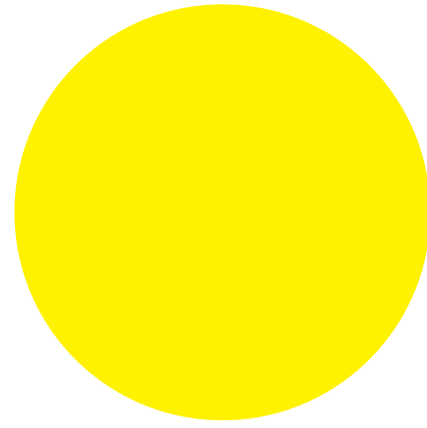




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Iran Daily



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IranDailyWeb

Vol. 7572 • Sunday, June 2, 2024 • Khordad 13, 1403 • Dhu al-Qadah 24, 1445 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages

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European narrative of IAEA's politically-motivated moves



By **Abed Akbari**
Political analyst

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Two years after the issuance of the most recent resolutions by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in May and October 2022, which were met with significant responses and counteractions by the Islamic Republic of Iran, the agency is once again making a politically motivated move to exploit the tactic of issuing resolutions against the country.

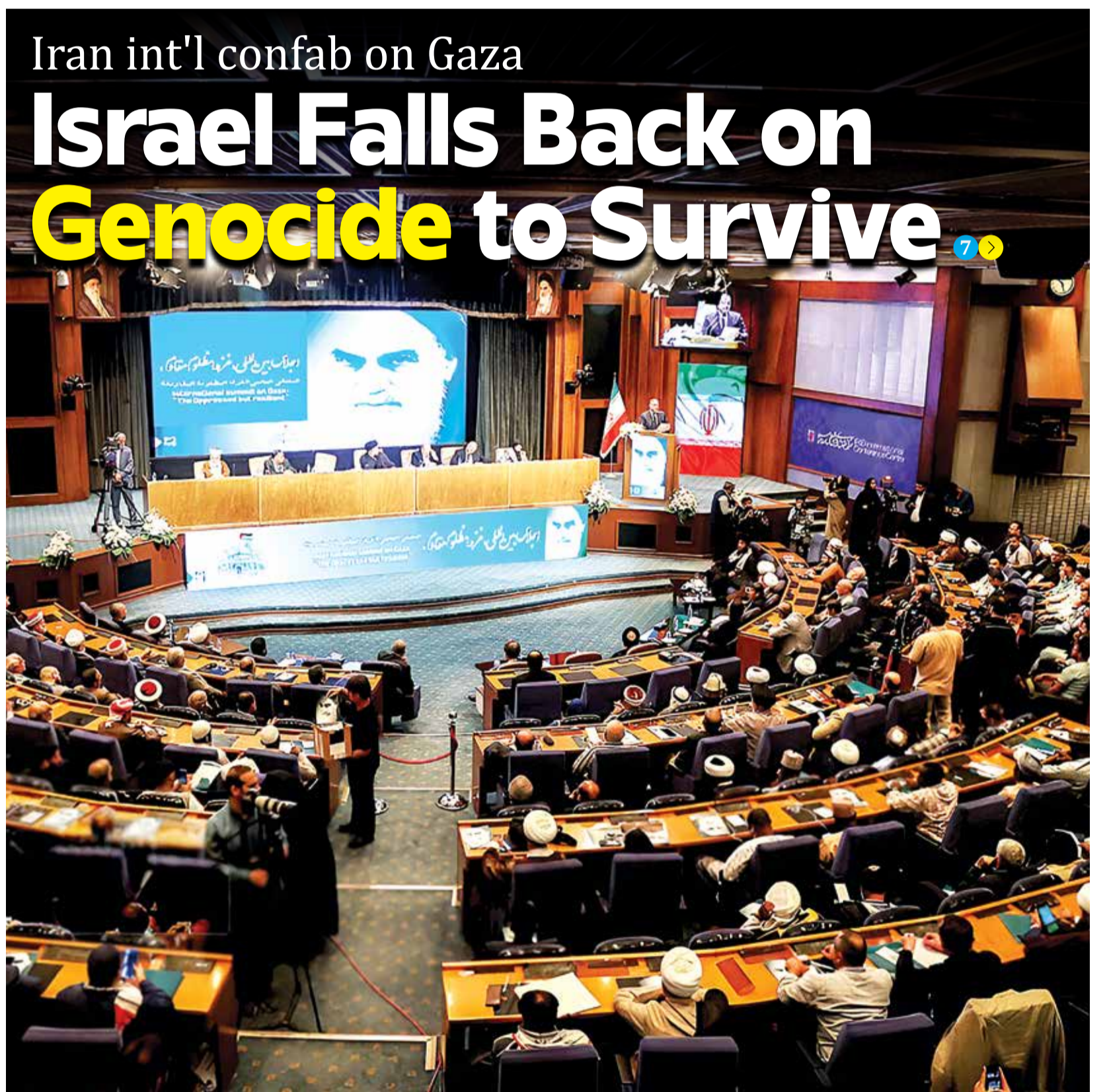
Emphasizing the ineffective use of the pressure lever has consistently failed to produce results for its creators. This issue, most importantly, will adversely affect the agency's cooperation with Iran. It is a course of action that resulted in the February 2023 agreement between the Islamic Republic and the agency and could be jeopardized by the West's irrational choices.

Following the first resolution, Iran terminated all post-implementation cooperation based on its confidence-building measures and collected over 20 surveillance cameras of the agency from nuclear facilities.

In reaction to the resolution of the Board of Governors on 17 November 2022, Iran announced the commencement of 60% uranium production at the Fordow complex, deploying advanced IR-6 machines instead of first-generation centrifuges, equipping hall B (Unit 1) with the capacity of 8 new chains, and initiating gas injection into two new chains of advanced machines in Natanz. According to many European experts, a similar scenario is predicted to be repeated in the event of the approval of a new resolution against Iran. Regarding the Western parties' new maneuvers to pressure Iran by issuing a new resolution, several key points are noteworthy.

First, following the signing of the JCPOA in 2015, Iran responsibly fulfilled its commitments flawlessly to lift unjust sanctions. Despite receiving IAEA's verification in 16 reports, the unilateral reinstatement of sanctions by Donald Trump led to Iran activating the JCPOA dispute resolution mechanism in 2018. Iran activated the dispute resolution mechanism within the framework of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) at the ministerial level of the remaining members in this agreement in 2018.

As a result of the meeting, the JCPOA parties, through issuing statements, highlighted 11 commitments to compensate for the economic damages caused by the unilateral actions of the United States. However, the imbalanced execution of the agreement and pressure from US unilateral sanctions led to the Iranian Supreme National Security Council deciding to pause the gradual implementation of voluntary nuclear commitments and granted a 60-day opportunity for diplomacy. Page 2 >



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Iran makes jet engine blades, overhauls dozens of airliners

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MEHR

European narrative of ...

Iran, up to one year after the US withdrawal from the JCPOA, adhered to all its commitments under this agreement to give European countries the opportunity to compensate for the consequences of Washington's exit from the agreement. However, given that European countries did not fulfill their promises, Iran also reduced its commitments under the JCPOA in several steps.

