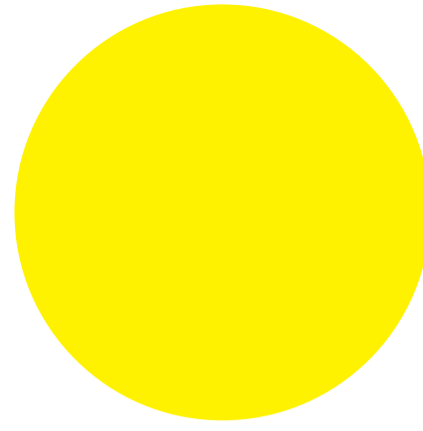




Iran firm to secure rights over Arash gas field: Minister 6 >



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Iran Daily



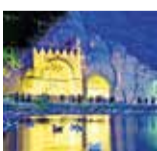
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Iranian fleet participates in Russia's Navy Day parade

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Russia's Pacific Fleet warships parade off the port city of Vladivostok during the Navy Day celebrations on July 30, 2023. ● PAVEL KOROLYOV/AFP



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No 'big deal' around corner



By Heshmatollah Falahat-Pisheh
International affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Following the recent visit of Jake Sullivan, the US national security adviser, and Brett McGurk, the White House coordinator for Middle East affairs, to Saudi Arabia, analysts have been closely examining the state of Riyadh-Washington relations. Notably, Thomas Friedman, a commentator with close ties to the president of the United States, has shed light on the American efforts to broker a "big deal" in the Middle East, primarily centered on normalizing relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel. According to Friedman's account, this plan involves several conditions set by Saudi Arabia for accepting the normalization of relations with Israel. Page 3 >

Iran's oil shipments to China triple despite US sanctions

Iran's oil shipments to China have more than tripled over the past three years, despite the US sanctions on the country and the increase in Russia's shipments to China. According to data released by data analytics firm Kepler, Iranian crude exports to China have been consistently around one million barrels per day (bpd) in 2023, compared to approximately 325,000 bpd in 2020. The upward trend of Iranian oil shipments to China began in 2019, with exports reaching 585,000 bpd in 2021 and 766,000 bpd in 2022. The International Energy Agency (IEA) also confirmed Iran's daily export of one million barrels of oil to China in its recent report titled "Oil 2023." Page 6 >



At least 40 dead after blast hit Pakistan party rally

At least 40 people were killed and over 150 injured when an explosion tore through a political rally in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province on Sunday, police and health officials said. Senior police officer Nazir Khan said the workers convention of Maulana Fazlur Rehman's Jamiat Ulema Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) party was taking place on the outskirts of Khar, the capital of Bajaur district, when the explosion took place, AP reported. According to Reuters, the police said there was no confirmation yet about the cause of the blast that took place at a gathering of the conservative JUI-F party in the former tribal area of Bajaur that borders Afghanistan. Page 2 >



● REUTERS

NEWS IN BRIEF

Floods cause
damage to
SE cities

National Desk

Floods caused by heavy rainfall have inflicted a lot of damage to infrastructure and agricultural products in southeastern cities in Sistan and Baluchestan Province.

According to authorities in the city of Taftan, floods have hit five villages in the region.

Several houses were seriously damaged after severe floods struck Chah Kamal village and neighboring areas of Khan Bibi and Shogeh.

Authorities have asked people in rural areas to refrain from approaching rivers or barrages as many of the barrages have been filled with flood water.

Floods also blocked roads and cut off water and electricity and uprooted trees in several other cities in the province.

Iranian
copters armed
with precision
strike missiles

TASNIM - The Iranian Army Ground Force has equipped its military helicopters with missiles that hit targets with pinpoint accuracy, a ranking commander said.

Iran is in possession of the most powerful fleet of military helicopters in West Asia, Commander of the Iranian Army Ground Force's Airborne Division General Yousef Qorbani said on Sunday.

The commander said that Iran's military choppers have been furnished with up-to-date gear, including precision strike missiles and night-vision systems. Highlighting the Airborne Division's great combat preparedness, the general lauded local experts for turning the threat of sanctions into opportunities and manufacturing over 800 helicopter components in the country.

He also pointed to the Airborne Division's major role in helping civilians in natural disasters, saying his forces have saved more than 2,000 lives by airlifting patients and body organs.

Iranian fleet participates
in Russia's Navy Day parade

Russian warship sails on the Neva river during the Navy Day parade in Saint Petersburg on July 30, 2023.
● AFP

International Desk

Iranian Navy's Caspian Sea fleet on Sunday participated in Russia's annual Navy Day event, a traditional show of military might which takes place in the Gulf of Finland and on the River Neva in St. Petersburg.

Russian President Vladimir Putin reviewed the parade of warships and nuclear submarines and announced that the Russian Navy would receive 30 new ships this year.

Forty-five ships, submarines and other vessels took part in the event. Around

3,000 navy personnel also took part in a parade on land, the Kremlin said.

Putin, accompanied by Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Admiral Nikolai Yevmenov, the head of the Navy, inspected some of the ships from a launch boat on the Neva before making a speech.

"Today, Russia is confidently implementing the large-scale tasks of our national maritime policy and is consistently building up the strength of our Navy," said Putin. "This year alone, 30 ships of different classes are being added to the fleet," he said.

Four African heads of state attended Sunday's event and five other African countries sent representatives, according to the Kremlin. They were invited after a Russia-Africa summit in St. Petersburg, which concluded on Friday, at which delegates discussed grain supplies and potential peace talks on Ukraine.

Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani also traveled to Russia to attend the ceremony.

Upon his arrival in St. Petersburg, the Iranian commander told reporters that Iran's naval forces will try to achieve an effective and

successful presence in the international arena and raise the Iranian flag. The navy chief highlighted naval diplomacy as a key mission pursued by navies worldwide, including the Iranian Navy.

He stressed that annual joint exercises conducted with the navies of Russia and China in Chabahar, the Makran coast, and the Indian Ocean were part of their naval diplomacy efforts.

Admiral Irani added that he had participated in Russia's Navy Day upon the official invitation of the Commander of the Russian Navy.

