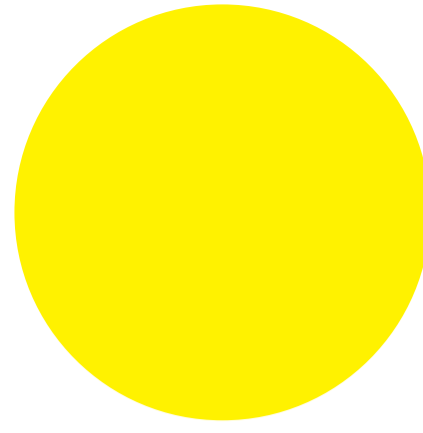


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Raisi inaugurates several projects in southern Iran



During his second visit to Fars Province, President Ebrahim Raisi inaugurated many development and infrastructure projects in various sectors.

The Shiraz-Isfahan freeway as well as eight major water transfer projects were among the most important inaugurated projects, according to president.ir.

With a total length of about 213 kilometers, the freeway has been constructed in six segments.

With the completion of the project, in addition to advantages including reducing fuel consumption, the route from Shiraz to Isfahan and the north of the country, in general, has become 135 kilometers shorter.

The inaugurated transport projects also included several rural and main roads, road maintenance, safety projects, fixing accident-prone areas, and technical building maintenance projects.

The launch of the second line of potable water transfer from Dorudzan Dam to Shiraz, with a total length of 78 kilometers, was one of the water projects which contribute to meeting the water need of 40 percent of people in Shiraz.

Arriving in Shiraz on Thursday on a two-day visit to Fars Province, Raisi was accompanied by members of his cabinet.

During the president's visit, over 100 road transportation projects and 20 infrastructure projects in industrial parks as well as over 900 gas supply projects were inaugurated.

Oil Minister Javad Owji inaugurated the first phase of a refining project in the city of Mohr on Friday.

Having a capacity of refining 6.6 million barrels of gas condensates per year, the plant is among the nine biggest refineries of the country.

The first phase project, which was implemented by the private sector, creates 200 direct job opportunities.

The plant is in the immediate vicinity of Parsian Gas Refinery and Parsian Sepehr Ethane Extraction Complex.

The construction of the refinery started in September 2014, but the executive operations had halted due to some obstacles.

Development of the Pasargad Steel Complex in the city of Kavar was another project that was inaugurated by Industry, Mine, and Trade Minister Abbas Alibadi during the provincial visit.

The projects include gas supply to two cities and 63 villages, as well as 330 industrial projects in the gas industry.

Iran to play role of gas hub: *Owji*



Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji (R) attends a specialized session of the 6th Russian Energy Week International Forum in Moscow on October 12, 2023. **SHANA**

Iran is the safest and cheapest route for energy transit to international waters, said Iran's oil minister on Thursday, underscoring that the global energy market cannot deny Iran's key role.

In addition to its rich energy resources, Iran is located at a suitable geographic position, connecting Asia to Europe, and the only land route between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf, stated Javad Owji, adding that some countries around Iran are oil and gas exporters and some importers, and such conditions make it easier for Iran to play the role of an energy hub, Shana reported. Owji, who addressed a specialized session of the

6th Russian Energy Week International Forum in Moscow said that considering its natural resources and northern neighbors, Iran is the leading player of energy trade in the Middle East and can turn into a gas hub.

Iran is currently exporting gas to Turkey and Iraq, he said, while Pakistan and India are potential customers of Iran's gas. Trading and swapping crude oil, oil products, and petrochemicals have given Iran a special status, he mentioned. Import and export terminals, as well as oil and gas transmission pipelines are indicative of Iran's great capacity for turning into the region's energy hub.

Gas supplies discussion

Speaking at the plenary session of the Russian Energy Week, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Tehran is discussing the possibility of Russian gas supplies with Moscow.

"Iranian partners are also discussing with us the opportunities of Russian gas supplies to the Iranian market," Putin said. Preparatory activities for the North-South corridor project are close to the end, and construction can start shortly, the Russian president noted.

"We have agreements with all the participants in this process: relevant docu-

ments are in place with Iran, and with Azerbaijan. Turkmenistan is showing interest from the other side of the Caspian Sea, and Kazakhstan," the president added.

Putin remarks on Iran-Russia energy swap welcome

Owji welcomed Russian President Vladimir Putin's remarks on increasing energy exchanges between the two countries, as his reaction came during his meeting with Russian energy giant Gazprom's Alexei Miller.

Pointing to his meeting with Russian Deputy Minister Alexander Novak, Owji called

for taking practical steps to create a gas hub on the northern coast of the Persian Gulf. Miller, for his part, pointed to growing relations between Moscow and Tehran, expressing Gazprom's readiness for further cooperation with Iran.

Gazprom to help gas hub creation

Gazprom will explore the issue of potentially creating a gas hub in Iran, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said in an interview with RT Arabic, adding that Moscow will participate in the project if it has potential.

"I think that our Gazprom Company will explore the issue, and if it is indeed a potentially good project it will participate in it, of course. And Russia as well. But it is necessary to assess and explore it," he said.

Earlier reports said that Iran, with the participation of Russia, Qatar and Turkmenistan, planned to create a gas hub in the industrial region of Asaluyeh in Bushehr Province.

Asaluyeh serves as the production hub for the world's largest oil and gas field, which is located in the central part of the Persian Gulf, in Iranian and Qatari territorial waters. The total geological reserves of the field are estimated at 53 trillion cubic meters of natural gas, and 7.7 billion cubic meters of condensate. The recoverable reserves are estimated at 35.6 trillion cubic meters of natural gas, and three billion cubic meters of condensate.

Iran says it has access to unfrozen funds in Qatar, rejects reports otherwise

Iran rejected a report that says the country had been barred from accessing its \$6 billion fund, recently unfrozen and transferred to Qatari banks.

"There has been no change in the issue of Iran's access to its foreign exchange resources in Qatari banks and the agreement [reached in this regard] remains in force," Nour News, which is affiliate with Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said on Thursday.

Earlier in the day, the Washington Post reported that US Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo had told House Democrats that American officials and the Qatari government had agreed to stop Iran from accessing a \$6 billion

account in light of a surprise attack by the Palestinian Hamas resistance group against Israel.

