

Persian Wolf
Chooan crowned
at Arnoald Classic
2024

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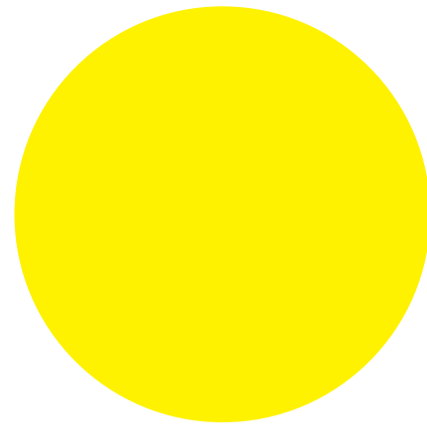


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Sign Several MoUs

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Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi (l) and his Algerian counterpart Abdelmadjid Tebboune inspect a guard of honor in Algeria's presidential palace in Algiers, on March 3, 2024.

president.ir

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US refuses waiver over IP gas pipeline

The Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline project has reportedly been delayed as the US has expressed concern about the project and refused to waive the sanctions imposed on Iran. According to local sources, Pakistan has approached the US for a waiver to resume the Iran-Pak gas pipeline project, but the US refused to give any concession. Washington has also expressed its concern about this project, arynews.tv reported. The project began in 2013, but several deadlines have already been missed, with Islamabad citing the threat of US economic sanctions. There was a deadline of March this year to complete Pakistan's part of the gas pipeline project, and if Pakistan does not start the project by March, it would have to pay a fine of \$18 billion. Sources claimed that after the United States' refusal, Pakistan has made it clear to Iran that Pakistan wants to complete this project, but due to the sanctions, this project cannot be completed. Pakistan asked Iran to extend the March deadline in view of the current situation.

According to the agreement, Iran has prepared a 700-mile-long pipeline for its part, while in Pakistan, a 500-mile-long pipeline has been prepared and will go to Balochistan and Sindh. Pakistan's Energy Minister Muhammad Ali said work on 80 kilometers of the pipeline in the Pakistani territory would be carried out, adding that it would take around 1.5 years to complete the pipeline project in the Pakistani territory.

Twelve dams in Iran hold over 75% of water capacity

Twelve dams in Iran currently hold over 75% of their water capacity, with 46% of the total capacity filled since the start of the new water year (Sept. 23, 2023, to Sept. 21, 2024), according to the latest data. The water inflow to the dams until March 2 amounts to 11.68 billion cubic meters, marking a 12% decrease from last year's 13.3 billion cubic meters, ISNA reported. Moreover, the water outflow from the dams' reservoirs on this date is noted at 10.5 billion cubic meters, reflecting a 21% increase from the previous year's 8.71 billion cubic meters. Currently, the reservoirs hold 22.88 billion cubic meters of water, which is 3% less than last year, resulting in 46% of total capacity filled.

Iran-Syria Joint Chamber of Commerce:

ICB approves establishing Iran-Syria joint bank

Economy Desk

The Central Bank of Iran has approved the establishment of a joint bank with Syria, said the vice president of the Iran-Syria Joint Chamber of Commerce on Sunday. Announcing this during a conference introducing opportunities to access the Syrian market, Ali Asghar Zebardast emphasized that agreements between Iran and Syria are made by the governments, and executed by the private sector, IRNA reported. By outlining the obstacles to enhancing trade between the two countries, he pointed out that the primary challenge lies in financial transactions. The official said that the Central Bank of Iran has approved the establishment of a joint bank, adding, "Syria's bank should cooperate more in this regard, and we hope that the necessary instructions are given by the authorities".

Meanwhile, the head of the West Asia Office of the International Trade Centre said the establishment of the joint bank is currently going through its initial stages, following the joint committee meeting held two months ago. Expert work will be carried out in the coming months and information will be provided, Abdolmir Reyhavi said, according to ISNA. He expressed hope that the joint bank will start its work next Iranian year, which begins on March 20. According to the official, Iran's trade volume with Syria is very low; to the extent that the trade between the two countries was equivalent to \$245 million in the past Iranian year. He said that the country's target for next year is to export at least \$500 million to Syria. In the first 10 months of this year (began on March 21, 2023), the trade exchanges between the two countries included \$120



million in Iranian exports, and \$34 million in imports. However, this trade volume is not satisfactory for Iran,

Reyhavi said. Referring to the Free Trade Agreement signed in 2012, he said that the agreement

will pave the way for the development of trade between the two countries, adding that the establish-

ment of a joint bank in Syria is one of the facilities that will be available to traders.

Prioritizing North-South project, crucial for Iran amid rapidly reshaped corridors



By Zohreh Qanadi
Staff writer

PERSPECTIVE

The giant and fast-growing economies of Asia, notably China and India, need to expand trade links to the West. At the G20 summit in New Delhi in September, India announced the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC). Backed by the US, EU, and Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, IMEC is a proposed ship and rail corridor that would connect India, the world's fifth-largest economy, to the Middle East and Europe. The corridor offers an alternative trans-regional commercial transportation route to the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC) based in Chabahar. Instead of Chabahar in the southeast of Iran, the ports of the UAE - India's third-largest trading partner - would act as the Indian Ocean connectivity hub. From Mumbai, Indian goods shipped via this multi-modal route could arrive on the European mainland in as little as 10 days, 40 percent faster than via the Suez Canal maritime route. The Arab-Mediterranean corridor connects the western shores of India (ports of Mumbai and Jawaharlal Nehru), Jebel Ali Port (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Haifa Port (Israeli occupation regime), and Piraeus Port (Greece) to

Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. The architecture of this new connection has its roots in the normalization of diplomatic ties between the United Arab Emirates and Israel in 2020, or the Abraham Accords, which has led to their rail connection through Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Saudi Arabia has already committed to investing \$20 billion in IMEC, much of it

itary forces supporting war-torn Palestinians. The project's future is now somewhat uncertain, but the participation of Arab countries in the Persian Gulf region to establish an independent land route for Israel to secure its commercial routes from Houthi attacks in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait has brought its land route components closer to being operational. And India also is deter-

mined to activate this ambitious venture. Iran, strategically positioned at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, with its access to open seas, stands to gain significantly. Given the proposal of the IMEC, it is crucial for Iran to prioritize activating the North-South corridor, emphasizing the impor-

less, sanctions impede government funding for the North-South corridor infrastructure, notably Chabahar port. To tackle this, adopting public-private partnerships and involving the non-governmental sector, especially through joint-stock public projects, could be a viable policy.