In July 2021, Iranian Navy destroyer Sahand and its accompanying support vessel Makran participated in the naval parade on the occasion of Russian Navy Day in St. Petersburg.

Iranian naval forces, together with their Russian counterparts, have held several joint war games in recent years with the purpose of improving the security of international maritime trade, countering piracy and maritime terrorism, exchange of information in naval rescue and relief operations, and exchange of operational and tactical experiences.

Iranian FM hails Iraq's role
in region

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (R) talks with Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Assistance Mission Jeanine Antoinette Hennis-Plasschaert (L) in Tehran on July 30, 2023.
● mfa.gov.ir

National Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian underlined the role that neighboring Iraq plays in the Middle East region.

The Iranian top diplomat made the remarks at a meeting with visiting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Assistance Mission Jeanine Antoinette Hen-

nis-Plasschaert in Tehran on Sunday, according to IRNA.

Referring to strong relations between the two nations, Amir-Abdollahian said that relations between the two countries are based on people-to-people relations and official cooperation. The Iranian official underlined that relations have positive effects on both countries as well as developing stability and

security in the region. Amir-Abdollahian was also briefed on the latest situation and developments in Iraq by the UN official.

He also pointed to the importance of the security of both countries' common border and emphasized the strict implementation of the security agreement signed between Tehran and Baghdad to promote border security.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

Iran's National Day of Blood Donation



At least 40 dead ...

"The JUI-F organised a workers convention in Khar town of Bajaur in which 40 people lost their lives and more than 130 were injured," district police officer Nazir Khan told Reuters.

He said an emergency had been declared in the hospitals of Bajaur and adjoining areas where most of the injured were taken.

Pakistan has seen a resurgence of attacks by terrorists since last year when a ceasefire between the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Islamabad broke

down. However, most of the recent attacks have been on security forces and installations, rather than political gatherings.

The TTP pledges allegiance to, but is not directly a part of, the Taliban in western neighbour Afghanistan. Pakistan's security forces say the TTP have sanctuaries in Afghanistan, which the Taliban run-administration there denies.

Afghanistan's administration condemned the explosion in a statement by their spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid. The TTP are not the only militant group to car-

ry out attacks in the area, which has also been hit by a local chapter of the Daesh terrorist group.

Iran has also strongly condemned the attack with Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kan'ani saying terrorists once again committed another crime in the neighboring and brotherly country of Pakistan.

He extended Iran's sympathy to the Pakistani government and nation as well as the bereaved.

The Iranian spokesman said the Islamic Republic stands by Pakistan in tackling terrorism.

Nigerien protesters wave Russian flags, attack French Embassy



International Desk

Thousands of supporters of the junta that took over Niger in a coup earlier this week marched through the streets of the capital, Niamey, on Sunday waving Russian flags, chanting the name of the Russian president, and forcefully denouncing former colonial power France. The protesters marched through the city to the French Embassy, where a door was lit on fire, according to someone who

was at the embassy when it happened and videos seen by the AP.

Black smoke could be seen rising from across the city. The Nigerien army broke up the crowd of protesters. Russian mercenary group Wagner is already operating in neighboring Mali, and Russian President Vladimir Putin would like to expand his country's influence in the region. However, it is unclear yet whether the new junta leaders will move toward Moscow or stick with Ni-

ger's Western partners. Days after the coup, uncertainty is mounting about Niger's future, with some calling out the junta's reasons for seizing control. President Mohamed Bazoum was democratically elected two years ago in Niger's first peaceful transfer of power since independence from France in 1960. The mutineers said they overthrew him because he wasn't able to secure the nation against growing violence.

France has 1,500 soldiers in the country who conduct joint operations with the Nigeriens. The United States and other European countries have helped train the nation's troops. On Sunday France condemned all violence against diplomatic compounds, whose security is the responsibility of the host state, said a statement by the government. The attack follows France's move on Saturday to suspend all development and financial aid for Niger.



Nigeriens, some holding Russian flags, participate in a march called by supporters of coup leader Gen. Tchiani in Niamey, Niger, on Sunday, July 30, 2023.
● SAM MEDNICK/AP

West African bodies issue ultimatum

Regional bodies, including the 15-member Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), have also denounced the coup. Some taking part in Sunday's rally warned them to stay away. The African Union has is-

sued a 15-day ultimatum to the junta in Niger to reinstall the country's democratically elected government. ECOWAS is holding an emergency summit Sunday in Abuja, Nigeria.

The 15-nation ECOWAS bloc has unsuccessfully tried to restore democracies in nations where the military took power in recent years. Four nations are run by military regimes in West and Central Africa, where there have been nine successful or attempted coups since 2020. If ECOWAS imposes economic sanctions on Niger, which is what normally happens during coups, it could have a deep impact on Nigeriens, who live in the third-poorest country in the world, according to the latest UN data. Heads of the West African economic bloc ECOWAS, the eight-member West African Economic, and Monetary Union could suspend Niger from its institutions, cut off the country from the regional central bank and financial market, and close borders, according to Reuters. However, in a televised address Saturday, Brig. Gen. Mohamed Toumba, one of the soldiers who ousted Bazoum, accused the meeting of making a "plan of aggression" against Niger and said the country would defend itself. The junta issued a second statement on Saturday night inviting citizens in the capital take to the streets to protest against ECOWAS and show support for the new military leaders.

Palestinian factions meet in Egypt to reunite, reconcile

Palestinian factions kicked off a meeting Sunday in Egypt to discuss reconciliation efforts as violence in the occupied West Bank surged between Israel and Palestinian militants. The main attending groups, Hamas and Fatah, have been split since 2007. With repeated reconciliation attempts having failed, expectations for the one-day meeting are low, AP wrote.

Another key group playing a central role in the fighting with Israel, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, boycotted the gathering to protest the detentions by the Palestinian Authority of its members, according to the group's leader, Ziyad al-Nakhala. According to the official Palestinian news agency Wafa, the gathering in the Egyptian city of el-Alamein on the Mediterranean Sea was

discussing "ways to restore national unity and end the division". The meeting comes amid soaring violence in the West Bank, where Fatah group is based and exerts limited self-rule. Israel has been staging near-nightly raids in Palestinian areas of the territory, especially in areas where Abbas' security forces have less of a foothold.



