

# TEHRAN TIMES

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## Why Israel cannot defeat resistance in Gaza

# INEXTINGUISHABLE



Rockets are fired toward Israel from the Gaza Strip, as seen from southern Israel, Friday, Dec. 1, 2023.

## Iran to EU: Washington main driver of Israeli carnage in Gaza

TEHRAN- Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has noted that the United States' supportive policies are the primary element enabling the Zionist regime to continue slaughtering people in the beleaguered Gaza Strip.

Amir Abdollahian made the remarks in a Saturday phone conversation with the European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell.

During the talk, Iran's top diplomat emphasized the need to put a stop to the Zionist regime's atrocities against Palestinians as soon as possible.

"The Zionist regime's military attacks against the people of Gaza must stop as soon as possible to pave the way for the dispatch of humanitarian aid," he said.

Abdollahian went on to emphasize, "Supportive policies adopted by the United States have encouraged the Zionist regime to continue its military aggression and massacre of civilians in Gaza, and also play an important role in the continuation and further spread of the war."

Iran's foreign minister also delivered a severe warning regarding the Zionist regime's plan to forcibly deport Palestinians from the occupied territories. ▶ Page 2

## Iran ranks 25th among world's top commercial shipping fleet owners: CIA

TEHRAN - The United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), in its latest report on the state of the world's commercial fleets, has ranked Iran 25th among the countries with the largest shipping fleet, higher than the United States, Germany and France.

Based on the mentioned report, having 924 commercial vessels, the Islamic Republic stands at the 25th place among 186 countries, IRIB reported.

According to CIA, last year (2022), Iran had 32 bulk carriers, 31 container ships, 393 general cargo ships, 83 oil tankers and 403 ships of other types.

Brazil, Portugal, Denmark, Canada, Germany, Australia, Bangladesh, Spain, and Switzerland are among the countries that have smaller fleet compared to Iran, based on the mentioned report.

The total number of active commercial ships in West Asia analyzed in this report in 2022 amounted to 4,398 ships, more than a fifth of which belonged to Iran.

Back in January, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) ranked Iran as the owner of the world's 22nd-biggest maritime fleet in terms of capacity. ▶ Page 4

## Israeli anxiety in Gaza

By Ali Karbalaei

TEHRAN- Backed by the United States, the indiscriminate Israeli attacks against the civilian population across the entire Gaza Strip continue unabated.

There is a level of anxiety among the Israeli army, especially in the northern part of the enclave, as it is shooting at anything that moves.

The administration of U.S. President Joe Biden claims it has pressured the regime to limit the number of civilian casualties in the next phase of the war on Gaza, following a seven-week-old ceasefire.

The Israeli military, as instructed by the Israeli cabinet, has brushed the wider concerns of the international community on the rising civilian death toll.

The regime is not taking into account any caution against the loss of civilian life amid Israeli military focus now in the densely populated southern Gaza Strip and in particular the city of Khan Younis where Palestinians had been forcibly displaced by the Israeli army.

There have been multiple reports of Palestinian civilian casualties in Khan Younis and its surrounding areas. ▶ Page 5

## Iran's support for Gaza is based on national constitution: Raisi

TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi has said that Iran's support for Gaza is based on the "principles of the country's constitution."

Speaking at a conference on the national constitution on Sunday, the president reiterated that support for the oppressed is one of the basics of the constitution, so from the victory of the Islamic Revolution, support for Palestine was the "first issue" of the Islamic Revolution.

The support for the oppressed, said the president, is one of "our principles, so we cannot give up on them."

He also noted that some states' stances regarding the Israeli-Palestine conflict would not halt Iran's principle to support the oppressed, noting that the truth in the Gaza Strip has become clear to the entire world these days.

Raisi further said that the Zionist regime's racial discrimination, killings, injustice, cruelty, and oppression against the Palestinian people are clear to everyone.

He went on to say that the "pure blood" of Palestinian children revealed the situation to everyone and caused huge pro-Palestinian gatherings around the world. ▶ Page 3

## Kissinger was worried about Israel's ability to survive in the long run, says Farid Zakaria

In our last lunch, just a few weeks ago, Henry Kissinger worried about Israel's ability to survive in the long run, Farid Zakaria announced in a broadcast at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. ET Sundays on CNN.

In a country of optimists, Henry Kissinger was a European pessimist. He began his career worrying about nuclear weapons and ended it worrying about artificial intelligence," Zakaria noted.

"Over the years, in our conversations, he would speculate gloomily that Japan was going to become a nuclear power, that Europe would fall apart, and that Islamic extremism would triumph," revealed Zakaria.

"In our last lunch, just a few weeks ago, he worried about Israel's ability to survive in the long run," Zakaria highlighted.

Kissinger was the first Jewish secretary of state and also the first immigrant to ascend to that office. 13 members of his family died in the Nazi death camps. That background shaped his worldview.

## Op-ed Soil and water – Asia-Pacific's bread and butter

By Jong-Jin Kim

FAO Assistant Director-General

Here, in the world's most populous region, there is a crisis slowly unfolding that involves the earth beneath our feet. The soil that has been producing the food we eat and supporting the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of farmers and others, is under threat.

Often referred to as the "Skin of the Earth," soil acts as a silent steward, supporting the production of 95 percent of the food we eat in this region. It retains water, serves as a habitat for animals, and plays a key role in regulating our climate by storing more carbon than all the world's forests combined. ▶ Page 7



## Military chief visits Baghdad, says Iran ready to counter threats to Iraq's sovereignty

TEHRAN - The Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces has stated that the Islamic Republic is ready to counter any possible threats against Iraqi territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

Major General Mohammad Baqeri made the remarks at a meeting with his Iraqi counterpart, Abdel Emir Rashid Yarallah, in Baghdad on Sunday.

During his trip, General Bagheri was set to meet with a number of senior Iraqi officials, including the country's prime minister and president.

Iran's top general cited the positive relations and shared experiences between the two neighbors as evidence that Iraq was moving toward peace and durable security. ▶ Page 2

## Iran, Japan agree to further cooperation in cultural affairs

TEHRAN-In a meeting between the head of Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) and the Commissioner of Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs, it was decided that a draft agreement on cultural cooperation between the two countries would be prepared and reviewed by the two sides.

Mohammad-Mehdi Imanipour who attended the third round of religious dialogue between Islam and Shintoism in Tokyo, Japan, met and discussed with Shunichi Tokura in the field of developing cooperation between the two countries, Mehr reported on Saturday.

Shinto means the way of the gods. Shintoism is an ancient religion of Japan. It started at least as long ago as 1000 B.C but is still practiced today by at least five million people. The followers of Shintoism believe that spiritual powers exist in the natural world. ▶ Page 8

TEHRAN PAPERS

A powerful military alliance of Iran, Russia, and China is being formed

In the following column, we take a look at some important contents and views in the yesterday's Iranian newspapers.

In an analysis, Kayhan analyzed the upcoming joint military maneuvers of Iran, Russia, and China in the Persian Gulf and the defense cooperation between the three countries. It wrote: The joint drill of Iran, Russia, and China is going to be held in the Persian Gulf. Analysts call the defense cooperation between Iran, Russia, and China one of the most powerful military alliances in the world. Following the declaration of the maneuver, military analysts said that a new anti-NATO coalition was slowly being formed. North Korea can be added to these four countries. We will witness a military alliance in the world that is one of the most powerful in terms of the number of weapons, advanced technology, and military experience. China and Russia have already agreed to establish a joint scientific center to develop military technology. Iran has also confirmed that it will receive the advanced fighter aircraft "Sukhoi-35" from Russia. North Korea also sent its first spy satellite into Earth orbit. It is unbelievable how Biden and his incompetent administration were able to create a multi-polar world within 2 years.

Iran: Resistance groups are independent

In a note, the Iran newspaper addressed the provocative actions of the U.S. and Israel against Iran and said: Parallel to the U.S.-provoked Israel's genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, Washington's military bases in Syria and Iraq have been targeted by regional resistance groups. These groups organized an operation against the American army several months ago and also recaptured parts of the Syrian lands. In an alleged position, the Americans have called Iran the main player behind these attacks in response to the situation in which its military bases are caught in the region. This allegation is made despite the fact that Iranian diplomatic officials, especially in recent weeks, have emphasized it has no role in the recent anti-American attacks and insisted on the independence of the resistance groups. In an interview with the English newspaper Financial Times, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian adverted to this important issue and emphasized that Hezbollah is a resistance movement in the region against Israel, its identity is independent and Lebanese, and it does not receive orders from Iran. Also, he has warned that Iran will respond decisively to any attack on Iranian forces in Syria.

Tehran denounces deadly Israeli strikes on Gaza residential areas

TEHRAN- The spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry has lambasted the U.S. government's full-fledged backing for the atrocities committed by the Zionist regime and sharply denounced the Israeli air strikes on Gaza's residential areas and refugee camps, which have resulted in the deaths of numerous people.

In a post on X on Saturday night, Nasser Kanaani highlighted, "Strikes by the Zionist regime's warplanes on a residential complex in Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza housing displaced and defenseless people left more than 100 people martyred and dozens wounded. Moreover, an attack on the Shujaiya neighborhood in east Gaza left over 60 people martyred. These strikes added more dark and disgraceful pages to the long list of war crimes committed by the Zionist regime against the oppressed Palestinian nation over the past 50 days."

"We strongly condemn these heinous crimes. The crimes are going on at a time when the U.S. government continues its full support for the Zionist regime and some American news outlets speak of Washington providing the apartheid Israeli regime with thousands of new bombs," he added.

The spokesman went on to continue, "Some reports by American news outlets revealed that Washington has supplied the apartheid Israeli regime with thousands of new bombs."

Kanaani also noted that "indubitably, the U.S. government is an accomplice to war crimes, massacre and genocide committed by the usurper Zionist regime against Palestinians."

Following the conclusion of a seven-day truce

Javan: The importance of de-escalation with Iran

Javan writes that the Palestinian issue is not the only challenge to a stable Middle East. It says as part of a grand deal, Washington should reduce tensions with Iran instead of using its alliance with Riyadh to limit—not deter—Teheran's goals. Saudi Arabia, by partnering with Iran on bilateral and regional issues while advancing a big deal with the U.S., can lessen Iran's resistance to an agreement with the U.S. and even find ways to accompany Tehran with a new regional order. Washington cannot prevent the normalization of connections between Iran and its Arab neighbors, so instead of vain attempts to create an anti-Iran alliance, it should frame Iran's long-term goals within the framework of a new regional order. For this purpose, Washington should encourage Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf countries to deepen diplomatic relations and economic interaction to win Tehran's consent for a permanent solution to the Palestinian issue and reduce tension in the region.

Hamishari: Israel is committing genocide but the West is worried about Iran's conventional missile and nuclear programs!

In a commentary, Hamshahri addressed the hypocritical behavior of the West and said: While Israel resumed the second round of bombing of civilians in the Gaza Strip with various types of conventional and unconventional bombs, the European troika expressed concern about Iran's civilian nuclear program and its defensive missile industry. This news, along with the International Atomic Energy Agency's report on Iran's nuclear program and the statements of Rafael Grossi, the director general of this institution, are pieces of a puzzle that are supposed to once again create a security image of Tehran's conventional defense industry and its civilian nuclear program and turn them into subjects for political propaganda. What the West is trying to instill with its propaganda campaign is that Iran's nuclear case amid the Gaza war should not be forgotten. Before issuing any statements, the European troika, Rafael Grossi, and other political institutions in the world must answer while they are afraid of the attention of the world's public opinion and international bodies on the Gaza war they are trying to deflect attention from this extremely horrific crimes.

with Hamas, Israel resumed its assaults on Gaza on Friday morning.

Intense shelling has been directed against Khan Younis, a city in southern Gaza where hundreds of inhabitants have relocated from the northern enclave, in recent days.

"More than 100 Palestinians were killed Saturday in a new massacre committed by Israeli occupation forces in the Jabalia refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip," the official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported.

