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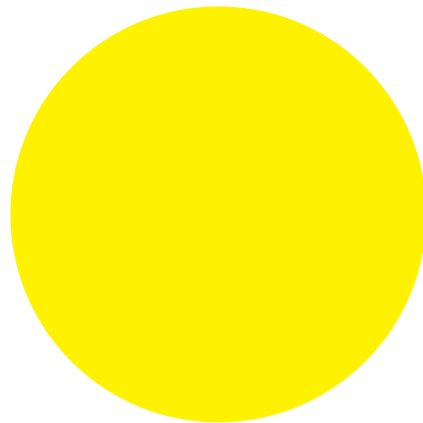
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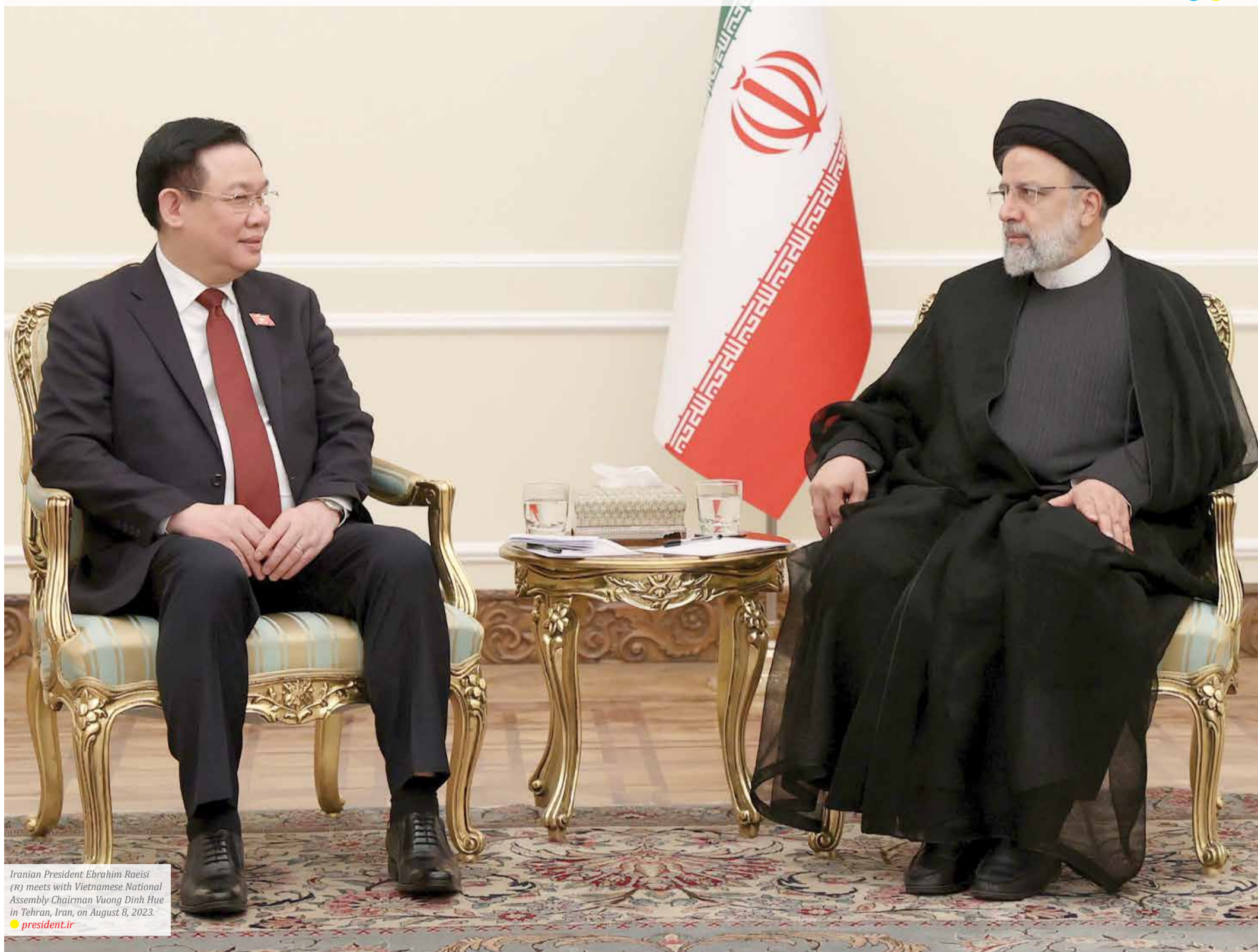


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Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi (R) meets with Vietnamese National Assembly Chairman Vuong Dinh Hue in Tehran, Iran, on August 8, 2023.
● president.ir



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Iran hosts conference with 'partner' BRICS

International Desk

Addressing a high-level conference dubbed, "Iran and BRICS: Prospects for Partnership and Cooperation," in Tehran on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said Iran is already cooperating with the bloc of emerging markets in such fields as transport and the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC).

The top Iranian diplomat pointed out that Iran enjoys a unique geo-strategic position in the world, which makes it a perfect partner for bilateral and multilateral coop-



● mfa.gov.ir

eration, according to IRNA. He cited efforts underway for diversifying Iran-China transit as one of the areas for cooperation, adding that through Iran, China can be linked to the Sea of Oman and, subsequently, to Brazil and South Africa.

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AEOI indigenizes technology of heavy water derivatives

National Desk

The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) announced that Iran has most recently unlocked the cutting-edge technology of producing heavy water derivatives, expressing readiness to export the technology.

Mohammad Eslami pointed out on Tuesday that the technology in question is one of the most advanced technologies available in the field, so much so that only very few advanced countries currently possess it, IRNA reported.

"We are pursuing the incorporation of laser and biotechnologies into



● AFP

our project on heavy water derivatives for the purposes of producing deuterated drugs, which is one of the most important measures that could be taken in laboratories," he maintained.

"The AEOI is looking to further develop this technology and export it to eager countries.

Pakistan to buy more electricity from Iran

REUTERS - Pakistan will buy more electricity from neighboring Iran, a Finance Ministry statement said on Tuesday.

The decision was taken at an Economic Coordination Committee chaired by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar. Energy-starved Pakistan already has contracts to purchase electricity from Iran for its border regions, especially for China-backed development projects on Gwadar port. The new proposal came a week after the Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian visited Islamabad.

Amir-Abdollahian paid a four-day visit to Pakistan at the invitation of his Pakistani counterpart. The visit to Pakistan had two main objectives.

His first objective was to enhance border security between the two countries, and his second objective was to discuss bilateral trade and pending energy projects.

The top Iranian and Pakistani diplomats exchanged views in line with the two objectives and even signed a five-year strategic plan for commercial cooperation.

Iran in dire need of smartening methods of combating smuggle of goods, forex



IRNA



By Reza
Abesh Ahmadlou
Staff writer

One of the most important factors that have directly affected the production boom in Iran today is the phenomenon of goods and forex smuggling, which has had a negative impact on various social, economic

and cultural areas. By reviewing the news related to the amount of smuggling discoveries in recent years, it can be said that, currently, the smuggling of goods and foreign currency has become a serious and threatening problem in the country's economy, so that the fight against it has become one of the priorities of the country. Estimates by the Central Headquarters to Combat

the Smuggling of Goods and Currency suggest that the total value of smuggled goods in Iran amounts to approximately \$20 billion. Economic experts and Members of Parliament (MPs) have recently put forth differing figures regarding the extent of smuggling in the country.

With the approval of the Law on Combating Goods and Forex Smuggling in the Iranian year of 1392 (start-

ed March 21, 2013), new horizons were opened in terms of preventing and dealing with the harmful phenomenon of goods and forex smuggling. However, the performance of related bodies in this field is faced with many ambiguities.

According to experts, the unsuitable performance of some organizations in charge of dealing with the smuggling of goods has made it a challenge to prevent and deal with this sinister phenomenon. For example, many experts believe that instability in legislation, disproportionality of crimes and punishments, and the inconsistent approach in dealing with smuggling are the most important problems in this area.

The capital flight and damage to production and employment is one of the consequences of smuggling, toward which the government must have a cross-sectoral approach in fighting against it, while changes in the tools and methods of fighting against smuggling of goods and forex is a necessity.