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas (L) leads a meeting of reconciliation talks between Fatah and Hamas in Egypt on July 30, 2023.
● Wafa

No 'big deal' ...

These conditions include a joint defense agreement, the establishment of a peaceful nuclear program, and the acquisition of advanced weaponry. It appears that Israel is playing the role of mediator in this plan, but it's evident that both Saudi Arabia and the United States are driven by their own national interests in the matter. For Saudi Arabia, the top priority is obtaining a security guarantee against potential invasion. During Donald Trump's tenure, Riyadh offered various contracts and concessions to the US, but it failed to address its security concerns.

Ensuring security in the West Asian region is also crucial for the US, as it observes Arab countries increasingly gravitating toward China. The numerous contracts China signs with Arab nations represent missed opportunities for the US, as Saudi Arabia has become China's gateway to West Asia, further bolstering Beijing's influence in the region. As a result, the Americans are keen on preserving Saudi Arabia as a strategic ally. However, the prospect of fulfilling Saudi Arabia's conditions for the deal seems unlikely. One of the key demands is NATO's support as a security guar-



US President's Middle East advisor Brett McGurk (L) met with Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud on April 13, 2023.
● SAUDI FOREIGN MINISTRY

antee. Despite the existence of a bilateral security and military agreement between Saudi Arabia and the United States, the US has announced since 2011 that it will only engage in wars through NATO, ruling out independent military actions. It is improbable that NATO would provide such support to Saudi Arabia, especially considering that the alliance has even

rejected Ukraine's membership, despite it being a European country. Consequently, the Saudi security concerns and their main condition might not materialize. Moreover, Joe Biden's administration has shown reluctance to uphold the commitments made by the Trump administration to Saudi Arabia, leading Riyadh to be cautious about

entering into any bilateral security agreements with the United States. Currently, Saudi Arabia is closely monitoring developments in Palestine and Israel while emphasizing the need for security guarantees. Due to its strategic influence in Muslim and Arab nations, Saudi Arabia has taken an interest in advocating for the establishment of two independent states, one for Palestine and another for Israel. Additionally, Riyadh opposes Israel's policy of continued settlement construction in Palestinian territories. However, the realization of these requests from Saudi Arabia by Israel, as well as Israel's acceptance of Saudi Arabia's pursuit of nuclear technology, appear to be unlikely.

Israel, for its part, is concerned about Saudi Arabia acquiring nuclear know-how, considering it a significant Muslim country with considerable influence in the Islamic world. Israeli leaders understand that Arab nations often experience political changes, making them wary of allowing Saudi Arabia to obtain nuclear capabilities. Ultra-orthodox factions in Israel, who firmly believe in an inevitable war between Muslims and Israel, vehemently oppose any move toward nuclearization in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, Israeli extremists have not forgotten the substantial financial aid Saudi Arabia provided during the 1967 Six-Day War, when it supported efforts to defeat Israel.

In contrast to Friedman's narrative, the idea of a big deal between the involved parties seems unlikely, mainly because the Biden administration recognizes the complexities and obstacles that such a plan would face. The Biden administration is more focused on managing the situation and buying time to maintain some level of control over developments in the Middle East, which have completely spiraled out of its control. The United States' primary priorities currently revolve around the conflict in Ukraine and its ongoing rivalry with China. President Biden aims to prevent Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries from rapidly aligning themselves with China, Russia, and Iran.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli MP: Normalization with Saudis not imminent



● AFP

REUTERS - A top Israeli lawmaker said on Sunday that any forging of relations with Saudi Arabia does not appear imminent, citing what he described as sticking points in negotiations currently being held between Riyadh and US mediators.

"I think it's too early to talk about a deal being in the works," Yuli Edelstein, head of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee and a senior member of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party, told Israel's Army Radio.

Senegal's opposition leader charged with conspiracy



AP - Senegal's opposition leader Ousmane Sonko has been charged with conspiracy against the state and calls for insurrections among other offenses, the public prosecutor said Saturday. The announcement comes weeks after Sonko was convicted on separate charges of corrupting youth and sentenced to two years in prison, which ignited deadly protests across the nation, where at least 23 people were killed and dozens injured.

Efforts underway to refurbish Taq-e Bostan



yaldamedtour.com



IRNA

Iranica Desk

Taq-e Bostan historical site is located on a hillside with the same name and next to a fountain in the north of the city of Kermanshah, the capital of the western province of Kermanshah.

Head of Taq-e Bostan historical site, Mohammad Feyz-Aqaei, said that plans have been devised to restore the historical complex

and equip it with new facilities by mid-March 2024.

He added studies have been carried out to provide the necessary facilities required by the handicapped to visit the complex, ISNA wrote.

He added that measures were carried out to improve lighting in the historical site, adding special light sources are expected to be installed on the arches of the monument.

"Preliminary studies have been conducted in this regard in cooperation with one of the best consulting companies of the country," he said.

Feyz-Aqaei said that according to correspondences made with the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ministry, an expert is expected to visit Taq-e Bostan to study the restoration of the 600-year-old tree located

in the complex.

He believes that renovating measures undertaken in Taq-e Bostan would help pave the way for the world registration of the valuable historical site.

"Taq-e Bostan has been registered on UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites in 2007. We have tried to pursue its permanent global registration, which needs a national determination," he noted.

He said that the global registration of the monument would lead to an increase in the number of Iranian and foreign tourists choosing Kermanshah as their destination.

Taq-e Bostan, which literally means 'The Arch of the Garden' in Persian, is a site famous for its Sassanid (224-651 CE) rock reliefs. Located five kilometers from Kermanshah, at the heart of the Zagros Mountains, the site contains some of the best preserved reliefs from the Sassanid era. The site includes scenes such as the investitures of Ardashir II (reigned from 379-383



destinationiran.com

CE), Shapur III (383-388 CE), and Khosrow II (570-628 CE).

