

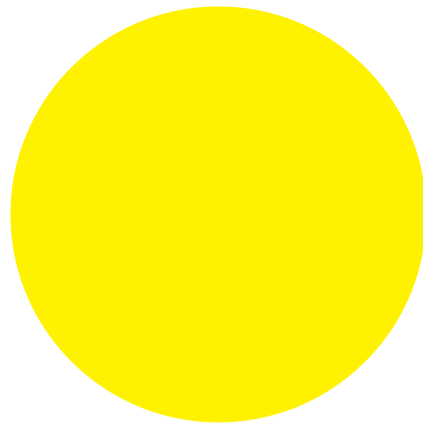
## Israel invited Reza Pahlavi to 'recruit him as its pawn'



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# Iran, Russia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan seal transit deal

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Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi (l) and his Cuban counterpart Miguel Diaz-Canel walk down the stairs at the Cuba's Palace of the Revolution after a ceremony during which both countries signed several cooperation deals in Havana, on June 15, 2023. [president.ir](http://president.ir)

## Raeisi: Bullying powers powerless against independent nations

### Iran, Cuba sign several cooperation agreements

#### International Desk

Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi said Tehran-Havana cooperation can create hope in independent nations, stressing that bullying powers are powerless against these nations, as he wrapped up a three-nation trip to Latin America. The Iranian president, who visited Cuba as the last stop on his tour to Latin America, held talks with

senior Cuban officials and participated in a trade forum in Havana on Thursday. During the forum, which was also attended by senior delegations of Iran and Cuba, Raeisi praised the growing cooperation between Tehran and Havana as a source of hope for independent nations and a cause of frustration for global imperialist powers. He asserted that the United States

and other bullying powers are powerless against independent nations. "Our cooperation in the path to progress can create hope in independent nations and despair among imperialists." President Raeisi referred to the resistance of the Iranian nation against sanctions and the U.S.'s so-called "maximum pressure" campaign, saying, "Iran considers relations with independent countries as one of the

ways to counter sanctions." The Iranian president said that activating the Joint Commission of Economic Cooperation can provide faster solutions for implementing the agreements already signed between the two sides. During the trip, both countries signed six agreements on judicial issues, political cooperation, customs and information technology.

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## Iranian diplomacy spans across continents

By Javad Mohammad Ali  
Staff writer



### OPINION

The conclusion of the president's visit to three South American nations, namely Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba, is followed by the arrival of Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, in Tehran today. On the eve of Farhan visit, an American official made an announcement regarding Bahrain's willingness to restore relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Prior to that, the sultan of Oman engaged in significant discussions with senior Iranian officials

during an important trip to Tehran. While President Raeisi was visiting South America, Ali Baqeri, Iran's deputy foreign minister and the chief negotiator for nuclear talks, traveled to the United Arab Emirates. Apart from meeting UAE officials, Baqeri also had discussions with counterparts from Britain, France and Germany. Tehran has emerged as a focal point for diplomatic consultations in recent times. These diplomatic engagements encompass a range of activities, from bilateral relations with neighboring countries to regional talks and the expansion of cooperation with East Asian nations.

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## Iranian oil quietly flooding into global market again



Iran is shipping the most crude in almost five years, fortifying its re-emergence on the geopolitical stage. Exports have surged to the highest level since US sanctions were re-imposed in 2018, according to a range of analysts including Kpler Ltd., SVB Energy International, FGE and the International Energy Agency. The vast majority is flowing to China – the world's biggest importer. Yet the extra supplies are sapping confidence in an oil market weakened by faltering economic growth and cheap Russian cargoes, frustrating efforts by Iran's partners in the OPEC+ alliance to put a floor under crude prices, Bloomberg reported. "Iran's crude exports smashed it last month," said Homayoun Falakshahi, a senior analyst at Kpler. "Iranian crude is extremely interesting for those willing to take the risk to buy."

Crude shipments have doubled since last autumn to reach 1.6 million barrels a day in May, even as American sanctions remain in place, according to the firm. Production has hit 2.9 million barrels a day, the highest since late 2018, the Paris-based IEA estimates. Yet additional shipments — adding to flows from two other OPEC+ members under sanctions, Russia and Venezuela — are already happening, hitting global oil markets. Iran's surge has undermined efforts to stabilize the market by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and its leader, Saudi Arabia, which this month announced a new production cutback of 1 million barrels a day, to little effect. Ever since US sanctions were reimposed five years ago, Iranian crude has been shipped to its few remaining buyers. Chinese refiners — especially smaller, independent companies in Shandong province — are ramping up purchases of Iranian cargoes, Kpler says. Iran's Deputy Oil Minister, Amir Hossein Zamani Nia, said on Friday sanctions imposed on Iran are aimed at disrupting the world's energy supply, stressing that Iran will definitely overcome those sanctions. He made the remarks in a conference celebrating the 60th founding anniversary of OPEC in Iraq's capital, Baghdad.



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## AEOI: Iran reactivates 10 IAEA cameras at Natanz nuclear site

The spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) said some 10 cameras of the UN nuclear watchdog have been reactivated at a centrifuge manufacturing site in the central province of Isfahan, as the two sides boost cooperation to resolve their differences. Speaking at a press conference on Thursday, Behrouz Kamalvandi said the cameras had been reactivated as part of a deal with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), but the data recorded on the camera would not be handed over until a final agreement is reached, Iran Front Page reported.

