



# Enemies Afraid of Electoral Miracle in Iran

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## Opinion

### Aaron: An eternal flame

By Mohammad Sarfi  
Editor-in-Chief

TEHRAN - The self-immolation of a 25-year-old US airman on February 25 outside the Israeli embassy in Washington DC is a solitary act of deep moral outrage against the Western complicity in the Gaza tragedy.

Aaron Bushnell's final words before pouring flammable liquid on himself and setting himself on fire are a poignant reminder to those who still have the spark of humanity alive within them:

"I am an active duty member of the United States Air Force. And I will no longer be complicit to genocide. I am about to engage in an extreme act of protest. But compared to what people have been experiencing in Palestine at the hands of their colonizers—it's not extreme at all. This is what our ruling class has decided will be normal."

Aaron tragically ended his own life; and as the flames engulfed him from head to toe like a phoenix, he repeatedly shouted in a resounding voice: Free Palestine! His membership in the US Air Force and self-immolation in military uniform elevate this brave and eternal young man's act, as the US military is directly involved in the genocide of the oppressed citizens of Gaza. The people of Gaza are being torn apart and burned alive with full support from the US military and American bombs. ▶ Page 2

### Iran aims to produce world's first vaccine for leishmaniasis

TEHRAN - Pasteur Institute of Iran has embarked on producing a vaccine for leishmaniasis which is said to be the first of its kind in the world.

Leishmaniasis is a parasitic disease that is found in parts of the tropics, subtropics, and southern Europe. It is caused by infection with Leishmania parasites, which are spread by the bite of infected sandflies.

There are several different forms of leishmaniasis in people. The most common forms are cutaneous leishmaniasis, which causes skin sores, and visceral leishmaniasis, which affects several internal organs (usually spleen, liver, and bone marrow).

"The disease has been reported in some parts of the country, but there is currently no vaccine for leishmaniasis in the world," ISNA quoted Rahim Sarvari, the president of Pasteur Institute as saying.

Accordingly, one of the main priorities of the Pasteur Institute of Iran is to produce a vaccine for the treatment of Leishmaniasis, he said.

Sarvari went on to say that extensive efforts are underway to develop the vaccine. "The process has gone through several phases, and the results will be announced soon." ▶ Page 7

### UN: One quarter of Gaza's people one step away from famine

At least 576,000 people in the Gaza Strip - one quarter of the population - are one step away from famine, a senior UN aid official told the Security Council on Tuesday, warning that widespread famine could be "almost inevitable" without action.

"Very little will be possible while hostilities continue and while there is a risk that they will spread into the overcrowded areas in the south of Gaza. We therefore reiterate our call for a ceasefire," said Ramesh Rajasingham, coordination director of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Reuters reported.

One in six children under age 2 in northern Gaza suffers from acute malnutrition and wasting and practically all the 2.3 million people in the Palestinian enclave rely on "woefully inadequate" food aid to survive, he told the Security Council.

Rajasingham said the UN and aid groups face "overwhelming obstacles just to get a bare minimum of supplies into Gaza." These include crossing closures, restrictions on movement and communication, onerous vetting procedures, unrest, damaged roads and unexploded ordnance, he said.

### Global calls grow for sanctions on Tel Aviv

By Ali Karbalaei

TEHRAN - Imposing sanctions on the Israeli regime has been a long-held demand by many in the international community over the past decades despite persistent shielding of the regime by the United States. The issue of punitive measures is being raised once more amid the devastating and indiscriminate Israeli war on Gaza.

The international rights organization, Human Rights Watch, has joined other advocacy groups, politicians and countries in calling for "sanctions on Israel", especially to put pressure on Tel Aviv to comply with the ICJ ruling on genocide.

A month has passed since a ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) found there was a plausible case to investigate the act of genocide against the Palestinian population in Gaza amid the Israeli war on the tiny coastal territory.

Despite the ICJ's demands that called on Tel Aviv to do everything within its power to prevent the act of genocide from taking place against the Palestinians in Gaza until the highest UN court concludes its investigation the regime has failed to do so, infuriating international rights groups. ▶ Page 5

### Delusional post-war Gaza scenarios

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN - Soon after Israel launched its brutal onslaught on the Gaza Strip in early October, post-war scenarios came to the fore.

In mid-October, Israel acknowledged that the regime's Intelligence Ministry had drafted "a wartime proposal" to transfer the Gaza Strip's 2.3 million people to Egypt's Sinai peninsula.

The move was quickly dismissed by the Egyptian president. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said Egyptians in their millions would reject the forced displacement of Palestinians into Sinai.

The draft proposal was in line with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plan to "destroy" Hamas and take full control of Gaza.

Last week, Netanyahu unveiled his post-war Gaza plans. Based on the plans, Israel would take over security control of the entire Gaza Strip and the regime's military would be granted unlimited freedom for operations inside the territory.

Speculations regarding Gaza's future have been further highlighted over the past days following the resignation of the Palestinian Authority prime minister. ▶ Page 5

### Nuclear messages exchanged between Tehran, Washington: Iran FM

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has noted that Tehran and Washington have exchanged messages regarding the stalled nuclear talks.

In an interview with Lebanon's Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network in the Swiss city of Geneva on Tuesday, he added that "letters are still being exchanged between Tehran and Washington regarding several topics."

"The American side sometimes hints at its desire for all participating parties to revert to their previous obligations as per the nuclear agreement. On our part, we frankly expressed our readiness to welcome recommendations that would allow reversion to previous commitments, but also annul the unilateral sanctions imposed on Iran," he clarified. ▶ Page 2



### Russian Deputy PM meets with Iran's VP in Tehran

TEHRAN - In a diplomatic visit to Tehran, Alexander Novak, the Deputy Prime Minister of Russia, convened with Mohammad Mokhber, Iran's First Vice President, for discussions on various aspects of mutual interest, addressing diplomatic, economic, and strategic matters.

The Wednesday afternoon meeting underscored the importance of bilateral engagements between Russia and Iran.

Mokhber emphasized the firm commitment of the Iranian government to strengthening the relations with Russia, affirming that no factor can hinder the progress of the bilateral relations between the two countries.

### Maestro Tjeknavorian unveils musical tribute to Maryam Mirzakhani

TEHRAN - Maestro Loris Tjeknavorian has released a musical creation dedicated to the late Iranian mathematician, Maryam Mirzakhani.

Entitled "Harmonizing Notes on the Scale of Numbers," the composition was unveiled during a ceremony held at the Ra'ad Charity Foundation in Tehran on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

The ceremony was graced with the presence of Maestro Tjeknavorian, the Mirzakhani family, alongside various artists, musicians, scholars, and cultural dignitaries.

Addressing the audience, Tjeknavorian shared insights into the emotional process behind crafting a tribute to Maryam Mirzakhani, expressing, "Like many in Iran and across the globe with an affinity for scientific pursuits, ▶ Page 8

## TEHRAN PAPERS

## No resolution will be issued against Iran

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

The Iran newspaper pointed to Iran's nuclear issue. It wrote: With the expansion of the scope of the Gaza war and the efforts of the Zionist leaders to involve Iran in this conflict, it was predictable that the negotiations to lift the sanctions on Iran would stop and the extremists in Western-Zionist circles would focus on putting pressure on Iran through the IAEA. It was in such a situation that (IAEA chief) Grossi tried to attract the attention of public opinion, media, and political circles in Western countries to his dissatisfaction with the process of cooperation with Tehran through numerous interviews. However, the recent IAEA report, which indicates a 5% reduction in Iran's 60% enrichment rate, shows that Iran does not intend to violate its unshakable position despite the IAEA's excuses. In this regard, no resolution against Iran will be approved at the next meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors. This shows that despite the false claims of Western-Zionist circles, Iran, unlike the Zionist regime, still adheres to its commitments in the framework of nuclear safeguards.

## Shargh: Increasing China's motivations

In an analysis, Shargh discussed China's policies toward the Persian Gulf countries and said: China has never been interested in accepting the responsibilities of a "security guarantor", which is the stated goal of American bases in the Persian Gulf. However, the Chinese base in the UAE may be an indication of China's plan for its military presence in the region, which is actually a covert presence. Beijing must also balance its relations with its Arab partners and Iran. On the one hand, its defense relations with Tehran go back several decades. On the other hand, economic relations with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and similar countries are more profitable than anything Iran can offer. China has yet to see any signs of apparent friction in relations with Tehran and Riyadh at the same time, but managing expectations with Tehran and its Arab rivals may become an issue. Riyadh has shown a willingness to take action against major powers that are partners with Iran (for example, voting to condemn Russia's attack on Ukraine at the United Nations).

## Javan: Tehran's red lines in geopolitical changes in the Caucasus

In an article, Javan dealt with the geopolitical

changes in the Caucasus. It quoted Ahmad Kazemi, a senior researcher in Eurasia, as saying: Iran's red line toward any geopolitical changes in the Caucasus is clear, and the necessary messages and warnings have been sent in this regard. The development of cooperation between Iran and Armenia in the field of reconstruction of transit roads in the form of the Persian Gulf-Black Sea corridor is important. The project of the "Aras Corridor" between Tehran and Baku is a basic idea to end the geopolitical conspiracy in the Caucasus.

Kazemi also referred to the Al-Aqsa Storm Operation and the persistence of the Palestinian resistance movement against the crimes of the Zionist regime and considered the failure of the threat from the Zionist regime against Iran in the Caucasus as one of the results of these developments. Iran is fully prepared to face any geopolitical adventures in this region and believes that the mistakes of the enemies can create an opportunity for Tehran to compensate for some shortcomings to clean Zionism from the Caucasus region.

## Ham Mihan: Iran's approach to prevent the creation of Zangezur corridor

In a commentary, Ham Mihan wrote: If the Republic of Azerbaijan has not taken action to create the Zangezur corridor, it is partly related to Iran's policies and actions. Iran's capacities in the form of encouragement and punitive measures have prevented the formation of such a corridor. Among Iran's encouraging measures, we can mention the agreement between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan to establish the Aras corridor, and among the punitive measures, we can mention Iran's military maneuvers in the northwest of the country, as well as the establishment of a consulate in Kapan, Armenia. All the actions that Iran has taken were aimed at stabilizing the situation in the region. If Baku imagines that Iran's reaction will be serious, decisive and effective, then it will avoid actions that disrupt the current status. But if Baku imagines that Tehran is not in a position to react strongly, it may use force. Baku may miscalculate and misperceive Iran's status. In that case, the situation in the region may go out of control.

## Iran, Turkmenistan vow to strengthen ties at consular session

TEHRAN - The 16th session of the intergovernmental Turkmen-Iranian commission was held on Tuesday where the two sides emphasized the importance of past agreements and explored new avenues for cooperation.

The meeting focused on consular, border, and customs affairs, playing a crucial role in enhancing the collaborative efforts between the two nations.

Conducted at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, the session featured the participation of prominent officials from the two countries, including Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs Ahmed Gurbanov of Turkmenistan and Alireza Bikhdeli of Iran. The discussions centered on the progress evaluation of agreements made during the previous session of intergovernmental commission between the two nations that was held in Ashgabat, on February 2023.

The officials meticulously reviewed the implementation status of previously agreed-upon actions and explored new avenues for cooperation. The emphasis on adhering to existing agreements signaled a mutual dedication to fortifying the partnership between Turkmenistan and Iran.

In addition to addressing current issues, the

dialogue delved into the future prospects of bilateral relations. By identifying mutual interests and concerns, both nations expressed their aim to establish a proper foundation for ongoing and future collaborations.

The session highlighted the strategic significance of Turkmen-Iranian relations in regional stability and development, emphasizing the constructive role played by high-level meetings in fostering mutual understanding and cooperation. The session concluded with the signing of a Final Protocol, encapsulating the agreements reached during the session. This protocol serves as a roadmap for the implementation of these agreements, ensuring the progress in Turkmen-Iranian relations remains measurable and accountable.

As Turkmenistan and Iran navigate the complexities of their regional environment, the outcomes of the 16th intergovernmental session underscore a shared commitment to cooperation and mutual respect. The session not only solidified existing ties but also opened doors to new opportunities, setting a positive trajectory for the future of Turkmen-Iranian relations.

## Preparations for March 1 elections fully underway: Raisi

TEHRAN- Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi affirms the nation's readiness to proceed with the electoral process during a cabinet meeting on Wednesday. Highlighting the significance of voter turnout, President Raisi underscored its role in enhancing social capital within the system.

He expressed optimism that robust participation in the Friday elections would not only thwart the efforts of adversaries but also instill further confidence among supporters of the Islamic Republic.

Reflecting on Iran's electoral history, Raisi hailed the upcoming 37th term of elections as a

testament to the country's esteemed traditions.

Emphasizing the readiness of all necessary infrastructures, he assured that Iran is well-prepared for the successful conduct of Friday's elections. He also addressed the tactics employed by adversaries aimed at instilling despair among the Iranian populace and diminishing voter turnout.

