

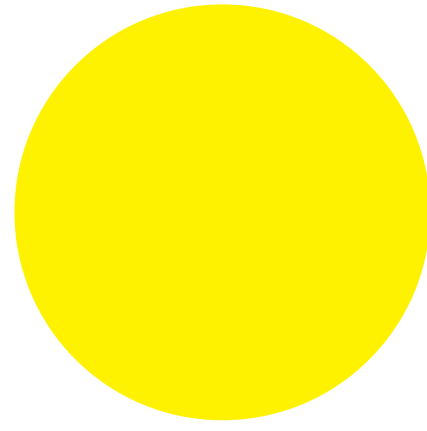


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Iran ready to share experiences with Sri Lanka: *Raeisi*

International Desk

Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi expressed the country's readiness to share its "eye-catching" experiences and achievements in scientific and technological fields with Sri Lanka. In a meeting with the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka Ali Sabry in Tehran on Sunday, President Raeisi highlighted the South Asian country's great potential for development, Tasnim news agency reported. For his part, Sabry said the Colombo government is eager to promote economic, technolog-



ical, and medical cooperation with Iran. In a separate meeting with the Sri Lankan foreign minister, the governor of the Central Bank of Iran, Mohammad Reza Farzin, stressed that if the promotion of bilateral trade ties is to be put on the agenda of Tehran and Colombo, the central banks of the two countries should lead the monetary exchanges.

US calls Israeli settler attack 'terrorism'

Washington has condemned as terrorism the killing of a Palestinian by Israeli settlers, in sharpened language that appeared to reflect US frustration with surging violence in the occupied West Bank under Israel's hard-right cabinet. Israeli police detained two settlers in Friday's incident near Burqa village. According to Palestinians, they were part of a group that threw rocks, torched cars and, when confronted by villagers, shot a 19-year-old dead and wounded several others, according to Reuters. "We strongly condemn yesterday's terror attack by Israeli extremist settlers that killed a 19-year-old Palestinian," the US State Department said in a statement late on Saturday, urging "full accountability and justice". According to Israel's Army Radio, the rate

of attacks by settlers or their supporters against Palestinians in the West Bank has more than doubled this year compared to 2022. "We are faced with the evolution of a dangerous Jewish nationalist terrorism," opposition lawmaker Benny Gantz, a former defense minister, said on messaging platform X, formerly known as Twitter. "Whatever happened at Burqa, it joins a slew of events that beset our security forces with having to pursue, rather than protect, Israelis." A new report by the Palestinian Wall and Settlements Resistance Commission said Israeli forces and settlers perpetrated nearly 900 attacks on Palestinians and their holy sites last month, Press TV wrote.

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Iran's four-month imports of basic goods top 7 m tons: IRICA



Economy Desk

Iran imported over seven million tons of basic goods worth \$4.763 billion during March 21–July 22 period, according to figures released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

The statistics also indicated that exports from Iran fell by eight percent in the four months to July 22 compared to the same period last year, IRNA reported.

IRICA figures showed that Iran's exports reached a total of \$15.906 billion in March–July, down 7.97% against the same period in 2022.

The figures also indicated that Iranian export shipments had risen by 28.56% in value terms year on year over the four months to late July to a total of \$45.758 million tons.

Petroleum products accounted for a bulk of shipments exported from Iran in March–July, with liquefied petroleum gas sales generating \$1.633 billion in revenues over the period, followed by liquefied propane at \$1.14 billion and liquefied butane at \$0.823 billion, revealed IRICA figures.

China remained the largest customer of Iranian export commodities over the first four months of the Iranian calendar year with \$4.644 billion worth of purchases, followed by Iraq at \$2.927 billion and Turkey at some \$2 billion, the customs data showed. IRICA said imports into Iran had risen by 6.18% in volume terms and by 10.82% in value terms year on year in March–July to reach 11.842 million tons worth \$19.539 billion.

Main commodities imported into Iran over the four months to late July included animal feed corn worth \$1.29 billion worth of shipments, followed by mobile phones at \$0.7 billion and soybeans at \$0.647 billion, it said.

The customs figures showed that the United Arab Emirates, the largest re-exporting center in the Persian Gulf, had been the largest supplier of goods to Iran over the four months to late July with \$5.818 billion worth of exports, followed by China at \$5.558 billion and Turkey at \$2.09 billion.

Iranian carpets reign supreme in global quality, beauty Rivals market their products as Iranian rugs



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

Iran's tradition of crafting handwoven carpets boasts a rich historical legacy, securing its top position globally in terms of both quality and aesthetic allure. A significant archaeological revelation was made at a site called Pazyryk, unearthing the world's most ancient handwoven rug. This artifact, dating back three millennia, stands as a testament to the Iranian mastery in carpet weaving.

The worldwide association of handwoven carpets with Iran is an unmistakable fact. The very mention of Iran conjures images of these exquisite creations, a recognition unparalleled and unchallenged by any nation. The identity of Iran is intricately woven into these pieces, such that international conceptions of the country frequently intertwine with thoughts of its iconic handwoven carpets.

However, recent years have seen India ascend to the forefront of the global carpet trade, displacing Iran from its long-held position. The competition in the realm of handwoven rug production and export is fierce, with India, Pakistan, China, Nepal, and Turkey vying for prominence alongside Iran. These rivals strategically capitalize on Iranian designs, mimicking local patterns and styles, all while marketing their products under the Iranian carpet banner.

In an interview with Iran Daily, Ahmad Karimi Esfahani, the head of Iran's Union of Handwoven Carpet Exporters, says despite



IRNA

the shifting landscape, Iranian carpets "continue to reign supreme in terms of quality on the global market".

He underscores the disconcerting trend of competitors leveraging Iranian designs without appropriate acknowledgment, a practice that blurs the lines between authenticity and imitation.

"India, for instance, markets its wares as 'Kashan Indian' or 'Isfahan Indian,' notwithstanding the absence of any connection to these Iranian locales," the businessman said.

The period spanning 1979 to 1995 witnessed handwoven carpets constituting a substantial share — approximately 40-45% — of Iran's non-oil exports. During this era, the export value of Iran's handwoven carpets reached a \$1.75 billion annually, a substantial fraction of the country's total

non-oil exports valued at \$4 billion.

Esfahani traces a decline in handwoven carpet exports after 1995 to various hurdles, including restrictive trade regulations and shifting customer preferences. A diversification in rug styles worldwide challenged the traditional notions of carpets, prompting a decline in demand. This shift culminated in a gradual reduction in Iran's handwoven carpet exports, currently amounting to \$50-55 million annually.

Resolving impediments tied to exportation, including issues arising from sanctions and financial transactions, is deemed crucial by Esfahani. He asserts that without a resolution to these challenges, remarkable growth in exports remains elusive. However, optimism is kindled by the prospect of overcoming these hindrances, potentially cat-

apulting current export figures to multiple times their current standing.

The businessman emphasizes a crucial aspect that Iranian authorities must consider to bolster exports: effective market regulation. This measure aims to ensure that carpet weavers are not confronted with shortages of essential raw materials, thereby obviating the need to resort to chemical dyes in their productions.

"A hallmark of Iranian carpets lies in their utilization of natural and herbal hues and materials, underscoring the significance of preserving this tradition." A diverse array of nations spanning the Western and European regions, Central Asia, East Asia (including Japan), and even African countries comprise the traditional clientele for Iranian handwoven carpets.

