



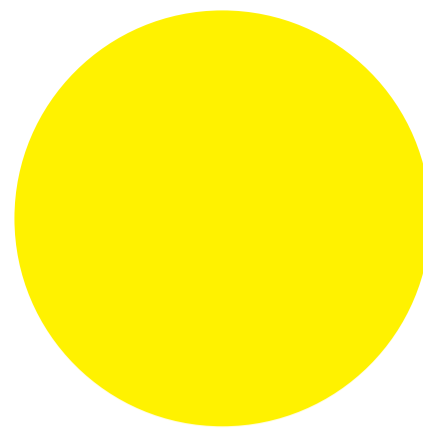
**New era for Esteghlal as fans' favorite Nekounam takes charge**

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# Iran Daily

## Iran became world's seventh steelmaker in May

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Albanian police pepper spray members of the Mujahedeen Khalq Organization during a raid on their camp in Tirana, Albania, on June 20, 2023.

## End of despised terror group

Political Desk

Did it truly require 42 years, spanning from June 20, 1981 to June 20, 2023, for the followers of the terrorist Mujahedeen Khalq Organization (MKO) to come to terms with its true nature? This particular date marked the beginning of the MKO's open defiance and armed conflict against the newly established Islamic Republic of Iran. While it initially held promise for the organization's leaders and members as a means to seize power in Iran and serve the people, it also marked the onset of a decline characterized by abandonment of their idealistic claims, a descent into malevolent paths, and ultimately, betrayal of the nation resulting in widespread animosity and forced exile. The MKO's failure to effectively challenge the Islamic Republic through armed confrontation pushed them into a realm of seeking revenge and resorting to blind acts of terror. As the war launched by the Iraqi Baath regime, led by Saddam Hussein, unfolded against Iran, the MKO's activities transformed into acts of treachery. Its members

began by divulging intelligence to the enemy forces and subsequently establishing a presence in Iraq, officially aligning themselves with the invading army and launching attacks against the Iranian people. The organization's illusory military aspirations were dealt a severe blow in 1988, following the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq war, with Operation Forough Javidan. This operation resulted in a crushing defeat and the crippling of their military capabilities. Following this defeat, the MKO leadership shifted their focus toward bomb attacks, acts of vandalism, and targeted assassinations. Official statistics indicate that throughout their campaign against the Islamic Republic, the MKO has been responsible for the assassination of approximately 17,000 Iranian citizens and officials. The ousting of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq dealt a significant blow to this widely despised group. The removal of the protective cover provided by the Iraqi dictator laid bare the undeniable fact that terrorists had no place in Iraq. Consequently, they were compelled to abandon their bases in Iraq and were relocated to Alba-

nia, a European nation, under the auspices of Western supporters, primarily led by the United States. After their military endeavors to overthrow the Islamic Republic proved unsuccessful, the terrorists redirected their attention toward political pursuits, receiving support from Western nations, all while persisting in their acts of terrorism. Each year, they meticulously orchestrated elaborate shows on various pretexts to showcase their presence and relevance. The participation of political figures, as well as certain European or American officials who harbored opposition to the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the organization's propaganda events, served as a source of encouragement for the MKO leaders and members. Such events made them believe that they enjoyed substantial backing from Western governments, although their presence and the expenses incurred for organizing such programs undoubtedly cost the MKO an arm and a leg. Prominent figures such as Rudy Giuliani, the former mayor of New York and a close associate of former US president Donald

Trump, John Bolton, the former US national security advisor, Bernard Kouchner, the former German foreign minister, Stephen Harper, the former Canadian prime minister, Philippe Douste-Blazy, the former French foreign minister, and Fatmir Mediu, the chairman of the Republican Party of Albania, have been featured speakers at conferences hosted by the MKO. These spendthrift shows and victim playing failed to rally support for the MKO inside Iran. Over the past four decades, due to their ideologies and actions against the Iranian people, the Mujahedeen organization has lost all credibility, not only among Iran's overseas opposition but also among dissident factions within the country. A survey conducted in 2022 by an opposition organization presented 34 candidates for the chair of the self-proclaimed opposition leadership council. Maryam Rajavi, following the disappearance and presumed death of her husband Massoud Rajavi, the group's primary leader, was ranked last in this poll. The organization's lack of credibility within Iran is so apparent that in October

2018, Elizabeth Stickney, a Farsi-speaking spokesperson for the US Department of State, stated in an interview with Deutsche Welle television network, "We have previously stated and continue to maintain that the MKO has no standing among the people of Iran." The terrorists operating in Albania encountered significant challenges. Firstly, they observed a surge in animosity from their intended target, namely the Iranian nation. Additionally, they were simultaneously grappling with escalating setbacks in their activities that were detrimental to the general public. These setbacks were primarily caused by the effectiveness of the Islamic Republic's intelligence forces. Furthermore, they were also contending with a surge of defections. The political standing also suffered a decline both among governments and public opinion worldwide. In response, they sought to expand their activities in the realm of cyber warfare and malicious online propaganda by recruiting mercenaries. However, they failed to gain any success the virtual space.

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## Leader: Palestinian youths' battle holds promise for bright future



Khamenei.ir

International Desk

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali

Khamenei said the involvement of Palestinian youths in the struggle against the Israeli regime is of great importance. Ayatollah Khamenei made the comments in a meeting with the head of the political bureau of the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement, Ismail Hanieh, in Tehran on Wednesday. He referred to recent developments in the West Bank city of Jenin as a clear example of the youths' involvement in the Palestinians' battle against the Israeli regime, which hold promise for a bright future, with complete victory. On Monday, the Israeli regime was forced to scramble helicopters to rescue its troops trapped in the firefight with Palestinian fighters during its deadly raid on the Jenin refugee camp. Pointing to the importance of the unity among the Palestinian resistance groups, the Leader said that the Israeli regime tried to create division among the resistance groups during the recent Gaza war, but it failed to do so.

## Baqeri Kani, Mora hold 'serious, intense' talks in Doha

Iran's deputy foreign minister and chief nuclear negotiator Ali Baqeri Kani said on Wednesday he held talks with the European Union's Iran nuclear talks coordinator Enrique Mora in Doha. In a tweet, Bagheri-Kani described the meeting as "serious and constructive." He added that several issues were discussed, including the negotiations on sanctions lifting. Mora also in a Twitter message said he held "intense" talks with Baqeri Kani on a range of difficult bilateral, regional and international issues, including the way forward on the Iran nuclear agreement. Iran said last week it had been engaged in indirect negotiations with the US through Oman, with nucle-



ar issues, US sanctions and detainees on the agenda. The following day, Baqeri Kani said he had met with diplomats from three European countries in Abu Dhabi to discuss a number of issues including Iran's nuclear program. In recent weeks, Washington and Tehran have denied media reports that they were close to reaching an interim deal to replace the 2015 agreement.

