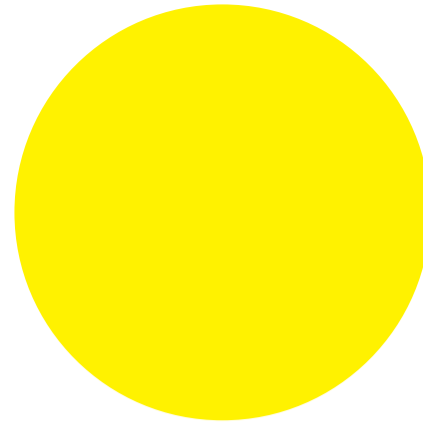




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Iran Daily



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Vol. 7348 • Tuesday, July 25, 2023 • Mordad 3, 1402 • Muharram 7, 1445 • Price 40,000 Rials • 8 Pages

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Pilots of Iran's Air Force prepare to scramble their fighter jet during a military drill in central province of Isfahan on July 24, 2023.
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Raeisi: Iran supports Yerevan-Baku peace talks

International Desk

Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi said Tehran supports peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan amid a territorial dispute between Iran's two neighbors. Raeisi made the remarks in a meeting with visiting Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan in Tehran on Monday. The Iranian president said that the problems in the region should be settled by the regional countries, stressing that foreign interference only complicates the problems.



● president.ir

Raeisi said that Iran supports peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region. He expressed hope that the talks would lead to the establishment of peace and security in the region. Page 2 >

Iran disbands terrorist network linked to Israel

Iran's Intelligence Ministry said its forces have disbanded a "large terrorist network" and arrested its members who were planning to carry out numerous terrorist attacks across Iran. In a statement on Monday, the ministry said the terrorists were connected via "terrorist circles in Denmark and the Netherlands" to the Israeli spy agency, Iran Front Page reported. The terrorists planned to carry out attacks in the month of Muharram — during which millions of Iranians hold public mourning ceremonies for the third Shia Imam — but were arrested before "entering [their] extensive... operational phase." The terrorists planned to bomb,

among other places, the burial place of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated by the United States in 2020. General Soleimani is buried in his birthplace of Kerman. The Intelligence Ministry statement said the terrorists planned sabotage activities in the six Iranian provinces of Tehran, Kerman, Esfahan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad, Kurdistan, and Mazandaran. They also planned to attack popular gathering places, including Muharram mourning ceremonies, gas stations, power pylons, and natural gas plants to disrupt domestic and export supplies.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Prisoner
exchange
with US

PRESS TV – Iran's Foreign Ministry has put the blame on the US administration for prolonging the process of prisoner exchange.

The spokesman for the ministry, Nasser Kan'ani said Washington lacks the resolve to finalize the exchange of prisoners with Iran.

Iran has always been serious about the prisoner swap considering the importance that it attaches to the fate of its citizens, he underlined.

Raeisi: Iran
supports ...

The Iranian president underlined that Tehran does not accept any geopolitical changes at borders of the regional countries and supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all the countries of the region.

Earlier in the day, the Armenian foreign minister held talks with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian. During the meeting, Iran's top diplomat reaffirmed Tehran's call for comprehensive and sustainable peace in the Caucasus region and warned against foreign exploitation of the situation there.

Amir-Abdollahian said Iran focuses on the establishment of peace in the Caucasus region and welcomes progress in peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

"We believe that enhanced peace and security among the neighbors can serve the common interests of regional countries," Amir-Abdollahian added.

Amir-Abdollahian further said the Caucasus region should not turn into a conflict zone and a battlefield among powers because it would postpone the establishment of regional peace. Tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan remain relatively high nearly two years after the arch-foes fought a war over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region. The six-week conflict, which claimed more than 6,500 lives on both sides, ended in November 2020 with a Russian-brokered deal.

Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan but has been populated by ethnic Armenians. Russia has deployed 1,960 peacekeepers to the region for an initial five-year period. Since the truce, the two sides have accused each other of breaching the peace deal.

Message of drill: Stable security for Iran, region

Iran's bomber, kamikaze drones destroy mock targets



● IRNA

National Desk

Iran's top general Mohammad Hossein Baqeri praised the accomplishments of a large-scale drill

held in Iran's central province of Isfahan on Monday, on the sidelines of the exercise as the Iranian Air Force's bomber and kamikaze

drones successfully hit and destroyed mock enemy targets.

The Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces commended the Air Force units for

achieving the primary objectives of the war game, underscoring how Iran's military readiness serves as a deterrent against hostile actions from adversaries. He also lauded the Air Force for their diverse operations and tactical maneuvers, which involved drones, fighter jets, transport and logistical aircraft, as well as air ambulances. The major general said the Air Force units conducted a full range of operations, and exercising various tactics in the drill with drones, fighter jets, transport, logistical and refueling aircraft, as well as air ambulances. Speaking on Monday, Brigadier General Alireza Rudbari, the spokesman for the exercises, said 500-pound bombs were previously carried by F-4 and F-5 fighter jets, but during the maneuvers, Karrar drones dropped them on ground targets and obliterated them, press TV reported. Arash kamikaze drones,

equipped with warheads, also hit "important and vital" positions of hypothetical enemy and destroyed them, he added.

The operation was carried out after an RF-4 plane, as well as Mohajer-6 and Kaman-12 reconnaissance drones photographed the targets, he said.

Sending images online, Mohajer-6 drone targeted mock enemy equipment using smart, precision-strike and upgraded Qaem bombs, Rudbari said.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force (IRIAF) has launched the 11th edition of the drills, code-named Devotees of Velayat Sanctuary, in Anarak District of Na'een County on Sunday.

The Islamic Republic military forces hold routine exercises according to a detailed schedule in various parts of the country in order to test their weaponry and equipment and evaluate their combat preparedness.

European states must prevent recurrence of Qur'an desecration: *SpoX*



Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman holds a copy of the Qur'an at his weekly press conference in Tehran, Iran, on July 24, 2023.

● AMIN JALALI/IRNA

The spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry said European countries must adopt proper measures aimed at preventing the recurrence of Holy Qur'an desecration by extremist individuals or groups.

