

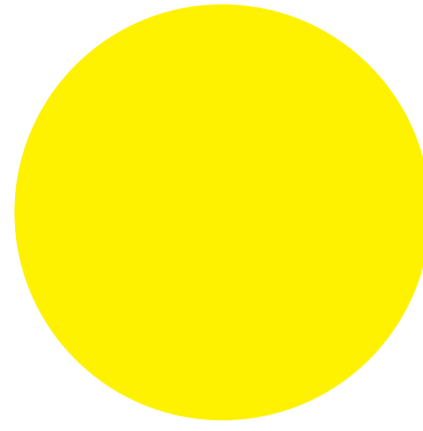


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Iran Showcases Its Defense Products in DIMDEX 2024 **2 >**



Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani (C) visits the 8th Doha International Maritime Defense Exhibition and Conference (DIMDEX 2024) in Qatar's capital, Doha, on March 4, 2024. **IRNA**

National Desk Iran has participated in the 8th Doha International Maritime Defense Exhibition and Conference (DIMDEX 2024) to present its defense achievements. The three-day exhibition opened on Monday at the Qatar National Convention Center (QNCC). Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani, who visited the exhibition on Monday, said the purpose of holding the exhibition is to present the defense achievements of different countries, which can provide a basis for the export of their products. He said that Iran's Defense Ministry has showcased its products such as long-range radars and various types of air defense systems. According to the exhibition organizers, the DIMDEX 2024 aims to lay the groundwork for increased cooperation among relevant stakeholders. Its main goal is to build partnerships and alliances that focus on establishing security and stability in the seas and oceans, positively affecting the economic and social well-being of nations and communities.



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NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran rejects
'unilateral'
GCC statement
on Arash gas
field

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani rejected 'unilateral' statements by the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on the Arash gas field. Kanaani said that Iran has repeatedly announced its principled position on the matter based on international law. The GCC Ministerial Council made claims about the Persian Gulf Arash natural gas field, which Iran shares with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. It alleged that only the two Arab countries have the right to exploit natural resources from the field. "Making one-sided claims will not create any rights for the claimant. We have emphasized the continuation of technical and legal negotiations with the Kuwaiti authorities," he added. "Raising such issues in unilateral statements is not acceptable at all."

Majority of
voters think
Biden too old
to be effective
president:
Poll

A majority of voters in the US believe Joe Biden is just too old to be an effective president, according to a new poll by the New York Times and Siena College. According to the poll's results, 73% of all registered voters believe Biden is too old to be effective, in turn revealing spreading concerns about the 81-year-old president's mental competency, The Guardian reported. The results of the wide-ranging poll, which were first released on Friday, are the latest blow to Biden's election campaign.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

Resignations over Gaza war
rock Israeli army

Gaza 'powder keg' could spark wider war: UN

International Desk

Many high-ranking officials have resigned from the Israeli army spokesperson's team due to the ongoing war in Gaza, according to the Israeli media, as UN human rights warned that the war is a "powder keg" with the potential to spark broader conflict in the Middle East. On Sunday, Israeli Channel 14 reported that "The second-in-command in Daniel Hagari's team, Moran Katz, along with many high-ranking officials have submitted their resignations in light of the Gaza conflict".

"The retiring officials also include Gen. Richard Heshit, the Israeli army's spokesperson for foreign media affairs," Anadolu Agency quoted the channel as saying. Israeli reports in recent months have highlighted deep-seated disputes between the cabinet and the army regarding the regime's management of the war and its post-war strategy in Gaza. Israel has launched a deadly offensive on the Gaza Strip following a cross-border incursion by the Palestinian resistance group Hamas on Oct. 7, 2023. The ensuing

Israeli bombardment has killed 30,410 people and injured 71,700 others with mass destruction and shortages of necessities.

'Powder keg'

UN human rights chief Volker Turk said Monday that the Gaza war is a "powder keg" with the potential to spark broader conflict in the Middle East, UN human rights chief Volker Turk said Monday, AFP reported. Turk said it was imperative to take all possible measures to avoid a wider conflagration.

"The war in Gaza has already generated dangerous spillover in neighboring countries," he said in his global update to the United Nations Human Rights Council.

"I am deeply concerned that in this powder keg, any spark could lead to a much broader conflagration. This would have implications for every country in the Middle East and many beyond it." He said that overlapping emergencies made the specter of spillover conflict very real, and cited the examples of Yemen and Lebanon as places where the Gaza war is having a wider effect. "The military escalation in southern Lebanon



between Israel, Hezbollah and other armed groups is extremely worrying," Turk said.

The UN high commissioner for human rights said almost 200 people had been killed in Lebanon and some 90,000 internally displaced. There was also extensive damage to health facilities, schools and vital infrastructure.

"Incidents in which civilians, including children, paramedics and journalists,

have been killed in attacks must be fully investigated," said Turk.

Some 80,000 people have also been displaced from areas in northern Israel along the country's border with Lebanon, he added. Yemen's military forces have been targeting Israeli-linked ships in Red Sea in support of Palestinians. The US, Israel's key ally, has led reprisal strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen in a bid to quash the attacks.