The second important point is that in recent days, media outlets outside Iran have been focused on the leaked future decisions of the Board of Governors of the IAEA. The central theme of this coverage in recent days has highlighted disagreements and divisions within the Western camp regarding the reutilization of the resolution tool against Iran. Despite the creation of a media dichotomy regarding the views of the European Troika and the United States concerning the issuance of a resolution against the Islamic Republic, few in Iran have accepted this dichotomy. There is a consensus among Iranian analysts that the design and implementation of the pressure lever named the IAEA's resolution are pursued in collaboration with the US and its European allies.

The third point is that during his recent visit to Iran, Rafael Grossi engaged in discussions with Iranian officials regarding potential collaboration with the agency. Following his return from Tehran, Grossi reported that both parties have reached a mutual understanding, with Iran demonstrating a willingness to undertake specific actions. He highlighted three key areas of focus: inspections, unresolved issues, and voluntary measures that Iran can implement. However, despite these positive developments, the re-emergence of political accusations concerning Iran's peaceful nuclear program, along with the unresolved remedial issues such as the presence of human-origin uranium particles in Varameen and Turqzabad, and the lack of information provided to the agency regarding their current whereabouts, suggest a predetermined nature behind the Director General's statements.

The third point is that Rafael Grossi visited Iran last month and negotiated with Iranian officials on how to cooperate with the agency. Upon his return from Tehran, he stated that both sides have reached a common understanding and Iran has expressed readiness to work on specific actions. He also mentioned that there are three categories of issues: inspections, remaining issues, and voluntary actions that Iran can take. Despite this, the reintroduction of political allegations against the country's peaceful nuclear program and mentioning the fact that outstanding remedial issues have not been resolved, citing that Iran has not provided valid technical explanations to the agency regarding the presence of uranium particles of human origin in Varameen and Turqzabad, nor informed the agency about their current locations, mostly indicate the scripted nature of these statements by the Agency's Director General.

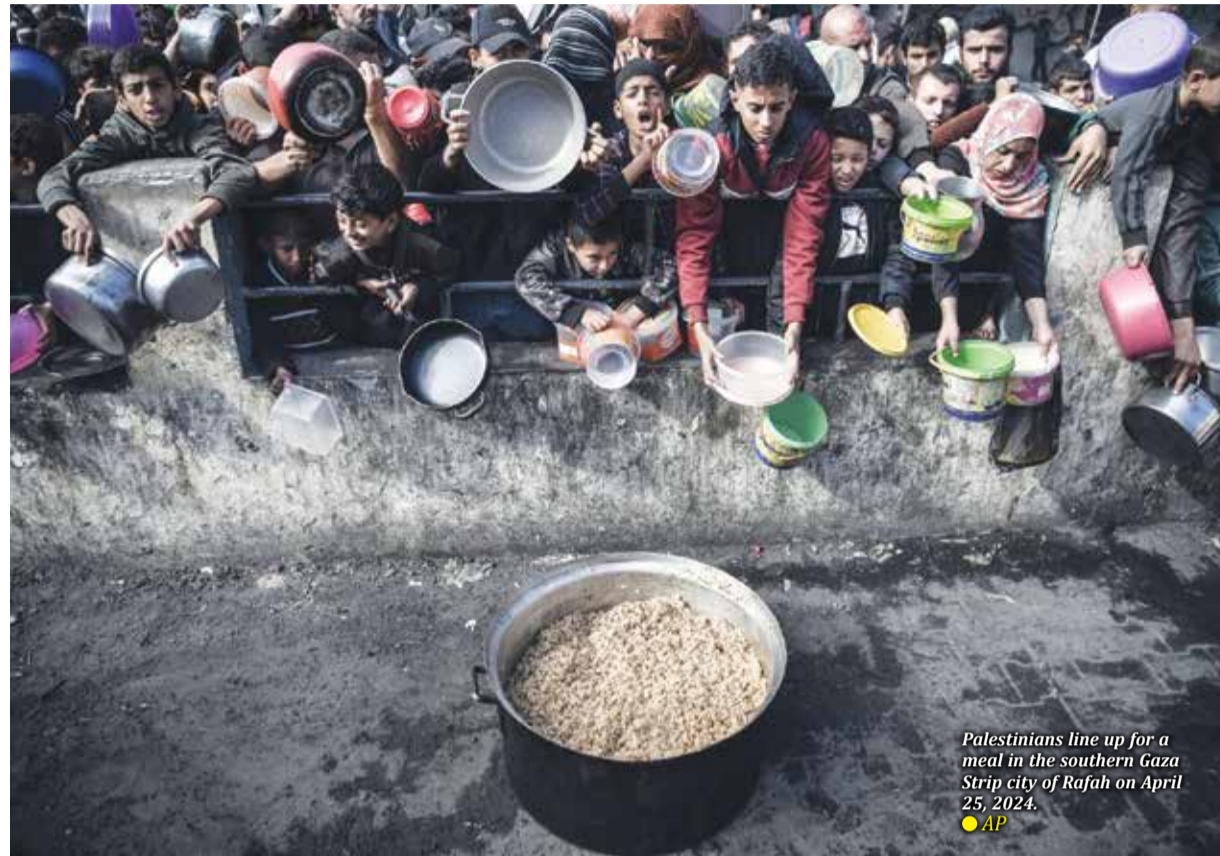
The allegations regarding Iran's nuclear activities have their roots in forged documents from the Zionist regime, which have been provided to the media and the officials of the agency to attribute Iran's nuclear program to security-related issues. During the two-day visit of Grossi to Tehran on February 2023, Iran, while rejecting the allegations and emphasizing that countries' commitments in the non-proliferation area are not unlimited, voluntarily engaged in truth-testing activities and increased monitoring by inspectors of the agency within the framework of the Parliament's strategic law. Subsequent expert-level meetings were held and several technical issues between Iran and the agency were resolved through the interactions.

The fourth point is that the ambiguous situation in the Biden camp at the threshold of the US presidential election and the volatile conditions in the Middle East, fueled by Israeli provocations, have exhausted all of the US' foreign policy and military capacities in the region, creating a fragile situation for the Western side. Iran's influence in regional developments and the deadlock faced by the Zionist regime have generated such contrasting and hostile behaviors towards the Western supporters of the regime.

The final point is that institutions and laws in Iran are highly important for maintaining internal stability and effectiveness in foreign policy. These institutions and laws provide a framework that limits power and ensures the continuity and long-term success of the government's foreign policy regardless of changes in the shifting of officials. This principle has significantly helped the Islamic Republic to withstand shocks such as the passing of the head of state and foreign minister. A government whose foreign policy depends on the stability of institutions is more flexible towards individuals. Because the outlines of foreign policy derive from the interests of these institutions, primarily based on the government's interests. Western analysts have concluded that after the death of Raisi and Amir-Abdollahian, there will not be a significant change in Iran's foreign policy.

This indicates that the current direction of Iran's foreign policy is shaped by the interest-based pragmatism of the government, which will not be disrupted by provocative behaviors of the Western side, such as the recent resolution by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

'Weapon of war': Israeli-imposed famine chipping away at Palestinian lives



Palestinians line up for a meal in the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah on April 25, 2024.
● AP

PERSPECTIVE

With Israel's incessant air-strikes on the Gaza Strip showing no sign of abating after a dismal eight months, the occupying regime's crippling siege on the besieged territory is taking a heavy toll on Palestinians by pushing the enclave to the brink of a full-blown famine.

