

## Iran, Russia reject drone claims as 'political show'

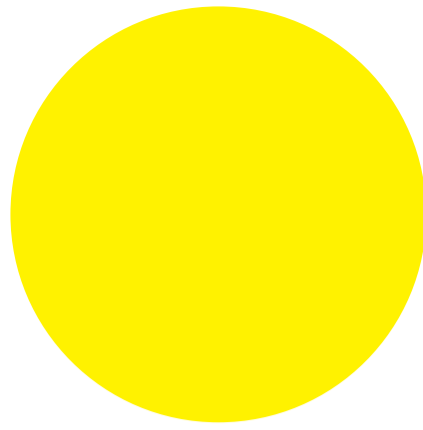


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## Iran to implement nationwide conversational skills awareness program: Official

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# Iran Daily

## Minister: Iran oil exports ascending despite 'harsher' sanctions

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Iran's Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province hosts the First Festival of Iran's Ethnic Groups, which began on June 20 and will last till June 26, 2023. AHMAD RIAHI DEHKORDI/IRNA

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## Political understanding between Iran, the West feed regional developments

By Ebrahim Beheshti  
Staff Writer



Iran's foreign policy apparatus has recently witnessed a flurry of activity, especially in the past two weeks. The latest example pertains to the four-nation Persian Gulf tour of Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, which took him to Qatar, the UAE, Kuwait and Oman. This is in addition to talks held between Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani and European Union deputy foreign policy chief Enrique Mora. Besides, Amir-Abdollahian has also unveiled Iran's proposal for establishing a joint mechanism for dialogue and cooperation among the Persian Gulf states. Iran Daily has conducted an interview with Diako Hosseini, an expert on strategic issues, to discuss such developments. He says Iran is simultaneously easing tensions with regional countries and the United States. Here are excerpts from the interview.

tries. This is because they regard this process as a prelude to regional stability which can also benefit the global economy. It seems that this process is the basis of Iran's diplomatic activities. Moreover, boosting regional ties can positively affect Iran-U.S. communications through mediators. Meanwhile, the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is unlikely until the U.S. presidential elections are held in 2024. Hence, a political understanding could replace the agreement in avoiding or reducing tensions. We can expect that easing regional tensions will pave the ground for de-escalation between Iran and the West, including the U.S. In other words, reducing tensions in the region is part of a political understanding between Iran and the West.

**IRAN DAILY:** Iran has seen a flurry of diplomatic activity or "diplomatic traffic" over the past months. What is your take on the issue?  
**DIAKO HOSSEINI:** The diplomatic activity is in line with Iran's efforts to promote relations with neighboring countries, which have been emphasized by President Ebrahim Raeisi. Likewise, big powers like China and the U.S. support the process of easing tensions between Iran and regional coun-

Do you believe that de-escalation of tensions between Iran and some regional countries, as well as the West, is moving ahead in parallel?  
In this regard, there are two points of view. The first indicates that the ongoing regional developments are part of a political understanding between Iran and the West. This process is supported by China.

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## Russian president calls Wagner mutiny treason; vows to punish its leaders

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday vowed harsh punishment for the organizers of an armed rebellion spearheaded by mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin, who led his troops out of Ukraine and into a key southern city. Putin denounced the move as "a stab in the back" in an address to the nation.

Prigozhin's private army appeared to control the military headquarters in Rostov-on-Don, a city 660 miles (over 1,000 kilometers) south of Moscow that runs Russian operations in Ukraine, Britain's Ministry of Defense said, according to AP. Wagner troops and equipment also rolled into Russia's Lipetsk Province,

about 360 kilometers (225 miles) south of Moscow, where authorities "are taking all necessary measures to ensure the safety of the population," said regional Gov. Igor Artamonov, via Telegram.

As the fast-moving events unfolded in Russia, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Moscow is suffering "full-scale weakness" and that Kyiv was protecting Europe from "the spread of Russian evil and chaos."

In his speech, Putin called the actions by Prigozhin, whom he did not mention by name, a "betrayal" and "treason."

**'Inevitable punishment'**  
"All those who prepared the rebellion will suffer inevitable punishment," Putin said. "The armed forces and other government agencies have received the necessary orders."

Prigozhin said his fighters would not surrender, as "we do not want the country to live on in corruption, deceit and bureaucracy."



"Regarding the betrayal of the motherland, the president was deeply mistaken. We are patriots of our homeland," he said in an audio message on his Telegram channel.

Prigozhin's private army, known as Wagner, has been fighting alongside regular Russian troops in Ukraine. His goals weren't immediately clear, but the rebellion marks an escalation in his struggle with Russian military leaders, whom he accused of botching the war in Ukraine and hobbling his forces in the field.



Members of Wagner group sit atop a tank in a street in the city of Rostov-on-Don, on June 24, 2023. STRINGER/AFP

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## Israeli minister calls for assassination of 'thousands' of Palestinians

Far-right Israeli Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir called on his cabinet to launch a wide military offensive in the occupied West Bank, encouraging the regime forces to assassinate "hundreds, or if needed, thousands" of Palestinians. Ben-Gvir made the remarks during a visit to the illegal hilltop outpost of Evyatar on Friday, Press TV reported. "Here, there should be a

full settlement, not only here, but in all the hills around us," he said, urging the settlers to "run to the hilltops." "We should settle the Land of Israel, and at the same time, launch a military operation, blow up buildings" and eliminate not just one or two, but dozens and hundreds and, if needed, thousands of Palestinians, Ben-Gvir said.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

FM spokesman  
blasts Zionists'  
desecration of  
Holy Qur'an

**TASNIM** – Nasser Kanaani, the spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, strongly condemned the desecration of the Holy Qur'an by the Zionist regime's settlers in the West Bank, adding that the regime clearly "does not have any red lines in insulting religious sanctities and violating human rights."

A group of Israeli settlers stormed the village of Urif, south of Nablus, in the northern West Bank on Friday, forcing their way into a local mosque and vandalizing it before ripping the pages of a copy of the Muslim holy book and throwing it into the street.

Pakistan  
Army Chief  
to visit Iran

**IRNA** – Pakistani Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir will make an official visit to Tehran in the coming days to advance Islamabad's military diplomacy with neighbors.

A senior Pakistani military official, who asked not to be named, said that strengthening bilateral cooperation in the security, border, and military sectors is on the agenda of the general's talks with high-ranking Iranian officials.

Region  
prioritizes  
maritime  
coalition: Navy  
commander

**MEHR** – Forming a maritime coalition is one of the priorities of the region, said Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani, adding that it would enhance security in the region.

Pointing to Iran's role in securing maritime trade routes, the Iranian Navy commander noted that Iranian naval forces have been honored three times by the United Nations for establishing maritime security and combating piracy.