Nevertheless, he voiced hope that widespread participation would once again defy such efforts and reaffirm the resilience of the Iranian people.

Concluding his remarks, he reaffirmed Iran's status as a sovereign and independent nation, grounded in the will of its people.

## Nuclear messages exchanged between Tehran, Washington: Iran FM

From page 1 ▶ Iran's top diplomat stressed that "under President Ebrahim Raisi's government, we held serious talks with nuclear negotiators, but unfortunately, at a certain point, the war in Ukraine cast its shadows on them."

"The Iranian government affirmed from the start that it does not consider the nuclear agreement as an approach to resolving the country's issues, but Iran has proven that it is one of the countries most committed to its international pledges."

## UN performance

Abdollahian also said that "the performance of the United Nations is unfortunate, and Iran cannot leave space for recognition of the Israeli entity, because it does not acknowledge its legitimacy and considers it an occupation power over Palestinian lands."

He also averred that "the Security Council did not fulfill its duty as the United States continuously, unilaterally, and arrogantly exploited its veto power. Every prospect and proposal of a ceasefire resolution in Gaza has been rejected by the American veto, exhibiting a contradictory behavior to the banners of primary human rights. Even at the UNHCR, we still have not seen any adequate mobilization in this regard."

"During the first month of the war and the start of the genocide in Gaza, I visited Geneva and met with prominent officials at the United Nations, including the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and frankly told them that the commotion made, in the same council, when claims circulated the death of an Iranian woman, would not be forgotten," top diplomat continued.

## ICJ lawsuit

In an answer to a question about lawsuit filed by South Africa



against the Israeli regime, he said that "there are two simultaneous lawsuits filed against the Israeli apartheid and criminal occupation. The first one is a South African lawsuit filed against Israel and is currently being adjudicated. We hope the judges announce their charges in the upcoming days for them to be transformed into principles and foundations for all UN organizations, including the UNHRC."

The second lawsuit, he clarified, "was raised by the UN requesting judicial guidance regarding the legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, based on a decision made a few weeks ago. The ICJ's guidance, in this case, could become a precedent that presents a solution to the Palestinian cause."

## Probability of regional war

The Iranian foreign minister was asked about Iran's stance on the increased Western presence in the region in light of the growing number of U.S. and other Western naval entities and whether this could signify an escalation that could affect and reach Iran, Amir Abdollahian simply answered: "No."

"Our evaluations indicate that Netanyahu wants to expand the war and wants to implicate the

United States in conflicts and wars, now more than ever, at a rate that surpasses the holistic support the U.S. and its allies have been supplying the Israeli entity with... But the main point is that the U.S. and other Western nations are seemingly encountered with specific conditions," he said.

## Red Sea clashes

Amir Abdollahian also stressed that he talked with his British counterpart about the joint U.S.-UK aggression on Yemen, calling it a "strategic mistake" and underlining that Yemen has "proven that they do not trifle with any party regarding the security of their lands. They have been able to sound this message and clearly relayed that ships carrying military cargo to Israel will be stopped."

"Remarkably, they kept their vows to the fullest. If you take a satellite look at the Red Sea, you will find hundreds of ships on that route. We realize that shipping and insurance costs have soared, but trade ships that do not carry any supplies to the Israeli occupation cross the Red Sea safely," he stated.

## Iran regional "proxies"

Given the existence of any proxy linking to Tehran, Abdollahian

answered that "we do not have any proxies in the region.

Hezbollah and the Resistance in Palestine work as they see fit, based on their own interests. Yemen follows the same framework as well. In Iraq and Syria, groups to fight Daesh were formed and still operate for their countries' interests and considerations."

"It would be best if the United States focused on finding a political solution instead of throwing accusations and fabricating false scenarios," he underlined.

Disavowing Western accusations that Iran is using regional Resistance movements, whether in Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, or elsewhere, as regional proxies and tools to further its interests, he replied, "Five months of war proved that warfare is not the solution, thereby emphasizing the need for political resolutions realistically and from a Palestinian-centric lens."

## No difference between Biden, Trump

When asked for a comment on the upcoming U.S. elections, the Iranian foreign minister underlined that Tehran does not see a significant difference between both U.S. President Joe Biden and candidate Donald Trump.

"Over the past 45 years, the U.S. saw several Democratic and Republican presidents. What is of significance to us is their behavior. If they treat Iran with mutual respect and forego their errors and hostility, then we would return the respect," he said.

Amir Abdollahian also underscored that "if they continue employing this hostility, then our response would be direct and appropriate, whatever the party and political direction they might belong to and have."

## Tehran criticizes German FM over comments on human rights



TEHRAN- German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock's accusations against the Islamic Republic were categorically rejected by Iran as an inane attempt by the Berlin government to hide its backing for the Israeli occupation and its indifference to egregious human rights violations occurring throughout Palestinian territory.

In a statement late on Tuesday, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani said that "it is a bitter irony that certain Western governments claim to be advocates of human rights, while they played a direct role in supplying and equipping the regime of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein with chemical warfare during its imposed war on Iran in the 1980s, and have now offered support for

Israel's massacre in Gaza."

He went on to add, "Under the pretext of protecting human rights and yet by politicizing the matter, German authorities interfere in the domestic affairs of other countries, and at the same time, they bolster their own economy through stepped-up activities of their armament manufacturers."

The spokesman cautioned German officials from misusing the human rights issue to further their own politically motivated agenda by employing humanitarian and phony gestures.

In addition to highlighting the dire circumstances facing locals and refugees in Rafah, Kanaani continued to draw attention to the ongoing Israeli atrocities against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, calling the appalling conditions in Gaza and the West Bank an outright disgrace and unmistakable evidence of the failure of the so-called human rights advocates.

If Germany and its allies are really seeking to protect human rights, they should set up a special fact-finding committee to probe into Israel's massacre of 30,000 defenseless civilians in Gaza,

he pointed out.

The comments followed the German foreign minister's appeal for an extension of a UN mission about the riots in Iran in 2022 during her speech to the 55th session of the UN Human Rights Council on Monday in Geneva.

The UN Human Rights Council established the fictitious fact-finding mission on Iran in accordance with a resolution critical of Tehran that was approved during a special meeting in November of that year.

Iran denounced the resolution at the time, saying that such anti-Iranian actions were motivated by "multifaceted political goals."

Tehran also said that it would not assist such a mission, emphasizing that a national fact-finding commission had already been established in the nation to investigate the occurrences.

Germany's accusations on human rights concerns coincide with a societal backlash against anybody voicing support for the Palestinians, who have been subjected to Israel's most recent violent aggression against them for almost five months.

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

## Aaron: An eternal flame

From page 1 ▶ Bushnell could have, like many others, settled for the mainstream American media narrative, expressed maximum regret, and questioned what difference one person like him could make, thus easing his conscience. However, he did not want to be a cog in this killing machine and was more awake than to settle for mere expressions of regret or even protests.

America's shameful policy towards the massacre of the people of Gaza once again showed itself in the case of Bushnell. Mainstream American media outlets try to diminish and even suffocate public awareness with two labels, the first label being that they want to accuse him of having a mental disorder. One must truly ask whether this brave young man is suffering from a mental disorder or

American leaders, who have so far turned a blind eye to the massacre of 30,000 Palestinian citizens and continue to support the criminal regime of Israel, are the ones with a disorder?

The second label is the claim of Bushnell's connection with extremist groups. This accusation is neither new nor surprising. In the eyes of the West, anyone who resists their colonialism is considered extremist. Even Palestinians who have been displaced from their land for 75 years and resist against Israel are labeled as extremists.

Despite all efforts to distort and sully him, Bushnell's name will be recorded in the history of resistance and freedom.

Rest in power, martyr Aaron.



## Pars 1 satellite will be launched Thursday morning

TEHRAN- Iranian Minister of Information and Communication Technology, Issa Zarepour, announced that the domestically developed Pars 1 satellite is scheduled for launch on Thursday.

This marks the 12th satellite launch during President Raisi's administration, Zarepour disclosed during a press briefing following a cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

"Pars 1, an imaging satellite, has been entirely

produced within Iran," Minister Zarepour stated, highlighting the significance of international collaboration in this endeavor, as the satellite will be launched using the Russian Soyuz satellite carrier. Looking ahead, Zarepour outlined plans for advancing Iran's space capabilities, including the completion of the initial phase of a major space center in southern Iran.

Once operational, this facility will enable Iran

to deploy satellites into orbit at a 98-degree Sun angle, enhancing the country's space exploration capabilities significantly.

Emphasizing the rapid pace of progress in Iran's space industry, Zarepour revealed that several satellites are currently in production, with anticipated launches slated for the upcoming year. In the end, he expressed optimism that these developments would set new records for Iran's space program.

# Enemies afraid of electoral miracle in Iran

TEHRAN- Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei met with a number of first-time voters as well as the honorable families of martyrs on Wednesday.

During the meeting, he said a vibrant and strong participation by the Iranian nation in the elections would be a manifestation of national power, guarantee the national security, and disappoint the enemies who have their eyes on Iran, according to Khamenei.

He noted that holding a vibrant election is one of the pillars of proper administration of the country's affairs and would pave the way for resolving the country's problems and moving the country forward.

Ayatollah Khamenei, referring to the writings of some elements of the Pahlavi regime about the sham elections before the Revolution, said: "As they have also admitted, the list of the elected candidates was already determined at the [Shah's] court and sometimes even in some foreign embassies, and the same list had to come out of the ballot boxes."

Pointing to the rule of dictatorial groups after major revolutions such as the French Revolution and the former Soviet Revolution, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution said, "Imam Khomeini (ra), with complete trust in the people and giving primacy to the ballot box, put the type government



to a referendum only about 50 days after the victory of the Revolution, so that the people, as the owners of the country and the Revolution, would become the decision-makers of all important matters."

He also drew attention to the evil enemies keeping a watchful eye on "dear Iran" and Friday's elections, saying, "The U.S., the policies of most Europeans, the evil Zionists, capitalists and big companies that follow Iran's affairs closely with various motives and reasons are more than anything else afraid of the people's participation in the elections and the power of the Iranian people."

"The enemies have seen that this decisive popular power destroyed the tyrannical regime supported by the U.S. and the UK and disgraced Saddam in the imposed war despite his Western, Eastern and regional supporters," Ayatollah Khamenei remarked. That is why, he hastened to add, elections are a manifestation of showing off the

country's national power.

He called the strong participation of people in the elections a manifestation of national power, which in turn guarantees national security, asserting that "nothing will exist without national security."

"If the enemy sees a weakness in Iranians in the field of national power, it will threaten the national security from various angles," the Leader warned.

He also argued that the election of strong candidates, the formation of a strong parliament, and consequently resolving the country's problems and securing its progress are the outcomes of a strong and vibrant election. "Political growth and increasing the analytical power of the youth during the elections are invaluable, because they lead to gaining knowledge about the enemy and its methods and actions, and as a result, gaining knowledge about the ways to confront and neutralize the conspiracies of the ill-wishers," he said.

In the final part of his speech, Ayatollah Khamenei called the Gaza issue an essential issue of the Islamic world and said: "The Gaza issue introduced Islam to the world, and it became clear that Islam and religion as a factor lead to people's power and resistance and their not surrendering in the face of all the bombings and catastrophes of the Zionists."

This issue, he went on, showed the truth of the Western culture and civilization to the world and it became clear that the politicians born from this culture are not even willing to acknowledge that the Zionists are committing genocide against Palestinians.

He said despite their empty rhetoric, they veto UN Security Council resolutions aimed at halting the Zionist regime's crimes.

Ayatollah Khamenei also said the self-immolation of a U.S. Air Force officer in protest against the crimes of the Zionist regime was the peak of scandal and disgrace for the U.S.'s inhumane policies and the West's cruel culture. He further added that even this person who was brought up in Western culture recognized the depth of the disgrace of this culture.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution then expressed hopes that God would grant complete victory to Islam, Muslims and Palestine, especially Gaza.

### Mauricio Paes named Iran volleyball coach

TEHRAN - Brazilian coach Mauricio Motta Paes has been named as new head coach of Iran's men's national volleyball team, the volleyball federation of Iran announced on Wednesday.

Paes will serve as Team Melli head coach until the end of the 2024 Olympic Games, with the option to extend for two more years.

Italian coach Alberto Giuliani was a serious candidate for taking charge of Iran volleyball team but the Federation opted Paes.

He has most recently worked as Ukraine's Epticentr-Podolyany.

Paes replaced Behrouz Ataei, who was dismissed in October following poor results in the 2023 Volleyball Nations League.

Italian coach Angelo Lorenzetti, Roberto Piazza, Russian Vladimir Alekno, Belgian Vital Heynen and Saeid Marouf were among the candidates for the job.

Iran's chances of reaching the 2024 Paris Olympics are slim due to poor results in the 2023 FIVB Volleyball Nations League and the Olympic qualifiers.

