

TEHRAN TIMES

8 Pages | Price 100,000 Rials | 1.00 EURO | 4.00 AED | 46th year | No. 14812 | Saturday | July 6, 2024 | Tir 16, 1403 | Dhu al-Hijjah 29, 1445

50 Percent

On Friday, Iranians went to the polls in the runoff elections to elect a new president, and the latest unofficial reports indicate a participation rate of around 50 percent



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Iran, Turkmenistan sign major gas swap deal

TEHRAN - Iran and Turkmenistan have signed a gas swap deal under which Ashgabat will sell up to 10 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas to Iraq each year.

The contract was signed on Wednesday in Turkmenistan following extensive negotiations between Tehran and Ashgabat.

Iran's Ambassador to Turkmenistan Ali Mojtaba Roozbahani and Maksat Babayev, chairman of the State Concern Turkmen gas, put their signatures on the agreement.

Based on the swap mechanism, Iran-- which lies between Turkmenistan and Iraq-- will supply up to 10 bcm of natural gas to Baghdad in exchange for receiving the same volumes from Ashgabat.

Furthermore, Iranian companies will construct a new 125-kilometer gas pipeline along with three gas pressure booster stations in Turkmenistan aimed at boosting annual shipments of gas to Iran to 40 bcm.

Speaking to IRNA's foreign policy correspondent, Ambassador Roozbahani highlighted the role played by the late President Ebrahim Raisi and foreign minister Hossein Amirabdollahian in pushing the gas swap deal. ► Page 4

Strongest Hezbollah retaliation to date

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN - The Israeli military has suffered casualties after Hezbollah waged one of its largest bombardments against the occupation's army since October.

The ongoing attacks follow the assassination of one of Hezbollah's top commanders on Wednesday, Mohammad Nehme Nasser, (Hajj Abu Nehme) and in solidarity with the people and resistance forces in Gaza.

The Israeli military admitted the death of an officer in the Yiftah armored brigade's 8679th unit. Other Israeli troops sustained injuries, in the same incident, after a rocket-artillery shell landed in an Israeli base in the occupied Golan.

Israeli reports also confirmed serious injuries among soldiers after a military vehicle was hit by shelling from Lebanon.

Hebrew news outlets have been reporting attacks in several Israeli cities across the north, which has come under a heavy barrage of Hezbollah rockets and drones.

Hezbollah issued a statement saying its fighters are targeting "Israeli occupation sites along the Lebanese-Palestinian border, causing direct casualties."

The Lebanese resistance movement announced that it had attacked an Israeli espionage center "with appropriate weapons, confirming direct hits". ► Page 5

Iranian diaspora votes in runoff election

TEHRAN - A surge of participation was seen among Iranian expatriates as they joined their compatriots in Iran to vote in the decisive presidential runoff election on Friday, July 5.

Hundreds of ballot boxes were set up in 95 countries across Asia, Europe, Africa, North America, South America, and Australia. Iranians abroad showed higher participation in the runoff election compared to the first round, according to official figures.

In Canada however, the citizens of Iran were barred from voting in the elections for the second time, as Ottawa continued its stance from the first round on June 28th.

"We only had one country in the world that did not allow Iranians to exercise their voting rights, and that was Canada. Canada was the only country violating the rights of Iranians outside Iran. This is the same country that, a few days ago, entered into a firm agreement with terrorists and placed the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), a sacred institution recognized for fighting terrorism at the regional and global levels, on the terrorist list," Iran's acting Foreign Minister Ali Baqeri Kani told reporters on Friday after he was seen casting his vote at the foreign ministry. ► Page 3

God willing, today our dear people will choose the best candidate: Leader



TEHRAN - The Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, cast his vote in the 2024 presidential runoff election on July 5th in Tehran.

This marked his second public appearance at a polling station in

full text of his remarks: In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Praise God, it is a good day. It's a day when the people are present and are participating. It's a day when our dear people are actively involved in an important political matter of the country, that is, the elections. I've heard that people's enthusiasm and interest are greater than before. I hope that is the case. If that is the case, it is something to be pleased about. God willing, our dear people will be able to vote and choose the best [candidate]. At this stage, people should naturally make a greater effort to finish the task so that tomorrow, God willing, we will have our president. God willing, may God grant success to our nation, help our country to develop, and shower His grace and mercy upon all those who are working hard on this path.

May God's greetings, mercy, and blessings be upon you.

a week, as he also voted in front of dozens of reporters in the first round of the election on June 28th.

After casting his vote, Ayatollah Khamenei took a few minutes to speak to the reporters. The following is the

Cultural sector thrives under President Raisi's leadership, minister says



TEHRAN- Under the visionary leadership of President Raisi, Iran's culture sector has experienced a remarkable resurgence over the past three years, Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili said during an interview with the Tehran Times on Friday.

The minister made the remarks during a visit to the daily's headquarters in downtown Tehran, where he praised the significant strides made in the cultural and artistic fields during this period.

"It has been a remarkable three years for Iranian culture and art," he said, highlighting the numerous achievements and initiatives that have been implemented to promote and develop the sector. ► Page 8



SCO can foster regional, international peace: Iran acting president

TEHRAN - Iran's acting president, Mohammad Mokhber, has highlighted the potential of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to foster sustainable peace both regionally and globally.

Speaking at the 24th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO in Astana, Kazakhstan, Mokhber urged SCO members to strengthen their transit, commercial, and banking ties, advocating for a move away from the U.S. dollar in economic transactions.

"There are many opportunities and capacities in the territory of the member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the field of trade, ► Page 2

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The effect of the level of participation

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

Siasat-e-Rooz devoted its editorial to the importance of people's participation in the run-off elections of Iran and said: It is an undeniable fact that the level of people's participation is directly related to sanctions, tensions, and Iranophobia, and ultimately increases or decreases Iran's role in the world.

If the participation is high, the global authority of Iran will be more visible in the international arena and it will be the basis for Iran to have wider interactions with international countries and institutions. Its result can lead to the neutralization of sanctions, dealing with anti-Iranian tensions, and Iran's role in the new world order.

If the level of participation is low, this issue will be the basis for miscalculation by Iran's enemies and will have no result other than more sanctions, imposed tensions, and a reduction of the interactions of countries with Iran.

Based on this, in the first place, it is important and necessary to have wide participation at the ballot box with any point of view and taste and vote for any candidate.

Iran: Alliance to fight terrorism

In a note, the Iran newspaper discussed the AALCO International conference hosted by Iran. It wrote: Iran once again hosted an international conference with representatives of 48 countries on the eve of the run-off presidential elections.

The theme of this conference was "Preventing and Countering Terrorism; Asian-African Attitudes". As one of the member countries of this organization, Iran has played an active and influential role.

In this regard, by recognizing the role of the Islamic Republic of Iran and allocating the post of vice president of this organization to our country, the organization has had significant and mutual interaction and cooperation, and so far, three AALCO annual conferences have been held in Tehran.

Considering the leading role, it plays in countering terrorism in West Asia, Iran takes an important step in the field of international law by holding this conference.

It is expected that this conference can achieve results such as creating alignment in the field of preventing and countering terrorism at the level of Asia and Africa and explaining the achievements of AALCO member countries in this field.

Leader's message to Putin: Iran-Russia relationship remains unchanging

TEHRAN – During a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday, Iran's acting president on Thursday conveyed a message from the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to Russian President Vladimir Putin in which the leader emphasizes the relationship between Iran and Russia is so deep and enduring that no changes in government can affect it.

Talking with Putin in Astana, Kazakhstan, on the sidelines of the 24th summit of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Mokhber also stated that the strategic relations between Iran and Russia have significantly shifted global power dynamics, challenging the existing unilateral order.

Mokhber emphasized that the deep-rooted and strategic relationship between Iran and Russia is influencing global developments. He noted that a new chapter in Tehran-Moscow relations is emerging, promising benefits not only for both nations but also for the broader region and the world.

Highlighting the increasing cooperation in economic, commercial, transportation, and energy sectors, Mokhber called for accelerating the implementation of a comprehensive bilateral cooperation agreement.

Over the past few years, Iran and Russia have strengthened their ties. The strategic cooperation agreement is expected to elevate their relationship to a new level. Mokhber, in a recent meeting with Leonid Slutsky,

Ham Mihan: The importance of the role of the president in foreign policy

In an article, Ham Mihan discussed the importance of the role of the president in foreign policy and quoted retired diplomat Javid Ghorban Oghli as saying: Foreign policy issues, sanctions, FATF, and the JCPOA are one of the main points of the programs, debates, and campaigns of the two Iranian election candidates. The decision is to negotiate or agree with the system, but the role of the person who implements this decision in the best way and with maximum protection of the country's national interests is very important and decisive. The system allowed the 13th government to negotiate and agree. This decision was made in a meeting that was personally managed by the Leader. It has been said many times that the agreement is a reciprocity.

We cannot expect to take everything and give nothing. Another thing is that the negotiation should be purposeful and applicable. The nuclear agreement [JCPOA] was the biggest achievement and success of the country in the past few decades. Why we got here and whether the same agreement can be revived or we should seek another agreement is a long discussion.

Javan: Foreign revenues exceeded JCPOA promises

In an analysis, Javan discussed the growth of Iran's crude oil trade and wrote: The combination of the two strategic approaches of the 13th government based on network marketing, small private refineries, and the reconstruction of refineries enabled Iran to achieve foreign exchange income of 36 billion dollars despite the tightening of Western sanctions. Another strategic approach of the 13th government was the reconstruction of refineries in countries aligned with Iran. This strategic and anti-sanction and neutralizing sanctions approach also has two key achievements. First, by upgrading and modernizing refineries, Iran has been able to increase its global crude oil refining capacity and guarantee a wider market for its exports. Also, the second achievement of this route is the guaranteed market development for Iran's crude oil. By tying the renovated refineries to the processing of Iranian crude oil, the 13th government has ensured a guaranteed market for its exports and reduced the risk of supply disruption.

Chairman of Russia's State Duma Committee on International Affairs, underscored the urgency of executing the comprehensive cooperation deal.

He also stressed the importance of completing the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which will significantly enhance transportation efficiency.

The INSTC, a 7,200 km multi-modal network, was established by an agreement between Russia, Iran, and India in 2002 to facilitate freight movement across several regions.

President Putin reiterated Russia's strong, enduring relationship with Iran and praised the expanding bilateral cooperation, particularly in economic and commercial sectors.

He highlighted the free trade agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) as a crucial step for deeper cooperation, providing a platform for increased interactions with the union's member countries.

In December 2023, Iran and the EAEU signed a significant free trade agreement, six years after Tehran joined the bloc to diversify its trade partners amid Western sanctions.

Putin further noted that Tehran and Moscow share common positions on regional and global issues, including efforts to establish a multipolar world.

He expressed support for Iran's proposal to join the Eurasian Union as an observer member.

SCO can foster regional, international peace: Iran acting president

From page 1 ▶ production, energy, transportation, agriculture, customs, telecommunications, as well as the development of technology in the field of artificial intelligence, for interaction, which should be used for the benefit of the welfare of nations and consolidation of sustainable peace and inclusive development in the Shanghai region and around the world," Mokhber stated on Thursday.

He emphasized the importance of activating transit corridors to facilitate trade and economic growth, pointing to the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and southern Iranian ports as key components. "We believe that the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization can trade with the countries of the world through the North-South Corridor and through the southern ports of Iran at a lower cost and faster pace," he said.

Mokhber proposed creating a network of free zones and preferential trade agreements within the SCO, and advocated for the use of national currencies in multilateral transactions to reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar. Additionally, he suggested the establishment of an SCO joint bank to boost financial and economic cooperation among member states. "Establishment of the Shanghai Joint Bank can improve the level of cooperation of the member countries in the financial and economic fields," Mokhber noted.

Condemning the use of unilateral sanctions, particularly in the energy sector, Mokhber mentioned Iran's active role in drafting the SCO's energy cooperation strategy. "The Islamic Republic of Iran is strongly opposed to the use of political tools, especially unilateral sanctions in the field of energy," he stated, emphasizing multilateralism in energy cooperation.