Iran, Russia reject drone claims  
as 'political show'

Iranian Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri (r) and Commander of the Army General Abdolrahim Mousavi visit an underground drone base. ● AP

The Iranian and Russian ambassadors to the United Nations rejected claims by the U.S. representative about Moscow's use of Iranian combat drones in the Ukraine conflict as baseless.

Tehran slammed the anti-Iran action by the U.S., Ukraine, and three European countries as "a political show aimed at affecting" the UN chief's report on Iran abiding by its commitments under the nuclear deal, IFP reported.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield claimed that her country had "released further information" that Tehran had provided "hundreds of one-way attack Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)", and insisted that Ukraine and the UK had also provided "evidence" that Iranian

drones had been recovered by Kyiv.

"Russia has not only procured hundreds of Mo-hajer and Shahed series UAVs from Iran in clear violation of Resolution 2231 but it is also now working with Iran to produce these weapons inside Russia," she alleged.

"Russia has been using these UAVs in recent weeks to strike Kyiv, destroy Ukrainian infrastructure, and kill and terrorize Ukrainian civilians," Thomas-Greenfield continued. The diplomatic mission of Iran noted in a statement that the accusations against Iran aim to influence the six-month report of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres about the implementation of UNSC Resolution 2231 that authorized the Iran

nuclear deal.

The statement also said the push by the U.S. and its allies is aimed at preventing the review of the report in June at the Security Council, which is chaired by the United Arab Emirates, and postponing it to the next month when the UK takes over the presidency of the council, adding that the move shows the spiteful intentions of those countries. The Iranian diplomatic mission at the UN once again rejected claims that Iran is involved in the Ukraine war, stressing that the conflict is unwinnable and that all efforts must be aimed at ending it as soon as possible and resolving the root cause of the war in order to restore lasting peace in Ukraine. Russia's ambassador to the United Nations also

stressed that Kyiv has not given Moscow or Tehran an "iota of credible evidence" to prove the allegation.

Vassily Nebenzia condemned the U.S. version of events and accused Washington of attempting to 'mislead' the world.

"We categorically rejected it. These are baseless allegations and blatant attempts to deliberately mislead the international community. The arguments that our colleagues are providing do not withstand any scrutiny and simply lack any legal or technical grounds," he said.

The Russian ambassador added that the 'evidence' was limited to 'open source information and vague assessments' with 'incoherent photos of hardly identifiable debris'.

"It looks like they are not

even sure themselves about the shreds of evidence they are providing, and it's not about facts, as you see. Rather, it's all about a fake political narrative," he stated.

Both Iran and Russia have repeatedly denied claims that Tehran has provided Moscow with drones to be used in the Ukraine war.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in November dismissed media controversy over Iran's alleged support for Russia in the Ukraine war, adding, however, that Tehran had provided Moscow with a limited number of drones months before the war in Ukraine.

He also gave assurance that Iran would not be indifferent if it is proven that Russia has used Iranian drones in the conflict.

## Political understanding ...

The second suggests that the de-escalation pertains to the fact that some of the regional countries have decided to adopt a more independent policy. This could reduce tensions between Tehran and Washington. Nonetheless, we do not know whether the positive trend of de-escalation is a prelude to or result of a political understanding between

Iran and the U.S. But easing tensions with the region and the U.S. have positive effects on each other. It means that securing regional cooperation will help reduce and gradually resolve tensions between Iran and the West, including the U.S.

Besides, if Iran and the U.S. reach a strategic understanding, we will witness its effects on promoting regional cooperation. The

move will also pave the way for Tehran and Washington to normalize economic ties.

**Can we say that regional agreements with Iran are currently at the security and political phase; they have not gone through the phase of economic cooperation yet?**

That is correct. Although regional countries have good economic ties with

Iran, they face restrictions in developing these relations as long as U.S. sanctions on Tehran remain in place. These restrictions hamper efforts to make huge investments.

**Iran's foreign minister put forward a proposal to promote dialogue and cooperation among regional countries. Can the plan help establish cooperation in the region with long-lasting effects?**  
A proposal to promote regional cooperation had

already been suggested by former foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. But it was not realized because conditions were not ripe. Now, however, it seems that the conditions are ripe for going ahead with the foreign minister's plan. Both Iran and other regional countries should be aware that sole reliance on the process of easing tensions is not enough to strengthen regional stability. Governments should continue talks on different levels to clear up misun-

derstandings and establish new bonds.

In my opinion, if the Iranian foreign minister's plan is realized, it can serve as a suitable platform for enhancing cooperation and resolving remaining disputes among regional countries. This will, ultimately, lead to establishing a strong and stable region.

It is high time that the plan is put into operation because the conditions are prepared for its realization and big powers support it.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



## Iran Embassy assailant indicted by Denmark

A knife-wielding assailant who intruded into the Iranian Embassy compound in Copenhagen with the intent to assassinate the ambassador last October has been finally indicted by a Danish prosecutor.

The 33-year-old assailant has been charged with aggravated assault against Iran's Ambassador Afsaneh Nadipour as well as inflicting property damage on the embassy building and automobiles, according to a statement released Friday by the prosecutor's office, which further noted that Denmark's justice

minister has accepted the charges brought against the suspect.

The assailant entered the embassy compound on October 7, 2022, and tried to attack and seriously harm the female Iranian ambassador by rushing towards her with a knife, injuring a local employee of the diplomatic post who tried to stop him, Press TV wrote. According to the prosecutor's statement, the attempted assault on Nadipour was thwarted by an embassy employee, and the suspect was then arrested by the Copenhagen police

and has since remained in custody.

The statement said the inability of a foreign diplomat in Denmark to perform his or her duties without fear of being physically attacked is a very serious matter and totally unacceptable, adding under such circumstances, the diplomat — by law — must come under police protection. Denmark's ambassador to Iran extended his country's apology, promising that security measures for the Iranian embassy would be upgraded.

## N. Korea warns of stronger response to any military measures by US



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken  
ANDREA VERDELLI/  
BLOOMBERG

North Korea criticised US Secretary of State Antony Blinken for trying to get China to pressure Pyongyang to lay down arms, and warned that its response will grow "more overwhelmingly and aggressively" to any stronger military measures by the United States on the Korean Peninsula, state media KCNA said on Saturday. Blinken's "threats" for China to pressure Pyongyang expresses a "dangerous hegemonic mentality", KCNA said, citing

a North Korean Foreign Ministry official, Reuters reported.

KCNA also criticised the U.S. for sending military assets including a nuclear-powered submarine to the Korean Peninsula, risking "peace and security".

North Korea fired two short-range missiles off its east coast last week, less than an hour after Pyongyang warned of a response to military drills by South Korean and U.S. troops.

The country is under international sanctions over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes.