Turk said the Houthi attacks had not only disrupted global maritime trade but had driven up the price of goods, which has had a significant impact on developing countries.

Truce talks

Meanwhile, mediators and Hamas envoys have made "significant progress" towards a truce in Gaza, Egyptian state-linked TV reported Monday as the talks in Cairo entered a second day. Egypt, Qatar and the US have been pushing for a cease-fire in the almost five-month-old war, with the latest proposal calling for a six-week halt to fighting and prisoner release.

Israeli troops operate in the Gaza City's Zeitoun neighborhood on March 3, 2024.
● ISRAEL'S ARMY

Raisi: Iran needs no global power
to ensure its security

President Ebrahim Raisi said Iran's security is "en-

ogenous"; the Islamic Republic does not rely on

any global power to ensure its national security. Raisi made the remarks in an address to the graduation ceremony for cadets studying in the academies of Iran's Armed Forces, which was held in Imam Hassan al-Mujtaba University of Officer and Police Training in Tehran on Monday, Press TV reported.

He said, Iran's security stems from the presence of people in various scenes and from aware-

ness, awakening, and vigilance and the presence of the armed forces.

"Our security does not depend on other countries and conventional powers in the world," the president asserted. He argued that security is Iran's most vital need, as he pledged to strengthen the defense prowess of the country.

"Defense power, economic stability and cultural capability are three important components of

national strength," Raisi emphasized.

He added that the enemy is hell-bent on hindering the Iranian nation's progress through acts of sabotage, sanctions and threats, but Iranians are resolute on moving in the path of development.

"In this war of wills, the will of the great Iranian nation has achieved victory so far and it will continue to be victorious in the future," the president stated.

He said the Iranian nation's presence in various scenes and its accountability have foiled all the enemies' plots over the past 45 years.

Elsewhere in his address,

Raisi noted that the United States and the Israeli regime have the most despised armed forces in the world, emphasizing that Palestine and Gaza are now the leading issues of humanity.

Israel waged its genocidal war on the besieged Gaza in October, after the Palestinian Hamas resistance group carried out Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the usurping entity in retaliation for its intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people.

Israel has so far killed at least 30,534 Palestinians, mostly women and children, while injuring 71,920 others.

Israeli attack on Lebanon will ignite
new version of 2006 war: Hezbollah

The Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement has warned that any Israeli act of aggression against the Arab country would ignite an advanced version of the 33-day war fought in the summer of 2006, when the occupying regime suffered a humiliating defeat.

"The Zionist enemy continues to threaten us with military aggression, and we respond by means of steadfastness, resistance, and retaliatory strikes," Hezbollah's Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem

said on Monday. "We, hereby, declare that if they commit a foolish act and attack our territories, there would then be a new version of the 2006 July war," he said at the sixth International Conference for the Union of Resistance Scholars in Beirut. Sheikh Qassem also cast doubts on Western calls for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, describing them as theatrical and deceitful.

He underlined that Hezbollah conducts operations against Israeli military out-

posts in the 1948 occupied territories in retaliation for the bloody aggression against Gazans, out of its humanitarian and religious duties towards the oppressed Palestinian nation.

For his part, Osama Hamdan, a senior representative of Hamas in Lebanon, stated that Arab and Muslim nations are duty-bound to join forces and frustrate the Israeli regime's policy of intentionally starving Palestinians in Gaza.

"Our people have withstood the ongoing Israeli aggres-

sion against Gaza for the last 150 days through unwavering resilience and unshakable determination. Gaza-based resistance factions conducted Operation Al-Aqsa Storm at the time when the occupying regime was about to liquidate the Palestinian cause and resistance front." He stressed that the Axis of Resistance reintroduced the Palestinian issue as the primary concern of the Muslim world, foiled fiendish US plots, and reiterated that it is impossible to coexist with the usurping Tel Aviv regime.

Timeless elegance of the Persian carpet



pgnews.ir

The Iranian carpet embodies timeless elegance and the rich heritage of Iran's cultural legacy, standing as a global hallmark of exquisite craftsmanship. Known worldwide as the Persian carpet or Iranian rug, this piece transcends its functional use to become a true work of art. Crafted with unmatched skill, the carpet weaves its own story, encapsulating centuries of tradition and artistry. The range of designs, from traditional patterns to contemporary styles, ensures that the diversity and superior quality of the Iranian carpet will meet and exceed your expectations.

History

The history of the Persian carpet is deeply rooted in ancient times, originally crafted by nomadic tribes as functional art to embellish their tents and shield against the harsh desert climate. As years passed, this humble craft evolved into an art form celebrated for its intricate design and exceptional workmanship. By the 16th century, these artistic creations had captured European markets, becoming treasured possessions celebrated for their aesthetic appeal and impeccable quality. The art of carpet weaving in Iran is believed to extend back to as early as 500 BCE. Ancient Persian texts and artifacts offer valuable in-

sights into this mesmerizing craft, revealing a tradition that would eventually captivate global attention.

