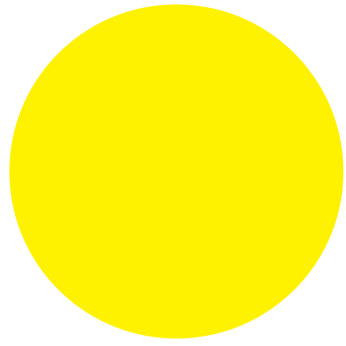


Judiciary chief offers to help gov't tackle economic issues



Iran Daily

Vol. 7615 • Tuesday, July 30, 2024 • Mordad 9, 1403 • Muharram 24, 1446 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages



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Netanyahu's murky strategy against Hezbollah

By Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh
International affairs expert

EXCLUSIVE OPINION

The possibility of a full-scale ground invasion by Israel in southern Lebanon, spurred by the Majdal Shams incident in the occupied Golan Heights, has stoked international concern. In my opinion, notwithstanding the absence of overt full-scale warfare, Israel has, in effect, unleashed fierce assaults on Hezbollah positions over the past months. Israel's primary objective in southern Lebanon is twofold: destroying Hezbollah's strongholds and assassinating the movement's top leaders and commanders. The magnitude and scale of Israeli operations may be tenfold that of Hezbollah's attacks, and the casualties are incomparable. Therefore, Israel has effectively launched an all-out war against Hezbollah in Lebanon and is increasing its intensity daily to reach the movement's strategic depth. Paradoxically, it is Hezbollah that has refrained from engaging in a full-blown war, opting instead for restraint.

Ever since the Majdal Shams incident occurred, regardless of who is accountable for the death of several children, Israel has leveraged the event as a pretext to launch further attacks on Hezbollah positions.

Therefore, it appears that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is employing a murky strategy regarding southern Lebanon, with the intention of attaining maximum gains and infiltrating Hezbollah's strategic depth, while evading accountability for a full-blown conflict. Following the surprise attack by Hamas on October 7, Netanyahu has attempted to foil strategic threats against himself and is anticipated to persist with this approach until at least the end of the US presidential election. If Donald Trump wins the election, he will then advance his agenda more comfortably.

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'Grave' Consequences If Israel Attacks Lebanon: Pezeshkian

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Smoke billows following an Israeli airstrike in the southern Lebanese border village of Chihine on July 28, 2024.
KAWNAT HAJU/AFP

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SPECIAL ISSUE

Iran's exports up by 8.3% in four months to late July

Iran's non-oil exports rose by \$1.35 billion in the four months to July 21 compared to the same period last year, according to the latest figures released by Iran's House of Industry, Mine and Trade.

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Iranian filmmakers win at Malaysian festival

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Oil sales fetch \$15.7b in four months: **IRICA**

Economic Desk

Iran has exported \$15.7 billion worth of crude oil by the end of July, as stated by the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Mohammad Rezvanifar said that considering the oil exports of \$15.7 billion, the total foreign trade of the country amounts to \$51 billion, Tasnim news agency reported.

Figures by a major energy data agency last month indicated that Iran witnessed the second major growth in its oil production in 2023 despite continued pressure as a result of US sanctions on the country's oil exports.

Figures by the Energy Institute (EI), cited in a June-29 report by ILNA, showed that Iran's oil and condensates production had reached an average of 3.94 million barrels per day (bpd) last year, up 19% from figures reported in 2022.

The growth was more than 13 times higher than a global average oil production increase of 1.4% as the world's average output reached 82.636 million bpd last year, the data showed.

Only Guyana's output growth of 40.8% was higher than Iran's although the small South American nation's production hovered at around a tiny figure of 0.391 million bpd.

Petchem output tops 20m tons in Q1 calendar year

Economic Desk

Iran has produced nearly 20 million and 410 thousand tons of various petrochemical products, of which three million tons was sold domestically in the first quarter of the Iranian year (March 21 - June 22, 2024), according to the country's Association of Petrochemical Industry Corporations (APIC).

APIC's Secretary-General Ahmad Mahdavi Abhari said that seven million and 740 thousand tons was exported, while nine million tons was allocated to feeding petrochemical complexes, Mehr News Agency reported.

According to APIC's secretary-general, the country exported over seven million tons of petrochemicals valued at \$3.390 billion between March 21 and June 22, 2024.

Mahdavi Abhari said that if the current trend in exports continues, the value of our exports will increase compared to last year.

Judiciary chief offers to help gov't tackle economic issues

Economic Desk

Head of Iran's Judiciary emphasized the judicial system's support for the new government in economic and livelihood matters, stating that one of the key manifestations of this support for the country's 14th administration in the economic sphere is the assurance of a secure environment for safe economic investments.

On Monday, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, during a meeting of the Supreme Judicial Council, referred to the endorsement ceremony of President Masoud Pezeshkian on Sunday, noting that as the Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said, economic matters are currently the priority, and all branches and pillars of the system must assist the government in this regard; thus, the judiciary must also contribute, IRNA reported.

Elaborating on how the judicial system can assist the government, the head of the Judiciary stated that, "This support cannot be limited to mere words.



We must actively support the government in overcoming economic and livelihood challenges."

The Judiciary chief underlined that one of the significant manifestations of the body's support

for the government in economic matters is ensuring the security of investments.

"In this regard, we should not impose unnecessary and unjustified restrictions on law-abiding businesspeople," he said, noting that, "There are sometimes complaints about unnecessary limitations imposed by the judiciary or its agents on merchandisers."

Ejei stated that one of the requirements for economic growth and prosperity is attention to the issue of "competitiveness."

"If government and semi-governmental organization tighten the space for the private sector, then economic revitalization will not progress," he said, adding that, "All members of society should play a role in the economy, and the economy must, in the truest sense, become people-oriented."

"The judiciary has valuable capacities to assist the government in various fields, and we view supporting the government as a form of supporting ourselves, as the government's success in addressing people's livelihood issues will also reduce the volume of judicial cases," he concluded.

Exports up by 8.3% in four months to late July, official data show



Iran's non-oil exports rose by \$1.35 billion in the four months to July 21 compared to the same period last year, according to the latest figures released by Iran's House of Industry, Mine and Trade.

The figures published on Sunday showed that Iran had exported a total of \$17.5 billion worth of goods, commodities and manufactured products from late March to late July, up by 8.3% from the same period in 2023, Press TV reported.

Exports from Iran saw a major increase in the calendar month to late June 20 when shipments were worth \$5.496 billion, up 14% compared to the same month last year, showed the data, which cited official figures from Iran's customs office (IRICA).

The figures indicated that Iranian exports had risen 11.5% year on year in the month to late July to reach some \$4 billion.

Iran has seen a steady rise in its non-oil exports in recent years

thanks to increased government support for domestic manufacturing and agriculture sectors, a policy which has been aimed at diversifying away from oil revenues and making the economy more resilient against foreign sanctions.

China and Iraq have been the largest buyer of Iranian goods and products in recent years, with petrochemicals generating the bulk of revenues derived from non-oil exports.

