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## NEWS IN BRIEF

Baku seeking to resolve differences with Tehran: *Hajiyev*

**REPORT NEWS AGENCY** – Head of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy Department of the Presidential Administration Hikmat Hajiyev said Iran is a neighboring country and Azerbaijan's policy is to maintain stable and mutually beneficial relations with all neighbors. "There was a certain misunderstanding and miscommunication between Iran and Azerbaijan. But through some diplomatic channels we are trying to resolve that and we are also receiving positive signals from the Iranian side," Hajiyev said in an interview with the Israeli i24NEWS TV.

"We are also engaged diplomatically with our Iranian counterparts to turn that page and establish a much more favorable atmosphere for cooperation for our wider region and bilateral cooperation between Azerbaijan and Iran," Hajiyev added.

The relations became strained in January when Azerbaijan's Embassy in Tehran came under attack. Azerbaijan termed the attack a "terrorist" incident, although a probe has shown that the attacker had been motivated by "personal and family-related problems."

Tehran has slammed Baku for its partnership with the Israeli regime towards the establishment of a united front against the Islamic Republic.

## Iran after joint action with KSA to tackle sand storms

**TASNIM** – Iran is pursuing collaborative efforts with Saudi Arabia to address the issue of sand and dust storms originating from Saudi Arabia's Empty Quarter Desert, as stated by the head of the Iranian Department of the Environment, Ali Salajegheh.

Salajegheh revealed that the Empty Quarter, situated in the south of Saudi Arabia, is responsible for approximately one-third of the sand and dust storms that enter Iran through its southwestern borders, affecting vast regions of the country during dry seasons. He conveyed during an interview with ILNA, "Based on recent bilateral discussions, it has been agreed to undertake joint initiatives to combat the sources of sand and dust in this desert."

## Major railway project launched in eastern Iran



Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi (2nd L) orders start of construction of a major railway project in Birjand, South Khorasan Province, on September 6, 2023. **FARS**

Construction works have started for a major railway project in Iran's arid eastern regions upon an order by Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi. The project that started on Wednesday will connect the

cities of Nehbandan to Yunesi in Iran's province of South Khorasan with a railway that stretches nearly 400 kilometers in the arid deserts along Iran's border with Afghanistan, according to Press TV. Raeisi said in a speech in the

provincial capital of Birjand that the railway will play a major role in the economic empowering of the region, adding that the government had earmarked all the financial and technical resources needed for the completion of

the project.

The Nehbandan-Yunesi rail link passes through Birjand and several major cities in South Khorasan and is part of a 910-kilometer railway corridor between Zahedan, in southeast, and Mashhad in

northeast Iran. Head of the Iranian transportation ministry's local department in Birjand said that the government will use oil barter financing mechanisms to fund the project.

Mir Mohammad Moudi said that the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei had approved a government request to use 1,800 trillion rials (\$360 million) worth of oil barter financing resources to fund the railway project in the region. Iran has an ambitious plan to link its only ocean port of Chabahar on the Sea of Oman via railways to landlocked countries in Central Asia. The project would significantly boost Iran's cargo transit capacity via the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

Construction is already underway for a railway connection between Chabahar and Zahedan with a first part of the link due to be opened until the end of the calendar year to March.

Iran attracted \$6.7b in investment during EXPO event: *Official*

Iran's chief economic diplomat said foreign companies and governments committed to some \$6.7 billion worth of investment in Iran during an investment opportunity exhibition that was held in early May in Tehran.

Mehdi Safari, who leads economic diplomacy department of the Iranian Foreign Ministry, said on Thursday that Iran seeks to break new records in foreign investment attraction and even go beyond the milestone figures recorded during the Iran EXPO 2023 event that was held on May 7-10, Press TV reported. Safari said Iran has an ambitious vision to diversify its economy away from crude oil revenues, including by expanding the transportation infrastructure in the country to significantly increase



its cargo transit revenues.

He said a target has been set to increase the volume of cargo transit via Iran to 90 million metric tons (mt) per year, including some 60 million mt in East-West transit, adding that the country expects that could generate up to \$100 billion in transit fees each year.

The senior diplomat said Iran has been trying to expand its fleet operating in shipping routes in

the Caspian Sea to help increase the flow of cargo on the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) that passes through the Iranian territory.

Safari added that Iran's efforts to expand routes along the INSTC will focus on the completion of the Rasht-Astara railway, a major project kicked off earlier this year with Russian investment, although he insisted efforts will not only be limited to that project.

## Iran rejects Japanese-Arab statement about Persian Gulf islands

## International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry in a statement denounced a joint statement from the ministerial meeting of Arab-Japan Political Dialogue about three Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf, saying that the islands are an eternal part of Iranian territory. The Foreign Ministry's spokesman Nasser Kanaani said that their statement about the Iranian islands of Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb lacks any political or legal value, and is in violation of the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs of countries and respect for their territorial integrity. The third session of the ministerial meeting of the Arab-Japan Political Dialogue was held in the Egyptian capital of Cairo on September 5, 2023. Regarding the three Irani-

an islands in the Persian Gulf, the ministers attending the event called for efforts "to reach a peaceful solution through bilateral negotiations as per the provisions of international law and the UN Charter." The three Persian Gulf islands of Abu Musa, the Greater and Lesser Tunbs have historically been part of Iran, proof of which can be found and corroborated by countless historical, legal, and geographical documents in Iran and other parts of the world. However, the United Arab Emirates has repeatedly laid claim to the islands. The islands fell under British control in 1921, but on November 30, 1971, a day after British forces left the region and just two days before the UAE was to become an official federation, Iran's sovereignty over the islands was restored. The statement by the Arab



countries also claimed that the Arash gas field in the Persian Gulf is exclusively owned by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and they alone have the right to its natural resources.

