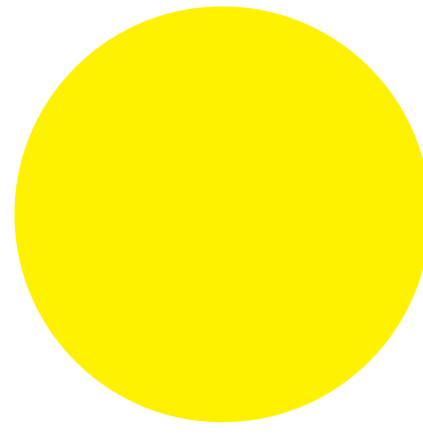




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Iran Daily



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CBI: Iran's annual economic growth at 4%

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An explosive charge left by Palestinians detonates before an Israeli armored vehicle during an Israeli army raid in Jenin in the occupied West Bank on June 19, 2023. **JAAFAR ASHTIYEH/AFP**

Raeisi: Palestinians' resistance brings them closer to victory 'day by day'

International Desk

The leaders of Palestinian resistance groups held talks on Monday with top Iranian officials in Tehran as new Israeli violence against Palestinians claimed the lives of five Palestinians.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi met with Islamic Jihad chief Ziyad al-Nakhalah while Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh held talks with Ali Akbar Ahmadi-

an, the newly-appointed secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC). "The most effective way to end the more than 75 years of occupation of Palestine is resistance," Ahmadian told Haniyeh, who arrived in Iran on Monday at the head of a large delegation. Nakhalah has been in Iran since last week and has met top Iranian officials, including the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatol-

lah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and President Raeisi. On Monday, Raeisi told Nakhalah that Israel was seeking to normalize ties with more Arab and Muslim countries "to discourage young Palestinians from [seeking to] liberate the occupied territories," the president's office said in a statement, as he hailed Palestinian "resistance" against Israel. In 2020, Israel established diplomatic ties with the

United Arab Emirates, Morocco and Bahrain under the Abraham Accords, brokered by the United States. Saudi Arabia has declined to recognize Israel. Raeisi insists that acts of resistance by brave Palestinians have brought them ever closer to triumph over the occupying Israeli regime. "With Jihad and resistance, we will approach victory day by day," Raeisi said. The president reiterated the Islamic Republic's sup-

port for the oppressed Palestinian nation and their "just cause," which he said "remains the cause of all Muslims." The Iran-Palestinian talks coincided with Israeli forces launching a raid on Jenin in the West Bank on Monday. The raid left five Palestinians dead and saw five Israeli border police and two soldiers injured. Iran is a staunch supporter of the Palestinians and does not recognize Israel.

Raeisi's possible visit to Saudi Arabia a game changer

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan became the first high-ranking official from his country to travel to Iran in seven years. The visit garnered attention not only from the regional media but also from international analysts and governments at regional and global levels. In order to gain deeper insights into the various dimensions of the landmark visit, Iran Daily spoke with Reza Sadrolhosseini, an expert in regional affairs.



INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

IRAN DAILY: Farhan's visit to Iran has received diverse and extensive coverage in both the regional and international media. How do you interpret such media reporting?

SADROLHOSSEINI: Considering the significant power and influence held by Iran and Saudi Arabia, two prominent countries on either side of the Persian Gulf, the renewal of diplomatic relations and the Saudi foreign minister's visit to Iran were bound to attract massive coverage. However, the media attention to this news has varied between regional and international outlets. Israeli and Western outlets, known for their opposition toward Iran, openly expressed their concerns regarding this visit. These concerns stem from several factors including a potential reduction in arms sales to Middle Eastern countries as Tehran and Riyadh further develop ties. **Page 2** >

Iran's economic diplomacy in full force

Economy Desk

Iran's current government has prioritized international negotiations to drive economic development and improve conditions. In the past two years, they have signed over 370 agreements, particularly in the economic sector, with nations worldwide. Upon assuming power in 2021, the government focused on invigorating the country's economic diplomacy, with a crucial strategy being the expansion of commercial and economic relations. Previous shortcomings, such as neglecting neighboring and allied nations' export potential and failing to explore market growth, were acknowledged as hindrances to progress in export development.

To address these issues, the Iranian government has formulated a comprehensive roadmap, aligning with the president's electoral promises, aiming to double non-oil exports by 2025, targeting \$75 billion in exports. The Ministry of Industry, Mines, and Trade attached great importance to signing the Free Trade Agreement with Eurasia and gaining official membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Agreement as measures to enhance the nation's economy. The government delegation has taken multiple steps to achieve these objectives. They convened 23 joint economic commissions, both in Tehran and the target countries' capitals, and dispatched 149 economic delegations abroad, while hosting 41 foreign economic delegations. **Page 6** >



Golestan Province's Turkmen carpets reflect colorful culture and history **4** >



Volleyball Nations League: Iran seeking revival in Rotterdam **5** >



Mazandaran to set up first-ever environmental protection conservatory: MoU inked **7** >

Australia launches constitutional referendum on indigenous recognition

Australia's Senate voted Monday to hold a referendum this year on creating an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, an advocate aiming to give the nation's most disadvantaged ethnic minority more say on government policy. Dozens of mainly Indigenous people stood up the public galleries and applauded when senators passed the referendum bill 52 votes to 19, according to AP. The Senate vote means the referendum must be held on a Saturday in a two-to-

six-month window. Minister for Indigenous Australians Linda Burney, the first Indigenous woman to hold the job, described the Senate vote as the "final hurdle" toward the referendum. "Today the political debate ends. Today we can start a national conversation at the community level about what a Voice is, why it's needed and how it will make a practical difference," Burney told reporters. While the Voice would advocate for Indigenous in-

terests, it would not have a vote on laws, and debate for and against the elected body has become increasingly heated and divisive. Proponents hope the Voice will improve living standards for Indigenous Australians, who account for 3.2% of Australia's population and are the most nation's most disadvantaged ethnic group. If the referendum is passed, it would be Australia's first successful referendum since 1977 and the first ever to pass without bipartisan support.



Australian Senator Dorinda Cox and Indigenous Australians Minister Linda Burney rejoice after a legislation enabling a Voice referendum passed the Senate. **ALEX ELLINGHAUSEN**

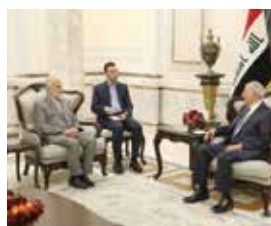
NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran FM to visit
three Persian
Gulf states

● FARS

ISNA - Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian will travel to Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait on Tuesday.