The imposition of a tightened blockade on the ingress of basic essentials into the Gaza Strip, destruction of food infrastructure, such as bakeries, mills, and food stores as well as a widespread scarcity of medicines, pharmaceuticals and

life-saving supplies has led to the starvation of more than half a million people and a broader humanitarian crisis in the war-ravaged area.

Palestine's official news agency Wafa reported on Saturday that a 13-year-old Palestinian had lost his life due to starvation in the central Gaza Strip following the Israeli closure of the Rafah border crossing to international humanitarian aid.

The teenager, identified as Abdul Qader al-Sarhi, succumbed to death in al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah. Local medical sources were cited by Wafa as saying that

the death toll from malnutrition and dehydration has risen to 37 in the Gaza Strip as Israel presses ahead with its brutal aggression on the southern city of Rafah.

"The health situation in the Gaza Strip has gone from bad to worse, with the [Israeli] military offensive expanding in the city of Rafah and all its hospitals being out of service," the sources said. "The announced toll reflects only what reaches hospitals while dozens are dying silently as a result of famine, without being able to reach hospitals."

Fayez Abu Ataya, a seven-month-old Palestinian infant, also starved to death

on Thursday in central Gaza due to the lack of milk and medicine as a result of Israel's strict blockade.

Resembling a bare skeleton, Fayez was filmed succumbing to starvation and dying in his father's arms at the same hospital in Deir al-Balah.

During a press conference in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Wednesday, Palestinian NGOs and professional unions stated that the Gaza Strip had turned into a "famine-stricken zone."

Seventy international rights organizations had earlier called on relevant authorities and global institutions in a joint statement to for-

mally recognize a famine in the besieged Palestinian territory.

The Geneva-based Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor and the Cairo-headquartered Arab Organization for Human Rights were among the rights bodies, which made the call amid alarming reports of widespread famine in the territory.

The rights organizations said in their joint statement that food insecurity was escalating within the Gaza Strip, underscoring Israel's use of starvation tactics as a "weapon of war" against the Palestinian people.

They called on Israel to act immediately to implement the precautionary measures announced by the International Court of Justice regarding the opening of the Rafah crossing to provide basic services and much-needed humanitarian aid for the people of in the Gaza Strip, especially in its northern region, which is grappling with severe shortages.

Even the aid reaching the southern region of the enclave has been insufficient, particularly with the displacement of over 1.3 million people from northern Gaza to the south, notably to Rafah, as result of the occupation's months-long onslaught.

Israel's barbaric bombardment campaign against the Gaza Strip, which has since October last year targeted hospitals, residences and houses of worship, has so far left at least 36,379 Palestinians dead, most of them women and children, and 82,407 others injured.

Iran makes jet engine blades, overhauls dozens of airliners

An Iranian knowledge-based company has acquired the technical know-how to manufacture jet engine turbine blades, allowing for 28 McDonnell Douglas passenger planes to return to service after being grounded because of the sanctions.

Speaking to Tasnim, the CEO of the knowledge-based company, a subsidiary of the Iran Power Plant Projects Management Company (MAPNA) Group, said local scientists have succeeded in manufacturing high-tech jet engine blades, a main component that makes up the turbine section of an aircraft engine. Mani Rezvani said the foreign sanctions have impeded domestic airlines' access to jet engine blades, which are sold at exorbitant prices, resulting in 28 out of the 40 McDonnell Douglas passenger planes in Iran being grounded.

He noted that the Iranian experts manufactured a prototype of the JT8D engine blades via reverse engineering two months

ago, saying the homegrown product is expected to get approval from the Civil Aviation Organization of Iran.

The first JT8D engine of a Boeing MD passenger plane equipped with Iranian engine blades will be switched on by June 20, Rezvani said, adding that the product will be mass produced afterwards and used in other engines after permission

from the authorized organizations.

The homegrown jet engine blades cost the manufacturer around \$8,000, while the foreign products have a price tag of \$22,000, he said.

He also unveiled long-term plans for the export of the Iranian jet engine blades to Russia and the Caucasus nations.

€1b credit line helps expand Iran-Russia trade

The chief executive of the Export Guarantee Fund of Iran (EGFI) said a €1 billion credit line for Iran was launched in 2022 and activated last year (ended March 19, 2024).

Amir Borhani said that using the services of the fund in the Russian market reached more than €30 million. Of €1 billion credit line, €13 million has been used in the past month, he stated.

He also pointed out that the volume of trade with Russia will be expanded in the current year (started March 20, 2024), Mehr news agency reported.



Vacancy Notice

The Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in I.R.Iran, intends to recruit a Logistics and Operations Assistant (FTA) at GS5 level for its office in Tehran, Iran.

Details of the Advertised vacancy can be found on UNFPA website on the following link:
<https://iran.unfpa.org>

Please apply online by 19 June 2024, 12:00 PM Tehran Time.
 This vacancy is open only for Iranian Nationals.

Important Note:

- ▶ There is no application, processing or other fees at any stage of the application process
- ▶ UNFPA does not solicit or screen for information in respect of HIV/AIDS or disabilities and does not discriminate on the basis of HIV/AIDS status or disabilities
- ▶ Women and people with disabilities are highly encouraged to apply.

Visit Bastam to take a journey through history and beauty

Iranica Desk

The Bayazid Bastami Complex stands out as a prominent and revered tourist destination in Bastam, Semnan Province. As you approach the main square of Bastam, the striking turquoise dome of this renowned mystic complex commands attention, offering a glimpse into the city's rich history and spiritual significance.

Comprising a collection of tombs, a *khanqah* (monastery), a portico, a brick minaret, mosques, the shrine of Imamzadeh Mohammad, Ghazan Khan's Dome, and other ancient structures, the Bayazid Bastami Complex showcases various architectural styles and historical periods, each with its own unique story to tell.

Upon entering the complex, visitors are transported back in time, enveloped in a serene ambiance enhanced by the melodic songs of birds, the vibrant blue sky, verdant trees, and intricate tile work adorning the

surroundings. This idyllic setting offers a panoramic view that instills a sense of calm and tranquility in all who visit, inviting contemplation and reflection amidst the beauty of the past.

The tomb of Bayazid Bastami is characterized by its simplicity and lack of ostentatious decorations, reflecting the humble lifestyle typically associated with mystics. This unadorned and unfinished structure serves as a poignant reminder of the mystic's ascetic way of life, exemplifying the modesty and spiritual depth often attributed to such individuals. Notably, the tomb features an iron window, adding to its understated yet meaningful design.

Beneath the monument's dome lies the tomb of Bayazid Bastami, marked by a marble gravestone adorned with religious inscriptions, symbolizing the reverence and spiritual significance attributed to the mystic.

Within the Bayazid Bastami Complex, the Shahrokhi School holds a place of historical importance. This two-story building, comprising 28 rooms, a mosque, and an ivan, stands as a testament to the Timurid era's architectural legacy.

yet meaningful design.



● MEHR

Shahrokhi School

Originally positioned in the complex's eastern section, the Shahrokhi School has a rich history as an educational institution and is named after its founder, Shahrokh Timuri. Today, the school continues to serve as a religious seminary, preserving its heritage and contributing to the spiritual and educational fabric of the community.

Kashaneh Tower

The Kashaneh Tower is a magnificent tall tower situated in the southern part of the city, near the Jaame Mosque. The architecture of the tower displays a unique beauty and grandeur, reminiscent of observatories, characterized by its multi-faceted design and adorned with exquisite plasterwork and brickwork. Standing at a height of nearly twenty meters, the history of this tower dates back to 1300 CE, as indicated by the inscription at its entrance.