Addressing the ongoing conflict in Gaza, Mokhber called for urgent action by the SCO and the international community to stop Israel's war crimes and provide humanitarian aid to Palestinians. "Unfortunately, during the past 9 months and contrary to all international standards and human ethics, we are witnessing a widespread wave of genocide, war crimes, mass killing of innocent women and children of Gaza by the Zionist regime," he said. He condemned the Israeli military actions, accusing the regime of committing genocide in Gaza with U.S. support, and urged for immediate intervention to end the atrocities.

Since the conflict escalated on October 7, Israeli forces have reportedly killed over 37,953 Palestinians, mainly women and children, and injured more than 87,266. Mokhber emphasized, "We strongly condemn the continuation of brutal, organized crimes by the Zionist regime with the support of the United States against the resistant and oppressed people of Gaza, which has stunned the human society and left international organizations in inaction."

Mokhber concluded by expressing confidence in the SCO's decisions and agreements, believing they will

significantly enhance cooperation among member countries in various fields. He extended his gratitude to Kazakhstan for hosting the summit and congratulated China on assuming the next SCO presidency.

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

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

In a message on his X account on Thursday, Ali Baqeri Kani, Iran's acting Foreign Minister, stated that Iran has now turned into a partner in the process of decision-making in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

"If until yesterday we were only

'collaborators' with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Member States, thanks to the initiative of the martyr Raisi's administration, today we are 'partners in decision-making' within this international political-security mechanism," Baqeri noted.

'Relations between Iran, China are based on mutual interests'

Iran's acting president also met with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the 24th summit of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO in Astana, Kazakhstan.

During this meeting, Mokhber stated that the relationship between Iran and China is founded on shared interests and mutual respect.

Mokhber expressed gratitude to the Chinese government and people for their sympathy and solidarity following the death of President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash on May 19 in Iran's northwestern province of East Azarbaijan.

"The relations between Iran and China are strategic and based on mutual interests and respect. They are deepening and developing," Mokhber said.

He highlighted the commitment of Iranian and Chinese officials to further expand cooperation in economic, commercial, and energy sectors. Xi, in turn, offered his condolences over President Raisi's death and asked Mokhber to convey his sympathies to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Xi reiterated that the relations between Beijing and Tehran are strategic and emphasized that China's policy to strengthen ties with Iran is not swayed by external influences.

The Chinese president also stressed his country's desire for the development, progress, and welfare of the Iranian people.

Iran calls on UN, human rights institutions to determine fate of kidnapped diplomats

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Ministry has called on the United Nations and other human rights institutions to diligently follow up on the case of four Iranian diplomats who were kidnapped in Lebanon in 1982.

On the 42nd anniversary of the kidnapping of four Iranian diplomats in Lebanon, the Islamic Republic of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement commemorating the national heroes and expressing sympathy with their families.

The diplomats —Seyyed Mohsen Mousavi, Ahmad Motevasselian, Kazem Akhavan, and Taghi Rastegar Moghadam— were abducted by mercenaries affiliated with the Zionist regime.

The Ministry's statement read, "On the 42nd anniversary of the kidnapping of four Iranian diplomats in Lebanon, Gentlemen Seyyed Mohsen

Mousavi, Ahmad Motevasselian, Kazem Akhavan, and Taghi Rastegar Moghadam by mercenaries affiliated with the Zionist regime, the Islamic Republic of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs commemorates these national heroes and sympathizes with their families."

Recalling the long history of crimes committed by the Zionist regime against the region's nations, including the ongoing genocide in Palestine, the Ministry stressed the need to clarify the fate of the kidnapped diplomats. It held the Zionist regime, which was the occupying force in Lebanon at the time, politically and legally responsible for the crime.

"Despite the intensive political, legal and international efforts and persistence by the Foreign Ministry over the past 42 years, which in 2008 led to the then UN Secretary General expressing readiness to cooperate, unfortunately, the international community, especially human rights institutions, has not yet taken effective measures to help determine the fate of the diplomats," the statement reported.

The Ministry also urged the UN and human rights institutions to respond appropriately, stating: "[W]e once again stress on the responsibilities of the UN and human rights institutions, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC),

to diligently follow up on the case until a desired outcome, namely the determination of the fate of these loved ones, is achieved."

The Ministry also acknowledged the cooperation of the Lebanese government over the years and stressed the need for continued efforts by Lebanon's political and judicial institutions to determine the diplomats' fate. It proposed establishing a joint fact-finding mission between Iran and Lebanon, under international supervision, to thoroughly investigate the case.

Iran's top rights official demands formation of fact-finding mission

The secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights emphasized the urgent need for renewed efforts to uncover the truth behind the diplomats' disappearance.

"The formation of a fact-finding committee is essential," Kazem Gharibabadi wrote in a post on his social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter, marking the 42nd anniversary of the abduction of four Iranian diplomats.

"Forty-two years have passed since the abduction of our four brave diplomats. We remember them today and honor their memory. We remain hopeful that the fate of these individuals will soon be clarified," he wrote on Thursday.

Tehran warns against regional tensions in call with Hungarian FM

TEHRAN – In a phone conversation on Friday, Iran's acting Foreign Minister, Ali Baqeri Kani, warned that any new tensions in the region would be detrimental to warmongers.

His remarks came during a discussion with his Hungarian counterpart, Peter Szijarto, where they reviewed the bilateral relations between Iran and Hungary.

Baqeri Kani highlighted the historically favorable relations between Iran and Hungary, noting that these ties have strengthened in recent years.

He emphasized the importance of enhancing stability in the region and criticized the actions of the

Israeli regime against Palestine and Lebanon. He stated, "The continuation of Zionist crimes against the Palestinian nation and the recent threats against Lebanon have created a new situation in the region. Any new tension will definitely be detrimental to the warmongers."

Szijarto, Hungary's Foreign Minister, underscored the importance of diplomacy in both bilateral relations and the broader international arena. He expressed a strong desire to bolster ties between Hungary and Iran, particularly during Hungary's upcoming presidency of the European Union. Szijarto conveyed hope that these

discussions would lead to stronger bilateral relations.

The Hungarian diplomat also stressed the need for concerted efforts to prevent the escalation of conflicts in the region. He highlighted the crucial role of diplomacy in maintaining regional stability and avoiding further tensions.

This conversation between the Iranian and Hungarian foreign ministers underscores the mutual interest in strengthening diplomatic ties and addressing regional challenges through dialogue and cooperation. As both countries look to deepen their relationship, they also share a common goal of promoting

stability and peace in the region. On February, the top Hungarian diplomat visited Tehran as the head of a high-ranking delegation. He met with his then-counterpart, the late Hossein Amir Abdollahian, and signed a trade deal in agriculture and food industries. Szijarto has also attended a Hungarian-Iranian business forum in Tehran to discuss sectors not affected by sanctions, including pharmaceutical, food, healthcare, and water management industries.

When asked about the challenges of working with Iran due to financial transaction limitations, the minister said the two countries can still cooperate in a multitude of areas.

Iranian diaspora votes in runoff election

From Page 1 ▶ "It seems natural to me that terrorists are always opposed to people's rule and democracy. Here, Canada has actually established that path for itself, declaring companionship with terrorists one day and creating a barrier against democracy the next," the top diplomat added.

Iran to bring charges against individuals involved in harassment of voters

Iranian authorities are filing formal complaints against individuals harassing voters outside polling stations in several Western countries.

These complaints stem from incidents during both rounds of the Iranian presidential election, where anti-Iran groups associated with terrorists, monarchists, and separatists targeted Iranian voters with verbal, sexual, and physical abuse in Europe, the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand.

Local authorities in Britain arrested six individuals during



the first round of the Iranian presidential elections for attempting to physically harm voters. In Australia, five arrests were made during the second round as police increased security measures to also address harassment of voters with insults and profanities.

Despite police cooperation in most Western countries, Tehran is pursuing legal action against those who harassed voters to prevent similar instances in the future.

The Iranian ambassador to Italy has reported submitting evidence of voter harassment to both the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and local security authorities in Rome and Milan.

"This is not something that the Islamic Republic can turn a blind eye to," the envoy said. "We will make sure that anyone who dared to harm citizens will pay the price."

The Iranian embassy in the UK has also announced the establishment of a dedicated

office to collect evidence of attacks against Iranian citizens, which will be presented to police and used in legal proceedings. "All available evidence and documentation of violence, threats, and acts of hatred against Iranian citizens are being collected," the embassy said in a statement.

"We assure our dear compatriots in Britain that the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in London will use all its power to support our dear compatriots and bring this case to a conclusion and punish the aggressors and violent terrorists and will take any necessary measures," it added.

More embassies in the West are reportedly joining their colleagues in Italy and the UK in the coming days.

Analysts believe the anti-Iran groups' outrageous and aggressive acts in the past two weeks are partly due to their constant failures to gain traction among Iranians.

Iranians head to polls to choose between Pezeshkian and Jalili

Voter participation boosted in Runoff

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – The people of Iran cast their ballots on Friday, July 5th, in a runoff election to determine their next president, choosing between reformist Masoud Pezeshkian and conservative Saeed Jalili.

The first round of the elections held on June 28 saw Pezeshkian emerge as the top candidate with over 10.4 million votes, followed closely by conservative Saeed Jalili with 9.5 million ballots cast in his support. The failure of either candidate to secure a majority in the first round led them to a runoff.

Both hopefuls were filmed casting their ballots in the capital Tehran. Pezeshkian, accompanied by former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, voted at a girls' high school in western Tehran, while Jalili voted at the grand mosque in Qarchak, southeast of the capital.

Various important figures, including Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri, and head of the Guardian Council Ahmad Jannati also cast their votes.

The presidential elections were called a year early following the sudden passing of President Ebrahim Raisi, who lost his life in a helicopter crash in Iran's east Azerbaijan Province on May 19th. He was expected to be able to secure a second term in office.

Voter participation increases in second round

The first round of the race recorded a 10 percent decrease in voter turnout compared to the 2021 presidential elections, with only

40 percent of the eligible voters showing up at the ballot box. The decline in voter participation was attributed to the disillusionment of traditional reformist voters, whose trust had been eroded by the perceived shortcomings of Hassan Rouhani's administration.

It is, however, believed that many of the traditional reformist supporters who stayed away from the ballot box on June 28 decided to take part in the second round of the race. Unofficial reports show that during the second round on July 5, over 28 million people had cast their votes by 10PM, marking a six percent increase in participation compared to the first round. Voting hours ended up getting extended until midnight.

"The voting process started smoothly at 8 am. Reports suggest a higher turnout compared to the first round of elections," said the spokesman for Iran's election headquarters before issuing a warning to the two candidates and their campaign offices. "We ask that candidates and their supporters refrain from announcing victory before the official announcement of the results."

A senior Guardian Council member observing a polling station in the capital also confirmed that at least in the early hours of voting, more people showed up at the ballot box compared to last Friday. "We have set up electronic voting systems everywhere which makes the voting process faster. People are participating smoothly and no incidents or disturbances have been reported so far," he added.

The two presidential debates held in the past week, are also thought to have boosted voter enthusiasm due to the unprecedented assertiveness and straightforwardness of the

televised duels.

"I decided to vote after watching the debates. I want to vote for Jalili because I think he cares more about low-income families. He is one of us and is determined to fight corruption," a woman in the suburbs of Tehran told IRIB reporters.

Some supporters of Pezeshkian said they chose to vote for him for his "better-crafted" economic plans. "Our country's economy hinges on our factories. I believe Pezeshkian's economic team can revitalize different industries. We also need to reconsider these energy subsidies, as they are ultimately harming our economy," a young man who said he is attempting to start his own business said to Iranian reporters.

The main difference between the two hopefuls seems to lie in their economic policies. Pezeshkian favors eliminating energy subsidies and a more liberal economic system, while Jalili supports maintaining subsidies and government intervention in the market when necessary.