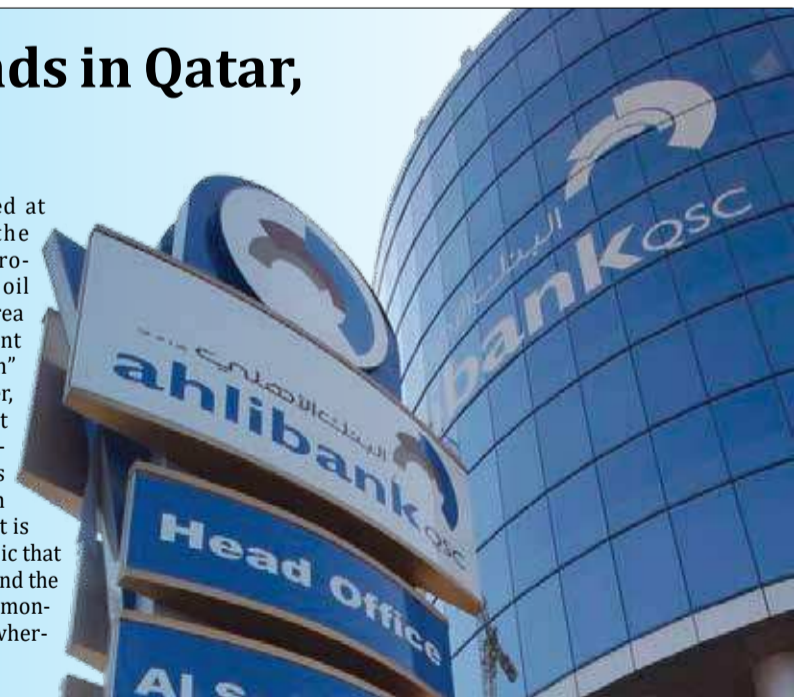
Adeyemo's remarks were cited by two people who were speaking on the condition of anonymity.

In August, Iran and the United States agreed to a Qatar-brokered deal to secure the release of some \$6 billion of Iranian funds that had remained blocked in two South Korean banks since 2018, under the pretext of US sanctions.

The money was successfully transferred last month to accounts held by six Iranian banks in Qatar's Ahlibank and Dukhan Bank.

The administration of US President

Joe Biden claimed at the time that the funds and the proceeds of Iranian oil sales to South Korea could only be spent on "humanitarian" purposes. However, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi underscored Tehran's full authority on its assets, saying it is the Islamic Republic that decides how to spend the funds and that the money will be spent "wherever we need it".



Iran's sponge iron production rises almost 6%

Economy Desk

Production of sponge iron in Iran increased by about six percent during the first half of the current Iranian year (March 21-September 22), compared to the related figure of the past year.

The sponge production during the six months to September 22 was about 18.85 million tons, 5.9%

up from last year's output of 17.8 million tons, according to ISNA.

Sponge iron, also called direct-reduced iron (DRI), is produced from the direct reduction of iron ore (in the form of lumps, pellets, or fines) into iron by reducing gas or elemental carbon produced from natural gas or coal. Many iron ores are suitable for direct re-

duction.

Also, 4.75 million tons of steel sections were produced in Iran during the six-month period, which is a 4.8% increase compared to the same period last year.

Steel production volume during the first six months of the current Iranian year witnessed a 3% surge compared to the same period last year.

Iran's beautiful islands

When thinking about Iran, most people have in mind the immensity of its deserts, or the beauties of its

mosques and palaces. Few people consider its islands, yet the country is a great destination for those

who crave white sandy beaches and turquoise waters. In this article, discover Iran's most beautiful islands.

Two seas run alongside Iran: the Caspian Sea in the north and the Persian Gulf in the south. While Iran has only one island in the Caspian Sea, it possesses no less than 34 islands in the Persian Gulf, out of the 90 small and large islands in this area. Not all of

them can be visited, either because they are military territories or because they are under environmental protection. But there are plenty remaining islands to offer wonders to travelers, among which the most famous are the two largest: Qeshm and Kish.

Qeshm Island

Qeshm is the largest island in the Persian Gulf, and by far one of the most interesting. The island has been a UNESCO geopark since 2006, and has many significant geosites. The most famous are the Chahkooh Canyon, the Valley of Stars, and the

Salt Cave, which is the longest in the world. Qeshm Island also has a singular culture, deeply influenced by the neighboring Arab countries. Visiting Qeshm Island is easy, as there is an international airport and daily flights to and from Tehran. Furthermore, most nationalities can stay in Qeshm without a visa for 30 days, surfiran.com wrote.



● hamishehsajafar.com



● visitiran.ir

Kish Island

Kish is Iran's second largest island, yet it is much smaller than Qeshm. The island is famous for its pristine sandy beaches and fancy hotel resorts. Visitors do not need a visa to enter Kish Island, which can be reached by air. Kish Island can be

a rather expensive destination, as it focuses on providing great entertainment (waterpark, dolphinarium, zoo, various watersports, etc.) and plenty of shopping centers. While Kish Island is famous for its modernity, there are also several natural and historical attractions such as the old Greek Ship and the underground city, Kariz.

Hormuz Island

There are plenty of other beautiful islands that attract visitors in southern Iran.

Hormuz Island, situated between the port city of Bandar Abbas and

Qeshm Island, is a must-see. It is sometimes called Rainbow Island, as it is famous for its colorful mountains and soil. The island is of great geological interest, and is a stunning succession of various natural landscapes.



● iraniantours.com



● IRNA

Hengam Island

Just two kilometers south of Qeshm Island, Hengam Island is famous for its

dolphins that can easily be observed from autumn to spring. Hengam is a small, 33-square-kilometer, inhabited island that attracts many visitors for its fauna and flora. Besides dolphins,

there are also many gazelles on the island. Furthermore, it's a perfect destination for swimming, with a pristine beach and crystal clear water full of colorful fish.

Larak Island

Larak is another beautiful island near Qeshm and Hormuz. While it's not much visited, it is becoming increasingly popular for its pristine and beautiful nature. The island is 77 square kilometers, and is inhabited by about 500 villagers who speak their own dialect.

Like Qeshm, Hormuz, and Hengam, Larak combines small mountains and sandy beaches. There are also the remains of a Portuguese Castle. There is no public transportation to Larak Island, but it's easy to get a boat from Qeshm pier and cross the 10 kilometers separating the two islands.

