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Bibi and Gantz: Two Sides of the Same Coin

The resignation of Gantz highlights divisions in Israel over its failure to defeat Hamas

© Flash90/Chaim Goldberg



► Page 5

War cabinet Minister Benny Gantz (standing), Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at a press conference at the Defense Ministry headquarters in Tel Aviv, November 22, 2023.

Iran condemns U.S., UK complicity in Israeli Al-Nuseirat massacre

TEHRAN – Iran’s foreign ministry spokesman on Monday rebuked Washington and London for taking part in a recent Israeli attack on a central Gaza refugee camp which left more than 200 Palestinian civilians dead and hundreds of others wounded.

“We strongly condemn the heinous crimes of the Zionist regime in this camp. Many reports suggest that U.S. and UK military and intelligence forces were also involved in these operations. This indicates that in a tripartite operation, more than 700 Palestinian citizens were killed or wounded, which is a major setback for the Zionist regime. This barbaric operation is condemned in the strongest terms by the Islamic Republic of Iran,” Nasser Kanaani expressed during the foreign ministry’s weekly press conference.

Israel carried out an unprecedented and violent raid on the Al-Nuseirat camp in central Gaza on Saturday. Reports show the regime’s soldiers concealed inside UN aid trucks to penetrate the camp. Four Israeli captives taken by Hamas resistance forces on October 7 were freed as a result of the brutal and bloody operation. ► Page 2

Presidential candidates begin race to rally support

TEHRAN – The anticipation and anxiety surrounding Iran’s 2024 presidential election dissipated on Monday as approved candidates swiftly established their campaign offices and embarked on meetings with influential figures to garner support.

Six figures were approved to run for president: Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Saeed Jalili, Alireza Zakani, Amir-Hossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi, Masoud Pezeshkian, and Mostafa Pournomani, who have already begun to receive help from some of the fellow 74 politicians that could not gain the approval of Iran’s Guardian Council.

Three of the hopefuls appeared on national TV on Monday to speak to the people of Iran regarding their plans and visions for the country’s future.

Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, widely considered a leading contender in Iran’s 2024 presidential election, made his first campaign appearance on Iran’s News Channel. During his 45-minute address, Qalibaf prioritized economic issues and financial well-being.

“Throughout my career, I have consistently leveraged technology and engaged young experts to enhance efficiency,” Qalibaf stated. “Maximizing effectiveness is paramount to me.”

Qalibaf’s economic platform is expected to be a central theme of his campaign as he seeks to address the challenges facing Iran’s economy. “The motto is ‘Service and Progress’. Of course, this is not just a motto, it is a reality that we must pursue and achieve,” he said. ► Page 2

Global outrage at Nuseirat “bloodbath”

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – As Palestinians continue grieving for victims of yet another Israeli massacre in Gaza, calls have grown for an end to the regime’s mass-slaughter of civilians.

Footage of the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza after the Israeli bombardment that killed at least 274 Palestinians and injured around 700 others shows much of the camp reduced to ashes.

Countries across West Asia condemned the massacre in a scathing criticism of the Israeli occupation regime.

The South African government also issued a lengthy statement, which labeled the attack “in a designated safe zone” as “one of the single worst massacres committed by the Israeli occupation forces in Gaza.”

The statement said, “We are appalled that these attacks are being praised by some, for saving four Israeli hostages, while killing and severely injuring hundreds of innocent Palestinian civilians.”

The South African Government added, “While families mourn the loss of life, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant jubilantly termed the operation ‘daring in nature.’ ► Page 5

Iran and the BRICS outlook

By Kazem Jalali

Iran’s ambassador to Russia

MOSCOW – The BRICS Foreign Ministers’ meeting will be held today, Monday, in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia.

Ali Baqeri Kani, the acting Foreign Minister of Iran, will lead our country’s delegation at this meeting. This is the first BRICS Foreign Ministers’ meeting since the Islamic Republic of Iran joined the group.

Another joint meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 11, where, in addition to the main members, 15 other countries, known as the friends of BRICS, have also been invited to participate.

The BRICS group is a political-economic coalition focused on coordinating major and complex global economic issues. The first BRICS summit was held in 2009 in Yekaterinburg, Russia, with the participation of China, Russia, Brazil, and India. South Africa joined the coalition in 2010, changing the group’s name from BRIC to BRICS. Over the past fifteen years, BRICS has become an important coalition of rapidly growing economies and a leading force among southern countries in challenging global economic and financial systems. ► Page 2

Raisi foreign policy Legacy: A Chinese perspective

By Jin Liangxiang

SHANGHAI – Ebrahim Raisi’s sudden martyrdom as a result of a helicopter crash on May 19, 2024, was a huge loss not only for Iran but also for the region. During his presidency of 34 months, he did make changes in the country and in the region as well. His foreign policy legacies were numerous, and the following four are particularly worthy of mentioning.

The first should be his contribution to regional reconciliation. Iran’s policy for resuming diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia took place with the direction of the Leader, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei; it was the continuation of that of Raisi’s predecessor, and was within the context of new regional dynamics. But Raisi’s personal involvement should be one of the most important factors as he was one of the policy makers and the very person implemented the policy.

It was shortly after President Raisi’s visit to China in the middle of February 2023 that China, Iran and Saudi Arabia started the negotiation in Beijing in early March 2023, which finally resulted in a diplomatic breakthrough. Or to put it another way, ► Page 3

Damascus exhibiting capabilities of Iranian universities

TEHRAN – An exhibition showcasing the scientific capabilities of Iranian universities is being held in Damascus, Syria.

A total of 13 Iranian universities are attending the four-day event, which kicked off on Monday at the Faculty of Law at the University of Damascus, IRNA reported.

The national union of Syrian students, in cooperation with Iran’s vice-presidency for science and technology, has organized the exhibition within the framework of scientific cooperation between Syria and Iran to feature the scientific capabilities of Iranian universities.

Bassam Bashir Ibrahim, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Syria, visiting the exhibition underscored the importance of utilizing the experiences and expertise of the universities present in the exhibition. ► Page 7



Iran calls for financial reform to counter U.S. dollar dominance

TEHRAN – Iran’s caretaker foreign minister, Ali Baqeri Kani, delivered a speech at the BRICS Ministerial meeting in the Russian city of Nizhny Novgorod, emphasizing the pivotal role of the newly expanded BRICS alliance in addressing international issues and shaping a fairer global system. Baqeri highlighted the significance of the expansion of BRICS, which welcomed new members on January 1, 2024, as a clear indication of the group’s increasing influence and prominence on the world stage. “The expansion of BRICS has marked a turning point, the effects of which will undoubtedly be visible in the not-too-distant future,” he stated. ► Page 2

War on Gaza: US courts must hold Biden accountable

It is no secret that the Israeli military is carrying out genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza.

At the human rights organization where I work, Defense for Children International – Palestine, I’ve analyzed and reported on more first-hand accounts of Palestinian child killings, injuries, arrests and torture than I can count.

People around the world have seen for themselves the gut-wrenching images of charred Palestinian children’s bodies on social media; heard Israeli leaders spell out their intentions to ethnically cleanse Palestinians from Gaza; and from where I live in Washington, DC, witnessed the Biden administration continue to diplomatically support and send weapons to Israel with abandon. ► Page 5

TEHRAN PAPERS

The political resolution of the Westerners does not affect Iran's nuclear progress

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

In a note, Kayhan addressed the issue of the recent resolution and quoted political analyst Abolfazl Zohrevand as saying: This resolution is completely political and the Westerners are trying to influence Iran's election atmosphere with it. The fact is that the United States and the European countries that are members of the JCPOA have not fulfilled their obligations. The Islamic Republic of Iran has fulfilled its commitments under the JCPOA, and the countries that withdrew from the JCPOA must fulfill their commitments. It was these collaborations that turned into the JCPOA, and the JCPOA was just a loss for us; We lost our national capacities and stopped, and the Westerners did not take the smallest step toward what they promised, i.e. the lift of sanctions. In any case, these Western actions do not affect Iran's progress in the nuclear field. The Islamic Republic of Iran has chosen its path and despite sanctions and blocked access to global markets, it has done its work well and has shown that sanctions do not affect Iran's progress.

Ham Mihan: The dilemma between Iran and America

In a commentary, Ham Mihan dealt with Iran's challenges in the current situation and wrote: In the current situation, Iran sees itself in a critical dilemma, one that is full of internal and external challenges. The most important of these challenges is the quality of the relationship between Iran and America amid regional tensions over Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza. If the Biden administration, despite its initial desire, fails to reach an agreement with Iran on the JCPOA, the possibility of Trump coming to power in the United States may make the prospects of reaching any agreement much lower. Iran is facing the challenge of how to manage regional influence policies. Internationally, Iran's main challenge is how to manage its relations with the West and balance relations with Russia, China and India amid enduring economic sanctions. Despite all Iran's insistence in its positions, the avoidance of war and efforts for regional peace and stability is the focus of Iran's regional prospects. It should be seen whether these efforts will bring the Biden government and Iran to sit at the negotiating table again or not.

Jam-e-Jam: There is synergy between Iran and Tunisia

In an article, Jam-e-Jam discussed the visit of Tunisian President Kais Saied to Iran to attend the late president's ceremony and quoted Dr.

Hadi Ajili, the cultural adviser of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tunisia, as saying: Kais Saied's visit was the first visit of the head of the Tunisian government to Iran. It is considered a victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. There are favorable and desirable fields and capacities in the way of synergy and cooperation between Iran and Tunisia, which should be taken advantage of. The geopolitical and cultural role and position of each of the two countries in the region of West Asia and North Africa is clear, and the synergy and cooperation of these two countries will be of special importance and privilege for both of them. Now it's time to integrate the active and passive capacities and bring the relations of these two important international actors into a more operational phase. Considering the wide reception of Tunisian citizens to the artists and cultural groups sent by the Islamic Republic of Iran, it can be said that cultural diplomacy and regional diplomacy are two important channels in realizing the policy of synergy and cooperation between Iran and Tunisia in the international system.