Despite their differences, Pezeshkian and Jalili seem to share a common vision for Iran's foreign policy. They have both said that they are planning to work towards the termination of U.S. sanctions while pursuing closer ties with non-Western countries. Both have also praised the Axis of Resistance, saying Iran should continue to back resistance forces in the region.

At the time of writing this article, it is still unclear who would take office in Tehran's Pasteur Street. However, what's for certain is that whoever emerges victorious in the Iranian presidential election, will face the task of governing a diverse population with a wide range of political and social views.



the late President Ebrahim Raisi.

Analysts viewed the visit as a clear message of Erbil's desire to expand and strengthen all-out relations with Iran.

Tehran emphasizes 'deep-rooted' ties with Iraqi Kurdistan

TEHRAN – Iran's ambassador to Iraq, Mohammad Kazem Al-Sadegh, has affirmed the strong and growing relationship between Iran and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

During a meeting with Masoud Barzani on Thursday, head of the Kurdistan Region Democratic Party, the ambassador highlighted the deep-rooted nature of the relationship, emphasizing security and trade as key pillars for regional development.

Al-Sadegh's statement comes as Barzani

leads a high-level delegation to Baghdad after a six-year absence, seeking to improve relations between the Kurdistan Region and the Iraqi federal government.

Iraq's Kurdistan region has also been trying to foster closer relations with Iran.

The head of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Nechirvan Barzani, visited Tehran earlier this year to hold talks with high-ranking Iranian officials including Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and

Iran's top rights official demands release of imprisoned citizen in UK

TEHRAN – Kazem Gharibabadi, Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, has urged the Iranian Foreign Ministry to actively pursue the release of an Iranian citizen, Richard John, who is currently imprisoned in the UK.

Gharibabadi expressed deep concern about John's "unfavorable conditions" in British prisons, highlighting his denial of basic rights, including medical care and even a single day of leave in 20 years.

"Mr. John is by no means in favorable conditions in prison and is deprived of medical and health services. Given Mr. John's dire situation in British prisons, the request of his mother, and the acceptance of [that request by] domestic institutions to provide medical and health services to Mr. John, there is no reason not to transfer him to Iran."

Gharibabadi criticized the British government's refusal to pardon and repatriate John, despite his renunciation of British

citizenship.

"This Iranian citizen, who has been sentenced to life imprisonment by a British court, has renounced his British citizenship in the hope that he will be freed from prison and return to his country," he said.

"However, the British [government] has still opposed his pardon and deportation."

He called for continued diplomatic and legal efforts to secure John's freedom, emphasizing the urgency of the situation.

Iran to send 40 athletes to Paris 2024

TEHRAN – With just 24 days until 2024 Olympic Games begins, Iran's 40-athlete team are ready to compete in 13 different sports.

The team was finalized with the addition of track and field athletes Hassan Taftian and Farzaneh Fasihi, who secured their spots based on their IAAF World Rankings.

This brings the final number of Iranian athletes to 29 male and 11 female, who will compete in wrestling, shooting, weightlifting, taekwondo, fencing, rowing, gymnastics, table tennis, cycling, archery, sport climbing, swimming and track and field.

Here is a full list of the Iranian athletes competing in each sport:

Wrestling

Freestyle: Rahman Amouzad (65kg), Younes Emami (74kg), Hassan Yazdani (86kg), Amirali Azarpira (97kg), Amir Hossein Zare (125kg)

Greco-Roman: Mehdi Mohsennejad (60kg), Mohammadreza Gerai (67kg), Amin Kaviyanejad (77kg), Alireza Mohamadi (87kg), Mohammadhadi Saravi (97kg), Amin Mirzazadeh (130kg)

Shooting

Hanieh Rostamian (25m pistol), Shermineh Chehel Amirani (10m air rifle), Fatemeh Amini (10m air rifle), Mohammad Beiranvand (Trap)

Taekwondo

Mehran Barkhordari (-80kg), Nahid Kiani (-57kg), Mobina Nematzadeh (-49kg), Aryan Saadatmand (80+kg)

Fencing

Ali Pakdaman, Mohammad Rahbari, Mohammad Fotouhi, Farzad Bahar Arasbaran (Team and individual epee)

Weightlifting

Mirmostafa Javadi (89kg), Ali Davoudi (109 kg and over)

Rowing

Mahsa Javar (Lightweight double sculls), Zeynab Norouzi (Lightweight double sculls), Nabi Rezaei (Men's C1 1000m), Fatemeh Majlesi (Women's single sculls), Ali Aghamiri (Men's K1 1000m)

Cycling

Ali Lalehzadeh (Road)

Gymnastics

Mahdi Olfati

Table tennis

Nima Alamian, Neda Shahsavari, Noshad Alamian

Archery

Mobina Fallah (Recurve individual)

Sport climbing

Reza Alipour

Swimming

Samiar Abdoli

Athletic

Hassan Taftian (Men's 100m), Farzaneh Fasihi (Women's 100m)

The 2024 Olympic Games will be held from July 26 to Aug. 11 in Paris. A total of 10,500 athletes from around the world are expected to compete in 329 events across 32 sports.

Iran defeat Australia at 2024 Asian Women's U20 Volleyball Championship

TEHRAN – Iran defeated Australia 3-1 (28-30, 25-23, 25-19, 25-19) in the 2024 Asian Women's U20 Volleyball Championship at the Jiangmen Sports Center Gymnasium on Thursday.

Outside hitter Shaghayegh Hassankhani scored a match-high 22 points from 17 kills, 2 blocks and 3 aces for Iran, while Ella Schabert led Australia with 17 points from 11 kills, 2 blocks and 4 aces.

Iran had lost to Vietnam and Thailand in Pool C.

Padideh Bolourizadeh's team will play the winners of Hong Kong and New Zealand for the 9th place on Sunday.

The competition started on July 2 in Jiangmen, China and will run until July 8.

A total of 12 teams will vie for top honor and four berths at stake for the 2025 FIVB Volleyball Women's U21 World Championship.

Japan are defending champions.

Defender Hassan on Qatari club Al-Arabi's radar

TEHRAN – Persepolis' Qatari defender Abdelkarim Hassan has reportedly been linked with a move to Al-Arabi.

He had been also linked with another Qatari team Al-Wakrah in late June.

Hassan joined Persepolis in January on an 18-month deal and Qatari newspaper Raya has reported that Al-Arabi has negotiated with the Persepolis on signing Hassan.

Abdelkarim Hassan helped Persepolis win the 2023-24 Iran Professional League (IPL) and his departure could be a big blow to the team.

Iran to compete at FIBA 3x3 Women's Series

TEHRAN – Iran will participate in the FIBA 3x3 Women's Series, which will be played in the city of Guba, Azerbaijan on July 20-21.

The event will welcome national teams from the Netherlands, Australia, China (U24), the Philippines, Iran, as well as "Düsseldorf Zoos" (Germany), "Czechia" and "Baku Flames" (Azerbaijan) clubs.

This season of the FIBA 3x3 Women's Series features a marathon with 20 stops confirmed.

The first Stop of the 2024 season was held in Springfield, the US, on April 23-24, marking the first-ever Women's Series in the United States since the launch of the competition in 2019.

With a total of 20 events throughout this season and over 1.4 million USD in prize money, the Women's Series is set to reach unprecedented heights.

Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang province, will host the FIBA 3x3 Women's Series Final on September 7-8, 2024.

Miodrag Bozovic takes charge of Esteghlal Khuzestan

TEHRAN – Montenegrin coach Miodrag "Grof" Bozovic was appointed as new head coach of Esteghlal Khuzestan football team on Thursday.

The 56-year-old coach has replaced Sirous Pourmosavi in Esteghlal Khuzestan.

Under tutelage of Pourmosavi, Esteghlal Khuzestan escaped relegation with a last-gasp win over Havadar in 2023/24 Iran Persian Gulf Pro League (PGPL).

Bozovic started coaching career in Serbian team Beograd in 2000 and has also worked as head coach in Russian clubs FC Moscow, Dynamo Moscow, Amkar Perm, Rostov, Lokomotiv Moscow and Arsenal Tula.

He has most recently coached Azerbaijan's Neftçi Baku.

Chabradze linked with Persepolis

TEHRAN – Georgian defender Grigol Chabradze has been reportedly linked with a move to Persepolis football club.

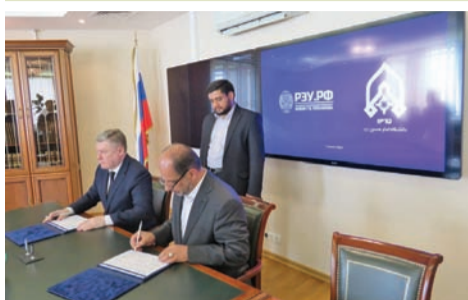
The 28-year-old player joined Iran's Zob Ahan in 2024 January on an 18-month deal.

Persepolis will most likely part ways with Danial Esmailifar after the player reached an agreement with Tractor.

Now, Iran Professional League (IPL) champions have shown interest in signing Chabradze.

Chabradze has represented Georgia national football team nine times.

Iran, Russia universities agree on joint work for de-dollarization



TEHRAN - Presidents of Imam Hossein University (AS) and Plekhanov University of Economics of Russia signed a memorandum of cooperation and agreed to work together in the field of de-dollarization.

They signed this joint cooperation agreement in the field of scientific and academic exchanges.

In a separate meeting, the officials of the two universities shared the successful educational methods of the Russian and Iranian universities and raised the issues related to the exchange of students and professors for holding practical classes and lectures, advanced training and organizing scientific internships using the resources of both universities.

Back in July 2022, Iran and Russia launched a settlement system to use their national

currencies in economic exchanges.

Iran's Integrated Forex Market launched the Ruble/Rial currency pair earlier this month, following a visit of former Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Governor Ali Saleh-Abadi to Moscow.

The new arrangement means the two countries can now settle trading debts in each other's currencies.

The first trade took place on July 19, the day that Russia's President Vladimir Putin arrived in Iran for talks with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Seyyed Ali Khamenei and late President Ebrahim Raisi.

Iranian officials say they plan to expand the new bilateral settlement system to include the currencies of other key trading partners, including the Turkish lira, the Indian rupee, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) dirham.

Iran's deputy foreign minister for economic diplomacy Mehdi Safari has also floated the idea of developing a new interbank messaging system between Iran and Russia. This could act as an alternative to Swift.

Speaking to the media in late July, Saleh-Abadi said: "Two countries that want to de-dollarize their transactions must have a special system similar to Swift... We have practically reached a very good agreement."

Iran ready to cooperate with BRICS members to create financial entity: CBI Governor

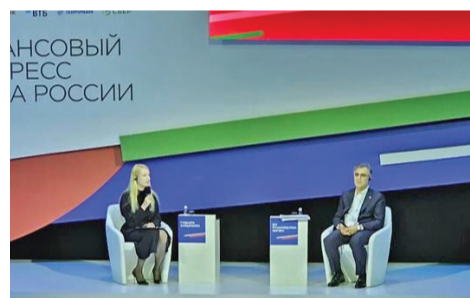
TEHRAN - The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran Mohammad Reza Farzin has proposed the establishment of an intergovernmental organization within BRICS, similar to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Farzin made the suggestion on Thursday as he addressed the International Banking and Financial Conference in St. Petersburg where he arrived a day earlier for talks aimed at developing monetary and banking interactions between Iran and Russia.

He said that the formation of a FATF-like organization within BRICS aims to enhance banking cooperation among BRICS member states.

As to the political leaders' determination to use local currencies in trade exchanges, Farzin said, if the member states can use the ruble, the yuan, the dirham, and the rial in the exchanges between Russia, Iran, China, and other countries, it will remove a major obstacle in the trade and lead to strengthening the relationships.

He went on to say that the development of alternative payment channels aimed at reducing reliance on the U.S. dollar and Western-dominated financial infrastructure has been the main motivation for the BRICS efforts, and the success rate of these initiatives depends on the willingness and interest of BRICS members to cooperate and overcome shortcomings.