Lavan Island, located west of Hormuzgan

Province, is Iran's third largest island. It can be reached from the port city of Mogham in 30 minutes by boat. While mostly residential and inhabited by fishermen families, Lavan Island is not so touristic. However, the island has a beautiful and lush nature, covered with shrubs and tall trees and vast pristine beaches of white sand.



● jabama.com



● jahannews.com

Maroo Island

Maroo Island, also called Shidvar Island, is located near the port city of Mogham, in western Hormuzgan Province, and can be reached via Lavan Island. The small island is famous for its white sand beaches

and a seabed full of colorful coral reefs, which makes it a paradise for divers. Because of its rich and fragile ecosystem, the entrance of tourists on the island is regulated and requires authorization from the Environment and Maritime Organization.



● atto-co.com

Ashuradeh Island

Ashuradeh is the only island in the Caspian Sea, in northern Iran. In Golestan Province, the island is part of Bandar Torkaman. While it was once inhabited, its 300 families have now left. The island has very fertile soil suitable for growing pomegranate trees and raspberry bushes. It is also where 40 percent of Iran's caviar is produced. On the island, visitors can discover the remains of two historical buildings dating back to the Russian occupation in 1837: the Russian Fort and the Russian counselor's house.



● rahbal.com

Protected islands of southern Iran

There are many other small islands in the Persian Gulf, both in Hormuzgan Province and Bushehr Province. Since these islands are breeding grounds for many species of migratory birds and have a fragile ecosystem, entering them is only possible after getting permission from the Department of the Environment. Most of these islands are uninhabited and only fishermen come by sometimes. Among the most beautiful of these islands are Nakhiloo Island (small enough to be visit-

ed in an hour by foot), Umm al-Gorm Island, and Tahmadon Island (one of the largest, with a length of about 12 kilometers). These three islands can be reached by boat from the city of Bord Khun. We could also mention Dara Island, Kharko Island, and Ghabr-e Nakhoda Island. On the latter, which can be crossed in less than 30 minutes by foot, there is something resembling a tombstone, which, according to local stories, is the tomb of a captain ('nakhoda' in Persian) from Bushehr.

Islands you won't be able to visit

There are still plenty of small and medium-sized islands in the Persian Gulf that belong to Iran, but that are not accessible to visitors. Indeed, many of these islands are used for military purposes, as the Strait of Hormuz is a strategic military area. One of the most famous islands is Abu Musa; the Greater and Lesser Tunbs, Siri Island and Farur Island are other islands to which access is prohibited.



● rahbal.com

A reminder to Troika Resolution 1929 was terminated



By Ebrahim
Beheshti
Staff writer

The UK, France, Germany, and the US have separately accused Iran of violating a UN Security Council resolution endorsing the 2015 nuclear deal after it launched the satellite Nour-3 (Light-3) into orbit on September 27.

The Nour-3 imaging satellite was successfully placed into an orbit 450 kilometers (280 miles) above the Earth's surface aboard the Iranian Qased satellite carrier. It was the latest successful launch by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Force. Space Commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force Ali Jafarabadi has described the satellite as having an "image accuracy that is two and a half times that of the Nour-2 satellite."

Nour-2, launched in March 2022, has remained in orbit to this day. Nour-1, launched in 2020, fell back to Earth last year.

The four above-mentioned Western states consider the launch of the satellite a threat to the region and international security.

However, Nasser Kanaani, the spokesperson for the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasized that despite some interpretations that stem from the unilateral desires of certain governments, under international law, there are no restrictions on the Islamic Republic of Iran's scientific and applied activities in the field of space research.

Fierce Western criticism of Iran's missile tests or satellite launches has become a repetitive pat-

tern against Iran. They have attempted to label any Iranian action in these domains as a violation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and Resolution 2231. The Americans were not even satisfied with the ban on missile activities in Iran in 2020 and demanded the extension of the embargo on Iran's conventional military weapons, which ended in 2020 as part of the nuclear agreement. Their excessive demands ended in a major legal and political embarrassment for them as their resolution proposed on the Security Council session of August 14, 2020, had only the Dominican Republic's affirmative vote, and the conventional arms sanctions against Iran expired on October 18, 2020.

Iran's space program to continue under international law

Iran's permanent ambassador to the United Nations said the Islamic Republic is determined to keep up with its activities related to ballistic missiles and space-launch vehicles within the framework of international law.

Amir Saeid Iravani addressed UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the Security Council's President Sergio Franca Danese in a letter on Wednesday, Press TV reported.

"We reiterate, once again, that Iran is determined to continue its activities related to ballistic mis-

siles and space-launch vehicles, both of which are within its inherent rights under international law and are necessary for the preservation of its security as well as socioeconomic interests."

The letter came after Britain, Germany and France claimed in a letter to the UN on Monday that Iran's space activities violate the Security Council's resolutions. The trio submitted the letter after Iran launched Qased (Messenger) satellite carrier in late September.

Iravani also said in his letter that the UK, France

and Germany "once again desperately attempted to establish an unrelated and fabricated link between paragraph 3 of Annex B to Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015) and Iran's Qased Space Launch Vehicle (SLV) on 27 September 2023, which successfully launched the Noor-3 satellite into orbit."

"The Islamic Republic of Iran categorically rejects unsubstantiated allegations made against it in the letter and reiterates that Iran has not conducted any activity inconsistent with Resolution 2231

(2015). Iran regards such allegations as unfounded, that are equally as unjustified as the arbitrary and misleading interpretations of Resolution 2231," Iran's UN envoy said.

The Islamic Republic's "position regarding these repeated and unfounded claims have been elaborated on in its numerous letters," Iravani said.

London has also claimed the carrier used "technology essential for the development of a long-range ballistic missile system."

Iravani reiterated, "Iran has repeatedly stated

Different Interpretations

Throughout the years following the JCPOA, there has always been a clear difference in interpretation between Iran and Western parties regarding Iranian missile tests, satellite launches, and their connection to UN Security Council Resolution 2231. Western parties claim, like they just did again, that this resolution prohibits any ballistic missile activity by Iran, including the use of satellite launch vehicles for placing satellites into orbit. They claim that satellite launches help Tehran's ballistic missile program. As French Foreign Ministry spokesperson Anne-Claire Legendre claimed, "These activities are all the more worrying in the context of the continuing escalation of Iran's nuclear program."