Arman-e-Melli: Board of Governors made negotiations more complicated

Arman-e-Melli discussed with Hassan Beheshtipour, an international relations analyst, the possible change in the negotiation process between Iran and the United States after the European troika issued a resolution. It wrote: The text of the resolution is such that it demands more monitoring and not the referral of Iran's case to the Security Council. However, in any case, the important point is that any kind of resolution against Iran is case-building and we should not deal with it lightly, because any resolution issued is against national interests.

Iran is cooperating with the International Atomic Energy Agency, and in the current situation, issuing a new resolution will not bring any other result except to complicate the situation. An unwritten agreement between Iran and the United States has been reached indirectly, and because the European troika was outside of this agreement, they are pushing for their participation and role-playing. Our main problem is America and we have to solve our problems with the American side, so if we succeed in this direction, the troika of Europe would not have enough maneuvering power in this field to be able to obstruct and take measures against Iran by issuing a resolution.

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Qalibaf's economic platform is expected to be a central theme of his campaign as he seeks to address the challenges facing Iran's economy. "The motto is 'Service and Progress'. Of course, this is not just a motto, it is a reality that we must pursue and achieve," he said.

Qalibaf's biggest perceived opponent,

Pezeshkian, also appeared on the same channel to outline his campaign platform and priorities. Pezeshkian's remarks were highly reminiscent of Iran's past reformist candidates, who have led the country for a period of 24 years since the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

Pezeshkian courts reformists with Zarif appointment pledge

The 70-year-old physician has reportedly pledged to reappoint former Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif if elected. This move is seen as an attempt to garner support from reformist and moderate voters, among whom Zarif enjoys high levels of popularity.

Reformists have faced declining popularity since the collapse of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was negotiated under Zarif's leadership. The JCPOA's demise led to the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions and significant economic hardship in Iran. The inking of new "JCPOAs" was a key campaign promise for former President Hassan Rouhani, who secured a second term largely based on the nuclear deal's appeal.

Joining other presidential candidates on Monday, Qazizadeh Hashemi also took to national television to present his campaign platform and priorities. Qazizadeh was allotted 30 minutes to discuss his agenda with viewers.

5 presidential debates are scheduled to take place in the coming days. Candidates are allowed to campaign until June 26, two days before

Tehran condemns U.S., UK complicity in Israeli Al-Nuseirat massacre

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"We strongly condemn the heinous crimes of the Zionist regime in this camp. Many reports suggest that U.S. and UK military and intelligence forces were also involved in these operations.

This indicates that in a tripartite operation, more than 700 Palestinian citizens were killed or wounded, which is a major setback for the Zionist regime. This barbaric operation is condemned in the strongest terms by the Islamic Republic of Iran," Nasser Kanaani expressed during the foreign ministry's weekly press conference.

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freed as a result of the brutal and bloody operation.

Kanaani also addressed the issue of ceasefire in Gaza, asserting that the U.S. government has provided full support to the Zionist regime's war crimes against Palestinian citizens for the past eight months. He criticized the lack of evidence showing genuine U.S. efforts to establish a ceasefire and called on Washington to refrain from supplying military equipment to the regime.

"If there is any honesty in the U.S. government, it should refrain from sending military equipment to this regime," he stated.

Furthermore, Kanaani highlighted

the internal collapse and strategic failures of the Zionist regime, citing the recent resignations within its cabinet. He emphasized that these changes would not alter the situation for Palestinians. "The repeated resignations in the Zionist regime's cabinet indicate internal collapse and the failure of this regime to achieve any of its goals.

It's telling of the regime's strategic failures. However, the displacement of some killers in the Zionist regime's cabinet will not change the situation in Palestine."

European Trio's actions "unconstructive"

Shifting the focus to nuclear issues, Kanaani criticized Western

pressure on Iran, labeling certain European actions as "unconstructive." He stressed Iran's adherence to international laws and agreements regarding its nuclear activities and expressed concern over pressure from Western countries leading to a deviation of international agencies from their professional functioning.

When asked about Europe's potential activation of the snapback mechanism, Kanaani refrained from speculation: "I will not speculate on Europe's intentions. We will show constructive reactions to constructive behaviors and will respond according to international laws to non-constructive behaviors."

Regarding the arrest of an Iranian citizen in France, Kanaani assured that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is closely monitoring the situation. He revealed that diplomatic efforts have been initiated, including discussions with the French ambassador to Tehran and issuing an official note on the matter. Kanaani affirmed that the release of the detained citizen is a top priority for Iran's diplomatic system.

Iran calls for financial reform to counter U.S. dollar dominance

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During his address, Baqeri underscored Iran's responsible and innovative participation in all aspects of BRICS, including its political-security, economic-financial, and cultural-people-oriented initiatives. He stressed the importance of collective will and prioritization of common plans to advance BRICS' goals, particularly in the economic-financial pillar.

"BRICS holds the largest population, the largest economy, and the widest territory on Earth; therefore, it should represent the voice of the majority of the world's people who seek to achieve their rightful place and prefer a fairer, more democratic, and multilateral world over the current chaotic one," the diplomat said.

The Iranian foreign minister rejected the characterization of BRICS countries as "emerging" or "southern," instead advocating for terms such as "propellers" and "dynamic economies." He emphasized that these countries have rich,

ancient civilizations and are determined to regain their rightful place in the global system.

Financial systems should be tweaked

Baqeri also called for reforming financial systems based on Bretton Woods, citing the United States' use of the dollar as a weapon and imposition of illegal sanctions as evidence of the urgent need for change. He urged BRICS to accelerate actions such as conducting transactions with national currencies, using digital currencies, establishing joint banking platforms, and creating new financial banking structures.

"BRICS has set out with great goals to reform unfair systems; it has turned into a new approach that can be the core initiator of change for building a better world. BRICS has become a successful symbol for change and making the global system fairer and more just among countries and global minds."

West Asia not safe in the face of Zionist occupation

Elsewhere in his speech, the acting foreign minister stressed that true peace and stability in West Asia can only be achieved through the complete cessation of occupation and the nuclear disarmament of the Zionist regime. "In this regard, we have proposed two initiatives: first, the 'national referendum in the land of Palestine' with the participation of real residents of Palestine, including Muslims, Christians, and Jews, to determine their fate and establish the future political system of Palestine; and second, the initiative for a 'nuclear-free Middle East and

prevention of mass slaughter."

Baqeri reiterated Iran's commitment to strengthening regional stability and its legitimate response to Zionist aggressions. He also emphasized Iran's policy of developing constructive relationships with neighboring and regional countries and its willingness to resolve regional issues through negotiation and dialogue.

Furthermore, Baqeri criticized the recent actions of three European countries at the International Atomic Energy Agency, labeling them as tension-provoking acts and part of the failed policies of Western countries.

An anti-Iran IAEA resolution was passed by the UN nuclear watchdog's Board of Governors on Wednesday. The censure was proposed by Germany, France, and Britain despite the IAEA Secretary General's recent constructive visit to Iran.

"We will continue to cooperate with the agency within our rights and obligations under the NPT treaty and safeguards agreement," the diplomat announced.

Baqeri, however, clarified that Iran's peaceful use of nuclear energy and its nuclear development projects would not be affected by any external resolutions or actions.

The two-day meeting of foreign ministers of the BRICS group of countries kicked off on Monday, with the participants observing a minute's silence in memory of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, who lost their lives in a tragic helicopter accident on May 19.

Iran and the BRICS outlook

countries, such as countering the dominance of the dollar and opposing unilateralism in the global economy and trade, have been well-received by many nations. Consequently, numerous countries have expressed interest in joining or collaborating with BRICS through partnerships or the BRICS Plus initiative. Currently, BRICS holds the largest share of the world's GDP based on PPP, surpassing other economic blocs, including the G7.

BRICS encompasses over a quarter of the world's land area, about 45% of the global population, 36% of the world's GDP, and 25% of global exports. What sets BRICS apart from other global coalitions is that, despite having different goals and interests in international competition, the member countries are united by their primary objective of seriously reforming the global system, maintaining the cohesion necessary for a sustainable group and alliance. In fact, BRICS has the legal frameworks to establish a powerful economic entity outside the G7, with effective tools for influence.

Due to the significant role of BRICS and the increasing economic power of its members, many countries are seeking to join this bloc to benefit from its advantages. Following the announcement of the decision

to accept new members, joining BRICS became a focus of high-level meetings and discussions among Iranian officials in the 13th government. A formal letter from the late Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Iran's former Foreign Minister, requesting membership in BRICS was sent to the five member countries in June 2022.

Iran's persistent efforts to join BRICS and strengthen its foreign policy by expanding relations with the East led to the Islamic Republic of Iran being the only West Asian country invited to participate in the BRICS Plus summit during the fourth world summit hosted by China. Late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi delivered a speech at the BRICS Plus virtual meeting on June 24, 2022, emphasizing that international cooperation is essential for advancing global development in the face of increasing global challenges. The Islamic Republic of Iran officially joined BRICS on January 1, 2024.

BRICS operates based on three pillars: political-security, economic-financial, and cultural-people-to-people. For 2024, 258 events are planned across these areas, with 80 events already executed. Key topics include:

- An extraordinary BRICS summit

on West Asia and Gaza

- The annual presidential summit

- The foreign ministers' meeting

- Deputy foreign ministers' meeting on Gaza

- Counter-terrorism and anti-drug summits

- Meetings of ministers of foreign affairs, transport, science, health, industry, finance, trade, energy, agriculture, technology, sports, and more

- Parliamentary leaders' summit

- Central bank governors' meetings

- Various fields including energy, customs, trade, banking, standards, statistics, innovation, and aerospace

Looking at the BRICS events in 2024, many of Iran's national interests can be pursued within the BRICS framework. These include the non-Western nature of BRICS, prioritizing de-dollarization and a SWIFT alternative platform using local currencies, leveraging BRICS capacities for regional issues such as the Gaza conflict, and utilizing BRICS multilateral diplomacy to pursue national interests and bilateral meetings with influential member countries during these group meetings.