Kamalvandi said 29 cameras and the agency's devices were removed, and according to the agreement, about 10 cameras were reactivated in Natanz. Commenting about the agency's Israeli-inspired claims about what it calls nuclear activities at "undeclared" sites, Kamalvandi said the IAEA has no more questions about two of those sites. He said that Western states were trying to rid Iran of its capabilities in nuclear technology, but to no avail. "Iran's nuclear infrastructure, such as enrichment areas, heavy water, etc., has made great progress," he said.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran, U.S. 'close' on prisoner swap: **Oman**



IFP – Iran and the United States are close to finalizing a deal on the release of American inmates held in Tehran, Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Albusaidi told Al-Monitor. Albusaidi said in an interview Wednesday he senses "seriousness" on the part of both Washington and Tehran as their negotiators try to salvage the 2015 nuclear deal under which Iran agreed to curb its nuclear activity in exchange for sanctions relief.

"I can say they are close," Albusaidi said of a potential prisoner agreement. "This is probably a question of technicalities."

"They need to have a framework [and] a time-frame of how this should be orchestrated," he said of the frozen funds, noting, "I think they're ironing those things out."

Albusaidi also stated that there is a "positive atmosphere" surrounding the nuclear issue, adding that Muscat believes the Iranian leadership is serious about reaching an agreement.

"As long as the other side also reciprocates in good faith, they're willing to do this," he continued.

## Top Saudi diplomat to visit Iran today



PRESS TV – Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud will visit Iran today amid warming relations between the two Middle Eastern powers, official sources said.

Hours after the report, Iran's government spokesman Ali Bahadori Jahromi said the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Tehran will officially resume activities next Iranian week, which starts on Saturday.

Asked by reporters about the timing of the official re-opening of the Saudi Embassy, the spokesman said, "The Saudi foreign minister will be visiting Iran and will take a set of measures in that regard."

# Israel invited Reza Pahlavi to 'recruit him as its pawn'



Iran's former ambassador to Jordan, Mojtaba Ferdosipour (l.), speaks in a panel, titled "Israeli and Iran's Opposition," in Tehran on June 13, 2023. **TASNIM**

## International Desk

A distinguished panel of speakers gathered on Tuesday, June 13, 2023, to discuss the outcomes of the earlier visit of Reza Pahlavi, the son of Iran's ousted Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, to Israel and his subsequent meetings with Israeli officials.

The panel titled, "Israeli and Iran's Opposition," was organized by Tasnim news agency and the Tehran International Studies and Research Institute in Tehran. Among the speakers at the event were a number of the Islamic Republic's former diplomats, commanders of the Armed Forces, and analysts of regional affairs.

Mojtaba Ferdosipour, Iran's former ambassador to Jordan, came out of the gate swinging, claiming that each presidential candidate in the United States and France must first persuade the Zionists, guarantee to champion their interests, or, in the case of the U.S., address the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) pro-Israel lobbying group.

"That is why Reza Pahlavi, who had been trying to get recognized as the leader of the opposition, went to Israel to drum up their support,"



Reza Pahlavi, the son of Iran's last king, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, visits the Western Wall (Wailing Wall) in East Al-Quds on April 18, 2023. **Anadolu Agency**



he added. But what were the Israelis trying to get out of the visit? Ferdosipour believes, "The Zionists invited Pahlavi to officially recruit him as their pawn and characterize him as their approved figure under the Zionist framework of governance."

Giving a military perspective on the current state of Israel, Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Commander Hossein Kanaani-Moqaddam maintained that Israel is "at best a large military base, not a government or state," unlike what Reza Pahlavi might have imagined. "I believe the visit to Tel Aviv could be the final nail in Pahlavi's coffin," he said.

Building on what Kanaani-Moqaddam had said, Brigadier Gen-

eral Khodadad Fallah, the political deputy of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Army, stressed that Israel cannot launch a military attack against Iran, but its ally, the United States, can put the Islamic Republic under economic pressure. Nevertheless, Pahlavi put his efforts into bewitching the Armed Forces of Iran, especially the Army, to join the rioters, which, Fallah added, failed horribly as no one joined his misguided cause.

Reza Pahlavi, the son of the U.S.-backed former Shah of Iran, who fled the country in 1979, arrived in Israel on April 17. During the four-day trip, he met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Isaac Herzog, and a number of other officials.

The 62-year-old was received and accompanied throughout his visit by Israeli Intelligence Minister Gila Gamliel.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani was asked at the time if he would comment on the visit, to which he replied, "Neither the person you've mentioned [Pahlavi], nor the purpose of this trip, or the place he wants to travel to are worthy of discussion."

The panelists of the event also highlighted the importance of reinforcing the Palestinian Resistance Movement in its fight against the usurping Israeli regime, especially since "the Zionists are organizing and supporting riots in Iran to erode the Islamic Republic's support of the resistance."

## Iranian diplomacy spans ...

Additionally, Iran has signed cooperation agreements in South America. Moreover, Iranian diplomacy remains active on other fronts, including ongoing negotiations with the United States prisoner exchanges, the release of frozen Iranian assets abroad, and the nuclear issue. The forthcoming visit of the Saudi foreign minister to Iran is expected to pave the way for the strength-

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ening of political ties between Tehran and Riyadh, subsequently accelerating the process of regional de-escalation, aligning with the Islamic Republic's regional stance. Iran's international role is demonstrated through the continuation of nuclear talks, efforts to implement agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency, and even potential deals with the United States.

Presently, Iranian diplomacy spans from the East to the West, encompassing the West Asian region and extending to South America, with the aim of finding solutions and opportunities to address the country's economic challenges while enhancing political cooperation to safeguard national interests. The emphasis on the West Asian region and constructive dialogue serves to clear up misunderstandings and

promote mutual interests, forming the foundation for further consultations between Iran and the West. Furthermore, Western nations, including the United States, have realized that the Islamic Republic of Iran is not isolated under imposed pressure. Instead, they recognize that engaging in constructive dialogue, based on respect and reciprocity, is a more favorable option.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



## Raeisi: Bullying powers ...

Raeisi said Cuba and Iran would seek to work together in biotechnology, mining, electricity generation and other areas.