The success of these initiatives will depend on the willingness of BRICS members to collaborate and overcome challenges.

Iran, Russia discuss expansion of banking, financial cooperation

Farzin also discussed the expansion of collaborations between Iran and Russia in a meeting with his Russian counterpart Elvira Sakhipzadovna Nabiullina.

During the meeting, the two sides held talks on the latest status of joint projects and financial cooperation between the two countries' banking systems.

The officials also discussed maximizing the use of national currencies, countering sanctions on the banking sector, and cooperation within the framework of the BRICS group.

Kazem Jalali, Iran's Ambassador to Moscow, also participated in the meeting.

Iran's trade with 56 OIC member states hit \$8.6b in Q1

TEHRAN - Iran's trade with member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) reached \$8.6 billion in the first three months of the current calendar year (March 20-June 20), the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) has announced. In an interview with an IRNA correspondent on Wednesday, Mohammad Rezanifar stated that the trade exchanges between Iran and OIC member states in the first three months amounted to 26.7 million tons worth \$15.5 billion, marking an 8 and 11 percent increase in weight and value respectively, compared to the previous year. He added that Iran's exports to these countries totaled 21.5 million tons, amounting to \$8.6 billion, reflecting a year-over-year growth of 6 and 15 percent in weight and value. Furthermore, he noted that Iran's imports from OIC member countries stood at 5.2 million tons, worth \$6.9 billion, registering a 20 and 7 percent rise in weight and value, respectively year-on-year.

The value of the trade exchanges between Iran and the other 56 member

states of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) reached \$61 billion in the past Iranian calendar year (ended March 19, 2024), registering a 0.19 percent hike compared to a year earlier. Rezanifar put the volume of the trade exchanges between Iran and OIC member states from March 21, 2023, to March 19, 2024, at 94 million tons, registering a 4.22 percent decline compared to the previous year.

Iran exported \$29 billion of products to these countries and imported \$32 billion worth of products from them, the official added. The deputy minister of economy went on to say that the country's export of products to the OIC members last year registered an 11 percent decline in value while the import of products from these countries increased 13 percent compared to a year earlier.

Among the OIC member states, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan, Oman, Afghanistan, Malaysia and Indonesia were Iran's major trade partners, the IRICA chief added. Back in May 2023, the former head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and

Agriculture (ICCI) stressed the need for establishing a joint Islamic market among OIC members over the next 10 years.

Addressing a gathering of the heads of OIC member chambers of commerce on the sidelines of the "Russia - Islamic World: Kazan Forum 2023" in Russia, Gholam-Hossein Shafeie said: "An important issue that has been discussed a lot in the past and the organization should pay attention to it in the current situation is the creation of a common Islamic market in the next 10 years, which can be achieved by concluding a free trade agreement among Islamic countries and removing tariff and non-tariff barriers."

"Experts have worked on the Islamic market plan, and using the experiences and studies of these experts can definitely be a way forward," he added. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which was formed in 1972, today has reached a position where, according to statistics, the future of the world's energy would be in the hands of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Shafeie said in his speech.

Iran-Russia strategic coop. deal on final stage: Russian envoy

TEHRAN - The Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Iran has announced that Tehran and Moscow are finalizing their strategic cooperation treaty.

In a visit to the city of Isfahan on Thursday, Alexey Dedov said the two sides are paving the ground for finalizing the Iran-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership in the near future.

He also expressed hope that the path outlined by late President Ebrahim Raisi to strengthen relations between the two countries will continue.

As a result of signing the strategic treaty between the two nations, Iran and Russia will witness a growth in mutual trade.

Referring to Isfahan as a strategic province for enhancing relations between Iran and Russia, Dedov said that although Russia's exports to Iran, especially Isfahan, has increased, the two sides need to create potential to further boost these exports.

According to Iranian customs reports, Isfahan province's exports to Russia in the first two months of this year crossed one



million dollars, nearly five times higher than the figures in the same period last year, he noted.

The Russian ambassador continued that there has been a twofold growth in tourism exchanges between the two nations and that with arriving in Isfahan, he understood why the city is popular among Russian tourists.

He further emphasized the role of Isfahan in the expansion of Iran-Russia and international interactions.

Earlier this month, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow and Tehran are continuing

their work on a comprehensive bilateral cooperation agreement, although the schedule of specific events may shift.

Also Russia's RIA state news agency reported that the agreement had been temporarily suspended due to problems faced by Iranian partners, however, Iran's Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali said this was not the case.

Iran and Russia have been working on this agreement for two years, and the latest draft of the texts are being exchanged.

According to Jalali, this text must be adjusted and coordinated

with various institutions inside the country which takes time.

"Our efforts have been and are to get this agreement signed by the authorities of the two countries in 2024," he said.

Jalali added that currently, the text is in Iran's hands, hoping that various institutions respond as soon as possible to sign the agreement.

He further said that during a meeting on Monday, June 10, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Iran's acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani insisted that the two countries sign this agreement as soon as possible.

Work on a new major agreement between Moscow and Tehran was announced in September 2022 during a meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and late President Ebrahim Raisi.

In January, Russia's Foreign Ministry had said a new interstate treaty reflecting the "unprecedented upswing" in Russia-Iran ties was in the final stages of being agreed, and Putin and Raisi were expected to sign it soon., the report added.

Aviation experienced four years of sanctions without incident

TEHRAN - Head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization says the country has successfully weathered four years of brutal US sanctions without suffering a single civil aviation incident.

Mohammad Mohammadi Bakhsh said that the Iranian aviation industry had relied on "domestic expertise and the high potentials" of its technicians and engineers to be able to cope with the sanctions, Press TV reported.

"Carrying out 6 million flights without incident over nearly four years, despite all shortages, sanctions and problems, is a sign

of expertise, capability and high efforts of all those involved in the country's aviation industry," said Mohammadi Bakhsh.

Since coming under US sanctions in 2018, Iran has been barred from importing brand-new planes and spare parts which it needs to upgrade and refurbish its aviation fleet.

The country had signed major plane purchase deals with international giants like Boeing and Airbus before Washington imposed sanctions on Iran.

However, the sanctions caused Iran to launch a home-grown plane maintenance

and overhaul program to respond to growing demand for travel inside the country.

That comes as Iranian companies have been able to carry out maintenance operations on jets received from other countries, including from Russian airlines.

Mohammadi Bakhsh said the aviation industry in Iran is on its way to growth despite the sanctions.

He said Iranian airlines will take delivery of new planes until the end of the calendar year in March to boost their fleet ahead of busy travel seasons.

Iran, Turkmenistan sign major gas swap deal

TEHRAN - Iran and Turkmenistan have signed a gas swap deal under which Ashgabat will sell up to 10 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas to Iraq each year.

The contract was signed on Wednesday in Turkmenistan following extensive negotiations between Tehran and Ashgabat.

Iran's Ambassador to Turkmenistan Ali Mojtaba Roozbahani and Maksat Babayev, chairman of the State Concern Turkmenagas put their signatures on the agreement.

Based on the swap mechanism, Iran-- which lies between Turkmenistan and Iraq-- will supply up to 10 bcm of natural gas to Baghdad in exchange for receiving the same volumes from Ashgabat.

Furthermore, Iranian companies will construct a new 125-kilometer gas pipeline along with three gas pressure booster stations in Turkmenistan aimed at boosting annual shipments of gas to Iran to 40 bcm.

Speaking to IRNA's foreign policy correspondent, Ambassador Roozbahani highlighted the role played by the late President Ebrahim Raisi and foreign minister Hossein Amirabdollahian in pushing the gas swap deal.

He emphasized that the agreement is the result of high-level consultations between the two countries.

Roozbahani described the gas swap deal as a significant step towards further developing cooperation between Iran and Turkmenistan in the gas sector.

According to energy experts, Iran is moving toward turning into a gas hub in West Asia by resuming imports from Turkmenistan.

Hamid Hosseini, an expert on the issue, said any type of energy exchange with neighboring countries promotes Iran's position in the world's gas market and increases its share in the gas trade.

The expansion of gas trade with neighbors also improves the transmission of energy in the country, he mentioned.

"Last winter, we faced a gas shortage in the country, particularly in the northeastern part, which is near Turkmenistan," recalled the expert, continuing, "We can partly meet our gas need by imports from Turkmenistan this year."

Hosseini, who is a member of the Iranian Oil, Gas and Petrochemical Products Exporters Union (OPEX), said gas imports from Turkmenistan will also help supply feedstock to the country's petrochemical complexes.

Iran should have developed its relations with Turkmenistan in the gas sector in the previous years, regretted the analyst, adding the 13th (incumbent) administration seized the opportunity and reached an agreement with Turkmenistan by paying its gas debt to the neighboring country.



Call for Tender 2nd Announcement for the Purchase of Integral Block & bleed Valves for Belal Project, Tender No. 966444

Iranian Offshore Engineering and Construction Company intends to Purchase of Integral Block & bleed Valves for Belal Project through a public tender. Therefore, the applicants are allowed to have 15 days after the date of 1st publication of the tender notice in the newspaper to participate in this tender.

To download the tender documents, please visit the tender's section of the IOEC 's website: WWW.IOEC.COM/EN/TENDERS, and Please do not hesitate to contact with Transaction Committee office with Ms.Mahabadpour with Tel:+9821-82841057 under sign for any inquiries and more information.

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN- Nine months into Israel's brutal war on the Gaza Strip, the regime of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is struggling to contain the fallout from its military failures.

Since launching war on Gaza on October 7, Netanyahu has vowed to continue the onslaught until total victory over Hamas and elimination of the Palestinian resistance group.

Netanyahu, also known as Bibi, has claimed that the war will lead to the release of Israeli and foreign captives.

The Israeli premier, however, has failed to deliver on his promises.

In line with efforts to cover up the Israeli battlefield defeats at the hands of Palestinian resistance fighters, Netanyahu told US President Joe Biden in a phone call on Thursday that he wants to deploy a delegation to Qatar for negotiations with Hamas.

The Israeli cabinet said in a statement following the phone conversation that "Prime Minister Netanyahu updated President Biden on his decision to send a delegation to continue the hostage negotiations and reiterated the principles that Israel is committed to, especially its commitment to end the war only after all of its goals have been achieved."

The Israeli cabinet's statement acknowledges that the Netanyahu regime will only be able to secure the release of the remaining captives through talks.



Nonetheless, it says Israel will not stop the war until achieving its goals which mainly pertain to the destruction of Hamas's military and governing capabilities.

Netanyahu's decision to send negotiators to Qatar came after Hamas said it had presented new "ideas" to Qatari, Egyptian and Turkish mediators on how to reach a ceasefire and captive-exchange deal.

"We exchanged some ideas with the mediator brothers with the aim of stopping the aggression against our Palestinian people," a Hamas statement said on Wednesday.

Biden proposed a ceasefire plan for Gaza on May 31 and described it as an Israeli proposal.

The United Nations Security Council approved a US resolution in June backing Washington's ceasefire plan which called for ending the Gaza war.

Hamas welcomed the ceasefire plan but the US has accused the resistance group of blocking progress towards it.

Netanyahu, however, has not

stated directly whether he supports the ceasefire plan.

Over the past months, Israelis have held protests calling on the Netanyahu cabinet to reach a deal with Hamas to free the captives.

They have accused Bibi of prioritizing his political interest over the lives of the captives. The demonstrators have also demanded snap elections and Netanyahu's resignation.

More than 1,100 people were killed when Hamas carried out a surprise military operation in southern Israel dubbed Al-Aqsa Storm on October 7. Nearly 250 Israeli and foreign nationals were also taken captive.

Dozens of the captives still remain in Gaza following a prisoner swap deal between Israel and Hamas in November last year. Al-Aqsa Storm was followed by Israel's genocidal war on Gaza.

The Israeli army has killed more than 38,000 Palestinians in Gaza, mostly children, and wounded over 87,000 others since the war broke out. But the Netanyahu regime has been

unable to bring the Palestinian resistance to its knees which has resulted in widening political rifts in Israel.