Raisi foreign policy legacy: A Chinese perspective

By Jin Liangxiang

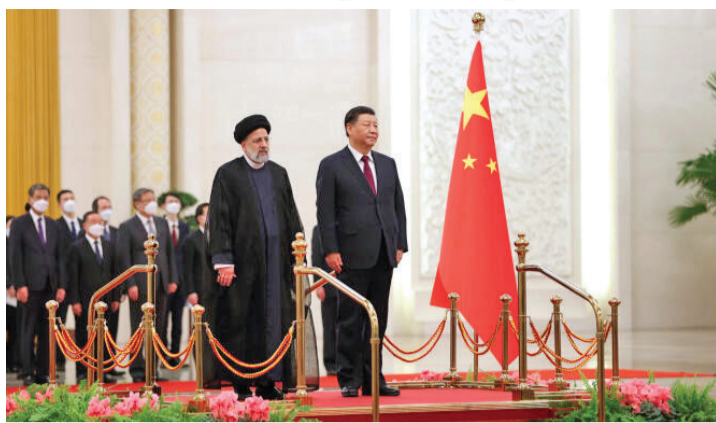
Ebrahim Raisi's sudden martyrdom as a result of a helicopter crash on May 19, 2024, was a huge loss not only for Iran but also for the region. During his presidency of 34 months, he did make changes in the country and in the region as well. His foreign policy legacies were numerous, and the following four are particularly worthy of mentioning.

The first should be his contribution to regional reconciliation. Iran's policy for resuming diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia took place with the direction of the Leader, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei; it was the continuation of that of Raisi's predecessor, and was within the context of new regional dynamics. But Raisi's personal involvement should be one of the most important factors as he was one of the policy makers and the very person implemented the policy.

It was shortly after President Raisi's visit to China in the middle of February 2023 that China, Iran and Saudi Arabia started the negotiation in Beijing in early March 2023, which finally resulted in a diplomatic breakthrough. Or to put it another way, Raisi's visit to Beijing served as a very important momentum or background to the great diplomatic move. It was reported that Raisi agreed in principle with the idea of negotiating a reconciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia when he was in Beijing.

For the rest part of the year 2023, Raisi during his presidency proceeded with the steps of the reconciliation by reestablishing diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia, selecting ambassador to Saudi and opening embassy in Saudi. And Saudi reciprocated the steps. And in November 2023, Raisi travelled to Saudi Arabia to attend the special summit of Islamic and Arab countries on the Palestine issue, marking a milestone in Iran-Saudi relations.

Raisi's efforts were one part but maybe one of the most important parts of the reconciliation. And



without his personal efforts, the reconciliation might not have gone so smooth judging by the very complicated regional context.

The second should be his robust diplomacy toward Asian countries. Iran, as a great Asian civilization, would always like to categorize itself as an Asian country, and would like to use the word of West Asia to define its neighborhood instead of the term Middle East. Iranian politicians and policy makers of generations had been working hard to make Iran an integrated part of Asia, politically, economically and in culture.

Raisi was one of the Presidents of Iran who had contributed greatly to this endeavor. It was Raisi who had finally finished all the procedures of joining SCO. Besides, President Raisi had visited major countries in the Asia including China, Russia and Indonesia during his 34-month presidency. Raisi was also mulling visiting India, but unfortunately had not been able to carry out the plan for various uncertainties until his martyr. Till to his death, Iran's economic relations with Asian countries had grown in a robust way.

Asia has become a continent and region with very dynamic economies. Raisi's diplomacy had greatly enhanced Iran's position in its diplomatic landscape with Asian countries, which will greatly serve the development of the relations between Iran and Asian countries in the near and distant future.

The third should be his efforts to expand Iran's diplomatic space. Despite the intentional efforts of some western countries to

isolate Iran diplomatically, Iran had achieved great success in its foreign relations as Iran had many friends across the world.

Raisi's 34-month presidency had seen huge achievements in Iran's efforts in this regard. President Raisi travelled 29 times abroad during the 34 months, and his footprints were seen in 23 countries in the neighborhood, AsiaEuro continent, Latin America and Africa. President Raisi should be one of the most diligent presidents since the Islamic revolution.

It was also in his presidency that Iran formally joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS. The significance of Iran's participation is mutual. While the two international organizations was able to justify its international standing by having a great civilizational regional power, Iran was able to engage with major international actors in institutionalized ways, and Iran's status in international community was greatly elevated.

The fourth should be his reasonable approach to nuclear negotiations. Nuclear negotiation has largely been a factor defining Iran-U.S. relations. The Trump administrations reneged on the JCPOA, and launched the policy of Maximum Pressure on Iran. Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA was detrimental, and the explanation from the U.S. side that the JCPOA was just an administrative agreement instead of a treaty was even more detrimental as it justifies that any U.S. administration could withdraw from a potential deal to be reached.

Learning the lessons of the

previous engagements, Raisi and his nuclear team voiced very clearly that any negotiation with the U.S. should be based on solid commitments on the U.S. side to remove the sanctions in a verifiable way.

But on the other hand, Iran under Raisi remained open to the negotiations. Though the negotiation in Vienna to resume JCPOA failed in September 2022, Iran and the U.S. reached an agreement, which resulted in Iran releasing U.S. prisoners in exchange for U.S. unblocking Iran's assets in South Korea in 2023.

Shortly before Raisi's martyrdom, Iran was also negotiating with the U.S. in Oman on issues related to regional tensions and the nuclear issue according to the recent interview of Ali Bagheri, the acting Foreign Minister.

Raisi maintained a balance between adherence to the principles and flexibilities, namely always opening to negotiations. By that approach, Raisi demonstrated not only Iran's willingness for a negotiated solution to the disputes but also Iran's resoluteness in safeguarding national interests.

All in all, despite internal and external criticism, Raisi actually stayed on reasonable course of Iran's foreign policy. It's easy to make complaints, but it is never easy to do something.

The U.S. could not change its Iran policy due to domestic politics, and European countries were kidnapped by U.S. regarding its policy toward Iran. It was within the above-mentioned context and the unavailability of changes of international structure that Raisi changed the course of Iran's foreign policy.

Anyway, Iran under Raisi's presidency greatly expanded its scope of foreign relations, improved Iran's standing in international community, and created necessary friendly neighborhood in favor of its domestic economic agenda. It was never an easy job.

Jin Liangxiang is a senior research fellow at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies

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Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

Dragan Skocic shortlisted to lead Persepolis

TEHRAN – Former Iran national football team head coach Dragan Skocic has been reportedly shortlisted to lead Persepolis.

Brazilian coach Osmar Loss Vieira will likely leave Persepolis and the Iranian club is going to find a replacement for the coach.

Osmar led Persepolis to title in 2023-24 league but has not yet extended his deal.

Now, the media reports suggest that Persepolis has opened negotiation with ex-Team Melli coach Skocic.

The 56-year-old coach has previously worked in Iranian clubs Malavan, Foolad and Sanat Naft.

Also, Croatia's Petar Segrt is another coach being linked with Persepolis' hotseat.

He was most recently the head coach of the Tajikistan national team.

Montenegrin coach Nebojsa Jovovic, who has most recently worked in Emirati club Khor Fakkan, is among the candidates as well.

Hassan Yazdani ready to win gold in Olympics

TEHRAN – Hassan Yazdani returned to the mat for the first time in eight months in the Ranking Series in Budapest to prove his fitness. After winning the Asian Games, Yazdani underwent shoulder surgery and returned to training only a month ago and now is ready to win a gold medal in the 2024 Olympic Games.

Yazdani wrestled like he was never away. Yazdani ended a long day with a 12-2 win over American wrestler Trent Hilday, his fourth win via technical superiority in as many bouts.

"I thank God that I was able to get on the mat in international competitions after seven months and 13 days," Yazdani said. "I started wrestling training a month ago and, it was good. With my relative preparation, I tried to get an acceptable result in this course of competition."

Yazdani said that he still needs to work on a few of his weaknesses which were exposed in the tournament. Yazdani gave up six points in his four matches and was stuck in a danger position a couple of times.

"I had a little preparation and it was around 60 percent," he said. "I hadn't wrestled for a long time and when they announced my name for this tournament, I had about 25 days to train and it got better as time passed. When you're not ready, you may face problems. My opponents used this opportunity and scored some points on me."

"I have some weaknesses that I hope I can fix before the Olympics so that I can wrestle better than these competitions and get the gold medal. I hope that until the Olympics, I can eliminate my weaknesses so I can win the best medal for my country and our good people."

For his return to the mat, Yazdani expressed his gratitude to several individuals but was grateful for the support from his family.

"I want to thank all those who have been by my side during this time," he said. "Dr. Rezaei, my physiotherapist and also Samereh Ghanbari as they didn't leave me alone during this time. Dr. Aslani, my doctor and Javad Rahmani, my bodybuilding coach, and of course, my old coach Mehdi Yegane Jafari, who was by my side during these difficult days after the shoulder surgery. My family has its own place but these loved ones contribute to winning this medal and the Olympics medal. So far everything has been successful, I hope we can get the best result in the future."

Iranian Greco-Roman wrestlers win eight medals at Budapest

TEHRAN – Iranian Greco-Roman wrestlers claimed eight medals at the Budapest Ranking Series on Sunday.

World Championships bronze medalist Mohammadhadi Saravi had no issues beating whoever tried to challenge him. In the final Alex Szoke from Hungary led 1-1 on criteria but Saravi scored a takedown.

Shayan Habibzare also won a bronze in the weight class after defeating Kevin Mejia Castillo from Honduras.

Poya Dad Marz seized a silver medal at the 55kg, being defeated by to Azerbaijan's Eldaniz Azizli.

Saeid Esmaeili beat Kyotaro Sogabe of Japan 6-5 and Mohammadreza Gerai defeated Andres Montano from Ecuador to win two bronze medals at 67. Iran's Danial Sohrabi defeated Shmagi Bolkvadze from Georgia 7-3 to win a bronze medal at 72kg.

Mohammadreza Mokhtari defeated Azerbaijan's Sanan Suleymanov at 77kg bronze medal match.

Mohammadhossein Mahmoudi also won a bronze medal at 87kg after defeating Turkey's Ali Gengiz 10-4.

Iran, Uzbekistan vie for 2026 World Cup qualification top spot

TEHRAN – Iran will host Uzbekistan in Group E of the Preliminary Joint Qualification – Round 2 of the FIFA World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027 on Tuesday.