According to South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Blinken has called key ally South Korea to discuss results of his visit to China this month.

Blinken told South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin he had an honest, practical and constructive dialogue with the Chinese side, and wanted to explain the results of his visit in as much detail as possible, a ministry statement said.

Blinken and Park decided to continue to communicate regarding relations with China and to urge Beijing to play a constructive role in North Korea's suspension of provocations and denuclearisation, the ministry said. During the visit to China where Blinken met President Xi Jinping and other top officials, the two sides agreed to stabilise their intense rivalry so it does not veer into conflict, but failed to produce any major breakthrough.

## Israeli forces kill Palestinian at West Bank checkpoint near Al-Quds

Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian man claiming that he had opened fire at the main checkpoint between occupied northern West Bank and Al-Quds amid a new round of atrocities waged by the regime against local residents.

The Israeli regime's Hebrew-language media outlets claimed that the yet unidentified Palestinian arrived on foot at the Qalandiya checkpoint north of al-Quds early Saturday morning while carrying an M16 automatic rifle and began firing at Israeli forces in the area before being shot dead at the scene, Press TV reported. A "security guard" and another man were reportedly slightly injured after being shot at the checkpoint. Israeli police forces were rushed into the scene and the two injured were evacuated by medical personnel to Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital in West Al-Quds for treatment.

Earlier on Friday, an Israeli woman that tried to stab the regime's soldiers was shot and wounded in the northern West Bank in what officials were reportedly investigating as a possible attempted suicide.

The Israeli military claimed in a statement that the nearly 40-year-old woman approached the soldiers near the Tapuah Junction and tried to stab them.

"In response, the soldiers opened fire in her direction to remove the danger," the military said.

The woman was wounded in her lower body and taken to a hospital in "moderate condition," the regime's Army Radio further claimed, noting that no soldiers were injured in the incident.

According to the military report, the woman was "dressed as a Palestinian," but did not elaborate.

The incidents came amid heightened tensions in the West Bank following a series of retaliatory Palestinian operations, and price tag attacks by extremist Zionist settlers.



Israeli forces arrive at the scene where a security guard and another man were slightly injured after being shot at Qalandiya checkpoint north of Al-Quds, the occupied West Bank, on June 24, 2023.  
TWITTER

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Eastern Libya administration threatens oil blockade



REUTERS - Authorities based in eastern Libya on Saturday threatened to blockade oil exports over the Tripoli government's use of energy revenue, accusing it of wasting billions of dollars without providing real services.

Libya has been locked in a political standoff since last year, when the parliament in eastern Libya rejected the interim Government of National Unity in Tripoli and designated a new administration that has been unable to take over in the capital.

#### House Republicans seek to expunge Trump impeachments



REUTERS - Two of Donald Trump's staunchest allies in the U.S. Congress have introduced legislation aimed at expunging the former president's two impeachments, a legislative maneuver without precedent in U.S. history.

Representative Elise Stefanik, the No. 4 House of Representatives Republican, and hardline Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene introduced a pair of resolutions that if enacted would aim to change the record "as if such articles had never been passed".

## UN urges action to stop 'wanton killings' in Sudan's Darfur

The United Nations called Saturday for immediate action to stop "wanton killings" of people fleeing El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur state, by Arab militias aided by paramilitary forces.

For more than two months, the Sudanese army headed by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan has been locked in fighting with the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) commanded by his former deputy Mohamed Ham-

dan Daglo, AFP reported. The deadliest violence has raged in Darfur, a vast western region on the border with Chad where the UN has warned the conflict has taken an "ethnic dimension".

"We are gravely concerned that such wanton killings are ongoing and urge immediate action to halt them," UN rights office spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani said in a statement.

"People fleeing El Geneina

must be guaranteed safe passage and humanitarian agencies allowed to access to the area to collect the remains of those killed," she added.

The Geneva-based UN rights office said people who escaped to Chad had given "horrifying accounts of armed 'Arab' militia backed by the Rapid Support Forces killing people fleeing El Geneina on foot". It said witnesses had given "corroborating accounts" of Arab militia

targeting men from the non-Arab Masalit people.

The UN rights office said that all but two of the 16 people it interviewed testified that they had witnessed "summary executions" and the targeting of civilians on the road from El Geneina to the border between June 15 and 16. The US said last week that up to 1,100 people had been killed in El Geneina, in a statement that attributed the atrocities "primarily" to the RSF



paramilitary force.

In its statement, the UN rights office said El Geneina had become "uninhabitable", and that essential infrastructure had been destroyed and movement of aid to the city remained blocked.

It called on the RSF leadership to "immediately,

unequivocally condemn and stop the killing of people fleeing El Geneina. "We urge the immediate establishment of a humanitarian corridor between Chad and El Geneina, and safe passage for civilians out of areas affected by the hostilities," it said.

## Russian president calls ...

### 'A march of justice'

"This is not a military coup, but a march of justice," Prigozhin said.

Prigozhin posted video of himself at the military headquarters in Rostov-on-Don and claimed his forces had taken control of the airfield and other military facilities in the city. Other videos on social media showed military vehicles, including tanks, on the streets.

The rebellion comes at a time when Russia is "fighting the toughest battle for its future," Putin said, as Western governments heap sanctions on Moscow and arm Ukraine.

"The entire military, economic and information machine of the West is waged against us," Putin said.

Russia's security services, including the Federal Security Service, or FSB, called for Prigozhin's arrest after he declared the armed rebellion late Friday.

Prigozhin said he wanted to punish Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu after he accused Russian government forces of attacking Wagner field camps in Ukraine with rockets, helicopter gunships and artillery. He claimed that "a huge number of our comrades got killed."

Prigozhin said Wagner's forces shot down a Russian

military helicopter that fired on a civilian convoy, but there was no independent confirmation of that.

He alleged that Gen. Valery Gerasimov, chief of the General Staff, ordered the attacks following a meeting with Shoigu, where they decided to destroy Wagner.

The Defense Ministry denied attacking the Wagner camps. Prigozhin said he had 25,000 troops under his command and urged the army not to offer resistance.

Ramzan Kadyrov, the strongman leader of the Chechnya region who used to side with Prigo-

zhin in his criticism of the military, expressed his full support of Putin's "every word."

"We have the commander in chief, elected by the people, who knows the situation to the slightest detail better than any strategist and businessman," Kadyrov said. "The mutiny needs to be suppressed." Wagner forces have played a crucial role, capturing the eastern city of Bakhmut, an area where the bloodiest and longest battles have taken place. But Prigozhin has increasingly criticized the military brass, accusing it of incompetence and of starving his troops of munitions.