The Ardashir II relief shows the king standing on top a bearded figure believed to be the Roman emperor Julian the Apostate (330-363 CE), receiving the ring of kingship from Ahura Mazda, which means 'Wise Lord' or 'Lord of Wisdom' in the Avestan language.

The second relief, which

is located in a manmade cave built in the form of an *ivan* (terrace), shows two kings believed to be Shapur III standing next to his father Shapur II (309-379 CE), the conqueror who defeated the Romans.

A third manmade *ivan* at the site contains reliefs showing the investiture of the last great Sassanid king Khosrow II. To his right stands Ahura Mazda offering him the ring

of kingship and to his left stands the water goddess Anahita holding a small jar of water and offering Khosrow II another ring. There is also a relief of Khosrow II in full battle gear mounted on his favorite horse, the legendary black stallion, Shabdiz, which means midnight and was reputed to be the fastest horse in the world. Khosrow II is seen holding a lance in this relief.

Susa, the main key site for ancient Iran



The city of Susa is the main key site for ancient Iran. The only one to have an occupation span of 6,000 years – from the foundation in 4,200 BCE to the 13th century CE – it brought to light the Elamite Civilization that flourished in Iran long before the Persians built their universal empire.

Susa goes into the historical period at the end of the 4th millennium BCE by inventing an original writing system, the proto-elamite script, which was soon replaced by Sumerian cuneiform signs.

The city was founded on a small plain – aptly named Susiana and irrigated by the Karun and Karkheh rivers (modern Khuzestan) – that forms an eastern extension of

the great Mesopotamian plain. This geographical setting plays a defining role in the identity of the site: All through its history, Susa alternately shows a certain vulnerability towards Mesopotamian influences and an autonomy that has its roots in the mountainous part of the country. In fact, Susa is the lowlands capital of the political entity that is Elam, the double country extending from the Susiana to Fars, while Tale Malyan, founded around 3,000 BCE, governed the highlands. The seasonal movements of transhumant populations assured permanent contact between these two worlds. Metallurgy was the principal craft in Susa, especially during the 3rd millennium BCE, when the

trans-elamite world took possession of the processing of alabaster, chlorite, semi-precious stone and shell.

Excavations at Susa have predominantly been led by French archaeologists and encompass all three mounds of the settlement: The Apadana in the north, named after the Persian palace built here around 521 BCE by Darius the Great, the Acropolis (or Acropole) in the west, which dominate the plain with its 38m of archaeological deposits, and finally the large mound of the Royal City (or Ville Royale) in the east, jutting out to the south at the so-called Donjon.

Discovery of Apadana

One of the first renowned visitors to Susa was Aus-

ten-Henry Layard, who soon after would come to fame through the British excavations at the Assyrian cities of Nimrud and Nineveh. During a stay with the Bakhtiari tribes in 1841-1842, he also briefly visited the Susiana. Archaeology as such does not begin at Susa until the appearance of British geologist-archaeologist W. K. Loftus (1820-1858 CE). Initially hired to mark out the Turkish-Persian border, he was later won by O. K. Rawlinson, famous decipherer of Old Persian and director of all British excavations in Mesopotamia, for the rather unrealistic task of uncovering the entire site. Accompanied by the artist Henry A. Churchill, whose role it was to draw everything

that there was, Loftus bravely went to work in two campaigns between 1851 and 1852.

His discovery of four column bases on the Apadana tell, bearing a trilingual inscription revealing the names of the builders of the palace and the term "Apadana" designating its hypostyle part, is of historic importance. A topographical map, tracing the exact elevation lines of the site, was also established. But the region was dangerous, the results not very spectacular compared to contemporary excavations in Assyria, and so Loftus had to leave off his work. Thirty years later, the French, namely Marcel Dieulafoy and his wife Jane, had no reason to complain of this decision.

Iran beats Uzbekistan for Asian U16 volleyball crown



Iranian players and the coaching staff celebrate after a 3-1 victory over Uzbekistan in the final at the Asian Men's U16 Championship in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on July 29, 2023.
● volleyball.ir

Saudi league has 'changed transfer market', Guardiola says



● MICHAEL REGAN/GETTY IMAGES

BBC – The Saudi Pro League's financial clout has "changed the market" for transfers and elite clubs "need to be aware of what is happening", says Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola. After luring Portugal star Cristiano Ronaldo to Saudi Arabia in December, the league has attracted several big-name players this summer.

That group includes Algeria's Riyad Mahez, who left City to join Al-Ahli.

"Saudi Arabia has changed the market," said Guardiola.

"A few months ago when Cristiano [Ronaldo] was the only one to go, no-one thought this many top, top players would play in the Saudi league.

"In the future there will be more and that's why clubs need to be aware of what is happening.

"Riyad got an incredible offer and that's why we could not say 'don't do it'."

City agreed to sell Mahrez in a deal worth up to £30m while Allan Saint-Maximin is set to become the next player to leave the Premier League for Saudi Arabia when he joins Mahrez at Al-Ahli.

Bayern Munich's Sadio Mane is in talks over a potential move, having received an offer from Al-Nassr; while reigning Ballon d'Or winner Karim Benzema has already followed former Real Madrid team-mate Ronaldo to Saudi Arabia.

Earlier this week, Premier League chief executive Richard Masters said he "wouldn't be too concerned at the moment" about Saudi Arabia's growing influence in football.

"It is not about the threat, it is a reality," Guardiola added during City's pre-season tour of Asia.

"They want to create a strong league and so far they are the league who can do it.

"The Premier League spent more than the others because the organisation of the Premier League is better and the broadcasts and the sponsors are higher than the other leagues, so the clubs can spend what they have.

"Right now, the Saudi league, I don't know how long they will sustain it, but the feeling is that they will stay. The players want to take this experience to play in that league and they are able to do it."

Guardiola added that City "are not looking for a replacement for Riyad in terms of skill because every player is different."

"We will see what happens with loan players, and which players stay here. A few things are going to happen."

Sports Desk

Iran made a clean sweep of seven wins with a victory over Uzbekistan to lift the trophy in the first Asian Men's U16 Championship in Tashkent.