Nasser Kanaani once again denounced the recent act of sacrilege against Islam's most revered book in Sweden, while holding a copy of the Qur'an at his weekly press conference in the Iranian capital Tehran on Monday, Press TV reported.

He said the desecration of the Qur'an is "a shameful act," stressing that "insulting divine and Abrahamic religions is unacceptable and cannot be justified by any means."

The senior Iranian dip-

lomat also called on the European states, in which such shameful insults were perpetrated, to take decisive measures against the offenders or hand them over to Muslim countries' judicial systems for punishment.

Kanaani added that Iran has summoned Mattias Lentz, Swedish ambassador to Tehran, sent out a note of protest to Stockholm, and written a letter to United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres in this regard.

He added that Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has held a telephone conversation with Hissein Ibrahim Taha, the secretary general of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), over the

matter.

All such efforts resulted in consensus on an emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to discuss the latest act of desecration of the Holy Qur'an in Sweden, the diplomat said.

Tehran believes that Muslim countries should seriously utilize their potentials. Muslim states expect the offenders to be prosecuted, Kanaani said.

On Friday, members of the Islamophobic and far-right nationalist group "Danske Patriotter (Danish Patriots)" burned a copy of the Holy Qur'an in front of the Iraqi Embassy in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Earlier this week, Salwan Momika, a 37-year-old Iraqi refugee living in Swe-



den, stomped and kicked the Holy Qur'an, just weeks after he set fire to pages of the holy book outside a Stockholm mosque. On Monday, two protesters set fire to a copy of the holy book in front of the Iraqi Embassy in the Danish capital, risking further deterioration of relations

between the two countries, Reuters reported.

In January, Rasmus Paludan, a far-right Danish leader, burned a copy of the Qur'an in front of the Turkish Embassy in Stockholm. The incident sparked outrage and condemnation across the Islamic world.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Six more uranium mines to run, as reserves are greater than estimated: *AEOI*

The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) said the Islamic Republic's uranium reserves are much larger than previous estimates, and that the country plans to operate six more uranium mines by the end of the current Iranian year (ending March 19, 2024). Mohammad Eslami said on Sunday that currently eight uranium mines are operating in the country, Press TV reported. "Our uranium reserves

in the country now exceed the previous estimates. We are currently operating eight mines, and six more mines are planned to come on stream by the end of the [Iranian] year," he said.

He added that over the past year and a half, they have located and run several mines to complete the nuclear fuel chain.

Eslami also said that extraction of uranium ore from mines and its pro-

cess through the heap leaching method greatly benefits the chain of valuable elements.

"The AEOI has drawn up and compiled a 20-year perspective plan to pave the way to attain Iran's nuclear industry objectives". Eslami said thanks to the plan, the agency has a proper understanding of the path ahead both at the national and international levels and is moving forward with a viable strategy.

Israel MPs approve judicial reform clause as protests flare



Israel's security forces use a water cannon to disperse a sit-in blocking the entrance of the parliament (Knesset) in Al-Quds on July 24, 2023, amid a months-long wave of protests against the planned judicial overhaul. **RONALDO SCHEMIDT/AFP**

Israel's hard-right cabinet on Monday pushed through parliament a key clause of its controversial judicial reform package despite months of mass protests and concerns voiced by foreign allies. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his coalition allies approved

the bill in a Knesset vote boycotted by opposition lawmakers, some of whom shouted "shame, shame", according to AFP. Critics charge the judicial revamp will undermine Israel's liberal democracy by removing checks and balances on the executive, while the cabinet argues

it needs to curb judicial overreach. The bill, passed with 64 votes in the 120-seat chamber, aims to limit the powers of the Supreme Court in striking down cabinet decisions which the judges deem "unreasonable". The reform package has triggered one of the big-

gest protest movements in Israel's history since it was unveiled by the cabinet in January. The bill was passed hours after Netanyahu, 73, returned to the Knesset - only a day after undergoing surgery to have a pacemaker fitted - as police outside the legislature

used water cannon and mounted officers were deployed against a crowd of demonstrators. Netanyahu's cabinet, which includes far-right and ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties, argues that the proposed changes are needed to ensure a better balance of power.

Social polarization: Israel's unyielding reality



By Hojjatollah Joudaki
Former Iranian diplomat in Egypt

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Yesterday, the Israeli parliament, known as Knesset, passed a pivotal clause in a judicial reform bill amid widespread and unprecedented protests against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's proposed changes to the judicial system. This motion strips the Israeli judicial system of its authority

to overturn government and ministerial decisions. Now, the pressing question arises: Will the approval of this key aspect of the judicial reform bill put an end to the challenges faced by Netanyahu's cabinet and the Israeli political system, leading protesters to return home? It is doubtful that the reform bill alone will quell the challenges dogging Netanyahu and Israel. Despite Netanyahu's right-wing coalition legally securing a majority in the parliament through elections, they face a fundamental societal challenge

from opponents and protesters. The crux of Israel's current political predicament lies in extreme polarization within society. On one side, there are liberals and leftists, less bound by rigid religious beliefs, while on the other, there are orthodox religious groups with staunchly conservative leanings. The divide between these two factions has deepened considerably, with the religious population holding sway in numbers due to higher birth rates within their communities. This demographic composition significantly contributed

to the right-wing coalition's victory in the latest elections. Consequently, while Netanyahu may hold the upper hand in law and parliament, a significant portion of Israeli society vehemently opposes both his and his government's policies and plans. The extreme right-wing, aligned with Netanyahu, is seeking to exploit the new laws pertaining to the judicial system to their advantage. For instance, they could manipulate the composition of the Supreme Court to further their extremist agendas whenever necessary.

Yesterday's resolution effectively grants the cabinet and right-wing factions carte blanche to pursue their radical plans, sparking further protest reactions. Notably, even Israel's European and American supporters have become vocal critics of Netanyahu's cabinet policies. As a result, the political opposition to Netanyahu's government is exploring fresh avenues to challenge and disrupt its policies. While the scale of street protests may diminish, the ramifications of Israel's deep social and political divisions will continue to afflict the government and political system. Over the past few months, numerous former Israeli

political, security, and military officials have sounded alarms, warning that the current cabinet's policies jeopardize Israel's security. Their insights stem from a thorough understanding of the prevailing state of Israeli society due to their experiences. The parliament's new ratification only exacerbates the existing social disparities. In any society, the wider the gaps, the more prone it becomes to crises. In Israel, "divergence" has replaced "convergence" as the stark reality of society. Consequently, the challenges faced by the cabinet and the Israeli political system show no signs of abating.

