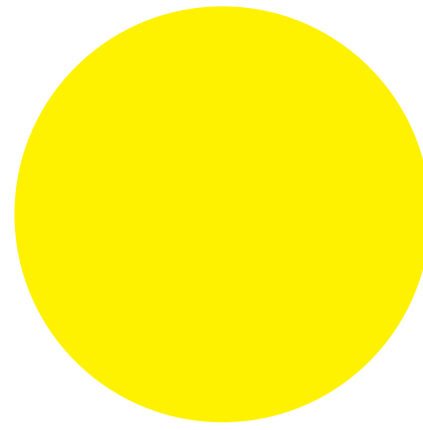




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# Iran Daily

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**SPECIAL ISSUE**



Protesters stage a die-in outside Google offices in Tokyo, Japan to oppose the company's \$1.2bn "Nimbus Project" contract with Israel on April 28, 2024. X

## Evil Netanyahu in hot water

By **Ebrahim Behešti**  
Staff writer

### PERSPECTIVE

Belligerent Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has found himself in a tight spot these days, grappling with a predicament that offers no easy way out. His tarnished reputation due to the atrocities and war crimes in the Gaza Strip now adds to the looming threat of an International Criminal Court ruling. Reports from the media suggest that

the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands, is set to pass judgment on Netanyahu, the Minister of War, and the Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Israeli Army for charges of committing war crimes. This imminent decision, hastening the downfall of Netanyahu's political career, is poised to spark an international legal scandal. In parallel with the news of the potential International Criminal Court ruling, there are reports of intensified negotiations for a cease-fire, with the US Secretary of State traveling to Saudi Arabia for this purpose. While external pressure mounts on

Netanyahu's hawkish administration to agree to a cease-fire, internal pressures are also escalating. These pressures are coupled with a growing public clamor for Netanyahu's removal and the dissolution of his cabinet. Adding to the chaos within Netanyahu's administration are internal rifts, with Israeli Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich threatening to resign if military operations in Rafah city are halted. After seven months of conflict, Netanyahu's tenure is reaching a point where support for him is virtually nonexistent, both domestically and

internationally, with widespread anticipation of his departure. Many experts believe that a substantial part of Netanyahu's opposition to cease-fire proposals is rooted in his concern for his political fate. Forecasts, along with the political climate in the occupied territories, indicate that once the Gaza conflict ends, the primary public demand will be for early elections, outcomes of which are already foreseen. Netanyahu's chances of winning the election are slim, given his performance during the seven months of warfare. Page 7 >



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## Iran coach Shamsaei hails 'hard work' toward Asian futsal glory

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

## IsDB to finance Iran's three projects

The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) will finance three new projects in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Talks on financing three new projects in Iran by the Islamic Development Bank is on the agenda of the meeting, reported Tasnim News Agency. Iran's Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Ehsan Khandouzi, who has traveled to Riyadh, attended the annual general assembly meeting of the bank on Monday morning. The annual meeting of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) kicked off in Saudi Arabia's capital of Riyadh on Monday. Khandouzi noted that it is the 50th establishment anniversary of the Islamic Development Bank as a major financial institution in the Muslim world. The 57 member states of the organization use the facilities of the bank for infrastructural projects including energy, education, healthcare and treatment, he said, IRNA reported. He went on to say that the Islamic Development Bank is the only financial institution that still helps finance development projects through the use of international credits. Expert-level meetings will be held with the economy ministers of the member states, especially countries that have a key role in the economic interactions with Iran, including those in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Khandouzi added.

## Annual exports of aquatics hit 210,000 tons:

IFO

A sum of 210,000 tons of the fishery products, valued at \$650 million, were exported from Iran to 67 countries in the previous Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2023 to March 19, 2024), the deputy minister of agriculture stated. Hossein Hosseini, who also heads the Iranian Fishery Organization (IFO), said that the exhibition is one of the most important events in showing Iran's export capacities, IRNA reported. The fishery industry is one of the unique capacities in the field of investment and yielding foreign currency and boosting it is one of the main objectives of the Ministry of Agriculture, he said, adding that a huge investment was made last year (ended March 19, 2024) in the fishery sector. The private sector of the country, which plays a leading role in spurring the export of fishery products, made 90 percent of the investment in this field last year, he said.

By Sadeq Dehqan & Reza Abesh Ahmadlou  
Staff writers

The 6th Export Potential Exhibition of Iran, also known as Iran Expo 2024 as one of the most important events in Iran, provides chances for business people and manufacturers in various sectors and paves the ground for industries to showcase their products. The exhibition unveils Iran's production and export capabilities and is expected to result in the creation of a competitive environment.

Iran Expo 2024, which commenced on Saturday in the capital city of Tehran and will run until Wednesday, has attracted 800 local companies, along with 2,000 international traders and entrepreneurs from 120 countries.

During the event, a sum of 3,500 business-to-business meetings have been scheduled, in addition to specialized conferences and webinars aimed at showcasing Iran's industrial capabilities to international attendees. Within a 50,000 square meter area, the exhibiting companies have showcased their newest products and accomplishments across various sectors including industry, agriculture, fishery, carpet weaving, handicrafts, tourism, laboratory equipment, and chemicals.

Alireza Shamsfard, the vice president of the Iran-Australia Chamber of Commerce, explained to Iran Daily about the importance of the event saying that Iran Expo has been one of the important exhibitions in the field of introducing Iran's export capacities in recent years. "More joint chambers have attended in this year's exhibition, and as a result, the presence of more businessmen from more countries in the current exhibition has been recorded."

Pointing out that the owners of various Iranian manufacturing



## More joint chambers of commerce participating in Iran Expo 2024

and export industries and companies present in the exhibition are members of the country's chambers of commerce, he noted from this point of view, the presence of the chambers of commerce in this exhibition is inspiring for them as they can use the capacities of joint chambers for cooperation with traders from other countries.

Also, Ramezan Bahrami, the head of Iran-Turkmenistan Chamber of Commerce, told Iran Daily that the holding of the exhibition along with the participation of the private and state-run sectors in holding the expo has been very well received by businesspersons, so that 150 traders from the Iran-Turkmenistan Chamber of Commerce were invited to participate in this exhibition.

He added: The initiative taken by the organizers of the exhibition was that the provincial capacities of the country were

showcased in a special section in the event, so we no longer have to take foreign business delegations to different parts of the country to introduce the capabilities of the provinces. "This has helped us save time and energy."

Also talking to Iran Daily, Amir Seiqaal-Zanan, the secretary general of the Iran-Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce said the joint chamber has hosted a hundred-member business delegation from Afghanistan since the beginning of the exhibition. He went on to say that a large part of Afghan businessmen lives in Iran. "Our effort is that the presence of businessmen leads to the conclusion of commercial contracts between the two countries."

In order to promote commercial cooperation, a business meeting between Iran and Afghanistan was held on Sunday with the presence of 400 traders, he not-

ed adding that B2B talks were held in more than 20 specialized areas between the two sides.