Oldest Persian rug

The Pazyryk carpet, discovered in a Scythian tomb located deep within Siberia, stands as a testament to the remarkable craftsmanship of ancient Iranian carpet weavers. Dating back to approximately 400 BCE, this artifact unveils the impressive sophistication that the art of carpet weaving had attained in antiquity. In the Pazyryk carpet, measuring 1.8 by two meters, there are approximately 3,600 knots in every square decimeter, totaling around 1.25 million knots for the entire carpet, which is about two millimeters thick.

Post-Islamic metamorphosis

Following the Islamic conquest of Persia in the seventh century CE, the artistic landscape of the region, including the renowned carpet weaving tradition, underwent significant transformations. The influence of Islam on this age-old craft was profound and multifaceted. Trade dynamics of the era also played a pivotal role in the carpet industry's evolution. With the expansion of trade routes, Iranian carpets began to find their way to distant lands. Their designs, superior crafts-

manship, and durability made them a sought-after luxury item in courts and households from Spain to China. The era also witnessed a surge in royal patronage. Many Islamic rulers, captivated by the artistry of these carpets, became significant patrons, often commissioning exclusive designs. This support from the elite not only ensured the industry's survival but elevated carpet weaving from a mere craft to a revered form of high art.

One of the most distinguished features that emerged during this period was the integration of calligraphy into Iranian carpet designs. Artisans began weaving verses from the Holy Qur'an, poetry, or sometimes their names into the carpets. This added an additional layer of meaning and depth to the already intricate designs, blending artistic expression with devotion. Technological advancements during the Islamic Golden Age also left their mark on carpet weaving. New techniques were developed, and improved tools were introduced. This period of innovation contributed to the quality and variety of carpets produced, setting even higher standards for craftsmanship.

Finally, regional variations began to emerge more prominently. Renowned weaving centers like Tabriz, Kerman, and Isfahan started to develop and refine their unique

styles, influenced by local traditions, resources, and artistic inclinations. Each region added its unique touch to the art of Iranian carpet weaving. The Seljuq dynasty was a transformative era for Persian carpet making. With the spread of Islam across the region, new styles like the "mihrab" design, representing the niche in a mosque that faces Mecca, came into vogue.

Golden age

The golden age of Iranian carpet weaving is often attributed to the Safavid era in the 16th and 17th centuries. Shah Abbas, one of the notable rulers, took a keen interest in the arts, including carpet weaving. Master weavers like Kashan's Maqsood were patronized, and the famous Ardebil carpet was created during this period.

The Qajar dynasty saw the commercial expansion of the carpet industry. During this period, new dyeing techniques were developed, and exports began to Western countries. Today, Persian carpets are synonymous with luxury and elegance, and they remain a vibrant and vital part of Iran's cultural heritage. The resilience and versatility of this age-old craft are evident in how it has endured through multiple eras, each leaving its indelible mark on the patterns, colors, and textures that we celebrate today.



goftani.net



IRNA



wikimedia.org



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Googed Stronghold serves dual purpose during peace and conflict

Iranica Desk

The historical Googed Stronghold, situated in Isfahan Province near the city of Golpayegan, boasts a rich history spanning over four centuries. Serving as a pivotal structure along caravan routes, it played a significant role in trade and defense. An intriguing document traces back half of its establishment to a person named Ali Khan, who dedicated it to his wife, leading to its alternative name as Ali Khani Stronghold.

Characterized by imposing towers flanking its sides, the stronghold served a dual-purpose during the times of peace and conflict. Functioning as both a military fortress and a secure caravanserai, it provided

accommodations for affluent merchants. The layout features a square courtyard with four symmetrically placed towers, each standing at approximately twelve meters to ensure vigilant surveillance and protection.

Reflecting societal hierarchies of the era, the upper levels housed merchants and dignitaries, while lower levels accommodated servants and livestock. An alcove above the entrance gateway contained a central water pool, strategically positioned to douse any fires set by adversaries during attacks. The stronghold's design incorporated natural sentinels in the form of pigeons and other birds, whose agitation signaled impending danger, aiding guards in preempt-

ing threats.

Furthermore, provisions for water and food storage, including a vital water well in the southeast corner, underscored the strategic foresight in preparing for times of conflict and siege. After a period of neglect, Googed Stronghold has undergone meticulous restoration, transforming into a boutique hotel and residence. Visitors can now explore

its nineteen rooms, along with amenities such as a teahouse, restaurant, and expansive courtyard, offering a glimpse into its storied past and architectural ingenuity.

lastsecond.ir



Oil, Gas

sectors flourishing under Iran's current government

Rise in production

The oil and gas industry's productivity has soared to 12.6 percent from -3.7 percent as domestic economy's productivity rate has reached 3.7 percent from 0.8 percent, showing the country's productivity and economic growth owes to the oil industry more than other sectors.

The country's oil production has jumped 60 percent since August 2021.

According to OPEC statistics, Iran's crude production hit 3.154 million barrels per day (mbd) in December 2023, while the figure was at a record low of 1.93 mbd in July 2020.