In a study conducted by Hossein Gholami and Rahim Namarvari on criminological analysis of the Law on

Combating Goods and Forex Smuggling, which was ratified in the Iranian year 1392 (2013), it was found that Iran's criminal policy did not work effectively and, as a result, the executive and judicial criminal policy did not bring tangible and acceptable results in combating goods and forex smuggling. According to the study, in most countries the smuggling of goods and currency is one of the crimes that cause extensive damage to various cultural, social and economic areas of the society. It is clear that controlling this kind of crime and preventing the spread of its harmful results is one of the most important goals of legislators.

As shown in the study, it can be said that Iranian legislators have addressed combating the smuggling of goods and forex, but they have not used scientific findings and achievements of criminology in a purposeful method.

The development of an un-free economy, damage to laws pertaining to criminals, as well as the government's revenues derived from fines on such crimes will be among the results of the implementation of the above-mentioned law.

Suspending Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project disappointing



By Syed Ali
Hassan
Iran Daily's
correspondent
in Pakistan

OPINION

The government that came to power in Pakistan with American support has decided to suspend the Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline project by justifying the US sanctions on Iran, announcing the state policy related to the Iran-Pakistan gas project in parliament. Pakistan is incapable of com-

pleting this project, Federal Minister of State for Oil and Gas Mossadegh Malik said in a written reply to a question raised by Maulana Jamaluddin, a member of Fazlur Rehman's party in the National Assembly.

Pakistan has shown its inability to go ahead with the project as long as the US sanctions on Iran are in place, or Islamabad receives a positive signal from the US to go ahead with the project. It should be noted that Pakistan is currently facing an energy crisis and despite US

sanctions on Russia, it is also buying cheap oil due to public pressure, but despite public pressure and dire need, it is reluctant to implement the plan to purchase cheap gas from Iran.

Gas load-shedding has been happening in Pakistan for the past several years in cold weather, while the people of Pakistan are facing serious problems due to the lack of gas pressure in the cities of Karachi and Sindh and Upper Punjab. Last year, many Pakistanis died due to lack of gas in a severe winter. Despite

the severe shortage of energy in the South Asian country of 240 million people, the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project has been in cold storage for almost a decade due to the pledge of allegiance to the United States.

According to a written reply submitted by the Minister of State for Petroleum Mossadegh Malik in the National Assembly, Pakistan has issued a force majeure and excusing notice to Iran under the Gas Sales and Purchase Agreement (GSPA). As a result of which Pakistan's obligations

under GSPA are suspended, in the policy statement submitted to the National Assembly, the Minister of State also put on record that Iran objected to the notice of force majeure and excusing event.

The Minister of State for Petroleum also admitted that Pakistan's Force Majeure and Excusing Event Notice has been considered a controversial issue by Iran, and Iran wishes to settle the matter through international arbitration.

If Iran goes to arbitration, Pakistan may be fined, but the

exact amount of the fine is subject to the decision of the arbitrators.

Pakistan's attempt is that instead of taking the issue to international arbitration, Iran should ignore the financial loss caused to Tehran due to the delay in completing the project by Pakistan.

It should be remembered that president Asif Zardari and Iranian president Ahmadinejad made an agreement to impose a fine on the party that did not complete the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project by the specified time.

Iran-Vietnam trade could hit \$1b: *Entrepreneur*



By Sadeq
Dehqan
Staff writer

Iran and Vietnam have the potential to boost their ties to achieve a bilateral trade volume of up to \$1 billion in the near term, an Iranian businessman said Tuesday as Vuong Dinh Hue, chairman of the Vietnamese National Assembly, commenced a three-day official visit to Tehran.

"If cooperation is effectively pursued and the prevailing challenges are successfully addressed, the bilateral trade between the two nations could swiftly ascend to the milestone of \$1 billion," Mostafa Mousavi, the head of the Iran-Vietnam Joint Cham-

ber of Commerce, told Iran Daily.

Mousavi noted that enhancing collaborative efforts between the two nations, particularly in the realms of economy and trade, stands as a key objective for the Vietnamese delegation's diplomatic mission to Tehran. "A group of 22 business magnates and industrialists is accompanying the Vietnamese top lawmaker during his trip to Iran," he added.

The delegation also includes the heads of various National Assembly committees and several deputy ministers from various sectors such as commerce, industry, agriculture, culture, sports, tourism, and economy. Mousavi further hailed the "progressing" politi-

cal rapport between Iran and Vietnam and noted that the Vietnamese government has a "genuine desire" to foster bilateral relations with Iran.

He added that visit by the Vietnamese delegation holds particular significance to relaunch the joint economic commission

"This commission has not convened since before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Its resumption is eagerly sought, as it is intended to address pressing economic and commercial issues - matters that will be extensively deliberated upon in the meeting between the Iranian Chamber of Commerce and the Vietnamese delegation," the businessman said.

Prior to this visit, a joint commercial memorandum

has already been inked between the two countries.

The existing trade dynamics, however, are challenged by sanctions and complications in monetary and banking transactions. A substantial portion of trade transpires through intermediaries in third-party countries, which are not accounted for in the official trade volume between Iran and Vietnam. To overcome these hindrances, both nations are actively seeking resolutions that would facilitate direct trade, reducing costs and fostering greater interaction between their business communities.

"Presently, the recorded bilateral trade stands at approximately \$250 million annually. With the successful resolution of

existing obstacles, this figure could surge beyond the \$1 billion mark within a mere six-month timeframe," Mousavi pointed out.

Economically, Iran's strengths lie in the export of raw and processed raw materials, while Vietnam possesses the capacity to provide finished goods to the Iranian market. This intrinsic synergy positions the two countries as natural trade partners.

Mousavi underlined Iran's robust potential in exporting products from the petrochemical and pharmaceutical sectors, in addition to medical supplies and technical/engineering expertise. The construction industry, in particular, presents notable prospects.

"Vietnam, on the other



IRNA

hand, excels in knowledge-based companies, a model that Iran could effectively emulate. Beyond this, the two nations can collaborate in sectors such as aquaculture, stone, construction materials, leather, and fruits." Vietnam employs a special approach in trade which operates on a principle: as Vietnamese exports to a given country rise, there is an anticipation of reciprocity through increased

imports from that country. Simultaneously, with a view to expanding exports to alternate markets, Vietnam strategically adjusts its import tariffs.

In light of this, Mousavi proposed that Iranian business entities seeking favorable tariff conditions for exports to Vietnam should reduce exports from third-parties to Vietnam and rather opt for direct exports to the South Asian nation.



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Tehran Bird Garden, unique in the region



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eligasht.com

Iranica Desk

Tehran Bird Garden is a beautiful and green environment in which you will see rare birds that are not found anywhere else. Some birds are flying freely in a part of the garden, where visitors can communicate with nature directly.

A huge steel structure, with a large net about 50m high, covers the garden.

In the Tehran Bird Garden you can walk alongside the birds and enjoy the beauty of these incredible creatures. The lakes and creeks flowing in this garden, as well as beautiful wooden bridges built over these rivers, have doubled their beauty.

Manager of Tehran Bird Garden Hamid Reza Mahabadi put the total area of Tehran Bird Garden at 86 hectares, of which 23 hectares are used for keeping the birds.

He added that 8,000 birds, from

176 species, are presently kept there.

Cassowary, a type of rare and flightless bird native to Australian forests is among the strangest birds you can see in the garden. The Cassowary is usually considered to be one of the world's most dangerous birds, at least where humans are concerned. Cassowaries are shy and usually hard to spot.

"We have prepared a special atmosphere for this type of bird to not only live freely but not harm themselves and others," he said.

He noted that the Tehran Bird Garden has close cooperation with the Department of the Environment (DoE).

"Sometimes the department gives us birds which are in need of care. We look after them with much attention and prepare them for return to nature."

Some ponds have been built at the entrance of the garden,

which are used to disinfect visitors' shoes. Moreover, the garden's personnel remind people to avoid feeding the birds.

Mahabadi said that the management of the Tehran Bird Garden was handed over to the private sector.

Referring to the financial problems they faced in running the garden, he noted that the spread of COVID-19 in the country led to a two-year closure of the Tehran Bird Garden.

"This helped create many financial problems for the complex; however, it was not possible for us to leave the birds unattended. They needed food, treatments and vaccinations. Our specialized workers were present in the garden all days during the period," he said.

He noted that the garden ranks first in the Middle East in terms of area and the number of birds kept in it. It has been built in two sections, the first of which is al-

located to caged birds.

