

Israel's Futile Scramble to Restore Deterrence



Why did Israel martyr IRGC officer Razi Mousavi?

▶ Page 3

Hamas rejects any temporary truce

By Ali Karbalaie

TEHRAN- Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad have confirmed that they are negotiating an end to the Israeli war on Gaza, the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the besieged Gaza territory, and the release of all Palestinian prisoners from the Israeli jails in return for the captives they are holding.

A member of the Hamas political bureau has denied what was published by Reuters, attributed to Egyptian security sources, regarding the discussions being mediated in Cairo.

Whilst the many reports emerging over the talks in Egypt have been conflicting, there does appear to be a consensus among the Palestinian resistance forces and civilians over the way forward.

One Hamas official reiterated that there will be no negotiations without a comprehensive cessation of the Israeli war, indicating that the movement seeks with all force to stop the regime's aggression and massacres against the Palestinian people completely and not temporarily. ▶ Page 5

Death toll nears 21,000 in Gaza

At least 20,915 people have been killed and 54,918 wounded in Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip since October 7.

According to Gaza's Health Ministry, 241 people were killed in the past 24 hours and 382 injured.

The Israeli military says the air force hit 100 targets in the south of the Gaza Strip in 24 hours.

Israeli bombing kills Palestinians overnight in Khan Younis, Bureij, Juhor ad-Dik, and Nuseirat, according to the Palestinian state news agency Wafa.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says war will not stop and he is ready to encourage Palestinians in Gaza to leave the enclave, according to Israeli media reports. Hamas has condemned the statement.

The United Nations also urged Israeli forces to take all available measures to protect civilians.

"All attacks must strictly adhere to the principles of international humanitarian law, including distinction, proportionality and precaution," UN Human Rights Office spokesman Seif Magango said in a statement. ▶ Page 5

Iranian filmmakers illuminate Gaza's struggle by making shorts

TEHRAN- Iranian filmmakers have created four short films to highlight the resistance and difficult conditions faced by the people of Gaza.

Produced by the Sureh Youth Film Center, these films aim to raise awareness about the situation and shed light on the struggles experienced by the people in Gaza, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

One of these films, titled "Embrace," directed by Amirhossein Kashmiri and produced by Hossein Rezaifar, has undergone technical stages and is now ready to be screened, the report added.

Another short film, "Message," written and directed by Saeid Moltaji, vividly portrays the life of a courageous female journalist before her martyrdom, highlighting the devastating aftermath of merciless attacks by the Zionist occupying regime. The sound design of this film was intricately crafted using authentic sounds captured within the city of Gaza. ▶ Page 8

Raisi to visit Turkey next week

TEHRAN – Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Ali Bagheri Kani has shared details about Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's upcoming visit to Turkey scheduled for the first week of January.

During a pivotal phone conversation on November 26, President Raisi engaged in a comprehensive discussion with his Turkish counterpart, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Emphasizing the deep-rooted historical friendship and shared values between Iran and Turkey, President Raisi articulated the importance of expanding cooperation across political, economic, and cultural spectrums between Tehran and Ankara.

During that conversation, President Raisi, recognizing Iran and Turkey's influential roles in the Islamic world, expressed optimism that their collaboration would serve as a positive model for interactions among Islamic nations, fostering unity and mutual understanding.

A key focus of the conversation was President Raisi's address to the U.S.'s role in the violence against the people of Gaza. He characterized any potential American intervention in Gaza as a continuation of crimes against Palestinians. ▶ Page 2

Tehran holds 3rd session of MKO terrorism trial

TEHRAN- The MKO terrorists' third trial took place in Tehran under the chairmanship of Judge Dehqani on Tuesday with the presence of the relatives of the victims.

According to documents obtained by Iran's security agencies, members of the Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO) terrorist group got oil from Iraqi former despot Saddam Hussein in exchange for killing Iranians.

The prosecutor's representative presented the specifics of the documents against the MKO members and their connections to Saddam throughout the hearing.

"Intelligence and judicial investigations show that the MKO members, as mercenaries of Iraq, carried out terrorist acts against the people. Also, the intelligence officials have obtained information showing that they took oil from Iraq in exchange for the terrorist acts," he said.

Judge Dehqani then asked the prosecutor's representative whether the said documents had been included in the lawsuit raised against the MKO members, to which the representative responded in the affirmative.

He also stressed that "the documents related to this meeting that was held in 2001 in the Iraqi Intelligence Service between the head of the Iraqi intelligence and Masoud Rajavi in the presence of Mehdi Abrishamchi have been documented and included in the lawsuit." ▶ Page 2

Opinion

Taste of Iran beyond media portrayals

By Afshin Majlesi

Frequently depicted through lenses of political tensions and historical misunderstandings, Iran's allure as a tourist destination often contends with a distorted portrayal aired by certain media outlets.

Here, one of the most striking odds for people visiting the ancient land is the contrast between the media's depiction and the genuine warmth extended by Iranians.

Stepping foot onto Iranian soil and immersing oneself in its vibrant tapestry of traditions, history, and hospitality offers an eye-opening experience that defies media stereotypes, suggesting that reality for almost all visitors feeling this culturally rich land is distinctly different. ▶ Page 6



'Long Live Resistance' reverberates in New York

New Yorkers saw their Christmas marred by demonstrations, which included chants of "One Wish for Christmas, Long Live Resistance" in a show of support for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Demonstrations come as New York City moves to "level three" police mobilization. Large crowds, who chanted "Long Live the Intifada," "Christmas Is Canceled" stormed Manhattan while mob surrounded the Pentagon and NSA chiefs' homes.

The United States has seen nationwide anti-Israel protests as Israel is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

Iran, Syria agree on need to put stop to Israel slaughter in Gaza

TEHRAN- According to Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Iran and Syria share the same viewpoint that Israel's war crimes and genocide in Gaza must cease immediately.

Amir Abdollahian praised Damascus' resolute position on the current events in Gaza and Palestine at a meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad on Monday.

He asserted that Syria and Iran are aiding one another with regional issues.

Amir Abdollahian also praised the efforts made to advance security and stability in Syria and expressed Iran's backing for the Arab nation's sovereignty to be expanded throughout the region. ▶ Page 2

TEHRAN PAPERS

Give the right message to Russia

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

Sobh-e-No devoted its editorial to Lavrov's support for the UAE's position to refer the country's ownership claims of over the three Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf to The Hague-based International Court of Justice. It said: The Arab countries are apathetic to the Israeli occupation of a part of the land of the Arab people and turning a blind eye to the crimes of the occupying regime in cleansing and killing Palestinians. However, they have a covetous eye on the small Iranian islands. In their numerous statements, instead of condemning the occupation of the Israeli regime, they have been talking about an "imaginary conflict" over the islands and seeking to resolve this so-called conflict through bilateral negotiations or the International Court of Justice. These Islands (Abu Mousa and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs) have eternally belonged to Iran and issuing such statements is against the friendly relations between Iran and its neighbors. Russia should know that Iran has succeeded in making itself needless of the hegemony of America and its allies, managed their hostile policy of pressure and sanctions, and reduced its economic dependencies. Iran is serious with every party about its territorial integrity and independence. By adopting a "balanced policy", Iran's diplomatic system does not allow any of the powers to undermine its position as an emerging power in the new regional and global order.

Vatan-e-Emrooz: Desperate attack to escape failure

In an analysis, Vatan-e-Emrooz discussed the Dec. 25 martyrdom of Seyyed Razi Mousavi, one of Iran's senior military advisers in Syria, by the Zionist regime and wrote: The Zionist regime's goal in assassinating martyr Mousavi is a suicide attempt to bring Iran into a direct war with the Zionist regime and turn the West Asia region into a battlefield. After the Al-Aqsa Storm Operation, all the efforts of the Zionists have been to expand the war to the entire region, because the Al-Aqsa Storm was the biggest military, security, and political hit to the Zionist regime in the occupied territories. Now, it is for two months since the Zionists have entered Gaza but have failed to achieve any important victory on the battleground. Therefore, it is clear that they want the war to be dragged outside the borders of the occupied territories so that by involving other countries in the region, they can find an excuse to create a 'war coalition' for their benefit. In addition, with the development of the war, the focus of the world's public opinion will be deflected away from this regime and its crimes in Gaza.

Iran official holds strategic dialogue with Iraqi officials

TEHRAN - An Iranian official has travelled to neighboring Iraq to hold a strategic dialogue with Iraqi officials.

The official, who is General Ahmadi Moqaddam, the head of Iran's National Defense University, held discussions with several Iraqi officials, including the National Security Advisor, the representative of Iraqi military educational institutions, and the commander of the Iraqi Federal Police.

During his meeting with Iraqi National Security Advisor Qasim al-Araji, General Ahmadi Moqaddam explored avenues for collaborative research and joint studies in the realm of futurology and strategic ecology.

Ahmadi Moqaddam's visit also included a meeting with the head of the Iraqi Federal Police, Lieutenant General Aqeel Mustafa Mahdi Al Ramah. The meeting centered on strengthening the existing cooperation agreement signed between the two countries in the educational domain. Both parties expressed keenness to expand their collaboration across all educational disciplines.

Ahmadi Moqaddam also paid a visit to the Iraqi Defense University, where he held a joint meeting with Iraqi officials, including the representative of Iraqi military educational institutions. The discussion revolved around the implementation of the signed cooperation agreement and reaffirming the commitment to fostering stronger educational ties.

During his visit to the Iraqi Federal Police head-

Siasat-e-Rooz: Endless claims

In a commentary, Siasat-e-Rooz addressed the false claims against Iran by quoting Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani as saying: The baseless claims of the British Foreign Secretary against Iran are rejected as this country itself is in the position of the accused and is a clear historical example of instability and insecurity in the region as it created the Zionist regime in the region. Instead, Iran has made many diplomatic efforts at various bilateral, regional, and international levels (to de-escalate the tension in the region). The last attempt was to host the international conference in Tehran. But the biggest defendant in recent developments is the U.S. government, which is actually part of the war crime and perhaps the first and last country responsible for both the start of the war and the attacks of the Zionist regime on Gaza and its continuation. From an international moral and legal point of view, the American government is not in a position to make accusations against other parties inside and outside the region. Iran considers these accusations completely rejected and worthless. Such claims are aimed at deflecting the public attention and covering up the crimes of the Israeli regime.

Hamshahri: Iran's economic diplomacy has become more active

Hamshahri discussed the progress of Iran's economic diplomacy in a conversation with economic expert Harvik Yarijanian. The paper said: Iran has been the target of cruel sanctions by the United States for several years. Now, to get out of the problems and unfortunate effects that these sanctions have caused for us, especially in the private sector, we need regional and extra-regional agreements. The Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) is a regional pact that Iran was already its partner and this partnership is getting more comprehensive. Moreover, Iran's economic diplomacy has become much more active. The main reason for this is the attention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to economic diplomacy. Today, many countries are noticing that their economy is affected by political issues, and Iran has paid a lot of attention to its economy in its political interactions. Today, Iran has an effective economic relationship with all neighboring countries, and our products have shown that they have a competitive advantage in the international markets, especially with neighboring countries and distant countries like China.

quarters, Ahmadi Moqaddam gained an in-depth understanding of the duties, capabilities, and achievements of the Iraqi police force. He particularly recognized the pivotal role of the police in combating ISIS and restoring stability to Iraq.

In a subsequent joint meeting with Major General Saleh Nasr Al-Ameri, the commander of the Iraqi Federal Police, Ahmadi Moqaddam, and his accompanying delegation delved into specific areas of collaboration between the two forces.