Delivery of gas to industries

Since October 2021, 3,195 more industrial units have been supplied with gas, concluding the number of industrial consumers has soared to 32,518. Sixteen power plants receiving gas have been added since October 2021, increasing the total number to 102.

Higher storage of gas

Gas stockpiled in Iranian storages broke the country's 10-year record as three billion cubic meters of gas have been stored in Sarajeh and Shourijeh facilities.

The stored volume is for injection into the national grid during cold days of the winter.

Gas injection record, no supply problem

Record 851 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas were injected into the national network on January 27. The country's gas output has witnessed a 30 mcm/d increase when compared to the volume produced a year earlier, said the minister.

New discoveries

Three oil and one gas fields have been discovered since August 2021. The discovery of four fields has soared the country's recoverable liquid hydrocarbons by 2.6 billion barrels.

Hirkan oilfield in northern province of Golestan, Tengoo and Genaveh oilfields in southwestern province of Bushehr, and Cheshmeh Shour gas field in northeastern province of Khorasan Razavi are the four fields discovered in the past two years.

Given the latest discoveries, the reserve replacement ratio for liquid hydrocarbon is 87 percent, it means if 100 barrels of crude oil and gas condensates are produced in Iran and consumed inside the country or exported to other countries, 87 barrels of that output have been replaced by newly-discovered deposits.

3D seismic data acquisition operations have increased 300 percent under the current administration when compared with surveys carried out during the four years before.

Prioritizing joint fields

The daily extraction of crude oil from the joint oilfield of Azadegan, along the Iran-Iraq border, to 500,000 barrels per day, as the figure currently stands at 200,000 bpd.

Six contracts have been signed on the development of oil and gas fields. Contracts with a total value of \$14 billion will be inked by March 19 to develop eight other oil and gas fields.





By Reza
Abesh Ahmadlou
Staff writer

Iran's oil and gas industry has witnessed an eye-catching productivity growth under the current administration as it has focused on beating off economic challenges since President Ebrahim Raisi took office in August 2021.

Signs of hope for finding a way out of the 2010s stagflation have now appeared thanks to the current administration's efforts as the average economic growth in 2021 and 2022 rose to 4.2 percent, of which 75 percent owes to productivity growth. The oil and gas industry has played a greater role when compared to other sectors' shares in achieving the economic growth.

According to the figures released by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI), the oil industry registered 19.8 percent and 25.6 percent growth in spring and summer 2023 respectively – 22.7 percent on aggregate in the six months – having a 16 percent role in increasing Iran's gross domestic product (GDP). The SCI data also showed that Iran's economic growth in summer 2023 stood at 7.1 percent if the oil sector's growth included and 4.2 percent if excluded.

Top in exploration

Iran stands top among regional countries, including Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar, in terms of exploration, as all wells drilled for exploration purposes have contained hydrocarbon, meaning the exploration success rate has stood at 100 percent.

Over the past two years, \$20 billion have been invested to complete the unfinished projects with the aim of increasing production and added value.

Flare gas capture

The Oil Ministry has announced plan for gathering 2 billion cubic feet of flare gas which would be carried out under five long-term plans.

A total of \$5 billion have been invested in this sector, as all flare gas gathering projects are operated by the private sector and all costs would be recouped by feedstock supply.

Long-term projects for flare gas capture include building LPG plants and flare gas capture stations which are expected to come on stream by March 2026.

Short-term projects include flare gas gathering from facilities in the three provinces of Khuzestan, Bushehr, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad which are planned under a \$1.1 billion contract with Persian Gulf Bidboland Gas Refining Company. That would help capture 593 mcf/d of gas, thereby supplying 1.5 tons of feedstock to refineries per annum.

Petchem production up

Iran's annual petrochemical production capacity will surpass 95 million tons by the end of the current Iranian year (March 19, 2024) as the figure was around 2.5 million tons in 1979.

NPC has conducted a thorough study on the petrochemical industry's value chain, launching 20 project packages for producing propylene, methanol, ethylene, aromatics, and butylene.

South Pars completion

Iran, in August 2023, brought to operation the last development phase of the world's largest gas field in the Persian Gulf which France and gas major Total quit twice under sanctions.

Inauguration of Phase 11 of South Pars, developed by Iranian experts, put an end to 20 years of waiting and saved the country \$800 million in development costs.

Extraterritorial refinery project

The National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) was the first Iranian company to start extraterritorial refineries.

Venezuela was the first country, and El Palito was the pilot refinery for Iran's extraterritorial project.

The El Palito refinery project in Venezuela has progressed by about 85 percent, as 85-90 percent of its equipment has been provided by Iranian companies.

Iran also has reached an agreement with South Africa to develop and equip five refineries in the African state.

The agreement was reached on the sidelines of the 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, under which the Iranian Oil Ministry will help to develop five refineries in South Africa by exporting technical and engineering services.