## China lashes back as Biden labels Xi 'dictator'

China on Wednesday called comments by U.S. President Joe Biden referring to Chinese leader Xi Jinping as a dictator "extremely absurd and irresponsible," as a new rift threatened to upset tentative efforts to stabilize the relationship between the two countries. The clash of words comes just over a day after Secretary of State Antony Blinken concluded a visit to Beijing that sought to break the ice in a relationship that has hit a historical low. Biden, at a fundraiser in California on Tuesday night, said Xi was embarrassed by recent tensions over a suspected Chinese spy balloon that was shot down by the Air Force over the East Coast. "That's a great embarrassment for dictators. When they didn't know what happened," Biden said. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning, responding to a question about Biden's remarks, said they "go totally against facts and seriously violate diplomatic protocol, and severely infringe on China's political dignity."

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**UCM hinders war on terrorism: Iran's UN envoy**



**TASNIM** – Iran's ambassador to the United Nations complained that the Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCM), namely sanctions, hinder international cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Addressing the third United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States held in New York, Saeed Irvani emphasized that counterterrorism requires comprehensive strategies in preventing and combating terrorism, with due regard to the cultural, political, social, economic, security, and intelligence dimensions.

## Iran, Saudi Arabia to resume postal cooperation

**TASNIM** – An official with Iran's National Post Company on Wednesday announced the resumption of postal relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia after the Hajj pilgrimage in the kingdom. In bilateral talks held in Bern, Switzerland, Saudi officials welcomed the move taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Chief Executive of Iran National Post Company Mahmoud Liaei stated.

## Iran, Norway hold joint consular commission after years



**ISNA** – The second joint consular commission of Iran and Norway was held after a seven-year hiatus, with the consuls general of the two countries presiding over the session. At the meeting, important consular issues between Iran and Norway including visa issuance, looking into the problems of students, academic cooperation, transit drivers, illegal refugees and their return to their country, judicial cooperation, as well as joint cooperation in humanitarian activities were discussed.

# Iran, Russia, Turkey, Syria condemn 'support' for terrorists in Syria



Delegations from Iran, Russia, Turkey, and Syria discuss the peace process in Syria at the 20th round of Astana talks in Astana, Kazakhstan, on June 21, 2023. **AA**

Iran, Russia, Turkey, and Syria on Wednesday condemned the actions of nations supporting "terrorist entities" in northeastern Syria as they assembled for Astana peace talks in Kazakhstan. The guarantor countries reject "illegitimate self-rule initiatives" in Syria implemented under the pretext of fighting terrorism, a joint statement read, according to Daily Sabah. Reiterating their resolve to combat terrorism, the

sides added, "We stand against separatist agendas that threaten the national security of neighboring countries." Since Tuesday, deputy foreign ministers from Iran, Russia, Turkey as well as Bashar Assad's regime have been in the Kazakh city for the 20th round of Astana talks. The guarantor countries on Wednesday held bilateral meetings and discussed developments "in the field" and Syria's im-

mediate region. A roadmap for the normalization of ties between the Damascus-based regime and Ankara was also on the agenda besides the release of hostages, missing persons, the humanitarian situation, the rebuilding of Syria, and the establishment of conditions for the return of Syrian refugees. The joint statement further condemned Israel's ongoing military attacks on Syria, reiterated the sides' call for respect to in-

ternational laws, and dismissed Israel's decisions and steps on the matter as "null and void". The sides agreed to reconvene for the next round of talks in the second half of the year, but longtime host Kazakhstan seems more reluctant to uphold the tradition as it surprisingly proposed ending the process during the meeting. "Syria's gradual emergence from isolation in the region could be regarded as a sign that the Astana

process has completed its task," Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Kanat Tumysh told reporters. "We cannot say that the Astana process is over," Russian negotiator Alexander Lavrentyev said. "... But if the Kazakh side has decided that they need to be moved to a different location, we will discuss that and pick one." Russia, Turkey, and Iran could, for example, take turns to host those meetings, he said.

## End of despised ...

The accumulated experience of over four decades of perpetrating acts of terror and betrayal against the Iranian people was not something that could be erased or disregarded through democratic gestures, claims of upholding human rights, or victim playing by anyone who was well-informed about the MKO's track record. It appears that the expiration date has finally come for certain European and American governments regarding their association with the MKO. For the first time in 15 years, the French gov-

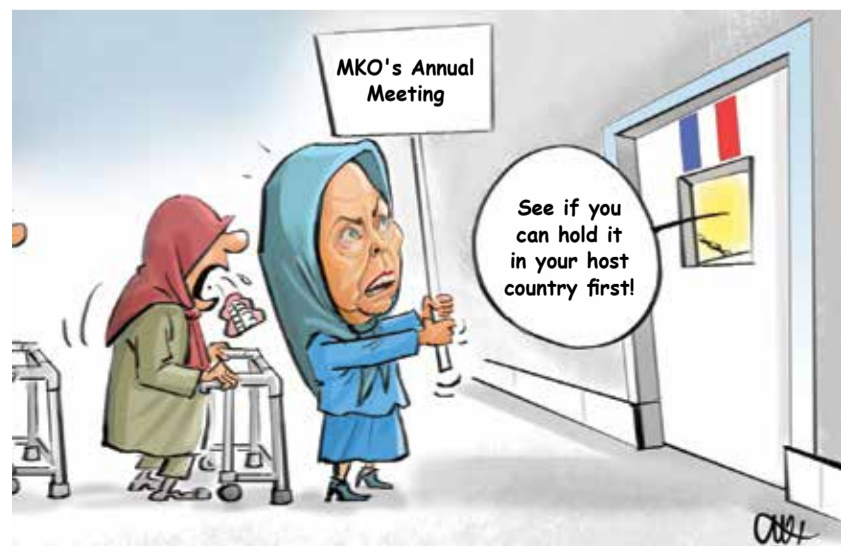
ernment, which had been the organization's main political sanctuary and headquarters, refused to grant them permission for their annual gathering in Paris. Another noteworthy development occurred when Albanian police carried out an operation against the organization's camp near Tirana on Tuesday, in accordance with a ruling by the Supreme Court on organized crime, specifically terrorism. The clash between police and the organization's members ensued due to the resistance put forth by the MKO members. In an official statement,

the Albanian Ministry of Interior announced the police operation was carried out due to the group's violation of the agreements and commitments made in 2014. Back in 2014, the MKO agreed to settle in Albania solely for humanitarian purposes and avoid engaging in any other activities. However, the group failed to fulfill its obligations and breached the agreement. According to a reliable security source cited by the Islamic Republic of Iran News Agency (IRNA), two members of the terrorist group were killed, 36 were wounded, and