The International North-South Transport Corridor passing through Iran saves nearly two weeks of travel time and is also an alternative to the traditional deep-sea Suez Canal route. It is the focus of geostrategic and economic diplomacy, primarily for India, Russia, and Iran. Even so, India turns its gaze to the new Arab-Med corridor instead of INSTC. It should be mentioned that the US anti-Iran sanctions have remained a major factor behind the country's exclusion from the trade crossings. The commercial-geostrategic importance of the Chabahar port crossing to the trade crossings. The commercial-geostrategic importance of the Chabahar port also depends on the presence of India. After the withdrawal of the US from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal, the development process of the port and railway routes leading to Afghanistan were disrupted. To be fair, the policies cannot be seen as anything other than meeting the countries' geopolitical and geoeconomic needs. States strive to establish the shortest, fastest, and most cost-effective routes, addressing both economic and political considerations. Uncertainties caused by the sanctions as well as India's extensive economic ties with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel, and their economic integration into the global economy have been effective in India's preference.

But with Russia, more than ever, in confrontation with the West, and with the European transport networks getting closed off, the North-South corridor is also essential for Moscow to expand its trade network. Iran should grasp this opportunity. Iran-Russia cooperation on building a new North-South trade route is an example of this effort. Furthermore, the Iranian government must acknowledge that the Chabahar port project still holds priority over ITEC. As highlighted by Iranian economic expert Mehdi Karimi's analysis on ISNA, "While the Arab-Mediterranean corridor provides India access to European markets without passing through Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia, it fails to address all of India's economic concerns and needs. Central Asian countries, with their developing economies, emerge as fitting trade destinations for India." Conversely, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and Western sanctions against Moscow have driven Russia towards new markets, with China, India, and Iran leading the way. The strategic advantage of the transit route through Iran for India to reach the markets of Central Asia, Russia, Afghanistan, and the South Caucasus is undeniable. India's concerns are eased by Iran's sole oceanic port, the port of Chabahar.



on the rail network. However, it seems that IMEC's fate is now tied to how the five-month Gaza war develops, given the level of cooperation the project would require between Israel and Arab states. The war has halted progress on IMEC, along with attacks on vessels in the Red Sea by Yemen's mil-

itary forces supporting war-torn Palestinians. The project's future is now somewhat uncertain, but the participation of Arab countries in the Persian Gulf region to establish an independent land route for Israel to secure its commercial routes from Houthi attacks in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait has brought its land route components closer to being operational. And India also is deter-

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Siraaf Rock-Cut Cemetery offers a profound glimpse into Bushehr's rich cultural heritage



● HOSSEIN YARMOHAMMADI/MIZAN

Nestled in the heart of the Iranian plateau, the ancient city of Siraaf, Bushehr Province, bears witness to the remarkable ingenuity and artistic prowess of its bygone inhabitants. Among the city's most captivating attractions lies the Siraaf Rock-Cut Cemetery, a breathtaking necropolis carved directly into the sunbaked cliffs that overlook the arid landscape. This extraordinary archaeological site offers a profound glimpse into the rich cultural heritage and funerary traditions of a civilization that once flourished in this inhospitable region. As you approach the Siraaf Rock-Cut Cemetery, the sheer magnitude of the site becomes immediately apparent. Stretching across a vast expanse of rocky outcrops, the necropolis is a veritable maze of intricately carved tombs, each one a testament to the skill and dedication of the ancient artisans who created them.

The rock-cut tombs of Siraaf display an astonishing variety of architectural styles and motifs, reflecting the diverse cultural influences that converged in this ancient city. From the simple yet elegant facades adorned with geometric

patterns to the more ornate and intricate carvings depicting scenes from daily life, each tomb is a unique work of art, meticulously crafted from the unyielding stone, amazingiran.media wrote.

One of the most striking features of the Siraaf Rock-Cut Cemetery is the sheer scale of the tombs themselves. Some of the larger structures boast cavernous interiors, their vaulted ceilings and arched entrances evoking a sense of awe and reverence. These grandiose tombs were likely reserved for the city's elite, a testament to their wealth and status within the community.

Beyond their architectural splendor, the rock-cut tombs of Siraaf offer a rare and invaluable window into the funerary practices and beliefs of their creators. The intricate carvings and decorations found within the tombs provide clues about the rituals and customs that accompanied the burial of the deceased.

Among the most intriguing features of the Siraaf Rock-Cut Cemetery are the numerous religious symbols and motifs that adorn the tombs. From intricately carved crosses and other Christian iconography to intricate Islamic callig-

raphy and geometric patterns, the necropolis bears witness to the diverse spiritual traditions that coexisted within the ancient city.

These symbols not only reflect the religious beliefs of the deceased but also offer insights into the complex tapestry of cultures that intersected in Siraaf. The harmonious coexistence of different faiths and artistic traditions within the necropolis speaks volumes about the tolerance and openness that characterized this ancient society.

Unveiling the secrets of the past

Despite its remarkable preservation, the Siraaf Rock-Cut Cemetery remains an enigma, with many unanswered questions surrounding its origins, purpose, and the lives of those interred within its tombs. However, ongoing archaeological research and excavations are steadily unraveling the mysteries of this extraordinary site, shedding light on the rich history and cultural heritage of the region.

