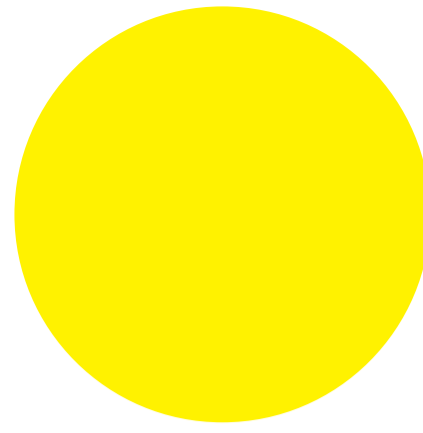


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Tapping into historical figures for public diplomacy



By **Abed Akbari**
International affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Public diplomacy refers to programs aimed at informing or influencing the public opinion of other countries. Public diplomacy can be done through official or private channels, as well as by institutions or individuals. Public diplomacy uses a variety of tools such as media, cultural events, art, science, and sports. The right use of the capacities of public diplomacy can help strengthen international relations, increase mutual trust and respect, create interaction and cooperation, resolve disputes and conflicts, convey messages and values, and especially "promote an image and increase recognition."

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Rouble
recovers after
slide past 100
vs dollar

REUTERS - The Kremlin on Tuesday stressed that there was no need for concern after the Russian rouble weakened past the symbolic threshold of 100 to the dollar in early trade before recovering slightly. By 1150 GMT, the rouble was 0.6% stronger against the dollar at 99.17, having hit 100.255 in early trade, a more than seven-week low.

It had gained 1% to trade at 104.91 versus the euro and firmed 0.5% against the yuan to 13.53.

Qatar begins
construction
on mega gas
field
expansion

AFP - Qatar's state-owned energy giant began construction Tuesday on a project to expand production from the world's biggest natural gas field through an export terminal on the Persian Gulf emirate's northeast coast.

The emir presided over a ceremony to lay the foundation stone for the gas field expansion at Ras Laffan, QatarEnergy's onshore gas processing base 80 kilometres (50 miles) north of Doha. Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani wrote on X, formerly Twitter, that the project "falls within our strategy towards strengthening Qatar's position as a global producer of liquefied natural gas (LNG)".

WB
downgrades
developing
East Asia
growth
forecast

CNBC - The World Bank trimmed its growth forecast for developing East Asia and Pacific, citing a sluggish China and global demand amid still-high interest rates and dampened trade.

The World Bank said it now expects developing economies in East Asia and the Pacific to grow 5% in 2023, according to its October report published Monday in Asia. That's slightly less than the 5.1% it had forecast in April.

Iran's crude extraction tops 3.1mbd,
highest since 2018

Iran extracted 3.15 million barrels per day (mbd) of crude oil in September, which is the highest since 2018, the year Washington re-imposed sanctions on Iran, according to Reuters surveys and separate figures from OPEC.

Analysts have said the higher Iranian exports appear to be the result of Iran's success in evading US sanctions.

OPEC oil output rose for a second straight month in September, led by increases in Nigeria and Iran despite ongoing cuts

by Saudi Arabia and other members of the wider OPEC+ alliance to support the market.

Last month, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries pumped 27.73 million barrels per day (bpd), the survey found, up 120,000 bpd from August. Production in August had risen for the first time since February. The rise in September was led by Nigeria, which has been battling with crude theft and insecurity in its oil-producing region. Nigeria managed a size-

able boost in exports in September without any major disruption to shipments, according to shipping data and sources in the survey, increasing output by 110,000 bpd. The country is targeting a further recovery by next year. Output from the 10 OPEC members that are subject to OPEC+ supply cut agreements rose by 80,000 bpd, the survey found.

Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf members maintained strong compliance with agreed cut-

backs and extra voluntary reductions.

Top exporter Saudi Arabia kept August and September output close to 9 million bpd, the survey found, as the country extended a voluntary 1 million bpd output cut to provide extra support for the market.

Iraq and the United Arab Emirates increased output slightly, while Angolan supply showed the largest decline in the group of 50,000 bpd due to a drop in exports.

OPEC's output is still un-

dershooting the targeted amount by about 700,000 bpd, mainly because Nigeria and Angola lack the capacity to pump as much as their agreed level.

The Reuters survey aims to track supply to the market. It is based on shipping data provided by external sources, Refinitiv Eikon flows data, information from companies that track flows such as Petro-Logistics and Kpler, and information provided by sources at oil companies, OPEC, and consultants.

Russia's cargo train heading
to Saudi Arabia arrives in Iran

The first transit train carrying goods from Russia to Saudi Arabia arrived in the port city of Bandar Abbas in the southern Iranian province of Hormuzgan.

After roaming 1,610 kilometers on Iran's railway network, the container train with its 31 wagons arrived in Bandar Abbas, reported Tasnim news agency. The cargo of the train will later be forwarded from the southern city to Saudi Arabia by ship.

Selecting the Bandar Abbas route for the transit of goods from Russia to Saudi Arabia will reduce the customs tariffs to almost half the normal amounts, boost the rail transport industry, and increase the share of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways in the transit of goods. The train left Russia's Chelyabinsk freight station on June 21 and transited through Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Iran. The route reduces delivery times by several days and is less expensive than the alternative maritime route through the Suez Canal.

Minister: \$20b invested in two years
to launch projects

Iran's oil minister said about \$20 billion has been invested to implement upstream and downstream projects since the incumbent government took office two years ago.

Talking to the IRIB News Agency on Monday, Javad Owji added the inaugurated projects were mainly those that were left unfinished.

The minister pointed to Isfahan Refinery's Diesel Hydrotreating Unit inaugurated by President Ebrahim Raisi on Friday, adding the DHT Unit having a daily production capacity of 16 million liters of Euro 5 diesel was put into operation to comply with the Clean Air Law of Iran. According to Owji, the facility prevents the emission of 300 tons of sulfur per day. The Oil Ministry has given priority to promoting the quality of oil products and reducing sulfur compounds in refineries such as the Isfahan, Shiraz, and Tabriz refineries, underlined the top official. He said 30 products of the Isfahan Refinery, including gasoline, meet international standards, noting that the central Iranian city's refinery produces 13 million liters of gasoline a day.