Quarterly trade figures released by IRICA earlier this month showed that Iran's non-oil exports had increased by 7.6% in the quarter to late June compared to the same period last year. Iran's total trade in the June quarter, including its oil exports of more than \$12 billion, reached nearly \$40 billion, according to IRICA figures which indicated that the country had a trade deficit of \$0.8 billion over the same period without considering the oil exports.

Nearly \$23b earmarked for import of essential, pharmaceutical, commercial goods: **CBI**

Economic Desk

The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) announced that it had allocated \$22.927 billion to the import of basic commodities, medicines, commercial goods, imports versus exports, and services from March 21 to August 7 of this year.

The CBI said that from the start of this Iranian calendar year (began on March 21) until July, 28, \$5.153 billion was allocated for essential goods and medicines, \$12.271 billion for commercial goods, \$418 million for services, and \$5.085 billion for imports versus exports, IRNA reported.

The bank's report suggests that the allocation of NIMA currency for the transport and automotive industries amounted to \$1.658 billion, for the electrical and electronic equipment industries was \$1.647 billion, for machinery and production equipment totaled \$1.041 billion, for mining industries reached \$946 million, and for textiles and apparel was \$624 million. These industrial groups also received



\$1.140 billion, \$187 million, \$892 million, and \$38 million in agreed-upon currency or imports versus exports by the end of July 28.

In addition to these groups, \$6.355 billion in NIMA currency and \$1.991 billion in imports versus exports were allocated to other industries. Currently, Iran has three foreign exchange rates, including the open market rate, the official rate and the NIMA rate.

NIMA is the Persian acronym for an online currency system

launched by the CBI in April 2018. It is a market where Iranian exporters can sell their foreign currency earnings for Iranian rials. The report provided by the CBI on Monday stated that the balanced average exchange rate for the month leading up to July 28 was calculated at 39,335 toman for the dollar. Additionally, on July 28, the dollar was priced at 48,159 toman in the currency exchange hall of Iran's central exchange market.

Netanyahu's murky strategy ...

Nonetheless, it seems improbable that Israel intends to orchestrate a ground operation and enter Lebanese territory. Such a move would render them susceptible to adverse consequences. For now, Netanyahu is pursuing his objectives through airstrikes on military sites while striving for a political goal against Hezbollah. Lebanon has been grappling with a political and economic crisis for years. An

incursion by the Israeli army into Lebanese territory may strengthen domestic support for Hezbollah, and the Lebanese may unite with Hezbollah to defend their country.

However, through these continuous air raids, Netanyahu is trying to portray Hezbollah as the instigator of hostilities and pit the movement against the Lebanese people. It seems that Hezbollah, taking into account the political and economic crisis, is also refraining

from a heavy response to Israel and wants to contain the war to prevent further internal challenges in Lebanon.

Therefore, an Israeli ground invasion of Lebanon does not appear plausible at this juncture as it would be costly for the Israeli military and could further erode the international standing of the Israeli regime. Furthermore, it may provoke more intense reactions from the global community, particularly the Muslim world.

Azərbaycan Muzeyi: A showcase of Seljuk metalworking and Islamic-Iranian artistry

Iranica Desk

The Seljuks were tribes of Turkic people who settled in the steppes of Khwarezm and along the shores of the Caspian Sea, across the Jihun River, during the Samanid era.

Over time, the Seljuks succeeded in driving the Ghaznavids out of Khorasan, effectively ending the Ghaznavid dynasty and establishing a powerful empire through significant victories and the conquest of cities such as Merv, Herat, and Neyshabur. With the rise of Islam, bronze gradually replaced gold and silver, particularly in the production of metal vessels. Bronze was cast and carved, and it was sometimes inlaid with silver or adorned with intricate designs; in some instances, it was even embellished with enameling. Metalworkers, utilizing this alloy, created vessels such as trays and water containers shaped like animals and birds, consistently imitating ancient traditional molds and patterns. Most experts believe that the illustrious era of Iranian-Islamic metalworking occurred during the Seljuk period.

Alongside local artists from Iran, Iraq, and Asia Minor, the Seljuks also benefited from the assistance of some Christian artists, particularly carvers. Nevertheless, they maintained a degree of internal independence in their arts by preserving traditions and traditional motifs, such as Sassanid designs. Remaining examples of Seljuk metalwork illustrate a sophisticated and progressive art form, showcasing a high level of skill.

One of the defining characteristics of Seljuk metalwork is the diversity of motifs that reflect an urban aesthetic. Generally,



these motifs encompass plant, animal, human, calligraphic, geometric, and abstract designs, as well as cartouches and intertwined patterns. Among these, animal forms are particularly prominent, as they are not only depicted in various creations but sometimes the entire piece or parts of it are crafted in animal shapes.

Another notable group of motifs includes inscriptions resembling Kufic or Naskh script, often featuring the name of the maker or owner, the date of creation, and occasionally text describing the piece.

Metal objects from the Seljuk period included a wide range of items such as drinking bowls, perfume containers, candlesticks, rosewater sprinklers, bowls, vases, bottles, mirrors, plaques, and washing basins.



● chtn.ir

Additionally, jewelry from this period primarily consisted of earrings and necklaces. The diversity and abundance of these metalworks likely stem from the fact that they were produced for a variety of clientele

and were not limited to specific social classes. In fact, individuals from different segments of society served as customers for metalworks with various purposes.

The Azerbaijan Museum in Ta-

briz is recognized as one of the most important museums in Iran and the second-largest archaeological museum in the country, following the National Museum of Iran. The museum contains a rich array of historical and artistic artifacts from both pre-Islamic and Islamic periods.

Currently, it features a valuable collection of twelve thousand antique and artistic objects, of which 2,300 pieces have been officially registered. Due to space limitations, only a select portion of these artifacts is displayed in various sections of the museum, catering to enthusiasts of history, culture, and art. Metalworking from the Seljuk period exemplifies Islamic-Iranian art, achieving remarkable excellence with the support of the Seljuks and the application

of contemporary industrial techniques. Despite restrictions on the selection of metals due to the prohibition of gold and silver, metalworkers of this era crafted various objects such as trays, mortars, candlesticks, and oil lamps using brass and bronze with a high tin content. The presence of these artifacts in the Azerbaijan Museum not only supports researchers but also represents a significant chapter in Iran's tumultuous history.

The first artifact is a bronze candlestick base dating back to the 12th century CE (6th century AH). This piece measures approximately 75 centimeters in height, with a base radius of about 33 centimeters. It showcases a variety of plant, animal, and geometric motifs, accompanied by floral Kufic inscriptions.

The second artifact is a copper ewer from the same period, also dating to the 12th century CE. This entirely handmade piece, crafted using the hammering technique, features an array of animal, plant, and geometric designs. Standing at 18 centimeters tall, with a mouth diameter of 10.5 centimeters, this vessel is proudly displayed for the public and enthusiasts at the Azerbaijan Museum.

The third artifact is another copper ewer from 12th century CE, which is also hand-hammered but lacks inscriptions. This vessel is adorned with various plant and geometric motifs created using the engraving technique. However, access to its decorations and a detailed examination of its designs are limited due to some motifs and sections being in poor condition. This piece has a height of 41 centimeters and a mouth diameter of over 10 centimeters.