Both sides have already secured their spots in the third round of the FIFA World Cup 2026 qualifiers AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027 Finals and will face off for the group's top spot.

Locked on 13 points after five matches, Iran will aim to use home ground advantage to defeat an Uzbekistan side who came back from two goals down to force a 2-2 draw when the sides met in Tashkent back in November.

It was a difficult result for Iran to accept, having defeated Uzbekistan in their previous 10 matches.

Amir Ghalenoei's side had to work harder than expected in Thursday's 4-2 win over Hong Kong and the tactician will be hoping for a more focused performance from his players.

Srecko Katanec's Uzbekistan will be eager to test itself ahead of the third round campaign, where the likes of Australia, Japan, Korea Republic, Qatar and Saudi Arabia could be their opponents.

Labib claims bronze at 2024 Asian Road Cycling C'ships

TEHRAN – Iran's Ali Labib claimed a bronze medal at the 43d Asian Road Cycling Championships in Almaty, Kazakhstan on Monday.

He finished in third place in the men's U23 Individual Road Race with a time of 2:57:35.

Iran's Mahdi Aghakashi (23), Mohammad Ramandi (28) and Pourya Yaghoubi (47) also competed in the event.

Emirati cyclists Abdulla Jasim Al-Ali and Mohammad Almutaiwei came first and second with 2:55:27 and 2:55:27, respectively.

The Asian Cycling Championships is an annual continental cycling championships for road bicycle racing and track cycling since 1963, exclusively for Asian cyclists selected by the national governing body (member nations of the Asian Cycling Confederation).

Since 2017, competitions on road and track cycling are held separately.

The tournament has brought teams from 28 countries in Kazakhstan.

Iran crowned champions of CAVA U18 Volleyball

TEHRAN – Iran defeated Kazakhstan 3-1 (25-12, 16-25, 25-17, 25-16) to win title of the 2024 CAVA U18 Volleyball Championship on Monday.

The Iranian girls' team also showcased their dominance throughout the tournament, remaining unbeaten with six consecutive victories. In their previous encounter during pool play, Iran triumphed with a decisive 3-0 win over Kazakhstan.

In the boys' division, Iran lost to Pakistan 3-1 to win a silver medal. The competition was held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Iran's Air Defense equipped with cutting-edge technology: commander

TEHRAN – The chief commander of the Iranian Army's Air Defense Force says the country's defense section is equipped with cutting-edge technology.

Brigadier General Alireza Sabahifard conducted an inspection tour of tactical radar sites, observation posts, and artillery positions along the northwestern border of the country on Monday.

"Air Defense, based on its indigenous capabilities and domestic capacities, is at a very high level of readiness and combat capability," General Sabahifard declared during his visit.

He highlighted that the core strength of the Air Defense lies in its young and specialized personnel.

"Our nation's youth and defense industry experts are equipped with the latest global knowledge; thus, the production and mass manufacturing of radar systems, drones, and more are carried out by our skilled Iranian youth," he added, underscoring the critical role of advanced training and education in bolstering the nation's defense capabilities.

The general also emphasized the effectiveness and decisiveness of the Air Defense Force in every field it has entered. "The Army's Air Defense Force has always been effective and decisive in every field it has entered, and performs its assigned missions with authority," he noted, reflecting on the force's track record of success and reliability.

Reflecting on the progress made since the early days of the Islamic Revolution, General Sabahifard stated, "Today, in terms of military capability, we are at a much higher position compared to the early days of the Islamic Revolution." He attributed this advancement to the sacrifices and selflessness of the warriors from the Iran-Iraq War, stressing that it is the duty of current and future generations to preserve and enhance the achievements of the Islamic system.

Further, General Sabahifard reiterated the importance of national elections, aligning with the Leader's views. "According to the Leader's statements, the key to solving the country's problems is holding elections with maximum public participation," he emphasized. He

described elections as a crucial and valuable opportunity for the nation, asserting that maximum participation is a duty and a tribute to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the country.

The general concluded by expressing the ongoing commitment to fully implementing the Leader's directives within the Air Defense Force, ensuring that the force remains a formidable and well-supported component of Iran's military.

In recent years, Iranian military specialists and engineers have achieved notable advancements in producing a diverse array of domestically developed equipment, fostering self-reliance within the armed forces.

Officials from Iran affirm their commitment to enhancing the nation's military capabilities, emphasizing their defensive nature.

Iran unequivocally states that negotiations will not affect its defense capabilities. Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, consistently emphasizes the importance of maintaining and enhancing Iran's defense capabilities.

belonging to Iran.

China affirms commitment to Iran's territorial integrity

TEHRAN – Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi reiterated Beijing's commitment to respecting Iran's sovereignty, amidst recent tensions over territorial claims in the Persian Gulf.

Wang made the remarks in a meeting with Iran's acting Foreign Minister, Ali Baqeri Kani, on the sidelines of the BRICS meeting in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia.

The meeting between Baqeri Kani and Wang Yi followed Iran's protest against China's support for "baseless claims" regarding islands in the Persian Gulf historically

Wang emphasized China's determination to enhance its strategic ties with Iran across various sectors, highlighting the countries' deep-rooted historical relations.

Baqeri Kani hailed the longstanding ties between Iran and China as emblematic of multilateralism, asserting that such alliances provide solutions to international issues. He also thanked China for its support in international forums, particularly in the face of recent resolutions targeting Iran's

peaceful nuclear program.

Addressing ongoing conflicts, Baqeri Kani highlighted the Israeli regime's actions in Gaza as emblematic of the failure of unilateralism, stressing the importance of multilateral approaches to global challenges.

Tehran, Moscow on the path to enhance cooperation

Earlier in the day, Baqeri Kani engaged in talks with Igor Levitin, special assistant to Russian President Vladimir Putin, on the sidelines of the BRICS meeting.

The discussions, held on Monday,

delved into a range of bilateral cooperation areas encompassing politics, economics, trade, and regional and international affairs.

Continuing his meetings, Baqeri Kani also held talks with the Foreign Ministers of Brazil and Belarus. The discussions underscored the enhancement of bilateral ties in all areas. The engagement between Iran and other countries comes amid Iran's official membership in the BRICS, solidifying its position within the group alongside recent entrants like Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia.

Russia stresses commitment to completing Rasht-Astara railway



TEHRAN - Minister of Transport of the Russian Federation Roman Vladimirovich has stressed the importance of Iran's Rasht-Astara railway as the missing link of the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC) saying that Russia is committed to completing the project.

"The work with Iran regarding the implementation of the Moscow-Tehran agreement continues in this regard, and we believe that the implementation of this project will increase rail traffic in the region," the minister said in a specialized meeting on the sidelines of the 27th Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum.

According to the official, Russia has already signed memorandums of understanding in the field of transportation and transit within the framework of the INSTC from 2022 to 2024 with Iran, Turkmenistan, and Bahrain and is seeking to reach an agreement with other countries.

Back in April, Deputy Minister of Russian Railways Sergey Pavlov and Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali met to discuss the implementation of Rasht-Astara railway project.

In that meeting, the two sides stressed that Tehran and Moscow are finalizing the draft of a contract for the implementation of the agreement to construct the mentioned railway.

Iran and Russia, both under harsh Western sanctions, on May 17 inked an agreement on the long-stalled construction of a railway connecting the northern Iranian cities of Rasht and Astara.

Spanning 162 km (100.6 miles), the railway

is a crucial element of the INSTC. The corridor integrates road, rail, and sea transportation, facilitating the movement of goods between Russia and India via Iran.

Through a video conference, late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin addressed the ceremony in Tehran where the two countries' transport ministers signed the agreement.

According to this agreement, the Russian Federation will invest 1.6 billion euros in this railway route.

Iran has been a key player in the INSTC and stands to benefit greatly from its full realization. As reported by Amwaj media, the Raisi government has seemingly banked significantly on transit becoming a top revenue generator. But Iran stands to gain from the project in more ways.

The operationalization of the corridor could mean improved relations between Iran and India, aligning New Delhi more closely with Tehran's regional interests.

A vital element of the INSTC, the Rasht-Astara railway project has been stalled for years due to costs, engineering, and logistical complications.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei stressed the importance of completing the stretch of the railway in his July 2022 meeting with Putin in Tehran.

VTB's new office in Tehran is part of Iran and Russia's ongoing efforts to connect their banking systems.

The two countries signed an agreement on January 29 to link their inter-bank messaging systems.

Due to Western sanctions, both countries have been cut off from SWIFT—a leading Belgium-based financial messaging service.

Both Iran and Russia are looking to reap the potential economic benefits of increased transit amid Western sanctions.

Iran's annual trade turnover stands at \$180b: CBI

TEHRAN - The deputy governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) for economic affairs Mohammad Shirijian has put the total trade turnover of the country in the previous Iranian calendar year at \$180 billion.

Iran's trade turnover reached \$180 billion in the previous calendar year (March 21, 2023-March 19, 2024) based on the balance of payments of the bank, Shirijian told IRNA's economy correspondent on Sunday.

According to the balance of payments of the

Central Bank of Iran, the Islamic Republic exported \$100 billion worth of goods in the period, marking a three percent rise compared to the previous year, he added.

The official said that \$80 billion worth of products were imported into the country in the said time, showing a 6.2 percent hike compared to the year before.

Iran's trade with member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) reached \$61 billion last year.

Annual pistachio production expected to reach 200,000 tons

TEHRAN - The production of pistachios in Iran is expected to reach 200,000 tons in the current Iranian calendar ending in March 2025, IRNA reported.

The deputy head of the board of trustees of Iran Pistachio Association, Jalil Karbakhsh-Ravari, told IRNA on Sunday the volume of pistachio export for the current year is estimated to be about 120,000 tons like the previous year.

Iran produced 200,000 tons of pistachio last year which ended on March 19, 2024, and exported 120,000 tons of its production worth about \$1.0

billion to the target states while the rest was consumed inside the country.

Karbakhsh-Ravari explained that 80 percent of Iran's pistachio is produced in the gardens of the southern province of Kerman while the rest is harvested from Razavi Khorasan, South Khorasan, North Khorasan, Semnan, Yazd, Markazi, Qazvin and some parts of capital Tehran.

