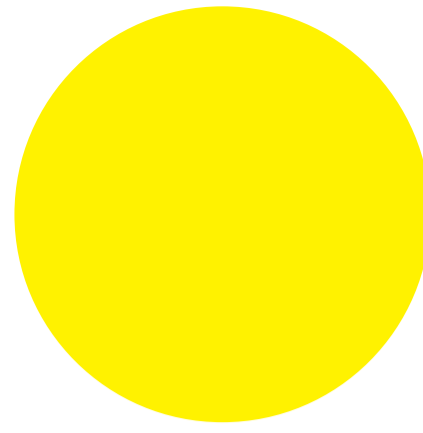


Iran's petchem sales grew 9.4% in two months

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Countdown begins to topple child killer Bibi



By Ebrahim Beheshti
Staff writer

OPINION

Despite Benjamin Netanyahu's desperate last-ditch efforts to salvage his political career through the brazen attack on Rafah, his extremist cabinet remains mired in controversy. The assault on the refugee camp has stoked international outrage, leaving Western governments with no choice but to condemn Israel's actions. The situation is so dire that even Ofer Cassif, a member of the Israeli parliament (Knesset), has termed it as genocide and demanded the perpetrators be brought to justice.

The noose of international pressure continues to tighten around the belligerent Israeli prime minister. Recently, three European nations—Spain, Norway, and Ireland—officially recognized Palestine as an independent state.

Slovenia's Foreign Affairs Minister, Tanja Fajon, underscored the urgency of a united response from the European Union, including the imposition of sanctions, should Israel's aggression persist. In a significant development, Josep Borrell, the European Union's foreign policy chief, supported the International Criminal Court's decision to arrest Netanyahu and his defense minister on war crime charges in Gaza. Borrell emphasized the importance of upholding the ICC's rulings to ensure justice is served. This move comes amidst an ongoing International Court of Justice order to cease the attack on Rafah.

The barrage of lawsuits against Israel in international organizations shows no signs of abating, with fresh complaints being lodged daily. Most recently, Reporters Without Borders has urged the ICC prosecutor to probe crimes committed by the Israeli regime against at least nine Palestinian journalists between December 2023 and May 2024.

In addition to mounting international pressure, pro-Palestinian activism is also gaining traction. At the People's Conference for Palestine in Detroit, Michigan, 3,000 attendees from various pro-Palestinian organizations gathered to express solidarity with the Palestinian people and call for an end to genocide, the lifting of the Gaza blockade, and the cessation of US aid to the Israeli regime.

As grassroots movements and global institutions alike intensify their efforts to hold Israel accountable for its actions, the coming months will undoubtedly see further developments in this ongoing struggle for justice and human rights.

Ehud Olmert, the former prime minister of Israel, has openly condemned the ongoing conflict, asserting that the war serves no purpose other than to advance the interests of Netanyahu and his extreme cabinet members. Calling for Benny Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot, two members of the war cabinet, to step down, Olmert emphasized the futility of achieving a decisive victory or eradicating Hamas.

Meanwhile, dissent is mounting within the occupied territories. As reported by the Israeli Broadcasting Corporation (iba), settlers staged protests in front of the Ministry of War headquarters in Tel Aviv, demanding an immediate prisoner exchange with the resistance in Gaza. The demonstrators also emphasized the need to oust Netanyahu and hold early elections.

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Iran's 12th Parliament Inaugurated

Leader: Lawmakers' main job to secure national interests

Iran's 12th Parliament was officially inaugurated on Monday with a message of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

In his message, the Leader stressed the importance of continuing and strengthening "religious democracy", describing it as a "big divine gift" to the Iranian nation.

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ICANA



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Iran eyes exporting renewable electricity to four neighbors

Economic Desk

Iranian renewable electricity producers are gearing up to export their commodity to four neighboring countries, the deputy energy minister said on Monday.

Mahoud Kamani, who also heads Iran's Renewable Energy and Electricity Efficiency Organization, known as SATBA, said a call would be issued next week in this regard for companies involved in green energy production to come forward.

"The capacity for exporting [renewable] power has been set and four lines have been established to supply electricity to Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan," Kamani said, IRNA reported.

Renewable energy resources accounts for 1.3% (1,186 megawatts) of Iran's total electricity production, which stands at around 94,000 MW per day. However, the country seeks to make them stand out its power portfolio by tapping into the huge potential of its sun-drenched deserts, which also pack strong winds.

According to Kamani, dozens of eco-friendly projects with a combined production capacity of 12,000 MW per day are under construction.

He also said a public tender had already been held to build wind parks responsible for generating 3,000 MW of green power per day and that the winning investors would be announced soon.

"These projects are part of a bigger plan to crank out 30,000 MW of renewable electricity in five years, the SATBA chief said.

Iran's environmentally friendly power stations include solar and wind farms, biogas facilities, small hydroelectric dams and plants powered by expansion turbines.

As per a sweeping program laid out by the Energy Ministry, renewable electricity generation is expected to reach 20,000 MW daily by 2027, and then take a major leap to 50,000 MW daily by 2031.

Petchem sales grew 9.4% in two months

Economic Desk

Iranian petrochemical exports surged by nearly 9.4% in the first two months of the Persian calendar year which started on March 20, the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said on Monday.

Mohammad Rezaifar said petrochemical manufacturers earned some \$3.5bn from exports during the two-month period, surpassing the previous year's revenues in the same timespan by \$300,000.

The weight of petrochemical overseas sales also climbed almost 3.8%, rising from 8 million tons to 8.3 million tons compared to the same timeframe last year, he said, ISNA reported.

Rezaifar added that petrochemical products accounted for 44% of Iran's non-oil exports in terms of value during the two-month timeframe. According to the IRI-CA chief, the bulk of petrochemical exports comprised liquefied propane, methanol, butane, liquefied natural gas and petroleum gases.

He did not give any details about the destination of the exported commodities.

"The growth rate in the



● SHANA

weight and value of petrochemical exports during the first two months of the year is a promising sign, suggesting an upward trend in the sales of petrochemicals," Rezaifar pointed out. The petrochemical industry

witnessed a severe slump in exports last year. Export values plunged to \$19.4bn, a sharp dip of 28.6% from the previous year's \$27.2bn, official figures showed. Experts put the blame on a decline in the average price

per ton of exported items. The head of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, has said the value per ton of petrochemical goods took a nosedive of around 20%, from \$496 to \$398. Last year, petrochemical

plants cranked out 96 million tons of goods. Deputy Oil Minister for Petrochemicals Morteza Shahmirzaei has said that the sector's output is expected to hit the 100 million tons milestone this year.