Natural beauty and rich heritage of Tang-e Boraq in Fars Province

Iranica Desk

Gorges and valleys formed by water erosion over thousands of years are a prominent feature throughout Iran, particularly in mountainous areas with high rainfall. The Zagros Mountains, in particular, are known for their stunning gorges and valleys shaped by heavy precipitation. The northern part of Fars Prov-

ince, adjacent to Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, is a popular tourist destination due to several renowned gorges. One of the most famous is Behesht-e Gomshodeh (Lost Paradise), which attracts many visitors.

Another remarkable gorge in northern Fars Province is Tang-e Boraq (Boraq Gorge), located about 160 km from Shiraz, near a village of the same name. This

gorge has been sculpted by the long-term erosion of the river, and despite its beautiful waterfalls and ponds, it remains relatively untouched and a hidden gem for nature lovers.

The lush, wooded environment within the gorge, combined with the abundance of water, creates an ideal setting for tourism. Various plants thrive on the gorge walls, contributing to the stun-

ning landscape. Additionally, large cave-like depressions in the walls serve as another attraction in this picturesque area. Visiting the gorge does not require extensive hiking, making it accessible to people of all ages. However, exploring the deeper parts does necessitate proper physical preparation. At the bottom of the gorge flows a river, one of the tributaries of the Kor-

River, which eventually feeds into the Dorodzan Dam.

At the entrance to the gorge, visitors can find amenities such as parking and restrooms. For those wishing to stay overnight, accommodations are available in the nearby Tang-e Boraq village. Dating back to the Cretaceous period, approximately 140 million years ago, the rock formations of this gorge are of carbonate or-

igin, with limestone mountains flanking both sides. Tang-e Boraq is situated along the tourism axis that includes Shiraz, Doshman Ziari, Khanmin, and Sedeh.

Additionally, Tang-e Boraq features an ancient inscription measuring two meters in length, written in both Parthian and Sassanid scripts. This inscription was officially registered on Iran's National Heritage List.



Tehran-Caracas Axis

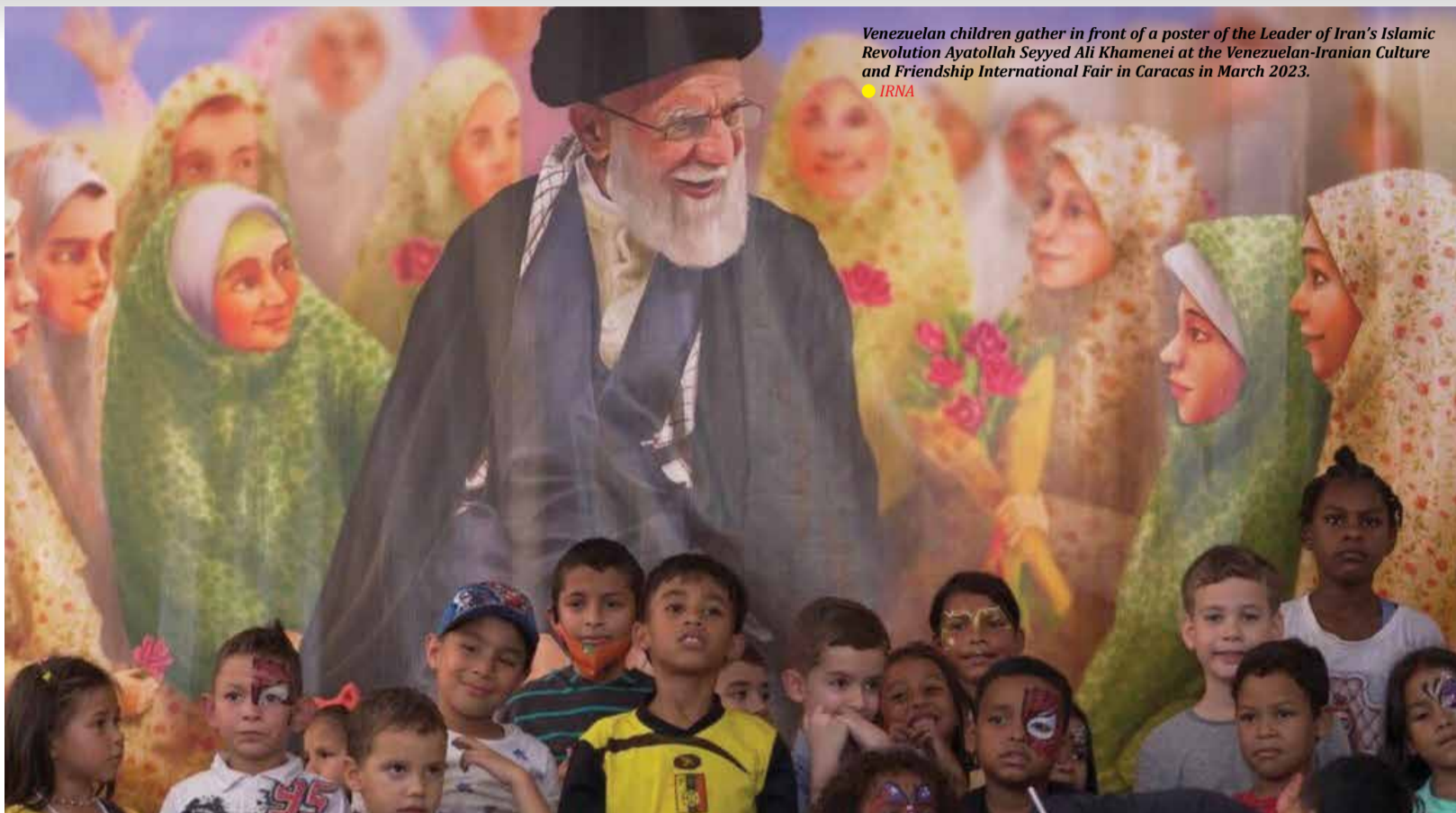
An important factor in geopolitical balance

By Matija Šerić
Journalist

ANALYSIS

The strategic partnership between the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the most intriguing alliances that have emerged in recent times. Undoubtedly, it is an extraordinary geopolitical phenomenon that connects two different continents, Asia (the Middle East) and South America, with the aim of achieving political, economic, and military interests. This alliance is not just a product of current political circumstances, but the result of excellent diplomatic, economic, and political relations that have developed over the past quarter-century.

Caracas and Tehran are more than 11,000 kilometers apart by air, but the distance has not hindered their partnership. The political systems of the two countries are very different. Venezuelans are mostly Catholics, and Iranians are Shia Muslims; the former are Latin Americans, and the latter are Indo-Europeans. It could be said that these differences have facilitated their connection.



Venezuelan children gather in front of a poster of the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei at the Venezuelan-Iranian Culture and Friendship International Fair in Caracas in March 2023.

IRNA

Beginnings

The era of Venezuelan-Iranian friendship began in the early 2000s when the controversial leftist president Hugo Chavez came to power in Venezuela. During his tenure, he visited Iran numerous times. The first visit took place in 2001, when he stated that he had come to Iran to "prepare the way for peace, justice, stability, and progress for the 21st century". The then Iranian president Mohammad Khatami visited Venezuela three times. During a visit in 2005, Chavez awarded him the Order of the Liberator and called him "a tireless fighter for the right causes in the world".