Mousa Aqaei, the head of the Iran-Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce told Iran Daily that "The representatives of most of the manufacturing and industrial centers and important Iranian companies are present at Iran Expo 2024, so, it is a good opportunity for foreign traders to get familiar with potentials of Iran."

Holding exhibitions to introduce export capacities plays a very important role in improving the trade, because trade will not be shaped until export capacities are introduced, he said.

"A few days ago, a trade delegation from Uzbekistan visited Iran. They expressed their surprise at Iran's special production capacity and hoped that exchanges between the two countries would be promoted in various fields as soon

as possible."

Also, Tahereh Soleimani, the head of the Commerce and Marketing Commission of the Iran-Georgia Chamber of Commerce told Iran Daily that "To attend this year's exhibition, a 26-person business delegation from Georgia came to Iran, and as a result of the negotiations, many contracts were signed with the Iranian parties, most of them were in the field of providing construction services and products."

She noted that the first important effect of holding such exhibitions is that the traders of other countries get to know our capabilities. "Unfortunately, we are weak at introducing our products to foreigners. This weakness has caused competitors and neighboring countries to take advantage of the opportunity and even seize our traditional export markets in other countries."

## Minister: Power plant industry almost self-sufficient



Energy Minister Ali-Akbar Mehrabian announced that with the efforts of Iranian experts, about 95 percent of the country's power plant and electrical industry parts and equipment are domestically produced.

The parts of the country's old power plant units are made abroad, which are now produced by Iranian knowledge-based companies, the minister added, IRNA reported.

"Today, Thermal Power Plants Holding Company and Iran Powerplant Repairs Company are leading in the country as have the most contracts with domestic knowledge-based companies." The parts that were made for the first time in the country with the cooperation of knowledge-based

companies enjoy high quality, and every day, the conditions of hydropower and thermal power plants in the country improve by using the capacity of knowledge-based companies, the minister noted.

In the early-February, Mehrabian said the country's contractors are presently implementing water and electricity projects in 50 different countries.

He added that Iran's water and electricity industry has gone from a completely dependent industry to complete self-sufficiency due to the efforts of domestic experts.

Thanks to its geographical location, Iran can generate significant power through renewable resources such as wind or the sun.

## Iranian NTBF manufactures modern agro drones

An Iranian new technology-based firm (NTBF) based in the Science and Technology Park of Sharif University of Technology managed to mass produce 'agricultural sprayer drones'.

Spraying agricultural land areas with sophisticated drones has several advantages including an increase in productivity, a decrease in consumption of pesticides and water and accurate spraying of agricultural lands, the commercial manager of the Sharif Agrobot Knowledge-Based Company

said, reported Tasnim News Agency, Abdollah Rousta added that the company manufactures spray drones in 10, 20 and 30-liter types.

He went on to say that the agricultural drones manufactured by this company carry out spraying operations accurately, which contributes to the quality of agricultural products.

Providing the possibility to spray hard-to-pass agricultural land areas is another advantage of the drone, Rousta continued.

The drones manufactured by the knowledge-based company have been equipped with a smart warning system and once the pesticide of the tank is empty, this system automatically alerts the operator to refill the tank.

The use of sprayer drones is a modern and efficient method for spraying agricultural lands, he said, adding that these drones help farmers, in addition to increasing productivity, to significantly save the consumption of water and pesticides.





# Saholan Cave, one of the most exceptional in Iran

## Iranica Desk

If you are considering a trip shortly and contemplating a visit to a natural wonder, we highly recommend adding Saholan Cave to the top of your list of destinations. You will be amazed by the beauty it offers.

Saholan Cave is a unique attraction situated in Mahabad, West Azarbaijan Province, within a village bearing the same name. Caves represent hidden worlds within mountains and beneath the earth's surface, often concealing astonishing beauty that may not be apparent at first glance, but stepping inside will surely captivate you. Saholan is renowned as one of the most exceptional caves and the second-largest water cave in Iran. Its history dates back to the Cretaceous period, which spanned from 145 million to 66 million years ago.

Every corner of this limestone cave is adorned with captivating sights. Stunning stalactites embellish the ceiling and walls of Saholan, alongside various limestone formations sculpted by water erosion, such as shapes resembling mermaids, octopuses, snakes, turtles, sea creatures, elephant's feet, lions, and grape clusters. These formations serve as

perfect subjects for capturing memorable photographs.

One of the most thrilling activities within this cave is boating on its lakes and ponds. With just a glance, you can uncover the hidden secrets within these crystal-clear waters that allow visibility for several meters. Boating through the lakes and traversing the corridors of Saholan Cave while listening to enchanting sounds will create unforgettable memories of your visit to this remarkable place.

Saholan Cave boasts two entrances: one with 178 steps and the other with 107 steps. Visitors enter through one entrance and exit through the other. Descending these steps leads you to a depth of 30 meters underground. As you near the cave floor, the air pressure rises, oxygen levels drop, and humidity reaches 78 percent.

The cave offers the opportunity for boating on three ponds or lakes within specified boundaries. The average depth of the ponds is 15 meters, with the deepest part reaching 31 meters.

## Residents

It might be interesting to know that the inhabitants of this cave include

pigeons, leeches, bats, and tiny aquatic creatures. Pigeons have many holes for nesting and living in Saholan Cave, while bats have built nests in various parts of the cave. Due to the darkness and absence of light, no algae grow in the waters of Saholan Lake, with only microscopic organisms present.

How was Saholan Cave discovered? The famous story of Saholan dates back to 1890 when a French archaeologist named Jacques de Morgan entered the cave with the help of local people and sketched a map of it, which remains significant after all these years.

Jacques mentions this place in his book "Geography of Iran," even though it is not seen in other sources. Subsequently, during World War II, an English group and in 1996, Iranian cave explorers continued their studies. From the main hall, the large hall, and the entrance corridor, pottery belonging to the Parthian and Ilkhanid periods was found. Since 2000, this cave has been welcoming tourists and is registered on Iran's Natural Heritage List, being part of the protected areas under the Environmental Protection Organization.



● IRNA



● gardeshgari724.com



● gardeshgari724.com

## Iranica Desk

Fahraj village in Yazd Province, chosen as one of the eight nominees from Iran for the prestigious Best Tourism Villages of 2024 project presented to the World Tourism Organization, is undergoing evaluation based on its allure, infrastructure, value chain, and sustainability as a village.