The delegation concluded their visit by paying homage to the martyrs of the Iraqi police force at the Iraqi Police Museum. This gesture underscored the profound respect held by Iran for the sacrifices made by Iraqi security personnel in safeguarding their nation.

Ahmadi Moqaddam also met with Iraqi Interior Minister Abdul Amir Al-Shimmarri on Sunday to discuss bilateral cooperation in training and strategic research.

Ahmadi Moqaddam, leading a high-ranking delegation, traveled to Iraq upon Al-Shimmarri's official invitation. The two officials agreed on a practical framework for cooperation in defense areas of cooperation.

During the meeting, Ahmadi Moqaddam also reached agreements with Iraqi high-ranking officials on further collaboration in these fields.

As part of their trip to Iraq, the Iranian delegation is expected to visit different parts of the Iraqi Ministry of Interior.

Iran, Syria agree on need to put stop to Israel slaughter in Gaza

From page 1 ▶ For his part, the foreign minister of Syria complimented Iran for hosting the international conference on Palestine and declared that his nation completely supports Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's position on the matter.

He remarked that the victory of the Palestinian people is really the victory of the Arab and Muslim world.

After the Palestinian resistance group, Hamas, launched Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the occupying regime in retaliation for the Israeli regime's decades-long campaign of killing and devastation in Palestine, Israel launched its attack on Gaza on October 7.

At least 20,674 Palestinians were killed as a result of Israeli violence thus far, the majority of them being women and children. A further 54,536 people have been injured, and numerous additional bodies are still under the debris.

The more than two million Palestinians who live there are without food, water, fuel, power, or other necessities as a result of the Tel Aviv regime's "complete siege" of the region.

"Ending Gaza War would ensure regional security"

Amir Abdollahian and his Jordanian counterpart, Ayman Safadi, discussed the most recent events in Palestine as well as the ongoing atrocities committed by the Zionist regime in Gaza and the West Bank over the phone on Monday.

He also noted that an end to the Israeli assault on Gaza will ensure stability throughout the region, while highlighting Iran's efforts to safeguard maritime security in the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman, and the Red Sea.



"Despite the positive regional and international efforts to prevent the continuation and expansion of the war, we are still witnessing attempts by the Zionist regime to pursue its aggressive goals toward genocide, the persistence of the Gaza siege and the forced displacement of the people of Gaza and the West Bank," the top Iranian diplomat said.

He then addressed international concerns about the security of the Red Sea, noting that Iran has always insisted on avoiding the spread of war and the importance of ensuring the safety of navigation in the Red Sea, as well as the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, but naturally, ending the war against Gaza can ensure the region's security.

Additionally, he discussed the attendance of guests from 69 nations at the Tehran International Conference on Palestine, calling it a historic occasion wherein all Muslim nations—as well as non-Muslim ones—took a unified and cooperative stand against the crimes committed in Gaza by the Zionist regime and in support of the rights of the Palestinian people.

Iran's top diplomat emphasized the importance of regional

nations resolving regional issues and protecting collective peace and security in the region, praising Jordan's efforts in this regard and in alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people.

Regarding the current events in the region, the foreign minister of Jordan, for his part, mentioned his nation's priorities, which include stopping the military aggression against Gaza, clearing the path for the delivery of humanitarian aid to the region's citizens, and preventing the forced relocation of Gazans.

Safadi continued that the humanitarian situation has gotten worse since the Israeli regime is still committing crimes in Gaza in spite of international attempts to put an end to them.

Egypt expresses gratitude to Iran for supporting Palestinians in Gaza

In a phone call on Monday night, the foreign ministries of Egypt and Iran spoke on the most recent events in the Gaza conflict, and Egyptian diplomat Sameh Hassan Shoukry thanked Iran for its efforts to assist the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Both ministers emphasized that more humanitarian supplies must

be sent to Gaza, which is ravaged by conflict. According to Amir Abdollahian, the Israeli regime has to quickly put an end to its atrocities against Palestinians in areas that are under siege.

Since the regime began its attack on October 7, the Iranian foreign minister has been advocating for the people of Gaza through diplomatic channels.

As part of those efforts, he has conducted several regional visits and countless phone conversations with leaders in the region and beyond.

Amir Abdollahian holds talks with Iraq's former premier

Amir Abdollahian and former Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi met on Monday at the Foreign Ministry, where they discussed issues of mutual concern, including events in Palestine and Gaza, as well as significant regional issues.

Appreciating Abdul-Mahdi for his active participation in the Tehran International Conference on Palestine, Amir Abdollahian explained that the conference's goal was to better utilize international structures and capacities to support the Palestinian people and put an end to the Zionist regime's war crimes.

Amir Abdollahian went on to discuss the strategic and excellent relations that exist between Iran and Iraq, pointing out that the depth of their friendly and fraternal ties is demonstrated by the numerous agreements for cooperation that both countries have signed at different levels and in various fields, as well as by the frequent visits and discussions between their high-ranking officials.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Tehran holds 3rd session of MKO terrorism trial

From page 1 ▶ The indictments of several more defendants in this case were read out during this meeting. The charges levelled against the twenty-three defendants were read aloud during the court's first and second sessions.

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the Marxist cult and terrorist group, which claimed it had played a major role in the victory of the Islamic Revolution, launched a campaign of terror against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Finally, in 1981 the MKO operatives took up arms and carried out large-scale terrorist operations, assassinating more than 17,000 Iranians. The most important of these actions were the bombings of the Office of the Prime Minister and the Office of the Islamic Republic of Iran Party. The president, prime minister, and head of the Supreme Court were brutally killed in the bombings.

When the MKO escaped from Iran, they went to Iraq and collaborated with Saddam Hussein in his war against Iran in the 1980s. They took up arms against their own country and participated in two operations against the Islamic Republic.

After Iran and Iraq accepted a ceasefire, the NLA (National Liberation Army), MKO's military branch, with financial and logistical support from Saddam Hussein attacked Iran with the hallucination of conquering Tehran in a few days. As soon as they set foot on Iranian soil, they committed heinous actions such as setting people on fire and hanging them.

The terrorist organization considered itself an alternative to the Islamic Republic of Iran and was doing its best to attack the Iranian people and government in any way possible.

After about 25 years of presence in Iraq, the



MKO was expelled at the end of Saddam Hussein's rule and settled in Albania with the financial support of some Arab countries and the direct support of the Americans.

The MKO was trying to rebuild and portray its new face from a terrorist face to a democratic one by taking measures such as holding political and annual gatherings. To achieve its vicious goals, the MKO kept inviting famous and controversial political figures to its summits.

Iranian academics write letter to FM over Gaza War

TEHRAN- In a letter to Iran's Foreign Minister, a group of Basiji professors from the country's universities have urged the diplomatic apparatus to fulfill their obligations fully to put an end to the brutal bloodshed and the vicious genocide by the Zionist regime in Gaza Strip.

Composing a letter on Monday to Hossein Amir Abdollahian, the professors said that during the last 75 days, more than 75 thousand people of the oppressed people of Gaza were martyred and injured.

Referring to the remarks by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution

that the bitter incident dishonored the West especially the U.S. and UK which backed the child-killing the regime wholeheartedly, they said that the hypocritical governments demonstrate their evil nature by sending supplies to the regime and trying to give the cold shoulder to what is happening in the Gaza Strip.

They also noted that despite hypocritical regimes, there are certain states who gained fame and honor by helping the Gazans and speaking out in the international community, adding that "the women and children of Gaza, who con-

tinued resistance without water and food under American-made bunker busters, tolerated the loss of their loved ones in order to preserve their dignity."

West Bank residents who fought and resisted on the two fronts of compromisers and criminals, Palestinian resistance groups, especially Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which made history by launching the Al-Aqsa Storm Operation, and Ansarullah of Yemen who became a source of pride for Muslims with their unparalleled courage and zeal are some examples.

Basiji professors also said that

"today the world is in a bipolarity between the dignified and the dishonorable, and this is the greatest achievement of the resistance of the oppressed people of Gaza. Therefore, we, a group of professors of the country's universities, while sincerely thanking and appreciating all the efforts of the resistance front and the free nations of the world, expect that the ministry will not spare any effort and opportunity to redouble efforts to isolate the occupiers of Al-Quds as much as possible till the removal of the cancerous tumor of Zionism from the region."

Raisi to visit Turkey next week

From page 1 ▶ Condemning the U.S. for its involvement in the actions of the Zionist regime, President Raisi underlined the inevitable discredit of the U.S. government on a global scale. Asserting that the people of Gaza, represented by Hamas, should determine their future based on the general will of the region, he highlighted that Americans have no authority to interfere, and any such attempts are destined to fail.

President Erdogan, in response, acknowledged the positive relations between Tehran and Ankara, expressing his commitment to elevating these relations to an exceptional level. The conversation underscored their shared vi-

sion for a stronger partnership.

Moreover, President Erdogan's visit to Tehran in July 2023 for an official bilateral meeting and participation in the seventh Astana process summit showcased the commitment of both nations to collaborative efforts. Leading a high-ranking delegation of political and economic officials, Erdogan engaged in fruitful discussions that resulted in the signing of eight cooperation documents and memoranda of understanding, covering diverse fields of collaboration.

Also, during a recent meeting with Turkish President on the sidelines of the 16th Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in Uzbekistan,

President Raisi highlighted the paramount concern of the Muslim world: the Palestinian issue and Israel's atrocities against Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip. Stressing the importance of exerting pressure on the occupying regime to halt its aggression, President Raisi emphasized the shared commitment to addressing critical challenges within the Muslim world.

The upcoming visit of President Raisi to Turkey is highly anticipated to mark a significant milestone, further strengthening the ties between Iran and Turkey, and paving the way for increased collaboration and understanding between the two nations.

Israel's futile scramble to restore deterrence

By Sadegh Fereydounabadi

TEHRAN - As Iran approaches the fourth anniversary of General Qassem Soleimani's martyrdom, the nation mourns the death of yet another influential commander in the fight against terrorism.

In the early hours of Monday, General Seyed Razi Mousavi was tragically killed in an Israeli airstrike in the residential neighborhood of the Zeinabiyah district in the suburbs of Damascus.

According to Iran's Ambassador to Damascus, Hossein Akbari, Mousavi was at the Iranian embassy at 2 p.m. local time and tragically lost his life after being struck by three missiles upon returning home from work at 4:10 p.m. He condemned the Israeli act as «heartless and passive.»

Mousavi perished while serving on Iran's military advisory mission in Syria, where Iranians have been lending assistance and guidance to the Syrian government. This mission was the first to provide immediate support to Syria in 2014 when the country found itself under the grip of the Daesh terror outfit. Under the leadership of General Soleimani, the mission played a crucial role in Damascus' successful counterterrorism efforts, ultimately defeating Daesh in late 2017.

"There might be a few reasons as to why Israel decided to commit this assassination while it is deeply bogged down in Gaza," Ali Abdi, a political expert on Palestine, told Iranian TV. "Israel has so far spent billions of dollars and lost hundreds of forces in the besieged Gaza Strip to eradicate Hamas. Hamas' position is as strong as it was before and the regime is



becoming increasingly unpopular among the masses across the world," said Abdi, adding that the move could be seen as an act of revenge for all the losses Israel has endured while facing off Palestinians in the battlefield.

Observers have also put the assassination of General Mousavi within the context of deterrence equations in the region. Israel has lost deterrence since October 7 and it has been working to restore its lost deterrence with such assassinations. According to independent observers, Israel deliberately chose to strike on the Syrian front although other fronts such as Lebanon and Yemen have been actively battling Israel more than the Syrian one. This, according to observers, stems from Israel's dire need to communicate a message of deterrence. But it is widely believed that such targeted assassinations are unlikely to tip the balance in Israel's favor.

