



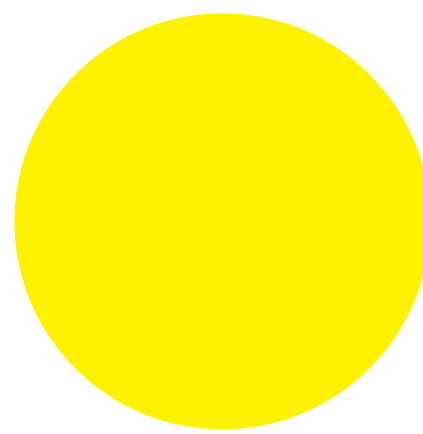
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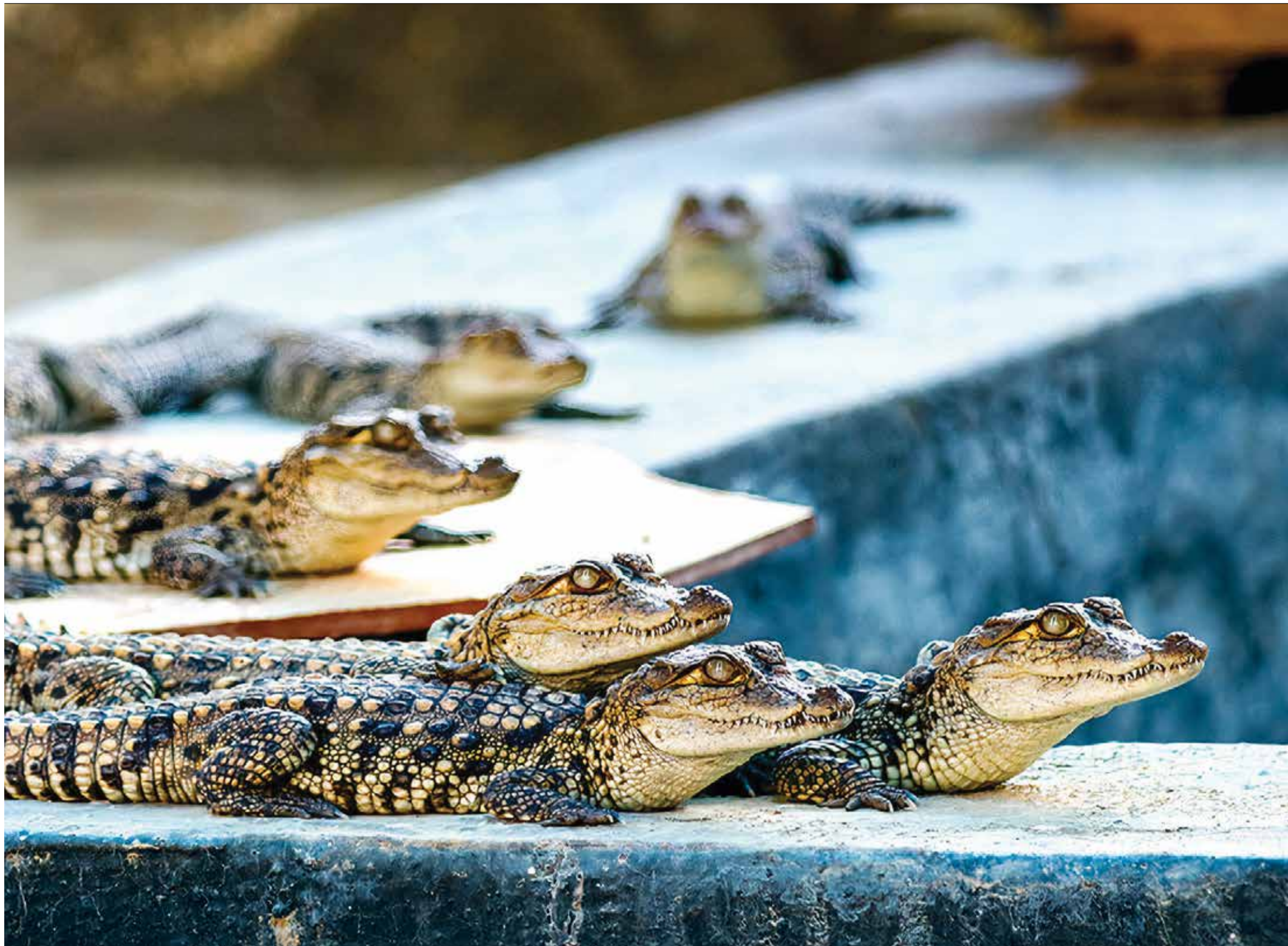


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Egypt, GCC pursue better relations with Iran

International Desk

Egypt and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) stated that they intend to establish better relations with Iran, lauding the positive impacts of the Tehran-Riyadh rapprochement on regional stability.

The spokesman of Egypt's Foreign Ministry Ahmed Abu-Zeid told CBC News that Cairo wishes its relations with Tehran to be positive, and interactions with the Islamic Republic have never been broken off. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian also pointed

to numerous commonalities between Iran and Egypt, saying the two countries are drawing up plans to improve relations. "We set no limitation to the expansion of all-out cooperation with Egypt," he stated Tuesday, according to Press TV.

The secretary general of the GCC told Al Jazeera that all Persian Gulf countries welcomed the normalization of ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Jassim Mohamed Albudaiwi said they want to hold deep discussions with Iran within the framework of international conventions.

A lose-lose situation for Netanyahu

By Ebrahim Beheshti
Staff writer

during a period of prolonged instability and uncertain coalitions, has now become the epicenter of internal turmoil, with unprecedented levels of instability associated with it. Over the past eight months, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right coalition has been grappling with unparalleled internal and external pressure. Criticism of the cabinet's policies, particularly the controversial ju-

dicial reform bill, has even drawn protests and opposition from its staunchest supporter, the United States. These criticisms were severe enough to lead to the denial of the Prime Minister's travel permission to the United States for a meeting with the US President, marking the first time in seven months that such a meeting has been withheld. In a surprising move, the US government extended an invitation to Isaac Herzog, the Israeli president, bypassing the prime minister.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran to produce 20 GW of nuclear power by 2041



REUTERS

MEHR – Iran has started initial work to construct five nuclear power plants to generate 20 gigawatts (GW) of electricity by 2041, the Iranian first vice president said on Tuesday.

The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran also said initial steps have been taken and preparations have been made for the project. In certain cases, executive operations have begun after the signing of contracts with domestic industries, he added.

Defense Minister: No one can threaten Iran



PRESS TV – Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani said Iran has achieved a level of power such that no one can threaten it. Ashtiani made the remark on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting in Tehran on Wednesday, two days after a Pentagon spokesperson confirmed the US military will send the destroyer USS Thomas Hudner and F-16 and F-35 fighter jets to the Persian Gulf region “in response to a number of recent alarming events in the Strait of Hormuz.” “The US is pursuing its own affairs. The Islamic Republic of Iran is basically at a level of power and capability such that no one can threaten it,” he said.