Boosting ultimate recovery of oil, gas wells on agenda: **Official**

Economy Desk

Iran has plans to boost the ultimate recovery of oil and gas wells, said the head of the Research and Development Department of Arvandan Oil and Gas Company. Issa Naviri added that most of the Iranian wells introduced for recovery are located in the South Azadegan oil field with

an average recovery factor of 4.4 percent, Shana reported.

The mission of Arvandan Oil and Gas Company is to develop and maintain oil and gas production from hydrocarbon reservoirs located in the west of the Karoun River with the highest ultimate recovery, the official noted. He put the production

target for his company at 900,000 barrels of crude oil per day and said: "The volume of in-situ oil in the operation field of the company is more than 96 billion barrels, 8.3 billion barrels of which are recoverable."

Meanwhile, the deputy CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) for supervising

oil and gas production at joint fields put the average daily crude oil produced from each oil well in the country at 1,550 barrels.

Ali Barati added that the NIOC has pursued the plan of reviving low-yielding oil wells of the country in cooperation with domestic technology-based companies for more than two years now.

He further noted that the cost of producing an oil barrel in a newly established field is more than a thousand US dollars.

The development of applied software and indigenized technical know-how in the oil industry is among the advantages of the plan for reviving low-yielding oil wells in the country, Barati emphasized.





Saqalaksar Lake a natural beauty in Iran



If you're a nature lover and have a penchant for lakes, then come along with us as we explore one of Iran's greatest natural wonders.

Saqalaksar Lake, located near Rasht, the capital of Gilan Province in northern Iran, is a sight to behold with its unparalleled beauty and captivating natural attractions. Picture a serene lake nestled amidst lush forests, creating a picturesque vista that is truly mesmerizing. Known as the cleanest lake in Iran, Saqalaksar Lake is a testament to the pristine beauty of nature.

Situated approximately 64 meters above sea level, Saqalaksar Lake, together with its surrounding green forests, spans a remarkable fifteen-hectare area. The lake itself stretches six hundred meters in length and five hundred meters in width. It is an artificial lake formed by the construction of a dam, receiving its water supply from precipitation and nearby springs.

The name Saqalaksar is derived from three words: "saqa," meaning water-hole, "lak," meaning stork, and "sar," meaning starling. Essentially, it signifies a place where storks and starlings quench their thirst. It is said that these birds inhabit the area surrounding the lake and utilize it as a source of water.

To fully grasp the beauty and tranquility of Saqalaksar Lake, take a leisurely stroll along its shores and through the encompassing woods. Listen to the harmonious melodies of the birds that dwell in this idyllic setting. If you prefer a more immersive experience, consider camping near the lake. However, try to plan your visit during weekdays to avoid the crowds typically present on weekends and holidays.

There are also boats available for rent, allowing you to paddle through the lake and explore its enchanting surroundings from a different perspective. Until a few years ago, an intriguing sight

awaited visitors at Saqalaksar Lake — an ephemeral house that emerged or submerged depending on the season. During periods of heavy precipitation, the house would vanish beneath the water, only to resurface during dry months. Unfortunately, for unknown reasons, it has since been removed, leaving behind fond memories of this remarkable phenomenon.

Saqalaksar Lake has gained recognition for being a haven of cleanliness and natural preservation in Iran. The nearby villagers are renowned for their warm hospitality and friendliness. They firmly believe that the village and its environs belong not only to them but to the Earth as a whole. Thus, they strive to preserve its pristine condition. They embrace the concept that actions speak louder than words. Consequently, maintaining a healthy environment is deemed crucial for a sound mind and heart.

In their tireless efforts to uphold the integrity of the lake, the villagers have established a remarkable tradition. Visitors must pay an entrance fee, which grants them access to the site. However, this fee serves a dual purpose. In addition to welcoming guests, the villagers provide them with bags to collect any trash they may encounter during their stay. Guests who gather and deposit trash into these bags are eligible for a partial refund of their entrance fee upon departure.

Saqalaksar Lake's allure knows no seasonal bounds. Regardless of the time of year, it exudes its own unique charm that captivates all who come across it. In the spring, delicate light green trees cast their reflection on the lake, creating a mesmerizing tableau, while vibrant flowers and flourishing rice farms embellish the surrounding landscape. In the fall, the lake is encircled by a breathtaking display of fiery-hued leaves, leaving spectators speechless. Finally,

the winter brings a tranquil scene of snow-covered trees and an icy lake surface, forming a winter wonderland.

Before setting out on your Saqalaksar Lake adventure, take note of the following tips: 1. Fishing and swimming are not permitted in the lake. 2. Visitors are allowed to enter only until 8 p.m. If you're traveling with friends, don't worry about individual fees. The entrance fee applies per car and is reasonable. Saqalaksar Lake is in a village with the same name, a mere fifteen kilometers from Rasht.

Take the opportunity to immerse yourself in the pure air and captivating scenery. Afterward, if you're interested in exploring nearby attractions in Rasht, Shahr-dari Square, Saravan Park, and Gilan Rural Heritage Museum are excellent options. Additionally, don't miss the opportunity to visit the famous stepped houses of Masuleh and the historic Ghaleh Roudkhan.

Aspakhu Fire Temple and its unique architecture

Iranica Desk

Aspakhu Fire Temple, which dates back to the ancient Sassanid era, is the oldest recorded structure of this period in North Khorasan Province.

This stone temple, which is sometimes called a church, is located on a high hill in the forests of North Khorasan Province, 115 kilometers from Bojnourd, on the road to Ashkhaneh, in the southern part of Aspakhu village.

The architecture of this building combines domes and *ivans*, which have a long history.

Near this building there is a cemetery on a hill that differs significantly from the burial and tomb-making practices of Muslims; the bodies are buried in a family manner. According to experts, these indications suggest that certain Zoroastrian communities lived in this vast area, and this magnificent building belongs to them.

The entrance of the temple, which has a special significance in its architecture, consists of two parts: the dome and the base. The dome is placed on the base in the shape of a semi-circle.