"A total of 15 petrochemical projects will come on-stream this year, bringing the number of operating petrochemical plants to 80 factories by yearend," Shahmirzaei said earlier this month.

Pistachio exports to EU hike 17% in Q1, 2024: Eurostat



The statistics office of the European Union, aka Eurostat, indicates that Iran's pistachio exports to EU countries have increased by 17 percent in the first quarter of 2024.

Eurostat figures indicate that Iranian pistachio exports to EU countries increased by 17% year-over-year in value, reaching €34 million in 2024 from

€29 million in 2023, Mehr news Agency reported. The data also shows that Germany is the primary destination for Iran's pistachio exports, importing €24.3 million worth of pistachios. In the first quarter of 2024, Iran was the second largest exporter of pistachios to Europe, following the US, which exported

pistachios worth €243 million to the EU during the same period.

However, from January to March 2024, Iran's exports of pistachios with shells to the EU decreased by 3% compared to the same period last year. The exports amounted to €8.7 million in the first four months of 2024, down from €9 million during the same period in 2023, IRNA reported. Iran's exports of shelled pistachios to Europe during the mentioned period in 2024 increased by 26%, reaching €25.3 million. In the first quarter of 2023, Iran had exported €20 million worth of shelled pistachios to Europe.

Countdown to end ...

With opposition to Netanyahu's regime growing both domestically and internationally, the coming weeks will undoubtedly witness further developments in the rapidly evolving political crisis in the Israeli-occupied territories.

As reported by the Hebrew language news website Walla, Israel Ziv, former head of the Israeli occupation army's operations directorate, expressed doubt about the military significance of the operation in Rafah. Ziv contended that the political sec-

tor's entanglement in crises renders claims of victory in the war groundless.

On the battlefield, events are not unfolding as Netanyahu had envisioned. Despite relentless attacks against Hamas and the people of Gaza over a span of more than seven months, the popular Palestinian resistance movement remains a formidable force. According to Abu Obaida, spokesperson for the al-Qassam Brigades, which is Hamas' military wing, resistance fighters in northern Gaza successfully executed a complex ambush

operation on Saturday evening, resulting in the death, injury, or capture of several Israeli soldiers.

On Sunday, Hamas' launch of rockets from Rafah toward Tel Aviv and the vicinity of Israeli military bases sent shockwaves through Israel, demonstrating the continued resilience and determination of the resistance movement in the face of adversity.

In a revelation on Sunday, the Israeli occupation army acknowledged partial casualty figures since the onset of the war. The official count so far stands at 3,601 wounded soldiers and 636 fatalities.

Adding to the grim picture, German news agency dpa disclosed that approximately 7,000 Israelis have applied for German passports in the first four months of this year alone, surpassing the total of 9,000 applications submitted in the entirety of 2023.

Presently, Netanyahu finds himself in a seemingly inescapable predicament, entangled in a whirlwind of challenges with no apparent exit strategy. As dissent mounts from both inside and outside of Israel, the clock appears to be ticking on the tenure of the controversial premier. No one wants Bibi.



● IRNA

PBO: Iran on path to reduce inflation

Economic Desk

The head of Iran's Planning and Budget Organization stated at the 31st annual conference on monetary and exchange rate policies that the inflation rate has reached 37%, indicating that the country is working towards reducing inflation. Davoud Manzour said that the twelve-month producer inflation in August 2021 was at 89.6% and had decreased to 32.6% by the end of last year (March 19, 2024), adding that "The country is now on a path to reduce inflation and can bring the inflation rate to around 20%, which is its long-term levels," IRNA reported.

The 31st annual conference began on Monday, centering on the theme of "Reforming Monetary and Supervisory Policies, with a focus on the new Central Bank law."

The conference featured two key themes: "Monetary, Exchange, and Credit Policy" and "Regulation and Supervision." Addressing the conference, the vice president also mentioned that the country's economic growth was 5.7% last year and predicted that liquidity growth at the end of the Seventh Development Plan (2023-2027) would decrease to less than 14%, which would help single-digit inflation. It was mentioned: the important target in the Seventh Development Plan is to achieve single-digit inflation, which we hope will be realized in the next five years.

The PBO chief added that the government's economic team, the Ministry of Economy, the Central Bank, and the Plan and Budget Organization have provided a suitable legal regulatory program for the

monetary, banking, and exchange sector to have better stability, effectiveness, and efficiency.

Addressing the conference, the Central Bank governor, Mohammad Reza Farzin, also said that inflation expectations have decreased. According to Farzin, the money growth rate, previously at 33% last year, has now dropped to 16% by the 16th day of the first month of new Iranian year. As per the Central Bank's announcement, Farzin mentioned that money growth is an important measure for inflation expectations, and a decrease in its growth rate indicates a reduction in inflation expectations.

The decrease in inflation expectations results from the policies that have been implemented by the government and have reduced the growth of money, the CBI chief said.

Enigmatic world of ancient Elam



Tappeh Sialk
visitiran.ir



Chogha Zanbil
IRNA



Chogha Zanbil
IRNA



Tappeh Sialk
delgarm.com



An archeological site in Jiroft
wikipedia.org

Long before the rise of the Persian Empire, another ancient civilization thrived in the region. The Elamites, who emerged approximately 8,000 years ago, established a distinctive culture in the rugged landscapes of southwestern Iran. Unlike later Iranian and Semitic peoples, the Elamites had their own language and cultural identity. Situated between the towering Zagros Mountains and the fer-

tile plains of Khuzestan, the Elamites centered their activities in Anshan and Susa. Despite their enigmatic origins and unique language, their influence persisted long after their decline, significantly shaping the region's historical trajectory, toirantour.com wrote. While the Elamites' racial heritage remains uncertain, their

impact on the Persian Empire was profound. The territories they once inhabited became crucial to Iranian dominance, with their culture leaving an enduring imprint on Persian society. From the remnants of Susa to the artifacts discovered in their ancient cities, the legacy of the Elamites underscores their lasting significance in shaping Iran's history.

Proto-Elamite Period

In ancient times, a vibrant civilization thrived in what is now southwest Iran, dating back to around 4000 BCE. Susa, situated on flat lands, and Anshan, nestled among mountains, served as the primary centers of this civilization. Susa's origins can be traced back to around 4200 BCE, while signs of Sumerian influence, such as pottery, appear around 3,200 BCE.

In Lorestan Province, people were already crafting bronze artifacts. By 3000 BCE, the Elamite language began to be recorded in writing, narrating tales of the past through cuneiform symbols. This period marked a time of innovation, exploration, and the enduring resilience of a civilization on the ascent.