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"I hope this meeting will help facilitate integration as well as an exchange of ideas and opinions," Raeisi said.

After the forum, Raeisi and Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel toured biotechnology production plants in the western part of the capital, and then headed to a closed-door reception at Cuba's Palace of the Revolution.

Diaz-Canel hailed Raeisi's visit as "meaningful" and a sign of "common values and views" between the two states.

"The three countries that you chose as the destination for your regional trip have a meaningful relationship with the Iranian Revolution. I am confident that your visit to Cuba will be a turning point

in the history of relations between the two countries," he said.

"Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba and Iran are among the countries that have had to heroically confront sanctions (...) threats, blockades and interference by Yankee imperialism and its allies with a tenacious resistance," Diaz-Canel said.

Heading a high-ranking delegation, Raeisi arrived in Havana on Wednesday evening local time. Earlier, he had visited Venezuela and Nicaragua.

Raeisi also held talks with former Cuban president Raúl Castro.

During the meeting, Raeisi emphasized the importance of solidarity and cooperation among independent countries against imperialist powers, especially in light of recent developments in the international arena and the shift of the world order to a multilateral system.

# A glance at president's LatAm tour

Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi visited Nicaragua and Cuba as the second and third destinations of his first tour to Latin America. Earlier, he had visited Venezuela. The visit provided the president face-to-face time with the leaders of the three countries, each of whom signed documents to expand bilateral cooperation with Iran.



President Raeisi and his Cuban counterpart look on as foreign ministers of the two countries, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (L) and Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla sign agreements during a meeting at the Palace of the Revolution in Havana, on June 15, 2023.



A group of Nicaraguan youths attend a welcoming ceremony for President Raeisi in Managua, on June 13, 2023.



President Raeisi (L) holds talks with Raul Castro, former Cuban president, in Havana, Cuba, on June 15, 2023.



The Iranian president pays tribute to the late leaders of the Nicaraguan revolution by laying a wreath at Revolution Square in Managua on June 13, 2023.



Iranian President Raeisi visits the Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CGB) in Havana, Cuba, on June 15, 2023.



Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega (L) shakes hands with his Iranian counterpart during a welcoming ceremony in Managua on June 13, 2023.



President Raeisi is officially welcomed by his Cuban counterpart, Miguel Diaz-Canel, in the Cuban capital of Havana, on June 15, 2023.



President Raeisi delivers a speech to a group of Nicaraguan youths after the official welcoming ceremony by President Daniel Ortega in Managua on June 13, 2023.

# Semnan Province, a center of handicraft production in Iran

## Iranica Desk

Handicrafts are a tool reflecting the identity and history of every nation. The artworks give their creators a sense of pride and cause them to feel a strong attachment to their motherland.

The status of handicrafts is so high that the International Craft Day (also known as World Craft Day) has been marked on 15th October every year to acknowledge world crafts and the tireless work of millions of craftspeople and artisans across the globe, ISNA wrote.

The central Iranian province of Markazi, with a rich history, is among the regions in which a variety of handicrafts are being produced.

Today, a large number of craftspeople create valuable artworks in the province, individually or in a workshop group.

Haj Vakil Castle, in the capital city of Arak, dating back to the Qajar era, is not only a historically significant monument, but also serves as a dynamic museum which contains several handicraft workshops.

The castle was sold to Hassan Vakil after the Second World War II, which is why it is called Vakil Castle.

The castle has various sections, including an entrance porch, outer and inner courtyards, a basement and a building known as Kolah Farangi. The monument, decorated with beautiful brick and tile work, was registered on Iran's National Heritage List in 1996.

Zeinab Karami, a museum guide working in the castle, told ISNA that a collection

of outstanding traditional handicrafts, including handwoven carpets, kilims, calligraphy and *qalam-zani* (engraving) are on display in the castle.

She said that the museum, extending in an area of 300 sq. m, has nine rooms showcasing various types of artworks.

Five workshops, active in the fields of manufacturing wood and leather products, glass painting, *mina-kari* (painting and coloring the surfaces of metals and ceramic tiles), pottery and ceramics, are in the basement of the building.

Deputy Head of Markazi Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, Qassem Kazemi, said that about 9,000 craftspeople are active in the province in 110 fields of handicrafts. He noted that the largest number of artists are involved in pottery production, *qalam-zani*, weaving traditional textiles, and making wood products.

Kazemi noted that a number of forgotten handicrafts have been revived in the province in recent years, adding that Arak and Tafresh have a long history in the field of metalworking.

He said that in addition to artists who work independently, over 60 handicraft workshops are operating in the province, in each of which two to five people are active.

Kazemi noted that nine handicraft markets are active across the province, pointing out that the 15th handicrafts exhibition will be held in the province in October.



Haj Vakil Castle  
ISNA

## Chahar Bagh Avenue in Isfahan dates back to Safavid era

One of the world's first boulevards, Chahar Bagh Avenue, was among the earliest creations of Safavid Shah Abbas I in Isfahan. Its construction started as soon as Isfahan was chosen as the capital city (1501 CE), and completed in 1598.

It started at the magnificent palace of the Jahan Nama, which occupied the site of the city's present municipality until 1890, and stretched to the

foot of the Soffeh Mountain. The splendid Allahverdi Khan Bridge connected the street at the point where it was interrupted by the Zayandehrud (River). The name of the street (in Persian meaning "Four Gardens") is derived from the four vineyards that originally bordered the street. Also, four rows of plane trees were planted along both of the avenue's sides, vipemo.com wrote.