Based on the statistics, Iran exported the 74.1-million-dollar worth of pistachio with shell skin and the 31.9-million-dollar worth of its nuts during the past two months.

Changuleh oil field development deal to be signed soon: NIOC

TEHRAN - The head of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has said the contract for the development of Changuleh oil field is going to be signed soon, Shana reported.

The development deal of the Changuleh oil field, which has an in-place reserve of 3.2 billion barrels of oil, is aimed at producing 60,000 barrels of oil per day in the first phase, Mohsen Khojasteh Mehr said.

According to the official, over \$1.3 billion is going to be invested to implement the mentioned project.

Based on the deal, the contractor is going to drill 18 production wells, two evaluation wells, two wastewater disposal wells, and

repair two wells, build well facilities and flow pipelines, and build facilities for processing and transporting crude oil and associated gas.

Located near the Azar oil field in the Anaran block, Changuleh is shared with Iraq's Badra oil field. The field was primarily considered to be independent, but analysis of 3D seismic data proved its shared status.

Based on NIOC data, Changuleh is estimated to need \$2.2 billion in investment to be fully developed.

So far, 3D seismic tests, determining the location of wells, and infrastructure activities like cleanup and construction of access roads have been carried out in this field.

20,000 solar panel sets provided to nomadic households in 2.5 years

TEHRAN - The head of the Nomads Affairs Organization of Iran said more than 20,000 solar panel sets have been distributed among the country's nomadic households over the past 2.5 years, IRNA reported.

According to Shayan Naderi, the number of solar panel sets provided to nomadic households across the country increased from 700 sets in August 2021 when the current government took office has reached 20,480 sets.

Knowledge-based and indigenized technologies are used in carrying out this project.

The government pays 90 percent of the costs of each system.

Solar panels are used to easily provide electricity in far-off places. It is not only clean but also cheap and limitless.

Solar-powered photovoltaic



panels convert the sun's rays into electricity by exciting electrons in silicon cells using the photons of light from the sun, which is the cleanest, most reliable form of renewable energy, and can be used in several forms to help generate electricity along with income.

Back in October 2019, the energy ministry announced the implementation of a program for

supplying the country's nomadic households with mobile small-scale power stations.

Also in November of that year, Iran's Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) inked a memorandum of understanding with Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation and the Organization for Mobilization of the Oppressed for the construction of 20,000

photovoltaic power stations (known as PV systems) across the country.

According to the Deputy Head of PBO, Hamid Pour-Mohammad, the project was part of a bigger program in which in the first phase 20,000 PV systems would be constructed for rural and nomadic households, and in the next phases the number will be raised to 100,000 stations.

Based on the Energy Ministry data, renewables, currently, account for nearly seven percent of the country's total electricity generation capacity.

Of the country's total renewable capacity, 44 percent is the share of solar power plants while the share of wind farms stands at 40 percent and small-scaled hydropower plants generate 13 percent of the total renewable capacity.

Electricity consumption exceeds 67,000 MW as temperature begins to rise

TEHRAN - Daily electricity consumption in Iran reached 67,387 megawatts (MW) on Saturday June 9, registering a 14,000 MW increase compared to the same date last year, according to the data released by Iran Grid Management Company (IGMC).

According to IGMC, the gradual increase in temperature has caused a surge in the use of air conditioning appliances, and consequently, electricity consumption has also begun to increase again, IRNA reported.

Based on IGMC data, the country's electricity consumption stood at 53,480 MW on the same day last year.

In order to meet the electricity demand in the peak summer period, the Iranian Energy Ministry has put several programs on its agenda among which increasing electricity production and managing consumption are the major ones.

The ministry is going to implement a comprehensive program during the summer, based on which low-consuming households are

going to be rewarded while the subscribers whose consumption exceeds the normal level will face a penalty.

Over the past decade, constant temperature rises and the significant decrease in rainfalls across Iran have put the country in a hard situation regarding electricity supply during peak consumption periods.

Iran's Power Generation, Distribution, and Transmission Company (known as Tavanir) has repeatedly announced that the company is implementing a variety of programs for managing the situation and preventing blackouts in the country.

Earlier this month, an official said that Renewable power plants with a total capacity of 13,000 megawatts are under construction in Iran, including a 780-megawatt plant being built in the southeastern Sistan and Baluchestan province.

Alireza Parandeh Motlaq, the deputy head of the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization of Iran (SATBA) for technical and

engineering affairs, stated that Sistan and Baluchestan is one of the richest provinces in the country in the field of renewable energies and enjoys high capabilities in different sectors including wind energy and geothermal energy.

Currently, there is a 60-megawatt renewable power plant installed in Sistan and Baluchestan province, including a 10-megawatt unit that had been installed in Zahedan region and a 50-megawatt unit constructed in the northern part of the province in recent years.

Parandeh Motlaq pointed to the high advantages of the generation of wind energy in Mil Nader region, the northern part of Sistan and Baluchestan, where a 50-megawatt wind power plant has been installed and is generating 210,000 megawatts/hour of electricity.

He went on to say that the wind energy generated in Sistan and Baluchestan province not only can meet the electricity demand of this southern province, but also there is the possibility of exporting the electricity to neighboring Afghanistan.

World journalists impressed by 'Sounds of Tibet' music concert

By Mahnaz Abdi

BEIJING- Almost 100 journalists from some 90 countries around the world were audience of "Sounds of Tibet", an impressive music concert held in the evening of June 6.

The concert was held at the place of Beijing Language and Cultural Center for Diplomatic Missions (LCC) in Sanlitun area, Chaoyang District, Beijing.

Seven pieces of music were performed by three professional musicians and singers during the concert which greatly impressed the participating journalists.

This concert was one of the many cultural activities organized

by the China International Press Communication Center (CIPCC) for the international journalists during a four-month program in China.

Now, let's a little know about the Tibetan music.

The music of Tibet reflects the cultural heritage of the trans-Himalayan region centered in Tibet, but also known wherever ethnic Tibetan groups are found in Nepal, Bhutan, India and further abroad. The religious music of Tibet reflects the profound influence of Tibetan Buddhism on the culture.

Western research into the history of Tibetan music has often focused more on religious than secular

music. It has been suggested that Tibetan religious music may have been strongly influenced by West-Asian music, including that of pre-Muslim Persia (and perhaps even of Byzantium). It has also been suggested that the landscape - and in particular the resonances of caves, with their natural percussive sounding stones - exerted a formative influence on the overtone singing found in Tibetan Buddhist chant (and plausibly also in prehistoric shamanic invocations), which is produced by artful moulding of the oral cavity

The assiduous adoption and

evolution of Indian Buddhist traditions and culture in Tibet between the 12th and mid-20th centuries - in a period when Buddhism had disappeared from most of the Indian subcontinent - allowed the Tibetans to perpetuate musical practices from India that would otherwise have been lost, and to develop them in distinctive ways.

Although Tibetan religious music can appear quite separate from the major traditions that emerged in Indian music, some of the musical instruments actually descend from Indian monastic and tantric Buddhist contexts.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Great Wall of China amazes international journalists again

By Mahnaz Abdi

BEIJING- Almost 100 journalists from some Asian, African, European, Latin American, and Oceanic countries, who are participating in a four-month program arranged by the China International Press Communication Center (CIPCC), visited the Great Wall of China for the second time during their stay in Beijing.

The group of foreign journalists embarked on a memorable journey to explore one of the world's most iconic landmarks the Great Wall of China in an evening with pleasant weather.

Many Chinese journalists, photographers, and broadcasters accompanied the journalists in their wonderful experience in the Great Wall, which resulted in a number of very interesting interviews, videos, and photos.

The journalists themselves took many selfies and also group photos during their great journey in the Great Wall.

The Great Wall of China was built over centuries by China's emperors to protect their territory. Today, it stretches for thousands of miles along China's historic northern border.

For millennia, Chinese leaders instituted

wall-building projects to protect the land from northern, nomadic invaders. One surviving section of such an ancient wall, in the Shandong province, is made of hard-packed soil called "rammed earth" and is estimated to be 2,500 years old. For centuries during the Warring States Period, before China was unified into one nation, such walls defended the borders.

Around 220 B.C.E., Qin Shi Huang, also called the First Emperor, united China. He masterminded the process of uniting the existing walls into one. At that time, rammed earth and wood made up most of the wall. Emperor after emperor strengthened and extended the wall, often with the aim of keeping out the northern invaders. In some places, the wall was constructed of brick. Elsewhere, quarried granite or even marble blocks were used. The wall was continuously brought up to date as building techniques advanced.

Zhu Yuanzhang, who became the Hongwu Emperor, took power in 1368 C.E. He founded the Ming Dynasty, famous for its achievements in the arts of ceramics and painting. The Ming emperors improved the wall with watchtowers and platforms. Most of the familiar images of the wall show Ming-era construction in

the stone. Depending on how the wall is measured, it stretches somewhere between 4,000 and 5,500 kilometers (2,500 and 3,400 miles).

In the 17th century, the Manchu emperors extended Chinese rule into Inner Mongolia, making the wall less important as a defense. However, it has retained its importance as a symbol of Chinese identity and culture. Countless visitors view the wall every year.

As earlier mentioned, this visit and also the first visit of the world journalists to the Great Wall was organized by the China International Press Communication Center (CIPCC).

CIPCC, under the China Public Diplomacy Association (CPDA), has initiated a program to build a platform for the media from countries around the world, especially developing countries, to observe China and study development in this country.

In each edition of the program, journalists from all around the world gather together to get familiar with the modern China and exchange their experiences in the field of journalism.

In 2024 edition of the program, started in late February, over 100 journalists from more than 90 countries are participating.

Bibi and Gantz: Two sides of the same coin

The resignation of Gantz highlights divisions in Israel over its failure to defeat Hamas

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN - The resignation of Benny Gantz from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's war cabinet has laid bare widening cracks within the Israeli establishment as the regime's global isolation deepens over its genocidal war on the Gaza Strip.

"Unfortunately, Mr Netanyahu is preventing us from approaching true victory, which is the justification for the painful ongoing crisis," Gantz said in a televised statement on Sunday evening as he announced his resignation.

Gantz is Netanyahu's chief political rival. Polls suggest if snap elections were held today, he would be the winner.