The rapprochement of the two nations, imbued with strong anti-imperialist, i.e., anti-American rhetoric, did not go unnoticed by Wash-

ington, causing significant concern within the Bush administration. With Mahmoud Ahmadinejad coming to power in Iran, bilateral relations began to gain specific features based on the friendly relationship between the two leaders. Both became icons of the struggle against the aggressive foreign policy of the USA in the period following the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. America's intentions were to undermine the governments of numerous states that did not want to submit to a unipolar world order and refused to relinquish sovereignty over their natural resources. Both Iran and Venezuela had a crucial resource: oil, which American companies were keen to acquire, and they also held important geostrategic positions on their continents.

Vanguard of 21st century anti-imperialism

In May 2006, it was announced that Caracas was ready to sell its 21 F-16 fighter jets (American-made) to Tehran. That same month, Chavez expressed support for Iran's intention to produce nuclear energy. In July 2006, Iran faced Western criticism for developing its nuclear program and supporting the Lebanese Hezbollah in its fight against Israel. It was during this time that Chavez visited Tehran and committed Venezuela to "stand by Iran at any time under any conditions. We are with you and Iran forever. As long as we remain united, we can defeat imperialism, but if we are divided, they will push us aside." "I feel that I have found a brother and a fighting friend after meeting with Chavez. We believe that Iran and Venezuela

should share all experiences with each other, stay by each other, and support each other," Ahmadinejad responded. During that visit, Chavez made the legendary statement at the University of Tehran: "If the US succeeds in consolidating its dominance, then humanity has no future. Therefore, we need to save humanity and put an end to the US."

In the mid-2000s, the Iranian-Venezuelan alliance was the vanguard of a new transregional anti-American (anti-imperialist) alliance that today is led by China and Russia.

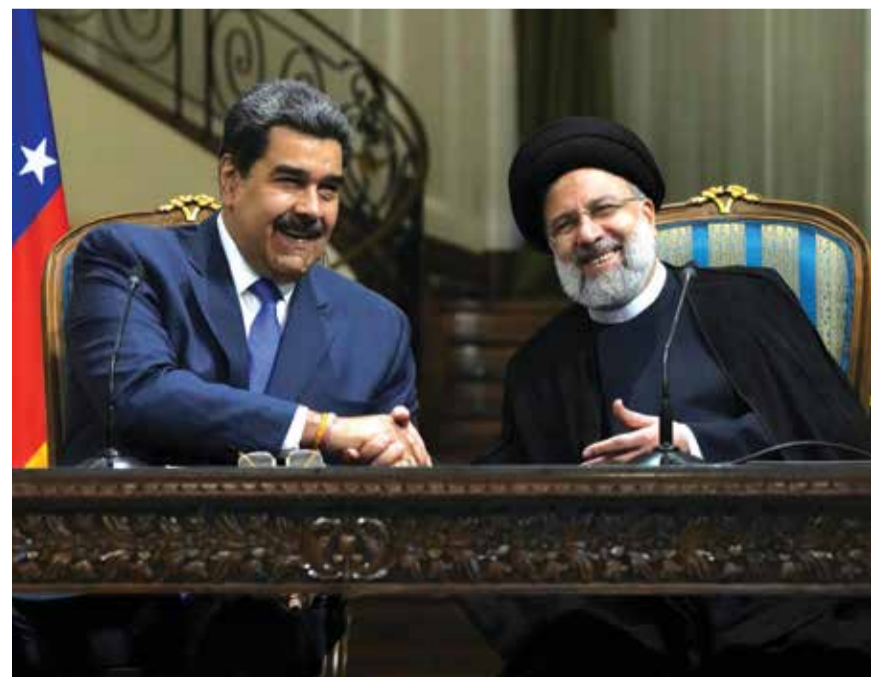
In January 2007, the two presidents announced that they would use money from the previously announced Anti-American Fund of \$2 billion to invest in the fight of other countries against American imperialism. In March of that year, Chavez

stated that he disagreed with Ahmadinejad's call to wipe Israel off the map, but that did not prevent them from declaring an "Axis of Unity" against American imperialism in July. In 2009, during the G20 Summit in London, Ahmadinejad and Chavez held a separate meeting they called the G2 Summit. During this meeting, the formation of a joint Iranian-Venezuelan development bank with an initial capital of \$200 million was announced.

During Chavez's visit to Tehran the following year, the continuation of the strategic alliance was announced with the aim of "establishing a new world order based on humanity and justice," as stated by the Iranian leader. Delegations agreed to deepen cooperation in the fields of oil, natural gas, textiles, trade, and public housing. Iran

thus became Chavez's main ally in the Middle East alongside Gaddafi's Libya and Assad's Syria, which would soon be engulfed by the Arab Spring.

In 2011, the Obama administration imposed sanctions on the Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA for opposing US sanctions and sending two oil tankers to Iran. In September, the two countries signed agreements on factory production, energy, construction, and agriculture during talks in Caracas. The then Venezuelan foreign minister Nicolas Maduro stated: "While imperialism and its criminal elites have declared war on the Muslim people for over ten years, we in the Bolivarian Revolution, led by president Chavez, declare our love for the culture of the Muslim people, their entire history, and proclaim our eternal brotherhood."



Iranian late president Ebrahim Raisi (R) and his Venezuelan counterpart, Nicolas Maduro, shake hands after signing a roadmap for their 20-year cooperation agreement in Tehran on June 11, 2022.

AP

Great words, but also deeds

After Chavez's death in March 2013, Maduro became the new president, continuing to foster excellent relations with Iran. The day after Chavez's death, Ahmadinejad paid tribute to his late friend, writing that Chavez would "return on the Day of Resurrection" along with religious figures such as Jesus Christ. At that time, annual trade between the two countries was estimated at hundreds of millions of dollars. This was a significant increase from 2001, when trade exchange amounted to only around \$189,000.

From 2001 to 2013, the governments of Tehran and Caracas signed nearly 300 agreements on numerous projects, including housing construction, cement factories, car manufacturing, the construction of hospitals, department stores, dairy farms, and seafood production companies. The value of Iranian company investments in Venezuela is estimated between \$15 and \$20 billion.

Chavez's death and Ahmadinejad's departure from power in June 2013 did not mark the end of the Iranian-Venezuelan friendship, which continued. Each country remains a crucial ally to the other. Presidents Maduro and Hassan Rouhani continued in the footsteps of their predecessors. By August 2014, the two countries had signed 265 agreements stemming from 58 projects in industry, ecology, trade, energy, culture, and more. During that month, during a meeting between Venezuelan foreign minister Elias Jaua and president Rouhani, Iran supported Maduro's government, which was beginning to face significant challenges: shortages of consumer goods and mass anti-government demonstrations that included violence from both protesters and police. Both expressed support for the Palestinian state and refused to legitimize the "State of Israel". Maduro visited Iran the following month.

During Maduro's next visit to Iran in January 2015, the topics were dom-

inated by global low oil prices. Both sides blamed the US for the low prices. Rouhani confirmed that Iran and Venezuela would join forces to "foil the strategies of world powers... and stabilize oil prices at a reasonable level".