"A missile strike targeted a residential building belonging to the Obaid family in Jabalia camp," the news agency said, adding that "dozens were injured, and many others are still missing under the rubble."

The Israeli army resumed bombing the Gaza Strip early Friday after declaring an end to a week-long humanitarian pause with Hamas.

Since the onset of the conflict, the Israeli military has attacked the camp on numerous occasions, most notably on October 9, 12, 19, and 22, when hundreds of Palestinians were killed and injured as a result. "The numbers are huge," the spokesperson for the civil defense in Gaza, Mahmoud Basal, said. "At least 300 are dead and many more are missing under the rubble."

Basal added the civil defense teams do not have the means or the equipment to handle the "massacre" Israel started the war on Gaza on October 7, following the surprise launch of Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the occupying regime in reaction to the Israeli regime's decades-long campaign of bloodletting and devastation against Palestinians.

Iran to EU: Washington main driver of Israeli carnage in Gaza

From page 1 ▶ "The root cause of the current situation in the occupied territories is the Zionist regime's occupation and aggression. If the Israeli regime's war crimes against the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank do not stop, it is possible for the war to further deepen and spread to other parts of the region," Amir Abdollahian averred.

For his part, Borrell stated that the European Union is attempting to get Israel to abide by its legal commitments under international law and that tensions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip need to stop as soon as possible.

He noted that Iran can play a



key player in easing tensions in the region.

The EU foreign policy chief also expressed optimism that Iran and the International

Atomic Energy Agency would continue their productive partnership.

Speaking briefly on Iran's contribution to easing tensions in

the region, Borrell also pointed out that the EU thinks diplomacy is the best way to resolve the Palestine issue and that continuing military operations will only exacerbate the situation.

Shortly after a seven-day truce agreement with Gaza's Hamas resistance group, Israel began a fresh round of indiscriminate attacks on the Gaza Strip on Friday.

In Gaza, there have been around 15,200 deaths and over 40,000 injuries thus far. Women and children make up 70% of the casualties in Israeli strikes on the blockaded region, according to the Health Ministry of Gaza.

Military chief visits Baghdad, says Iran ready to counter threats to Iraq's sovereignty

From page 1 ▶ "The two countries have good and valuable experience in the war against terrorism and can share their experience in a suitable format," Baqeri said, adding, "The Islamic Republic of Iran was the only country that came to Iraq's aid against the Daesh terrorist group, and martyrs Haj Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis are a precious legacy for the people of both countries."

To guarantee the long-term security of shared borders, Baqeri also emphasized the necessity of conducting joint drills between the Iranian and Iraqi armed forces.

"The opportunity to increase convergence and benefits of both nations from mutual capacities is provided by their common borders," he continued.

For his part, the Iraqi Army's chief of staff paid tribute to Lt. Ge. Soleimani and thanked the Islamic Republic for its genuine assistance in the war against Daesh.

Yarallah also said that the Iraqi armed forces were fully prepared to advance defense, military, and training exchanges with Iran in addition to conducting joint drills and exchanging experiences.

Following an upsurge in the terrorist attacks by anti-Iranian organizations living in the Iraqi Kurdistan region, particularly in border regions, the two neighboring nations struck a security pact in March.

In response to their hit-and-run acts, Iran's IRGC has launched three rounds of strikes against their sites since September last year, pledging to continue the attacks until the groups surrender.

Iran has repeatedly warned local authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan that it will not accept the presence and operation of terrorist groups near its northwestern borders, threatening a strong response if such areas become a refuge for anti-Teheran terrorists.

Iran, Iraq share concerns on Palestine

In another meeting on Sunday, General Baqeri and Iraqi Defense Minister Thabet Muhammad Al-Abbasi talked about a range of issues.

The leading military figures from Iran and Iraq emphasized their nations' support for Palestine, stating that the two neighbors share similar opinions regarding the Gaza war.

The senior Iranian commander stated that the two Muslim neighbors also share similar opinions about Palestine and the ongoing Israeli war on Gaza, pointing to the same positions of the Iranian and Iraqi governments and religious leaders about significant regional and global events.

General Baqeri also emphasized Iraq's importance in Iran's foreign and defense policy, saying given the regional circumstances, the

two nations must foster security and defense cooperation.

The Iranian Armed Forces are willing to share their expertise, experiences, and capacities with Iraq, he said, pointing to Iran's military advancements in tactical, strategic, and technological domains.

Additionally, the top commander made clear that Iran is prepared to conduct single- or multi-state navy relief and rescue exercises in the Persian Gulf.

For his part, General Abbasi asserted that Iraqis, regardless of their political stance, feel obligated to support the Palestinian people.

The significant advancements Iran has made in the defense sector were also commended by the Iraqi defense minister.

Bagheri arrived in the Iraqi capital Baghdad on Saturday night for a three-day visit. He is in Baghdad upon an invitation by his Iraqi counterpart. Baqeri is accompanied by a number of high-ranking military and political officials.

Upon arrival in the Iraqi capital, the commander and his accompanying delegation visited a site near Baghdad's international airport where General Soleimani and Iraqi commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis were assassinated in a U.S. drone attack in January 2020. Bagheri and his delegation paid tribute to the martyred commanders.

Raisi talks to Japan PM, proposes polls to gauge global support for Palestinians

TEHRAN - In a telephone conversation with Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Saturday, President Ebrahim Raisi of Iran described the issue of Gaza and the genocidal crimes committed by the Zionist regime as the biggest human disaster in modern history.

Raisi proposed organizing referendums in a number of nations, including Japan, to assess support for the rights of the Palestinian people, although Western nations are extremely wary of conducting such surveys.

The president also underlined the need to accurately present the facts surrounding developments in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the 75-year Israeli occupation, and the Zionist policies that have turned Gaza into the largest open prison in the world.

According to the presidential website, Raisi said, "Today, the correct decision of the authorities and heads of the countries of the world towards the Palestinian nation requires a detailed analysis of what has happened to this oppressed nation during these years and decades."

He added, "Understanding this story and recognizing the truth is not a complicated and difficult task."

Raisi went on to discuss how the U.S. is the primary financier of the Zionist regime's war machine against the helpless Gazan people, calling the U.S. an accomplice in the crimes.

The Zionist regime, with the direct support of the United States, has repeatedly violat-

ed the laws of war since the beginning of the Gaza war and "dropped bombs on the people of Gaza equivalent to 7 atomic bombs on the scale of the Hiroshima crime," the president lamented.

Amid such the carnage in Gaza, he said, the Americans brazenly "invite other countries to exercise restraint in the face of these crimes, so that the Zionist regime can safely go on with its crimes and genocide."

"We believe that the silence and inaction of the authorities and rulers of the world will make the child-killing Zionist rulers more aggressive and it is necessary for different countries, including Japan, with their diplomatic efforts to seriously focus on four important and high-priority issues, namely stop the bombing, provide aid to the people of Gaza, and pursue the rights of the Palestinian people," he added.

Following a surprise operation by the Hamas resistance forces on southern Israel, the Israeli regime commenced its devastating attack on Gaza on October 7.

So far, more than 15,000 people have been murdered in Gaza, with over 40,000 injured. According to the Gaza Health Ministry, women and children make up 70% of the victims in Israeli strikes on the blockaded region.

Thousands more are missing and presumed to be buried beneath the wreckage.

UNICEF, the children's agency of the United Nations, issued a stark warning on Friday over



the damage being done to Gaza's children as a result of the conflict, which it referred to as a "war on children."

"Europeans' hypocritical approach"

Raisi went on to call some European countries' recent statements about Iran's nuclear activities hypocritical, saying, "The question is which international organization supervises the Zionist regime's nuclear activities and which organization gives this regime permission to have atomic warheads, with which the people of Gaza are being threatened today."

Raisi lauds ties with China

He also praised the historical and close ties between Iran and Japan as well as the various opportunities for cooperation, particularly in commercial and economic spheres.

Raisi concluded his remarks by saying, "Iran and Japan's growing relations should continue strongly without being affected by the wishes of some ill-wishers."

Japan PM regrets resumption of the Gaza war

For his part, Prime Minister Kishida appreciated Iran's positions on the events in Gaza, voiced worries about the humanitarian situation there, and stressed the need to halt attacks on civilians and provide help to the Gazan population.

In addition, he hailed the cordial ties between Japan and Iran and emphasized that his nation is eager to expand ties with Iran in a number of areas.

In a statement, Japan's Foreign Ministry said, "Prime Minister Kishida called on Iran to 'play a role in the further release of hostages and towards calming down the situation.'"

The Japanese leader also expressed regret over the resumption of the war in Gaza after a one-week lull.

"It is regrettable that the fighting has resumed and that it is important to return to the agreement and to calm down the situation as soon as possible," the prime minister suggested.

The ministry said, "The two leaders also exchanged views on the situation in Ukraine, the situation in the Middle East region and Iran's nuclear issue."

# Iran's support for Gaza is based on national constitution: Raisi

From Page 1 ▶ Referring to the massacre of 6,000 Palestinian children by the Zionist regime, Raisi said, "We do not doubt that divine revenge will terminate the cruel and fake Zionist government."

Elsewhere, he noted, "The constitution has taught us about the basis of laws, regulations, communication between different sections, and the structure of the Islamic system."

Regarding the doctrine of velayat-e-faqih, he called Imam Khomeini's theory about the Islamic government



is "more inclusive and comprehensive" compared with other jurists' theories.

Referring to an African figure, the president emphasized that the constitution of the Islamic Republic, containing both democracy and causes, is the "most progressive law" among all countries.

Against the backdrop of the importance of people's votes, Raisi stated that it is one of the points of pride of the Islamic Republic that all the bodies, organizations, and structures are formed based on the people's votes.

## 1,000 Iranian lawyers sign a petition calling on ICC to put Israeli criminals on trial

TEHRAN - More than a thousand members of the Iranian legal community have signed a petition calling for an immediate arrest and trial of the Zionist regime's criminals in the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The petition was signed on the sidelines of a conference on the Islamic Republic's Constitution on Sunday. The members of the legal community lambasted the crimes of the Israeli regime in Gaza.

The edited text of the petition reads as follows:

In the Gaza war, the international community has witnessed living documentation of countless international crimes committed by Israel's apartheid and child-killing regime against the defenseless people of Gaza. As a result of this war, more than 16,000 people have been killed, more than 36,000 people have been injured, and 7,000 people are

missing. So far, 1.5 million people have been displaced, and 205 members of the medical staff, 25 members of the relief forces, and 64 journalists have been martyred. The barbaric attacks of the Zionist army on Gaza have caused 26 hospitals and 55 medical centers to go out of service. We have witnessed heartbreaking happenings for the children of al-Nasr Hospital in Gaza.

The Israeli defense minister, who has violated all human rights rules, has issued a complete blockade of Gaza, and subsequently, the access of the people of Gaza to electricity, food, water, gas, a safe environment for accommodation, treatment, and even the Internet has been cut off. Unfortunately, world leaders are only witnessing the cruel and collective punishment of the Palestinian nation by the occupying regime. Even after the temporary ceasefire,

the Gazan people have had no shelter to return to because 43,000 of their residential units have been leveled down. Despite the recommendations of the United Nations and human rights organizations, the Zionist army disagreed with the extension of the ceasefire and resumed its war crimes.

We, the signatories of this petition, while expressing our sympathy with the survivors of the Palestinian martyrs, express our disgust for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the widespread aggression and genocide of Palestinians by Israel and their European and American supporters. We request urgent action by the international community to expel the criminal Zionist regime from the occupied territories and immediately prosecute the Israeli criminals.

## Cuban president in Iran after 22 years

TEHRAN - Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel embarked on a historic journey to Iran, arriving in Tehran on Sunday night.

The invitation, personally extended by the Iranian President, not only symbolizes a diplomatic gesture but also heralds Miguel Diaz-Canel's inaugural presence in Tehran.

According to reports from Iranian media outlets, the official schedule for Diaz-Canel includes a formal reception slated for Monday morning. This reception, hosted at the Sa'dabad Historical-Cultural Complex by the Iranian President, is expected to set the tone for the engagements to follow.