Esfahani highlights the

urgency of expanding into new markets for Iranian carpets, suggesting that the economic attachés in Iranian embassies across the globe should intensify their efforts.

He said several export destinations have been curtailed due to multifarious reasons, including sanctions, necessitating the pursuit of alternative markets to offset such losses.

The handwoven carpet sector of Iran stands as a cornerstone of sustainable employment generation across villages and cities across Iran. Esfahani highlights a striking statistic: approximately two million households in Iran rely on handwoven carpets for their livelihoods. Given an average household size of four individuals, the economic sustenance of nearly 10% of Iran's population is either directly or indirectly linked to the handwoven carpet industry.

Gov't to pay more subsidy to 29m Iranians: Deputy minister

Economy Desk

A sum of 29 million Iranians to receive more subsidy under the new plan of Iran's Ministry of Cooperation, Labor, and Social Welfare.

Speaking in a press conference in Tehran on Sunday, Alireza Asgarian, the deputy labor minister for welfare and economic affairs, also said that his ministry is cooperating with 90,000 markets across the country to implement the new subsidy plan.

"Eight large chain stores across the country cooperate with the Ministry of Cooperation, Labor, and Social Welfare in the implementation of the economic



Alireza Asgarian, the deputy labor minister for welfare and economic affairs, speaks at a press conference in Tehran on August 6, 2023.
IRAN DAILY

project," the official noted. Asgarian added that the main goal of implementing the subsidy plan is to ensure people's needs.

The more purchase Iranians make, the possibility of identifying and solving the problems of the plan increases, he said, noting that in the future, there is

a possibility to add other groups as beneficiaries of the plan.

The official concluded that 11 main products of milk, cheese, eggs, chicken meat, edible oil, rice, dairy products, beans, pasta, sugar, and frozen beef have been included in the subsidy coverage of the ministry.

Parliament greenlights free trade zone on Afghanistan border

Iranian lawmakers approved a bill to establish the Dogharoon Special Economic Zone on the Iran-Afghanistan border.

In a Sunday session of the Iranian Parliament, the legislators discussed a report compiled by its Economy Committee concerning a bill to set up the Dogharoon Special Economic Zone. The bill along with its notes was passed with 160 in favor, 18 against, and 10 abstentions, IRNA reported.

According to the bill, the Iranian government is allowed to set up the zone in Razavi Khorasan Province. The Dogharoon Special Economic Zone will be

managed in accordance with the notes mentioned in the law and on the basis of the law to regulate the management of free trade zones in Iran, which was approved on August 29, 1993. Furthermore, any change in the ratified articles of the law should be proposed by the cabinet and approved by the parliament.

Also in the session, the outline of a bill to establish the Mazandaran Free Trade-Industrial Zone was approved.

The outline of a bill to set up the Sarakhs Free Trade-Industrial Zone was also approved in Sunday's session.

Qeshm Island's underground caves



A view of Qeshm Island
● surfiran.com



Namakdan Cave
● irancultura.it



Chahkooh canyon
● hipersia.com

Qeshm Island, a geological treasure trove, boasts a multitude of underground caves that are waiting to be explored. These natural wonders, formed over thousands of years, present a unique opportunity for adventure and learning.

Namakdan cave

Venture into one of the longest salt caves globally, stretching over six kilometers in length, Namakdan Cave offers a surreal and captivating experience like no other. This fascinating cave showcases a dazzling array of salt formations, stalactites and stalagmites that have taken shape over millennia, creat-

ing a landscape that resembles a crystal wonderland, kentaltravel.com wrote.

As you explore the cave's chambers, you'll encounter various unique formations that have been shaped by the slow deposition of salt minerals over thousands of years. These formations come in all shapes and sizes, from delicate, icicle-like stalactites hanging from the ceiling to massive, pillar-like stalagmites rising from the cave floor. In some areas, the stalactites and stalagmites have grown together, forming breathtaking columns that bridge the gap be-

tween the ceiling and the floor. The otherworldly environment of the Namakdan Cave is a product of geological processes that have been at work for millions of years. The cave was formed by the gradual dissolution of the surrounding salt rock by infiltrating water. Over time, the water carved out an extensive network of passageways and chambers, leaving behind the intricate salt formations that we see today.

As you navigate through the cave's labyrinthine corridors, you'll also notice fascinating patterns and textures on the walls, floors, and ceilings. These are the result

of water movement and mineral deposition, which create swirling designs and undulating surfaces that add to the cave's mystique.

Visiting Namakdan Cave is not only a visually stunning experience, but it also offers a unique opportunity to learn about the geological processes that have shaped this remarkable subterranean world.

Chahkooh canyon and caves

A geological marvel, Chahkooh Canyon boasts a series of underground caves, passageways and natural wells. As you navigate through the narrow passages,

marvel at the striking rock formations that have been shaped by wind and water erosion.

Dark canyon cave

Explore the lesser-known but equally fascinating Dark Canyon Cave, near the village of Tabl. Delve into the depths of this hidden gem and be captivated by the cave's enchanting beauty, characterized by its unique rock formations and underground streams.

Tips for a successful Qeshm Island cave tour

Safety first: Ensure you have ap-

propriate footwear and clothing for exploring the caves, as well as a helmet and headlamp for your safety.

Stay hydrated: Bring plenty of water to stay hydrated during your adventure, as the climate can be hot and dry.

Capture the moment: Don't forget your camera to capture the incredible sights you'll encounter on your tour.

Respect the environment: Help preserve these unique ecosystems by following the guidelines provided by your tour guide and practicing the 'Leave No Trace' principle.

Persian art of the 8th-11th centuries

Persian art of the 8th-11th centuries was first of all unusually varied as regards its range of themes and subjects and its influences. One of the major historians of Islamic art, Oleg Grabar, wrote: "Every newly discovered monument reveals to us completely unknown aspects of this art."

It is true that there were attempts to create specific styles at the courts of rulers, such as a court style in Khorasan under al-Mamun (early 9th century) and under Mahmud of Ghazni (early 11th century), but these were merely episodes not leading to any sort of lasting unification.

Such variety is characteristic of all types of art at this time. In the architecture of Iran, for example, the hypostyle plan was introduced as the basic mosque layout, brought by the Arabs from the West (the mosques in Siraf, Naein and Damghan), but at the same time the so-called "kiosk-mosques" were being built, based on the Zoro-

astrian plan of the *chahar taq*, and tower mausoleums were spreading (there are Middle Persian inscriptions on some of the mausoleums, alongside Arabic).

Mosques were decorated with stucco panels consisting of plant and geometrical motifs, whilst in the east of the Islamic world, as in Neyshapur, these motifs are extraordinarily close to those used in the west, for example in Iraq.

At the same time we know of stucco panels of that period (mid-8th century) which depict not only Sassanian animals but even Sassanian deities (Mithras on a stag) and heroes of Sassanian legends.

All in all it could probably be said that during these centuries a process of selection was taking place in Persian art, involving a choice of forms and themes from traditional art together with various innovations. Historians of Persian art are unanimous in mentioning the slowness of this process.



Jaame Mosque of Isfahan
● odysseytraveller.com

The most innovative art was produced in the north-west of the country.

It is especially important that in the same period one sees how the propagandistic and class character of the hunt, feast and battle scenes have entirely disappeared.