Erdogan welcomes restoration of Iran-Saudi ties

MEHR – Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Ankara welcomes the restoration of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. “Turkey welcomes the resumption of diplomatic relations between the Kingdom [of Saudi Arabia] and Iran, and hopes that this development will strengthen security and stability.” Erdogan made the remarks during a visit to Saudi Arabia on Wednesday.

Amir-Abdollahian: Russia, China not Iran's only choices



Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian
IRNA

Iran's foreign minister said Tehran “will never allow Russia or China to think that they are our only choices.

In a televised interview on Tuesday, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian reiterated Tehran's firm determination to safeguard the country's national interests and independence following a joint statement issued last week by the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Russia that challenged Iran's sovereignty over the three Persian Gulf islands of Abu Musa, the Greater and Lesser Tunbs.

Chinese President Xi Jinping also visited Saudi Arabia last year, where he also sat down with leaders of the PGCC countries. They issued a joint statement,

which contained several clauses that directly dealt with Iranian affairs, its nuclear program, and its regional activities, according to Press TV.

The Iranian minister said Iran would maintain its relations with countries while pursuing its “Look to Asia” policy, but hastened to add that the Islamic Republic “will never allow Russia or China to think that they are our only choices.” Iran interacts with Russia and China based on its own interests and would never let them harm Iran's independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity, Amir-Abdollahian said.

Trade ties with neighbors, Europe
Iran's foreign minister

said despite the sanctions imposed by the United States, Iran succeeded in increasing the value of its trade with its neighbors to more than \$90 billion. He said that Iran had also raised its economic exchanges with European countries in spite of certain political challenges. Amir-Abdollahian noted that Iran has maintained its ties with Britain, Germany and France – the three European parties to the 2015 nuclear deal – but argued that Europe is not confined only to these three countries.

“There are other large sectors in Europe that we interact with without any challenge,” the Iranian minister said.

Membership in SCO, BRICS

Elsewhere in his remarks, Iran's foreign minister said the country's full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and potential accession to the BRICS group of emerging economies will promote multilateralism and counter unilateral policies, including sanctions. At the end of the 23rd virtual summit of the SCO Council of Heads of States on July 4, Iran gained full membership in the world's largest regional organization in terms of geographic scope and population. Pointing to Iran's potential accession to BRICS, he said that Iran's potential membership in the five-state bloc would provide the

country with an opportunity to make use of great capacities from Africa to Asia, Latin America and other countries.

Iran-Saudi ties

Referring to the opening of a new chapter in Iran-Saudi Arabia relations, Amir-Abdollahian said restoration of ties between Tehran and Riyadh would secure mutual interests and result in positive outcomes for the entire region.

The top Iranian diplomat dismissed the notion that Tehran and Riyadh have reached just an economic agreement, explaining that the two sides agreed to improve mutual relations and investment through sustainable economic cooperation despite different political views in some areas. Following several days of intensive negotiations in Beijing, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed on March 10 to resume their diplomatic ties and reopen their embassies within two months. During the Tuesday interview, Amir-Abdollahian also pointed to the situation in Afghanistan, saying that any development in Afghanistan can have impacts on Iran's security. “Any instability in Afghanistan has a direct impact on our border areas,” he said, describing the massive influx of Afghan refugees into Iran as one of the Islamic Republic's “serious” challenges.

Russia's isles stance ‘strategic mistake’: Iran MP



National Desk

EXCLUSIVE

An Iranian lawmaker criticized Russia's recent

decision to sign a joint statement with Arab countries of the Persian Gulf concerning Iran's three islands calling it a “political and strategic mistake.”

Mehdi Saadati, in an interview with Iran Daily, stated that he advises Russians to rectify their stance on this matter.

This comes after Russia and the six member countries of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council earlier this month jointly requested the case of the

three islands of the Greater and Lesser Tunbs and Abu Musa to be referred to the International Court of Justice for resolution. Saadati dismissed the ownership claims over the three islands as “political maneuvers,” saying that the isles are “unquestionably” belong to Iran. “Iran is resolute in defending its territory,” said the lawmaker, adding; “Iran respects the territorial integrity and rights of all nations, expecting the same respect for its

principles and interests in return.”

“Iran has consistently proven that it does not seek to encroach upon the interests or territories of other nations... but it will not compromise on its national interests.” Regarding Russia's position in the recent joint statement, Saadati disclosed that necessary warnings were conveyed to Moscow.

“Iran finds Russia's stance unacceptable, leading to objections raised through

the summoning of the Russian ambassador and Iran's ambassador to Russia highlighting the nation's sensitivity to such issues in a meeting with the country's deputy foreign minister.

Saadati declared that the path taken by the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council toward Iran's three islands since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, despite being raised multiple times in different ways, will not yield any positive outcomes.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iraq gets new waiver to pay Iran's energy debts

The United States on Tuesday moved to let Iraq pay Iran for electricity via non-Iraqi banks, a US official said, a step Washington hopes may keep Tehran from forcing unpopular power cuts during the sweltering Iraqi summer.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken signed a 120-day national security waiver allowing Iraq — heavily dependent on Iranian electricity — to deposit such payments into non-Iraqi banks in third countries instead of into restricted accounts in

Iraq, the official told Reuters on condition of anonymity. Monies put into non-Iraqi accounts, like those deposited into Iraqi banks, will also be restricted, still requiring US permission for Iran to get access to them and only for spending on humanitarian goods.

Tehran has in the past pushed Baghdad to secure US permission to release such funds by cutting Iranian natural gas exports to Iraq, limiting Iraq's ability to generate power and forcing deeply unpopular

electricity cuts.

The latest waiver was expanded to permit payments to banks outside Iraq at the request of the Iraqi government, apparently in the hopes that this might transfer some of the pressure to other countries.

“The Iraqis have requested, and now we have agreed, to expand the waiver,” said the US official, saying this might help ensure better compliance with the US requirement that any disbursements be for humanitarian purposes.

N Korea fires two short-range missiles into the sea

North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles into the sea Wednesday in what appeared to be a statement of defiance as the United States deployed a nuclear-armed submarine to South Korea for the first time in decades. The launches came as the US and the US-led United Nations Command worked to resolve the highly unusual situation involving a US soldier who crossed into North Korea while on a tour of a border village Tuesday afternoon, AP reported. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said that from 3:30 to 3:46 a.m. North Korea fired two missiles from an area near the capital Pyongyang that flew about 550 kilometers before landing in waters east of the Korean Peninsula. The Japanese military said the missiles landed outside of Japan's exclusive economic zone and no damage to ships or aircraft was reported. The flight distance of the two missiles roughly matched the distance between Pyongyang and the South Korean port city of Busan, where the USS

Kentucky arrived Tuesday afternoon in the first visit by a US nuclear-armed submarine to South Korea since the 1980s. Japanese Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada told reporters the missiles flew on a low trajectory, reached about 50 kilometers (31 miles) in altitude and may have made irregular maneuvers in flight. That language has been used in the past to describe a North Korean weapon modeled after Russia's Iskander missile, which is designed to be maneuverable in flight to improve its chances of evading missile defenses. The South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff condemned the North Korean launches as "major provocation" that threatens peace and stability in the region and said the South Korean and US militaries were closely monitoring the North for further weapons activities. Wednesday's launches marked the North's first ballistic activity since July 12, when it flight-tested a new solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile that demonstrated potential range to reach deep into the US



A TV screen shows a file image of North Korea's missile launch during a news program at the Seoul Railway Station in Seoul, South Korea, on July 19, 2023. **AHN YOUNG-JOON/AP**

mainland. That launch was supervised by the country's leader Kim Jong-un, who vowed to further bolster his country's nuclear-fighting capabilities in the face of

expanding US-South Korean military activities, which he blamed for worsening the security environment on the Korean Peninsula. Tensions have rose in the

region in recent months as the pace of both North Korean weapons tests and US-South Korean joint military drills have increased in a cycle of tit-for-tat.