Fugitive Catalan leader holds key to Spanish electoral impasse

A Catalan independence leader on the run from Spanish justice could hold the key to unlocking a political impasse after Sunday's election ended in a hung parliament. Former Catalan regional government head Carles Puigdemont, who lives in self-imposed exile in Belgium since leading a failed push to split Catalonia from Spain in 2017, unexpectedly finds himself a potential kingmaker after no bloc on the left or right won enough seats to form a majority, Reuters reported. One path out of the labyrinth would be for Socialist

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez to secure a vote in favour, or at least an abstention, in a parliamentary vote on forming a government from Puigdemont's Junts party in exchange for further concessions on independence. The centre-right People's Party (PP) and the far-right Vox won the most seats in parliament with a combined 169 - short of the 176 seats needed for a majority and confounding poll predictions. The ruling Socialists (PSOE) and far-left Sumar won 153 but have more possibilities for negotiating support from small Basque

and Catalan separatist parties, as they did following 2019's election. Sanchez could win over left-wing separatist party Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC). But he will likely also need the backing of the more hardline Junts, which has not supported Sanchez in the past four years. Junts Secretary General Jordi Turull said on Monday he would use the "window of opportunity" created by the election impasse to achieve Catalan independence. "The state knows that if it wants to negotiate with us, there are two issues that

are fundamental and generate consensus in Catalonia which are an amnesty and self-determination," he said in an interview with local radio station RAC 1. Turull was among the nine Catalan jailed separatist leaders pardoned by Sanchez in 2021 for their role in the 2017 independence bid. However, many more are still facing trial, chief amongst them Puigdemont. Puigdemont, who still wields considerable influence within Junts, said in mid-July the party would not support Sanchez because he was unreliable. Early on Monday he tweet-

ed that Junts is a party that keeps its word. Puigdemont was stripped of the immunity he had as a member of the European Parliament earlier this month, paving the way for his extradition, as Spanish authorities have requested for the past six years. The Catalans are likely to play hardball in any negotiations after the election laid bare that a rapprochement with Madrid has not worked in their favour, said Joan Esculies, a writer and analyst on Catalan politics.



NEWS IN BRIEF

China warns Japan on NATO eastward expansion

REUTERS - The Chinese Embassy in Japan said in a statement on Monday that NATO's plan to expand into the Asia-Pacific violates UN rules.

The embassy hoped Japan, in its interaction with NATO, would refrain from actions that undermine trust among countries in the region.

The statement came after the Japanese ambassador to the United States said in May that the US-led military pact was planning a Tokyo liaison office, the first in Asia, to facilitate consultations in the region.

Russia vows retaliation after Ukraine drone strike



REUTERS - Russia spoke of taking harsh retaliatory measures against Ukraine after two drones damaged buildings in Moscow early on Monday, including one close to the Defense Ministry's headquarters, in what it called a brazen act of terror.

Nobody was hurt in the attack, of which a senior Ukrainian official said there would be more, but one drone struck close to the Moscow building where the Russian military holds briefings on its special military operation in Ukraine.

15 dead in Indonesia boat incident



AFP - At least 15 people were killed on Monday after a wooden boat sank off the coast of Indonesia's Sulawesi Island, search and rescue officials said, adding that all missing passengers had been accounted for.

The boat sank with 48 people onboard just after midnight (1700 GMT on Sunday), the local office of Indonesia's search and rescue agency said in a statement. Six people were rescued and taken to hospital for treatment, it added, and the cause of the sinking was being investigated.

Development of religious tourism in Zanzan Province is essential



Hosseinih Azam Mosque
● IRNA



People mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH) in a square located opposite to Hosseinih Azam Mosque
● IRNA

Iranica Desk

Tourism is presently known as an important industry across the world, and religious tourism is considered one of the oldest and most income-producing type, especially in Iran. Religious tourism is traveling for religious or spiritual purposes, for example, visiting the holy shrines of Imams and Imamzadehs, religious monuments and mosques, as well as attending religious ceremonies and rituals, IRNA reported. Zanzan Province, hosting the holy shrines of several Imamzadehs, has significant potential for development of religious tourism.

Experts believe that creating infrastructures, attracting investors, and providing funds required for implementation of related projects would help develop religious tourism in the province.

Deputy Head of the province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization said that this type of tourism not only brings economic benefits but also has great spiritual value. He said that when Muharram (the first month of the lunar calendar) arrives, local people hold various traditional religious ceremonies relating to the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH) and his companions.



An overview of Zanzan
● IRNA

He noted that a large number of the true lovers of Imam Hussein travel to Zanzan Province from across Iran and the world in the month of Muharram to participate in mourning ceremonies held in the region. Abyan said that there are

about 2,200 beds for tourists to stay in the province, adding that considering the unofficial accommodation centers the figure could reach 12,000. The official said that projects to establish a number of hotels and traditional

accommodations are underway in the province. "Permissions have been issued for the establishment of a number of eco lodges in the villages." "A tourist, of any type, brings economic prosperity to the region. We aim

to introduce the tourism attractions of the province and prepare the conditions for all residents of the province to benefit from it," he noted.

Director General of Zanzan Province's Endowments and Charity Affairs Organization Mokhtar Karami referred to the holy shrines of Imamzadehs and Hosseinih Azam Mosque, which is very popular in the country, as the important religious sites of the province.

He said that many people make pilgrimages to the religious sites every year. Hosseinih Azam Mosque is prepared to host religious tourists traveling to the province during Mu-

harram to participate in the mourning ceremonies held for the martyrdom of Imam Hussein.

Hosseinih Azam is one of the most important religious tourist attractions in Iran in the month of Muharram. It is located in the south of the provincial capital city of Zanzan, on Ferdowsi Street. The mourning ceremony held in the Hosseinih on the eighth day of Muharram is very famous in the country. The great Hosseinih is one of the most influential cultural and religious centers of Zanzan Province. Extending in an area of 12,000 square meters, this complex has various cultural, religious and medical facilities.