Old Elamite Period

Around 2700 BCE, the Old Elamite period commenced, characterized by conflicts with neighboring Mesopotamian cities like Ur. The Awan Dynasty followed, bringing both internal cohesion and diplomatic relations, with the 11th ruler even striking agreements with Naram-Sin of Akkad.

Subsequently, the Simash dynasty, potentially originating from the southern Lorestan mountains, disrupted the Elamite political landscape. Despite initial triumphs, Elam faced adversity when Shulgi of the 3rd Ur dynasty nearly subjugated them. Yet, Elam's spirit endured, leading to a successful revolt against Ur's authority, a narrative echoed in Mesopotamian songs and texts.

Amidst these power struggles, the Ep-arti dynasty ascended to prominence

in the mid-19th century BCE, led by the formidable Shirukdukh. Their military campaigns against Babylon's rising star, Hammurabi, showcased the intricate geopolitics of ancient times.

Middle Elamite Period

The Middle Elamite era commenced with the Anzanite dynasty assuming control after a prolonged historical silence. Khumbannumena, the fourth ruler in this lineage, oversaw a remarkable expansion of Elam's domain, earning him the moniker "Expander of the Empire." His son, Untash-Gal, left his mark by establishing the city of Dur Untash, known today as Chogha Zanbil. However, as Elam grew stronger, clashes with the ascendant Assyrian power became more frequent.

In the ensuing years, Elam found itself increasingly at odds with the formidable Assyrian empire. Tukulti-Ninurta I's incursions into Elam's northern territories elicited retaliatory actions by Kidin-Khutran, Khumbannumena's successor. Despite initial victories, Elam eventually succumbed to Assyrian dominance. Tukulti-Ninurta's brief southern expansion momentarily overshadowed Elam's strength, marking the gradual decline of the Anzanite dynasty. After a period of upheaval, the Middle Elamite period witnessed a resurgence under Shutruk-Nahhunte around 1160 BCE. This heralded the dawn of a new dynasty, likely centered in Susa. Elam emerged as a formidable military force in the Middle East, capitalizing on internal discord within Assyria. Shutruk-Nahhunte's audacious capture of Babylon, alongside the famed Hammu-

rabi's legal code, underscored Elam's ascendancy. Nevertheless, subsequent reigns experienced both triumphs and setbacks, with Elam's dominion extending deep into Mesopotamia but encountering resistance from Babylonian forces.

The shift towards centralized authority in Susa during this period hinted at forthcoming internal conflicts, reflecting the intricate interplay of power dynamics and regional autonomy in this transformative phase of Elamite history.

Chogha Zanbil

Nestled in the ancient Mesopotamian lands, Chogha Zanbil, or Dur Untash, stands as a testament to the grandeur of the past. Constructed during the reign of King Untash Naparisha at the peak of the Elamite empire, this sacred city features three robust walls encircling a majestic temple—a towering ziggurat that reaches towards the heavens in reverence.

At the core of Chogha Zanbil lies the ziggurat, a massive square structure spanning 105 meters on each side. This magnificent monument was erected to honor Inshushinak, the principal deity of the Elamites. Despite the passage of time, the vibrant red bricks of the ziggurat retain their youthful hue, whispering tales of ancient splendor.

Among the labyrinth of ruins, remnants of palaces and smaller temples stand as a testament to the diverse religious practices that once flourished within these sacred precincts. With over 5000 inscriptions adorning its bricks, Chogha Zanbil echoes the devotion and crafts-

manship of its creators, ensuring their legacy endures through the ages.

Neo-Elamite Period

Elam encountered challenges during the transition from the Middle to the Neo-Elamite eras. In 742 BCE, Huban-nugash ascended the throne, but his reign witnessed the fragmentation of the kingdom into smaller entities, weakening central authority.

Over the following century, Elam sought to intervene in Mesopotamian affairs, often forming alliances with Babylon against the formidable Neo-Assyrians. Despite sporadic victories, Elam faced challenges in resisting Assyrian expansion. Internal discord, coupled with interference from Assyria and Babylon, exacerbated the situation. Assyrian incursions into Elam, particularly in Lorestan, led to the disintegration of the kingdom's unity. Ultimately, Ashurbanipal's military campaigns from 692 to 639 BCE ravaged Susa, Elam's capital, leaving it in ruins and its territories desolate.

Anshan: A hub of Elamite power

Nestled amidst the rugged terrain of ancient Elam, Anshan stands as a poignant symbol of a bygone era's enduring influence. Situated north of present-day Shiraz in southwestern Iran, this ancient city sprawls across 350 acres of historical significance. Within its ancient remnants lie treasures that illuminate the early origins of civilization, including valuable artifacts that attest to the emergence of Elamite script.

Anshan rose to prominence around 2,350 BCE as a formidable contender against the Mesopotamian Akkadian

dynasty. Its zenith, however, unfolded during the 13th and 12th centuries BCE, when Elamite rulers, bearing the title "kings of Anshan and Susa," frequently raided Babylonian cities. By 675 BCE, dominion over the region transitioned to the Achaemenian Persians, who held the designation "kings of Anshan" until the era of Darius I in 522 BCE.

Delving into the world of ancient Elamites unveils a rich tapestry of history primarily centered around their capital, Susa, and neighboring locales in Khuzestan. Yet, intriguing connections to Elamite culture extend to other regions as well.

Tappeh Sialk

One enigma lies near Kashan at Tappeh Sialk (Sialk Hill), a mound steeped in ancient mysteries. Archaeological excavations have unearthed human remains dating back to 3,500 BCE, hinting at the presence of a venerable civilization. Some conjecture that Tappeh Sialk may have served as a sacred site, possibly featuring a towering structure like a ziggurat, showcasing the Elamites' spiritual beliefs and architectural prowess.

Jiroft

Further east, Jiroft emerges as a vibrant hub for commerce and trade along ancient thoroughfares. Here, diverse cultures converge, illustrating the far-reaching influence of Elamite civilization beyond Susa. In Jiroft's bustling streets and markets, echoes of the Elamite legacy persist, underscoring their enduring impact on the interconnected network of trade and cultural exchange in the ancient world.

Iran's measures to fight air pollution



By Darioush Gol-Alizadeh
Head of National Weather and Climate Change Center

PERSPECTIVE

Upon the approval of Iran's Clean Air Law in 2017, hopes were high that the era of polluted skies and smoggy cities would become a thing of the past. Many envisioned a future where blue skies and clean air would become the norm, eliminating the need to long for fresh air. Yet, seven years later, air pollution remains a pressing issue for major cities like Tehran, as grey skies persist despite regulatory efforts.

While the Clean Air Law's approval seemed promising, its implementation has encountered stumbling blocks, such as coordination challenges among multiple governing bodies and inadequate funding. As a result, the law has yet to significantly mitigate the detrimental effects of air pollution. Despite these hurdles, the current administration is forging ahead with critical measures aimed at alleviating the situation, though progress is gradual.