During the reign of Shah Abbas

I and his Safavid successors, Chahar Bagh Avenue (particularly at its lower section) was a promenade for the royal family and court. It was enclosed by wooden fretted walls of medium height, broken at even intervals by gates.

Most of the gates led to shady orchards that stretched along the street. At the center of the avenue was a canal, and water dropped in little cascades from them. Now and again, this

water was collected in large basins, some of which also had fountains. In the summer months, these tanks were often filled with cut roses, which floated on the water, filling the air with their fragrance.

On both sides of the canal wide sidewalks for pedestrians and horsemen were laid out, and flowerbeds enhanced the beauty of the street. As attested to by all visitors to Safavid Isfahan, in its heyday Chahar

Bagh was one of the world's most magnificent streets.

During the Safavid period, Chahar Bagh Avenue was reserved on Wednesdays for women. They strolled, picnicked, and went shopping, while eunuchs prevented men from entering the street. All the shopkeepers and servants on those days were also women.

After the Safavid rule, another Chahar Bagh Street was laid out by the Qajar governors,

while the trees of the original Chahar Bagh were cut down and sold for wood.

Although trees were soon replanted, the street never regained its original splendor. Today, it is an ordinary street, defaced by low buildings that are characteristic of modern shopping streets in Iranian cities.

However, one set of buildings from the Safavid period has survived.



# Persepolis, Sepahan among four Iranian clubs in AFC Champions League

## Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League champion Persepolis will be joined by Sepahan, Nassaji Mazandaran, and Tractor in the next AFC Champions League (ACL) season.

The Asian Football Federation on Thursday unveiled the eligible teams for the continent's elite clubs competition and the four Iranian sides as well as Golgozar Sirjan and Foolad Khuzestan were "licensed with sanctions." Two-time Asian champion Esteghlal, which lifted the Iranian top-flight trophy in the 2021/22 season, was excluded from the prestigious tournament after failing to meet the AFC's club licensing requirements.

Persepolis, Sepahan, and Nassaji are awarded a direct slot in the group stage of the event, while Tractor will have to secure a group berth through the playoff round.

A run of seven successive wins saw Persepolis pip Sepahan to the league title by a single point in May – the Reds' sixth Pro League crown in seven years – before Yahya Golmohammadi's men defeated archrival Esteghlal 2-1 in extra time for the Iranian Hazfi Cup trophy, completing a second domestic league and cup double in four years. The Tehran Reds – ACL fi-



● ALI SHARIFZADE/IRNA

nalist in 2018 and 2020 – will be back in the competition after missing out on the last edition due to club licensing shortcomings. Sepahan, beaten in the 2007 final, represented the country last season, only to see its campaign come to an end in the group stage.

Minnaw side Nassaji, which only won promotion to the domestic top-tier league in 2018, is gearing up for a maiden international appearance, thanks to a Hazfi Cup triumph in 2022 – a first trophy in the 64-year history of the northern Iranian club.

Tractor, meanwhile, will replace Esteghlal at the event courtesy of a fourth-spot finish in the league, which came after an impressive run under Spanish head coach Paco Jémez in the second half of the campaign.

The Tabriz-based club will host the winner of the pre-

liminary-round encounter between the Emirati club Sharjah and Bangladesh's Bashundhara Kings in a west region playoff on August 22.

The new season of the AFC Champions League will be staged across dual calendar years for the first time, with the group stage tak-

ing place from September 18 to December 13.

The expanded event will see 40 teams being divided across 10 groups in the west and east regions.

The knockout stage will be held from February 12 to April 24, 2024, before the two-legged final is staged on May 11 and 18, 2024.

## Hamilton backs Verstappen to beat his F1 race win record



● XPB IMAGES

THE GUARDIAN – Lewis Hamilton believes Max Verstappen could eclipse his Formula One record of 103 race wins.

The British driver acknowledged that Verstappen and his Red Bull team are in a position to chase down his remarkable tally but said he hoped to be able to further extend his lead, perhaps even at the British Grand Prix at Silverstone in three races time.

Hamilton was speaking before this weekend's Canadian Grand Prix, where Verstappen is odds-on to secure his 41st victory, matching Ayrton Senna's wins. When asked if the Dutchman could yet equal or surpass his own record, Hamilton was unequivocal.

"He has got a very long career ahead of him so absolutely," he said. "Records are there to be broken and he has got an amazing team." However the seven-time champion also insisted he and his Mercedes team would be unstinting in their efforts to return to the top step of the podium. "We have to work harder to try and continue to extend [the win record]," he added. "I hope that at least within the last period of time in my career we get to have some close racing."

After a very strong result at the last round in Spain, Hamilton indicated that he was optimistic regarding further upgrades, so much so that Mercedes could challenge the Red Bulls at Silverstone on 9 July. "I am really, really hopeful," he said. "The performance we had in Spain, each lap I was only about three-tenths off Max, which is the closest we have been this year. I am hoping by Silverstone we would have taken another step so I am hopeful maybe that will be a race where we can actually race them."

Hamilton also played down expectations of an announcement of a renewal of his contract with Mercedes, which ends this year, but did indicate his intent was very much that it was to be concluded. "It will get done when it is done, if that's next week or a month's time as long as it gets done I am not really bothered," he said.

Verstappen has five wins already this year, in what is proving to be an utterly dominant Red Bull car and leads the world championship by 53 points from his teammate Sergio Pérez. Hamilton is in fourth, 83 points back.

