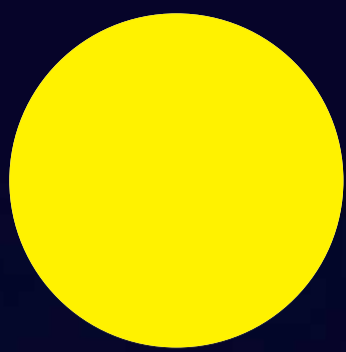


Ambassadors aspire to better ties as Pezeshkian assumes office

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Leader Endorses Pezeshkian as Iran's 9th President

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Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei (L) gives his official seal of approval to newly elected President Masoud Pezeshkian in an endorsement ceremony in Tehran, Iran on July 28, 2024. ● leader.ir

Russia's 2nd biggest bank to partake in Iran's Finex 2024



Russia's VTB Bank will participate in the 14th International Exhibition of Exchange, Bank & Insurance (Iran Finex 2024), according to the secretary of the policy-making council of the exhibition. Saleh Sepasdar said on Saturday that VTB – the second biggest bank of Russia – has assets amounting to \$290 billion. Noting that VTB is the first Russian bank to participate in the event, he said that this presence is “meaningful and important,” IRNA reported.

This bank has developed its brokerage relations with the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) and other Iranian banks over the past months and is now ready to perform banking operations and services, he said. With four branches outside Russia, VTB Bank seeks to offer services in the CIS countries, Africa, Latin America and Asia, he added. The 14th edition of Iran Finex is due to be held on August 9-12. Meanwhile, to expedite the integration of the two countries' payment systems, Moscow anticipates that Mir cards will soon be operational in Iranian territory, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko stated last week. The integration of the national payment systems is be-

ing discussed within a specialized mechanism of the bilateral intergovernmental commission on trade and economic cooperation, as well as through regular contacts between central bank heads, according to Rudenko.

“We expect to resolve all issues in this area in the near future,” Rudenko said, when asked about the timeline for Mir cards in Iran, TASS reported.

In April 2024, the Iranian Foreign Ministry announced that the project to accept Mir cards in the Islamic Republic had entered into the implementation phase.

In May 2022, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak announced that the countries were negotiating the connection of their national payment systems. Mir cards are accepted in 12 countries, although in eight of them, their operation is limited. Besides Russia, Mir cards are accepted without restrictions in Abkhazia, Belarus, Cuba, and South Ossetia. Countries planning to introduce the Russian card include Egypt, Mauritius, and Myanmar, with another six countries being prepared to engage in dialogue regarding its introduction, the report added.

Ambassadors aspire to better ties as Pezeshkian assumes office

EXCLUSIVE Upon the inauguration of President Masoud Pezeshkian in Iran, the ambassadors of Pakistan, Venezuela, and Vietnam in Tehran have, in separate messages sent to Iran Daily, voiced their respective governments' desire to foster cooperation with the new Iranian administration to promote mutual interests. The full text of their messages is as follows:

Pakistan seeks stronger ties under Pezeshkian



Pakistan is looking forward to deepening and widening its ties with the government of President Masoud Pezeshkian. Our Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif spoke to Dr. Pezeshkian on the phone right after his victory and congratulated him on his success and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthen bilateral ties with Iran.

Pakistan and Iran are brotherly neighboring countries, with limitless potential, who would continue to work together to promote peace, development, and stability in the region.

José Rafael Silva Aponte, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the Islamic Republic of Iran

Venezuela aims to cement strategic alliance with Iran



The government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, under the leadership of President Nicolás Maduro Moros, will continue to strengthen the bonds of friendship and brotherhood with the government and people of Iran, as well as deepen the strategic alliance for mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation between two nations. We wish the President of Iran, Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian, good health, prudence and success as we pray to the Almighty.

May H. E. Mr. President and the 14th Government of Iran gain great success in all fields: politics, economy and foreign affairs.

Vietnam, Iran can work for global peace



On the occasion of H. E. Mr. Masoud Pezeshkian's inauguration as the 9th president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Party, the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and self, H. E. Mr. Luong Quoc Huy, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has conveyed the most sincere and best wishes to President Masoud Pezeshkian.

May H. E. Mr. President and the 14th Government of Iran gain great success in all fields: politics, economy and foreign affairs.

May the people of Iran under the leadership of His Excellency Masoud Pezeshkian have more and more prosperity and happiness.

After more than half a century of establishing diplomatic relations (since August 4th 1973), the traditional friendship and multifaceted cooperation between Vietnam and Iran have been increasingly developing, gaining various important achievements. Vietnam always attaches importance and wishes to further strengthen political relations and boost economic, trade, cultural, scientific and technical cooperation with Iran. Ambassador Luong Quoc Huy expressed his belief that in the future, under the leadership of the President of Vietnam, H. E. Mr. To Lam and the President of Iran, H. E. Mr. Masoud Pezeshkian, the Vietnam-Iran relations shall certainly undergo new developments, on a par with the potentials and strengths of each country for the benefit of the people of the two countries, for peace, stability and cooperation in the region and the world.

Ambassador Luong Quoc Huy also believes and hopes to be able to maintain close coordination and cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the relevant agencies of Iran to execute and promote the implementation of the bilateral agreements in order to contribute to the promotion of the increasingly practical, effective and substantial Vietnam-Iran ties.

Europeans 'enthusiastic' about trade resumption with Iran

Iran-Poland trade volume rose 15% in 2023



By Sadeq Dehqan

Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Vice President of the Iran-Poland Chamber of Commerce stated that Europeans are more eager than Iran to lift sanctions and resume trade with the country. In an interview with Iran Daily, Alireza Shamsfard said should President Masoud Pezeshkian succeed in lifting the sanctions against Iran, as he announced during his campaign, there will be very positive outcomes for the volume of trade with the country. Referring to the growing trend in trade volume between Iran and Poland, the vice president of the chamber stated, “In recent years, despite sanctions, trade between Iran and Poland has not faced a decline compared to other European countries, whereas Iran's trade with many European countries experienced a significant drop due to the bans.”

The JCPOA, a multilateral international agreement, was signed between Iran and five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany in 2015, which required Iran to scale back some of its nuclear activities in return for the lifting of sanctions imposed on the country, especially by the United

States. However, former US President Donald Trump pulled Washington out of the agreement in May 2018, imposing severe economic sanctions against Tehran while Iran was adhering to its commitments under the deal and even continued to do so for a year after the US withdrawal.

The negotiations to restore the JCPOA began in April 2021, three years after the US unilaterally withdrew from the landmark deal and began to target Iran's economy with tough economic restrictions.

Shamsfard said that despite the sanctions, “even the trade between Iran and Poland in the food industry has shown a rise; this is because most of the trade between the two countries has been in the field of foodstuffs, which are less affected by sanctions.”

He added that, “Our biggest challenge in trade with Poland, currently, pertains to financial transactions.”

Petrochemical collaboration

The chamber's vice president announced that recently, cooperation in the field of petrochemical products between the two countries is on the verge of taking effect, and the Poles have welcomed the signing of new contracts with Iran.

“Recently, some Iranian petrochemical producers participated

in the Poly Plast exhibition in Poland, the largest exhibition of petrochemical products in that country, and signed cooperation agreements with Polish companies in the field of petrochemical collaboration and petrochemical exports,” Shamsfard said.

These agreements are in their preliminary stages but will lead to final contracts soon.

“We are very hopeful that after years, we can witness a significant leap in petrochemical product exports and experience a substantial increase in the level of trade relations between the two countries,” he added.