Iran concluded their FIBA Asia Cup 2025 Qualifiers Window 1 campaign with an undefeated record, dominating India 86-53 at the K.D. Jadhav Indoor Hall. Previously, Hakan Demir's side had secured a narrow 76-74 victory against Qatar on Feb. 23 in Tehran.

The Turkish coach of Iran basketball national team praised India's impressive performance on the court, acknowledging their strong gameplay.

Reflecting on the difference between the game against India and Qatar, Demir commented: "In my opinion, we witnessed a good team from India with a competent coaching staff. Certainly, we will see India's team improve in the future, but it's not fair to compare our game against Qatar with the Indian national team."

"I believe that the Qatar national team couldn't be considered a true national team due to the presence of players from Bosnia, Egypt, America, and Senegal," he added.

Regarding the main reason for Iran's decisive victory against the Indian national team, Demir highlighted: "We had a good performance in both offensive and defensive rebounds, which led to our victory. While India also performed well, we excelled in rebounds."

Iran will host Kazakhstan in the second window of the 2025 FIBA Asia Cup Qualifiers on Nov. 22, and then play an away game against Qatar three days later.

### Iran hockey suffer fourth loss at 2024 World Championships

TEHRAN - Iran's national hockey team was defeated against Hong Kong 11-3 in Group B of the 2024 World Championships Division III on Tuesday.

Iran had lost to host Bosnia 3-0, the Philippines 14-2 and North Korea 9-4 in its previous matches.

Team Melli will play Singapore on Thursday.

Entry to all championship games is free of charge, and the first-place team will go to division III A. The Group A tournament will be held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan from March 10 to 16 and the Group B tournament is underway in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina from February 23 to 29.

### Wrestler Gerai has suspension lifted by UWW

TEHRAN - Iranian Greco-Roman wrestler Mohammadali Gerai is no longer suspended.

He had been suspended until further notice in October 2023 for throwing water bottle onto the mat during a match in the 2023 World Wrestling Championships.

He threw a bottle in protest of the referee's decision during his brother Mohammadreza Gerai's match against Japan's Kyotaro Sogabe in the 67kg weight class.

Gerai defeated his rival 11-10 at last but the Japanese coaching staff believed that the bottle has led to the defeat.

Iran wrestling Federation appealed the decision and the UWW's Disciplinary Committee decided to lift the suspension and the wrestler is allowed to compete from April 1, 2024.

### FIFA president congratulates Iran over Beach Cup third place achievement

TEHRAN - President of FIFA Gianni Infantino has sent a congratulatory message to Iran for finishing third in the 2024 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Infantino extended the message to President of Iranian Football Federation Mehdi Taj, according to an IRNA Wednesday report.

Infantino says achieving such a position in the world competitions results from hardworking, enthusiasm, and professionalism.

Iran beat Belarus 6-1 in the third-place playoff match of the tournament held in Dubai on Sunday (February 25).

## Beating a dead horse

Republic of Iran.

Contrary to Halpern's perspective, democracy within Iran is a multifaceted concept rooted in the principles of Islam, governance by the people, and the establishment of a republic. According to the remarks by the leader of the Islamic Revolution on Saturday, the fusion of trust in the republic, the populace, and Islamic values has underpinned the country's stability and progression.

Also, a cursory examination of Iran's electoral framework reveals the active participation of its citizens in shaping both the executive and legislative branches of the country. Iran's electoral landscape encompasses various tiers, including presidential, parliamentary, and the Assembly of Experts elections, wherein individuals exercise their democratic rights. During parliamentary elections, candidates vie for 290 seats, while the Assembly of Experts election offers 88 seats for contention. This allocation ensures representation across diverse segments of society, fostering inclusivity within the political sphere.

Moreover, the upcoming March 1 election exemplifies the vibrancy of Iran's political landscape, with a multitude of parties and coalitions fervently competing for public support. The announcement by Iranian Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi regarding the readiness of 103 parties and 20 electoral coalitions underscores the robust democratic process underway.

In essence, the notion of democracy in Iran transcends Halpern's narrow confines, embodying a dynamic synthesis of Islamic principles and participatory governance.

### Decoding allegations of Jerusalem Post against Tehran

The assertions put forth in this report stem from the author's apparent concerns regarding Iran's stance towards Israel. It is imperative to clarify that Iran's foreign policy is a reflection of its national interests. Like freedom seekers across the globe, the Iranian populace has expressed its disapproval of Israeli onslaught through anti-Israeli demonstrations. Consequently, the country's

diplomatic channels routinely condemn Israeli aggression and human rights violations.

Regardless of the outcome of the March 1 election, both the Iranian people and their government will remain steadfast in their support for the oppressed Palestinians. Moreover, they steadfastly remember Israel's hostility towards Iran, including recent terrorist incidents and acts of sabotage orchestrated by Israeli spy agencies.

Another motivation behind this report appears to be an attempt to undermine the forthcoming election in Iran. By forecasting low voter turnout and highlighting divisions between the Iranian populace and its government, the report seeks to dampen enthusiasm and cast doubt on the legitimacy of the electoral process.

Furthermore, the report appears to propagate a narrative of hopelessness, suggesting that Iranians are powerless in shaping the future of their country. This tactic aligns with a broader strategy of soft warfare, aimed at sowing discord and alienating the Iranian people from their government.

### Unraveling Jerusalem Post's double standards

The attempt by the Israeli outlet to accuse Iran of lacking democracy is not only hypocritical but also shortsighted. While scrutinizing Iran's democratic credentials, the outlet conveniently overlooks the ongoing anti-government demonstrations within Israel itself.

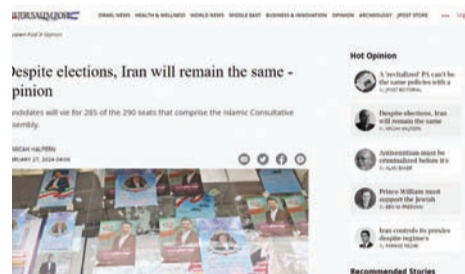
For months, thousands of Israelis have taken to the streets to protest the hawkish policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, particularly concerning the Gaza Strip.

Moreover, it conveniently ignores the global outcry against Tel Aviv's blatant disregard for human rights, particularly in recent months.

The international community has voiced widespread condemnation of Israel's actions, highlighting its egregious violations of human rights in various contexts.

By selectively focusing on Iran's political system while disregarding similar issues within Israel and the international community's condemnation of Israeli policies, the outlet exposes its bias and undermines its credibility.

public." The official did not specify which terror outfit the two individuals belong to. But the southeastern province has come under attacks by terrorists from the so-called Jaish Al-Adl group several times in the past years.



By Alireza Akbari

TEHRAN- In a recent editorial piece published by The Jerusalem Post, a concerted effort was made to sow seeds of hopelessness within the Iranian populace, casting doubt on the democratic processes in Iran.

The Israeli newspaper sought to discourage participation in the upcoming parliamentary and Assembly of Experts elections.

Authored by Michan Halpern, the piece asserted that these elections are unlikely to transform Iran into a Western-style democracy. However, this assertion is founded by Halpern's limited understanding of Iran's political landscape and its people.

Halpern's analysis overlooks the complexities inherent in Iran's electoral system and the diverse aspirations of its citizens. By painting a bleak picture of the electoral outcome, the report seems to undermine the potential for meaningful change within Iran's political framework. Such a perspective fails to acknowledge the role of Iranian voters and their capacity to shape the direction of their country through civic engagement.

Moreover, the editorial's focus on Iran's foreign policy, particularly its stance towards Tel Aviv, demonstrates a narrative of Tel Aviv's worries toward Iran's Israel policy.

### Iran's pursuit of Islamic democracy

Halpern's skepticism regarding the existence of democracy in Iran stems from his wrong outlook toward Tehran, where he erroneously applies a Western-centric interpretation of the term "democracy." In his critique, he overlooks the unique Islamic democracy model embraced by the Islamic

## Terrorist killed while preparing for attack in southeastern Iran

TEHRAN - A terrorist accidentally killed himself while attempting to plant bombs in a vehicle in the southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan, according to local authorities.

"Two terrorists who had entered

the country to carry out a bombing operation in the Bampur county were caught off guard when the car they were trying to install explosives in detonated. One of the terrorists was killed and the other is currently

at large," the prosecutor of Sistan and Baluchestan told Iranian media.

"Judicial orders have been issued for the arrest of the second terrorist who is currently on the run, and any new information or updates will be made

## Diverse backgrounds represented among parliamentary candidates: Guardian Council

TEHRAN - On Wednesday, the spokesperson for Iran's Guardian Council informed journalists that the candidates running for seats in Iran's Parliament on Friday hail from diverse professional and religious backgrounds.

The Guardian Council is the body responsible for vetting and approving candidates for Iran's elections including legislative votes.

"The approved candidates for the Islamic Consultative Assembly come from various backgrounds, including lawyers, judges, doctors, educators, and teachers, who are among the approved

candidates. Additionally, women are participating as candidates for the elections at a rate six times that of parliamentary seats," Hadi Tahan Nazif explained, adding that though the majority of Iranians are Muslims, minorities hold fixed seats in parliament.

"This year's election will be held in approximately 60,000 polling stations. In the process of reviewing the qualifications of the candidates for parliament, about 75% of the eligible candidates have been approved, which is almost all of the registrants from the previous term, with 52 candidates competing for each parliamentary seat," he said.

Iranians will decide on March 1 who they want to see occupy seats at Iran's parliament for the next 4 years.

A record-breaking 15,200 candidates have been greenlit by the selection committee to vie for the 290 seats in the Iranian parliament, marking a significant milestone post the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Of these candidates, 1,713 are women—a substantial increase from the 2020 election's 819 female entrants. Notably, the Tehran constituency is witness to a staggering 3,545 candidates competing in the upcoming elections.

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

## IFO negotiating fishery knowledge transfer with UNIDO



TEHRAN – The head of the Iranian Fisheries Organization (IFO) has emphasized the use of new technologies in the fishing industry and said: “We have entered into negotiations with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) to transfer new technologies in all areas from fishing to processing.”

“More than 45 percent of the country’s catch is comprised of tuna fish and Iranian fishermen are ranked first in the west of the Indian Ocean with more than 1,000 boats,” Hossein Hosseini said.

“IFO has put the use of new technologies, in which some countries such as Japan are leaders, on the agenda, and we have entered

into negotiations with UNIDO to transfer new technologies from fishing to processing,” he added.

Emphasizing that completing the tuna fish value chain is very important, Hosseini said: “Currently, the production of tuna in the country is 282 tons, most of which is sold in the form of canned food. In the first phase, we plan to bring 10 percent of this amount to the table of Iranians in the form of fresh meat, and in the next phases, we will increase the figure to 50 percent.”

Back in December 2023, Hosseini said the country’s fishery output is going to be increased to 2.6 million tons in the next 10 years.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the seventh International Congress on Fisheries and Aquatic Research in late December, Hosseini said: “In order to ensure food security, the fishery sector is expected to produce 2.6 million tons of products in the next 10 years.”

“We have started the development of aquatic production using the capabilities of domestic companies on the coast of Makran, and it is hoped that by using the capacities of knowledge-based companies, we will be able to achieve maximum production,” he said.

## TEDPIX rises 8,700 points on Wednesday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 8,723 points to 2,054,739 on Wednesday, which is the fifth day of the Iranian calendar week.

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

The head of Iran’s Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) mentioned the measures taken by this organization in the past Iranian calendar year 1401 (which ended on March 20, 2023) and explained the priorities and key plans of the SEO in 1402.

In a message on the occasion of the New Year, Majid Eshqi wrote:

In 1401, one of the main goals of SEO was to protect the rights of investors and restore their confidence in the capital market. In this regard, various programs were targeted and implemented: (1) Development and improvement of intelligent monitoring systems in market sectors and financial institutions, (2) Payment of interest through the comprehensive customer information

system of Sejam, including annual and annual profits, so that small shareholders can ensure that they receive their profits at the lowest cost, (3) Launching new investment instruments, including certificates of deposit of gold bullion, crude oil and gas condensate, so that small shareholders can invest in basic and relatively inflation-proof assets in small amounts, (4) Diversification of investment funds to cover the tastes and needs of a wider range of retail investors, (5) A jump in the licensing of financial institutions with the aim of improving the competitive environment and increasing the quality of customer service, (6) Building trust through the promotion of the Capital Market Stabilization Fund’s status and introducing the shareholder portfolio insurance plan for retail investors, (7) Improving market micro-structures such as increasing the range of volatility with the aim of smoothing the market flow, and (8) Issuing new guidelines for corporate governance in order to protect the rights of shareholders by publishers. Today, we can say with pleasure that the trust of small shareholders has been significantly restored as a fundamental step towards popularizing the economy.