Nasser Kanaani has earlier said Iran will not tolerate a violation of the nation's rights over the gas field. He has stressed that the country has always adhered to "the path of dialogue and consensus" about the operation of the oil and gas fields shared with its neighbors.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



## Iran will 'do its utmost' to put MKO members on trial

Iran's top human rights official said the Islamic Republic will take all necessary measures to put on trial the members of the Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MKO) terrorist group.

Kazem Gharibabadi, secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, made the remarks in an interview with the Arabic-language Al-Alam television news network. Gharibabadi said that the MKO terrorist group, like other terror outfits, is based in Western countries

and enjoys full support of certain Western states.

"We believe that Westerners draw on these groups as a tool in order to reach their foreign policy objectives. These terrorist groups lack the capacity to play a supporting role for the foreign policy of the West and the United States as their advocates," the top Iranian official said.

He said the MKO terrorists must be accountable for their criminal actions, noting that they have martyred more than 17,000 in-

nocent people in different parts of Iran.

Gharibabadi also pointed to the decision by Branch 1 of Tehran's Criminal Court to bring to trial 104 MKO members, including the ringleader of the terror cult Maryam Rajavi, stating that the deadline for them to introduce defense lawyers to the court expired a few days ago. The top Iranian rights official said the decision to openly hold the trial of the MKO members for their terrorist actions depends on the court itself.

# Anzali Wetland full of attractions

**Bandar Anzali, one of Iran's most picturesque ports, is situated in the northern part of the country, close to the provincial capital city of Rasht. Iran's European North is another name for Bandar Anzali. It is a port that is full of attractions. There are so many sites in Bandar Anzali, and it is impossible to see them all in a brief visit.**

**Bandar Anzali was known as the city of rain in the past, and it still rains a lot, especially in the spring. The humidity in Bandar Anzali is excellent for growing rice.**

**A significant feature of Bandar Anzali is that it dates back to the reign of Nader Shah Afshar, a famous monarch who made enormous efforts to construct the first ship to defend Iran's waters.**

**Anzali Wetland, known in Persian as Mordab-e Anzali, is one of the numerous attractions of this wonderful city that is highly popular with visitors, tappersia.com wrote.**



IRNA

## A unique attraction

As soon as you approach Anzali Wetland and make a small inquiry, you will come across a number of locations full of boats that encourage you to engage in an enjoyable activity. Take one of these boats to the amazing sight. Anzali Wetland is one of Iran's most stunning and well-liked natural tourist spots and is said to be the habitat of numerous creatures. Due to its location, this wetland cannot be compared to any other in Iran. Its high humidity and excellent water quality make it special. This 120-square-kilometer wetland, which is located southwest of Bandar Anzali and the Caspian Sea, is Iran's largest natural wildlife refuge. Its depth is around 2.5 meters in the spring, although it fluctuates depending on how much rain falls and how long the drought lasts. The best time to visit Bandar Anzali is the summer if you have the time to travel. During this period the wetland is awash in tulips, which gives the area beautiful

colors. Lily of the valley, also known as lotus, is a plant with very large, thick, and numerous pink petals on its large, circular, green leaf that emerges from the water.

You may rent a boat in various locations of Anzali Wetland for a price and navigate the water by yourself. This wetland's natural beauty may serve as a compelling subject for photography. Over 30 authorized marine tourist cooperative units are permitted to lend boats to visitors, and they can do so for a variety of prices, depending on their services, time of year, and season of the trip.

## Birdwatching

Several birds that have flown into Iran from its northern neighbors are sheltering in Anzali Wetland. This makes it one of the top locations for engaging in birdwatching activities. You may spend hours sitting, admiring birds, and their activities. In the wildlife refuge, a station for birdwatching has just been es-

tablished.

The wetland is widely renowned for housing a variety of bird species, including herons, purple swamphens, western marsh harriers, ducks, egrets, white-tailed eagles, pygmy cormorants, geese, swans, and coots, to name just a few.

It is the resting place of choice for 77 of the 145 species of migratory birds in Iran. As a result, it accommodates bird-watchers and other wildlife enthusiasts at specified times so they may enjoy an incredible experience and view the life that the region has to offer. A boat is required to take in the stunning scenery of the wetland.

## Kayaking

In the past, the only watercraft an Eskimo could use to go through the Arctic and the North Sea was a kayak, but today kayaks are used for sports events. You may set out on kayaks to experience exciting moments on your own and various sports on the edge of the Anzali Wetland.



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surfiran.com

## Fishing

Fishing has become popular in modern times. You may appreciate and take pleasure in fishing's serenity in the wetland and rivers. Of course, you cannot rent equipment here; you must bring all essential supplies with you.

## Flora and fauna

Anzali Wetland, like all others, is home to a wide range of flora, including water lilies, lotuses, and several other flowers. Plants that require a lot of moisture have been able to thrive in the areas surrounding the marsh because of the presence of damp soil. The majority of these plants are trees and shrubs.

## Mammals

The number of mammals is declining in the wetland as a result of both overharvesting and the loss of safe habitats on the wetland's border. Sheng, boar, hedgehog, weasels water otters, jackals, forest cats, Caspian jaw, and other animals may be found in this region.

Some additional animal species, including Caspian turtles, Persian frogs, lizards, European pond turtles, snakes, black rats, squirrels, and insects like hawksbills, call this marsh home.