However, the reality is quite different from the Western interpretation as per the texts of the JCPOA and Resolution 2231. Banning Iran's ballistic missile activities was not mentioned in the 2015 JCPOA text at all. Even in Resolution 2231, the issue was not raised. What the Western parties refer to is a non-mandatory and non-binding request in the third article of the second appendix of the resolution. This article calls on Iran not to have any activities related to the design and use of ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

So, this part of the appendix of Resolution 2231, contrary to the limiting Resolution of 1929, makes only a non-binding request ("called"). What is more, it is not even about the activities of ballistic missiles "capable of delivering" atomic weapons, but about ballistic missiles "designed to be capable" of carrying nuclear weapons. In fact, Resolution 2231 represents a significant modification by the UN Security Council regarding Iran's missile activities compared to Resolution 1929. Resolution 1929, adopted in 2010, imposes extensive prohibitions against Iran's conventional weapons activities in Article 8 and even more stringent prohibitions against Iran's ballistic missiles in Article 9. Article 9 states the Security Council "decides that Iran shall not undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons, and States are required to take all necessary measures to prevent the transfer of related technology or technical assistance."

Thus, the claims of the European states and the US against Iran's missile tests and satellite launches seem to align more with Resolution 1929 rather than Resolution 2231. This is despite the fact that these four states are well aware that with the 2015 JCPOA agreement and the endorsement of Resolution 2231, the previously passed Resolution 1929 has automatically been nullified.

Untenable Positions

The positions of Western countries are so legally untenable that even BBC Persian, on April 23, 2020, explicitly stated that the European trio's request from the UN secretary-general to inform the Security Council that Iran's ballistic missile program is not a violation of the JCPOA or Resolution 2231.

In response to the US State Department's previous claim that the launch of the Nour-1 satellite in 2020 violated Resolution 2231, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova had dismissed the claim, instead accusing Washington of violating the nuclear deal.

According to Zakharova, the US "flagrantly breached the norms of international law and violated the UNSC resolution 2231" and was trying to deflect international condemnation by making baseless accusations of Iran's noncompliance with requirements of the Security Council.

The humorous part of the story is that while the European trio accuses Iran of violating UN Security Council Resolution 2231, it has openly announced its intention to violate the same resolution and the JCPOA itself. According to the JCPOA, on October 18, another set of Iran's sanctions related to its missile activities were due to be lifted. However, since Germany, France, and the UK have claimed that Iran has not fulfilled its JCPOA commitments since 2019, they are making plans not to lift those sanctions on October 18. The US government has thrown its support behind the move as well.

In response to the failure of the European parties to fulfill their obligations a year after the US unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear deal in May 2018, Iran gradually reduced its commitments.

Iranian officials have repeatedly emphasized that any increase in Iran's nuclear activities or a reduction in its commitments under the JCPOA is based on Article 36 of the nuclear agreement, which grants Iran these rights. Iran has insisted that as soon as the other parties to the JCPOA honor their commitments and let Iran benefit from its safeguarded interests under the deal, it will quickly return to fully honoring its own commitments.

So, Western countries are essentially blaming Tehran for not adhering to the nuclear agreement and violating Resolution 2231, while they themselves, led by the United States, have failed to adhere to the agreement and are now openly planning to violate it again on October 18.



Fierce Western criticism of Iran's missile tests or satellite launches has become a repetitive pattern against Iran. They have attempted to label any Iranian action in these domains as a violation of the JCPOA and Resolution 2231.



that its missile and space programs fall outside of the purview or competence of Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015) and its annexes." Despite sanctions imposed by Western countries in recent years, Iran has managed to take giant strides in its civilian space program. It is among the world's top 10 countries capable of developing and launching satellites. "We caution against any politically driven approach used by certain developed countries with space programs that seek to demonize the use of

space technology for peaceful purposes by developing countries under absurd pretexts, such as proliferation concerns," the Iranian diplomat said. "This hypocritical approach seriously jeopardizes the exercise of the inherent right of states to access space and celestial bodies as well as their freedom to explore and use outer space for peaceful purposes, including their free access to space science, technologies, and applications without discrimination of any kind."



IOC suspends Russian Olympic Committee



● GETTY IMAGES

BBC – The International Olympic Committee's executive board has suspended the Russian Olympic Committee "with immediate effect until further notice".

The move comes after the ROC recognised regional organisations from four Ukrainian territories illegally annexed by Russia since its full-scale invasion began in 2022.

The IOC said last week's recognition was "a breach of the Olympic Charter because it violates the territorial integrity of the National Olympic Committee of Ukraine".

The suspension means the ROC "is no longer entitled to operate as a National Olympic Committee" and "cannot receive any funding from the Olympic movement".

Olympic Councils from the regions of Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia had been recognised by the ROC.

The IOC added it would decide whether Russian athletes could compete as neutrals at Paris 2024 "at the appropriate time".

In response, the ROC called the suspension "another counterproductive decision with obvious political motivations".

The IOC did not initially sanction the ROC following the invasion, but Russia has been banned from competing as a nation in athletics since November 2015 after state-sponsored doping was uncovered.

Russia's doping suspension was lifted in March but the World Athletics Council ruled the nation would remain banned "for the foreseeable future" because of the war in Ukraine.

The IOC has been under consistent pressure to ban Russian and Belarusian athletes from competing even under a neutral flag since the invasion began.

But in March it told sporting federations they should allow athletes from those countries to compete as neutrals.

Ukraine has threatened to boycott next year's Games in Paris if a full ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes is not upheld.

"This is an important decision," said Andriy Yermak, head of Ukraine's presidential office, who added that "sports cannot be out of politics" and accused Russia of using "athletes as propaganda".

Currently, IOC sanctions mean no international sporting events can be organised in the territory of either Russia or its ally Belarus, while the flags, national anthems or any other national symbol of both countries must not be used.

'Now is the moment', Kiani says of preparation for Paris

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At her physical peak and without any injuries, she plans to compete as often as possible in the run up to Paris.



Iran's Nahid Kiani (blue) is seen in action against Canadian Skylar Park at the Taiyuan Grand Prix in China on October 10, 2023. ● WORLD TAEKWONDO

WORLD TAEKWONDO – Life can change in an instant – and so can taekwondo. Nahid Kiani knows this all too well.