Residents of Bastam believe that this tower was originally a Zoroastrian fire temple before Islam and was later transformed into a watchtower. Others suggest that the original name of this structure was Ghazaneh and it was associated with the legacy of Ghazan Khan Mongol, eventually evolving over time to be known as Kashaneh.

Jaame Mosque of Bastam

The Jaame Mosque of Bastam stands out as one of the most beautiful mosques in the history of Iran, a significant landmark in Semnan Province. Situated near the Kashaneh Tower in Bastam and in close proximity to the Bayazid Bastami complex, this mosque showcases intricate brickwork and delicate plasterwork that garnered immense admiration during its era, solidifying its status as an architectural masterpiece.

Arisman, a prehistoric industrial hub on Iranian Plateau

The Iranian Plateau is surrounded by two mountain ranges, the Zagros and the Alborz. These high rising mountain chains form wide highlands on their inner side and in the centre there is the big desert of Dasht-e Kavir.

At the foot of the mountains, where the highlands start, there are numerous springs supplying a narrow strip of fertile ground. Thus today there is a green band of irrigated fields and gardens around the desert, often only a few kilometers wide. This zone of transition from the mountain range to the highlands presented itself as a preferred settlement area for the people after the beginning of the 7th millennium BCE. Today there is a circle of prehistoric settlements around the desert.

One of these places is the prehistoric metalworking settlement of Arisman. It is located at the southern rim of the desert, at the northern foothills of the Karkas Mountains, 960m above sea level.

The closest known prehistoric

site is Tappeh Sialk, 60km to the northwest in the municipal area of Kashan. As we know from surveys in the surrounding area, Arisman is the biggest but by far not the only metalworking place in this region.

In the area of the prehistoric settlement of Arisman, on more than one square kilometers, there are artefacts on the surface, like pottery fragments, stone tools, and copper slags from the 4th to the early 3rd millennium BCE. But a clearly indicated settlement mound, as it is typical for other places in the Middle East, is not to be seen. The concentration of copper slags, which at three places are piled up to real heaps of more than 25m in diameter, is especially conspicuous.

They show that in the antiquity Arisman must have played an important role as a producer of copper. But how old the copper industry at Arisman really is, became clear only in 1997 when a piece of charcoal from one of the three slag heaps showed to be from the early 3rd millenni-

um BCE. This encouraged the archaeological investigations which were started in the year 2000.

Since then there have been three excavation-campaigns at Arisman and a survey in the hinterland of the prehistoric settlement, and a picture of a complex prehistoric industrial settlement starts taking shape which intensively contributed to build a network of far distance trade in the 4th millennium BCE. In contrast to many known archaeological sites in Iran, the prehistoric settlement of Arisman extends horizontally instead of vertically. Obviously this horizontal extension is the result of moving the settlement continuously, while the layer containing building structures reaches a maximum of 1.60m.

In the mid of the 4th millennium BCE a single, one room residential house with clay walls was erected in area B. This house is the oldest archaeological finding recorded for the time being. In the interior of the building there is a hearth at the short side, next

to it there were two cooking pots in situ. These are handmade, and the underside of the bottom of the pots is structured by finger imprints, obviously to make the surface bigger and thus reach better absorption of the heat.

After this house had been abandoned, craftsmen's quarters were established in this area. Big kilns were erected, five of which could be investigated in the excavation area. These kilns are of three different types. Obviously in these kilns big amounts of pottery were produced. A layer of rubble, being almost one meter thick, is around the kilns. It contained thousands of pottery fragments, pieces from the walls of the kilns, and - surprisingly - numerous wastes from manufacturing copper and silver, probably from craft shops which must have been nearby. After the pottery quarters had been abandoned, this area was only used from time to time. Still rubble was dumped, and there is also a burial which was dug into the layer of rubble in later times.



● Arisman



● Arisman

From division to unity

President's arts policy builds bridges

PERSPECTIVE

When president Raisi's government got to work, one of the most pressing concerns for some Iranians was the potential closure of the culture and art arena and the subsequent construction of metaphorical walls between various groups of individuals. However, the issue of culture and art was addressed with great consideration. Throughout the tenure of the previous government, led by the late president Ebrahim Raisi, there were numerous achievements that demonstrated a renewed emphasis on culture and art, an area of concern that had perhaps previously been largely neglected. During his tenure, supporting artists, promoting Iranian art, and elevating the quality of artistic expression were identified as key priorities, and a series of comprehensive measures were implemented to ensure their realization.

Governing fields of art, cinema, theater, and music were fraught with an intricate network of challenges throughout the past three years when the previous government was in office. Nevertheless, upon reflection, it becomes clear that the efforts at the management of these cultural and artistic realms can be commended as the preservation of the principles of Iran's Islamic Revolution remained a cornerstone of such ef-

forts. This attention to the principles resulted in a thriving cultural landscape that can be deemed admirable despite facing the most stringent cultural boycott project ever orchestrated by hostile entities.

For all the concerted efforts of enemy forces and their pawns within the country to promote an all-encompassing boycott of cultural and artistic events, the previous government was able

to triumphantly host the Fajr film and theater festivals, as well as facilitate the organization of numerous concerts in Tehran and other provinces, coupled with film screenings. Under these challenging conditions, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance adopted a management strategy aimed at preventing societal polarization and division, thereby achieving its objective of preserving the rich cultural heritage of the nation.



The late president Ebrahim Raisi (2nd-R) and his minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili (C) stand alongside veteran actors of Iran in a meeting on March 15, 2024. president.ir

Music rhythm was fast

A noteworthy accomplishment of president Raisi's government was attaining a balanced frequency of monthly concerts across the nation. Regardless of genre, which encompassed pop, traditional, and regional music, these concerts facilitated the establishment of cultural equity throughout the country. People living in provinces outside the capital were afforded the opportunity to attend live performances by their favorite singers, leveling the playing field in terms of accessibility. This recalibration translated into an average of 500 monthly concerts nationwide, drawing an audience of approximately one million people based on the average capacity of the performance venues.

From several perspectives, the aforementioned concert frequency can be considered a significant development: Firstly, the number of monthly concerts has never reached

this level in recent years, demonstrating an unprecedented level of cultural activity. Secondly, never before in recent times have all the provinces of the country enjoyed equal access to diverse musical performances. Finally, the enthusiasm for concerts in the past never translated into such a substantial monthly audience, highlighting an overall growth in cultural engagement.

Contrary to the forebodings of some at the onset of president Raisi's tenure, his administration did not usher in an era of cultural isolationism and censorship, as many had feared. Rather, his three-year record reveals a commitment to elevating the significance of culture and art in both rhetoric and action. To that end, Raisi and his administration actively encouraged the stewards of these fields to actualize planned initiatives, resulting in a more vibrant and accessible cultural landscape.

Breaking 23-year-old record

A closer inspection of the surge in the production and sales of cinematic works over the past two to three years proves the aptitude of Raisi's government for navigating a steady course away from excitement, ultimately surpassing several historical records that had stood for several years prior. This uptick in viewership and sales had ripple effects, elevating the production and filmmaking processes throughout the country, and boosting the economic livelihood of nearly 17,000 who depend on the cinematic industry. The government's management of the cinema was able to usher in record-breaking sales without crossing boundaries. The pinnacle of this record-breaking movie sales streak was in the Iranian calendar year 1402 (ended March 19, 2024). Deemed a pivotal marker in the national film industry, the number of moviegoers in 1402 surpassed the previous 23 years, shattering multiple records. Riding on this wave, Iranian cinema sales soared to 1,216 billion Tomans (over \$20 million).