Uncovering the untold stories

Through meticulous examination of the tombs and their contents, archae-

ologists have uncovered a wealth of artifacts and clues that offer tantalizing glimpses into the daily lives, customs, and beliefs of the ancient inhabitants of Siraaf. From intricate pottery and jewelry to tools and household items, each discovery adds another layer to the complex tapestry of this long-lost civilization.

One of the most remarkable finds at the Siraaf Rock-Cut Cemetery has been the preservation of skeletal remains within some of the tombs. These precious relics not only provide invaluable insights into the physical characteristics and health of the ancient population but also open up new avenues for genetic and forensic research, allowing scientists to piece together the untold stories of those who once called Siraaf home.

Legacy for future generations

As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Siraaf Rock-Cut Cemetery is recognized as a site of immense cultural and historical significance, deserving of the highest levels of protection and preservation. However, the challenges of safeguarding this fragile and irreplace-

able treasure are immense, with threats ranging from environmental factors to human activities posing risks to its long-term survival.

Collaborative efforts in conservation

To address these challenges, a concerted effort involving local authorities, international organizations, and passionate individuals has been undertaken to ensure the preservation of the Siraaf Rock-Cut Cemetery for future generations. Through carefully planned conservation and restoration projects, the delicate rock carvings and structures are being meticulously stabilized and protected from further deterioration. Education and awareness campaigns also play a crucial role in the preservation efforts, fostering a deeper appreciation for the cultural and historical significance of the site among local communities and visitors alike. By engaging the public and promoting responsible tourism practices, the Siraaf Rock-Cut Cemetery can continue to be a source of wonder and inspiration for generations to come.

Haj Agha Ali House in Rafsanjan showcasing grandeur of its time

Iranica Desk

Haj Agha Ali House, formerly known as the Vaqfi House, is a magnificent example of traditional Iranian architecture located in Rafsanjan, Kerman Province. This historic complex is a true gem, showcasing the opulence and grandeur of its time.

As you enter the complex you

are immediately struck by the beauty of the large rectangular pond in the courtyard, adding a sense of tranquility and elegance to the surroundings. The presence of multiple ponds, including a striking turquoise pool in one of the grand halls, further emphasizes the architectural brilliance of the structure.

With approximately 90 rooms,

Haj Agha Ali House is a sprawling estate divided into different sections, each with its own unique characteristics. The autumn and winter quarters each has its own charm, connected by courtyards, corridors, and porches that showcase the intricate details of Qajar-era architecture.

The *shahneshin* (literally meaning royal residence), a central

part of the mansion, exudes luxury with its exquisite plasterwork and spacious areas for hosting guests. Adjacent structures like the Kolah Farangi Mansion and seasonal porches add to the charm and functionality of the complex, providing a glimpse into the lifestyle of the past.

Designed to provide respite from the heat, Haj Agha Ali

House remains a cool retreat in Iranian architecture, offering a peaceful sanctuary for travelers. With designated areas for different seasons, including a winter residence, the house is a testament to thoughtful design and comfort.

Beyond the beauty of Haj Agha Ali House, the cities of Rafsanjan and Kerman offer their own cultural treasures. Rafsanjan's

ancient bazaar, dating back to the Seljuk era, and the city's anthropological museum provide further insight into the region's rich history and heritage. A visit to this historic complex is a journey through time, allowing visitors to experience the splendor of traditional Iranian architecture and the beauty of Kerman Province.



Iran's steel industry keeping flourishing trend



By Reza
Abesh Ahmadlou
Staff writer

Iran's steel industry stands at the forefront of the nation's industrial advancement, playing a pivotal role in economic development and global trade. The industry has steadily grown despite various challenges, leveraging technological innovations, strategic export initiatives, and a wealth of natural resources to establish a strong global presence. Iran's annual steel production capacity is targeted to hit 55 million tons by 2025.



Ninth producer of crude steel

According to the World Steel Association (WSA), Iranian steelmakers churned out 2.6 million tons of crude steel in January, which led the country to stand at ninth place of global steel producers. World crude steel production for the 71 countries reporting to the World Steel Association was 148.1 million tons in January 2024. Iran was the tenth-biggest steelmaker in the world in 2023 as the country produced 31.1 million tons of crude steel during past year.

01

Green production

The industry's commitment to adopting environmentally sustainable production practices has been a significant driver of technological innovation in Iran.

Iranian steelmakers have embraced eco-friendly initiatives, such as the use of renewable energy sources and the implementation of energy-efficient technologies, to align with global sustainability trends and reduce their environmental footprint.

02

Sponge iron production

The extensive and innovative use of direct-reduction iron (DRI) technology in Iran's steel industry has been a game-changer for sponge iron production. By reducing reliance on imported raw materials and enabling cost-effective steel production, this technology has enhanced the industry's self-sufficiency while promoting economic viability and competitiveness in the global market.

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Self-sufficiency in CK45 steel production

Saba Steel Complex, a subsidiary of Mo-barakeh Steel Company (MSC) in October 2023, inaugurated a production line of CK45 steel that made Iran needless of importing the product.

CK45 steel is classified as medium carbon steel, which is one of the most widely used non-alloy carbon steels. It has good tensile properties and machinability. So, the product is widely used in the field of machinery manufacturing.

In the past two years, one of the main strategies of MSC has been the production of new products with greater added value.

The new hot-rolled product of CK45 steel, which has many applications in the agricultural industry as well as making industrial tools, was manufactured by Saba Steel Complex after months of effort and relying on technology and skill.