## Nearby sites

Abkenar hamlet is one of the sites near Anzali Wetland. This community is situated near the water, as implied by its name (beside the water). Warm and friendly residents of this community work in horticulture, raising summer crops, and rice farming. There are fruit trees in every border region of the wetland, but they are not regarded as a source of revenue for the locals. Additionally, some individuals make a living through fishing. The journey to this region will likely be remembered as a tranquil experience since Abkenar is incredibly calm despite its distinctive attractiveness.

## Islands

Of the many islands in Anzali Wetland, two of them are:

**Qalam Godeh Island:** The outer or southeastern end of the Bandar Anzali coast is an island by the name of Qalam Godeh, and this is where ships typically anchor. The passageway on this island is 125 meters wide, deep, and long, much like a river. Ships in this channel are completely safe to anchor close to the coast, load, and deliver their cargo.

**Mian Pashteh:** This island, which has a forest on it, is located near Qalam Godeh. Due to high gusts, this island, which is just one meter above sea level, frequently floods. It measures 1,260 meters in length, from east to west, and its widest point is 765 meters. At the point where the river empties into the sea, the island's 630-meter-long north shore is situated. An automobile bridge erected over the river serves as the link between this island and the city.

## Weather

In Anzali Wetland, which is close to the Caspian Sea, summers are hot and muggy, while winters are mild, with lows around 0°C.



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By Afifeh  
Abedi  
Expert on  
Central Asia

OPINION  
EXCLUSIVE

Iran's involvement in the Ukraine conflict via the alleged sale of Iranian drones to Russia has been one of the topics that is almost consistently brought up by Western parties or even West's allies in the East during almost every telephone or in-person negotiation with Iran in the past year. The matter is also raised in indirect negotiations involving Iran, the United States, and the European Union. In nearly all these negotiations, the Western parties insist that a precondition for any agreement between Iran and the West is Iran's commitment to cease sending drones to Russia. Iran, in turn, has consistently retorted that it has not exported any drones to Russia for use in the Ukraine conflict.

There are crucial points to be made regarding the reasons and motivations of the West to continue raising the drone issue and conducting extensive propaganda against Iran for its alleged interference in the Ukraine conflict. The West's policy on Iranian drones — like its policy on Iran's other armaments that have consistently been a point of contention — needs to be analyzed and evaluated from realistic perspectives. The analysis should encompass aspects such as the West's traditional policy of isolating and weakening Iran, global trends in geopolitical competitions, and established theoretical discussions in international relations regarding military capabilities as indicators of power. Five such points will be made here.

# Why are Iran's drones non-negotiable?

**1** From a realist perspective, one of the indicators of a country's power is its effective military and weapon capabilities within its borders. This extends to protecting its borders, confronting regional and international threats, and deterring any form of aggressive action in neighboring or distant regions. While proponents of idealistic theories prioritize economic power and the alignment of interests among countries to prevent war, strategists emphasize both defensive and offensive capabilities as the ultimate measure of a country's power. This is because their perennial assumption about the international environment is one filled with threats against the very existence of states. Consequently, in today's transformative international conditions, military effectiveness plays a more significant role in national security.

**2** Simultaneous with shifts in the global order, intensified geopolitical competition and actors' inclination to alter power dynamics weaken arms control regimes, making them susceptible to a collapse. This occurs while effective control over armaments, especially modern technologies, is lacking. The trend is evident in indirect aerial and naval conflicts and the pivotal role that smart weaponry plays. These armaments possess numerous advantages, which have increased their popularity. They reduce human costs, create more disruption, disturb rivals' concentration, and serve intelligence and espionage purposes. An added advantage is that they are more effective in targeting military objectives while mitigating traditional warfare and extensive civilian casualties. Drones, among other things, have thus transformed into effective weaponry. Hence, while Western nations focus on accusing Iran of transferring drones to Russia — among other issues of arms technology — covert and discreet subterranean efforts by Western allies to attain newer military technologies with artificial intelligence and semi-autonomous or autonomous capabilities are rapidly progressing.

The indigenous Mohajer-10 drone unveiled in a ceremony in Tehran, Iran, on August 22, 2023  
● [president.ir](http://president.ir)



**3** In the face of myriad security challenges spanning decades, Iran grapples with the question of why it should prioritize military might over economic prowess. Why embrace the world as anarchic, relying on realist theories of security? Amid escalating international tensions, Iran's security concerns have deepened. It's essential to remember that the security of nations and governments are intertwined. In such circumstances, a focus on unrealistic idealistic theories is unwise.

Western creators of idealistic economic functionalism theories, particularly Americans, exhibit paradoxes of morality and immorality. The annals of international relations are rife with diverse evidence of Western warmongering, justified through various means, albeit appearing legitimate. As seen in the context of the Ukraine conflict, while Russia is labeled the aggressor, American strategists like John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt admit that the actions of the US and NATO provoked Russia.

Although Russia's attack on Ukraine lacked ethical justification, the reality was that Russia sought to ensure its own existence. Post-conflict, the US and European allies hinder negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, exacerbating the conflict. While vociferously denouncing Iran's alleged sale of drones to Russia, Western powers supply Ukraine with weapons, fanning the flames of war. Furthermore, Western parties have repeatedly demonstrated unreliability in honoring their agreements with Iran. The US exited the JCPOA, and Europe failed to support the deal's revival.

This doesn't negate the necessity of potential negotiations and agreements with the West. Instead, it underscores that such interactions must be approached with a strategic outlook, factoring in long-term costs.