## History

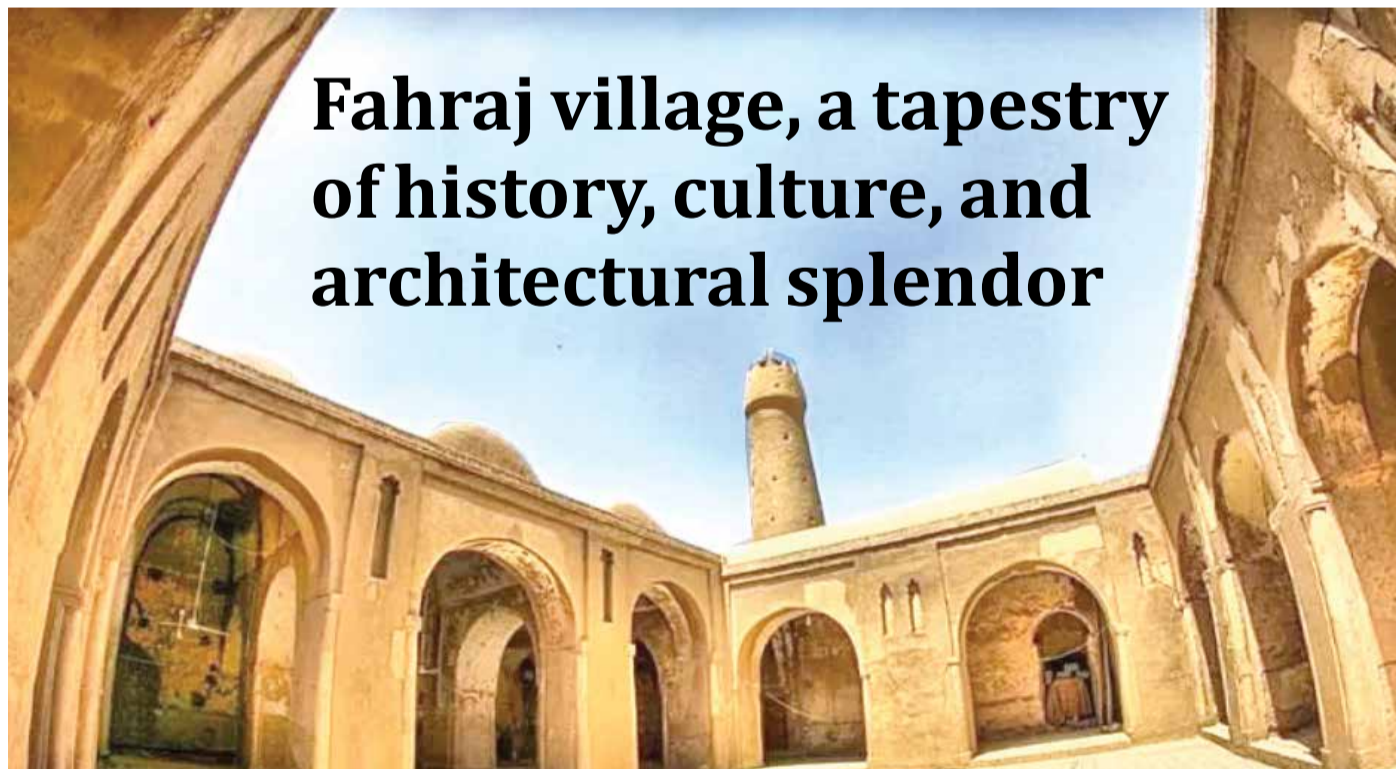
With a history that traces back to pre-Islamic times, Fahraj village is believed to have roots dating over 8,000 years. It was once among the four principal districts of the ancient city of Yazd and retained its prominence in Yazd until the 13th century.

## Handicrafts and souvenirs

The traditional craft of *kar-bafi*, known for its intricate weaving techniques that produce exquisite textiles, thrives in Fahraj village. Given the renown of Yazd Province in carpet weaving, Fahraj has the potential to become a center for establishing handicraft workshops and eco-museums to exhibit and market items like fine fabrics.

## Social-cultural features

The inhabitants of Fahraj village are Shia Muslims who observe religious ceremonies annually. During the lunar month of Muharram, which commemorates the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (AS), the third Imam of Shia Muslims, and his companions, the villagers participate in the *nakhl-gardani* ritual. *Nakhl*, symbolizing the Imam's coffin, is carried from one location to another in a symbolic gesture.



● kojara.com



● kojara.com



● kojara.com

## Fahraj village, a tapestry of history, culture, and architectural splendor

## Architecture

In Fahraj village, like other settlements in the desert province

of Yazd, most buildings are constructed using traditional architecture suited to the warm

and arid climate of the region. The village boasts two distinct architectural styles: the ancient

village layout, centered around the main mosque in Fahraj, follows a semi-concentric and

linear design, while the modern village envelops the ancient core and its historic structures. Houses in Fahraj predominantly utilize materials like mud, clay, and brick, with some preserving their historical character by incorporating wind catchers on their roofs. The village's narrow alleys feature semi-covered passageways called *sabat*, enhancing the architectural charm and offering shade to pedestrians, a practical solution for the desert heat.

## Attractions

**Jaame Mosque of Fahraj:** Regarded as one of Iran's oldest mosques, the main structure of the Jaame Mosque dates back to the Sassanid era before being converted into a mosque during the Islamic period.

**Fahraj Castle:** Initially built alongside the mosque, the present facade and embellishments of Fahraj Castle reflect the architectural styles of the 10th and 11th centuries AH (15th and 16th centuries CE). The castle's four-sided layout includes four round towers at the corners, each with two floors and a distinct pointed arch design.

**Cistern of Fahraj Hosseinieh:** It is an ancient site in Fahraj, with origins possibly tracing back to pre-Islamic times, attracting visitors keen on exploring the rich historical heritage of Yazd.

**Historical Complex of Fahraj Martyrs:** Dating back to the 9th century AH (14th century CE), this complex, located about 30 kilometers northeast of Yazd, encompasses a tomb, a school, and a monastery, acknowledged as one of Iran's national heritage sites.



# Google, Amazon; Did you mean 'Genocide enablers'?



⬆️ Demonstrators stage a "die-in" protest outside Google offices in San Francisco, the US, on December 14, 2023, over Google's contract with Israel that provides facial recognition and other technologies amid the Israeli genocide in Gaza.  
SANTIAGO MEJIA/THE CHRONICLE



⬆️ Workers held a 10-hour sit-in protest at Google offices in Sunnyvale, California, on April 16, 2024. Some workers were arrested minutes after taking this photo.  
X

7 By Reza Raadfar  
Political analyst

## PERSPECTIVE EXCLUSIVE

*I'm not going to lie. There was a time, not very long ago, when I, too, believed that certain giant companies hold higher values than others. The more modest their beginnings, the humbler their founders, and the more worker-friendly their offices were, the more I bought into that idea. I hardly think it's an overstatement that most of us view companies like Google and Microsoft more favorably than some others like Amazon, Tesla, and Meta (formerly, Facebook). Not all of that was due to my naivete. As time went by, I discovered more and more, through investigative journalists and whistleblowers, that companies spend lavishly on carefully curating their image. On the more disturbing side of it, they employ tactics like releasing information about their dealings to the public, signing non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), settling lawsuits, and firing and silencing workers who speak out to keep the lid on their shady business. On the less disturbing side of it, the faces of the company put out a sweet, cheery, and friendly air to themselves and their management style just to stand out from the crowd of cutthroat, money-hungry CEOs and build a loyal clientele. The two companies in question today arguably took one of these paths: Amazon took the former path while Google took the latter. Yet, they converged when they signed basically the same contract with an obvious evil force: the Israel Defense Force (IDF).*

Of course, we are talking about Project Nimbus. Like a nimbostratus — the dark rain clouds that it got its name from — it's been haunting these giants and making their public events gloomy for over two years now, which they should have seen coming over the horizon.