The importance of this trip goes beyond bilateral relations and will address important issues between Iran and the United States, as Muscat and Doha now play a mediating role in reducing tensions, exchanging prisoners, and nuclear negotiations.

Baghdad
links Tehran
with Arab
states: *Official*

International Desk

Lauding Baghdad's positive role in bringing Tehran and Riyadh closer together, the president of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations said that Iraq is the channel through which Tehran makes contact with Arab states.

In a meeting with Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid on Monday, Kamal Kharrazi stressed that the Islamic Republic supports the establishment of security and stability in Iraq.

Navy chief
in Pakistan
to enhance
maritime
cooperation

● MEHR

IFP - Commander of the Iranian Navy Rear Admiral Shahram Irani arrived in the Pakistani capital Islamabad on a three-day visit. The visit by the Iranian admiral is aimed at the expansion of bilateral cooperation in the fields of maritime security and training, as well as the exchange of delegations with Pakistan.

Flash floods behind Tehran
recent water shortage

Iran's Energy Ministry released a video that shows how flash floods that happened earlier this month near the capital Tehran washed down tons of rocks into the downstream of the city's main reservoir, an incident that led to days of water shortage in the city.

The video released on Sunday showed layers of rocks piling up on the downstream of the Amir Kabir Dam, a large water reservoir located nearly 60 kilometers to the west of Tehran, and blocking its outlet in less than 20 minutes, according to Press TV.

Experts say more than 1.6 million cubic meters of rock and earth were washed down the dam's downstream, causing a massive blockage between the dam and water treatment facilities that supply water to Tehran. Energy Ministry officials said the incident was a first in the history of Amir Kabir Dam, also known as Karaj dam, a reservoir built more than 60 years ago to ensure water supply to Tehran.

The incident caused nearly a week of water shortage in Tehran and in the nearby metropolitan city



Workers struggle to clear the huge pile of rocks that slid downstream and caused a blockage between Amir Kabir Dam and water treatment facilities.

● FARS

of Karaj.

Authorities said the operation to clear the rocks and earth blocking the dam's downstream was a very complicated one and took more than six days. They added that it took three more days to restore full supply of water to households and businesses in Tehran on June 16.

NW still struggles
with flash floods

Severe floods are reported to have continued in Garmy and Bileh Savar districts in northwestern Ardebil Province on Monday, leaving several people killed or missing and damaging roads and homes. As a result of the hailstorm, heavy rain, and subsequent flash floods,

the roofs of private homes in Bileh Savar and Jafarabad were damaged and many trees were uprooted, said Bileh Savar County Governor Sahab-Ali Asqari. The governor said that heavy rain followed by floods and strong wind caused damage to as many as 200 private homes in villages in Bileh Savar

County, Mehr news agency reported.

Also, 150 vehicles suffered major damages including shattered glass.

Asqari added that water and electricity have been restored to some of those affected villages, noting that various governmental bodies and armed forces have joined the rescue and relief efforts.

Raeisi's possible visit ...

Over the past four months, as the restoration of diplomatic relations between Tehran and Riyadh grew more serious, Arab countries have notably shifted their attitudes toward Iran, demonstrating a clear interest in deepening their relations with Tehran. Naturally, this development has raised concerns among Israel and its Western allies.

Furthermore, an additional cause for their apprehension lies in the potential collaboration between Iran and Saudi Arabia in addressing the Palestinian issue, which poses a threat to Israel's political

influence and propaganda efforts.

Another source of worry pertains to economic and energy matters. Iran holds the largest reserves of natural gas, while Saudi Arabia is the leading oil producer. Consequently, Tehran and Riyadh could potentially play a joint role in the energy sector in the near future, the outcomes of which remain unclear for Western countries.

In contrast, regional media predominantly portrayed the Saudi foreign minister's visit in a positive light, recognizing the thaw between Tehran and Riyadh as beneficial for

regional security and economic advancement.

Farhan delivered an official invitation from the Saudi king to Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi to visit the kingdom. Does this invitation signify a push toward strengthening relations?

In the realm of international affairs, embassy activities are considered customary, and having an embassy alone does not necessarily reflect the quality of relations between two nations. However, the Saudi invitation demonstrates Riyadh's keenness to enhance re-

lations with Tehran and address remaining challenges between the two countries. Raeisi's possible visit to Saudi Arabia would undoubtedly bring about significant security, political and economic developments for both nations and the wider Middle East.

Do you believe that Tehran-Riyadh relations will remain confined to security and politics, or do you foresee a gradual expansion into economic cooperation? Typically, economic cooperation and the identification of shared economic interests can bolster the

political and security ties between nations. However, it is through diplomatic relations that the essential groundwork for establishing economic cooperation is laid. Given the absence of political relations and certain misunderstandings, Iran and Saudi Arabia were compelled to initiate the restoration of their ties from a security perspective and subsequently proceed to the political phase. Thus, until diplomatic relations are established and both countries have embassies in place, the natural progression into the economic phase of cooperation cannot occur.

Notably, the statements made by the foreign ministers of both countries in Tehran emphasized the significance of economic and trade relations. Fundamentally, one of the primary reasons behind Saudi Arabia's shift in approach toward Iran is a transition from a security and military-focused approach to a political and economic one. Therefore, it is highly probable that the reestablishment of political relations will pave the way for economic cooperation, particularly considering the substantial potential that exists for both Iran and Saudi Arabia.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

Radioactive pollution of Aras River
up in the air

National Desk

While an Iranian newspaper confirmed the rumor that the Aras River is contaminated with radioactive substances, a provincial official ruled out the possibility that Armenia's nuclear power plant is leaking into the river. Payam-e Ma newspaper claims that its independent investigations have detected signs of radioactive pollution as well as high levels of magnesium, lead, arsenic, and more than 50 other pollutants in a water sample

taken from a part of the river adjacent to the Khoda Afarin Dam and Mughan plain. The report speculates with confidence that nuclear sewage from Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant in Armenia has been dumped into the river without administering the necessary treatment, leading to a rise in the number of diagnosed stomach cancers in Iranians living down the river. However, the East Azarbaijan Province's deputy governor for political and social affairs dismisses the report. "The introduction of radio-

active materials from Armenia's Metsamor plant to the Aras River is virtually impossible because of how far away the plant is from that area," Torab Mohammadi said, adding that the plant is considered to be safe in that regard and there have been no reports of any leakage from it. "But the sewage of an Armenian copper factory can be easily seen to be dumped into the river, which diminished after we objected, but the factory keeps contaminating the river secretly at night."