A day after an epic comeback against the Chinese Taipei in the semifinals secured a place at next year's U17 World Championship for Iran, Arash Sadeqiani's

boys came from behind to beat the host 3-1 (19-25, 25-22, 25-16, 25-22) in the inaugural final showdown at the Universal Sports Complex – a repeat of the result when the two sides met in the last-eight pool stage.

The triumph rounded off a glorious 14 days for the Iranian age-group volleyball, after the country's under-21 team had defeated Italy in a five-set thriller in

Manama, Bahrain, for a second world title in four years. Mostafa Sedaqat delivered 16 points from 13 attacks and three aces for Iran, while Mohammad-Raouf Khoshhal and Kamyab Abdollahi contributed with 13 and 11 points respectively. There was further joy in the awarding ceremony for Iranian Khoshhal, who was named the Most Valuable Player of the event,

while sharing the Best Outside Hitter award with the host's Ogabek Haydarov, who scored a match-high 19 points – including 18 attacks – in the final.

Khoshhal was joined by two Iranian teammates in the Dream Team, as Taha Mohseni was picked as the Best Middle Blocker – alongside Liou Guan-peng of the Chinese Taipei – with Masoud Eimeri tak-

ing home the Best Libero award.

Chinese Taipei's Huang Pin-Yen (Best Opposite Spiker) and Uzbekistan's Shohruhxon Halimov (Best Setter) were also rewarded with a place in the Dream Team.

"Thank God all of Iranian players' efforts paid off," Iran coach Sadeqiani said after the match, adding: "My players worked hard for five months and had a winning

mentality throughout the competition."

"The next generation of the Iranian volleyball is truly blessed with brave and diligent players."

Earlier in the day, the Chinese Taipei walked away with a 3-1 (25-13, 18-25, 25-23, 25-22) victory over Pakistan to finish third – joining Iran and Uzbekistan in next year's U17 World Championship.

Iran U17 to begin GR title defense at World Championships

Sports Desk

Iran will be chasing a second successive Greco-Roman crown when the Wrestling U17 World Championships get underway in Istanbul, Turkey, today.

The defending champion will be represented by four reigning Asian gold medalists in Mohammad-Meraj Mohmadi (51kg), Mohammadreza Gholami (55kg),

and Aliakbar Asghari (92kg), as well as Amirhossein Abdevali, who will be the biggest threat to home-favorite Cemal Bakir's title defense in the 110kg weight class.

Gholami will also be among the favorites for the 55kg gold, though he will be challenged by Uzbekistan's Aytjan Khalmakhannov, the 51kg gold medalist in 2022.

Payam Ahmadi, meanwhile, will be looking to build on his bronze-winning campaign in Rome last year when taking part at the 48kg contests.

Alireza Amiri (45kg), Ali Dezfulinejad (60kg), Amir-Mehdi Saeedinava (65kg), Ahmadreza Mohammadian (71kg), and Alireza Abbasi (80kg) are the other wrestlers in the Iranian squad in Istanbul.



● iwfi.ir

Crawford wins undisputed welterweight title with beatdown of Spence



THE GUARDIAN – Terence Crawford delivered a shocking beatdown of Errol Spence Jr. in their long-awaited unification bout on Saturday night, becoming the first undisputed welterweight champion in nearly four decades and staking a credible claim as the world's best boxer regardless of weight. Crawford dropped Spence in the second round and twice more in the seventh before referee Harvey Dock intervened at the 2:32 mark of round nine.

The matchup between undefeated American stars more than five years in the

making was billed as the best fight that boxing could deliver. But after an opening round that unfolded on even terms, Crawford stamped his name into history with an extraordinary performance of power, precision and ring generalship that made an elite opponent look like a novice.

Crawford (40-0, 31 KOs) became the first fighter to hold all of the recognized world titles at welterweight since 1986, when Lloyd Honeyghan stopped Donald Curry at Caesars Atlantic City to capture the WBA, WBC and IBF titles in one of

the great upsets in British boxing history.

"I only dreamed of being a world champion," Crawford said. "I'm an overachiever. Nobody believed in me when I was coming up, but I made everybody a believer. I want to thank Spence and his team because without him none of this would have been possible."

Terence Crawford (L) punches Errol Spence Jr. during round five of the World Welterweight Championship bout at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, NV, US, on July 29, 2023.
● JOHN LOCHER/AP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran's auto production rises 30%



IRNA – Car manufacturing in Iran rose 30 percent in the first four months of the current Iranian year (March 21-July 22), compared to the corresponding four months of last year. According to the director general of the Iranian Industry Ministry's Auto Industry Department, Iranian carmakers manufactured over 443,000 vehicles in the four months to July 22. Abdollah Tavakoli Lahijani said that during the four-month period, Iranian automakers produced nearly 363,000 passenger cars.

Over 8m tons of wheat purchased



IRNA – Iran has purchased more than eight million tons of wheat from domestic farmers under the national guaranteed purchase. Saeid Rad, the general manager of the Government Trading Organization of Iran, said that the purchases were carried out in a 130-day time span from the beginning of the current Iranian year (March 21) to July 28.

Bolivia challenges global dollar dominance with Chinese yuan



REUTERS – Bolivia's government is determined to curb dependence on the US dollar for foreign trade, instead turning to the Chinese yuan, officials said, as Latin American support for alternative currencies grows. Economy Minister Marcelo Montenegro said the Andean country was following "a pattern at the level of international trade that is generating a progressive increase in the use of the yuan in foreign trade".

Iran firm to secure rights over Arash gas field: Minister

Iran will pursue its rights over the Arash/Durra gas field if other parties shun cooperation, the country's Oil Minister Javad Owji said on Sunday, according to the Oil Ministry's Shana news agency.

"If there is no willingness to cooperate, Iran will pursue its rights and benefits, including the exploitation and exploration of the Arash gas field, and will not tolerate any violation of its rights," Owji said, according to

Reuters. Kuwaiti Oil Minister Saad Al Barrak told SkyNews Arabia on Thursday that his country will start drilling and begin production at the gas field without waiting for border demarcation

with Iran. The Arash gas field, known as "Durra" by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, was initially discovered by a Japanese oil company back in 1960. This field is shared between

Iran and the neutral zone situated between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. According to the previously determined border limits, approximately 40% of the Arash field's oil and gas reserves lie within Iranian waters.