[wikipedia.org](https://www.wikipedia.org)

Overall, considering the architectural features and the use of materials, especially the use of uncut stones, small wooden beams, method of dome-making, dome arches, and other elements, it can be said that this type of architecture prevailed in the early Sassanid period and, at most, until the early Buyid era in Iran.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran
opposes any
geopolitical
change in
region

IRNA – Iranian Foreign Ministry's Spokesman Nasser Kanaani reiterated Iran's position over developments in the Caucasus region, saying that Tehran opposes any change in the geopolitics or boundaries of the region.

He stressed the need to use the capacities of neighbors to establish peace and stability in the region, which has been the scene of conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan in recent months.

Kanaani also said that Iran opposes the presence of outsiders in the region.

Iran's
nuclear tech
developed to
serve people

IRNA – The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Mohammad Eslami said the country's nuclear technology is developed to serve people. Addressing a group of attendees of the 37th International Islamic Unity Conference, Eslami said Iran does not seek nuclear weapons and has always pursued peaceful nuclear energy. He said Iran is ready to share its nuclear achievements with other countries.

Judiciary
official's sons
arrested on
corruption
charges

TASNIM – Two sons of the First Deputy of the Iranian Judiciary Mohammad Mosaddeq have been arrested over links to a corruption case amounting to nearly five million dollars.

The suspects are involved in a case of large-scale embezzlements from banks that started eight months ago, the news agency reported, adding eight people linked to the case have so far been arrested.

**Leader: Normalization with Israel
'betting on a losing horse'**

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei (L) meets with a group of Iranian people and officials, as well as ambassadors from Muslim countries, and participants at the 37th International Islamic Unity Conference in Tehran on October 3, 2023. khamenei.ir

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei rebuked countries seeking to normalize relations with Isra-

el, saying that "the Zionist regime is perishable".

"The Islamic Republic's definite position is that the governments that use the normalization gamble with the Zionist regime as a model for themselves will lose and the loss awaits them," Ayatollah Khamenei said on Tuesday, Press TV reported.

"They are making a mistake and, as the Europeans say, they are betting on a losing horse," he told a

group of people, government officials, ambassadors of Islamic countries and guests of an international unity conference in Tehran.

Ayatollah Khamenei said the situation in Israel is not one of the kind to encourage closeness and countries "should not make this mistake".

"Today, the Palestinian movement is more cheerful than ever in the past seventy and eighty years,

and the Palestinian youth and the anti-usurpation, anti-oppression and anti-Zionism movement are more cheerful, more lively, and more ready than ever, as you can see.

"And God willing, this movement will come to fruition, and as the late honorable Imam [Khomeini] described the usurping regime as a cancer, God willing, this cancer will be eradicated at the hands of the Palestinian people and

the resistance forces in the entire region."

Ayatollah Khamenei said Israel holds malice against Muslim countries.

"The Zionist regime is full of hatred and anger, not only toward us, but also other countries. It is not like the Zionist regime is happy with the countries far and around it. They also hate Egypt, Iraq and Syria. "Why? Because their goal was from the Nile to the Euphrates and this did not happen. These countries did not allow it for different reasons," the Leader said.

**Hostility toward
Islam**

Ayatollah Khamenei said hostility toward Islam is more obvious than ever now, citing the desecration of the Holy Qur'an in the West as an example.

"An ignorant idiot insults and a government supports it, which shows that the issue is not just a staged and insulting act," he said.

"We have nothing to do with that ignorant and oblivious person who condemns himself to the most severe punishments and execution in order to fulfill the objectives of the behind-the-scenes elements. The discussion is about the

designers of these crimes and hateful acts.

"They think they can weaken the Qur'an, but they are wrong and they ruin themselves," the Leader added. Ayatollah Khamenei said the idea of weakening the Qur'an with such acts is delusional, which only exposes the inside of the enemies of the Holy Book. "The Qur'an is a book of wisdom, knowledge, humanization and awakening, and hostility with the Qur'an is actually hostility with these lofty concepts. Of course, the Qur'an is a threat to the corrupt powers because it both condemns oppression and blames the oppressed people who succumb to oppression."

Also, Ayatollah Khamenei said the justification of desecrating the Qur'an under the "trite, false and wrong" moniker of freedom of speech only disgraces the justifiers. "In the countries that allow insulting the Qur'an under the pretext of freedom of speech, do they also allow attacking Zionist symbols? What language can be used to prove more clearly that the countries in question are under the domination of the cruel, criminal and plundering Zionists of the world?"

Iran's Army launches large-scale drone drill

The Iranian Army on Tuesday launched a massive drill involving a broad range of military unmanned aerial vehicles. Troops from the four units of the Army, namely the Ground Force, Navy,

Air Force, and Air Defense Force participated in the military maneuver, Tasnim News Agency reported. Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, the deputy chief of the Iranian Army for

Coordination, said nearly 200 drones covered strategic waters of the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, as well as all four corners of the country

and its central part.

He noted that the patrol and reconnaissance drones carried out missions along the country's borders on Tuesday morning and took images from the drill zones.

Sayyari said the surveillance drones successfully carried out their intelligence-gathering and patrol missions on the first day of the Army's 1402 joint drone military exercise.

The Army has flown diverse homegrown drones, including Chamrosh, Yashir, Sadeq, Pelican, Ababil,

Kaman-12, Yazdan, and Mohajer to control the country's land, sea, and air borders as well as the international waters, the general said.