Israeli troops, backed by helicopter, kill five Palestinians in Jenin



Smoke is seen rising into the air during an Israeli raid in Jenin, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, on June 19, 2023.

● RANEEN SAWAFTA/REUTERS

Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank killed five Palestinians on Monday, in a raid that saw seven Israeli security personnel wounded and rare helicopter fire.

The sound of gunfire was heard across Jenin as wounded Palestinians continued to arrive by ambulance to the northern West Bank city's Ibn Sina hospital into the early afternoon, an AFP journalist said. The Palestinian Health Ministry said five peo-

ple had been killed and at least 91 others were wounded in the violence. It named four of those killed: 15-year-old Ahmed Saqer, Khaled Assassa, 21, Qais Jabareen, 21, Ahmad Daraghme, 19, and Qasam Abu Saria, 29. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad resistance group said Abu Saria was one of his fighters. Among the injured was Palestinian journalist Hazem Nasser, who was hospitalized with a gun-

shot wound, according to the Palestinian journalists syndicate. The violence marked a rare use of Israeli airpower in the territory. During the clashes, Palestinians detonated a roadside bomb next to an Israeli military vehicle. "We had five Israeli border police guys wounded, and two soldiers also lightly wounded," army spokesman Richard Hecht said. A Palestinian intelligence

official told AFP on condition of anonymity it was the first time since 2002 – during the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising – that the Israeli army has fired missiles from an aircraft during a raid in Jenin. The United Nations rights chief, Volker Turk, said he was "extremely worried by the deteriorating situation". "Unlawful killings of Palestinians by the Israeli security forces have in-

creased, including apparent extrajudicial executions," he added. Violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has escalated over the past year, especially after the hard-right cabinet of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took power in December. Since the start of the year, at least 163 Palestinians, 21 Israelis, a Ukrainian and an Italian have been killed in the tensions in the occupied territories.

China hails 'progress' in U.S. relations after Xi-Blinken talks



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets with Chinese President Xi Jinping in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China, June 19, 2023.

● LEAH MILLIS/REUTERS

China's Xi Jinping hailed "progress" in talks with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Beijing on Monday, the final engagement of a closely-watched trip aimed at ensuring the superpower's disputes

do not spiral into conflict. Blinken, the first holder of his post to meet the Chinese leader since 2018, strode towards Xi with his hand outstretched at the Great Hall of the People, a venue China often uses for greeting heads of state – positive signals in the choreography of diplomacy, Reuters reported.

The two shook hands, then the delegations faced each other across a conference table bedecked with pink lotus flowers, with Xi at the head and Blinken just to his right. Xi and Blinken's roughly 30-minute meeting could help facilitate a summit between Xi and U.S. President Joe Biden later in the year. Biden and Xi last met on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Bali, Indonesia in November, pledging more frequent communication, although ties since then have deteriorated over issues ranging from Taiwan to espionage concerns.

"The two sides agreed to follow through the common understandings President Biden and I had reached in Bali. The two sides have also made progress and reached the agreement on some specific issues. This is very good," Xi told Blinken at the start of the meeting.

Blinken responded by saying the two countries "have an obligation and responsibility" to manage their relationship and that the United States was "committed to doing that". His meetings in Beijing, including talks with China's top diplomat Wang Yi and foreign minister Qin Gang, had been "candid and constructive," he added.

It was not immediately clear from Xi's remarks or previous readouts of Blinken's meetings exactly what progress had been made. Chinese state media said Xi told Blinken in the otherwise closed-door talks that China "hopes to see a sound and steady China-U.S. relationship" and believes that the two countries "can overcome various difficulties". But he also urged the U.S. not to "hurt China's legitimate rights and interests", a signal of potential flashpoints such as Taiwan, the democratic island Beijing considers its own, which had cropped up during Blinken's previous meetings.

N Korea says botched satellite launch was 'gravest failure'

An unusually candid North Korea has said the botched launch of a military satellite last month was the "gravest failure" but it vowed it would soon succeed in its quest, state media reported on Monday.

North Korea's ruling party made the assessment of its May 31 launch

at a three-day meeting that ended on Sunday, ordering workers and researchers to analyse the mission that ended with the rocket and its spy satellite payload plunging into the sea, and to prepare for another launch soon, Reuters reported.

Officials "who irresponsibly conducted preparations" for the failed launch were "bitterly criticised" at the meeting, the KCNA state news agency reported. The rocket failed "after losing thrust due to the abnormal starting of the second-stage engine", North Korea said at the time. Nuclear-armed North Korea had earlier said it would launch its first military reconnaissance satellite to boost monitoring of U.S. military activities, another step in a military programme that has raised fears of war.

The North's state media said the ruling Workers' Party Central Committee also discussed bolstering nuclear capabilities and stepping up production of nuclear weapons.

Leader Kim Jong-un attended the meeting, KCNA said, but it made no mention of whether he made a speech or delivered a report, as he usually does at such important policy-making sessions.



Sailors prepare to lift the wreckage of a rocket used in North Korea's failed attempt to launch its first military satellite last month from the sea.

● South Korea Defence Ministry via Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kuwait swears in fifth government in a year



AFP – Kuwait's fifth government in less than one year took the oath of office Monday after elections returned an opposition-controlled parliament, setting the stage for further political turmoil in the oil-rich emirate. Four royals are among the 15-strong cabinet, which is appointed by the ruling Al-Sabah family and has a history of clashes with the Persian Gulf's only elected national assembly with powers to hold government to account.

Ukraine: Eight villages retaken from Russia in two weeks



REUTERS – Ukraine said on Monday it had driven Russian forces from an eighth village in its two-week-old counter-offensive, a settlement on a heavily fortified part of the front line near the most direct route to the country's Azov Sea coast. A Russian-installed official said on Sunday that Ukraine had taken control of the village, Piatykhatky, in the southern Zaporizhzhia region. He later said Moscow had pushed them out and on Monday morning he said Ukraine was attacking again.

Sudan spiralling into 'death and destruction': UN



AFP – Sudan is descending into death and destruction at an unprecedented speed, UN chief Antonio Guterres said Monday as he urged donors to step in and curb the unfolding catastrophe. "Without strong international support, Sudan could quickly become a locus of lawlessness, radiating insecurity across the region." The Sudanese Army has since April 15 been battling paramilitary forces commanded by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, after the two fell out in a bitter power struggle.