Twice, the Iranian was within a split second of clinching a gold medal victory at the Taiyuan Grand Prix. Twice, fortune shifted. The finals of the women's -57kg matched pitted world champion Kiani against popular Canadian Skylar Park, a third-generation taekwondoist.

Round 1 saw both athletes deploying clean, powerful, long-range technique, and both hunting the head. But the Iranian was clearly dominant and took the round.

In round 2, Park aggressed with a body kick and a head kick going five up, but after an IVR, it was the Iranian who once again drew

ahead. If she could maintain that lead, the match – and the gold – would be hers under the "best of three" system.

But Park landed a game changer in the final second, taking the game to the third.

Round 3 was fierce action – powerful kicks, falls – but the Iranian, yet again, took the lead. Park's dad/coach requested an IVR. Granted – but the board was still 7-5 to the Iranian. Six seconds left. Park drove Kiani off the mats. Score: 7-6 to the Iranian.

Less than one second remained. The order to fight was given and Park attacked immediately – landing to the body for a one-point win.

Kiani dropped to her knees in dismay. Finishes don't get more dramatic than this.

A silver at this level of competition is a fine feat, but the 25-year-old Tehran native, speaking the day after the match, admitted her inner agony.

"Since yesterday, I have seen that moment running through my mind more than 100 times," Kiani said. "What could I have done to change the result?" Making things doubly dire was that Kiani had, in the past, generated game-changing, last-second moves herself.

"Taekwondo is a sport of the moment and I have won many matches like that, I have changed the result!" she said. "In the future, I will be more careful about the last moment."

Still, the future looks bright. Recent shifts in circumstances have lifted her fortunes in taekwondo.

Kiani has a long competitive background, having learned the ropes of international competition in both juniors and cadets, before graduating to the seniors.

She qualified for, and fought at both the 2019 Worlds in Manchester and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. In both cases, she went home without a medal.

But things were changing. Just prior to Tokyo, Kiani had stepped up in weight, fighting at -57kg.

"I feel much better at this category," she said. "After the Tokyo Olympics I felt that medal belonged to me – I had to grab it."

Post-Tokyo, new leadership came to the national team and Kiani got a new coach: Minoo Maddah.

"She helped me mentally a lot," Kiani said. "She helped me to believe in myself and

showed me that you can reach everything."

The combination of ingredients proved to be the secret sauce. Suddenly, the also-ran was bringing home precious medal in elite-level competition.

Kiani has won (deep breath): Gold at the 2022 Chuncheon Asian Championships; gold at the 2023 Baku World Championships; silver at the 2023 Roma Grand Prix; gold at the Chengdu 2021 Summer World University Games; and silver at the 2023 Taiyuan Grand Prix.

In short: She is one of the top players in the women's division. Kiani's moment is now.

She attributes her current attitude and character to the long time she spent in the medal wilderness.

"I never give up," she said.

"Sometimes I lose, but I never get tired, I come back as strong as possible."

At her physical peak and without any injuries, she plans to compete as often as possible in the run up to Paris. There, she has two connected aims: To win gold, and to make her parents proud.

In fact, her career is due to her mother. Kiani's journey in the sport started when her mother bought her a taekwondo uniform when she was eight.

Fast forward to today, and the 25-year-old has no regrets about the life choices that purchase initiated.

"Since I started to do taekwondo, I have continued it and many things have happened and many doors have opened to me – many possibilities," she said. "Anything can happen."

Qatar World Cup construction workers sue US firm for labor trafficking



● KAI PFAFFENBACH/REUTERS

REUTERS – Dozens of Filipino workers who helped build stadiums that hosted the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar filed a lawsuit on Thursday claiming U.S. construction firm Jacobs Solutions Inc subjected them to dangerous and inhumane conditions.

The nearly 40 plaintiffs in a complaint filed in federal court in Denver, Colorado, said Jacobs and several subsidiaries that oversaw the construction projects forced workers to live in cramped, dirty barracks and work up to 72 hours straight in blistering heat without food and water.

The plaintiffs also claim they were not paid all of their wages and had their

passports confiscated, barring them from finding new jobs or returning home to the Philippines.

Dallas, Texas-based Jacobs did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Qatar has faced intense criticism from human rights groups over its treatment of migrant workers, who along with other foreigners comprise the bulk of the country's population.

The scrutiny intensified in the years leading up to the 2022 World Cup, when hundreds of workers were reportedly killed and thousands injured during construction projects.

The government of Qatar has said that far fewer

workers were killed or injured, and in 2020 raised the country's minimum wage and applied it to foreign workers for the first time.

The plaintiffs in Thursday's lawsuit claim Jacobs knew or should have known about human rights abuses in Qatar and chose to knowingly exploit workers.

Jacobs and its subsidiaries are accused of violating a U.S. law that prohibits trafficked or forced labor even when the alleged conduct occurs outside the United States. The plaintiffs also accused Jacobs of negligence and unjust enrichment, among other claims. They are seeking unspecified damages.

Gaza on brink of 'devastating humanitarian catastrophe'

Iran: New front against Israel possible

International Desk

The Gaza Strip is on the brink of a "devastating humanitarian catastrophe" as the Israeli regime has intensified its heavy and indiscriminate bombardment on the besieged Palestinian territory, which has killed nearly 1,800 Palestinians so far.

The Israeli Army has ordered the evacuation of all civilians living in Gaza City and in the north of the Gaza Strip ahead of an expected ground offensive on the Palestinian region after it called up 300,000 reservists and moved forces, tanks and armor to the southern desert area around Gaza.

UN officials in Gaza "were informed by their liaison officers in the Israeli military that the entire population of Gaza north of Wadi Gaza should relocate to southern Gaza within the next 24 hours," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in a statement in New York.

"This amounts to approximately 1.1 million people," Dujarric added, or nearly half of Gaza's 2.3 million population.

Dujarric said the UN "considers it impossible for such a movement to take place without devastating humanitarian consequences."

'Fake propaganda'

Salama Marouf, head of the Hamas government media office, said the relocation warning was an attempt by Israel "to broadcast and pass on fake propaganda, aiming to sow confusion among citizens and harm our internal cohesion."

He added: "We urge our citizens not to engage in these attempts."