### Security high in Moscow

Military trucks and armored vehicles were seen in central Moscow early Saturday, and soldiers with assault rifles were deployed outside the main Defense Ministry building. The area around the presidential administration near Red Square was blocked, snarling traffic. Col. Gen. Sergei Surovikin, the deputy commander of the Russian forces in Ukraine, urged Wagner troops to stop any move against the army, saying it would play into the hands of Russia's enemies who are "waiting to see the exacerbation of our domestic political situation." Western countries moni-

tored developments closely. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with his counterparts in the other G7 countries and the European Union's foreign affairs representative, his spokesman said, adding that Blinken "reiterated that support by the United States for Ukraine will not change."

Latvia and Estonia, two NATO countries that border Russia, said they were increasing security at their borders.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani reacted to the developments in Russia, saying that Tehran supports the rule of law in the country. He emphasized that the developments are a domestic matter, according to Iran's

Foreign Ministry's official website.

The Kremlin said Putin spoke by phone with the leaders of Turkey, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan about the events.

### A 'gift' to the West

Russia's close ally Belarus said Saturday that the armed insurrection underway by the Wagner mercenary group was a "gift" to Western countries, warning the uprising could spell "disaster", according to AFP.

"Any provocation, any internal conflict in military or political circles, in the information field or in civil society is a gift to the collective West," the Belarusian Foreign Ministry said, citing a statement by Minsk's Security Council.

# Kashan, an alluring destination with fascinating architecture



Fin Garden  
apochi.com



Agha Bozorg Mosque  
itto.org



Borujerdi House  
apochi.com

Kashan, a city in the central province of Isfahan, is one of the most alluring destinations in Iran, as it offers numerous historical houses and structures with fascinating architecture, such as the beautiful Fin Garden and the historical bazaar of Kashan.

Kashan is internationally famous for producing carpets, silk and other textiles. Years ago, Kashan was a significant center of pottery and tile production, and even the name "Kashan" is derived from "kashi," which means 'tile' in Persian, vipemo.com wrote.

## Fin Garden

Fin Garden is a unique combination of natural and man-made elements. The fascinating gardening method, the complicated irrigation system, and the beautiful stained glass windows are only parts of the beauties of the internationally known garden located in the heart of the



Maranjab Desert  
dalahoo.com

central arid lands of Iran.

Fin Garden was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2012, as one of nine Persian gardens that have been bestowed the same title.

## Agha Bozorg Mosque

The historical Agha Bozorg

Mosque, with its sunken courtyard, is a fine example of Islamic architecture in Kashan. This mosque was constructed for praying, teaching and preaching in the late 18th century CE. The selection of tiles, its precise and symmetric architecture, as well as its lighting give this complex



Abyaneh  
apochi.com

a surreal atmosphere.

## Historical houses of Kashan

The city of Kashan is famous for its numerous historical houses representing Islamic-Iranian architecture. The Ameri House, the Manuchehri

House, the Borujerdi House, the Tabatabaei House, and the Abbasi House are the most visited historical houses in Kashan. Today, some of these houses serve as traditional hotels which welcome tourists from throughout the world.

## Abyaneh

Known as the Red Village, the ancient village of Abyaneh, dating back to 1,500 years ago, is located 87km from Kashan. The idea behind the title is the red clay used in almost all buildings of the village. Abyaneh is a living village, where the traditional clothing of its residents is among the first things that draws the attention of visitors.

## Maranjab Desert

Maranjab Desert is a top tourist attraction and a mesmerizing desert near the city of Kashan. There are lots of adventurous activities in which you can engage like trekking up the golden sand dunes, visiting salt polygons of "Namak (Salt) Lake," camel riding, night gatherings around a fire and watching the stunning starry sky in the desert. There is an ancient caravan-serai in Maranjab Desert, which dates back to the Safavid era.

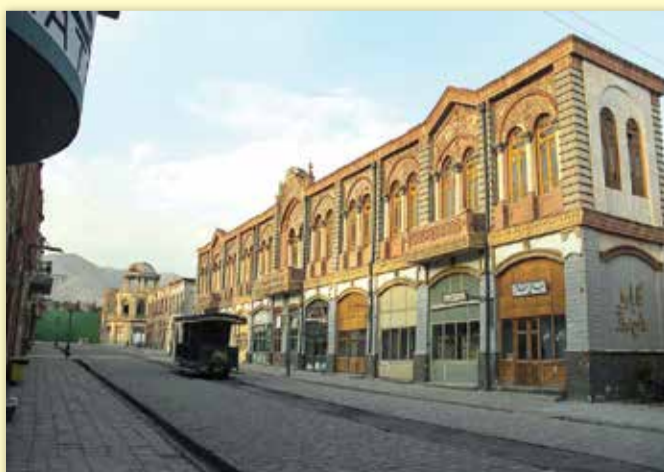
## Ghazali Town attractive for cinema lovers and tourists

For people who are eager to get acquainted with the cinema of the world in different styles, Ghazali cinema town, in western Tehran, is a wonderful place for spending a day. Ghazali Cinema Town, established in 1971 as the hub of Iranian cinema, covers a wide area, about 10 hectares. Some of the old districts, streets and buildings of Tehran are beautifully simulated in this area, and they were used as locations for making historical, religious and social films, irantourtravel.com reported.

Like a magical time machine, Ghazali Cinema Town take you to Old Tehran. As the home of Iranian cinema, Ghazali has seen the production of many old Iranian films. "Hezar Dastan," a very popular Iranian TV series, directed by Ali Hatami in 1978, is about Iran's social and political situation during the rules of the kings, Ahmad Shah and Reza Shah, with fabulous music, a professional cast, and beautiful locations like nostalgic cafés, shops, the Grand Hotel

and cobblestone streets. It is considered to be the first project filmed in the cinema town. The very famous and popular Iranian movie, Saint Mary (1997), is another project done in Ghazali Cinema Town. Several movies about the Iran-Iraq war, the Imam Ali TV series, Joseph the Prophet, and many more Iranian movies were also filmed in the town. Great efforts have been made to bring forth the replica of famous historical buildings

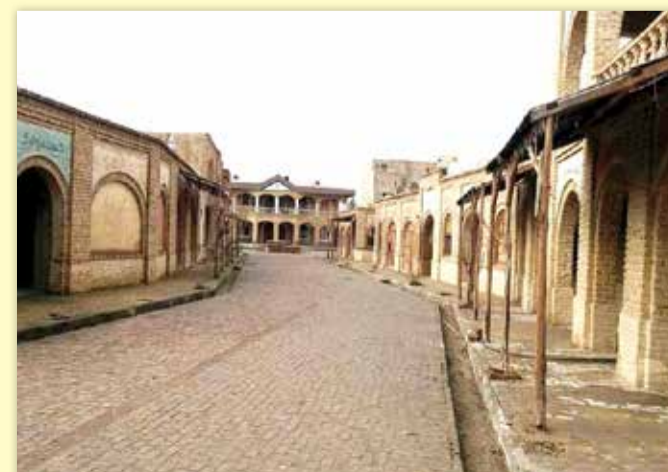
which, through the passage of time, have been witness to various incidents. The most exciting thing about visiting this place was meeting some of the happy puppets that played TV shows for children in the past. In general, Ghazali Cinema Town of Tehran has always been a popular place for Iranians and foreign tourists. A parking lot is available for visitors, and there is a guide for a group of more than ten members, explaining all the attractions.