Golestan Province's Turkmen carpets reflect colorful culture and history



arahanacarpet.com



ghalin.com

Iranica Desk

Turkmen carpets, woven in the northeastern province of Golestan, are a mirror reflecting the rich culture, history and civilization of the region passed down from one generation to the next for centuries.

The oldest discovered Turkmen carpet dates back 1,800 years; however, this doesn't indicate whether a carpet-weaving industry in the region existed before that, or not, because some Turkmen carpet designs existed hundreds of years BCE.

The theory that has been confirmed for a long time is that in the beginning, Turkmen considered their carpets merely as practical objects; however, over time,

they became aware of their artistic value.

Turkmen carpet designs arise from the local women's creativity.

Thousands of people are presently active in the fields of carpet weaving, marketing and sales across the province.

Hajar Keramat, a carpet weaver, told IRNA that Turkmen girls learn the traditional art of carpet weaving from childhood. There is no Turkmen girl who is not familiar with the craft.

Turkmen give newly-married couples a hand-woven rug as a gift. In addition, a genuine carpet must be included in the dowry of all girls.

"After I got married I decided to develop the business of

my father-in-law, who was a carpet salesman. We opened a small shop and gradually developed this business."

"Now, after a few years, we have a shop selling natural threads for carpet weaving. Moreover, we have established a carpet-weaving workshop, in which 80 Turkmen women are active."

The artisan said thanks to their various size, unique features and long historical backgrounds, Turkmen rugs have many customers both across Iran and the world.

Her husband, Khalil Aqatabai, said, "I was a music player when I was young, but due to my wife's great enthusiasm for developing the traditional profession of Turkmen, I changed my job after marriage and, with the

help of each other, we have managed to achieve great success over time."

He noted that the exquisite carpets, as a main symbol of Turkmen, are still produced in the province without any major change in the design.

The number of patterns of Turkmen carpets is close to 811. Turkmen mostly use broken geometric patterns, known as *akhal*, in their rugs decorated with rhombus frames, connected to each other with cross lines.

The size of Turkmen carpets is between one to 12 square meters. They are woven in various colors, including lacquered red, navy blue, dark green, white and beige. Turkmen carpets were registered on Iran's National Heritage List in 2011.



IRNA

Rich metallic ore deposits in Iran

The extraordinarily rich metallic ore deposits in Iran have favoured the early development of specialised crafts, especially metallurgy, since Chalcolithic times. Poly-metallic ore deposits are found in abundance throughout the plateau. Among the best known are the copper and silver deposits of Anarak-Talmessi in the Dasht-e Kavir Desert, which were systematically exploited since Sassanid times and probably already much earlier.

Pyrotechnology – the use of fire to alter the physical properties of a material – was used since the 5th millennium BCE to transform oxidic copper ores, such as malachite, into malleable metallic materials. The use of sulphidic ores, which are somewhat more difficult to process, as they require an additional procedure in the reduction of the ore, dates only slightly later. Arsenic copper

is the most widely used metal in this time and was probably made from arsenical copper ore. A more uncommon procedure was the systematic extraction of silver from silver-lead ore by means of a refinement process known as cupellation, which first appeared on the Iranian Plateau in the 4th millennium BCE.

Some of the best-known archaeological evidence for the processing of copper comes from a small workshop area in Layer 9 of Tappeh Ghabristan in the Qazvin Plain. It consists of a two-room house in the centre of the settlement, whose larger room was furnished with two hearths. A crucible with a pierced foot – a type now known as Type Ghabristan – was standing next to the larger hearth.

On the other side, a workbench or platform made of mudbrick had been set up. Pieces of copper ore

were found inside a large bowl within the same building, and several casting moulds for tools were scattered across the floor. The copper workshop of Ghabristan is a textbook example of the so-called "cottage industry", where all production steps, from the smelting of the ore to the final reworking of the finished artefact, are completed within one area.

The industrial settlement of Arisman is a good example for the systematic processing of copper towards the end of the 4th millennium BCE. The smelting of the ore now took place outside the actual settlement, and the construction of draft furnaces that utilised the locally prevalent winds to process enormous amounts of ore led to the accumulation of large slag heaps in the vicinity. During this time, only the casting and finishing processes took place within residential buildings.



Open hearth-mould of a shaft-hole axe with core-holder in clay



Crucible with a base

The above is a lightly edited version of part of a chapter entitled, 'Early Towns in Iran', from a book entitled, 'Persian Antiques Splendor', edited by T. Stollner, R. Slotka, and A. Vatandoust, published by German Mining Museum. The photos were taken from the book.

Sports Desk

Iran is eager to bounce back from a poor start to its campaign in the Volleyball Nations League when kicking off Week 2 of the preliminary round against Germany in Rotterdam today.

Behrouz Ataei's men will step onto the court at Rotterdam Ahoy on the back of three defeats in four games, knowing further wobbles in the Dutch city could all but finish their quest for a place in the quarter-finals. Iran is 11th in the 16-team table but will have to end in the top half to progress to the VNL Finals - starting July 19 in Gdansk, Poland. Ataei's side was well beaten by Japan in straight sets in their VNL opener on the Asian foe's home soil in Nagoya.

A much improved performance saw Iran win the first two sets

Volleyball Nations League: Iran seeking revival in Rotterdam

against Poland before the European powerhouse rallied to come out victorious in a third successive five-setter between the two teams at the event.

Iran then came from behind to beat China in four sets but again fell to a defeat in three sets against the surprise package of the tournament Slovenia to close out a disappointing first-week run.

Third from bottom in the standings, Germany has also managed a single victory so far - a 3-1 win against Canada in Ottawa last time out in the competition.

The Germans suffered four-set losses to volleyball giants Brazil and Italy either side of a defeat in straight sets against the Netherlands.

Ataei has made one significant change to the squad that was in action in Nagoya, leaving out Mohammad-Javad Ma'navinejad - much to the outside hitter's annoyance - to make room for Meysam Salehi, who has fully recovered from a shoulder injury.

Iran will be facing even tougher opponents in Rotterdam as the Asian powerhouse will take on reigning

world champion Italy on Wednesday before squaring off against last year's VNL runner-up USA two days later.

A depleted Italian team opened its campaign with back-to-back straight-set defeats against Argentina and USA but came out on top in four-setters against Cuba and Germany to stand ninth in the table.

However, Italian head coach Ferdinando De Giorgi has named a full-strength squad for the visit to Rotterdam as they will be looking to secure a last-eight spot for a second year running.