## Exports from Mazandaran Province grows 13% in 11 months

TEHRAN - More than \$282 million worth of non-oil products were exported from Iran’s northern Mazandaran province in the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2023-February 21, 2024), showing a 13 percent growth compared to the same period last year, an official with the province’s customs office announced. According to Amir Jamshidi, over 298 commodity items with a total weight of over 1.377 million tons were exported from the provincial customs offices, Mehr News Agency reported.

The exports increased by 52 percent in the

mentioned 11 months in terms of weight, compared to the same period last year, the official said.

According to Jamshidi dairy products, cement, plastic materials, citrus fruits, and edible products were the top exported goods from the customs offices of Mazandaran province between March 21, 2023, and February 24, 2024.

The non-oil goods were exported to forty-nine countries, mainly to Iraq (\$127 million), Russia (\$65 million), Turkmenistan (\$15 million), Kazakhstan (\$12 million) and Uzbekistan (\$9 million), he added.

## Iran’s oil sector annual growth doubles despite sanctions

TEHRAN - Iran’s oil sector has witnessed a twofold increase in its annual economic growth in autumn 2023, the country’s Finance and Economic Affairs said on Tuesday.

As IRNA reported, Ehsan Khandouzi, who made the statement in a press conference, added the oil industry’s growth reached 21.8 percent in the season from 10.8 percent registered in autumn 2022, showing the country has largely succeeded in overcoming sanctions.

The 13th administration has made great efforts to neutralize sanctions since it took office in August 2021, the official underlined, praising the incumbent government’s economic diplomacy and attention to foreign investment.

Last week, Iran’s Plan and Budget Organization (PBO) head, Davoud Manzour, said the country’s economic growth in autumn 2023 stood at 5.1 percent including the oil sector’s growth, and 2.5 percent without oil. According to Khandouzi, Iran’s non-oil trade with 15 neighboring states during the 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (starting March 21, 2023) hit \$55 billion, 2.5 percent higher than the figure during the corresponding period in its preceding year.

Foreign investments made since the incumbent government took over have exceeded \$11 billion, said the spokesman, adding the oil sector has attracted \$4.8 billion, the industrial sector \$3.8 billion, the services sector \$617 million, and the agricultural sector \$580 million.

# Iran, Russia ink several co-op MOUs to wrap up 17th Joint Economic Commission

TEHRAN – Iran and Russia signed several memorandums of understanding (MOUs) to cooperate in various sectors at the end of the two countries’ 17th Joint Economic Committee meeting which was held in Tehran during February 26-28.

The MOUs were signed in the presence of the Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji and Russia’s Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, who co-chaired the mentioned meeting, Shana reported.

Over the three days of the joint committee meeting, Iranian and Russian experts from different economic sectors explored all avenues of cooperation in the form of 20 working groups to prepare the mentioned MOUs and the commission’s comprehensive document.

### Iranian Oil Ministry to co-op with Russia’s Transneft on smart tracking technologies

On the sidelines of the two countries’ Joint Economic Committee meeting on Wednesday, Iran’s Deputy Oil Minister for Engineering, Research and Technology Affairs Vahid-Reza Zeydifard met with Transneft’s Deputy Head Kalanda Vladimir Alexandrovich during which the two sides explored areas for mutual cooperation.

According to Zeydifard, the two sides’s cooperation is going to mainly focus on smart tracking technologies of oil and gas pipelines.

Speaking at the meeting, Zeydifard said there are many fields for cooperation between the two sides’ scientific and research centers, such as the Iranian Oil Industry Research Institute and Russian research institutes.



Pointing out that smart monitoring of oil and gas pipelines and student exchange between Iran and Russia are among the main areas of cooperation, he continued: “Currently, Iran’s knowledge-based companies have potential capabilities in the field of smart monitoring of pipelines, but due to the expansion of oil and gas pipelines in Iran, we need to cooperate with “Transneft” company in this field as well.”

Alexandrovich for his part emphasized that the goal of his company is to help the projects of Iran’s oil industry and not make a profit. “Iran has many achievements in the oil and gas industry, and our cooperation with this industry is beneficial for both parties,” he said.

### Iranian Automakers ready to co-op with Russian counterparts

The Managing Director of Iran’s major automaker Iran Khodro Company (IKCO) has said his company is ready to cooperate with its Russian counterparts.

Speaking to the Head of Russia’s Federal Agency for Technical Regulations and Metrology (Rosstandart) Anton Shalaev, Alimardan Azimi expressed IKCO’s

readiness for harmonizing the company’s standards with those of Russia.

Referring to Iran Khodro’s plans for exporting vehicles to Russia, Azimi said: “According to the agreements made, the process of exporting Iranian automobile products to Russia is underway. At the first stage, we are going to launch the production line of Tara [an Iranian car] in the Russian market, and I hope to expand cooperation by creating the necessary conditions.”

Shalaev also called for cooperation between the two sides for the development and improvement of the standard in the Russian automobile industry.

### Tehran-Moscow launch new airlines

Iran and Russia have also agreed to launch new airlines between the two countries and establish joint ventures to cooperate in the transportation sectors.

According to Iranian Deputy Transport Minister Kamal Hadian-Far, the two sides are also going to sign the deal for completing Iran’s Rasht-Astara railway.

\*\*\* Iran-Russia gas cooperation planned: envoy

Talking to IRNA on Tuesday,

Iran’s Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali said Iran-Russia cooperation in the gas sector has been planned and could lead to good outcomes if implemented.

Jalali pointed to the materialization of the plan to turn Iran into a gas hub in partnership with Russia thanks to the two countries’ top global positions in terms of gas reserves and production and added, “It was suggested in the past that Tehran and Moscow cannot cooperate in the economic fields, but the comment proved wrong in recent years.”

He said, “When I was departing for Moscow to begin my diplomatic mission, some people told me that Iran and Russia could never cooperate in the economic areas as energy is the pillar of their economy and the two states are rivals in this sector. To me, this is a wrong suggestion as economic cooperation is not limited to the energy sector and the two countries can cooperate in many fields.”

The theory proved wrong in practice, underlined the ambassador, referring to the current cooperation between Iran and Russia in various sectors.

Jalali said, “If the two countries had not faced the five barriers of cognition, transit, logistics, monetary and banking, and customs problems, bilateral relations would have expanded in many areas.”

The Russians made the highest investments in Iran in 2023, the envoy quoted the Economy Ministry as saying, adding the investments have been mainly attracted by the oil industry.

Iran and Russia can also cooperate to export gas, he concluded.

## Natural gas consumption hits new record high

TEHRAN – Following the significant temperature drop over the past few days, the consumption of natural gas by Iranian domestic and commercial sectors reached 665 million cubic meters (mcm) to register a new record high in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19), an official with the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) announced.

According to Head of the NIGC Dispatching Department Gholamreza Kooshki, considering the current trend, the country’s gas consumption is expected to increase even further to 680 mcm,

Shana reported.

“Now, the gas network of some cities in the provinces of Golestan, Mazandaran, Gilan, Razavi Khorasan, North Khorasan, and South Khorasan are in critical conditions, and there is a need to save and manage consumption,” Kooshki said.

According to the official, the most gas consumption is registered in the provinces of Tehran, Isfahan, and Razavi Khorasan respectively.

As reported, Oil Minister Javad Oji has also warned about the current consumption patterns, saying that there is a possibility of a drop in gas

pressure in the northern provinces.

“I ask people to use optimally and heat a minimum space in the workplaces and homes to help other fellow citizens, especially in the North-West, North, and North-East provinces,” Oji said.

The NIGC also published a notice on Wednesday morning asking all natural gas consumers across the country to observe the comfort temperature from 18 to 21 degrees Celsius, wear clothes suitable for the cold season, and adjust the temperature of heating systems based on the comfort temperature.

## IAC preparing comprehensive document on smartening of airports

TEHRAN – Iran Airport Company (IAC) is going to form a specialized committee to explore ways of developing the digital and electronic infrastructure of the country’s airports and

aviation systems with a focus on compiling a comprehensive document on the smartening of the airports.

According to the IAC Office of

Public Relations, during a meeting held on Tuesday, senior officials and experts from the company discussed operational plans and details on the preparation and compilation of the mentioned

document based on international experiences and internal capabilities of the domestic knowledge-based companies, IRNA reported.

## TPO to hold conference on Iran-Syria trade opportunities next week

TEHRAN – Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) is going to hold a conference on Syria’s trade opportunities for Iranian business operators on Sunday, March 3, an official with the organization announced.



Abdolmir Rabiavi, the director general of TPO West Asia Office, said: “Syria is one of the export target countries of the Islamic Republic, and after

the end of the military crisis and establishment of peace in the region, Iranian traders and businessmen are getting more interested in the Syrian market.”

Emphasizing the need to raise awareness among Iranian traders about the political and economic situation in Syria, the official added: “Iranian manufacturing and exporting companies have greatly welcomed this conference so that in the end we had to consider a ceiling for the presence of Iranian companies.”

According to Rabiavi, 150 Iranian companies have been selected to participate in this conference.

The official said the organization has been taking effective measures to increase the share of Iranian companies in the Syrian market.

He pointed to the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Tehran and Damascus and added that the customs tariffs agreed with Syria have been minimized to the zero level.

The two countries have high potential and capacities to boost their trade, Rabiavi added.

As stated by the former TPO head, Iran has allocated a special budget of \$50 million to support the Iranian export companies active in the Syrian market.

“Iran and Syria have good political relations and we must use this opportunity and encourage the private sector and our businessmen to enter the Syrian market and the government must do its best in this regard,” Alireza Peyman Pak said.

Iran and Syria signed four documents to boost cooperation in the fields of trade and industry during a visit of an Iranian delegation headed by the country’s industry minister to Damascus in 2022.

The documents were inked at the end of the two countries’ joint economic and industrial committee meetings which were held in the Syrian capital.

## Iran ranking improves 6 places among ISO members

TEHRAN – The head of the Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of Iran has said the country’s ranking among the 168 member countries of the International Standard Organization (ISO) has improved from 26th to 20th place.

“Based on the latest reports of international organizations, Iran’s national standards organization has reached the 20th place in the global standardization list for the second year in a row despite all the negative impacts of the U.S. sanctions,” Mehdi Eslam-Panah told IRIB.

According to the official, Japan, China, South Korea, and India occupy the first to fourth ranks among Asian countries, and Iran is ranked fifth. He further noted that Iran is West Asia’s top country in terms of standardization, according to the ISO.

# Resistance remains a thorn in the side of the U.S., Israel Delusional post-war Gaza scenarios

From page 1 ▶ Mohammed Shtayyeh and his government submitted their resignations to President Mahmoud Abbas on Monday.

"The upcoming phase and its challenges necessitate new governmental and political arrangements, taking into consideration the evolving situation in Gaza, national unity discussions, the urgent need for Palestinian-Palestinian consensus based on national unity, broad participation, solidarity, and the extension of authority over all of Palestine," Shtayyeh said.

The Palestinian premier's announcement comes at a time when the PA faces intense pressure from the United States to reform and improve its governance in the West Bank.

The White House wants a reformed PA being in control of both the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank.

But as the Israeli premier's proposal shows,

the regime is opposed to the prospect of the PA returning to Gaza after the war.

Netanyahu has also dismissed the idea of establishing a Palestinian state.

## Unfeasible plans

Regardless of the differences between the U.S. and Israel over PA's



return to Gaza, their post-war plans are delusional and unviable.

First of all, Netanyahu wants to take full control over Gaza after eliminating Hamas.

But, the elimination of the resistance movement from Gaza has been elusive and will remain elusive.

Some two weeks ago, a document drawn up by the Israeli military's intelligence revealed that the Netanyahu regime will fail to destroy Hamas.

The document said even if Israel dismantles the resistance group's organized military capabilities, it will continue to operate in Gaza. It also said "authentic support remains" for Hamas among the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

Over the past months, Herzi Halevi, the head of the Israeli army, has not spoken of eliminating or eradicating Hamas. He has instead raised the possibility of dismantling the resistance group. His approach is an implicit acknowledgment that even a protracted war will not be able to destroy Hamas.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell has also warned Israel can't defeat Hamas by military means.

Netanyahu has vowed to continue the war until "total victory" over Hamas. When his regime remains incapable of defeating Hamas, how can he implement his post-war plans?

Shtayyeh stepped down amid growing U.S. pressure on Abbas to shake up the Palestinian Authority as part of plans to work on a

political structure to govern Gaza after the war.

Reports suggest that Abbas will name Mohammad Mustafa, a former World Bank official who is chairman of the Palestine Investment Fund as the new prime minister.

Irrespective of who will be appointed as a new prime minister, the Palestinian Authority will be unable to govern Gaza.

The PA stands accused of ineffectiveness and corruption.

Likewise, surveys show it is deeply unpopular among Palestinians who see it as unable to provide security in the face of regular Israeli incursions into the occupied West Bank.

Furthermore, more than 60% of Palestinians want the PA to be dissolved, that's according to a survey carried out by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in December. The opinion poll also revealed that 92% of respondents want President Abbas to resign.