Following the official reception, both leaders will engage in private meetings, creating an opportunity for more in-depth discussions. A subsequent joint session involving high-ranking officials will be convened, providing the platform for the signing of cooperation agreements between the two nations. The anticipated joint press conference will serve as a platform for both leaders to elucidate the outcomes and achievements of their discussions.

Diaz-Canel's visit extends beyond official meetings, as he plans to interact not only with Iranian officials but also with high-ranking authorities in the host



country. His schedule includes visits to exhibitions spotlighting the capabilities and recent achievements of Iranian innovators. Additionally, a tour of the Pasteur Institute, a collaborative effort between Iran and Cuba in the fields of medicine and pharmaceuticals, is on the itinerary.

The trip holds historical significance, marking the first

instance of a Cuban president setting foot in Iran since Fidel Castro's visit to Tehran in June 2001.

It is noteworthy that the exchange between Iran and Cuba is not unidirectional. In June of this year, the Iranian president visited Havana and held discussions with his Cuban counterpart. In the presence of both leaders, six agreements were signed to expand bilateral economic, political, and judicial cooperation between the two countries.

The Cuban President has recently conducted official visits to the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, marking his initial two stops on the West Asia tour.

## Oman's top diplomat in Tehran for talks

TEHRAN - In a significant diplomatic development, the foreign minister of Oman arrived in Tehran on Sunday for a series of meetings and negotiations with his Iranian counterpart, Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

As reported by Iranian media outlets, Sayyid Badr Al-Busaidi, leading a distinguished delegation, seeks to foster discussions and dialogue on matters of mutual interest. The Sunday visit underscores the ongoing efforts to strengthen diplomatic ties between the two nations.

The discussions between the two foreign ministers are expected to cover a range of key areas of focus, emphasizing the expansion of bilateral cooperation.

Issues of regional significance were on the agenda, with a particular emphasis on addressing the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza and the imperative need for a ceasefire. Humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza was the central and crucial topic

of the conversation. The two chief diplomats also highlighted the shared commitment to alleviating the suffering of the affected Gazan population.

The visit builds upon the recent diplomatic engagement between Iran and Oman, as evidenced by a telephone conversation between the foreign ministers of the two countries on December 1st. During the phone call, the latest developments in Gaza were discussed. In addition to that, both sides emphasized the urgent necessity for a sustainable ceasefire and comprehensive humanitarian assistance to people in the Gaza Strip. The two foreign ministers also reiterated the importance of the global community's role in the endeavors toward peace, underscoring the shared commitment to promoting stability and addressing humanitarian crises in the region.

The ongoing diplomatic dialogue between Iran and Oman exemplifies the commitment of both nations to fostering regional stability and



addressing the pressing humanitarian challenges collaboratively.

Iran and Oman share strong diplomatic and economic bonds, rooted in their historical, cultural, and religious affinities. They are regional partners with intimate political and military connections. Muscat has also played a role in facilitating dialogue to ease tensions between Iran and the West, particularly in the build-up to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

## Tehran and Riyadh on the path to deepen ties

TEHRAN - Iran's ambassador to Saudi Arabia Alireza Enayati has expressed high expectations for the week ahead, emphasizing the anticipation of substantial events on the diplomatic front.

"We anticipate eventful days ahead this week. We have a busy schedule in governmental and popular relations during this week," Enayati wrote in a social media post on X on Sunday. This statement hints at a flurry of diplomatic activities, suggesting a renewed focus on enhancing ties

between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The unfolding sequence of events has taken on increased significance in the aftermath of a crucial phone call that transpired between the Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces and the Saudi Arabian Defense Minister on November 30. In the course of this conversation, both parties underscored their commitment to enhancing military ties between the two nations. This exchange stands out as a pivotal moment following the signing of the agreement on

March 10, which was geared towards reestablishing relations between Tehran and Riyadh.

The diplomatic landscape between Iran and Saudi Arabia witnessed a turning point in March when both nations reached an agreement to restart diplomatic relations and reopen their embassies and diplomatic missions. This historic rapprochement came after seven years of strained ties and was facilitated through a deal brokered by China, with the primary objective of

bridging longstanding gaps that had marred relations between the two West Asian nations.

In the aftermath of the diplomatic reset, both Tehran and Riyadh, in a joint statement, underscored the imperative to respect each other's national sovereignty and committed to refraining from interfering in each other's internal affairs.

The agreement seems to be gaining momentum as diplomatic channels open up for crucial discussions.

## Constitution is the 'biggest development document': official

TEHRAN - Describing Iran's constitution as "the greatest development document," the vice president for legal affairs said all the principles of the constitution have been taken into consideration.

Speaking on Sunday at a conference, Mohammad Dehghan said the constitution has never been viewed as a "ceremonial" matter. Yet all its principles

have been taken into account.

He added that in the Raisi administration, for the first time, a follow-up commission was established under the chairmanship of President Raisi on implementing the constitution.

"For the first time, a follow-up system for

the implementation of the constitution was formed by the Raisi administration so that Iranian people can report cases of violations of the constitution and they can present their suggestions for the implementation of the constitution," The vice president stated.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](https://tehrantimes.com))

## SPORTS

### Sepahan here for achievement, Jose Morais says

TEHRAN - Sepahan Portuguese coach Jose Morais says that they are ready to book their spot in the 2023/24 AFC Champions League knockout stage.

Sepahan will meet Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad Monday night at the King Abdullah Sport City in Jeddah in Group C.

Star-studded Al Ittihad are, irrespective of the result at the King Abdulaziz Sport City, assured of their spot in the Round of 16 while Sepahan need three points to be absolutely sure.

"First of all, I would like to thank Al Ittihad for their warm welcome. Al Ittihad have previously advanced to the next stage but we are here to secure our place in the knockout round. I really don't know what could happen but to respect football and the fans is more important than anything else," the Portuguese coach said in the pre-match news conference.

Sepahan have not qualified for the knockout for 11 years but Morais hopes to bring an end to the drought.

"We want to achieve success, that's why we are here. I know that we will have a difficult task ahead of us but we want to secure our place in the next round. I know that how strong Al Ittihad are because I've worked with some players of the team. But we are ready to meet them," he added.

### Nine weightlifters to represent Iran at Doha Grand Prix II

TEHRAN - Iran will send nine weightlifters to the IWF Grand Prix II.

The competition will be held in Doha, Qatar from Dec. 4-14.

Hossein Soltani, Mirmostafa Javadi, Mehdi Karami, Ayat Sharifi, Ali Davoudi, Reza Dehdar, Rasoul Motamedi, Fatemeh Keshavarz and Reyhaneh Karimi will be Iran's representatives in the tournament.

The Grand Prix serves as qualification event for the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

### Aghaei nominated for Athletes' Commission Election

TEHRAN - The International Olympic Committee announced a list of 32 candidates for elections to be held during the Paris Games, in which Iranian badminton player Soraya Aghaei is among the candidates.

The IOC Athletes' Commission serves as a link between athletes and the IOC. During their eight-year term, members of the commission work to provide athletes with a platform to share their voices and experiences, [insidethegames.biz](https://insidethegames.biz) reported.

The IOC AC is composed of a maximum of 23 members - 12 members directly elected by their peers and a maximum of 11 appointed - who serve a term of eight years. The vote is held at every Olympic Games, with four members elected at each Summer Games, and two at each Winter Games.

All athletes competing in Paris will be eligible to vote in the Olympic Villages during the Games, the IOC said. Four athletes from four different sports will be elected to the commission, the IOC said. The vote will be supervised and certified by an election committee appointed by IOC president Thomas Bach.

TEHRAN - Mohsen Kaveh was named as new head coach of Iran freestyle wrestling team on Saturday.

### Mohsen Kaveh named Iran freestyle wrestling coach

He replaced Pejman Dorostkar, who stepped down as head coach of the national team earlier in the day.

Dorostkar had been appointed as Team Melli head coach after the 2020 Olympic Games.

Kaveh, who was serving as freestyle team's technical manager, will lead the team in the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

### Iran beaten by Germany at 2023 World Women's Handball

TEHRAN - Germany made it out of the preliminary round at the 2023 IHF Women's World Championship for the sixth time in a row, taking their second win in as many matches in Group F at Denmark/Norway/Sweden 2023, 45-22, against Iran.

The European side also tied the record for the number of goals scored in a single match at the IHF Women's World Championship, set 16 years ago against Paraguay, when they took a 45:12 win, which is still the largest-ever in their history in the world handball flagship competition.

On the other hand, Iran conceded their eighth loss in nine matches at the IHF Women's World Championship and their hopes of progression hang by a thread, with the last match against Japan being paramount for the Asian side, who has lost the first two matches by 43 goals combined.

Iran had lost to Sweden 35-15 in their first match on Saturday.

### Nassaji keen to sign off on high note against Al Hilal

TEHRAN - Al Hilal SFC will aim to end their group stage campaign with a fifth consecutive win when they host Nassaji Mazandaran.

Nassaji will be keen to sign off on a high note and Al Hilal can expect resilient opponent on Monday.

Last week's 2-0 win over Uzbekistan's Navbahor confirmed the four-time Asian champions as the Group D winners but the in-form side will not be satisfied with that.

Al Hilal followed up their win over Navbahor with an impressive 3-0 defeat of Al Nassr in a Saudi Pro League 2023/24 tie on Friday, opening a seven-point gap at the top.

They will be determined to maintain the momentum as they bid to win the AFC Champions League title for a third time after having been denied by Urawa Red Diamonds of Japan last season.

Nassaji's hopes were dashed long ago but the Iran side would have enjoyed their debut campaign.

### Al Ittihad will have tough test against Sepahan: AFC

TEHRAN - Al Ittihad FC will be braced for a tough test when they host Sepahan in Group C of the AFC Champions League 2023/24 on Monday.

Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad are, irrespective of the result at the King Abdulaziz Sport City, assured of their spot in the Round of 16 while Iran's Sepahan need three points to be absolutely sure.

Al Ittihad's 2-1 Matchday Five win against AGMK FC of Uzbekistan means the two-time AFC Champions League winners is assured of advancing, even if they finish as the Group C runners-up.

Al Ittihad, however, will be determined to end the group stage top and will put their best foot forward.

Sepahan, on 10 points, stand a good chance of advancing but will want to make it absolutely sure.

They have enjoyed a good group stage campaign and will not want a premature end to their journey, [the-afc.com](https://the-afc.com) reported.

## TPO holds conference on Iran-Saudi Arabia trade opportunities

TEHRAN – Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) in collaboration with Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) held a conference on the Iran-Saudi Arabia trade opportunities in Tehran on Sunday.

In this event which was attended by Iranian business operators and entrepreneurs interested in trade with the kingdom, the ways of expanding economic relations between the two countries were explored, the TCCIMA portal reported.

Speaking in this conference, Abdol-Amir Rabiavi, the director general of TPO's West Asia Office, pointed to the benefits of increasing economic and trade relations with Saudi Arabia and stressed the important role of the private sector in developing trade relations with this country.

Stating that the private sector is more agile in economic exchanges and has fewer bureaucratic restrictions, Rabiavi said: "The participation of the private sector will be the basis for the expansion of business relations with Saudi Arabia."

TPO has also held a meeting with private sector representatives and the country's economic officials to explore areas for expanding trade relations with Saudi Arabia last month.

In this meeting, Mohammad-Sadegh Ghanadzadeh, TPO's deputy head for International Business Promotion, emphasized the development of trade relations with Saudi Arabia and removing obstacles in this field, saying: "Considering that relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia have resumed after about 10 years, it is necessary to make specific planning to boost economic relations with the kingdom."

Referring to the initial agreements with the Saudi embassy, he said: "In the initial meetings, we came to the conclusion that based on a professional framework and model, the process of developing commercial and economic relations between the two countries should proceed step by step."

According to the official, in this regard, in the first stage, and considering that the two

countries economic operators have lost touch for about 10 years, it is necessary to provide more familiarity and understanding of the commercial and economic capacities of the two countries.