The Americans, meanwhile, eased to three successive victories over the Netherlands, Italy, and Canada - without conceding a single set - but a 3-1 setback against Brazil saw them finish second in the table.

Iran's last outing in Rotterdam will be on Friday against the host, which is seventh - courtesy of two wins and defeats apiece.

The Netherlands left the court empty-handed against the Americans but won in straight sets against Cuba and Germany, before a five-set thriller against Argentina saw Nimir Abdel-Aziz and co. suf-

fer a second setback.

Iranian head coach hopes his men will be inspired by their impressive run in last year's event, where they overcome a shaky start - three defeats in five games - to beat USA, Canada, Poland, Slovenia, and Serbia in the following seven matches and find their way into the quarter-finals. Iran will conclude the preliminary round with a trip to Anaheim, California, in the United States to face Tokyo Olympic gold medalist France, Bulgaria, Argentina, and Cuba.

Japan has been in flying form at this year's tournament as a clean sweep of four victories at home led to a top-spot finish in Week 1, with USA, Argentina, Slovenia, Brazil, Poland, the Netherlands, and Serbia following the Asian side in the table.



Iranian weightlifter Davoudi scoops triple golds in IWF Grand Prix

Sports Desk

Iranian superheavyweight weightlifter Ali Davoudi made an impressive return to the international scene at the IWF Grand Prix Havana 2023.

The reigning Olympic silver medalist took a major step in securing a berth in next year's Paris Games by making a clean sweep of the men's +109kg golds at the qualifying event in the Cuban capital.

In the absence of the four medalists in last year's World Championships - Georgian sensation Lasha Talakhadze, Bahrain's Gor Minasyan, Armenian Varazdat Lalyan, and Syrian Man Asaad - the 24-year-old Iranian began his campaign with a 195kg lift in the snatch contests.

The winner of six Asian golds failed to raise the 203kg weight above his head but was successful on his third attempt to finish the category 22kg clear of second-placed Belarussian Eduard Ziaziulin, who represented the Individual

Neutral Athletes team in Havana. Ecuador's Jorge David Arroyo Valdez settled for the snatch bronze with a best tally of 180kg.

Davoudi picked up where he had left off in the snatch event, overcoming the 238kg weight in his first clean & jerk lift.

The Iranian could not overcome the 251kg and 252kg barriers in his next two attempts but the first lift proved to be enough for the C&J gold.

David Andrew Liti of the New Zealand finished second to the Iranian with 226kg, while Serbian Tamas Kajdoci registered 216kg for the bronze.

An overall tally of 441kg sealed a third gold of the night for the Iranian, with Liti (400kg) and Kajdoci (391kg) taking the overall silver and bronze medals respectively.

The weightlifting competitions will be held across five weight classes.

Each country will be allowed to have a maximum of the three contestants in each of the men and women contests.



Second Announcement **Copper Cathode Tender Notice**

National Iranian Copper Industries Company

Commodity: Copper cathodes LME grade "A" produced in Sarcheshmeh and Khatoon Abad, Kerman Province, I. R. IRAN.

Quality: Copper cathodes LME grade "A" as per following typical analysis:

Cu	99.994	% Min	As	< 1	PPM	Sb	< 1	PPM
Fe	< 2	PPM	Pb	< 5	"	Zn	< 3	"
Mn	< 0.5	"	Co	< 2	"	Ni	< 1	"
S	< 15	"	Cd	< 0.2	"	Te	< 1.2	"
O	< 50	"	Se	< 0.4	"	Sn	< 1	"
Bi	< 1	"	Si	< 1	"	P	< 1	"
Cr	< 1	"	Ag	< 10	"			

Standard: ASTM-B115

Packing: In bundles.

Quantity: 5000 MT (Five Thousand) +/- 2% (seller's option). The less quantity is also negotiable.

Shipment: Partial shipment during year 2023. The exact shipment schedule shall be mutually agreed between buyer & seller at the time of contract settlement.

Delivery: FOB Bandar Abbas, Iran or FCA Sarcheshmeh, Kerman, Iran based on Incoterms 2020.

Price: The price per metric ton of the material shall be the official LME cash settlement price for copper grade 'A' in USD as published in the London Metal Bulletin, during the quotational period plus premium.

The premium could be either flat or plus per ton for delivery term FCA Sarcheshmeh, Kerman, Iran and for FOB term, please advise your premium offer to be able to check and discuss accordingly.

Quotational period: Quotational period for any unknown price is negotiable.

Payment Procedure:

- Buyer shall pay 100% (one hundred percent) of proforma/provisional invoice value amount in Euro (other currencies of payment are also negotiable), prompt net cash payable by telegraphic transfer to a bank which is nominated by seller. Seller will introduce its non-Iranian trustee company and all documents will be issued in the name of that company and the money will be deposited into the its account.
- Proforma/Provisional invoice amount shall be calculated based on provisional price which is average of five consecutive working days prior date of Provisional/ Proforma invoice.

All calculation of Provisional/Proforma/Final invoices is based on USD, then converted to Euro for payment.

- The exact payment procedure shall be mutually agreed between buyer & seller at the time of contract settlement.
- The final balance, if any, between the provisional payment made by buyer and the final value of the material shall be paid by the owing party by telegraphic transfer against seller's presentation of final invoice within five working days from the date of the final invoice.

Important Notes:

- Offers must be presented to NICICO Sales Dept. only through email sent to sales-tender@nicico.com till end of Tuesday 27th June 2023 local time. It is very important that offers shall be definitely sent to the sales-tender@nicico.com and the ones sent to any other email addresses won't be acceptable.
- In case your offer is accepted by NICICO, it will be advised to you via Email.

P.S. Offers must be include per following items, otherwise won't be acceptable:

- Quantity
- Price; price offer shall include premium according to our stated condition.
- Quotational Period
- Payment Procedure
- Delivery Terms

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NEWS IN BRIEF

CBI: Iran's annual economic growth at 4%

IRNA - The Central Bank of Iran announced on Monday that the realization of 4% economic growth in the Iranian year of 1401 (ended March 20) indicates the growth of economic activities across the country. The growth of GDP in all quarters of 1401 had an upward trend, such that from the first quarter to the end of the fourth quarter, the economic growth rate of the country was 1.9%, 3.9%, 4.9% and 5.3%, respectively.

IMF working on digital currency platform

AFP - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is working on a platform for central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) to enable transactions between countries, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Monday. "CBDCs should not be fragmented national propositions... To have more efficient and fairer transactions we need systems that connect countries: we need interoperability," Georgieva told a conference attended by African central banks in Rabat, Morocco.