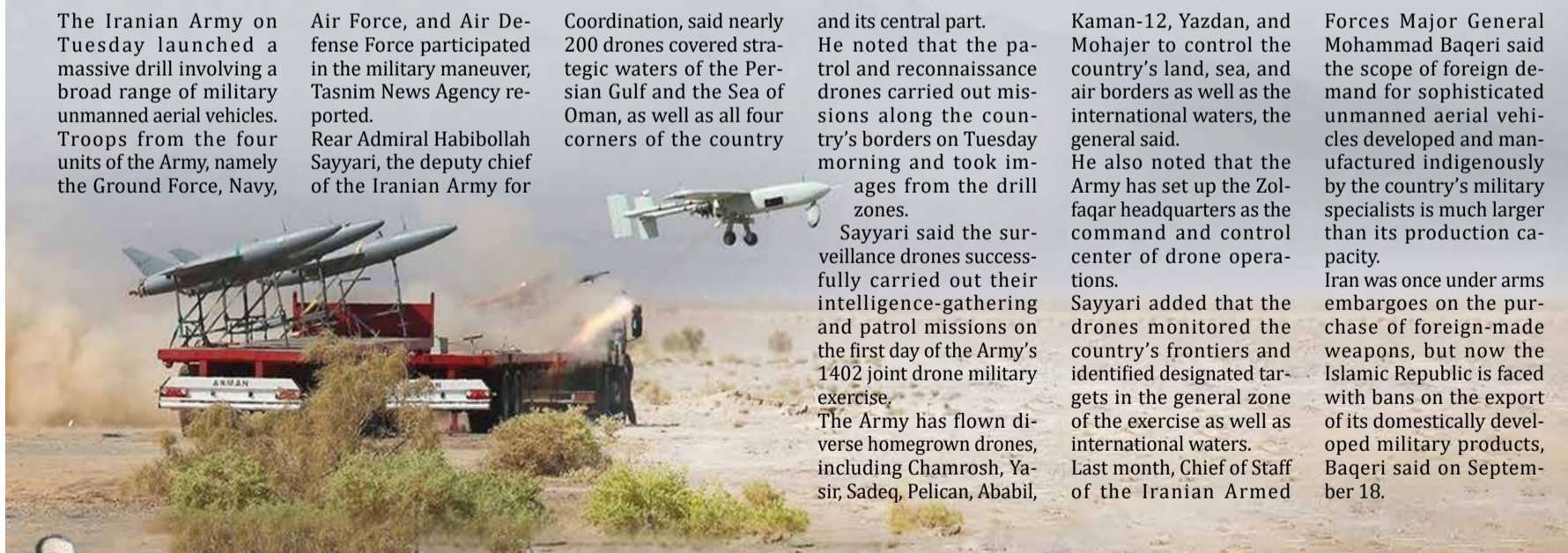
He also noted that the Army has set up the Zolfagar headquarters as the command and control center of drone operations.

Sayyari added that the drones monitored the country's frontiers and identified designated targets in the general zone of the exercise as well as international waters.

Last month, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed

Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri said the scope of foreign demand for sophisticated unmanned aerial vehicles developed and manufactured indigenously by the country's military specialists is much larger than its production capacity.

Iran was once under arms embargoes on the purchase of foreign-made weapons, but now the Islamic Republic is faced with bans on the export of its domestically developed military products, Baqeri said on September 18.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

**NAM rejects use of force against states
on pretext of fighting terrorism**

Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Iran to the United Nations Zahra Ershadi said the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) rejects the use of force by any country against any NAM member state under the pretext of fighting terrorism.

Ershadi made the remarks in a statement on Monday on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement before the Sixth Committee of the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on "Measures to eliminate inter-

national terrorism", IRNA reported. She said that the NAM unequivocally rejects terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as well as all acts, methods and practices of terrorism.

"We would like to stress that terrorism should not be equated with the legitimate struggle of peoples under colonial or alien domination and foreign occupation, for self-determination and national liberation. The brutalization of peoples remaining under foreign occupation should continue to be de-

nounced as the gravest form of terrorism, and the use of state power for the suppression and violence against peoples struggling against foreign occupation in exercising their inalienable right to self-determination should continue to be condemned," she said.

Ershadi said that terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group, and these attributions should not be used to justify terrorism or counter-terrorism measures.

By Ebrahim Beheshti
Staff writer

PERSPECTIVE

In recent days, there have been reports indicating that the United States is trying to normalize relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel and apparently has made progress in this regard. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, in a recent interview with Fox News, stated that his country is now closer than ever to establishing relations with Israel.

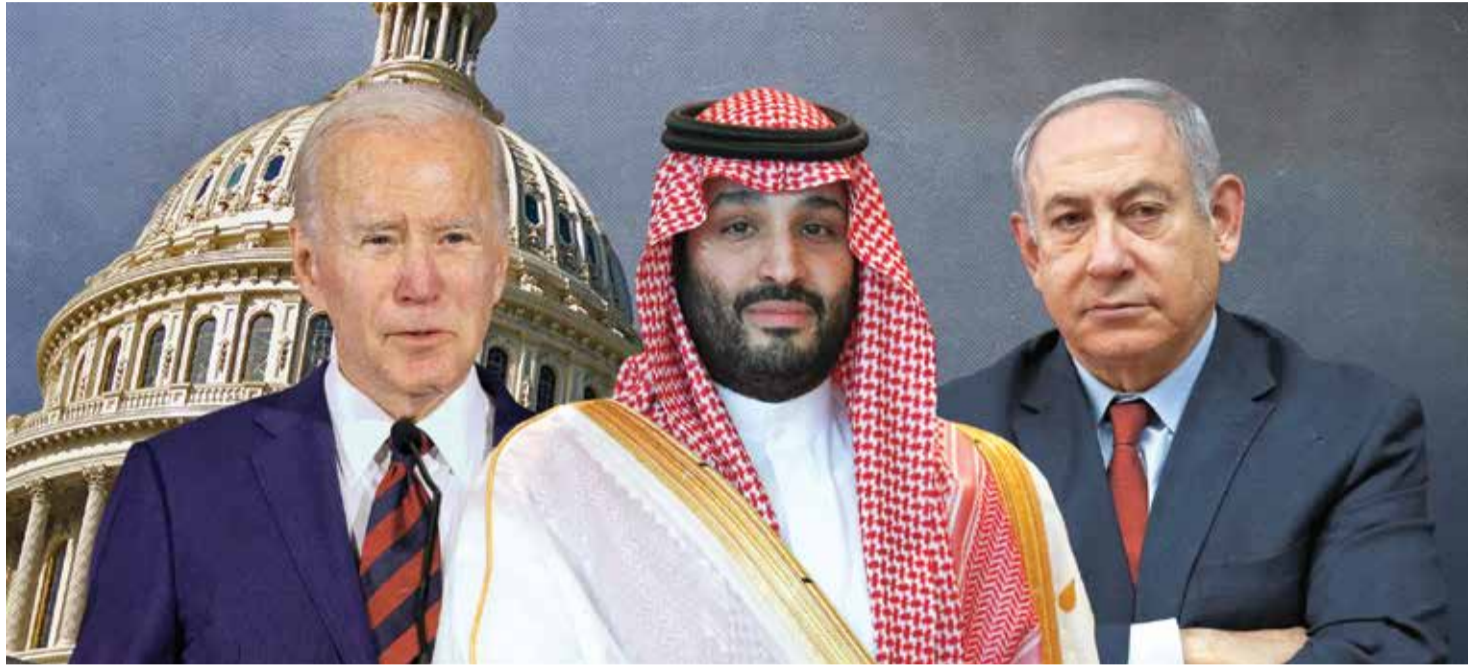
Furthermore, following a meeting between US President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, some media outlets reported that they both agreed on general principles for addressing the Palestinian issue, with a focus on a two-state solution. Additionally, in a remarkable development, two Israeli ministers visited Saudi Arabia in the last two weeks.