In recent years, the government has enforced various strategies to curb air pollution, including requiring domestic automakers to provide scrapping authorization for old vehicles, promoting cleaner energy sources, and enhancing emission standards for vehicles and fuel types. Additional initiatives include formulating national fuel standards, integrating the Clean Air Law into budgetary considerations, and crafting a comprehensive climate change management plan.

Darioush Gol-Alizadeh, the head of the National Weather and Climate Change Center which operates under Iran's Department of Environment, sheds light on the government's ongoing endeavors to fulfill its commitment to enhancing air quality and boosting the number of healthy days. Although challenges remain, the administration's continued focus on this vital issue signals a de-



A dog walks over the Aradkooh landfill in Tehran Province, Iran, looking for food.
● HASAN SHIRVANI/IRNA

termination to bring about a positive change and ensure cleaner air for Iranian citizens.

Mandating carmakers to provide scrapping permits

Under the current administration, considerable efforts have been devoted to upholding the Clean Air Law, with a particular focus on reducing air pollution in affected cities. A significant discussion point is the requirement for domestic car manufacturers to present scrapping permits to decommission used vehicles, as outlined in Article 10 of the Automobile Industry Organization Law. As this regulation takes effect, a substantial opportunity arises for modernizing public transportation fleets, particularly in metropolises such as Tehran. With local car manufacturers supplying the necessary resources, Tehran's aging taxi fleet, consisting of vehicles over 12 years old, can be renovated within two years while minimizing reliance on government funds. Article 10 ensures that a portion of the cost will be covered by the scrapping permit obtained from the previous vehicle owner.

Iran currently faces an urgent need to address its vehicle emissions, as approximately 37 million vehicles are in

operation nationwide, including 25 million cars and 12 million registered motorcycles. Among these, 6.5 million cars have surpassed their expected lifespan, while nearly 90% of motorcycles are either carbureted or in a state of disrepair. In Tehran alone, approximately 60% of air pollution stems from traffic, with older vehicles playing a significant role. Motorcycles emit up to 12 times more pollutants than passenger cars, making the removal of worn-out vehicles a critical priority.

Stressing the significance of Article 10 in the Automobile Industry Organization Law, it has been highlighted that the legislation was approved by parliament and enacted two years ago. This law prohibits the operation of worn-out vehicles for transporting goods and passengers in metropolitan areas. One of the clauses mandates that 25% of newly registered vehicles must involve scrapping an older vehicle, ensuring that one worn-out vehicle is removed for every four new vehicles registered. This measure is expected to considerably impact both the reduction of air pollution and the removal of aging vehicles from the roads.

Despite the importance of public transportation in improving air quality, efforts to replace worn-out vehicles

and revamp the public transport system have been insufficient in the past. While progress is being made, it is crucial to expedite the renovation process. Last year, about 70,000 used cars were scrapped, a notable increase from the 20,800 scrapped the previous year, indicating that efforts are moving in the right direction.

Cutting down on fossil fuel dependence

A key concern for the current administration is the reduction of reliance on fossil fuels through renewable energy development for power generation. Article 19 of the Clean Air Law mandates that the Ministry of Energy allocate 30% of annual electricity expansion to renewables. However, this target has yet to be met, with renewable energy accounting for less than 1% of the nation's energy mix. Despite the slow progress, promising programs initiated by the Ministry of Energy have begun to make strides. These programs aim to add 10,000 megawatts of renewable energy to the country's energy capacity by next year's end, demonstrating that renewable energy development is no longer optional but necessary.

Expanding renewable energy sources is essential for meeting the nation's electricity needs and fostering sustainable growth in public transportation. As current public transport policies prioritize hybrid and electric vehicles, it is crucial to embrace renewable energy to power these initiatives.

Boosting vehicle, fuel standards

Another critical aspect under focus is the enhancement of emission standards for all types of vehicles. Progress has been made, with domestically manufactured cars now meeting Euro 5 standards, and imported cars adhering to Euro 5 and 6. Moreover, the production of carbureted motorcycles has been halted, and they are no longer licensed for use.

Recognizing the link between fuel quality and air pollution, efforts have been directed towards refining all fuel types. Notably, Euro 5 diesel is now produced at the Isfahan Refinery, with a low sulfur content of about 10 parts per million (PPM). Daily diesel production stands at 114 million liters, meeting Euro 4 and 5 standards. However, gasoline con-

sumption remains a concern as daily production reaches 108 million liters of Euro 4 and 5 gasoline, necessitating improved nationwide fuel standards.

Approximately 30% of gasoline produced meets Euro 4 and 5 standards, while the remainder consists of standard production gasoline. To optimize air quality, aligning fuel and vehicle compatibility is essential. The large number of aging vehicles necessitates renovation as they contribute to high fuel consumption and highlight the pressing need to bolster public transportation.

Investing in both surface-level and underground public transport options, particularly the metro, can significantly reduce private car usage. Although Tehran's current bus fleet requires expansion, ground-level infrastructure has limitations. As such, prioritizing metro development will effectively combat air pollution while circumventing surface-level constraints.

Rolling out fuel quality plans in refineries

Previously, a unified national standard for various fuels, including gasoline, gas oil, and fuel oil, was lacking. This gap was addressed under the current administration, leading to the establishment of an improved fuel oil standard. Sulfur content was reduced from 3.5% by volume weight (equivalent to 35,000 ppm) to 0.8%. Although not yet in production, the Ministry of Petroleum's plan aims to bring all domestically produced fuels up to national standards by March 2028 through refinery upgrades. Several refineries, such as those in Isfahan, Shiraz, and Tabriz, have received approval from the Board of Ministers for these upgrades. However, certain considerations must be addressed before granting permission for project implementation. The Isfahan Refinery, in particular, has been greenlit for 50 artificial intelligence projects, signaling a commitment to modernizing and improving operations.

Allocating funds for Clean Air Law

One significant accomplishment of the current administration is the allocation of funds specifically for implementing the Clean Air Law in the national budget. This precedent-setting move provides financial support for address-



A man looks at the polluted sky of the Iranian capital of Tehran.
● IRNA

ing air quality issues and is crucial for further progress. This line of credit, non-existent in previous years, has facilitated the dedication of 320 billion Tomans two years ago and 840 billion Tomans last year. Although these figures pale in comparison to the scope of work required, this important initial step creates a solid foundation for future budgetary allocations.