Last month, Benny Gantz resigned from the Israeli war cabinet, saying, "Netanyahu prevents us from moving forward to a real victory [in Gaza]".

His resignation not only dealt a blow to the Netanyahu cabinet but also put a spotlight on political divisions in Israel.

Gantz is not the only official who admitted that Israel has failed to achieve its military goals in Gaza.

"This business of destroying Hamas, making Hamas disappear — it's simply throwing sand in the eyes of the public.... Hamas is an idea; Hamas is a party.

It's rooted in the hearts of the people — anyone who thinks we can eliminate Hamas is wrong," Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari, the Israeli military spokesman said in June.

Netanyahu is currently between the devil and the deep blue sea.

On the one hand, he will be held accountable for failing to prevent the Al-Aqsa Storm operation if he decides to end the war.

On the other hand, the continuation of the war will claim the lives of more Israeli soldiers and deepen his regime's international isolation.

Netanyahu's rhetoric is just an attempt to put on a brave face as the Israeli army is sinking deeper into the quagmire of the Gaza war.

Strongest Hezbollah retaliation to date

Lebanese resistance movement pounds Israeli military positions

From page 1 ► Hezbollah fighters also targeted a building used by occupation soldiers in the Admit settlement with "appropriate weapons", causing it to catch fire and resulting in fatalities and injuries among those inside.

The formidable resistance movement has shared footage of its retaliatory operations targeting barracks and bases belonging to the Israeli army in the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan Heights as well as Israeli settlements in the north.

"These operations support our steadfast Palestinian people in Gaza and reinforce their courageous and honorable resistance against Israeli aggression on resilient southern villages and safe homes," a Hezbollah statement

read.

Hezbollah fighters targeted a site in Beit Lid using a Burkan (volcanic) rocket, and they have also reportedly hit the al-Mughar site in the district of Haifa with the same rocket that carries a heavy warhead, also causing "direct hits".

In another statement published on Hezbollah's Telegram account, the resistance movement said it targeted the Roisat al-Alam area in the Israeli-occupied Kfarchouba hills of Lebanon with another heavy rocket, causing fires and destruction to parts of the region.

On Thursday, the southern Lebanese resistance movement declared its fighters had

struck multiple Israeli sites with more than 200 rockets and nearly two-dozen drones, following the assassination of Nasser in the Lebanese city of Tyre.

The resistance group added that this operation targeted five Israeli military sites including the newly-established headquarters of the 91st Division in the Ayelet barracks.

The headquarters of the 7th armored brigade in Katsavia Barracks, the armored battalion of the 7th Brigade in the Gama barracks, the 210th Division (Golan Division) in Nafah Base, and the Artillery Regiment of Yarden barracks' 210th Division were also targeted, according to Hezbollah statements.

Ben-Gvir: Security minister or 'torture minister'

Israel is committing political suicide as its ministers are making insane remarks

By Parviz Rashidi

TEHRAN - The self-proclaimed human rights defenders in the West must now openly express their views about Itmar Ben-Gvir, Israel's so-called national security minister, who has said Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails should be killed with a "shot to the head".

"Prisoners should be shot in the head instead of being given more food," Ben-Gvir insisted in a video message on July 1.

Israel has detained about more than 9,450 citizens from the West Bank, including occupied Jerusalem, since October 7, along with thousands of citizens from Gaza. He also emphasized his support for a bill proposed by his right-wing Otzma Yehudit Party, which calls for executing Palestinian prisoners, stating, "They should be killed with a shot to the head, and the bill to execute Palestinian prisoners must be passed in the third reading in the Knesset."

"Until then, we will give them minimal food to survive. I do not care about this," Ben-Gvir added.

His horrifying proposal came as Muhammad Abu Salmiya, the director of Gaza's the Al-Shifa hospital, said at a press conference on July 1 that he was tortured while being held without charges for the last seven months at an Israeli detention center. There are many questions regarding the terrifying remarks of this man. Such words can only be made by a bloodthirsty or sadistic person.

Israel's defenders in the West have to say whether Ben-Gvir is actually a "torture minister" or national security minister.

This man is notoriously famous as he had previously said "Arabs should be killed."

In December 2022, Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party coalesced with ultra-Orthodox and racist parties to grab power no matter what the costs.

Though the Army had refused to draft Ben-Gvir when he was 18 due to the convictions against him and his dangerous views, Netanyahu allied with him and other fascists, including Amichai Eliyahu, the heritage minister, who in November 2023 said using nuclear bombs against people in Gaza is "an option" and in January called for "ways more painful than death" for Palestinians.

In his new shocking remarks on Wednesday, July 3, Eliyahu reposted a tweet calling for the reoccupation of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. The tweet also advocates for the expansion of the Israeli occupation to southern Lebanon and, eventually, Jordan.

Ben-Gvir, a settler in Kiryat Arba, has already been convicted of incitement to racism, destroying property, possessing a "terror" organization's propaganda material and supporting a "terror" organization — Meir Kahane's outlawed Kach group.

Abdullah Al-Zaghari, the head of the Prisoners' Club, says, "The statements of fascist and extremist minister Ben-Gvir represent a system that practices genocide against the Palestinian people, and only speaks in the language of killing and fighting any Palestinian presence in any form."

Al-Zaghari said since the war started on Oc-

tober 7 "the occupation prison administration, which falls under Ben-Gvir's authority, has actually executed Palestinian prisoners and detainees."

Ben-Gvir has also called for the Sde Teiman prison to keep its doors open to Palestinian detainees, despite overcrowding, saying, "We are overcrowded in prisons, and it is a good thing."

The name of Israel was associated with occupation, murder, assassination, land theft, violation of international law, etc. However, since its unthinkable crimes started in October 2023 in the tiny Gaza Strip the name of Israel has also been synonymous with starving civilians, banning food, water, and medicine to people, targeting medical complexes, indiscriminate killings, and in one word "genocide".

The Western countries that have been blindly backing Israel and failed to take any practical steps against its illegal acts should not feel surprised by the emergence of such highly dangerous individuals. It is extremely expected that the West and international human rights bodies strongly condemn the remarks by Ben-Gvir.

Like Prime Minister Netanyahu and his war minister Yoav Gallant who are being sought by International Criminal Court chief prosecutor Karim Khan for war crimes and crimes against humanity, Ben-Gvir should also be designated as a war criminal.

Such statements, though dangerous, show that Israel is committing political suicide. It seems that the October 7 attack on southern Israel by Hamas, which took Israeli officials by surprise, has made the regime's officials make intemperate and unbalanced remarks.

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Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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WORLD HEADLINES

Pro-Palestine candidates secure wins in UK election



Five independent pro-Palestine candidates, including former Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, have won in United Kingdom general elections with Israel's war on Gaza among key issues for voters.

The other four independent candidates who won their seats from Labour on Friday include Shockat Adam in Leicester South, Ayoub Khan in Birmingham Perry Barr, Adnan Hussain in Blackburn, and Iqbal Mohamed in Dewsbury and Batley, Al Jazeera reported.

Both the Conservatives, who were routed in the election, and Labour have said they want the fighting in Gaza to stop. Yet, they have backed Israel's "right to defend itself", angering pro-Palestine and Muslim voters across the country.

Labour leader Keir Starmer, who will be the next prime minister, was heckled with shouts of "Free Palestine" both at the polling station in his Holborn and St Pancras constituency and at his election count as he was declared to have won his seat.

Corbyn, 75, who has represented London's Islington North constituency for more than 40 years, was re-elected after defeating Labour's Pratul Nargund by 24,120 votes to 16,873.

He said those who voted for him were "looking for a government that on the world stage will search for peace, not war, and not allow the terrible conditions to go on in Gaza at the present time".

Qassam Brigades kills 10 Israeli soldiers

The armed wing of the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement said it had killed 10 Israeli soldiers in an operation on al-Nazaz Street in the eastern Gaza City neighborhood.

In a statement on Telegram, Qassam Brigades said that fighters targeted a building occupied by Israeli troops with a TBG (thermobaric) rocket, before entering the building and killing the remaining soldiers from a distance.

"During their withdrawal, they [the fighters] detonated an explosive device inside the building, and then helicopters intervened to evacuate the dead and wounded soldiers," the statement added, according to Al Jazeera.

It also said resistance fighters struck an Israeli Merkava 4 tank with a Yassin-105 rocket.

Bolivia hails Iran for condemning coup

TEHRAN - Bolivia's embassy in Iran has blamed foreign countries including the United States for last month's attempted coup in the country.

The failed coup attempt was led by Bolivia's former top military commander, Juan Jose Zuniga, on June 26.

Bolivia police arrested him hours after the presidential palace in La Paz was stormed by soldiers.

General Zuniga said he wanted to "restructure democracy" and that while he respected President Luis Arce "for now", there would be a change of government.

The general later claimed he had staged the intervention at the president's request. His claim was rejected by the Bolivian government.

Bolivia's ambassador to Iran Romina Guadalupe Pérez Ramos said in a statement on Thursday that the country is probing domestic and foreign motives behind the failed coup.

She said foreign motives are linked to the plundering of Bolivia's natural resources.

The ambassador noted that Bolivia summoned the US charge d'affaires in June

EU concerned over Israel's evacuation orders in Gaza

The EU on Friday voiced "deep concern" over Israel's evacuation orders from Khan Younis in Gaza, saying it is "creating a humanitarian crisis within the crisis."

In a joint statement, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarcic said that not only were 250,000 people impacted by these orders, but these also threatened the patients and staff of the European Hospital and forced them to relocate to other facilities, Anadolu reported.

"This evacuation decision is certain to worsen overcrowding and cause severe shortages in the already overwhelmed remaining hospitals at a time when access to emergency medical care is critical," Borrell and Lenarcic said.

"Forced evacuations are creating a humanitarian crisis within the crisis. They exacerbate an already catastrophic humanitarian situation, with nearly 1.9 million Gazans displaced within the Strip, as stated by UN Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza Sigrid Kaag in the Security Council," they said.

They stressed that there are no facilities to accommodate people, and humanitarian partners struggle to meet the immense needs of the newly displaced.

"The European Union reiterates that for evacuations not to amount to prohibited forcible transfers, they must conform with International Humanitarian Law, guaranteeing safety in transit and proper accommodation in areas of refuge for Palestinians called on to evacuate," they said.

Russia conducts mobile nuclear missile launcher drills

Russia's Defense Ministry said on Friday it was conducting drills involving Yars mobile nuclear missile launchers, less than a month after it held tactical nuclear weapons deployment exercises alongside ally Belarus.

The ministry said Yars missile launcher crews in at least two different regions were set to move over 100 kilometers (62 miles) and practice camouflage and deployment, Reuters reported.

It published a video showing a mobile launcher maneuvering along forest roads and taking up position before troops covered it in camouflage netting.

"Similar exercises will be held by other missile units in the near future," the defense ministry said.

In June, Russia conducted tactical nuclear weapons drills with Belarus after what Moscow said were threats from Western powers.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said then that Moscow had no need to use nuclear weapons to secure victory in Ukraine, but added that he did not rule out changes to the country's nuclear doctrine.



calling on Washington not to interfere in the internal affairs of the Latin American country.

Ramos said Bolivia and other Latin American countries have fallen victim to military coups in the 20th century.

She said these countries have also seen hybrid wars and soft coups in the late 20th century and early 21st century.

The Bolivian ambassador in Tehran thanked Iran for condemning the abortive military takeover.

She also offered Bolivia's appreciation to countries, international organizations, political parties, academics and prominent figures that denounced the failed putsch.

Proposal for joint cultural heritage committee between Tehran and Astana



TEHRAN – On Wednesday, Iran's deputy minister of cultural heritage, during a meeting with the Kazakh ambassador to Iran, proposed the formation of a joint cultural heritage committee between the two countries.