**4** The previously mentioned point emphasizes that continued focus on deterrence logically contributes to securing long-term interests. In a changing international landscape, a complex interplay exists between "deterrence" and the construction of a security regime. Failing to transition power amidst anarchic conditions implies being confined to a limited new order, blocking power elevation for an indefinite period. While a significant portion of a country's power indicators stems from economic prowess, such economic power is attainable through various means. Iran, due to its geographical, political, and ideological circumstances, should establish a stronger link between technological and military advancements and its economy. Military-technological progress could become a future income source. Issuance of drones and modern weaponry is also part of Iran's commercialization of its defense industry.

**5** One of the additional objectives of the West's extensive propaganda against Iranian drones is to undermine Iran-Russia relations. Despite the ups and downs, weaknesses, and challenges, Iran-Russia relations present an opportunity for both countries on regional and global levels. West's policy aims to isolate Iran and disrupt Tehran-Moscow ties. Despite criticisms, the Iran-Russia relationship has yielded effective technical and military advancements. During sensitive times and under regional and international pressures, Iran has received direct and indirect political support from Russia. The anti-Iranian propaganda regarding the alleged Iran-Russia drone deal seeks at least to hinder the deal, with broader goals of creating disruption and mistrust in this relationship. Given recent efforts by Iran and Russia to strengthen ties, adhering to the principle of deterrence, alongside diplomacy and regional cooperation, remains a vital security strategy for Iran.

The West's surprise at the progress Iran has made in drone production is notable. Past resolutions against Iran primarily focused on impeding its technical-military progress. However, Iran has invested heavily to neutralize these resolutions and achieve a level of deterrence. This underlines the significance of deterrence as a central security tool for Iran's future, running parallel to diplomacy, multilateralism, and regional engagement.



In the shadowy pages of history, certain figures stand as beacons of courage and foresight. Ahmad Shah Massoud, the legendary Afghan commander was undoubtedly one such luminary. His life's narrative weaves a tapestry of resistance and sacrifice. Today, we revisit the story of a man who could have altered the course of history, had he lived a few days more.

Massoud, an engineering graduate from Kabul Polytechnic University, found himself thrust into a different destiny with the events that gripped Afghanistan in the late 1970s. In 1979, as the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan, Massoud rose to lead small groups of mujahedin, or holy warriors, in the rugged Panjshir Valley, in staunch defiance of the Soviet-backed communist regime.

For a decade, from 1979 to 1989, Massoud stood as a bulwark against the relentless onslaught of the Soviet-backed Afghan government forces, decisively thwarting eight offensives launched by the Soviet army.



In memory of Ahmad Shah Massoud

# Untold story of legendary Afghan freedom fighter

## A 'Che Guevara figure'

A more romantic picture of a guerrilla leader rallying his troops can scarcely be imagined. This black and white photo on the top of the page shows Massoud at 27, addressing his followers in an orchard outside his mother's native village of Rokheh, in northeastern Afghanistan.

The period is late 1980. In time, Massoud will become famous as the "Lion of the Panjshir," celebrated for his courage and charisma.

American journalist Steve Coll wrote in *Ghost Wars*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction,

that Massoud was seen as "a Che Guevara figure, a great actor on history's stage."

"Massoud was a poet, a military genius, a religious man, and a leader of enormous courage who defied death and accepted its inevitability."

Here in this photo, he is not yet known to the outside world. He stands, arm outstretched to his Tajik followers in the Panjshir Valley, less than a year into his David and Goliath campaign against the invading Soviet army. It is a rare photo, almost certain-

ly the first of Massoud to be disseminated internationally. The photographer was Fereydoun Ganjour, a 32-year-old Iranian freelancer who had spent five months taking pictures of the mujahedin in Afghanistan. Ganjour said he had crossed into Afghanistan by foot from Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province and marched with a group of weapons carriers over the Hindu Kush mountains. "There was no oxygen," he recalled laconically. "Three horses died on the way." He was possibly the first pho-

tographer to enter the Panjshir Valley after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Ganjour arrived in August 1980, more than a year before an American journalist writing for the *Christian Science Monitor* provided a detailed account of Massoud's war in the Panjshir Valley.

Once in the Panjshir, Ganjour continued to follow the mujahedin, marveling at their stamina. "They would travel all day, sometimes with only a small piece of hard bread to eat," he said. "I found out how weak I was in comparison."

Rokheh is where he took most of his pictures. One day, the Soviets passed nearby in a convoy of about 60 small tanks mounted with machine guns and dozens of trucks and jeeps carrying food and ammunition. Ganjour witnessed the mujahedin pick off stragglers and shoot down two helicopters. Then the guerrillas were chased in turn, he said, into the hills.

"He is an amazing man," Ganjour also said of their leader, whom he identified in his notes simply as Massoud.

## Unheeded warning

As the Red Army finally retreated in 1989, the Afghan political landscape underwent seismic shifts. A government composed of diverse mujahidin factions emerged but was riddled with internal and ethnic divisions, laying fertile ground for the ascent of the Taliban toward Kabul.

Massoud valiantly held the gates of Kabul against the Taliban forces for a grueling 18 months, backed only by his indomitable

spirit. It was only through extensive financial, logistical, and military support from Pakistan and some Persian Gulf Arab states that the Taliban managed to seize Kabul in the autumn of 1996.

The US Defense Intelligence Agency's documents leaked in November 2011 reveal that Massoud had "limited information" about Al-Qaeda's looming attacks against the United States. He had, in fact, sounded the

alarm months before, only to see his warnings go unheeded.