70 were arrested during the raid. Additionally, the spokesperson for the US State Department released a statement expressing support for the Albanian government's right to investigate potential illegal activities taking place within its territory. The recent events in France and Albania, which have taken a stance against the MKO, along with the implicit endorsement from the US State Department regarding the Albanian government's actions, appear to be significant pieces of the puzzle that contribute to the down-

fall of Rajavi's terrorists. The rejected terrorists no longer hold appeal for their once-supportive entities. However, one must question whether it had to take 40 years to reach this point. It seems that the political games played by certain Western governments, utilizing criminals as leverage against the Islamic Republic, required giving them a 40-year window to carry out assassinations. Otherwise, the fate of the MKO in Iran could have been anticipated as early as June 20, 1981, marking the year when their destiny was sealed with the label of "void."

**Mohammad Ali Rajabi**  
Cartoonist



## Iran welcomes UN's Persian Gulf initiative

### International Desk

The Iranian foreign minister welcomed an initiative proposed by the UN secretary-general about a meeting between the foreign ministers of the eight countries of the Persian Gulf. Amir-Abdollahian said that the initiative, which has been introduced by UN Secretary General António Guterres, should be considered by the Persian Gulf littoral states. He added that Tehran even welcomes a meeting between the heads of state of

the countries. He made the remarks after a meeting with his Omani counterpart Sayyid Badr Albusaidi in Oman's capital on Wednesday. Iran's top diplomat, who is on a regional tour, arrived in Oman on Tuesday. The Omani foreign minister said they discussed "continued consultations and cooperation" on issues of bilateral concern. "There is great consensus in the visions of the two states on a series of issues... that will contribute to stability, security and peace," he said, quoted by the official Oman

News Agency. Amir-Abdollahian, for his part, called the meeting "constructive" and praised the effective cooperation between the two sides. On Tuesday, the Iranian top diplomat met Qatari officials in Doha where they discussed various bilateral and regional issues. Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani said his country seeks comprehensive development of relations with Iran, while hailing the existing "strong" ties between the two nations. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian is on a tour of the Persian Gulf that will see the Iranian foreign minister also making stops later in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.



The aftermath of the 1981 failed armed riot organized by the MKO  
iichs.ir



MKO ringleader Massoud Rajavi (L) and impeached former Iranian president Abolhassan Banisadr  
iichs.ir



The detonated office of former Iranian president Mohammad Ali Rajaei  
iichs.ir



The wedding of MKO ringleaders Massoud Rajavi (R) and Maryam Rajavi  
iichs.ir

# 45 years of failure

## Terrorist Mujahedeen Khalq Organization through the years



MKO chief Masoud Rajavi (L) and Iraq's former dictator Saddam Hussein  
iichs.ir



A satellite photo of MKO headquarters, called Ashraf-3 camp, in Albania's capital, Tirana  
IRNA



Destruction left in the wake of MKO's Operation Mersad in Iran's Kermanshah  
iichs.ir



Pictures of MKO ringleaders under the boots of Iran's armed forces  
iichs.ir



MKO members being evacuated from Camp Ashraf in Iraq's Diyala  
iichs.ir



MKO's cyber army launching propaganda campaigns against Iran  
Twitter



MKO chief Maryam Rajavi (L) and former U.S. secretary of state Mike Pompeo  
AP



Recent riots in Iran which was partly orchestrated by the MKO  
IRNA



A view of the Ashraf-3 camp in Albania's capital, Tirana  
iichs.ir



MKO members clash with Albania police at the Ashraf-3 camp in Tirana.  
Repor TV

# Yazd Water Museum offers a fascinating glimpse into hidden world of desert waterways

The city of Yazd, the capital of the central province of Yazd, is famous for its qanats (underground aqueducts), and the Yazd Water Museum, one of the best of its kind, is devoted to the brave men who built them. Located in a restored mansion with a visible qanat running underneath, the museum offers, through a series of photographs, exhibits and architectural drawings, a fascinating glimpse into the hidden world of waterways that have allowed life to flourish in the desert. lonelyplanet.com reported.

The uniform of the qanat builders shows an early form of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), with padded cotton hats and white clothing that was luminous in the dark and would act as a shield in the event of an accident.

The museum, which charts the 2,000 years that Iran's unique irrigation system has been in operation, describes the drilling of mother wells (which can reach a depth of 300 meters, such as the qanat near Mashad) and the use of water distribution clocks. These clocks (basically, a bowl with a hole in the bottom) helped to mark the 15- or 20-minute shares of water purchasable by households or farmers.

Qanats run through many of the wealthy old houses in Yazd, collecting in basement pools, known as *sardob*. As the coolest part

of the house, these rooms were often beautifully decorated and several fine examples exist in Yazd's old traditional hotels today.

Qanats, many of which run through each town, are the reason why the wealthiest districts are always closest to the mountains – to be closest to the freshest water.

There exist also old water ownership documents that imply how wealthy farmers or households would purchase water.

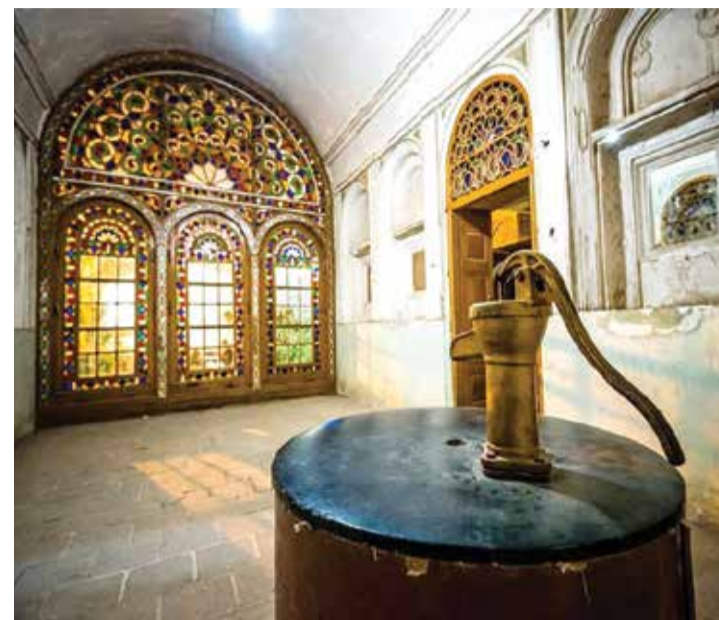
By visiting the museum, you can fully understand how such an architectural and engineering masterpiece of the ancient world, like Nashtifan Windmills, would work.