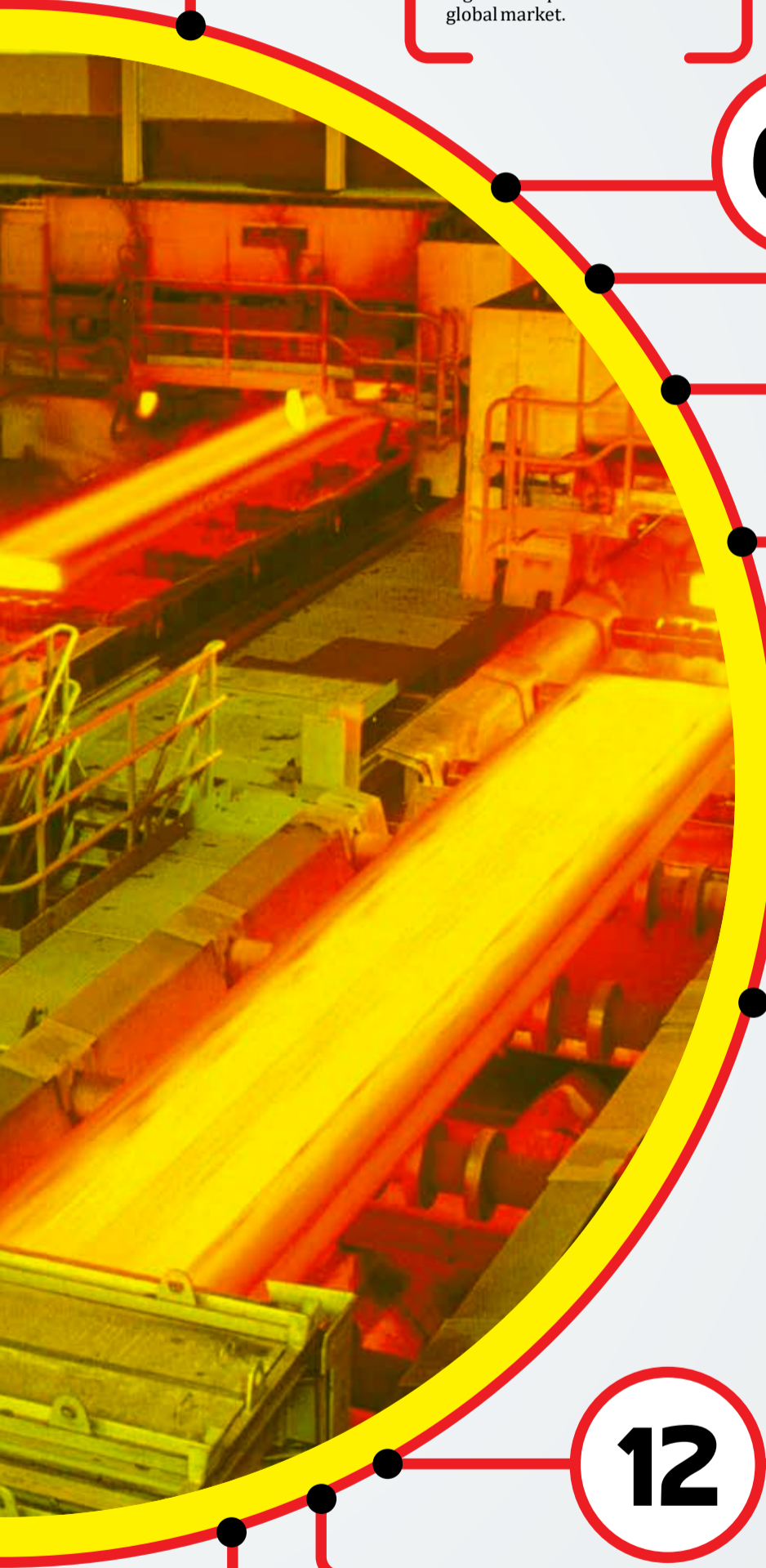
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High-strength steel

Notably, Iran's production of high-strength steel (HSS) has gained significant attention, particularly in industries such as automotive, construction, and machinery manufacturing. The demand for lightweight yet high-strength materials has been a driving force behind the development of advanced high-strength steel (AHSS) and ultra-high-strength

steel (UHSS) grades in Iran.

These specialized steel products offer improved performance characteristics, including enhanced structural integrity, weight reduction, and increased durability, making them well-suited for applications requiring superior mechanical properties.



06

Utilization of EAF

One notable advancement in steelmaking technology in Iran is the utilization of electric arc furnaces (EAF) and continuous casting machines, which have significantly increased the industry's capacity for producing high-quality steel in various forms. These modern processes not only enhance productivity but also enable the industry to meet stringent international standards and specifications, boosting its competitiveness in the global market.

High-performance steel alloys

In the energy sector, Iranian steel companies have introduced advanced alloys and specialty steels tailored to meet the stringent performance requirements of critical components, such as aircraft structures, turbine blades, and drilling equipment. These high-performance alloys exhibit exceptional mechanical properties, temperature resistance, and fatigue strength, contributing to the efficiency and reliability of aerospace and energy systems.

Robust production chain

The steel industry's progression in Iran is also closely intertwined with the efficient management of iron ore supply, production processes, and the establishment of a robust and integrated production chain. The country's iron ore reserves have facilitated the development of a comprehensive production chain, encompassing iron ore extraction, beneficiation, pelletizing, and the production of direct-reduced iron (DRI) and steel. This integrated approach has empowered Iranian steelmakers to minimize dependency on external sources and ensure a seamless flow of raw materials throughout the production process, fostering cost-efficiency, reliability, and self-sufficiency.

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Challenges facing Iran's steel industry

The steel industry in Iran faces some challenges, including fluctuations in global steel prices, disruptive international sanctions, and reliance on some of imported raw materials, especially iron ore and coking coal.

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Facilitate exports

Furthermore, the Iranian government has been actively fostering diplomatic and trade relations with other countries to facilitate the export of steel products. Bilateral trade agreements and diplomatic initiatives have paved the way for expanded market access, creating opportunities for Iranian steelmakers to solidify their presence in international trade networks.