Shamsfard also mentioned that petrochemical product exports from Iran to Poland have previously existed, albeit on a very limited scale, with fewer goods. “However, due to the current conditions in Europe and the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, some European countries, including Poland, are facing challenges in securing petrochemical resources, hence they welcome cooperation with Iranian petrochemical companies and signing contracts with them,” he explained.

Trade volume

Regarding the volume of trade between the two countries, he went on to say, “In terms of trade volume between the two countries, we cannot accurately make any calculations based

on our customs' official statistics because Iranian companies cannot directly engage with the Poles due to sanctions, and some of our products are indirectly exported to Poland through third countries.”

Nevertheless, the official statistics of Iran's customs have announced the volume of trade between the two countries in recent years to be between 8 million to 28 million dollars, Shamsfard said.

“However, according to Polish customs statistics, the trade volume between the two countries has been stated to be 70 to 80 million dollars per year, which seems to be more accurate,” he added.

According to the vice president of the Iran-Poland Chamber of Commerce, “Our major imports from Poland include livestock products, industrial and mining machinery, and medicinal drugs, while the highest amount of Iran's exports to Poland consists of food products followed by petrochemical products.”

According to the vice president of the Iran-Poland Chamber of Commerce, the trade volume between the two countries in 2023 had a 15% increase compared to 2022. He added that despite the increase in trade in 2023, the trade statistics of the two coun-

Alireza Shamsfard



tries are lagging compared to the years 2016 and 2017, as during those years, the record of 200 million dollars was experienced, but after that, the trade between the two countries decreased due to the imposition of sanctions against Iran.

“Now, given the inflation that Europe, especially in the energy sector and some food products, is facing, if the supply of Iranian products to Europe increases, it will be met with enthusiasm by them,” Shamsfard said.

“On the other hand, Iran is also a large market of 85 million people, making exports to it highly attractive for European countries, and perhaps unique for them, as it is a market that has not yet opened up to European products,” he added.

Opportunities for cooperation

According to Shamsfard, es-

timates indicate that there is significant potential for trade collaboration between Iran and Poland in such sectors as mining, construction machinery, and the food and petrochemical industries.

He concluded that if commercial partnership in these areas materialize, trade between the two countries can easily reach approximately 500 to 550 million dollars per annum. He added that mineral, construction, and petrochemical products could serve as the primary exports from Iran to Poland. Conversely, road construction machinery, mining machinery, pharmaceutical products, and agricultural and livestock industry goods such as fertilizers and pesticides, which Poland exports throughout Europe, could be the major exports from Poland to Iran.

Edible delights and handcrafted treasures of Isfahan



Gaz
sitotravel.com



Firoozeh-koobi
aradbranding.com



Poolaki
blog.okcs.com

Discovering the souvenirs of a city often forms the most memorable part of any trip, and Isfahan, the vibrant heart of Iran, is no exception. The city's offerings can be divided into two main categories: edible delights and intricate handicrafts. While many may know Isfahan for its traditional sweets like *gaz* and *poolaki*, a wealth of other delectable treats awaits those who seek unique souvenirs.

Gaz

Gaz is a delightful and well-known confection with roots tracing back 450 years to the Safavid era. Traditionally made from the sap of the angebin plant, modern *gaz* is crafted from rose water, sugar, egg whites, nuts, and slivers of pistachio. Unique to Isfahan, *gaz* comes in various forms, with bite-sized pieces being the most common. Another popular variety, *gaz-e ardi*, is coated in flour to extend its shelf life and reduce sweetness, earning it the playful nickname "troublesome *gaz*" due to its messy nature.

Poolaki

Poolaki, another cherished sweet from Isfahan, resembles thin, coin-sized candies and is available in multiple flavors, including saffron, lemon, pistachio, coconut, sesame, honey, cocoa, and mint. This treat is easy to make, which makes it particularly popular among locals, in contrast to the more complex preparation of *gaz*.

Korki

Once you experience *korki*, you'll

likely become enamored with this soft, delectable treat made from animal fat and a blend of flours. Available in vanilla, saffron, and chocolate flavors, *korki*'s unique texture and taste make it a favorite among both visitors and locals.

Bereshtook

Though *bereshtook* is found in various Iranian cities, Isfahan's version is particularly renowned for its exceptional flavor. Made from chickpea or wheat flour combined with oil, sugar, cardamom, and powdered sugar, Isfahan's *bereshtook* stands out for its exquisite taste and craftsmanship.

Doogh and gooshfil

Combining *doogh* (a savory yogurt drink) with *gooshfil* (a sweet pastry) might seem unusual, but many find this pairing surprisingly enjoyable. The salty *doogh* beautifully offsets the sweetness of the *gooshfil*, creating a unique flavor experience. For those wanting to bring home these treats, sealed 1.5-liter containers of *doogh* and boxed *gooshfil* are available.

Sohan asali

Often linked to Qom, Isfahan's *sohan asali* is a thin, delicious confection primarily made from almonds and pistachios. Ingredients such as honey, butter, sugar, rose water, and saffron enhance its rich flavor and make it a nourishing treat. Typically, *sohan asali* is sold in sheets, custom-cut to desired sizes.

Firoozeh-koobi

Isfahan is not only renowned for its edible souvenirs but also for its exquisite Iranian handicrafts. The city's artisan products are popular among tourists, with notable crafts including:

Firoozeh-koobi is a craft that involves inlaying small pieces of turquoise into brass, copper, or silver dishes, resulting in stunning decorative items. This luxurious handicraft evokes a profound sense of tranquility. Known as turquoise inlay in English, *Firoozeh-koobi* is one of Iran's prestigious arts, attracting numerous enthusiasts both domestically and internationally. The captivating hues of turquoise stones entice art lovers to acquire this beautiful craftsmanship reminiscent of the sky.

Khatam-kari

Khatam-kari, also known as marquetry, is a captivating art form that decorates wooden objects with intricately cut pieces of wood, bone, and metal. These materials are meticulously shaped into delicate triangles, often measuring just three millimeters. The result is a stunning surface adorned with a variety of geometric shapes in diverse colors. This visually striking technique never fails to captivate visitors with its harmonious blend of rhythmic colors and forms.

If you're planning a trip to Isfahan, often referred to as "Half the World," enhance your journey by exploring its incredible attractions and bringing home some of these exceptional souvenirs.



Sohan asali
mozaffarigaz.com



Khatam-kari
honarisfahan.com



Doogh and gooshfil
parsine.com

Haj Aqa Torab Bathhouse, a cultural heritage site in Nahavand

The Haj Aqa Torab Bathhouse, a notable structure from the Qajar era in Nahavand, Hamedan Province, was built by Haj Mirza Mohammad Taqi, a prominent benefactor of the city. It is commonly referred to by his son's name, Haj Aqa Torab, and is also known as the Twin Bathhouses.

This bathhouse features an almost rectangular layout with separate sections for men and women. Above the entrance to the men's section, an inscription details the building's history. The entrance is situated about five steps below street level and is flanked by two elegant half-columns.

Inside, a wall divides the space into two distinct areas. The first section, known as the *sard-khaneh*, serves as a changing room and is characterized by



four stone columns, a dome, and a central aperture for lighting and ventilation. A beautiful lavabo is positioned at the center of the room, surrounded by alcoves and chambers on three sides. Notably, an alcove

and two columns are adorned with painted scenes from the *Shahnameh*, a long epic poem written by the Persian poet Ferdowsi, while the interior of the dome showcases various plant motifs and vases featuring



birds, along with an inscription. The second section, the *garm-khaneh*, is designed for hot water and mirrors the layout of the changing room, featuring four central columns and a smaller dome overhead.