He noted that in the second section, expanding in an area of 6.5 hectares, the birds are free to fly. He said that some people buy birds, but after some time they can't keep them any more due to certain reasons including living in an apartment, thus, the best solution is to give them to the bird garden.

Mahabadi said that about 150 workers with various tasks are active in the Tehran Bird Garden. Some of them manage the green space of the garden while others are involved in feeding and taking care of the birds.

"Active in the garden is a team of veterinarians who visit various parts of the garden on a daily basis and bring sick birds to the clinic to be treated," he said.

The Tehran Bird Garden, located on East Babaie Expressway, Kouhestan Street, is open to the public in the summer from 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. every day.

Development of Persian Islamic art

Islamic art history was essentially developed from the 19th to the 20th century, and the major discourse of the double-adjective "Persian Islamic," or the more hybrid term "Perso-Islamic," art was thus conducted chiefly by Euro-American scholars. During the formative period of its scholarship, the primary concerns for Persian art among western scholars were given to architecture and "miniature" painting of the great mediaeval dynasties of the Seljuks, Ilkhanids, Timurids and Safavids.

Sculpture, which traditionally ranks highly in western art history, lost its significance after the Muslim conquest when many figurative traditions of the Persian world were dismissed or modified. One category that did not match western art historical concepts but was soon accepted as distinctively "Persian" as well as rightly "Islamic" along with architecture and "miniature" painting, especially among collectors and museums, was carpets. Surviving examples that can be attributed to the pre-Islamic Persian world

were not discovered until the mid-20th century, although mediaeval descriptions of pre-Islamic Persian carpets were already well-known. So-called "minor arts" or "arts and crafts," according to western art-historical traditions, such as metalwork, ceramics and glass, were also viewed as subjects of investigation but more often integrated into the wider category of Islamic art. Other genres of the "minor arts," such as arms and armour, were also collected, but these were rarely viewed distinctively as Persian objects. Euro-American scholarship inevitably Euro-Americanised the approaches to these topics. This is particularly the case with the single Persian "miniature" painting leaf, which was viewed and appreciated as the Persian equivalent to old master's oil painting but not as a book illustration. Persian "miniature" painting was thus sold individually, as well as delicately framed, often with the emphasis on image rather than the entire page with text, and it was predominantly

displayed on the wall in Euro-American museums.

In order further to establish the connoisseurship of Persian "miniature" painting in the West, the role of painters was overemphasised, while calligraphers and other aspects of the art of the book were downplayed. For most westerners of this time, undecipherable Arabic letters must have been viewed as irrelevant for the appreciation of "miniature" painting, and this tendency may have promoted the detachment of image from text both in scholarship and in art dealing.

While calligraphers were rarely featured in the early writing of Persian painting in the West, some identifiable figures of Persian painting, like Reza Abbasi (1565-1635), became "stars" or "masters," following the western art-historical canon. Deriving from pre-existing Persian notions of Kamal al-Din Behzad (1460-1535), this late-Timurid painter became "the Persian Michelangelo (an Italian sculptor, painter, architect, and poet)." These juxtapositions enabled



A miniature by Reza Abbasi
artang.ir

European scholarship to build up Europeanised constructs for the discussion of Persian art in which the lonely genius of a Behzad or another painter eclipsed the manuscripts which contained the paintings.

Like the Japanese rediscovery of Ukiyoe prints' painters, the Persian world rediscovered the Persian artists through European assessments. In turn, Iran and Tajikistan would name their new mu-

seums in honour of these rediscovered artists, hence the Reza 'Abbasi Museum in Tehran (opened in 1977) and the Kamal al-Din Behzad Museum in Dushanbe (opened in 1945). Ironically the latter museum does not possess any, even single painting by its denominator, but it has modern, European-inspired, oil paintings, intending to evoke the forgotten, if not mythical, past of the Tajik nation. Such a painter-oriented taste

ultimately set a borderline between art history and philology (text) in Persian manuscript studies. This often resulted in distorted transliterations and misinterpretations of the text in the past. Yet thanks to the rise of codicology in the field of Islamic manuscripts in recent days, it is a right time to declare that every aspect of the physical condition of Persian book painting has nowadays thoroughly been studied.

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Unilateralism taking last breaths'

PRESS TV – Iran's deputy foreign minister for political affairs said more and more countries are joining multilateral international organizations, like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as a result of the declining influence of unilateralism. During a meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergey Ryabkov on Monday, Ali Bagheri-Kani highlighted the growing global trend of joining international economic mechanisms belonging to the multilateralism front, including the SCO and the BRICS group. "This is the outcome of the waning of international mechanisms belonging to the unilateralism front," he argued.

Iran-Russia military cooperation to continue: Ryabkov



MEHR – Deputy Russian foreign minister said that the military cooperation between Iran and Russia will continue despite the enemies' opposition, adding that Russia is committed to cooperation with friendly countries like Iran. Speaking to journalists on the sidelines of the high-level conference dubbed "Iran and BRICS" on Tuesday, Sergey Ryabkov said that the "legitimate" and "very substantial" cooperation between Iran and Russia will continue despite all attempts by enemies of Iran and Russia to disrupt and derail that cooperation.

Iran hosts conference ...

Also speaking at the Tehran conference, Anil Sooklal, South Africa's ambassador-at-large for Asia and BRICS, noted that BRICS was formed to promote international cooperation. "We want to work for the Global South and the good of humanity."

The BRICS group of fast-developing economies — Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa — is often seen as an alternative to Western economic and political hegemony. It accounts for 42% of the global population and about 26% of the world's economy, according to the South Africa-based Institute for Security Studies.

Iran is among dozens of countries that seek membership in BRICS, and has submitted a formal application to join the body.

E Asia key part of Iran's foreign policy

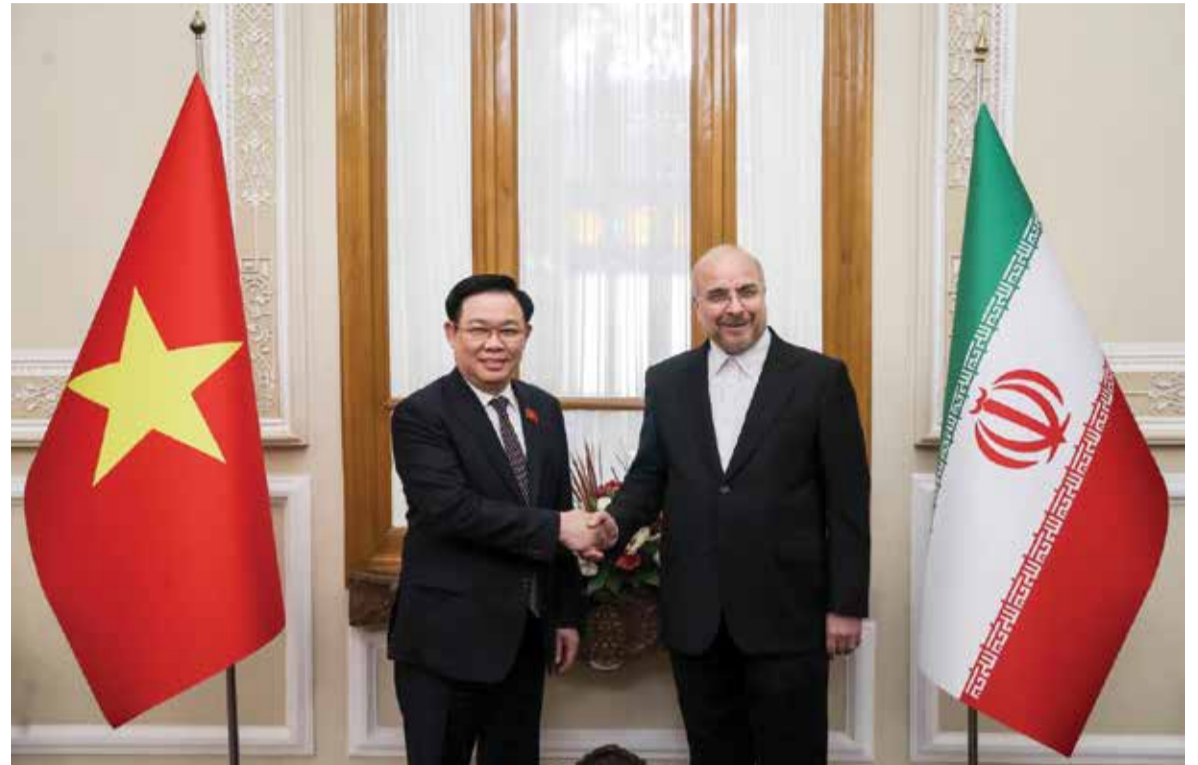
Iran, Vietnam stress parliamentary diplomacy

National Desk

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf has emphasized on paying special attention to East Asia as his country's foreign policy priority, highlighting the efficacy of parliamentary diplomacy as a basis for enhancing ties with Vietnam in the regional and international arena.