Therefore, it has been decided to hold a joint economic and commercial meeting between Iran and Saudi Arabia in Tehran in the near future, and business operators and private companies active in various fields are going to attend this gathering, Ghanadzadeh said.

On October 23, TPO head hosted a meeting with Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Tehran to explore ways of expanding economic relations between the two sides.

In this meeting, which was organized by the Iran-Saudi Arabia Investment Fund for the development of job opportunities, Mehdi Zeyghami and Abdullah bin Saud al-Anzi discussed planning to start and develop business relations between the two countries.

As reported, the two sides welcomed the idea of exchanging business delegations between Iran and Saudi Arabia and emphasized the need to actively participate in each other's exhibitions.

Speaking at the meeting, Zeyghami expressed hope for the development of trade relations between the two countries and stressed the importance of boosting trade interactions between the two sides in the field of new and high-tech technologies.

"Considering Saudi Arabia's future plans and the investments of this country in new technologies, trade in the field of such technologies can benefit both countries," the official said.

The TPO head also expressed his interest in the presence of Iranian companies in the health, food industry, and petrochemical exhibitions of Saudi Arabia and requested the ambassador of this country to make preparations for the presence of Iran in the form of a pavilion in these exhibitions.

Al-Anzi for his part welcomed Zeyghami's suggestions and said: "Regarding the proposal to attend Saudi exhibitions, the preparations for this will be provided by exchanging the list of companies."

## Iran Chamber of Guilds to launch performance monitoring system

TEHRAN – The head of Iran Chamber of Guilds has said the chamber is going to launch a system for assessing the performance of businesses across the country, IRIB reported on Saturday.

"A system will soon be launched where consumers can rate the behavior and performance of sellers," Mojtaba Safaei said.

With the launching of this system, the physical inspection of trade unions and businesses will be reduced and customers can rate the seller's behavior, fairness or expensiveness, etc. by referring to this platform, the official explained.

According to Safaei, this system will be



integrated into the businesses' websites, and the consumers rate the seller or service provider. This rating can be used as kind of information and road map for the next people who want to buy from a specific store.

## 1st shipment of Iranian oil products exported from Khorramshahr port to UAE

TEHRAN – Director-general of Khorramshahr Ports and Maritime Department said the first shipment of oil products to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been loaded and exported from the southwestern Iranian port.

According to Ali Askari, the mentioned products were exported by four 2,500-ton vessels and in four stages of loading due to traffic restrictions in the Arvand waterway,

the portal of the Iranian Transport Ministry reported.

Referring to the suitable and multifaceted facilities and infrastructure in Khorramshahr port, Askari said: "The export of oil products from Khorramshahr port to the UAE, in addition to creating direct and indirect employment for local people, will lead to business prosperity,"

## TEDPIX gains 33,400 points on Sunday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), gained 33,489 points (1.6 percent) to 2,121,185 on Sunday, which is the second day of the Iranian calendar week.

TSE is one of the four Iranian stock

exchanges, and the most important one. The other three ones are Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB).

# Iran ranks 25th among world's top commercial shipping fleet owners: CIA

From page 1 ▶ In a report dubbed "Navigating Stormy Waters", the UNCTAD said the capacity of Iran's maritime fleet increased by one percent or 190,000 tons in 2022.

In 2021, the capacity of the Iranian shipping fleet was estimated to be 19,251 million tons.

The UNCTAD data indicated that the Iranian shipping fleet accounts for 0.89 percent of the world's total shipping capacity.

UNCTAD put the total number of the world's commercial ships, including tankers, container ships, and bulk carriers at the end of 2022 at 55,037. The total capacity of the mentioned ships was estimated at 2,180,058,307 tons in 2022, which increased by two percent over the previous year.



## Monthly transit of goods via Iran increases 6.8% on year



TEHRAN- Transit of commodities through Iran increased by 6.84 percent during the eighth Iranian calendar month Aban (October 23-November 21), as compared to the same month in the past year, the deputy transport minister announced.

Shahriyar Afandizadeh said that 1,541,849 tons of goods were transited via Iran in the eighth month of the present year.

According to the official, transit of commodities through Iran increased by 28.2 percent during the first eight months of the current year (March 21-November 21), as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

He announced the achievements resulted from promoting transit negotiations, and the foundations of the "Iran-Way" initiative in the growth of the country's transit this year, and said that 9,458,862 tons of commodities were transited via Iran in the first eight months of the present year.

The continuous trend of recent transit records via the country and the increasing interest of governments, traders, and those active in transport sectors from neighboring, regional and extra-regional countries in the transit and logistics situation of the Islamic Republic of Iran indicate the fruitfulness of the transformational approach of the 13th government to the strategic issue of transit, with emphasis on the development of all-round economic relations with neighbors, the official stressed.

As stated by Transport and Urban Development Minister Mehrdad Bazrpash, the "Iran Way" initiative made by the current Iranian government, lets the neighboring countries use Iran as a route or a solution that facilitates their access to international waters.

Iran Way initiative is the gateway to Iran's land of transit opportunities, the minister has underlined.

As previously announced by Afandizadeh, 10.8 million tons of commodities were transited through the country in the past Iranian calendar year 1401 (ended on March 20).

The official also announced that Iran registered

a new record high with the transit of 8.3 million tons of non-oil goods in 1401, adding that 2.5 million tons of oil products were also transited via the country in the previous year.

"Considering the transit of 7.5 million tons of non-oil goods in 1400, we have seen a 10.7-percent growth in the transit of this type of goods in 1401 compared to the previous year", he said.

"In 1401, we witnessed important developments and achievements in the strategic and operational areas of the country's transit, whose definitive effects will be seen gradually and steadily on the growth of transit from the country in 1402 and the coming years", the deputy transport minister further highlighted.

Afandizadeh then explained: "In line with the activation and development of the North-South International Transport Corridor, in a tripartite meeting in last September between the high-ranking officials of our country and the Russian Federation and the Republic of Azerbaijan in Baku, while aiming to achieve the transit of 15 million tons of goods through this corridor by 2030, agreements were reached in the field of strengthening the cooperation of the three countries in joint investment and financing, the completion and development of key infrastructures and their exploitation, especially the construction of the Rasht-Astara railway line, facilitating cross-border traffic of goods and increasing the quality and quantity of this traffic", adding that the implementation of these agreements is being followed up.

He went on to say, "One of the most important events last year was Iran's full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). In a short period of time after the meeting of the heads of Shanghai in September 1401 in Samarkand, the first six-party meeting of the transport ministers of Iran and the countries of Central Asia, in addition to Russia and Azerbaijan was held in Tehran in October 1401 with the goal of achieving 20-million tons of annual transit between Iran and Central Asian countries, as an area with a very high role and importance in east-west and north-south transit, especially after the recent regional and international developments, which was approved by the members."

This year, the issue of transit and playing a role in major programs such as those related to China's Belt and Road Initiative, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is one of the main priorities of the Transport Ministry in developing transport relations with regional and extra-regional target

countries, the deputy transport minister noted.

After seven years of reduction in the transit of goods from the country, the growth path of transit resumed in the past Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20, 2022) and with the passage of 12.65 million tons of goods through Iran, a growth of 68 percent was achieved.

The policy of paying attention to neighbors and developing political and economic relations with neighboring countries in the current government, increasing attention to road and rail routes in the world, and the efforts and cooperation of transportation and trade-related organizations in establishing or activating corridors through the country has led to significant growth in transit of goods through Iran.

Iran is one of the countries with a special status in trade and transit relations due to its strategic location and special geography, as the country is the passage of several important international corridors.

Considering its geographical location, Iran can play a significant role in the transit of goods in the region and benefit a lot from its status in this due.

Paying attention to upstream documents, especially the country's development plans, and the government's decision to develop transit, paying special attention to infrastructure development, reducing transit time, making it cheaper to cross Iran and making more advantages over competitors, due to the short path for customers, can lead to facilitating the development of transit so that the country can reach the desired growth in this due.

In early June, Afandizadeh announced that the Transport and Urban Development Ministry is preparing a five-year comprehensive plan for increasing transportation and transit relations with Central Asia, as well as the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman countries.

The plan includes the basic strategies and executive roadmap in a step-by-step manner for the next five years and will mark the evolution of the bilateral transport and transit relations with the target countries, including the countries of Central Asia and the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, Afandizadeh explained.

This year, the issue of transit and playing a role in major programs such as those related to China's Belt and Road Initiative, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is one of the main priorities of the Transport Ministry in developing transport relations with regional and extra-regional target countries, the deputy transport minister noted.

## Iran-Turkey trade reach \$4.4b in 10 months

TEHRAN - The trade exchanges between Iran and Turkey in the first 10 months of 2023 reached \$4.4 billion, showing a 16 percent decline compared to the same period of last year.

According to the latest figures released by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT), Iran's trade with the neighboring country stood at \$5.3 billion in January-October 2022, Tasnim News Agency reported.

According to TURKSTAT, Turkey's exports to Iran from January to October 2023 reached \$2.55 billion, recording a three percent increase compared to last year's corresponding period.

Turkey exported over \$2.49 billion worth of products to the Islamic Republic in the first 10 months of 2022.

Turkey's imports from Iran also registered a 34 percent decline and

fell from \$2.81 billion in January to October 2022 to \$1.85 billion in the first 10 months of 2023.

Based on the data previously released by the Turkish Statistical Institute, the value of Iran's exports to Turkey increased by 19 percent to reach \$3.35 billion in 2022.

Turkey had imported over \$2.82 billion worth of commodities from the Islamic Republic in 2021.

Based on the mentioned data, Iran's imports from the country also marked an 11-percent rise to hit \$3.07 billion in the past year, in comparison with 2021, when the figure was \$2.77 billion.

According to the Turkish Statistical Institute, the trade between the two countries registered a 15-percent rise in 2022 compared to 2021.

The value of trade between the two neighbors reached \$6.42 billion

in 2022, while the figure stood at \$5.59 billion in the preceding year.

Iran's trade balance with Turkey was \$280 million positive in favor of Iran in the past year.

Last July, Iran, and Turkey discussed ways of expanding economic relations along with political ties at the Turkish-Iranian High-Level Cooperation Council in Tehran.

During the meeting, which was co-chaired by Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the two sides negotiated the extension of the gas export contract between the two sides for the next 25 years.

In the meeting, President Raisi noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to expand economic relations with neighboring countries.



The president also evaluated Tehran-Ankara ties as positive and progressive, saying that the two countries should pursue appropriate policies to move towards increasing their annual trade exchanges to \$30 billion.

On the sidelines of the mentioned meeting, Iranian Energy Minister Ali-Akbar Mehriban also held talks with Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Fatih Dunmez in which the two sides exchanged views on cooperation in energy fields.

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN - As Israel's onslaughts on Gaza were going on October 11, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared that the regime would ensure "every Hamas member is a dead man" by the deadly campaign's conclusion.

This stance found substantial backing from Western leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron, who entertained the notion of an international coalition to fight Hamas. Many Western leaders including U.S. President Joe Biden and UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak shared similar sentiments.

EU and U.S. officials scrambled to West Asia to voice their support for Tel Aviv by making visits to the occupied territories, essentially giving the regime the greenlight to pummel the besieged Gaza Strip in an apparent bid to eradicate Hamas. Logistics and funding streamed into Tel Aviv, accompanied by a significant propaganda effort to bolster Israel's illegitimate objectives, as the West hastened to materialize Israel's vision of a world without Hamas resistance fighters.

However, Israel's aspirations have ultimately appeared akin to the hollow fantasies of one who has endured a crushing blow while still in the throes of a deep slumber.

Over 50 days into Israel's aggressive foray into Gaza, the regime has failed to achieve any significant military outcomes. Despite the loss of 16,000 Palestinian lives, Israel has not succeeded in eliminating any high-ranking Hamas members. Meanwhile, Hamas continues its unrelenting attacks on the occupied territories, launching rockets across the Gaza border to strike



Israeli settlements. Within Gaza, the terrain remains a perilous quagmire for Israeli forces, resulting in the destruction of hundreds of Israeli tanks and an undisclosed, though potentially substantial, number of soldier casualties.