# Man United negotiating exclusivity with Qatari bidder in \$6B-plus sale talks

REUTERS – English football club Manchester United is negotiating granting exclusivity to the consortium led by Qatar's Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani in talks to sell itself for more than \$6 billion, people familiar with the matter said on Thursday.

While a deal remains uncertain, the development represents a major milestone in the efforts of Sheikh Jassim – the son of Qatar's former prime minister who is one of the richest men in the Persian Gulf state – to take over the iconic sports brand.

Members of the Glazer family, who own minority stakes in Manchester United and control it thanks to a dual-class share structure, would be cashing out as part of the proposed deal, one of the sources said.

The Qatari offer is currently viewed by the Glazers more favorably than a bid from British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe, founder of chemicals producer INEOS, the sources added. Ratcliffe's offer envisions that the Glazers would keep some interest in Manchester

United.

Manchester United would not be allowed to negotiate with any bidder other than Sheikh Jassim for the exclusivity period. It could not be learned how long this period may last. The sources cautioned that the situation remained fluid and a new bid from Ratcliffe could prevent Sheikh Jassim from securing exclusivity.

The sources requested anonymity because the matter is confidential. Representatives for Manchester United and Sheikh Jassim did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Shares of Manchester United jumped as much as 15% on the news and ended trading in New York on Thursday up 6.8% at \$24.81.

A \$6 billion-plus deal for Manchester United would be one of the biggest ever in the sports world, following a similarly sized sale of the National Football League's Washington Commanders earlier this year.

It would also represent



● manutd.com

a significant premium to other soccer deals. Last year, the \$3.1 billion acquisition of Chelsea Football Club by an investment group led by Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital valued it at 5.7 times revenue for its last financial year. A sale for more than \$6 billion would value Manchester United at more than 10 times last year's annual revenue, according to Refinitiv data.

The Glazer family, which made its fortune in real estate, retail and healthcare and also owns the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers, bought the team for 790 million pounds (\$1 billion) in 2005.

Record 20-time English champions, Manchester United has over 650 million fans worldwide, according to market research firm Kantar. A large number of them have been

clamoring for a change of ownership.

That is because the Glazers have overseen a significant downturn in the club's fortunes, with the club winning just the last of their 20 top-flight titles in former manager Alex Ferguson's final season in charge in 2012-13.

Manchester United won the League Cup under Erik ten Hag this season, but

their third-place finish in the league, 14 points behind local rivals and treble winners Manchester City, underscores the scale of the turnaround required. While a section of supporters may view the deep pockets of a new Qatari owner as the quickest way to shrink the gap between United and Abu Dhabi-backed Manchester City, others have expressed "deep concern" at Qatar's human rights record.

Several Middle Eastern nations have made huge investments in sport in recent years, leading to criticism that they are trying to "sportswash" their images.

Qatar hosted football's showcase event, the World Cup, in 2022, while state-run Qatar Sport Investments (QSI) owns Ligue 1 club Paris St Germain.

Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) bankrolls the breakaway LIV Golf Series, which recently agreed to merge with the PGA Tour, as well as Premier League team Newcastle United.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

## ECB hikes interest rate to 22-year high



AFP – The European Central Bank said eurozone inflation was still too elevated as it hiked interest rates for an eighth consecutive time to a two-decade high, despite a darkening economic outlook.

The ECB increased rates by another 25 basis points, taking the closely-watched deposit rate to 3.50 percent -- its highest level since 2001.

"Inflation has been coming down but is projected to remain too high for too long," the ECB said in a statement.

## Intel to invest up to \$4.6b in Poland site



GETTY IMAGES  
CNBC – US chip giant Intel will invest up to \$4.6 billion to build a new site in Poland, creating around 2,000 jobs, the company said Friday.

Its new facility, to be located in the southern Polish city of Wrocław, "will help meet critical demand for assembly and test capacity that Intel anticipates by 2027," Intel said in a statement.

## China takes next step in currency globalization



REUTERS – China's gradual internationalisation of its currency will shift to its next leg on Monday when about two dozen Chinese companies start trading in their home currency in Hong Kong's stock market. Hong Kong stocks such as Alibaba and Tencent are among the 24 stocks which will be priced and traded in both yuan and the Hong Kong dollar under the Dual Counter Model on the Hong Kong stock exchange from Monday.

## Iran, Russia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan seal transit deal



Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash attends the 26th Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) on June 15, 2023.  
IRNA

## Economy Desk

A transit agreement was concluded by Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Russia and Iran during the visit of Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash to Russia, aimed at attending the 26th Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF). According to Bazrpash, pursuing bilateral agreements and speeding up the completion of the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC) were the most important goals of his participation in SPIEF this year, IRNA reported. Participating in a meeting with the Russian Minister of Transportation and bilateral meetings with some officials of the coun-

tries were also among the programs of the Iranian minister in Russia.

On his visit to Russia, Bazrpash was accompanied by a senior delegation including the head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO), and the head of the country's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO). During the SPIEF summit, business-to-business (B2B) meetings were held between senior transport officials of the two countries to discuss issues related to the INSTC, transit, ports, and air transportation cooperation.

Given the geographical location of Iran and its connection to the Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, many countries have shown keenness

to establish cooperation with Iran in the transportation and transit sectors, according to Bazrpash.

An investment and Business exhibition was also held as part of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. The exhibition is a platform for constructive dialogue, searching for solutions, consolidating efforts, and fostering the exchange of experience among the forum participants.

The SPIEF has been held annually since 1997 and is a major business event in the world. Over the past 25 years, the forum has cemented its status as a leading international event focusing on key issues on the global economic agenda.