During a Tuesday meeting with his Vietnamese counterpart Vuong Dinh Hue in Tehran, Qalibaf expressed satisfaction with hosting the Vietnamese delegation on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Iran and Vietnam, IRNA reported.

He noted that parliamentary diplomacy has played a crucial role in advancing these relations in recent years. Upon an invitation extended by his Iranian counterpart, Vietnam's National Assembly chairman began his three-day visit to Iran on Tuesday. Addressing a joint press conference, Qalibaf hailed the visit by Vietnamese delegates as a groundbreaking moment, marking the first-ever visit by the Vietnamese National



Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf (r) shakes hands with his Vietnamese counterpart, Vuong Dinh Hue, in Tehran, Iran, on August 8, 2023.
● HAMED MALEKPOUR/ICANA

Assembly chairman to Iran. He also highlighted the shared history of both nations in opposing oppression and tyranny. In line with his vision of strengthening ties, the Iranian Parliament speaker suggested streamlining visa issuance procedures between Iran and Vietnam to facilitate easy travel, particularly for ac-

ademic and trade-related purposes. The speaker also advocated for the establishment of direct air connectivity between Tehran and Hanoi, which could further catalyze the bilateral relationship. In the press conference, the Vietnamese chairman reciprocated the sentiments, saying his country recognizes Iran's import-

ant role in the region. He also emphasized the increase in the volume of trade between Iran and Vietnam to two billion dollars, stating that with the signing of agreements and documents of cooperation between the two sides, the level of relations will be improved, ISNA reported. Hue expressed hope that the visit could expand eco-

nomics and trade cooperation. He also emphasized the potential for economic collaboration and investment between Iran and Vietnam. Referring to the sister city agreement between Tehran and Hanoi, he emphasized the need to explore various strategies to enhance cooperation between Iran and Vietnam.

Raeisi lauds journalists for countering enemy's propaganda



Iran's President Ebrahim Raeisi has thanked the country's journalists for countering the enemy's propaganda and misinformation campaigns. "I sincerely thank you for the many efforts that you

made in different conditions... to be able to confront the enemy's media campaigns that aim to distort the truth," Raeisi said in the closing ceremony of the 21st Iran's National Media Festival on Tuesday,

which marks the National Reporter's Day, Press TV reported. He stressed that confidence building is one of the most important characteristics of a journalist. "The enemy's goal is to weaken hope and faith in the hearts of the people. These are the two basic principles that the Leader of the [Islamic] Revolution [Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei] emphasizes." Raeisi stated that the enemy's propaganda aims to disappoint people, adding that media workers play an important role in "creating hope." Iran marks the National Reporter's Day, which

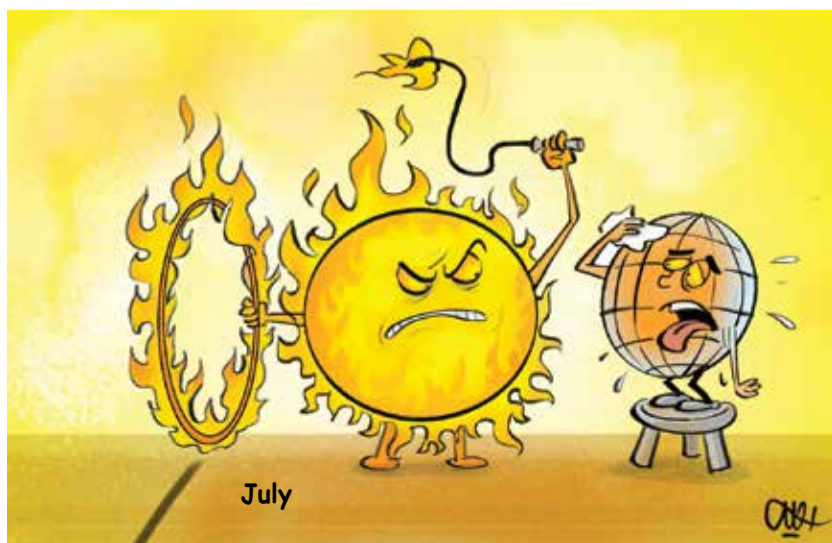
commemorates the death anniversary of a journalist and eight Iranian diplomats who lost their lives in a terrorist attack in Afghanistan, on the 17th day of the Persian calendar month of Mordad, which falls on Tuesday this year. The nine Iranian citizens were killed after Taliban militants entered the Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif in 1998 in an incident that sparked worldwide condemnations.

Iran making headway Elsewhere in his remarks, President Raeisi said Iran is experiencing growth in various sectors, especially science, and technology,

in spite of all the threats, sanctions, and hardships the enemy has inflicted on the nation. He also reiterated Iran's position on multilateral negotiations to revive the Iran nuclear deal, saying Iran has the upper hand as a country that never left the deal or the talks to revive it after the United States unilaterally withdrew. However, he continued, "We have not trusted them (the US) whatsoever and will never trust them." Iran and six major world powers signed the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in 2015 to put an end to the commo-

tion created over the country's nuclear activities. The US, however, abandoned the JCPOA in 2018 despite Tehran's full compliance with its nuclear obligations, reinstating the sanctions the deal had lifted. Multilateral diplomatic endeavors, which began in April 2021, have so far failed to revive the deal. Raeisi, meanwhile, made clear that his administration is pursuing a policy of "neutralizing" the sanctions while attending the talks aimed at lifting them. "We're reaching for that end with all our might because we've seen their breaches of promises," he added.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



IRGC: Iran will respond in kind to any US action, mischief in region

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has warned the United States against any act of mischief in the region, including the seizure of ships. "Iran has reached such a high degree of power and capability that it can respond in kind to any US action and mischief [in the region], including the seizure of ships," the IRGC's spokesman Brigadier General Ramezan Sharif said on Monday, according to Press TV. He added that regional countries have "correctly under-

stood that Iran is turning into a big power in the region." The IRGC's spokesman added, "In any direct battle between Iran and the United States during recent years, regional countries have seen the weakness of America and the power of the Islamic Republic, and have understood that the security of the Persian Gulf must be established by its own littoral states." Sharif's remarks came after the US Naval Forces Central Command (CENTCOM) announced on Monday that the US Navy has deployed more

than 3,000 sailors and Marine forces to West Asia under the pretext of protecting ships and vessels crossing the main waterways in the strategic region. It added that the forces from the Bataon Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) have arrived in West Asia. The move was made after US Navy accused Iran of "attacking, seizing or attempting to seize" nearly 20 internationally flagged merchant vessels in the region over the past two years.

Thousands in Haiti march to demand safety from violent gangs



Several thousand people – their faces covered to conceal their identities – marched through Haiti's capital on Monday demanding protection from violent gangs who are pillaging neighborhoods in the capital Port-au-Prince and beyond. Haitians' daily lives have been disrupted by incessant gang violence that has worsened poverty across the country as it awaits a decision from the UN Security Council over a potential deployment of an international armed force.

"We want security!" the crowd chanted as it marched for two hours from the troubled community of Carrefour-Feuilles to Champ de Mars in the downtown area and then to the prime minister's official residence, where police broke up the demonstration with tear gas. "I can't work. I can't go out. I'm like a prisoner in my own home," said Wilene Joseph, a 36-year-old street vendor and mother of two who joined the march out of frustration. "I worry about my kids being shot

because bullets are flying from all directions all the time," Joseph said of her children, ages 5 and 7. "The situation is unacceptable." Since the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021, experts say gangs have seized control of up to 80% of Port-au-Prince, killing, raping and sowing terror in communities already suffering endemic poverty. From January to March, more than 1,600 people have been reported killed, injured or kidnapped,

a nearly 30% increase compared with the last three months of 2022, according to the newest UN report. On Monday, UNICEF announced an "alarming spike" in kidnappings, with nearly 300 confirmed cases so far this year, almost equaling the number reported for all of last year, and almost three times the total for 2021. The agency noted that women and children are increasingly being kidnapped and used for financial or tactical gain.