Artistic contacts between Europe and Persia



Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Isfahan
● ghoghmos.net

In this article, firstly, we want to historiographically assess the work of Marcel Dieulafoy (1844-1920 CE), the author of one of the earliest general surveys of ancient Persian art, entitled *L'Art antique de la Perse* (1884-9). In a lesser-known later book by Dieulafoy, *Art in*

Spain and Portugal (1913), he suggested that most of the arts of mediaeval Iberia were derived from Islamic, and ultimately Sasanian, Persia. The first paragraph is worth quoting in its entirety: "It may seem strange that the art history of Spain and Portugal should begin on Iranian ground, at

the time of the Sassanids, and that the study of the primitive mosques should serve as a preface to that of the western churches. I hope, however, to show in the course of the first three chapters that Persia was not only the source of inspiration of Muslim architecture, and of the so-called Mudejar architecture of Spain, but that it played an important and well-defined part in the elaboration of those religious themes which found their way into the Asturias, Castille, and Catalonia, and were acclimatised in France at a later period by the Benedictines." A chain of Italian scholars from Michele Amari (1806-1889) through Ugo Monneret de Villard (1881-1954) and Geza de Francovich (1902-1996) to Giovanni D'Erme (1935-2011) projected a similar genealogical link among mediaeval Italy, Fatimid Egypt and pre-Islamic Persia. Amari, for instance, suggested a massive Persian immigration

in Sicily during its Muslim conquest and offered a series of toponymy that he believed to reflect Khorasanian or Transoxanian connections. Monneret not only drew comparisons between early mediaeval Italian and Persian art, but he was also aware of Persian artistic presence in ancient India. Francovich found an underlying Persian core in the representation of kingship in mediaeval European art, while D'Erme "was vividly struck by the 'Persian aura' which effused from" the Cappella Palatina in Palermo. Such bold assertions may have stemmed from whimsical thoughts of Italian scholars of various times. Yet they responded, to a certain degree, to the 19th-century trend in Indo-European linguistics and anthropology that greatly stimulated the growing European discourse on the origins of western art, including the "Orient oder Rom" debate that had provocatively

been triggered off by Josef Strzygowski (1862-1941) in Vienna in 1901. Despite an unclear definition of its role in the shaping of western art, Persia continued to exude its "aura," and it was this very aura which was perceived and translated into an abstract idea of "Persian art" in the context of the "Orient oder Rom" debate. The term "Persian art" eventually came to be used, though in its most general sense, in mediaeval contexts as a distant backdrop for a remote past, whereas the more recent, let alone contemporary, artistic contacts between Europe and Persia were rarely touched upon before World War II. While Europe was not particularly receptive to the art and culture of modern Persia during the 19th and early 20th centuries, the latter, on the other hand, earnestly studied, reciprocated and exploited the on-going European discourse about the quasi-legendary brilliance of Persian art, especially

during the last years of the Qajar dynasty. It laid claim to every bit of the Persian greatness that had been so much extolled by western scholars. Without doubt, the leading western scholars to take up residence in Persia were the self-made entrepreneur Pope from America, the polymath Ernst Herzfeld (1879-1948) from Germany and the architect and Franco-Persian cultural attaché André Godard (1881-1965) from France. They gave support to the official renaming of the country from Persia to Iran, a move which implied that the country was home to all Iranians — Kurds, Lors, Balochi and even Turkic-speaking people — not just the Persians. However, it can be argued that this reversal of the discourse may have ultimately sealed the fate of "Persian art." Tied to a modern, state, "Persian art" was detached from its earlier aura of timelessness, thus losing most of its universal claims.

The above is a lightly edited version of part of a chapter entitled, 'Why Persian art needs to be studied and collected', from a book entitled, 'The Shaping of Persian Art: Collections and Interpretations of the Art of Islamic Iran and Central Asia' edited by Yuka Kadoi and Iván Szántó, published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Iran's youth handball team aims for world championship glory



● irihfir

Sports Desk

Iran's youth national handball team is gearing up to embark on a journey to showcase their talent in the 10th IHF Men's Youth (U19) World Championship. With the tournament scheduled to kick off in Croatia from August 2 to 13, the young team under the guidance of Head Coach Majid Rahimizadeh is ready to take on the challenge and make their mark on the global stage.

Drawing inspiration from their impressive performance in the Asian championship last year, Rahimizadeh believes his players have the potential to spring another surprise in the world junior handball event. Their goal is to reach the top 16 teams. However, it won't be an "easy path" for the Iranian team as they find themselves in group H, rubbing shoulders with some formidable European opponents. Sweden, the reigning

European champions, and the ever-strong Faroe Islands, who recently defeated Sweden and Denmark in friendlies, are set to pose tough challenges. On August 11 and 12, Iran will take on these powerhouses, followed by a crucial encounter against Burundi from the African continent. Rahimizadeh, speaking to ISNA on Monday, underlines the significance of every match in the world championships and emphasizes his team's unwavering determination to "represent their country with honor".

To prepare for the tough competition ahead, the head coach says, the players have already achieved an impressive 80% preparation level, and the team is working tirelessly to maintain this state of readiness. Additionally, the squad is gearing up for two friendly matches with Georgia, yet another strong team in the world championships. These encounters

are seen as good opportunities for the players to "build their confidence, fine-tune their techniques, and refine their tactics" before the main event. Rahimizadeh reflects on Iran's unexpected success in the Asian championship and holds hope for a similar outcome in the world championships. With a roster comprising 8 players from Iran's Premier League teams, the national team is undoubtedly a force to be reckoned with, he boasts.

Iran is set to take part in the forthcoming global event after a 14-year hiatus which is a monumental achievement for Iran's handball team. Rahimizadeh emphasizes the significance of "continuous participation" in such high-level competitions as a means to "enhance performance and ultimately secure better results". He draws inspiration from teams like Sweden and the Faroe Islands, who have consistently thrived

in such tournaments through sustained presence and dedication.

However, realizing their dreams of advancing to the top 16 teams requires more than just talent; it demands a well-structured, long-term plan. Rahimizadeh expresses concern about the "constant rotation of management" in Iran's handball, calling for a stable and sustainable strategy. He firmly believes in the immense potential of the current generation of players and "their ability to leave a lasting impact on the world stage". Yet, he acknowledges that only a "professional attitude, meticulous planning, and adequate resources" can unlock their true potential. Coach Rahimizadeh's hope is unwavering, and he remains confident that his players will rise to the occasion, showcasing their skills and determination to earn a spot among the world's top 16 teams.