Constructed from brick, mortar, and stone, the bathhouse boasts decorative plasterwork, tiling, and painting throughout. Today, the Haj Aqa Torab Bathhouse has been transformed into an ethnography museum,

where visitors can experience traditional washing ceremonies in the men's section and the *hanabandan*, a traditional wedding ceremony, in the women's section.

Nahavand is one of the southern townships of Hamadan Province. It features a temperate mountainous climate, characterized by heavy rainfall in the spring. The city is located 152km south of Hamadan and approximately 460km from Tehran.

Studies and archaeological research conducted by Prof. Grishman at Geyan Hill reveal that the inhabitants of this region had a civilization similar to that of Mesopotamia around 3,700 BCE. However, this civilization eventually declined due to the influence of Asian and European populations.

Netanyahu in Congress

Crime boss fulminates, while his accomplices cheer



By Richard Rubenstein
Scholar, author

OPINION

I returned home from Wednesday's anti-Netanyahu demonstration on Capitol Hill in time to watch the Israeli prime minister address a joint session of the US Congress. The vilest thing about the event was not the speech itself, which was predictably bloodthirsty and mendacious, but the reactions of the assembled Congresspeople. Almost all of them stood and cheered lengthily while their invited guest smeared those protesting his appearance in the streets outside the Capitol as pro-Hamas "idiots" who "stand with rapists and murderers," and whose protests are "paid for by Iran".

Understand that almost all those protesting, including me, were Americans — a group that the members of Congress claim to represent. But never mind that. Benjamin Netanyahu is an experienced con artist who knows very well when he has an audience of suckers who will buy any Brooklyn Bridge that he feels like selling.

I arrived home in time to watch him bedazzle the Congressional rubes by introducing wounded Israeli war veterans — who just happened to be people of color — in the visitors' gallery. No one laughed or objected when he defamed the protestors, when he called the Israel Defense Forces the most scrupulously pro-civilian army in world history, or when he accused the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court of disseminating an antisemitic "blood libel". But his best trick of all was using the Book of Genesis to justify Israeli claims to all of 21st-century Palestine.

About half of the Democrats in Congress had the decency to absent themselves from this bellicose farce. Kamala Harris refused to attend and preside; Rashida Tlaib attended but held up a small sign that read "War Criminal". Other Democrats like Jerry Nadler of New York and Jamie Raskin of Maryland were in the hall but behaving weirdly — sitting on their hands for some of Bibi's more obnoxious pronouncements but rising to cheer at other moments of jingoistic bombast. No point in offending AIPAC and its supporters in an election year! Most Republicans, of course, were



US lawmakers stand and applaud as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (C) addresses a joint meeting of Congress in the chamber of the House of Representatives at the US Capitol on July 24, 2024.

AP

"They call Israel a colonialist state," he ranted, pounding the lectern. "Don't they know that the Land of Israel is where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob prayed, where Isaiah and Jeremiah preached and where David and Solomon ruled?" That grotesque non-sequitur evoked the loudest cheers of all! Netanyahu understands perfectly well that what sustains the remaining American support for Israel is a combination of Zionist political and financial pressure, evangelical Christian hopes for a Middle East Armageddon, and US imperialism. He baldly presented Israel as a US agent in the region, obviating the need for American "boots on the ground". His peroration, cheered on passionately by the yokels, called for an Abrahamic Alliance to make war on Iran and Hezbollah.

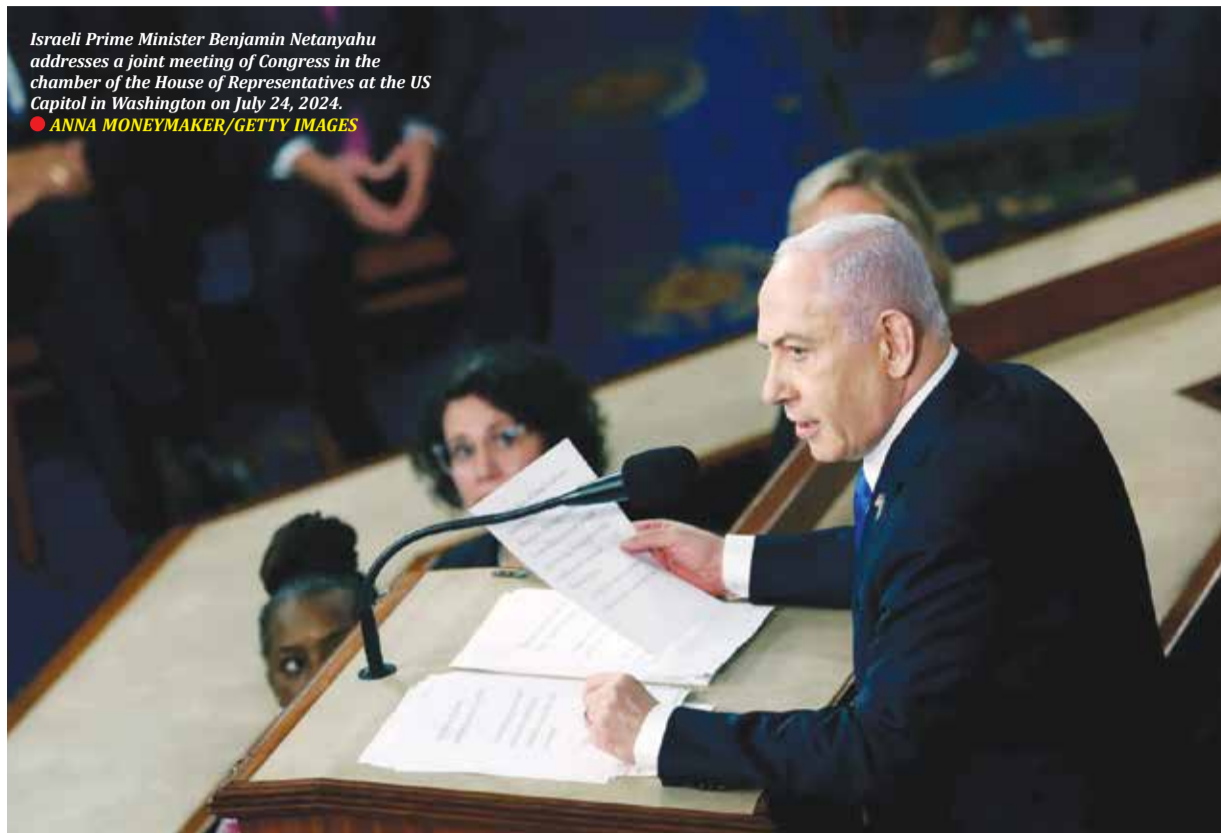
in ecstasy throughout, especially when Netanyahu praised their Dear Leader. As I write this, he is on the way to Mar-a-Lago to pay him homage. So much for Donald Trump the "peace candidate". The one useful result of this globally embarrassing event was the revelation — if one were needed — that the MAGA Republicans are united in support of a US-financed "forever war" in the Middle East. Meanwhile, the world watches in disbelief as the clueless American Empire further isolates itself morally and politically from virtually all the world's peoples. With friends like Netanyahu, as the old Jewish joke goes, who needs enemies?

The article first appeared on CounterPunch.



Rashida Tlaib (C), congresswoman for Michigan's 12th Congressional District, holds a sign that reads "War Criminal" as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addresses a joint meeting of Congress in Washington, DC, on July 24, 2024.