Greater refining output

Iran's refining industry has refined 2.2 mb/d of crude oil and gas condensate, supplied 112 ml/d of diesel and 100 ml/d of gas oil. This achievement has been made owing to the implementation of strategic projects and switch from fuel-based approach to profit-based approach. The country will reduce crude oil and natural gas sales by developing the value chain and bring its oil refining capacity to 3 mb/d.



Iranian fencer Pakdaman on course for Paris spot



● GETTY IMAGES

Sports Desk

Ali Pakdaman is all but guaranteed a place in the saber competitions of the Paris Olympics in the summer after the Iranian fencer stood fifth in the latest FIE World Rankings. The 33-year-old Iranian collected 155,000 points to move up by two spots in the ranking, with Georgian Sandro Bazadze, Aron Szilagyi of Hungary – a silver medalist in the Tokyo Olympics – Egyptian Ziad Elsisy, and South Korea's Oh Sang-uk standing first to fourth respectively. Pakdaman grabbed a first individual medal in five years for the country at the Fencing World Cup in mid-February, when he beat Bazadze to reach the final showdown in Tbilisi, only to settle for the silver after a 15-7 defeat against Szilagyi.

Iran could miss Palma players for Futsal Asian Cup

Sports Desk

Iran faces the prospect of being without three instrumental players for the AFC Futsal Asian Cup, starting April 17 in Thailand.

Prolific pivot Hossein Tayyebi as well as Mohsen Oladqobad and Salar Aqapour play for Spanish Primera Division club Mallorca Palma and the reigning European champion is reluctant to release the trio for the Asian flagship international event as the tournament is not part of the FIFA international calendar.

The three players were named in Iran's provisional 25-man squad for the tournament as head coach Vahid Shamsaei is eager to dethrone defending champion Japan in Thailand.

In his first major tournament on Iran's bench, Shamsaei led the country to the Asian Cup final two years ago, before his side suffered a 3-2 defeat against the Blue Samurai

in Kuwait.

Shamsaei said last week that the Iranian federation and the Spanish team have been in talks in recent days, hoping the two sides would settle the issue in "a friendly and professional manner."

However, the Iranian futsal great confirmed the trio will play no part in the friendly tournament in Vietnam in the buildup to the Asian Cup.

The Iranians have played an essential role in Palma's domestic and continental campaigns this season.

Tayyebi bagged a double, taking his tally to 11 for the season, with Oladqobad also on the score-sheet as Palma defeated Cordoba 4-2 on Saturday to sit fourth in the Spanish top-flight table.

Oladqobad also scored four in three outings to help Palma win the group in the UEFA Futsal Champions League elite round last December and progress to the final tourna-

ment, starting in early May.

Chasing a record-extending 13th title, Iran will begin its Asian Cup campaign against Afghanistan on April 18 in Group D.

Shamsaei's men will then take on Bahrain before an encounter against Kuwait on the final day of the group stage.

The top two of each four groups will head into the quarterfinals with the final showpiece set to be staged in the Bangkok Arena on April 28 – less than a week before Palma is in the Champions League last-four action against either fellow-Spanish club Barcelona or the Portuguese archrivals Benfica and Sporting.



Palma's Iranian duo Hossein Tayyebi (R) and Moslem Oladqobad as well as Salar Aqapour (not pictured) hope the Spanish club will give them the go-ahead for participation in the AFC Futsal Asian Cup in April.

● MALLORCA PALMA FUTSAL



● MALLORCA PALMA FUTSAL

Asian Age Group Aquatics Championships:

Iran off to flying water polo start with Malaysia rout

Sports Desk

Iran began its water polo campaign at the Asian Age Group Aquatics Championships in emphatic fashion, hammering Malaysia 34-3 in a Group B encounter in the Filipino city of Capas on Monday.

Ali Pirouzkah's boys won the first three quarters by 8-1, 9-1, and 7-1 scorelines respectively before scoring 10 without response in the final quarter.

Group B also Kazakhstan, Singapore, and Sri Lanka,

with Iran taking on the latter in its second outing today.

Singapore sits atop the group table with maximum points, thanks to back-to-back victories over Malaysia and Sri Lanka, while Kazakhstan opened its campaign with a 43-1 thrashing of Sri Lanka on Sunday.

The Iranian water polo team will be looking to continue the country's impressive run in the competition following medal-laden performances in the swimming and diving events.

Sam Vajer, who claimed

the best diver award in the 15-17 age class, bagged a couple of golds in the boys' board level 3m and 1m contests, as well as the platform silver.

He also teamed up with Kimumars Aslani to win the 3m synchronized springboard silver and finish on the third podium in the synchro board level final.

Samyar Abdoli, meanwhile, led the charge for the country in the swimming contests with a men's 50m freestyle gold in the over-18 class, while he was

part of the four-man team alongside Homer Abbasi, Mehrshad Afghari, and Matin Sohran that won the 4X100m freestyle relay bronze.

Mohammad-Mahdi Gholami also enjoyed a prolific campaign with five medals in the 13-14 age category despite leaving Capas without a gold – grabbing double silvers in the 200m individual medley and 200m butterfly events – as Iran finished with three golds plus seven silvers and bronzes apiece.