It is evident that there are daunting challenges ahead before an agreement between Saudi Arabia and Israel can be reached. The normalization plan is closely intertwined with two critical issues: Israel's internal turmoil and the political strategy of the Democrats and the Biden administration to use the normalization issue as a trump card in the 2024 presidential election.

Netanyahu seems to view the normalization plan as an opportunity to stabilize his fragile cabinet. The domestic situation in Israel is currently so precarious that even former prime minister Ehud Barak has expressed concerns, stating that Israel is being undermined from within.

On the American front, the Democrats also see the realization of the normalization plan as a chance to boost their electoral prospects and bolster their weak foreign policy performance. However, what appears to be overlooked amidst these political calculations are the rights of the Palestinians and the potential concessions they may receive as a result of normalization. Will Netanyahu, known for his history of disregarding Palestinian rights, be willing

Normalization shrouded in uncertainties



to recognize these rights in the context of normalization?

Reports suggest that one of Saudi Arabia's main conditions for normalization is that Israel accepts the two-state solution, which would involve the creation of an independent Palestinian state with East Al-Quds as its capital.

Following the announcement of the agreement between Biden and Netanyahu regarding the general principles for the two-state solution, the Israeli channel I24NEWS reported that the key question now is how to translate these principles into practice.

Some media outlets have speculated that Netanyahu may view concessions related to the Palestinians or Saudi conditions for normalization as merely symbolic gestures, rather than genuine, binding commitments for Israel.

That's why the Saudi newspaper Al Riyadh recently wrote that the state of normalization is not just about achieving success; what follows is of greater importance.

According to Al Riyadh, regardless of the Saudi conditions, Israel should not assume that the Palestinian issue will fade into oblivion with normalization coming

into force. The concept of normalizing relations should compel Israel to reevaluate its interactions with its neighbors.

This Saudi paper emphasized that "the situation in the Middle East necessitates a 'fundamental shift in Israel's political mindset'."

The central question here lies in whether Israel, particularly Netanyahu and his radical cabinet, are willing to alter their political perspective. This challenge in answering the question has prompted Barak to say that there are no guarantees of achieving normalization. This is a historical irony: when the normalization process is ripe, Israel finds itself with an unconventional government.

The Arabi21 website has already highlighted that even the simplest concessions for the Palestinians could prove difficult for Netanyahu to secure due to staunch opposition from members of his cabinet, such as Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir.

Moreover, there are reportedly other major conditions that Riyadh has placed on the table for normalizing relations with Israel which include a defense treaty

between the United States and Saudi Arabia, as well as an agreement on the nuclearization of Saudi Arabia. Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh, an international relations expert, has told Iran Daily: "It's unlikely that Israel would agree to Saudi Arabia's nuclearization. Israel is concerned about the prospect of a Muslim-majority country like Saudi Arabia gaining access to nuclear capabilities, given its substantial influence in the Islamic world. Israel knows that Arab countries are prone to undergoing political changes. Consequently, those in Israel who adhere to orthodox and radical religious beliefs and believe that a war between Muslims and Israel is inevitable are unlikely to support the idea of Saudi Arabia acquiring nuclear capabilities in any capacity."

Ali Nejat, a Middle East affairs expert, also spoke to Iran Daily, saying that both Israel and Saudi Arabia are inclined toward normalization. However, Israel's preference is for normalization without granting special privileges to Saudi Arabia. "Israelis might consider a limited level of nuclearization for Saudi Arabia, particularly at an industrial scale, under US pressure.

“
A major obstacle to a comprehensive Middle East peace deal lies in the prevailing public opinion across Islamic countries, where the majority, as indicated by various polls, remains opposed to the idea of normalizing relations with Israel.

However, it appears that they are open to the idea of forming two states."

Another major obstacle to a comprehensive Middle East peace deal lies in the prevailing public opinion across Islamic countries, where the majority, as indicated by various polls, remains opposed to the idea of normalizing relations with Israel.

On September 18, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP) published the results of a survey conducted among the Saudi population, revealing a notable decline in support for a normalization deal with Israel.

According to the poll, even the proportion of those willing to engage in trade relations with Israel without a normalization pact

is quite low. Around one-third of participants expressed their willingness to take initial steps in relations with Tel Aviv that fall short of official diplomatic ties, including supporting cooperation with Israeli companies in areas such as weather and technology. Palestinian-British journalist Abdel Bari Atwan, citing the same polls, emphasized that the leaders signing normalization agreements with Israel do not necessarily represent the sentiments of their people.

"Poll results from the WINEP, which supports Israel, demonstrate a massive decline in Arab nations' support for the normalization agreements between Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Tel Aviv within just one year." Therefore, despite the apparent determination of Saudi Arabia and Israel to normalize ties with the backing of the United States, it is evident that not all the factors required to realize such a deal are within their control.

The road to normalizing relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel remains fraught with challenges and uncertainties, especially given the lack of a positive outlook for the future of normalization and the realiza-

China gains foothold in Mideast as US gets isolated

By Syed Ali Hassan
Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

The United States finds itself increasingly isolated in the Middle East, as China expands its influence in the region, exacerbating the gradual decline of the role of the US and its Western allies. China's instrumental role in normalizing relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia was one of the more pronounced events that showcased Washington's diminishing presence in the Middle East.

A significant recent development was the visit of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to China at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping. The move that the two presidents made toward building a strategic partnership between Syria and China serves as a firm response to external forces challenging Syria's sovereignty.

During their meeting, President Xi firmly voiced China's opposition to foreign powers meddling in Syria's internal affairs. He urged all countries involved to recognize Syria's sovereignty and called for lifting illegal and unilateral sanctions against the Arab nation. The two presidents also jointly announced the establishment of a strategic partnership between Syria and China, which encompasses military cooperation and global political coordination.