Strange new motifs appear during the 9th and early 10th centuries on Neyshapur ce-

ramics, and there alone. The designs portray birds, beasts (most often a goat), various monsters, horses being attacked by beasts of prey, figures in rich clothing holding goblets and flowers, and riders on horseback.

All these designs do, of course, have their prototypes in Sassanian art, but they are very primitively executed with no

regard for proportion and are sometimes mere caricatures, though this style gives the faces a lively character and expressive quality.

The ceramic style, which appeared suddenly and vanished just as suddenly, possibly in the course of a single century, is an example of those completely new aspects of art appearing in connection with the new discoveries which Oleg Grabar mentions.

Ceramics from the Garrus region (northwestern Iran) are also curious, executed in a technique involving the carving out of a layer of slip, which results in a low-relief design. One such bowl portrays a character from an Iranian epic, the tyrant-king Zahhak who killed Jamshid. Some scholars assign these ceramics to the 12th century.

From the beginning of the 11th century changes in Persian art are clearly distinguishable and this new phase covers a lengthy period of about 300 years, until

the mid-14th century.

It should be noted that ceramics and metalwork depicted the most vivid figurative images of this period. The golden age of miniature painting dates from around the end of this phase of Persian art (after the Mongol conquest) and this form was subsequently to occupy a dominant position in figurative art. The political history of this period involves the rise of the Turkic dynasties of the Ghaznavids in the east and of the Seljuks, and the crushing Mongol conquest.

In view of the fact that works of art have as yet been insufficiently researched it is impossible to relate them precisely to historical events, and, on a wider scale, to events in the field of culture (often it is necessary to date objects of this period from the 11th-12th or 12th-13th centuries; although in the course of these centuries extremely important changes occurred both in politics and ideology).

NEWS IN BRIEF

Prosecutor
general
replaced

TASNIM - Mohammad Kazem Movahedi Azad was appointed as the new prosecutor general of Iran on Sunday. He has replaced Mohammad Jafar Montazeri as the prosecutor general under a decree issued by Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei. The former prosecutor general has been promoted the chairman of the Supreme Court of Iran.

'US unfit to
lead nuclear
disarmament'

PRESS TV - Tehran has lashed out at the US, noting that it is the only country that has used nuclear weapons to massacre hundreds of thousands in Japan and is also the key supporter of the nuke-armed Israeli regime while still purporting to advocate global nuclear disarmament. In a post on X — formerly Twitter — on Sunday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani seriously questioned Washington's competence for leading calls for the elimination of weapons of mass, marking the 78th anniversary of the US atomic bombing of the Japanese city of Hiroshima that killed nearly 140,000 people.

Leader: Historic naval mission elevated Iran's int'l standing

National Desk

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei lauded the Navy of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the successful completion of its groundbreaking mission of traveling around the world, saying the unprecedented move enhanced the country's international standing, contributed to security, and reminded superpowers that the high seas belong to all nations.

The leader praised the successful and honorable mission of the 86th flotilla of the Iranian Navy around the world, attributing its success to high determination, strong will, self-confidence,

advanced military knowledge, efficient management, and "courage and perseverance in the face of hardships", leader.ir reported. During the meeting with the commander, crew, and families of the 86th flotilla on Sunday, he highlighted that this great achievement once again demonstrated that successes, advancements, and fulfilled hopes stem from relentless efforts and perseverance.

The 86th flotilla, comprising the domestically-manufactured Dena destroyer and Makran forward base ship, returned home in May after sailing 63,000 kilometers of sea routes over eight months and circumnavigating the globe in 360 degrees.



leader.ir

Albania police seize control of terrorist MKO camp: Report



Albanian police have reportedly taken control of the camp that accommodates members of the anti-Iran terrorist cult Mujahedeen Khalq Organization (MKO) near the capital Tirana, imposing a strict curfew over the entire area.

The police in the south-eastern European country do not allow either entry into or exit from

the Ashraf-3 camp in the country's western town of Manëz, Tasnim news agency reported on Sunday. Earlier this week, Albania's Special Court on Corruption and Organized Crime ordered state authorities to prevent MKO ringleader Maryam Rajavi from entering the country. Informed sources,

speaking on condition of anonymity, said the verdict came after Albanian officials examined available pieces of evidence and concluded that the MKO was using the country to organize anti-Iran terrorist attacks. Rajavi reportedly fled the Ashraf-3 camp to France after Albanian police forces raided the site on June 20 due to

its engagement in "terror and cyberattacks" against foreign institutions. Authorities seized 150 computer devices linked to MKO's terrorist activities. More than a week later, the police entered the camp again, deploying security forces at the entrance to the camp to control all vehicles leaving the site.

Ex-embassy to OPEC:

Iran won't give up rights to Arash gas field

By Ebrahim Beheshti
Staff writer

In a contentious development, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have jointly announced that Iran holds no claim to the Arash gas field, also known as "Al-Durra". The discovery of the gas field dates back to the 1960s, but it has remained untapped due to several factors, including disputes between Iran and Kuwait concerning the delimitation of their maritime boundaries. Iran's Oil Minister, Javad Owji, responded to the stance taken by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, expressing his concern over their lack of cooperation and understanding. He warned that if there is no willingness to engage in dialogue and cooperation, Iran would assert its rights to the resources, both in terms of benefits and exploitation, and would not tolerate any violation of those rights.

To gain deeper insights into the ongoing disputes and explore potential solutions that could benefit all three countries, Iran Daily conducted an interview with Mohammad-Ali Khatibi, Iran's former representative in OPEC. The interview aimed to shed light on ways to resolve the tensions surrounding the gas field and

enable the three nations to mutually tap into its resources.

Iran Daily: Could you provide insight into the primary contention that arose between Iran and Kuwait pertaining to the Arash gas field?

Khatibi: The central issue, which stretches back over a considerable period, revolves around the absence of clearly defined maritime boundaries between the two nations. The matter at hand is essentially a disagreement over these maritime borders. Consequently, until a consensus on these borders is reached, both sides are left with room for conjecture. The primary objective lies in definitively establishing these maritime boundaries. Subsequent to this crucial step, the focus will shift toward the exploitation and investment in the oil and gas reserves within the shared Arash gas field. This endeavor cannot thrive amidst an environment marked by tensions and threats; instead, it necessitates resolution through negotiations. **Nonetheless, borders did exist between the two countries. The Kuwaitis, however, assert new borders based on seismic findings by oil major Shell, a study that**

denies Iran's entitlement to the Arash field. Iran contests this delineation of borders.

Indeed, the chronicle of Iran-Kuwait disputes traces its origins back to the discovery of the gas field in 1960s. What remains of paramount importance is bringing these disagreements to a close and finding a resolution. As such, neither party should proceed to exploit the resources inherent to the shared field until these disputes are satisfactorily addressed and the delineation of borders is established. Engaging in unilateral actions only serves to incite reactions from the opposing side, potentially intensifying the existing conflicts.

The Kuwaiti authorities have consistently engaged in negotiations with Iranian representatives and have never explicitly denied Iran's stake in the Arash gas field. Even in 2022, Kuwait's foreign minister declared that Arash constitutes a tripartite gas field shared among Iran, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. What prompted this sudden shift to deny Iran's participation?