Iran's gymnasts set to make history at Asian Games

Sports Desk

Reza Kheirkhah, the head coach of Iran's national artistic gymnastics team, has set his sights on securing medals in the upcoming Asian Games. With determination and confidence, Kheirkhah believes that the team has what it takes to improve their standing from the previous eighth place finish and even clinch the coveted gold medal in Hangzhou, China. Originally scheduled for September 2022, the 19th Asian Games had to be postponed to 2023 due to COVID-19 concerns in China. The multi-sport event is now to be held from September 23 to October 8 2023. With a thorough preparation plan in motion, the Iranian head coach highlights the team's relentless efforts to achieve success at the Hangzhou Asian Games. The national team's rigorous training camps have been conducted without interruption, aimed at honing their skills and readiness for the grand event, Kheirkhah says, according to IRNA. The final camp has already commenced, and after a series of tests, ten members of the national team have been selected to represent Iran in Hangzhou. Despite facing setbacks in Iran's Gymnastics Federation, the athletes showcased unwavering motivation

during training, he points out. Kheirkhah expresses great faith in the potential of the artistic gymnastics team, citing their track record in securing 16 medals across Asian, world, and international competitions. The team is more than capable of returning home with a handful of medals, he says. The team's recent achievements speak volumes of their progress. Over the last seven months, the artistic gymnastics squad has proudly secured three valuable medals in international arenas. Kheirkhah is optimistic that "history can be made" at the Asian Games, aiming for "two finalists and two medals" at the minimum. "With the current team's potential, these goals are well within reach." Having clinched medals among 72 countries in previous competitions, including Olympic qualifiers and Asian Championships, the Iranian artistic gymnastics team has undoubtedly showcased their prowess on the global stage. In light of their impressive achievements, Kheirkhah urges the Ministry of Sports and Youth and the National Olympic Committee to provide the necessary cooperation to Iran's Gymnastics Federation, ensuring that the team is fully equipped to shine at the Hangzhou Asian Games.



Women's cycling in Iran faces grim future

Sports Desk

Women's cycling in Iran is teetering "on the brink of obliteration," as highlighted by Forouzan Abdollahi, a female Iranian cyclist, who is deeply concerned about the dwindling state of the sport. In an interview with ISNA published on Monday, the renowned athlete has shed light on the challenges faced by women cyclists and how "the lack of motivation and support is causing the sport to shrink each passing year". In a candid revelation, Abdollahi has exposed the dire situation of Iranian women's cycling and the demoralization felt by the athletes. She points out that apart from the Asian Championship, there are no other international competitive platforms for women cyclists in Iran.

"The league, which used to have two stages, saw one stage canceled last year," dealing a heavy blow to the athletes' motivation, she says. With minimal opportunities to showcase

their talent, the sport is losing its appeal among aspiring cyclists. The lack of support from clubs and sponsors has further exacerbated the predicament. Abdollahi stresses that without backing, the sport cannot flourish. "The young female cyclists put in tremendous efforts, training diligently alongside their male counterparts, yet their hard work often goes unnoticed and unsupported."

Abdollahi highlights a sharp decline in participation in the national championship, particularly in the youth category. While talented individuals have shown promise, many are forced to abandon their cycling dreams due to the high costs and lack of income. The inconsistency in athlete selection

for competitions has led to a decrease in motivation, particularly among young cyclists.

Looking toward the future, Abdollahi calls for a stronger focus on promoting youth talent and providing the necessary support for aspiring

female cyclists. The sport needs a "nurturing environment" to thrive, and "investing in the younger generation" is crucial to expect future medal-worthy performances.

She emphasizes that women's cycling has already showcased its potential, with notable achievements by athletes like Faranak Parto-Azer and Somayyeh Yazdani in mountain biking and road championships, respectively. However, without sustained support, the growth and success of such athletes remain uncertain. "We pushed ourselves as high as we could but we need support from here on out."

Abdollahi pleads individuals and organizations to step up and contribute to the development of women's cycling in Iran. She passionately believes that the sport holds great potential and has the ability to deliver remarkable results. While imploring for support, Abdollahi voices hope that her call would resonate with those who can make a difference in the future of women's cycling in Iran. "I hope those people hear me out."



● iwspports.ir

Iranian taekwondokas bag 30 medals in S Korea competitions

Sports Desk

Iranian athletes won 30 medals in the 2023 Seongnam World Taekwondo of Hanmadang, South Korea, which was held with the participation of taekwondo athletes from 58 countries. Iranian taekwondo practitioners snatched 17 gold, eight silver and five bronze medals during the four-day event, which ended on Monday at the 2023 Seongnam World Taekwondo of Hanmadang in South Korea.

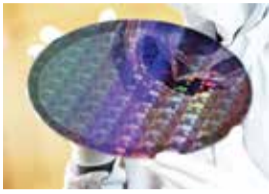
Iranian gold medalists in the competitions comprised of Mohammad Hossein Artman (two medals), Nima Faraji, Jalal Aqdam (two medals), Hadi Rajabi, Ronak Hosseinzadeh, Zahra Joudaki, Behnam Mohammadi, Hadi Asefi, Abolhassan Shahvardi, Firouz Asbaqi, Farnaz Amini, Niloufar Farahani, and Leili Alidoust (two golds).

The eight silver medals of Iran were also won by Amin Aramesh Far, Ahmad Bahram, Ronak Hosseinzadeh, Maliheh Asadi, Akbar Ghaffari, Shakiba Soltani, Niloufar Farahani, Reza Mohammadian and Hossein Samadi. Also, Laila Kashwari, Mahboubeh Shafizadeh, Maliheh Asadi, Behnam Mohammadi and Hadi Asefi won five bronze medals for Iran. Hanmadang is a Taekwondo Festival for competitions including the essentials of martial arts such as breaking, self-defense, and poomsae, which is held every year by the World Taekwondo Academy (Kukkiwon).