## Iran reports historic surge in manufacturing activity

Iran has reported a historic record in the output of its large manufacturing sector for the year to late March. Figures by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) cited in a Thursday report by IRNA showed that a CBI index that measures activity in Iran's large manufacturing plants had increased by 9.6% in the year to March 20 compared to the year before.

"... it rose to the highest level in the history of the country's manufacturing production," said the report, adding that CBI's Large Manufacturing Index had risen by 3.1%, 13.2%, 9.5% and 12.8%, respectively, year on year over the four quarters of the past calendar year.

The figures covered industrial activity in some 2,400 factories with more than 100 employees across Iran. It said the size of output in large plants had increased in 23 out of 24 manufacturing categories surveyed by the CBI, adding that 16 of those categories had reported double-digit growth compared to the year to March 2022.

Iranian motor vehicle industries were the best performers in the survey in the year to late March with some 31.8% of growth in their output, said the report.

Iran has increasingly relied on manufacturing in plans to diversify the economy away from oil as the country seeks to offset the impact American sanctions on its crude oil exports.

Experts say the policy has also helped Iran overcome its employment problems while leading to increased presence of the country's private sector in major investment and development projects.



IRNA

## Iran elected head of ILO Asia-Pacific group



mcls.gov.ir

## Economy Desk

In a meeting of the labor ministers of member countries of the Asia-Pacific region, Iran was elected as head and coordinator of Asia-Pacific Group (ASPAG) at the International Labor Organization (ILO).

In this expert-level meeting, headed by the Philippines as the current coordinator of the region, the candidacy of Iran was raised for this position and it was unanimously approved by the member countries, according to mcls.gov.ir.

In the tripartite system of the International Labor Organization, the governments are organized within the framework of four regional groups: Asia

and Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Africa, and play a key role in the decision-making assemblies. The regional coordinators are responsible for forging relations of the organization with member states and also representatives of countries of respective regions in decision-making meetings including screening group meetings, the Board of Directors' meetings, and specialized meetings of the International Labor Conference.

## Multilateralism priority

Meanwhile, Ali-Hossein Raeiati-Fard, the deputy labor minister, said realizing social justice in the world requires respect for

multilateralism and relying on cooperative and collective approaches.

Speaking at the meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland, Raeiati-Fard added that the devastating effects of COVID-19 have emerged in the areas of work, economy, unstable supply chains, insufficient social security and support systems, poverty and inequality.

Stating that according to the global employment and social outlook report, the Asia-Pacific region's labor market is still far from the pre-crisis situation, Raeiati-Fard said the employment rate per population and the total working hours in the region are still lower than the pre-COVID period in 2019.

## Iran to supply 200k cars to Venezuela in five years

Iran will supply 200,000 cars to Venezuela under a

five-year deal signed during a trip by Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi to the South American country earlier this week.

CEO of Iran's second largest car manufacturer Saipa said that the memorandum of understating signed a day earlier between him and Venezuelan industry ministry authorities would cover exports of finished cars from Iran as well as



IRNA

cars manufactured in a joint plant in the country, reported Press TV.

Mohammad-Ali Teymouri said that Saipa will supply a first batch of 2,000 cars to Venezuelan customers within the next few months.

Teymouri said that authorities of the two countries had also agreed to restore manufacturing at a plant operated by Venezuelan Iranian Automotive Compa-

ny (Venirauto), a company in Venezuela which has remained inactive since 2015. He said the launch of operations at the plant, where Saipa and Iran's largest carmaker IKCO own 36% of the shares, would allow Iran to expand its presence in the Latin American car market. The CEO said Saipa would also work to revive another car factory in Venezuela, which is focused on produc-

tion of commercial vehicles and trucks, after some nine years of inactivity.

Iran and Venezuela have joined ranks in their efforts to counter the American sanctions targeting their economies.

The two countries signed contracts worth nearly \$20 billion during a two-day visit by Raeisi to Venezuelan capital Caracas that ended on Tuesday.

# Air pollution costs Iran \$7 billion a year

## Social Desk

Mohammadreza Masjedi, Secretary General of the World Union to Fight Lung Diseases, announced at the 33rd Annual Congress of the Society of Internal Medicine Specialists that air pollution is the fourth leading cause of death in Iran, costing \$7 billion annually. Approximately 20,000 lives are lost each year due to air pollutants, with motorcycles being the primary contributor to air pollution in the country. Masjedi cited recent research indicating that air pollution claims 9 million lives worldwide each year, with one in nine people succumbing to air pollution-related issues. One-third of stroke-related deaths are also attributed to air pollution. In 2021-2022, 27 Iranian cities experienced air pollution levels exceeding permissible limits, with some cases reaching three times the acceptable threshold. The most polluted cities include Tehran, Ahvaz, Mashhad, Tabriz, Shiraz, Isfahan, Ilam,

Sanandaj, Khorramabad, Arak, Karaj, Kermanshah, Abadan, Shahr-e Kord, Yazd, Urmia, Kerman, Qazvin, Birjand, Qom, Zabol, Bojnord, Zanjan, Bushehr, Ardabil, Zahedan, Dezful. The CEO of the National Network for the Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases identified motorcycles and worn-out cars as the leading causes of air pollution in Iran. Worn-out cars produce 25 times more pollution than Euro 2 cars, and approximately 45 percent of the country's vehicles are outdated. Motorcycles emit four times more pollution than cars, with over 90 percent being carbureted and 86 percent considered worn out. Iran is home to 219 motorcycle manufacturers, most of which produce gasoline and non-standard models. According to the Ministry of Health, 20,000 deaths in Iran are attributed to air pollution each year, with over half of the population exposed to polluted air. In Tehran alone, more than 3,700 people die annually due to air pollution, resulting in \$2.3 billion in



damages. Masjedi noted that 20 percent of lung cancer cases are linked to air pollution, with diesel fuel burning during cold seasons contributing to increased pollution levels and related deaths. To combat air pollution,