NEWS IN BRIEF

More than 700 sentenced to prison over French riots: Minister



AFP - More than 700 people have been sentenced to prison over riots in France late last month, the country's justice minister said Wednesday while lauding the fast-track trials that have alarmed some defence lawyers. In total, 1,278 verdicts have been handed down, with over 95% of defendants convicted on a range of charges from vandalism, theft, arson or attacking police officers.

UN slashes cash aid to Syrian refugees



AP - The UN food agency said Tuesday it will reduce monthly cash aid for 120,000 Syrian refugees living in two camps in Jordan because of what it described as an "unprecedented funding crisis." Jordan is a country of 11 million people and hosts some 1.3 million refugees from Syria. Most of them live in towns and cities across the kingdom, while several tens of thousands have settled in two camps - Zaatari and Azraq. Starting in August, the monthly cash allowance for camp residents will be reduced from \$32 to \$21, the World Food Program said.



Italy put 23 cities on red alert as temperatures could reach 46 Celsius on Wednesday, one of the global hotspots as a wave of extreme heat, wildfires and flooding wreak havoc from the United States to China. An intensifying heatwave has hit southern Europe during the peak summer tourist season, breaking records including in Rome and bringing warnings about an increased risk of deaths and heart attacks,

A firefighter tries to extinguish a wildfire burning near the village of Kandyli, near Athens, Greece, on July 19, 2023. **STELIOS MISINAS/REUTERS**

Reuters reported. Wildfires burned for a third day west of the Greek capital Athens, with air water bombers resuming operations at first light and firefighters working throughout the night to keep flames away from coastal refineries. Fanned by erratic

Europe battles heatwave, fires Record temperatures scorch China

winds, the fires have gutted dozens of homes, prompted hundreds of people to flee and blanketed the area in thick smoke. Temperatures could climb to 43C today, forecasters said. In China, which this week was hosting US climate envoy John Kerry for talks, tourists defied the heat to visit a giant thermometer showing surface temperatures of 80C. In Beijing, which set a new record as temperatures remained above 35C for the 28th day in a row, Kerry expressed hope that cooperation to combat global warming could redefine troubled ties between the two superpowers. A global pattern of heatwaves that have scorched parts of Europe, Asia and

the US this week have thrown that challenge into sharp relief. Temperatures remained high across much of Italy on Wednesday, with 45-46C expected on the Mediterranean island of Sardinia and some inland areas of Sicily likely to see temperatures in the mid-40s. The health ministry said it would active an information hotline and teams of mobile health workers visited the elderly in Rome. While the heatwave appears to be subsiding in Spain, residents in Greece were left surveying the wreckage of their homes after the wildfires. Spain warned of the risk of wildfires in most of the country though residents were allowed to return to

their homes in La Palma Island where a blaze that raged for five days was stabilised in one sector, although it remained active elsewhere. In Germany, the heatwave sparked an unlikely discussion on whether workplaces should introduce siestas for workers. In South Korea, heavy rain has pummelled central and southern regions since last week. Fourteen deaths occurred in an underpass in the city of Cheongju, where more than a dozen vehicles were swamped on Saturday when a river levee collapsed. In the southeastern province of North Gyeong-sang, 22 people died, many from landslides and swirling torrents. In India, flash floods, land-

slides and accidents related to heavy rainfall have killed more than 100 people in the north of the country since the onset of the monsoon season on June 1, where rainfall is 41% above average. In recent days, temperatures in Xinjiang and other parts of Asia, as well as Europe and the United States have shattered records. These unprecedented temperatures have added new urgency for nations around the globe to tackle climate change. With the world's two biggest economies at odds over issues ranging from trade to Taiwan, Kerry told Chinese Vice-President Han Zheng on Wednesday that climate change must be handled separately to broader diplomatic problems.

A lose-lose situation ...

This invitation was seen as a challenge to Netanyahu, who had been waiting for an invitation from the US for more than seven months. Yedioth Ahronoth, an Israeli newspaper, highlighted Netanyahu's long wait for a US invitation and regarded the Israeli president's invitation instead of the prime minister's as a significant snub, marking the second time in less than a year such an occurrence had taken place.

During his meeting with Herzog, US President Joe Biden stressed the need for a consensus-based approach to address the contentious judicial reform plan. This plan aims to bring changes to Israel's judicial system, limiting the powers of the Supreme Court and granting cabinet members greater authority in judicial matters. However, the bill has sparked unprecedented internal protests in Israel for the past seven months. In his meeting with Her-

zog, Biden indirectly supported the internal protests against Netanyahu's cabinet, commending what he described as the strength of democracy in Israel. The situation remains tense as Israel navigates through this period of political upheaval and uncertainty. The US and other supporters of Israel in Europe are not only opposing the contentious judicial reform bill but also expressing their disapproval of Israel's settlement policy and the hardline positions held by some members of Netanyahu's cabinet. The extremist

cabinet in Israel is facing internal pressure while also failing to make progress in one of its crucial regional initiatives - the Abraham Accords aimed at normalizing relations with Arab countries. This effort has been hindered, especially in recent months, as relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia have shown signs of warming, affecting the dynamics of the Arab countries' relations with Iran. The outcome of the judicial reform bill presents a lose-lose situation for Netanyahu. If the cabinet withdraws the bill, it will

be seen as an internal defeat for the prime minister, weakening the foundation of the ruling extremist coalition and providing a significant achievement for internal rival factions. On the other hand, if Netanyahu persists in advancing the bill, external pressure will continue to mount, leading to further isolation of the cabinet from Israel's supporters, while internal protests could escalate into violence. This ongoing situation, characterized by internal protests, external pressure, and internal instability, leaves a murky outlook for

the future of Israelis. The Elnashra website recently published the findings of a new academic study conducted by Israel's "ERI" research institute, revealing a serious crisis of trust between Israeli youth and the authorities. The study indicates that a majority of young people (54%) have admitted to experiencing deteriorating internal relations and feelings of personal insecurity and instability, prompting them to consider emigrating from Israel. Considering the current conditions in Israel and the growing opposition

to Netanyahu's cabinet, it is plausible that the far-right coalition may meet the same fate as previous coalitions in recent years, resulting in its collapse and potentially marking the end of Netanyahu's political life. However, what remains uncertain is whether Netanyahu's future will involve a peaceful retirement as a citizen or if he will face legal repercussions due to the criminal cases pending in the judicial system. Some speculate that his pursuit of judicial reforms might be related to his personal situation in this regard.