People march as tires burn during a protest against insecurity on August 7, 2023, near the Prime Minister's official house in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. **● RICHARD PIERRIN/AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

MPs debates no-confidence motion against Modi gov't



AFP – India's parliament debated a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government on Tuesday, a day after opposition leader Rahul Gandhi returned to the house.

The opposition Congress party launched the debate in a bid to force comment from Modi on months of deadly ethnic conflict in northeastern Manipur state, with a vote potentially to be held on Thursday.

Rains unleash landslides, flooding in Scandinavia

AFP – Heavy rains caused flooding and landslides in Sweden and Norway on Tuesday while strong winds caused a Danish wildfire to spread out of control, authorities said, with more heavy rain forecast.

A storm dubbed "Hans" swept in over the Nordic countries over the weekend, leaving a path of destruction.

Residents of the ski resort town of Are in northwestern Sweden were advised to stay clear of the Susabacken stream after it overflowed, sending mud and rocks coursing through the town and causing damage to roads and houses, Sweden's crisis information website Krisinformation reported.

European scientists: July was hottest month on record by far

Now that July's sizzling numbers are all in, the European climate monitoring organization made it official: July 2023 was Earth's hottest month on record by a wide margin.

July's global average temperature of 16.95 degrees Celsius (62.51 degrees Fahrenheit) was a third of a degree Celsius (six tenths of a degree Fahrenheit) higher than the previous record set in 2019, Copernicus Climate Change Service, a division of the European Union's space program, announced Tuesday. Normally global temperature records are broken by hundredths or a tenth of a degree, so this margin is unusual, according to AP. "These records have dire consequences for both people and the planet exposed to ever more frequent and intense extreme events," said Copernicus deputy director Samantha Burgess. There have been deadly heat waves in

the Southwestern United States and Mexico, Europe and Asia. Scientific quick studies put the blame on human-caused climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas.

Days in July have been hotter than previously recorded from July 2 on. It's been so extra warm that Copernicus and the World Meteorological Organization made the unusual early announcement that it was likely the hottest month days before it ended. Tuesday's calculations made it official. The month was 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than pre-industrial times. In 2015, the nations of the world agreed to try to prevent long-term warming — not individual months or even years, but decades — that is 1.5 degrees warmer than pre-industrial times.

Last month was so hot, it was .7 degrees Celsius (1.3 degrees Fahrenheit) hotter than the average July from 1991 to 2020, Copernicus said. The world's oceans were half a degree Celsius (0.9 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than the previous 30 years and the North Atlantic was 1.05 degrees Celsius (1.9 degrees Fahrenheit) hotter than average. Antarctica set record lows for sea ice, 15% below average for this time of year.



A woman covers her head with a shawl amid soaring temperatures in Dubai, UAE, on August 3, 2023. **● KARIM SAHIB/AFP**

Belarus begins military drills near its border with Poland, Lithuania



Belarus began military exercises Monday near its border with Poland and Lithuania, a move coming with tensions already heightened with the two NATO members over Russia-linked Wagner mercenaries moving to Belarus after their short-lived mutiny in Russia.

Both Poland and Lithuania have increased border security since thousands of Wagner fighters arrived in Russian-allied Belarus under a deal that ended their armed rebellion in late June and allowed them and their leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, to avoid criminal charges, AP reported.

Leaders of the two NATO nations have said they are braced for provocations from Moscow and Minsk in a sensitive area where both countries border Belarus as well as the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad. They commented early in August after two Belarusian helicopters flew briefly at low altitude into Polish air space. Belarusian authorities denied their helicopters entered Poland.

The Belarusian Defense Ministry said the drills that began Monday are based on experiences from "the special military operation" — the term Russia uses for its war in Ukraine. It said that includes the "use of drones as well as the close interaction of tank and motorized rifle units with units of other branches of the armed forces." The war games were taking place in the Grodno region of Belarus, near the so-called Suwalki Gap — a sparsely populated stretch of land running 96 kilometers (60 miles) along the Polish-Lithuanian border. It links the three Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia with the rest of the NATO alliance and separates Belarus from Kaliningrad, a heavily militarized Russian exclave on the Baltic Sea that has no land connection to Russia.

War crimes by Myanmar's military 'more frequent and brazen': UN

War crimes committed by Myanmar's military, including the bombing of civilians, have become "increasingly frequent and brazen", a team of United Nations investigators said in a report published on Tuesday.

The report by the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM), which covered the period between July 2022 and June 2023, said there was "strong evidence that the Myanmar military and its affiliate militias have committed three types of combat-related war crimes with increasing frequency and brazenness", according to Reuters.

These crimes include the indiscriminate or disproportionate targeting of civilians using bombs and the burning of civilian homes and buildings, resulting at times in the destruction of entire villages, it said.

The report also cited "killings of civilians or combatants detained during operations".

"Our evidence points to a dramatic increase in war crimes and crimes against humanity in the country, with widespread and systematic attacks against civilians, and we are building case files that can be used by courts to hold individual perpetrators responsible," said Nicholas Koumjian, head of the IIMM.

Since a junta seized power two years ago, Myanmar has been plunged into chaos, with a resistance movement fighting the military on multiple fronts after a bloody crackdown on opponents that saw Western countries re-impose sanctions.

A spokesperson for the junta could not be reached for comment on the findings made by UN investigators.

The junta has previously denied atrocities have taken place, saying it is carrying out a legitimate campaign against terrorists.



Over 1,000 evacuated as Portugal wildfire spreads

REUTERS – Hundreds of firefighters scrambled on Tuesday to put out a blaze raging in southern Portugal that has scorched thousands of hectares of land and forced the evacuation of around 1,400 people.

The wildfire, currently being tackled by over 850 firefighters and six water-bombing planes, started on Saturday in the municipality of Odemira, in the Alentejo region, but has since spread south towards the Algarve, one of Portugal's top tourist destinations.

High temperatures and strong winds have complicated efforts to fight the flames..

Saudi spending no one-off, says top league official

REUTERS – The vast sums invested to entice some of the world's top players to Saudi Arabia this season is no one-off, but part of a long-term strategy to make the Saudi Pro League one of the best in the world, its chief operating officer has said.

Carlo Nohra told Reuters in an interview that authorities in the "football-mad country" are confident their strategy of going all out to sign the game's biggest names would ensure that fans flocked to stadiums in the new campaign, which starts on Friday.

Saudi clubs have spent more than 400 million euros (\$439 million) in the close season to sign players from Europe's elite teams, including Ballon d'Or winner Karim Benzema from Real Madrid, Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson and treble winner Riyad Mahrez from Manchester City.

The influx began just a few months after Al-Nassr signed Cristiano Ronaldo on a reported salary of more than \$200 million a year in December.

Football website Transfermarkt ranks the Saudi League as the fifth-biggest spender in the current transfer window, ahead of Spain's LaLiga.

"It's very straightforward and I tie it back to our strategy," Nohra told Reuters. "One of the very first objectives that the Saudi Pro League was set was to improve the product."

"We had to improve quality and in order to improve quality, you have to bring in the best. Spending was always going to be an essential component for us to do this."

"What you're seeing is simply the Saudi Pro League doing what other leagues needed to do ... We have joined these ranks, and we're doing whatever it takes to improve quality on the pitch."

Nohra added that the league's strategy would take time to come to full fruition and that the spending was set to continue.

"Look, this is definitely a journey," he said. "This is not just for one weekend. We've set out to achieve this objective to be one of the top 10 leagues in the world."

"We have a mission, and that is to unleash the potential we have to drive change. We want to become one of the recognised leaders for excellence in governance, in club development and player acquisition, and also in commercialization."

Multiple media reports say Saudi Arabia has allocated more than \$17 billion to support clubs under the country's "Vision 2030" economic and social reform blueprint, but Nohra said each transfer period would be dealt with independently.

"We're taking it one window at a time."

Taekwondo glory leads Iran's 23-medal run in World University Games

Sport Desk

Iran finished 11th among 120 participating countries at the FISU Summer World University Games – formerly known as the Summer Universiade – in Chengdu, China, courtesy of 23 medals – including five golds.

Of the 11 disciplines in which 83 Iranians were entered, five yielded medals, with the taekwondo contestants leading the list of the medalists for the country with 13.

Reigning world champion Nahid Kiani headlined Iran's taekwondo campaign as she secured a second international gold in two months when she defeated Su Po-ya of the Chinese Taipei in the women's -53kg final showdown.