GETTY IMAGES



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addresses a joint meeting of Congress in the chamber of the House of Representatives at the US Capitol in Washington on July 24, 2024.

ANNA MONEYMAKER/GETTY IMAGES

Netanyahu's speech to Congress was uninspiring, directionless



By Yossi Mekelberg
Scholar

OPINION

Only those who still harbor any expectations of Israel's embattled Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were disappointed by his speech to a joint meeting of the US Congress on Wednesday. For the rest of us, it was the same old Netanyahu: all hype and no substance; clichés over content. He was cynical in exploiting the captives, whether still in captivity or released, parading them along with soldiers and officers who risked their lives in the war. As always, he was economical with the truth, and all for the sake of his own vanity and political survival.

It was argued that this Netanyahu speech, although delivered in Washington, was mainly intended for Israel's domestic audience. In fact, its messages were chiefly for American consumption, mainly because most Israelis are not falling for his empty rhetoric about "total victory" and his pretense that releasing the captives is his priority. But the optics of the event were directed at the audience back home, in an attempt to redeem his credibility and reputation as a statesman who can still play on the biggest international stages.

Those present at the Capitol willingly swallowed his rhetoric, but it was worth paying more attention to the relatives of the captives. Either those in the gallery in Congress who wore T-shirts reading "Seal The Deal NOW" and consequently were removed from the hall and arrested, or those watching in Israeli TV studios who were holding back the tears as they had hoped that Netanyahu, because he had taken the trouble to be away from the country in these tough days, would deliver a message that a deal had actually been reached. Their disappointment was understandably visible.

Instead, it became apparent that Netanyahu's speech had three aims. First, to receive US support for continuing the war. Second, to maintain the flow of American weapons and ammunition. And, lastly, to attack the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice in order to find a partner to help derail any legal proceedings against Israel and against himself personally.

Netanyahu received repeated rounds of applause from those present at his tedious, nearly hour-long speech, but about half of the congressional Democrats skipped it, including former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and former House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn. This was more than twice the number

of Democrats who could not bear to attend a similar previous occasion when Netanyahu's aim was to upset Barack Obama's Iran nuclear deal.

Pelosi later posted on X that the speech was "by far the worst presentation of any foreign dignitary invited and honored with the privilege of addressing the Congress of the United States," and she should know, considering her long service in that Congress.

One of Netanyahu's routine acts when in the US, or his "schtick," as they call it there, is to present the alliance between the US and Israel as one between equal partners. And he takes this even further, portraying Israel as protecting American interests in the Middle East. But on this occasion, he went as far as claiming that "Israel fights on the front line of civilization," that American cities are safer because of that, and, by doing it, "we help keep Americans' boots off the ground." He added: "We're not only protecting ourselves; we're protecting you."

This is what American legislators and those they represent love to hear, whether true or not, and unsurprisingly so, considering the nation's traumatic experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq. But the reality is very different when we consider that, in the immediate aftermath of October 7, Biden sent two aircraft carriers to the Eastern Med-

iterranean, including the USS Gerald R. Ford, the world's largest warship, to deter Iran or Hezbollah from joining the Israel-Hamas conflict. Moreover, since the beginning of the war, it is estimated that the US has enacted legislation providing at least \$12.5 billion in military aid to Israel.

But for all the expressions of gratitude to President Joe Biden in Netanyahu's speech, there was a barely veiled criticism of the former's holding back of an increased supply of weaponry, with the implication that the onus is on the current American administration to achieve "total victory". "Give us the tools faster, and we'll finish the job faster," he said.

This might ring true with Israel's supporters, but instead of repeatedly giving Netanyahu a standing ovation, they should have asked him: How is it possible that those weapons — which according to local authorities in Gaza have already killed 39,000 Palestinians, many of them civilians and among them thousands of children, possibly implicating both Israel and potentially the US in war crimes — are yet to achieve this victory? Instead, Israel's prime minister repeated his mantra that victory was within sight, something that he has been constantly repeating during the course of this war, with no evidence to support it.

Particularly appalling is the Israeli cabinet's lack of any strategic outlook, either for a cease-fire and the release of captives or for a "day-after," which can only suggest that this war will continue to claim lives and inflict suffering upon many more people, to the tune of American legislators' applause. Netanyahu was careful not to commit to any deal with Hamas because keeping his coalition intact is more important to him not only than Palestinian lives but also the lives of the captives. He was more interested in the heart emoji that his National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir sent him on X after the speech than in sending the Israeli negotiation team to Doha, the departure of which has once more been postponed. It has been revealed that four more

captives have been killed while in captivity, at least one of them by Israeli military fire. At this rate and with no cease-fire deal in the offing, who knows how many of them will return alive and in what condition? Perhaps naively, it might have been expected of Netanyahu that at long last, he would find the courage, while thousands of miles from home, to at least hint at his responsibility for the failures of October 7 and show some remorse, maybe some regrets for all the innocent lives lost. But this is not in his nature and especially not when his wife Sarah and son Yair are watching from the gallery. The speech at Capitol Hill was a home game, for which only his own supporters showed up, while most of his critics watched it on the screen. Have

we learnt anything new from Netanyahu's speech? Not at all. It was just another illustration of his populist rhetoric, which has appeal in some quarters in Washington. But this will not end the war in Gaza or avert one with Hezbollah, and it will not hasten either the return of the captives or a future of security based on peace with the Palestinians. Neither will it put Israeli society back on the tracks after Netanyahu derailed it with his assault on the country's democratic institutions. Without rectifying all of this, a speech is just a speech, and time sadly trudges by without favor for the Israeli and the Palestinian people, as well as the rest of the international community.

The article first appeared on Arab News.

Netanyahu's Congressional address A catalogue of deception

ANALYSIS

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech to the US Congress on Wednesday was not just a political performance; it was a troubling display of deceit. Delivered amid protests outside the US Capitol and widespread criticism, Netanyahu's address was riddled with inaccuracies and falsehoods that distorted the reality of the Gaza conflict and undermined international discourse.

One of the most glaring falsehoods was Netanyahu's claim that "despite all the lies you've heard, the war in Gaza has one of the lowest ratios of combatants to non-combatant casualties in the history of urban warfare." This statement is not just misleading but fundamentally untrue. Gaza's Health Ministry reports that the death toll has reached nearly 40,000. This figure, backed by lists of deceased individuals and verified by past UN assessments, starkly contrasts with Netanyahu's portrayal. The vast majority of the casualties in Gaza are civilians, including tens of thousands of women and children. To suggest that such a high number of civilian deaths indicates a low ratio of combatants is a deliberate attempt to obscure the scale of the humanitarian crisis.

roughly half of whom were children. Amnesty International condemned those attacks as "unlawful" and evidence of Israel's continued flouting of international humanitarian law, with entire families being wiped out with little accountability. Compounding the falsehoods, a panel of ten independent UN rapporteurs declared only last month that Gaza is experiencing a famine, attributing it to Israel's "intentional and targeted starvation campaign against the Palestinian people". This dire assessment highlights the severe humanitarian crisis that Netanyahu's speech glossed over, opting instead to present a dangerously distorted picture. Netanyahu spun a tale of humanitarian generosity, claiming Israel has allowed more than 40,000 aid trucks

on the brink of famine, making the Israeli PM's claims not only misleading but a desperate attempt to mask a dire humanitarian crisis with a façade of false benevolence.

Distorting truth

The gap between Netanyahu's rhetoric and the situation on the ground is further illustrated by recent public opinion within Israel itself. A poll by Israel's Channel 12 News showed that two-thirds of Israelis believe that securing the return of captives is more important than continuing the war in Gaza.