NEWS IN BRIEF

Germany readies €20b to bolster chip output



BLOOMBERG – German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government plans to dole out €20 billion (\$22 billion) to bolster semiconductor manufacturing in Germany in a push to shore up the country's tech sector and secure supplies of critical components amid growing geopolitical tension. The money is to be distributed to German and international companies by 2027 and will be drawn from the Climate and Transformation Fund, according to people involved in the negotiations.

Worldcoin crypto launched



REUTERS – Worldcoin, a cryptocurrency project founded by OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, launched on Monday.

The project's core offering is its World ID, which the company describes as a "digital passport" to prove that its holder is a real human, not an AI bot.

To get a World ID, a customer signs up to do an in-person iris scan using Worldcoin's 'orb', a silver ball approximately the size of a bowling ball. Once the orb's iris scan verifies the person is a real human, it creates a World ID.

Worsening euro zone business downturn reignites recession fears



AFP – Euro zone business activity shrank much more than expected in July as demand in the bloc's dominant services industry declined while factory output fell at the fastest pace since COVID-19 first took hold, a survey showed.

The decline was broad-based with the euro zone's two biggest economies - Germany and France - both in contractionary territory and will likely add to fears the bloc will slip back into recession.

The trade between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has doubled over the past four years, announced EAEU Minister of Trade Andrey Slepnev.

Talking to IRNA, Slepnev said that bilateral cooperation with the Islamic Republic is actively expanding in various spheres.

The figures indicate that trade between the union and Iran surged by 22% in 2022, added the official.

He noted that agricultural products account for 75% of the bloc's trade with Iran.

Industrial commodities play a pivotal role in the cooperation between the two sides, the minister said, adding that the trade in the areas of minerals, industries, and chemicals is about to be expanded.

Slepnev termed Iran as a key partner in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), calling the corridor a solution in transportation and logistics.

The project will not only help expansion of regional trade, but it will also bring about cooperation in the field of industry and joint production, he further noted.

The EAEU was founded in 2015 at the initiative taken by the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. The Republic of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan are other members of the union.

Iran's renewable power stations capacity exceeds 1,080 MW

The capacity of Iran's renewable power stations reached 10,080 megawatts (MW), announced the head of Iran's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA).

Mahmoud Kamani also said that now, the capacity of renewable power stations is increas-

ing across the country, reported IRNA.

Putting the under-construction power plants into operation will further increase this capacity, the official added.

Iranian Energy Ministry has put it on the agenda to add 10,000 MW to the capacity of the country's renewable power plants

by the end of the current administration (August 2025). In January 2022, the Energy Ministry and some of the country's private contractors signed memorandums of understanding (MoU) for cooperation in the construction of new renewable power plants across the country.



IRNA

IME monthly trade nears \$3b

The Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) announced that over 11.11 million tons of commodities, worth about \$3 billion, were traded in its domestic trading and export halls in the month closing on July 22.

A total of 8.89 million tons of various products, worth about \$2 billion, were traded at IME's domestic and export metal and mineral trading hall, ime.co.ir reported on Monday.

Among the traded products were 1.36 million tons of steel, 1.97 million tons of iron ore, 906,200 tons of sponge iron, 62,625 tons of aluminum ingots, 52,641 tons of copper, 42,550 tons of zinc, 2,000 tons of coke, 820 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 2,000 tons of coke, 550 tons of cast iron, 75 tons of precious metals, and 4.6 million tons of cement as well as 170 vehicles.

Based on the report, the exchange saw trade of 1,200 kg of saffron on its agricultural trading floor. In addition, 1.99 million tons of various commodities, valued at over \$892 million, were traded at IME's domestic and export oil and petrochemical trading halls.

Other traded items were 422,963 tons of polymeric products, 567,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 187,000 tons of lube cut, 164,147



IRNA

tons of chemical products, 33,215 tons of sulfur, 17,006 tons of base oil, 16,068 tons

of petroleum products, 1,345 tons of insulation and 589,591 tons of bitumen.

Iran, FAO ink pistachio technical cooperation document



IRNA

A document on the pistachio technical cooperation project was signed between Iran's Ministry of Agriculture and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), said a senior official of Iran's Ministry of Agriculture.

It was signed and sealed by Deputy Minister of Agriculture Affairs Mohammad Mehdi Boroumandi and Head of FAO Representative Ad Interim to Iran Yubak Dhoj G C, with the aim of organizing and standardizing the complete chain of production up to the supply of Iran's pistachio products, according to fao.org.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Iran's Minister of Agriculture Mohammad Ali Nikbakht said Iran has valuable experiences in the fields of fisheries, stockbreeding and animal husbandry, poultry, horticulture, farming as well as projects related to water and soil, including watershed management and aquifers.

Pointing to climate change, shortage of resources in the world and its significance, he added that his ministry is making its utmost effort to reduce the damages that occur in the production stage using the world's

most modern technologies.

Development of value chains and intermediary-processing industries for minimizing waste is among the main programs followed up at the Ministry of Agriculture, he said, reiterating that using technical know-how and increasing productivity in the agricultural sector have been put at the top of the agenda of the ministry. As a specialized and professional organization in agriculture, FAO can play an important role in exchanging technical know-how and experience among the member states, the minister emphasized.

He went on to say that FAO can share Iran's successful experience in the agricultural sector with other countries as well.

The head of the FAO Representative Office to Iran, for his part, said that FAO backs measures taken by the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in attracting capital and multilateral investment opportunities. Given the privileged status of Iran's pistachios in the global market, maintaining and enhancing the export trend is of strategic importance for the agricultural sector, Yubak Dhoj G C added.