Export destinations

Iran's steel industry has set ambitious targets for production and exports, aiming to expand its global reach and increase its share of the international steel market. The industry targets key export destinations in the Middle East, Asia, and Europe, where Iranian steel products are in high demand. The government's initiatives and strategic trade agreements have paved the way for expanded market access, creating opportunities for Iranian steelmakers to solidify their presence in international trade networks.

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Iran's steel industry has emerged as a beacon of industrial prowess and innovation, forging a path towards greater success and prominence in the global steel sector. Embracing a culture of innovation, strategic investments, and a commitment to competitiveness and sustainability, Iran's steel industry is set to leave an indelible mark on the international steel landscape, contributing significantly to the nation's economic development and global trade presence.

Main steelmakers of Iran

Iran is home to several major steelmakers that have played a pivotal role in the industry's progression. Notable among them is Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) in central province of Isfahan, the largest steelmaker in the Middle East and North Africa, which has introduced groundbreaking products such as ultra-high strength steel for advanced engineering applications. Additionally, Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) has developed corrosion-resistant steel grades, catering to the automotive and construction sectors, while Khuzestan Steel Company (KSC) in southwestern province of Khuzestan has launched innovative advanced high-strength steel for the aerospace and energy industries.

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Iranian production technologies

Iran has been an innovator in steel production technologies, particularly with the widespread adoption of the PERED technology. PERED or Persian Reduction has been invented and patented by Mines and Metals Engineering, an Iranian engineering company registered in Germany. The technology involves a direct reduction process converting iron oxides, in the form of pellets or lump ore, to highly reduced product suitable for steel making. Iran's domestic iron ore supply has bolstered its production chain, supporting the industry's self-sufficiency and capacity to meet both domestic and international demands.

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Long-term goals

The future outlook for Iran's steel industry is promising, with opportunities for significant expansion and global influence. The industry's alignment with sustainable development goals, focus on product diversification, and strategic market expansion position it as a key player in the ongoing evolution of the global steel sector. Moreover, the industry's commitment to research and development has fostered a culture of continuous innovation, driving advancements in steel technology, product diversification, and value-added solutions.

Persian Wolf Choopan crowned at Arnoald Classic 2024

Sports Desk

Iranian bodybuilding superstar Hadi Choopan claimed yet another major prize on Saturday as he was crowned the Men's Open champion at the Arnoald Classic 2024.

Held in front of a sold-out crowd at the Battelle Grand Ballroom in Columbus, Ohio, the sport's premier event saw some top competitors from around the globe vie for the ultimate prize.

However, it eventually appeared to be a two-man race heading into the final day, as both Choopan – a Mr. Olympia champion in 2022 – and Samson Dauda, who was looking to defend his title, were featured in the first and final callouts during pre-judging on Friday.

The two favorites kicked off the first callout in another head-to-head with the commentary team filling Choopan's conditioning was the difference maker and predicted the Iranian would take the title from the defending champion.

The two were called out again in a third callout with the other top contenders in Rafael Brandao and Akim Williams.

At the end of the day, the 'Persian Wolf' dethroned the 'Nigerian Lion' to win the \$300,000 prize and earn some redemption, having felt hard done by to finish as the runner-up in the 2023 Mr. Olympia last November.

Presented with the trophy by Arnold Schwarzeneg-

ger, the 36-year-old Iranian was also awarded the Franco Columbu Most Muscular award.

"I used to spend a lot of money just to watch Arnold movies when I was a kid and my biggest dream was to meet him one day and take a picture with him," Choopan said when interviewed on the stage by Schwarzenegger.

"I feel so privileged to share the stage with him today. We're two Mr. Olympia champions. It's just a great honor to receive this award from an idol and the greatest bodybuilder in the world," added the Iranian who was accompanied by his high-profile coach Hany Rambod.

Schwarzenegger, meanwhile, was full of praise for Choopan, saying: "Congratulations on the great, great victory. You were without any doubt the best. You were the best yesterday in the prejudging and you were the best today. You were the most defined, the most cut, and the most muscular, [with] great posing and everything."

Choopan will return to Las Vegas, Nevada, for the 2024 Mr. Olympia in mid-October, where he will be considered the top contender to reigning champion Derek Lunsford.



● CHRIS BERNACCHI/GETTY IMAGES

Iran's Aminzadeh bags gold at Para Powerlifting World Cup

Sports Desk

Iranian para powerlifter Ahmad Aminzadeh clinched a second gold medal for the country at the Fazza 2024 World Cup in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.

Participating in the men's +107kg contest, Aminzadeh registered successful 250kg and 260kg lifts in his first two attempts before a final lift of 267kg saw the Iranian claim a second major gold in five months following his triumph in last year's Asian Para Games.

With the event serving as part of the

qualification for Paris Paralympics, Saturday's victory leaves Aminzadeh in pole position to punch his ticket for the French capital in September, where he will be looking to emulate his late fellow-Iranian Siamand Rahman – a superheavyweight world record holder and two-time Paralympic champion, who passed away in March 2020.

Aminzadeh's teammate Mahdi Sayyadi was also part of the event on Saturday but narrowly missed out on the podium, despite a strong performance with 231kg, and settled for the fourth place.

Sayyadi had finished second to Aminzadeh at the Para Gamers in Hangzhou.

Earlier in the competition, Mohsen Bakhtiar delivered a record-breaking performance to win the gold in the 59kg event.

The Iranian lifted 186kg and then went on to overcome the 196kg weight and shatter the Asian record. More than 180 athletes from 32 countries have been taking part at the 13th edition of the competition. Hossein Tavakkoli, a gold medalist at Sydney 2000, is the head coach of the Iranian eight-man squad in Dubai.



● mokhtab24.ir

James becomes first NBA player to score 40,000 points

BBC – LeBron James became the first NBA player to reach 40,000 career regular-season points in Saturday's game against the Denver Nuggets.