Since Saturday, Israel has been pounding Gaza in

retaliation for a Hamas attack in Israel that has killed at least 1,300 people, the deadliest attack in Israeli history. At least 1,799 people have also been killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza, said the Health Ministry in Gaza on Friday.

The ministry reported in a statement the "martyrdom of 1,799 citizens including 583 children and 351 women," adding that more than 7,000 people have been wounded.

At least nine Palestinians were also killed by Israeli fire across the occupied West Bank during rallies in solidarity with Gaza, the Health Ministry said.

The Israeli Army said its "fighter jets struck 750 military targets in the northern Gaza Strip overnight."

Israeli fighter jets and drones have levelled entire blocks and destroyed thousands of buildings.

Total siege

Israel has cut off water, food and power supplies to Gaza in a total siege it has vowed will not end until all hostages are freed.

The territory was already under a land, air and sea blockade since 2006.

Any Israeli ground operation is complicated by Hamas's holding - according to Israel - an estimated 150 Israeli, foreign and dual-nationals who were taken back to Gaza during the attack.

Hamas on Friday said 13 hostages, including foreigners, had been killed in Israeli strikes.

New fronts against Israel

The continued air strikes and blockade on Gaza has drawn warnings from Iran. Iran's Foreign Minister



Palestinians evacuate wounded after an Israeli airstrike in Rafah refugee camp, southern Gaza Strip, on October 12, 2023.
● HATEM ALI/AP

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian warned on Friday that fighting against the Israeli regime may expand to new fronts.

"Some European officials asked me if there were any chances that new fronts might open up against the Zionist regime," Amir-Abdollahian said on Thursday in the Lebanese capital of Beirut, his second stop on a regional tour that has already taken him to Iraq.

"I told them as far as the Zionists keep up their war crimes, there exists every prospect that other resistance movements [may enter the war]," he added.

Amir-Abdollahian has started the tour as means of talking with ranking officials in the destination countries about the developments that have been unfolding in the region, especially the Israeli regime's crimes against Gaza.

He called Israel's displacement of tens of thousands of Palestinians as part of the warfare, and its con-

comitant enforcement of an all-out siege on Gaza, "an organized war crime" on the part of the occupying regime.

"Continuation of these war crimes will be followed by other reactions on other axes, for which the Zionist regime and its supporters would be responsible," he added.

Lebanon's Hezbollah movement on Friday said it would be fully prepared to join its ally Hamas in the war against Israel when the time was right.

"We, as Hezbollah, are contributing to the confrontation and will (continue) to contribute to it within our vision and plan," Hezbollah deputy chief Naim Qassem told a pro-Palestinian rally in Beirut's southern suburbs.

"We are fully prepared, and when the time comes for action, we will take it," he said. An outreach by "major countries, Arab countries, and envoys from the United Nations, directly and

indirectly, asking us not to interfere in the battle, will not affect us," he said, adding, "Hezbollah knows its duties".

Israel has traded fire with Hezbollah and allied Palestinian factions in Lebanon in recent days, although the tit-for-tat attacks have remained limited.

US support for Israel

On the other side, the US has sent additional munitions to Israel and deployed an aircraft carrier battle group to the eastern Mediterranean in a show of support, while warning Israel's other enemies not to enter the war.

On Friday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, also on a solidarity visit to Israel, pledged "iron-clad" backing for Israel in its war.

In London, the UK said it was sending two Royal Navy ships and surveillance aircraft to the eastern Mediterranean to support Israel and "ensure regional stability".

Millions worldwide protest in support of Palestine

International Desk

Millions demonstrated Friday across various countries of the world in support of Palestinians and against the intensifying Israeli bombardment of Gaza, underscoring the risk of a wider regional conflict as Israel prepares for a possible ground invasion.

Tens of thousands of Muslims demonstrated Friday across the Middle East including Iran in support of Palestinians and condemnation of Israel.

This is while, France and Germany banned pro-Palestinian demonstrations and several Western countries said they had stepped up security fearing that protests could lead to acts of violence, Reuters reported.

Some 1,000 Muslims rallied in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, after Friday prayers to show solidarity with

the Palestinians. Chanting "Free Palestine" and "Crush the Zionists", they burned two effigies draped with Israeli flags, aljazeera.com reported.

From the typically sedate streets of downtown Amman in Jordan to Yemen's war-scarred capital of Sana'a, crowds of Muslim worshippers poured into the streets after weekly Friday prayers, angered by devastating Israeli airstrikes on Gaza that began after the Palestinian resistance group Hamas launched an unprecedented surprise attack on Israel last Saturday, AP reported.

The Israeli strikes have killed more than 1,530 people in the Gaza Strip, which has already been under a land, sea, and air blockade for more than 15 years.

In Iran, tens of thousands of people participated in nationwide rallies, chanting

slogans in support of Palestinians and in condemnation of the United States and the apartheid Tel Aviv regime.

The demonstrators were also carrying pro-Palestine banners. Some Iranian political figures participated in the protests as well.

At the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Al-Quds' Old City on Friday, Israeli police permitted only certain older men, women, and children to enter the sprawling hill-top compound for prayers, trying to limit the potential for violence. Only 5,000 worshippers made it into the site, the Islamic endowment that manages the mosque said. On a typical Friday, some 50,000 gather there for prayers.

In Beirut, thousands of supporters of Lebanon's Hezbollah group waved Lebanese, Palestinian, and Hezbollah flags, chanting slogans in support of Gaza.

In Baghdad, tens of thousands of protesters gathered in Tahrir Square — the protest hub of Iraq's capital — for rallies called by the influential Shia cleric and political leader Muqtada al-Sadr.

"May this demonstration ... terrify the great evil, the United States, which supports Zionist terrorism against our loved ones in Palestine," al-Sadr said in an online statement.

In the Syrian capital of Damascus, protesters — including Palestinians from the Yarmouk refugee camp formed after the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation — also rallied.

In Yemen's Sana'a, demonstrators crowded the streets waving Yemeni and Palestinian flags.

After Friday prayers, Egyptian demonstrators ringed the historic Al-Azhar Mosque — the Sunni Muslim world's foremost



Protesters participate in a pro-Palestinian demonstration in Helsinki, Finland, on October 13, 2023.
● EMMI KORHONEN/AFP

religious institution — in downtown Cairo, chanting that Israel remained their enemy "generation after generation".