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## Speraw 'disappointed' over US visa denial for three Iranian players



US head coach John Speraw makes instructions to his players during a 3-0 victory over Iran in the Volleyball Nations League in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, on June 23, 2023. ● FIVB

### Sports Desk

USA volleyball head coach John Speraw said he was "disappointed" to hear that the US Embassy in Ankara has refused to issue visas for three Iranian national team players for the Volleyball Nations League.

Iran is to visit Anaheim in California for the final week of the preliminary round – starting July 4 – but head coach Behrouz Ataei will likely have to do without the trio of integral opposite spiker Amin Esmaeilnejad, setter Mohammad-Taher Vadi, and Arman Salehi.

Iran will kick off Week 3 against Tokyo Olympic champion France, before taking on Bulgaria, Argentina, and Cuba.

Speaking about the situation after his team's straight-set victory over Iran in Rotterdam, Speraw said: "I would have been disappointed. I think any coach wants to take his best players... I'm not sure who this has affected – which players or staff – but anytime you're going to a highly competitive environment, you wanna have everybody with you. No question I'd have been disappointed.

When told who the three players are, Speraw said: "Oh man! If I was a coach and three of my starters didn't get visas that would be frustrating.

"I know it's complex, you could see the emotions that were out

on the court today. I'm sorry that that happened," added the American.

Friday's defeat was a fifth in seven games for Ataei's men, while the Americans – last year's runners-up – celebrated their sixth victory.

USA took the first two sets by 25-22 and 25-18 scorelines before overcoming a 20-17 deficit in the third set to win it 25-23.

"Great volleyball match," Speraw said, adding: "We played with a lot of emotion and energy."

"I think the first set was really well played by both teams, [that was] very close. I think the end of that set and for the rest of the match, the biggest key was our serve versus their passing. They got a run of passing difficulties and that was the difference in the match."

Meanwhile, Milad Taqavi, the secretary of the Iranian Volleyball Federation, said the country may withdraw from VNL Week 3 as "it's impossible to take on the opponents with an incomplete squad."

"We'll have a meeting at the federation this week to discuss the issue and will consider all aspects of the situation before making the decision. We're not willing to take part at the event at any cost," added Taqavi, while he urged the sport's international governing body, the FIVB, to come up with the proper response to the United States' decision.

## Iranians win three medals in Yasar Dogu wrestling event

### Sports Desk

The first day of the freestyle competitions at the Yasar Dogu, Vehbi Emre & Hamit Kaplan wrestling tournament in Istanbul, Turkey, saw the Iranians walk away with a couple of gold medals, as well as a silver.

Representing the country in the 57kg contests, Ebrahim Khari was handed the ultimate prize of the weight class after Germany's Justin Junior Lehr withdrew from the final showdown with an injury.

Mohammadreza Shakeri bagged a second gold for Iran on Friday, thanks to a 10-2 victory over the host's Cavit Acar in the 65kg final. Meanwhile, Ali Rezaei came out on top against two Turkish wrestlers to reach the 70kg final, only to suffer an 11-6 defeat against Magomed Bashir Khaniev of Azerbaijan.

Friday's results came after a total of nine medals had seen Iran finish as the runner-up in the Greco-Roman event.

Saeed Esameili was the sole Iranian to leave Istanbul with a GR gold after a win against Turkey's Mus-



Ebrahim Khari (l) and Mohammadreza Shakeri won two freestyle golds at the Yasar Dogu, Vehbi Emre & Hamit Kaplan wrestling tournament in Istanbul, Turkey. ● iwfi.ir

tafa Safa Yildirim in the 67kg final. Meysam Dalkhani (60kg) – a world champion in 2018 – plus Mohammad-Mehdi Javaheri (55kg), Sajjad Imentalab (72kg), and Jamal Esmaeili (82kg) added four silvers to Iran's medal haul, while Amirmohammad Yarmohammadzahi (63kg), Amin Kavi-

aninejad (77kg), Pejman Poshtam (87kg), and Morteza Alghousi (130kg) grabbed a bronze in their respective weight classes. Turkey topped the Greco-Roman standings with 220 points, with Iran finishing on 169 points. Hungary tallied 111 points for the third spot.

## Uzbekistan named 2024 Futsal World Cup host



### Sports Desk

Uzbekistan will play host to next year's FIFA Futsal World Cup, the sport's governing body announced on Friday. The Central Asian country overtook Morocco, and United States in the bidding process.

Uzbekistan will be the fourth Asian country to host the competition following Hong Kong (1992), the Chinese Taipei (2004), and Thailand (2012). The top four of the 2024 AFC Futsal Asian Cup will join Uzbekistan in representing the continent in futsal's flagship

international event – starting September 14 next year. The draw for the Asian Cup qualifiers took place in AFC headquarters in Kuala Lumpur where record 12-time champion Iran was drawn in Group C alongside Lebanon, Maldives, and group host Kyrgyzstan.

## United States to host expanded 32-team FIFA Club World Cup In 2025



Real Madrid players celebrate lifting the FIFA Club World Cup trophy in Rabat, Morocco, on February 11, 2023. ● AFP

AFP – The United States will host a new-look expanded 32-team Club World Cup in 2025, governing body FIFA announced.

The move means the U.S. will host major tournaments for three successive summers, culminating in the 2026 World Cup which will be co-hosted with Mexico and Canada.

In 2024, an expanded Copa America, featuring national teams from South America and the CONCACAF region, will be held in the United States.

The existing Club World Cup, which began in 2000, has

struggled to capture global attention and FIFA president Gianni Infantino has long targeted an expansion to bring the top clubs from Europe, South America and the rest of the world into a tournament format.

The most recent edition was held in Morocco in February and featured just seven teams.

"The Club World Cup 2025 will be the pinnacle of elite professional men's club football, and with the required infrastructure in place together with a massive local interest, the United States is the ideal host to kick off this

new, global tournament," said Infantino.

While many of the qualification slots remain to be decided, the tournament will feature the likes of Real Madrid, Manchester City, Chelsea, Brazilian clubs Flamengo and Palmeiras, Mexican team Leon and Seattle Sounders from Major League Soccer.