Kuwait's surprising shift in stance has raised eyebrows, particularly considering the ongoing push for reduced

tensions and peaceful coexistence in the regional political landscape. Attempting to forge agreements with other nations or international corporations for the exploitation of Arash's resources without Iran's concurrence would prove futile, given Iran's non-acceptance of such endeavors. Notably, Iran is the sole party that Kuwait deals with in this case. While the delineation of maritime boundaries carries inherent complexities, it is conceivable that this has contributed to the prolonged negotiations without yielding a definitive outcome.

Nonetheless, my proposed resolution calls for a heightened commitment to negotiations characterized by increased gravity. Perhaps prior to this juncture, when the resource potential of the Arash field wasn't as crucial, the urgency for cooperation was diminished. Presently, however, all three nations find themselves in need of the oil and gas reserves within this field. Consequently, in the interest of safeguarding their respective rights, a more earnest approach to negotiations becomes imperative.

Could the Kuwaiti and Saudi governments be under the impression that Iran, due to external

pressure from Western nations, is in a vulnerable position? Might they be attempting to ramp up pressure or legal maneuvers to compel Iran to yield?

The notion is fundamentally flawed. True weakness manifests when a nation unilaterally gives concessions to superior powers. While Iran may engage in negotiations and make calculated concessions to secure its interests and achieve larger gains – as evidenced in the context of the nuclear deal – it has never capitulated unilaterally to any party. Tehran's steadfastness in safeguarding its principles and interests against formidable players like Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Europe has remained resolute. The Kuwaiti authorities themselves are aware of Iran's unwavering commitment to its national interests and understand that Tehran does not waver from its position.

In the event that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia unilaterally tap into the resources of the gas field, while no agreement is reached with Iran, does Iran possess the technical capacity to reciprocally exploit the shared resources within the field?



Indeed, Iran possesses the requisite capability to undertake such efforts. Despite facing sanctions, Iran successfully operationalized the most challenging phase of its South Pars gas field, utilizing entirely domestic technical expertise and even surpassing projected timelines. Iranian corporations have even been actively engaged in substantial projects abroad. It stands to reason that if Kuwait and Saudi Arabia choose to capitalize on the resources of the Arash field, Iran holds the legitimate right to take countermeasures. However, it's important to emphasize that Iran's preferred stance is rooted in pursuing negotiations to settle disputes.

You previously advocated for the involvement of an impartial entity to develop the gas field, requiring consensus from all three nations for equitable resource allocation. Do you believe this proposal remains viable prior to the resolution of maritime boundaries?

No, my proposition pertains to the phase of demarcating maritime boundaries. Typically, in the case of shared fields, two methods of exploitation exist: each country independently invests in and develops its respective sector, or, to bring down costs, the nations opt to collaborate through a single entity responsible for field development, subsequently distributing the yielded resources in accordance with prior agreements. Iran, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia have yet to reach this stage, as they must promptly resolve the maritime border dispute before advancing to the exploitation phase. The paramount consideration for all three nations is that operating within an ambiguous and tense environment is in no one's interests. We expect Kuwaiti officials to continue to exhibit wise policies, as in the past, recognizing that failing to address this dispute could not only deprive each country of economic gains but also potentially strain their diplomatic relations.

Germany's AfD party: EU is a 'failed project'

The far-right Alternative for Germany declared the European Union a "failed project" in its current form as it adopted its program for next June's European Parliament election at its party convention in the eastern city of Magdeburg on Sunday, the German news agency dpa reported.

The text states that the EU has "completely failed" in all important areas, including its migration and climate policy, and it rejects the Euro as a currency.

However, the party stopped short of demanding Germany's exit from the EU. Instead, the AfD is calling for the EU to be re-founded as a "federation of European nations," dpa reported.

According to the election

program, the main tasks of the new federation should be the protection of external borders against migration, strategic autonomy in security policy, and the preservation of "different identities" in Europe.

Recent polls put support for the AfD at 19-22%, behind only the main conservative opposition bloc. AfD candidates recently won elections in eastern Germany to lead a county administration for the first time since the 1930s and now holds the mayoralty in a town with a population of 56,000.

The program adopted in Magdeburg Sunday takes a softer line towards the EU than the draft program from June, in which the AfD said it would seek the "orderly dissolution of



Maximilian Krah, the AfD's top candidate for the European elections, addresses the media during the European election meeting in Magdeburg, Germany, Sunday, Aug. 6, 2023.

● KLAUS-DIETMAR GABBERT
DPA VIA AP

the EU." Several AfD officials had previously voiced their desire for Germany to exit

the EU altogether, in what is called "Dexit." However, the new program says the AfD supports the idea of

a "Europe of fatherlands, a European community of sovereign, democratic states."

At least 28 killed after train derails in southern Pakistan

At least 28 people were killed Sunday when an express train derailed in southern Pakistan, the railway minister said, with an emergency declared at local hospitals struggling to deal with dozens of injured. Accidents and derailments occur frequently on the country's antiquated railway system, which has nearly 7,500 kilometres (4,600 miles) of track and carries more than 80 million passengers a year, according to AFP.

"This is quite a big acci-

dent," railway minister Khawaja Saad Rafique told reporters. "According to the information so far, 28 passengers have been killed and many are injured."

Rafique said at least 1,000 passengers were aboard the Hazara Express when it derailed on a section of track where no faults had been reported.

"There can be two reasons: first that it was a mechanical fault, or the fault was created -- it might be a sabotage. We will investigate

it." The derailment happened near Sahara railway station close to Nawabshah city in the southern Sindh province.

"Eight coaches have derailed," Mohsin Syal, a railway official, told local HUM News.

There were chaotic scenes at the Nawabshah Trauma Centre as ambulances and private cars ferried the injured for treatment.

The Hazara Express is a daily passenger train that leaves the port city of Ka-



Police officers gather at the site where a train derailed in Sarhari town in district Sanghar, Pakistan, on August 6, 2023.

● YASIR RAJPUT/REUTERS

rachi in the south and takes around 33 hours to reach Havelian in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, some 1,600 kilometres north.

In June 2021 two trains collided near Daharki in Sindh, killing at least 65 people and injuring about 150 others.

Russia says Ukraine hit Donetsk university with cluster shells



● DMITRY YAGODKIN/TASS

Flames engulfed a university building's wooden roof in Donetsk following Ukrainian shelling on Saturday, said an emergency official in the Russia-controlled city in eastern Ukraine. "As a result of the latest attack on Donetsk, the first building of the University of Economics and Trade is on fire," Alexei Kulemzin, the Russia-installed mayor, said on Telegram. "We are using 12 water tanks, three ladders and 100 fire fighters," said Alexei Kostrubitsky, the Russia-installed emergency minister for the region that Moscow calls the Do-

net'sk People's Republic. Kostrubitsky said Ukrainian forces used cluster munitions in the shelling that caused the blaze. Both sides have used cluster munitions in the course of Russia's 17-month military operation in Ukraine. Ukraine, which received supplies of US cluster munitions last month, has vowed to use them only to dislodge concentrations of enemy soldiers.

There was no immediate comment from Ukraine on the alleged shelling. Both sides deny targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Kostrubitsky said there were no people inside the building during the shelling.

"The most difficult thing is that the roof is wooden, so the fire spreads fast."

Russia's RIA state news agency cited Kostrubitsky and emergency services as saying the fire spread to an area of about 1,800 sq m (19,400 sq ft) before being contained early on Sunday.