Kiani was joined in the list of the female medalists by fellow Iranian Anahita Tavakkoli, who took the +73kg silver, -62kg bronze winner Narges Mirnourollahi, and Yasaman Limouchi, a winner of the individual poomsae competition before she grabbed a second bronze in the team event alongside Mobina Sharifi and Reihaneh Omrani.

In the men's contests, Mehdi Haji Mousaei (-54kg), Alireza Hosseinpour (-58kg), and Mirhashem Hosseini (-74kg) also walked away with the ultimate prize of their respective weight classes, while Arian Salimi settled for the -87kg silver and Mehran Barkhordari took the -80kg bronze.

Hosseinpour, Hosseini, Salimi, and Barkhordari



Iran's Nahid Kiani (L), a reigning world champion, won the women's -53kg gold in the taekwondo event of the Summer World University Games in Chengdu, China. **XINHUA**

then teamed up to finish second to South Korea in the men's team kyorugi contest. Morteza Zendehehdel was

also a double individual and team bronze winner in the poomsae competitions as he was part of the Iranian trio – along with Reza

Jalalifar and Ali Mousania – which shared the men's third podium with Vietnam. Iran's only other gold medal in Chengdu came in the

wushu event, where Mohammad Hosseini came out on top in the men's gunshu. Shahin Banitalebi also left the Chinese city with a

men's taolu medal, taking the nanquan bronze.

Hamidreza Sahandi (70kg) and Ali Khorshidi (80kg) added a couple of men's sanda silvers to Iran's medal haul after suffering final defeats against the host's athletes, while Shoja Panahi finished third in the 60kg class. Mohana Rahimi was the Iranian medalist in women's sanda – a 60kg bronze.

There were further glories for Iran in shooting – a couple of bronzes in the women's team events.

The team of Fatemeh Shekari, Laya Mohammadi, and Haniyeh Rostamian finished third in the 10m air pistol campaign, with the latter two teaming with Amitis Jafari for the 25m pistol bronze.

Elsewhere in the Games, Amirhossein Mahmoudpour clocked 7:13.01 minutes to win a rowing silver in the men's lightweight LM1x final, with Reza Sha'bani defeating Moldova's Dan Olaru to finish his archery campaign with a men's recurve bronze.

China, as expected, dominated the Games on home soil with 178 medals, including a remarkable 103 golds.

Japan collected 21 golds, 29 silvers, and 43 bronzes to finish runner-up in the medal table and a neck-and-neck race saw South Korea pip Italy to the third spot.

Both countries won 17 golds and 18 silvers apiece, but the South Koreans collected 23 bronzes against Italy's 21.

Iran completes GR lineup for Wrestling Worlds

Sport Desk

Iran Greco-Roman head coach Hassan Rangraz completed his 10-man squad for the Wrestling World Championships – starting September 16 in Belgrade, Serbia.

The final berth in the Iranian team was secured by Danial Sohrabi who came out victorious against Sajjad Imentalab in a best-of-three contests in Tehran on Tuesday.

Sohrabi defeated his opponent twice (5-1 and 3-1) either side of a victory for Imentalab, which came after a 1-1 draw in the second bout.

A world under-23 gold medalist last year, Sohrabi will be joined by some top-notch wrestlers in the Iranian squad who will be seeking further glories in the Wrestling Worlds – hosted by the Serbian capital for the second year running.

Mohammadreza Geraei will headline the team in Belgrade, when chasing a fourth successive major medal in the 67kg weight class.

A winner of the Tokyo Olympic gold and a world champion in 2021, Ger-



Tokyo Olympic gold medalist Mohammadreza Geraei, pictured during a training session in Tehran, will be chasing a fourth major Greco-Roman medal in the 67kg weight class in the upcoming Wrestling World Championships. **iwfir**

aei saw his dominance in the class come to an end against Serbian Mate Nemes in last year's world final.

Geraei's older brother, Mohammad-Ali, will head

into the 77kg event on the back of three world bronzes under his belt – the last of which came in 2021.

Amin Mirzazadeh will be after a second world superheavyweight medal af-

ter last year's 130kg silver, while Mohammad-Hadi Saravi – a bronze medalist in Tokyo – will be looking for a third world medal, having won the 2021 gold in Oslo before a third-spot

finish last September. Pouya Dadmarz – Asian gold medalist in April – will be the Iranian contestant in the 55kg contests and will be hoping for a better result than his 2022

run in the World Championships, where he was knocked out in the quarterfinals.

Having claimed a gold and a bronze at the UWW Ranking Series this year, Mehdi Mohsennejad will take his decent form into the 60kg event, while Iman Mohammadi will be looking to build on his double world age-group golds in 2022 when representing the country in the 63kg competitions.

The Asian champion for the past three editions, Nasser Alizadeh (87kg), and Alireza Mohmadi (82kg) – a bronze winner at the Asian Championships this year – complete the country's Greco-Roman lineup in Belgrade.

With Russia barred from the 2022 UWW Worlds, the Iranian team, which had finished second to the Russians in 2021, looked to be the ultimate favorite for the Greco-Roman crown last year, but a below-par campaign under former head coach Mohammad Bana saw the country leave the event without a gold, settling for a fourth-spot finish behind Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Serbia.

Tehran's first airport to be National Museum of Flight

Social Desk

Restoration work on the flight hangar situated in Velayat Park, formerly Qale Morghi Barracks, in southern Tehran has commenced, announced the CEO of Tehran Municipality Cultural Spaces Development Company.

The plan is to transform Tehran's first airport into a flight museum, according to IRNA.

Mohammad Nazem Razavi told the media that restoration efforts have begun on the flight hangar located in Velayat Park. He highlighted that the collection of flight hangars from the former Qale Morghi Airport is Tehran's oldest airport. It was decided that they should be transferred to Tehran Municipality.

Razavi continued by stating that historic Qale Morghi Airport was officially opened as Tehran's first airport in 1922 and has served Iran's aviation needs for over a century. Moreover, he mentioned that this airport is situated in the 19th district in southwestern Tehran. After

ceasing its flight services, it was decided by order of Iran's Leader to repurpose this complex under the authority of Tehran Municipality. The decision was aimed at addressing deficiencies in public spaces within southern areas of Tehran, while preserving runways and their functionality during times of crisis.

Razavi pointed out that this important decision led to the establishment of Velayat Park in 2011. Throughout its history, valuable buildings were constructed at this significant airport, some with national heritage value. He emphasized that among these structures are historical hangars dating back to when the airport was initially established. These hangars hold considerable cultural significance and were registered as one of Iran's national monuments on December 2, 1996.

Furthermore, Razavi clarified that these flight hangars from Qale Morghi Air-

port symbolize a hundred years' worth of aviation history in Iran. Reviving them as a cultural-scientific and recreational site could attract numerous visitors. The architectural design successfully combines past elements with contemporary features using innovative technologies.