Britain launches preferential trade scheme

CNBC - Britain on Monday began implementing a preferential trading scheme with 65 poor and developing countries to replace similar arrangements in place when the country was a member of the European Union, according to a statement. The Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS) removes or reduces tariffs and simplifies trading rules, the UK's Department of Trade and Business said in a statement.

Russia says regional free trade pact with Iran possible by yearend

A free trade zone agreement between Iran, Russia and several countries that cover the vast Eurasian region spreading from the borders of Eastern Europe to Western China is possible by the end of the year, Russia's TASS news agency reported on Monday. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk told the state TASS agency in an interview that talks between the Eurasian Economic Union - which comprises Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia - and Iran are in their final stages. "We are moving forward," Overchuk said. "We very much hope that such an agreement can be signed by the end of the year." Both the region and Iran have taken on additional significance for the Kremlin after imposing sanctions on Russia.

Russian-Iranian commodity turnover rose 20% in 2022, according to government data, two-thirds the overall growth rate Moscow saw with China, another key partner with whom Russia has expanded political and economic alliance in the past two years. The regional agreement with Iran would replace and expand an interim pact that already provides a reduction in customs duties on hundreds of categories of goods. In November 2022, Russia started swapping oil products with Iran and in March, Tehran said it counts on "huge volumes" of both oil and gas swaps with Moscow. Overchuk also told TASS that negotiations among the Eurasian Economic Union countries on creating a common gas market continue.



TASS



Iran's Deputy Oil Minister for International Affairs and Trade Ahmad Asadzadeh (2nd R) and Uzbekistan's First Deputy Minister of Energy Azim Akhmedkhadjjev (3rd L) discuss Tehran-Tashkent cooperation in energy sector in a meeting attended by officials from both sides in Tehran on June 19, 2023.

SHANA

Tehran, Tashkent agree on energy roadmap

A roadmap for cooperation between Iran and Uzbekistan in oil, gas, and petrochemical industry was outlined in Tehran on Monday. During the visit of Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and his accompanying delegation to Tehran, the two sides prepared the roadmap to im-

plement a memorandum of understanding (MoU) the two countries signed on September 14, 2022, Shana reported. Iran's Deputy Oil Minister for International Affairs and Trade Ahmad Asadzadeh and Uzbekistan's First Deputy Minister of Energy Azim Akhmedkhadjjev explored all avenues to re-

move obstacles in the way of the memorandum. The two officials also discussed cooperation in downstream and upstream sectors of the oil and gas industry, as well as scientific and training programs, deciding to form a joint working group to follow up on the agreements reached between the two

countries' ministries of oil and energy on bilateral oil, gas and petrochemical cooperation. A joint statement and 10 cooperation documents were signed between the two countries in the presence of Iran's President Ebrahim Raeisi and his Uzbek counterpart Mirziyoyev on Sunday.

Iranian oil output grows 10% in two-year time

Iran's oil production has grown by 10 percent since President Ebrahim Raeisi took office, announced the deputy governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) for economic affairs.

Talking on the details of economic growth in recent years, Mohammad Shirijian revealed the continued two-digit growth in oil production, Tasnim news agency reported.

As the average investment growth in the 2010s was -6.9 percent, the figure hit 6.7 percent in 2022, which shows that taking advantage of domestic capacities and talents has been effective in economic growth. Shirijian also put the economic growth in 2021 at 4.5 percent.

The CBI official also said that economic growth in the agricultural sector rose from -2.6 percent in 2021 to 1.1 percent in 2022.

Regarding the growth rate of the mining and mineral sector, Shirijian said it rose from 1.1 percent in 2021 to 6.5 percent in 2022.

Iran's crude exports and oil output in 2023 have reached record highs since the country came under US sanctions more than five years ago, according to Reuters and Bloomberg reports.

The Friday report by Reuters said Iranian crude shipments continued to rise in 2023 with higher shipments to China, Syria and Venezuela. The report quoted consultants, shipping data, and a source familiar with the matter.



SHANA

A large chunk of Iran's crude oil goes to China which is the world's major importer of energy. Several European customers including Germany, Spain, and Bulgaria also imported oil from Iran.

Iran has not released official figures about its oil exports over the past years amid efforts to evade Washington's illegal sanctions.

The United States, under former president Donald Trump, abandoned the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in May 2018 and reinstated unilateral sanctions that the agreement had lifted.

Tehran's oil exports have been limited since May 2018. However, the exports have risen steadily during the term of current US President Joe Biden.

The crude exports exceeded 1.5 million barrels per day (bpd) in May, the highest monthly rate since 2018, Reuters reported quoting Kpler, a major international tanker-tracking service.

Iran's economic diplomacy ...

These negotiations resulted in over 370 signed documents, with a strong emphasis on the economic sector, strengthening ties with various countries. Notably, approximately 100 Iranian exporting companies were introduced to foreign representatives, facilitating business transactions on their behalf.

Through active engagement in international negotiations, Iran's government has made significant strides towards economic development, fostering trade relations, and expanding export opportunities.

The Iranian Chamber of Commerce has established offices in select countries to facilitate economic consultations and connect Iranian entrepreneurs with international economic actors, with a focus on neighboring countries. Economic advisors and experts have been deployed to embassies' economic departments to strengthen ties further. Efforts to activate and formalize Rimdan and Pishin marketplaces with Pakistan are underway, along with discussions for new border bazaars with Turkey. Memoranda of understanding have been signed with the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to reopen the Yazdan bazaar with Afghanistan. These measures demonstrate the government's commitment to enhancing economic cooperation.

To address sanctions and promote exports, the government has utilized business prospects and improved institutional capabilities in sectors such as Post Bank and the petrochemical industry. Strategic products and investment opportunities have been explored in various countries, leading to signif-

icant progress in fulfilling presidential commitments. In 1401, trade volume exceeded \$100 billion, with 122.056 million tons of goods valued at \$53.166 billion being traded in 2022. While the weight of goods traded decreased by approximately 15% compared to the previous year, the value increased by 9.7%. A positive trade balance of \$19 billion was achieved across 84 countries.

In an effort to strengthen economic diplomacy, joint economic commissions with China and Iraq were established, setting the stage for improved exchanges and market access. The Iranian government prioritized expanding trade with neighboring countries, leading to the finalization of significant agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs). These included collaborations with insurance companies from neighboring countries, Russian companies RNRC and VSK INSURANCE HOUSE, as well as various governments, such as Russia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, China, Thailand, Turkey, Cuba, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, Oman, Ghana, and Pakistan, in matters concerning customs affairs.