Another groundbreaking development is the formulation of the country's first climate change management plan. Following the Seventh Plan Law, Note 1 to Article 21 of the Climate Change Management Plan Law was devised. Ad-

ressing climate change has far-reaching implications that transcend air pollution concerns, as the entire nation's infrastructure and activities are susceptible to its impacts. It is crucial to build resilience and transition to a green and low-carbon economy to prevent irreparable damage.

The Islamic Council approved the climate change management program, emphasizing four critical goals: strengthening adaptation, reducing vulnerability, expanding the green economy, and fostering low-carbon industries. The urgency of this plan cannot be overstated, as current cli-

mate-driven disasters like floods are causing significant human and financial losses. Developing strategies to mitigate soil erosion and safeguard food production are essential components of combating desertification. Successfully addressing climate change necessitates sustained and collaborative efforts.

Climate change impacts, such as altered rainfall patterns, often catch us off guard due to a lack of preparedness. With 94% of global food production reliant on soil, mitigating the consequences of floods on soil quality and agricultural lands is paramount to prevent widespread food production challenges and increased deserti-

fication. A comprehensive plan to manage the impacts of climate change is vital, requiring continuous and collective action.

Setting limits for odor pollution

Another notable accomplishment is the establishment of permissible odor limits, a first for the country. These standards were drafted, approved, and released, providing a much-needed guideline that was previously absent. For instance, complaints about unpleasant smells from industrial and non-industrial activities along the Tehran-Qom highway or near Imam Khomeini Airport can now be addressed more effectively.

These odors stem from a combination of factors, such as untreated sewage, livestock farms, slaughterhouses, and landfills like Aradkooch or Kahrizak.

With these new guidelines, permissible limits for odor-producing gases or odorous gases can be determined, enabling authorities to assess whether the smell is annoying or not. Industries can be monitored based on these standards, ensuring that emissions remain within acceptable levels and do not cause discomfort. While odor pollution may not have direct health impacts, it is important to manage as it contributes to overall air quality and public well-being.

Under Raisi's presidency

Iran's health system forever transformed for the better

PERSPECTIVE

Amidst the coronavirus pandemic, Iran's government, led by the late president Ebrahim Raisi, achieved significant milestones in various sectors, notably transforming the nation's health system. During the early days of Raisi's tenure, which started on August 3, 2021, the country was still grappling with the effects of the pandemic, but the government's swift procurement and distribution of vaccines turned the tide, ensuring the safety of countless citizens.

Within a brief five-month period after the administration took charge, over 131 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine were imported into the country. According to data released by the customs and the Food and Drug Organization, Iran's vaccine imports surged sevenfold within those five months, compared to the entire term of the previous administration. This rapid scale-up in vaccine acquisition was a critical component of Iran's comprehensive efforts to protect its population from the devastating effects of the pandemic.

Nurses were heard this time

Ali Abbasi-Beglo, a board member of the Emergency Medical Association of Iran, highlighted the dedication of Raisi's government to nurses in an interview with Ana news agency. According to Abbasi-Beglo, Raisi's focus on the nation's

health system was evident from the onset of his presidency, as demonstrated by the hiring of over 10,000 nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

He further added that giving merit pay to healthcare workers was among other initiatives prioritized by Raisi's government that reflected its commitment to the well-being of healthcare professionals.

Pharmaceutical breakthroughs

Significant strides were made in the pharmaceutical sector, as confirmed by the head of the Food and Drug Organization, Seyyed Heydar Mohammadi. For example, according to Mohammadi, 17 new drug production lines were launched and several innovative medications were introduced during president Raisi's tenure.

The Darooyar project, another notable development, was first implemented in the Iranian calendar year of 1401 (ended March 20, 2023), paving the way for the domestic production of a range of high-tech medical equipment and supplies, such as linear accelerators, CT scan machines, defibrillators, respiratory ventilators, anesthesia machines, and specialized dialysis machines, along with a variety of required disposables. These advancements were made possible through the dedicated efforts of knowledge-based companies and the support of president Raisi.

Mohammadi emphasized the late president's commitment to bolstering food security and informing the public about healthy foods, which resulted in

tangible improvements by the end of the calendar year of 1402 (ended March 19, 2024). The president's unwavering support for producers of healthcare products and his focus on improving the nation's health were evident in the prioritization of healthcare resources, such as medicine, equipment, and infant formula, as well as his frequent orders to accelerate the provision of financial assistance to the health sector.

Knowledge-based health firms under spotlight

The focus of Raisi's government on knowledge-based companies in the health sector stands out as one of its exceptional accomplishments. Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini, vice president for parliamentary affairs in the cabinet of Ebrahim Raisi, underscored the government's dedication to supporting these companies, particularly in medicine and health.

According to Hosseini, previous governments of Iran had not prioritized this area, resulting in a lack of support for knowledge-based companies and their innovative products. However, Raisi's government made a concerted effort to champion the nation's brightest minds and their groundbreaking ideas. In line with this vision, various ministries, including oil, energy, and industry, were mandated to provide backing to their relevant knowledge-based companies. This new emphasis on nurturing Iran's exceptional talent is expected to yield remarkable results, as long as young innovators continue to receive the support they need. The prevailing sentiment is that Iran's success hinges on harnessing the ingenuity of its youth to drive progress and growth.

Health system before, after Raisi

Prior to Raisi's inauguration as president in August 2021, around 19 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines had been allocated to Iran, with daily fatalities surpassing 700. Following the government's allocation of necessary financial resources, approximately 140 million vaccine doses were secured.

Completing electronic prescription initiative

The implementation of the electronic prescriptions initiative, which was introduced in the calendar year of 1397 (ended March 20, 2019), and the phasing out of paper prescriptions became a top priority for Iran's government under Raisi. This transition gained momentum when the Iran Health



Iran's late president Ebrahim Raisi (R) speaks with doctors and nurses in a hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic.
● ANA

Insurance Organization rolled out the electronic prescription program across 235 cities in November 2019. The pressing need for streamlined healthcare services amidst the coronavirus pandemic further emphasized the significance of the project.

Curbing escalating, unnecessary healthcare costs was another key concern for the country's health authorities. By implementing the electronic prescription program, Iran aimed to integrate various pieces of information, prevent prescription errors, cap service fees, prevent insurance overlaps, and reduce paper consumption. The successful execution of this project would pave the way for the full realization of the family doctor initiative.

According to experts, the current electronic prescribing system has effectively addressed many issues related to paper prescriptions while also reducing healthcare costs, minimizing prescription and medication errors, and enhancing drug therapy and patient well-being.

Boosting hospital capacity

The government of the late president significantly improved Iran's hospital infrastructure with the opening of 106 hospital projects and the addition of 15,939 hospital beds. Comparing his government's achievements to his predecessor's, the Minister of Health pointed out to Hazrat Mahdi (PBUH) Smart Hospital, which now has 1,000 beds, and Ghadir Hospital, which now has 821 beds, as examples.

