major platform for copyright exchange, facilitating the trading of publications from China and abroad, including print books and multimedia works.

This year’s edition of the Beijing International Book Fair will conclude on June 23.

## Tom Stoppard’s “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead” on stage in Tehran



TEHRAN-Neauphle-le-Chateau Theater in Tehran is hosting the play “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead” written by Tom Stoppard.

Elham Sehat has directed the 75-minute play that has Arash Dadgar, Ali Amir Khalili, Tiam Mousavi, Sepehr Shabani, Masoumeh Tahmasbi, Hadiseh Biabani, and Saghar Yaghoubpur in the cast among others.

Written in 1966, “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead,” was Stoppard’s first major play to gain recognition.

An absurdist, existential tragicomedy, it expands upon the exploits of two minor characters from Shakespeare’s “Hamlet,” the courtiers Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and the main setting is Denmark.

The action of Stoppard’s play takes place mainly in the wings of Shakespeare’s

“Hamlet,” with brief appearances of major characters from “Hamlet” who enact fragments of the original’s scenes.

Between these episodes, the two protagonists voice their confusion at the progress of events occurring onstage without them in “Hamlet,” of which they have no direct knowledge.

Comparisons have also been drawn with Samuel Beckett’s “Waiting for Godot,” for the presence of two central characters who almost appear to be two halves of a single character.

Many plot features are similar as well: the characters pass time by playing questions, impersonating other characters, and interrupting each other or remaining silent for long periods of time.

The players help demonstrate the conflict between art and reality. The world in which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern live lacks order, but art allows people to create artificial order.

As the Player says, “There’s a design at work in all art.” Art and the real world are in conflict.

The play was adapted for a film released in February 1990, with screenplay and direction

by Stoppard. The motion picture is Stoppard’s only film directing credit.

The cast included Gary Oldman as Rosencrantz, Tim Roth as Guildenstern, Richard Dreyfuss as the Player, Joanna Roth as Ophelia, Ian Richardson as Polonius, Joanna Miles as Gertrude, Donald Sumpter as Claudius, and Iain Glen as Hamlet.

Tom Stoppard, 86, is a Czech-born British playwright and screenwriter. He has written for film, radio, stage, and television, finding prominence with plays.

His work covers the themes of human rights, censorship, and political freedom, often delving into the deeper philosophical thematic of society.

He is one of the most internationally performed dramatists of his generation.

He has received numerous awards and honors such as an Academy Award, a Laurence Olivier Award, and five Tony Awards, including one for “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead.”

“Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead” will remain on stage until July 12 at the Neauphle-le-Chateau Theater located at No. 18, Neauphle-le-Chateau St., junction of Razi St.

## Tehran theater to host reading performance of Neil Simon’s “Fools”

TEHRAN- Shahrzad Theater Complex in Tehran will be playing host to a reading performance of the renowned American playwright Neil Simon’s comic fable “Fools” on Friday.

The performance will be directed by Sasan Piri with a cast composed of Sepideh Saketof, Soroor Rakhshani, Yunes Hosseini, Amir Reza Qolinejad, Saba Sadat Hashemi, Samina Hemmatzadeh and Paria Latifi.

The reading will be based on a Persian translation of the play by Shahram Zargar.

The story of the play is set in the small village of Kulyenchikov, Ukraine during the late 19th century. It follows Leon Steponovich Tolchinsky, a schoolteacher who takes a new job educating Sophia, the daughter of Dr. Zubritsky and his wife, Lenya. Leon soon learns that there is a curse on the village that makes everyone stupid, but

complications ensue when Leon falls in love with his pupil.

Simon’s masterful writing is on full display as he weaves together historical facts and fiction to create a story that is both informative and laugh-out-

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loud funny.

The play pokes fun at the conventions of traditional Russian culture, as well as the absurdities of the Czarist regime, all while maintaining a lighthearted and playful tone.

Throughout the play, Simon uses his signature quick wit

and clever dialogue to keep the audience laughing. From mistaken identities to wacky misunderstandings, the comedy never stops in “Fools.”

The play also explores themes of love, family, and cultural identity, adding depth and heart to the humor.

The play, premiered on Broadway at the Eugene O’Neill Theatre in 1981, allegedly was written as the result of an agreement Simon made with his wife during their divorce proceedings. She was promised the profits of his next play, so he attempted to write something that never would last on Broadway.

“Fools” was adapted as a stage musical in 1984 titled “The Curse of Kulyenchikov,” with book and music by Peter Melnick, lyrics by Pat Pattison and direction by Paul Warner.

It ran from April to May 1984 at the Old Library at Leverett House,



at Harvard University.

With the permission of Simon, the play was adapted into another musical in 1990, this time with the title “Kulyenchikov”. It was produced in San Jose, California in November of that year.

“Fools” has also been staged by several Iranian directors, including Nader Naderpur, Hooman Rahnemun, Majid Behnamifar, Mohsen Sotudeh, Majid Kashiforoushan, Faezeh Rastegar and Satia Nuruzi, at Tehran theaters over the past few years.

## Cartoon of Day



Gaza Genocide

Cartoonist: Ahmad Qaddura from Sweden