But he described it as "bittersweet" after his Los Angeles Lakers side lost 124-114 to the defending NBA champions. "Being the first player to do something, it's pretty cool in this league," said the 39-year-old, who scored 26 points on the night.

"You just know the history, you know the greats that have come through."

James scored the historic basket with 10 minutes and 39 seconds remaining in the second quarter with a driving lay-up from the left side of the basket to give the Lakers a 37-32 lead.

The crowd gave James a standing ovation during a timeout and the ball he used to reach the milestone was removed from the game.

However, the Nuggets stretched their winning streak to six games thanks to 35 points from Nikola Jokic to leave James with mixed

feelings.

"The main thing is always the main thing and that's the win," he said. "And I hated that had to happen in a defeat especially versus a team that plays extremely well.

"We played some good basketball but weren't able to close it out, so [it's] bittersweet, but I enjoyed every moment on the floor."

James became the NBA's all-time leading scorer in February 2023, passing Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's long-standing record of 38,387 points.

The four-time NBA champion and four-time Most Valuable Player is in his 21st campaign and is the league's oldest active player.

James said he did not know if another NBA player could reach the 40,000-point milestone.

"You have to play the game quite a while and have some good luck with injuries and things of that nature," he said.

"You have to take care of your body. You have to be present on the floor and then you have to be productive as well."

F1 season opens with Verstappen in 'a different galaxy'

REUTERS – Max Verstappen could not have hoped for a better start to his bid for a fourth-consecutive Formula One title, with even rivals hailing his crushingly dominant display in Saturday's season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix as being in "a different galaxy".

The Dutch driver took the chequered flag 22.4 seconds clear of his team mate Sergio Perez driving a similar RB20.

He did it having started from pole, led every lap and with the fastest lap to complete a 'grand slam'.

"Unbelievable, I think today went even better than expected," said Verstappen.

"It's special to have these kind of days, where it all feels perfect and you feel at one with the car."

A close-run qualifying on Friday and a constant changing of the guard in practice, with three different teams occupying top spot in the three sessions and none of them Red Bull, had raised the prospect of a closer-run race on Saturday.

The seemingly untroubled ease of Verstappen's win in the first race of a record 24-round season swiftly dashed those hopes, instead giving way to a sense of



● Red Bull's Max Verstappen holds aloft the Bahrain Grand Prix trophy in Sakhir, Bahrain, on March 2, 2024.

● RULA ROUHANA/REUTERS

resignation and foreboding. The 26-year-old, barely breaking a sweat as he got out of the car, had similarly won last year's Bahrain season-opener from pole, which set the stage for Verstappen to sign off 2023 with 19 wins from 22 races.

With his Red Bull harder to catch, at least on the evidence of the 2024 season opener, there

is every possibility he could go better.

Rivals are not ruling out the prospect.

"Unfortunately, yes," Mercedes boss Toto Wolff said when asked if Verstappen could be uncatchable. "I think today Max is not in a different league but he's in a different galaxy — the performance is extraordinary."



● MARK J. TERRILL/AP

Iran, Algeria sign several MoUs



National Desk

Iran and Algeria signed several memoranda of understanding on various fields in Algiers on Sunday in order to further expand relations between the two countries.

The signing ceremony was attended by Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi and his Algerian counterpart Abdelmadjid Tebboune. They also chaired a joint commission of high-ranking delegations from both countries. During the meeting, the president referred to Iran's significant economic progress, saying, "Iran's high capacities in the economic field are suitable for the development of mutual cooperation in the fields of energy and technology, engineering, industrial, petrochemical and finance with Algeria".

He also called for further improvement of the level of economic and commercial relations between Tehran and Algiers. Raisi described Algeria as a lead-

ing country in the fight against hegemony and colonialism in the world. He also pointed to the two countries' common stances regarding various regional issues, especially the fight against terrorism. The Iranian president said that Iran considers the development of Tehran-Algiers relations as a basis for strengthening regional and international ties.

Heading a high-ranking politico-economic delegation, Raisi arrived in Algiers on Saturday to attend the 7th meeting of the leaders of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF).

The GECF, which is comprised of 13 permanent members and seven observers, was established in 2008, based on an initial proposal by Iran as one of the world's largest holders of natural gas reserves.

The Iranian president also held separate meetings with other top officials from the 19-member gathering of the world's leading natural gas producers. Raisi's trip marks the fourth visit of an Iranian president to the North African country, which took place after 14 years, since former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's visit in 2010.

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi (R) shakes hands with his Algerian counterpart Abdelmadjid Tebboune in Algeria's presidential palace in Algiers, on March 3, 2024. [president.ir](#)

Neighborly ties to help Pakistan solve challenges



By Nozer Shafiei
Subcontinent affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Pakistan's parliament elected Shehbaz Sharif from the Muslim League party prime minister.

What Pakistan's parliament pulled off was actually a compulsion because none of the major parties could muster the necessary quorum to form a government in the parliamentary elections. Independent candidates affiliated with the Tehreek-e-Insaf party led by former prime minister Imran Khan won 93 seats, and the Muslim League party headed by Nawaz Sharif secured 75 seats. The People's party led by Bilawal Bhutto also bagged 54 seats. Therefore, none of the parties managed to form a government because they did not garner the majority in the parliament.

Therefore, Imran Khan's rival parties teamed up to form a government and stave off political instability. Not only in Pakistan but also in other countries, coalition governments tend to be fragile. Some parties might pull out of the coalition midway. Also, a coalition government inevitably faces a strong opposition in the parliament.

This adds to the complexity of running the country for a government embroiled in an unfavorable economic situation and facing security and political challenges, especially in its dealings with neighbors, Afghanistan and India. Particularly, the Pakistani Taliban remains a major challenge for any government in this country. In addition, the new government is up against a strong and well-supported opposition whose leader is behind bars. Hence, while the election of Sharif appears to be a fitting decision that could help manage the internal political crisis of the country and prevent ongoing street protests, he will undoubtedly encounter challenges.