While Gazans remain supportive of Hamas, the resistance group is also gaining popularity in the West Bank.

Resistance groups such as Hamas remain a thorn in the side of the U.S. and Israel.

They are making attempts to eliminate resistance groups, but to avail.

## WORLD HEADLINES

### Senators question legality of Biden's strikes in Yemen

A growing number of bipartisan lawmakers is questioning President Joe Biden's legal authorities to conduct strikes on Yemen's Ansarallah.

Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., led three other senators in a Tuesday letter to Biden pushing him on the strategic and legal rationale for the recent tit-for-tat strikes against Ansarallah assets in Yemen without a military authorization from Congress. The objections come following reports the White House is preparing for a sustained campaign that could last several more months in response to the movement's attacks on Israeli-linked ships in the Red Sea.

"There is no current congressional authorization for U.S. military action against the Houthis in the Red Sea or Yemen," Kaine told Defense News. "This has gone beyond a one-off self-defense. As soon as it's a prediction of a back-and-forth, it's going to escalate more. This needs Congress now."

Sens. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., Mike Lee, R-Utah, and Todd Young, R-Ind., also signed onto the Kaine letter questioning Biden's legal authorities under the 1973 War Powers Act.

In Biden's notification to Congress outlining his initial Jan. 11 strikes in Yemen, he invoked his authorities as commander-in-chief under Article II of the Constitution to defend U.S. citizens, personnel and assets.

### Haniyeh urges Palestinians to march on Al-Aqsa Mosque on 1st day of Ramadan

Ismail Haniyeh, the political bureau chief of Hamas, has called on the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank to march on Al-Aqsa Mosque on the first day of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

"The siege of Al-Aqsa and the siege of Gaza are one and the same," Haniyeh said in

a televised message on Wednesday, Press TV reported.

Haniyeh was referring to an announcement by the Israeli regime that it would impose restrictions on access to Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Old City of occupied al-Quds during Ramadan according to "security needs."

The first day of Ramadan this year falls on March 10 or 11.

"Al-Aqsa Mosque and other holy sites must be managed in accordance with international law. Our people will defend their mosques, churches, and holy sites with all forms of resistance."

The chief of the Palestinian resistance movement said the rise in Israel's attacks in the West Bank is part of a comprehensive plan to displace all Palestinians.

### Russia: West allows Israel to use hunger as a method of war

The U.S. and Russian representatives to the UN exchanged heated words Tuesday during a Security Council session on Gaza.

In his remarks at the session, titled "Protection of civilians in armed conflict," Russian envoy Vassily Nebenzia accused his "Western colleagues" of allowing Israel to use hunger as a method of war, TRT World reported.

Nebenzia slammed the U.S. for vetoing multiple UN efforts towards a cease-fire in the Gaza conflict, which he said would "prevent mass starvation" in the Israeli-blockaded Palestinian enclave.

He said an alternative resolution drafted by the U.S. does not "contain an appeal for a cease-fire and is aimed at broadening the UN umbrella to the acts of Israel."

"This is not an alternative. This is yet another license to kill," he added.

U.S. Deputy Ambassador Robert Wood said: "I would just remind everyone in this room that the Russian Federation is a country that doesn't contribute to resolving humanitarian crises. It creates them."

## Global calls grow for sanctions on Tel Aviv

'Israel is starving Gaza's 2.3 million population more harshly than before'

From page 1 ▶ The United Nations Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has said that fewer aid trucks have entered Gaza and fewer aid missions have been allowed to reach northern Gaza in the several weeks since the ruling than in the weeks preceding it.

Rights groups have accused the Israeli regime of continuing to obstruct the delivery of basic services in the Gaza Strip and entry and distribution of lifesaving aid and fuel within the enclave.

They also warned that the Israeli military is practicing other acts of collective punishment that amount to war crimes. These include the starvation of civilians as a weapon of war.

In its latest report, Human Rights Watch has warned that "the Israeli government is starving Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinians, putting them in even more peril than before the World Court's (ICJ) binding order."

"According to data published by OCHA and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the daily average number of trucks entering Gaza with food, aid, and medicine dropped by more than a third in the weeks following the ICJ ruling."

This is in clear violation of the ICJ ruling, triggering calls by rights groups and politicians to impose sanctions and other punitive measures against the Israeli government and military officials.

"Israel's ground forces are able to reach all parts of Gaza, so Israeli authorities clearly have

the capacity to ensure that aid reaches all of Gaza," Human Rights Watch highlighted.

The Israeli regime is "starving Gaza's 2.3 million population more harshly than before," the group added.

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), a global human rights NGO that combines 188 organizations from 116 countries has issued a press release entitled "The European Union must sanction Israel for its crimes in Gaza".

The FIDH called on the 27-nation bloc to prosecute Israeli officials arguing that the EU has a duty to intervene to the fullest extent against the Israeli regime.

"The plausible risk of genocide recognized by the ICJ is a point of no return, which makes the absence of concerted sanctions and condemnations unsustainable."

Earlier this month, Ireland and Spain jointly called for an "urgent review" of the EU's trade agreement with Tel Aviv.

In Ireland, the upper house of the legislature unanimously passed a motion on Saturday calling on the Irish government to "impose sanctions on Israel" and to prevent "U.S. weapons being sent to Israel passing through Irish airspace". The motion also calls on the government to advocate for an "international arms embargo on Israel".

The Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC) has welcomed the move, saying it will now increase "pressure on the government to act".

IPSC added "polls show that 80% of people in Ireland understand that what's happening in Gaza is a genocide, that 70% recognize that



Israel is committing the Crime of Apartheid, and that huge majorities are demanding sanctions."

This comes as the UN Human Rights Office has called on all countries to immediately cease any arms transfers to the Israeli regime.

Sending weapons would violate international humanitarian law, it added.

Furthermore, UN experts have welcomed the decision of an appeals court in the Netherlands on 12 February 2024 that ordered the government to halt the export of F-35 fighter jet parts to Tel Aviv.

Meanwhile, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has once again decried the ongoing Israeli crimes against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip despite the diplomatic spat between Brazil and the Israeli regime over his genocidal comments on Gaza.

On Saturday, President Lula reiterated that "what the Israeli government is doing is not war. It is genocide. Children and women are being murdered". On Tuesday, the Brazilian leader maintained his position in a TV interview.

## North Gaza hospital shuts down surgery department

Gaza's al-Awda Hospital, one of the few partially functioning health facilities left in the north, has had to cancel all surgical operations after two of its operating rooms were "targeted and destroyed", according to its

acting director Mohamed Salha.

"This means that all medical services related to obstetrics and gynecology have stopped completely," Salha told Al Jazeera.

The closure also means

the hospital must cancel all orthopedic and plastic surgeries, which can help save the limbs of wounded Palestinians, Salha said.

"We were the only hospital in

northern Gaza for orthopedic surgeries ... There is no other alternative place in northern Gaza or Gaza City because the health ministry's hospitals are out of service completely," he said.

## Save the Children: Israel is killing kids in "slow motion"

Children in Gaza are on the brink of starvation while food aid sits just across the border, Alexandra Saieh of Save the Children warned.

"What we are witnessing right now in Gaza

is the killing of children," Saieh told Al Jazeera. "There is almost no aid left and nothing is getting to them."

"Children are being starved while trucks full of food are sitting literally a few miles

away waiting to get in.

"We know this is happening largely because of Israeli bombardment and restrictions that are preventing the safe delivery of humanitarian aid, including food."

## Russia slams Macron idea of troops to Ukraine

The situation on the frontline is catastrophic for Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky, and the recent statement by French President Emmanuel Macron about the possible deployment of French troops to Ukraine will be of no help, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria

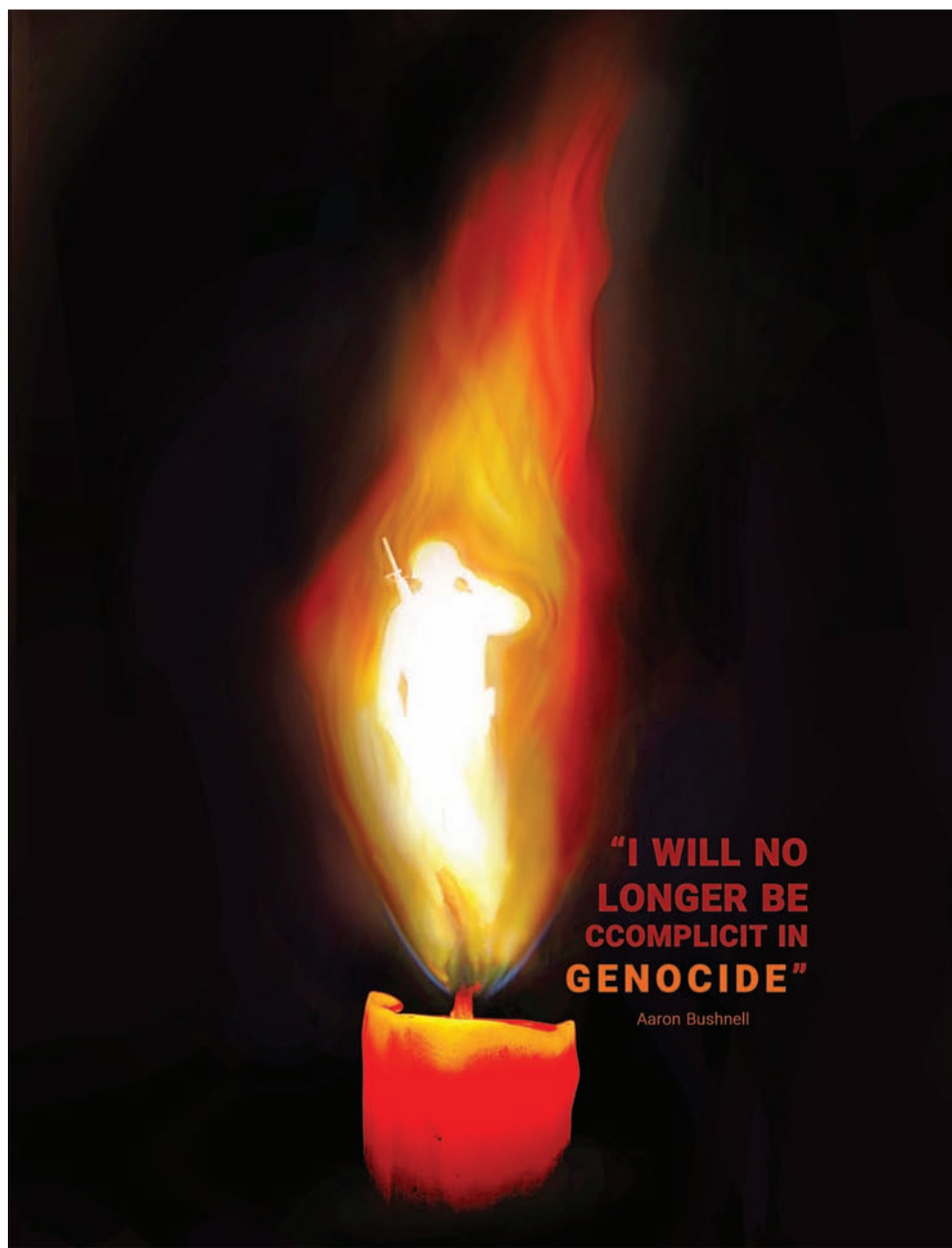
Zakharova told Sputnik radio.

"The Kiev regime is facing a deplorable situation on the frontline, and nothing will help it," the Russian diplomat said. According to her, some bold and powerful rhetoric was needed to encourage Ukrainian troops, TASS reported.

"Has Macron's statement had any effect? The situation is the complete opposite," Zakharova maintained.

In addition, Zakharova said, in the wake of Macron's statements, a lot of NATO officials and agencies ruled out sending troops to Ukraine.

Macron said at a press conference after a meeting of around Western leaders in Paris on Monday that there was no consensus on the formal deployment of ground troops to Ukraine. However, he did not rule out such a possibility in the future.



"I WILL NO  
LONGER BE  
CCOMPLICIT IN  
GENOCIDE"

Aaron Bushnell

## Russian representative in Iran sees no obstacle to visa-free agreement dedicated to group travelers



TEHRAN – A representative of the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation in Iran has dismissed any issues regarding the implementation of the cancellation of group travel visas between the two nations.

“There is no issue on the Russian side regarding this matter,” ISNA quoted Belkin Yakov as saying on Wednesday. The official noted that the mechanism for canceling group visas between the two countries was put into effect in August 2023.

The first group, comprising representatives of government and private agencies, traveled from Iran to Russia in September without visas, while reciprocally, a delegation from the Russian Ministry of Economic Development, along with representatives from several tourist agencies, visited Mazandaran province, he explained. “These travels marked the commencement of visa-free tourist exchange between Iran and Russia.”