Saeid Karimi, the deputy director of the Ministry of Health, also emphasized the growth in hospital bed capacity, stating that the number of special beds for infants doubled from 500 to 1,500. Furthermore, 3,000 specialty beds were added to the country's hospital bed capacity during this period.

Iran's booming health tourism industry

Iran has experienced remarkable growth in health tourism over the past two years, attracting a staggering 2.2 million health tourists to the country. With 240 hospitals acquiring IPD licenses to accommodate this influx, the government's commitment to fostering health tourism is evident.

As part of its ongoing strategy, the government intends to introduce a plan under which health advisors will be dispatched to countries that send us the highest numbers of health tourists, further solidifying Iran's position as a premier medical destination.

In addition to these efforts, the Minister of Health highlighted the launch of 53 new public dental centers and the acquisition of 1,000 ambulances during the late president's tenure.

Iran's health infrastructure development in the same period also includes the establishment of 37 pre-hospital emergency bases and four airbases as well as the purchase of 58 ambulances and 20 ambulance buses equipped with 13 mobile beds, contributing to a comprehensive enhancement of the nation's healthcare resources.



Iranian doctors and nurses tend to patients in well-equipped hospitals at the peak of the coronavirus pandemic.
● TASNIM

Volleyball Nations League:

Olympic aspirations fading away
as Iran hits rock bottom in Week 1

Sports Desk

Iran left Rio de Janeiro empty-handed after falling to a fourth successive defeat in Week 1 of the Volleyball Nations League.

Having suffered 3-1 losses to Serbia and Cuba either side of straight-set defeat against reigning world champion Italy, Mauricio Motta Paes's men produced a much-improved performance on Sunday but were still beaten by Argentina, which rallied from behind twice for a 3-2 win (23-25, 31-29, 20-25, 25-20, 15-13) in the Maracanãzinho venue.

Outside-hitter Morteza Sharifi chipped in a game-high 26 points – including double aces – with fellow-Iranian opposite spiker Amin Esmailnejad scoring 24, while Bruno Lima was the most prolific Argentine with 20 points, followed by middle-blocker Nicolas Zerba, who finished on 16.

The result left Iran rock bottom of the 16-team table, while it saw the Asian side drift further away from a place in July's Paris Olympics.

With Germany, Brazil, Poland, Canada, USA, and Ja-

pan having already joined host France, and Egypt set to take the African slot, only four Olympic quotas remain up for grabs, which will be decided through the FIVB Men's Ranking by the end of the VNL preliminary round on June 23.

As it stands, Italy and Slovenia – the top two in the preliminary round with a clean sweep of victories – are the favorites to punch their Paris tickets after standing second and fifth respectively in the latest ranking on Monday.

Argentina (eighth) and Cuba (ninth) will also fancy their chances to qualify with Iran lagging behind in the 16th place of the ranking.

Iran will head to Fukuoka, Japan, for Week 2 – starting with an all-Asian encounter against the host on June 4.

Brazil, Bulgaria, and VNL debutant Turkey will also come Iran's way in Fukuoka, before the final week of action in the preliminary round sees Paes's side take on USA, the Netherlands, France, and Germany in Manila, Philippines.

The top eight of the table will progress to the VNL Finals in Lodz, Poland.



Iranian setter Mohammad-Taher Vadi (18) defends against Argentine middle-blocker Loser Bruno during a game in the Volleyball Nations League in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on May 26, 2024.



FIFA Futsal World Cup:

Iran lands Venezuela, Guatemala, and France in group stage



CHALINEE THIRASUPA/AFK

Sports Desk

Iran will begin its Futsal World Cup campaign in Uzbekistan with a game against Venezuela in Group F on September 16.

The draw for the 10th edition of the sport's flagship international event took place in the ancient Uzbek city of Samarkand on Sunday, where 24 teams were split into six groups, with Iran, seeded in Pot 1, also pitted against Guatemala and France. Ranked fourth in the inaugural FIFA Men's Ranking earlier in May, the Asian powerhouse, whose best World Cup finish came in 2016 thanks to a shootout victory over Portugal in the third-place playoff, will face Guatemala on September 19 before squaring off against the

European opponent three days later.

Having lifted a record-extending 13th Asian Cup trophy in April, Vahid Shamsaei's men will fancy a comfortable progress into the knockout stage after being handed a relatively easy task in the group phase.

Venezuela will be making only a second World Cup appearance after reaching the last 16 in Lithuania three years ago, while Guatemala, beaten by Iran in all six previous meetings between the two sides, has failed to go beyond the group stage in five attempts.

France, meanwhile, will be a World Cup debutant – alongside Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and New Zealand – courtesy of an elite-round group

win in the European qualifiers. Elsewhere in the draw, reigning champion Portugal was placed into Group E, alongside Panama, Tajikistan and Morocco, while Brazil – the most decorated team in the competition with five titles – is in Group B, also featuring Cuba, Croatia, and Thailand.

Host Uzbekistan will face the Netherlands, Paraguay, Costa Rica in Group A, with Argentina – the 2021 runner-up and champion in 2016 – landing Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Angola in Group C.

Two-time champion Spain is in Group D with 2021 semifinalist Kazakhstan, New Zealand, and Libya. The top two of the six groups will be joined by four best third-placed teams in the round of 16.

Taremi signs off with a goal, steers Porto to cup triumph over Sporting

Sports Desk

Iranian striker Mahdi Taremi brought the curtain down on a glorious four years with Porto on Sunday, scoring the winner in extra time during a 2-1 victory over Sporting CP in the Taça de Portugal final.

Set to join Serie A giant Inter once his contract runs out on July 1, Taremi came off the bench in the second half before sending the keeper the wrong way from the spot in the first period of the extra time – an 11th goal of the season for the Iranian, coupled with seven assists in 35 games

across all competitions.

Dutch center-back Jerry St. Juste put Sporting in front in the 20th minute, only to see his strike canceled out by Evanilson five minutes later, and then received his marching orders on the half-hour mark.

This was a seventh domestic trophy – including a league and couple double in the 2021/22 campaign – in a Porto shirt for the 31-year-old Iranian, who joined the Dragons from fellow-Portuguese side Rio Ave in 2020 and went on to become the club's third all-time top scorer with a remarkable 91 strikes in 182 appearances

– one goal shy of retired Colombian Jackson Martínez, with Porto's Brazilian legend Mario Jardel on top with 138 goals.

"I am proud to have spent four years with this group. This is simply unbelievable for me and I will always have fond memories of my incredible time in Porto," Taremi said after the game.