His foresight did not stop there. In an address to the European Parliament in Brussels, Massoud had conveyed to the Americans that the path to peace in Afghanistan was intertwined with the cessation of Pakistan's support for the Taliban. He had cautioned that Afghanistan's problems would inevitably snowball into a global crisis if swift action was not taken.

But as fate would have it, on September 9, 2001, just two days before the September 11 attacks on the United States, Massoud's life was tragically cut short. He was assassinated by two Al-Qaeda suicide bombers posing as television journalists.

Under the government of former Afghan president Hamid Karzai, Massoud was honored with the title of "National Hero," and September 9 was designated as "Massoud Day." Today, his legacy

endures beyond the borders of Afghanistan.

His son, Ahmad Massoud, now leads the opposition against the Taliban, striving to keep the torch of resistance ablaze. In a world where the Taliban once again hold sway over Afghanistan, Massoud's memory serves as a reminder of bravery, vision, and sacrifices.

\*A John Goddard story published by the *Toronto Star* in 2005 contributed to this article.

# Iran beats Bulgaria to continue unbeaten run

## Sports Desk

Mohammad Mohebbi bagged the winner as Iran walked away with a 1-0 victory over Bulgaria in a friendly in Plovdiv on Thursday.

Brentford midfielder Saman Qoddous was first to an ill-fated back pass by home side's Ilia Gruev before his volley cross found Rostov striker Mohebbi, who headed home with 14 minutes into the contest.

Having seen his contribution to the national team being limited to cameo appearances over the past six years, Qoddous will be looking to build on the man-of-the-match performance he delivered at the Hristo Botev Stadium ahead of January's AFC Asian Cup in Qatar.

Goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand had to be replaced by Payam Niazmand midway through the first half after suffering a groin injury.

The news is a massive blow for Persepolis fans and the manager Yahya Golmohammadi, whose team will have to take on Cristiano Ronaldo and co. in an AFC Champions League opener against Saudi side Al Nassr in 10 days.

This was a fifth successive win for the Asian powerhouse under head coach Amir Qalenoeei, who is yet

concede a loss since taking over from Portuguese Carlos Queiroz following a group stage exit at last year's World Cup.

"We were good in defense and enjoyed an overall decent performance, though we're disappointed not to have converted our chances," Qalenoeei's assistant Antonio Manicone said after the game.

"We have a big goal at the Asian Cup and will keep working hard toward that objective," added the Italian. The three-time champion will be chasing a first trophy at the continent's flagship international event since 1976 when starting its campaign in Group C against the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, and Palestine.

Next for Iran is a friendly against Angola in Tehran on Tuesday.

Ranked 116th in the world, Angola shared the spoils with Madagascar in a goalless stalemate at home on Thursday to finish second to Ghana in the qualification group and progress to the Africa Cup of Nations in Cote d'Ivoire earlier next year.

Qalenoeei's side will fly to Jordan in October's international break to take part in a four-team tournament, also featuring Qatar and Iraq.



Iran's Mohammad Mohebbi (L) and Saman Qoddous celebrate after the winner in a 1-0 victory over Bulgaria at the Hristo Botev Stadium, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, on September 7, 2023. ● FFIRI

## Four more Asian cadet medals for Iranian taekwondo



Narina Khayat (R) and Pinar Lotfizadeh (L) pose with their Asian cadet medals alongside Hadi Saei, the head of the Iranian Taekwondo Federation, in Beirut, Lebanon, on September 7, 2023. ● taekwondo.ir

## Sports Desk

Having bagged six medals – including two golds – on the first day of the Asian Cadet Taekwondo Championships, Iranians picked up where they had left off on Day 2 by capturing another four in Beirut, Lebanon.

Narina Khayat defeated Uzbekistan's Rabboniya Ruslanova in straight rounds for the gold medal of the girls' -164cm class on Thursday.

Pinar Lotfizadeh, however, had to settle for a silver in the girls' -168cm event after a 2-0 defeat against Rushanakhon Ravshanova – also from Uzbekistan.

In the boys' competitions, Pouya Kiaheyrati came short against Jordanian Osama al-Manaseer in the -168cm final and took the silver, while Armin Masoumi finished his boys' -172cm campaign with a consolation bronze.

Seyyed Mohammad Abdollahi (boys -152cm) and Fatemeh Zahra Baqeri (girls -148cm) were the Iranian gold medalists on the first day of the cadet event.

The results came after the Iranian 10-girl squad had won the Asian junior title earlier in the Lebanese capital, courtesy of a remarkable six golds, two silvers, and a bronze.

## South Korea still a work in progress, says Klinsmann

REUTERS – Coach Jurgen Klinsmann said South Korea are still going through a transition period and wants to see his squad build a strong mentality as they head toward next year's Asian Cup in Qatar. The Koreans extended their winless run under the German to five games on Thursday with a 0-0 draw against Wales.

Klinsmann, 59, was appointed in February and tasked with building on South Korea's run to the knockout rounds of last year's World Cup. Prior to Thursday's game they had drawn against Colombia and El Salvador and lost to Uruguay and Peru.

"The team is in the process of developing toward Qatar," Klinsmann

told reporters in Cardiff. "It's a normal process between two World Cups that there's a type of a turnover into the next generation of players.

"For me, it's very important to see where they are mentally ... and I look a lot about how the team develops as a group. If you want to win or want to go far in a tournament, you need a very, very strong spirit."

Captain Son Heung-min also came to Klinsmann's defence after the German was criticised for spending more time at his U.S. home than in South Korea since his appointment.