US calls Israeli ...

The Israeli attacks ranged from direct assaults on Palestinian people, vandalism of property, razing lands, storming villages, uprooting trees and seizing property.

The commission further noted that most of the 897 attacks were carried out in the occupied Al-Quds with 148 cases, followed by Nablus with 140 and Al-Khalil with 113 attacks, the Palestinian Wafa news agency reported on Sunday. The commission also pointed out that Israeli settlers conducted 202 attacks in various parts of the occupied West Bank, but mainly in Nablus, Ramallah and Ramallah.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

The monthly report goes on to underline that 139 orders for demolition, stop construction, and evacuation of Palestinian facilities were issued by the Israeli regime in July, describing them as "a record rise that warns of many more demolitions in the next period."

The occupation forces demolished 41 homes and commercial structures, mainly in Al-Khalil and Al-Quds, the commission said, adding that Israeli forces and Zionist settlers also vandalized a total of 2,552 trees by cutting and uprooting them, mainly in Nablus.



NEWS IN BRIEF

N Korea leader tells arms factories to boost capacity

REUTERS - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has instructed factories making missile engines, artillery and other weapons to boost capacity as an important part of bolstering the country's defense capabilities, state media said on Sunday. Kim's inspections from Thursday to Saturday included the production of engines for strategic cruise missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles, as well as shells for super large-caliber multiple-rocket launchers and transporter-erector-launchers, said state news agency KCNA.

His unusual visits to multiple arms production facilities over several days come as Pyongyang pushes to develop various strategic and conventional weapons and holds prominent displays of a range of arms.

Pence may testify against Donald Trump



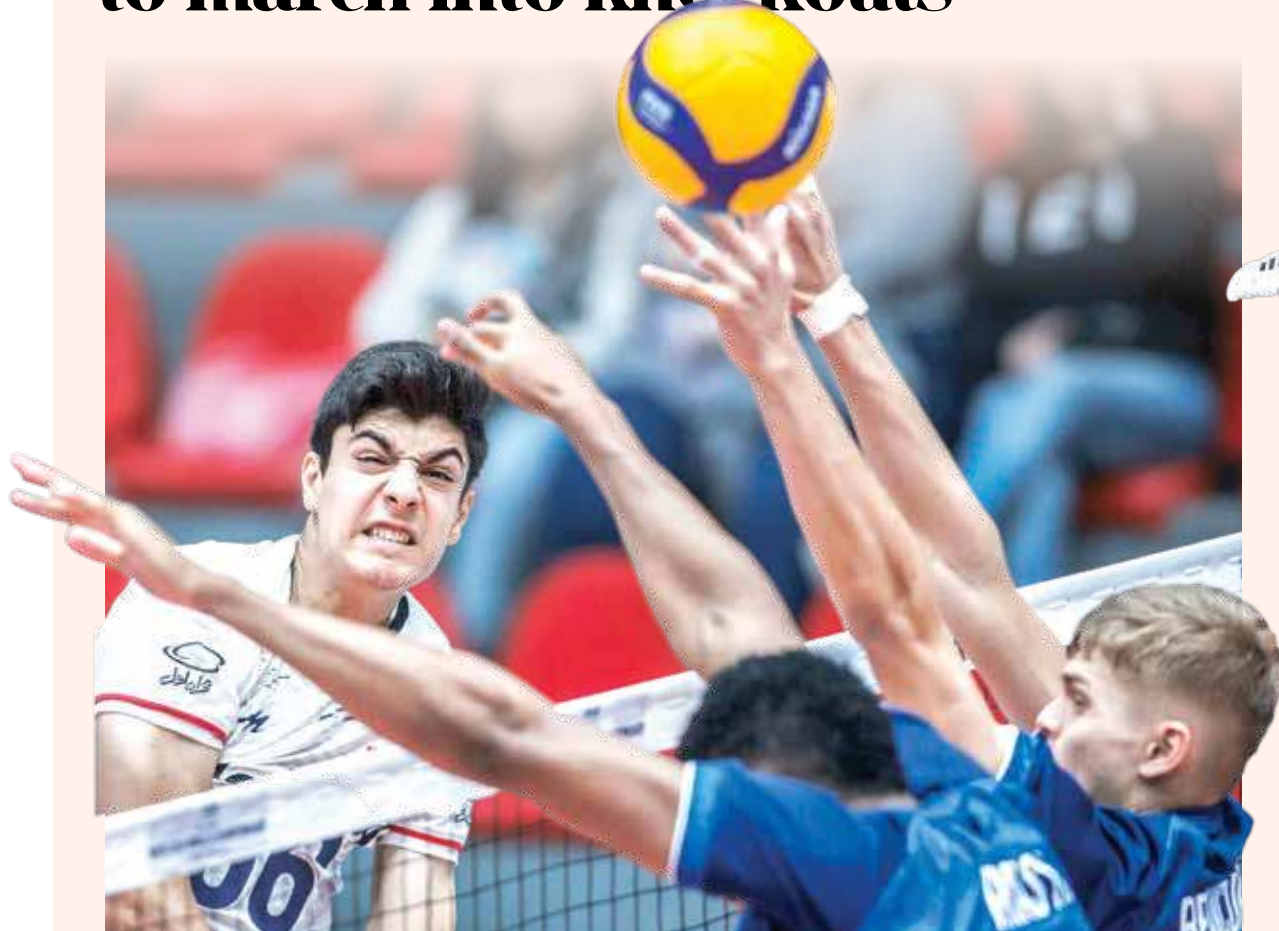
REUTERS - Former Republican Vice President Mike Pence on Sunday did not rule out being a prosecution witness if his ex-boss Donald Trump goes to trial on charges of orchestrating a criminal conspiracy to try to reverse his defeat in the 2020 presidential election. Asked on Sunday on CBS's Face the Nation with Margaret Brennan if he would be a witness against Trump if the case goes to trial, Pence said he had "no plans" to testify, but did not rule it out.

"But people can be confident we'll obey the law, we'll respond to the call of law, if it comes, and we'll just tell the truth," said Pence, who is running against Trump in the 2024 Republican presidential nominating contest.

Morocco minibus plunge kills 24

A minibus carrying market-goers in Morocco plunged into a ravine on Sunday, killing 24 people in one of the North African country's worst-ever road accidents, officials said. The passengers were travelling a mountainous route to a weekly market in the town of Demnate, in the central province of Azilal, when the minibus overturned on a bend, the local authorities said. Images on public broadcaster 2M showed the vehicle crushed at the bottom of the ravine.

FIVB U19 World Championship: Iran routs Colombia to march into knockouts



Sport Desk

Iran eased into the last-16 round of the FIVB Boys' U19 World Championship in San Juan, Argentina, thanks to a 3-0 (25-13, 25-22, 25-16) victory over Colombia in Pool C. This was a third consecutive victory for Iran at the competition – following wins against South Korea and Puerto Rico – as Mohammad Vakili's boys are yet to concede a set in San Juan.

Iran had already been handed a victory over Nigeria in the final match of the group fixtures after the African side withdrew from the event and a perfect run in the pool will see the Asian champion take on Mexico in the knockout phase on Tuesday. Outside-hitter Morteza Narimani contributed with a game-high 17 points – including four aces – for Iran, with Abolfazl Mahdian chipping in 15 points.