In conjunction with building confidence with the specialized community of artists, particularly in the realm of cinema, Raisi's government recognized the vital importance of earning the support of the nation. The diverse range of artists whose works were featured at various festivals in the past three years is indicative of the government's ability to strike a healthy balance between these

two key constituencies. One significant example that epitomized this approach was the meeting held on March 15, 2024, in which the deceased president met with artists from a variety of fields including poetry, cinema, calligraphy, music, and literature. In his speech, he regarded cultural capability as a pivotal element of national power, akin to defense and economic capabilities. He stressed the importance of giving the country's art and culture scene the attention it deserves. What provides further evidence of this confidence of the art body with president Raisi and his government are the messages and interviews of artists and actors published on the occasion of the president's tragic accident.

For example, Poursan Derakhshandeh, a renowned screenwriter and director, commented, "I was touched by their martyrdom. What happened is not good at all. This event will have many (negative) psychological effects on people. I am sorry and affected by this tragedy; in the past years, there have been bitter incidents in which we have lost some officials. However, this bitter incident left us in awe."

Ebrahim Hatamikia, another prominent cinema director, added his own voice to the collective outpouring of grief, writing: "On the last day of Ordibehesht (the second Iranian calendar month), when the news of the martyrdom of Ayatollah Raisi and his accompanying team was published, our

hearts trembled and we were stunned. Today, we saw one of the most bitter events in the history of this land and we whispered to ourselves, 'Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi rajii'un' (meaning 'Indeed, we belong to Allah, and indeed, to Him we return.'). I offer my condolences for this heartbreaking, bitter, and terrible incident. It is hoped that this critical phase will pass with peace and unity in line with the interests and expediency of dear Iran, away from political and factional differences."

Alirum Nouraei, a film and television actor, also wrote: "I offer my condolences to the noble people of Iran for the martyrdom of Ayatollah Raisi and their honorable companions, and I pray for the survivors' patience and health from the one Allah."

Alongside the aforementioned points, the previous government's accomplishments in the realm of art include the establishment of 231 movie theaters across various provinces of the country. Moreover, the simultaneous strengthening of the private sector while preserving governmental capacities in the film industry can be considered another hallmark of managerial performance during this period. The government's commitment to supporting the private sector was evident in the impressive sales figures of private sector films and their substantial presence in film festivals.



Under president Raisi, people living in provinces outside the capital were afforded the opportunity to attend live performances by their favorite singers, leveling the playing field in terms of accessibility. This recalibration translated into an average of 500 monthly concerts nationwide, drawing an audience of approximately one million people.



On the third day of the 42nd edition of the Fajr International Film Festival, a crowd of people gathers outside a film theatre at Milad Tower in Tehran, Iran, on February 3, 2024. IRNA

Late president's literary initiatives

PERSPECTIVE The deceased Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi was always trying to improve the conditions of the literary figures in the country and would turn up at ceremonies related to literature. One of the characteristics of the president was his attention to cultural events and the issues and troubles of authors, poets, and others who make a living from writing in all its forms. In the three years he held the presidency, he

turned up at the Book of the Year Award ceremony each year. In early March 2022, when health guidelines linked to the COVID-19 epidemic were still being strictly followed across the country, the closing ceremony of the 39th edition of the Book of the Year Award and the 29th Iran's Book of the Year Award was held simultaneously with the presence of president Raisi, Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili, and other cultural

caretakers of the country. At the ceremony, the president pointed out that books play a very key role in political and economic analyses and said: "For this reason, paying attention to books and reading books is of great importance in the Islamic Republic." He went on to add that books and book reading are of huge significance in Iran. Thanks to such an approach, we're seeing more and more growth and success from educated Iranians in society and academic circles.

Best tool for understanding characters

Referring to the role of the book as a bridge between civilizations, president Raisi maintained in that ceremony: "The book is the best tool for understanding characters. If it were not for the works of Saadi, Hafez, and Avicenna, it would be very hard and even impossible to pin them down. Getting to know a culture and civilization goes hand in hand with getting to know the books, and through books and cultural works, we can share our culture with other countries."

On that day, the president also paid attention to the hardships of the livelihood of Iranian literary figures. "These days, many people who write well are living in difficult conditions. They should be supported."

Duty of protecting culture

The following year, at the 40th Book of the Year Award ceremony, the president touched on the protection of culture as the duty of intellectuals and stressed: "Books can keep a culture safe. It's up to intellectuals to safeguard this function and tradition. Books are the works that can protect a society's culture. You should always keep an eye on books. They're the best way to preserve the history, culture, and knowledge of the nation. Books give us a platform to pass on thoughts and science."

Pointing out the actions of his government in this regard, he explained: "One of the serious plans of this government is to focus on cultural issues. Dealing with economic and livelihood matters shouldn't take our eye off the ball when it comes to books and culture. That includes honoring authors and writers who were active in the book world. We should always double down on these efforts. Books are our way to know the great. The government should pave the way for the emergence of better writers in the book publishing field."



During an unannounced visit to the Tehran International Book Fair, the late Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi (C) talks with a publisher of the Holy Qur'an on May 21, 2022. president.ir

Elites of society

Two years later, president Raisi took part in the 41st edition of the Book of the Year Award ceremony on March 8, 2024, as well. The late president stated there that the perfect human being was the noble prophet of Islam, adding that through books and by looking at the life of the perfect human being and his precious parents, "we can see a role model to build our life upon". Emphasizing that responsible writing should be promoted, he noted: "We shouldn't cash in on books, writing, and the transmission of knowledge. Of course, everyone has bills to pay, but books and the sharing of science, knowledge, and culture should be put on a pedestal." The late president stated that some jobs in society always rely

on the treasury or handouts and that the life of someone struggling in this regard should be provided for somehow. "But we shouldn't bring the book down to the level of a money-making medium," he said. "There might be some extra income involved, but that's not the point. Writing is one of those jobs that, although it's considered work, shouldn't be about making money." Addressing the writers present at the meeting, he highlighted: "You are the elites of society and have your own responsibilities. We expect elites to safeguard society from cultural invasion and protect it against deviations. An intellectual isn't someone who leads people towards Western or Eastern thoughts."

Expansion of public libraries

His attention to cultural issues wasn't just a one-time thing at the Book of the Year Award. On November 15, 2022, president Raisi flagged the problem of books and book reading as one of the key indicators of every society's culture. He asked the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to make expanding public libraries and easy access to books a priority. Following the late president's attendance at a ceremony for commemorating the National Day of Books, Reading, and Librarians in November 2022, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance penned a letter to the president, suggesting ways to make books more accessible and tackle the livelihood challenges faced by

librarians with the help of the country's institution for public libraries. Per the president's order on November 28, 2023, relevant institutions, including Iran's Planning and Budget Organization, were tapped to cooperate in solving librarians' problems and making books more accessible. The organization was also tasked with allocating the necessary credit budget to temporarily ease librarians' livelihood challenges within the rules. Another part of the order focused on central libraries in the provinces; the Planning and Budget Organization was to allocate the required credits to complete the construction of these central libraries.