This shift in public sentiment reflects growing discontent with Netanyahu's approach and suggests that his touting of "total victory" (in the Congress address) is being increasingly viewed as unrealistic and bogus.



A woman cries following an Israeli army operation on an area previously designated as safe for displaced Palestinians in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip.
● HAITHAM IMAD/EPA

Outright lies

Netanyahu also asserted that civilian casualties in the southern Gaza City of Rafah are "practically none". This claim is not only far-fetched but an outright lie. Israeli strikes in Rafah have indeed resulted in significant civilian casualties. For instance, a strike in May ignited a fire in a tent camp housing displaced Palestinians, killing at least 46 people. Netanyahu's description of this attack as a "mishap" trivialises the reality of the tragedy. Earlier in February, Israeli air strikes killed at least 95 civilians,

into Gaza, delivering half a million tonnes of food. But this claim is a glaring falsehood. According to UN data, just 28,000 aid trucks have entered Gaza since the conflict erupted, and routes into the territory have been severely restricted. The Rafah crossing, a crucial lifeline, has been blocked by Israeli forces since early May, choking off aid to southern Gaza. International NGOs and the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, the world's foremost authority on famine, have warned that Gaza teeters

Netanyahu's speech to Congress was not just a political manoeuvre but a calculated effort to manipulate perceptions and justify actions that have been widely condemned. By distorting the truth, Netanyahu not only misled the US Congress but also perpetuated a narrative that undermines efforts toward a genuine resolution of the Gaza crisis. Only through a clear understanding of the situation can meaningful progress toward peace and justice be achieved.

The article first appeared on GulfNews.

US must stop arming Israel



By Farrah Hassen
Scholar, author

OPINION

In a shameful moment in US history, an accused war criminal addressed Congress on July 24.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came to plead for more arms for his war on Gaza, where the International

Court of Justice has found it "plausible" that Israel is committing genocide. "Give us the tools faster, and we'll finish the job faster," Netanyahu said.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) is seeking a warrant for Netanyahu's arrest for war crimes and crimes against humanity. But instead of arresting him, Congress gave him multiple standing ovations.

Beyond applause, the US government is also Israel's chief supplier of arms. Every year, Congress sends billions in military aid — including thousands of high-powered explosives and other weapons since October.

To avoid complicity in war crimes and genocide, these shipments must end.



⬆ Demonstrators from Jewish Voice for Peace protest the war in Gaza at the Canon House Building in Washington, DC, on July 23, 2024.
● TIERNEY L. CROSS/GETTY IMAGES

There is overwhelming evidence that Israeli forces under Netanyahu's leadership have committed massive human rights atrocities against Palestinians in Gaza. And that's against the backdrop of an illegal military occupation of Palestinian territory and apartheid, as another ICJ ruling confirmed recently.

Nonetheless, Congress invited Netanyahu to speak. He used this platform to deny any responsibility for the slaughter, famine, and catastrophic destruction in Gaza — and to denigrate Americans who are rightly horrified by their government's support for his genocidal campaign.

As Netanyahu spoke, thousands of people took to the streets near the Capitol. Braving tear gas and arrest, they gave voice to the majority of Americans who demand an immediate, permanent cease-fire in Gaza and an embargo on arms to Israel.

Most Americans are disgusted that US-made bombs keep turning up at massacre after massacre. Over the past few weeks alone, Israel has repeatedly bombed so-called "safe zones" and at least eight schools in Gaza where thousands of forcibly displaced Palestinians were sheltering. On July 9, the Israeli military murdered at least 30 Palestinians who were playing soccer at the Al-Awda school using GBU-39 bombs made by Boeing. Israel also dropped GBU-39s on another UN school-turned-shelter in the Nuseirat refugee camp on July 6, killing at least 40, and before that on Palestinian families sheltering in plastic tents during the May 26 Rafah massacre.

On July 13, Israeli forces killed 90 people and injured hundreds more at the Al-Mawasi refugee camp that Israel had designated a "safe zone". Children were reportedly found "in pieces". Eight 2,000-pound bombs turned the civilian area into a "smoldering

crater". At least one of the munitions was a Boeing-made JDAM. Despite these atrocities, the weapons continue to flow.

In May, President Biden announced that he would pause the delivery of 2,000-pound bombs ahead of Israel's invasion of Rafah, which Biden had called "a red line". However, Israel has still received destructive 500-pound bomb shipments despite invading Rafah, and the killing in Gaza continues.

These weapons shipments violate both international and US law. The United States is legally obligated to withhold military assistance when US weapons are used to violate human rights.

The UN Human Rights Council and various experts have called on all countries to end the sale and transfer of military equipment to Israel — or else risk complicity in crimes, including genocide. They called on arms manufacturers supplying Israel to do the same, including Boeing, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, and Northrop Grumman.

Polls show that a majority of Americans support closing the arms pipeline to Israel. In advance of Netanyahu's speech, seven major labor unions representing nearly 6 million workers called on President Biden to "immediately halt all military aid to Israel".

The voices of the American people deserve more respect in Congress than Netanyahu's lies and demands. An immediate end to all US weapons transfers to Israel is long overdue, alongside a permanent cease-fire and a larger pursuit of freedom and justice for the Palestinian people.

We must not allow ourselves to become a nation that applauds mass murder.

The article first appeared on Eurasia Review.

Sevilla lost out in Sardar Azmoun race as UAE move agreed



● REUTERS

Sevilla continue on their transfer hunt to sign a new striker with Sardar Azmoun rejecting a move to Spain. The Andalusians have lost two key attackers in the space of a week with Rafa Mir joining La Liga rivals Valencia and Youssef En-Nesyri heading to Fenerbahce, according to Football Espana. Despite the need to raise funds, as shown by those sales, Sevilla also need reinforcements and Azmoun was a long-term target. The Iranian international is under contract at Bundesliga champions Bayer Leverkusen until 2027 but the German side are open to selling him. After spending last season on loan at AS Roma, Azmoun has been looking for a new club, with transfer guru Fabrizio Romano claiming he is moving to the UAE.

Tabriz hand-woven carpet goes to Paris 2024 Olympics



The Paris 2024 Olympics has fostered an opportunity for Tabriz carpets to showcase Iranian culture to the Olympics and the World Cup. Iranian designer of hand-woven carpets for the 2024 Olympic Games Hamid Arshadi said that six master carpet craftsmen from Tabriz, northwestern province of East Azarbaijan, have been assigned the weaving of the 2024 Olympic carpets during the last six months, according to Iran Press. Also, as the designer of the 2022 Qatar World Cup carpet map, he stated that seven carpets for the 2024 Olympics will be woven in Tabriz and presented in the international arena as the flagship of Iranian culture. Regarding the patterns used in the 2024 Olympic carpets, Arshadi said that the symbol of the National Olympic Committee of Iran, are olive branches and peace doves flying as a sign of peace. He said the woven carpets will be given to the International Olympic Committee of Lausanne, Switzerland, the Paris Olympic Game Committee, the Iranian Olympic Committee, and the Japanese Olympic Committee with the coordination of the National Olympic Committee of Iran.

First Day wrap-up of Iran at Paris 2024 Olympics: Gymnast Olfati displays great performance

Five athletes from Iran put themselves in race with their rivals on the first day of the 2024 Olympics in Paris on Saturday as Iranian gymnast Mehdi Olfati displayed a great performance as he came fourth in the Men's Vault contest. Also, a victory by the table tennis player, advance of the Iranian female rower to another chance along with elimination of the shooting and fencing representatives were the performance of the Iranian representatives on the first day of the 2024 Paris Olympics.