However, at the beginning of establishing the mechanism for exchanging group tourists without visas, minor problems occurred, including the lack of awareness by migration police in Iran and Russia about this mechanism, he said.

The official said after holding several meetings with representatives of the migration police, the Iranian Ministry of Tourism, and the Touring & Automobile Club of Iran (the coordinating body for visa-free group travel between the two countries), this issue was resolved.

From then until the end of 2023, five groups comprising approximately 100 people from Russia traveled to Iran without visas, he added.

## Brick kiln, bathhouse in Shahrud made national heritage

TEHRAN – A historical brick kiln and a centuries-old Hammam (public bathhouse) have recently been registered in Iran’s national list for cultural heritage.

According to the Shahrud’s tourism chief, by registering these historical buildings and introducing them as effectively as possible, valuable steps can be taken towards preserving and revitalizing these invaluable heritages and passing them on to future generations.

“Now, the number of registered historical monuments in this county has increased to 137,” the official said. Traditional brick kilns, a common sight across Iran, stand as enduring symbols of the nation’s architectural traditions.

Crafted from locally sourced materials such as clay, sand, and straw, these kilns employ age-old techniques passed down through generations. The process begins with workers molding the clay into rectangular bricks, which are then laid out in the kiln to undergo the firing

Earlier this month, some Russian tourist agencies working with Iran revealed the promised visa-free regime for Iranian tourist groups had not been fully realized and was fraught with difficulties. They said, despite the agreement, many Iranian tourists intending to visit Russia are still required to obtain [electronic] visas, even when traveling in groups.

In that regard, a manager of a Russian agency operating in St. Petersburg expressed “While some approved agencies can facilitate visa-free travel for groups of five or more Iranians, the process is excessively complex and lengthy, prompting most agencies to opt for traditional visa applications instead.”

The manager highlighted that Russian tourists face no such issues when traveling to Iran in groups. Iran is particularly appealing to Russians interested in history, but financial constraints and banking limitations have hindered travel.

Similarly, an Iranian manager of another tourism agency based in Russia verified that statement, adding that despite years of organizing tours from Iran to Russia, they prefer to work with Iranian tourists with visas due to the complexities of the visa-free process.

He added that the issuance of electronic visas by Russia is now much simpler and quicker, serving as an alternative to traditional visas, with processing times as short as four days.

The bilateral visa-free tourist exchanges were supposed to benefit Iranian or Russian groups of five to 50 travelers for up to 15 days at a time.

process. Fueled by wood or other combustible materials, the kilns reach high temperatures, transforming the raw clay into durable bricks suitable for construction.

Bathhouses or ‘hammams’ in Iran were not only places for bathing and cleaning up. They had a social concept for people who gathered at these places weekly. Hammam was a place where people talked with each other about their daily life and shared humor and news.

There are still bathhouses in Iranian cities but they do not have their social function anymore since most people have bathrooms in their homes due to the modern lifestyle.

Some 400 kilometers to the east of Tehran, halfway between the capital and Mashhad, and at the junction with the Gorgan road, sits the modern city of Shahrud, which has grown to absorb the historic town of Bastam situated in the hills a few kilometers to the north.

## Airbnb data reveals people are looking for travel away from hotspots

Ahead of the busy summer season, new data from Airbnb has revealed how holidaymakers are looking for more authentic experiences. Airbnb data highlights how there is a trend towards holiday experiences that more closely resemble what life as a local is like – indicating a move towards more authentic travel this year.

As many as one in five (22%) say they travel on Airbnb because they want a local experience and responding to the same survey, almost two thirds of guests (64%) said that travelling on Airbnb provided a closer connection to the culture than staying in a hotel would have. There was a 72% increase in people booking private rooms between 2021 and 2023, pointing towards a growing desire for affordable travel that is also immersed in local culture.

When it comes to finding hidden gems and discovering contemporary culture – local Hosts are the go-to: they know far more about their area and the best things to see and do than holidaymakers could ever dream of finding online. Last year, nearly half of guests (48%) said they visited places recommended by their Host, which they may not have known about otherwise.

Airbnb superhost, Lucy, said: “Sharing all the brilliant things you can see and do in my local area is one of my favourite things about being a Host. I love sharing the most beautiful country walks, the local pubs where my guests can try local craft beers and as a foodie I know and share all the best spots for local cuisine.”

(source: Airbnb)

# Chinese joyful encounters in Iran vs. negative media portrayals

TEHRAN – A recent visit to Iran by a group of Chinese social media influencers has sparked discussions about their fresh perceptions of the country along with their people’s common stereotypes about Iran.

In a familiarization tour titled “Salam Iran” (Hello Iran), approximately 10 Chinese nationals embarked on a journey to explore Iran’s diverse landscapes and cultural heritage.

With the slogan “nature and climatic diversity,” the influencers traversed through Tehran, Hormozgan, Qeshm, Isfahan, and Kerman, visiting attractions such as Mount Tochal, the deserts, Shahdad village, and the Persian Gulf, ILNA reported on Wednesday.

Speaking to ILNA, one of the visitors remarked, “The reality of Iran is not being conveyed in the Chinese online space.”

“Despite the misconception of war in Iran, our visit revealed a tranquil and culturally rich country, abundant in history and beauty.”

By showcasing the country’s attractions and hospitality, the fam tour is intended to bridge the gap between the misrepresented image and the actual experiences of travelers.

Here is a selection of the influencer’s opinions shared with ILNA:

### Abundance of war-related news about Iran

In her reflections, Ye Yun addressed the prevalent misconceptions about Iran within the Chinese online community.

Yun noted the absence of positive news about the country circulating on Chinese social media platforms. She expressed concern over the dominance of narratives depicting Iran as a place lined with conflict and insecurity.

These narratives, she observed, have contributed to a perception of the Middle East (West Asia) as an inherently unsafe region in the eyes of many Chinese.

She remarked, “While we, as young individuals with access to online information, may recognize that Iran is not at war and is relatively safe to visit, the majority of Chinese people refrain from actively seeking information and instead rely on the prevailing narrative within our society, which portrays Iran



as unsafe.”

Moreover, she highlighted the abundance of war-related news about Iran currently dominating the Chinese internet space.

Ye emphasized that her research dispelled these misconceptions, revealing Iran as a safe and culturally rich destination worthy of exploration. She acknowledged the importance of firsthand experiences in reshaping perceptions and stressed the significance of interacting with Iranian people and witnessing their way of life.

“For Chinese tourists, the most valuable and captivating aspect of visiting Iran is encountering its people and experiencing their way of life,” Ye stated.

She expressed her enjoyment of this aspect of her journey, highlighting the warmth and hospitality she encountered. Additionally, she praised Iran’s diverse natural attractions, which she believes hold great appeal for Chinese travelers seeking unique destinations.

### Beyond desert and heat

Wei Ran, who recently visited Iran, has shared fascinating insights into her journey, challenging common misconceptions about the country and the Middle East (West Asia) as a whole.

Reflecting on her preconceptions, Wei remarked, “What we know about Iran and the Middle East at first glance is that Iran is not a very big country, and secondly, it’s all desert.”

However, her trip revealed a vastly different reality. “On our journey to Iran, we were able to ski, see mountains, and even experience a slight touch of snow just a short distance away from the desert,” she explained.

From the freezing temperatures

of Mount Tochal to the scorching heat of Qeshm Island, Wei Ran, and her companions experienced a wide range of climates within Iran.

She noted that many Chinese initially perceive Iran to have a climate similar to that of the UAE or Saudi Arabia—extremely hot. However, the diversity of landscapes they encountered, including snow-capped mountains, lush forests, and pristine beaches, shattered these stereotypes.

## “Despite the misconception of war in Iran, our visit revealed a tranquil and culturally rich country, abundant in history and beauty.”

“One of the most captivating aspects of Iran for me was experiencing both cold and hot weather in a short period,” Wei said.

“Seeing snow in Iran, a country I had perceived as warm, was particularly intriguing.”

Wei expressed her excitement about returning to Iran to explore more of its UNESCO World Heritage sites, highlighting the allure of the country’s rich cultural and historical attractions. She also expressed admiration for unique natural wonders, such as the Valley of Stars on Qeshm Island, which left a lasting impression on her.

### Impressed by Iran’s natural beauty and cultural heritage

Zou Xingyu has expressed ad-

miration for Iran’s pristine natural landscapes and rich cultural heritage following a recent visit to Qeshm Island.

Zou emphasized the allure of Iran’s UNESCO World Heritage sites and expressed the intention of returning to explore them further.

“On my journey to Qeshm, I encountered the untamed nature of Iran, which left a lasting impression on me,” Zou remarked.

Zou expressed a desire to revisit Iran to explore its famed UNESCO sites, highlighting the significance of these landmarks in attracting Chinese tourists.

The traveler noted that the Silk Road and its associated attractions, along with Iran’s people and culture, serve as compelling reasons for Chinese travelers to visit the country.

“In China, the pressures of work and life are significant, leading to widespread feelings of discontent within society,” Zou shared.

According to Iran’s Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, the number of Chinese arrivals in Iran has been soaring at a faster pace even when compared to pre-pandemic levels.

“The demand for visiting Iran has been soaring among Chinese nationals,” the deputy tourism minister Ali-Asghar Shalbafian said last November. He made the remarks in a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Lu Ying Chuang held in Tehran’s Sa’dabad historical complex.

Shalbafian said some 50,000 travelers from China visited the Islamic Republic during the first seven months of the year (started on March 21, 2023).

“Iran has hosted many Chinese tourists in the past few months, and in particular, after the end of Coronavirus,” Shalbafian added.

In a comparison with the same period in the year 1398 (started in Mar. 2019), the official said: “Chinese arrivals in the current year have been higher than that in 98, though the number of flights has almost halved.”

Insignificant numbers of Chinese restaurants, Chinese-language guides, or even unfitting lodging facilities have been among the main reasons cited by experts why Chinese arrivals in Iran fall short of expectations.

## Isfahan’s lesser-known sites to enchant tourists

TEHRAN – For the upcoming Nowruz vacations, Isfahan seeks to put the spotlight on its lesser-known destinations for travelers visiting the historical city situated in the heart of the Iranian plateau.

Isfahan, a travel gem with its vast number of wonders, is home to many historical sites, some of which are lesser-known to tourists, according to the provincial tourism chief.

Referring to policies framed by the Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Isfahan, Hamidreza Mohaqeqian

emphasized that absorbing tourists in both quality and quantity is underway.

“We are seeking to introduce the lesser-known places of interest to the Nowruz travelers in cooperation with several relevant committees at the provincial level with a particular focus on the upcoming spring holidays,” the official noted.

Explaining the purpose of the decision, Mohaqeqian added that the visitors are expected to be more fascinated through this influential strategy by magnificent wonders which of course are visit-worthy.

## Persian New Year: Tehran gets ready to welcome visitors



TEHRAN – As preparations unfold for the spring holidays and Ramadan coinciding with Nowruz, Tehran’s tourism chief has revealed plans to serve visitors in the best way possible.

Regarding the Tehran Municipality’s plans, Amir Ghasemi pinpointed that a series of meetings are being held in the wake of coop-

erating Nowruz travels.

He also outlined how special the occasion is, considering the convergence of the upcoming holy month of Ramadan with the celebration of Nowruz, which shed light on the importance of suitable planning for the travel surge.

The official detailed the services provided by the organization, stressing that some different urban tours are arranged, including bicycle tours and walking tours, to name a few.

Discussing the free walking tours, Ghasemi underscored that 24 paths are planned in the different areas of Tehran comprising paying visits to historical sites, under the guidance of expert tour leaders.

The official mentioned collaborative efforts with other provinces, including, decorating main squares with other 30 provinces’

Millions of visitors travel to Isfahan every year to immerse themselves in the city’s magnificent architecture and history. Isfahan was the capital of Iran for two important dynasties, the Seljuq and the Safavid. It was during the latter that many of the famous historical sites of this city were constructed.

There are numerous places to visit in Isfahan, and it would take a long time to visit all of them, which brings to light the importance of introducing the lesser-known sites to the tourists to exploit the city’s capacities in the best way possible.

elements and distributing Tehran tourism maps at the departure paths of other cities in aiming to introduce the capital’s tourism capacities.

The official highlighted the responsibility of the municipality, ensuring to track every concern by any means related to the tourism sphere.

Every year, the Iranian capital welcomes millions of visitors during the spring holidays.

According to the statistics revealed by related officials, more than six million vehicles arrived in Tehran in the course of the last two weeks of the Nowruz holidays.

Tehran is also the leading place in passenger traffic among all provinces, which throws light on the significance of further planning to serve visitors as best as possible.

TEHRAN –The 25th international exhibition of medical, dental, pharmaceutical, and laboratory equipment (Iran Health Expo 2024) will be held from May 18-21 at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds.