IMF revises up Iran's GDP projection for 2023

Economy Desk

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its latest World Economic Outlook Report, revised its forecast for Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2023, expecting the country's economy to grow 2.5 percent this year. The fund had estimated the Islamic Republic's GDP growth at two percent for 2023, in its previous report published in April, according to img.org. The entity also revised its estimation for Iran's economic growth in 2022, putting the country's GDP growth for last year at 3.5 percent. In the April report, Iran's economic growth for 2022 was calculated at 2.5 percent. The 3.5 percent growth of Iran's economy in 2022 is equal to the

average growth of the world economy this year. Global growth is projected to fall from an estimated 3.5 percent in 2022 to three percent in both 2023 and 2024. While the forecast for 2023 is modestly higher than predicted in the April 2023 World Economic Outlook (WEO), it remains weak by historical standards. The rise in central bank policy rates to fight inflation continues to weigh on economic activity. Global headline inflation is expected to fall from 8.7 percent in 2022 to 6.8 percent in 2023 and 5.2 percent in 2024. Underlying (core) inflation is projected to decline more gradually, and forecasts for inflation in 2024 have been revised upward. In most economies, the priority

remains achieving sustained disinflation while ensuring financial stability. Therefore, central banks should remain focused on restoring price stability and strengthen financial supervision and risk monitoring. Should market strains materialize, countries should provide liquidity promptly while mitigating the possibility of moral hazard. They should also build fiscal buffers, with the composition of fiscal adjustment ensuring targeted support for the most vulnerable. Improvements to the supply side of the economy would facilitate fiscal consolidation and a smoother decline of inflation toward target levels. As announced by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), Iran's gross domestic



REUTERS

product (GDP) grew four percent in the past Iranian year (ended on March 20). The CBI also put the GDP growth at 3.5 percent, excluding oil. According to CBI data, the GDP growth was positive in all four

quarters of the previous year, so that from the first quarter to the end of the fourth quarter of the said year, the economic growth rate of the country was 1.9 percent, 3.9 percent, 4.9 percent, and 5.3 percent, respectively.

Iran's thermal power station output hiked by 2,000 MW: Official

Economy Desk

The average electricity generation of thermal power stations during peak consumption days of summer in the current Iranian year has increased by over 2,000 megawatts (MW) compared to last year, announced Nasser Eskandari, a deputy with the Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH). Over 700 power plant units of 112 state-run and private power stations have created a sustainable condition to supply electricity needed by the country's

clients, the official noted on Sunday, according to IRNA. According to estimates, the amount of electricity consumption in Iran will exceed 73,000 MW in coming days, Eskandari said, expressing hope that with the efforts of all the staff in the electricity industry as well as the cooperation of customers, the country will face no problems in the supply of electricity. Iran's total power generation capacity currently stands at about 85,000 MW, more than 90 percent of which is supplied by thermal power plants.



IRNA

Iran's oil shipments ...

The report stated that despite severe financial restrictions, Iran managed to increase its crude oil production by 140,000 barrels per day in 2022 to an average of 2.5 million barrels per day, energportal.eu reported. Official data shows that Iranian oil production has also increased this year, with the country's oil output reaching 2.9 million bpd

in May, 350,000 bpd higher than in 2022. Chinese private refineries have been buying more Iranian oil, even amidst rising competition from Russia. These refineries, known as teapots, have prioritized Iranian oil as Russian supplies become more expensive. China's imports of Iranian crude and condensate saw a 20 percent month-on-month increase in March, reaching 800,000 barrels

per day. Analysts expect this trend to continue in the coming months. Although Iranian oil has long been sanctioned by the US, refineries in China have remained a consistent outlet for the country's exports. The private refiners in Shandong, in particular, have emerged as key players in the Iranian oil market, according to industry experts. Despite the negative impacts of US sanctions, Iran has success-

fully ramped up its oil production and exports in recent months. Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi announced that the oil and gas sector experienced a growth of nine percent in the past Iranian calendar year, (which ended on March 20). Oil Minister Javad Oji also predicted that a new record high will be reached in the country's oil export in the current Iranian calendar year. In

November 2022, President Raeisi also highlighted that Iran's oil exports had reached pre-sanction levels. According to the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), Iran's average oil production in 2022 was 2.54 million bpd, an increase of 140,000 bpd from the previous year. In 2021, Iran's oil production reached around 2.4 million bpd.

Milad Tower to host toys, entertainment exhibit

Social Desk

The sixth exhibition of toys and entertainment, with the aim of supporting Iranian goods, promoting production and business, increasing sales, and enhancing market share through direct communication with consumers, will be held in Tehran's Milad Tower this fall.

The event will take place October 8 to 13, 2023. The exhibition will showcase various product groups, including educational and learning aids, intellectual toys, cultural toys, artistic toys, dolls, movement toys, and electronic toys. These products represent investments and the result of Iranian thinking and culture, according to Azad News Agency (ANA).

Kambiz Aqaei, the exhibition director, discussed the use of toys to teach correct social behavior to children. He mentioned that some toys are designed to teach lifestyle, apartment living, traffic culture, and cultural issues.

"Fortunately, there are many examples of such toys in Iran's national production complex," he said.

Aqaei also commented on the quality of toys in the country. "The quality of production in certain areas, such as cardboard and paper products, as well as plastic toys, has almost reached

acceptable limits," he said, adding that some products even meet international standards and are exported.

The expert in marketing and sales development emphasized the importance of exhibitions and festivals. He explained that participating in exhibitions is crucial for businesses as it attracts the target market and leads to increased customers and sales.

"Exhibitions also provide cost-effective advertising, marketing opportunities for different seasons, and direct sales," he noted, adding, "Thousands of people interested in toys attend exhibitions to gather information about products and services, making it an excellent opportunity for producers to advertise and sell their offerings."

Regarding the impact of the exhibition on families and children, Aqaei mentioned that it provides an opportunity for toy manufacturers and retailers to showcase their achievements.

"Families can conveniently find and purchase the right toys at reasonable prices in one place," he said.