The drastically low oil prices severely impacted Venezuela's economy, as oil makes up 90% of its exports. In June 2015, a series of intergovernmental agreements were signed in economic, financial, technological, and scientific fields, with Iran promising Venezuela medicines and medical equipment. In November 2015, Maduro visited Iran again, where continued cooperation was promised. In August 2016, Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif visited Caracas in a live broadcast on state television. The meeting was a political show to demonstrate that Venezuela was not internationally isolated, defying the US, which it claims to be in an economic war with, but also served Iran, whose minister toured Latin America.

Partnership in era of pandemic, new US pressures

Both Iran and Venezuela have lived under US sanctions for years. During Trump's administration, sanctions on Venezuela, first imposed by Obama in 2014, were intensified in 2017. Trump's administration withdrew the US from the Iranian nuclear deal in 2018 and imposed new sanctions on Iran. As a result of these US actions, Tehran and Caracas undertook joint projects to better cope with the sanctions. Amid acute fuel shortages while Maduro was preoccupied with protests following the contested 2018 presidential elections and Juan Guaidó's 2019 self-proclamation as president, Iran sent several crucial oil shipments to Venezuela. Unlike Western countries that recognized Guaidó, for Iran,

Maduro was and remained the only legitimate president. In May 2020, a fleet of five Iranian oil tankers transported 1.53 million barrels of oil from the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas to Venezuelan refineries. A sixth ship sailed the Caribbean Sea and docked in La Guaira, unloading 345,000 barrels of oil. A second oil shipment, consisting of four tankers carrying 1.12 million barrels of oil, was seized by Americans in August 2020. Russia's assault on Ukraine in early 2022 further strengthened the cooperation between Venezuela and Iran, and more broadly, the two countries began to work more closely with Russia, China, North Korea, Syria, Cuba, Nicaragua, and other anti-American countries. That year, Israelis reported that Iranians planned to build a naval base in Vene-

zuelan ports to operate in the Americas. The second-largest refinery in Venezuela, Punta Cardon, received 200,000 barrels of Iranian oil in April 2022, and another 400,000 barrels were delivered to the Puerto José refinery in May. The Venezuelan state oil and gas company PDVSA continues to receive vital equipment from its Iranian partners. Maduro and Raisi met six times. In June 2022, Maduro visited Iran, where he signed a 20-year cooperation pact in the oil, petrochemical, and defense sectors. Iranian oil exports reached a new record in early 2023 due to increased shipments to Venezuela and China. Iran supported Venezuelan oil exports, and its navy established a presence in the Panama Canal for the first time in history.



Workers with Iranian and Venezuelan flags celebrate the arrival of the Iranian oil tanker "Fortune" at a Venezuelan refinery. AFP



Then foreign minister of Venezuela Jorge Arreaza (L) is greeted warmly by his Iranian counterpart, Mohammad Javad Zarif, in Tehran on April 7, 2018. TASNIM

Raisi's fruitful visit to Venezuela

In June 2023, Iran's late president Ebrahim Raisi visited Venezuela on his tour of South America, also visiting Nicaragua and Cuba. The Iranian president said that Iran and Venezuela could expand their bilateral trade from the current \$3 billion in two phases: to \$10 billion in the first phase, and then to \$20 billion in the second phase. With this intention, 25 agreements were signed in sectors such as the petrochemical industry, transportation, and mining, with a particular emphasis on export and oil cooperation.

"The relationship between Iran and Venezuela is not a normal diplomatic relationship but a strategic

relationship between two countries with common interests, common visions, and common enemies," Raisi said at a press conference. The Iranian president said the country had proven its friendship with the Latin American country "in difficult days" over the years, describing bilateral relations as "strategic".

Furthermore, he called for the establishment of regular shipping lines between Iran and Venezuela and advocated for strengthening cooperation between the two sides in the industry, mining, energy, and banking sectors. Raisi emphasized that despite the measures taken by the two countries to develop their relations, there is still untapped potential. "I pay

my respects to the wise, noble, and valuable people of Venezuela, who resist cruel imperialism. We are friends in difficult times," Raisi said. He added that Tehran and Caracas have "common enemies," referring to the US, which was not explicitly stated for diplomatic correctness.

Maduro stated that the two countries are "on the right side of history" and will be "invincible" in their resistance to US sanctions. "After imperial aggressions, after more than 900 criminal sanctions, here is Venezuela standing and extending a hand to Iran," said the Venezuelan leader. During his visit, Maduro awarded Raisi the National Medal of Honor of Venezuela.

Further cooperation

Since August 2023, the two countries have launched direct flights between Tehran and Caracas. An Iranian delegation visited Venezuela in April this year. According to Venezuelan sources, the meeting's goal was to review bilateral cooperation. In the coming months, Caracas and Tehran are expected to enhance their relations in the energy and military fields.

Tehran uses Venezuela as a base for conducting its activities in Latin America. Iranians have shown interest in Venezuela's uranium reserves in recent years. Uranium is a key element for the development of Iran's nuclear program. Iranian interest is not limited to Venezuelan territory. Both Bolivia and Peru are important to Tehran due to their strategic resources.

Political, economic, military benefits of alliance

The alliance between Iran and Venezuela emerged as a new coalition on the international stage at the beginning of the 21st century. Politically, the Iran-Venezuela alliance stems from their shared goals in opposing dominant Western powers in the international arena.

Both countries face similar challenges and pressures, including sanctions and international isolation, which bind them in their search for alternative allies. Their mutual resistance to US foreign policy, which regards both countries as hostile, their possession of oil, and their aim to establish a multipolar world order have brought Caracas and Tehran closer together. Both countries are members of OPEC and the Non-Aligned Movement. Interestingly, their current political systems were born out of revolutions: the Islamic and the Bolivarian. Ideologically, the alliance between Iran and Venezuela is also founded on shared anti-imperialist views.

The economic aspect of the alliance is crucial, especially in the context of energy resources. Iran and Venezuela are countries with large oil reserves, and their cooperation in the energy sector is vital for both sides, particularly considering Chi-

na's significant energy needs. Iran and Venezuela can quench China's "thirst" for oil.

Through various agreements and initiatives, the two countries have established mechanisms for cooperation in the economy, trade, and infrastructure projects. Oil has been a decisive factor in their connection. However, they have differing views on oil production. Iranians believe that oil production should be increased to earn more revenue, while Venezuelans think production should be reduced to raise prices.

Military cooperation plays a significant role as well. Both countries face threats from foreign powers and potential military interventions, making the exchange of military technology, training of military personnel, and military exercises important components of their cooperation. The military dimension of the alliance provides them with additional security and strengthens their ability to defend against aggression. The primary connection between the two countries is their opposition to Washington, driven by the fear that the US might eventually carry out a military invasion of Iran and Venezuela. Therefore, both countries have excellent relations with Russia and China and advocate for multipolarity.