The dates, host cities and match schedule for the tournament will be established at a later date, FIFA said. FIFA decided in February that the new competition will feature 12 teams from Europe, six from South

America and four representatives each from Asia, Africa and CONCACAF, which includes North and Central America and the Caribbean. The Oceania region will also be given one slot and the host nation is guaranteed a place in the tournament.

The European participants will include the winners of last five Champions Leagues. The new tournament will, like the national team World Cup, be held every four years. The last edition in the smaller format is scheduled to be played in Saudi Arabia in December.

Teams from South America

will qualify through the Copa Libertadores and CONMEBOL's rankings.

FIFA is setting up operations in the United States with offices in Miami and recently signed an agreement to work jointly with CONCACAF on regional tournaments such as the Gold Cup and Nations League.

FIFA also announced on Friday it was pushing back the decision on the host of the 2030 World Cup from September or October to the second half of next year "to ensure additional consultation with all key stakeholders."

## NEWS IN BRIEF

## Pakistan to raise taxes in final attempt to secure IMF loan



AFP - Pakistan has changed its budget for the financial year starting on July 1, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said on Saturday. "Pakistan and IMF had detailed negotiations for the last three days as a last effort to complete the pending review," he told parliament. For the fiscal year starting next month, Pakistan will raise a further 215 billion rupees (\$752 million) in new tax and cut 85 billion rupees in spending, as well as a number of other measures to shrink the fiscal deficit, he said.

## Bitcoin hits more than one-year high



REUTERS - Bitcoin, the world's largest cryptocurrency, hit a more than one-year high, capping a week of gains helped in part by BlackRock's plans to create a bitcoin exchange-traded fund (ETF) despite heightened U.S. regulatory scrutiny on the digital asset sector. BlackRock, the world's biggest asset manager, filed last week to launch iShares Bitcoin Trust, an ETF that would have Coinbase Custody as its custodian as well as offer institutional investors exposure to the cryptocurrency.

## Chip maker Micron to invest 2.7b for plant in India



CNBC - Computer storage chip maker Micron will set up its semiconductor assembly and test plant in Gujarat entailing a total investment of \$2.75 billion, the company said. The assembly and testing factory will help build a semiconductor ecosystem that promotes supply chain diversification.

## Iran enjoys high potential in exports of agro-products: MP



By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staff writer

A member of the Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources and Environment Committee of the Iranian Parliament said Iran has high export capacities in the agricultural sector. With correct planning, along with solving problems in the field of export of agricultural products, Iran's share in supplying agricultural products to regional markets can increase by 50 percent, which can bring good foreign exchange for the country, Jalal Mahmoudzadeh told Iran Daily. We now officially have about six percent of the market of agricultural products in the region, the MP noted. "Due to restrictions in the field of packaging agricultural products, a large part of the products are exported in bulk to the surrounding countries, as these countries package our products and reexport them under their own name with higher prices." If some issues such as regulatory and infrastructure problems, product packag-

ing, transportation, border markets and terminals are resolved, the official export of our agricultural products will easily increase several times, the lawmaker added. One of the weak points in the field of exports is that, although the task of marketing has been given to the Ministry of Agriculture, we have seen that the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade also intervenes in this field, he said.

"Another major challenge is that in our country, when the price of a product increases in the domestic market, the relevant authorities quickly stop the export of the product to adjust the price in the domestic market."

Usually, in case of an increase in the price of an export product in the domestic market, exporting countries do not stop the export; rather they raise the tariff related to the export product and inject the income into the domestic market, the MP explained.

This is done because when foreign clients buy a product, they expect to receive it without interruption, while the countries that repeatedly create interruptions in



IRNA

their export process are not considered safe and secure exporters.

"Due to these disturbances, our presence in neighboring countries is not so strong. For example, our share in the Armenian agricultural market is about five percent,

while Turkey's share is 19 percent, despite its political problems with Armenia." The same situation exists in the Iraqi market. At one time, 90 percent of the agricultural product market of the Kurdistan region belonged to Iran, but this

figure has now reached below six percent; or in Russia, we have 6.2 percent of the agricultural product market, while Turkey's share is above 21 percent, he added.

Parliament has approved the granting of export in-

centives for traders, but due to financial issues, the granting of incentives is being delayed. This is despite the fact that export incentives must be paid to exporters on the same day that the export is carried out, he concluded.

## Minister: Iran oil exports ascending despite 'harsher' sanctions

Iran's oil minister said his country's oil products and exports have climbed in spite of "harsher" sanctions. Talking to IRNA, Javad Owji added that the promotion of energy diplomacy and relations with Asian, African, and Latin American countries have helped Iran create new markets for its oil. He vowed that good news on oil sales will be announced in the coming months. The minister quoted President

Seyyed Ebrahim Raeisi as saying that Iran's oil exports rose to 1.9 million barrels per day (bpd) in May. Owji said international institutes that monitor the countries' oil exports have reported the hike in Iran's output and exports. Last week, a Reuters report quoting consultants, shipping data and a source familiar with the matter said Iran's crude exports and oil output have hit new highs in 2023 despite U.S.

sanctions, adding to the global supply when other producers are limiting output. Tehran's oil exports have been limited since former U.S. president Donald Trump exited a 2015 nuclear accord in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions aimed at curbing oil exports and the associated revenue to Iran's government. Even so, Iran's oil exports have risen during the term of U.S. President Joseph Biden, the report continued.



IRNA

## Iran-Russia joint work on Rasht-Astara railway project progressing well: Envoy



IRNA

Iran's ambassador to Russia said that Moscow and Tehran are moving ahead in their joint work on the construction of Rasht-Astara railway section, Tasnim news agency wrote. Speaking on the sidelines of the 2nd International Altai Forum, Kazem Jalali stated, "The agreement [on the project] was signed in the presence of the two presidents, and now the transport ministries of our two states are preparing to put the agreement into practice. We think that both countries have shown their seriousness in this matter, and we are moving ahead."

There are no special problems along this path, he said, responding to a question about how work is

progressing on the Rasht-Astara section.

On May 17, 2023, representatives of the two countries, Russian Transport Minister Vitaly Savelyev and Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash, signed an agreement on the joint construction of this section.

According to the document, Moscow and Tehran will jointly finance the design, construction, as well as the supply of goods and services, TASS news agency reported.

The 170km-long Rasht-Astara railway is designed to link land sections of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which will boost the economic efficiency of the trans-Caspian route.

It is planned that the Rasht-Astara railway will be built by Moscow and Tehran, while the Astara (Iranian city)-Astara (Azerbaijani city) line will be constructed by Moscow, Tehran, and Baku. The cost of the section's construction is set at \$1.6 billion.