Though Israel has not released any official figures, several reports and accounts point to the high number of Israeli casualties in Gaza. David Oren Baruch, the director of the Israeli military cemetery on Mount Herzl, disclosed on November 19 that as many as 50 Israeli soldiers had been interred in the past 48 hours. Additionally, an Israeli Rabbi, tasked with recording fatalities, acknowledged the loss of 30 Israeli forces during a single attack on the 3rd day of Israel's ground offensive in Gaza. However, these accounts have largely been censored by Israeli officials. Reports also indicate that over 1,000 Israeli soldiers have sustained injuries, with 200 in critical condition. Some analysts have also appeared on Israeli TV, admitting that Hamas has so far managed to defeat the regime on the ground as it holds

entrenched control over vast areas of the besieged territory.

Beyond Gaza, Israel is facing significant challenges. Billions of dollars worth of the regime's security equipment, funded by American tax dollars, has been decimated in the northern region of the occupied territories due to attacks by Lebanon's Hezbollah. Additionally, Yemen has profoundly influenced the situation to Israel's disadvantage. Israeli companies are now required to reroute their ships to evade potential seizure by the Ansarullah. Consequently, Israel has opted against engaging in a new conflict with Yemen due to its perceived high cost, thus far abstaining from any confrontation and refraining from firing a single shot at Yemeni positions.

Israel's indiscriminate actions in Gaza, coupled with its failure to secure decisive achievements on the ground and continuous suffering at the hands of Hezbollah and Ansarullah, have resulted in a significant decline in the regime's credibility and popularity on the global stage. It is evident that, rather than achieving

success in its ground offensive, the regime has suffered a severe military, security, and reputational setback at the hands of Palestinians.

But even if the tables turn and Israel gets to kill large numbers of Hamas members in Gaza, the group can essentially never be eradicated. That's because as former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak stated in October, Hamas is deeply rooted in the hearts and minds of Palestinians. Hamas represents a cause—a movement dedicated to the liberation of Palestine. This cause extends beyond the organization. Therefore, even if Hamas undergoes significant military setbacks due to Israeli actions the Palestinian struggle towards liberation will not cease. Once Israel is done with its latest round of assaults against Gaza, those who have lost their loved ones during the regime's brutal attacks are likely to seek vengeance any chance they get. Palestinians have already chosen a path that will lead to either victory or martyrdom. As Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei once stated, Operation Al-Aqsa Storm has begun an "inextinguishable" quest that is sure to carry on.

Certain Western leaders also seem to have recognized the situation. On Saturday, the French President cautioned that Israel's pursuit of eradicating the Palestinian resistance group could lead to a decade of warfare. "If Hamas were to be completely destroyed, the conflict could extend for 10 years," Macron said during a press briefing on the fringes of the UN's COP28 climate discussions in Dubai.

"Therefore, this objective must be carefully reconsidered," he underscored.

## Pentagon: US warship, multiple commercial ships have come under attack in the Red Sea

An American warship and multiple commercial ships came under attack Sunday in the Red Sea, the Pentagon said, potentially marking a major escalation in a series of maritime attacks in the Mideast linked to the Israel-Hamas war.

"We're aware of reports regarding attacks on the USS Carney and commercial vessels in the Red Sea and will provide information as it becomes available," the Pentagon said.

The Carney is an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer.

The British military earlier said there had been a suspected drone attack and explosions in the

Red Sea, without elaborating.

The Pentagon did not identify where it believed the fire came from. However, Yemen's Houthis have been launching a series of attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, as well as launching drones and missiles targeting Israel as it wages war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters, said the attack began about 10 a.m. in Sanaa, Yemen, and had gone on for as much as five hours. Another U.S. official who similarly spoke on condition of anonymity for the same reason said the Carney had intercepted at least one drone

during the attack.

There was no immediate comment from the Houthis. However, a Houthi military spokesman earlier said an "important" statement would be released shortly.

Global shipping had increasingly been targeted as the Israel-Hamas war threatens to become a wider regional conflict — even as a truce briefly halted fighting and Hamas exchanged hostages for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. However, the collapse of the truce and the resumption of Israeli airstrikes and its ground offensive there had raised the risk of the seaborne attacks resuming.

## Israeli anxiety in Gaza

### Probe reveals how the Israeli military has run out of targets to hit

From page 1 ▶ In a sign of the anxiety among Israeli ground forces operating in Gaza, they are shooting with lethal force at anything that moves?? including a vehicle belonging to Doctors Without Borders, more commonly known as Médecins Sans Frontières.

A staff member with Médecins Sans Frontières has recounted the moment Israeli forces opened fire on the MSF vehicle, killing two people.

In a post on social media, one of the MSF passengers in the car who survived the attack gave this testimony. "When we arrived at al-Wahida Street, which is close to our office and guesthouse and Gaza clinic. I saw tanks and snipers on top of the buildings. I was terrified when I saw that the snipers and tanks are pointing at us.

Especially the fourth and fifth van, they started opening fire on us, and one bullet grazed my forehead. I got a superficial injury. The bullet hit the head of my colleague Alaa, who was just next to me. He got a critical injury in the head and started massively bleeding.

His head fell on the steering wheel. I immediately took control of the steering wheel to move to the right of the street."

MSF has asked Israeli authorities "for a formal explanation", adding that it calls for an "independent investigation into this attack".

This comes as a joint investigation published by +972 Magazine and the Hebrew-language outlet Local Call, which interviewed several current and former sources in the Israeli intelligence community who revealed how the regime uses artificial intelligence technology known as the Gospel platform after it ran out of targets to hit.

The technology has loosed the rules of Israeli airstrikes and is based on computer-generated data



### Israel targets a vehicle belonging to Doctors Without Borders and kills two people.

to locate targets for Israeli warplanes rather than human intelligence.

The chances of committing massacres have increased as seen in the current war on Gaza, which has entered its 58th day with a civilian death toll surpassing 15,200, 70 percent of them women and children, as of Saturday.

It allows airstrikes on non-military targets and the use of an AI system, which has enabled the Israeli army to carry out its deadliest war on Gaza.

"In one case discussed by the sources, the Israeli military command knowingly approved the killing of hundreds of Palestinian civilians in an attempt to assassinate a single top Hamas military commander," the probe revealed.

A powerful Israeli bomb hit a group of multi-story buildings in Hamad City, a Qatari-funded housing development on the outskirts of Khan Younis. Huge clouds of smoke engulfed the complex.

## WORLD HEADLINES

### NATO should be ready for bad news from Ukraine, says Stoltenberg

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg says NATO should be ready for bad news from Ukraine, according to his interview with ARD television on Saturday.

"We should also be prepared for bad news," he said when asked if he feared that the situation in Ukraine would worsen in the future. "Wars develop in phases. But we have to support Ukraine in both good and bad times."

It is crucial to boost ammunition production, Stoltenberg said, conceding that NATO countries were unable to meet the increased demand for them. He said Ukraine is now in a "critical situation," but declined to recommend what Kiev should do.

"I will leave it to the Ukrainians and military commanders to make these difficult operational decisions," Stoltenberg said.

He also commented on challenges faced by the European defense industry.

"One of the issues we should address is the fragmentation of the European defense industry," he said.

The NATO chief said it's in the interest of Europe and is good for jobs in the industry. He said it is important not to allow ammunition prices to rise now that demand has climbed.

Stoltenberg said there had been no significant developments on the battlefield over the past few months. He declined to share an outlook for what could happen next.

"Wars are inherently unpredictable," the official said. "But we know that the more we support Ukraine, the faster the war will end," the Secretary-General highlighted.

### US Muslims pledge to ditch Biden in 2024 over his stance on Israel-Gaza war

Muslim American leaders in several pivotal states pledged on Saturday to rally their communities against President Joe Biden's bid for re-election due to his steadfast backing of Israel's war in Gaza.

The #AbandonBiden campaign began when Minnesota Muslim Americans demanded Biden call for a ceasefire by October 31, and has spread to Michigan, Arizona, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Florida.

"This #AbandonBiden 2024 conference is set against the backdrop of the upcoming 2024 presidential election and the decision to withdraw support for President Biden due to his unwillingness to call for a ceasefire and protect innocents in Palestine and Israel," the group told US news outlet Axios in a statement.

Opposition from their sizable Muslim and Arab American populations could pose a challenge to the president's Electoral College prospects in the upcoming election.

The US president and the vice president are elected by a group of "electors" who are chosen in most cases by political parties in that state.

"We don't have two options. We have many options," Jaylani Hussein, director of Minnesota's Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) chapter, said at a news conference in Dearborn, Michigan, when asked about Biden alternatives.

### Renewed exchange of fire at Israeli-Lebanon border

The Israeli army says a number of its soldiers were "slightly" injured following an antitank missile attack launched from Lebanon.

Israeli media put the number of wounded to four.

Since October 7, fighting between the Israeli army and Hezbollah has been largely confined to the border area.

Almost 100 Hezbollah fighters have been killed in the fighting, while at least 15 civilians and four journalists have been killed by Israeli attacks on the border since October 7.

### Top Persian Gulf Arab diplomats to meet in Doha

Foreign ministers of Persian Gulf Arab countries are convening in Doha for a GCC summit on Tuesday, with the Gaza war expected to top the agenda.

The meeting comes three weeks after leaders from the Arab and Muslim world met in Saudi Arabia where they issued a joint statement calling for an immediate end to the war in Gaza.

### Pentagon chief warns Israel of 'strategic defeat'

Israel's victory over Hamas will become a "strategic defeat" if the country doesn't prevent civilian casualties during its military operation in Gaza, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin has said.

Washington "will continue to press Israel to protect civilians and to ensure the robust flow of humanitarian aid" into Gaza, Austin vowed on Saturday, in a speech at the Reagan National Defense Forum at Simi Valley, California.

"The center of gravity is the civilian population and if you drive them into the arms of the enemy, you replace a tactical victory with a strategic defeat," the Pentagon chief said, implying that indiscriminate attacks on Gaza by Israel could prompt even more Palestinians to join the ranks of the Hamas armed group.

"It would compound this tragedy if all that awaited Israelis and Palestinians at the end of this awful war was more insecurity, more rage and more despair," Austin added.

### More than 700 Palestinians martyred in last 24 hours

The Director-General of the Government Media Office in Gaza has told Al Jazeera that more than 700 Palestinians have been martyred in Gaza during the last 24 hours.

He added that over 1.5 million people have also been displaced in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas says talks of truce or prisoner-captives exchange will not take place while Israel continues its attacks on Gaza.

The move comes after Israel pulled back its negotiators from Qatar citing an "impasse" in talks.

### Rescuers unable to reach all Palestinians trapped under debris

A Palestinian Civil Defence official said that conditions across the Gaza Strip are "beyond dire", warning that rescuers lack the resources to reach all victims of Israeli bombardment.

"There are dozens of civilians being killed in every single air strike. Hundreds are also being wounded," says Mahmoud Basal, the spokesperson of the Palestinian Civil Defence in Gaza.

### US base in Iraq's Erbil attacked by drone

A US military base north of the Iraqi city of Erbil some 425 km away from Baghdad was attacked by a kamikaze drone, the Dubai-based Al Hadath television reported early on Sunday.

The Islamic Front for Iraqi Resistance claimed responsibility for the attack. The group earlier announced that it was resuming its attacks on US military bases following the end of the humanitarian ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

According to Fox News, a total of 74 attacks on US forces in Iraq and Syria have been registered since October 17. About 900 US servicemen have been deployed in Syria and about 2,500 in Iraq.

## Under-the-radar destinations: Mirza Kuchak Khan Mausoleum



TEHRAN - The mausoleum of Yunes Ostadsarai, famously known as Mirza Kuchak Khan Jangali or Commander of Jangal (1880-1921), serves as an intriguing site for tourists exploring Rasht, the capital of Gilan province, northern Iran.