The First representative of Iran in the single scull competitions of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games stood in fourth place and went for another chance.

Fallen in the first group of the primary matches, Fatemeh Mojallal competed with rivals from Uganda, South Africa, Spain, Australia, and Nicaragua.

She managed to set a record of 08:01:30 and stood after rowers from Australia, Spain, and South Africa, respectively. Mojallal failed to ascend to the quarter-finals, yet she can have another chance.

Fatemeh Mojallal is the rising star of Iranian rowing. She has earned a place in the women's single sculls event and will have big shoes to fill in the absence of Nazanin Molaei, who achieved Iran's best-ever rowing result at the Tokyo Olympics by reaching the B Final.

Mojallal will also have the honor of carrying Iran flag at the closing ceremony of the 2024 Olympics. This is a significant moment for



● IRNA

Iranian rowing, as it will be the first time that a rower has been given this honor since Homa Hosseini at the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

In fencing, Iran's saberist Ali Pakdaman won 15-11 against Yoshida Kento of Japan in his first match to become one of the top 16 in the Olympics. Pakdaman faced an athlete from South Korea in the round of 16 and lost 15-8. Mohammad Fotuhi, the other representative of Iranian saber, faced saberist from Mexico and lost 15 to 13 to the Mexican rival to be eliminated.

Mohammad Rahbari, the other member of fencing team faced

Sebastien Patrick from France. In this game, the saber representative of Iran lost in a tough and breathtaking match with a result of 15-13.

Hanieh Rostamian collected 571.16 points in 10-meter shooting competition among 44 shooters, but she failed to go to final round.

Nigeria's table tennis star, Olajide Omotayo, lost to Iran's Noshad Alamiyan 4-1 in the Round of 64 of the Paris 2024 Olympics men's table tennis singles event.

The home crowd in South Paris Arena 4 erupted as Prithika Pavade secured a 4-1 victory over Iran's Neda Shahsavari. With a

packed arena behind her, the French player produced a thrilling performance that had the crowd on their feet.

The 33rd round of the Olympic Games, the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, kicked off on July 26 and will continue until August 11.

Among the participating countries is the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is represented by 40 athletes at the marquee sporting event, including 29 men and 11 women, competing in 13 sports.

As in previous Olympic Games, wrestling, weightlifting, and taekwondo are expected to be Iran's primary medal contenders. However, there are also hopes for

strong performances in gymnastics, table tennis, and climbing, according to their respective federations.

Iran's Olympic contingent has already arrived in Paris in batches, with the third group landing on Tuesday morning.

Iran bagged seven medals at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

Shooter Javad Foroughi earned Iran's first medal, securing gold in the men's 10-meter air pistol event.

Greco-Roman wrestler Mohammadreza Geraei added another gold to Iran's tally.

Sajad Ganjzadeh clinched gold in the men's karate kumite competition in the +75kg category.

In weightlifting, Ali Davoudi won a silver medal in the +109kg weight class, lifting a total of 441kg—200kg in the snatch and 241kg in the clean and jerk.

Freestyle wrestler Hassan Yazdani secured a silver in the 86kg weight class, narrowly losing to his arch-rival from US David Taylor with a score of 4-3 in the final.

Iran also earned two bronze medals. Greco-Roman wrestler Mohammadhadi Saravi triumphed in the 97kg category, defeating Finland's Arvi Savolainen 9-2.

Amirhossein Zare won bronze in the men's freestyle 125kg, overcoming China's Deng Zhiwei 5-0.

Iran participated in the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics with a total of 66 athletes—56 men and 10 women—competing in 17 sports.

It finished 27th in the overall medal standings at Tokyo, with three gold, two silver, and two bronze.

Iran secure semifinal spot in Asian Men's U-20 Volleyball Championship

Title-hotshots Iran, Japan, Korea and hosts Indonesia emerged victorious on the action-packed Top 8 round not only to stay unbeaten in the 22nd Asian Men's U-20 Volleyball Championship at Jawa Pos Arena and Gelora Pancasila here, but also advance to the do or die semifinals. After the rest and recovery day on Friday, the topflight competition resumed with top eight teams testing their mettle in Pool E and Pool F and the remaining eight lower-ranked sides fighting it out in Pool G and Pool H to chase for better opportunities and better positions between 9th and 16th places of the championship, which serves as the Asia's qualification tournament for the 2025 FIVB Volleyball Men's U-21 World Championship, asianvolleyball.net wrote.

In the Top 8 round on Saturday, former three-time champions Japan pulled off sensational straight-set 25-14, 25-13, 25-23 victory against Saudi Arabia in Pool E at Jawa Pos Arena.

Another Pool E clash at the same venue saw in-form Indonesia continue their winning streak on home soil with dramatic 3-1 (25-20, 25-23, 16-25, 25-18) win against India, silver medallists at the previous edition two years ago in Riffa, Bahrain. However, with only top two teams from each pool booking their semifinal spots, Indonesia and Japan are uncatchable in Pool E and through to the semifinals, with the former claiming 6 points from two straight wins and the latter bagging 5 points from two wins in a row. India and Saudi Arabia had respective one point and no point following two straight losses to come in third and fourth places in Pool E.



● asianvolleyball.net

In Pool F, reigning and seven-time winners Iran, which captured the last year's U-21 World Championship title to their name, became the only team not dropping a set to their respective opponents in the championship. The mighty Iranians on Saturday powered past Kazakhstan in thrilling three-setter 25-21, 25-16, 25-22. Opposite Pouya Ariakhah played a key role in helping Iran cruise past Kazakhstan, scoring a match-high 21 points from 19 kills, one block and one ace, while Opposite Ikramov Diyorbek led Kazakhstan with 18 points, all in attack.

Iran will next take on Korea in the 2022 semifinal rematch.

Korea, former six-time champions and bronze medallists in Riffa, Bahrain, flexed their muscles on Saturday to demolish former four-time winners China 3-1 (25-16, 25-20, 22-25, 25-18) in exhausting 101 minutes.

China dominated the blocking game with 12 stuffs against Korea's 8, but the Koreans fared better in the other key elements including attacks (57 to 43), aces (6 to 2) and benefited from more opponent errors (26 to 22).

Iran led Pool F with 6 points from two straight wins without losing a set, while Korea also collected 6 points from two wins in a row to come in second position.

China and Kazakhstan did not win a point from similar two losses to finish third and fourth places respectively.

Following their remarkable unbeaten runs, Iran and Korea are assured of finishing top two in Pool F and claiming their semifinal spots, while China and Kazakhstan will be relegated to classification round for 5th-8th places although they have to first take on each other.

Meanwhile, in the classification round for 9th-16th places, Kuwait downed Hong Kong, China in competitive four-setter 25-22, 18-25, 26-24, 25-22 in Pool G.

In another Pool G encounter, Australia swept Bangladesh in well-fought three sets 25-17, 31-29, 25-21.

Hong Kong China, Bangladesh, Australia and Kuwait had 3 points each from similar 1-1 win/loss record, but following the sets and points ratios, Hong Kong China stayed atop Pool G, followed by Bangladesh, Australia and Kuwait respectively.

In Pool H, Thailand, which finished a well-earned fourth place at the previous edition two years ago, tasted their first victory in Surabaya following their epic tie-break win 25-20, 25-23, 24-26, 21-25, 15-9 in a fatiguing 129-minute clash against Chinese Taipei.

The other Pool H clash saw Vietnam sweep Qatar in comfortable straight sets 25-12, 25-22, 25-14.