Ali Darabi, during the meeting held at the ministry's headquarters, highlighted the shared cultural domain and their collaboration on World Heritage registrations, citing the example of the [UNESCO-listed] Nowruz dossier, which Iran has registered with the participation of 12 countries, including Kazakhstan.

He reminded the deep-rooted civilizational connections between the two nations, saying: "We have a rich heritage such as the great philosopher [Abu Nasr Muhammad] al-Farabi and the Silk Road, and our shared culture and religion form a significant foundation for cooperation between Iran and Kazakhstan."

"I am pleased that Kazakhstan is a member of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage," Darabi said.

In another part of his speech, the Iranian minister mentioned, "Last year, we registered [a collection of] 54 Iranian caravanerais as World Heritage.

Khaf attracts visitors from Canada, China, and the U.S.

TEHRAN – The lesser-known Khaf county, which is home to many sites of historical significance, has played host to a number of foreign tourists on a one-day tour.

"Six foreign tourists from Canada, the U.S., and China embarked on a tour of Khaf county, exploring its rich historical and cultural attractions," said a local official in charge of tourism on Thursday.

Mahmoud Ba'aqideh further elaborated that the tourists visited notable historical sites, including the Khargerd Ghiasieh School and the Nashtifan windmills.

"They also had stops at local handicraft shops," he continued.

Ba'aqideh added that during their overnight stay at an eco-lodge, the tourists enjoyed a

variety of activities, including traditional music performances, demonstrations of local attire, and sampling of herbal teas and local cuisine.

Earlier this week, Mahmoud Ba'aqideh noted that all efforts are being ramped up to develop Khaf's tourism capacities aimed at drawing both domestic and foreign visitors.

"Three tourist lodges are currently active in Khaf," said the official, adding that three more lodges will soon begin operations within the county.

Khaf county, situated in Khorasan Razavi province, northeastern Iran, is home to over 300 identified historical sites, with 105 of them listed as national heritage sites, and two, including the Khaf windmills and the historical city of Zozan, have been registered on the UNESCO tentative list.

and the manner in which they are interacting – were clearly deliberate, and it conveys an unmistakable sense of action. There is something happening between these figures. A story is being told. Obviously, we don't know what that story was," said Griffith University archaeologist Adam Brumm, another of the study's authors.

Aubert speculated that the paintings were probably made by the first group of humans who moved through Southeast Asia before arriving in Australia about 65,000 years ago.

"It's probably just a matter of time before we find samples that are older," Aubert added.

Previously, the first narrative art was thought to have emerged in Europe.

The date given for the Indonesian cave art is "quite provocative" because it is so much older than what has been found elsewhere, including in Europe, said Chris Stringer, an anthropologist at London's Natural History Museum.

Stringer, who was not involved in the research, said the experienced team's findings looked sound but needed to be confirmed by further dating.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

World's oldest artwork discovered in Indonesian cave

Scientists have discovered what they believe to be the world's oldest artwork – depicting three people gathered around a large red pig – in a cave on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi.

Research published on Wednesday indicates the painting was created some 51,200 years ago.

"This is the oldest evidence of storytelling," Maxime Aubert, an archaeologist at Australia's Griffith University and co-author of a new study published in Nature, told the AFP news agency.

Aubert was part of the team that identified the previous record holder, a picture of a warty pig thought to be at least 45,500 years old.

The latest discovery, found inside the Leang Karampuang cave in the Maros-Pangkep region of South Sulawesi, is in poor condition.

It shows three people around a wild pig, measuring 92cm by 38cm (36 inches by 15 inches), in a single shade of dark red pigment. There are other images of pigs in the cave as well.

"The juxtaposition of the figures – how they are positioned in relation to each other –

Ancient grandeur: the story of Belqeys Castle and its historical complex

TEHRAN – Belqeys Castle is a must-visit destination for those intrigued by Iran's rich historical heritage.

Spanning an impressive area of over 180 hectares, this fortress is a remarkable example of early Islamic architecture, believed to have been constructed during the Sasanian era.

Its strategic position on a flat plain, surrounded by a deep moat, indicates its historical importance as a defensive stronghold on the ancient Silk Road.

Nestled in a historical fabric, in northeastern Iran, it is renowned as the second-largest adobe monument in the county after the famous Arg-e Bam, which stands tall in the southern Kerman province.

In its heyday, Belqeys Castle was a three-story architectural marvel, fortified by 29 towers each standing at about 11 meters high.

These imposing structures highlight the castle's role as a formidable barrier against invasions, safeguarding the bustling trade route that connected the East and West.

Although time has reduced the castle to a mud shell, the remnants evoke a sense of the grandeur and strategic importance it once held.



Located about three kilometers southwest of the present-day city of Esfarayen in North Khorasan province, the castle is part of a larger historical complex that includes a variety of fascinating structures. Visitors can explore the remains of a caravanserai, which once provided refuge for weary travelers and traders.

The ancient bazaar, a hive of commerce in centuries past, offers a glimpse into the vibrant market life of the time. The pottery kiln showcases the advanced craftsmanship in ceramics, featuring a furnace and intricate niches and domes.

One of the most intriguing parts of the complex is the Sharestan, the public section of the ancient city. Enclosed by a

brick wall, Sharestan was home to various neighborhoods, industrial workshops, and workers' quarters.

Historical sources point to Tappeh Menar as the most significant public area, believed to have functioned as the city mosque.

The discovery of a large brick water reservoir in the southern part of Sharestan underscores the advanced urban planning and infrastructure that supported the city's inhabitants.

The mausoleum of Sheikh Azari and the ancient cemetery add a spiritual dimension to the site, offering insights into the religious practices and final resting places of the people who once thrived here.

The archaeological excava-

tions conducted in 2014 and 2015 have unearthed a portion of the interior structure of Belqeys Castle, revealing a well-organized layout of nested rooms with multiple entrances. The rooms, constructed with bricks measuring 5x25x25 centimeters and clay mortar, reflect the meticulous construction techniques of the era.

Visiting Belqeys Castle is more than just a journey through ancient ruins; it may transport you back to a time when the Silk Road was a lifeline of cultural exchange and economic prosperity.

The castle's towering remnants, the surrounding historical complex, and the enchanting tales of the past make it a captivating destination for historians, archaeologists, and tourists alike.

As you walk through the remnants of this once-mighty fortress, imagine the bustling activity, the strategic defenses, and the vibrant life that flourished within its walls.

Belqeys Castle is not just a relic of the past; it is a window into the rich historical and cultural heritage of northeast Iran, waiting to be explored and appreciated by those who seek to uncover the secrets of ancient civilizations.

Iran's East Asia tourism roadshow comes to last stop in Jakarta

TEHRAN – On Thursday, Iran wrapped up its East Asia tourism roadshow with a final event in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta, following previous stops in Vietnam and Malaysia.

The one-day event in Indonesia's capital brought together key officials and private sector leaders from both nations for business meetings and discussions on future tourism agreements, as reported by IRNA.

Emphasizing the significance of such events in strengthening bilateral relations, Iranian Deputy Tourism Minister Ali-Asghar Shalbfanian met with Indonesian Deputy Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy Martini Mohamad Paham.

Shalbfanian highlighted Iran's diverse travel offerings, noting that the country is renowned not only for religious, cultural, handicraft, and culinary tourism but also for



medical tourism.

"Iran is one of the top destinations for high-tech medical treatments in the Middle East," he stated.

Additionally, Iranian Ambassador to Indonesia Mohammad Boroujerdi discussed the progress in tourism cooperation between the two nations.

"We are working with the Indonesian government to finalize administrative steps to

obtain direct flight permits between Iran and Indonesia," the Ambassador noted.

The event continued with the signing of a memorandum of understanding for cooperation between the Head of the Iranian Tour Association, Mustafa Shafiei-Shakib and the General Chairperson of the Central Executive Board of the Indonesian Tour and Travel Association (ASITA), Nunung Rusmiati.

Then the travel agencies held a B2B meeting to produce a collaboration that is expected to increase the number of tourists in both countries.

The event, which was part of Iran's framework of Tourism Roadshow Southeast Asia 2024, came after holding sessions in Vietnamese capital of Hanoi and Malaysian one, Kuala Lumpur, with the goal of bolstering tourism bonds.

480K overnight stays recorded in Golestan in Q1

TEHRAN – Hundreds of thousands of overnight stays has been recorded in Golestan province during the first quarter of this Persian year (started on March 20), highlighting the region's growing appeal among travelers.

"Over 480,000 travelers and tourists stayed in various accommodations, including official, unofficial, and emergency lodgings across Golestan..." said the provincial director-general of cultural heritage, tourism, and

handicrafts.

Mohammad-Javad Savari detailed the distribution of these stays, stating that 295,500 people stayed in official accommodation, 169,160 in unofficial lodgings, and 6,360 in emergency shelters across the province.

He also emphasized the significant appeal of Golestan's cultural, natural, and historical attractions for many travelers, urging collective efforts to further promote these attractions

to the public.

Golestan province, located in northern Iran, boasts a diverse array of tourism attractions, making it a prime destination for both sightseers and nature lovers.

The provincial capital, Gorgan, features a rich historical fabric, including the well-preserved Estarabad district, which is renowned for its ancient houses, Tekyehs, madrasas, and mosques.

Beyond its historical significance, Golestan offers breath-

taking natural landscapes, such as the lush Alangdareh and Naharkhoran forest parks, which provide visitors with opportunities for hiking, picnicking, and wildlife observation.

Golestan's coastal areas along the Caspian Sea add to its allure, featuring pristine beaches and scenic views.

The province is also home to several cultural and recreational festivals that celebrate its rich heritage and vibrant community.

Ritual of Tasht-Gozari observed in Ardebil's Jameh Mosque

TEHRAN – On Thursday, the historical Jameh Mosque of Ardebil witnessed the sacred Tasht-Gozari ceremony aimed to pay homage to the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (AS) and his companions.

The Tasht-Gozari ritual, which translates to "laying a wash-tub," symbolizes the vital significance of water, reminiscent of the water blockade faced by the third Shia Imam and his followers in the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE.

The ceremony, part of the broader mourning traditions observed during the lunar month of Muharram, commenced following the noon prayers and continued until the call to Maghrib prayers, drawing participation from various mourning groups from different neighborhoods.

In preparation for Tasht-Gozari, volunteers meticulously clean the mosques and wash tubs.

Then, six wash-tubs, representing the six neighborhoods, are carried into the Jameh Mosque by neighborhood representatives.

These representatives, with wash-tubs balanced on their heads, circumnavigate the mosque, allowing mourners to touch the tubs and express their allegiance to Imam Hussein (AS). The wash-tubs are then placed on designated platforms within the mosque, and mourners pour jars of water into them.

For the next ten days, mourners drink the water from these tubs, believing in its healing properties, often taking it to the sick. The Tasht-Gozari ceremony is not only a remem-



brance of the sacrifices made by Imam Hussein (AS) but also serves as a reminder of the principles of justice, equality, and sacrifice he stood for.

The ceremony is also performed in tens of mosques across six main neighborhoods in Ardebil province.

Tehran to host 6th Intl. Genetics Congress

TEHRAN –The 6th international and 18th national congress on genetics will be held in Tehran from July 7 to 9.

Hosted by Shahid Beheshti University, the three-day event will be conducted under the theme of 'genetics for health; food security; conservation of genetic resources, immediate needs and future necessity', IRNA reported.

Held every two years, the congress's primary objective is to share the latest global scientific achievements among genetic professors, researchers, and experts.

International universities from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Russia cooperate with Shahid Beheshti University to hold the congress this year, IRNA quoted the president of the Iranian Genetics Society as saying.

While there are 13 climates or variable weather conditions across the world, Iran benefits from eleven climate diversity which has resulted in a variety of genetic and plant diversity. It is considered a highly valuable natural resource for the country, Mokhtar Jalali-Jouran said.

The value of the biological, plant, and animal genetic diversity in Iran is far more than the oil and gas, he stressed.

In terms of genetic science production, Iran ranks 2nd in the region and 22nd worldwide, ISNA quoted the scientific secretary of the congress as saying.