Communicating via Book fair

During different periods, both when he was serving as the head of the judiciary and later as president, he attended the Tehran International Book Fair. He recently spoke about the importance of holding the Tehran International Book Fair and advancing cultural justice. During his multi-hour visit to the book fair, he chatted with publishers and publishing managers about issues and challenges in the publishing industry and the book market. According to him, the book fair is more than just a cultural event. It's a platform for establishing meaningful and effective commu-

nication between authors, publishers, and book readers, and a place where ideas are exchanged. He attributed the thriving book publishing and distribution sector to the blessings of Iran's Islamic Revolution. Before the Revolution, the Tehran Book Fair was limited to a couple of tents pitched next to the University of Tehran. Now, with the backing and encouragement of the leader, an exhibition of this magnitude and quality is held for books, fueling everyone's enthusiasm and interest in reading.

Self-sufficiency in paper production

Another key point in the president's was the attention he paid to self-sufficiency in paper production. Right from the start of the previous government's term, Raisi pushed for self-sufficiency in paper production by rallying various forces and holding regular meetings with paper producers. He also tasked his first deputy with following up on this matter. With Raisi at the helm of the government, the Ministry of Education was tasked with using domestic production for textbook papers. This move kept \$50 million of foreign currency within the country. As a result, about 1,241 people found employment in Mazandaran's wood and paper industry factory.

Raisi's gov't celebrates cultural renaissance

Record-breaking achievements in performing arts, music

PERSPECTIVE The previous government wrapped up with the untimely, tragic death of president Ebrahim Raisi, but over his three-year tenure, a noticeable growth kicked off in the fields of art and cultural activities.

Three years ago, there were 580 movie theaters up and running in the country. Raisi's government turned things around by adding another 300 cinemas to the mix. By the end of the Iranian calendar year 1402 (ended March 19, 2024), the number of movie theaters in the country had ramped up to 846. Besides showing a growth rate of over 48% for constructing theatres compared to the previous government, this figure means that the per capita cinema for Iranians has improved to one theater per 104,000 people. When president Raisi took the wheel, the latter figure stood at one theater per 580,000 people.

Breaking box office records

In the first year of Raisi's government (ended August 3, 2022), film sales racked up a whopping 415 billion Tomans (nearly \$9 million) with an audience of 13 million people tuning in. The following year, cinema sales skyrocketed to over 1,240 billion Tomans (over \$20.7 million). Keeping up the momentum, Iranian cinema sales clocked in at over 146 billion Tomans (over \$2.29 million) in the first month of the Iranian calendar year 1403 (ended April 19, 2024).

Cinematic productions

Under President Raisi's government, over 180 movie scripts have been greenlit for production. These films showcase a diverse range of genres and talents, with both renowned veterans and up-and-coming filmmakers behind the camera.

Concerts held

Over the last three years, a grand total of 7,000 music concerts have been played in venues in the capital and various cities across the country. The number of concerts in 1401 (ended March 20, 2023) hit 3,913, and the following year, the tally cranked up to 4,970.

Theatrical productions

By July 2022 last year, the count of theatrical productions neared 8,000, and this number ramped up in the months to March that marked the end of the calendar year. Compared to the year before, drama production and performances have shot up by over 30%.



The late Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi (C) is interviewed while touring Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) facilities for filming TV programs. IRNA



Volleyball Nations League:

Iran will have to 'take lessons' from Week 1 setback, Ebadipour says

Sports Desk

Iranian captain Milad Ebadipour says his young teammates will have to "take lessons" from their mistakes in Week 1 of the Volleyball Nations League. Mauricio Motta Paes's side suffered 3-1 defeats against Serbia and Cuba either side of a straight-set loss to reigning world champion Italy before signing off in the first week of action with a five-set setback against Argentina in Rio de Janeiro. The result left Iran bottom of the 16-team table, with the Asian powerhouse drifting further away from an Olympic berth through the FIVB Men's Ranking by the end of the preliminary round.

The Iranian squad is in Fukuoka, Japan, for Week 2 of the annual event – starting with a game against the formidable host on Tuesday. "I believe we did enough to claim at least two victories in week one. They were decisive matches for us and we could have closed the gap on the Olympic berth. Unfortunately, that did not happen but we have to move on," said the Iranian outside-hitter, who tops the league's best-receivers list with 29 successful attempts. "We have eight crucial games ahead of us and could still finish on a high," added Ebadipour. "I can only say that I was pretty satisfied with the way each and every player pre-

formed in the first week as they gave it their all and that's the important thing for the team. "Mistakes are part of this game but we can't afford to repeat the schoolboy errors that cost us in the first four matches and our younger players will have to take lessons from those mistakes for the rest of the way. Those tiny errors can decide the final outcome of a game when you play the big national teams," said Ebadipour. When asked about the first match in Week 2 against Japan, which beat Iran in the previous two meetings between the two Asian foes, Ebadipour said: "It is definitely going to be a tough contest against the Japanese home crowd. Japan

has made huge progress over the past few years and came out on top against some of the best teams in the world. "Our team also showed signs of improvement in the final two games in the first week. I believe more important the result for us will be to avoid making costly errors." Brazil will come Iran's way on Thursday with the games against Bulgaria and VNL debutant Turkey also on the fixtures list for Paes's side. Ebadipour hopes the Iranian players will use the experience of playing Brazil in three friendlies before Week 1 to their advantage when facing the South American heavyweight in Fukuoka, though it will still be a gigantic task against the

"most decorated team in the world." "We're talking about Brazil here – a winner of numerous Olympic golds and silvers. They can change their game-plan for each rally throughout the game. It will be a grueling test for us but I'm confident our team will come up with a better performance than the previous outings," Ebadipour said. Many believe the games against Bulgaria and Turkey, which won a single game between them in Week 1, will be easy contests for Iran, but Ebadipour has other ideas. "Nothing is predictable in sports. We still have to be on our best form and put in all our efforts to secure victories against those opponents."

West Asian Athletics Championships: Girls headline Iran's medal-laden run in Basra

Sports Desk

Iranian girls bagged six medals on Day 3 of the West Asian Athletics Championships in Basra, Iraq. Parisa Arab clocked a new national record of 16:37.80 minutes to walk away with the ultimate prize in the 5,000m final – a second gold for the Iranian girl after her 10,000m triumph on Day 1. Nazanin Fatemeh Eidian led Iran's one-two in the women's 400m hurdles final with 1:00.99 minutes, followed by Shahla Mahmoudi, who crossed the line in 1:01.51 minutes. This was the latest success for Iranian prodigy Eidian – also the women's 400m champion in Basra – in a glorious 2024 campaign, following double silvers in February's Asian Indoor Championships in Theran and the 400m hurdles gold in the Asian under-20 event in April. In the field contests, Mana Hosseini dominated the women's javelin throw event with a remarkable 50.57m attempt, beating Omani and Qatari contestants to the gold medal. Asal Ali-Qoli and Mahya Naeimi, meanwhile, won the women's high jump silver and bronze respectively, both registering a best attempt of 1.70m. Iranians had won eight golds and six silvers on Day 2 in the southern Iraqi city, with Fatemeh Zahra Qalenoeei (women's 5km walk), Mohammadreza

Tayyebi (men's shot put), Masoud Kamran (men's 110m hurdles), Reihaneh Mobini (women's long jump), Toktam Dastarbandan (women's 800m), Melika Norouzi (women's hammer throw), and Hadiseh Raouf (women's 300m hurdles) all finishing on the top podium in their respective disciplines. The first day of the competitions had seen Hamidreza Zouravand (men's 10km walk), Mahsa Mirza Tabibi (women's pole vault), and Elham Hashemi (women's shot put) come out on top across different contests as Iran won four golds and silvers apiece.



