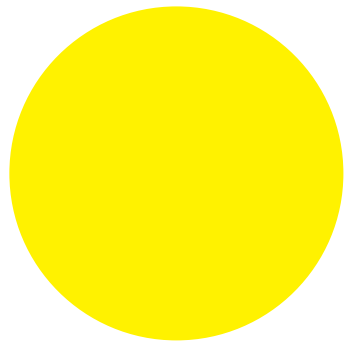


Iran, Iraq to further cooperate on climate, environmental research

8 >



# Iran Daily

Vol. 7593 • Monday, July 1, 2024 • Tir 11, 1403 • Dhu al-Hijjah 24, 1445 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages



irandaily.ir

newspaper.irandaily.ir

IranDailyWeb

# Hard currency revenues up 18.6% in three months: **CBI**

2 >

## Democracy and foreign policy in Iran



By Majid Behestani  
International relations expert

### OPINION EXCLUSIVE

On June 28, the Iranian nation took to the polls to cast their ballots in a snap presidential election following the death of the president Ebrahim Raisi, who died in an air crash in the country's northwest last month. Over 60 foreign delegations attended his funeral and memorial service in Tehran. In addition, many more heads of state and international organizations offered their condolences to Iranian officials. This indicated that, despite the economic, political, and media sanctions imposed by Western countries and Israel, Raisi's government was globally respected as a result of its positive performance.

Raisi had a close relationship and shared a similar outlook with Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on foreign policy. The question now is what impact his successor will have on the country's foreign policy.

Firstly, the main foreign policy decisions in Iran are made by the Leader and the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC). Therefore, elected governments cannot make fundamental changes. However, due to the democratic nature of the Islamic Republic, governments are not entirely powerless. While they may not be able to bring about sweeping changes, they can make significant adjustments in strategies and policies. Notably, half of the SNSC's members are representatives of the government, and the council is chaired by the elected president.

Friday's vote was not finalized, leading to a runoff between Saeed Jalili and Masoud Pezeshkian on July 5. Jalili represents the hardliners and conservatives, whereas Pezeshkian, from the Reformist camp, favors normalizing international relations.

Page 2 >

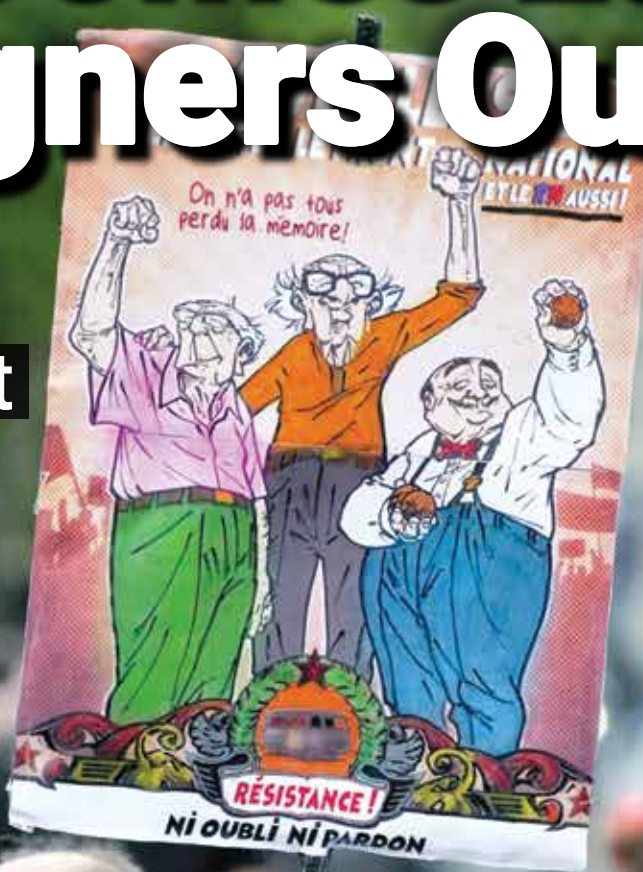
# Here Comes Europe's 'Foreigners Out'

4-5 >

## SPECIAL ISSUE

## France votes in election that could usher in far right

7 >



Varkaneh village, attractive for numerous tourists during spring and summer

3 >

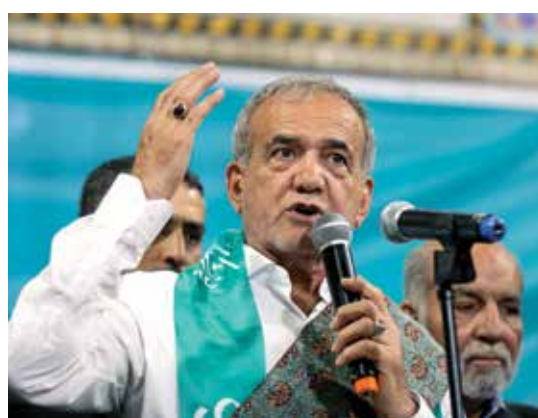


Iran GR coach Rangraz expecting 'at least two medals' in Paris

6 >

Campaigning kicks off for Friday's runoff

7 >





## NEWS IN BRIEF

## Iran stands as fourth OPEC crude exporter

Iran has overtaken Kuwait and Nigeria to be the fourth largest crude/condensate exporter of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

Based in London, Vortexa which pursues oil and gas flows across the globe, published the news and announced that Iran's crude/condensate exports accounted for 9% of OPEC's crude/condensate exports in February 2024 and again in May 2024, the highest share since August 2018, Shana reported. "Iran's crude exports averaged 1.56 mbd during January-May, around 250,000 higher than both Kuwait and Nigeria," the website said. According to Vortexa, "Despite ongoing sanctions, Iran managed to increase its crude/condensate exports to 1.7 mbd in May, the highest levels observed in more than five years." The website also announced that an increase in Iran's crude production, higher demand from China, and a net increase in the size of its dark fleet, have helped the country to increase its exports.

## Democracy and foreign ...

If we consider Raisi's approach as moderate—balancing revolutionary

ideals with logical efforts to strengthen national power—Jalili would have a more radical stance, and Pezeshkian a more passive one.

The former believes in neutralizing all-out sanctions by bolstering internal capacities and improving economic conditions through cooperation with neighboring countries and powers such as those in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS, including India, China, Russia, and Brazil.

In contrast, the latter is expected to prioritize lifting US sanctions. While Raisi's three-year efforts were focused on rebuilding Iran's ties toward the Eastern corridor, Pezeshkian's assuming of office could disrupt this process. He will look into ways to revive the 2015 nuclear deal or the JCPOA and strategies to mitigate the negative impacts of the Ukraine war on relations between Tehran and European capitals as well as the United States.