hipersia.com

Heyran Pass, a natural miracle in Gilan Province

Iranica Desk

Heyran Pass with amazing landscapes is an important route linking Gilan and Ardebil provinces and among the busiest in the country. Heyran village, extending in an area of 2,200 hectares, lies 30km from Astara, Gilan Province, hosts a large number of Iranian and foreign tourists throughout the year. The village leads to numerous picturesque spots and lush forests from one side and Astarachay River flowing on the border between Gilan Province and Republic of Azerbaijan from the other, ISNA wrote. The establishment of a cable car over Heyran Pass by the private sector has prepared conditions for tourists to look at this natural miracle from the sky in all seasons of the year. With many turns and bends, Heyran

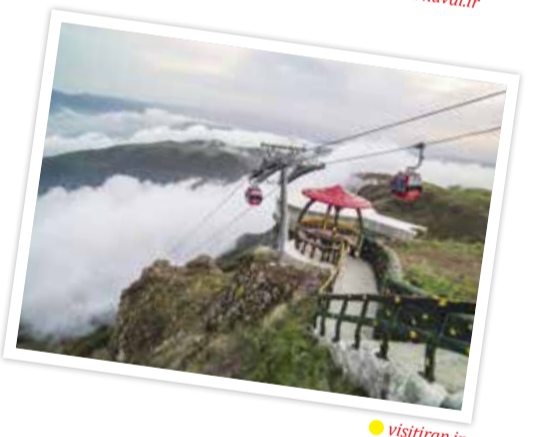
Pass plays a significant role in commercial transactions between Gilan and Ardebil provinces. However, since Gilan and Ardebil provinces are two popular tourist destinations of the country, there is usually heavy traffic on the roads, especially in the spring and summer. Governor Enayatullah Rezaipour told ISNA that Astara has a large number of tourism sites, all of which dazzle the eyes. He said that Astara is one of the most important tourist destinations in Gilan Province, having a significant potential for developing the region's tourism industry. He noted that Heyran Mountain Pass is among Astara's major natural attractions, the tourism infrastructures of which are expected to be enhanced in cooperation with the government and the private sector. Rezaipour said that the government

has carried out fruitful measures for developing the infrastructure of the region's electricity, gas and water sectors. The second tunnel of Heyran Pass, with a length of 2,200 meters, is presently under construction. The first thing that fascinates your eyes when passing through this road is the forest coverage that surrounds you. Bit by bit, you will also find green pastures that cuddle huts. In the meantime, grazing livestock or horses that go alongside it are added to the landscape to captivate a lasting image in your mind. Of course, not everything ends here. All these beauties on this passage drown in the foggy road to create a dream paradise for you, and the question might come to mind: Where did this fog come from at this altitude? In fact, the fog rolls in from the Cas-

pian Sea. One of the characteristics of this passage is that it is located at the border, and you will see an enormous forest belonging to the Hirkan National Park, located in Azerbaijan. Hirkan National Park, with an area of 40,358 hectares, opened on February 9, 2004 by the president of Azerbaijan, as a rich source of plants and animals. Because of the pass's location, most people who live there are engaged in farming and livestock breeding. However, the presence of attractive sceneries and the expansion of tourist spaces as well as the arrival of domestic investors offer a brighter future for the region. You can enjoy driving at Heyran Pass if you do proper maintenance on your vehicle and are proficient in driving. We advise you not to take this beautiful but dangerous pass without driving skills.



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Strategic water structures



One of the most important technical works of Xerxes' experts, for military purposes was a bridge constructed over the Hellespont strait. Xerxes was a Persian ruler who served as the, reigning from 486 BCE until his assassination in 465 BCE. In fact, Hellespont is the Greece name of Bosphorus or Dardanelles Strait. As there was a state by the same name in the past, Herodotus explained in detail about the construction of a bridge over Hellespont Strait in his history book. According to Herodotus' opinion, doing such an important technical affair was very great and considerable. There were about 700 ships in three to 50 rows, which stood beside each other. The ships were fixed by anchors and tied up with thick and strong ropes to one another. They covered the ships with ladders and spread earth on them. Some of the historians believed it had been exaggerated about the number of the ships. On the other hand, the strait between Sestos and Abydos Cities had the least width about 1,200 meters. If the average width of each ship as-

sumed three to five meters, the figures show the number of ships at the narrowest section of the strait would be 340 in one row and 700 in two rows. The schedule for bridge construction over Hellespont Strait and Xerxes' canal excavation had been studied by Iranian for many years and they had done all the measurements and provided all the necessary facilities for ship manufacturing, ropes etc. These kinds of activities were handed to different tribes that were living under sovereignty of Iran.

Moat excavation

The old people remember the moats, which were excavated around Tehran. Moat means a wide ditch, which is excavated around a city or a castle in order to prevent enemies' entry, or flood damages. Defensive moats were designed and constructed by Salmaan Farsi, an Iranian companion of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), for the first time. He was the first Iranian who accepted Islam and he became one of the trusted close companions of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Iranian had used water structures and canals for military purposes.

And there is no doubt Salmaan who lived about 1,400 years ago, knew the history of his country and the technical facilities which had been used before for military expeditions much better than us. One of the important battles, which made clear the fate of universal movement of Islam was the Battle of Moat. In the year 4 A.H. Muslims were informed that the Qoraysh army intended to attack Medina. They got worried because they were few and didn't have enough weapons. So Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and his companions got benefit from Salmaan's thought and knowledge and agreed to dig a moat around Medina. They finished the job in 14 days. So Qoraysh couldn't cross the moat and their slings were useless. Finally they had to return. Perhaps moat construction around castles and cities in Iran and Europe were imitated from Salmaan's thoughts during Middle Ages. If there was enough water, they would fill it up with water and install a bridge in front of the gate. During the night and dangers, they pulled up the bridge and cut the route.

The above is a lightly edited version of part of a chapter entitled "The Strategic Structures", from a book entitled, "Water and Irrigation Techniques in Ancient Iran", written by Gholam Reza Kuros and Majid Labbaf Khaneiki, published by Iranian National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage.

Taremi in the spotlight as Milan move saga drags on



● DIOGO CARDOSO/DEFODI IMAGES

Sports Desk

Rumors and speculations continue to swirl over the future of Mehdi Taremi for yet another summer transfer window as the Porto striker is again tipped for a move to a European heavyweight club.