## IME weekly trade tops \$692m

Within the week ending on June 23, the Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed trade of 3,127,518 tons of commodities and 70 vehicles with a total value of more than \$692 million on its physical market, posting a growth of 11.3% in terms of value compared to the figures of the previous week.

According to a report by ime.co.ir on Saturday, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 2,613,727 tons of commodities and 70 vehicles worth nearly \$480 million. On this floor the IME sold 1,230,760 tons of cement, 842,000 tons of iron ore, 392,342 tons of steel, 147,000 tons of sponge iron, 7,575 tons of aluminum, 5,846 tons of copper, 1,000 tons of zinc, 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate and 70 vehicles. Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export



IRNA

rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 497,230 tons of commodities valued at more than \$201 million.

Commodities traded on this floor included 220,666 tons of bitumen, 115,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 94,190 tons of polymeric products, 33,707 tons of chemicals, 27,000 tons of lube cut, 4,290 tons of oil, 2,260 tons of sulfur, 650 tons of petroleum products, 300 tons of insulation and 270 tons of feedstocks.

The IME also traded within the same week 16,560 tons of commodities on its side market.

# Iran to implement nationwide conversational skills awareness program: **Official**

Social Desk

**EXCLUSIVE**

Deputy of the prevention of social harms for Iran's State Welfare Organization, unveiled an ambitious initiative aimed at bolstering dialogue skills nationwide. The program, designed to enhance social empowerment and mitigate harmful behaviors in stressful situations, is a proactive measure against societal harm.

Arezou Zokaeifar explained that the initiative, which was conceived last year with the assistance of scientific groups and experts across all provinces, is based on an educational package. The initial focus will be on at-risk groups or environments. Identified individuals will undergo training and subsequent follow-up, according to IRNA.

"It is our hope that the implementation of such programs, which bolster protective factors against social harm, will yield significant effectiveness in altering behaviors and attitudes, thereby reducing certain societal harms," Zokaeifar emphasized.

The deputy further highlighted the persistent issues plaguing society, including family conflicts, interpersonal disputes, verbal tensions, and a lack of healthy social communication. These issues, coupled with a generational gap and the formation of tense verbal relations, contribute to a lack of mutual understanding.

Zokaeifar underscored the importance of dialogue skills, particularly in times of personal, familial, and societal crises. "One of the most crucial skills is the ability to understand the inner world of others and to receive intellectual and practical assistance from them," she said.

She further noted that effective and constructive dialogue is an art that many lack. "Humans are inherently social creatures, and dialogue is intrinsic to our na-

ture. With its aid, we can foster constructive and efficient interactions, and navigate critical and stressful situations more effectively," Zokaeifar concluded. Interpersonal relationships are without any doubt an essential part of human life, and dialogue is a crucial component in building and maintaining healthy relationships. Effective communication through dialogue enables individuals to express their thoughts, feelings, and needs, while also actively listening to the perspectives of others. This facilitates mutual understanding and promotes empathy, helping to build trust and connection between individuals. Dialogue also helps to manage conflicts and resolve misunderstandings, preventing negative emotions from building up and causing long-term damage to the relationship. Through open and honest dialogue, individuals can create a safe space for vulnerability and deepen their connections with others, ultimately leading to more fulfilling and meaningful relationships.

Also, dialogue is of utmost importance on a larger scale – the societal one – as well. It should be noted that rapid technological advancement and increasing polarization of our age make the art of dialogue more critical than ever. As societies grapple with complex issues, from climate change to social justice, the need for constructive conversation and mutual understanding is paramount. Still, the rise of monologue and the tendency to shut out differing perspectives pose significant threats to societal cohesion and progress.

Dialogue, the exchange of ideas and perspectives, is the lifeblood of any thriving society. It fosters understanding, empathy, and mutual respect among individuals with diverse backgrounds and beliefs. It is through dialogue that societies can navigate the complexities of the modern world, finding



common ground and working towards shared goals.

"Dialogue is the cornerstone of democratic societies," says Jane Goodall, a renowned social psychologist. "It allows us to challenge our assumptions, broaden our understanding, and find innovative solutions to our most pressing problems."

However, the rise of monologue – one-sided communication that stifles dissenting voices – threatens to undermine these benefits. In a monologue, there is no exchange of ideas, no opportunity for understanding or empathy. Instead, monologues often serve to reinforce existing beliefs and biases, creating echo chambers that polarize societies and hinder progress.

The dangers of monologue are evident in the increasing polarization seen in many societies today. As individuals retreat into ideological echo chambers, the common ground necessary for societal progress becomes increasingly elusive. This polarization can lead to societal stagnation, as differing factions become more entrenched in their beliefs and less willing to compromise or collaborate.

Moreover, the tendency to shut out differing perspectives can exacerbate societal divisions. By refusing to engage with those who hold different views, individuals and societies miss out on opportunities for growth and understanding. This can lead to a lack of empa-

thy and understanding, further fueling societal divisions and conflicts.

"Shutting out differing perspectives is a recipe for societal stagnation," warns Goodall. "It is only by engaging with those who challenge our beliefs that we can truly grow and evolve as individuals and societies."

In the face of these challenges, the importance of dialogue cannot be overstated. By fostering open and constructive conversations, societies can bridge divides, foster mutual understanding, and work towards shared goals. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected and complex, the need for dialogue is more critical than ever.

## A culture of environment a necessity for Iran: *Tehran Governor*



● ISNA

Social Desk

Tehran Governor

Alireza Fakhari has underlined the importance of paying greater attention to environmental issues, stating that building a culture of environmentalism is an undeniable necessity. Fakhari emphasized the need for environmental cultural events and necessary training to pursue this goal, in remarks reported by ISNA.

Fakhari noted the duty of all individuals to preserve the environment, adding that progress in human knowledge and social welfare creates new needs that cannot be met solely through economic development.

The governor added that damage to natural resources, national heritage, and human livelihoods is directly tied to neglect of the environment.

Fakhari stressed that environmental concerns are no longer limited to local or even national scopes, but rather impact all aspects of human life on a global scale. To spread awareness of these issues, he called for the use of all possible resources, including environmental events like the National Environment Award.

As the 13th edition of the award approaches, Fakhari expressed hope that it will serve as a platform for sharing ideas and achievements related to environmental protection. He concluded by emphasizing that promoting a culture of environmental responsibility is a crucial step toward sustainable development in Iran.

## UK man who pleaded guilty to celebrity Twitter hack gets five years in prison

A British man who took part in schemes to hack the Twitter accounts of celebrities, including Joe Biden and Elon Musk, was sentenced to five years in prison, the US attorney's office announced on Friday.

Joseph James O'Connor, 24, pleaded guilty to cyber-crime charges last month, nearly three years after he and others in his hacking group hijacked more than 130 Twitter accounts as part of a Bitcoin scam, including those of Apple, Uber, Kanye West, Bill Gates and Barack Obama. He also pleaded guilty to stealing \$794,000 in virtual currency from a New York cryptocurrency company, The Guardian reported.