Given Iran's standing in the region and across the globe, the outcome of the upcoming runoff holds great interest for many countries and how they will adjust their behavior toward Iran remains to be seen. The July 5 vote is crucial for Russians concerning the Ukraine war, for Saudis regarding Yemen, for Israelis about the Gaza and Lebanon conflicts, and for the Chinese in terms of foreign investment. All eyes will be on July 5 to see who will be declared the winner.

# Hard currency revenues up 18.6% in three months: CBI

Figures by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) indicated that the country's hard currency income rose 18.6% in the quarter to late June compared to the same period last year.

The CBI figures published on Sunday showed that Iran's hard currency revenues had reached \$25.5 billion in the three months to June 20, IRNA reported. The figures showed that Iran's trade surplus had also soared 51.3% to \$11.2 billion in the June quarter. The CBI said it had allocated \$3.975 billion to imports of basic goods and medicine in the 101 days to June 28, adding that some \$13.442 billion had been earmarked for imports of other commodities and goods over the same period.

According to the report, a sum of \$3.256 billion was paid for the imports of agricultural products including wheat, edible oil and livestock during the said period. The CBI added that \$1.298



billion of subsidized forex, also known as NIMA forex, was allocated to trans-

portation and automotive industry, while electricity and electronic sector

received \$1.486 billion during the 101 days to June 28. Mineral indus-

tries earned \$656 million from CBI, as machinery and production equipment

received \$803 million of NIMA forex during the mentioned days.

## Iranian company completes power project in Iraq



The Iran Power Plant Repairs Company (IPRC) has completed the project of repair and maintenance services of Mosul Gas Turbine Power Station in the northern Iraqi province of Nineveh. Masoud Moradi, the CEO of IPRC, made the announcement on Sunday and said the project, which included the overhauling of the turbine rotor of the power station, has fetched a total of \$185,000 for Iran, as reported by IRNA.

The company has plans to broaden his market overseas as it enjoys strong infrastructure and experts, the official added. "As per the mandated policies, the IPRC has focused to support the power plant industry of Iran with a focus on domesticizing equipment needed for the power industry of the country," he stated adding that having an eye to attend the electricity markets of neighboring states is among the approaches of

the company.

"As per the announced policies, the most important policy and mission of the IPRC is to seriously focus on supporting the country's power plant industry through specialized repairs and manufacturing of equipment and parts," he said.

"Heeding the electricity market of neighboring countries and exporting technical and engineering services in order to find new markets and gain hard currency is also an important part of the company's foreign policy approach," he added. Moradi stressed that in addition to winning the top rank in the Middle East in the field of repairing thermal power plant units, Iran has managed to be among the top five countries in terms of manufacturing power plant turbines in the world.

## Seven anti-flaring projects to be launched by Sept.

Iran will inaugurate seven projects on gathering associated gases, worth \$400 million by September 21, announced the managing director of the Persian Gulf Bidboland Gas Refinery. Talking to Shana, Mahmoud Amin-Nejad added that by launching the projects, a sum of 16 gas flares will be turned off in the East Karoun region as 250 million cubic feet of gas will be processed to be used as feedstock.

The contract for the renovation and construction of gas collection facilities in the East Karoun region was signed in 2018 between Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company and the National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC).

In January, the head of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) said that the country's oil fields will stop wasting flare gas within two years.

According to Mohsen Khojasteh Mehr, the NIOC has allocated \$5 billion to projects for stopping flaring at oil fields, as the projects have progressed by 70%.

Gas flaring is the process of burning the gas released through certain industrial processes, including oil extraction.

Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji said in March that the country's oil and gas industry ranks first among the major gas exporting and producing countries in reducing flare gases.



## Iron ore reserves estimated at over 5bn tons

A mine owner in Iran says the country's iron ore reserves are estimated at some 5 billion metric tons (mt), as he insists that official figures should be revised up to show the real state of iron mines in Iran and their potential for investment. Mehrdad Akbarian, who

also chairs Iran's Association of Iron Ore Producers and Exporters (IROPEX), said that figures announced by the Iranian government about unproven iron ore reserves, which is about 3.2 billion mt, do not properly represent a rough estimate of recoverable iron in the country.



"Unfortunately, the official figures do not match the realities on the ground,"

Akbarian told the ILNA news agency. "That comes as reserves

can further expand with progress in technology, increased mining and investment in exploration," he added.

The businessman said that the total iron ore mined in Iran since the industry was formed several decades ago has not exceeded 0.6 billion mt. Akbarian insisted that increased supply of energy, including electricity and natural gas, to Iranian steel plants can lead to more activity in iron mines.

Iran has produced more steel in recent years main-

ly due to increased government support as part of a policy to diversify the economy away from oil exports.

Iranian steel exports have increased steadily since the US imposed sanctions on the country in 2018. Iran is currently the 10th largest steel producer in the world with more than 30 million mt of annual output. Increased production caused the country to move up to 7th in the global ranking of steel producers during some calendar months of last year.



# Varkaneh village, attractive for numerous tourists during spring and summer



iranwonders.com

The seasonal flow of rivers, the steady flow of village qanat water, and its springs, particularly during spring and summer, infuse the village with a special freshness. These water sources, coupled with the walnut, apricot, grape, and apple orchards they nourish, lend a unique charm to the village and contribute to its delightful beauty. The surrounding mountains and the

regions, alongside the walnut, apple, and almond orchards, are popular choices for family excursions for residents of Hamadan and other cities.

## Historical sites and cultural landmarks

The village boasts a number of captivating historical and religious attractions. These include a mosque nestled within



## Iranica Desk

Rural tourism is a highly sought-after travel experience for visitors looking to immerse themselves in traditional or historical settings and diverse indigenous cultures. Iran boasts numerous villages that attract tourists, with Varkaneh in Hamadan Province standing out as one of the most renowned. Located near the Ekbatan Dam, Varkaneh village is a prominent tourist destination within the province. Nestled in the southern foothills of the Central Zagros Mountains, this region is renowned for its pristine natural beauty and mountainous climate. Varkaneh is one of Hamadan Province's six designated tourist villages, recognized as a national heritage, and appreciated as a special tourism area in the country. The residents of Varkaneh village are multilingual, speaking

Turkish, Persian, and Kurdish languages. This village is famous for its local music, which is a central part of celebrations and weddings.

Varkaneh village has a rich history that spans over 400 years, with artifacts dating back to the Safavid period discovered there. The village's original nucleus, developed around the village qanat, boasts a significant historical lineage tracing back to the early Safavid era.

The architecture of Varkaneh village is notable for its predominant use of stone as the primary building material. This preference for stone construction is attributed to the ample availability of the material in the region, its durability, resilience to weather changes, and the scarcity of bricks and clay in the vicinity. This tradition of employing local materials in construction is a common practice in Iranian architecture across various regions.