While Manchester United and Inter as well as Saudi Pro League side Al Hilal have been brought up in the media as potential suitors, a switch to Serie A giant Milan looks to be imminent for Taremi, with several reports suggesting in recent days that it would be just a matter of time

before the Iranian international joins the Rossoneri outfit. With the 36-year-old Frenchman Olivier Giroud the only established number nine in the squad, Milan manager Stefano Pioli and the club hierarchy are believed to be considering the Porto talisman as a perfect fit to fill the void left behind by Zlatan Ibrahimovic's retirement. According to SportMediaset and Calciomercato.com, Milan has reached a verbal agreement with the prolific forward over personal terms, though an initial €13 million offer for the Iranian, who turned 31 on Tuesday, has

been swiftly rejected by Porto. The Portuguese giant has reportedly tagged Taremi with a €25m asking price but Milan, for its part, is not willing to go beyond a second €20m bid for the striker, whose Porto contract expires in 2024. Still, a deal seems to be impending as Porto prefers to cash out on the Iranian in the current transfer window rather than letting him leave as a free agent next summer. Taremi scored 31 goals, while providing his teammates with 14 assists, in 51 appearances across all competitions for Porto

last season – including 22 strikes in the league which saw him finish as the campaign's leading marksman. He also netted five to help Porto win the group in the UEFA Champions League before being knocked out by Inter in the first knockout round. Should the Milan deal eventually go through, it will be a massive step forward for a player who was only introduced to the European club football in 2019, when he left Qatari side Al Gharafa for Rio Ave in the Portuguese top flight. Having joined Porto in August

2020, Taremi has bagged 80 goals and 49 assists for Sergio Conceicao's side, lifting the league trophy in 2022, while winning back-to-back Portuguese cup titles during his time at the club. Whether we have already seen the last of Taremi in a Dragons' shirt or not, his Porto career will be best remembered by his wonder goal against Chelsea in the 2020/21 Champions League season – a stunning bicycle-kick strike which was voted the UEFA Goal of the Season and brought him a FIFA Puskas Award nomination.

Women's World Cup will win over the sceptics: Infantino



● FIFA

REUTERS – FIFA President Gianni Infantino said women's football has experienced incredible growth over the last 10 years and is confident that the World Cup will win over anyone who remains sceptical about the merits of the women's game. The sport's governing body expects 2 billion people to tune in for the 64-game tournament being co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand, with the event set to kick off in Auckland today.

"Many people who believe that women's football is still not a great game, or it's not so entertaining or it's kind of a bad copy of men's football or some stuff like that – well when they watch a game for the first time they will actually see that it's a fantastic game," said Infantino.

"The level has grown incredibly in the last 10 years and the best are coming here." Infantino said if there was one sport where the women's game could compete with the men's it would be football.

"I mean, it's 50% of the population, women around the world, more or less, right?" he said.

"It's really inconceivable, intellectually, that there is not one sport that can compete with some of the men's sports."

Auckland, which is smaller than most of its host city counterparts in Australia, will stage the opening ceremony and the first match between New Zealand and Norway.

But while overall ticket sales surpassed 1 million more than a month ago, the slow pace of sales in New Zealand has prompted concern. FIFA said last week it was giving away 20,000 free tickets in New Zealand.

"New Zealand: We want you. We need you," said Infantino. "It's never too late to do the right thing."

FIFA Secretary General Fatma Samoura said a total of 1.375 million tickets had been sold across the tournament so far.

Meanwhile, Infantino said he only wants to talk about positive things during the event when asked about issues such as gender pay disparity.

"Until the 20 August [date of the final] you will only hear positive things from me about everything and everyone and if somebody is still not happy about something then I am so sorry."

"As of 21 August we focus on some other issues around the world. We will deal with all the problems coming up. But seriously we have made important steps and made a path."

Key to Russian decision for Paris Olympics is athletes' respectful conduct, Bach says

The key factor in weighing the IOC's ultimate decision on letting Russians participate at the 2024 Paris Games is how well athletes behave in international competitions, the Olympic body's president Thomas Bach said Tuesday.

"It's too soon to draw final conclusions," Bach said, adding "we have the responsibility not to punish athletes for the acts of their government."

The International Olympic Committee has pushed sports governing bodies this year to approve some athletes from Russia and its military ally Belarus competing as neutrals for international competitions including Paris qualifying events.

Bach has previously said the IOC can take its own final decision "at the appropriate time, at its full discretion" which could include barring Russians and Belarusians as their countries' war on Ukraine continues.

On Tuesday, Bach clarified the IOC's interest is mainly in ensuring athletes behave well in competitions, not how the war progresses.

"Right now it is more to monitor

the situation on the field of play, whether the rules are respected, the conditions are respected, by everybody," Bach told reporters in an online briefing ahead of next week's one-year countdown to the Paris opening ceremony.

Soccer and track and field have taken the toughest positions against Russia, excluding teams and athletes within days of the invasion of Ukraine starting in February 2022. Russia was removed from trying to qualify for the men's and women's World Cup in soccer.

The IOC shared that view when war started days after the closing ceremony of the Beijing Winter Games, citing Russia's breach of the traditional Olympic Truce pledge agreed at the United Nations and security concerns for athletes.

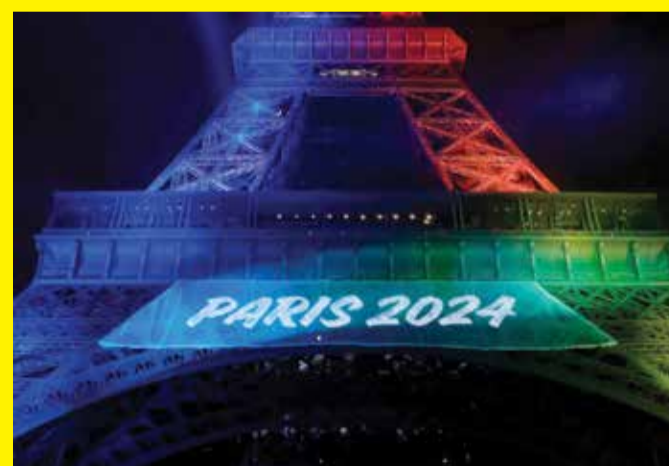
Tennis and cycling continued to let Russians and Belarusians compete as neutrals – but not in team events – without their national identity, and the IOC and Bach have pointed to their success.

Ukrainian tennis players, including Wimbledon semifinalist

Elina Svitolina, have refused to shake hands with opponents from Russia and Belarus leading to crowds at Roland Garros and Wimbledon booing what they saw – not seemingly always accurately – as a breach of protocol. "We can see that this is working pretty well," Bach said Tuesday. "They are respectful and they make it clear they want to compete against the best athletes of the world."

Governing bodies of individual Olympic sports have the final say which athletes compete and their umbrella group, known as ASOIF, said in May that finding a common position has been difficult in trying to define neutrality and what exactly is a team sport. The Court of Arbitration for Sport was involved in helping to define neutrality, which the IOC has advised should include no active support for the war and no contacts since February 2022 with military or state security agencies.

In Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelensky and past Olympic champions have urged the IOC to exclude Russia entirely. Zelensky invited Bach in January to



● GETTY IMAGES

visit the destroyed city Bakhmut "to see with his own eyes that neutrality does not exist."

Another Olympic Truce text – the ancient tradition in Greece that paused wars and ensured safe passage to the games – is being prepared ahead of Paris. It should apply for several days ahead of the July 26-Aug. 11 Summer Games and for a few days beyond the Aug. 28-Sept. 8 Paralympic Games.

Bach said the host French government "is initiating this Truce

resolution. We are waiting for this to happen and then are looking forward to having a result on which again all member states of the United Nations can agree." Russia has also faced investigations and calls to be excluded from each of the past four Olympics since 2016 because of scandals tied to a state-backed doping program that tainted the 2014 Sochi Winter Games. Russia eventually sent teams to each Olympics though under a neutral identity starting in 2018.

Gando; Iran's native crocodile holds promise for exports, tourism



Farhad Saleh-Zahi

By Sadeq
Dehqan
Staff writer

The mugger crocodile, scientifically known as *Crocodylus palustris* and referred to as gando in the local dialect of Sistan and Baluchestan, holds a distinct position in Iran's wildlife scene. As the sole crocodile species native to freshwater habitats in the country, it occupies a unique ecological niche. Within Iran's southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan, the mugger crocodile reigns as a medium-sized reptile, taking the crown as the largest reptile within the nation. Its presence is particularly prominent in the Chabahar port city and various parts of the province, presenting opportunities for economic development and tourism. The species' origins can be traced back to the Sarbaz River in Iran, sharing its range with India and Bangladesh. While a precise census on the number of gando in Sistan and Baluchestan remains unavailable,



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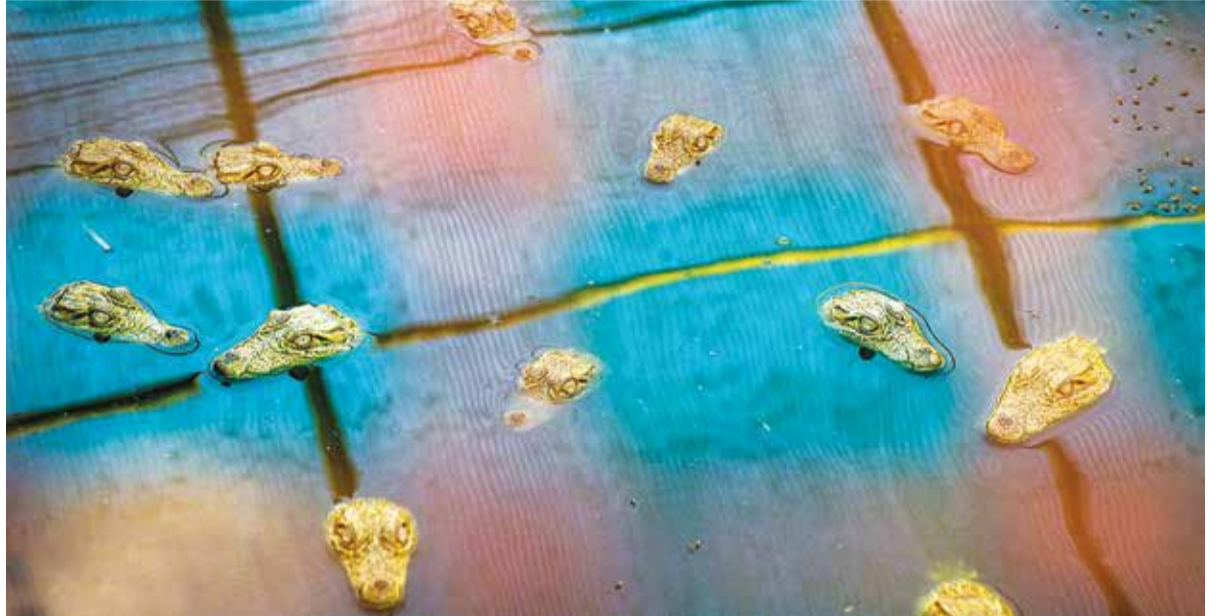
the population is considered substantial, not only in the province but also across neighboring countries. At present, the species is not classified as endangered due to its abundance.

The crocodile type is characterized by its relatively smaller size and short snout. In comparison to its South American counterparts, which can reach astonishing lengths of 6 to 8 meters, and sometimes even up to 12 meters, the gando's length rarely exceeds 4 or 5 meters.

The mugger crocodile has earned a reputation for its shy and non-aggressive demeanor, except during the egg-laying season when it becomes fiercely protective. It maintains a safe distance from humans and other animals, avoiding unnecessary interactions whenever possible.

In recent years, Sistan and Baluchestan province has experienced a surge in drought, as noted by Farhad Saleh-Zahi, an environmental expert in the Chabahar Free Zone. Despite warnings against approaching the Sarbaz River, certain villagers acting as water harvesters have risked venturing near it. Tragically, this has led to reports of gando attacks on locals in the region.

While gando's primary diet consists of birds, fish, and small mammals, observations have revealed that these crocodiles may also target cattle, driven by the scarcity of food as they approach the Sarbaz River to quench their thirst.



Gando breeding

Saleh-Zahi brings attention to the breeding of gando, highlighting the existence of a sole breeding center spanning an area of about 5,000 square meters in the Chabahar Free Zone, Sistan and Baluchestan Province. Established in 2018, this breeding farm obtained a pair of gando from the environment and has since obtained a population of 120 specimens. With the ongoing egg-laying season, an upsurge in the gando population at the center is anticipated.

The gando at the center ranges in age from four to five months, with a potential lifespan of up to 40 years. The oldest members of the center are the original progenitor pair. In their natural habitats, gando typically have shorter lifespans, but under favorable

breeding conditions, they can live up to 60 years or more.

As for the objectives of the gando breeding center, Saleh-Zahi emphasizes that a primary goal is to reintroduce gando crocodiles into their natural habitats. Additionally, some of the gando raised at the center are intended for export to Southeast Asian countries. However, the production capacity of the center has not yet met the required level for exportation. In 2020, some gando specimens were released from the center into the wild to support their reproduction in their natural environment.

Gando demand in Southeast Asia

The uses of gando in Southeast Asian countries are diverse, as described by Saleh-Zahi. Some of these

crocodiles are acquired for display in wildlife parks, or to be released into crocodile habitats. Moreover, the valuable skin of the gando is utilized in producing high-end leather goods, while its meat is also consumed in Southeast Asian countries.

The significance of crocodile blood in the serum and pharmaceutical industries cannot be overlooked, and the antibodies produced in the gando's body contribute to manufacturing sensitive drugs, including those used in AIDS treatment, the environmentalist says. Saleh-Zahi points out the potential income generation of the gando breeding industry in Sistan and Baluchestan province.

"If gando production reaches the desired level across various centers in the province, it could pave

the way for its export, thus contributing to the economic growth of both the province and the entire country."