The museum has different levels, all of which are open to the public. Each level has its own characteristics. Levels are connected together through a stairway called *payab*. For example, one level was for storing food and fruits. One was used as a living room due to the cool and pleasant atmosphere. And one was used for saving water.

In 2016, the Persian qanat was registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List. It is a great evidence of cultural tradition and civilization in the deserts of Iran. The Yazd Water Museum opened in 2000 by the Yazd Regional Water Authority. However, as a mansion, its construction and beautification work was completed in 1887.



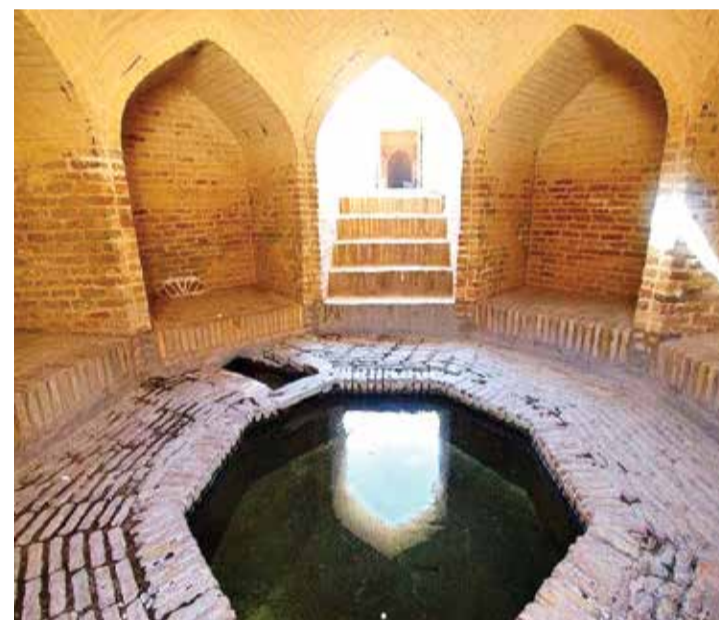
● itto.org



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## Boldness in Safavid arts

The development of a style of writing, the curvilinear *nastaliq* script, in the Safavid Period reflects the tendency towards finding conceptual links between the visual and the textual. *Nastaliq* was visually suited to the sound of Persian poetic language and was used at first solely for Persian poetry. That it carries within its swagger of line such emotive responses inspired its use for Persian inscriptions on architectural epigraphic bands, but also on all kinds of objects, from textiles and carpets to armour and candlesticks.

The Heech piece of sculpture by Parviz Tanavoli plays with those potentialities of the *nastaliq* script: By spelling the Persian word for nothingness in a large, elegantly twisting body of three letters in bold red *nastaliq*, it makes a thought-provoking, philosophical mockery of the very meaning of the word.

Other representations of such complex visual, textual and conceptual networks of meaning are found in narrative and figurative motifs on textiles: They become animated when worn as robes; and they trigger recitation of familiar poems or proverbs. Similarly, instruments of illumination — candlesticks and torches — carry on their surfaces poetic fragments in *nastaliq* script that relate to a mental image of light, the

light of the divine, of love and yearning. The candle sacrifices itself as it burns down while giving light and attracting the moth (a metaphor for the soul).

Manuscripts are designed to impress by their grandeur but also by the way they are held, touched and seen. The *falnameh* (book of omens) folios were made extraordinarily large, with the narrative image rendered in bold colours and large-scale figures to allow for viewing and hearing the *fal* (fortune) being read out loud. The *Shahnameh* of Shah Tahmasp breaks the record in every respect: It is the largest of the luxury copies of the text in manuscript form to have been produced up to that point, with an unprecedented high ratio of painting to text folios, and a consistently high concentration of skills and expertise throughout its entire production. The most amazing product of the Safavid *ketabkhaneh* (library), it must have been perceived as a sharp cultural weapon for it to have been sent as a gift to Ottoman Sultan Selim upon his accession. This was not done to appease the enemy, who was often victorious on the battlefield, but to boast about the realm in which the Safavids could not be defeated — art.

Animated objects abound in this period and become even more expressive in the

seventeenth century: Metalwork and ceramics enriched with poems that call to mind images and speak to the function of the object as if made eloquent; textiles that recall in their woven patterns and through the very act of weaving threads mental images and scenes better known from poetry and painting.

These artistic tendencies go hand in hand with a purposeful scenography of seeing: How the onlookers touched, viewed and sensed these luxury things was an important consideration in the process of making them. Large repeat figures would sway before the viewer's eyes if woven out of silk velvet, which responds to the direction of light and movement. Boldness in Safavid arts is ordinarily not about scale of motifs or the high contrast of colours. Rather it is in the way the object, the work of art, animates the imagination; the way it asks for close looking and sustained attention; it lies in noting the awesomeness of the tight weave of delicate threads and the miniature-like effect of the woven image; and the splendid effects of pounced gold leaf against deep brilliant blue as foils for warrior figures, dappled horses and other motifs which come alive as light changes if one could turn the pages in the *Shahnameh* of Shah Tahmasp.



● Safavid metalworkers introduced new shapes like these torch-like candlesticks.



## New era for Esteghlal as fans' favorite Nekounam takes charge

### Sports Desk

Weeks of speculations over the future of Esteghlal's bench came to an end on Tuesday after former Iranian international midfielder Javad Nekounam was named as the new manager of the Persian Gulf Pro giant. Numerous names were brought up in the Iranian media over the last fortnight, including Spanish coaches Juan Ramón López Caro and Quique Sánchez Flores as well as ex-Mes Rafsanjan boss Mohammad Rabiei, though it was always a matter of time before the 42-year-old manager – backed by the majority of the club faithful – would win the race for the Tehran Blues' job. Nekounam takes over from passionate Portuguese Ricardo Sa Pinto, who ended his season-long stint at the club – best remembered by touchline rows with the referees and the opposition camps – after a third-spot finish in the league and a 2-1 defeat against Persepolis in the Hazfi Cup final to join Cypriot side APOEL Nicosia.

The frustrating quest for a new head coach in the preseason has been a constant scenario for Esteghlal fans in recent years as Nekounam will be the seventh manager in as many seasons to start a new league campaign on the Blues bench. "Welcome home dear Javad. Your arrival at Esteghlal as a player was followed by silverware. Let's hope you will also lift the championship trophy as the manager," Esteghlal wrote on social media when

announcing the appointment of Nekounam, who won the domestic league title with Esteghlal in his first season back in the Iranian club football in 2012 – in the latter stages of an illustrious career, which included a six-year spell at La Liga club Osasuna.