Masjedi emphasized the importance of implementing the Clean Air Law, approved in 2016, but not yet seriously enforced. Proposed solutions include developing urban transportation, promoting cycling culture, stringent

vehicle emissions testing, renewing taxi fleets, relocating polluting factories, improving gasoline quality, expanding urban green spaces, encouraging electric vehicle use, preventing fuel oil burning, and installing particulate

filters and vehicle catalyst recovery systems. Masjedi advised the public to consume antioxidant-rich foods, such as vegetables, fruits, almonds, milk, and other dairy products, to protect against the effects of air pollution.

FARS

## World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is: A call to rethink our relationship with land and water



By Ali Amiri  
Staff writer

There are many villages, even cities, scattered throughout our country Iran and the rest of the world that are struggling to survive. Their once-fertile land has turned to dust, and the once-abundant water sources have dried up. The villagers and city dwellers, amounting to millions the world over, are on the frontlines of a battle against desertification and drought. Today, on World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, we should be reminded, more than ever, of the urgent need to address these pressing issues. Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1994, this annual event aims to raise awareness about the global challenges of desertification, land degradation, and drought,

and to promote sustainable land management practices. The significance of this day cannot be overstated. According to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), over 1.3 billion people are directly affected by desertification and drought, with millions more at risk. These issues contribute to food insecurity, poverty, and forced migration, exacerbating existing social and political tensions. "Desertification is the process by which fertile land becomes degraded and turns into desert-like conditions," explains Mehdi Pedram, an engineer of agriculture, who has spent four years battling the phenomena in the southern parts of Dasht-e Kavir in central Iran. "The primary dangers associated with desertification include loss of agricultural productivity, food insecurity, water scarcity, increased greenhouse gas emissions, loss of biodiversity, and forced migration." Many experts believe that these issues can exacerbate existing social, economic, and political tensions. As we face the growing threat of climate change, it is crucial that we rethink our relationship with land and water. "If we fail to address desertification and climate

change, we can expect an increase in the frequency and severity of droughts, further land degradation, and a decline in agricultural productivity," Pedram points out, further warning, "This will lead to greater food insecurity, increased poverty, and more forced migration." Additionally, he mentions that the loss of vegetation and soil carbon due to desertification can further contribute to climate change, creating a vicious cycle. To understand the gravity of the situation, we must first recognize the interconnectedness of land, water, and human well-being. Land degradation, often caused by unsustainable agricultural practices, deforestation, and overgrazing, leads to a loss of fertile soil and vegetation. This, in turn, disrupts the natural water cycle, resulting in reduced rainfall and increased evaporation, ultimately leading to drought. As the UNCCD states, "By 2025, two-thirds of the world's population could be living under water-stressed conditions." This alarming projection underscores the need for a paradigm shift in how we manage our land and water resources. One such shift involves embracing the concept of "land stewardship." This

approach emphasizes the importance of preserving and restoring the health of our ecosystems, recognizing that the well-being of both people and the planet are inextricably linked. Land stewardship encourages sustainable land management practices, such as agroforestry, conservation agriculture, and integrated water resource management. "There are several strategies that can be employed to combat desertification," notes Pedram, as he further elaborates, "These include sustainable land management practices, such as agroforestry, conservation agriculture, and integrated water resource management." The expert explains that these practices not only help combat desertification and drought but also provide a range of co-benefits, including increased biodiversity, improved soil fertility, and enhanced carbon sequestration. By adopting land stewardship principles, we can work towards a more resilient and sustainable future. Another critical aspect of rethinking our relationship with land and water is addressing the issue of water scarcity. As the global population continues to grow, so too does the demand



for water. This increased demand, coupled with the impacts of climate change, has led to a growing water crisis. To tackle this challenge, we must prioritize water conservation and efficiency measures. This includes investing in water-saving technologies, such as drip irrigation and rainwater harvesting systems, as well as promoting water-efficient practices at the household level. Furthermore, we must recognize the importance of transboundary water cooperation. With over 60 percent of the world's freshwater resources shared by two or more countries, effective water management requires international collaboration. By working together, countries can develop

equitable and sustainable solutions to water scarcity, ensuring that no one is left behind. As we mark World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, let us remember the millions of our compatriots and other people around the world who are directly affected by these issues and the countless others who are at risk. Let us commit to rethinking our relationship with land and water, embracing sustainable practices, and working together to build a more resilient and just world. "Individuals and communities can play a significant role in combating desertification," the young engineer says. "At the local level, communities can adopt sustainable land management practices, such as planting

trees, practicing crop rotation, and implementing water-saving techniques. They can also engage in environmental education and awareness-raising activities to promote a better understanding of the issue and the importance of sustainable land and water management." Individuals can contribute by making more environmentally conscious choices, such as reducing water waste, supporting sustainable agriculture, and advocating for policies that address desertification and climate change. In the words of the UNCCD, "Our future starts with land." It is time for us to heed this call and take action to protect and restore the very foundation of our existence.



## Iran attending 29th Beijing Int'l Book Fair after five years



Arts & Culture Desk

IRNA – After a five-year hiatus caused by the global coronavirus pandemic, Iran has made a remarkable comeback at the 29th Beijing International Book Fair.