In Pakistan's capital of Islamabad, some worshippers trampled on American and Israeli flags.

"International media and international courts turn a blind eye to the injustices that befall Palestinians. They only notice the actions that the Palestinians take to defend themselves," said Faheem Ahmed, a worshipper in Karachi. "They call those actions terrorism."

West's silence on Israeli aggression exposed its ugliness



By Syed Ali Hasan
Iran Daily's
correspondent in
Pakistan

The merciless thought process of the international community, which has not spared any effort to fuel sorrow and anger over Hamas's pre-emptive attacks against Israel and justify Israel's brutal assaults, is reflecting the reality of human suffering. There are morally acceptable responses to human suffering, such as mourning, relieving, and stopping it. And then, there is the case of Israel, which has channeled that suffering into becoming a terrorist state itself by targeting and civilians of Gaza and laying siege to the whole area, not to mention its move to cut off water and electricity.

The pre-emptive attack of a resistance group has goaded terrorists and supporters of terrorism on the state level into showing their true colors. How can the United States justify its alliance with Israel when Israel has restricted water and food supplies to Palestinians, resulting in the dire suffering of ordinary people who are left starving and enfeebled as a form of collective punishment? Additionally, there have been reports of entire buildings bombarded and reduced to rubble in Gaza.

West's double standard regarding Israel's violation of human rights was expected. However, the Islamic world is shocked by the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation which have not only failed to prevent Israeli aggression in Gaza but also seemingly supported Israel.

Yet, Pakistan has strongly condemned Israel's disproportionate and indiscriminate bombing of the Palestinian population in Gaza and called for its immediate cessation. Prior to this, Iran's Leader Seyyed Ali Khamenei firmly supported Hamas, emphasizing that Palestinians cannot endure Israeli oppression indefinitely.

There is a perceived lack of advocating for the rights of Palestinians on the part of Saudis. To date, Saudi Arabia has not taken any substantial steps in favor of Palestinians. Riyadh has been notably uncomfortable with Hamas' recent actions since it has most likely put the move to normalize its ties with Tel Aviv on hold.

Iran showcases tourism industry at Italian exhibition



Iran's tourism sector participated in the 60th TTG Travel Experience, an international exhibition hosted in the Italian city of Rimini.

The Iranian pavilion, managed in collaboration with the World Touring and Automobile Club, showcased Iran's historical, cultural, and natural attractions, as reported by ISNA.

Mohammad Hossein Soufi, CEO of the Touring & Automobile Club of the Islamic Republic of Iran, expressed the importance of participating in such tourism exhibitions.

He emphasized the immense potential within Iran's various historical and cultural facets and the country's appeal to global travelers.

Soufi highlighted the significant opportunity presented by these exhibitions to further promote and enhance these attractions.

He noted that Iran's tourism professionals can not only engage in dialogue with peers from around the world but also attract a larger share of global tourists to experience Iran's offerings while effectively presenting the true face of the nation to the world.

The exhibition, which ran from October 11 to 13, featured Iranian tour operators introducing travel packages and investment opportunities, while also promoting the country's tourist attractions.

The TTG Travel Experience is Italy's most significant B2B exhibition and a hub for exchanging information, ideas, and innovations within the global tourism industry. The exhibition's primary aim is to foster the growth and development of Italy's tourism sector while simultaneously marketing and expanding the travel industry on a global scale.

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Address: #22, Hosseini-Rad Alley, South of Shahid Motahari St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran, Iran
● Editorial Dept. Tel: +98 21 88913453
● Editorial Dept. Fax: +98 21 88930684
● ICPI Publisher: +98 21 88548892, 5
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● Email: irandaily@iranagahiha.com
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Raisi: Hafez best reveals ties between Islam, Iranian culture

Hafez, a 'poet of all ages'

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi hailed the enduring importance of the renowned Persian poet Hafez and described Hafez as "a poet of all ages and centuries".

He made the statement during a visit to Fars Province, where he marked Hafez National Day on Thursday, according to president.ir. Speaking about Hafez's timeless poetry, President Raisi emphasized that Hafez' verses, deeply rooted in intrinsic human values, continue to hold a profound significance across ages and centuries, particularly in the modern era. Raisi highlighted that Hafez is the best manifestation of the ties that Islam have with Iranian culture and customs.

Raisi said that Shiraz has the ancient Persepolis, the Iranian Hafez, and the Islamic Shahcheragh to be proud of and added, "The coexistence of these three throughout history has been such that no one can

sense any conflict between them."

The president described Hafez as a symbolic embodiment of the interplay between Iran's civilization, culture, and religious heritage, emphasizing that "there is no conflict among them."