Juan Felipe Velasco topped the scoring

chart for the Colombians with 11 points. "Our performance was superb in major spells of the contest. We were brilliant in serving significantly in the first set. The game was so close in the second set, but a change of tactics and players in the third led us to the victory," Vakili said after the match. "We also had 13 successful blocks, which is an impressive figure for a team of this age group," added the Iranian, whose team is chasing a third world under-19 title – and a first since 2017 – in San Juan.

Later on Saturday, Poland – runner-up in Tehran two years ago – defeated Japan in four sets (34-32, 26-24, 22-25, 25-21) in Pool B, while Brazil powered past Chile in straight sets (25-11, 25-17, 25-21).

USA beat the host 3-0 (25-19, 25-18, 25-20) to maintain a perfect record in Pool A and Italy came out victorious against Belgium 3-1 (25-16, 25-15, 25-23, 26-14) in Pool D.



Iranian outside-hitter Morteza Narimani hits a spike during a straight-set victory over Colombia at the FIVB Boys' U19 World Championship in San Juan, Argentina, on August 5, 2023.



Iranians cap Asian Youth & Junior Weightlifting Ch'ships with 10 medals



Sport Desk

Alireza Esfandiari brought the curtain down on a medal-laden campaign for Iran at the Asian Youth & Junior Weightlifting Championships in Delhi, India, with a couple of gold

medals and a silver in the super-heavyweight class of the junior contests. Esfandiari took the snatch gold with a best lift of 177kg before settling for the clean & jerk silver with 207kg.

An overall tally of 384kg secured the total gold of the +109kg event for the Iranian.

Meanwhile, Taha Nemati, winner of three youth golds earlier in the competition, finished second to Esfandiari in the snatch contest thanks to a 166kg lift, while taking the C&J and total bronzes.

Earlier on Saturday, Kourosh Zare' took the snatch bronze of the 109kg class before claiming the C&J and total silvers.

Hassan Emadi grabbed the silver medal of the snatch event.

The final day's medals took Iran's tally to 21 medals – three golds, 11 silvers, and seven bronzes – as the country finished as the runner-up in the juniors age group with 708 points. Uzbekistan won the title with 729 points, with the host country in the third place with 599 points.



Iran's Alireza Esfandiari is seen in action in the juniors' +109kg contests of the Asian Youth & Junior Weightlifting Championships in Delhi, India, on August 5, 2023.

IRIB NEWS

History-making Iran into last 16 of world U19 handball meet



Iran's Amirhossein Karami (24) shoots during a 46-24 victory over Burundi at the Men's U19 Handball World Championship in Opatija, Croatia, on August 5, 2023.

IRIHF

Sport Desk

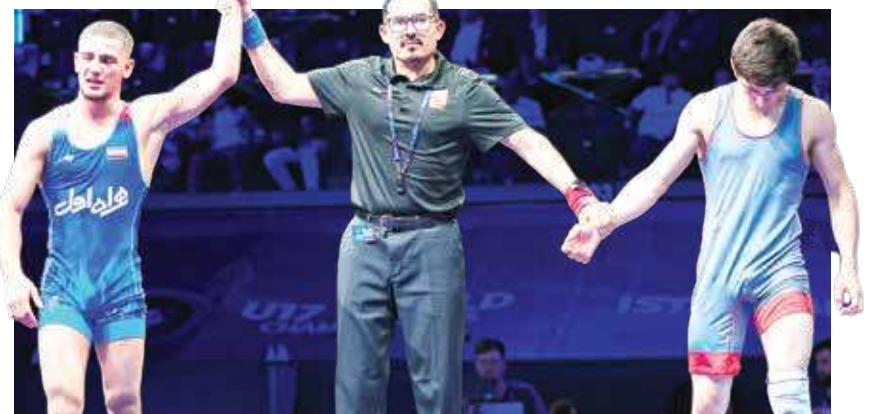
Iran secured a first-ever place in the round of 16 at the IHF Men's U19 Handball World Championship in Croatia. Fourteen years after the country's last participation at the event, Iranian boys defeated Burundi 46-24 on Saturday to win Group H with five points. Amirhossein Karami delivered a man-of-the-match performance, scoring a game-high 14 goals to lead Majid Rahimizadeh's side to a second victory in the competition.

Later in the day, the Faroe Islands stunned handball powerhouse Sweden by a 34-31 scoreline to join Iran in Group IV of the last 16 – also featuring Germany and Saudi Arabia.

Iran will resume action in the next round today against Saudi Arabia – in a repeat of last year's semifinals in the Asian Championship in Bahrain, where Iran had edged the Saudis 34-33 before suffering a defeat against South Korea in the final.

Iran opened its campaign in Croatia with a 26-26 draw against Sweden and went on to beat the Faroe Islands 29-27.

Wrestling U17 Worlds: Khalili storms to FS gold, Sayyar settles for bronze



Iran's Sina Khalili (1) has his hand raised as the winner in the freestyle 65kg final against Russian Magomed Alibakharchiev, representing the Individual Neutral Athletes, at the Wrestling U17 World Championships in Istanbul, Turkey, on August 5, 2023.

UWW

Sport Desk

The second day of the freestyle contests at the Wrestling U17 World Championships in Istanbul, Turkey, saw the Iranians bag a gold and a bronze medal across five weight classes.

Having powered past opponents from Slovakia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Germany, Sina Khalili made a quick work of Russian Magomed Alibakharchiev – participating as a neutral athlete – for the 65kg gold.

The reigning Asian champion was at his defensive best and used his speed and strength for successive takedowns en route to a 10-0 victory.

Khalili's gold continues the country's streak of having at least one freestyle champion at the event after missing out on the gold in 2016 in Tbilisi, Georgia.

There was further glory for the Iranian squad in first five weight divisions as Sam Sayyar bounced back from a last-four setback against American Paul Kenny to out-muscle Turkmenistan's Azymerdi Ashyrgulyev 10-0 and grab the 48kg bronze – sharing the third podium with Joseph

Bachmann of Puerto Rico, while Kenny went on to edge Japanese Yamato Furusawa for the ultimate prize.

Amir-Reza Teymourizad, meanwhile, was unfortunate to leave the competitions empty-handed after suffering a defeat against Armenian Samvel Gevorgyan in the third-place bout of the 55kg class.

Saturday's result came after Iran had lifted the Greco-Roman trophy in Istanbul last week.

The country's 10-man squad collected one gold and silver apiece as well as double bronze medals to top the table with 113 points – five clear of second-placed Azerbaijan which won two golds – with Georgia in third with 96 points.

Payam Ahmadi defeated Asian champion Shakhzod Ruziokhunov 4-0 to claim the 48kg gold, while Ahmadreza Mohammadian settled for the 71kg silver after a 6-5 loss to Greek wrestler Arionas Kolitsopoulos.

Alireza Amiri (45kg) and Amirhossein Abdevali (110kg) finished their campaigns with a couple of consolation bronzes.

Iranian rangers having a tough time

Social Desk

The news of rangers being martyred or injured in conflicts with illegal hunters is a recurring issue in Iran. This profession, mostly known to the public for such incidents and legal challenges related to gun use, carries with it deeper complexities.