Hence, making such critical remarks are not surprising.

Both Netanyahu and Gantz are criminals who have the blood of a large number of Palestinians on their hands.

The slaughter of more than 37,000 Palestinians in Gaza since October 7 is just the tip of the iceberg.

Gantz had already threatened to step down if Netanyahu did not lay out how Israel would achieve its "six strategic goals" in Gaza which include the end of Hamas rule in Gaza.

More than eight months have passed since Israel declared war on Gaza following Hamas' surprise military operation in southern Israel on October 7. Israel has not only failed to bring Hamas to its knees but the regime has suffered major defeats at the hands of resistance fighters on the battlefield.

Laying out plans for defeating Hamas is just wishful thinking because the resistance movement has become stronger and support for it has grown in the Palestinian territories over the past months.

Hence, Gantz is playing the blame game when he accuses Netanyahu, known as Bibi, of denying Israel "true victory" because both of them want to see the elimination of Hamas from Gaza. True victory for them



means defeating Hamas, but this dream will remain elusive even if Gantz or others succeed Netanyahu.

Political ploy

Netanyahu and his coalition partners still have 64 of the Israeli parliament's 120 seats. His cabinet will not collapse following the resignation of Gantz if far right ministers, namely National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich do not make good on their threats to leave the cabinet.

As a result, Netanyahu could safely stay in office till elections are due in October 2026. But he will become more heavily reliant on far-right ministers who now want a spot in the war cabinet to replace Gantz.

Gantz's decision to quit the war cabinet could be a clever ploy because he wants to shirk responsibility for Israel's failure to achieve its military goals in Gaza. He wants to appear as a savior and woo voters in a future election.

Domestic divisions

Israel's opposition leader Yair Lapid backed Gantz's decision to leave the war cabinet as "important and right".

Netanyahu, however, criticized his move, saying in a post on X, "Benny, this is not the time to quit the campaign, this is the time to join forces."

Far right ministers made a blistering attack on Gantz too.

"There is no act less stately than withdrawing from the government during a war," Smotrich said.

He accused Gantz of fulfilling the demands of Hamas, Lebanon's Hezbollah and Iran by his decision to leave the war cabinet.

Iran, Hamas and Hezbollah have insisted on an end to Israel's brutal war on Gaza. Hezbollah has stressed that it will stop its attacks against Israel if the regime ends the Gaza war.

Iran has also warned on numerous occasions that the Gaza war could spill over into the entire West Asia region.

Nonetheless, the Netanyahu regime has vowed to continue the Gaza war in defiance of growing international calls to reach a deal with Hamas.

Israel is accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The International Criminal Court (ICC) has also requested arrest warrants for Netanyahu and his war minister Yoav Gallant for committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza. However, international pressure has so far failed to stop Israel's killing machine.

Good cop, bad cop

The United States and its allies blame Netanyahu for the continuation of the Gaza war. They have depicted Gantz as a centrist politician who can end the onslaught.

A question arises here: Is Gantz different from Netanyahu?

Undoubtedly, it is a fallacy that Gantz would have acted any differently than Netanyahu if he had been in Bibi's shoes following the October 7 Hamas attack.

Gantz is a former chief of staff of the Israeli military and also a former war minister.

He was the army chief when the regime launched war on Gaza in 2012. The Israeli rights group B'Tselem said the Israel army under Gantz's leadership killed nearly 170 Palestinians during the war.

In another war against Gaza in 2014, more than 2,000 Palestinians including over 500 children were butchered by Israeli forces while Gantz was still the army chief.

The Israeli army also killed hundreds of Palestinians in Gaza in May 2021 and August 2023 when Gantz was the regime's war minister.

In his 2019 campaign for the Israeli Knesset, Gantz put out a video of destruction in Gaza in the 2014 war. In that video, he bragged about sending parts of Gaza "back to the Stone Age".

This is in addition to the killings of Palestinians in the West Bank at the hands of Israeli forces during the era that Gantz held top military posts.

The comments made by Gantz and the Israeli military's brutalities when he was the chief of staff and war minister clearly show how he thinks about Palestinians.

Now it seems Netanyahu is playing the role of the bad cop and Gantz is the role of the good cop.

But, in essence, they are members of the bogus and apartheid regime.

As long as the US and its Western allies continue to support Israel, the regime will not end acts of genocide in the Palestinian territories. The regime seeks to make the Palestinian territories uninhabitable for Palestinians and force them to leave their homes, which amounts to ethnic cleansing.

WORLD HEADLINES

Hamas: Blinken comments show bias to Israel

Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said on Monday that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's Gaza ceasefire comments were "biased to Israel" and that his stance is a real obstacle to reaching an agreement.

"Blinken's speech during his visit to Egypt is an example of bias to Israel and it offers an American cover to the holocaust conducted by the occupation in Gaza," Reuters reported.

Speaking after meeting Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Cairo, Blinken said, "My message to governments throughout the region, to people throughout the region, is if you want a ceasefire, press Hamas to say yes."

Paris mayor: Calling election before Olympics hard to understand

The mayor of Paris said she is having "difficulty understanding" why President Macron chose to call parliamentary elections just weeks before the city hosts the Olympic Games.

The ballot will take place across two rounds on 30 June and 7 July, while the Olympics will get under way on 26 July, the BBC reported.

Anne Hidalgo - a member of the Socialist Party, which opposes Macron - describes the president's decision as "another move I am having difficulty understanding".

"Like a lot of people I was stunned to hear the president decide to do a dissolution," she says. "A dissolution just before the Games, it's really something that is extremely unsettling."

Report: Number of journalists killed in Gaza rises to 150

Three more journalists were killed in Gaza bringing the total number of journalists killed since Israel launched its bombing campaign on the enclave to 150, the Government Media Office (GMO) said, Middle East Monitor reported.

In a statement, the GMO said the Palestinian journalist community lost fellow Abdullah Ahmed Al-Jamal, an editor and journalist at Palestine Now, and Ahlam Ezzat Al-Ajla, a correspondent at Family Happiness Magazine, and Dina Abdullah Al-Batniji, a journalist at Al-Thuraya Media Foundation.

Qassam Brigades launches attack on Israeli forces in Rafah

The armed wing of the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement says it has "killed and wounded" an unnamed number of Israeli forces in the Shaboura camp of Gaza's Rafah city.

Analyst: European election results humiliation for Scholz's party

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's party has suffered a humiliating defeat in European elections which could affect the government's future steps on migration and its Ukraine policy, a leading expert said on Monday.

"It is quite humiliating that the chancellor's party SPD has only 14% of the vote, that doesn't look very good," Josef Janning said, adding that voters' discontent with the government's Ukraine policy, concerns about ir-

The statement made on Telegram said the Qassam Brigades detonated a booby-trapped house with the Israeli forces inside.

"Immediately upon the arrival of the rescue force, our [fighters] destroyed the vicinity of the house that was blown up with mortar shells," it added.

Hezbollah conducts another attack on Israeli forces in Golan

Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement has conducted another attack on Israeli forces.

Hezbollah hit the headquarters of the 210th Golan Division at the Nafah base in the occupied Golan Heights of Syria, Al Jazeera reported.

The Lebanese group said in a statement on Telegram that the "air attack with a squadron of drones" resulted in "confirmed casualties".

"Part of the headquarters was also destroyed and set on fire," it added.

UN: Over half of Gaza's buildings destroyed

The UN reported on Monday that more than half of the buildings in the Gaza Strip have been destroyed by Israeli attacks since October 7.

"More than half of all buildings have been destroyed," the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) said on X, citing data from the United Nations Satellite Center (UNOSAT), Anadolu reported.

Stating the destruction in Gaza is "indescribable," it added: "Clearing the rubble will take years. Healing from the psychological trauma of this war will take even longer."

Reiterating its call for a ceasefire, the statement said: "This suffering must end."

No snap election in Germany

Germany will not follow France and hold a snap election despite the ruling coalition's dismal performance in the EU election, a spokesperson for Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on Monday.

"The regular election date is next autumn. And that's what we plan to do," Steffen Hebestreit told a government press conference, according to AFP.

Scholz's coalition suffered heavy losses at the European elections, with all three parties in his government trailing the conservatives and the far right, preliminary results showed.

The chancellor's Social Democrats (SPD) scored their worst result in history at 14%, third behind the far-right AfD at about 16%, and well behind the conservative CDU-CSU bloc's 30%. The Greens recorded 12%, while the liberal FDP took 5%.

The result sparked calls from opposition parties for Scholz to follow the lead of Emmanuel Macron and call a snap election.

Global outrage at Nuseirat "bloodbath" Latest Israeli massacre sparks widespread condemnation

From page 1 ► planned brilliantly, and executed in an extraordinary fashion. This once again raises the question of whether some believe that Palestinian lives matter."

Also, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez said Havana also condemns the massacre "in the strongest terms", highlighting that it provides more "evidence of the genocide that Israel commits with impunity against the people of Palestine".

Turkey's foreign ministry branded the massacre as "barbaric", saying it was another entry to the list of war crimes it (Israel) has committed in Gaza.

"We deplore the Israeli attack on the Nuseirat refugee camp in Gaza, which has killed hundreds of Palestinian civilians," the foreign ministry added.

The UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Martin Griffiths, stressed the "Nuseirat refugee camp is the epicenter of the seismic trauma that civilians in Gaza

continue to suffer."

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Joseph Borrell, wrote on social media that the "reports from Gaza of another massacre of civilians are appalling. We condemn this in the strongest terms. The bloodbath must end immediately".

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation slammed the Israeli assault as another example of organized state terrorism and genocide.

Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, emphasized that Tel Aviv has been using captives to legitimize killing, injuring, and starving Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, said.

Albanese pointed out that the Israelis could have retrieved all captives alive and intact eight months ago when the first ceasefire and exchange deal was put on the table. "Yet,

Israel refused in order to continue to destroy Gaza and the Palestinians as a people."

Despite some 1,000 casualties, the United States, which played an active role in the massacre, just said it was "concerned".

White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan admitted that civilians had been killed in Gaza. "Any time civilians are killed, we're concerned," he said.

Palestinian medics say many of those who perished were children, while a large portion of the injured are also children who have lost their parents.