The most capped player in the history of the national team with 151 appearances under his belt, Nekounam had been without a team since leaving Foolad Khuzestan in the most controversial fashion in February. Having led the southern Iranian club to a maiden knockout spot in the AFC Champions League, Nekou stepped down from his role right after a 1-0 victory over Saudi club Al Faisaly in the last-16 round in Doha over a rift with the new club board, before Foolad's run at the continent's elite clubs competition came to an end by Al Hilal days later.

Nekounam will begin a new chapter in his career on the back of a decent run with Nassaji Mazandaran and Foolad, as he steered the former to a first promotion for the Iranian Pro League in 2018, before winning the domestic cup and Super Cup trophies with Foolad. However, the Iranian is fully aware of the size of the new task in Esteghlal which is in stark contrast with all he has ever faced in his previous teams. Expectations will be sky high in the capital as the Blues fans will be eager to see Nekounam end the dominance of their archrival and reigning domestic double champion Persepolis

over the Iranian top flight since 2017 – a feat only achieved by former Esteghlal coach Farhad Majidi in the 2021/22 season.

A long-time admirer and protégé of Iran's former Portuguese head coach Carlos Queiroz, who has also been outspoken in praising Atletico Madrid's Argentine tactician Diego Simeone as a managerial role model, Nekounam is best known for adopting an accurate defensive gameplan against stronger oppositions. That is the kind of approach that helped his Foolad team hold Persepolis to a goalless draw at the Azadi Stadium last season before walking away with a 1-0 victory in the reverse fixture at home.

His recent record against Persepolis coach Yahya Golmohammadi surely offers hope among Esteghlal supporters for a first derby victory in the league since March 2018.

Nekounam also knows how important it will be to get off to a decent start in the new season to avoid an early pressure from the stands and the club hierarchy.

To that end, he needs to make sure he will make the right signings in certain positions in what was blamed as an unbalanced squad last season, while retaining the star players of Sa Pinto's team, most significantly frontline international duo Mehdi Qayedi and Mohammad Mohebbi, who are at end of their loan spells at the club, and versatile Frenchman Kevin Yanga – reportedly on the Portuguese's wishlist in his new job.

### Beiranvand to undergo surgery on fractured jaw



varzesh3.com

### Sports Desk

Iran goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand said he will have to undergo surgery on his fractured jaw after being forced out injured during a 1-0 victory over Uzbekistan in the CAFA Nations Cup final on Tuesday.

Persepolis keeper suffered the damage when he collided with teammate Saeed Ezzatollahi with six minutes into the game in Tashkent's Milliy Stadium. Leverkusen striker Sardar Azmoun scored the winner three minutes after the break, wrongfooting Uzbekistan keeper Utkir Yusupov with a wonderful drive after being teed up by Mehdi Taremi.

### Murray will not 'overreact' to early Queen's exit



PETER CZIBORRA/REUTERS

REUTERS – Andy Murray said he will not "overreact" to his opening round exit at the Queen's Club Championships after Tuesday's 6-3 6-1 defeat by Alex de Minaur ended the three-time Grand Slam winner's hopes of securing a seeding at Wimbledon.

The 36-year-old Scot, who has won Queen's a record five times, came into the match on the back of winning back-to-back grass-court titles at the Surbiton Trophy and Nottingham Open this month.

"Obviously after today, it's easy to overreact," said former world number one Murray, who has resurrected his career after hip resurfacing surgery. "I lost to a good player and it was obviously very comfortable."

"But at the same time, over the past couple of weeks, yes, it's obviously not the same level of opponents, but I won the (Nottingham Open) last week without dropping a set."

"I only lost one set in Surbiton. Was holding serve very comfortably. Was moving well, hitting the ball well. There are a lot of positive signs there."

Murray, who is now ranked number 38 in the world, opted to skip tournaments in the recent clay court swing to focus on the grass court season as he bids for a third Wimbledon title. This year's grass court Grand Slam runs from July 3-16.

## EURO 2024 qualifiers: Ronaldo nets winner on historic 200th Portugal cap; Haaland fires Norway

AFP – Cristiano Ronaldo marked his 200th international appearance with the winner as Portugal beat Iceland 1-0 in Euro 2024 qualifying on Tuesday, while Erling Haaland netted twice for Norway.

Ronaldo struggled for much of the match but repaid coach Roberto Martinez's faith by slotting home from Goncalo Inacio's knock-down in the 89th minute.

"It was a nice script (for Ronaldo). There was incredible celebration, the first men's player ever in world football to get 200 international games," Martinez told uefa.com.

"For me it's an unbelievable achievement, it's amazing," said the 38-year-old Ronaldo. "And of course to score the winning goal, it's even more special."

Portugal remain two points clear of Slovakia at the top of Group J after a fourth straight win.

Slovakia, who are Portugal's next opponents in September, won 1-0 away to Liechtenstein to stay unbeaten.

Luxembourg gave their unlikely bid to reach a maiden major tournament a boost with a brilliant 2-0 away victory over Bosnia and Herzegovina to move third, just three points behind Slovakia.

The top two from each group qualify automatically for next year's finals in Germany. Elsewhere, Belgium brushed aside the Thibaut Courtois captaincy row by seeing off Estonia thanks to a Romelu Lukaku double in Tallinn and Moldova came from two goals down to stun Poland.



Portugal captain Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates after scoring the winner in a 1-0 victory over Iceland in the Euro 2024 qualifiers in Reykjavik, Iceland, on June 20, 2023.

AP

Belgium goalkeeper Courtois had said he was "surprised" that coach Domenico Tedesco told a press conference he had refused to travel to Estonia after being overlooked for the stand-in captaincy last week. Tedesco had wanted to hand Lukaku the armband for Saturday's 1-1 draw with Austria and give Courtois the honour in Tallinn, with regular captain Kevin De Bruyne absent.

But with Courtois instead back home, Lukaku was named skipper again and responded by scoring two goals in a 3-0 success which helped Belgium stay second in Group F.

Austria remained three points clear in first place, albeit having played a game more than Belgium, as Christoph Baumgartner scored twice in the last 10 minutes to clinch a 2-0 win over Sweden.

Haaland's brace helped Norway bounce back from their dramatic defeat by Scotland at the weekend with a 3-1 victory against Cyprus.

That kept their slim hopes of reaching a first major tournament since 2000 alive, although they only sit third in Group A and just one point ahead of Spain having played two games more than the three-time champions.

Group leaders Scotland were not blown off course by a near two-hour interruption caused by heavy rain as they maintained their 100 percent record with a 2-0 win over Georgia.