● IRSF

Foden is best player in Premier League, Guardiola says after derby triumph

REUTERS – Phil Foden is the best player in the Premier League on current form and will become a Manchester City legend, manager Pep Guardiola said after his second-half double inspired a crucial 3-1 comeback win against Manchester United on Sunday.

City were utterly dominant but still trailing to a spectacular eighth-minute pile-driver by Marcus Rashford when forward Foden took centre stage in the second half.

The 23-year-old local boy struck a sublime left-foot shot into the roof of the net in the 56th minute

and then beat Andre Onana with a precise finish after 80 minutes.

Erling Haaland's 18th league goal of the season rounded things off in stoppage time – his sixth goal of the week – but nothing could steal the limelight from Foden who now has 11 league goals this season, equaling his record.

"It is the amount of games he is playing. He was always a talented player but now he is more mature and understands more the game, especially defensively," Guardiola told the BBC. "He can play middle, right, make moments

and cut inside, play in the left, scoring from the left. What can I say? He is the best player in the Premier League right now for the amount of things he does. Unbelievable."

Foden's quality and level of consistency is making him undroppable even in a squad laced with world class players. His current form also makes it unthinkable that he cannot be accommodated in Gareth Southgate's England side.

"We don't negotiate over that," Guardiola said when asked about Foden's defensive discipline. "The guy who doesn't do that doesn't

stay in the team. He loves football, he lives for football. He is a joy and his work ethic is unbelievable."

Guardiola was no less effusive in his praise of Foden when talking to Sky Sports.

"He will already be a legendary player because in a short age, the games played, the minutes, the goals scored, the titles won and he is from the home and that is why the connection with the fans is unbelievable," Guardiola said.

"He is the player of the season. No-one has been so decisive for us as him this season."



Manchester City's Phil Foden (R) scores his second during a 3-1 win against Manchester United in the Etihad Stadium, Manchester, Britain, on March 3, 2024.

● JAY BARRATT/AMA

Iran unveils 400 archaeological discoveries in one year

National Museum of Iran hosting conference on Iranian archaeology

Arts & Culture Desk

The annual gathering of Iranian archaeologists kicked off with the exhibition of 400 findings, addressing concerns about the loss of historical artifacts.

The 21st Annual Symposium on the Iranian Archeology, is underway at the National Museum of Iran from March 4 to 6, showcasing the achievements of Iranian archaeologists over the last Persian year (ended on March 20, 2023), ISNA reported. Jebrael Nokandeh, Director General of the National Museum of Iran, hosting the conference and the exhibition of last year's archaeological discoveries, highlighted the event as "Nowruz of Iranian Archaeologists."

The exhibition, running until Eid al-Fitr at the museum, features over 400 artifacts from 12 regions and 12 provinces, spanning the Paleolithic to Islamic periods.

Expressing gratitude to all archaeologists for providing an opportunity for museum visitors, Nokandeh emphasized that archaeological discoveries not only contribute to cultural heritage but also facilitate research. Ali Beigi, the head of the Ar-



chaeological Research Institute, reflected on the history of the institute and the conference, stating that the publications from the early 1950s demonstrate the high attention given to archaeology.

He acknowledged the efforts of Iranian archaeologists to establish themselves as independent thinkers during that period. Beigi noted that the current resources are insufficient to meet even a small section of archaeological needs.

Beigi mentioned that out of 119

field activities in the past year, around 30 reports from archaeological excavations were selected for presentation, comprising a 700-page collection.

Nowruz Rajabi, an advisor to the head of the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Research Institute, discussed the executive guidelines for cultural development projects, highlighting legal requirements for heritage protection.

He expressed concern about cultural heritage destruction during construction projects,

referencing incidents such as the dam construction at Dez where extensive damage occurred.

Rajabi urged the guidelines to be directed by the government to ensure attention to these issues before project implementation. Mostafa Deh-Pahlavan, the head of the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, paid tribute to the deceased heritage experts and discussed the shortcomings in Iranian archaeology. He questioned the availability of archives from past studies, the

whereabouts of biological findings from excavated tombs in the last century, and the lack of comprehensive databases accessible to the public and scientific community.

The exhibition displayed selected archaeological findings from various regions of Iran, including Qazvin, Sistan and Baluchestan, Alborz, Mazandaran, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, East Azarbaijan, West Azarbaijan, South Khorasan, Zanjan, Isfahan, Kerman, Fars, Ardebil, and Kurdistan.

Minister:
60% growth
in computer
game
production
in 5 years



Arts & Culture Desk

The Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance highlighted the importance of drafting a "Comprehensive Document of Computer Games" while emphasizing a 60% growth in game production in the seventh development plan.

Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili made the statement during the 147th session of the for the promotion of virtual content production held on Monday, ISNA wrote.

"We have assessed that the gaming industry is definitely a golden opportunity for us, although it also has threatening aspects," he added.

He expressed confidence in utilizing this opportunity due to the strong cultural influence by aligning with necessary requirements.