The newly-finished season was the least prolific for the Iranian, who surpassed the 20-goal mark in each of the previous three seasons – bagging 22 to finish as the leading marksman in the Portuguese top flight last year.

"Unfortunately, things didn't quite

go as I expected this season, as I was involved in the Asian Cup and had to be focused on the national team. I have to apologize to Porto fans for that, although I always gave my all on the pitch, as well as the training sessions," added the striker, who slipped down the pecking order in the Porto squad after returning from international duty in February amid reports of the him undergoing medicals at Inter ahead of the summer move. "I am a member of the Super Dragões from today and wish them the best of success with the club," Taremi said of the ultra group of Porto supporters.



Iran's 12th Parliament inaugurated



Iranian lawmakers take oath during the inauguration session for the new Parliament in Tehran on May 27, 2024.
● ALI SHARIFZADEH/IRNA

National Desk
Iran's 12th Parliament was officially inaugurated

on Monday with a message of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

In his message, the Leader stressed the importance of continuing and strengthening "religious

democracy", describing it as a "big divine gift" to the Iranian nation. Ayatollah Khamenei said

each member of the parliament is a representative of the entire nation which means that the main work of the lawmakers is to secure the country's national interests. Iran's acting President Mohammad Mokhber also addressed the parliament in his first public speech since May 19's helicopter crash that killed his predecessor and seven others. His speech came as Iran prepares for a presidential election to replace the late President Ebrahim Raisi in just a month. In his remarks, Mokhber praised Raisi's time in office, noting that Iran's crude oil production—a key source of hard cur-

rency for the country — climbed to more than 3.6 million barrels a day. That comes after Oil Minister Javad Owji said Sunday that Iran was now exporting around 2 million barrels a day, despite Western sanctions targeting the Islamic Republic. Mokhber also asserted that the country's economy remained stable under Raisi when Iran took military actions in Iraq, Israel and Pakistan in recent months. Many high-ranking Iranian officials as well as foreign guests attended the opening ceremony during which the new parliamentarians took oath. Iranians elected 290 members of the parliament in two rounds of the elections which were held on March 1 and May 10. Iran announced a turnout of 41 percent in the parliamentary elections.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Strong ties only way to expel outsiders from Mideast



Iran's Acting Foreign Minister Ali Baqeri Kani said stronger bonds and ties among the neighboring states are the only way to expel foreigners from the Middle East region. Baqeri Kani made the remarks in a joint press conference with Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi, who arrived in Tehran on Monday to express his country's solidarity with Iran following the death of President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in a helicopter crash last week, Press TV reported.

"Today, we are consolidating friendly and fraternal relations and promoting multilateral ties with our neighbors," Baqeri Kani said.

Baqeri noted that foreign policy had a special position in the doctrine of Raisi's administration which included the expansion of political ties with the neighboring countries and enhanced trade cooperation. The Omani foreign minister, for his part, said he exchanged views with Baqeri Kani on issues of common interest concerning the region, particularly Israel's massacre and destruction in Gaza.

Mokhber: Iran will follow late president's policy of boosting ties



● IRNA

International Desk
Iran's Acting President Mohammad Mokhber said on Monday Tehran will follow the late president's policy of expansion of relations with countries. Iran is determined to expand and strengthen its international relations, especially with the Muslim and allied countries, Mokhber told the visiting President of the National

Assembly of Mali Abdoulaye Maïssouma in Tehran. He described the late president Ebrahim Raisi and his foreign minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian as valuable assets for the Islamic world. Mokhber called for the use of capacities in both countries to promote economic relations between Iran and Mali. Malick Diallo, for his part, expressed his condolenc-

es to Iran over the loss of President Raisi, and said Mali hopes to continue expanding economic and trade relations with Iran. Raisi, Amir-Abdollahian and six others died on May 19, when their helicopter crashed in foggy weather in the mountains near the northwestern border with Azerbaijan. The charred wreckage of the aircraft was found the following day.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Israel faces global outcry over deadly strike on Rafah camp

Israel faced a wave of international condemnation Monday over a strike that Gaza officials said killed 45 people when it set off a fire that ripped through a tent city for displaced Palestinians.

The UN called on Israel to conduct a "thorough and transparent" investigation into the Rafah strike, as the Israeli military said it was launching a probe into civilian deaths, AFP reported. French President Emmanuel Macron wrote on X that "these operations must stop. There are no safe areas in Rafah for Palestinian civilians. I call for full respect for international law and an immediate ceasefire."

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said he was "horrified by news coming out of Rafah on Israeli strikes killing dozens of displaced persons, including small children. I condemn this in the strongest terms". Israel launched the attack on Sunday evening, hours after Hamas had unleashed a barrage of rockets at Tel Aviv and nearby areas which sent Israelis running for bomb shelters even though most were intercepted by air defenses. Israel's army claimed its aircraft "struck a Hamas compound in Rafah" and killed Yassin Rabia and Khaled Nagar, both senior officials for the resistance group in the occupied West Bank. Gaza's civil defense agency said the strike set off a fire that tore through a displacement center in northwestern Rafah near a facility of the UN agency for Palestinians, UNRWA. "We saw charred bodies and dismembered limbs ... We also saw cases of amputations, wounded children, women and the elderly,"



said agency official Mohammad al-Mughayyir.

Footage from the Palestinian Red Crescent Society showed chaotic night-time scenes of paramedics racing to the fiery attack site and evacuating the wounded, including children. The ICRC said one of its field hospitals was receiving an "influx of casualties seeking care for injuries and burns" and that its teams were "doing their best to save lives".

Mughayyir said the rescue efforts were hampered by war damage and the impacts of Israel's siege. Across the region, the Israeli attack sparked strong protests from mediators Egypt and Qatar as well as from Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Egypt deplored the "targeting of defenseless civilians" and labelled it part of "a systematic policy aimed at widening the scope of death and destruction in the Gaza Strip to make it uninhabitable".

Jordan accused Israel of "ongoing war crimes" and Saudi Arabia condemned "in the strongest terms the continued massacres committed by Israeli occupation forces". Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said "we

Palestinians gather at the site of an Israeli strike on a camp for internally displaced people in Rafah on May 27, 2024.
● EYAD BABA/AFP

will do everything possible to hold these barbarians and murderers accountable".

Qatar condemned the Israeli bombing as a "dangerous violation of international law" and voiced "concern that the bombing will complicate ongoing mediation efforts and hinder reaching an agreement for an immediate and permanent ceasefire".