"I understand where fans come from, as someone who's been on the national team for a long time," Son said. "I am not saying



South Korea head coach Jurgen Klinsmann (L) speaks with Wales manager Robert Page before the goalless friendly at Cardiff City Stadium, Cardiff, United Kingdom, on September 7, 2023. ● ACTION IMAGES

the coach is always right, but I also don't think fans are always right, either. "Many different players

have been getting opportunities. In some ways, the coach is trying to identify new players, in-

stead of trying to put up results right away. I am sure he knows what he's doing."

## Sabalenka fends off Keys to reach US Open final

AFP – Aryna Sabalenka fought back from the brink of defeat to overcome American 17th seed Madison Keys in a third-set tie-break and line up a US Open final against home favourite Coco Gauff.

Keys served for the match in the second set but incoming world number one Sabalenka overhauled the 2017 runner-up to win 0-6, 7-6 (7/1), 7-6 (10/5) to reach her second Grand Slam final.

"I'm really proud of myself that I was able to

turn around this game and get this win, because it was just incredible," said Sabalenka. "I was just, like, 'Come on, keep trying, keep pushing, like, I don't know, do something extra. Just try to turn around this match.'"

"It really means a lot to be in the final of the US Open for the first time," she added.

Sabalenka rode an emotional rollercoaster, angrily remonstrating with her coaching team at times, before being able to sheepishly laugh off celebrating prematurely in the decisive tie-

break. "I thought that we play tie-break up till seven. I was just all over the place," she said. The Australian Open champion will bid for her second Grand Slam title on Saturday against the 19-year-old Gauff. The American holds a 3-2 edge but this will be their first meeting at a major.

"She's an unbelievable player," said Sabalenka. "The crowd will be supporting her a lot. I will do everything I can. I'll be fighting for every point and I will do my best."



By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staff writer

Harley-Davidson is, beyond any doubt, one of the most popular motorcycle brands in the whole wide world. Ask any biker or motorcycle collector to name just one bike they would definitely want to ride, or have in their collection, and they'd come right up and answer: Harley-Davidson.

The immense popularity of Harley-Davidson worldwide might be puzzling to some. At first glance, it seems that these heavyweight bikes are not particularly known for their blistering speed, unlike the Japanese Suzukis and Hondas; nor are they famous for smoothly climbing rocks and dunes, unlike trail or cross-country bikes; even their maneuverability in a race, or on the streets, is not comparable to that of some other bikes.

Nevertheless, Harley-Davidsons offer a collection of all these features. These mighty bikes come with an unparalleled mixture of speed and power. Besides, the unique design of their engine, combined with a large fuel tank and big tires, makes them an appealing vehicle for road trips – no more will you be stranded on the side of the road, waiting for a kind stranger to pull over and give you a few drops of gas.

They also have the upper hand in terms of safety, acting like a tank in the face of almost any obstacle. Harley-Davidsons are created in a way that their riders – given they are not utterly unlucky – would not come to any harm heading on.

Still, none of these could account for such vogue and charm. What sets Harley-Davidsons apart from the rest is their widely recognized elegance. The awesomeness associated with riding one of these bikes – with their long handlebars, prominent wheels, curved, single seats, and a terrifying, resonant sound comparable to the roaring of a lion – stems from an aura of grandeur going hand in hand with the biker.

Perhaps what further expanded the vast acclaim for Harley-Davidsons are those scenes from popular – or cult – Hollywood movies etched upon our memories, in which superstars ride these ferocious vehicles: Jack Nicholson in 1969 cult classic 'Easy Rider' and, of course, Arnold Schwarzenegger in 1991 blockbuster 'Terminator 2: Judgment Day' – the latter arguably one of the most

watched chase scenes of all time. There's no surprise then, that despite many technological advances, and in spite of Harley-Davidson directors sticking to their traditional designs and technologies (about 120 years after the inception of the company), there's still no competitor in the market for them. The stature and popularity of this mammoth of a bike still reigns unchecked.

**Harley-Davidsons in Iran**

Harley-Davidsons were brought to Iran back in the day mainly as vehicles for the law enforcement organizations. They were even operational up until the late 1980s, but problems arose in supplying their spare parts, especially for the engines, and they were gradually phased out and replaced by other brands. Subsequently, many of these bikes and their spare parts were sold in auctions.

In comes Yousef Shekarandaz, who owns a collection of classic motorcycles in the basement of his shop near Jomhuri Street. He is one of those who have bought containers of Harley-Davidson parts. Through his enthusiasm and knowledge of motorcycle maintenance, he was able to assemble those parts to build himself a collection of majestic motorbikes.

The dimly lit, old stairs of his basement lead to a stylish, breathtaking collection of motorbikes, some of which are more than a century old. In addition to Harley-Davidsons, Yousef owns other motorcycles produced by Triumph, Zündapp, Hercules, Vespa, and BSA, whose rubber horns or manual gears are telltale signs of their relic status.

The gathering of those classic motorbikes in that cozy, quiet corner of the basement, compared to the hustle and bustle of the crowd up there on Jomhuri Street, was reminiscent of the 1995 movie 'Underground', which narrates the lives of some partisans who, in the midst of World War II, escape the Nazis and take refuge in the basement of a house, only to reemerge 20 years later to find out that the war is over and everything has changed.

Certainly, none of the unsuspecting crowd passing by the front of the shop upstairs could have the slightest idea that such a collection of the most valuable, classic, antique motorcycles are gathering dust here.