He further noted, "The situation is similar in cinema. Some do not accept the statistics regarding public interest in cinema, but the animation 'Smart Kid,' which is entirely religious and tells the story of Imam Reza (PBUH), had over \$1.2 million in sales."

Esmaeili emphasized the need to pay more attention to this field firmly, stating: "According to the latest surveys in the country, we have 34 million computer game players, with four million of them being professional players who spend over 21 hours a week playing computer games."

"It depends on us how much we can use this capacity. By using this capacity, we can turn it into an opportunity, and neglecting it could pose a threat," he added.

Iran to make animation 'Smart Kid 2'



Honar Pooya Animation Studio is set to produce the animated film 'Smart Kid 2,' with the screenplay writing process underway.

The film, produced by Hamed Ja'fari, CEO of Honar Pooya Animation Studio, is based on successful global models and experiences, ILNA wrote.

Ja'fari emphasized that the positive feedback from audiences for the first 'Smart Kid,' indicates the film's potential

for continuation.

"We've received good feedback during this period, and the sales and audience numbers for 'Smart Kid' show that this animated film has the necessary potential for a sequel," Ja'fari said.

The producer of 'Smart Kid' provided insight into the production process of the sequel, stating that the screenplay writing for 'Smart Kid 2' has begun. This phase is expected to take approximately 6 to 8 months, with the production team preparing to begin the animation's creation process in the next Iranian year.

'Smart Kid 2,' produced by Hamed Ja'fari, is a product of Honar Pooya Animation Studio and the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults.

Iran-India exhibition opens in Golestan Palace

Arts & Culture Desk

The Iran-India Exhibition, showcasing a collection of 127 precious Indian jades along with their documents, opened at the Golestan World Heritage Site on Monday.

The opening ceremony was held with the presence of Deputy Tourism Minister Ali Darabi, the of Iran, and the Indian Ambassador to Tehran Rudra Gaurav Shresth, ILNA wrote.

At the beginning of the event, Afarin Emami, the director of the Golestan World Heritage Site, welcomed the attendees and provided insights into the significance of the jade collection of the Golestan Palace.

She noted that jade is one of the most traded commodities through the Silk Road, with most of the precious objects in the Gole-

stan Palace treasury attributed to Indian artists, indicating the cultural and political ties between Iran and India during the Qajar era.

Masoud Bonakdar, a researcher of this precious collection, discussed the research conducted on these valuable jades.

He mentioned that jade holds significant historical importance in Iran, referenced in various texts including the Tarikh-i Bayhaqi, (Bayhaqi's History).

The researcher continued, explaining that initially, these hundred jade pieces were collected from various storages in the Golestan Palace, and then their historical background and use were identified through the documents available in the Golestan collection.

Following a musical performance by an Indian group, Indian envoy

addressed the audience.

He described the exhibition as a significant symbol of the bond between Iran and India, showcasing their traditional and civilizational connections throughout the centuries.

He added that this collection is just one example of the historical ties between Iran and India.

The Indian envoy also highlighted the presence of many Persian manuscripts in India and mentioned that the first Persian newspaper was published in Bengal. He emphasized the Indian government's strong emphasis on teaching and preserving the Persian language, which is one of the nine languages taught in Indian schools.

The exhibition featuring Safavid jade frames and goblets, and jeweled pen holders will welcome visitors for two months.

Iran's DOE teams up with organizations to preserve rare turtle

Social Desk

Iranian officials have joined forces to protect the endangered Euphrates softshell turtle, the only Trionychidae species in Iran. The Department of Environment and the Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC) have signed an MoU for the preservation of this rare turtle.

The Euphrates softshell turtle, also known as the Mesopotamian softshell turtle, is found in the Euphrates-Tigris river basin across countries like Iraq, Syria,

Turkey, and Iran's Khuzestan Province. Its survival is threatened primarily by habitat loss from dam construction, along with pollution and fishing.

Nourollah Moradi, from Iran's Department of Environment, stressed that efforts in education and public participation should be substantive, not merely symbolic, IRNA reported.

He emphasized the need for a working group of environmental experts in Khuzestan province to create a specific action plan for conservation efforts. Moradi also highlighted the sig-

nificance of raising awareness and providing educational materials to local communities, especially youth, for the protection of such species.

He stated that the participation should align with the region's climate and that environmental discussions should involve provincial experts to yield favorable outcomes.

Abouzar Sharifi, CEO of PEDEC, mentioned the company's commitment to environmental responsibilities, such as reducing pollutants in their oil field projects.

Sharifi highlighted the importance of preserving the Euphrates softshell turtle as a pivotal part of their social and environmental obligations.

Sharifi announced future plans to revive the Hoor Al-Azim wetland, emphasizing the necessary studies for its restoration. Meanwhile, during the session, Barbod Safaei, a researcher and herpetologist, deemed research projects for protecting valuable species like the Euphrates softshell turtle crucial.