While Iran has consistently extended support to the Palestinian resistance, it has iterated that its operations against Israel, including the attack on October 7, are independently planned and

executed by Palestinian factions themselves. However, Israel seems to find it difficult to acknowledge the severe setbacks it has faced from Palestinian groups, which it has subjugated in every manner possible over the past 75 years. Consequently, it tends to attribute blame to Iran whenever a crisis arises.

Abdi also conjectured that Israel might be endeavoring to expand the conflict beyond Gaza's borders, seeking direct U.S. involvement while alleviating pressure on the regime to cease the war in Gaza. He, however, emphasized the need for a resolute response against Israel's recent terrorist act.

Iranian officials seem to be of the same mind as Abdi. The Spokesperson for Iran's defense ministry, Brigadier General Reza Taleaee Nik, earlier affirmed, "The Zionist regime will face consequences for the assassination." Iran's highest-ranking military commander, Mohammad Baqeri, has also vowed a robust retaliation, denouncing the assassination of General Razi Mousavi as a strategic blunder by the Zionist regime.

The current situation evokes memories of the 2020 assassination of General Soleimani. In January of that year, former U.S. President Donald Trump directly ordered drone strikes that resulted in the killing of the revered anti-terror figure, who was in Baghdad on an official visit, along with his Iraqi counterpart Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Force.

In a retaliatory move five days later, Iran launched dozens of missiles at the Ain al-Assad air base in al-Anbar Governorate, western Iraq, as well as another U.S. air base in Erbil, fulfilling its vow of "firm retaliation" for the assassination.

The U.S. reported that following the attack on the al-Assad airbase, which marked the first strike on American positions since WWII, 100 of its troops experienced "traumatic brain injuries." Recounting his experience to the U.S. media, one American soldier vividly described the anguish, stating, "I still have recurring nightmares from the incoming—just that sound of those things coming in."

The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, currently engaged in a fierce conflict against Israel, has denounced the killing of General Mousavi as a "blatant violation of international laws," urging for legal action against the regime for its terrorist attacks.

The motive behind Israel's assassination of the advisor remains unclear. As such killings have, thus far, had no impact on Iran's progress across various domains, it is uncertain what Israel aimed to achieve.

U.S. naval presence in region aimed at compensating Israel defeat: advisor

TEHRAN - Hossein Taeb, the advisor to the commander-in-chief of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), has asserted that the deployment of U.S. naval forces in the region is a strategic move aimed at compensating for Israel's recent defeats against the resistance movements in Palestine.

These remarks were made during the third session of the central commemoration command center for the anniversary of the 2009 nationwide rallies, known as the 'Day 9 Epic', which marked the end of post-election unrest and renewed the nation's allegiance to the Islamic establishment.

Taeb emphasized Israel's reliance on U.S. military equipment, highlighting the extensive bombardment it faced in recent conflicts as an indicator of its diminishing power.

In his analysis of regional conditions and global trends, Taeb argued that Iran's growing



power and commitment to Islamic values pose a regional threat to the United States. He pointed out significant changes in global and regional equations four decades after the Islamic Revolution, citing events like the Dey 9 Epic and the Al-Aqsa Storm Operation as emblematic moves toward the ideals of resistance.

Taeb further elaborated on the U.S. perception of Iran's increasing influence and its efforts to curb it post-Cold War. He discussed the U.S. strategy, including sanctions and the establishment of military bases in neighboring countries, designed to counter Iran. Despite multiple attempts against Iran, the U.S. and Israel recognized that the Islamic Revolution posed a threat to their interests, leading to a plan for dual governance in Iran to create internal discord.

The advisor emphasized Iran's resilience in the face of challenges and the ongoing strengthening of its position. As the nation commemorates December 9 and looks ahead to upcoming events, the internal and regional empowerment process for Iran is on the rise. The need to celebrate these occasions fervently is underscored to create an enthusiastic electoral atmosphere at the end of the current year.

Interior minister expresses pride in Islamic Republic's democratic system

TEHRAN- Iranian Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi expressed pride in the Islamic Republic's democratic system, which is based on religious, moral, human, and divine values.

Speaking at a meeting on Tuesday, Vahidi condemned the Zionist regime's historical crime in Gaza, which was committed with the support of the United States.

Vahidi reiterated that the Zionist regime's history is marred by terrorism, and it continues to rely on violence. He referenced the massacre of nearly 20,000 innocent Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, saying that the United States falsely portrays

itself as a humanitarian nation. Still, it commits crimes against humanity in Gaza.

The minister also addressed the Palestinian people, saying that they have voted for Hamas in elections, but some Westerners claim that Hamas is a terrorist group. He argued that Hamas has demonstrated its humanitarian nature by freeing prisoners from the Zionist regime.

Vahidi directed a stern message to the West, wondering about what they have done to protect human rights. He pointed out that they have killed many children and innocent people. He criticized the United States for vetoing ceasefire

resolutions in Gaza, allowing it to continue committing crimes against defenseless people.

Addressing the American officials, the Iranian Minister said, "You are trying to veto the ceasefire in Gaza so that you continue to commit crimes and kill defenseless people."

To show Washington's limitless backing for Tel Aviv, the United States, on December 8, vetoed a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Israel's carnage in the Gaza Strip.

Earlier on October 18, a day after the bombardment of Al-Ahli hospital in northern Gaza by the Israeli Army, the U.S. alone also blocked a similar

resolution calling for a ceasefire presented by Brazil and argued that the text did not mention "Israel's right to self-defense."

The minister emphasized that Iran's elections are among the strongest and healthiest in the world, as they are founded on religious, moral, human, and divine democracy. He called on those who value the Islamic Revolution and desire a strong Iran to actively participate in the upcoming elections.

Vahidi concluded by stating that the main pillar of the Islamic Republic's power is its elections, which must be held with the highest level of security and safety.

country and EAEU member states.

He further highlighted that the trade liberalization with Iran would stimulate the development of critical transport routes like the North-South International Corridor, fostering opportunities for scientific and industrial collaboration, as well as facilitating tourist exchanges and delegation visits between the nations.

Expressing optimism, President Putin expressed hope that the parliaments of both Iran and EAEU member states would

swiftly ratify the newly established free trade agreement.

The five-member EAEU comprises ex-Soviet states: Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. Under the free trade agreement, Iran and the bloc will eliminate tariffs on 87% of goods traded between them.

This landmark agreement is expected to bolster economic cooperation, enhance trade connectivity, and pave the way for further strategic partnerships between Iran and the EAEU.

SPORTS

Polissya Zhytomyr interested in Sayadmanesh: report



TEHRAN - It is reported that Polissya Zhytomyr from Ukraine is considering the option of hiring Iranian winger Allahyar Sayyadmanesh on loan.

His current Championship deal expires in the summer of 2026.

Allahyar has made just three appearances for Hull City this season. In the period 2020-21, Sayyadmanesh played for Zorya Luhansk. As part of Zari, Allahyar played 50 matches in which he scored 15 goals and gave seven assists.

Polissya Zhytomyr is an absolute newcomer to the UPL. The team from Zhytomyr confidently spent the autumn part of the championship, leaving for the winter break in third place with a two-point gap from the two leaders - Kryvbas and Dnepr-1.

True, in terms of lost points, Polesie is also inferior to Shakhtar and Dynamo, who have matches in reserve.

In addition, the team, coached by Yuriy Kalitvintsev, made it to the semi-finals of the Ukrainian Cup for the first time in its history, successively passing Agrobusiness, Dnepr-1 and Alexandria.

The Ukrainian Premier League will resume competition at the end of winter. Polissya Zhytomyr will play away against Rukh in the 18th round. The match date is February 24.

Lucas Alcaraz officially named Nassaji coach

TEHRAN - Spanish coach Luis Lucas Alcaraz González has been officially named head coach of Nassaji football club.

Alcaraz, who most recently headed the Spanish football club Ibiza, has penned an 18-month contract with the Iranian top-flight club.

Nassaji parted company with Mehdi Rahmati last week following poor results in Iran football league.

"First, I would like to say I'm very happy to be her. After 20 years coaching in Spain, I wanted to experience a new challenge," Alcaraz said.

"Iran football, in my opinion, is very competitive and I accepted to work in the country soon after I received the offer," the Spaniard added.

Nassaji are 15th in the Iran 16-team table.

Iran to send six wrestlers to Vehbi Emre & Hamit Kaplan

TEHRAN - Iran will send six Greco-Roman wrestlers to the 2024 Vehbi Emre & Hamit Kaplan.

Pouya Dadmarz (55kg), Mehdi Mohsennejad (60kg), Mohammad Reza Gerai (67kg), Amin Kavianejad (77kg), Mohammad Hadi Saravi (97 kg) and Amin Mirzazadeh (130kg) will compete in the competition.

The 41st Vehbi Emre & Hamit Kaplan Tournament will be held in Istanbul, Turkey in January.

This international tournament includes competition men's Greco-Roman wrestling. This ranking tournament will be held in honor of the Olympic Champion, Hamit Kaplan and Turkish Wrestler and manager Vehbi Emre.

AFC President extends condolences on passing of Melika Mohammadi

TEHRAN - Asian Football Confederation (AFC) President Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa has expressed his deep sadness and shock after receiving the news of the untimely demise of Iran women's national team player Melika Mohammadi.

Mohammadi, 23, died in a tragic road accident in Bam, Kerman province Saturday night.

Extending his condolences and sympathies, the AFC President said: "On behalf of the Asian football family, I would like to convey my deepest condolences to the family and friends of Ms Melika Mohammadi. Her contributions as a key player of the Islamic Republic of Iran's women's national team will be long remembered. We join the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran in mourning this great loss."

Shaikh Salman also expressed his speedy recovery wishes to those injured in the accident.

Mohammadi represented Iran in the AFC Women's Asian Cup India 2022, while playing a significant role for her club side Bam Khatoun FC in the recent AFC Women's Club Championship in Uzbekistan.

The thoughts and prayers of the AFC and the rest of the Asian football community are with the family and friends of Melika Mohammadi, the FFIRI, and the Iran football family during this difficult time.

Sepahan, Persepolis get their points deduction revoked

TEHRAN - Persepolis and Sepahan football teams had their deducted points returned by the Iran Football Federation's Appeal Committee. The ongoing 2023/24 Persian Gulf Pro League (PGPL) season is now more intense, particularly in the title race.

The Football Federation's Disciplinary Committee deducted four points from Sepahan four months ago for financial violations in players' contracts. In October, they also deducted one point from Persepolis for tax violation issues, but the Appeal Committee has now overturned it.

The Appeal Committee finally voted after months of delay and review, while Persepolis and Sepahan teams anxiously awaited the decision of the Disciplinary Committee on their complaint against Esteghlal's contract violations!

Sepahan, who were one game and one point behind Esteghlal, have now reclaimed the top spot on the PGPL table with 31 points, surpassing the Blues by two points.

Persepolis claimed victory in matchday 14 of the PGPL, while Sepahan suffered defeat and Esteghlal and Tractor ended in a draw, heightening the competition at the top.

Persepolis, who have been struggling in their recent matches, were able to come out on top with a 2-1 victory over Shams Azar.

This crucial win was exactly what the Reds needed to regain control of their situation with only a week remaining in the half-season. Giorgi Gvlesianii, Georgian defender, netted four goals in the League, including a brace in this match, making him the team's top scorer alongside Shahab Zahedi.

Yahya Golmohammadi's team's spirit will be boosted by the return of their deducted point as they aim to regain the PGLP title for the seventh time in eight seasons.