The Israeli military claims the air, sea and ground assault was needed to rescue four captives. However, the savage nature of the assault also killed three other Israeli captives, according to the armed wing of Hamas.

Experts have said this was not a "hostage rescue operation" but a war crime.

War on Gaza: US courts must hold Biden accountable An upcoming appeal in San Francisco will argue that the president's policies are fueling Israel's genocide against the Palestinian people

From page 1 ► While President Joe Biden recently said that "no one is above the law", in response to guilty verdicts in former President Donald Trump's hush-money trial, his administration is seemingly committed to shielding Israel from accountability at any cost - even if that means tearing apart the rules-based international order.

Biden has so far not only refused to sup-

port the ongoing case brought by South Africa at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), but he has actively rejected the preliminary findings of the World Court determining that Israel is "plausibly" committing genocide.

Even more, Biden continues to undermine the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, after news emerged that he was pursuing arrest warrants against Israeli Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for perpetrating war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

While the US court system seems to finally be holding Trump accountable for some of his litany of crimes, the courts have failed to stop Biden from furthering US complicity in the Israeli genocide of Palestinians.

(See full text at www.tehrantimes.com)

regular migration, led to the surge of radical parties.

"It's not all about the unpopularity of the current government coalition, but it is also about the discontent in the public about two issues: One of them is support for Ukraine, the government's Russia policy, and the other issue is migration," he said during a briefing organized by the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), Anadolu reported.

(See full text at www.tehrantimes.com)

Iran, Iraqi Kurdistan see surge in medical tourism

TEHRAN – Medical tourism is a significant area for developing tourism between Iran and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, West Azarbaijan's governor-general said on Monday.

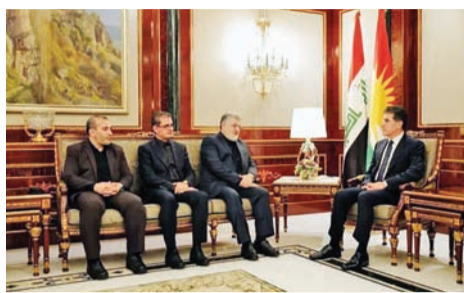
In an interview with CHTN, Mohammad-Sadeq Mo'tamedian highlighted the achievements of the second meeting of border governors-general from both regions, leading to several agreements.

The meeting, he added, included the governors-general from Iran's West Azarbaijan, Kordostan, and Kermanshah provinces, and their counterparts from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The official revealed plans to establish a dedicated ambulance route to facilitate the movement of patients between the two regions.

"Annually, many travelers from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq visit West Azarbaijan for medical treatment," Mo'tamedian emphasized. "Easing their travel can significantly enhance health tourism."

The governor general also mentioned that further steps discussed at the meeting to bolster this initiative include 24-hour customs operations, specialized gates at border terminals, completion



of transit infrastructure, expanding highways, resolving direct transportation issues, and opening new border crossings.

Mo'tamedian pointed to the long-standing relationship between Iran and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, underscoring cultural and religious commonalities and good neighborly relations as key factors in strengthening bilateral ties.

In his concluding remarks, he noted that considering the use of the Tamarchin border crossing for the third consecutive year for Arbaeen pilgrims, officials from the Kurdistan Region have expressed readiness to host pilgrims, which is expected to significantly boost religious tourism in the province.

Iran sees growth in handicraft exports, reaching \$450 million

TEHRAN – Iran's handicraft exports, excluding jewelry and suitcase exports, reached \$450 million in the past Persian year (ended on March 19), according to the deputy minister for handicrafts.

"That sum of handicrafts' exports enjoyed a year-on-year growth attributed to the concerted efforts and support from the late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts (Ezzatollah Zarghami), who have been instrumental in removing barriers to export," Maryam Jalali-Dehkordi said.

She, however, did not mention a figure concerning handicraft exports made a year earlier.

Speaking to ILNA on Saturday, the official emphasized the importance of exports in the handicrafts market, noting the sector's remarkable progress over the past year.

"Export is a crucial link in the handicrafts market chain," Jalali-Dehkordi said on the sidelines of a conference held to celebrate World Handicrafts

Day.

"Over the past years, our ministry has undertaken significant foundational and structural activities, leading to notable growth in exports since last year."

Addressing the conference, Jalali Dehkordi said during the current administration, handicrafts found a voice, became fruitful, and approached business development. "Creating incentives and providing facilities for the handicrafts sector, tax exemptions, special attention to the private sector, providing insurance coverage for 10,000 handicraft artists, creating some 150,000 jobs, training 65,000 people through various programs, were among measures taken by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts over the past three years."

Currently, a selection of 13 cities and three villages in Iran have been registered by the World Council of Handicrafts as "world cities of handicrafts".

Skyrocketing prices and 'record' visitor numbers: Good luck in Europe this summer

Temperatures are rising. Hotel prices are exploding. And travelers are already behaving badly. Welcome to another summer in Europe.

From the headlines, things already look chaotic. Famous sites are raising their entry fees. Hotel rooms are like gold dust. And the dollar has slipped against both the pound and the euro.

Oh, and there's the small matter of crowds. "There's been a substantial increase in last year's

demand," says Tom Jenkins, CEO of the European Tourism Organization, speaking about U.S. travelers to Europe. "2023 saw higher numbers than 2019, and this year we're comfortably seeing more – record volumes of Americans coming to Europe."

Kayla Zeigler agrees. As the owner of Destination Europe, she is sending "record numbers" of clients to the continent this year.

(Source: CNN)

Iran in frames



The Chapel of Dzordzor stands at the mouth of a narrow gorge where the Zangmar River flows, embraced by surrounding mountains. Located near the village of Baron in West Azarbaijan province, the chapel is small and has difficult access, but the stunning landscape and historic architecture make it well worth the visit!

Enhanced safety measures for Tehran museums

TEHRAN – The tourism ministry and Tehran Municipality have inked a cooperation agreement aimed at better protecting the historical heritage of the Iranian capital.

The agreement addresses the national importance of safeguarding valuable cultural and historical landmarks in Tehran, such as the Golestan Palace, Niavaran Complex, Sa'dabad Complex, and the National Museum of Iran, Mehr reported.

It underscores the necessity to elevate crisis management knowledge and fire safety levels at these cultural sites, as well as the Grand Bazaar of Tehran.

Key points include increasing the resilience of these valuable cultural and historical buildings against fires, improving safety measures at the Grand Bazaar, and facilitating the issuance of safety implementation permits.

Enhancing the skills and knowledge of staff at cultural sites, developing an operational plan for fire risk management and emergency response, creating a shared database and safety profiles, and connecting cultural and historical buildings to the fire alarm system of the Fire Department are among the pillars of the agreement.

By implementing these measures, the agreement seeks to provide a safer environment for the preservation and enjoyment of Tehran's rich cultural history.



A view of the National Museum of Iran.

The enhanced safety protocols will help protect these irreplaceable sites from fire and other potential hazards, ensuring their legacy for future generations, the report said.

Tehran boasts a rich cultural heritage that reflects the grandeur of its historical epochs and the sophistication of Persian art and architecture. At the heart of this heritage lies the UNESCO-listed Golestan Palace, a stunning complex of royal buildings that dates back to the Qajar era. The palace is a masterpiece of Iranian architecture, adorned with exquisite tile work, mirror halls, and lush gardens. It was once the seat of Qajar rulers and continues to enchant visitors with its blend of Persian and European architectural styles, representing the artistic renaissance of the 19th century in Iran.

The Niavaran Complex, another significant cultural landmark, offers a glimpse into the opulent lifestyle of the Pahlavi dynasty. Located in the northern part of Tehran, this complex includes several palaces, each showcasing a unique blend of modernity and traditional Persian design. The main palace, Niavaran Palace, served as the residence of the last Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Its lavish interiors, filled with art and artifacts from around the world, reflect the Shah's taste for luxury and his efforts to modernize Iran.

Equally magnificent is the Sa'dabad Complex, which is situated in the foothills of the Alborz Mountains. Sa'dabad was the summer residence of the Qajar and Pahlavi monarchs. The complex includes several museums and palaces, such

as the White Palace and the Green Palace, each offering insights into the royal lifestyle and Iran's modern history. The lush gardens and the tranquil environment provide a perfect backdrop for exploring Iran's royal heritage.

The National Museum of Iran stands as the country's premier museum, housing an extensive collection of artifacts that span the entirety of Iran's rich history, from prehistoric times to the Islamic era. The museum's two main buildings, the museum of ancient Iran and the museum of Islamic archaeology, offer a comprehensive overview of the nation's cultural evolution. Visitors can marvel at ancient relics, including pottery, textiles, and manuscripts, each telling a story of Iran's past civilizations and their contributions to world heritage.

No exploration of Tehran's cultural heritage would be complete without a visit to the Grand Bazaar, a bustling marketplace that has been the commercial heart of the city for centuries. The bazaar is not only a place for trade but also a social and cultural hub, where the traditions of Persian craftsmanship are kept alive. Its labyrinthine alleys are lined with shops selling everything from spices and carpets to jewelry and antiques, providing a sensory feast for visitors and a tangible connection to Iran's mercantile history.

Restoration completed on rooftops around UNESCO-listed Naqsh-e Jahan Sq.

TEHRAN – Restoration work has been completed on the rooftops of a centuries-old bazaar, situated around the UNESCO-listed Naqsh-e Jahan Square in Isfahan.

In that project, rooftops situated on the eastern and western sides of Naqsh-e Jahan Square were successfully restored at a cost of approximately 52 billion rials (some \$87,000), according to Fariba Khatabakhsh, who presides over the World Heritage site.

Restoration of the rooftops was undertaken both as a planned and an emergency measure, thanks to funds allocated to Naqsh-e Jahan Square in 2023, the official said.

"Winter rains in 2022 caused moisture to penetrate the bazaar's interior on the eastern side of

Meidan Imam (Naqsh-e Jahan Square), between Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque and Imam Mosque. However, damaged parts underwent emergency repairs at that time, and later, the [governmental] funds allowed for comprehensive restoration in this section," she explained.

The official said that the restoration also included the western side of the square, specifically the area between Hafez Street and Ali Qapu Palace, extending to Saadi Passageway.