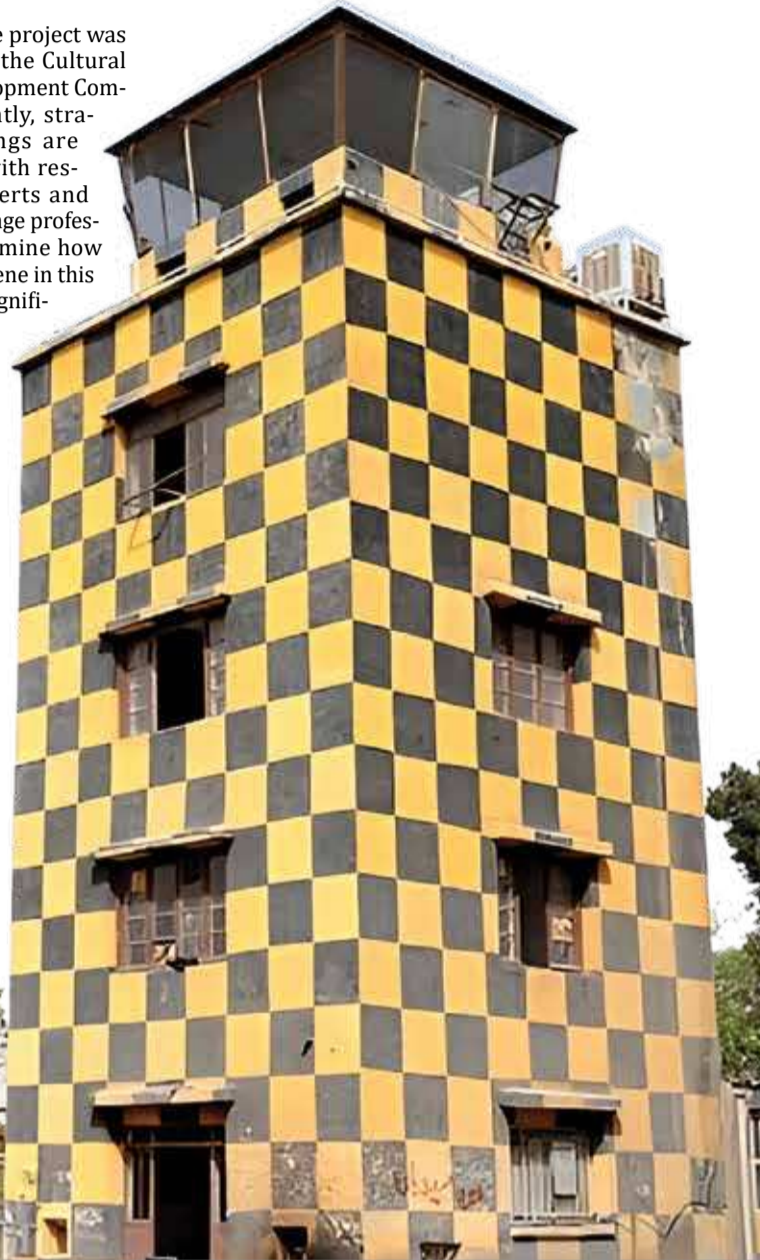
Razavi continued by stating that after a century since the airport's establishment, it has been decided to restore and revitalize these historic hangars, intermediate buildings, and surrounding areas. The plan is to establish the National Museum of Flight, which will serve the people of Tehran and Iran.

In addition to showcasing the history of flight and aviation in Iran and globally, this cultural-scientific complex aims to engage individuals interested in flight-related recreational and sports activities. It seeks to create a platform for talented youth in this field while also providing talent scouting opportunities for Iran's air force.

Razavi mentioned that in

July 2023, the project was entrusted to the Cultural Spaces Development Company. Currently, strategic meetings are being held with restoration experts and cultural heritage professors to determine how best to intervene in this historically significant building.

Documentation and emergency protection measures will be implemented as initial steps towards preventing further damage to this monument's integrity and eliminating any potential risks.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran's Defense Ministry builds solar power plants

Social Desk

Iran's Ministry of Defense has successfully initiated the first phase of its 300-megawatt solar power supply project. This endeavor aims to utilize clean electricity and protect the environment.

During the opening ceremony, Commander Mehdi Farahi, the deputy minister of defense, highlighted the ministry's social responsibilities in terms of environmental protection and reducing air pollution, ISNA reported.

He stated that in order to fulfill these duties, the ministry has planned to establish renewable power plants including solar and wind facilities. Farahi further explained that a four-year plan has been devised for generating 300 megawatts of electricity through solar power plants. The initial portion of the plan was inaugurated on Tuesday, August 8.

The first phase of the project encompasses an area spanning 700 square meters, with a capacity of 140 kilowatts.

Firefighters tackling blaze in southern Portugal



REUTERS

The Guardian - Hundreds of firefighters are scrambling to put out a blaze raging in southern Portugal that has scorched thousands of hectares of land and led to the precautionary evacuation of about 1,400 people.

The wildfire, which is being tackled by more than 800 firefighters, started on Saturday in the municipality of Odemira in the Alentejo region but has since spread south towards the Algarve, one of Portugal's top tourist destinations.

High temperatures and strong winds are complicating efforts to combat the flames, which have destroyed about 6,700 hectares of land. José Ribeiro, commander of the emergency and civil protection authority, said weather conditions were expected to remain a challenge.

Shortly before sunset on Monday, the sky in Odemira turned dark as a huge smoke cloud filled the air. Odemira's mayor, Hélder Guerreiro, called the situation "critical, difficult and complex" while Ribeiro said there was a "lot of work" ahead to bring the wildfire under control.

World is losing forests

In 2015, research on global forest cover revealed a concerning fact: 70 percent of the world's remaining forest now lies within 1 kilometer of the forest's edge. This process, called fragmentation, is causing the deepest and darkest parts of the world's forests to shrink.

Forest fragmentation is bad news for many unique animal and plant species that rely on these forests for their survival. It also reduces the forest's ability to capture and store carbon, which is an important part of tackling climate change.

Researchers from Fudan University in China recently conducted a study that mapped changes in global forest fragmentation between 2000 and 2020. Their results show that the most biodiverse forests on the planet - those found in the tropics - continue to suffer increasing fragmentation, mainly due to clearance for agriculture.

However, the picture is different in certain boreal, temperate, and sub-tropical regions. In particular, patches of forest in western Canada, western and far-eastern Russia, and central and southern China seem to be coming

together.

Less fragmentation should, in theory, benefit forest biodiversity and increase carbon removal. But the outcome ultimately depends on the type of forests that are regrowing or being planted. It's unclear from the study whether the regrowth consists of single-species plantations for timber or bioenergy, or if it's natural regeneration.

However, a different study in 2022 shed some light on the situation. It highlighted the presence of large areas of planted forest in temperate and boreal regions, alongside natural regenerated forests with signs of human management such as logging.

These forests host very different biodiversity to natural, old-growth forests, and are less effective at storing carbon.



GETTY IMAGES

Iran's strategic drug reserves up to 70%

Social Desk

In a recent announcement, Bahram Einollahi, Iran's Minister of Health, Treatment and Medical Education, highlighted the progress made by the Ministry of Health in enhancing healthcare services.

The minister confirmed that strategic drug reserves have now reached 70 percent, ensuring a steady supply for patients across the country, IRNA reported.

Einollahi emphasized that his ministry has fulfilled all legal obligations to bolster the medical field's capacity. He noted that this year marks the second consecutive year of expansion efforts, following approval from the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution.

Last year alone witnessed a remarkable increase in medical field capacity by 27 percent, surpassing even the mandated target set at 20 percent.

Furthermore, Einollahi revealed notable advancements in other crucial areas of healthcare infrastructure. The government has acquired 500 new ambulances to strengthen

emergency response capabilities nationwide. Additionally, an impressive total of 15,000 hospital beds have been added thus far with plans to incorporate another 6,700 beds before year-end.

Addressing concerns regarding patient care within public institutions and hospitals, Einollahi underscored that no doctor is allowed to refer patients from public departments to private facilities or practices. Such actions are considered violations under current regulations. The progressive measures implemented by Iran's Ministry of Health demonstrate their commitment towards improving healthcare access and quality while ensuring adequate supplies for patients throughout the nation.



TASNIM

Academies of Persian, Urdu languages to collaborate

Arts & Culture Desk

ISNA - In a significant step towards fostering cultural ties between Iran and Pakistan, the Academy of Persian Language and Literature in Iran and the Academy of Urdu Language in Pakistan have declared their readiness for collaboration.

Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, the president of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature, extended his congratulations to Saleem Mazhar on his appointment as the head of the Academy of Urdu Language.

In a message, Haddad-Adel stated, "I congratulate you on your appointment as the head of the Academy of Urdu Language in Pakistan. The Academy of Persian Language and Literature expresses its willingness to cooperate with the Academy of Urdu Language in all aspects under your leadership. It is hoped that the cultural, linguistic, and literary bonds between the two nations of Iran and Pakistan will continue to expand and deepen day by day."

Saleem Mazhar holds a Ph.D. in Persian language and literature from the University of Tehran. As a professor of Persian language and literature at University of the Punjab in Pakistan, he is proficient in English, Urdu, Persian, and Punjabi languages. He was bestowed with an honorary membership in the Academy of Persian Language and Literature in 2019.

To date, he has authored numerous books and articles on Persian language and literature.

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Iranian bas-relief returned from London undergoing analysis

Arts & Culture Desk

The significance of the Sassanian bas-relief carving returned from London was examined during a conference titled, "The Ancient Iranian Bas-Relief Carving: Restoration and Study in the National Museum of Iran."

Scholars from the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Research Institute, university researchers, and independent scholars engaged in three specialized panels to discuss their expert insights about the repatriated bas-relief, ILNA wrote. Mostafa Dehpahlavan, the head of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Research Institute, conveyed his appreciation for the collaborative efforts that led to the restoration and return of the artwork to the National Museum of Iran. The carving's detailed examination aimed to provide a deeper understanding of its essence. Dehpahlavan emphasized the importance of academic cooperation and transparent research processes.