The exhibition, along with other side programs, also allows families to make informed choices by involving their children in the selection process, according



● ANA

to Aqaei.

He further highlighted that this year's exhibition is the first toy sales exhibition in Tehran. With the presence of manufacturers and suppliers, the event will showcase the competition and development within the industry. It aims to introduce

the capabilities and production capacities of the toy industry at the highest level.

"The exhibition also includes cultural and educational programs, featuring artists, trainers, family competitions, group games, and a painting station," he said.

The sixth Toy and Entertainment Exhibition will be held from October 8-13, 2023 at the tallest structure in Iran and the sixth tallest telecommunication tower in the world. It will feature the participation of the country's toy industry producers.

Drowning in Iran up by 10% last spring

Social Desk

There has been a 10 percent increase in drowning cases in the spring of 2023 compared to the previous year, according to official statistics announced by Iranian Legal Medicine Organization.

A total of 280 people died due to drowning in the past spring, ISNA reported.

Iranian Legal Medicine Organization released the official statistics of drowning cases this spring, revealing a 9.8 percent increase in drowning compared to the same period last year. This increase is concerning, especially as the country's Emergency Medical Services had previously warned about the issue of drowning and called for people's caution.

Out of the total number of drowning deaths recorded this spring, 224 were men and 56 were women. The highest number of drownings, 126 cases, occurred in May-June, which saw a 16.7 percent increase compared to the same period last year when there were 255 casualties. The provinces with the highest

number of drowning deaths this spring were Khuzestan with 41 deaths, Fars with 27 deaths, and Isfahan with 23 deaths. Surprisingly, most drowning instances did not occur on beaches but in areas where drowning is less expected. This challenges the popular belief that most drowning cases happen at the beach. Efforts to improve coastal safety have been somewhat effective in reducing drownings, especially on the northern coasts of the country.

While rivers traditionally have the highest number of drowning deaths in the first quarter of the year, agricultural ponds ranked second during this period. In the spring season, when there are more agricultural activities and fewer trips to coastal provinces compared to the summer season, there are more drowning deaths in agricultural pools than in the sea.

The sea ranks third in terms of drowning deaths, with 37 deaths, 29 of which occurred in unauthorized areas. Swimming pools accounted for 28 cases, water canals for 21 cas-



● ISNA

es, artificial lakes and dams for 12 cases, wells for eight cases, and ponds and natural lakes for four and two cases, respectively. Additionally, 24 people lost their lives in other water bodies during this period.

Every year, as the hot season begins, the number of drowning deaths increases in Iran. Many of these deaths are a result of carelessness or lack of swimming skills. It is crucial for people, especially children and teenagers, to pay attention to safety tips and warnings when swimming,

particularly on hot days. By following these precautions, we can ensure a safe and enjoyable summer season with a decrease in the number of drowning cases and the lowest possible number of deaths.

The Legal Medicine Organization of the country has emphasized the importance of taking these safety measures seriously, as there are still more than 50 days left in the summer season and people's desire to travel to places with bodies of water and coastal provinces continues.

The cheetah cubs are doing fine: *Official*

Social Desk

Gholamreza Abdali, the director general of the Office of Wildlife Protection and Management, recently provided an update on the physical condition of two Asian cheetah cubs, named Azar and Turan.

The environmental official said that the cubs are currently in good health at the cheetah reserve in Shahrud, Semnan Province, Mehr news agency reported.

Abdali reassured that overall care of the cubs is being handled well, and there is currently no threat to their lives. The biosphere therapists at Turan Reserve in Shahrud are closely monitoring their condition and, fortunately, the cubs are in excellent shape.

It is worth mentioning that Azar and Turan are two Iranian cheetah cubs who were discovered by a local herdsman in the Turan region last December. They were initially placed under the

care of specialized veterinarians, wildlife therapists, and experts at the General Directorate of Environmental Protection in Semnan. They were afterward transferred to the captive cheetah breeding site in Turan, also known as the Asiatic Cheetah Research Center. As it is no longer possible to release them back into the wild, they will spend the rest of their lives in captivity, residing in a fenced area within the national park and participating in the national tour in Shahrud.



● MEHR

Vigorous everyday activities a road block for cancer

Many people know exercise reduces the risk of cancers, including liver, lung, breast, and kidney. But structured exercise is time-consuming, requires significant commitment, and often financial outlay or travel to a gym. These practicalities can make it infeasible for most adults.

There is very little research on the potential of incidental physical activity for reducing the risk of cancer, Science Alert reported.

Incidental activities can include doing errands on foot, work-related activity, or housework as part of daily routines. As such, they do not require an extra time commitment, special equipment, or any particular practical arrangements.

In a study out on July 27, authors explored the health potential of brief bursts of vigorous physical activities embedded into daily life.

These could be short power walks to get to the bus or tram stop, stair climbing, carrying heavy shopping, active housework, or energetic play with children.

The new study included 22,398 UK Biobank participants who had never been diagnosed with cancer before and did not do any structured exercise in their leisure time.

Around 55 percent of participants were female, with an average age of 62. Participants wore wrist activity trackers for a week. Such trackers monitor activity levels continuously and with a high level of detail throughout the day, allowing the researchers to calculate how hard and exactly for how long people in the study were moving.

Participants' activity and other information were then linked to future cancer registrations and other cancer-related health records for the next 6.7 years.

This meant the authors could estimate the overall risk of cancer by different levels of what they call "vigorous intermittent lifestyle physical activity", the incidental bursts of activity in everyday life.

They also analyzed separately a group of 13 cancer sites in the body with more established links to exercise, such as breast, lung, liver, and bowel cancers.

The researchers' analyses took into account other factors that influence cancer risk, such as age, smoking, diet, and alcohol habits.

Even though study participants were not doing any structured exercise, about 94 percent recorded short bursts of vigorous activity. Some 92 percent of all bouts were done in very short bursts lasting up to one minute.

A minimum of around 3.5 minutes each day was associated with a 17-18 percent reduction in total cancer risk compared with not doing any such activity. Half the participants did at least 4.5 minutes a day, associated with a 20-21 percent reduction in total cancer risk.