Khan and Jen valleys, especially during different seasons and notably in the lush greenery of spring, present stunning and captivating landscapes.

Varkaneh attracts numerous tourists and travelers, especially during the spring and summer seasons. The stone terraces of Takht-e Sang and Darikhan re-

the old fabric, the horse stable renowned for its unique stone architecture, and the impressive Mehri Khanom Castle. Furthermore, the distinctive stone architecture prevalent throughout the village is noteworthy.

## Nomadic life

In the spring and summer

months, Varkaneh village becomes a temporary home to nomadic tribes. These nomads uphold their age-old traditions by journeying through lush pastures, mountains, and numerous valleys, pitching their camps among the hills before eventually returning to the plains as the moderate season draws to a close. The nomads' migration route, weaving through picturesque landscapes of their summer and winter quarters, has established the area surrounding this village as a prominent hub for observing nomadic movements.

## Ideal time to explore

Nestled in the southern foothills of the central Zagros Mountains, Varkaneh village experiences a mountainous climate. For an optimal visit, you are recommended to explore Varkaneh during the warmer seasons, particularly in spring and summer. The colder weather in the latter part of the

year may pose challenges for travelers. Nonetheless, autumn adorns Varkaneh with its enchanting hues, drawing many to revel in the village's breathtaking vistas.

## Accommodation options

As a burgeoning tourist spot, Varkaneh village offers comfortable lodging options to ensure visitors' satisfaction. Apart from eco-lodges, some locals extend house rentals on a daily basis. Varkaneh village is well-equipped with welfare and tourism amenities. The influx of visitors notably rises during holidays and weekends. When exploring Varkaneh village, it's essential to honor and respect the local culture. The villagers are known for their hospitality, yet it's courteous to seek permission before entering private orchards. To support the local economy, consider purchasing products and handicrafts from Varkaneh village.

# Felt making a time-honored tradition in Semnan Province

Semnan Province is renowned for its rich cultural heritage and diverse handicrafts. The province is particularly known for its intricate and colorful traditional handicrafts, which reflect the artistic skills and talents of the local artisans. These handicrafts not only showcase the cultural identity of the region but also serve as a significant source of income for many families in Semnan. Visitors to the province have the opportunity to explore and purchase these beautiful handmade items as souvenirs, appreciating the local artistry. One of the many handicrafts of Semnan is felting, a traditional craft that has been practiced for centuries. The process of making felts is similar across different

regions of Iran, with variations in color, pattern, and thickness. Felt is considered one of the oldest floor coverings created by mankind. According to a famous story told by the felt makers of Semnan, Soleiman the prophet's son, a shepherd, inadvertently discovered felt making when his tears mixed with the wool of his sheep, resulting in the creation of the first felt.

Felt is a unique textile made without the use of a loom, relying on moisture and pressure for its creation. During the felting process, water is poured over layers of wool while they are compressed, causing the fibers to interlock and form a single piece of fabric. Sheep wool, typically sheared in springtime, is



the most commonly used material for felts due to its long fibers and variety of colors. A piece of felt can be made in a single day, making it an affordable product,

albeit a labor-intensive one. Felt is primarily used as a floor covering but also finds applications in crafting items like *korsi* covers (low tables with heat-



visitiran.ir

ers underneath), horse covers, kitchen utensils, dolls, and clothing. The patterns and designs of felts often feature abstract motifs inspired by nature. Today, felt

making continues to be practiced in cities such as Semnan and Shahroud, preserving this traditional craft for future generations.



# Here comes Europe's 'foreigners out'

By Nicholas Vinocur and Victor Goury-Laffont  
Journalists

## PERSPECTIVE

The historic success of the radical right in the recent European Parliament election may have come as a shock, knocking two of the bloc's most important governments off balance.

But it shouldn't have been too much of a surprise for anyone paying attention to the outraged mood among many of the Continent's young people, who have not only embraced hard-line anti-immigration views but seem prouder than ever to broadcast them.

Consider this as evidence: A 14-second clip filmed on the German holiday island of Sylt and uploaded to the social media platform X about two weeks before the vote. In it, a group of expensively dressed German youths can be seen belting out the words "Ausländer Raus!" ("foreigners out!") over a euro-dance beat as they swirl glasses of rosé. The all-white group, whose preppy attire wouldn't be out of place in other European holiday hotspots like France's Biarritz or Sweden's Gotland, all know exactly when to chime in with the xenophobic lyrics laid over l'Amour Toujours, a turn-of-the-century track by DJ Gigi D'Agostino. At one point in the video, one of the partygoers is so taken with the song that he gives himself a Hitler mustache with two fingers while throwing up a floppy "Seig Heil" salute with his other hand.



Alternative for Germany (AfD) party co-leaders Alice Weidel (C) and Tino Chrupalla (front-R) react to results after the polls closed in the European Parliament elections, in Berlin, Germany, on June 9, 2024.  
● ANNEGRET HILSE/REUTERS

The video's release prompted a furor in Germany, with one politician calling for the partygoers to be brought to justice for breaking the country's hate speech laws, but there was no stopping the forces on display in the video. When European voters headed to the polls on June 9, the far-right Alternative for Germany party (AfD) pulled off its best performance ever, beating Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democratic Party and sending po-

litical shockwaves through Europe's most populous country. A similar feeling of whiplash is rippling across France, where President Emmanuel Macron has called a snap election after being trounced by the far-right National Rally party. And in Brussels, policymakers are bracing for a European Parliament in which one in four lawmakers belongs to the radical right.

As a reeling Continent tries to make sense of

what just hit it, the role of young voters like the Sylt partygoers is coming into focus as an important factor. In Germany, the share of young people who voted for the AfD jumped between the last European Parliament election in 2019 and this one (rising by 11 percent among voters aged between 24 and 30). In France, Marine Le Pen's National Rally party raked in some 30 percent of the youth vote nationally — a

10-point rise compared to 2019. Which begs the question: Why are so many of Europe's Gen-Z and younger Millennials — whose parents and grandparents espoused left-wing politics in the 1960s — embracing the antithesis of their elders' ideals? And whatever happened to the stigma or shame that once surrounded overtly racist and xenophobic attitudes like those on display in the Sylt video? The answer is a hodgepodge of factors ranging from Europe's

cost-of-living crisis to the isolation many youths suffered during the COVID lockdown years to a delayed backlash following the bloc's 2015 migration crisis when nearly two million migrants flowed into the bloc. But there are also more intangible factors, linked to the fact that many young people experience politics solely via social media platforms like X and TikTok where far-right content glorifying the "Great Replacement" theory and linking immigration to violence runs unchecked.