Vietnam led Pool H with 5 points from two straight wins, with Chinese Taipei and Thailand trailing in second and third places with 4 and 3 points respectively from similar record of one win against one loss. Qatar have yet got a point from two straight losses to come in fourth place.

Leader endorses Pezeshkian as Iran's 9th president

National Desk

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei formally endorsed Masoud Pezeshkian as Iran's 9th president at a ceremony held in Tehran on Sunday.

The Leader's decree, endorsing the mandate of President Pezeshkian, was read out at the event by the head of the leader's office.

In the decree, Ayatollah Khamenei said, "The fate-determining test of the presidential election ended with calmness and sobriety in difficult conditions thanks to the endeavors of people and officials, and the person chosen by the nation became ready to take on a great responsibility."

He also described the 14th presidential vote, which was held after late president Ebrahim Raisi's unfinished term of office, as "one of the honors of the Iranian nation and a sign of the establishment of a sustainable Islamic system that indicate the rationality and sobriety of the country's political environment."

The Leader also expressed prayers and wishes for Pezeshkian's success, adding that the nation's vote and his endorsement will persist as long as the president follows his usual approach on the straight path of Islam and the Revolution. Pezeshkian won the second round of the presidential election which was held on July 5. The 69-year-



Iran's newly elected President Masoud Pezeshkian (2nd L) speaks after receiving an official seal of approval of Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei (L) as Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf (2nd R) and Judiciary Chief Gholam-Hossein Mohseni Ejehei listen.

● khamenei.ir

old trained heart surgeon garnered more than 16 million votes against ex-nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, who secured upwards of 13 million out of over 30 million votes cast, with the voter turnout standing at almost 50 percent.

The election was called early after Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi lost his life in a helicopter crash in May.

Pezeshkian will take the oath of office in parliament on Tuesday. Delivering a speech at the event, the Leader said Iran's "democra-

cy is mixed with competition and healthiness."

"This democracy that exists today in our country was not obtained cheaply and easily, it is the result of people's uprising against a chaotic and disastrous situation that prevailed in the past," he emphasized. Ayatollah Khamenei further said that the Islamic Republic has in the past more than 40 years witnessed dozens of elections that were held in a healthy and competitive atmosphere with the motivated presence of the people.

Economic issues

Ayatollah Khamenei also asserted that economic issues are a priority today, stressing, "A calculated, strong and persistent economic mobility is required."

"Of course, in the previous government, valuable work was done, which should continue."

The leader urged officials to do whatever that is within their power on the international level while protecting the nation's dignity, however, he advised them not to ignore "capabilities and initiatives inside the

country." He further called for the country to adopt an "active and effective" approach in the face of global issues, especially regional ones.

The Islamic Republic has priorities in its foreign relations, one of which is its neighbors, he pointed out.

"We have no intention to oppose some European countries. The reason I didn't mention European countries as a priority is that they have not treated us well for many years," he added.

"If they don't have this bad attitude, then (ties with Europe) would be

one of our priorities." On the campaign trail, Pezeshkian had pledged to try to revive a 2015 nuclear deal with the United States and other world powers.

The deal collapsed in 2018 after Washington withdrew from it. Pezeshkian has in a recent article called for "constructive relations" with European countries, even though he accused them of reneging on commitments to mitigate the impact of US sanctions.

Justice for people

In his Sunday speech, President Pezeshkian pledged to pursue no path other than that of justice.

He said that "returning dignity and honor to the country is only possible through unity, and sticking to the law."

"We must join hands to address problems, needs, and concerns of the beloved people of our country," he added. "A society that is convergent and law-oriented can see the strengthening of its administration and society." Following the event, acting President Mohammad Mokher handed over official responsibilities to Pezeshkian

Reformist Aref appointed as first vice president

Haji-Mirzaei appointed as president's chief of staff

National Desk

Iran's new President Masoud Pezeshkian appointed Reformist Mohammad Reza Aref, 72, as his first vice president, according to an announcement carried by state TV.

Aref has represented Tehran in parliament and served as first vice president and communications minister under Iran's last Reformist president Mohammad Khatami, who held office from 1997 to 2005. He was also a candidate in the 2013 presidential election but withdrew

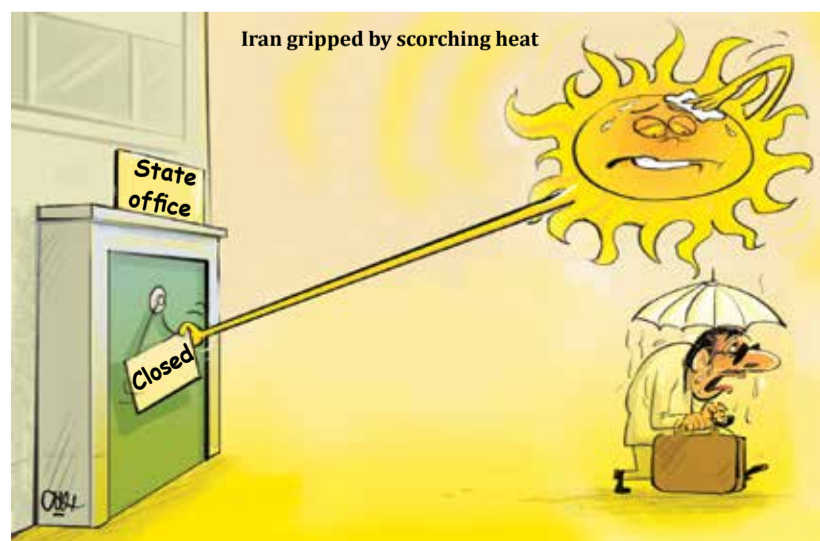


in favor of Hassan Rouhani, who went on to win the presidency. Aref is currently a member of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution and a member of the Expediency Council. He holds a doctorate in engineering from Stanford University.



Pezeshkian also served as health minister under Khatami. Iran's new president also appointed former education minister Mohsen Haji-Mirzaei as his chief of staff. Haji-Mirzaei served as education minister under former president Rouhani.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran warns of 'consequences' of Israeli attacks on Lebanon after Golan strike

International Desk

Iran on Sunday warned Israel that any new military "adventures" in Lebanon could lead to "unforeseen consequences", following a deadly rocket strike in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

"Any ignorant action of the Zionist regime can lead to the broadening of the scope of instability, insecurity and war in the region," said foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani.

He added that Israel will be responsible for "the unforeseen consequences and reactions to such stupid behavior".

Hezbollah, which on Saturday claimed multiple attacks on Israeli military positions following a deadly raid on southern Lebanon, has denied responsibility for the rocket fire that Israeli authorities said killed 12 people including children in the Druze town of Majdal Shams.

Kanaani accused Israel of pinning the blame on Hezbollah "to divert public opinion and world attention from its massive crimes" in the Gaza Strip, where war has raged since October 7.

He added that Israel "does not have the least moral authority to comment" on the deaths in Majdal Shams, on the Golan Heights which the country has seized from Syria in 1967 and lat-

er annexed in a move not recognized by the United Nations.

The attack sharply escalated tensions in the hostilities which have been fought in parallel to the Gaza war and has raised fears of a full-blown conflict between the heavily armed adversaries.

"Hezbollah will pay a heavy price, the kind it has thus far not paid," Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a phone call with the leader of the Druze community in Israel, according to a statement from his office.

In a written statement, Hezbollah said: "The Islamic Resistance has absolutely nothing to do with the incident, and categorically denies all false allegations in this regard".