He noted the identified threats in the Hoor Al-Azim region and



the need for immediate attention to mitigate habitat destruction and attacks by stray dogs. Safaei mentioned multiple meetings held to empower and

inform local communities, expressing hope for increased budget allocations toward conservation efforts in the near future.

Overview of 12 successful space launches

Iran is among the top 10 countries in the field of aerospace technology following the latest successful launch of satellites into space, according to President Ebrahim Raisi. The trajectory of Iran's space success began 15 years ago, with the launch of the Iranian satellite Omid on February 3, 2009, commemorated annually as the National Day of Space Technology, to showcase the

achievements in this field. However, Iran's space industry has gained considerable momentum in the past two years, with 12 successful space launches. These launches include satellites Qoqnu, Khayyam, Noor-2 and -3, Nahid-1, Qaem-100 satellite carrier, and Bioscience Capsule, among others, and the latest launch of the research-sensing satellite of Pars-1.

Pars-1 research satellite

The research-sensing satellite of Pars-1 was successfully put into orbit on February 29, 2024. A Soyuz rocket from the Vostochny Cosmodrome in Russia's far eastern Amur region launched the 134-kilogram satellite. It receives data from ground sources in three spectral ranges of visible, short-wave infrared and thermal infrared.

Simultaneous launch of three satellites

The simultaneous launch of three satellites took place on December 30, 2021, for the first time by the Simorgh (Phoenix) satellite launch vehicle (SLV). Qoqnu, and two CubeSats, a class of miniaturized satellites, were launched from Imam Khomeini Space Launch Terminal in Semnan Province, to an altitude of 470 kilometers above the Earth's surface. According to the Iranian Space Agency (ISA), reaching a 470-km-altitude with Simorgh was a significant accomplishment, considering that Iran's space presence had previously been limited to the Earth's 250-km orbit.

Noor-2 satellite launch

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Force successfully put the Noor-2 satellite into a 500-kilometer orbit in March 2022, by Qased (Messenger) satellite carrier. The mission of the imaging satellite is measurement and reconnaissance. The imaging precision is approximately 10 to 15 meters. The successful launch demonstrated that the 18-meter, 18-ton satellite carrier Qased has a considerable level of reliability.

Khayyam satellite blastoff

The Khayyam satellite was launched into a 500-kilometer orbit from the Russian-operated Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on August 9, 2022. The satellite will employ remote sensing capabilities to provide high-quality images four times per day for use in environmental and agricultural studies, as well as water resource monitoring. Khayyam started remote sensing for monitoring and mapping land use changes in July 2023. Iran's Space Organization received the first telemetry data sent from the Khayyam satellite, hours after the launch.

Nahid-1 satellite blastoff

The Nahid-1 telecommunications satellite was launched into space by Zoljanah launcher, in June, 2022, using solid fuel.

Saman suborbital transfer block

On October 4, 2022, Iran announced a successful suborbital rocket launch conducted to test the Saman orbital transfer block, designed for evaluation of the orbital height of satellites. The rocket carrying the Saman stage was launched into an altitude of 100 kilometers, enabling a test of the system in vacuum conditions.

Successful suborbital test of Qaem-100

The suborbital launch of the Qaem-100 satellite carrier by the IRGC Aerospace Force was successfully conducted in December 2022.

Third 'measurement and reconnaissance' satellite

The IRGC's Aerospace Force launched the Noor-3 satellite in December, 2023, by satellite carrier Qased. Noor-3 was put at over 450 kilometers above the Earth's surface. The satellite has image accuracy that is two and a half times that of the Noor-2 satellite.

Bio-space capsule

ISA successfully put into orbit its newest bio-space capsule, with the domestically-built Salman launcher on December 6, 2023. The Salman launcher achieved great success in its first attempt and carried the 500-kilogram capsule in very good condition. The launch is a step to send humans into space in line with the country's plan to revive various sectors of the space industry and consolidate bio-space knowledge.

Soraya in 750-km orbit

The Soraya satellite, developed by the Iranian Space Research Center, was sent into a 750-km Low Earth orbit by the Qaem-100 SLV on January 20, 2024. The IRGC Aerospace Force successfully put Soraya satellite into orbit in 11 minutes. The 50-kg Soraya is a research satellite.

Mahda, Keyhan-2 and Hafez-1 satellites at orbit

Mahda, Keyhan-2 and Hafez-1 satellites were launched from Imam Khomeini Space Launch Terminal in Semnan Province on January 28 by the Simorgh SLV. The three satellites were put into orbit with a minimum altitude of 470 km and a maximum of 1,100 km above the Earth's surface. Mahda is a research satellite. The 32-kg Mahda is developed to test advanced satellite subsystems. Its main task is to assess the performance of the Simorgh launcher in multiple injections of space cargo in low altitudes. Mahda is to evaluate new designs and the reliability of indigenous technologies in space. Keyhan-2 and Hafez-1 nanosatellites are cubic nanosatellites weighing less than 10 kilograms. Weighing 32 kilograms, it is a lightweight satellite developed to test advanced satellite subsystems. Hafez-1 seeks to prove the use of narrowband communication technology in the internet of things (IoT).