### Why young voters swung right

Mathieu Gallard, research director at the Ipsos polling firm, says that left-wing parties — namely the far-left France Unbowed party — remain the dominant political force among youths aged between 18 and 24 in France. But he acknowledged that support for the National Rally had skyrocketed for the same age bracket over the past five years. "There is a section of young people who are hostile to immigration and who vote on these issues," he said.

The fact that the president of the National Rally is now Jordan Bardella, a smooth-talking 28-year-old at home on TikTok, helps to explain the rise in youth support. In one video posted to the platform a week before the European Parliament election, Bardella appeals primarily to young voters, urging them to mobilize their "parents," "friends, and loved ones" to turn out "in big numbers" to a pre-election rally. In another video posted before Bardella goes on stage for a political rally, he confides that he decided to wear jeans because he "couldn't be bothered to iron" his suit — an obvious "I'm just like you" moment that seems to resonate with the commenters. Bardella's youth and social media acumen aren't the only factors in his success, Gallard said. "His youth, his presence on social media, widen the electorate somewhat ... but it's not the main factor. The main factors are



A protester holds an anti-far right banner showing the faces of French presidents and the word 'Honte' or 'Shame' during a rally in Paris, France, on June 15, 2024. Anti-racism groups joined French unions and a brand-new left-wing coalition in protests in Paris and across France against the surging nationalist far right.  
MICHEL EULER/AP



the unpopularity of the executive [led by Macron] and the importance of immigration in the campaign." Indeed, the far-right figureheads in the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, and Austria aren't exactly spring chickens, yet they too appeal to youth voters with a similar formula of anti-EU, anti-immigrant, and anti-elite doomerism which paints the leaders of their country as being corrupt and detached. For Yanis Ouadah, who joined the National Rally in 2021 and is now a local party representative in southwestern France, the party's anti-immigration, tough-on-crime message resonates with students who fear they are competing with recent immigrants for access to housing among other benefits. "When you see that the French can't find housing in their own country but that foreigners can, we are asking for a national priority [in access to housing], something that more and more young people agree with," he told POLITICO before the election.

Over in the Netherlands, two students who cast their first-ever votes for anti-Islam politician Geert Wilders last November, struck a similar chord when asked to explain their choice. "I'm not against refugees, not at all," said a 20-year-old student in Rotterdam named Chess van Leeuwen. "But if it gets too much, in times of crisis, we have to think about ourselves." Regardless of what else Wilders stands for, "the Netherlands comes first for him," he added. Ouadah, who hopes to become a police officer, also linked his political choice to his perception that criminality has run rampant in France. "We can no longer go out safely," he said. "Look at the number of knife attacks taking place. We have a government that clearly doesn't care about the French." Ouadah also mentioned what he called "extremism" on display during pro-Palestinian protests in recent months as a factor helping the National Rally. Another oft-cited factor: COVID

and the lockdowns that confined youths at a time when many were due to leave their homes to start university. The lockdown orders that were handed down by leaders across Europe within a few weeks in 2020 helped cement the idea that political elites were high-handed and insulated from the effects of their policies. Such grievances are deeply entrenched among right-wing voters in many European countries. Then there's the subject of the song captured on video in Sylt. Nearly a decade after the bloc opened its doors to a record number of refugees fleeing war in Syria, undocumented migration to the Continent has dropped sharply even if legal migration remains elevated. Yet immigration remains by far the number one issue for right-wing voters, intermingled as it is with fear of a "Great Replacement" of white Europeans by dark-skinned, mainly Muslim immigrants from outside the bloc — a term coined by French

intellectual Renaud Camus which now permeates the right-wing "meme-o-sphere".

#### Far-right wave here to stay

In many ways, the surge in youth support is disconnected from reality. After hitting a high of more than 10 percent in October 2022, Europe's inflation rate is now back down to two percent. The same goes for unemployment, which, at six percent on average across the EU according to Eurostat, is far below the 12.2 percent average joblessness rate reached in 2013. In other words, on the economy, migration, and the effects of the pandemic, Europe has already weathered the worst of the storm. But the lingering effects of these convulsions are shaping politics today and perhaps for many years to come. The challenge facing Europe's elites today is sizing up the consequences of the bloc's youth-led shift to the right. In France, the Bardella generation will return to the polls to vote

in a new national parliament during a two-round election on June 30 and July 7. The snap election, called by Macron, will show whether the shock performance of the National Rally last Sunday was an outburst of protest voting or a seismic shift in the country's politics that will cement the far-right party as a leading political force. While pollsters say voters are unlikely to install Bardella as his country's youngest-ever prime minister, the National Rally could well expand its number of seats in the National Assembly, paving the way for yet another attempt by either Le Pen or Bardella himself at winning the presidency in 2027. Leading up to the vote, the far-right's performance is already shaking up the country's political landscape. Eric Ciotti, leader of the conservative Les Républicains party, broke a long-standing taboo by announcing he would seek local alliances with the National Rally — only to be denounced by several of his party's heavyweights.

In Germany, the abysmal performance by the three parties in Olaf Scholz's ruling coalition hasn't triggered a snap election, but it may have signed the government's death warrant. While the chancellor has ruled out calling an election, he could yet face a vote of confidence that might lead to his replacement, possibly without an election. If Scholz goes, the country's most likely next leader would be Friedrich Merz, a conservative member of the Christian Democratic Union whose party won the most votes in the June 9 election. Whatever twists and turns the next weeks and months will deliver, young far-right voters will shape European politics for years, if not decades, to come. Political allegiances forged in young adulthood tend to last lifetimes. Europe's "foreigners out" generation may have arrived in a surge; it's unlikely to ebb away anytime soon.

The article first appeared on POLITICO.

## Expect EU to finally fine a far-right France

By Bjarke Smith-Meyer, Gregorio Sorgi, and Giorgio Leali  
Reporters

### PERSPECTIVE

France has always been too big, too powerful, and — most crucially of all — too much a part of the cozy EU establishment to be fined for its financial sins. But the party might be over. As the European Commission prepares to name and shame the latest batch of governments that

have flouted budget rules, France's easy ride no longer looks sustainable. The EU's top brass is under pressure from across the bloc to finally crack down on the budget bad boy and set the country on a course that could ultimately see it penalized. The prospect of Marine Le Pen's far-right Nation-

al Rally (RN) forming a government in Paris after President Emmanuel Macron called a snap election has changed everything. It has sent a shudder through the EU's bureaucracy in Brussels — and in Frankfurt, the seat of the European Central Bank — officials have told POLITICO.