Young people wave Venezuelan and Iranian flags during the arrival of Iranian late president Ebrahim Raisi at the Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas, Venezuela, on June 12, 2023. YURI CORTEZ/AFP



People pay for groceries at Megasis, the first Iranian supermarket in Caracas, Venezuela. ALEX VASQUEZ/BLOOMBERG

An important factor in geopolitical dynamics

While the alliance between Iran and Venezuela brings tangible benefits, it also carries certain risks. For instance, close cooperation with Iran could provoke additional tensions between Venezuela and the US, potentially leading to further escalation of international relations in the Latin American region.

Additionally, economic dependence on oil could complicate the economic stability of both countries given the fluctuating oil prices on global markets. Thanks to their close relations, the two countries can help each other in difficult times. Iran can somewhat assist Venezuela in overcoming its deep political and economic crisis, while Venezuela can diplomatically support Iran in potential conflicts in the Middle East. Despite the challenges, the Iran-Venezuela alliance remains an important factor in international relations with the potential to influence global political and economic dynamics.

The article first appeared on Eurasia Review.



Azmoun enters new chapter as European journey ends

Sports Desk

Iranian international Sardar Azmoun will embark on a new era in his career after signing a three-year contract, worth €5 million, with UAE Pro League club Shabab Al Ahli.

The new deal means the end of an 11-season long journey for the 29-year-old striker, a former Sepahan under-19 player, who began his senior club football with Russian top-flight side Rubin Kazan. Azmoun spent last season at AS Roma on loan from Bayer Leverkusen, bagging three goals and four assists in 29 games across all competitions for the Giallorossi but the Italian capital club, which failed to secure a Champions League spot for upcoming campaign, refused to make a permanent bid for the striker.

The Iranian returned to the Bundesliga champion for the regular performance diagnostics two weeks ago but did not show up for the first training session of the new season, while Spanish club Sevilla was also believed to be interested in making a move for the prolific forward.

Azmoun had joined the German club from Zenit St. Petersburg for €2.5 million in January 2022 and went on to register five goals and assists apiece in 44 appearances during a difficult season-and-a-half spell marked by injury setbacks. Also a former player of Russian top-flight side Rostov FC, Azmoun netted 118 goals – including six in the UEFA Champions League – while providing his teammates with 52 assists in 345 games for five clubs in Russia, Germany, and Italy.

The Iranian won seven major trophies with Zenit, including four league titles, and was the Russian top flight's top scorer in the 2019/20 season, claiming the Player of the Season award the following year.

Having a remarkable 53 goals in 83 international caps under his belt, Azmoun is the fourth Iranian to sign for Shabab Al Ahli in three years, following Ahamad Nourollahi, and Mahdi Qayedi, joining international teammate Saeid Ezzatollahi for the start of the new season.

Azmoun's first appearance in the Emirati club's shirt could come in his home country against his boyhood club Sepahan, when the two sides square off in the inaugural AFC Champions League Elite preliminary round in Isfahan next Tuesday.

Sayyadmanesh off to flying start in new Belgian league season

Sports Desk

Iranian striker Allahyar Sayyadmanesh began the new Jupiler Pro League season in style as he bagged a goal and assist to help KVC Westerlo beat Cercle Brugge 3-0 on the opening day of the Belgian top-flight campaign.

The 23-year-old Iranian, who joined Westerlo from Championship club Hull City in January, teed up Lucas Stassin for the club's first goal 18 minutes into

the game before the Belgian teenager found his second with a superb close-range volley 10 minutes after the break.

Sayyadmanesh capped his impressive performance with a composed left-footed chip in the 64th minute – his first club goal since April 2023 – and then was substituted eight minutes later.

The former Esteghlal and Zorya Lugansk forward will be looking to build on the fresh start after a dreadful

2023/24 campaign, during which he failed to find the net across 24 appearances for Hull and Westerlo in all competitions as his contribution was limited to a single assist.



KVC Westerlo striker Allahyar Sayyadmanesh (L) is seen in action during a 3-0 victory over Cercle Brugge in the Belgian Jupiler Pro League in Het Kuipje, Westerlo, Belgium, on July 28, 2024. ● PHOTONEWS



China's Lian Junjie and Yang Hao compete in the men's 10-meter synchronized platform diving final at the Paris Olympics in Saint-Denis, France, on July 29, 2024. ● LEE JIN-MAN/AP

China makes it 2-for-2 in Olympic diving, leaving Britain's Daley with a silver

AP – With Tom Daley out of the way, China is another step closer to an unprecedented sweep at the Olympic diving pool.

Lian Junjie and Yang Hao breezed to gold in the 10-meter synchronized platform Monday to give the Big Red Machine its second straight gold medal of the Paris Games.

The three-time reigning world champions finished with a whopping 490.35 points, receiving several perfect 10s from the judges and no marks lower than 8.0. They nailed their final dive, a forward 4 1/2 somersaults in the tuck position, to clinch the gold.

Before the final marks were even posted – all 9.0s and 9.5s – the Chinese coaches were hugging and celebrating. Fans waved Chinese flags in the stands at the new Olympic Aquatics Centre, next door to the Stade de France in suburban Saint-Denis.

China, which has dominated the sport in the post-Greg Louganis era, is trying to become the first country to claim every diving gold medal since synchro was added in 2000, doubling the program from four to eight events.

Since that expansion, China has won 40 of 50 golds, including seven of

eight at each of the last two Summer Games.

In Tokyo three years ago, China's only setback came in the men's 10-meter synchro, when Daley and Matty Lee pulled off the upset for Great Britain as China took silver.

This time, the roles were reversed. Daley and new partner Noah Williams settled for a silver at 463.44. The bronze went to Canada's Rylan Wiens and Nathan Zsombor-Murray with 422.13, edging out fan favorite Mexico (418.65).

The United States did not qualify for the one of the eight Olympic berths.

Man Utd to make call on 100,000-capacity new stadium by end of year

BBC – Manchester United's owners hope to make a final decision on whether to spend more than £2bn on a new 100,000-seat stadium by the end of 2024.

United co-owner Sir Jim Ratcliffe wants to build a 'Wembley of the north' for the side and, together with Trafford Council, has put together a taskforce to assess the feasibility of a new stadium

and redevelopment of Old Trafford. Club sources confirmed the taskforce has already met four times, with discussion largely centred around a new-build rather than renovating the exist-

ing stadium, which would cost around £1.2bn and take longer to complete. It has been stressed no decision has been taken.

Ratcliffe's £1.25bn deal for his 27.7%

stake in the club included £237m for future investment in the club's stadium. His Ineos Group have taken over football operations from majority owners the Glazer family.

'Grave' consequences if Israel attacks Lebanon: *Pezeshkian*



Smoke billows from a site targeted by Israeli shelling in the southern Lebanese border village of Tayr Harja on July 24, 2024.

● KAWNAT HAJU/AFP

International Desk

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian warned that the Israeli regime will suffer "grave" consequences should it make a big mistake by attacking Lebanon. The new Iranian chief executive issued the warning in a Monday phone conversation with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron. Fears of an all-out war between Hezbollah and Israel heightened after Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday vowed a "severe response" to a recent deadly rocket attack in the occupied Golan Heights.