It seems that one of the strategies of the new government to tackle its political and regional challenges is to enhance cooperation with its neighbors. Iran is among these neighbors that have maintained good relations with Pakistan. Tehran has always prioritized the security of its neighbors and views any instability across the borders as detrimental because continued instability poses a threat to Iran's national interests. Accordingly, alongside economic, cultural, and political cooperation, it has consistently fostered good ties with its neighbors, including Pakistan. Now, it appears that Sharif's government will prioritize bolstering relations with Iran. The completion of Iran's gas transmission pipeline to Pakistan can pave the way for stabilizing and strengthening Sharif's government in Pakistan as a first step. Sharif, in his inaugural statement after assuming office as prime minister, affirmed that Pakistan would continue to enhance bilateral relations with its neighbors, particularly Iran. It seems that the new government acknowledges the significance of regional cooperation with its neighbors, and this can assist the new government in moving forward.

Shehbaz Sharif elected Pakistan's PM for second time

Pakistan's newly formed parliament elected Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday as prime minister for a second time, three weeks after uncertain national elections caused delays in the formation of a coalition government.

He beat Omar Ayub, the candidate backed by jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan, who secured 92 votes. Sharif returns to the role he held until August when parliament was dissolved ahead of the elections and a caretaker government took over. No single party won enough seats to form government on their own, Reuters

reported. "Shehbaz Sharif is declared to have been elected the prime minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan," National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq said, after announcing Sharif had secured 201 votes, above the required 169 votes in the house.

The declaration was met with loud protests from the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) party backed by Khan. The lawmakers called for Khan's release and shouted slogans alleging Sharif had come to power through electoral rigging. In a wide-ranging speech,

Sharif touched on a number of topics, including the need for economic reforms as well as international relations, but stopped short of announcing definitive changes in policy. He invited the opposition for talks about reconciling political and policy differences.

The Feb. 8 election was marred by a mobile internet shutdown, arrests and violence in its build-up and the unusually delayed results triggered accusations that the vote was rigged.

Sharif, 72, is the younger brother of three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif.



Candidates backed by Khan gained the most seats but the PML-N and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) agreed to form a coalition government, which enabled Shehbaz Sharif to be elected as prime minister after his brother stepped aside. Khan is currently serving prison

terms in multiple cases and has been barred from seeking or holding office. Sharif replaced him as prime minister after his ouster in a no-confidence vote in parliament in April 2022.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif [AFP](#)

Parliamentary elections go to 2nd round in at least 15 cities

National Desk

Iran's parliamentary elections went to the second round in at least 15 cities, including the capital, after many candidates fell short of the 20% threshold needed to secure a parliament seat in the initial round.

According to unofficial media reports, 15 candidates from Tehran, including the current Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, have so far managed to enter the parliament, while other 30 candidates will compete in the second round for remaining 15 seats.

Nearly 150 current lawmakers will be absent in the next parliament. Some of them did not manage to garner enough votes, some were disqualified by the Constitutional Council, and some of them did not register for elections. On Friday, Iranians went to the

polling stations across the country to elect new members of parliament and the Assembly of Experts - an 88-member body in charge of overseeing the activities of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution with a position of authority to either appoint or dismiss the Leader.

Preliminary results from the elections showed that 41 percent of the more than 61 million eligible voters cast their ballots during the elections.

Iranian Interior Ministry said more than 25 million voted on Friday. The polls opened at 8 a.m. local time (04:30 GMT) on Friday and the voting began at 59,000 polling stations across the country, with more than 15,000 candidates competing for 290 seats in the Iranian parliament, and 144 candidates vying for positions in the eight-year-term Assembly of Experts.

Palestinian minister: Cease-fire more important than having food under fire

International Desk

The caretaker Palestinian Health Minister Mai al-Kaila said that "the cease-fire is much more important than having food under fire" as international mediators are trying to broker a 6-week cease-fire in the Gaza Strip.

"The top priority is to have a cease-fire," she said from Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. "People are running from one place to another just to save their lives. People all over the world should mobilize to push for a cease-fire."

"The second call is, stop providing Israel with weapons. Third, make Israel accountable in front of the international law," Al-Kaila added. A Hamas delegation arrived in Egypt's capital on Sunday for talks on the cease-fire after indications that Israel has provisionally accepted a six-week pause in fighting before the beginning of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Qatari and US mediators also arrived in Cairo on Sunday. A Hamas official said if Israel were to meet its demands - which include a com-

plete military withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and stepped-up humanitarian aid - this would "pave the way for an agreement within the next 24-48 hours". Another unnamed Palestinian official told Reuters, however, that a cease-fire deal was still not imminent, saying: "We're not there yet."

A US official said on Saturday that Israel had "more or less accepted" a deal presented by mediators. Increasing the flow of aid is crucial. The local health ministry said on Sunday that 15 children had died from malnutrition and dehydration at Kamal Adwan hospital in Beit Lahya, and the UN has said about a quarter of the total population is "one step away from famine".

Hamas has indicated its negotiating position could be influenced by the deaths of 115 Palestinians in Gaza who were killed after Israeli troops opened fire near a crowd of people scrambling to get food from an aid convoy on Thursday. Since October, Israel's strikes on the Gaza Strip have claimed the lives of more than 30,410 Palestinians - mostly women and children.



SUBJECT: Cancellation of International Tender

Notice no. 1402

سایپا آذین

Tender notice no. 1402 related to Saipa Azin co, which was published in Iran daily newspaper dated 24/06/2023 for 4,000 T of foam material (polyol and isocyanate) is hereby cancelled due to unavailable circumstances.

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Tehran Paris Tehran' top-grossing Iranian theater in current year



Iran's 'Tehran Paris Tehran' play won the title of the best-selling show of the current Iranian year, ending on March 19, with ticket sales totaling \$140,000.