"For 30 years or so, my main job was to sell antiques in a shop on Naderi Street, at the Istanbul Intersection in downtown Tehran," says Yousef,



adding with an air of unease, "But it's a few years now that, because of my former partners' decisions, I was forced to change lanes. Now I sell audio equipment in this shop, which I'm not interested in at all."

Like many children his age, Yousef was an avid lover of motorbikes. He fondly remembers the old motorcycle shop in front of their downtown house on Salsabil Street, where he used to longingly goggle at its bikes every day without fail.

"When I came of age, I started buying motorbikes for myself. From Suzuki AX 100 to Kawasaki Z1300."

The first classic bike he bought, however, was a German Zündapp about 19 years ago. He placed it like a statue in one of the rooms of his house to be revered along with other antiques he had collected.

"But it stood above the rest. Everyone who saw it was immediately drawn to it."

The pride and joy he felt upon seeing the reaction of his visitors prompted him to buy a couple more classic motorcycles. Then, he ended up at the inevitable crossroad.

"I said to myself that now I have to have a Harley-Davidson."

Only, there was a big problem. You could not find more than a few dozen of those mighty bikes in Iran, and the ones for sale at the time were only scrap. Therefore, Yousef came up with the idea of getting his hands on some of those auctioned off Harley-Davidson parts and accessories. He sold his car and borrowed some money to buy two 20-foot containers of what he desired.

"When I finally bought those pieces, everyone who saw them said, 'What good are they?'"

Little did they suspect that this antique dealer, motorcycle enthusiast knew exactly what they were worth. "All these parts were manufactured and packaged in the original Milwaukee facility, which has now turned into a museum. They are all produced by hand, whereas the parts produced after the 80s are completely machine-made."

At that point, Yousef employed the services of a mechanic and started to assemble the bikes. Being a sculptor himself, Yousef managed the work, designing the process, and they assembled whole motorcycles, with complete chassis and everything.

"In the end, from

those pieces, more than 40 Harley-Davidsons were obtained, all of which are as dear as sculptures to me."

When his collection was shaping up to be bigger than what he expected, he panicked a little bit.

"I thought, what if the authorities come and think they are smuggled or are obtained in illegal ways? Which they did, and asked me, 'Where did you get these bikes?' And I showed them the papers and told them I bought them from you, indeed."

At that point, Yousef decided to create a safe haven for his beloved bikes, arranging them in order to be revered by visitors of his shop.

"But this time, municipality officials came and objected to the structures and dismantled them. After that, I sold some of the bikes and the rest of them are just as you can see here."

The collector believes that he shouldn't have been discouraged, but rather appreciated and encouraged. "These bikes are a part of our history, they are our cultural heritage and a big capital for our country. You may be surprised to know that not even one of the likes of these motorcycles are kept in the traffic police museum."

Yousef's collection is undoubtedly unparalleled in Iran, and perhaps could give some of other collections abroad a run for their money. He now owns a total of 15 Harley-Davidsons, plus some 30 other classic motorbikes manufactured by other world-famous brands.

"The first Harley-Davidson bikes were imported to Iran in around 1940, but the oldest one I got is a 1200cc bike from 1942. The rest of them are manufactured in later years, up to 1979, which was the last year that Harley-Davidsons were molded and manufactured by hand."

Yousef has at some point espoused the idea of turning his invaluable collection into a museum of some sort instead of letting them gather dust in the basement. Yet, he does not believe that such a deed is possible without official support from relevant authorities.

"But at the end of the day, I don't believe that they would value such a collection."

In addition to the currently assembled motorcycles, he has approximately 38,000 spare parts, out of which "about 30 more bikes could be assembled." Yet, each of these new 30 Harley-Davidsons would lack some minor parts.

"I have about 95 percent of the parts needed for each new bike, with some of them in need of a bolt or a cylinder here or there."

Since other brands' spare parts do not fit Harley-Davidsons, and due to sanctions, Yousef is not able to finish what he has started. Nonetheless, he is sure of the treasure he sits on.

"Some foreigners are struggling to get their hands on some of these pieces, because someone who owns an old Harley-Davidson is not willing to put new spare parts on it, and definitely wants something original."

"Therefore, if a regular spare part costs ten dollars, an original one costs a hundred."

Hidden collection of majestic motorbikes in Tehran | **Sleeping Giants**

## Iran's 'Twenty-one Weeks Later' to debut globally at Busan festival



**MEHR** – In its first international appearance, the Iranian short film, 'Twenty-one Weeks Later,' directed by Nasrin Mohammadpour, will compete at the 28th Busan International Film Festival in South Korea.

Mohammadpour's film serves as the only official representative of Iranian short films at this festival. To mark this achievement, the English poster for the short film, designed by Martin Kheybali, was released and unveiled.

The 28th edition of the Korean film festival is scheduled to take place from October 4 to 13 in South Korea.

Similar to the director's previous works, this short film delves into women's issues, this time focusing on a subject related to motherhood. The film features a cast including Banafsheh Riazi, Leila Hosseinzadeh, Soodabeh Bahraminejad, and Parisa Asgari.

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# The Grandeur of Arbaeen in Iran



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### Arts & Culture Desk

In a remarkable turn of events, a record-breaking number of pilgrims flocked to Iraq for Arbaeen rituals this year, as confirmed by Iran's Police Chief, Ahmad Reza Radan.