Hezbollah had earlier announced several rocket attacks targeting Israeli military positions. The Israeli ambulance service said 13 more people were wounded by the rocket that hit the soccer pitch which was filled at the time with children and teenagers.

The Israeli military said the rocket launch was carried out from an area located north of the village of Chebaa in southern Lebanon. Netanyahu's far-right coalition ally, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, called for tough retaliation, including against Hezbollah's leader,



Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. "For the death of children, Nasrallah should pay with his head. All of Lebanon should pay," Smotrich posted on X.

The conflict has forced tens of thousands of people in both Lebanon and Israel to leave their homes. Israeli strikes have killed some 350 Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon and more than 100 civilians, including medics, children and journalists.

On the Israeli side, 22 soldiers and 24 civilians have been killed, according to Israeli authorities. In a statement on X, Lebanon's Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib urged for an "international investigation or a meeting of the tripartite committee held through UNIFIL to know the truth" about who was responsible for the attack. He insisted the Lebanese group targets "only mili-

A man stands near a damaged gate around a football pitch after a rocket strike in Majdal Shams village in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights on July 28, 2024.

● MENAHEM KAHANA/AFP

tary" positions and ruled out them carrying out an intentional attack on civilians in Majdal Shams.

The UK on Sunday condemned the rocket attack and said it was "deeply concerned about the risk of further escalation and destabilization".

France's Foreign Ministry also condemned the attack and urged belligerents to avoid escalation. "France condemns in the strongest terms the particularly fatal attack on the Druze town of Majdal Shams in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights," the ministry said, calling for "everything to be done to avoid a new military escalation".

UNESCO adds ancient Hegmataneh to World Heritage List

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's ancient archeological site of Hegmataneh, also known as Ecbatana, was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, according to an announcement by Iranian officials on Saturday. Located in the western Iranian city of Hamedan, Hegmataneh

dates back to the Median kingdom and the Achaemenid empire. Ali Darabi, Iran's Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, who is currently in New Delhi for a UNESCO World Heritage Committee meeting, described Ecbatana as the "mother city" of

ancient Persian civilization. "Hegmataneh, with its unparalleled evidence of the Median, Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sasanian periods, has been inscribed as Iran's 28th property on the World Heritage List," Darabi stated. The site boasts valuable artifacts and unique evidence of urban

planning from the Parthian period, along with significant remnants from the Achaemenid and Sasanian eras. Darabi congratulated the people of Iran, especially the residents of Hamedan Province, on this achievement. He also mentioned that there are no restrictions on registering the historical center of

Hamedan in the future, as it already falls within the protected buffer zone of the newly inscribed World Heritage site. Iranian officials, including Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, expressed their gratitude to the cultural heritage experts and congratulated the nation on this recog-

niton, which shines a light on Iran's rich historical and cultural legacy. The inscription of Hegmataneh on the UNESCO World Heritage List highlights the global significance of this ancient site and underscores Iran's diverse and profound contributions to world civilization.



Iran ranks fourth in 54th Int'l Physics Olympiad



Iranian physics student team finished fourth in the 54th International Physics Olympiad (IPHO 2024), with one gold and four silver medals, following China, Russia, and Romania in the rankings. The competition, hosted by Isfahan University of Technology, saw over 200 students from 47 countries compete, IRNA wrote. According to Mahmoud Bahmanabadi, advisor to the minister and head of the Physics Olympiad organizing committee, this year's event was one of the best-organized in recent years, despite challenges. He expressed satisfaction with the outcome, especially with Iran's return to gold medal standing after a hiatus. Iranian students have a strong track record in the International Physics Olympiad over the past four decades, having amassed 36

gold, 68 silver, and 39 bronze medals. The university previously hosted the event in 2007. The 54th edition of the Olympiad witnessed a tight competition among the top teams, with China emerging as the winner with five gold medals. Russia and Romania followed with impressive medal hauls, and Iran's team showed significant improvement, climbing up from their previous ranking of 17th place. Rajdeep Singh Rawat, the president of the International Physics Olympiad, praised the hosting of the event, stating that it fostered competition among young students and strengthened scientific ties between nations. The 54th International Physics Olympiad began July 21, bringing together 198 gifted students from 46 countries for an intense competition.

Iran stands up for Palestine at Venice Biennale

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran was the only country to stand up and speak out for Palestine at the Venice Biennale, according to Mohammad Khorasanizadeh, acting director of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. During the opening ceremony of the redisplay of Iranian artists' works on the theme of "Children of Gaza," which was previously displayed at the 60th Venice Biennale, Khorasanizadeh highlighted Iran's commitment to using art as a platform for advocating for the freedom and rights of the Palestinian people. The event was attended by high-ranking Iranian officials, including Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, who expressed his gratitude to the artists for using their talent to raise awareness about the plight of the people of Gaza. Esmaeili also criticized the hypocrisy of Western nations, con-

demning their silence in the face of horrific crimes committed against Palestinians. The exhibition, now on display at Gallery 6 of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran, showcases the works of five Iranian artists who donated their pieces to stand in solidarity with Palestine. The Iranian pavilion at the Venice Biennale, with the theme "Art Without Borders," featured a powerful message centered on the poetry of Saadi, emphasizing the country's unwavering support for the Palestinian cause. Looking ahead to the next Venice Biennale, which will focus on architecture, Esmaeili emphasized the importance of continuing to bring attention to the injustices faced by the oppressed, including the people of Gaza. He expressed his hope that art would continue to serve as a powerful medium to raise awareness and inspire action toward a more just world.

Iranian contestant wins third place in Russia Qur'an competition



Omid Hosseinejad, representing Iran in the international Qur'an competition held in Russia, secured third place in the recitation category. The event, organized by several Islamic institutions with support from the Republic of Tatarstan, featured contestants from 22 countries, including BRICS members. Mohamed Samir Mohamed from Bahrain claimed first place, while Mohamed Abdelkarim Kamil Attiyah from Egypt impressed the judges by memorizing the Qur'an despite being blind since birth, earning him second place. Hosseinejad, a Qur'an reciter

from Mashhad, qualified for the Russia competition by achieving a top rank in Iran's 46th National Qur'an Competition. The judging panel, comprised of esteemed Qur'an experts from various countries, assessed the contestants based on their adherence to Tajweed rules and the beauty of their recitation. The Russia Qur'an Competition is held biennially, alternating between recitation and full Qur'an memorization categories. This year's focus on recitation means that next year's competition will center around Qur'an memorization. Among the judges was Iranian Qur'an expert, Gholamreza Shah Miveh Isfahani. The competition, hosted in the city of Kazan, Russia, showcased the participants' dedication and talent in reciting and memorizing the Qur'an, highlighting the importance of this religious tradition across the globe.

Kamancheh virtuoso Alizadeh to hold concerts in European cities

Hossein Alizadeh, the renowned Iranian musician and composer, will be holding a series of concerts in European cities this coming fall. Accompanied by his musical group, 'Hamavayan,' Alizadeh is set to showcase the beauty of Iranian music to audiences across

the continent. According to the tour schedule, the group will perform in Zurich, Munich, London, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Berlin, Cologne, Stockholm, Madrid, and several other cities during the months of October to December. The ensemble for these concerts

includes Hossein Alizadeh on *tar*, Ali Bostan on *setar*, Saba Alizadeh on *kamancheh* (Iranian spiked fiddle), Parisa Pouladian on *rabab* (Arab fiddle), Mehdi Emami on vocals and *daf*, Houshmand Ebadi on *ney* (end-blown flute), Behnam Samani on *tonbak* (Iranian goblet drum) and *daf*, and other talented musicians.