After all, it's one thing to let off a pro-EU, statesmanlike leader for the type of reckless spending that endangers the economic stability of the eurozone. It's quite another if it's carried out brazenly by a nationalist firebrand who doesn't think the rules are worth the paper they're written on in the first place.

"If an irresponsible [French spending] plan was put on the table, and the Commission said 'no problem,' then the whole fiscal framework is lost," said Zsolt Darvas, a senior fellow at Brussels' influential think tank Bruegel, referring to the way the EU's executive arm gets to run the rule over governments' budgets. "Other populist parties would forever disregard the rules."

In the old days, the European elite could afford to be candid about how much slack it allowed France. It was Jean-Claude Juncker, the previous Commission president, who eight years ago explained why Europe's budget cops had turned a blind eye to France's poor public finances. "Parce que c'est la France," he said. Simple as that.

(The fact that Juncker's economy commissioner was French might have helped too.)

#### Eye-watering

France's economy under Macron is little better than in those days. His government has already pledged budget cuts worth about €20 billion to bring down a budget deficit — the difference between annual spending and income — which reached 5.5 percent of GDP last year. France's public debt is forecast to climb to 114 percent of GDP in 2025.

Those are eye-watering figures: EU rules force countries to have, or at least work toward, annual deficits of three percent and debt at 60 percent. France is among a dozen countries that will receive a red flag for breaching the bloc's deficit threshold. This will put them into what's called an "excessive deficit procedure," which requires governments to take action



Supporters of the French far-right National Rally (Rassemblement National - RN) party react with joy after the polls closed during the European Parliament elections, in Paris, France, on June 9, 2024.  
SARAH MEYSSONNIER/REUTERS

to rein in their spending — and to set out in detail how they're going to do it. It's a typically drawn-out EU process that can take years but ultimately, they could be fined.

And the trouble is, the economic plans of National Rally, if it takes power, could make the figures worse not better.

"Someone can always promise the Moon," Macron's finance minister, Bruno Le Maire, told France Info. "They [National Rally] couldn't care less about public money."

The party has campaigned on a program that mixes tax cuts and protectionism and — although prospective prime minister, 28-year-old Jordan Bardella, appeared to row back on it in recent days — undoing Macron's pension reforms and lowering the retirement age to 60 for some workers.

That would detonate a bomb under the country's public purse, as the average age of the population increases. "If RN implements its fiscal policies, then there's no chance it can follow the [EU] fiscal rules, and if it doesn't follow the fiscal rules, then the Commission will have to follow the [excessive deficit] procedure," said Nils Redeker, deputy director of the Jacques Delors Institute, a Paris-based think tank. If the party followed through with its plans "the economic damage could be quite big".

#### Losing trust

But the markets are already jittery. The French stock market suffered its worst week in more than two years. In the days before Macron's election announcement, a credit-rating agency downgraded the country over the cost of servicing its debt — a sign of failing

confidence.

And it comes at a time when the Brussels bureaucracy is at its most vulnerable. Following the European Parliament election, the EU must decide whether Ursula von der Leyen remains president of the Commission, and then she, or whoever replaces her, must name new commissioners.

"The quickest way for von der Leyen to lose the trust of the smaller member states before she's even nominated for a second term is by letting large member states, like France and Italy, off the hook under the new fiscal rules," one diplomat from a northern European country said on condition of anonymity.

The whole point of the rules is to avoid the contagion effects of massive debt that almost toppled Greece at the start of the 2010s and was in danger of rip-

ping apart the whole currency area. The crunch point won't come this week. That's more likely in the fall when countries have to present roadmaps for how they're going to reduce their debts and deficits, by which time France will have a new government.

#### Backroom deals

This is the first test for the EU's reformed spending rules, which were suspended since the Covid pandemic. They came back into force this year, and governments are under pressure to toe the line.

In the days of Juncker's infamous quote, the deal-making that resulted in France escaping a fine was less than transparent. Officials say there is no longer appetite for such backroom negotiation.

This is even more the case because northern governments negotiated strict deficit and debt safeguards into the reforms to ensure countries are kept in check and continue to be — at least theoretically — punished with fines if they go astray.

#### Markets first, Commission second

This could all be moot. Financial markets might have their say before the Commission even gets a chance. National Rally would be wise to see the mess that followed the spending plan presented by then-UK Prime Minister Liz Truss two years ago — which included huge tax cuts, sent markets into a tailspin, and resulted in her almost-immediate downfall.

"If it happened in the UK, then it could happen in France," Bruegel's Darvas said.

Or, as Redeker from the Jacques Delors Institute put it: "What the Commission does is probably of secondary importance."

"The reaction of markets might have a more immediate impact than the EU's fiscal rules."

The article first appeared on POLITICO.



# Iran GR coach Rangraz expecting 'at least two medals' in Paris

## Sports Desk

Iranian Greco-Roman wrestling head coach Hassan Rangraz says it will be "fair to expect" his men grab at least two medals in the Paris Olympics.

Iran became the first country to complete a full set of six Greco-Roman wrestling quotas for the Games when Amin Kavianejad (77kg) and Alireza Mohmadi (87kg) secured the remaining two slots in April's Asian qualifiers in Bishkek.

The duo will be joined by reigning world champion Amin Mirzazadeh (130kg), Mohammad-Hadi Saravi (97kg), Mahdi Mohsennejad (60kg), and Saeid Esmaili (67kg) in representing the country in the French capital's Grand Palais Éphémère from August 5 to 8.

"I truly believe all six members of the team deserve to finish on the podium in Paris. The competition, however, will take place at such a high level and it is really going to be tough to win a medal there," Rangraz said, adding: "Let's not forget that the Iranians have won an average two medals over the past three Olympics, though the London 2012 [where Iran won a remarkable three golds] was a one-off occasion and the figure was even lower prior to that year."

"That is why I think it fair to expect the team grab at least two medals in Paris," added the 2001 world champion, who took over from Mohammad Bana following the 2022 World Championships.

Asked who are the Iranian hopefuls for Olympic glory, Rangraz said: "Mirzazadeh and Saravi will probably have the biggest chance for a medal and I hope it will be the most colorful one."

Unlucky to leave Tokyo with an Olympic medal three years ago, Mirzazadeh stunned Turkish great Rıza Kayaalp to the world title last year to add to his world silver in 2022.

Still, legendary Cuban Mijaín López – chasing a fifth successive Olympic gold – remains the ultimate favorite for the top prize in the superheavyweight class.

"Mirzazadeh and Kayaalp are the top two in the world 130kg ranking and will be in different halves of the draw in the Olympics, but López will come to Paris as a non-ranked wrestler and could face Mirzazadeh at any stage before the final," Rangraz said.