The return of Sepahan and Persepolis points, as decided by the appeal committee, will undoubtedly ignite passionate reactions from other teams, especially Esteghlal, resulting in further controversies in Iranian football.

Putin hails Iran as gateway to West and South Asia

TEHRAN- Russian President Vladimir Putin praised a newly signed free trade agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), lauding Iran's pivotal role as a gateway connecting Eurasian markets with those in West and South Asia.

Speaking at an EAEU summit in St. Petersburg where the agreement was signed on Monday, Putin underscored Iran's economic strength and technological advancements, emphasizing that strengthening ties with Iran would bring immense benefits to both the

ICCIMA calls on govt. to lessen interventions in energy sector

TEHRAN – Members of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Energy Committee have called on the government to reduce its interventions in the energy economy, the ICCIMA portal reported.

Pointing out that the imbalance in the electricity industry is serious, the members of the committee said: "To solve this problem, the government should stop interfering in the energy economy and allow the private sector to operate."

During this meeting, a report was presented on the situation, obstacles, and problems of the electricity industry in Iran.

According to the law, electricity generation is exempt from value-added tax, but the Tax Affairs Administration does not accept this exemption and has a disagreement with the Ministry of Energy, which results in many problems for economic operators active in this sector, the members of the committee said.

Commodities worth \$736m traded at IME in a week

TEHRAN- During the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed trade of 2,832,048 tons of commodities with a total trading value of \$736 million on its physical market.

As reported by the IME's Public Relations and International Affairs Department, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor trade of 2,427,313 tons of commodities valued at more than \$542 million.

On this floor the IME sold 1,139,713 tons of cement, 562,000 tons of iron ore, 554,505 tons of steel, 157,500 tons of sponge iron, 11,015 tons of aluminum, 7,403 tons of copper, 1,330 tons of zinc and 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate.

Furthermore, the IME witnessed on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 392,748 tons of commodities worth more than \$186 million.

Commodities traded on this floor included 106,365 tons of bitumen, 95,919 tons of polymeric products, 94,290 tons of vacuum

bottom, 53,500 tons of lube cut, 28,532 tons of chemicals, 10,410 tons of sulfur, 3,583 tons of oil, 802 tons of petroleum products and 350 tons of feedstocks.

The IME also traded within the same week 11,987 tons of goods on its side market.

As previously reported, IME witnessed trade of 11,980,791 tons of commodities with a total trading value of nearly \$3 billion on its physical market during the past Iranian calendar month (ended on December 21).

The exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor, trade of 9,893,000 tons of commodities valued at nearly \$2 billion.

On this floor the IME sold 5,059,317 tons of cement, 2,279,000 tons of iron ore, 1,930,172 tons of steel, 545,000 tons of sponge iron, 58,805 tons of zinc, 39,140 tons of aluminum, 32,356 tons of copper, 2,275 tons of cast iron, 1,000 tons of coke, 800 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 175 tons of lead and 60 tons of precious metals concentrate.

Housing price decreases 2.2% in Tehran city

TEHRAN- Average housing price declined 2.2 percent in the capital Tehran during the ninth Iranian calendar month Azar (ended on December 21), compared to the previous month, according to a report released by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

Based on the CBI data, the number of real

estate deals fell 1.2 percent in the capital city in the ninth month from the eighth month.

Experts believe that the housing market has entered a long-term stagnation and the prices are not expected to change drastically anytime soon.

TEDPIX loses 15,700 points on Tuesday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 15,746 points (0.72 percent) to 2,178,753 on Tuesday, which is the fourth day of 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).

Head of Iran's Securitas and Exchange Organization (SEO) Majid Eshqi has said that using the capacities of the country's private sector in the stock market has been one of the main strategies of the organization over the past year.

NPC calls for diversification of funding mechanisms in petchem industry

TEHRAN – The head of Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC) has stressed the need for using new specialized financing solutions in the petrochemical industry, Shana reported.

"If specialized measures are taken in the field of financing in the petrochemical industry, all obstacles, even sanctions, can be overcome," Morteza Shahmirzaei said on Tuesday, at a conference on investment and financing in the petrochemical industry.

Pointing out that the conference was held to identify complications and explore investment and financing opportunities for petrochemical projects, Shahmirzaei stated that these issues should be seriously investigated in the specialized meetings of this conference to achieve positive results for the investors of this industry.

The official stated that today 95 percent of the world's industries are directly or indirectly dependent on the products of the petrochemical industry, adding: "Considering the rich hydrocarbon resources, Iran should make maximum use of these resources, especially by developing the petrochemical industry as much as possible."

Pointing out that financing challenges have delayed some petrochemical projects for years, Shahmirzaei added: "We must actualize investment opportunities in this industry so that all types of petrochemical products can be produced in the country."

He further called on the country's major petrochemical holdings to collaborate with economic experts and scholars in holding financing and funding training courses for investors in this sector.

The NPC head said the 20-year roadmap of the country's petrochemical industry is being compiled by the company, adding: "I request all scientific and research centers to help us in this regard."

Shahmirzaei further noted that over 85 percent of the



parts and equipment used in the petrochemical industry are manufactured inside the country, adding that the industry will become completely self-sufficient in the coming years.

On Sunday, the official stressed the need for using the capacities of domestic companies to meet the technological needs of the petrochemical industry to cut dependence on foreign sources.

Speaking in a meeting with the students and scholars at Iran University of Science and Technology (IUST), Shahmirzaei said: "The diversity of manufactured products in an industry is one of the indicators of development in that industry, and today the petrochemical industry is one of the most powerful industries in the country with the production of 550 grades of petrochemical products."

He put the country's petrochemical production capacity at 92 million tons, saying that currently 72 petrochemical complexes are active across the country.

Earlier this month, the official said the country's petrochemical industry relies on domestic knowledge and technology and the industry is mostly self-sufficient.

Speaking to the press on the sideline of a visit to a knowledge-based petrochemical company in Lorestan Province, Morteza Shahmirzaei emphasized the maximum support for domestic knowledge-based companies, saying that Iran's petrochemical industry relies on the strength and expertise of Iranian companies

in the path of development and progress.

He underlined the access to technical knowledge as one of the major challenges in the field of petrochemical production and stated: "The National Petrochemical Company, with an intensive program, has obliged the Petrochemical Research and Technology Company to focus on the indigenization of technologies in this industry in cooperation with knowledge-based companies active in this sector."

The official has also said that domestic companies have supplied about eight billion dollars of equipment and parts for the country's petrochemical complexes over the past two years.

"In the last two years, about eight billion dollars of equipment and goods required for petrochemical projects have been provided through domestic companies, part of which was first-time construction," Shahmirzaei stated.

Emphasizing the NPC's focus on providing domestically manufactured parts and equipment for its projects, Shahmirzaei said: "[In the past two years] about 10 billion dollars have been spent on providing equipment and parts for petrochemical projects, more than 80 percent of which have been produced by domestic companies."

He pointed out that about 15 parts and equipment needed by the petrochemical industry were made by knowledge-based companies in the 13th government, adding: "Currently, at most 90 percent and at least 40 percent

of petrochemical projects use domestically produced goods and equipment."

The official assessed the ability of domestic manufacturers of petrochemical equipment and goods as very favorable and stated: "Many Iranian manufacturers are providing services to neighboring countries and Southeast Asian countries, and nine Iranian manufacturers are among the major equipment exporters in global markets."

Mentioning some of his company's major strategies, Shahmirzaei said: "The most important part of the National Petrochemical Company's strategy is to complete the industry's value chain and support knowledge-based companies, domestic manufacturing firms, and domestic production of catalysts."

"The government's strategy in the field of production is to make maximum use of the installed capacity in the petrochemical industry by using the knowledge and capabilities of domestic manufacturers," he added.

The petrochemical industry plays a crucial role in Iran's non-oil economy, as petrochemical export is the second-largest source of revenue for the country after crude oil. Petrochemical exports already constitute nearly 33 percent of the country's non-oil exports.

According to Shah-Mirzaei, the company plans to increase its annual petrochemical production capacity to 200 million tons over the next 10 years.

In this regard, Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji said that more than 100 petrochemical projects with a total investment of about \$70 billion have been defined and will be implemented across the country.

Oji noted that the country will also be completely self-sufficient in producing the catalysts used in the petrochemical industry by the end of the current government administration's incumbency (August 2025).

Major projects worth \$80m launched in Chabahar Port



TEHRAN – Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Mehrdad Bazrpash officially launched five major infrastructure projects with a total investment of 40 trillion rials (about \$80 million) in the southeastern Chabahar Port.

The second phase of a 100,000-ton grain

silo, a 25-megawatt power plant, a water desalination plant with a capacity of 5,000 cubic meters and a storage warehouse with a capacity of 734,000 tons are among the projects whose implementation was started with the presence of the Minister of Transport and Urban Development, Mehr News Agency reported.

Also, a multi-purpose cargo support terminal with an annual capacity of 296,000 tons and a container support service terminal with an annual capacity of 50,000 TEU were other development and executive projects started in Chabahar's Shahid Beheshti Port.

According to Bazrpash, providing a suitable platform for the use of port infrastructure and equipment in Shahid Beheshti port, promoting the participation of the private sector in the development of port activities, and attracting

private sector investment for the development of the country's maritime-oriented economy and the development of Makran coasts are among the major goals of logistics projects being implemented in Chabahar Port.

As Iran's only oceanic port on the Gulf of Oman, Chabahar Port holds great significance for the country both politically and economically. The country has taken serious measures to develop this port to improve the country's maritime trade.

The port consists of Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti terminals, each of which has five berth facilities. The port is located in Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan Province and is about 120 kilometers southwest of Pakistan's Baluchistan Province, where the China-funded Gwadar port is situated.

Iran ready to export oil products, techno-engineering services to Nicaragua

TEHRAN – Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji has expressed Iran's readiness for exporting oil products and technical and engineering services to Nicaragua, Shana reported.

The minister made the remarks in a meeting with visiting Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Denis Moncada on Monday, saying Iranian companies are prepared to help Nicaragua implement its refinery projects and provide the country with the necessary equipment.

Iran's 13th administration is keen to develop relations with Nicaragua in all fields, underlined Oji, adding he had good talks with the country's energy minister on supply of fuel and oil products and also exports of techno-engineering services during his recent visit to Managua.

Iran and Nicaragua have common views on fight against injustice, said the oil minister, pointing out the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the Nicaraguan Revolution took place almost simultaneously and are known as "Twin Revolutions".

Tehran-Managua ties have increased since the 13th administration took office, Oji noted, calling for forming technical and specialized boards to put bilateral agreements into action.

Nicaragua's foreign minister for his part deemed the Iranian oil officials' visit to his country necessary to put the



agreements into practice.

Moncada said he would give a report to the Nicaraguan president on Iran's considerable expertise and willingness to cooperate with his country in refinery projects.

He described refinery projects as vital to Nicaragua and added, "We are eagerly waiting for holding the joint commission's meeting and using the technical know-how of Iranian experts in our refinery projects."

The official said: "This is the fourth visit I have paid to Iran over the past two and a half years," adding that "Iran's oil minister was briefed on Nicaragua's oil industry and needs in the refinery sector during his visit and we hope the two sides will have good cooperation in this area."