As far as we know — and you will see that it's a big if — Project Nimbus was a \$1.22 billion contract signed by both Google and Amazon in May 2021 to provide cloud technology to the Israeli cabinet. Some would argue that providing services to the most benign ministry of the infamous cabinet must have been enough to raise some alarms. What made the contract worse was that the Israeli military was one of the main recipients of these cloud services and apparently more — and that is an important piece of information that was once strongly denied by representatives of Google.

Mind you, the Israeli military and defense ministry have long been accused of committing crimes against the humanitarian rights of Palestinians, Lebanese, and other peoples of the Middle East, even before Israel's recent onslaught of civilians in Gaza.

If cloud services, which are leveraging powerful computing resources without having to purchase or maintain hardware and software, sound foreign or harmless to you — which shouldn't be — you'd be upset to know that this is not the only dealing of these parties.

In July 2022, the Intercept reported that training documents for Israeli government personnel indicate Google is providing software that the company claims can recognize people, gauge emotional states from facial expressions, and track objects in video footage. The same mind-blowing technology that helps Google Photos find the exact or similar pictures to the one you have in your computer is at the moment helping the Israeli military to expand its campaigns of arresting, imprisoning, and torturing thousands of Palestinian civilians with little to no evidence in the slim hopes of getting their hands on a captive taken by Hamas.

### Employees, concerned public fight back

If Project Nimbus started in 2021, why did we say that its name has been haunting Amazon and Google for only two years? That's roughly when some employees came forward with their newfound discovery that the project is not serving peaceful purposes as promised. Since then, they have been organizing protests and trying to keep the public from forgetting that their beloved Google and their indispensable Amazon have been facilitating crimes against humanity — the most recent of which is the genocide in Gaza.

More than 1,000 workers have stepped up and put their careers on the line, and their calls have been responded to by over 97,000 signatories who have backed their cause on

notechforapartheid.com. The movement posits that "technology should be used to bring people together, not enable apartheid, ethnic cleansing, and settler-colonialism." While some big companies — like Microsoft in 2020 — caved under maybe less pressure in the past and changed their way, Google and Amazon have been defiantly and forcefully pushing back.

Google Cloud spokesperson Atle Erlingsson told Wired in September 2022 that the company proudly supports Israel's government and said critics had misrepresented Project Nimbus. "Our work is not directed at highly sensitive or classified military workloads," he told Wired. Erlingsson, however, acknowledged that the contract will provide Israel's military access to Google technology. According to former Google worker Ariel Koren, who was one of the first instances from many to come of Google firing anti-Nimbus employees, "Google systematically silences Palestinian, Jewish, Arab, and Muslim voices concerned about Google's complicity in violations of Palestinian human rights." In March 2022, The Times reported allegations by Koren — at the time a product marketing manager at Google for Education — that Google had retaliated against her for criticizing the contract, issuing a directive that she move to São Paulo, Brazil, within 17 business days or lose her job.

Since those early days, employees angry at being made complicit in genocide are not few and far between anymore. They have gathered under the banner of the No Tech for Apartheid movement, but this has not made them immune to retaliation as these giant firms drafted their contracts with their employees in a way that would allow them to hold all the cards.

Alphabet Workers Union, which provides resources to union members in an anti-military working group, has not taken a formal stance on Project Nimbus, either. Mohammad Khatami, a YouTube software engineer based in New York got involved with the Alphabet Workers Union and participated in a small protest of Project Nimbus at a July Amazon Web Services conference in Manhattan. Khatami stressed, "Greed and corporate interests were being put ahead of workers, and I think the layoffs just illustrated that for me very clearly."

"Google has given us no reason to trust them," said Joshua Marxen, a Google Cloud software engineer who helped to organize some protests, according to the Los Angeles Times. "I am very worried that Google has no scruples if they're going to work with the Israeli government."

As is unfortunately expected from such cases, the three demands of the No Tech for Apartheid movement are simple and moral, so much so that one worries why they should have been demanded for over two years and still not accommodated. The movement demands that Google drops



Project Nimbus that provides support to the genocide in Gaza, addresses the health and safety crisis among Google workers from being made complicit in a genocide, and finally, stops the harassment, intimidation, bullying, silencing, and censorship of Palestinian, Arab, Muslim Googlers.

Like us, users of Google and Amazon who thought these companies were better than helping a notorious cabinet recognize and profile the oppressed Palestinians, these workers were fooled. Specifically, they were fooled by the repeated claims of both companies to uphold human rights commitments. Amazon had once released Global Human Rights Principles, promising to “embed respect for human rights throughout our business”. Similarly, Google stated that companies “can make money without doing evil”. Now, were they always doing evil to make money or did they recently get stripped of cash and turned to evil? Judging by their unparalleled stock values, I don’t think the second possibility holds any weight, but I like or rather, have to be optimistic for my own sanity.

### Not the first faux pas

The two companies have made untoward dealings with other parties before as well. The No Tech for Apartheid movement, with their inside knowledge, has listed a few.

Amazon helps power the deportation-detention machine of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and partners with over 2,000 US police departments to surveil and criminalize Black and brown communities through its doorbell camera Ring. Meanwhile, Google sold artificial intelligence to the Department of Defense to



An unidentified Google Cloud engineer (standing) disrupts a conference in New York City on March 4, 2024, to declare that he refuses “to build technology that powers genocide, apartheid, or surveillance”. The engineer was reportedly fired.

make its drone strikes deadlier and, despite ending this contract after public and worker pressure, Google still holds ties with the Pentagon.

In recent years, Google workers have objected to military contracts, challenging Google’s work with US Customs and Border Protection and its role in a defense program building artificial intelligence tools used to refine drone strikes. Workers have alleged that the company has cracked down on information-sharing, siloed controversial projects, and enforced a workplace cul-

ture that increasingly punishes them for speaking out.

If you think these were some shameful, upsetting revelations about your favorite companies, wait till you hear what they have been doing for years to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, where not only there’s no meaningful pushback to adopting horrible policies, but they are also almost surely incentivized by the Israeli cabinet. If you don’t believe this or can easily play the devil’s advocate for Google in the following cases, just remember that a few meters

away over the fence, in the illegal settlements, the realities are the total opposite.