The African Union chair Moussa Faki Mahamat also condemned the attack on X saying: "Israel continues to violate international law with impunity and in contempt of an ICJ ruling two days ago ordering an end to its military action in Rafah." "The ICJ order must be urgently enforced if global order is to prevail," he added. In a case brought by South Africa alleging that the Israeli military operation amounts to "genocide", the ICJ on Friday ordered Israel to halt its Rafah offensive, and demanded the release of hostages and the "unhindered provision" of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Jordan seeks 'amicable' relations with Iran



Jordan's Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II said Jordan seeks amicable relations with Iran.

In an exclusive interview with Al Arabiya, the crown prince said that Jordan, along with all Arab countries, seeks amicable relations with Iran, based on the principle of good neighborly relations and non-intervention in the affairs of other countries. Last week, Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman al-Safadi in a phone conversation with Iran's acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri conveyed the Jordanian king's condolences to the Iranian Leader on the deaths of Iran's president and foreign minister and their companions in a tragic helicopter incident.

Iran pavilion in Venice to reopen after closure over Raisi's passing



Arts & Culture Desk

The official Iranian pavilion at the 2024 Venice Biennale will reopen on May 28 after a four-day closure from May 23 to 26 to honor the memory of Ayatollah Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and his companions, who were martyred in a copter crash on May 19. The closure was a mark of respect for the national mourning

period in Iran, ISNA reported. The pavilion's reopening marks the continuation of Iran's participation in the 60th edition of the Venice Biennale, showcasing its contributions to the international art scene. The Iranian pavilion presents works by artists such as Mostafa Goudarzi, Kazem Chalipa, Mor-teza Asadi, Abdolhamid Qadiri-rian, and Gholam Ali Taheri, all revolving around the oppression

of Gaza's children. The pavilion features a selected piece from the media section of the 16th Fajr Visual Arts Festival, titled 'Mirrors of Light' by Maryam Safaei and Mohammad Amin Owji. This interactive installation, based on Persian architectural geometry and ancient mirror craftsmanship, creates a celestial and paradisiacal atmosphere through light reflection.

Isfahan to welcome Chinese investors for hotel construction

Arts & Culture Desk

Isfahan is ready to provide any guarantees to support Chinese investors in the tourism sector, said the Director-General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts in Isfahan Province. With tax exemptions for hotel construction in the province, Isfahan is prepared to offer support to Chinese investors, Amir Karamzadeh added. During a meeting with the deputy head of the Communist Party

of the People's Republic of China in Gansu Province, Karamzadeh stated that Isfahan needs at least 200 new hotels to achieve sustainable tourism development goals. Karamzadeh emphasized the potential for sister-city agreements between Gansu and Isfahan, noting Isfahan's rich historical heritage with over 22,000 historical artifacts, 2,000 registered national heritage sites, and 17 UNESCO World Heritage sites. Isfahan is currently sister with

16 cities worldwide. The 25-year cooperation agreement between Iran and China opens up opportunities for tourism development and enhanced bilateral relations. Gansu official expressed China's willingness to collaborate with Iran and implement proposals from Isfahan's cultural authorities. The historical ties between the two countries date back approximately 4,000 years, with Gansu and Isfahan playing significant roles in cultural and economic exchanges.

Iranian 'Between the Cliffs' wins three awards at Russian festival

Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian film 'Between the Cliffs,' written and directed by Mokhtar Abdollahi, won three awards at the International Film Festival for Children and Youth "Hero" in Krasnoyarsk, Russia.

The film, produced by Mohammad Ahmadi, received the festival's Grand Prix, the Audience Choice Award for best film, and an honorary diploma for best child actor (Andia Yahyapour), ISNA wrote. The Russian festival took place from May 20 to May 24.

'Between the Cliffs,' Abdollahi's debut feature film, tells the story of siblings Ebrahim and Ilma, young shepherds who face challenges while tending their flock in their parents' absence. The cast includes Hamidreza Gheibi, Andia Yahyapour, Esmail Moradi, and Maryam Al Ahmad. It has so far participated in inter-



national film festivals so far including Dhaka International Film Festival (January 2023, Bangladesh), BUFF Film Festival (March 2023, Sweden), CMS International Children's Film Festival (April 2023, India) and Within the Family Film Festival (July 2023, Russia).

It won the special jury award and the Golden Butterfly for best child actor at the 34th International Film Festival for Children & Youth, as well as awards for best film and best actor at the 18th Within the Family International Festival of Family and Children's Films in Russia.

Iran's vocalist Qorbani to perform in Dubai

Iranian vocalist Alireza Qorbani will perform in Dubai Opera House on June 7.

The concert will take place under the artistic direction by Hsam Naseri. Qorbani will be accompanied by the Firdaus Orchestra, an Emirati ensemble founded by renowned composer A.R. Rahman, who has won both Oscar and Golden Globe awards, ISNA wrote.

The pieces which will be staged include 'Zero Degree Turn,' 'The Strange Times' and 'The Strange Times'. This performance follows Qorbani's recent performances in Tehran during Nowruz, as well as in Berlin, Gothenburg, and Milan. After a series of successful concerts, titled 'Sing with Me,' in Tehran and other cities across Iran, Qorbani, had an international tour to Canada, Australia, and Europe.



Birth of Persian Zebras in Semnan offers hope against extinction

Social Desk



The birth of Persian single-hoofed herbivore zebras in Semnan's Kavir National Park signals a potential breakthrough in the fight against the extinction of this species, according to the head of Semnan's Department of Environmental Protection Agency. Bahram-Ali Zaheri, speaking on Monday, announced that recent assessments show the park is now home to 36 Persian zebras. Of these, approximately 11 are premature, while the rest are mature, Borna news agency re-

ported. "Mid-spring marks the start of the zebra birthing season," Zaheri said. "This year, births began at an ideal time in Kavir National Park, giving us hope that we might break the extinction code for this valuable species." Zaheri explained that Persian zebras reach sexual maturity and become capable of reproduction at three years old. With 11 juveniles currently in the park, there is optimism that the population will stabilize at over 50 individuals as these zebras mature. He emphasized the importance

of genetic diversity in preventing genetic disorders and maintaining the health of the species. Last year, an adult male zebra was relocated from Turan National Park in Shahrud to Kavir National Park to introduce genetic variation. This initiative will be repeated this year. The Persian zebra, a notable single-hoofed herbivore, had been extinct in Kavir National Park for around 30 years. Efforts to reintroduce the species began with captive breeding, followed by release into the wild. The Persian zebra is a subspe-

cies of the Asian zebra, which once had a vast population across the Middle East, Central Asia, and China. However, its numbers have drastically declined, with the species now extinct in many of these regions. Persian zebras have a low reproduction rate. Typically, only one out of three foals survives. Male foals are particularly vulnerable as adult males do not accept and often kill them. This behavior, coupled with a long gestation period and the rarity of twin births, has contributed to the decline in their population.