ONE STAGE TENDER INTERNATIONAL CALL

FOR

PURCHASE OF 8000 MT BAKED ANODE BLOCK

TENDER No.: j/ 60

DATE: 25th /December /2023

1. Subject.: Iran Alumina Company (IAC) intends to purchase high quality Baked Anode Block, in amount of 8000 MT for using in its Primary Aluminum Reduction Smelter Plant through one stage Tender according to following conditions as mentioned in the relevant Tender documents .:

2.: Bid Bond Guarantee: 155,076 Dollar/or 59,813,656,000Rials

3.: Tender proposal.: Since the tendering is to be done in one stage ,thus the eligible Bidders should follow and regard the Tender instructions and present and submit all of required justified documents and the mentioned Tender envelopes in one package together.

4.: Closing Date.: The eligible Bidders should submit their Bids/proposal to the central administration office as mentioned below and also in the Tender documents before 16:00 pm ,local time , on the day 03th February ,2024 .

5.: Opening Date.: 13th February , 2024 on 10:00 AM.

6.: Contact information.: For more details and receiving the relevant Tender documents , the Bidders can refer to the following contact information.

Add.: Km 7 of Sankhast Road, city of Jajarm, Northern Khorasan Province, IRAN, P. O. Box:1135-94415 legal and contractual Affairs .

Tel .: 0098-58-32603067-32604231 Fax: 0098-58-32272487

website: www.iranalumina.ir E-mail: aluminumajarm@gmail.com

IRAN ALUMINA CO en.iranalumina.ir

Second Announcement



Iran Alumina

Hamas rejects any temporary truce

Palestinian resistance firm on its stance toward a ceasefire

From page 1 ▶ He added that the Palestinian people want an end to the Israeli massacres and are not waiting for temporary truces, after which the regime to resume its terrorism.

Hamas has also said it has "no knowledge" of the information Reuters reported.

The resistance group said, "We reiterate that there can be no negotiations without a comprehensive cessation of aggression."

"Hamas leadership seeks a permanent cessation to the aggression and massacres against our people."

"Our people want to see this aggression completely halted, and do not want to wait for a temporary or partial truce for a short period, after which the aggression and terrorism might fatally continue."

The Palestinian Center for Policy Survey and Research recently revealed that support for Hamas has increased since the Israeli war on Gaza began, which indicates the Palestinian people back this position.

The researchers conducted the interviews with Gazans face-to-face during the seven-day truce, at a time when they were extremely tired, thirsty, traumatized, and hungry. This is an indication that the Palestinians in Gaza are wary that another temporary truce will only see the Israeli regime prepare itself to resume indiscriminate bombardment in the enclave.

The consensus in Gaza, among its people and their backing for the resistance, is that they have been starving and dying since the regime imposed a siege on the "world's largest open-air prison" in 2006, and the only way forward now is either through death or victory.

They are not falling for an Israeli trick to accept another truce for a number of days.

Those who have lost their children, wives, parents and other family members, in previous



Israeli wars on Gaza, are the same Palestinian men, among the ranks of Hamas and other resistance factions who are fighting the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip today.

Before the war, there were around 5,000 Palestinians in Israeli jails, but the number has now doubled to around 10,000 as the Israeli military has arrested thousands more in the occupied West Bank and Gaza since October 7, according to the Palestinian Prisoners Association.

According to sources, Cairo proposed holding elections and "provided guarantees to Hamas that its members will not be 'chased or prosecuted,'" while the movement refused to relinquish power in Gaza in exchange for a permanent ceasefire only.

This would be defined as a victory for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Associated Press, citing a senior Egyptian official and a European diplomat, reported that Egypt had put forward a preliminary proposal to end the war on Gaza, which includes "a ceasefire, the gradual release of prisoners, and the formation of a Palestinian government of experts to manage the Gaza Strip and the West Bank."

The proposal, which was reached with Qatar, was presented

to the Israeli regime, Hamas, the United States, and European governments but "still appears at a preliminary stage," according to the agency.

AP reported details about the "agreement," which calls for an initial ceasefire for a period of up to two weeks, during which Hamas will release between 40 and 50 Israeli captives, in exchange for the release of between 120 and 150 Palestinian prisoners from Israeli prisons.

Simultaneously, negotiations will continue over the extension of the ceasefire and releasing more Israeli prisoners and dead bodies held by the Palestinian resistance.

Negotiations are also reportedly continuing for a comprehensive "all for all" agreement, in addition to the withdrawal of the occupying forces from Gaza and the resistance's cessation of launching rockets towards the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories.

Associated Press sources noted that Egyptian officials discussed the broad outlines of the proposal with the head of the Hamas Political Bureau, Ismail Haniyeh, while the proposal is also scheduled to be presented to the Secretary-General of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Movement, Ziad al-Nakhalah.

Izzat al-Risheq, a member of Hamas' political bureau, said, "There can be no negotiations without a complete stop to the aggression."

"The Hamas leadership is aiming with all its might for a complete, not temporary, end to the aggression and massacres of our people," he said, referring to the more than 20,000 Palestinians killed during the 11-week Israeli war on Gaza.

Speaking on the condition of anonymity, a senior Palestinian Islamic Jihad official familiar with the Cairo talks echoed al-Risheq's denial, according to Reuters.

The Egyptian sources said that both Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which have been holding separate talks with Egyptian mediators in Cairo, had rejected offering any concessions.

"After the aggression is stopped and the aid increased, we are ready to discuss prisoner swaps," one Hamas official said.

The Islamic Jihad, which also holds Israeli captives in Gaza, has echoed this position.

A Palestinian Islamic Jihad delegation led by its leader Ziad al-Nakhalah has traveled to Cairo to exchange ideas with Egyptian officials over prisoner swap offers and other issues, but an official said the resistance movement had set an end to Israel's military offensive as a pre-condition for further negotiations.

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad insists that any prisoner swap must be based on the principle of "all for all", meaning the release of all captives held in Gaza by Hamas and Islamic Jihad in return for the freedom of all Palestinians jailed in Israel.

Separately, Palestinian Islamic Jihad official Ali Abu Shaheen later told Reuters that "the movement reaffirmed its position that the aggression against the Palestinian people must be ended and that it wasn't in favor of temporary truces."

WORLD HEADLINES

Death toll nears 21,000 in Gaza

From page 1 ▶ Sean Casey from the World Health Organization in Gaza says the hospital situation is "dire" as facilities are overwhelmed and so many have closed completely.

Despite a UN Security Council resolution last week calling for scaled-up humanitarian aid, Casey says hostilities in the past few days have not allowed that to happen. "I was at al-Aqsa Hospital in the middle area where the night before they received a huge number of injuries, 100-plus injuries, and many deceased brought to the hospital from the night before," Casey told Al Jazeera.

"We're seeing significant numbers in the hospitals and it's really important to reiterate the UN Security Council resolution called for humanitarian pathways... It's really critical we see that realized because we're seeing many civilians losing their lives, we're seeing hospitals lose functionality, we're seeing health workers displaced and unable to care for the many patients that are put before them."

India's navy deploys warships to Arabian Sea after tanker attack

The Indian Navy has dispatched guided missile destroyers to the Arabian Sea after an attack on an Israel-linked chemical tanker off its coast, the Ministry of Defence said.

Three stealth-guided destroyers were deployed "in various areas of the sea" to "maintain a deterrent presence" considering the "recent spate of attacks in the Arabian Sea", the ministry said in a statement late on Monday. It was also using long-range maritime patrol aircraft for "domain awareness", it said.

The Yemeni forces known as Ansarallah are targeting Israeli ships or those bound for Israel in response to the regime's massacre

in the Gaza Strip and its refusal to allow humanitarian aid to the besieged enclave. However, Ansarallah has said it is committed to free navigation except for Israel.

TV anchor booted over 'pro-Israel' coffee cup

Turkish broadcaster TGRT Haber TV has sacked an anchor for appearing on air with a cup from Starbucks, the world-famous coffee chain that many in the country now see as pro-Israel. In recent months, Türkiye has seen numerous pro-Palestinian protests due to the bloody conflict between the occupation regime and Hamas resistance fighters.

In a statement on Sunday, the channel strongly condemned the actions of news anchor Meltem Gunay and an unnamed director, terminating their contracts for "just cause." It explained that "it is strictly forbidden for the announcer to present on TGRT News TV in a way that will covertly advertise any company."

It further added that "our institution... knows the sensitivities of the Turkish people regarding Gaza and defends them to the end."

UN says no let-up in Israeli air strikes in Gaza

There is no let-up in Israeli air strikes in Gaza, a UN official has told the BBC, after visiting a hospital struggling to treat the injured.

Gemma Connell of the UN humanitarian agency OCHA told the BBC what she had seen at the Al-Aqsa hospital in central Gaza on Monday was "absolute carnage."

Many severely injured people could not be treated because the hospital was "absolutely overloaded", she said.

Some Harvard board members face pressure to resign for endorsing the chancellor's 'free expression' stance

Amid a controversy over Harvard University President Claudine Gay's defense of free expression during anti-Israel protests, certain campus faculty members have demanded that some board members resign for supporting her.

Criticism against President Gay has escalated due to her characterization of anti-Israel protests on campus under the umbrella of free expression.

Due to allegations of damaging the campus prestige, there are persistent calls for Gay to step down, with certain faculty members at Harvard University in the US advocating for the restoration of the university's "historic reputational damage," according to The Wall Street Journal.

Meanwhile, some board members who have expressed support for Gay are also facing calls for resignation by some of their colleagues.

"Harvard's reputation has taken a very substantial hit in the world," said former Harvard Medical School Dean Jeffrey Flier, who was invited to meet with some board members last week to discuss various issues, including the ongoing divisions within the campus over Gay's issue.

Kit Parker, professor of bioengineering



The development came as fallout continues from early December when three US college presidents -- the University of Pennsylvania's Liz Magill, Gay, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sally Kornbluth -- testified before Congress on antisemitic incidents on their campuses.

They expressed their commitment to combating all forms of hatred, as well as an increase in Islamophobia and hatred toward Muslims.

They spent hours answering questions about antisemitism, disciplinary actions against students, how universities represent different points of view and campus security.

Magill resigned on Saturday after days of criticism and pressure following her comments at the hearing.

Separately, Harvard University's former presidents -- Lawrence S. Bacow, Derek Bok, Drew Gilpin Faust, Neil L. Rudenstine, and Lawrence H. Summers -- also expressed strong support for Gay "as she leads Harvard into the future."

"We look forward to supporting President Gay in whatever ways we can as Harvard faces this challenging moment for higher education and the wider world," the university said on X.

and applied physics, highlighted Harvard's critical juncture and urged board members to resign. He questions, "How arrogant is Harvard? And when I say Harvard, I mean the Harvard Corporation. Do they think this is going to go away?"

The Harvard Corporation, which has 12 members, holds the distinction of being the oldest corporation in the Western Hemisphere, according to information on its website.

An unnamed faculty member has proposed invoking a provision within the Massachusetts constitution to appoint a state representative to the board.

A spokeswoman for Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey confirmed that the governor is aware of the proposal and expressed excitement for the review.

'Do not get used to suffering' in Gaza: Mohamed Salah

Egyptian footballer Mohamed Salah has issued an emotional Christmas message on social media in which he called on people not to forget those grieving for their loved ones in Gaza.

It is the Liverpool FC forward's second comment on Israel's war on Gaza, having previously called

for an end to "massacres" and an appeal for humanitarian aid to be allowed.

Israel started its military aggression against Gaza on October 7 following an operation by the territory's resistance groups, dubbed Operation al-Aqsa Storm.

Captives' families to Netanyahu: Bring back them right now

During a special session on December 25, Netanyahu called for more time to secure the return of the captives while underlining that it remained a priority.

However, the families of the captives present at the event expressed their impatience with the prime minister's handling of the situation. They voiced their

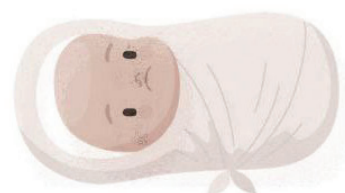
frustration by chanting "now, now" repeatedly during his address.