President emphasizes encouraging approaches in terms of population rejuvenation

Social Desk

The National Headquarters of Population convened for its fifth meeting on Monday, with President Seyyed Ebrahim Raeisi in attendance. The meeting, held before noon, focused on the critical issue of population regulation and the importance of adherence to approved laws and upper-level documents concerning the nation's population rejuvenation. Raeisi underscored the need for a thorough review of the performance of responsible institutions in implementing the National Headquarters of the Population's approvals. He stressed the urgency of addressing delays and bolstering culture-building measures with an encouraging approach, given the existing concern about this significant issue,

according to president.ir. The president highlighted the importance of enhancing encouraging approaches and culture-building for different societal sections as a priority in addressing the population rejuvenation. He stated, "The actions of the institutions in charge should be such that society perceives families with more children as having a higher quality of life." Raeisi also emphasized the role of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting in promoting the issue of population youth, describing it as a crucial culture-building measure. He added, "All cultural productions should focus on encouraging childbearing, so that, over time, the issue of population becomes a dominant discourse." Raeisi stressed the need for a

suitable roadmap for institutions responsible for population regulation, emphasizing the continuity of updated policies and decisions to achieve appropriate results in this area. In a bid to strengthen preventive approaches to abortion, Raeisi ordered the secretary of the National Headquarters of Population to form a working group. The group, comprising officials from the Ministry of Health, the vice president for Women and Family Affairs, and the judiciary, is tasked with examining the various aspects of the issue and taking action to resolve them. The fifth meeting of the National Headquarters of Population concluded with the approval of eight resolutions aimed at facilitating and removing obstacles to having children.



● IRNA

IFRC to advocate easement of medicinal sanctions on Iran

The head of the Middle East and North Africa regional office of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) Societies said Tuesday that the organization is working to reduce the impact of pharmaceutical sanctions on Iran.

Hossam Elsharkawi stated that he recently met with leaders of the Iranian Red Crescent Society and promised to advocate for easing sanctions that have made it difficult to get medicine and medical supplies into Iran, Mehr news agency reported.

"In the past two years, I have traveled to Iran and have seen firsthand the high operational capacity and large number of volunteers" in the country's Red Crescent branch, Elsharkawi said on the sidelines of a meeting of the International Federation's Islamic Advisory Committee in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

He said he plans to send colleagues to Tehran in the coming weeks to learn from the Iranian Red Crescent's experiences in several humanitarian fields. The comments came after Elsharkawi met with the secretary general and deputy director of international affairs for



● MEHR

the Iranian Red Crescent Society, Yaqub Soleimani and Razieh Alishvandi. Alishvandi spoke about the role of Iranian women in the Red Crescent and said the organization can serve as an example of "the capabilities and effective presence of Iranian women, especially in the field of relief and humanitarian actions."

Soleimani called for more advocacy to document and reduce the impact of sanctions on humanitarian operations. He also pointed out that the Iranian Red Crescent's network of thousands of local Crescent Houses that mobilize communities to prepare for disasters is a successful model that was welcomed by the federation and member societies.

Eight attractive Iranian villages to vie on global stage

Social Desk

Eight villages have been announced as Iran's final candidates in the project of the best global tourism villages, positioning them to compete on the global stage. The initiative, proposed by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 2021, aims to promote the role of tourism in safeguarding villages.

To evaluate the candidate villages, the UNWTO has established key indicators encompassing various aspects. These indicators include the availability of resources and attractions, restoration and protection of resources, social and environmental sustainability, tourism value chain, infrastructure and communications, as well as safety and security, according to Mehr News Agency.

These indicators are further divided into 40 sub-indices, providing a comprehensive framework for assessing the villages. Initially, 130 villages from across Iran entered the selection process. Following the evaluation based on the UNWTO's indicators, this number was narrowed down to 30 villages. Finally, taking into account the designated capacity



● Kandovan Village
● UNWTO

for each country, eight villages emerged as the final candidates representing Iran.

The selected villages that will participate in the global competition are Kandovan in East Azarbaijan, Meymand in Kerman, Soheili in Hormozgan, Qasemabad in Gilan, Kandolus in Mazandaran, Abyaneh in Isfahan, Palangan in Kordestan, and Bisheh in Lorestan.

In preparation for the competition, Iran has completed the documentation for its candidate villages. This includes the submission of supporting materials such as video clips showcasing the tourism attractions and potentials of each village, as well as relevant images. These materials have been prepared and uploaded to the World Tourism Organization's system.

PIC OF THE DAY



Every year, the women of Lasjerd Village in Sorkheh City, Semnan Province, uphold the old tradition of offering bread by diligently preparing and baking thousands of their traditional breads in their home tanooors (ovens). These breads are then distributed to the mourners during the nights of Muharram in the village's Hosseiniyehs. Located 40 kilometers west of the center of Semnan Province, Lasjerd is a living testament to the rich cultural heritage of the region.

● MASOUD MOHAQEQ/ISNA

Thousands more evacuated as Greece 'at war' with fires

Authorities evacuated nearly 2,500 people from the Greek island of Corfu on Monday as the heat-battered nation was "at war" with several wildfires.

Tens of thousands of people have already fled blazes on the island of Rhodes, with many frightened tourists scrambling to get home on evacuation flights, according to phys.org. About 2,400 visitors and locals were evacuated from the Ionian tourist island of Corfu from Sunday into Monday, a fire service spokesman said, adding that the departures were a precaution. "We are at war and are ex-

clusively geared towards the fire front," Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis told parliament, warning that the nation faced "another three difficult days ahead" before high temperatures are forecast to ease.

Greece has been sweltering under a lengthy spell of extreme heat that has exacerbated wildfire risk and left visitors stranded in peak tourist season.

Kelly Squirrel, a transport administrator from the United Kingdom, said police had ordered people from her hotel on Rhodes to evacuate. "We had to keep walking,"



● GETTY IMAGES

she told AFP at the international airport. "So we walked for about six hours in the heat." Rhodes, which counted 2.5 million visitor arrivals in 2022, is one of Greece's leading holiday destina-

tions. Greek television broadcast images of long lines of people, some in beachwear, lugging suitcases along the island's roads on Saturday, when the evacuations were ordered.

'The Wastetown' set for public release in France



ISNA – 'The Wastetown,' a film directed by Ahmad Bahrami and produced by Reza Moqaddas, is set to be released in French cinemas starting from August 2.

Bahrami was previously honored with the Best Director Award at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival for his exceptional work on 'The Wastetown,' a film that is yet to be released in Iran.

In the meantime, Reza Moqaddas, the producer of 'The Wastetown,' is currently presenting Hadi Mohaqeq's movie 'Scent of the Wind' in French cinemas, which has reportedly attracted an audience of over 20,000 viewers.

Starting a talented cast, including Baran Kosari, Ali Baqeri, and Babak Karimi, 'The Wastetown' features a compelling story set in a remote brick manufacturing factory that uses ancient methods for brick production. The factory employs families from different ethnic backgrounds, and the boss holds the key to resolving their challenges.