Iran Health aims to develop health technologies in the country, enhance the global competitiveness of Iranian knowledge-based companies in markets, expand the exports of knowledge-based and technological firms in the health sector, and form domestic and foreign technological consortia in Iran and global markets, IRNA reported.

Sharing experiences of health technology development as well as attracting foreign investment in the field of health are among other important goals of holding this exhibition.

Iran Health aims to showcase the country's latest products and achievements in the fields of medical engineering; dental, medical, ophthalmic, and orthopedic equipment; pharmaceuticals; home care products; remote therapy; physiotherapy; surgical and medical emergency equipment; sonography and endoscopy; medical applications; electrical equipment; beauty products; and plastic surgery.

## Knowledge-based companies manufacturing medications

Some 600 medical equipment companies are active in the country, producing around 99 percent of the medicine supplied to the domestic market. Medical equipment manufacturers in the country produce and supply over 10,000 types of medical equipment to domestic and foreign markets. Now, various pieces of laboratory equipment are manufactured at prices much



lower than the same foreign products.

Iranian knowledge-based companies have succeeded in producing recombinant drugs which are mainly used for treating hard-to-treat diseases such as cancers, MS, hemophilia, and viral diseases.

Developing a system based on artificial intelligence (AI) that can detect breast cancer with 94 percent accuracy, manufacturing new medicines for pulmonary hypertension, coagulation disorders, chemotherapy drugs, and production of anti-cancer drugs titled SinaDoxosome, used in all types of abdominal cancer, Levofloxacin, used for the treatment of infectious diseases, Paclitaxel, to treat various lungs, and skin, ovarian and breast cancers, Doxorubicin, human papillomavirus (HPV) and 'ibrutinib', which is used to treat various blood cancers, have placed Iran among the main producers of medications in the world.

Medications such as "Cetrerolix Acetate", used for the treatment of infertility, drugs for MS patients (called Synvox), special patients (called Interferon Beta, Gamma, and Alpha), and hepatitis C patients (called pegylated interferon) are

other examples of the broad efforts of Iranian researchers.

Medical equipment worth around \$20 million is exported to more than 60 countries annually, according to Iran's Union of Medical Equipment Manufacturers and Exporters.

More than 70 percent of medical equipment and 100 percent of normal hospital beds are domestically made.

Also, over 95 percent of specific ICU and CCU beds and more than 85 percent of operating room medical equipment such as anesthesia machines and other equipment are manufactured with cutting-edge technology in the country.

## Over 60 countries import Iranian medical equipment

On January 13, the head of Iran's Union of Medical Equipment Manufacturers and Exporters said that medical equipment worth around \$20 million is exported to more than 60 countries annually.

More than 70 percent of medical equipment and 100 percent of normal hospital beds are domestically made, IRNA quoted Abdolreza Yaqoubzadeh as saying.

Also, over 95 percent of specific ICU and CCU beds and more than 85 percent of operating room medical equipment such as anesthesia machines and other equipment are manufactured with cutting-edge technology in the country, he added.

Yaqoubzadeh went on to say that the country's need for medical equipment production is three to four billion dollars per year, some one billion dollars of which is imported.

## Export of medicine and medical equipment rise

Iran experienced a significant rise in exports of medicine and medical equipment in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year that started on March 21, 2023.

"Exports of pharmaceuticals and medical equipment grew by 300 percent in the first four months of the year," IRNA quoted Mohammadi as saying.

Currently, the production of medicine, medical equipment, and powdered milk is supported by subsidies. So, their exports were very limited, but it is hoped that their exports will increase next year, he explained.

Referring to the shortage of 100 drug items in the country, he said: "Nearly one and a half percent of the country's pharmaceutical need is imported. Along with domestic production, it is done as soon as the domestic production meets the demand."

A total of 227 knowledge-based firms are supplying medical equipment for health centers across the country, according to the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology.

## Tehran, Moscow to boost co-op in health sector

TEHRAN – Deputy Health Minister Mohammad-Hossein Niknam and his Russian counterpart Sergei Glagolev met in Tehran on Tuesday, discussing ways to enhance collaboration between the two countries in the field of health.

The two officials highlighted cooperation in research and education, medicine and medical equipment, artificial intelligence, and modern technologies, particularly vaccines and pharmaceutical raw materials, IRIB reported.

During the meeting, Niknam proposed holding joint meetings annually and periodically in the two countries, which was welcomed by the Russian official.

## Russia seeking to facilitate medical imports from Iran

In May 2023, Heidar Mohammadi, the head of the Food and Drug Administration, met Glagolev in Moscow, saying Russia was seeking to facilitate medical imports from Iran.

"We are determined to have interactions with Russia in the field of health," IRNA quoted Mohammadi as saying.

Mohammadi pointed out that Iran-made medical devices are currently exported to 55 countries around the world.

The Russian official, for his part, expressed hope that relations will be enhanced in the field of technology transfer.

"Certainly, we have a lot of motivation to introduce our manufacturers to Iran and also visit Iranian companies to boost cooperation in the future."

He also expressed his interest in further cooperation in the field of combating infectious diseases and expanding medical tourism.

In October 2022, Hossein Shomali, an official with the Food and Drug Administration said Iran exported medicine worth \$7.5 million to Russia in the [Iranian calendar] year 1400 (March 2021-March 2022).

Biological medicine accounts for a major portion of the products exported from Iran to Russia, ISNA quoted Shomali as saying.

The pharmaceutical industry is one of the active and important industries, which during the past years has been able to meet the domestic need for medicines to an acceptable level with significant growth.

## Iran aims to produce world's first vaccine for leishmaniasis

From page 1 ▶ Since the disease is caused by a parasite (Leishmania) which easily changes structure as it is detected, the development of the vaccine requires further in-depth study, he noted.

## Pneumococcal vaccination of babies kicks off

On February 19, the national program for pneumococcal vaccination of babies under 12 months of age started.

The program was officially launched in the city of Bandar Khamir, southern Hormozgan province, IRNA reported.

The vaccination program to combat pneumococcal has been added to the country's immunization program, Pedram Pak-Aein, an official with the ministry of health, said.

It will be implemented in several phases, with the priority given to underdeveloped areas, he added.

Some 3.5 million doses of pneumococcal vaccine have been imported. In the first phase, the vaccines will be distributed in deprived areas of the southern provinces of the country, the official explained.

The vaccine prevents not only the death of at least 1,500 children every year but also protects thousands of other children against bacterial infection caused by the virus, he further noted.

Pak-Aein went on to say that vaccination against rotavirus will start in the calendar month starting February 20 aiming to prevent the hospitalization of 10,000 children per year.

Knowledge-based companies and domestic manufacturers will soon produce both pneumococcal and rotavirus vaccines and pres-



At the same time, one of the solutions for the development of the pharmaceutical industry, considering the large volume of the pharmaceutical consumption market in the world, is the export, he highlighted.

Exporting medicine has advantages such as saving foreign currency and thus facilitating the production cycle with the possibility of importing raw materials, it also can lead to the reduction of production costs, and on the other hand, it can encourage the manufacturing company to improve product quality, he explained.

He went on to say that the export value of the country's pharmaceutical items last year was about \$60 million, which has increased by 30 percent compared to the previous year, which shows the 0.2 percent share of the pharmaceutical industry in export revenue among the different industries of the country.

Health Minister Bahram Einollahi has said many countries in the region are asking Iran for help with issues related to health.

Emphasizing that all diseases are currently treated in the country, the minister added: "With the help of scientists, we were able to educate efficient human resources," ISNA reported.

Countries that do not have pharmaceutical production infrastructure or have a small share of domestic production compared to their pharmaceutical market, can be a good export target for Iranian companies, he added.

The value of Iranian pharmaceutical exports to Russia last year was about \$7.5 million, which is 12.5 percent of the country's total exports, most of which were biomedicine, he said.



ent them to the market within the next few months.

The pneumococcal vaccine helps protect against some types of bacterial infections that can cause serious illnesses like meningitis (an infection in the brain and spinal cord) sepsis (a life-threatening reaction to an infection) pneumonia (an infection in the lungs).

Pneumococcal vaccine can be injected when babies are 2, 4, and 12 months old, IRNA quoted Mohsen Zahraei, the head of the preventable diseases department of the Ministry of Health, as saying.

"We hope to be able to develop these two vaccines soon. Once the vaccines pass the quality control trials, and obtain the Food and Drug Organization approval, we will be able to use the domestic products in the national vaccination program," Zahraei said.

"Since the development of a vaccine is a complex process and takes a lot of time, the vaccines are imported now.

Annual vaccination worldwide prevents the death of two and a half million children, which shows the very high effectiveness of vaccines," he added.

## IRCS provides aid to people hit by winter storms



TEHRAN –The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) rescued 13,249 individuals affected by winter storms over February 24 – 28.

During the four days, a total of 326 relief teams, consisting of 1313 rescuers, helped individuals hit by snow and flood in 26 provinces, according to the IRCS website.

They provided emergency accommodation for 5,376 people and transferred 75 others to safe places.

The rescuers pulled 909 vehicles out of the snow and cleaned 68 houses of muddy water.

## Joint workshop

A training workshop focusing on lowering harms caused by drug addiction was held with the cooperation of the IRCS and Villa Mara-

ini Foundation of Italy in Tehran in December 2023.

Pirhossein Kolivand, the head of the IRCS, and Massimo Barra, the head of the Villa Maraini Foundation, met on the sidelines of the event. Kolivand stated that drug users encounter severe health issues, suffering from an identity crisis which leads to their exclusion by both their families and society, the IRCS website reported.

However, initiative projects, such as Harm Reduction pertaining to Drug Addiction, serve the purpose of educating and offering healthcare to these individuals, enabling them to reintegrate into society, reunite with their families, and restore self-esteem.

Barra, for his part, emphasized the significance of the problems resulting from drug addiction. Since a large number of individuals are globally affected by addiction, it is crucial to provide them with additional support through greater cooperation, he added.

In December 2023, volunteer physicians were sent to provide free health and pharmaceutical services to people in deprived areas, an official with the IRCS said.

The program was implemented on the occasion of World Volunteer Day, commonly known as IVD, which is celebrated on December 5 every year.

It's a day where volunteers are acknowledged and the spirit of volunteerism is promoted at the local, national, and international levels.

"Volunteer physicians would be sent to deprived areas from Ilam, Kermanshah, Yazd, Bushehr, Markazi, West Azarbaijan, and Kerman provinces to serve the people in these areas," Vahid Salimi said.

They would provide free health and pharmaceutical services, including visiting patients, dental and midwifery services, and traditional medicine and acupuncture consultation.

They would also check people's health, blood pressure, height, and weight.

Moreover, oral and dental health care would be taught to the students of the villages.

The main objective of dispatching volunteers was to improve the health of the villagers due to the unavailability of specialist doctors in these areas and reduce medical expenses.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Precipitation forecast to reach above normal in next 3 months

The country is predicted to receive above normal rainfall over the next three months (February 20-May 21), head of the climatological research institute affiliated to Iran's Meteorological Organization (IMO) has said.

The whole country will meet normal and above normal rainfalls, the northern parts will receive above normal rainfall while southern provinces will receive normal to lower-than-normal rainfall, IRNA quoted Iman Babaeian as saying on Sunday.

This month, northern and eastern provinces will receive rain above normal averages, while in the first month of spring precipitation will be at normal amounts across the country, he noted, adding, during the second month of spring rainfall will reach its peak.

## بارش‌های کشور در سه ماه پیش‌رو بیش از نرمال است

رئیس پژوهشکده اقلیم‌شناسی سازمان هواشناسی گفت: پیش‌بینی‌ها نشان می‌دهد میزان بارش در کشور در سه ماهه پیش‌رو (اسفند ۹۷، فروردین و اردیبهشت ۹۸) در حد نرمال و متمایل به بیش از نرمال خواهد بود.

ایمان باباییان روز یکشنبه در گفت‌وگو با خبرنگار ایرنا افزود: مجموع بارش‌ها در سطح کشور نرمال و متمایل به بیشتر از نرمال است اما در نیمه شمالی، بیشتر از نرمال و در نیمه جنوبی در محدوده نرمال تا کمتر از نرمال خواهد بود.

وی اظهار داشت: بارش‌ها در اسفندماه ۹۷ در نیمه شمالی و شرقی بیشتر از نرمال است، در فروردین ماه ۹۸ نیز بارش‌ها در محدوده نرمال و برای اردیبهشت بیشتر از نرمال پیش‌بینی شده است.



Managing Director: **Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati**  
Editor-in-Chief: **Mohammad Sarfi**

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895  
Email: info@tehrantimes.com  
Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000  
Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051430  
Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807  
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603  
Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737



No. 18, Moghadasi Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran P.O. Box: 14155-4843 Zip Code: 1599814713

FEBRUARY 29, 2024

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*A wise man first thinks and then speaks and a fool speaks first and then thinks.*

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:17 Evening: 18:17 Dawn: 5:12 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:34 (tomorrow)

## Tehran museum to screen restored version of Kiarostami's "Through the Olive Trees"



TEHRAN-The cinematheque of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art is set to screen a restored version of the renowned Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami's film "Through the Olive Trees".