On October 7, the Palestinian resistance forces launched a surprise operation called Al-Aqsa Storm against Israeli positions. In the attacks, Hamas forces captured 250 Israelis, mostly military personnel.



ISRAELI KILLING MACHINE

Israeli PM says defence budget must increase by \$5.5bn annually. Benjamin Netanyahu made the comments during a ceremony to extend the term of office of the Bank of Israel's Governor Amir Yaron.



Centuries-old Narin fortress undergoes restoration



TEHRAN – A fresh season of restoration work has commenced on the ruins of the Narin fortress, which is a gigantic ancient mud-brick monument in the town of Meybod, central Yazd province.

A restoration project is intended to strengthen its overall structure, its walls, ceilings, and ramparts, a local official said on Tuesday.

The fortress rises imposingly above the town that has grown around it since almost 2000 years ago.

Legend has it that the fortress belonged to King Solomon and was built by jinns (spirits), but whatever the original provenance of the monument's foundations, most of what can be seen today dates from the Sassanian era.

Lying on the Silk Route, the stronghold was used by soldiers who provided an armed escort for passing caravans, charging a tax for their services, historical sources say.

The view from the top of the fort gives an interesting view of the town of Meybod and shows how the growing population of the citadel spilled beyond the mudbrick walls. Watchtowers dotted around the town until recently formed the further reaches of the urban area, but these have since been breached as new houses stretch into the surrounding desert.

In many ways, Iran under Sassanian rule witnessed tremendous achievements of Persian civilization. Experts say that during Sassanid times, the art and architecture of the nation experienced a general renaissance.

According to UNESCO, Meybod is a remarkable example of the viability and transmission of human beings' collective thoughts from different generations to the present one.

"What is significant in the city of Meybod is the regularity of city planning. The anatomy and spatial structure of the city show original plans which conform with the old Iranian city planning."

Since antiquity, mankind has assumed the need to fortify properties to survive in an ever-changing world of invasion and conquest. Commencing from simple earthworks and wooden walls, fortifications gradually evolved into complex, unconquerable, imposing citadels.

Those strongholds were normally erected and maintained along significant routes and cities, particularly at heights overlooking steep slopes or cliffs. Many of the fortifications of the ancient world were built using mud brick, often leaving them no more than mounds of dirt for today's archaeologists.

Glimpses of World Heritage sites

Chartres Cathedral

Notre-Dame de Chartres Cathedral, located in the Centre-Val-de-Loire region, is one of the most authentic and complete works of religious architecture of the early 13th century.

It was the destination of a pilgrimage dedicated to the Virgin Mary, among the most popular in all medieval Western Christianity. Because of the unity of its architecture and decoration, the result of research of the first Gothic era, its immense influence on the art of Middle Age Christianity, Chartres Cathedral appears as an essential landmark in the history of medieval architecture.

The outstanding stained-glass ensemble, monumental statuary of the 12th and 13th centuries and the painted decorations miraculously preserved from the ravages of humankind and time, make Chartres one of the most admirable and the best-preserved examples of Gothic art.

The west façade built around the middle of the 12th century, with its three portals whose plays are decorated with statue columns (Royal Portal), its two towers, its southern spire and its three large incomparable stained-glass windows, comprise an authentic and complete example that remains with us of this art created at St Denis, and which marked the advent of an original mode of plastic expression, known as the Gothic style.

A little later, the nave and the choir, reconstructed as of 1194, effected for the first time an architectural formula which would be widely employed throughout the 13th century.

The monumental sculptures of Chartres Cathedral are valued both for their abundance and for their quality: the large ensembles, reliefs and statues, of the Royal Portal at the entrance to the nave, the six portals and two porches dating from 1210 at the north and south entrances to the transept, offer a complete panorama of Gothic sculpture from the moment when it broke from Romanesque traditions to attain the subtle balance of idealism and realism that characterizes its apogee. In this cathedral, seat of a renowned school, technical and artistic mastery were at the service of a highly developed iconographic science.

Finally, Chartres Cathedral has almost totally conserved its homogeneous decor of stained-glass windows executed between approximately 1210 and 1250. To this must be added the three stained-glass windows of the 12th century above the Royal Portal and the large roses of the 13th century on the three façades: on the west, the Last Judgement; on the north, the Glorification of the Virgin; on the south, the Glorification of Christ.

(Source: UNESCO)

6 extraordinary treasures that archaeologists unearthed this year

As long as humans have been minting coins and crafting beautiful jewelry and other stunning collectibles, an equal number of people have been right behind them searching for these precious finds.

From stashes of gold and silver coins to intricately designed jewelry, here are some of the top treasure finds of 2023.

Massive coin collection in Japan

During a factory construction project north of Tokyo, workers were wowed when they unearthed a stash of about 100,000 coins buried at the site. The

collection of currency was divided into 1,060 bundles and dated to between 175 BC and 1265 CE. The former originated from China and contained the Chinese inscription "Banliang," which translates to "half ounce." So far, researchers have examined around 334 of the coins, and it's anyone's guess what other treasures will be unveiled.

Underwater temple overflowing with sunken treasure in Egypt

Underwater archaeologists exploring a canal off the Mediterranean coast of Egypt found a partially collapsed underwater

temple brimming with treasures. Further exploration of the temple, which collapsed sometime during the mid-second century B.C. and was built for the ancient Egyptian god Amun, revealed a wealth of "treasures and secrets," including silver ritual instruments, gold jewelry and alabaster containers.

"Lost" rainbow cup minted by Celts in Germany

A 2,000-year-old rainbow cup minted by Celts was found alongside a river in Germany. The cup-shaped gold coin contains a rare design element: a four-

pointed star surrounded by arches. The find is one of only three known rainbow cups to contain this motif. Rainbow cups get their name based on a Celtic legend that they are drops of gold that fell to Earth at the end of a rainbow.

Civil War-era coins buried in a Kentucky cornfield

A bounty of 700 Civil War-era coins was discovered by a man working in his cornfield in Kentucky. The cache, dubbed the "Great Kentucky hoard," contained hundreds of gold coins minted between 1840 and 1863, as well as a handful of silver

coins. Researchers think the collection was buried prior to a Confederate raid during the summer of 1863.

"Eye-catching" gold hair ring in a Bronze Age burial in Wales

A "glitzy, golden hair-ring" was part of a Bronze Age burial discovered along a road in Wales. As archaeologists excavated the burial site, they also unearthed a wooden comb that's thought to be the oldest of its kind ever found in the UK. Both objects were buried alongside the 3,000-year-old cremated remains of a person who

was likely of high social status, the researchers concluded.

Bronze Age swords and thousands of medieval coins in Germany

A group of volunteer conservationists discovered approximately 8,000 medieval coins and seven Bronze Age swords while working at three separate sites in Germany. Archaeologists think the 3,000-year-old weaponry may have been placed there as part of a sacrificial offering.

(Source: Live Science)

Taste of Iran beyond media portrayals

From Page 1 ▶ In fact, hospitality is not just a custom here—it's a way of life. From the bustling bazaars of Tehran to the serene gardens of Shiraz, visitors are greeted with open arms, engaging in heartfelt conversations that transcend borders and politics. Shared meals with locals, conversations in tea houses, and encounters at historical landmarks all contribute to a complicated understanding that cannot be captured in many news stories about the ancient country.

"Do not travel to Iran due to the risk of ..." is an example of those negative perceptions that significantly impact Iran's tourism potential and its ability to attract foreign travelers from across the globe. However, there are strategies that Iran can adopt to reshape its tourism narrative.

Firstly, countering Iranophobia demands proactive measures. This way, Iran can develop its comprehensive media campaigns to sharpen the focus on showcasing its diverse cultural heritage, ancient sites, stunning landscapes, warm hospitality, and the vibrant



lifestyle of its people using reputable influencers.

Secondly, fostering people-to-people connections is vital in altering perceptions. Encouraging cultural exchange programs, and community-based tourism initiatives can enable travelers to engage directly with Iranians, experiencing their warmth, hospitality, and the richness of their culture firsthand.

Additionally, simplifying visa

procedures or offering visa-on-arrival facilities to visitors from more countries can significantly enhance accessibility, making Iran a more attractive destination. Iran's recent unilateral move to cancel visa requirements with 32 countries stands as a pivotal step in redefining the nation as a distinct destination for global tourists, considering all the tourism facets of the ancient country.

Furthermore, collaboration

with international travel agencies, and tour operators, and participating in global tourism expos and events can enhance Iran's visibility on the global tourism map.

Building strategic partnerships and offering attractive travel packages or incentives can draw more attention and encourage travelers to explore the wonders of Iran.

Lastly, investing in health tourism for which the country is famous, and sustainable tourism practices that prioritize environmental conservation and responsible tourism can enhance Iran's appeal to travelers seeking quality yet wallet-friendly medical services and sustainable experiences.

Given that tourism heavily relies on media images and advertising, lagging in this arena and falling behind competitors imposes irreparable consequences on the path of tourism development. Here, Iran can gradually shift perceptions by inviting more and more foreign travelers to discover the wonders that the country has to offer.

Five natural elements in northern Iran made national heritage

TEHRAN – Five natural elements, including long-lived trees, which are located in Iran's Mazandaran province, have gained national status.

"Five natural elements in Mazandaran province have been added to the national heritage list by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts," the provincial tourism chief said on Tuesday.

The newly registered elements include two long-lived trees, a spring, a cave, and a waterfall, Hossein Izadi said.

Emphasizing that these natural sites possess cultural, historical, and natural value and are of interest to the people of the region, the official added, "Protecting these registered heritage sites is an important capacity in the region that can lead to attracting tourists and economic development."

Mazandaran has numerous cultural, spiritual, historical, and natural heritage sites. The identification and registration of these sites to prevent their destruction and preserve them falls under the responsibility

of the provincial directorate for cultural heritage and tourism, Izadi explained.

"However, the actual preservation and sustainability of these sites for future generations lie in the hands of the people and all executive bodies."

Sandwiched between the towering Alborz mountain range and the Caspian Sea, the picture-perfect province has long been a highly popular destination for domestic travelers. To cite an example, more than 1.8 million domestic travelers, the majority of whom were from Tehran, rushed the province on August 1 and 2. The consecutive days were declared national holidays by the government due to a heat wave that saw temperatures touch record levels across the country.

Its ever-present green landscapes provide a perfect backdrop for hiking, biking, and exploring. Visitors can take a stroll at the stunning Larijan hot springs, one of the most famous natural attractions in the region, and relax after a long day of exploring. Moreover, the varied nature of the province features plains, prairies, forests, and rainforests

stretching from the sandy beaches of the Caspian Sea to the rugged and snowcapped Alborz range, including Mount Damavand, one of the highest peaks and volcanos in Asia. More than 800 registered historical and cultural sites, 338 km of shoreline, mineral springs in jungles and mountains, waterfalls, and caves are among the major tourist attractions in the province.

When it comes to local cuisine, the Mazandaran region is a food lover's paradise as well. The region is well-known for its diverse cuisine made with fresh and organic ingredients. Many of its popular dishes have a flavorful mix of white rice, fish, and herbs, cooked with sour orange juice. Its distinctive dishes include: Aghuz Mossama (walnut dish), Tah Chin, Torsh Torshu, Do Pati, Espenasak, pumpkin soup, Esfenaj Marji, Kahi Khanar (a dish made from pumpkins), Naz Khatun, Qaliye, Khoresh-t-e Alu and Aghuznun.