Twelve children aged between 10 and 16 were killed on Saturday when a rocket struck a football pitch in the Druze Arab town of Majdal Shams where they were playing. The Israeli officials have blamed Lebanon's Hezbollah movement for the attack – a claim that was categorically rejected by the resistance group. Scores of residents of Majdal Shams protested at Netanyahu's visit which came after the last of the victim was buried on Monday, with hundreds of Druze men and women gathering for the funeral. Many residents of Majdal Shams have not accepted Israeli nation-

ality since Israel seized the Golan Heights from Syria in 1967. Israel's occupation army and Hezbollah have traded cross-border fire since the beginning of the regime's devastating war on the Gaza Strip in October last year, which has claimed the lives of more than 39,000 Palestinians so far. Hezbollah says its actions against Israeli forces are in support of Palestinians in Gaza. The cross-border violence has so far killed at least 529 people in Lebanon, according to an AFP tally, most of them fighters but also including 104 civilians. On the Israeli side, 24 civilians

and 22 soldiers have been killed, according to the military.

Diplomatic efforts

Diplomatic efforts are underway to contain soaring tensions between Hezbollah and Israel. Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib said a flurry of diplomatic activity has sought to contain the anticipated Israeli response, after Defense Minister Yoav Gallant threatened to "hit the enemy hard." Italy's foreign minister told his Israeli and Lebanese counterparts Monday it was "possible to interrupt the spiral of violence" as he reiterated calls for a ceasefire, his

office said.

The Foreign Ministry said Antonio Tajani spoke with both Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz and Lebanon's Abdallah Bou Habib. The German government has also called on all parties to the Middle East conflict, in particular Iran, to prevent an escalation. The UK on Sunday condemned the rocket attack and said it was "deeply concerned about the risk of further escalation and destabilization." In a statement on X, Foreign Secretary David Lammy also said the UK's new Labour government has been clear that Lebanon's Hezbollah movement "must cease their attacks" on Israel.

Airlines suspend flights

Meanwhile, several international airlines suspended flights to Lebanon on Monday. Air France and the German airline group Lufthansa said they were suspending flights to Beirut after Israel threatened reprisals for the deadly strike. Royal Jordanian also announced the suspension of flights, with at least two of its regular trips to Beirut being cancelled. The country's only airport in Beirut was packed with travelers on Monday, including families anxiously awaiting delayed flights in the suffocating heat.

Delegations from 80 countries to partake in Pezeshkian's swearing-in



National Desk

Iran's new President Masoud Pezeshkian will be sworn-in as the country's 9th president in parliament today in a ceremony which will be attended by delegations from 80 countries. High-ranking dignitaries from different countries have arrived in the Iranian capital Tehran to take part in Pezeshkian's swearing-in ceremony. Iranian lawmaker Alaeddin Boroujerdi said delegations from 80 countries, including 11 parliament speakers, four vice presidents, four prime ministers, and two presidents will take part in the ceremony. Officials from Cuba, Columbia, Mongolia, Malta, Niger, Libya, Gambia, Sudan, Myanmar, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, and Madagascar had arrived in Tehran until Monday. The ceremony will be broadcast live on state television and covered by over 600 reporters, photographers and cameramen from domestic and foreign media outlets.

Pezeshkian, Iran's ninth president since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, formally began his four-year mandate on Sunday after the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei endorsed his victory in the second round of the presidential vote on July 5. During the endorsement ceremony, Pezeshkian vowed to follow "the path of fairness and justice," serve the people and address their problems, adding that these tasks would be "impossible without sticking to the law and unity." In a speech, Ayatollah Khamenei praised Pezeshkian as a "competent president," saying, "We all have to help him and his government pull off great work." In a decree, giving his official approval for Pezeshkian, the Leader said the new Iranian president was a "wise, honest, popular, and scholarly" person. Pezeshkian, a 69-year-old 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 tragic helicopter crash in May.

Iranian president invited to BRICS summit in Russia

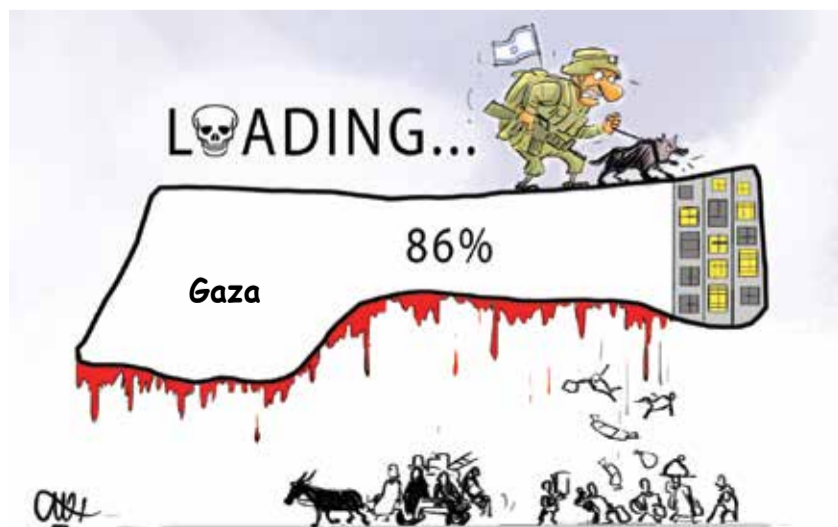
The Kremlin confirmed that Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has been invited to attend a summit of BRICS group of major emerging economies in Russia in October. Pezeshkian has already had an invitation from Moscow to the BRICS summit in Kazan, Kremlin's press secretary Dmitry Peskov told Izvestia newspaper. Peskov added that Russian President Vladimir Putin is eager to meet



with Iran's new chief executive. "We hope that the new Iranian president will come to this summit because we will be happy to see him, and Putin is preparing to meet Pezeshkian at the BRICS summit," Peskov said.

Back on July 8, Putin congratulated Pezeshkian on his election victory. During a subsequent phone call, the two leaders expressed their readiness to sign a strategic cooperation agreement between Tehran and Moscow on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit. The BRICS summit at the level of heads of state will be held on October 22-24. Iran became an official member of BRICS on January 1, 2024.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Maduro re-elected as Venezuela's leader



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro reacts after his victory in presidential election in Caracas on July 29, 2024.

● JUAN BARRETO/AFP

International Desk

Nicolas Maduro has been declared the winner of Venezuela's presidential election by the country's electoral authority – a result that appeared to dash opposition hopes of ending his socialist rule. Venezuela's National Electoral Council (CNE) said Maduro won with 51.21% of votes compared with 44.2% for his rival, the former diplomat Edmundo González Urrutia. The council said that with about 80% of votes counted, Maduro had secured more than 5m compared with González's 4.4m. The result was immediately challenged by rivals and several governments in the region and beyond. The Venezuelan opposition dismissed the CNE's announcement as fraudulent

and promised to challenge the result. It said its candidate had won with 70% of the votes and insisted he was the rightful president-elect. The opposition said vote tallies it had received, as well as quick counts, showed González had a lead of 40 percentage points over the incumbent. Opposition parties had united behind González in an attempt to unseat President Maduro after 11 years in power. Opinion polls conducted ahead of the election had suggested González would roundly defeat the president. While China, Iran, and Russia congratulated Maduro on his re-election Washington and other foreign governments from Europe and some South American countries cast doubt on official results. Maduro dedicated his

win to Chávez, who anointed Maduro as his successor shortly before his death in 2013. "Long live Chávez. Chávez is alive!" Maduro shouted. Addressing supporters in the capital, Caracas, the 61-year-old leader said: "I am Nicolás Maduro Moros – the re-elected president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela ... and I will defend our democracy, our law and our people." "The Venezuelans and the entire world know what happened," González said in his first remarks. The opposition leader, María Corina Machado – who had thrown her weight behind González's campaign after being banned from running – rejected the result, claiming the opposition had won in every single state. "We won and everybody knows it," she said. "We haven't just defeated them politically and morally, today we defeated them with votes," Machado told journalists, claiming González should be considered the country's president-elect.