O'Connor was arrested nearly two years ago in Spain for the July 2020 hack and extradited to the US in April. The charges he pleaded guilty to include conspiracy to commit computer intrusions, conspiracy to commit wire fraud and conspiracy to commit money laundering and stalking two victims, among others. Under the most serious of the charges, O'Connor faced up to 20 years in prison. In addition to serving five years in a US prison, O'Connor was also sentenced to three years of supervised release and ordered to pay \$794,000.

"O'Connor's criminal activities were flagrant and malicious and his conduct impacted multiple people's lives. He harassed, threatened and extorted his victims, causing substantial emotional harm," Kenneth A Polite Jr, an assistant attorney general in the US justice department's criminal division, said after O'Connor pleaded guilty last month.

"Like many criminal actors, O'Connor tried to stay anonymous by using a computer to hide behind stealth accounts and aliases from outside the United State."



● REUTERS

**'One Sudden Morning' on stage in Tehran**



**Arts & Culture Desk**

'One Sudden Morning,' a compelling theatrical production written by Hossein Pakdel and skillfully directed by Farhad Baqeri, is captivating audiences at Tehran's illustrious Arghavan Mansion. The play, which commenced on June 19, will enthrall spectators until July 7, offering a limited but captivating engagement.

The storyline of the performance revolves around a poignant narrative. A long-absent sister returns to her paternal abode, immersing herself in a profound exploration of the harrowing memories that accompanied the aftermath of her brother's tragic suicide. Amidst this introspection, she contemplates the condolences they received during those trying times and, ultimately, unveils the underlying cause behind his fateful decision.

**Kazan Kremlin hosting Iran's handicrafts exhibit**

**Arts & Culture Desk**

IRNA - In a momentous inauguration ceremony on Friday, a captivating exhibition showcasing the exquisite handicrafts and traditional arts of Iran commenced at the prestigious Kazan Kremlin, a UNESCO-registered historical citadel located in the vibrant city of Kazan, within the Republic of Tatarstan in Russia.

An impressive collection of approximately 120 masterpieces, carefully crafted by skilled Iranian artisans, graces the exhibition, which promises to enchant visitors for a remarkable span of two weeks.

This remarkable showcase, titled 'My Iran,' allows talented craftspeople to proudly present their meticulously handcrafted creations, spanning a diverse array of artistic disciplines such as miniature painting, metalwork, enameled objects, mosaic artistry, inlay work, and marquetry.

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**First Festival of Iran's Ethnic Groups underway in southern Iran**



**Arts & Culture Desk**

The First Festival of Iran's Ethnic Groups, which began on June 20, is underway at Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province until June 26. Farsan Governor Seyyed Hadi Salehi said that the primary objective of the festival is to enhance

cultural and artistic activities, foster solidarity among different ethnic groups, highlight their roles in the food chain and production, showcase the capabilities of tourism enthusiasts, inject vibrancy and liveliness into society, and focus on cultural assets, according to IRNA. Salehi stated, "In Far-

san County, households consist of diverse ethnic groups such as Bakhtiari, Qashqai, and Fars, peacefully coexisting alongside each other." He recalled that the festival's sidelines feature an exhibition of souvenirs, handicrafts, and traditional arts representing various Iranian ethnic

groups from different provinces. The exhibition boasts 100 booths, with 40 dedicated to showcasing the culture, handicrafts, and traditional arts of ethnic groups and tribes from different regions of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province. To accommodate participants, Salehi noted that

four schools, guesthouses, and local ecotourism facilities in Farsan have been designated for accommodation during the festival. He stated, "Art groups from other provinces are present at this festival, performing various programs in different locations throughout Farsan."



**Ancient Iranian bas-relief carving, delivered to Iranian Embassy in London, to be repatriated**

**Arts & Culture Desk**

The chargé d'affaires of the Iranian Embassy in London announced that the ancient Iranian bas-relief carving, believed to be over two millennia old, which was illicitly taken out of the country almost seven years ago, has been successfully delivered to the Iranian Embassy in London. It is slated for imminent repatriation to Iran. Mehdi Hosseini Matin took to his Twitter account on Friday to convey the news, stating that the Iranian Embassy in London had effectively substantiated Iran's rightful ownership of the smuggled Iranian carving,

leading to its public display at the esteemed British Museum for a duration of three months, IRNA wrote. Approximately seven years ago, authorities apprehended the coveted 2,000-year-old Iranian carving during a smuggling attempt at a British airport. Esteemed at a staggering value surpassing £30 million (\$37 million), this remarkable artifact holds great historical and cultural significance for Iran, and its long-awaited return is imminent. Dr. St John Simpson, a senior curator and archaeologist in the British Museum's department of the Middle East, said: "We almost never come across a case of something being cut out of the 'living rock.' That's a level of brutality that surpasses anything. "You've even got felt-tip marks on the

back before they've used an angle grinder to slice diagonally behind it and across the top. It was then packed in an incredibly bad manner, in a small, almost unpadded crate held together with nails. "If it had been a state-of-the-art art-handling type crate, that would have attracted a different sort of attention because it required all sorts of paperwork." He has identified it as a unique rock relief sculpture dating to the period of the Sasanian empire, AD224-651. "It belongs to a period when Iran was the center of a powerful empire stretching from Syria to the Caucasus and Central Asia, and with its capital at Ctesiphon, south of present-day Baghdad," he said. "The Sasanians were powerful rivals of Rome and famous today for their fine silverware and cut glass."

**Brasilia hosting Iran's Film Week and photo exhibition**

**Arts & Culture Desk**

In commemoration of the 120th anniversary of Iran and Brazil's establishment of diplomatic relations, an ongoing cultural extravaganza in Brasilia is captivating audiences with a photo exhibition featuring select cultural and artistic masterpieces. Additionally, three remarkable

Iranian films, complete with Portuguese subtitles, are being showcased at a prominent cultural center, Tasnim news agency reported. During the grand opening ceremony of this cultural affair, Iranian Ambassador to Brazil Hossein Qaribi emphasized the illustrious 120-year history of harmonious and amiable ties between the two nations.

He further emphasized, "Today, we have convened to present the influential prowess of arts and culture as a means to unite our nations." The envoy went on to highlight the longstanding and robust partnership between Iran and Brazil in the realms of commerce, economics, arts, and culture, spanning several decades. An official representative from

Brazil also addressed the gathering, acknowledging the significant collaboration that exists between the two countries in cultural, political, and economic arenas. The photo exhibition stands as a cultural treasure bestowed upon the capital of Brazil. This remarkable exhibition will enchant visitors for a span of three weeks.