Researchers from 15 countries namely Canada, Spain, the



Netherlands, Finland, Australia, the U.S., Germany, New Zealand, Sweden, Hungary, Russia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Turkey have submitted articles to the Congress, he said.

Out of 794 submitted articles, 758 have been accepted. 64 articles will be presented in the form of lectures and 694 in the form of posters, he said.

The accepted articles were in the fields of human genetics (475), plant genetics (188), animal genetics (179), ethics and biosafety (29), stem cells, and micro-organisms (15).

There will be 20 lecturers both online and in person; and a total of 17 educational workshops will be held during this year's congress, he added.

Iran's rich biodiversity, genetics

There are 11 types of ecosystems in the world, 9 of which are identified in Iran. Moreover, out of 42 types of wetlands, 41 types exist in the country. Therefore,

Iran is one of the 20 countries rich in biodiversity and genetics.

Biological and genetic diversity in the country has caused many plants and animals to be native to Iran, currently, there are 2,100 endemic plant species in Iran.

Five ecoregions, rich biodiversity

Each region is defined by its characteristics that play a significant role in a land's biodiversity and richness, based on which, Iran shares five ecological zones with specific flora from the lowest to the highest parts, namely, Caspian, Iran-Turani, Arasbaran, Zagros, and Persian Gulf-Omani ecological zones.

The great difference between the two latitudes of the north and south of the country and the existence of different plains, altitudes, and climates have given a very diverse view of the vast land so that a variety of vegetation and plant species are grown across it.

The Hyrcanian ecological zone

covers the green belt, the southern margin of the Caspian Sea, and the northern profile of the Alborz Mountain range.

The forested areas of the region stretch to 2.4 million hectares covering Astara in Gilan province to Glidaghi in Golestan province.

The area of forests in the Iran-Turani ecological region, which covers most of the central plateau of Iran, is 4,666,941 hectares.

Based on topographic and altitude conditions, this region is divided into two mountainous regions with a cold climate and a desert with a hot and dry climate.

Arasbaran forests, which are among the semi-humid forests of the country, are located in the province of East Azarbaijan and northwest of Ardebil province, which covers 174,838 hectares.

Some sources date the Zagros oak forests to 5,500 years.

The creation and expansion of these forests are due to rainfall raised by the Mediterranean system and the Black Sea, which extends from the Sardasht area of West Azarbaijan to Firoozabad city of Fars province covering an area of 5,440,494 hectares.

The forests of the Persian Gulf-Omani ecological region include part of the southwest and all southern coasts, covering 2,039,963 hectares. Due to ecological differences, the main vegetation is divided into two territories of the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman.

Cooperatives build a better future for all



By Maryam Tavassoli

TEHRAN –The 102nd International Day of Cooperatives will be celebrated on July 6 with the theme of 'Cooperatives Building a Better Future for All'.

The 2023 UN Secretary-General Report on Cooperatives in Social Development acknowledged that cooperatives have a track record of promoting the economic and social development of all people including marginalized groups.

Co-operatives have been acknowledged as associations and enterprises through which citizens can effectively improve their lives while contributing to the economic, social, cultural, and political advancement of their community and nation.

The cooperative movement has been also recognized as a distinct and major stakeholder in both national and international affairs.

This year's theme aligns well with the objectives of the upcoming UN Summit of the Future whose theme is "Multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow".

Cooperatives will have the opportunity to showcase their current and historical contributions to building a sustainable future, accelerating efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030.

Cooperatives can showcase their high standards for inclusive and sustainable growth, and serve as stewards for protecting the environment and fighting climate change.

Through democratic governance and shared ownership, cooperatives set an example for peace and stability, bringing people from diverse backgrounds together on equal terms, and fostering understanding and respect.

This day will build the momentum towards the 2025 International Year of Cooperatives, which was declared by the UN last year.

Co-operatives' open membership model affords access to wealth creation and poverty elimination.

This results from the cooperative principle of members' economic participation: 'Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative.'

Because co-operatives are people-centered, not capital-centered, they do not perpetuate, nor accelerate capital concentration and they distribute wealth more fairly.

Co-operatives also foster external equality. As they are community-based, they are committed to the sustainable development of their communities – environmentally, socially, and economically.

This commitment can be seen in their support for community activities, local sourcing of supplies to benefit the local economy, and in decision-making that considers the impact on their communities.

Despite their local community focus, co-operatives also strive to bring the benefits of their economic and social model to all people in the world.

Globalization should be governed by a set of values such as those of the cooperative movement; otherwise, it creates more inequality and excesses that render it unsustainable.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

“Noora” vaccine successfully passing first phase of clinical trial

“Noora” coronavirus vaccine, domestically made by Baqiyatallah University of Medical Sciences affiliated to the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), is successfully passing the first phase of the clinical trial.

The vaccine is well undergoing the first phase of human testing, he noted, adding, the first phase of human testing lasts 2 months, so far more than a month has passed, IRNA reported on Saturday.

واکسن نورا مرحله پایانی فاز اول تست انسانی را طی می کند

تهران - رییس دانشگاه علوم پزشکی بقیه الله گفت: تزریق دز اول واکسن نورا به تمام داوطلبان انجام شد و دز دوم هم به نیمه تزریق رسیده است.

دکتر حسن ابوالقاسمی روز شنبه در گفت و گو با ایرنا، روند فعالیت کارآزمایی بالینی واکسن نورا را مطلوب ارزیابی کرد و افزود: این واکسن به نحو مطلوبی در حال طی کردن فاز اول تست انسانی است.

وی با یادآوری اینکه طبق برنامه ریزی انجام شده طول دوره مرحله اول تست انسانی ۲ ماه است، ادامه داد: تاکنون بیش از یک ماه از این دوره سپری شده است.

IRCS urges BRICS to set up 'public health and human welfare' working group

TEHRAN –Pirhossein Kolivand, the head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) has called BRICS for the implementation of a comprehensive approach by establishing a public health and human welfare working group.

Attending the BRICS Civil Forum 2024, Kolivand delivered a speech on "Justice, Equality, and Sustainable Development", the IRCS website reported.

With the motto of 'Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security', the BRICS Civil Forum was held from July 3-4 in Moscow.

The comprehensive approach calls for the engagement of volunteer experts and talented youth from diverse backgrounds within societies.

"It can be implemented within the 'Public Health and Human Welfare' working group by identifying opportunities, sharing successful practices from all member countries, and leveraging knowledge management through collaborative efforts among members," Kolivand said.

The official suggested that the working group should focus on the following issues to fulfill its main objectives.

Sharing successful experiences by BRICS member states can help promote and prioritize the principles of social justice, focusing on human spiritual capacity in daily life rather than just materialistic aspects.

Encouraging active and practical participation among member states to mutually strengthen their commitment and motivation toward a healthy lifestyle and social welfare for improved and prolonged life spans.

Promoting successful cultures, and exchanging expertise to prevent the rapid spread of destructive ideologies and micro-cultures.

Unifying as 'One Voice' to advocate for international constructive justice and equality, and to enhance overall public performance and empowerment.

Providing substantial support for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) corresponding with these goals and establishing a comprehensive network for universal health care, including vulnerable groups, through voluntary and public assistance.

Making efforts to provide modern digital technology on a global scale and promoting global social discourse to enhance health literacy through coordinated efforts across educational, support, and health care systems.

Protecting current and future generations from the harmful effects of drugs and psychoactive substances. Resolving existing concerns among countries and leveraging common strengths in alignment with BRICS goals, while preserving national, cultural, and religious traditions by strengthening family values and cohesion.

Establishing a virtual platform for knowledge management and experience sharing to strengthen small businesses and related interactions and prioritizing support services and programs for organizations and public institutions active in voluntary, humanitarian, and entrepreneurial social services, and career development to alleviate poverty.

Kolivand also elaborated on Iran's history and the IRCS achievements.

"Iran is a country with rich historical and cultural experiences. Throughout centuries and millennia, Iranians have institutionalized social participation, solidarity, and cooperation as essential values to safeguard their way of life and their people.

In the eyes of the Iranian people, virtues, merits, and noble human goals have always been highly esteemed. This includes efforts to maintain overall human health, preserve natural resources, and protect plants and animals," Kolivand noted.

In Iran, taking action against the adverse impacts of climate change and poverty is regarded as a humanitarian, voluntary, national, and religious endeavor.

Additionally, combating hunger, promoting health, expanding education, and ensuring access to clean drinking water are considered essential human goals that are deeply ingrained in the ideals of Iranian citizens and the fabric of historical human values. Accordingly, the primary focus and special mission of the Iranian Red Crescent Society focuses on justice, equality, and societal development.

A key aspect of the IRCS is its commitment to 'culture building' to advance the progressive goals outlined in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Today, with the robust economic foundation of BRICS nations, symbolizing the potential resurgence of the economic power from the East,

there is optimism that significant strides can be made in reducing global inequality, reaching out to migrants, and responding to the displaced populations' needs, enhancing infrastructure and capacity building, resolving conflicts, and notably improving human development indicators.

This entails leveraging the intellectual, cultural, ideological, and social resources within societies to instill a sense of self-belief and empowerment in individuals who have been impacted by injustices and inequalities.

Over forty years of working experience in marginalized or underdeveloped nations, the most effective way to serve these societies is found to be cultivating their self-confidence and providing essential support to help vulnerable populations establish stable livelihoods.

It is crucial to recognize marginalized and vulnerable segments of society as key stakeholders and to support their advancement in alignment with overall economic development goals, both within countries and within organizations such as BRICS.

The implementation of Rural Health Houses, overseen by dedicated doctors in provincial capitals, cities, and villages, has facilitated the provision of crucial health education, vaccination programs, maternal and child safeguarding policies, and primary services.

"By embracing innovative and thoughtful approaches, tailored to the unique conditions, traditions, and customs of each geographic region, we can make significant progress and achieve promising outcomes," Kolivand stressed.

The official went on to say that some of the key challenges in achieving development goals may include insufficient financial resources, particularly in low and middle-income countries; ongoing climate changes and geopolitical tensions; and governance issues, particularly in infrastructure development and data management.

Nonetheless, the proposed solutions and programs, informed by diverse experiences, have the potential to address these issues effectively and offer viable solutions to overcome these challenges. Similarly, the Iranian Red Crescent Society has demonstrated success across many of these domains.

In the early years of the Islamic Revolution, in 1979, the innovative ideas of two Iranian physicians led to the establishment of a comprehensive public health network across the country. This initiative included the development of a primary healthcare network that catered to the needs of both rural and urban populations, utilizing trained paramedics to deliver essential health services in remote areas.

Hospitals, pharmacies, and clinics of the IRCS are providing treatment, and rehabilitation services, as well as manufacturing and producing medicine and medical equipment both within and outside the country.

One of the other remarkable initiatives of the Iranian Red Crescent Society has been the establishment and development of 'Hela/Crescent Houses' (Community-based and Volunteer-Oriented Centers) with the aim of promoting public training and raising awareness to cope with hazards and respond to emergencies and crises as first responders.

To address poverty, alleviate suffering, and empower marginalized populations, the IRCS has achieved significant success in identifying vulnerable individuals through collaboration with donors and government organizations.

This has involved providing training, empowerment, awareness campaigns, and entrepreneurship opportunities, leading to many mothers and girls securing jobs and becoming breadwinners for their households.

Dispatching health professionals as volunteer medical teams to underprivileged communities has improved access to essential healthcare services and fostered a sense of satisfaction among those in need.

Furthermore, in efforts to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change, the IRCS, in collaboration with volunteers and local NGOs, planted 5 million saplings in just one year.

This initiative was carried out as a non-profit endeavor without government funding and involved coordination with organizations responsible for natural resources. This exemplifies the organization's commitment to implementing sustainable solutions, the official further noted.

Kolivand also led the health working group focusing on the theme of 'healthy society, a prerequisite for the development of BRICS countries.'