Initially constructed during the Pahlavi era, this complex underwent expansion and additional construction, notably a building dedicated to his memory and the portal, post the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

Mirza Kuchak Khan Jangali, a prominent figure in the Persian Constitutional Revolution, was a key leader of the Jangal movement. He vehemently fought against foreign intrusion and sought Iran's independence. The uprising, commencing in 1914, persisted against both domestic and foreign adversaries until 1921, concluding upon Mirza's demise.

The commemorative structure, located between the mausoleum and Soleiman Darab cemetery, is aesthetically simple yet architecturally splendid.

Designed as a regular octagon, a prevalent geometric form in Iranian architecture, it boasts eight elegant columns adorned with wooden capitals encircling the mausoleum.

The construction predominantly employs local materials like bricks, tiles, clay, and wood, blending harmoniously with the lush greenery and ancient trees in the vicinity, evoking the essence of the forests and resonating with the free-spirited nature of the revolutionary leader.

Adjoining the mausoleum of Mirza Kuchak Khan, lie the graves of the Jangal movement fighters, their names engraved on individual tombs. Additionally, the site hosts the mausoleum of Shivan Fumani, a revered poet of the region, along with other notable personalities from the area.

This site, coupled with nearby attractions like the Kolah Farhangi Palace, the Mirza Kuchak Khan House Museum, and the Ganjineh Museum, stands as a prominent tourist destination in Rasht.

A fascinating historical fact revolves around the burial of Mirza Kuchak Khan's head, initially separated from his body and interred in Tehran.

## British Museum to display world's 'oldest map of stars'

An ancient item that is thought to be the world's oldest surviving map of the stars is to go on display at the British Museum.

The 3,600-year-old Nebra Sky Disc was discovered in Nebra, Germany, in 1999 and is being loaned to the London museum from next year.

The 30cm bronze disc has a blue-green patina and is adorned with gold symbols thought to represent the sun, moon, stars, solstices and Pleiades constellation.

The Nebra disc belongs to Germany's State Museum of Prehistory in Halle and this is the first time it has been loaned internationally for 15 years.

It was recovered in a police sting after being

found by illegal treasure hunters using metal detectors in 1999.

It will be displayed as a part of a Stonehenge exhibition from February.

Neil Wilkin, curator of The World of Stonehenge at the British Museum, said: "The Nebra Sky Disc and the sun pendant are two of the most remarkable surviving objects from Bronze Age Europe.

"Both have only recently been unearthed, literally, after remaining hidden in the ground for over three millennia." We're delighted that they will both be key pieces in our once-in-a-lifetime Stonehenge exhibition at the British Museum.

(Source: Independent)

\* World destinations welcomed 22% more international tourists in the third quarter of 2023 compared to the same period last year, reflecting a strong Northern Hemisphere summer season.

\* International tourist arrivals hit 91% of

pre-pandemic levels in the third quarter, reaching 92% in July, the best month so far since the start of pandemic.

\* Overall, tourism recovered 87% of pre-pandemic levels in January-September 2023. That puts the sector on course to recover almost 90% by the end of the year.

\* International tourism receipts could reach USD 14 trillion in 2023, about 93% of the USD 15 trillion earned by destinations in 2019.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: "The latest UNWTO data shows that international tourism has almost completely recovered from the unprecedented crisis of COVID-19 with many destinations reaching or even

exceeding pre-pandemic arrivals and receipts. This is critical for destinations, businesses, and communities where the sector is a major lifeline."

**The Middle East (West Asia), Europe and Africa lead recovery**

The Middle East continues to lead the recovery by regions in relative terms, with arrivals 20% above pre-pandemic levels in the nine months through September 2023. The Middle East remains the only world region to surpass 2019 levels this period. Visa facilitation measures, the development of new destinations, investments in new tourism-related projects and the hosting of large events, help underpin this remarkable

performance.

Europe, the world's largest destination region, welcomed 550 million international tourists over the period, 56% of the global total. That represents 94% of pre-pandemic levels. The rebound was supported by robust intra-regional demand as well as strong demand from the United States.

Africa recovered 92% of pre-pandemic visitors this nine-month period, and arrivals in the Americas reached 88% of 2019 numbers this period, as the region benefitted from strong US demand, in particular to Caribbean destinations.

Asia and the Pacific reached 62% of pre-pandemic levels this period due to slower

reopening to international travel. However, performance among subregions is mixed, with South Asia recovering 95% of pre-pandemic levels but North-East Asia only about 50%.

Moreover, the World Tourism Barometer includes more focused data on regions, as well as sub-regions and individual destinations.

**Tourism spending strong**

Strong demand for outbound travel was reported by several large source markets this period, with many exceeding 2019 levels. Germany and the United States spent 13% and 11% more respectively on outbound travel than in the same nine months of 2019,

while Italy spent 16% more through August.

The sustained recovery is also reflected in the performance of industry indicators. Drawing on data from IATA (the International Air Transport Association) and STR, the UNWTO Tourism Recovery Tracker details a strong recovery in air passenger numbers and tourist accommodation occupancy levels.

Against this backdrop, international tourism is well on track to fully recover pre-pandemic levels in 2024 despite economic challenges such as high inflation and weaker global output, as well as important geopolitical tensions and conflicts.

(Source: UNWTO)

# 400-year-old Jolfa Square to undergo restoration

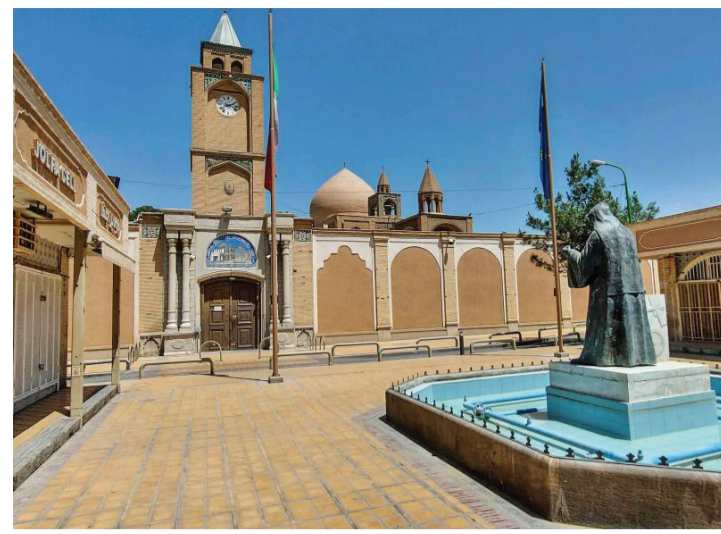
TEHRAN - Isfahan's tourism chief has revealed plans for the restoration of Jolfa Square, which is a gateway to a touristic Armenian neighborhood in the ancient city.

Hamidreza Mohaqeqian announced the plan on Saturday during his visit to the historical square in conjunction with the celebration of the 52nd founding anniversary of the Vank Cathedral's museum, CHTN reported.

"The [New] Jolfa neighborhood, with over 400 years of history, stands as one of the most significant historical and cultural centers in southern Isfahan," Mohaqeqian said.

"In recent years, we have successfully transformed this complex into one of the principal tourism hubs of Isfahan."

However, given that Jolfa Square is nestled at the heart of this historical texture and requires special attention, it was decided during this visit, in col-



laboration with the council for the preservation of Armenian heritage in [New] Jolfa, to monitor, plan, and subsequently carry out the restoration and optimization project of this complex to restore it to its historical era, the official explained.

The quarter dates from the time of Shah Abbas I, who transported a colony of Christians

from the town of Jolfa (now on Iran's northern border) en masse, and named the village 'New Jolfa'.

Shah Abbas sought their skills as merchants, entrepreneurs, and artists and he ensured that their religious freedom was respected - albeit at a distance from the city's Islamic center. At one time, over 42,000 Armenian

Christians reportedly lived her

Isfahan was once a crossroad of international trade and diplomacy in Iran, and now it is one of Iran's top tourist destinations for good reasons. The ancient city is filled with many architectural wonders, such as unmatched Islamic buildings, bazaars, museums, Persian gardens, and tree-lined boulevards. It's a city for walking, getting lost in its mazing bazaars, dozing in beautiful gardens, and meeting people.

Isfahan is renowned not only for the abundance of great historical bridges but also for its 'life-giving river', the Zayandeh Road, which has long bestowed the city an original beauty and fertility.

The city has long been nicknamed as Nesf-e-Jahan, which is translated into "half the world", meaning seeing it is relevant to see half the world. In its heyday, it was also one of the largest cities in the region, with a population of nearly one million.

## 3000-year-old qanat to emerge as Iran's newest tourist appeal

TEHRAN - Efforts are underway to revive the ancient marvel of Qanat-e Zarch, a 3000-year-old subterranean aqueduct stretched in central Iran, as part of a move to enhance tourism prospects in the region.

This ambitious initiative is poised to not only revive a historical treasure but also fortify the local economy, according to Zarch's governor Morteza Zibaian.

Highlighting the far-reaching benefits of resurrecting the 3000-year-old Qanat-e Zarch, the governor underscored its potential to significantly bolster the local economy while concurrently amplifying tourism opportunities.

In a decisive step towards this goal, Zibaian announced the formation of the Qanat Council working group, comprising a consortium of experts and stakeholders devoted to preserving this ancient water system's significance.

Revered as one of the most remarkable man-made aqueducts globally, the Qanat of Zarch spans

an impressive 80 kilometers across the semi-arid landscapes of Yazd province in central Iran.

Originating from the village of Fahraj in the northeastern region of Yazd, the Qanat plunges to depths of 30-40 meters below the surface, winding its way until it reaches Zarch. Here, the precious water source plays a pivotal role in irrigating the lower terrains, nurturing the fertile lands, and sustaining local agriculture.

Recent surveys conducted on Iran's ancient subsurface water supply systems, known as qanats, have revealed that approximately 37,000 of the 120,000 qanats are still operational. These resilient water channels continue to serve communities in arid and semi-arid regions across the country, epitomizing their enduring significance in providing a vital lifeline amidst challenging environmental conditions.

The revival of Qanat-e Zarch, with its rich historical legacy and architectural splendor, not only stands as a testament to ancient Iranian engineering prowess but also beckons as an

enticing attraction for tourists seeking a glimpse into the country's illustrious past. As a living testament to Iran's heritage and ingenuity, this restoration project holds promise not only in preserving cultural heritage but also in fostering sustainable tourism-driven economic growth.

In 2016, a selection of eleven qanats was collectively inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list under the title of The Persian Qanat. Each of them epitomizes many others in terms of geographic scopes, architectural designs, and other motives. Such subterranean tunnels provide exceptional testimony to cultural traditions and civilizations in desert areas with an arid climate.

Generally, each qanat comprises an almost horizontal tunnel for collecting water from an underground water source, usually an alluvial fan, into which a mother well is sunk to the appropriate level of the aquifer.

UNESCO has it that "The qanats provide exceptional testimony to cultural traditions and civilizations in desert areas with an arid climate."

## 12th-century Saveh mosque, known as a museum of Islamic architecture, restored



TEHRAN - Saveh's tourism chief has announced the successful completion of restoration work on the city's grand mosque, often revered as a treasury showcasing Islamic architectural brilliance.

Reza Ayyaz, speaking on Sunday, disclosed that the comprehensive restoration project, financed with a budget of 10 billion rials (equal to \$20,000), encompassed refurbishments to the mosque's

ceiling, corridors, and the meticulous restoration of its adobe and cob-covered surfaces.

Drawing attention to the rich historical heritage represented by Saveh's grand mosque spanning various Islamic periods, Ayaz added, "Certain discoveries indicate its legacy spanning over a millennium, bearing architectural imprints from the Buyid dynasty era to the illustrious Safavid period."

Renowned cultural heritage experts have speculated that the Jameh Mosque might have been constructed atop an earlier edifice, potentially utilizing remnants from a preceding mosque or an ancient structure, the official said.

He added these architectural traits echo the features commonly found in mosques featuring Shabestan, an underground space prevalent in traditional Iranian architecture observed in mosques, residences, and schools.