● MARZIEH SOLEIMANI/IRNA

Protester chains himself to goalposts at Scotland v Israel match



● SNS

BBC – A protester chained himself to the goalposts before Scotland's Women's Euro 2025 qualifier against Israel at Glasgow's Hampden Park. The match, played behind closed doors, was delayed after the man used a heavy duty lock to secure himself to the posts in protest at Israel's military operation in Gaza. The game eventually kicked off 45 minutes later than planned, with Scotland running out 4-1 winners. Several hundred people, some carrying small coffins and Palestinian flags, had gathered outside the doors of the main stand. The protester who gained entry to the national stadium was earlier wearing a hi-vis vest, so he may have been mistaken for a steward. He was cut free from the posts and led from the pitch by police. Players were seen discussing a second warm-up and whether it was safe to return to the pitch shortly before the match got under way. The match kicked off to the sound of demonstrators outside booing, blowing whistles and setting off fireworks. A handful of counter-protesters also demonstrat-

ed before the group B2 game. Last week, the SFA said it had been left with "no option" but to bar supporters from attending "following extensive security consultations with all key parties". Public demonstrations against Israel's military operation in Gaza have been happening regularly across the UK. One group – the Gaza Genocide Emergency Committee – arranged a protest before the game at Hampden and called for the matches to be cancelled. Police Scotland said: "Appropriate policing plans are in place to maintain public safety and minimise any disruption to the community." Israel was banned from hosting any football matches by UEFA for security reasons in the aftermath of the 7 October attack by Hamas and the Israeli government's military response. Instead, the Israeli national side and its club teams have played fixtures at neutral venues in Hungary. Tuesday's return game between Scotland and Israel in Budapest will also be played behind closed doors.

Iran int'l confab on Gaza

Israel falls back on genocide to survive



Seyyed Hassan Khomeini, the grandson of the late founder of Islamic Republic in Iran Ayatollah Rouhollah Khomeini (r), shakes hands with a foreign rabbi during an international conference on Gaza in Tehran, Iran, on June 1, 2024. ● AHMAD MOEINI JAM/IRNA

International Desk

Iran's capital hosted an international conference dubbed "Gaza; the Oppressed but Resilient", to discuss nearly eight months of Israel's genocidal war on the Gaza Strip. Many political and international figures participated in the Saturday's conference in Tehran. Addressing the event, Iran's acting Foreign Minister Ali Baqeri Kani described Hamas's Opera-

tion Al-Aqsa Storm in the occupied territories in October as a turning point in the history of Palestine and the "illegitimate regime of Israel". Baqeri Kani said that the Israeli regime is on decline every day and its only tool for survival is killing and genocide. Baqeri Kani said that despite all the efforts made by its allies in the world, the regime did not manage to rally international support for its genocidal war

in Gaza. He said that the "illegitimate regime" has now turned into a hated regime in the world. The Iranian top diplomat noted that the Hamas's operation also led to further integration and synergy among the region's resistance movements. Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf also addressed the international conference. He highlighted Israel's isola-

tion in the world in the wake of its aggression in Gaza and the growing support for Palestine. Iran's top parliamentarian criticized Israel's onslaught on Gaza, which has claimed the lives of more than 36,000 Palestinians in nearly eight months, saying that its lack of humanity and wisdom will ultimately lead to its decline. Lebanon's Minister of Culture Muhammad Wissam Al-Mur-tada also said today, the Pales-

tinian fighters in the entire Palestinian land in Gaza and Rafah are inflicting heavy blows on the regime's army. He said that the Islamic countries should put aside the differences and continue to fight against the "fake regime" in order to liberate the Palestinians lands. Chairman of Pakistan's Parliament Foreign Policy Committee Mushahid Hussain said that the Operation Al-Aqsa Storm is the most important development in the region after the Iranian revolution, noting that the operation debunked "Israel's invincibility myth". Israel launched its onslaught against the Gaza Strip, targeting hospitals, residences, and houses of worship after Palestinian fighters launched the surprise attack against the regime on October 7. Nearly 36,300 Palestinians have been killed, most of them women and children. Meanwhile, more than 1.7 million people have been internally displaced during the war as well.

Iran reserves right to respond to EU sanctions

Iran strongly condemned new EU sanctions against some of the country's officials and entities, stressing that the Islamic Republic reserves the right to respond. The EU on Friday levied fresh sanctions on a number of Iranian individuals and entities, accusing them of transferring drones and missiles to Russia and undermining peace and security West Asia. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani on Saturday shot back, slamming the European Union's double standards in dealing with Israel's months-long crimes in the Gaza Strip. "The European Union, which has been passive and ineffective in dealing with the humanitarian disaster in Gaza and Palestine for the past months and has been criticized by Europe's public opinion as well as people all over the world, once again instead of focusing on the war crimes of the Zionist regime in Gaza and punishing and banning this criminal regime, has put on its list of sanctions some leading and influential Iranian officials and institutions in the fight against terrorism and ensuring lasting security in the region," he said. "It is regrettable that the European Union, by resorting to repeated, absurd and baseless excuses and accusations, ignoring the realities on the ground in West Asia, and continuing its failed and ineffective approach, once again resorted to the outdated and ineffective tool of sanctions against sovereign Iran and preferred the Zionist regime's and the United States' satisfaction to the interests of the European Union and nations." Kanaani underscored Iran's principled policies, especially in ensuring regional and international peace and security, and strongly criticized the EU double standards. "The Islamic Republic of Iran reserves the right to respond to this destructive approach by the European Union," he added.

The bans targeted six Iranian individuals and three entities, among whom were Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani and Major General Gholam-Ali Rashid, the commander of Iran's Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, the European External Action Service (EEAS) said Friday. The sanctions prohibit any EU citizen or company doing business with the listed individuals and organizations. Iran has vehemently denied having supplied drones or missiles, reiterating on numerous occasions that drones supplied to Russia were delivered to Moscow long before the Ukraine war started in February 2022.

Election race gaining momentum as eight more sign up

National Desk

Eight more candidates registered on the third day of formal registration for presidential race to replace the late chief executive, Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash on May 19. Former executive deputy of Iran's Leader's office Vadid Haghanian and Iranian lawmaker Masoud Pezeshkian were among the eight people who registered on Saturday. Haghanian said his candidacy was a "personal

decision" but he was "fully familiar with the issues of the country". Like other hopefuls, Haghanian will have to wait to see if his candidacy is approved by the Guardian Council. He said he had forged close ties with key officials in state institutions "during 45 years of service in the presidential administration and the office of the Leader". Candidate registration opened on Thursday and closes on Monday. Others who have announced their candida-

cy include Tehran Mayor Alireza Zakani and former lawmaker Zohreh Elahian, the first woman to enter the race. Ex-Parliament speaker Ali Larijani, former Central Bank Governor Abdolnasser Hemmati and former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili have also registered. The Guardian Council will announce the final list of candidates on June 11 after it has completed its vetting procedures. Candidates must be between the ages of

40 and 75 and have at least a master's degree, according to Iran's electoral law. The 14th presidential elections were originally slated for 2025 but were brought forward due to Raisi's tragic death on May 19. Raisi and seven members of his entou-



rage, including foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, were killed when their chopper came down on a fog-shrouded mountainside in the northwestern Iran. ● IRNA

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



First Announcement

N.I.S.O.C
NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY
AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO.: 08-38-0240007

National Iranian South Oilfields Company (NISOC) intends to purchase the following goods

| Items | Material Description | Quantity |
|-------|---|----------|
| 1 | COILED TUBING REEL STRING, QT-800, SINGLE TYPE H2S SERVICE, FITTING FIG.1502 WING LONG SIZE: 15000FT OD 1.25 IN., W.T. 0.095 IN. | 6RL |
| 2 | LONG SIZE: 22000FT OD 1.5 IN., W.T. 0.125 IN. | 6RL |

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.nisoc.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded.