Meanwhile, Saravi – a winner of one world gold and double bronzes over the past three years – has been in dazzling form since the last-four defeat against Cuba's Gabriel Rosillo in last September's world event and will be looking to improve on his Olympic bronze in Paris.

"Saravi will have a difficult draw, given his No. 3 spot in the ranking, and will likely face a tough battle against the Belarusian opponent [Abubakar Khaslakhanau] en route to the final," the Iranian coach said.

"Sixteen of the world's best have gone through difficult paths to reach the Olympics. The ranking place and the draw will defiant-



● FARSHAD BANDANI/IAWF

ly play a massive part in every wrestler's campaign," added the Iranian.

Speaking about the other Iranians' title shot in Paris, Rangraz said: "Eight ranked wrestlers will participate in each weight class and will be placed in different parts of the draw. Mohsennejad

will be among those eight in the 60kg contests but could still go head-to-head with the world gold and silver medalists in the same half of the bracket."

"The same applies to Esmaili in the 67kg class. He is an exceptional talent but his last international medal came in the world

under-20 60kg and the event in Paris will be his first in the new weight category in a major senior competition.

"Our 77kg and 87kg wrestlers will head to the Games as non-ranked wrestlers, so they will be up against some demanding tests from their very first bout.

"It's been five years since Kavianejad last represented the national team in the World Championships. Mohmadi is just 21 and did a great job to seal the 87kg berth for the country. He won the world 82kg silver last year and the Olympics will make his major 87kg debut."

## FIBA U18 Asia Cup: Iranian girls finish fourth in Division B



● FIBA

## Sports Desk

Iranian women's team settled for the fourth place in the FIBA U18 Asia Cup, Division B after a 64-59 loss to Samoa in Shenzhen, China.

Sanaz Lashkari was the Iranian top scorer with 21 points, while Helya Houdneh had 18 points and eight rebounds.

Peata Manumaleuga chipped in a game-high 22 points for the Samoans, with Kira-May Filmu enjoying a double-double with

19 points and 20 rebounds. This was a fifth game for the Iranian girls in the event after a clean sweep of three victories over Hong Kong (65-52), Kyrgyzstan (73-40), and Samoa (76-73, OT) had seen the country win Group A for a place in the semifinals, before falling to a 64-49 defeat against Lebanon. The Philippines came out 95-64 winners against the Lebanese later on Sunday to progress to next year's Division A contests.

## Italy's title defence began with a bang, ends with a whimper



**REUTERS** – Defending champions Italy were never among the favourites coming into Euro 2024, but nobody predicted just how poor they would be, and they leave the tournament having surrendered their crown with barely a whimper.

Italy surprised many three years ago when they won the European Championship, but they leave Germany without ever having looked capable of making a mark, at least not a positive one.

In the round of 16 on Saturday, Luciano Spalletti's side came up against a confident, settled Switzerland, a team which had already impressed in their draw with Germany, and Italy for long periods looked completely out of their depth.

The signs were there in the group stage, where they began with a win but then risked an early exit, and Italian fans could be forgiven for wishing it had indeed all ended sooner, their side playing as though they just wanted the suffering to end.

Even in the opening win against Albania they conceded the fastest ever goal scored at the Euros, perhaps a sign that Italian minds and hearts were never really on the job. That comeback 2-1 win showed promise and character, and there was much talk



Italy's Federico Chiesa (L) and Davide Frattesi look dejected after the last-16 defeat against Switzerland in Euro 2024 in Berlin, Germany, on June 29, 2024.

● ANNEGRET HILSE/REUTERS

of never writing Italy off at a major tournament. But that would be as good as it got. On paper Italy suffered a narrow defeat against Spain, with a Riccardo Calafiori own goal the only difference between the teams. On the pitch, they were outclassed and dominated by a young, energetic Spanish side.

After that harsh lesson, Italy were expected to deal better with an ageing Croatia team, but they did little to impress and needed a 98th minute goal from substitute Mattia Zaccagni to rescue a 1-1 draw

and reach the last 16 as group runners up.

If Spain can be categorised as youthful and the Croatians as the end of a cycle, it's difficult to know where Italy fit in, and that is the biggest problem facing Spalletti, should he survive the backlash that has already begun.

Italy lacked an identity, a clear definable style, as Spalletti searched in vain for a formation and lineup that could carry out his orders.

He began by selecting the same side in the opening two games but then complained

of a lack of freshness and energy from his players and decided to shake things up against Croatia with three changes.

That clearly did not have the desired effect, so the manager made twice as many for the tie with Switzerland. It went even worse, and the Swiss, who have seven players who started all four games, were the fresher-looking side.

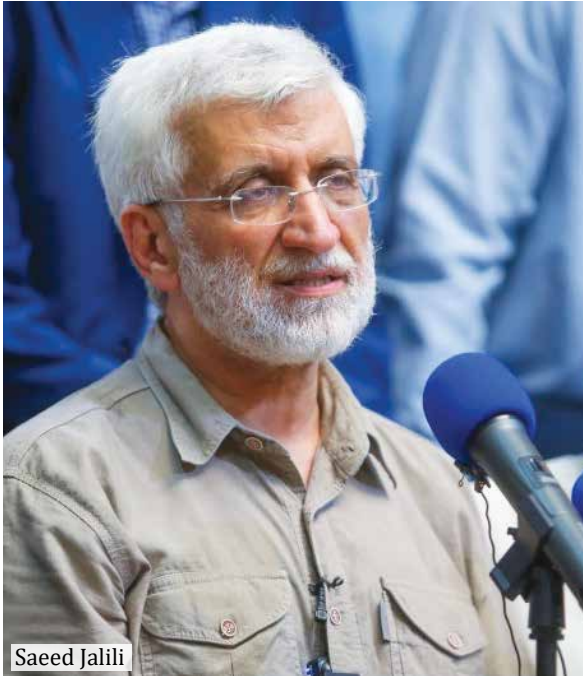
Italy's one outstanding player at the tournament was captain Gianluigi Donnarumma, the keeper saving them from even further embarrassment on several occasions, but in front of him there was nobody who could turn on the magic to inspire the others.

The Swiss were simply too good, while Italy lacked any composure, and for their fans the worst thing must have been seeing their side go down without putting up a fight.

Midfielder Bryan Cristante summed it all up with brutal honesty: "They beat us physically and in terms of organisation. The desire was different, then when you can't do things against a team that runs so much better, you try but you don't succeed."

"Now we have to clear our heads and start again next year with a different attitude and energy."





Saeed Jalili



Masoud Pezeshkian

## Campaigning kicks off for Friday's runoff

### National Desk

Iran's presidential candidates began their campaigning on Sunday for the Friday run-off elections after the Guardian Council confirmed the results of the June 28 election.