Poland fell to fourth place in Group E after blowing a two-goal lead to lose 3-2 to Moldova in Chisinau.

Moldova, who had won only one of their last 43 Euro and World Cup qualifying matches, appeared to have been safely dispatched by first-half goals from Arkadiusz Milik and Robert Lewandowski.

But Ion Nicolaescu's double left Poland reeling and Vladyslav Baboglo, who plays his club football for Ukrainian team Oleksandriya, headed past Wojciech Szczesny to score a dramatic 85th-minute winner. Moldova, 171st in the FIFA rankings, are now third in the group standings, a point behind second-placed Albania who saw off the Faroe Islands 3-1.

Hungary moved top of Group G by cruising past Lithuania 2-0, level on points with Serbia after their 1-1 draw with Bulgaria.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

## High UK inflation hinders cost-of-living fight



AFP - Britain's annual inflation rate unexpectedly remained at 8.7 percent in May, official data showed Wednesday, piling pressure on the Bank of England and government to act over a cost-of-living crisis.

Markets had forecast a drop from April's level, while the BoE was already widely expected to raise interest rates again today to combat an inflation rate which is the highest among G7 nations.

## China unveils \$72b tax break for green cars



REUTERS - China unveiled on Wednesday a 520 billion yuan (\$72.3 billion) package of tax breaks over four years for electric vehicles (EVs) and other green cars, its biggest yet for the industry as it seeks to boost slower auto sales growth. "The extension by another four years beat market expectations," said Cui Dongshu, secretary general of the China Passenger Car Association.

## German recession will be sharper than expected: Ifo



CNBC - The German economy will contract more than previously expected this year as sticky inflation takes its toll on private consumption, the Ifo Institute said on Wednesday while presenting its forecasts. "The German economy is only very slowly working its way out of the recession," Ifo's head of economic forecasts, Timo Wollmershaeuser, said. German gross domestic product is expected to fall by 0.4% this year, more than the 0.1% forecast by the Ifo Institute in March.

## Iran became world's seventh steelmaker in May



By Reza Abesh Ahmadi  
Staff writer

Iranian steelmakers churned out 3.3 million tons of crude steel in May, according to statistics released by the World Steel Association (WSA) on Wednesday, indicating that the country stands at seventh place among steel producing countries. The country's steel ingot production for May 2023 registered an 8.8 percent rise compared to the figure for May 2022. World crude steel production for the 63 countries reporting to the association was 161.6 million

tons in May 2023, a 5.1 percent reduction compared to May 2022. WSA figures showed that Iran was the world's 10th crude steel producer during the first five months of 2023, with 13 million tons of output, two percent more than the related figure for 2022. China produced 90.1 million tons in May 2023, down 7.3 percent over May 2022, while India produced 11.2 million tons of steel ingots last month, up 4.1 percent compared to the figure for last year, as Japan produced 7.6 million tons, down 5.2 percent compared to the same month last year.



The United States produced 6.9 million tons of crude steel in May, down 2.3 percent. Russia is estimated to have produced 6.8 million tons, up 8.8 percent. South Korea produced 5.8 million tons,

down 0.1 percent. The World Steel Association is one of the largest and most dynamic industry associations in the world, with members in every major steel-producing country. The WSA

represents steel producers, national and regional steel industry associations, and steel research institutes. Members represent around 85 percent of global steel production.

## Iran inked 'very good' oil deals with LatAm states: Minister



Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji speaks to reporters in Tehran on June 21, 2023.

Iran's Oil Minister Javad Owji expressed satisfaction over Tehran's recent signing of "very

good" agreements in the upstream and downstream sectors of the oil industry with the three Latin American nations of Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua. Speaking to reporters after a cabinet session on Wednesday, Owji said the Iranian administration of President Ebrahim Raisi has started cooperating with the three Latin American states in the export of crude oil and gas condensates since its inauguration some two years ago, according to

Press TV. He added that Iran has exported more than 3.8 million oil and gas products to the Venezuelan refineries. "This country (Venezuela) has the largest oil reserves in the world and has a refinery capacity of more than one million barrels" but most of its capacities have not been used due to the sanctions, he emphasized. Owji noted that Iranian specialists in the oil industry have succeeded in

restoring some parts of the capacity. He said Iran and Venezuela have no financial payments, and the fuel trade is done through barter deals, adding, "We had a win-win game with Venezuela." The Iranian minister also commended the good measures taken in Cuba to barter oil with drugs and said Tehran began to restore Cuba's refinery capacity. Owji accompanied President Raisi in his groundbreaking tour of the three

Latin American nations earlier this month. During the visit, Iranian and Venezuelan ministers and other top officials signed a total of 19 cooperation agreements and memorandums of understanding. The agreements are aimed at expanding cooperation between Tehran and Caracas in many areas, including in the field of petrochemicals, as the two sides move to expand overall cooperation in the oil sector.

## Iran, FAO cooperate to combat desertification, drought



In a ceremony held in Tehran to mark the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, Nazi Tavakoli, the officer in charge, reads the message of the FAO representative ad interim to Iran on June 20, 2023.

**Economy Desk**  
Iran's Ministry of Agriculture marked the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought in a ceremony held in Tehran. The ceremony was held on Tuesday with the presence of a number of ambassadors, managers and officials of the Natural Resources and Watershed Management Organization (NRWO), as well as officials from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Speaking at the ceremony, NRWO head, Abbasali Nobakht, announced the activation of the taskforce for controlling desertification during the current administration. "Our plan is to emphasize the focus of the taskforce on operational and result-oriented measures to create synergy between related organizations, as well as the effective use

of the capacity of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification for regional dust management in cooperation with neighboring countries," Nobakht said. Also, Yubak Dhoj G C, the representative ad interim of FAO to Iran, in a message, expounded on activities to combat desertification and drought in the country. "The theme of 2023 to commemorate this day focused on women's roles and rights in sustainable land management. This theme strongly calls for safeguarding women's land rights to ensure a sustainable future for all," read the message of Yubak Dhoj G C. "Desertification and drought pose immense challenges that extend across every corner of our planet, endangering the livelihoods of millions, particularly those residing in dry and semi-dry regions such as Iran," said the FAO representative in a message on the occasion.