During a recent visit to the Chazzabeh border crossing in southwestern Iran, Brigadier General Radan announced that more than four million people traveled to Iraq from Iran through six border crossings en route

to Karbala, Iraq, to participate in the Arbaeen procession, paying tribute to Imam Hussein (PBUH). The police chief noted that over 400,000 foreign pilgrims from 10 countries also crossed Iran this year to travel to Iraq

for the Arbaeen rituals. Radan expressed gratitude towards the Iraqi government for their remarkable cooperation during this year's Arbaeen, characterizing it as "extraordinary" and truly heartening.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi underscored the profound meaning of Arbaeen, emphasizing that it sends a powerful message of freedom and independence across generations while ensuring that the memory of Imam Hussein (PBUH) endures. Speaking in Birjand, the capital of South Khorasan Province, Raeisi stated, "Arbaeen is a flag to keep Ashura alive and conveys a message of freedom and independence. It reminds the people that they should always live with the memory of Imam Hussain (PBUH)."

He further noted that Ashura, Imam Hussein's sacrifice, serves as a source of inspiration for human history's devel-

opments and serves as the bedrock for uprisings, movements, and revolutions. This year, Karbala, the holy city hosting the shrine of Imam Hussein (PBUH), attracted 22 million pilgrims, according to Iraqi officials.

Furthermore, Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili, emphasized the evolving dynamics of Arbaeen.

He pointed out that young men and women, particularly those born in the 2000s, have enthusiastically embraced this public expression of faith, with women and girls comprising nearly 55 to 60 percent of the participants.

Esmaeili emphasized the need to recognize and celebrate the dignity, sacrifices, and strong presence of women in this significant religious gathering, demonstrating that Arbaeen continues to evolve and resonate with people from all walks of life.

## Iran's participation in international tourism exhibitions

### Arts & Culture Desk

According to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism's plan, Iran is expected to participate in 18 foreign tourism exhibitions by the end of the Iranian year (March 19, 2024). However, assessments indicate that the political behavior of some countries may affect Iran's decision to attend certain exhibitions.

As reported by ISNA, participation in international tourism exhibitions is considered one of Iran's most significant promotional tools for tourism. While some tourism officials believe that participating in international exhibitions only had a minimal impact on attracting foreign tourists, private sector stakeholders and tourism investors hold a different view. They argue that Iran's absence from foreign exhibitions will significantly harm its tourism industry, leading to its gradual decline, especially as they assert that promoting Iran's tourism in foreign media requires minimal cost and Iran's international tourism advertising efforts have been limited to exhibitions and B2B commercial meetings.

Due to the easing of COVID restrictions and the reopening of international exhibitions, Iran's presence in its target and traditional markets has been notable. However, a review of its presence reveals a lack of comprehensive and targeted strategies to make a tangible impact on tourism. This situation has been exacerbated over the past year due to the political behavior of certain countries.

Nonetheless, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism has planned to participate in 10 tourism exhibitions in the top-targeted countries by the end of the current Iranian year. However, some of these exhibitions have been hindered due to reasons such as U.S. sanctions or sporadic political behavior in certain countries. Some Iranian tourism agencies have stated that they will attend these exhibitions as visitors to maintain Iran's visibility. According to prioritization and planning, Iran is expected to have a presence in exhibitions in France, China, Italy, the UK, Spain, Turkey, India, Germany, and Russia by the end of the Iranian year. However, Iran will not have a pavilion in the exhibitions in France due

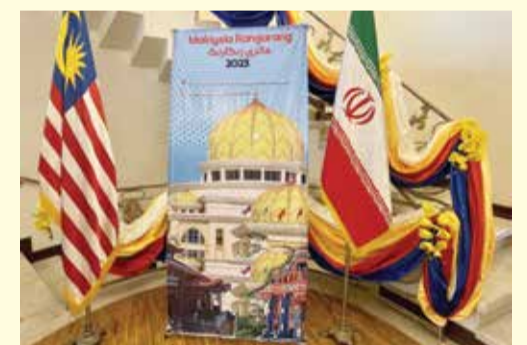
to insufficient number of participants, and in the case of the highly competitive English exhibition, the private sector will be responsible for the representation.

China's leading outbound travel exhibition, known as COTTM, has temporarily excluded Iran due to US sanctions, but Iran is expected to have an official presence at the ITB Shanghai exhibition in China.

In addition to these exhibitions, for secondary-target markets, Iran plans to participate in exhibitions in Armenia, Oman, Japan, Qatar, Poland, Austria, and Serbia. The decision to attend these exhibitions will be made based on the number of applicants and exhibition conditions.

Iran, which, according to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism, attracts the most travelers and tourists from neighboring countries, has primarily focused on these nations over the past year. However, marketing efforts in these countries still follow traditional methods. As part of the ministry's marketing plan, it is expected to organize specialized tourism exhibitions in Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq.

## Malaysians celebrate National Day in Tehran



Malaysians in Tehran marked the 66th National Day and 60th Malaysia Day on Tuesday at the residence of Malaysian Ambassador to Tehran Khairi bin Omar.

Both days are significant for Malaysians as August 31 marks independence from colonial rule, while September 16 marks the date when the peninsular states of Malaya merged with Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore to form Malaysia in 1963.

The ceremony titled "Malaysia Rancangan" was participated by a number of senior officials including ambassadors of some other countries as well as officials from Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The ambassador of Malaysia welcomed the participants and briefed them on the occasion and he also pointed to the good relations between both states.

Malaysia has been one of Iran's friends since the start of their political relations following the independence of Malaya as both countries are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) which have used these frameworks to develop political ties.

The journey towards Malaysia's independence was led by its first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, along with a delegation of ministers and political leaders. They engaged in negotiations with the British to secure the country's freedom.