The Guardian Council's spokesman Hadi Tahan Nazif said the validity of the first round of the election has been approved by the council, adding that no complaints were submitted to the council by any of the candidates.

Masoud Pezeshkian, the Reformist contender, and Conservative Saeed Jalili will face off in the July 5 runoff election after final results showed that Pezeshkian secured a narrow lead over Jalili. Winner of the competition

will replace the late president Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash last month. Pezeshkian received 10,415,991 votes while Jalili gained 9,473,298. Conservative parliamentary speaker Mohammad

Baqer Qalibaf and former interior minister Mostafa Pourmohammadi, the two other candidates, garnered 3,383,340 and 206,397 votes respectively.

According to the Interior Ministry, out of 61 million eligible voters, more than 24 million cast their ballots, resulting in a 40% turnout. This means that the turnout rate has been lower than the previous presidential election, which saw nearly 49%.

Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi said the vote went smoothly. "The presidential election was conducted in complete security, in all fairness, with very serious competition and with the valuable presence of people at the ballot boxes," he said. Iran's presidential race began with six candidates but Alireza Zakani, the current mayor of Tehran, and Amir Hossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi withdrew from the race on the eve of the election day.

After the official announcement of the final results, Pezeshkian issued a statement, calling for high turnout in the runoff election.

"We must stand up once again and make a new plan," he said. Pezeshkian said that Iranians from all ethnicities should join hands and

save the country from "poverty, lies, discrimination and injustice."

"I hope your presence will be the basis of a new voice for change in attitude, behavior, conversation and in the distribution and allocation of resources," he added in a video published on the website of the Reformist newspaper Etemad.

In a message posted on his X account on Sunday, Pezeshkian assured his supporters that his government will stand against "forced" morality police and filtering of Internet content and social media platforms.

"Those who are part of the problem cannot save us. The future is in your hands," he said in another message.

Jalili visited Tehran's Grand Bazaar on the same day to talk with people. He underlined that improving the country's economic situation is among his most important plans.

He said that the economic status of the public will improve by his economic programs.

The two candidates are also scheduled to take part in televised debates on Monday and Tuesday. Campaigning will continue until 24 hours before the polls open for casting ballots.

## Israel launches assaults on Rafah, Shujaiya



Heavy fighting between Israeli forces and Palestinian fighters continued in northern and southern Gaza with at least six civilians, including children, killed in a strike on a home in Rafah.

Israeli forces advanced further on Sunday into the Shujaiya neighborhood of northern Gaza and also pushed deeper into western and central Rafah in the south, residents said.

Israeli tanks, which moved back into Shujaiya four days ago, fired shells towards several houses, leaving families trapped inside and unable to leave, the residents said.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians have fled the devastated neighborhood. Speaking at the start of the weekly cabinet meeting on Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu repeated his position that there was no substitute for achieving victory in the war against Hamas.

"We are committed to fighting until we achieve all of our objectives: Eliminating Hamas, returning all of our hostages, ensuring that Gaza never again constitutes a threat to Israel and returning our residents securely to their homes in the south and the north," he added.

Months of on-and-off talks towards a Gaza truce and captive release deal have meanwhile made little progress, with Hamas saying Saturday there was "nothing new" in a revised plan presented by US mediators.

The Israeli military reported clashes in central Gaza and the southern Rafah area, a week after Netanyahu declared that the "intense phase" of the war raging since October 7 was nearing an end.

The United Nations humanitarian agency OCHA estimated that "60,000 to 80,000 people were displaced" from Shujaiya since new fighting broke out there on Thursday and the army issued evacuation orders.

For those who remain, "our lives have become hell," said 50-year-old Shujaiya resident Siham al-Shawa.

She told AFP people were trapped as strikes could happen "anywhere" and "it is difficult to get out of the neighborhood under fire."

"We do not know where to go to protect ourselves."

## France votes in election that could usher in far right

Voters across mainland France cast ballots Sunday in the first round of early parliamentary elections that could put the government in the hands of nationalist, far-right parties for the first time since the Nazi era. The two-round elections that wrap up July 7 could impact European financial markets, Western support for Ukraine and the management of France's nuclear arsenal and global military force, AP reported.

Many French voters are frustrated about inflation and other economic concerns, as well as President Emmanuel Macron's leadership, seen as arrogant and out-of-touch with their lives. Marine Le Pen's anti-immigration National Rally party has tapped that discontent, notably via online platforms like TikTok, and

led in preelection opinion polls. A new coalition on the left, the New Popular Front, also poses a challenge to the pro-business Macron and his centrist alliance Together for the Republic. It includes the French Socialists and Communists, the greens and the hard-left France Unbowed party and vows to reverse an unpopular pension reform law that raised the retirement age to 64, among other economic reforms.

There are 49.5 million registered voters who will choose the 577 members of the National Assembly, France's influential lower house of parliament. Turnout at midday Sunday stood at 25.9% according to interior ministry figures, higher than the 18.43% at midday during 2022 legislative elections. The vote

was taking place during the traditional first week of summer vacation in France, and absentee ballot requests were at least five times higher than in 2022. Macron voted in Le Touquet, a seaside resort in northern France. Le Pen also voted in the north, her party's stronghold, but in the working-class town of Hennin-Beaumont.

Voters in Paris had issues from immigration to the rising cost of living on their minds as the country has grown more divided between the far right and far left blocs, with a deeply unpopular and weakened president in the political center. The campaign was marred by rising hate speech.

"People don't like what has been happening," said Cynthia Justine, 44. "People feel they've lost a lot in recent



years. People are angry. I am angry." She added that with "the rising hate speech," it was necessary to express frustrations with those holding and seeking power. She said it was important as a woman to vote since women haven't always had that right. And "because I am a Black woman, it's even more important. A lot is at

stake on this day." Macron called the early elections after his party was trounced in the European Parliament election earlier in June by the National Rally, which has historical ties to racism and antisemitism and is hostile toward France's Muslim community. It also has historical ties to Russia.



French President Emmanuel Macron and his wife Brigitte Macron stand in the voting booth before voting in Touquet-Paris-Plage, northern France, on June 30, 2024.  
● YARA NARDI/AP

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



## Afghanistan situation requires comprehensive talks: Iran

Iran's special envoy to Afghanistan emphasized the need for comprehensive consultations with all parties to address the "complex and serious" situation in Afghanistan and the wider region.

Hassan Kazemi Qomi made the remarks in a post on X on Sunday, hours before a delegation from Iran left for Qatar to attend the third Doha summit on Afghanistan.

Expressing hope that the upcoming round of the United Nations-hosted meeting on Afghanistan

will bring about security, stability and welfare for the Afghan people, the envoy underscored the importance of collective efforts to resolve the ongoing challenges, Press TV reported.