This marks President al-Assad's second visit to China since assuming office. During their discussions, the leaders delved into bilateral relations, aligned their stances on global matters, and advocated for the expulsion of foreign powers to foster regional peace.

The repercussions of the Syrian president's visit to China are becoming more and more evident. China is progressively gaining access to regional trade markets while simultaneously limiting American influence in West Asian countries. Meanwhile, Syria, with its oil-rich regions under US military occupation, faces aggression from Turkey in the north and intermittent aerial attacks from Israel. The burgeoning defense cooperation between China and Syria, coupled with President Xi's commitment to bolster Syria's economy, will enhance Damascus's autonomy.

President Xi's message to the US, Israel, and Turkey, in light of their actions on Syrian soil, is unmistakable: You should respect Syrian sovereignty.

Tapping into historical figures for public diplomacy

By Abed Akbari
International affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Public diplomacy refers to programs aimed at informing or influencing the public opinion of other countries. Public diplomacy can be done through official or private channels, as well as by institutions or individuals. Public diplomacy uses a variety of tools such as

media, cultural events, art, science, and sports. The right use of the capacities of public diplomacy can help strengthen international relations, increase mutual trust and respect, create interaction and cooperation, resolve disputes and conflicts, convey messages and values, and especially "promote an image and increase recognition."

Iran is a country with a rich and glorious history and civilization and has seen many great historical figures in various fields of literary and ar-

tistic science. Avicenna, Saadi, Hafiz, Khayyam, Rumi, al-Biruni, Razi, Atar of Nishapur, and Farabi can each be a symbol of a culture and civilization on their own. With their works and ideas, these characters have influenced not only Iran but the world. They can be adopted as cultural and humanistic models for different societies. Holding conferences, festivals, and cultural and artistic activities about these famous and historical greats is a huge capacity that can strength-

en public diplomacy and increase mutual respect and trust by interacting with people from other countries.

The German government has been using the capacity of the famous German poet Goethe, who has been very influenced by Hafiz for years. The establishment of the Goethe-Institut to helm the education of the German language, introduce the German culture, and award the Goethe Medal to those who have provided outstanding services in the field of cul-

tural exchange has been done in this regard.

Iran's initiative to mark various days in its national calendar after historical Iranian figures can be showcased to the world as a form of public diplomacy that introduces the cultural figures of Iran. For example, the country has marked various days throughout the year after Saadi, Avicenna, Rumi, and Hafiz.

It is also of great importance to tap into the capacity of international organizations such as UNESCO by holding

programs and events to showcase the tangible and intangible works of historical figures and commemorate their qualities and life events. This could particularly be done by holding scientific meetings, publishing books and articles, producing films and TV shows, or naming an award after one of these figures. These programs can help the people of the world better understand Iran and its culture and civilization, advancing Iran's public diplomacy.

Hangzhou Asian Games:

Rasouli wins discus throw gold in fitting farewell for Haddadi

Sports Desk

Iranian discus throw sensation Ehsan Haddadi saw his 16-year reign at the Asian Games come to an end on Monday as his fellow countryman Hossein Rasouli walked away with the ultimate prize of the event in Hangzhou.

Having announced that the showdown at the HOC Stadium would be his final appearance at the Asian Games, Haddadi thought his season-best throw of 61.82m in a second attempt had been enough to secure a fifth successive gold in the competitions for the 2012 Olympic silver winner, before the 23-year-old Rasouli registered 62.04m on his fourth throw as Iran still enjoyed a remarkable one-two in the athletics competition.

"I knew the 62m throw would seal the gold, though I could have done better but I was struggling with a chest injury during the event," Rasouli said.

China's Abuduaini Tuergong – a gold medalist in July's Asian Championships – settled for the bronze with 61.19m.

"I was a bit unlucky today as I had a severe back pain before the contest. I think I could have exceeded the 64m-mark had it not been for the physical condition. I'm still happy the discus throw gold remains in Iran," said Haddadi, who was reduced to tears after the event while being surrounded by his opponents for the day.

Asked if Monday's contest would mark his retirement from the sport, Haddadi said: "I'll make the final decision when I return to Tehran. I can still qualify for the Paris Olympics, so I may continue



Iran's discus throw gold medalist Hossein Rasouli (R) and silver medalist Ehsan Haddadi shake hands on the podium at the Hangzhou Asian Games in China on October 2, 2023.
● hangzhou2022.cn

until next year's Games."

"It's been a tough 22 years in competitive sport. My body has been through a lot as I have gone under seven or eight surgeries over these years," added the Iranian, 38, who also has six Asian golds as well as a 2011 world bronze under his belt.

Kurash glory

Elsewhere in Hangzhou, Iran's Sadeq Azarang grabbed a gold medal in the kurash competitions, thanks to a final victory over South Korean Kim Ming-yu in the men's -90kg weight class.

Zahra Baqeri won a silver following a defeat against the host's Liu

Yi in the women's -87kg final, with Melika Omidvand – beaten by the Chinese in the semifinals – taking the joint-bronze of the class.

In canoe sprint events, Iran's Peyman Qavidel and Sepehr Sa'atchi teamed up for a third-place finish behind the Chinese and South Ko-

rean pairs in the men's kayak double 500m final, while Iranian duo Adel Mojallalimoqadam and Kia Estandani also finished their campaign with a bronze in the men's canoe double 500m final.

Hediyeh Kazemi clocked 2:00.635 to win a bronze in the women's kayak single 500m contest.

Iranian equestrians eyeing 'decent finish' in Asian Games



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

The Iranian equestrians will be chasing a "decent finish" in the jumping event of the Hangzhou Asian Games in China, said Mohsen Zakeri, the head of the country's horse-riding team.

"I hope we'll collect the required points for a medal in the Games or at least finish in the top five of the competition," Zakeri told Iran Daily of the Iranian contestants, who will be involved in the team jumping contest today, before being in action in Friday's individual event. Naghmeh Khanjani, Omid Ghariabi, and Masoud Mokarinejad are the three Iranian horse riders in Hangzhou.