Iran's House of Books and Literature is proudly showcasing a collection of over 300 titles that span a wide range of subjects, including Iranian studies, religion, contemporary and classical literature, literature of the Sacred Defense (Iran-Iraq War), children's and young adult literature, as well as various forms of art. Notably, Soureh Mehr Publishing House, Nakhle Sabz Publication, and Mehrestan Publication are actively participating in this prestigious exhibition. In addition to these esteemed publishers, the Al-Mustafa International University and the Cultural Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran have set up a booth at the event, offering translated editions of significant religious and literary works in the Chinese language.

The Beijing International Book Fair, which commenced on June 15, has drawn participants from 56 countries and regions, spanning a four-day duration. This highly anticipated event, held both physically and virtually, boasts a staggering 2,500 exhibitors who collectively present over 200,000 books in Chinese and other languages to the visitors.

## Banksy first solo art exhibition



THE GUARDIAN – Graffiti artist Banksy announced his first solo exhibition in 14 years titled 'CUT & RUN: 25 years card labour'.

The exhibition will open at the Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art on June 18. It will showcase works from across Banksy's career, stretching from 1998 to 2023. New stencil versions of some of his famous pieces along with the original sketches behind them will be featured as well as some which have never previously been seen. A few of Banksy's famous pieces such as 'Girl With a Balloon' will be on view.

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# Minister: Prominent dignitaries connect past and future generations of cultural heritage

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Tourism Minister, Ezzatollah Zarghami, underscored the pivotal role played by distinguished personalities, celebrities, and prominent dignitaries in bridging the gap between past and future generations, acting as custodians of our national and religious cultural values.

Zarghami made these remarks during a ceremony held on Thursday to honor notable figures in the field of cultural heritage, highlighting that paying homage to such individuals is equal to honoring Iran's cultural legacy and national identity, IRNA wrote. Emphasizing the significance of these iconic figures, Zarghami asserted that they serve as guiding lights, leading us towards national and religious virtues and values. These luminaries have dedicated their illustrious lives to this noble path, driven by a profound understanding and unwavering belief, and have nurtured countless students who have become a source of immense



pride for the nation. The minister stressed the imperative of media initiatives to promote and showcase the richness of Iran's cultural heritage, lamenting the insufficient efforts in properly introducing these invaluable treasures to the world. He stated, "We have not been able to adequately showcase these cultural gems as we ought to."

Furthermore, Zarghami accentuated the vast scope of Iran's cultural heritage, pointing out that alongside the 3,000 registered intangible cultural elements and the 21 globally recognized heritage sites, which reflect the rituals, ceremonies, and historical skills of the Iranian people, there are also 35,000 registered works that hold profound significance and

tangibility rooted in our cultural and intangible beliefs. Highlighting the harmony between Iran's intangible heritage and the teachings and culture of Islam, Zarghami clarified, "A substantial portion of our intangible heritage aligns seamlessly with the principles and values of Islam. There exists no contradiction. Many of our national

cultural traits beautifully embody the pure tenets of our Islamic heritage and monotheistic worldview." The ceremony paid tribute to several prominent dignitaries, including Mahmoud Taleqani, Abdolhossein Vakili-Fard, and Rasoul Vatandoust, whose contributions were commemorated and celebrated as an integral part of Iran's cultural tapestry.

## Iranian director Bahrololumi intends to make film on mathematician Mirzakhani



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian director Maryam Bahrololumi expressed a profound interest in creating a film centered around the life of renowned Iranian mathematician Maryam Mirzakhani. Bahrololumi believes that one of the most enduring portrayals of women in Iranian cinema is exemplified

by the film 'Narges,' crafted by the director Rakhshan Banietemad, IRNA wrote. According to Bahrololumi, the longevity of a cinematic heroine depends on various factors, including the depth of character development and the director's ability to capture the essence of that heroine. "Narges,' featuring the brilliant performance of Firouzeh Farjam, stands as a shining example of female characters in our cinema, not only leaving a lasting impression on me but also resonating with my generation. This film encompasses all these facets," she noted. Discussing the disparity

between Iranian and international female heroes in cinema, Bahrololumi explained that numerous aspects contribute to this difference, but the most significant factor lies in the Iranian culture. "Undoubtedly, Iranian culture encompasses a wide range of elements that can be explored individually. However, the intrinsic emotional value attributed to Iranian women within our culture, particularly as mothers and sisters, holds immense importance. This aspect of Iranian women holds great significance for me personally, and it is a characteristic I aspire to

portray in my desired cinema," she added. Emphasizing her point, she added, "A heroine in cinema is not necessarily a victim of oppression. Rather, a female hero is a woman who can conquer the peaks of adversity and injustice, pursuing her goals for a better life and the tranquility of her family. She persistently strives towards achieving her aspirations and desires." Bahrololumi continued, stating, "A heroine pursues her goals and aspirations regardless of the circumstances. This definition aligns with the general understanding of a hero in

cinema. When we aim to transform a woman into a hero in our films, she is undoubtedly not exempt from this universal definition. Such a hero, without succumbing to issues related to gender and discrimination, progresses along her path to achieve her objectives." Born in 1977, Mirzakhani grew up in Tehran. In 1994, Mirzakhani earned a gold medal at the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO), the first female Iranian student to do so. In 2014, Mirzakhani became both the first woman and the first Iranian to be honored with the Fields Medal.

PIC OF THE DAY

Masterful Iranian craftspeople skillfully weave intricate traditional wicker baskets and an array of captivating artifacts, showcasing their artistry during the splendid 3rd National Wicker Festival held in the enchanting Fashtakeh Village, nestled in the northern region of Gilan Province. This captivating display of talent took place on June 16, 2023, immersing visitors in the rich cultural heritage of Iran.