Ahmad Abu Shammal, a computer scientist based in Gaza, noted that selecting Palestine as your location on Amazon may well result in a big reduction in pricing, but the catch is that you have to be an Israeli residing in one of the illegal settlements of the West Bank. If, however, you’re a Palestinian, “Don’t even bother trying this if you’re Palestinian — your package will never be delivered.”

That is if you can load the website. As you may know, Palestine is stuck with 3G networks, and Gaza is still on 2G, while the world, including Israel, is anticipating the possibilities of 5G. “This leaves Palestinians with an underdeveloped and expensive connection, in direct contrast with the other side of the political fence.”

Let’s say you get over that hurdle, too — probably with an iron will and lots of free time on your hand, which, realistically, at least as a Gazan, you won’t have right now as you’re scavenging for food in the densely populated Rafah region. You’ll very soon realize that none of Google’s paid services are available in Palestine. “If you own an Android device, you will not be able to purchase apps,” Akram Abunahla, a Gazan graduate student in Linguistics, wrote to the movement. So, don’t wonder why there aren’t any news and videos coming directly from Gazan citizens. They simply don’t have access to the same apps that you and I do. And that is maybe for the better, since when they did have access, for example in 2018, Israeli forces arrested more than 350 Palestinians because of their posts on social media platforms, according to the Commission of Detainees Affair.

As I researched more and more about the recent scandal of Google firing 50 workers for participating in a protest over its cloud deal with Israel, the rabbit hole got deeper, but unlike Alice, I’m no happier than I was before; quite the contrary. I definitely know more, but it came at a slightly steep price. I lost the last piece of innocence that I had, the piece that allowed me to lean back and trust that at least Google directors have our interests in mind. Apparently, no, their pockets are deeper than any literal or metaphorical rabbit hole.

## Google contract shows deepening deal with Israel Defense Ministry



By Billy Perrigo  
Award-nominated  
journalist

### PERSPECTIVE

**Google provides cloud computing services to the Israeli Ministry of Defense, and the tech giant has negotiated deepening its partnership during Israel’s war in Gaza, a company document viewed by TIME shows.**

**The Israeli Ministry of Defense, according to the document, has its own “landing zone” into Google Cloud — a secure entry point to Google-provided computing infrastructure, which would allow the ministry to store and process data, and access AI services.**

The ministry sought consulting assistance from Google to expand its Google Cloud access, seeking to allow “multiple units” to access automation technologies, according to a draft contract dated March 27, 2024. The contract shows Google billing the Israeli Ministry of Defense over \$1 million for the consulting service.

The version of the contract viewed by TIME was not signed by Google or the Ministry of Defense. But a March 27 comment on the document, by a Google employee requesting an executable copy of the contract, said the signatures would be “completed offline as it’s an Israel/Nimbus deal.” Google also gave the ministry a 15% discount on the original price of consulting fees as a result of the “Nimbus framework,” the document says.



Hundreds of protesters gather in front of Google’s San Francisco offices, demanding an end to its work with the Israeli cabinet and protesting Israeli attacks on Gaza, on December 14, 2023.

● TAYFUN COSKUN/ANADOLU

Project Nimbus is a controversial \$1.2 billion cloud computing and AI agreement between Israel and two tech companies: Google and Amazon. Reports in the Israeli press have previously indicated that Google and Amazon are contractually barred from preventing specific arms of Israel from using their technology under Project Nimbus. But this is the first time the existence of a contract showing that the Israeli Ministry of Defense is a Google Cloud customer has been made public. Google recently described its work for the Israeli cabinet as largely for civilian purposes. “We have been very clear

that the Nimbus contract is for workloads running on our commercial platform by Israeli cabinet ministries such as finance, healthcare, transportation, and education,” a Google spokesperson told TIME for a story published on April 8. “Our work is not directed at highly sensitive or classified military workloads relevant to weapons or intelligence services.”

Contacted on April 10 with questions about the Ministry of Defense contract, a Google spokesperson declined to comment further.

The news comes after recent reports in the Israeli media have alleged the coun-

try’s military, controlled by the Ministry of Defense, is using an AI-powered system to select targets for airstrikes on Gaza. Such an AI system would likely require cloud computing infrastructure to function. The Google contract seen by TIME does not specify for what military applications, if any, the Ministry of Defense uses Google Cloud, and there is no evidence Google Cloud technology is being used for targeting purposes. But Google employees who spoke with TIME said the company has little ability to monitor what customers, especially sovereign nations like Israel, are doing on its cloud infrastruc-

ture.

The Israeli Ministry of Defense did not respond to requests for comment.

The Israeli Ministry of Defense’s attempt to onboard more units to Google Cloud is described in the contract as “phase 2” of a wider project to build out the ministry’s cloud architecture.

The document does not explicitly describe phase one but does refer to earlier work carried out by Google on behalf of the ministry. The ministry, the contract says, “has [already] established a Google Cloud Landing Zone infrastructure as part of their overall cloud strategy and to enable [the Ministry of Defense] to move applications to Google Cloud Platform.”

For “phase 2” of the project, the contract says, the Ministry of Defense “is looking to enable its Landing Zone to serve multiple units and sub-units. Therefore, [the Ministry of Defense] would like to create several different automation modules within their Landing Zone based on Google’s leading practices for the benefit of different units, with proper processes to support, and implement leading practices for security and governance architecture using Google tools.”

The consulting services on offer by Google are for the tech company to “assist with architecture design, implementation guidance, and automation” for the Ministry of Defense’s Google Cloud landing zone, the contract says. The estimated start date is April 14, and Google’s consulting services are expected to take one calendar year to complete.

Two Google workers have resigned in the last month in protest against Project Nimbus, TIME previously reported.

The article first appeared on TIME.



# Iran coach Shamsaei hails 'hard work' toward Asian futsal glory

## Sports Desk

Iran head coach Vahid Shamsaei was full of praise for his players for their "hard work and sacrifice" in winning a record-extending 13th Futsal Asian Cup title. Mahdi Karimi, Saeid Ahamd-Abbasi, Ali-Asghar Hassanzadeh, and goalkeeper Baqer Mohammadi were all on the scoresheet, with Jirawat Sornwichian finding the net for Thailand, as Shamsaei's men walked away with a 4-1 victory over the host in Sunday's final in the Bangkok Arena. The triumph came as redemption for the Iranian futsal great Shamsaei, who lifted the Asian trophy as a player on eight occasions but had to settle for a runner-up finish in his maiden tournament on the national team bench after a defeat against Japan in 2022.

"I remember the day I lost the 2022 final against Japan. I had to apologize to everyone, especially to the Iranian fans. Today, I'm happy that they stayed patient with me and I want to dedicate this trophy to everyone back home, especially my late father, who did not see me win the trophy as a head coach," said Shamsaei.

"Reflecting on the previous tournament, despite scoring plenty of goals throughout, we ultimately lost in the final. This time, we maintained a high level of concentration," added the three-time Asian Player of the Year.