Strict quarantine rules had kept the Iranians from participating with their own horses in the Games since Doha 2006, Zakeri said, adding: "Since Iran is regarded a country with high veterinary risks, it is necessary to quarantine horses for a certain period before the Games. That's why we had to come up with a list of our riders who had horses abroad and selected the top ones for the event so that our representatives would ride their own horses in Hangzhou." "Two of the horses were in the



The Iranian equestrian team and coaching staff for the Hangzhou Asian Games
● IRAN DAILY

Netherlands and the other one was in the United Arab Emirates. We staged three training camps in the Netherlands under Iran coach Esfandiar Houshmand and the equestrians took part in several jumping CSI tournaments," said the Iranian.

It has been nearly three decades since Iran last won an equestrian medal at the Asian Games – a team jumping bronze in Hiroshima 1994 for the country's four-man side, comprising Shahrokh Moqaddam, Kazem and Ezzatol-

lah Vojdani, and Davoud Bahrami. "The team has worked a lot to prepare for this year's event, not to mention the Iranian contestants will have the chance to ride their own horses at the TL Equestrian Centre, which is why I believe we can hope for a decent finish in the Games," said Zakeri, who added that proper measures – including serum therapy – have been taken in recent days to make sure the horses would recover from the exhaustion caused by the 16-hour flight to China.

AFC Champions League:

Sepahan vs. Al Ittihad called off after Saudi side refuses to play

Sports Desk

An AFC Champions League match between Iranian club Sepahan and Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad was canceled on Monday after the Saudi side refused to take to the pitch at Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium.

The Group C game was called off "due to unanticipated and unforeseen circumstances," the Asian Football Confederation said in a statement later on Monday.

"The AFC reiterates its commitment towards ensuring the safety and security of the players, match officials, spectators, and all stakeholders involved," read the statement, adding: "This matter will now be referred to the relevant committees."

Al Ittihad is yet to officially announce the reason behind the controversial decision but wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter, that the club was informed by the AFC's organizing official that "the game would not take place on the scheduled date and the team is allowed to leave the venue." Al Ittihad flew back to Saudi Arabia on Monday night. Several sources, including



Sepahan fans are seen in the stands at the Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium, Isfahan, Iran, on October 2, 2023.
● RASOUL SHOJAEI/IRNA

the Iranian Fars and Tasnim new agencies, reported that the players of the Saudi side refused to leave the dressing room due to a bust of Iranian Quds Force General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated in a US drone strike near the Baghdad airport in January 2020, being placed at the entrance to the pitch. "Everything was in place for a proper game of football but Al Ittihad came up with demands that were not sport-related at all," Sepahan CEO Mohammadreza Saket

said afterwards. "I can assure all Sepahan supporters that the club will lodge a complaint to the AFC against Al Ittihad's behavior," Saket added. Sepahan shared the points with Iraq's Air Force Club in a 2-2 draw in Erbil on Matchday One of the Asian elite clubs competition, while Al Ittihad defeated Uzbekistan's AGMK FC 3-0 at home. Elsewhere on Monday, Air Force Club walked away with a 2-1 victory at AGMK to move atop the group.

Tehran hosts 2m foreigners

Complex case of Afghan refugees in Iran



● EGHTEHAD NEWS

Social Desk

For over four decades, Iran has been a generous host to millions of Afghan refugees, providing those coming from a war-torn neighboring country with shelter, education, and health care. However, in the wake of the Taliban's takeover, the state of Afghan refugees in Iran has become the subject of much scrutiny and heated discussions. To many Iranians' dismay, the arrival of the new waves of Afghan refugees in Iran, with their number estimated to be around 1.5 million, has led to a surge in anti-refugee sentiment. Prior to the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in 2021, it was estimated that between 2 to 3 million Afghan refugees resided in Iran, making the country host to one of the largest refugee populations in the world. But recently, many Iranians have come to believe

that the unceasing waves of Afghan refugees seeking asylum in Iran have gotten out of hand, further straining an already weakened economy. This sentiment was echoed by some Iranian authorities as well. Mayor of Tehran Alireza Zakani has recently stated that "about two million foreigners live in Tehran" now, most of whom are Afghan nationals. "More than 700,000 [these foreigners] have been identified in the last year, which shows this phenomenon to be a growing trend." He further stated that "the impact of foreigners' arrival" should be examined, signaling a growing concern among authorities. Of course, such a concentrated population of refugees in any given city is no light matter. In Iran, especially in the capital of Tehran, some view the Afghan refugees as a burden on the already strained resources and job market.

One of the main arguments put forth by those critical of the mass presence of Afghan refugees is the perceived pressure it puts on Iran's subsidized services. Critics claim that Afghan nationals benefit from subsidies provided for essential commodities such as bread, electricity, water, and gas, which should ideally be reserved for Iranian citizens. This argument has gained traction, as the majority of Afghan refugees rely on these subsidies for their daily needs.

Another argument that arises in the debate surrounding Afghan refugees in Iran is the inflation of rent prices in major cities and their suburbs due to the significant presence of Afghan nationals. Critics argue that the large influx of Afghan refugees has created a surge in demand for housing, leading to a scarcity of affordable accommodation for both Iranians

and Afghan refugees alike. This has resulted in an unbridled increase in rental prices, making it challenging for many individuals and families to secure adequate housing and exacerbating an already pinched housing market. Zakani also highlighted the importance of the settlement of the refugees, introducing it as a challenge related to the activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Program. According to the mayor, "Many of them live in illegal settlements that cannot be organized since these refugees lack identity documents."

However, the issue of Afghan refugees in Iran should be approached with a multi-dimensional perspective. Afghan refugees in Iran often face significant challenges and vulnerabilities. Many have fled conflict, persecution, and economic hardships in their home country,

seeking safety and better opportunities in Iran. They often work in low-wage jobs, facing precarious living conditions and limited access to education and health care.

"Afghan immigrants have always done the hardest work with the lowest wages and without any privileges," said Ayatollah Behsoodi, an Afghan cleric living in Iran, regarding the matter. The working refugees in Iran are not insured and, therefore, are prone to exploitation by their employers. "[They] are neither insured nor supported by institutions and organizations; if an accident happens to them, there is no one to support them and compensate them."