In the early 20th century, by constructing seven new roads and railways, the provinces of Mazandaran and Gilan became known as Shomal by all Iranians (meaning "the North" in Persian).

Persian handicrafts: Masnad Bafi of Ardabil



TEHRAN – Different regions in Iran boast diverse climates, leading to variations in people's lifestyles, beliefs, traditions, and crafts. This diversity manifests in various handicrafts and handwoven products across the country, including the art of Masnad weaving.

Masnad, a form of practical Kilim carpet, is specifically crafted in the Namin and

Anbaran regions of Ardabil. Typically measuring about 110 by 170 centimeters, Masnad, like other Kilims, is woven on a loom.

As mentioned by Visit Iran, Masnads can be either single-sided or double-sided, with the latter generally being more costly. Often utilized as prayer rugs, many Masnads feature patterns depicting altars. Additionally, there are various

types of Masnads woven in these areas, characterized by diverse patterns and motifs, often laid on the floor for guests. The name "Masnad" itself signifies "a place where a person sits or leans on," reflecting its utility. Renowned Persian poets like Rumi have referenced Masnads in their works.

Typically, Masnad patterns are geometric, with infrequent use of cursive motifs. The designs consist of symmetrical vertical lines, with a notable high contrast between the background color and the pattern. Researchers suggest that Masnad patterns and motifs are inspired by "Shirakipich" (another type of Kilim from the Kerman province) but lack the central paisley motif. A prevalent motif known as the "Matn" flower, locally called "Keshmiri," is intricately woven

throughout the background.

Other floral motifs include Khara, Shah Abbassi, Garmayi, and Joft. Additionally, two types of margins, namely "Charkhi" (circular) and "Vakili," embellish the Masnad. The weaving of Masnads incorporates designs such as bushes, vases, flowers, and hunting scenes. Raw or white cotton and single-colored wool yarn are commonly used as materials for the wefts in Masnad weaving.

Situated on a high, windswept plateau, Ardabil is well known for having abundant natural beauty, hospitable people, and its silk and carpet trade tradition. It is also home to UNESCO-registered Sheikh Safi al-Din Khanegah and the Shrine Ensemble. It is freezing in winter and mild in summer, attracting thousands every year.

Yellow deer in southern protected area up by 30%

TEHRAN – The number of yellow deer in the Arsanjan breeding center, southern Fars province, has increased by 30 percent over the past year.

In the latest census, 95 yellow deer were identified in the region, showing an increase of 30 percent year on year, IRNA reported.

Measuring some 300 hectares, the Arsanjan breeding center was launched in 2011 with seven yellow deer.

Endangered species

There are many threats to endangered wildlife species, including mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and birds.

Habitat destruction, fragmentation, and modification caused by human-led activities such as industrial and residential development, logging, crop farming, livestock grazing, mining, road and dam building, and pesticide use have taken an extreme toll on threatened and endangered wildlife populations at an alarming rate.

Currently, about 128 species of animals and vertebrates in the country are at risk of extinction, some of which are not in good condition, and



amphibians are the most vulnerable in this area.

Persian zebra, Asiatic cheetah, black bear, and yellow deer are in danger of extinction.

Zebras exist in two habitats in Iran; one is in the Turan protected area in the south of Semnan province, where there are about 250 zebras, and the other is in the Bahramgur protected area in the southeast of Fars province, where 1,200 zebras are kept.

The Persian zebra population is estimated to be around 1,500, although the zebra is considered an endangered species according to both national and international regulations.

Asiatic cheetah ranks second among Iran's endangered species. Including the cheetahs that have probably not been identified, the population of this species in Iran is estimated to be below 30.

Persian yellow deer is also one of the most important species in the

world. According to the list provided by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, these deer are in the EN category and the red list, which is considered to be in danger of extinction.

The deer have been released in a limited number of habitats in "Ashk" Island, West Azarbaijan province, and "Dez" National Park, Khuzestan province.

They are also kept in reproduction and breeding centers in Ilam, Yazd, Fars, West Azarbaijan, and Mazandaran provinces.

Asian black bear, which is known as the Baluchi black bear, is another endangered species in the country. It lives mainly in forest areas, especially in mountainous areas at altitudes of 500 to 2,700 meters, and is found in Kerman, Hormozgan, and Sistan-Baluchestan provinces in very low quantities.

Paying attention to the biodiversity and wildlife inside the country will not work alone, and it is important to use international capacities to manage the current critical situation and prevent the extinction of endangered species.

Health insurance services ready for cancer patients



TEHRAN – The Health Insurance Organization is ready to provide services to patients suffering from cancer in the country, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

The number of health centers that have concluded contracts with the Health Insurance Organization has increased by seven percent in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21) compared with the past year.

More than 53,000 centers have concluded contracts with Health Insurance Organization so far in the current year, IRNA quoted Keivan Tajbaksh, an official with the Organization, as saying.

Health insurance contracts have been signed with government, non-government, private, and charity centers for services.

The centers include doctors' offices, hospitals, pharmacies, rehabilitation centers, and all medical centers.

"We hope to witness an increase in the number of health centers that are parties to the contract with Health Insurance Organization as new forms of the contract, approved by the Supreme Council of Insurance, are announced," Tajbaksh said.

He stated that 13,931 pharmacies, 20,804 doctor's offices, 2,049 clinics, 2,446 independent laboratories, and 4,261 rehabilitation centers, both independent and affiliated with other organizations, have concluded contracts with the Health Insurance Organization.

With the support of the World Health Organiza-

tion, the national cancer control program has been developed, which sets out the Ministry of Health's roadmap up to the Iranian calendar year 1404 (March 2025-March 2026).

The purpose of the program is to reduce cancer prevalence and mortality while improving the quality of patients' lives, which can serve as a model for other countries, especially in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

The program includes two important documents, namely, "development of national cancer care network" and "development of cancer human resources", which resulted in the establishment of the early diagnostic centers.

Infertility treatment services

Health Insurance Organization offers a variety of services from medical equipment to medicine for infertile couples.

The services include 28 items of medical equipment, 56 laboratory services, 63 drugs for special diseases, 20 surgical services, four subspecialty treatments, and seven medical imaging services, Mohammad-Esmaeil Kameli, an official with the Organization, said.

He went on to say that about 90 percent of the treatment costs in government centers and 90 percent of the costs in other centers, including private, charitable, and non-governmental centers, are covered by Health Insurance.

Insured infertile couples, who have been registered in the Health Insurance system, can enjoy these services.

The health insurance organization covers nearly 45 million people in the country, of whom 12 million receive free health insurance coverage

Other significant services

Health Insurance Organization, together with the Ministry of Health, have provided important and significant services in different sectors.

Providing free insurance for low-income families, paying the medical expenses of infertile couples,

providing services to the disabled, supporting patients with rare diseases, and providing services to foreign nationals are among the provided services so far, IRNA reported.

The government has adopted policies to identify uninsured people. In this regard, the Health Insurance Organization in cooperation and interaction with the Social Security Organization was assigned to identify uninsured people, who are often from the vulnerable groups of society.

Accordingly, some 90 percent of hospitalization costs and around 70 percent of outpatient treatment costs are covered by insurance.

In this regard, by allocating 50 trillion rials (about \$100 million), 107 rare diseases are covered by the health insurance fund, and with the cooperation of universities, a lion's share of treatment costs are paid by the government.

So far, more than 31 rare and special diseases, including high blood pressure, MS, type 2 diabetes, hemodialysis, thalassemia, kidney transplant, hemophilia, diabetic retinopathy, type 1 diabetes, cystic fibrosis, and autism, have been identified in the system of the Health Insurance Organization.

Unfortunately, during the past years, many infertile couples who wanted a child avoided pursuing their problems due to the huge and staggering costs of treatment.

This is while paying attention to this important issue can help increase the young population, which is one of the most important and influential elements in the progress and development of the country.

With the support of the organization, infertile couples without insurance coverage, pregnant mothers, and their babies up to the age of 5 are covered by insurance.

All the indicators of health and treatment have made significant progress after the Islamic Revolution, and now Iran is one of the leading countries in this field.

ENGLISH IN USE

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System to be set up for monitoring, forecasting agricultural drought

A system will be launched to monitor, forecast and report the agricultural lands being hit by drought, Amir Qaderi, an official with Disaster Management Organization has announced.

Over a meeting of a special working group for addressing drought and risks threatening agricultural sector, a plan for establishing a system for monitoring and forecasting agricultural drought in the country was approved and submitted to the Disaster Management Organization for review, he explained.

"Following the study of other countries' experiences and existing global methods, the necessity of establishing a domestic system to recognize the lands prone to agricultural drought was emphasized," he noted.

سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران ایجاد می‌شود

معاون امور بازسازی و بازتوانی سازمان مدیریت بحران کشور از ایجاد سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران خبر داد.

به گزارش پایگاه اطلاع رسانی سازمان مدیریت بحران کشور، امیر قادری روز یکشنبه با اعلام این خبر گفت: طرح ایجاد سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران طی جلسه‌ای با حضور مدیران و کارشناسان سازمان مدیریت بحران و وزارت جهاد کشاورزی بررسی شد.

وی ادامه داد: پس از بررسی تجارب داخلی و روش‌های موجود جهانی، ضرورت استقرار نمونه بومی پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی مورد تأکید قرار گرفت و با مشارکت مراکز پژوهشی سازمان هواشناسی کشور و پژوهشکده حفاظت خاک و آبخیزداری طرح ایجاد سامانه پایش و پیش‌بینی خشکسالی کشاورزی ایران پیشنهاد شد.

ISC ranks Iranian universities based on six indices

TEHRAN – The Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC) has released a report, ranking 115 governmental and 17 non-governmental universities according to six indices.

Education counts for 30 percent, Research counts for 25 percent, Technology and Innovation counts for 20 percent, International Outlook counts for 10 percent, and Social Services, Infrastructure, and Facilities counts for 5 percent, ISNA quoted the ISC head Ahmad Fazl-zadeh as saying.

The universities of Tehran, Fardowsi of Mashhad, Tarbiat Modarres, Shahid Beheshti, and Shiraz were placed first to fifth in the ranking.

Global ranking

The Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2024 has listed 36 Iranian universities among the world's top 1,000 institutions, compared with 29 universities in 2023.

The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2024 include 1,904 universities across 108 countries and regions.

The ranking is based on 18 carefully calibrated performance indicators that measure an institution's performance across five areas: teaching, research environment, research quality, industry, and international outlook.

Sharif University of Technology ranks first among Iranian universities with a rank in the range of 301-350.

Amirkabir University comes next with a rank in the range of 351-400.

The University of Tehran and Iran University of Science and Technology both are in the range of 401-500.

Shahid Beheshti Medical University, Tehran Medical University, and Iran Medical University are in the range of 601-800.

This year's ranking analyzed over 134 million citations across 16.5 million research publications and included survey responses from 68,402 scholars globally. Overall, it collected 411,789 data points from more than 2,673 institutions that submitted data.

Oxford University is at the top of this ranking for the eighth year in a row.

The highest new entry in this ranking is the Catholic University of Italy, which is ranked 301-350. However, most of the institutions joining the rankings for the first time this year are in Asia.

The United States is the most represented country with 169 institutions, as well as the most represented among the top 200 institutions, with 56 universities.

India, with 91 institutions of higher education, is currently the fourth most represented country and has surpassed China (86).

Four countries entered this ranking for the first time, all of them in Europe. The addition of Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Armenia is contrary to last year's trend, which has caused these countries to be represented in the ranking of the world's top universities.