He highlighted the value of such sessions where scholars scrutinize and critique each other's works, ultimately contributing to the dissemination of accurate scientific

knowledge. Morteza Adibzadeh, the director general of Museums and Historical-Cultural Property of Iran, described the process of repatriation as complex and time-consuming, involving both sensitive diplomatic negotiations and legal considerations. He expressed hope for the successful return of historical-cultural properties to Iran this year. Adibzadeh cautioned local researchers against hasty judgments and premature conclusions, urging them to avoid prejudice before thorough examination.

He emphasized the role of scientific and technical analysis in preserving and understanding cultural heritage artifacts.

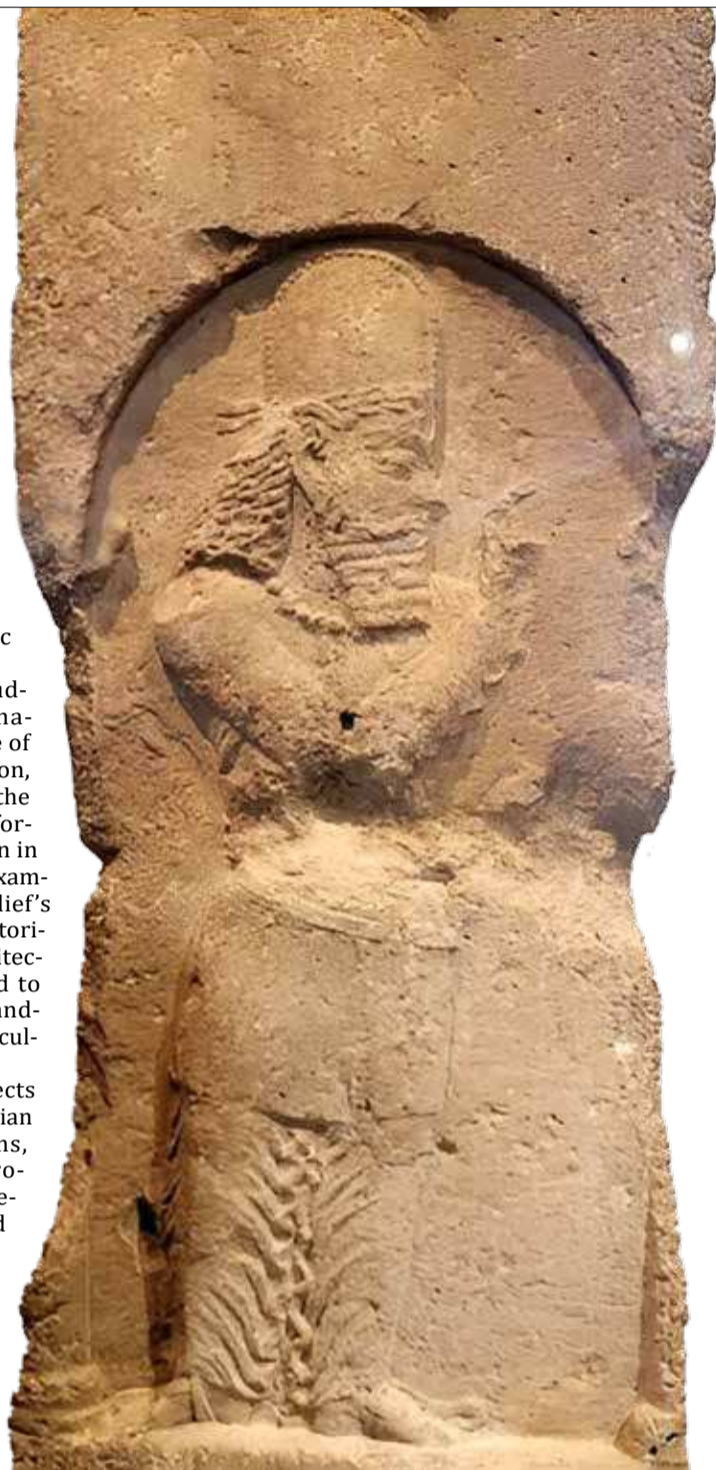
Jebreel Nokandeh, the head of the National Museum of Iran, defended the collaborative efforts between global museums, indicating their adherence to international conventions for heritage preservation. He encouraged scholarly and technical discussions, highlighting the significance of objective scientific evaluations.

The conference included three specialized panels, which delved into various aspects of the Sassanian bas-relief's restoration and study. Scholars discussed topics

such as the relief's artistic and historical attributes, its journey from London to Iran, and its cultural and stylistic features.

As the panels concluded, the event emphasized the importance of scholarly collaboration, careful analysis, and the need for accurate information dissemination in the digital age. The examination of the bas-relief's technical aspects, historical context, and architectural features aimed to deepen the understanding of this significant cultural artifact.

This conference reflects the dedication of Iranian scholars, institutions, and museums to promoting meticulous research practices and fostering cross-disciplinary cooperation, contributing to the preservation and appreciation of the nation's rich cultural heritage.



Tracing roots of curses engraved in epitaphs

Arts & Culture Desk

Inscriptions of curses, known as "accursed epitaphs," have seemingly appeared throughout various historical eras and across the globe. Beyond these epitaphs, the words of malediction have also been used in the endings of many books, dissertations, and even talismans. It seems that curses have always been a potent tool for reinforcement and obedience, deeply ingrained in the beliefs of people. From the time people embraced prayer, curses also found their prevalence. They often serve as conditional statements to fulfill commands, contracts, preserving inscriptions, protecting the name of kings, deterring demolition and looting, or expressing hostility.

Morteza Rezvanfar

vanfar, a member of the academic faculty at the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Research Institute, spoke to ISNA about the roots of curses in history, saying, "Curses and prayers share a common origin, with curses being a negative form of prayer. Both draw upon supernatural forces to achieve a desired outcome. It could be for the betterment of the recipient, seeking benevolence, or, conversely, seeking harm and malevolence against them. Even in the Persian language, 'prayer' is called 'afarin,' which, by replacing the initial 'a' with 'n,' and receiving some modification it becomes 'nefreen' (curse)." According to historical documents, humans have often turned to supernatural forces, including the highest powers like God, to invoke curses and designate them as overseers or agents for fulfilling malevolent wishes. For

instance, "May his lineage be eradicated beneath the sun," or phrases like "May God or the gods curse him." It was even believed that when curses were inscribed on epitaphs addressed to the most powerful entities like kings and rulers, they proved to be more effective.

The recipients of curses on epitaphs are usually individuals considered responsible for wrongdoing, and in some cases, these curses extend to their children, families, or tribes. Some curses are worldly, wishing for harm to health, extinction of descendants, or destruction. In other cases, curses target the afterlife and the future life of the individual.

It is interesting to note that in the Middle Persian period (Pahlavi era), apart from books and texts, curses were not seen on epitaphs, but they resurfaced again later.

The traces of curses can

be observed in many parts of the world, as they have always been effective tools for motivation or prevention. In Iran, too, examples of these curses have been interpreted by experts from the Elamite and Achaemenid periods. For instance, the inscriptions on the Elamite ziggurat of Chogha Zanbil in Khuzestan Province read: "May the curses of the gods be upon him, and may he have no offspring under the sun." Similarly, in the Darius inscription at Bisotun, the destroyer of the inscriptions and sculptures is warned: "Ahura Mazda may hurt you, and he may destroy whatever you do."

Rezvanfar illustrated some of the curses inscribed on Persian epitaphs outside of Iran, citing examples such as:

An inscription from a mosque in Bangladesh: "Whoever destroys this mosque, if he is a Muslim,

may he consume forbidden food; if he is Hindu, may he eat beef, and whoever keeps this edifice safe, may he have a high place." An epitaph from the mosque of Baku, Azerbaijan, offering tax reduction: "May the person who modifies the mentioned reduction be cursed by divine wrath and may he face the malediction of the refuge of the message."

An inscription from a school in Derbent, Russia: "Henceforth, if anyone usurps, may God's curse be upon him in abundance."

The history and wide geographic distribution of curses in epitaphs underscore their enduring potency as a compelling tool for motivation or deterrence. From ancient times to the present day, the legacy of curses on epitaphs continues to leave its mark across diverse cultures worldwide.