A general overview of environmental protection in Iran reveals the true state of the country's environment. The fact that Golestan National Park, one of Iran's and the world's most significant wildlife habitats, is protected by only 17 or 18 rangers during both day and night highlights the fragile and precarious state of environmental protection contracts in Iran. This predicament also applies to job conditions within environmental protection — a field that hasn't received adequate recognition for its importance nor sufficient support considering the risks it faces.

Environmental protection in Iran poses numerous difficulties. Firstly, there are dangers faced by the employees on a daily basis.

Secondly, legal loopholes present significant challenges, while insufficient support exacerbates the already difficult circumstances. These factors contribute to making environmental protection an overlooked profession in Iran.

Qanbar Arab-Kalu is a veteran ranger who has been affected by cancer and negligence profoundly. Having served as a ranger at Golestan National Park for 30 years — also acting as its chief ranger — he is considered one of the park's invaluable assets. Unfortunately, just one month before retirement, he was diagnosed with stomach cancer.

For nearly two years now, this dedicated ranger has battled illness and endured expensive treatments without much assistance. According to his son's account, throughout this time period, he received

nothing more than a certificate of appreciation presented at a provincial event while he was severely ill. Apparently, no inquiries were made regarding his well-being during his extended hospitalizations in Tehran — except from other rangers or trainees who worked alongside him. It seems as if his contributions to Golestan National Park have been all but forgotten.

"This disregard demonstrates how little authorities value environmental protection and the significance of this profession," Arab-Kalu said. "It's not that I seek their attention or personal meetings, but it is these instances of neglect that have led to a decline in interest among new recruits to become rangers." "Now, apart from a few seasoned professionals, enthusiasm lacks among younger individuals who consider joining this field — a situation that pains me deeply.

Having been wounded both in the Iraqi-imposed war and through my work in environmental protection, it saddens me to witness the unfortunate state of the job I once loved."

Qanbar Arab-Kalu and other experienced rangers at Golestan National Park possess invaluable native expertise and local knowledge regarding one of Iran's largest and most important habitats. They are our national treasures whose potential contributions are being squandered through evident negligence.

Mehdi Teymuri, head of Golestan National Park, further explained the working and living conditions of rangers. "This profession inherently carries risks — from falling off mountains to snake bites and encounters with wild animals. However, we recognize that the greatest threat lies in conflicts with armed illegal smugglers who often pos-

sess better resources than our rangers — a serious peril to their lives," Teymuri said.

Another challenge hindering environmental protection efforts is the lack of facilities and personnel. While law enforcement officers can request assistance from nearby provinces during confrontations, rangers find themselves alone when faced with hunters in remote forest areas.

Legal challenges also contribute to making ranging a difficult job as it lacks comprehensive legal safeguards. For some time now, campaigns have been conducted annually to save rangers facing execution — an unfortunate consequence resulting from using firearms against armed illegal hunters in defense of both nature's well-being and

their own safety. The privileges granted to military forces or law enforcement agencies concerning gun use do not extend equally to rangers, exacerbating their already challenging circumstances.

With less than 3,000 rangers nationwide — 144 of which martyred following recent tragic incidents — the events surrounding rangers exemplify the legal vulnerabilities within this field. Moreover, they are often ill-equipped and lack proper weaponry and vehicles, while hunters possess an abundance of resources. Therefore, stronger laws must be implemented to address these disparities effectively. Although progress has been made compared to previous years, challenges persist.

Scientists re-grow retinal cells in lab using nanotech

In efforts to tackle the leading cause of blindness in developed countries, researchers have recruited nanotechnology to help re-grow retinal cells.

Macular degeneration is a form of central vision loss, which has massive social, mobility, and mental consequences. It impacts hundreds of millions of people globally and is increasing in prevalence, according to Science Alert.

The degeneration is the consequence of damaged retinal pigment cells. Our bodies are unable to grow and replace these cells once they start dying, so scientists have been exploring alternative methods to replace them and the membrane within which they sit.

"In the past, scientists would grow cells on a flat surface, which is not biologically relevant," explains Anglia Ruskin University biochemist Barbara Pierscionek.

"Using these new techniques the cell line has been shown to thrive in the 3D environment provided by the scaffolds."

Nottingham Trent University biomedical scientist Biola Egbowon and colleagues fabricated these 3D scaffolds with polymer nanofibers and coated them with a steroid to reduce inflammation. Using a technique called electrospinning, which produces nanometer-wide fibers by squirting a molten polymer through a high-voltage field, the team was able to keep the scaffold sufficiently thin.

The polyacrylonitrile polymer they used provided mechanical strength, and Jeffamine polymer attracts water, essentially allowing the synthetic scaffold to act as a membrane.

The water-attracting ability of the material is what helps the cells bind to the scaffold and also encourages their growth, but when the effect is too strong, it's also been associated with cell death in previous research.

The team's new formulation seems to be just right, as the system increased the growth and longevity of the retinal lab cells and kept them viable for at least 150 days.

"This research has demonstrated, for the first time, that nanofiber scaffolds treated with the anti-inflammatory substance such as flucinolone acetonide can enhance the growth, differentiation, and functionality of retinal pigment epithelial cells," says Pierscionek.

Previous attempts have used collagen and cellulose to create a similar scaffold, but Egbowon and team believes their synthetic option will be easier to make compatible with our immune systems and simpler to modify.

The new study has demonstrated this method can keep the required single layer of retinal cells healthy, producing biomarkers that indicate they are functioning more naturally than what has been found when they grow on other mediums.

Iran neighbors welcome country's high-tech drugs

Social Desk

Iran's Ministry of Health deputy and head of the Food and Drug Administration highlighted that neighboring countries favor high-tech drugs produced in Iran.

"These countries welcome the import and consumption of such drugs," said Heydar Mohammadi, according to ISNA. He made these remarks during the opening ceremony of the Behestan Pharmaceutical's drug-medical innovation factory.

He emphasized that working in drug production is challenging, adding, "At the Food and Drug Administration, we see ourselves as advocates for producers. Our duty is to support them while facilitating production processes for our country's future."

He further announced that this newly opened complex will soon manufacture high-tech drugs, offering them to the people of Iran. These drugs have limited manufacturers worldwide,

making it a source of pride for Iran's contribution to the biological drug production industry. Referring to neighboring countries' acceptance of Iran's high-tech drugs, the Deputy Minister of Health stated that many biological products manufactured in Iran are consumed by these nations. This recognition places Iran in an excellent position when it comes to exporting biological products.

The announcement from the Food and Drug Administration emphasizes that when major importers within a country venture into domestic produc-

tion, positive outcomes arise due to their financial strength, expertise in currency supply and transfer logistics, as well as familiarity with administrative regulations.

Mohammadi assured that the Food and Drug Administration fully supports the producers. The organization aims to deliver high-quality products promptly for consumer access.

"It is hoped that we will soon witness this company's products entering markets swiftly while anticipating other drug productions joining this endeavor without delay," he said.



Illegal grazing in Iran's Central Alborz Protected Area prevented

Social Desk

The head of Tehran's Department of the Environment (DoE) announced that 5,000 illegal livestock were successfully prevented from entering the Central Alborz Protected Area.

Alireza Rahmati stated that agents of Tehran's DoE unit identified several herdsmen with approximately 5,000 livestock who planned to illegally enter the protected area, IRNA reported. They were successfully prevented from doing so and subsequently referred to judicial authorities for legal action.