The presence of 17 distinct historical layers within the mosque's dome chamber and its surrounding areas provides compelling evidence to support this hypothesis, Ayyaz explained.

Following the era of the Buyids and the advent of Seljuk rule, construction work on the iwan (porch) and minarets at Saveh's grand mosque commenced. As a result, the mosque proudly boasts

a porch, a dome, arched chambers, and a minaret? dating back to the 6th century A.H, he said.

Saveh's Seljuk-era Jameh Mosque continues to enthral the faithful, tourists, and enthusiasts of history and Islamic architecture alike. Its intricate architectural ensemble encompasses a courtyard, porch, minaret, dome, and two ancient altars adorned with Kufic calligraphic works.

Historical records suggest that the mosque, which was completed in the 12th century, remains an active place of worship and has undergone various restoration endeavors over the centuries to preserve its grandeur.

Named after Saveh, the central Iranian city, the term "Jameh Mosque" or "Masjed-e Jameh," or "Friday Mosque" in Iran specifically denotes a grand communal mosque designated for obligatory Friday prayers, distinctively recognized within the country and revered as a significant cultural and spiritual landmark.

## International tourism to end 2023 close to 90% of pre-pandemic levels

International tourism is on track to recover almost 90% of pre-pandemic levels by the end of this year. According to the latest data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), an estimated 975 million tourists travelled internationally between January and September 2023, an increase of 38% on the same months of 2022.

The newest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer also shows:

\* World destinations welcomed 22% more international tourists in the third quarter of 2023 compared to the same period last year, reflecting a strong Northern Hemisphere summer season.

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pre-pandemic levels in the third quarter, reaching 92% in July, the best month so far since the start of pandemic.

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(Source: UNWTO)

# Soil and water – Asia-Pacific's bread and butter

From page 1 ▶ But the ability of our soils to provide these ecosystem services are increasingly threatened due to decades of soil degradation and water scarcity, caused by overuse and misuse.

Soil and water rely on each other, and that's critical to feed a hungry world. Here, in the Asia-Pacific region, some 90 percent of our fresh water is consumed in agricultural activities alone, considerably more than the 75 percent used by agriculture, on average, worldwide.

Yet, more than three-quarters of the Asia-Pacific population is now grappling with water insecurity. Much of this has been caused by mismanagement of our water and soil resources.

Unsustainable practices have exacerbated the situation, contributing to the loss of biodiversity in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, and further challenging the resilience of agrifood systems facing extreme weather events.

The fact that soils are not a renewable resource makes their preservation an even more urgent matter: it can take up to one thousand years to form one centimetre of soil, and this same centimetre can be destroyed in only a few minutes through careless acts of degradation.

In order to better understanding the close relationship between soil and water, is a critical necessity for countries to work domestically and cross-borders to ensure wider sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region.

## There are answers

While pressure on this soil-water-food nexus is increasing, reversing the degradation is still



possible. But we all need to take responsibility. We all need to act. Together, we must promote soil and water management at all levels.

We can all do our part by changing habits to preserve fresh water each day. Meantime, policy makers and other stakeholders can collaborate in implementing sustainable soil and water management practices.

This involves planning and action to ensure more efficient use of fresh water, promoting sustainable use of fertilizers and pesticides, employing appropriate irrigation methods, including the ways we drain and pump water, and pay more attention to monitoring related data – such as soil and groundwater salinity levels.

Indeed, all land users, particularly farmers and smallholders, need training in sustainable soil and water management and that means inclusive access to technology transfer.

Implementing sustainable soil management practices is both possible and crucial for transforming our agrifood systems, making them

more resilient to extreme climate events. By doing so, our soils can become richer in carbon and can hold more water, benefiting the interconnected relationship between soil, water, and plants.

This not only improves the overall health of the region's environment, but also enhances its ability to mitigate the effects of climate change. Research has found that Asian soils have the capacity to sequester 180 megatonnes of carbon per year, if sustainable high-carbon input soil management practices are adopted.

## World Soil Day

Addressing soil degradation requires comprehensive domestic and international efforts involving government policies, research initiatives, and awareness programmes. Initiatives like the Glinka World Soil Award and the King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award, launched by the Government of Thailand, acknowledging the late king's dedication to sustainable soil management and its role in food security and poverty reduction, serve as exemplary models of lo-

calized endeavours.

These efforts aim to recognize and encourage sustainable soil practices, fostering awareness and responsible management. Indeed, it is why we circle the 5th of December on our calendars each year to mark World Soil Day, to remind everyone of soil's importance to us all.

Hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Global Soil Partnership, strives to enhance soil governance and promote the practice of sustainable soil management for food security, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and sustainable development.

In a world hungry for solutions, FAO is sowing the seeds of sustainability, emphasizing the importance of understanding, and addressing the complex nexus between soil health, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation, and essential ecosystem services.

In doing so, we aim to help countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and achieve better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life for all.

As we navigate the multiple challenges of recovery from the pandemic, conflicts, and the need for systemic agrifood systems reform, celebrating World Soil Day should extend beyond 5 December, calling for collective action and a daily commitment to safeguard the Earth's lifeline – our soil. It's literally our bread and butter.

Jong-Jin Kim is Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

## Iran attends WHO consultative sessions on traditional medicine strategy

TEHRAN – Iran attended the World Health Organization's consultative sessions on developing a draft of a new traditional medicine strategy as the only representative from West Asia.

The event took place from November 27-30 in Geneva, Switzerland, IRIB reported.

Arman Zargarani, Iran's advisor to the traditional medicine office at the Ministry of Health, participated in the event at the invitation of the WHO headquarters in Geneva.

The International Regulatory Cooperation for Herbal Medicines Unit of WHO, WHO-IRCH, invited 20 experts in the field of traditional medicine from all over the world to develop a draft of traditional medicine strategy for the period 2025-2034.

The invited experts were from China (3 representatives), Australia, Canada, Switzerland, (2 representatives each), Iran, Malaysia, England, South Korea, South Africa, Ghana, Norway, Thailand, Philippines, Brazil, and India (1 representative each).

## Iran holds a 40% share of the market for medicinal plants in the neighboring countries.

Within 3 days of intensive work, the entire initial draft was reviewed in the presence of Rudi Eggers, WHO Director of Integrated Health Services, and Kim Sungchol, head of the WHO Traditional Complementary and Integrative Medicine Unit.

The rest of the work will be carried out remotely by the volunteer representatives after the end of the sessions based on the determined issues.

Zargarani assessed the level of the meetings as very high and the discussed topics of fundamental importance for the future integration of traditional medicine in the health system of the member countries of the World Health Organization.

He also considered the presence of Iran in this meeting as the only representative from West Asia to be important both from the point of view of Iran's global reputation in traditional medicine and also as a unique opportunity to apply the viewpoints of Iran and Iranian medicine in preparing the most important universal draft of traditional medicine strategy.

It should be noted that WHO's current document of traditional medicine strategy (2014-2023) has been extended until 2025, and the document being written will be reviewed for approval after its finalization in the upcoming General Assembly of the World Health Organization.

tion.

## Iran holds 40% share of regional market

Iran holds some 40 percent share of the market for medicinal plants in the neighboring countries, an official with the Ministry of Health said on October 31.

"A large volume of pharmaceuticals, supplements, food products, and beverages are exported to Iraq, Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, and Afghanistan," IRNA quoted Hamidreza Banafsheh as saying.

Iran is among the leading countries in the field of medicine and health technology, supplying 98 percent of pharmaceutical items to the domestic market, the official noted.

"Nearly 450 out of 1,400 knowledge-based companies are active in the field of herbal medicines, biotechnology, and food industries."

He went on to say that the National Institute for Medical Research Development aims at expanding exports of medicinal products.

Since most of the raw materials for the production of herbal medicines are native to the country, these products can internationally compete with those of the other countries, he added.

Besides, some 15 to 20 percent of Iran's herbal medicines are unique in the world. Iran has the capacity to introduce new herbal medicines to the world, he highlighted.

Producing and commercializing pharmaceutical plants are the best ways to introduce the rich resources of herbal medicines which, in addition to making foreign currency revenues for the country, will lead to the scientific authority of Iran in this field, he concluded.

## Medicinal plant exports can be increased

According to the chairman of the Union of Medicinal Plants Exporters of Iran, the country's export of medicinal plants can be increased through meeting world standards.

Mohammad-Ali Rezaei Kamal-Abad stated that world standards are increasing due to the health-oriented consumption of herbal products, and failure to comply with these standards will lead to the return or destruction of these products.

"In the past years, poisons have entered the country, which is not only not used in other countries, but has also caused water and soil pollution in our country", he lamented.

Referring to the importance of agricultural product export standardization, he added: "Standardization is done in our country, but this standardization is not up-to-date. With the coordination of ministries, expenditure and updating of information can help to standardize agricultural products and develop the export of these products", he commented.

He said that having more than 11 climates out of 13 climates, Iran has 8,000 varieties of medicinal plants, which is at least twice as much as Europe.

## United in action to achieve SDGs for persons with disabilities



By Maryam Tavassoli

TEHRAN – The International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) is globally observed on December 3. "United in action to rescue and achieve the SDGs for, with and by persons with disabilities" is this year's theme.

It focuses on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which was adopted by United Nations member states in 2015.

The SDGs are 17 goals that nations seek to achieve by 2030 in order to make the world a better and more equitable place for all.

It is essential that persons with disabilities participate in this effort and have a large role in what happens.

It also seeks to increase awareness of gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic, and cultural life.

On this day, various organizations try to promote the rights, dignity, and well-being of persons with disabilities at every level of society.

## Iran's services to persons with disabilities

In this regard, the Health Insurance Organization has been offering 59 services to persons with disabilities, including 14 services in orthopedics, 6 services in occupational health, 9 services in hearing aids, 6 services in physiotherapy, 11 services in speech therapy, 6 services in rehabilitation, and seven services in optometry.

A total of 4,261 rehabilitation centers are parties to the health insurance contract, and persons with disabilities who are under welfare organization's coverage and have registered their names in the health insurance systems can receive rehabilitation services with 70 percent insurance coverage.

.... People with disabilities should be supported.

In 2022, President Ebrahim Raisi said not only the Welfare Organization, but all institutions have the mission to provide the ground for growth, prosperity, and employment of persons with disabilities.

People with disabilities should be supported. These people should not be pitied, but should have double respect because despite having physical defects, they are effective and efficient at all levels of society, and they should have equal social opportunities with others, he further highlighted.

He went on to state that all institutions have a mission to provide a basis for the growth and employment of disabled people; the streets, public places, and private buildings should be made accessible for the disabled.

Proper attention to people with disabilities in society should become a culture, and this requires media and cultural work. Also, the government and related organizations should pay special attention to this issue, he added.

He further called on the Ministry of Labor and the Welfare Organization to take measures on their employment and prosperity.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## 'Organ donation rate grows 60-fold in 18 years'

Organ donation rate has increased by 60 times over the past 18 years, though the growth is not considerable compared to the global scale, head of the transplantation and treatment of diseases department at the Ministry of Health has announced.

Some countries including China have grown 122-fold in terms of organ donation over the past 10 years, ISNA quoted Mehdi Shadnough as saying on Monday.

Although, Iran ranks 26 in organ donation in the world, it can claim better ranks given some plans being implemented in this regard, he highlighted, adding, we will achieve better results certainly by the next year (March 2019-March 2020), as many barriers have been removed last year.

## رشد اهدای عضو در ۱۸ سال گذشته ، ۶۰ برابر شده است

رئیس مرکز مدیریت پیوند و درمان بیماری‌ها وزارت بهداشت گفت: رشد اهدای عضو در ۱۸ سال گذشته در ایران ۶۰ برابر شده است البته در مقیاس جهانی شاخص قابل قبولی نیست.

به گزارش ایسنا دکتر مهدی شادنough اظهار کرد: کشوری مانند چین طی ۱۰ سال در زمینه اهدای عضو رشد ۱۲۲ برابری داشته است.