## Report confirms Iran raised power output by 7 GW

A report published by Iran's Tasnim news agency corroborated statements made by Iranian Energy Ministry officials in recent days suggesting the country's output of electricity had increased by 7 gigawatts (GW) in less than two years and since the current Iranian administrative government took office in August 2021. The report gave a breakdown of electricity production increase numbers reported in Iran over the past two years. Tables in the report showed that some 31 new thermal power plant units had been set up across Iran since August 2021 to increase the country's electricity production by 5.3 GW. It said repair and upgrade projects carried out in existing power plants had led to more than 2 GW of increased output



in the country's thermal power sector. Electricity generation from renewables increased by 0.175 GW in Iran over the past two years while output from small generators and from hydroelectric dams increased by 0.237 GW and 0.005 GW, respectively, said the report, citing figures from Iranian Energy Ministry and other government departments. It said Iran will launch more than 0.9 GW of new

electricity generation capacity by the end of the calendar year to late March. Iran expects a peak electricity demand of 73 GW this summer. State electricity company Tavanir said its total output is currently at around 60 GW amid warnings that power cuts would be inevitable for industries and businesses over summer months when household demand for cooling is expected to jump to record levels.



# Plastic bag predicament: A threat to our environment and the urgency of reduction

Social Desk

EXCLUSIVE

Soudeh Najafi, the chairperson of the Health Committee of the Islamic Council of Tehran, underscored the importance of punctual waste collection across the city, acknowledging the persistent criticisms of the city's waste management practices.

Najafi discussed the committee's recent meeting with the waste management organization, referencing the fourth plan of Tehran Municipality. This plan, a cornerstone of urban justice and a key issue in the city's sixth management period, is heavily emphasized by the city council. The degree of its implementation is a reflection of the city management's performance in the eyes of the citizens, ISNA reported.

"The fourth plan for the transformation and development of Tehran, which was compiled based on the realization of urban justice, is one of the most important issues in the urban management of the sixth period," Najafi said. "The city council emphasizes its implementation and the degree of implementation of this program shows the record and performance of the city management in the eyes of the citizens."

Najafi reiterated the importance of timely waste collection, acknowledging the

criticisms that have been levied against the city's waste management organization. She urged the organization to adhere to relevant plans and orders to achieve the desired outcomes.

Addressing the issue of waste tanks in the city, Najafi noted that improperly placed tanks obstruct roads and contribute to traffic congestion. Additionally, waste and leachate spilling from these tanks create an unpleasant odor, posing a potential health risk to citizens.

Najafi, a member of the executive board of Tehran Islamic Council, highlighted the potential for waste to serve as a source of income. She expressed hope that the waste management organization would take significant measures in collaboration with knowledge-based companies to capitalize on this potential. Najafi also touched on the issue of child labor in waste collection, particularly among foreign nationals. She condemned the exploitation of children and teenagers by illegal agents and waste collection networks, advocating for the design of waste tanks that restrict easy access to their contents.

"A significant part of the amount of waste produced in Tehran is plastic, about 10 percent of which is related to plastic bags," Najafi said. "We need to take action to recycle these products."

Finally, Najafi addressed the

growing vermin problem in the city, particularly the prevalence of rats in the city's streams. She expressed hope that the waste management organization, in collaboration with other institutions, particularly water and sewage, would manage and control this issue effectively.

In light of the startling news, we should be mindful of the fact that in our current era where convenience often trumps conservation, the ubiquitous plastic bag has become a symbol of our throwaway culture and a major threat to our environment. This seemingly innocuous item, found in every corner store and supermarket across the globe, is contributing to an environmental crisis of epic proportions.

Plastic bags, lightweight and water-resistant, are favored by retailers and consumers alike for their convenience. However, their environmental impact is anything but lightweight. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Americans alone use over 380 billion plastic bags and wraps yearly, requiring 12 million barrels of oil to manufacture.

The problem lies not only in their production but also in their disposal. Plastic bags are non-biodegradable, meaning they do not break down naturally in the environment. Instead, they slowly fragment into smaller pieces, or micro-

plastics, which can persist for hundreds to thousands of years. These microplastics infiltrate every corner of our ecosystem, from the deepest ocean trenches to the most remote mountain peaks.

Marine life is particularly vulnerable to plastic pollution. The United Nations reports that over 800 species worldwide are affected by marine debris, and as much as 80 percent of that litter is plastic. Sea creatures often mistake plastic bags for food, leading to blockages, starvation, and ultimately, death. The plastic ingested by marine life can also make its way up the food chain, posing potential health risks to humans.

On land, plastic bags litter landscapes, clog waterways, and contribute to landfill overflow. They are carried by the wind, often ending up in places where they pose a threat to wildlife and natural habitats. In urban areas, discarded plastic bags can block drains, exacerbating flood risks.

The plastic bag problem is not just an environmental issue; it's an economic one too. The World Bank estimates that the global economy loses \$80 billion to \$120 billion annually due to improper plastic waste management. This includes the costs of waste collection, the economic impact of tourism loss due to litter, and the potential income lost when recyclable materials are discarded

rather than recovered. So, what's the solution? Reduction is the first step. Many cities and countries have implemented plastic bag bans or fees, encouraging consumers to bring reusable bags. Businesses are also exploring alternatives to traditional plastic bags, such as those made from biodegradable materials or recycled content.

However, policy and industry changes alone are not enough. Public education about the environmental impact of plastic bags and the benefits of reusable alternatives is crucial. Consumers have the power to drive change through their purchasing decisions and habits. Recycling is another part of the solution, but it's not as simple as it seems. Only a small fraction of plastic bags are recycled, often due to contamination, sorting challenges, and a lack of recycling facilities. Innovations in recycling technology and infrastructure are needed to improve this rate.

The plastic bag predicament is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach. It's a challenge that involves governments, businesses, and individuals alike. But with concerted effort and a commitment to change, it's a challenge that we can overcome. After all, the



health of our planet and future generations depends on it. So does the health of our city, Tehran, and its current and future dwellers. We, as aspiring green citizens should take immediate steps to reduce our use of plastic bags. It could serve us well to remember that less than 50 years ago or so, Tehran-dwellers and Iranians all over the country used a reusable item called zambil, a big basket which they carried whenever they went shopping. Let us bring that lost tradition back.



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's theatrical production 'Mirzakoshon', penned by the acclaimed playwright Farhad Naqd'ali and skillfully helmed by director Ali Fat'hali, has taken center stage at the Shahrzad Theater Complex.

This captivating play commenced its captivating journey on May 28 and is set to enthrall audiences until the curtain falls on June 30.

Fat'hali, the visionary director, expounded on the artistic essence of the production, revealing a captivating amalgamation of storytelling techniques, including the venerable art of naqqali, alongside the resounding recitation of 'Shahnameh', the fabled Iranian epic poetry. Embracing the hallmark labyrinthine narrative structure of Iranian performances, patrons will bear witness to a mesmerizing interplay of storytelling intricacies, seamlessly interwoven within the very fabric of the performance. At the heart of this enthralling tale lie Termeh and Amir, two young souls entangled in a profound bond, nurtured within the hallowed walls of Darolfonoon School. Yet, their fervent affection becomes entwined with a somber twist, as Termeh's father finds himself ensnared in the throes of a grievous transgression, warranting the restitution of Diyya—an obligatory financial compensation traditionally paid to the victim or their heirs in cases of accidental manslaughter, bodily harm, or property damage.