He emphasized that illegal livestock grazing within protected areas is a major cause of habitat destruction and poses a serious threat to biodiversity, vegetation, and water and soil conservation.

He further added that since livestock grazing and cattle slaughter are prohibited by law in four environmental zones, violators will be reported to judicial authorities.

Regarding measures taken to prevent livestock entry into Alborz Province's protected areas, Rahmati highlighted that agents and rangers survey the areas round-the-clock. This vigilant presence has effectively stopped numerous herds from entering or leaving these protected regions while ensuring proper management.

The head of Tehran's DoE also discussed other consequences associated with unauthorized livestock grazing in these protected areas. Considering reduced rainfall and water shortages that Iran experienced in recent years — leading to predominantly detrimen-

tal effects on its plants and vegetation — indiscriminate grazing could bring irreparable risks to the ecosystem.

Rahmati stressed the importance of receiving assistance and support from villagers residing near these protected areas as well as cooperation from local councilors in controlling unauthorized entry by livestock herds.

"Monitoring efforts aimed at preventing such incursions into these environmentally significant regions should be accompanied by the wholehearted collaboration of locals with relevant environmental agencies," he said.



Ancient ceramic bowl discovered in S Iran



IRNA - The city of Ram-hormoz in Iran's southern province of Khuzestan witnessed a significant archaeological find as a local law enforcement commander announced the discovery of a large enameled ceramic bowl dating back to the early Islamic period.

The artifact was found during a search of a suspect's residence in the city. The suspect was apprehended in connection with the historical item, and the discovered artifact was handed over to the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Department of the Khuzestan Province, IRNA wrote. Colonel Mohammad Mohammadi-Nasab emphasized that Iran's police will not tolerate any attempts to loot or profit from the country's historical treasures.

University of Tehran aims to cement ties with Iraq



IRNA - The President of the University of Tehran Mohammad Moqimi emphasized the institution's commitment to enhancing scientific collaboration with Iraqi universities.

During a meeting with Abdul Muhsin Naji Al-Muhaisen, the president of the Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University of Iraq, Moqimi expressed readiness for joint research endeavors and the exchange of professors and students between the two academic centers.

One of the key initiatives discussed in the meeting was the establishment of a new Persian language education center in close proximity to the Iraqi border city of Basra. This center aims to facilitate easy access to Persian language education for the Iraqi people.

The University of Tehran has pledged to provide Persian language teachers and instructors to Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University, intending to bolster Persian language education — but it shall be subject to the availability of suitable space at the Iraqi academic center.

In response, Naji Al-Muhaisen expressed his enthusiasm for fostering scientific cooperation between the two universities and extended an invitation to Moqimi to visit the Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University of Iraq.

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Iran's 'Paper Dream' wins Best Producer Award in Greek festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian drama 'Paper Dream' achieves resounding success at the 68th Athens International Film & Art Festival, securing the prestigious Best Producer Award.

This film, helmed by talented director Ali Atshani, narrates the poignant tale of a young man living in seclusion due to his albinism. However, his life takes an unexpected turn when a cunning young girl exploits his pure-hearted nature and transforms him into a social media influencer. As their bond deepens, he finds himself captivated by her.

The film's captivating storyline has already earned

recognition at various international film festivals, including the Bridge Film Festival in Vancouver, the World Film Carnival in Singapore, and the Newark International Film Festival in the United States. It also clinched the Best Director Award at the South Texas International Film Festival in Edinburg and received the Best Film Award at both the Black Hat Film Festival in Budapest, Hungary, and the Independent Producers Indie Film Festival (IPIFF) in Bucharest, Romania.

The festival, renowned for its celebration of avant-garde, independent, alternative, and world media, showcases a diverse range of works, spanning



from 35mm and 16mm feature films to video and digital media installations.

Embracing artists from all walks of life, genres, and creative approaches, this

festival stands as a beacon of artistic excellence in the global film community.

Iran's theatrical production 'Current', an insightful human-centric play

Arts & Culture Desk

Alireza Maroufi describes 'Current' as a politically and socially oriented piece, but at its core, it delves deep into the human experience, offering a fresh perspective on humanity. The play's content and atmosphere set it apart from his previous works, making it a unique and distinct creation.

In essence, 'Current' is a theatrical exploration of the human condition, allowing each audience member to form their own interpretation of the work while addressing universal human concerns.

The director's enduring fascination with war becomes evident in 'Current.' While his other works have not always focused on the perpetuity of war, he seeks to break away from clichéd narratives and explore lesser-known aspects of conflict. For Maroufi, war remains a con-

stant concern, and he is open to the possibility of creating more works centered around this theme in the future.

The storyline of 'Current' is set in the early 1990s and revolves around Mustafa, a writer and documentary filmmaker. When he publishes materials against a prevailing current, he faces challenges that drive the plot forward. The play's themes are relatable to all members of society, as the issues presented can resonate with anyone, regardless of their position in life. In a way, 'Current' serves as a bridge between the present and the past, addressing timeless human dilemmas.

Maroufi typically writes his own scripts and directs his works, approaching his writing from a purely realistic standpoint without considering the execution at the time of writing. Once the writing is com-

plete, he takes on the role of a director, envisioning the presentation. The intimate knowledge he has of his own scripts enables him to fully comprehend their essence. However, he remains open to collaborating with a separate writer in media other than theater, allowing for fresh perspectives on his directorial vision.

The absence of elaborate stage decor in 'Current' is a deliberate decision by the director to bring a new dimension to the performances. By stripping away all non-essential elements, the focus is placed entirely on the actors, dialogues, form, and movements. This approach allows for a more direct and impactful connection with the audience, as they can project their own interpretations of the play's setting and atmosphere.

Maroufi's use of the mise-en-scène, where he incorporates space and stair-

ways between the seats, contributes to creating a dynamic and engaging experience. This technique enhances the audience's connection with the performance, allowing them to witness the play's unfolding up close.

Furthermore, Maroufi embraces the idea of non-linear performance in 'Current' and other works, using temporal breaks to create a sense of suspension that stimulates the audience's curiosity and comprehension of the play's underlying themes. When casting for 'Current,' the director prioritizes actors with strong expressive abilities encompassing speech, body language, and emotion. He seeks actors who can skillfully embody their roles, rather than merely relying on their popularity or fame. The play features a mix of veteran actors and recognized figures from the theater community, enhancing the ensemble's performance. Maroufi celebrates the

expansion and diversification of the play's themes, which enables 'Current' to present a formalistic drama that delves into various facets of the human experience. He hopes that the audiences witnessing the performances will find a shared understanding and appreciation for the play's language and exploration of humanity's intricacies.

With its human-centered approach and innovative performance, 'Current' promises to captivate audiences and leave a lasting impression on all who experience its unique perspective on humanity. Written and directed by Maroufi, 'Current' is on stage at Tehran's City Theatre main hall from July 20 to August 11.

Ruzbeh Hesari, Vahid Nafar, Elaheh Shahparast, Saleh Lavasani, Maziar Mehregan, Mohammad Niaz, Mehdi Rahimi-sadeh, Farzad Tajalli, Mohammad Hossein Samari, and Zoha Rajaeifar are the cast of the play.



Iran's theatrical play 'Current', written and directed by Maroufi, is on stage at Tehran's City Theatre main hall from July 20 to August 11.

● REZA MO'ATTARIAN
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