Two Iranian films in Indian festival



Two Iranian films, 'A Farewell to Arm' and 'After Midnight,' will compete in the 15th International Documentary and Short Film Festival of Kerala (IDSFFK) in India.

The festival will be held from August 4 to 9 in Kerala, showcasing approximately 300 films at Kairali, Sree, and Nila theaters in the city, IRNA wrote.

Directed by Amirhossein Karbakhsh, and produced by Alireza Montazeri, 'A Farewell to Arm' is a compelling documentary chronicling the quest for peace between Palestine and Israel. After years of strife, the leaders of the two nations come to a profound realization that the path to peace is far superior to the path of conflict.

Meanwhile, 'After Midnight,' directed by Mohammad Baqeri and produced by Mohammad-Hadi Aqajani, explores the poignant narrative of a mother's self-sacrifice and resilience as the avenger of blood.

The international distribution of both Iranian films is skillfully managed by Soureh Cinema International & Business Marketing Center.

The Indian festival has grown into a prominent platform for non-fiction filmmaking, celebrating creativity and resilience within the realm of media. The event features a diverse selection of documentaries and short films, categorized into various segments, including competition, long documentaries, short documentaries, short fiction, animation, and music videos.

Deepa Dhanraj, an acclaimed director and activist, will be honored with a lifetime achievement award during the festival, acknowledging her significant contributions to the field of documentary filmmaking. The festival aims to foster conversations while engaging professional filmmakers and enthusiastic audiences in its six-day-long celebration of captivating cinema.



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Two Iranian museums among world's best



Arts & Culture Desk

The National Museum of the Islamic Revolution & Holy Defense in Tehran and Jondishapur Museum of Trade History in Shiraz have earned places on the prestigious list of the world's top museums, as reported by Museum World Ranking.

In this international ranking, the former secured the 322nd spot, while the latter obtained the 335th position, IRNA wrote. Topping the current ranking is the renowned Louvre Museum in France, which holds the prestigious first position among museums worldwide. Museum World Ranking,

an independent European research institution, evaluates and ranks various museums worldwide based on a comprehensive set of quantitative and qualitative criteria. These criteria encompass effectiveness, cultural management and organization, profitability, competitiveness, innovation,

and information provided by the museums' representatives to the institution, such as establishment year, budget, the number of visitors, staff count, welfare facilities, and more. The rankings are meticulously curated by experts at Museum World Ranking, who carry out their

own verification process. This involves examining museum websites, considering visitors' feedback, and monitoring social media activity related to the museums. The list is thoroughly updated on an annual basis, reflecting the dynamic nature of the museum landscape.



Handicrafts museum for Muharram tradition to be launched



Arts & Culture Desk

The deputy tourism minister for handicrafts at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism announced the establishment of a specialized crafts museum dedicated to Muharram tradition. Maryam Jalali-Dehkordi stated that there is also a proposal to incorporate a section related to the Qur'an within the museum, which is currently under consideration, IRNA wrote.

Jalali made the statement during a visit to a hand-crafted exhibit on

Ashura showcased at Bagh-e Honar in the Abbasabad in Tehran, adding that, "Our culture gives so much meaning to wood and metal, turning them into intangible heritage that embodies the thoughts, intelligence, taste, and artistry of our craftsmen. The intangible heritage becomes tangible and narrates its own story." She continued, "Hand-crafted items related to Muharram and Ashura are a manifestation of love, passion, honor, and recognition of our artists. We witness the embodiment of Muharram's love, passion, and consciousness in metal, wood, and

stone - materials drawn from nature and transformed into a beautiful tale. I believe handicrafts' greatest service to culture is to immortalize these stories." Mohammad-Hossein Hejazi, the CEO of Abbasabad Renovation Company, also expressed appreciation for the exhibition of hand-crafted items related to Muharram. He highlighted how this artistic perspective could beautifully portray the Muharram tradition and religion. Hejazi emphasized that handicrafts are a powerful medium of expression, articulating our emotional and



religious beliefs. He expressed hope for more such exhibitions to be held across the country, fostering greater support and more opportunities to showcase

these artworks. Seventy-two artists are presenting more than 80 handcrafted items in the exhibition that will remain open until August 1.

Art exhibition showcasing plants from Qur'an

Kew Gardens in the UK is currently hosting a captivating exhibition featuring beautiful drawings of plants mentioned in the Qur'an. Among the teachings and parables in the Qur'an, Muslim holy book, references to nature, particularly greenery, vegetation, and flowers, are prevalent. Scientist and author Shahina Ghazanfar, along with New Zealand-based botanical illustrator Sue Wickison, co-created and curated this exceptional collection of artworks, as reported by metro.co.uk. Titled 'Plants of the Qur'an,' the exhibition presents 30 exquisite paintings by Wickison, showcased in Kew's Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art. Each painting showcases

a wide array of flora, including garlic, pomegranate, grapes, henna, and more, accompanied by informative insights into their significance within the religious text. During her research for the book 'Plants of the Qur'an: History & Culture,' Shahina Ghazanfar delved into ancient Mesopotamian cuneiform texts and semitic languages such as Aramaic and Hebrew to identify plants without modern Arabic names. "Those were more difficult to trace back," she shared. "Every plant has a historical and cultural attachment to it which we must never forget or lose." Sue Wickison, the artist behind the intricate botanical illustrations, expressed her fascina-

tion with Qur'anic flowers during a visit to the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi, known for its ornate decorations. She remarked, "What intrigued me, apart from the incredible building, were the unusual botanical motifs all over the floors and columns and up on the ceilings - different from the geometric shapes." To accurately depict the plants, Sue embarked on a journey around the world, visiting the mountains of the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Fiji, and Australia. She highlighted the importance of working from living material, saying, "The work takes hundreds of hours to produce. You must depict the plant accurately and aestheti-

cally. Some of the plants I have grown myself at my home in New Zealand - or traveled into the mountains to find." The 'Plants of the Qur'an' exhibition at Kew Gardens will run until September

17, providing visitors with a unique opportunity to appreciate the intricate beauty of these botanical artworks and deepen their understanding of the plants' significance within the religious context.