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 58,783/29 EURO or 25,752,604,285 RIAL, in favor of NISOC. Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: www.nisoc.ir/material-procurement-management-tab.

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P.,
NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI, IRAN PAYMENT
TERM IS C.O.D., SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S
MATERIAL APPROVAL.

NOTE: Based on enactment notified by Nisoc's Tender committee, foreign companies must submit a Bid Bond Guarantee amounting to aforesaid (paragraph 2) Euro amount. Otherwise, their quotations will not be considered.

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management
Complex, Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran
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Songlines: Iranian music album 'Luka' named among world's top 10

Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian musician Mohsen Sharifian's album 'Luka' was named as one of the top 10 bagpipe albums globally by the renowned music magazine, Songlines, in their May 2024 issue. Songlines is a UK-based magazine that covers world music, ranging from ancient to contemporary sounds. They feature different genres, showcase the best albums worldwide, introduce talented artists, and present annual awards. Sharifian's 'Luka' was chosen alongside works by renowned artists like Irish uilleann piper Davy Spillane, a Grammy Award winner, ISNA reported. Chris Wiley, a journalist at Songlines, describes Sharifian and his album as follows: "A multi-instrumentalist and composer born in Bushehr, southern Iran, Sharifian is one of the country's foremost artists in preserving and promoting local traditional music and dance. His bagpipe takes center stage in this superb collection, where percussive rhythms and intoxicating melodies create a mesmerizing atmosphere." Songlines, founded in 1999 in the UK, specializes in world music and has become a go-to source for music enthusiasts and scholars alike. In 2013, they recognized the collaboration between Iranian kamancheh player Kayhan Kalhor and Turkish baglama player Erdal Erzincan, listing their album among the top 10 releases of that year. Released in March 2022, 'Luka' is a culmination of Sharifian's experiences leading the Lian Music Group.

At the album's unveiling, Sharifian shared the inspiration behind the name: "While exploring the soothing songs of the waves and winds as narrated by captains and sailors of the south, I discovered different melodies on the arid shores of the Persian Gulf! These were the chants of desert nomads, used to tame camels. When a camel gets into gear, it becomes intoxicated! Wilder than any sea! In the ancient port of Bushehr, camels are called 'Luka' and the camel drivers as 'jat.' Jats would lead the Lukas with songs..." "Luka," Sharifian's 19th multimedia work, features 10 carefully selected pieces from the Lian Music Group's most beloved repertoire. The album's lyrics are folk poems chosen from the rich tradition of southern Iran's poetry.

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Iran's theatrical work 'Quiet' wins three prizes in Moscow

Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian theatrical production 'Quiet,' directed by Esmael Shafiee, received three awards at the 28th International Theater Festival "Russkaya Klassika" in Moscow. The multi-national play, presented by Iran's Chayka Theater Group, received accolades for Best Director, Best Duet Performance, and an Honorary Diploma for its contribution to bridging Eastern and Russian cultures, ISNA reported. The Best Director award was presented to Shafiee, a member of the faculty at the University of Tehran. The Best Duet Performance award was given to Iranian actresses Mina Emami and Farzaneh Meydani, who delivered a great performance that left a lasting impression on the festival attendees and judges. According to the report, the play features a diverse cast, including actors from Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia. 'Quiet' previously won a special prize at the 2023 The 13th Russian Festival of Performing Arts for Children - Harlequin, showcasing its impact on audiences and critics alike. Shafiee, who conducted the actors' rehearsals online, explored new ways of creating art across borders.



Pro-Palestinian protesters occupy parts of Brooklyn Museum



Pro-Palestinian protesters took over parts of the Brooklyn Museum on Friday, hanging a banner above the main entrance, occupying much of the lobby and scuffling with police, witnesses said. The art museum in the New York City borough of Brooklyn said it closed an hour early because of the disruption, including skirmishes between police and protesters that took place inside and outside the building. Some arrests were made but a New York Police Department spokesperson said there would be no official count until after the protest concluded. A demonstration continued outside the museum hours after the initial confrontation, but the spokesperson could not say whether any protesters remained inside, Reuters reported. One of the arrests was of a man who defaced an outdoor sculpture with graffiti, a Reuters witness said. Several protesters scrawled messages on the OY/YO sculpture on the plaza outside the entrance.

"There was damage to existing and newly installed artwork on our plaza," a museum spokesperson said in an email. "Protesters entered the building, and our public safety staff were physically and verbally harassed. "Out of a concern for the building, our collections, and our staff, the decision was made to close the building an hour early," and the public was asked to vacate peacefully, the statement said. Hundreds of demonstrators were marching through Brooklyn when some of them rushed the entrance, according to the Reuters witness. Security guards prevented many from entering but some managed to get inside. A banner was hung from atop the neoclassical facade proclaiming, "Free Palestine, Divest From Genocide." A pro-Palestinian organization named Within Our Lifetime urged demonstrators to "flood Brooklyn Museum for Gaza." It said activists occupied the museum to compel it to disclose any Israel-related investments and to divest any such funding.

Pro-Palestinian protesters march, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas in Gaza, in the Brooklyn borough of New York City, US, on May 31, 2024. ● REUTERS

Demonstrations against Israel's prosecution of the war in Gaza have continued in the United States, largely on university campuses. At Columbia University in upper Manhattan, demonstrators on Friday set up an encampment on campus during an alumni reunion to show support for Palestinians. Video on social media showed campus security taking down the tents. As of Friday night, police were not involved, as they had been in taking down the camp and evicting or arresting protesters twice before. "We are aware of the encampment erected this evening and are monitoring the situation. We remain committed to hosting a successful weekend for our alumni," Columbia spokesperson Samantha Slater said in a statement.

First Iranian book award to be held in Austria next year

The first Iranian Book Award in Austria, organized by the cultural representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Vienna, is set to take place in 2025. The award aims to strengthen cultural ties between Iran and Austria and support Iranian studies in German-speaking countries. The award will recognize the best books written in German over the past 20 years, focusing on one of nine main topics: Islamic wisdom and philosophy, Shia religion, Iranian-Islamic culture, Iranian art and literature, Persian language, Iranian history, Iranian antiquities, tourist attractions of Iran, and the Islamic Revolution. According to the organizers, the award is a way to promote Iranian culture and literature in German-speaking regions and to encourage Austrian Iranologists and other scholars to continue their research and writing in this field. Authors and publishers are invited to submit their entries to the secretariat of the cultural event by September 31, 2024. The closing ceremony and announcement of the winners will take place in Vienna in February 2025.