The current Iranian government has consistently prioritized enhancing trade relationships, particularly with neighboring nations, as a means to mitigate the impact of sanctions. They have diligently pursued their objectives outlined in a comprehensive plan during their two-year tenure. These efforts serve as a foundation for future endeavors and provide a clear vision for upcoming months, reflecting the government's determination to bolster the country's economy through increased international engagement.

Mazandaran to set up first-ever environmental protection conservatory: MoU inked



● BORNA

Social Desk

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been signed to establish the first environmental protection conservatory in northern Iran, marking a significant step in the country's commitment to environmental education and preservation. The MoU was signed by the Director General of the Department of the Environment of Mazandaran, Kavian, and the Director General of Education of the province, Kamali. The news was reported IRIB News agency, citing the Department of the Environment's information base. Ziauddin Almasi, the head of the Environmental Education and Training Center of the Department of the Environment, outlined the conservatory's objectives. He emphasized that students would be recruited based on the needs of the organizations, with targeted training provided according to job requirements.



● IRIB

Almasi highlighted that the graduates would have employment opportunities in various sectors, including tourism, relief, rescue, and the Red Crescent. He also noted the Department of the Environment's move towards incorporating new technologies, such as drones, into their operations and training programs. "If the students are successful in

the training courses, the recruitment process is also considered," Almasi said. Kavian, the Director General of the Department of the Environment of Mazandaran, underscored the educational focus of the environmental protection efforts. He revealed that 15 students have already begun studying environmental protection at

the Shahid Beheshti Academy Center in Sari since the last fall semester.

"The training of skilled environmental workers is one of the goals of setting up an environmental conservatory," Kavian said.

Kamali, the Director General of Education in Mazandaran, expressed optimism about the future of the environmental protection field. He suggested that with proper design, more students could be enrolled in the field of environmental protection in the coming years.

"The executive agreement of the field of environmental protection is a step in the development of cooperation between technical fields and the environment," Kamali said.

The establishment of the conservatory represents a significant milestone in Iran's environmental protection efforts, demonstrating a commitment to education and training in this critical field.

Earth could feasibly descend into chaos

The impact of human activity on the Earth system could result in unpredictable chaos from which there is no return, physicists have calculated.

Using a theory conceived to model superconductivity, a team of physicists led by Alex Bernadini of the University of Porto in Portugal showed that, after a certain point, we will not be able to restore equilibrium to Earth's climate, Science Alert reported.

A finite amount of human activity could result in a Hothouse Earth from which there is no return. They detailed their work in a paper made available in April 2022 on the preprint server arXiv that remains to be peer-reviewed.

"The implications of climate change are well known (droughts, heat waves, extreme phenomena, etc.)," physicist Orfeu Bertolami told Live Science last year.

If the Earth System gets into

the region of chaotic behavior, we will lose all hope of somehow fixing the problem."

For some years now, extreme weather events seem to be occurring more regularly. Wildfires blaze, storms rage, temperatures reach new records. Climate scientists have warned that this is a consequence of human activity, such as the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and increases in farming, which has led to the proposal of a new geological epoch: the Anthropocene, a period in which human activity has led to a significant and marked impact on the entire Earth system, comprised of the geosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere, and atmosphere.

The Anthropocene would follow the Holocene, which started around 11,700 years ago, and scientists propose its beginning around the middle of the 20th century – the peak of the nuclear era. Bernadini and his colleagues



● GETTY IMAGES

decided to model the transition from Holocene to Anthropocene as a phase transition and calculate its future trajectory accordingly.

Phase transitions are very common. The term refers to how a material changes from one state to another. A solid melts into a liquid, a liquid boils into a gas. A metal transitions from a normal state to a superconducting

one. Each of these has a tipping point at which an equilibrium state undergoes a profound shift into another state.

The Earth system is not a material, but research shows that phase transition modeling can be used to predict climate shifts with some success. Bernadini and his colleagues used the Ginzburg-Landau theory –

developed to model superconductivity – and applied it to the Anthropocene based on temperature, starting at a Holocene equilibrium point. Now, human influence is limited. Our world has a finite amount of habitable space, a finite amount of resources, and a finite rate at which we can use them. Given this maximum capacity, the researchers decided to

map the possible outcomes of the Anthropocene phase transition using a logistic map, a tool to explore how complex outcomes and even chaos can evolve from a simple point.

Their results showed that we're not necessarily headed for certain climate doom. We might follow quite a regular and predictable trajectory, the endpoint of which is a climate stabilization at a higher average temperature point than what we have now. That's... still not great, given the deadly effects we're already seeing on humans and other animals.

But at the more extreme end, Earth runs into havoc. This means that the Earth's system evolves into chaotic behavior – extreme seasonal fluctuations and weather events – that precludes prediction of the future behavior of the system, making it impossible to mitigate. That means it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to

claw our way back to a stable climate.

"Dividing the human activities into its multiple components, we have studied a case with only two of those components following logistic maps and interacting with each other," the researchers write.

"Even for this simple case, we observed the emergence of chaotic behavior in the equilibrium points of the Earth system. This leads to potentially important consequences if at least some components of the human activities actually follow logistic maps, which is a quite reasonable hypothesis, given the physical limitations of the planet-wide system we live in."

This outcome isn't inevitable, which is something of a relief. But, the researchers say we need to consider it a real possibility for designing strategies to mitigate climate change and manage the Earth system in the future.

PIC OF THE DAY

The breeding and restoration site of the endangered Iranian horned yellow deer is nestled in the charming city of Arsanjan, located in Fars Province, roughly 200km away from the center. Thanks to the efforts of Iran's Department of the Environment, these majestic creatures are now thriving with almost 80 deer at the site.



● ELAHE POURHOSSEIN/IRIB NEWS

Iranian film shines at Transylvania Int'l Film Festival



Arts & Culture Desk

ISNA – Iranian feature film 'Like A Fish on the Moon,' directed by Dornaz Hajiha, won the Best Film Award at the 22nd edition of the Transylvania International Film Festival, held in Romania from June 9 to 18.

According to the festival's website, for the first time during the event's history, the first prize of the festival goes to a film directed by a woman.

"I think whether you're a five-year-old or a grown man in your fifties, the pressure to do things you don't want to do is terrifying. I'm glad that the jury understood the message of this film," said Dornaz Hajiha at the presentation of the €10,000 Transylvania Trophy.