The drama, directed by Saeed Dashti and produced by Sam Beheshtyar, has run continuously for the past five months without reproduction, according to a report by IRNA on Sunday.

The storyline tells the story of Sara, a young girl who travels from Tehran to Paris to seek revenge for her father's murder. Upon returning to Tehran, she becomes entangled in a complex narrative.

Iran's 'Alone' to compete at Indian festival



The film 'Alone,' directed by Maryam Khadivi and Saied Nabi, will take part in the competition section of the IAWRT Asian Women's Film Festival in India.

This marks its debut at international film festivals, according to IRNA.

The IAWRT global festival is a significant cinematic event focused on influential women's issues worldwide. The 19th edition is scheduled to take place from March 7 to 9 in Delhi's cinemas, highlighting storytelling and innovative ideas from Asian women filmmakers.

'Alone,' shedding light on the life of a forest guardian in the woodlands of Gilan Province in northern Iran, narrates the challenges faced by these guardians, urging people to reflect on their environmental behavior.

In this international cinematic competition featuring narrative films, documentaries, shorts, animations, and experimental works, over 650 films worldwide were reviewed. Fifty films, representing various genres and originating from 20 countries, have been carefully selected for the final competition phase after a thorough evaluation process.

Iran's 'Loteria' wins big at Utah Zions Indie Film Fest

Arts & Culture Desk

Ali Atshani's film 'Loteria' won the Best Film Award at the closing ceremony of the 23rd Zions Indie Film Fest (ZIFF) on March 2.

This marks its 39th international appearance at the Utah festival, IRNA reported. The festival, one of the top 10 in the United States, is held annually from February 26 to March 2 at the SCERA Center for the Arts in Orem, Utah.

Established in 2001 and rebranded in 2022 with a new focus, ZIFF is a leading showcase for independent filmmakers worldwide. The 23rd edition, taking place against the backdrop of Utah's Wasatch Mountains, features a diverse audience

of cinema enthusiasts, industry leaders, film critics, film students, government officials, and financial supporters.

The event, which includes feature films, documentaries, special screenings, short films, music videos, screenplay competitions, table readings, valuable industry panels, and key presenters, continues the tradition of programming standards established over two decades ago.

Ali Atshani's 'Loteria,' produced in Mexico last year, has already received over 10 awards for best film and best director at various international film festivals.

The screenplay of 'Loteria' is based on a true story written by Ali Atshani and Mahmoudreza Sani.



Iran to celebrate poet Nezami Ganjavi in weeklong program

Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance announced its plan for a weeklong program commemorating the renowned Persian poet Nezami Ganjavi.

The program, set to begin on March 4 will mark the third edition of the national plan, ILNA reported.

The event will feature the words of the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance's message, along with speeches from prominent Persian language and literature scholars. Distinguished artists specializing in music, naqqali (Persian passion play), and reading the poems of Nezami will showcase their talents throughout the celebration.

The event aims to highlight Ganjavi's role as a common cultural heritage for Iranians and Persian-speaking neighbors, fostering unity and cul-

tural understanding. By introducing Ganjavi to the world, the organizers hope to bring attention to his thoughts and provide an opportunity for all admirers to appreciate his wisdom, poetry, and works.

In addition to the diverse cultural and artistic activities, this year's program, in line with the third international commemoration of Nezami, will introduce the national Ganjavi Award. This accolade, presented for the first time, aims to honor the poet's legacy and encourage academic excellence among students. The focus is on recognizing the best doctoral dissertations in the field of Nezami studies, contributing to scholarly advancement and inspiring future researchers. Ganjavi (c. 1141-1209 CE) is mostly known for "Khamseh", two copies of which are pre-

served in Iran were inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register list in 2011.

"Khamseh" is a pentology of poems written in Masnavi verse form (rhymed couplets) with a total of 30,000 couplets.

These five poems include the didactic work Makhzan ol-Asrar (The Treasury of Mysteries); the three traditional love stories of Khosrow and Shirin, Leili and Majnun, and Haft Paykar; and the Eskandar-nameh, which records the adventures of Alexander the Great.

There are various versions of "Khamseh" in Iranian libraries, but the two versions kept at the Central Library of the University of Tehran and the library of the Shahid Motahari School and Mosque in Tehran are the ones that were registered by UNESCO.

Iran's National Orchestra to perform in Tehran



Iran's National Orchestra, led by guest conductor Mazyar Zahredini, is set to perform at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on March 14.

According to ISNA, the orchestra will perform pieces including Ahmad Pejman's 'Divertimento' and Mehran Rouhani's 'Nostalgia.'

'Divertimento' is composed in four movements, titled 'Soran,' 'Hengam,' 'Susa,' and 'Kharazam,' created in 2008 with a free approach to form, emphasizing rhythmic and melodic patterns

of music from various ethnicities and regions.

'Nostalgia,' a three-movement piece, begins with the first movement, 'Red,' representing the color of love and based on the famous theme of 'Elahe-ye Naz' by Akbar Mohseni. The second movement, 'White' draws inspiration from the well-known theme 'Sang-e Khara' by Ali Tajvidi. The final movement, 'Red Color of the Flag' is based on the delightful spring theme by Ruhollah Khaleqi.

13th Tehran Int'l Animation Festival kicks off

The 13th Tehran International Animation Festival kicked off on March 3, showcasing films from the Iranian and International Competition Sections at the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults cultural center.



In the International Section, the festival includes 195 films, with 33 Iranian and 162 foreign entries, Mehr reported.

The jury members include Hormoz Haqiqi, Alexey Demin, and Pedro Serrazina.

Mohammad Hassan Shahmohammadi is one of the jury members of the CIFEJ (special screenings) section in this edition of the animation festival.

The 13th Tehran International Animation Festival, spanning March 3 to 7, is currently underway in Tehran, organized into four sections: Competition, out of competition, special screenings, and Perspective, under the direction of Mohammadreza Karimi-Saremi.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
 Cartoonist