Furthermore, Saleh-Zahi emphasizes the tourism potential of gando in the region. Sistan and Baluchestan province stands out as the only region in Iran where crocodiles are found natively.

"With strategic investments in the tourism sector, providing essential facilities and equipment, the region could attract tourists interested in witnessing the natural habitats and conservation centers dedicated to this unique animal," he says. The global popularity of gando makes it a compelling attraction, promising significant opportunities for income generation and employment creation in the region.

Iran's \$20b smuggling empire exposed & battled

Economy Desk

Estimates by the Central Headquarters to Combat the Smuggling of Goods and Currency suggest that the total value of smuggled goods in Iran amounts to approximately \$20 billion. Economic experts and Members of Parliament (MPs) have recently put forth differing figures regarding the extent of smuggling in the country. Mohammadreza Pour-Ebrahimi, the head of the Parliament's Economic Committee, reported that the figure stands at roughly \$20 billion annually, as stated by the Mehr News Agency. As per the law, the sole official body responsible for estimating and disclosing smuggling statistics is the Central Headquarters to Combat the Smuggling of Goods and Currency. However, the last official announcement from the headquarters on this matter dates back to 2019 when the estimated value of smuggled goods was \$17.2 billion.

Nevertheless, recent declarations from officials at the headquarters indicate that there has been a notable 17-percent increase in smuggling across Iran.

In an interview addressing the variation in figures concerning the value of goods smuggling in Iran, Saeid Niroumand, the deputy head of the General Directorate for Combating and Monitoring the Financial Affairs of the headquarters, stated that, according to the latest estimates, the total amount of smuggling is assessed at \$19.8 billion. Out of this, \$14 billion corresponds to goods smuggled into the country, while \$5.8 billion accounts for the value of illegally exported goods from Iran.

Niroumand highlighted that historically, petroleum products and derivatives have been leading the list of smuggled exports. Conversely, household appliances and car spare parts constitute the primary categories of imported smuggled goods.

The estimation process for the amount of smuggling is based on the "Supply and Demand Gap Analysis" method, which is a scientifically endorsed approach by Iranian academic bodies. Through this method, the authorities determine the country's imports, exports, production, and per capita consumption. By analyzing this data, the discrepancy between supply and demand is identified and considered as the amount of smuggling, as explained by the official.

Article 16 of the Anti-Trafficking Law specifies that the official statistics on smuggling volume should solely be announced and referenced from the data provided by the Central Headquarters to Combat the Smuggling of Goods and Currency. Nevertheless, this doesn't imply that the headquarters announces its statistics unilaterally without involving other institutions. Within the Central Headquarters to Combat the Smuggling of Goods and



MEHR

Currency, there exists a working group responsible for announcing the estimated smuggling volume in the country. This working group comprises representatives from more than 20 organizations, including the Iran Statistics Center.

What factors escalate smuggling

In the realm of reverse or outgoing smuggling, the allure of the "exchange rate difference" stands as the primary driving factor behind this illicit activity. On the other hand, inbound smuggling presents a different set of challenges, with various elements exacerbating the problem of

smuggling into the country. Factors such as the "tariff system," which imposes high import taxes of approximately 20 percent, as well as restrictions on importing over 2,000 types of goods, the lengthy legal import process, the complex permit system, and the involvement of multiple decision-making organizations all contribute to the issue. According to Niroumand, the fixed customs tariff rate in the country is considerably higher compared to that of member countries in the World Trade Organization and some other nations. It's worth noting that the Central Headquarters to

Combat the Smuggling of Goods and Currency has never advocated for a complete ban on the entry of goods into the country. However, the current situation, characterized by limited foreign exchange resources, has necessitated the prohibition of importing more than 2,000 items of goods into the country.

Huge amount of discoveries

Throughout this year, starting from March 21, Iran has actively strengthened its anti-smuggling efforts and implemented various plans to combat this illicit activity.

Between June 12 and 26, a series of operational plans were executed in collaboration with relevant authorities, including the Ministry of Intelligence and the police. These efforts led to the investigation of 422 warehouses in Tehran's Shurabad district through advanced systems. Out of these, action was taken on 95 warehouses

based on the findings, as informed by Niroumand.

As a result of these operations, suspected smuggled goods worth more than 1,650 billion tomans (\$33 million) were uncovered from the 95 warehouses. These cases are currently under scrutiny and being addressed, with the owners of the warehouses given the opportunity to defend themselves and present relevant documents. Niroumand emphasized that the use of advanced systems has significantly minimized the margin of error in such encounters.

The official further revealed that the number of smuggling discoveries made during this two-week period is nearly equivalent to the total number of smuggling cases detected throughout the entire 12-month period up to March 20.

Despite the positive strides taken in combating the smuggling of goods, Niroumand concluded by acknowledging that there is still a long way to go to achieve further progress and success in curbing this unlawful practice.

Iranian 'butterfly children' suffering from Sweden's medical embargo



IRNA

Social Desk

The medical embargo on Iranian patients suffering from Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB), often referred to as "butterfly disease," has been described as a constant source of pain, with the severity of the situation escalating daily. This is due to the exclusive production of a specific type of dressing in Sweden, which is currently inaccessible to these patients due to inhumane sanctions, IRNA reported. In 2018, the US government withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan

of Action (JCPOA), contravening Security Council Resolution 2231. This led to the re-imposition of sanctions against Iran, which critics argue unfairly target ordinary citizens and patients like those suffering from EB. Patients with rare diseases, particularly children with EB, locally known as "butterfly children," have been hit hardest by these sanctions. They struggle to access necessary medical and pharmaceutical equipment, including the specialized dressings produced solely in Sweden. The sanctions have left

these patients in a state of dire need.

The primary challenge for EB patients is obtaining these dressings, which alleviate some of the pain associated with their condition. Tragically, some have lost their lives due to the sanctions, a situation that critics have labeled a crime against these vulnerable children and teenagers.

The issue of caring for these patients has become a priority for Iranian officials across various executive bodies. The president has expressed particular concern over the embargo

on drugs needed by these patients. In a conversation with CGTN China, he compared the sanctions to warfare, stating, "In fact, this is the same as war, but its tools have been changed; yesterday the tools were military, today sanctions, and they follow these sanctions very ruthlessly."

He further added, "Even the medicine needed by the patients has been embargoed for Iran. For butterfly patients, children among them, it is very painful for their families; the medicines they need have been sanctioned."

Angry man sentenced to teaching French to underprivileged children

Social Desk

In an unusual verdict, a judge in Lavasan City's criminal court has ordered a man accused of assault and harassment to teach French to child laborers at a charity organization in Tehran for eight weeks. The case began when a young woman lodged a complaint against the man at the Lavasanat District prosecutor's office, alleging that he had assaulted and

harassed her in a neighborhood in Lavasan, Tasnim News Agency reported.