Apart from that, it is crucial to acknowledge the historical context and the long-standing relationship between the two countries of Iran and Afghanistan. Through shouldering menial jobs, the Afghan refu-

gee population has made significant contributions to Iranian society and economy, especially in sectors such as construction and agriculture.

While concerns regarding subsidies and resources are valid, it is essential to focus on the issue with empathy and a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play. Getting to grips with the challenges faced by Iran — as a country that hosts millions of Afghans — requires a balanced approach that considers both the humanitarian aspect regarding the refugees and the economic and social impacts that their stay has on the host community.

It is crucial at this point to note that during the recent refugee ordeal, Iran has been mainly on its own, not receiving any major help from the international community. It is imperative that Iran and the international community

work together to find sustainable solutions regarding the matter. It would ideally include supporting host communities, providing adequate resources, and promoting initiatives that enhance the self-reliance and integration of Afghan refugees.

Surely, the surge in anti-refugee sentiment directed towards Afghan nationals residing in Iran calls for a nuanced understanding of the issue. "We should avoid any emotional approach when facing the issue of immigrants," said Iranian lawmaker Ahad Alirezabeigi. "Considering the multiple dimensions of the immigration, it is necessary to pursue a comprehensive bill in this field."

Hopefully, voices like that of Alirezabeigi would come to the fore, helping inform the public about the positive aspects of hosting a large refugee population.

Iran's aging population major threat to its future

By Mahdieh Qazvinian
Staff writer

Iran is experiencing an acceleration in population aging. The proportion of people older than 60 years in Iran has exceeded 10% of the total population in

2022. While, the population growth rate in Iran is 0.7%, which is the lowest rate in the past 25 years.

Alireza Khosravi, a researcher at the Research Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, expressed his concern about the rapid increase in Iran's aging population in an exclusive interview with Iran Daily. He pointed out that the increase in the country's elderly population requires some exact media planning to meet their communication needs.

Speaking at the sidelines of a symposium on the role of mass media in the elderly lifestyle held on

the occasion of the International Day for Older Persons, Khosravi emphasized the important role that the media plays in communication and media planning on behalf of Iran's older persons. However, there is a gap in the national media as it does not frequently produce special programs for the elderly, said Khosravi, who is also a university professor working in the field of communication.

One of the most important issues that arise when you get old is the relationship that develops between the elderly and their family members. So far, the country's mass media has largely ignored the elderly and

their interests. After the production of the Iranian TV series "Pedar Salar," which was aired on national TV in the 1990s, no other series was produced that specifically cared for the elderly, Khosravi noted.

"Some steps should be taken to create appropriate programs for the elderly in the country. In producing such programs, we should be aware of what we are communicating and to which audience. It should be noted that the elderly differ in terms of their taste, attitude, needs, interests, and attention spans. The aging issue has not been discussed much in Iran. However, the public will hopefully be

made more aware of the issue since the birth rate has decreased all over the world and especially in Iran while the number of the elderly has increased in the communities."

Khosravi stressed that in producing such targeted programs, we should bear in mind that the security and peace of the elderly should not be disturbed because the elderly do not want to be separated from what they are used to. Moreover, they are looking for programs that bring them the peace that they so desire.

He added that to produce suitable programs, all economic, social, and cultural

factors must be considered. The environment in which the country's old people are living must also be given adequate attention.

To make matters more complicated, rural and urban elderly are totally different all over the world, and Iran is no exception to this. As such, the programs that are made should meet their needs and interests. For instance, the elderly who are living in rural areas of Iran typically engage in farming or animal husbandry until they have the energy to do so. It is to be expected that these older persons who are working hard in rural areas have less time to survey the media.



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Address: #22, Hosseini-Rad Alley, South of
Shahid Motahari St., Vali-e Asr Ave., Tehran, Iran
● Editorial Dept. Tel: +98 21 88913453
● Editorial Dept. Fax: +98 21 88930684
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newspaper.irandaily.ir
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Foreign journalists meet Raisi



● ALI HADDADI/MEHR

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi meets with journalists from 40 countries who participated at the International Khorshed Media Festival with the slogan "Women Enlighten" in Tehran on October 2, 2023.

● ZEINAB HAMZEH-LOUEI/FARS

Mustafa Prize winners honored



The 5th Mustafa Prize wraps up at Chehel Sotoun Palace Museum in Isfahan, central Iran, on October 2, 2023, by honoring the top five laureates from the Islamic world.

● AHMADREZA TAHERI/ISNA

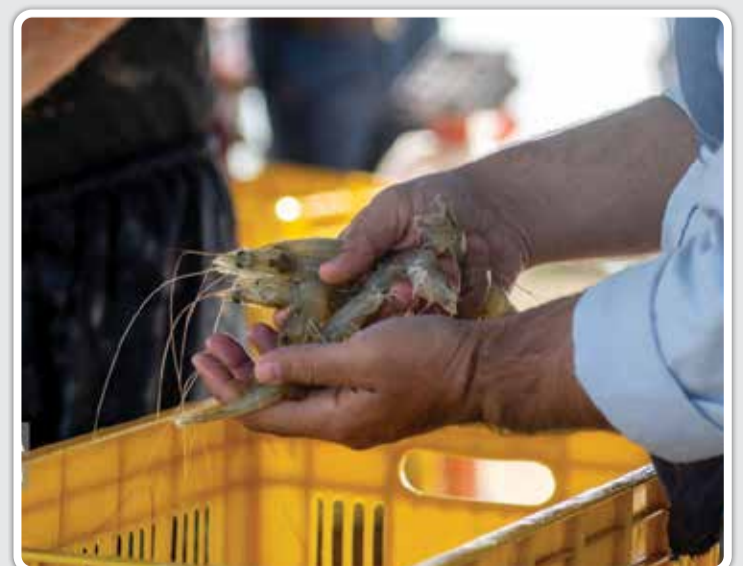
Elderly day celebration



Tens of elderly people gather at Tehran's Qasr Garden Museum on October 2, 2023, to celebrate the International Day for Older Persons.

● ZAHRA-SADAT RAD/YJC

Shrimp farming in Golestan



The photos capture the shrimp harvesting and processing activities at a breeding center in the Caspian Sea, situated 10 kilometers from the Gomishan coast in Golestan Province, northeastern Iran.

● MOHAMMAD ATAIE/IRNA