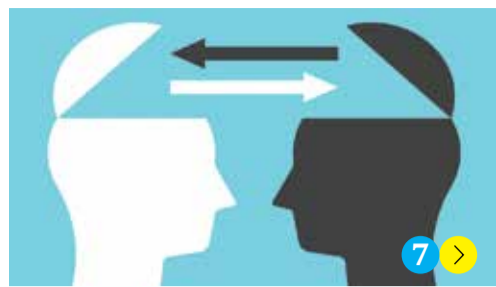
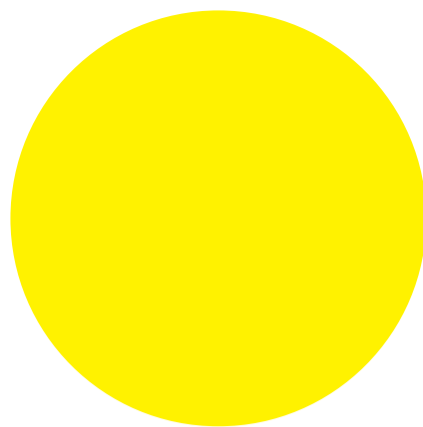


Criticism is nothing to be afraid of



Iranian artists making crafts in live workshops at Tehran Int'l Qur'an Exhibition



Iran Daily

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Iran, Saudi Arabia Resume Diplomatic Relations



Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (C) walks alongside Saudi Foreign Affairs Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan (L) before a meeting in Beijing, China, on April 6, 2023. IRNA

Rasht-Astara railway overhauls regional transit



EXCLUSIVE

Russia and Iran have recently finalized a comprehensive agreement to operationalize the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) rail line, which encompasses the Rasht-Astara railway. The agreement is expected to be formally signed within the next month. The Rasht-Astara railway constitutes the ultimate segment of the North-South Corridor rail line, which spans from the southern Iranian port

of Bandar Abbas to the northern frontier of Iran in the Astara region, covering a distance of 164 kilometers. The critical corridor will facilitate the transfer of goods from ships to rail, making it feasible to transport cargo all the way to the south of the country. This will considerably diminish the cost and time of transporting goods from the ports of East Asia to Europe by more than half. Furthermore, the conclusion of the North-South Corridor will elevate Iran's share of transit, predominantly in Caspian shipping, and position it as the hub of goods transit from southern countries to Europe. Page 6 >

Iran faces demographic shift as it rapidly ages



EXCLUSIVE

Iran is grappling with a significant demographic shift that has been the subject of hushed discussions for quite some time. The country's population is rapidly aging, and this fact has prompted officials to design various programs and laws to bolster the population. Experts who specialize in aging forecast that in less than 30 years, Iran will host around 20 million elderly individuals, which will comprise a quarter of the country's population. The growth rate of the elderly population is more than three times that of the overall population, creating an imperative for the government to take

measures to accommodate the needs and demands of this significant demographic. Qassem Abdollahzadeh, the head of the Secretariat of the National Council of the Elderly (SNCE), has been striving to address the needs of Iran's aging population. In an interview with Iran Daily, he highlighted the importance of empowering the elderly and the latest measures the secretariat has taken to achieve that objective. Abdollahzadeh says roughly 16 organizations and executive bodies are involved in preparing the so-called "National Document for the Elderly". Recently, these organizations attended a consensus meeting where they presented their reports. Page 7 >

COVID cases on the rise in Iran

National Desk

Following a long period of relative calm, Iran once again has seen a sharp rise in the number of COVID-19 cases in recent weeks. Figures released by the Iranian Health Ministry showed that 36 people lost their lives due to the coronavirus during a 24-hour period. COVID-19 has claimed the lives of more than 145,000 people in Iran since the pandemic began in 2019. The ministry also reported 1,064 new cases during the same period, of which more than half have been

hospitalized. A member of the country's taskforce to fight the disease has blamed the people for the rise in the numbers. Minou Mohraz believes that people are ignoring health protocols, including social distancing and wearing masks. In the last days of the Iranian year, which began on March 21, health experts warned about the increase in the number of coronavirus cases in the country. Payam Tabarsi, a member of the country's coronavirus taskforce, had earlier emphasized that the virus has not disappeared and

warned that the number of cases infected by Omicron subvariants, XBB and BQ1, is increasing in the country. Experts had also warned that gatherings and festivals at the end of the Iranian year, without observing health protocols, could cause an increase in the number of COVID cases. Iran has faced an increase in cases after every important event and various occasions. Experts had predicted the spike in cases after the Nowruz holidays, during which Iranians and their families meet their relatives.



IRNA

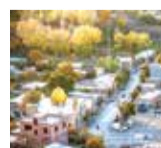
Israel's regional desperation



EXCLUSIVE

3 >

Amazing nature and urban planning of Hir attractive to tourists



4 >

Iran remains 24th in FIFA Ranking, second in Asia



5 >

Iran security chief had extensive de-dollarization talks with Putin: Report

Iran's top security official Ali Shamkhani and Russian President Vladimir Putin had extensive talks on de-dollarization of trade between the two countries during Shamkhani's visit to Moscow earlier this year, according to a report by Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, which is the Arabic service of the London-based website The New Arab. Iran's semi-official Fars news agency covered the report after it was released late on Wednesday and said that the hours-long, off-the-record meeting between Shamkhani and Putin early February was mostly focused on ini-

tiatives to offset the impacts of Western sanctions on both countries, including efforts to ditch the US dollar from bilateral trade. It said the two had agreed that Iran and Russia could increase the share of other major currencies, including the Chinese yuan, the Emirati dirham and the Indian rupee, in their foreign exchange reserves. The report said that the agreement was a base for Shamkhani's following consultations in China, the United Arab Emirates and Iraq to boost Iran's access to international trade.

Iranian, French top diplomats discuss bilateral ties in China

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and his French counterpart Catherine Colonna in a rare face-to-face meeting emphasized the necessity of mutual respect and the continuation of dialogue between the two countries. The meeting between Iranian and French top diplomats was held in China on Thursday as delegations from both countries were visiting the country. During the meeting, Amir-Abdollahian and Catherine Colonna also discussed various issues of

bilateral ties as well as regional and international issues. Catherine Colonna was traveling with President Emmanuel Macron on his state visit to China. Amir-Abdollahian was leading the Iranian delegation in separate reconciliation talks in Beijing between Iran and Saudi Arabia. China mediated the reconciliation last month. Iran's Foreign Ministry confirmed the meeting took place, adding that "some consular issues were also raised during the meeting," without elaborating.