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Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737



No. 18, Moghadasi Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran P.O. Box: 14155-4843 Zip Code: 1599814713

JULY 6, 2024

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Contentment is eternal wealth.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:08 Evening: 19:24 Dawn: 3:08 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 4:53 (tomorrow)

What's in Tehran art galleries



Painting

* Bakhtiar Sameh is displaying his latest paintings in an exhibition at Idea Gallery.

The exhibition titled "Virida" will be running until July 10 at the gallery located at 26, 18th St. off Sanai St., Karim Khan Ave.

*Etemad Gallery 2 is showcasing paintings by Mehdi Mohseni in an exhibition named "Fearless Face of Fear".

The exhibition will be running until July 18 at the gallery located at 25 Shirudi Alley, Mofatteh St., near Haft-e Tir Square.



* Kimia Askarian is showcasing her paintings in an exhibition at 009821 Projects Gallery.

Named "Pondering Upon You Anew, Being Pondered Upon Anew", the exhibit will be running until July 9 at the gallery located at No. 25, 18th Alley, Kheradmand St., Karim Khan Ave.

* A collection of paintings by Masoud Zamani is on view in an exhibition at Adapa Gallery.

The exhibition will run until July 21 at the gallery located at No. 5, Sumesara Alley, Sazesh St., Vali-e Asr Square.



* A collection of paintings by Mohammad Ebrahim Emad is on view in an exhibition at Bostan Gallery.

The exhibit named "Birds" will be running until July 13 at the gallery that can be found at No. 71, 22th Alley, Larestan St. off Motahhari Ave.

* Ech Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Hosein-Ali Zabehi and Anahita Zabehi.

The exhibition will run until July 19 at the gallery located at 10 Mirza Taraj opposite Dowlat St., Shariati Ave.

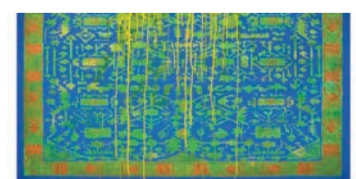


* A collection of paintings by Ali Rassam is on view in an exhibition at Saless Gallery.

The exhibit will be running until July 16 at the gallery that can be found at 148 Karim Khan Ave.

* Hamid Torkashvand is showcasing his latest drawings in an exhibition at Iranshahr Gallery.

The exhibit named "Is..." will run until July 16 at the gallery that can be found at 69 Sepand St., off Karim Khan Ave.



* A collection of paintings by Narenj Kazemi is currently being shown in an exhibition at Shirin Gallery.

The exhibition named "Zhavia" will run until July 23 at the gallery located at No. 5, 13th St., Karim Khan Ave.



* An exhibition of paintings by Tannaz Adli is currently underway at CAMA – Contemporary and Modern Art Gallery.

Named "Paradise", the exhibit runs until July 14 at the gallery located at No. 44, 10th Golestan, Pasdaran St.



Moradi Kermani's "You're No Stranger Here" republished

TEHRAN- The 41st edition of the Iranian writer Hushang Moradi Kermani's "You're No Stranger Here" has recently been published.

Moein, the publisher of the book, released its first edition in 2005.

"You're No Stranger Here", the writer's autobiography, has been published in English and Arabic as well.

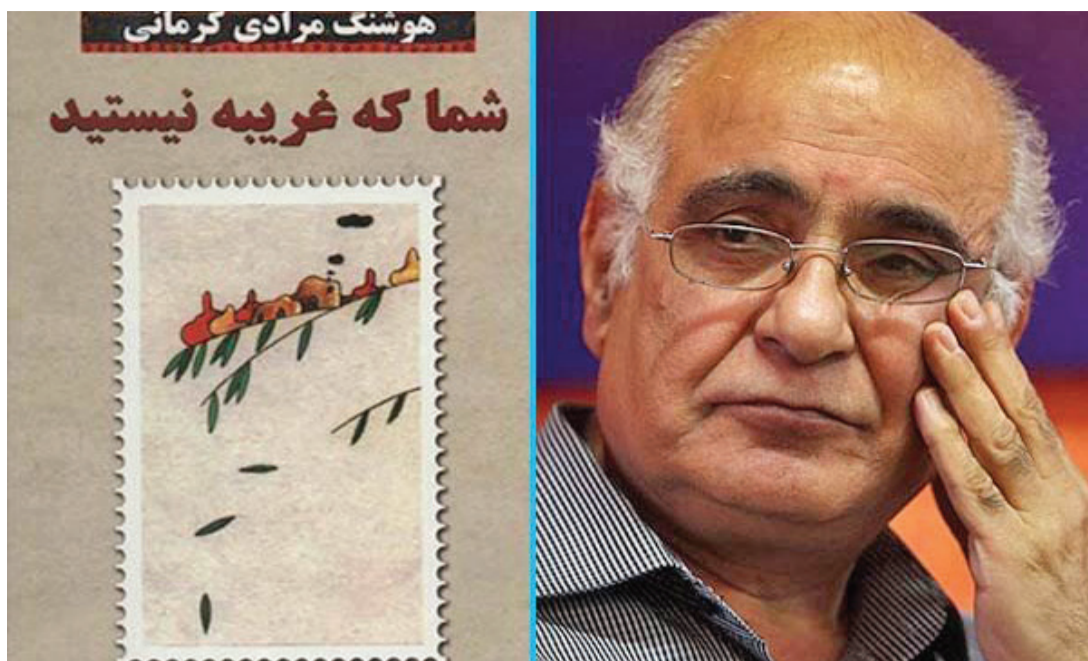
In his extremely short introduction to the book, Moradi Kermani, whose works are also appealing to adults, has said, "I did no research nor had any note to write in this book; it just came from my memory."

He then has dedicated it to those who are and were in company with him on the "journey", as well as "those who are influenced."

Next, he immediately grabs the readers' hands taking them to his home in Sirch, a remote village in Kerman Province, where he spent his unusual childhood; unusual simply because he lost his mother in his infancy and had to go on with his grandfather and grandmother, and a father who suffered from mental illness. Societies differ from one another in their definition of private life. Iranians traditionally shrink from revealing even a simple fact about their private lives.

But Moradi Kermani does not conceal even the bitter fact that his father was a psycho. In addition, he frankly reveals his rural descent while his fellow men often pretend to be a member of an ancient noble family from the heart of Tehran!

No work by any other Iranian writer comes nearly as close to describing the ambiance of Iranian society as that which is described in Moradi Kermani's books, particularly in "You're No Stranger



A combination photo shows Hushang Moradi Kermani and the front cover of the Persian edition of his book "You're No Stranger Here".

Here".

This is the reason why his works are also appealing to adults.

And this is the reason why Iranian filmmakers found his stories interesting enough to be turned into films. His "The Stories of Majid", about an ambitious teenage boy, Majid who lives with his grandma Bibi in the central Iranian city of Isfahan, was made into a popular TV series of the same title by late director Kiumars Puraehmad during the 1990s.

In 2000, Marzieh Borumand directed a screen adaptation of Moradi Kermani's "A Sweet Jam" about 12-year-old Jalal's struggles to open a jar of jam.

In 2004, Dariush Mehrjui also made a film based on his novel "Mom's Guest: An Evening in Isfahan" about a working-

class family's efforts to receive a young couple in their modest accommodation.

However, none of Moradi Kermani's works are as dramatic as his masterpiece "You're No Stranger Here", but the large budget required for making the story into a film or TV series has been an obstacle preventing filmmakers from approaching this story.

"You're No Stranger Here" is actually the key to learn how Moradi Kermani made himself into one of the few great writers of modern Iran.

Throughout his career, Moradi Kermani has written several children's books, many of which have won international awards and have been translated into multiple languages.

His literary works encompass a wide range of subjects that delve into various themes, including social justice, environmentalism, cultural customs, and historical events.

So far, Moradi Kermani's literary works have been translated into an array of languages, including French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, Korean, Greek, and Turkish.

Moradi Kermani's writing style is notable for its straightforwardness and uncomplicated approach.

He uses everyday language and accessible narrative techniques to convey complex ideas to his young readers. His books are not only entertaining but also educational, teaching important life lessons and values such as respect, empathy, compassion and kindness.

Iran's cultural sector thrives under President Raisi's leadership, minister says

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

TEHRAN- Under the visionary leadership of President Raisi, Iran's culture sector has experienced a remarkable resurgence over the past three years, Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili said during an interview with the Tehran Times on Friday.

The minister made the remarks during a visit to the daily's headquarters in downtown Tehran, where he praised the significant strides made in the cultural and artistic fields during this period.

"It has been a remarkable three years for Iranian culture and art," he said, highlighting the numerous achievements and initiatives that have been implemented to promote and develop the sector.

The minister attributed this success to the establishment of foundations and complexes



that have enriched Iran's cultural landscape, as well as the launch of a global creative industries initiative. The government has also set up 12 new creative cultural districts across the country, which will ultimately lead to the flourishing of Iran's cultural and artistic economy.

In addition to domestic efforts, the government has established the Foundation for Iranian-Islamic Lifestyle to promote Iranian-Islamic values and norms, as well as

the Hakim Nezami Foundation to promote Iranian culture globally in collaboration with the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO).

Many of these initiatives have already borne fruit, with opportunities for further growth in the field of culture and art. Noting that his ministry's budget has increased from 12 trillion rials (\$21 million) to around 200 trillion rials (\$364 million) since he took office, Esmaeili expressed hope that this positive trend will continue under the new administration.

These opportunities are fully open and compressed for the new government, and each of these projects and laws has led to significant advancements in culture and art through numerous follow-ups in parliament and cabinet meetings over the short term, he noted.

"We hope that this positive trend will continue with strength under the new government," he said.

Tehran Times, Afghan Voice Agency ink MoU

TEHRAN- Managing directors of Tehran Times International Daily and Afghan Voice Agency (AVA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on Wednesday in Tehran.

Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati, who is also the CEO of Mehr Media Group, inked the MoU with Hojjatoleslam Issa Hosseini Mazari, also the head of the Tebyan Center for Social-Cultural Activities, at the venue of Mehr news agency.

"The Tebyan Center started its work in Afghanistan in 1991, focusing on training journalists and Voice of Afghan News Agency is one of its outputs.

Since the early 1990s, this group has trained

about 500 journalists, many of whom are active in various mediums in Afghanistan and the world," Hosseini Mazari said.

Also speaking at the event, Rahmati said that Tehran is one of the oldest and a leading English Daily in Iran, founded by Martyr Mohammad Beheshti in 1979 following the Islamic Revolution.

Rahmati underlined that according to the MoU, "we will help you and we expect you to help us in presenting the true image of Afghanistan.

I hope we can exchange at least 15 news with your news agency during the week".

The Afghan Voice Agency is currently active in Afghanistan as one of the important and influential



Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati (L) and Hojjatoleslam Issa Hosseini Mazari

news agencies, and all its news programs are directed through the central office in Kabul.

2 cinemas open in Khorasan Razavi Province

TEHRAN-Two cinemas have opened in Khorasan Razavi Province, one in the capital city Mashhad and one in Torbat-e Jam.

On Wednesday morning, Vahdat Cinema was inaugurated in Torbat-e Jam and in the afternoon, Melal Cineplex was launched in Mashhad in the presence of the director of Cinema Organization of Iran and a number of cultural

officials, Honaronline reported.

"In the past 1,000 days, a total of 293 cinema halls have been established across the country," Mohammad Khazei said at the opening ceremony of Vahdat Cinema. "There are now 860 cinema halls operating in Iran," he added.

"In Khorasan Razavi Province,

the number of cinema halls has increased from 41 to 83, indicating a rise over 100 percent," Khazei noted.

Also speaking at the inauguration ceremony of Melal Cineplex in Mashhad, the official said: "According to the programs, 40 more cinema halls will be launched across the country, bringing the overall number to 900".

Melal Cineplex includes five modern halls, with a total capacity of 600 seats. An open-air cinema will also be launched in August with a capacity of 400 seats.

The only cinema in Torbat-e Jam, with a population of 100,000 people, Vahdat Cinema can accommodate 262 people.