The woman claimed she was walking when the man, without provocation, attacked her, accusing her of stealing from his home. This led to his arrest by police officers, who had obtained the necessary judicial permits. During his transfer to the Lavasanat District prosecutor's office, the accused explained that he had suspected the

woman after discovering his home had been burgled. He admitted to assaulting her out of anger, despite having no intention to fight. He also mentioned his fluency in French, a skill he acquired while studying abroad. The accused managed to secure the woman's forgiveness during the judicial investigation and was released on a legal order until his court date. The Lavasanat District prosecutor's office issued

a summons and indictment for the man on charges of intentional assault and harassment of women. He was brought to trial in Branch 102 of the criminal court in Lavasan, presided over by Judge Meisam Hosseinpour. At the trial, the accused confessed to his crime and expressed remorse, asking the judge for forgiveness. Judge Hosseinpour, taking into account the man's lack of prior record and his expression of remorse,

issued an unconventional sentence.

The man was ordered to purchase educational French textbooks and spend the next eight weeks teaching French to child laborers at a charity organization in Tehran. This unique verdict highlights the court's attempt to use restorative justice as a means of punishment, turning a negative incident into a positive outcome for the community.



TASNIM

Ta'zieh has brought me respect

2

Special series on ta'zieh



Mahdieh Ghazvinian
Staff writer

Reza Heidari, born in Tafresh, Markazi Province in 1939, is one of the renowned ta'zieh performers. He learned the profession from his father at a tender age and has been instrumental in nurturing the current generation of Iranian performers. He is a dedicated researcher and manuscript specialist and an exceptional artist in performing ta'zieh acts. He is among the few reciters who have extensively delved into the field of ta'zieh and the history of Islam. His diligent efforts have aimed to rectify the distortions in ta'zieh, making him stand out from other performers. Below you will read a report of our conversation with his as the second part of a special series on ta'zieh.

"Ta'zieh means saying condolences and is a significant part of Iran's traditional rituals, capturing the attention and interest of people," opens Heidari. The esteemed performer possesses a melodious and eloquent voice, combined with a comprehensive knowledge of authen-



tic traditional musical instruments. According to renowned contemporary singers, he is undeniably a master in his craft and one of the most prominent performers in Iran. Heidari shares, "I developed a strong interest in ta'zieh as a child, growing up in a family deeply involved in recitations. My father, Mohammad-Taqi Heidari, was a famous singer with a unique voice that is still praised by those who remember him."

Ta'zieh held great significance within his family, and they had memorized numerous manuscripts. Reciting ta'zieh together as a family was a cherished pastime, especially during the long winter nights gathered round. "My father, grandfather,

mother, grandmother, aunts, sisters, and I would all participate. Initially, perhaps the presence of a small or large audience affected me, but I have a memory that changed my perspective," he said. During one of his early performances of the role of Hazrat-e Ali-Akbar, Seyyed Ebrahim Mirjafari was playing the trumpet. The recitation had begun, but only a few people had arrived by the time it was his turn to recite the prelude.

"So, I approached the performer who was playing Imam Hossein without reading the prelude. Mirjafari interrupted the ta'zieh and asked why I hadn't recited the prelude. I replied, 'Sir, there is no one.'" The master went on to re-

spond, "No, my dear. I will accompany you, and you shall sing as I play. Hopefully, your performance will be accepted and revered by Imam Hossein."

"He turned me around, seated me, and played all the corners of the chahargah instrument for me. I sang, and since then, that memory has stayed with me. Therefore, as the saying goes, I will not cut corners." Furthermore, Heidari has composed songs for ta'zieh and has written numerous versions with new lyrics.

"Some of the recitations I have written include Hajj, Hazrat-e Soleiman, and Khawarij Nahrawan. I have composed over 25 recitations." While engraving remains Heidari's primary occupation, ta'zieh holds a special place as his secondary pursuit. He believes that in Iran, it is challenging to rely solely on ta'zieh recitation as a permanent profession due to lacking support for ta'zieh reciters.

Heidari highlights some remarkable ta'zieh recitations he has performed throughout his artistic journey. Among them, the ta'zieh of Imam Sajjad and the ta'zieh of Hamza, which he performed in

Arabic, left a significant impact. Nevertheless, he modestly notes that people's opinions varied, and his performances in Horr Ibn-Riahi's ta'zieh and Imam Hossein's ta'zieh on the day of Ashura garnered particular appreciation.

Heidari explains, "There is an exquisite collection of Iran's ta'zieh manuscripts in Italy's Vatican Museum. I had the opportunity to visit this museum during my trip to Italy. I recall a person from my childhood days that would seek Ta'zieh copies and offer significant prices to acquire them. He purchased many manuscripts and took them away. Later, I discovered that he had been commissioned by the Italian embassy to collect ta'zieh manuscripts around 70 years ago. Presently, a collection of 1,150 ta'zieh manuscripts is housed in a museum in Italy."

Reflecting on the past, Heidari emphasizes that the art form held a more prominent and significant position in people's lives. "Perhaps the previous generation of reciters possessed a purer intention and insight, and they experienced more favors and attention from the audience. Although such

incidents still occur today, they may not be as abundant. However, in general, people admire and respect ta'zieh reciters who uphold moral values and the religious principles. The honor and respect bestowed upon ta'zieh reciters arise from the reverence they hold as servants of Imam Hossein." Heidari has also performed in France and twice in Italy alongside the late Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami. During his month-long performances in Paris, foreigners exhibited a positive

and accepting attitude towards ta'zieh.

According to the artist, a proficient ta'zieh reciter should possess a comprehensive understanding of several disciplines and arts. Firstly, having a strong and melodious voice is essential. Additionally, learning and teaching musical instruments, understanding corners, and effectively employing songs and melodies within the framework of ta'zieh are vital.

"Proper enunciation of words and phrases is another crucial factor. It is through this very skill that the reciter can effectively convey the intended emotions of ta'zieh to the audience."





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News in photo

Flags and banners in honor of Imam Hussein (PBUH)



● SHAYAN MEHRABI/tehranpicture.ir



The second calligraphy event of Sign of Love is underway on the occasion of the mourning days of Muharram to marks the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (PBUH), the third Shia Imam, and his loyal companions. More than 80 artists attend the event at the Union House (Amin Ol-Soltan House) organized by the Tehran Municipality's Beautification Organization.

Flamingos over Maharlu Lake



The photo, recorded through paraglider flight and released on July 19, 2023, show Maharlu Lake in south of Iran hosting hundreds of Flamingos and different species of birds.



● ERFAN SAMANFAR

Traditional 'Locho' Wrestling Contest in Mazandaran



Locho wrestling is a traditional field of Pahlavani sports practiced in the northern Iranian province of Mazandaran. Annually, the people of Mazandaran gather together on July 19 to hold the Feast of the Dead, a part of which is the Locho wrestling contest.

● AKBAR QQAEMPOUR/YJC

A glimpse at the sole drum factory in Mideast on the eve of Muharram



Workers work at the largest drum production factory in the Middle East, which is located in Tabriz, northeastern province of East Azarbaijan. More than 40 workers are engaged in the production and manufacture of Muharram-mourning and military drums.



● MASOUD SEPEHRINIA/MEHR