"I want to express my deep appreciation to all my players for their sacrifice and hard work, especially during the holiday



Iran head coach Vahid Shamsaei reacts to the fans after the victory over Thailand in the AFC Futsal Asian Cup final in Bangkok, Thailand, on April 28, 2024. ● AFC

season when we chose to stay back and train.

"I'm incredibly grateful for the support from their families in allowing them to dedicate themselves to our shared goal. I firmly believe that it's these sacrifices

that have shaped our journey towards becoming champions of Asia."

The Iranian coach insisted a balanced and experienced squad was key to the latest success for the Asian powerhouse.

"Changing a generation is very difficult. We started this tournament without our best player, Hossein Tayyebi, who was the top scorer in the previous edition, where we only had four players with Asian Cup experi-

ence. For this tournament, however, we only had five players with no experience in the competition," said Shamsaei.

Next for the newly-crowned Asian champion is September's Futsal World Cup in Uzbekistan

and Shamsaei believes it takes far more effort to succeed in the global showpiece.

"We will now shift our focus to the World Cup. The preparations for that will be different, and we need decent support from the federation. I have had plenty of support from my team of advisors and assistant coaches," Shamsaei added.

Meanwhile, prolific pivot Ahmad-Abbasi was thrilled to win the Most Valuable Player and Top Scorer awards in the event.

"I'm really grateful for being named the MVP and winning the top scorer award. The main reason behind these honors is our collective journey towards the championship trophy. From day one, we were united in pursuit of excellence and now that we've achieved it, I couldn't be happier," said Ahmad-Abbasi, whose goal against Thailand was his eighth in six outings in Bangkok.

"Scoring goals is just one aspect of the game for me. I do it for the team, not to chase individual targets. Contributing to my team's success makes me happy and I want to dedicate these awards to the supporters here and back home who fueled our journey with their energy. These awards are also dedicated to my family.

"We have a mix of experienced and young players, we are ready to move forward and deliver at the World Cup."

There was further individual success for the Iranian players in the awarding ceremony as Mohammadi was handed the Best Goalkeeper award.

## Iranian girls lift CAFA U18 trophy



Iranian girls celebrate with the CAFA U18 Women's Championship trophy in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on April 28, 2024. ● FIFA

## Sports Desk

A one-all draw against the Kyrgyz Republic saw Iran retain the CAFA U18 Women's Championship in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Parnia Rahmani found the net for Maryam Jahan-Nejati's girls midway through the second half, only to see her goal canceled out by Ayana Karataeva's 92nd-minute equalizer.

The Stalemate was still enough for Iran to finish atop the table in the five-team round-robin tournament, organized by the Central Asian Football Association.

Iran collected 10 points – courtesy of successive victories over Uzbekistan (4-2), Turkmenistan (7-0), and Tajikistan (5-0) before Sunday's draw – with Uzbekistan finishing second on nine.

## Iranian boys crowned world school volleyball champion



● volleyball.ir

## Sports Desk

The Iranian boys team rounded off a dominant run in the ISF World School Volleyball Championship with a straight-set victory over Germany in Sunday's final in Belgrade, Serbia.

The Iranian students marched to 25-21 and 25-18 wins in the first two sets before coming out on top in the third with a 26-24 scoreline.

This was a second victory over the European side in Belgrade for Arash Sadeqiani's boys, who also defeated Uganda, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and the Chinese Taipei en route to the final showpiece.

## World Shooting Para Sport World Cup: Javanmardi shatters world record as Iran wins mixed 50m pistol gold



● TASOS KATOPODIS/GETTY IMAGES

## Sports Desk

Para shooting sensation Sareh Javanmardi set a new world record in the WSPS World Cup to inspire Iran to the P4 mixed 50m pistol SH1 title in Changwon, South Korea.

The three-time Paralympic gold medalist tallied 556 points in Sunday's qualification round as the Iranian team – also featuring Nasrin Shahi and Mohammadreza Mirshafiei – walked away with the ultimate prize thanks to an overall 1614 points, with South Korea (1606pts) and India (1580pts) in the following spots.

However, Javanmardi had to settle for a sixth-place finish in the individual final on 142.5 points as South Korean Jo Jeongdu grabbed the gold with 225.6 points – 0.3 points clear of Ukrainian silver medalist Oleksii Denysiuk while Nihal Singh of India scored 203.4 points for the bronze.

Sunday's team gold was a second medal for Javanmardi in Changwon, following the bronze-winning campaign in the P2 women's 10m air pistol SH1 event. Shahi had won the gold in Saturday's contest with 239.7 points, with Indian Bhakti Sharma tak-

ing the silver.

Shahi had also teamed up with Mirshafiei for the silver in the mixed 10m air pistol SH1 final. A second silver medal for Mirshafiei came in the men's 10m air pistol SH1 event where he registered 234.8 points to finish behind Indian shooter Sanjeev Kumar Giri.

A total of 125 shooters from 27 countries have been competing in the season's second World Cup, which will finish on Wednesday, in part of their preparation for the 2024 Paralympics – starting August 28 in Paris.



# FM: Iran ready to help sustainable development of Persian Gulf

## Iran marks Persian Gulf National Day



**International Desk**  
Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said Iran has been always ready to cooperate with the Persian Gulf states to help sustainable development of the waterway. In a message to a confer-

ence held in Tehran on the occasion of the Persian Gulf National Day, the Iranian top diplomat referred to the common values between the people of the Persian Gulf's states, saying that Tehran is ready to cooperate with all countries in the region

in fields ranging from tourism to security. He said that the Iranian government seeks to turn the Persian Gulf into a center for promoting good neighborliness, peace and stability through interaction between the two shores of

the strategic waterway. He underlined that the security of the Persian Gulf region is a complicated issue, which can only be ensured through cooperation and strengthening ties between the coastal countries. April 29, is observed as

the Persian Gulf Day in Iran, which coincides with the anniversary of the expulsion of the Portuguese Navy from the Strait of Hormuz in 1622 by the legendary Safavid dynasty ruler Shah Abbas I. Persian Gulf is a strategic waterway, surrounded by eight regional countries, known as the world's largest reservoir of oil and gas. Iran borders its northern shores and its territory also forms the northern side of the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most important oil passageway. One of the world's most important waterways, it produces one-third of the world's oil, half of the world's crude oil reserves as well as a significant amount of global natural gas reserves. However, its importance is not confined to oil and gas alone. It has been a scene of political and economic

tension between regional and extra-regional countries for years. The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy said on Monday that Iran's strategy is to promote peace, security and fraternity in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. He added that the national day is the anniversary of the end of Portugal's 117-year occupation of the Persian Gulf. The Persian Gulf — which spans some 251,000 square kilometers — is bounded by the Arvand River in the north, which forms the frontier between Iran and Iraq, and the Strait of Hormuz in the south, which links the Persian Gulf to the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean. The strategic inland sea is an international trade route connecting West Asia to Africa, India, and China.