وی خاطرنشان کرد: رتبه اهدای عضو ایران در رنکینگ جهانی ۲۶ است اما می‌تواند وضعیت بهتر داشته باشد و البته با توجه به فعالیت‌هایی که آغاز شده نتایج بهتری در انتظار خواهد بود و در سال ۹۸ نیز جهش خوبی را شاهد خواهیم بود چراکه چالش‌های موجود در سال ۹۷ رفع شده است.



## Iranians welcome tree-planting campaign

A national plan kicked off on Saturday for planting up to one billion trees across the country.

With the aim of combating desertification and restoring forests, the plan is going to be carried out over the course of four years.



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DECEMBER 4, 2023

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*The people of the world are like travelers in a caravan, who are carried on in their sleep.*

**Imam Ali (AS)**

Prayer Times > Noon:11:54 Evening: 17:11 Dawn: 5:29 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:59 (tomorrow)

## Greece's festival for children hosting Iranian films



TEHRAN-Four Iranian films are participating in the 26th Olympia International Film Festival for Children and Young People, which is underway at the cities of Pyrgos and Amaliada in Greece.

The feature film "The Apple Day" by Mahmoud Ghaffari, documentary "Alone" by Jafar Najafi, short film "Collision" by Amirhossein Mohseni, and animation "Our Uniform" by Yeganeh Moghaddam are the works from Iran present at the event, ISNA reported on Saturday.

"The Apple Day" tells the story of Mahdi, a first-grade boy, who learns A is for apple on his very first day at school and immediately agrees to bring the class a whole basket full as his older brother Saeed and their father sell apples. However, when their truck gets stolen, the family's already precarious existence begins to crumble. Meanwhile, Saeed feels responsible to fill the basket of apples promised for his little brother's class.

Mehdi Pourmousa, Arian Rastkar, Zhila Shahi, Aria Mohammadzadeh, and Khodadad Bakhshizadeh are in the cast of Ghaffari's film that tells the story of a new beginning filled with setbacks and loving solidarity.

In "Alone," Amir is a 14-year-old boy who lives in a village. After the death of his father, he is in charge of his mother and his 12-year-old twin sisters. The two girls receive most of his attention, especially when he attempts to help them break free from the shackles of tradition.

"Collision" tells the story of Sina a 13-year-old kid, who has been in jail for stealing and hitting a shop owner. He alongside with a social worker go to the owner to talk but the situation gets more

complicated than he expected.

In "Our Uniform," an Iranian girl recalls school-age memories through the wrinkles and fabrics of her old uniform, quite literally. Rather than using paper, canvas, or a digital medium, Moghaddam painted directly on the cloth used for making school uniforms to tell the story of a character who dreams of a better future.

Moghaddam's self-produced 7-minute animation, have won the Grand Jury prize at Spain's Animayo Festival and the Best Short Animation award at the France's Anecny International Animation Film Festival and as a result have qualified for the 2024 Oscars.

Olympia International Film Festival for Children and Young People started in 1997 as a bold and innovative festival that would present quality cinema to children, adolescents and young people, as well as to educators, parents and film enthusiasts, in the small provincial city of Pyrgos.

After two and a half decades of consistent work in the field of children and youth audiences, the festival is recognized as the largest children and youth film organization in Greece, with strong film and audiovisual literacy activities.

The festival is specialized in Children and Youth audiences. It has four competition sections: feature fiction films, short fiction live action films, short animation films and documentaries (all durations).

Having started from December 2, the festival will conclude on December 9. In addition to Pyrgos and Amaliada, some special programs will be held in other cities of Western Greece and in Athens.

## Cartoon of Day



Gaza

Cartoonist: Osama Hajjaj from Jordan

# Imam Reza (AS) Intl. Festival to be held in four provinces

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

TEHRAN-The 21st edition of Imam Reza (AS) International Festival is set to take place in Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi province, and three other provinces in Iran during the months of April and May, next year, the organizers have announced.

This edition of the festival will feature a diverse range of categories, including activities taking place in the northern province of Mazandaran, the southern province of Khuzestan, and the northwestern province of West Azarbaijan, the director of Imam Reza (AS) International Art and Cultural Foundation Morteza Saeidizadeh said in a press conference in Tehran on Sunday.

Efforts have been made to create a transformational shift in the festival, transitioning from public events to more professional endeavors within the foundation, he added.

The festival will also include specialized conferences, workshops for critique and evaluation of works, as well as peripheral sections, he explained.



He further emphasized the importance of showcasing prestigious and outstanding media products through various platforms such as social networks, environmental spaces, urban performances, and provincial showcases. This approach aims to give the festival a fresh and innovative outlook with the inclusion of new sections.

Highlighting the national scope of the festival, Saeidizadeh elaborated that all festivals are organized on a national level, and a dedicated

national secretariat has been established for smooth coordination.

The festival promises to be an extensive theatrical experience, with 10 to 15 theater performances scheduled in each province across all of the country's 450 locations, he noted.

In addition to its national significance, the festival will also have international components, particularly in the fields of photography and poetry, he mentioned.

The closing ceremony of the Imam

Reza (AS) International Festival will be a momentous occasion, as all artists will gather in the holy city of Mashhad to receive their well-deserved awards, he said.

In addition, a student festival and a village festival will also be held in conjunction with this year's festival, he added.

The Imam Reza (AS) Cultural and Art Foundation has been diligently preparing for a total of 12 festivals this year, encompassing the domains of poetry, music, film, and theater, among others, he stated.

The Imam Reza (AS) International Festival is held annually in various provinces of the country as well as in several other countries.

This festival encompasses various fields such as articles, plays or screenplays, produced shows, stories, visual arts, books, literary texts, poetry, press and digital works, and radio and television productions.

The festival will come to an end in Mashhad on May 19 that marks the birthday of Imam Reza (AS).

## "When We Have Sufficiently Tortured Each Other" to go on stage at Tehran theater

TEHRAN-Iranian director Mojtaba Jeddi will stage an adaptation of British playwright Martin Crimp's play "When We Have Sufficiently Tortured Each Other" at Entezami Hall of the Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) next week.

Khatereh Kordkarimi is the translator of the play, which will remain on stage for a month.

"When We Have Sufficiently Tortured Each Other" explores themes of power, violence, and sexuality through a series of fragmented, non-linear scenes. The play centers around a couple, identified only as "Man" and "Woman," who engage in sadomasochistic role play as a means of both escape and confrontation.

Over the course of the play, their relationship becomes increasingly violent and unpredictable, as they push each other to the brink of their limits and blur the lines between reality and fantasy. The play also includes a cast of supporting characters, including a group of onlookers who observe and comment on the couple's behavior, as well as an enigmatic figure named "The Visitor" who disrupts the couple's dynamic and raises questions about the nature of their relationship.

Through its complex characterizations, "When We Have Sufficiently Tortured Each Other" challenges the audience to consider the ways in which power shape human behavior and relationships.

Martin Crimp is a highly acclaimed British playwright known for his unique and provocative approach to theater. Born in 1956, Crimp first gained recognition in the 1980s with plays like "No One Sees the Video" and "Made in Heaven." He has since established himself as a leading figure in contemporary theater, captivating audiences with his innovative storytelling and challenging themes.

Crimp's plays often subvert traditional narrative structures and language, pushing the boundaries of conventional theatrical form. His works explore complex ideas such as power dynamics, violence, and abuse, often through a fragmented and non-linear approach. Crimp's use of unsettling and poetic dialogue creates a sense of disquiet and unease, deliberately confronting audiences with uncomfortable truths about society and the human condition.

In addition to his plays, Crimp has also worked as a translator and adaptor, bringing the works



Iranian director Mojtaba Jeddi in an undated photo

of other playwrights, such as Molière and Anton Chekhov, to the stage. His translations and adaptations maintain his distinct voice and style, infusing classic texts with a contemporary sensibility. Crimp's work continues to be performed internationally, earning him numerous awards and critical acclaim for his bold and provocative contributions to the theater world.

## Iran, Japan agree to further cooperation in cultural affairs

Frome Page 1 > At the beginning of this meeting, Imanipour said: "There is a proper capacity for the two countries to address the issue of museum and cinema cooperation. Holding cultural weeks can be a suitable solution for the two nations to get to know each other more."

"We can also collaborate with each other in the field of exchange

of professors and students of Islamic, Iranian and oriental studies," he added.

For his part, Tokura said: "It is very important for us to cooperate with Iran. We have carried out appropriate research activities in the fields of Iranian and Islam studies in Japan, and we can cooperate with each other in this field. The artists of the

two countries interact through social networks and efforts should be made to develop these relationships."

The Agency for Cultural Affairs is a special body of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. It was set up in 1968 to promote Japanese arts and culture.

The Islamic Culture and Relations Organization was established in 1995 for centralization and coordination of cultural missions overseas. The organization seeks to realize such goals as publicizing Iranian-Islamic culture across the globe and boosting Iran's cultural relations with other countries.

## Over 1,300 artists decry censorship of pro-Palestine views by art institutions

More than 1,300 British and Irish actors, writers, artists, directors, critics, musicians and playwrights have signed a petition demanding that art institutions stop their censorship of pro-Palestinian artists and individuals in the cultural field who seek to defend the Palestinian people from the Israeli genocide.

Some of the better-known signatories include Academy Award-winning actress Olivia Colman, Emmy Award winner Harriet Walter, Olivier Award winner Juliet Stevenson, and BAFTA award winner Aimee Lou Wood, World Socialist Web Site reported on Saturday.

The petition, sponsored by the group Artists for Palestine UK, is addressed to the Arts and Culture sector and states in part: "The scale of violence unfolding in Gaza demands our collective attention and action. Members of Israel's far-right government are openly calling for ethnic cleansing. The use of starvation as a weapon of war, along with denial of water and electricity, is cruel beyond words."

"The wholesale destruction of civilian infrastructure, the bombing of hospitals, schools, churches and mosques, the killing of 14,500 people in a matter of weeks, amount to a policy of collective punishment against the Palestinian people. The United Nations and hundreds of legal scholars have called on the international

community to prevent genocide," it added.

"As artists, we cannot remain silent in the face of such egregious violations of international humanitarian law. While catastrophe unfolds, we have observed a glaring absence of statements of solidarity with Palestinian people from most UK arts organizations. We find it deeply troubling and, frankly, indicative of a disturbing double standard that expressions of solidarity, which have been readily offered to other peoples facing brutal oppression, have not been extended to Palestinians," the signatories continued.

"Far from supporting our calls for an end to the violence, many cultural institutions in Western countries are systematically repressing, silencing and stigmatizing Palestinian voices and perspectives. This includes targeting and threatening the livelihoods of artists and arts workers who express solidarity with Palestinians, as well as cancelling performances, screenings, talks, exhibitions, and book launches," the petition continued.

The letter concludes by saying, "to stay silent in the face of mass injustice and worsening humanitarian crisis would be an abrogation of moral duty. To actively silence the principled artists and workers who do fulfil this responsibility is a failure to meet legal obligations on freedom of expression and anti-discrimination."

The letter cites several notorious incidents of censorship by arts institutions in the last six weeks, including: A media witch-hunt against the new director of the Swiss museum Kunsthalle Basel, Mohamed Almusibli, for signing a letter in support of Palestine published in Artforum, which cost one of Artforum's editors his job and generated widespread opposition in the arts community.

The cancellation of Haitian-American writer Anais Duplan's exhibition on afrofuturism by the Museum Folkwang in Essen, Germany because Duplan had made statements on Instagram in which he termed, in the words of the museum, "the Israeli military operation in Gaza a genocide."

A powerful mass movement against the genocide in Gaza has emerged around the world, including in imperialist countries such as the United States, France, Germany and Britain. This movement is not only defending the Palestinians against Israeli mass murder, but also its own right to exist, to simply speak the truth—which millions of people understand—that the destruction of people under attack—by missiles, bombs, tanks and snipers of an entire people is taking place before our eyes.

Artists are now playing a vital role in defending the right of millions to call things as they are and to demand an end to the homicidal assault on the Palestinians.