In addition to the 1,904 ranked institutions, an additional 769 universities are listed with "reporter" status, meaning they submitted data but did not meet the eligibility criteria to receive a rank and agreed to appear as reporters in the final ta-

ble. The world's top ten universities in 2024 are as follows:

University of Oxford, Stanford University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard University, University of Cambridge, California Institute of Technology, Imperial College London, University of California, Berkeley, and Yale University.

Academic rankings 2023

Multiple organizations annually rank universities around the world based on different criteria.

According to an early release from the 2023 edition of the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) Global Innovation Index (GII), Tehran ranks 34th among the top 100 Science and Technology (S&T) clusters in the world.

In September, Iranian higher education institutions once again demonstrated their global prominence, with 18 universities making their mark in the prestigious "Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers for World Universities," also known as the "Taiwan Ranking," released annually by the National Taiwan University.

The University of Tehran has emerged as the torchbearer of Iranian academia, securing an impressive global ranking of 286 in the 2023 Taiwan Ranking. This distinction cements the University of Tehran's reputation as a world-class institution committed to research excellence.

In August, the second edition of the Webometrics ranking 2023 of the World Universities ranked 440 Iranian institutions among 30,000 top universities worldwide.

Tehran University, ranked 305 in the world, is the top among Iranian institutions on the list followed by Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences.

The first edition of the Webometrics Ranking of World Universities 2023, in June, ranked 457 Iranian institutions among around 32,000 top universities across the world.

Universities (ARWU), also known as Shanghai Ranking, placed ten universities from Iran among the top 1000 universities in the world in the Shanghai Ranking, 2023.

The University of Tehran is among the top 500 universities in the world with a rank of 401-500, the best among Iranian universities, IRIB reported.

In the 2023 edition of the Times Higher Education Young University Rankings which includes 605 universities, Iran became the third most represented nation with 39 institutions.

The latest edition of the QS World University Rankings placed seven Iranian universities among the world's top institutes.

The Leiden ranking system published the 2023 report, according to which 46 Iranian universities were among the 1,411 top universities in the world. Among Islamic countries, Iran ranked first, followed by Turkey and Egypt with 36 and 13 universities, respectively.

In the 2023 edition of the Times Higher Education's Asian University Ranking System, 669 institutions from 31 Asian countries are included and 65 Iranian universities are among the top Asian institutions.



Shops full of New Year decorations

Shops in some parts of Tehran are full of colorful decorations and items, especially Christmas trees and statues of Santa Claus, used to celebrate the New Year.



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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Be not ashamed of a small donations; for, despair is much less than that.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:05 Evening: 17:18 Dawn: 5:43 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:13 (tomorrow)

Motamedi's album with Rembrandt Trio among Netherlands's best of 2023



Motamedi is totally natural. The jazz background and extensive improvisation experience of the Dutch musicians fits the crucial role of improvisation in traditional Persian classical music.

The Rembrandt Trio, made up of Rembrandt Frerichs (piano, fortepiano and organ), Tony Overwater (violine, double bass) and Vinsent Planjer (percussion), is no stranger to cross-cultural adventures as it was initially formed to fill an interstitial space between classical, jazz and Near and Middle Eastern music.

This album is the third collaboration of the Dutch Rembrandt Trio with an Iranian master. Previous projects of the trio were with grandmasters like composer and tar player Hossein Alizadeh and composer and kamancheh and setar player Kayhan Kalhor.

Motamedi, 45, started singing and playing ney (Middle-Eastern flute-like wind instrument) from adolescence. So far, he has collaborated with many local classical groups as well as the Iranian National Orchestra. He has released more than 15 albums and has held several performances in Iran, Italy, Poland, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, France, Germany, Turkey, Belgium and the U.S.

He has a resume ranging from working with the great maestros of Iranian music such as Ali Rahbari, Mohammadreza Lotfi, Hossein Alizadeh, Majid Derakhshani, Farhad Fakhreddini, etc. as well as working with international figures including Roger Waters.

NRC is a daily morning newspaper published in the Netherlands by NRC Media. It is generally accepted as a newspaper of record in the Netherlands.

The interplay of Rembrandt Trio and

Cartoon of Day



New Year

Cartoonist: Mikail Çiftçi from Turkey

Iranian filmmakers illuminate Gaza's struggle by making shorts

From Page 1 ▶ Inspired by the poetic works of renowned Palestinian author and politician Ghassan Kanafani, the animated short film "Melody of the Clouds," directed by Mohammad Lotfali and produced by Hadi Firuzmandi, depicts the immense suffering experienced by children in Gaza.

"The Land of Sorrowful Sprouts," an animated short film directed by Zeynab Sadat Badri and produced by Mohaddeseh Pirhadi, weaves a tale of the heart-wrenching struggles faced by the innocent children of Gaza.

The Sureh Youth Film Center, which aims to promote storytelling cinema and highlight young talents across various Iranian provinces, has played a pivotal role in supporting and nurturing these filmmakers in their creative endeavors.

On October 7, Israel started a deadly war on Gaza after the territory's Palestinian resistance group, Hamas, launched a surprise retaliation strike against the occupying regime, codenamed Operation Al-Aqsa Storm.

The Israeli regime's offensive has claimed the lives of nearly 20,000 individuals in Gaza, with a significant majority being women and children. Furthermore, over 53,000 people have suffered injuries as



a result.

Israeli officials, including the prime minister, have made public statements endorsing or pledging to carry out acts of genocide against Palestinians throughout the course of this conflict. These alarming declarations have raised serious concerns regarding the protection of human rights and the safety of the Palestinian population.

Tel Aviv has also imposed severe restrictions on essential resources such as water, power, and gasoline in one of the world's most densely populated areas.

This deprivation has resulted in a scarcity of medical supplies and food, leaving 2.3 million Palestinians at risk of starvation.

UNICEF has recently announced that children and families in Gaza are caught in a catastrophic situation.

Thousands of children have reportedly been killed and thousands more injured. Children and families in Gaza have been cut off from water, food, fuel, medicine, and other essentials, including safe access to hospitals, following escalating hostilities.

UNICEF has also called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and for unrestricted humanitarian access to allow aid to reach children and families in need, save lives and prevent further suffering.

The cost to children and their communities of the escalating violence will be borne out for generations to come. Children are dying at an alarming rate and being denied their basic rights. Civilians must be protected – children particularly – and all efforts must be made to spare them in all circumstances.

Children's book "A Sweet Jam" republished



TEHRAN-The 41st edition of the Iranian writer Hushang

Moradi Kermani's children's book "A Sweet Jam" has recently been published.

Moein, the publisher of the book, released its first edition in 1998. Since then, "A Sweet Jam" has captivated readers across the globe, with translations in multiple languages and enthusiastic reception in various countries.

An English translation of "A Sweet Jam" by U.S. scholar Caroline Croskery was released by the CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform in the United States in 2015. Iranian director Marzieh Borumand made a screen adaptation of the novel in 2000.

It all starts with a jar of jam. Twelve-year-old Jalal simply wants to eat his morning breakfast including the jam he has purchased with his own money. There's only one problem: no matter how he tries, he cannot get the jar open – and neither can his mother, the neighbor upstairs, the children at school, the principal, his teachers, the corner grocer, the factory distributor, the police officer or any of the neighbors.

This story is a humorous lesson on how one seemingly small event impacts each successive event, how small things become blown all out of proportion, and

how one should never count one's chickens before they hatch.

Most of Moradi Kermani's books, including "Believe It or Not" and "The Water Urn," have been rendered into several languages around the world.

Hushang Moradi Kermani, 80, is best known for children's and young adult fiction. His best-known books are "The Tales of Majid," "The Boot," and "The Water Urn." Most of his works have been translated into English, German, French, Spanish, Dutch, Arabic, Armenian, Turkish and several other languages. Moreover, some of his books have been made into popular local movies and television shows.

Melissa Barrera, Bella Hadid support Palestine on Christmas

Actress Melissa Barrera and supermodel Bella Hadid took to social media this week to share pro-Palestinian messages for Christmas.

According to Arab News, Mexican star Barrera, who was previously fired from the "Scream" horror franchise over her stance, took to her Instagram Stories and used the history of Christmas to reflect on the troubles Palestine are facing this holiday season.

"I hope this Christmas feels... weird ... I hope you can't ignore the fact that you're celebrating the birth of a child who was persecuted and targeted and his parents forced to flee to Egypt while right now millions of Palestinians from the exact part of the world are being persecuted and targeted and forced to flee their homes while they are indiscriminately and relentlessly bombed. Merry Xmas," she wrote.

Barrera appeared in the two most recent films in the "Scream" franchise but was fired from her lead role in the upcoming "Scream 7" film after she took to social media to share pro-Palestinian views.

She previously shared a post that accused Israel of "genocide and ethnic cleansing" and posted an excerpt from Jewish Currents magazine about distorting "the

Holocaust to boost the Israeli arms industry."

"Scream" producer Spyglass severed ties with Barrera after the posts. "Spyglass' stance is unequivocally clear: We have zero tolerance for antisemitism or the incitement of hate in any form, including false references to genocide, ethnic cleansing, Holocaust distortion or anything that flagrantly crosses the line into hate speech," the company said.

One day after Spyglass fired Barrera in November, it was revealed that castmate Jenna Ortega will also not be returning to the franchise due to filming conflicts. This week, director Christopher Landon also departed from his role on "Scream 7," taking to X on Saturday to write: "I guess now is as good a time as any to announce I formally exited 'Scream 7' weeks ago. This will disappoint some and delight others. It was a dream job that turned into a nightmare. And my heart did break for everyone involved. Everyone. But it's time to move on."

Meanwhile, US Dutch Palestinian model Hadid took to Instagram on Christmas Eve to share an illustration of the word "Palestine" in the form of a Christmas tree, topped with a dove holding an olive branch.

Hadid has long been a vocal proponent for Palestinian rights. Late October she posted a video encapsulating the violence inflicted on Gaza's residents along with a lengthy and emotional statement condemning terror attacks. Expressing grief for both Palestinian and Israeli civilians, she spoke to the "generational trauma" Palestinians have endured over decades of violent occupation.

"It is important to understand the hardship of what it is to be Palestinian, in a world that sees us as nothing more than terrorists resisting peace," wrote the model. "It is harmful, it is shameful, and it's categorically untrue."

Hadid, who has spoken in the past about losing work and friendships over her pro-Palestinian stance, confirmed that her cell number has nonetheless been leaked and that she's received "hundreds of death threats a day" since the beginning of the current war on October 7.

The model's statement also touched upon her family's personal history of displacement in Palestine. Her father, the real-estate developer Mohamed Hadid, was born in 1948, the year of the Nakba, or "catastrophe" that saw more than half the Palestinian population displaced en masse during the 1948 Arab-Israeli

war. As Hadid explained, nine days after Mohamed's birth, the Israeli government "expelled" him and his family from their home, never allowing them to return. "My family witnessed 75 years of violence against Palestinian people — most notably, brutal settler invasions which led to the destruction of entire communities, murder in cold blood and forcible removal of families from their homes," Hadid wrote. She added that "practice of settlements on Palestinian land still continues to this day" — something the United Nations confirms — and called the pain of that legacy "unimaginable."

She also drew attention to the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza, which the Israeli government has bombed relentlessly after Hamas launched its surprise attack. More than 1,400 Israelis were killed, while some 200 people were taken hostage. In retaliation, the Israeli government has flattened Gaza in air strikes, destroying homes, houses of worship, and schools where people are sheltering; it has cut access to clean water, electricity, food, and medical supplies.

More than 20,000 people have reportedly been killed in the Israeli government's brutal response so far, about half of them children.