## Sanders blasts Netanyahu for 'ethnic cleansing' in Gaza



**International Desk**

US Senator Bernie Sanders took aim at Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu again on Sunday, saying that Israel's actions in Gaza are "ethnic cleansing." Sanders reiterated his familiar call on CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday to hold Netanyahu responsible for Israel's actions in Gaza, pointing to the staggering death toll and the displacement of Palestinians in the region. He was asked to respond to the ongoing pro-Palestinian protests that have broken out on college campuses across the country and to Rep. Ilhan Omar's remarks last week when visiting Columbia University. Columbia University has had international attention after hundreds of pro-Palestinian protesters were arrested earlier this month. CNN played a clip of Omar's comments when she visited campus. "I think it is really unfortunate that people don't care about the fact that all Jewish kids should be kept safe, and that we should not have to tolerate antisemitism or bigotry for all Jewish students, whether they are pro-genocide or anti-genocide," she said. "What I think the essential point that Ilhan made is that we do not want to see antisemitism in this country," Sanders said. "And I think the word genocide is something that is being determined by the International Court of Justice." "But just as what I will say: I don't think there's any doubt that what Netanyahu is doing now — displacing 80 percent of the population in Gaza — is ethnic cleansing. That's what it is. Pushing out huge numbers of people," he added. Sanders has repeatedly criticized Netanyahu for the ongoing war in Gaza and has opposed more US funding to Israel. He also reiterated his calls for an end to US funding to Israel's actions in Gaza. "And now we're looking at the possibility of an attack on Rafah, where people have gone to as a so-called safety zone. So, what's going on there, again, to my mind, is outrageous. And as you've indicated, I strongly oppose US funding for Netanyahu's war machine," he added. The International Criminal Court is considering to issue arrest warrants for Netanyahu and several other officials of the regime. Israel is working through diplomatic channels to try to stop the warrants being issued, an Israeli official said on Monday.

## Evil Netanyahu in ...

Furthermore, his ousting from power will likely lead to investigations into corruption allegations, compounded by the looming International Criminal Court verdict, which could result in double jeopardy for him. Hassan Beheshtipour, a university professor and international relations expert, is of the opinion that Netanyahu is on his last legs politically. In an interview with "Iran Daily", he stated: "If the International Criminal Court passes judgment against Netanyahu, not only will it bring international disgrace upon him, but it will also embolden his domestic opposition, setting the stage for his ousting or defeat in the upcoming elections." According to Beheshtipour, "Israel has historically thrived on victimhood narratives and relied on stories like the Holocaust and anti-Semitism throughout its

decades-old existence. While Israel's actions in Gaza have tarnished its victim image, a potential indictment of Netanyahu and other officials will further tarnish the regime's reputation." The professor went on to say that even if the verdict against Netanyahu doesn't materialize, it won't alter his inevitable downfall. It appears unlikely that he will be able to stay in the political arena. Beheshtipour stressed that Netanyahu is heading towards a fate similar to that of Ehud Olmert. Olmert, the former Israeli Prime Minister, was compelled to resign following the fallout from the 33-day war against Hezbollah in Lebanon in 2006. Netanyahu, too, may have no option but to step down if a cease-fire is brokered due to the severe impact of Hamas' strike on Israel on October 7. This is why Netanyahu has been resisting the truce thus far.

According to the professor, a potential conviction in the International Criminal Court could hasten the process of Netanyahu's removal or resignation from power. Netanyahu finds himself in a tight spot, with his problems increasing daily, and no easy way out in sight. The continuation of the war and assault on Rafah have no supporters both domestically and internationally. Promises of releasing captives remain unfulfilled, the Israeli economy has taken a significant hit, the security of occupied territories is compromised, Hamas remains undefeated, college students in the US—traditionally staunch supporters of Israel—have launched an anti-Israel movement, global public opinion increasingly leans towards sympathizing with Palestine, and the looming threat of an International Criminal Court ruling on war crimes charges against Netanyahu spells trouble for him. The evil man is approaching the end of the line.

## Over 900 arrested at anti-Israel protests in US universities

**International Desk**  
Police officers detain a demonstrator during a pro-Palestinian protest against the war in Gaza at Emory University in Atlanta, the United States, on April 25.  
● ELIJAH NOUVELAGE/AFP

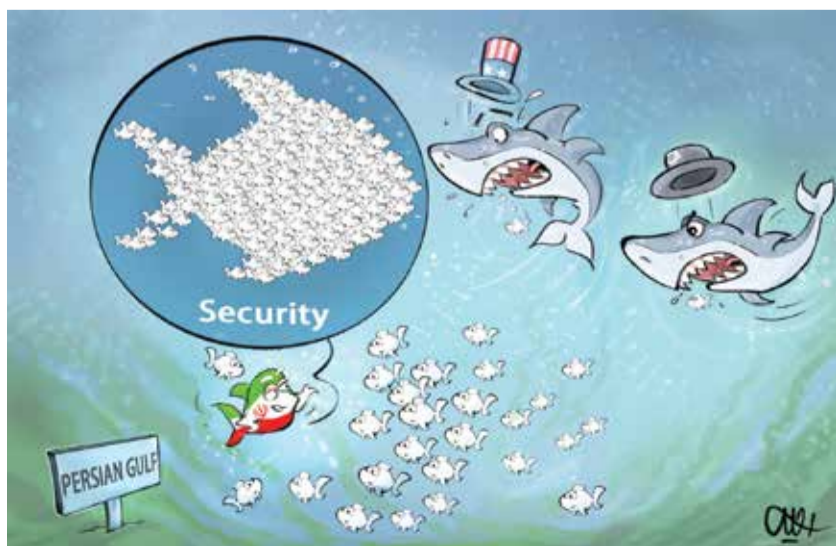


More than 200 protesters were arrested this weekend as demonstrations continued on college campuses across the US to denounce Israel's war in Gaza. So far, approximately 900 protesters have been arrested nationwide. Pro-Palestinian students are calling for a cease-fire in Gaza and an end to college ties with companies supplying weapons to Israel. About 275 people were arrested on Saturday on various campuses, including Indiana University at Bloomington, Arizona State University and Washington University in St. Louis. The Washington Post reported the tally on Sunday, the 10th straight day of the protests that began after Columbia University set up an encampment to demand cessation of the war and press the school to divest from Israeli financial interests.