The film revolves around Lotfollah, a 40-year-old supervisor born on-site, who acts as a mediator between the workers and the boss. As the boss announces the factory's imminent shutdown, Lotfollah's priority becomes safeguarding Sarvar, the woman he has loved for a long time, from harm.

'The Wastetown' marks Ahmad Bahrami's second feature-length film, following 'The Wasteland,' which received the prestigious Horizons Award at the Venice Film Festival.

● License Holder: Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA)
 ● Editorial Dept. Tel: +98 21 88913453
 ● Editorial Dept. Fax: +98 21 88930684
 ● ICPI Publisher: +98 21 88548892, 5
 ● Advertising Dept. Tel & Email: +98 21 88500617 - irandaily@iranagahi.com
 ● Website: www.irandaily.ir
 newspaper.irandaily.ir
 irandaily@icpi.ir
 ● Email: irandaily@icpi.ir
 ● Printing House: Iran Cultural & Press Institute

Address: #22, Hosseini-Rad Alley, South of Shahid Motahari St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran, Iran

Iran Daily

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62607571900044 > irandaily.ir | newspaper.irandaily.ir

Vol. 7348 ● Tuesday, July 25, 2023 ● Price 40,000 Rials ● 8 Pages

Iran's minister calls for ISESCO's stance on offense to Qur'an

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance has sent a letter to the director-general of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), urging the organization to take an official stance against the desecration of the Qur'an.

Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili wrote to Salim bin Mohammed al-Malik on July 24, expressing concern over the issuance of an official government permit for the burning of the Qur'an in Sweden.

He noted that this regrettable incident took place with the backing of the Swedish government, leading to dissatisfaction among Muslims worldwide. An official position from ISESCO could serve as a formal declaration of protest and dissatisfaction.

Esmaeili added, "I am confident that decisive action will be taken to prevent similar actions in other countries and to promote peace among Islamic nations. Furthermore, the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to host an extraordinary conference of culture ministers from Islamic

countries to discuss unified and coordinated responses to offenses against the sanctity of the Qur'an."

ISESCO is an affiliate of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The organization aims to facilitate coordination, expand educational, scientific, and cultural interactions among Islamic countries, inspired by the principles and teachings of Islam.

ISESCO has signed cooperation agreements with 114 specialized organizations, United Nations agencies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic institutions.



Iran, Japan discuss potential collaboration in cinematic works

Arts & Culture Desk

In a meeting held at the Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC), Kenjo Murakami, the chargé d'affaires of the Japanese Embassy in Tehran, and Mohammad Hamidi-Moqaddam, the CEO of the center, explored possibilities for joint cinematic ventures between Iran and Japan. During the meeting, Murakami highlighted the cultural commonalities between the two nations and praised the interest of many Japanese filmmakers in Iranian cinema.

He commended the artistic achievements of Iranian directors and expressed

hope for continued collaboration in film, animation, and television production, according to ILNA.

Drawing attention to the popular Iranian series such as 'Oshin,' and the animation 'Ganbare, Kickers!,' Murakami expressed his desire to establish an ongoing showcase of Japanese series and cartoons in Iran, reminiscent of the flourishing exchange between the two countries during the 1980s and 90s. He further emphasized Japan's historical and cultural values, deeply rooted in tradition, family, and respect for others' rights and hard work.

Hamidi-Moqaddam acknowledged the

profound cultural ties between Iran and Japan and recalled successful collaborations in the past, citing 'The Wind Carpet' by Kamal Tabrizi as an example of a joint production that captured the cultural affinity of both nations.

Both parties expressed their interest in formalizing contracts and agreements to enhance cooperation in various aspects of filmmaking, including production, distribution, and screening of Iranian and Japanese films at festivals and networks.

Hamidi-Moqaddam underscored Japan's expertise in animation, recognizing its potential to contrib-

ute to the development of animation in Iran, which has already demonstrated considerable talent and capacity.

The meeting participants delved into the shared historical experiences of both nations, including the tragic events surrounding the bombing of Sardasht during World War II. They viewed this common ground as a potential source of inspiration for future joint productions.

Murakami announced the forthcoming visit of a delegation of Japanese diplomats focused on sports and culture, aiming to foster further collaboration in cinema, television, and animation. The dele-



gation plans to explore avenues for cooperation with both the governmental and private sectors in Iran. Additionally, the possibility of organizing film festivals emerged as another potential platform to strengthen ties between Iran and Japan in the realm

of cinema. Both sides expressed optimism that this constructive dialogue would pave the way for fruitful cinematic collaborations between the two nations, enriching the cultural landscape of both countries.

At least 125 tombs discovered at Roman-era cemetery in Gaza

Archaeologists working on a 2,000-year-old Roman cemetery discovered in Gaza last year have found at least 125 tombs, most with skeletons still largely intact, and two rare lead sarcophagi, the Palestinian Ministry of Antiquities said. The impoverished Palestinian territory was an important trading post for civilisations as far back as the ancient Egyptians and the Philistines depicted in the Bible, through the Roman empire and the crusades, Reuters reported.

In the past, local archaeologists reburied findings for lack of funding but French organisations have helped excavate this site, discovered in February last year by a construction crew working on an Egyptian-funded housing project. "It is the first time in Palestine we have discovered a cemetery that has 125 tombs, and it is the first time in Gaza we have discovered two sarcophagi made of lead," Fadel Al-A'utul, an expert at the French School of Biblical

and Archeological Research, told Reuters at the site. One of the two sarcophagi was decorated with images of grapes and the other with dolphins said A'utul, whose organisation is supervising the work with help from French aid agency Premiere Urgence Internationale. "We need funds to preserve this archeological site so that history does not get washed away," he added. A'utul said he hoped the site would become a tourist destination, with a museum

to display the findings. At least 25 engineers and technicians were engaged on Sunday, despite the soaring heat, in digging, clearing the dirt, and preserving the skeletons. They have also been piecing together clay jars found inside some of the graves. "This is unprecedented," said Jamal Abu Reida, General-Director of Gaza's Antiquities Ministry. "It deepens Palestinian roots on this land and shows they date back thousands of years," he said.