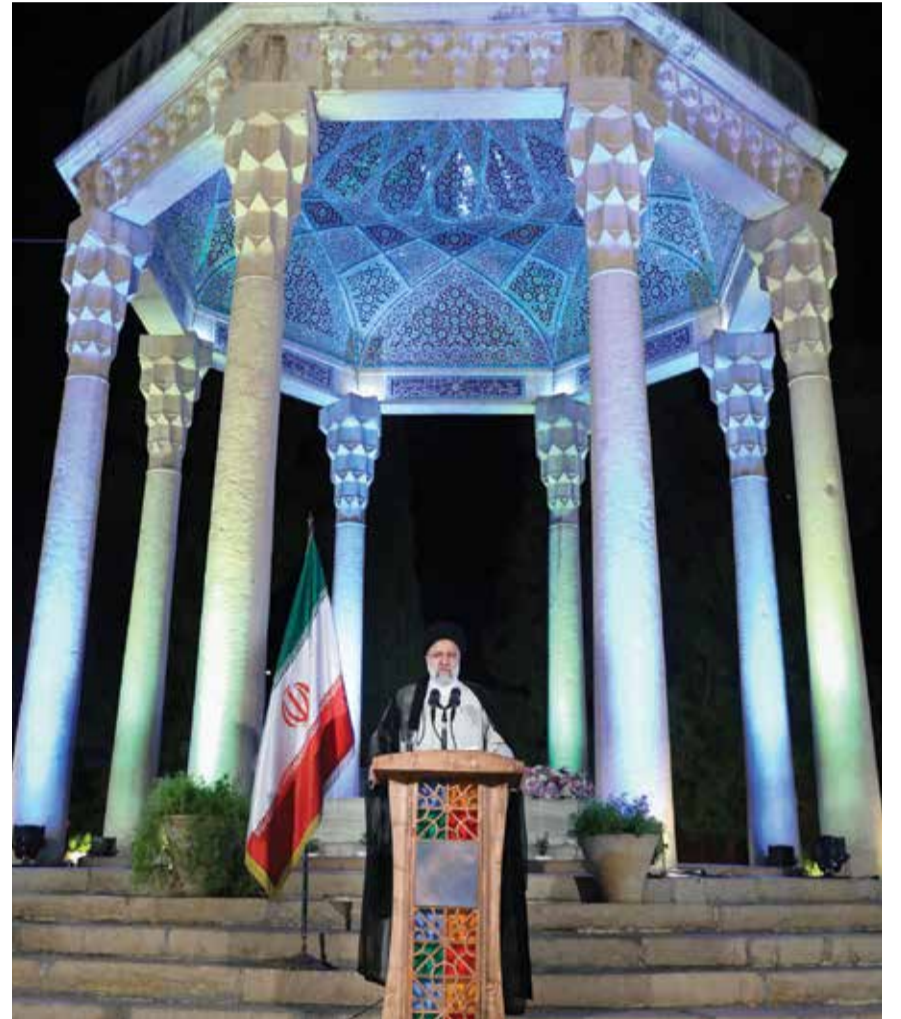
Raisi called upon advocates of culture as well as the artistic and literary communities to honor Hafez's lasting legacy. Raisi praised Hafez Shirazi, known as the "Tongue of the Unseen Realms," as a unique jewel in Iranian culture and literature, who is celebrated by speakers of the sweet Persian language worldwide.

He lauded Hafez's poems for their themes and authentic Islamic teachings and considered them as essential cultural and civilizational symbols of Iran, respected by people of culture and literature across the globe. Drawing attention to Hafez's deep connection with the Qur'an and his use of Qur'anic language in his works, President Raisi men-

tioned Hafez' unparalleled impact across generations.

Raisi further highlighted how Hafez's verses have been recited by great figures such as Mirza Javad Maleki, Allameh Tabatabai, Imam Khomeini, and the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Seyyed Ali Khamenei. The president quoted the Leader, who described Hafez as "the brightest star of Persian culture," and emphasized the unparalleled place Hafez holds in the hearts and minds of the Iranian nation. Raisi expressed his belief that Hafez's poetry has the power to bring peace to the troubled souls of contemporary individuals.

He also urged the presentation of Hafez's character to help address the concerns of the younger generation. The president concluded by emphasizing the importance of Fars Province as a cradle of culture and literature, calling for necessary governmental support to maintain its timelessness and significance in contemporary society.



● president.ir

Four Iranian books in 2023 White Raven catalogue in Munich

Arts & Culture Desk

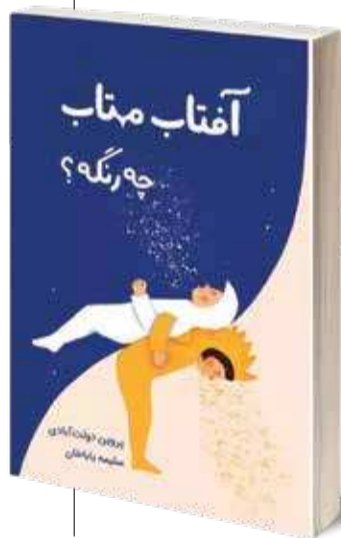
The 2023 White Raven catalogue, curated by the International Youth Library in Munich, was unveiled, featuring four Persian language titles from Iran. Released on October 12, the catalogue comprises 200 children's and young adult books in 39 languages, from 57 countries, ISNA reported.

The four Persian titles are: 'What Colour is the Moonlight? What Colour is the Sunlight?', written by Parvin Dolatabadi and illustrated by Salimeh Babakhan, published by Ketab-e Taak; 'Two Planets' by Masoud Qarebaghi, published by Fatemi Publications; 'The Tale of the Winds', by Reza Abdi, published by Resm-e Koodaki; and 'Siavashnameh,'

a rewriting by Leila Mirzaei, from Khordadnameh Publications. These titles were selected from works whose data were received by the library from publishers, authors, and illustrators, as well as literary critics specializing in children's literature, the Children's Book Council, literary agencies, and other active institutions

in the field of Iranian children's literature. It is evident that a greater number of such titles allow for the selection of higher-quality works and increased representation in the catalogue. The Persian department of the Munich International Youth Library expressed gratitude to all friends, commentators, and publishers

who contributed through recommendations and critiques, as well as generous publishers who shared their works with the library. Publishers, authors, and illustrators are welcome to submit their latest works for consideration, twice a year (in October at the Frankfurt Book Fair and each spring at the Bologna Book Fair), to the library's booth.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



UNESCO, Interpol planning virtual museum of stolen cultural objects

UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is planning a virtual museum of stolen cultural objects. The digital experience was first announced in September last year. It will launch in 2025 with 600 works of art on the list of Interpol, the international police organization. Last week, UNESCO held a meeting with a first look at the museum's design by Francis Kéré, a native of Burkina Faso and the winner of the 2022 Pritzker Architecture Prize. Via a statement on UNESCO's website, the \$2.5 million project will "contribute to raising awareness among general public to the consequences of illicit trafficking of cultural property

and contribute to the recovery of stolen objects". "Behind every stolen work or fragment lies a piece of history, identity and humanity that has been wrenched from its custodians, rendered inaccessible to research, and now risks falling into oblivion," said UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay. "Our objective with this is to place these works back in the spotlight, and to restore the right of societies to access their heritage, experience it, and recognise themselves in it." UNESCO said visitors will explore virtual spaces as they would in a real museum, also accessing educational digital materials, and stories and tes-

timonies from local communities. The organisation said in an announcement for last week's meeting: "The virtual museum will be a game-changing tool to raise awareness on the illicit trafficking and the importance of protecting cultural heritage among the relevant authorities, culture professionals and the general public, notably young generations." Following the alleged theft of around 2,000 artefacts from the British Museum, the institution has asked the public to help it identify and recover its lost treasures. Elsewhere, nearly 2,000 items – including coins, ceramic tiles and medals – have gone missing from Welsh museums.