Meanwhile, Amir finds himself ensconced in the depths of a peculiar predicament, toiling within the confines of a chamber presided over by the influential figure, Mirza Mashallah. This enigmatic persona harbors intentions of wedlock, proposing to unite with Termeh's father in matrimonial alliance, in exchange for fulfilling the Diyya obligation. Yet, amidst this labyrinthine scenario, Amir, aided by the sagacious Mubarak and the ingenious nephew of Mirza Mashallah, endeavors to engineer a masterful plan aimed at thwarting the solemn union from materializing.

As 'Mirzakoshon' continues its spellbinding run, spectators will be captivated by the enthralling tale that explores themes of love, loyalty, and the pursuit of justice within the intricacies of Iranian society.

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# Iran, Russia sign MoU for film production, joint events



Iran and Russia have recently solidified their collaboration in the realm of film production and joint events through the signing of a memorandum of un-

derstanding. The Farabi Cinema Foundation of Iran and the Union of Cinematographers of the Russian Federation came together to formalize this agreement, marking a significant milestone in their cinematic partnership. The signing ceremony took place on Tuesday at the headquarters of the Union of Cinematographers in Russia, and it was attended by Kazem Jalali, the Iranian Ambassador to Russia, Mehr news agency wrote. During the ceremony, Nikita Mikhalkov, the head of the union, and Seyyed Mehdi Javadi, the CEO of the Farabi Cinema Foundation, affixed their signatures to the memorandum. While commenting on the agreement, Javadi revealed

that it entails the development of fresh collaboration between Iran and Russia's film industries. This collaboration will encompass various aspects, such as co-production of films, organizing events, and hosting film weeks. Javadi expressed optimism that the implementation of this agreement will foster the growth of the cinematic relationship between Iran and Russia. Furthermore, both parties have agreed to establish a working group comprised of representatives from Russia and Iran. This working group will be responsible for strategizing and executing joint cinema projects, further reinforcing the ties between the two nations in the film industry.

## Perfecting Iran's National Orchestra through practice and collaboration

Arts & Culture Desk

Arash Amini, a renowned guest conductor of Iran's National Orchestra, shares his first-hand experience with the orchestra, highlighting the importance of dedicated effort and practice in achieving musical excellence. As the current leader of the orchestra, Amini's insights shed light on the journey to success for this esteemed musical ensemble.

Established in 1998 under the guidance of Master Farhad Fakhreddini, with the support of the Music Office of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Iran's National Orchestra has come a long way. Its inaugural performance showcased the vocal talents of Mohammadreza Shajarian, under the baton of Farhad Fakhreddini, featuring compositions by Bijan Taraqqi and Ali Tajvidi. Over the years, the orchestra has collaborated with numerous conductors. However, the Artistic Council of Iran's National Orchestra made the decision to invite guest conductors, with Arash Amini currently at the helm.

Drawing from the rich heritage of Iranian music, Iran's National Orchestra aims to captivate audiences with its performances. Following a ticketed program at the Fajr Music Festival in January/February of this year, the orchestra now focuses



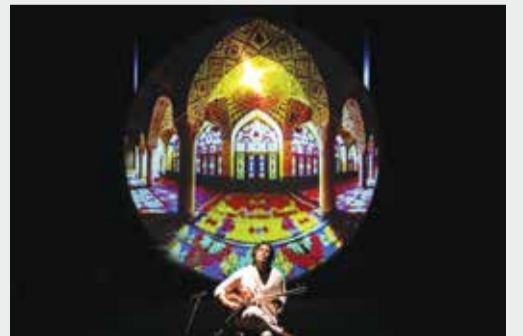
on presenting works by Iranian music masters in its current phase of activity. The program includes compositions by Iranian composers such as Morteza Hananeh, Javad Ma'roufi, Hassan Kassai, Behzad Abdi, and the eagerly anticipated premiere of Farhad Fakhreddini's 'Concerto for Violin and Orchestra.' Furthermore, the orchestra showcases the mastery of soloists like Maziar Zahireddini, Amin Ghafuri, Shima Shahmohammadi, Mojgan Mohammad-Hosseini, and Pouria Shivafard, who perform captivating suites for instruments like the kamancheh (an Iranian bowed stringed instrument), ghaychak (a bowed lute), ney (flute), and qanun (a string instrument). Reflecting on his connection with Iran's National Orchestra, Arash Amini expresses his nostalgia and excitement to lead

this esteemed ensemble once again. He praises the orchestra's talented musicians and the presence of Maziar Zahireddini, a pillar of Iranian music, as the concertmaster. Amini emphasizes the stability and desirability of the orchestra's situation, attributing it to the collaboration of seasoned professionals and younger players. Amini also acknowledges the need for continuous progress and development, particularly after the challenging period brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. Comparing an orchestra to a sports team, he emphasizes the importance of familiarity, harmony, and extensive practice among its members. Leveraging the immense potential of the orchestra, Amini believes that more performances and rehearsals will elevate the ensemble to new heights, not only enhancing the

musicians' morale but also raising the overall level of the orchestra. When it comes to selecting the repertoire for Iran's National Orchestra, Amini aims to present unique and lesser-known pieces that resonate with his own artistic preferences. The centerpiece of the concert is the world premiere of Maestro Farhad Fakhreddini's violin concerto, a composition entrusted to the orchestra by its esteemed founder. In addition, Amini introduces innovative combinations, such as a suite featuring the kamancheh and orchestra, performed by the talented Shima Shahmohammadi, and a suite for the qanun, with solo performances for the qanun and violin. The program also includes the mesmerizing 'Eight Paradises' by Master Hassan Kassai, arranged by Kam-biz Roshanravan, featuring a solo ney, brilliantly performed by Pouya Shivafard. Amini expresses his belief that Iran's National Orchestra should concentrate on showcasing the rich tapestry of Iranian music, highlighting the country's exceptional instrumental talents. By dedicating themselves to their craft and offering remarkable performances, the orchestra aspires to reach new heights of artistic achievement and inspire audiences with the beauty of Iranian music.

PIC OF THE DAY

Sohrab Pournazeri and Ali Qamsari, acclaimed musicians from Iran, are presenting live performances at the Saadabad Complex in Tehran.



● ALIREZA SOTAKBAR/ISNA