The screening scheduled for Sunday will be followed by a review session.

"Through the Olive Trees" is a 1994 drama written, produced, edited, and directed by acclaimed filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami. As the final installment of Kiarostami's Koker trilogy, the story is set in earthquake-devastated Northern Iran and revolves around the making of the movie "And Life Goes On...", a revisit of his earlier work "Where Is the Friend's Home?".

The film explores the interplay between art and reality, skillfully blurring the lines between fiction and truth in typical Kiarostami fashion.

The film follows Hossein Rezaei, a local stonemason-turned-actor, who faces challenges both on and off the movie set where he proposes to his co-star, Tahereh. Misunderstandings arise due to his social status and illiteracy, causing Tahereh's family to reject his offer.

As the boundaries between their on-screen roles and personal lives blur, the complexities of love and communication are magnified.

The film was initially chosen as Iran's entry for the Best Foreign Language Film category at the 67th Academy Awards, though it did not receive a nomination. Despite this, "Through the Olive Trees" has been hailed by many as a cinematic masterpiece for its nuanced storytelling and rich exploration of

relationships and human emotions.

The poignant and thought-provoking narrative leaves the audience pondering the unresolved conclusion as the characters navigate through the olive groves, symbolizing the ambiguity of life's answers.

The film garnered acclaim from international cinema critics, particularly in France, and was nominated for the prestigious Palme d'Or at the 1994 Cannes Film Festival.

It went on to win the Espiga de Oro at the 1994 Seminci in Valladolid, further solidifying its reputation. The movie's enigmatic final scene sparked vibrant discussions and was lauded for its thought-provoking nature.

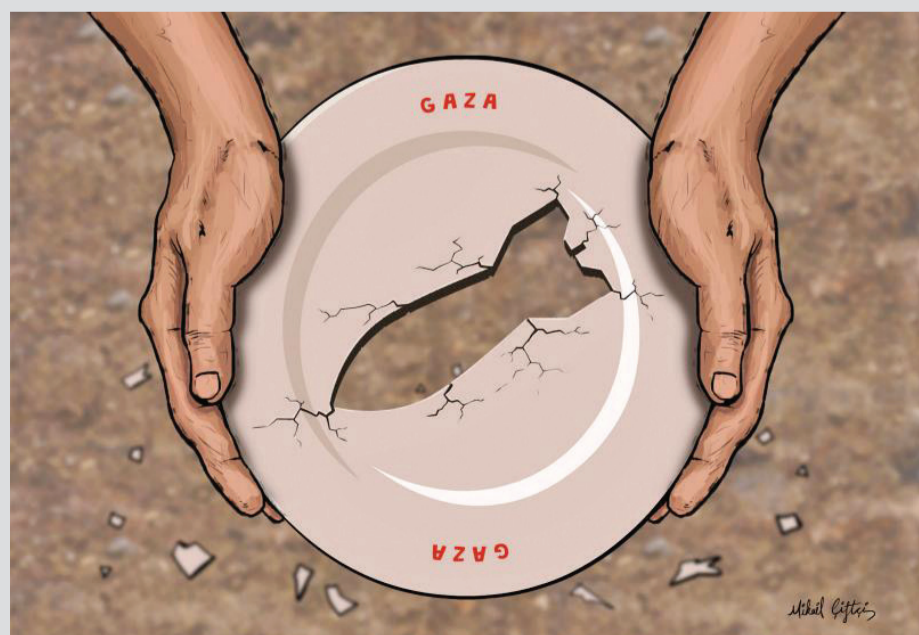
In the 2012 Sight & Sound poll, "Through the Olive Trees" was recognized by six critics and four directors as one of the top 10 greatest films ever made.

Abbas Kiarostami (1940-2016) was a highly acclaimed Iranian filmmaker known for his unique storytelling style and innovative approach to cinema.

His films often blurred the lines between reality and fiction, challenging viewers to question the nature of truth and perception. Kiarostami's works, characterized by their minimalist and naturalistic aesthetic, delved deep into the complexities of human emotions and relationships, offering a profound and contemplative look at life and society.

Throughout his career, Kiarostami gained international recognition and numerous awards, including the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival for his film "Taste of Cherry." He was considered a master of the cinematic art form, with critics praising his ability to capture the essence of everyday life in a poetic and profound manner. Kiarostami's influence extended beyond the borders of Iran, shaping the landscape of world cinema and inspiring generations of filmmakers with his unparalleled vision and storytelling prowess.

## Cartoon of Day



Hunger in Gaza

Cartoonist: Mikail Çiftçi from Turkey

# Maestro Tjeknavorian unveils musical tribute to Maryam Mirzakhani

From Page 1 ▶ I was profoundly impacted by the loss of such a significant figure in the realm of mathematics, and time had elapsed since that fateful event."

He continued, recounting a moment of inspiration, stating, "Just a few months ago, as the news played on in the background, I instinctively reached for my phone, and there she was, the late Mirzakhani, appearing before me."

"It was an inexplicable sensation, as if a deep connection had been forged between us, a connection that still mystifies me to this day and in that instant, I felt compelled to sit down and compose a piece imbued with elements of lament, sorrow, and protest," he explained.

Tjeknavorian underscored the creative challenge of balancing the sentiment of a romantic piece with the technical precision reflective of Mirzakhani's mathematical genius, highlighting the need for the music to resonate with her scientific persona.

"I was compelled to create a piece that wasn't just melodious or sentimental, but one that truly reflected Maryam Mirzakhani's scientific persona. Thus, I crafted the composition using the Chahargah dastgah to vividly capture the essence of an Iranian mathematician, allowing every listener to resonate with her spirit."

"The musical tribute dedicated to the late Mirzakhani held immense significance for me and it was imperative for the piece to commence and culminate with a sense of protest, echoing the stark reality of how someone of extraordinary brilliance could be taken from this world," he noted.

"The ever-present specter of death, striking even in one's prime at the age of 40, led me to the profound belief that God's love for Mirzakhani transcends earthly bounds, and we must acknowledge



and respect this divine calling. This realization profoundly influenced the composition process."

"Comprised of four distinct parts, the piece navigates through protest, Mirzakhani's life narrative, the solemnity of her funeral underscored by resounding beats, and concludes with a resolute three-beat protest against the world's loss," he said.

"The composition seeks to unmask the harsh truths of our reality, with Mirzakhani's spirit undeniably present at this ceremony, hopefully finding solace in the heartfelt tribute I have penned," he added.

Delving into the intrinsic bond between music and mathematics, Tjeknavorian expounded, highlighting, "While mathematics can exist independently of music, the converse is implausible; music inherently relies upon mathematical structures. Each sound we hear is fundamentally a numerical value, infinite in its permutations, anchored by the 12 fundamental musical notes that harmonize to create an expansive array of approximately 700 million

to one billion possibilities."

Emphasizing music as the universal language of divinity, he reiterated, "Music transcends linguistic barriers, resonating as the one universal language comprehensible to all. Despite misconceptions critiquing music's alleged descent into decadence, the purity of this art form remains a conduit for expression untainted by words, oftentimes misappropriated, yet incomprehensibly profound to those who grasp its true essence."

Furthermore, Ahmad Mirzakhani, father of the late Maryam Mirzakhani, expressed his gratitude towards Maestro Tjeknavorian, acknowledging him as a distinguished cultural icon on a global scale, particularly within Iran. He remarked, "I hold the esteemed Maestro Tjeknavorian in high regard and hope to duly recognize him for his contributions to the scientific community."

Highlighting the intrinsic link between mathematics and music, he noted that Maestro Tjeknavorian had also paid heed to this connection while crafting the

musical piece. Ahmad Mirzakhani suggested delving deeper into exploring the historical relationship between mathematics and music within the nation and across other societies that have extensively researched this intertwined domain.

Maryam Mirzakhani, Iranian-born genius mathematician and Stanford University professor, obtained her BSc in mathematics (1999) from Sharif University of Technology, Tehran. She then moved to the U.S. and finished a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 2004.

She won a gold medal in the Hong Kong International Mathematical Olympiad, in 1994, to be the first female Iranian student to have snatched a gold medal.

In the 1995 Toronto International Mathematical Olympiad, she became the first Iranian student to win two gold medals.

In 2017, Mirzakhani, the winner of the Fields Medal, also known as the Nobel Prize of mathematics, succumbed to breast cancer at 40.

## Keyvan Saket, Tsumuzi to perform in Japan

TEHRAN-Iranian tar and setar virtuoso Keyvan Saket and Japanese violinist Tsumuzi are set to perform in Tokyo, Japan, in March.

Traditional Iranian music will be performed at Libra Hall in Tokyo on March 7 and 8 in a concert where Keyvan Saket will play tar and setar, Tsumuzi will play the violin, and Siavash Saket and Daisuke Takeuchi will accompany them with tombak and piano respectively.

The event will be organized by the embassy of Iran in Japan with the cooperation of Minato City, a special ward in the Tokyo Metropolis, ISNA reported.

Saket, 62, is an acclaimed Iranian composer and music researcher. He has been featured in Japanese music textbooks. He has held many concerts in Iran, Canada and Australia. He established Vaziri Band in 1996 and has since performed numerous pieces with them. He has also worked with many great Iranian musicians, including the late Parviz Meshkatian.

Saket is the fastest tar and setar (traditional Iranian instruments) player in Iran. He has

always believed in introducing Iranian traditional music to the world. One of his ways of doing so was to promote through his shows what Iranian instruments were capable of playing.

To demonstrate this, he tried to perform well-known pieces from classical composers like Beethoven, Mozart, Paganini, Vivaldi, Strauss, and more. This mission seemed impossible at first; tar was played with plectrum and most of western classical pieces with the violin - a bowed string instrument. This meant that a tar player had to have a very quick plectrum to keep a rapid repetition of one note, or a tremolo. And yet, Saket was the only one with an impossibly blistering speed.

Along with his traditional albums, Saket released two modern albums that once again stunned everyone. In his albums, he performed extremely fast and complex pieces like "The Flight of the Bumblebee". His astonishing performance at the International Music Exposition in France in 2006, showed the significance of tar and setar globally.

Tsumuzi is a Japanese composer and violinist



known as the "Noble Prince of 5 beats," the "Noble Prince of Variations," and "Mr. Asymmetrical Meters". He is a musician and a licensed doctor who graduated from a national medical school in Tokyo. Since the release of the music video for his masterpiece "Ore no Libertango" (My Libertango), which has regularly topped jazz charts around the world, and his first overseas concert in Spain, he has established himself as a world-renowned maestro with five-beat and odd time signatures.

## Israeli director receives death threats after calling for ceasefire at Berlin Film Festival

Israeli film director Yuval Abraham said he is receiving death threats and has canceled his flight home from the Berlin International Film Festival amid backlash to an acceptance speech in which he decried the "situation of apartheid" and called for a ceasefire in Gaza.

Abraham and his Palestinian co-director Basel Adra accepted the Best Documentary award for their film "No Other Land," which chronicles evictions and demolitions of Palestinian homes in the occupied West Bank by Israeli authorities, on Saturday, CNN reported.

Their speeches were met with accusations of antisemitism by high-level German and Israeli officials, including the mayor of Berlin and Israel's Ambassador to Germany.

"A right-wing Israeli mob came to my family's home yesterday to search for me, threatening close family members who fled to another town in the middle of the night," Abraham alleged in a social media post

Tuesday.

"I am still getting death threats and had to cancel my flight home. This happened after Israeli media and German politicians absurdly labeled my Berlinale award speech — where I called for equality between Israelis and Palestinians, a ceasefire and an end to apartheid — as 'antisemitic.'"

Accepting the award on Saturday, Abraham's West Bank-based co-director Adra said it is "very hard for me to celebrate when there are tens of thousands of my people being slaughtered and massacred by Israel in Gaza."

Speaking alongside him, Abraham highlighted the inequality between himself and Adra, despite living just "30 minutes from one another."

"I am living under a civilian law and Basel is under military law," he said. "I have voting rights; Basel (does not have) voting rights.

I'm free to move where I want in this land; Basel is, like millions of Palestinians, locked in the occupied West Bank."

He continued: "We need to call for a ceasefire. We need to call for a political solution to end the occupation."

Berlin's mayor Kai Wegner said in a post on X on Sunday that the speech was "unacceptable relativization" and urged the film festival's management "to ensure that such incidents do not happen again."

"Berlin stands firmly on Israel's side, there is no doubt about that," he continued, adding that "full responsibility for the deep suffering in Israel and the Gaza Strip lies with Hamas."

Ron Prozor, Israel's ambassador to Germany, branded the comments "blatant antisemitic and anti-Israel discourse" and accused the German cultural scene of "showcase(ing) its bias," in a post on X on Sunday.