He added that the Iranian delegation would convey Tehran's concerns about Afghanistan and explain the humanitarian policies of Iran regarding foreign nationals in the country to the officials of the United Nations and the countries participating in the meeting.

The Iranian diplomat further noted he hopes that the upcoming negotiations will lead to the reduction of the suffering of the people of Afghanistan and bring about peace, stability, security, sustainable development, and a government based on people's will and without foreign interference and domination.

The third round of the UN-convened meeting of Special Envoys on Afghanistan is scheduled to be held on Sunday and Monday.



# Iran, Iraq to further cooperate on climate, environmental research

## Social Desk

The ministers of science from Iran and Iraq called for enhanced research cooperation to address climate and environmental challenges, as well as to further research and development in the oil industry.

Iraqi Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Naeem Al-Aboudi met with Iranian Minister of Science, Research and Technology Mohammad Ali Zolfigol, IRNA wrote.

Zolfigol noted that many provisions of the Iran-Iraq scientific cooperation agreement have been implemented, resolving issues faced by Iraqi students in Iran.

The relationship between Iran and Iraq has improved over the past three years, Zolfigol added. A planned second meeting of university presidents from both countries, initially set to be hosted by Iraq, was postponed



due to an incident involving resident Raisi and his

companions. Al-Aboudi highlighted that over

100,000 Iraqi students are currently studying in Iranian uni-

versities, presenting a significant opportunity to enhance

cultural cooperation. He also mentioned Iraq's readiness to offer 100 scholarships to Iranian students.

The ministers discussed establishing joint universities and research centers, creating a science and technology park in Iraq, and facilitating Persian and Arabic language education to bolster cultural ties. In addition, the Iraqi delegation expressed interest in benefiting from Iran's experience in establishing technology parks and innovation hubs.

Iran's officials emphasized their willingness to support Iraqi academic staff in completing their education in Iran and to collaborate on international journal indexing and university rankings through the Institute for Science Citation (ISC) in Shiraz. Both sides agreed to continue discussions on specific proposals to further advance their scientific and academic cooperation.

## Iranian, Russian universities to expand ties

Iran's Amirkabir University of Technology and Russia's Synergy University agreed to expand relations in education, focusing on joint courses in various fields.

A delegation from Synergy University visited Amirkabir University to explore scientific and industrial cooperation.

Officials from both universities discussed enhancing cooperation through joint courses in business management, robotics, artificial intelligence, entrepreneurship, and information technology.

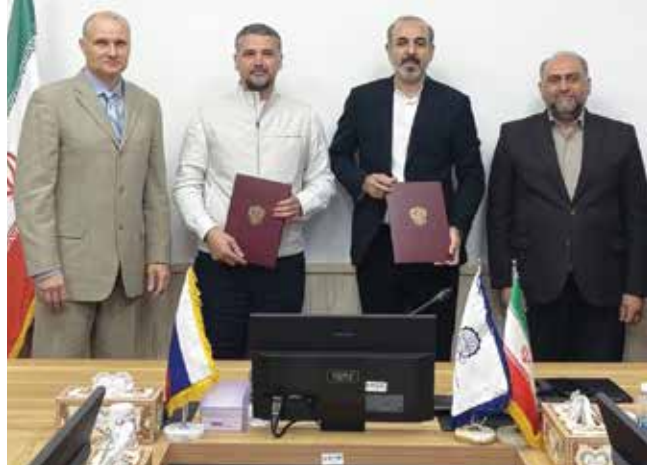
The agreement includes the exchange of students and professors during the academic years. In addition, courses will be held in Persian and Russian languages to foster

cultural exchanges.

Amirkabir University, one of Iran's oldest and most prestigious technical institutes, has significantly contributed to educational and research projects. Synergy University officials, including its president and vice presidents, were introduced to Amirkabir's capabilities during their visit.

A joint meeting, attended by faculty members, outlined possible collaboration frameworks. Four mutual programs were proposed, focusing on short-term courses in business management and interdisciplinary fields.

Online meetings between relevant faculties are scheduled for next month to plan the collaboration's details.



## Iranian documentary 'Homa' awarded in France

### Arts & Culture Desk

Gelareh Abbasi's documentary 'Homa' won the Best Director Documentary Short award at the World Film Festival in Cannes, announced Raft Films.

The film, which highlights the story of a blind addiction counselor and her marriage, has been praised internationally.

'Homa,' secured the award during its fifth international appearance. The monthly festival in Cannes showcases winning films, including 'Homa,' which will be screened in France soon. The documentary depicts the life of Homa Homavandi, a confident woman working at a rehab center, whose challenges do not

hinder her social engagement.

Before its Cannes success, 'Homa' received a Diploma of Honor at the FicFusa Festival in Colombia and a special award at the Accolade Global Film Competition in the US. It was also featured at the A Royal Chance Film Festival and the Melbourne Documentary Film Festival.



The 58th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in the Czech Republic spotlights Iranian cinema with screenings of 'My Favourite Cake' and 'In the Land of Brothers.'

The 58th edition of the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (KVIFF) kicked off in the Czech Republic with the screening of Viggo Mortensen's 'The Dead Don't Hurt.' The event, held at the Thermal Hotel, features various international films, including notable entries from Iran.

The event opened on June 28 and will run through July 6.

'My Favourite Cake,' directed by Behdash Sanaehea and Maryam Moghadam, is a collaborative production by Iran, France, Sweden, and Germany. It was screened on June 28, 29, and also is slated to be screened on July 3 and 6 in the non-competition Horizons section. Another Iranian film, 'In the Land of Brothers,' directed by Alireza Ghasemi and Raha Amirfazli, will have its European premiere in the Special Screenings category. Produced by Iran, France, and the Netherlands, it will be shown on July 2, 4, and 6.

## Iranian films to hit silver screen at 58th Karlovy Vary Int'l Film Festival

The festival, under the leadership of Jiří Bartoška, also features retrospectives, awards, and special guests. Actor Viggo Mortensen received the Festival President's Award and expressed his gratitude for the selection of his film as the opening feature.

This year, the festival revisited its history, highlighting the crucial

support from partners that saved it from cancellation in 1994. President Jiří Bartoška emphasized the importance of this support during a reflective interview with host Marek Eben.

KVIFF continues to be a prominent event in Central and Eastern Europe, showcasing 164 films from around the world. This year's jury

for the main competition includes notable figures such as American producer Christine Vachon and Australian actor Geoffrey Rush.

In addition to Iranian films, the festival will honor various cinema figures, including American actor and director Viggo Mortensen, British actor Clive Owen, and Czech actor Ivan Trojan.