Iranian filmmakers win at Malaysian festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmakers Alireza Ghasemi and Raha Amirfazli clinched the Best Director Award at the annual Malaysia Golden Global Awards for their film 'In the Land of Brothers.'

The win underscores the film's powerful storytelling and its ability to transcend borders. The seventh edition of the prestigious festival celebrated exceptional cinematic talents from around the world. 'In the Land of Brothers' stood out for its fearless storytelling of a globally relevant issue, showcasing intricate familial relationships amidst socio-political turmoil.

The film, a joint production between Iran, France, and the Netherlands, had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival, where it also garnered acclaim and a directing award in the World Dramatic Competition. The Malaysia Golden Glob-

al Awards recognized other outstanding works, with the Best Film Award going to 'Every You Every Me,' directed by Michael Fetter Nathansky. The emotionally resonant film also earned Anne Schwartz the Best Actress Award, and Nathansky took home the Best Screenplay Award.



Social Desk

More than 150 cases of dengue fever have been reported in Iran

over the past four months, according to the country's Health Ministry. From March 20 to July 29, a total

Over 150 cases reported in four months, mostly linked to travel

of 152 individuals were diagnosed with the mosquito-borne disease, with the majority of cases linked to travel to the UAE, IRNA wrote. The Health Ministry's report highlighted that 130 of the patients had traveled to the UAE, while 7 had been to Pakistan, 1 to Oman, and 1 to Benin in West Africa. Interestingly, 12 patients had no history of foreign travel, with 11 of them residing in Bandar Lengeh County, Hormuzgan Province, and 1 in

Chabahar County, Sistan and Baluchestan Province. These local transmissions are a cause for concern. The ministry also noted that all but one of the patients were Iranian nationals, with the remaining patient of African nationality. The cases have been identified across several provinces, with the majority detected in Fars Province by medical universities in Gerash, Larestan, Jahrom, and Shiraz. Other provinces with report-

ed cases include Hormuzgan, Bushehr, Qazvin, Chabahar, Zahedan, Tehran (Shahid Beheshti and Iran universities), Gilan, Mashhad, Qom, Iranshahr, and Isfahan. Unfortunately, one death has been reported, but the overall condition of the other patients is reported to be stable. The presence of Aedes aegypti mosquitoes, known vectors of dengue fever, has been confirmed in Hormozgan and Sistan and Baluchestan (Chabahar and Konarak) provinces, as well

as Bushehr (Assaluyeh and Kangan). Plus, the Aedes albopictus mosquito has been found in Gilan Province and, more recently, in Ramser County, Mazandaran Province, and Bileh Savar County, Ardebil Province. Health authorities are advising the public to take precautions to avoid mosquito bites, especially during the daytime when these insects are most active. Dengue fever can cause high fever, severe joint and muscle pain, and can even be fatal in some cases.

Iranian researcher develops innovative approach to convert CO2

Social Desk

An Iranian researcher, Fahimeh Varmaghani, developed an innovative approach to tackle carbon dioxide pollution and convert this harmful greenhouse gas into valuable resources and fuel using cost-effective methods. The research project, titled "Electrochemical Reduction of Carbon Dioxide on Metal Complex/Carbon Nanomaterial Modified Electrode," was supported by the Iran National Science Foundation (INSF) and aims to address the pressing environmental concerns related to carbon dioxide emissions. With a PhD in Analytical Chemistry from Bu-Ali Sina University, Varmaghani explained the significance of her work, "Electrochemical catalysts play a crucial role in enhancing chemical reactions by lowering the energy potential, making the reaction more thermodynamically favorable, and increasing reaction kinetics without being consumed in the process." The focus of her research is on harnessing renewable energy sources with minimal environmental impact.

She emphasized the importance of designing molecular catalysts to improve the efficiency of energy conversion processes, stating, "An ideal catalyst should facilitate higher current densities at lower excess potentials." Varmaghani highlighted the deep-rooted reliance on fossil fuels, which has led to a continuous increase in energy consumption and a subsequent rise in carbon dioxide emissions. She cited reports indicating a positive correlation between stored carbon dioxide and global warming, underscoring its impact on natural climate variations and the environment.

While acknowledging the exploration of alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, and hydropower, Varmaghani pointed out limitations and technical challenges associated with their large-scale industrial application. Varmaghani explained that carbon dioxide is an important natural resource and a synthetic raw material for many products. She said, "Converting carbon dioxide into value-added chemicals and fuel using renewable energy sources like wind and solar power is a highly promising approach." However, she also noted the challenges in carbon dioxide reduction.



Iran prepares for 15% increase in Arbaeen pilgrims

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian officials are gearing up for a busy Arbaeen season as millions of pilgrims are expected to travel to Iraq for the annual commemoration. The Ministry of Roads and Urban Development predicts a 15% increase in the number of pilgrims this year, amounting to over 4.6 million people traveling through six land borders and by air, IRNA reported. In a meeting of the Arbaeen Headquarters of the Ministry, attended by the Minister of Roads and Urban Development and security officials, preparations were discussed to facilitate the travel of pilgrims. Three key tasks have been assigned to the ministry, including preparing passenger terminals, ensuring road safety, and providing efficient transportation. To accommodate the expected increase in travelers, measures such as installing shades and mist-sprayers at terminals and improving road markings and signage are being implemented. Authorities are also ensuring sufficient transportation options, including inter-city buses, taxis, and ride-sharing services.

The aviation sector is also preparing for the surge in demand, with additional flights scheduled to and from Najaf and Baghdad. Moreover, domestic flights to border cities will be increased, providing more options for pilgrims. Extra trains are also planned to cater to the travel needs of the pilgrims. Officials recommend that pilgrims manage their travel time efficiently and consider using private vehicles as well. They also advise purchasing round-trip tickets for trains, buses, and planes to avoid any inconveniences on the return journey. To address potential delays, an eight-hour grace period has been implemented for bus tick-

ets, ensuring pilgrims can still use their tickets despite any unforeseen delays. Negotiations are also underway with two foreign companies to provide direct bus services from Tehran to Najaf or Karbala, with 400 buses already allocated. In addition, sea travel between Khorramshahr and Basra is being facilitated, with two ships allocated, pending the readiness of the Basra terminal by the Iraqi side. The Iranian government is leaving no stone unturned to ensure a smooth and safe journey for the pilgrims, implementing comprehensive measures to cater to the expected increase in Arbaeen travelers.