Iran's veteran vocalist Nasehpour dies at 83



Arts & Culture Desk

IRNA – Iran's renowned vocalist and former board member of the Iran Music House, Nasrollah Nasehpour, died at the age of 83. He will be laid to rest at the Artists' Section in Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery on Wednesday. He was born in Ardebil in 1940 and was raised in a music-oriented family since childhood.

When he moved to Tehran, he studied vocal *radif* with the late Mahmoud Karimi for about seven years. He also studied instrumental *radif* repertoire of Persian art music at the National Music Institute with the late Ali Akbar Khan Shahnazi.

In the class of the late Soleiman Amir Qasemi, he got in touch with the late Saeed Hormozi (a very skillful setar player) and he learned many important points of Persian art music. At last, he worked with the great master of vocal *radif* repertoire, the late Abdollah Davami, who had a great influence on his musical development. The unique timbre of Nasehpour's vocals, coupled with his creative talent and rich Azarbaijani musical background, made him an outstanding performer. He researched, taught, and performed for more than 50 years and trained thousands of students. Some of those students are famous vocalists in Iran and abroad. As a professor at the Art University of Tehran, his books on the old theoretical music of Persia have been published by the Iranian Academy of the Arts Publication.

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East Azarbaijan Province to tap into permanent handicrafts markets

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

The director of the Tabriz Department of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism in East Azarbaijan Province made an announcement regarding the establishment of permanent markets dedicated to rural handicrafts in 15 different locations throughout the province.

In an interview with an Iran Daily reporter, Seyyed Ramin Asbaqi elaborated on the purpose of these markets, stating that they aim to provide a platform for the exhibition and showcasing of rural handicrafts, generate income for villagers, and create opportunities that discourage rural migration to urban areas.

He further mentioned that the necessary agreements had been reached, led by the governor general's office of East Azarbaijan, to initiate the implementation process. Additionally, the provincial official revealed plans for a handicrafts exhibition at the Qajar Museum in Tabriz, which is set to coincide with Iran Craft Week. Running from June 15 to July 7, the exhibition features artists from 13 different artistic fields displaying a diverse range of handicraft products in 20 booths. Among the showcased crafts are leatherwork, pottery, calligraphy, installations, doll-making, glass fusion art, copper engraving, and traditional clothing. A section of the exhibition is dedicated to a nomadic tent where visitors can explore nomadic handicrafts.



● AHARNEWS



● IRAN DAILY

Asbaqi expressed optimism regarding the exhibition, noting that the Qajar Museum is renowned and attracts a large number of visitors. The booths at the exhibition will be allocated on a weekly basis to accommodate other artists and handicraft fields from the province.

Discussing the state of handicraft training in the region, Asbaqi highlighted that there are 83 different fields of handicraft training available in East Azarbaijan Province and the city of Tabriz.

He emphasized that these fields have dedicated workshops, exhibitions, and production centers for showcasing and promoting their products.

Furthermore, he mentioned the revival of forgotten crafts in recent years, including basket-weaving in Marand County and the fields of *chalangari* (a type of blacksmithing involving heating iron in kilns and shaping it into desired objects) and knife-making.

Asbaqi stated that there are currently 13,000 identified and registered artists in East Azarbaijan Province, with around 8,000 of them concentrated in Tabriz due to its superior facilities and access to raw materials.

He also revealed that the province has been award-

ed the national title in 153 artistic fields, with seven additional fields recommended for this prestigious recognition by the Ministry of Tourism, Cultural Heritage, and Handicrafts.

During the closing ceremony of a recent national event in Tehran, which focused on the design and production of traditional textiles and related handicrafts in Iranian clothing, the field of *mamaghanduzi* (a type of embroidery originating from Mamaghan City in East Azarbaijan) received special recognition from the Tourism Minister, highlighting its significance among the top handicraft fields.

Finally, Asbaqi underscored the handicraft capacities of East Azarbaijan Province,

emphasizing that the city of Osku has been registered as the national city of batik art, while block printing on fabric is recognized as one of the traditional printing arts, with the city of Ahar designated as the national city of varnish.

Looking ahead to 2023, Asbaqi disclosed that the city of Sardrud has been nominated to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts as the national city of carpet paneling, Mamaghan for *mamaghanduzi*, and Kuzehkona for ceramics.

In conclusion, block printing or batik art, varnish art, carpet paneling, *mamaghanduzi*, pottery, silver engraving, and woodcarving stand out as prominent handicrafts in East Azarbaijan Province.

Iraq unveils ancient stone tablet returned by Italy



Iraq unveiled a 2,800-year-old stone tablet returned by Italy, as the country works to recover from abroad antiquities looted from its territory. The tablet – whose text

is written in cuneiform, the Babylonian alphabet – bears the insignia of Shalmaneser III, the Assyrian king who ruled the region of Nimrod, in present-day northern Iraq, from 858 to 823 BC,

AFP wrote. The circumstances surrounding the tablet's arrival in Italy remain unclear, but the Italian authorities handed it over to Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid during a visit to Bologna over the past week.

"I would like to thank the Italian officials for their efforts and cooperation in bringing back this piece," Rashid said during a ceremony at a Baghdad presidential palace to hand the artefact over to the national museum.

The tablet had arrived in the 1980s in Italy, where it was seized by police, said Laith Majid Hussein, director of Baghdad's council of antiquities and heritage. Iraqi Culture Minister

Ahmed Fakak al-Badrani said the circumstances behind its discovery were unclear.

"Perhaps (it was found) during archaeological excavations or during work on the Mosul dam," Iraq's biggest built in the 1980s, he said.

He underlined the importance of the piece, "whose cuneiform text is complete". Modern Iraq's territory is the cradle of the Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian and Assyrian civilisations, to which humanity owes writing and the first cities. The country's antiquities have been the target of looting that increased in the chaos following the US-led invasion of 2003. "We will continue to work to recover all the

archaeological pieces of Iraqi history from abroad," said the Iraqi president.

"We want to make the national Iraq Museum one of the best museums in the world, and we will work to do so."

In May, New York prosecutor Alvin Bragg announced the return of two ancient sculptures to Iraq: a limestone Mesopotamian elephant and an alabaster Sumerian bull from the old city of Uruk.

The figurines were smuggled into New York in the late 1990s, according to the prosecutor's office. The bull was part of the private collection of Shelby White, a billionaire philanthropist and Met trustee.