The crackdown then started when university authorities called in the police, a move that sparked more than 100 arrests on the university's Manhattan campus. Two other highlights in the crackdown saw police forces rounding up roughly the same number of people at New York University and Emerson College in Boston. Protests have also erupted across numerous other seats of learning, including Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, and California State Polytechnic in Humboldt. The ensuing countrywide counter-campaign of suppression has seen law enforcement resorting to riot control methods against the protesters. The methods have featured "the same tools and tactics" that were deployed to confront

the thousands-strong protests that sparked across the country after a Minneapolis police officer killed George Floyd four years ago, the daily reported. The United States has been providing Israel with unrestrained military, intelligence, and financial support since October 7, when the regime unleashed the war against the besieged Palestinian enclave. Washington gives Israel \$3.8bn in military assistance every year, and US President Joe Biden has continued to provide staunch support to the illegal entity amid the Gaza war. On Wednesday, Biden signed into law a massive funding package that will provide an additional \$17bn to the occupying regime. Washington has also vetoed several United Nations Security Council resolutions calling for a cease-fire in the brutal military aggression.

**Mohammad Ali Rajabi**  
Cartoonist





# Iran's tourism industry grew by 21% in 2023: WTTC

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) said Iran's tourism industry grew by 21 percent in 2023. Turkish tourists ranked second in visiting Iran after Iraqis. Despite a 45 percent drop in GDP share due to COVID-19 in previous years, Iran's tourism saw growth last year, as reported by IRNA. The latest statistics of the World Travel and Tourism

Council also showed that the share of the tourism industry in the total economy of Iran increased to 4.7 percent in 2023, slightly up from the previous year. In the same way, the value of this industry in Iran increased to \$11.3 billion during the last year. Tourism-related jobs in 2023 grew by 10.3 percent compared to the previous year. The number of peo-

ple working in this industry was 1.6 million people. The share of the tourism industry in Iran's total employment in 2023 reached 6.6%. The WTTC has predicted that Iran's tourism industry will grow by 12.1% in 2024 and the value of this industry will reach \$12.7 billion. Statistics show that in addition to the boom in foreign tourism in Iran, the domes-



tic tourism industry also grew well in 2023. Foreign tourists spent

\$1.05 billion in Iran in 2023, which was an increase of 83.6% compared

to the previous year. Iran's domestic tourists spent as much as \$7.5 billion, about

18.7% growth compared to 2022, according to the WTTC data.

## Iran, Oman discuss tourism cooperation



### Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Ezzatollah Zarghami, met with Omani Minister of Social Development, Laila Ahmed Al Najjar, in Tehran to discuss expanding tourism ties between the two nations. During the meeting held in Tehran, Zarghami emphasized the importance of strengthening cultural, social, and political relations between Iran and Oman,

IRNA wrote. He highlighted the significance of cooperation in university partnerships and maritime tourism development. Zarghami stated that Iran's policy prioritizes boosting tourism relations with Oman, aiming to encourage Iranian tourists to visit Oman and vice versa. In response, Al Najjar invited Zarghami to participate in an upcoming specialized tourism conference in Oman, indi-

Iran's Tourism Minister Ezzatollah Zarghami (R) and Omani Minister of Social Development, Laila Ahmed Al Najjar hold talks in Tehran to discuss expanding tourism and social ties between the two nations. ● IRNA

cating Oman's interest in further collaboration with Iran in the field of handicrafts. She proposed the organization of joint exhibitions to promote handicrafts trade between the two countries.

## Amir Jadidi cast as tennis legend Mansour Bahrami in biopic

Amir Jadidi, acclaimed for his performance in the Oscar-nominated drama 'A Hero,' has been cast to portray tennis legend Mansour Bahrami in the upcoming biopic 'Mansour'.

France TV distribution has acquired world sales rights for Romuald Boulanger's upcoming bio-pic 'Mansour', capturing the journey of celebrity tennis player Bahrami's, from poverty in France, and then fame on the international circuit, ISNA wrote. Romuald Boulanger directs and produces under the banner of his Paris and L.A.-based company R-Lines Productions (On the Line, Like Me, Haters) with UK-based Unconditional Pictures. Unconditional Pictures's co-founder and co-head Dawn McDaniel wrote the screenplay with Philippe de Lyon taking co-writing credits

Iran-born Bahrami, 68, is a popular figure on the inter-

national tennis tournament circuit for his entertaining playing style and extraordinary life story. Born in Iran in the 1950s, he taught himself to play tennis using a frying pan as a racket



and disused swimming pool as his court. The film will capture how through sheer determination and quick wit, Bahrami navigated the complexities of life as an illegal immigrant, while forming lasting bonds with tennis icons who recognized his talent, to fulfill his childhood dream of

playing at Roland Garros. "Many people have told me over the years that my story is made for the screen but in fact it's very humbling to think there will be a feature film of my life," said Bahrami.



"I could not be prouder of the team we have with France TV distribution, R-Lines Productions and Unconditional Pictures and I'm so happy that Romuald Boulanger will be directing the film. Not only is he an exciting director but he is such a lovely guy. "Amir Jadidi is also an ex-

ceptional Actor. He really does transform. The fact he is a semi-pro tennis player is one of those great strokes of luck. Thank you to Dawn McDaniel for writing a beautiful script we all believe in. If my story can inspire people and make them smile, then I will be a very happy man."

Boulanger described Bahrami as "true hero" whose "resilience and passion have inspired countless individuals" "I am immensely honored to bring his extraordinary journey to the big screen," he said. France TV distribution team will launch the project in Cannes. "We have been moved by this story that illustrates the strength and determination of a man willing to do whatever it takes to fulfill his dearest dream," said VP International Cinema Sales Alexandre René and SVP International Sales Julia Schulte.

## Archeologists unearth 4,500-year-old architectural remnants in SE Iran

### Arts & Culture Desk

Archaeologists, alongside students from University of Zabol, discovered architectural remnants dating back approximately 4,500 years ago during an educational excavation at the Pirzal mound. Located 60 kilometers south of Zabol in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, Pirzal mound was listed as a national heritage site in

2018. In 2023, University of Zabol conducted an educational excavation at Pirzal mound for practical archaeology courses, yielding significant findings, ISNA wrote. Among them was an architectural structure from the fourth era of Bronze Age (about 2,500 to 2,300 BCE) including remains of a house in the first layer of the site. Hossein Sarhaddi, a facul-

ty member at University of Zabol who supervised the



excavation, attributed the Pirzal mound site to the

Burnt City phase IV, dating approximately from 2,500 to 2,300 BCE. He elaborated on the architectural remnants, describing the house consisting of several rooms surrounding a central courtyard. During this season's excavation, conducted in a 10 by 10-meter area of Workshop 3, pottery dating back approximately 4,500 years, clay figurines, and

counting objects were unearthed. Archaeologists also discovered objects related to local goods management and trade systems, suggesting the site's integration with surrounding areas. These traded goods, according to archaeologists, included stone vessels, animals such as cows, sheep, and wheat, along with other life necessities of that era. They believe

that the exchange of stone items like figurines and marble vessels thrived at this mound. Sarhaddi emphasized the significance of this ancient mound, stating that based on surface findings, Pirzal is considered one of the largest mounds belonging to the late Burnt City phase, with its exact history and quality still under debate among archaeologists in southeastern Iran.