"On both sides of Ali Qapu Palace, the rooftops' inadequate slopes had caused water to seep into the roofs of some market shops, and the gutters were problematic. Therefore, all roofs were repaired, and the slopes were corrected," Khatibakhsh added.

The bazaar surrounding Naqsh-e Jahan Square dates back to the Safavid era and is primarily dedicated to the sale of Isfahan's handicrafts, attracting numerous visitors and artisans alike.

Naqsh-e Jahan is one of the largest city squares in the world and an outstanding example of Iranian and Islamic architecture. Built by the Safavid Shah Abbas I in the early 17th century, the square is bordered by two-storey arcades and anchored on each side by four magnificent buildings: to the east, the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque; to the west, the pavilion of Ali Qapu; to the north, the portico of Qeyssariyeh; and to the south, the celebrated Royal Mosque.

Naqsh-e Jahan was at the heart of the Safavid capital's culture, economy, religion, social power, government, and politics.

Kermanshah to enhance tourism with child-friendly initiatives

TEHRAN – Kermanshah province in western Iran is ramping up every effort to be recognized as a child-friendly tourist destination. "Registering the province as a child-friendly tourism hub," Kermanshah's deputy tourism chief highlighted. "Is a top priority on the agenda."

Considering capacities lie within the province, Vahid Amiri elaborated, measures are in the pipeline to secure Kermanshah as a child tourism destination as well as being previously recognized as a creative city of gastronomy by UNESCO.

A special pavilion is in preparation for the upcoming Tehran International Tourism Expo with an eye toward familiarizing the audience with Kermanshah's capabilities in the field, he added.

Regarding the involved organizations, Amiri pinpointed that the Strategic Child-friendly

Tourism Document is planned to be developed in collaboration between provincial sectors such as the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults and the Ministry of Education headquarters, to name a few.

"We are making every effort," he emphasized. "Considering the education system's capacity to annually organize over two million student excursions in the form of tourism tours."

The goals set in this initiative include familiarizing the younger generation with the tourism industry and its basic principles, encouraging and motivating the private sector to lead in the tourism sector, and optimally utilizing the available resources for this purpose, according to Amiri.

"We aim to encourage this highly capable generation to become developers and promoters of

the province's capabilities in the tourism sector," he wended up.

Child-friendly tourism destinations are locations specifically designed or adapted to cater to families with children. These destinations prioritize safety, entertainment, and convenience to ensure a memorable and stress-free experience for both kids and their parents.

Restaurants and eateries at these destinations typically offer children's menus, high chairs, and sometimes even play areas, ensuring that dining out is enjoyable for the whole family.

As Kermanshah has previously been registered by UNESCO as a creative city of gastronomy, securing its place as a child-friendly destination could also lead to tourism enhancement provincewide.

Drawing Dreams on Fabric: an exhibition of Iranian needlework

TEHRAN – An exhibition titled "Drawing Dreams on Fabric" has lifted the curtains on a wide array of Persian needlework to commemorate World Handicrafts Day.

It mainly features collections of needlework being kept at Niavaran Historical Cultural Complex, where the exhibition opened doors to visitors early on Monday.

According to organizers, the one-month exhibition held in Ahmad Shahi Pavilion is aimed at promoting the diverse range of needlework originating from across the

country.

Needlework (Souzan-douzi in Persian) is a common occupation mostly among females in some regions of the country. It is the art of drawing images on plain fabrics by sewing delicate stitches using a needle and colorful yarns.

Turkmen needlework, one of the most recognized styles which has been inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2022, is a decorative applied art used on the national dress of people of all gen-

ders and ages in Turkmenistan and Iran.

In both countries, Turkmen-style needlework begins with the preparation of thin silk threads that are intertwined in three layers and twisted into a single thread, then straightened with a large needle.

According to UNESCO, this unique technology gives the thread a shine. For the most common needlework style, a series of loops are created by piercing the fabric with a thin needle and holding the previous loop with the thumb of the oth-

er hand. Other needlework styles vary according to the region.

There is no age limit, and young girls traditionally learn needlework from their mothers and grandmothers. In rural areas, the patterns used reveal the territorial identity of the needlewomen. They are also used to symbolize love, friendship, nature, and strength. Needlework is used on wedding clothes, in clothing for funerals and cultural events, and as decorative parts of ordinary clothing, such as scarves, coats, pants, shawls, and accessories.

Rotavirus, pneumococcal vaccination to continue till mid-August

TEHRAN – The nationwide implementation of the pneumococcal and rotavirus vaccination program is expected to cover the entire country by the end of the fifth calendar month Mordad (August 20).

“People should not be concerned about the [probable negative effects of] vaccines. Fortunately, surveys and studies have shown that pneumococcal and rotavirus vaccines do not have any severe complications,” the deputy health minister, Hossein Farshidi, stressed.

The official went on to say that the implementation of the vaccination program is currently underway in the south of the country and will soon extend to all parts of the country.

High-risk regions

The national vaccination program against rotavirus and pneumococcal started in May in seven more provinces of the country.

The seven provinces are Khorasan Razavi, South Khorasan, North Khorasan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Hormozgan, Bushehr, Khuzestan, and Ilam, IRNA reported.

Rotavirus is the most common cause of diarrhea in infants, under the age of one, and their hospitalization.

Annual rotavirus vaccination prevents the hospitalization of over 50,000 individuals. It will also prevent some 1,200 deaths caused by severe cases of diarrhea.

On April 13, Pedram Pak-Aein, an official with the health ministry said, “The vaccination program against pneumococcal and rotavirus will focus on tropical and south-



ern regions of the country.”

“The immunization initiative will begin in the coming weeks in provinces that are most vulnerable to these diseases,” IRNA quoted Pak-Aein as saying.

Rotavirus vaccination program will target tropical, southern, and southeastern provinces, while pneumococcal vaccination will be extended to southern provinces as well, he added.

The nationwide implementation of the vaccination program will commence as soon as needed pneumococcal and rotavirus vaccines are provided, Pak-Aein further noted.

The vaccination program to combat pneumococcal and rotavirus kicked off in February after being missed from the immunization schedule for a decade.

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

On February 19, Pak-Aein said, “The vaccination program to combat pneumococcal has been added

to the country's immunization program on January 21.

Rotavirus can cause severe watery diarrhea, vomiting, fever, and abdominal pain. Children who get rotavirus disease can become dehydrated and may need to be hospitalized.

Babies can get three doses of vaccine at the 2nd, 4th, and 6th months of life. The vaccine is administered by putting drops in the child's mouth, IRNA quoted Mohsen Zahraei, the head of the preventable diseases department of the Ministry of Health, as saying.

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).

Zahraei further noted that pneumococcal vaccine can be injected when babies are 2, 4, and 12 months old.

“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.

to the country's immunization program.”

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.

Pak-Aein went on to say that vaccination against rotavirus, started on February 20, aims 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 present them to the market within the next few months, he added.

Vaccination against rotavirus, pneumococcal

The national vaccination plan aiming to combat rotavirus and pneumococcal, which most notably cause diarrhea and pneumonia respectively, was said to be added

imposed by enemies,” Akbari added.

Science, technology co-op

The Iranian deputy science minister, Vahid Haddadi-Asl, and the representative of the Syrian Higher Education Ministry, Fadia Yousef Deeb, discussed ways to enhance bilateral scientific research cooperation.

The meeting was held on December 18, 2023, within the framework of the first joint science and technology cooperation committee, attended by a Syrian delegation and representatives of Iran's ministries of science and health.

Referring to the friendly relations between the two countries, Haddadi-Asl considered it necessary to develop and deepen scientific cooperation in the international arena, IRIB reported.

Collaboration in the fields of education, research, technology, and student exchange were among the important topics of discussion.

Yousef Deeb, for her part, acknowledging the capabilities of Iran in scientific developments, announced Syria's readiness for scientific cooperation with Iran; she also stressed the importance of Iran's scientific experiences being shared with Syria.

She asked for a report on the process of establishing science and technology parks and the possibility of training Syrian science and technology managers in Iran or Syria.

Concerning Syria's interest in enhancing technological and innovative cooperation with Iran, the deputy science minister for innovation and

technology, Sajjad Mohammad-Ali Nejad, presented an account of the status of science and technology parks in Iran and the different stages of their establishment, including entrepreneurship centers in universities, technology incubators, which are responsible for training technicians to work in knowledge-based companies, and technology campus.

He went on to explain that, “Iran has managed to establish and expand science and technology parks without relying on other countries, and is willing to share its knowledge and experiences with Syria.”

In December 2023, Mohammad-Reza Mohammadzadeh Attar, the Iranian Deputy Science, Research, and Technology Minister; and Mohamad Amer Tlas, the Syrian Vice-President for the National Union of Students, in a meeting in Tehran, discussed ways to enhance scientific and technological cooperation.

The necessity of establishing a joint science and technology park in Syria was highlighted.

The officials also agreed to hold an exhibition of Iran's scientific achievements in Syria to make Syrian students acquainted more with the technologies and innovations of Iran and Iranian universities.

Syrian students who are interested in studying in Iran will be granted scholarships for master's and Ph.D. degrees.

It was also decided to strengthen Persian language courses in Syria by dispatching professors from Iran

Damascus exhibiting capabilities of Iranian universities

TEHRAN –An exhibition showcasing the scientific capabilities of Iranian universities is being held in Damascus, Syria.

Hosted by the Faculty of Law at the University of Damascus, a total of 13 Iranian universities are attending the four-day event, which kicked off on Monday (today), IRNA reported.

The national union of Syrian students, in cooperation with Iran's vice-presidency for science and technology, has organized the exhibition within the framework of scientific cooperation between Syria and Iran to feature the scientific capabilities of Iranian universities.

Bassam Bashir Ibrahim, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Syria, visiting the exhibition underscored the importance of utilizing the experiences and expertise of the universities present in the exhibition.

The Syrian official said, “Holding such exhibitions can provide Syrian students an opportunity to explore the services provided by these universities, including the educational systems, curriculums, tuition fees, and registration processes.”

Iran's ambassador to Damascus, Hossein Akbari, for his part said, “Universities play an essential role in the development of technology which consequently has a significant impact on the fate of any country.”

This exhibition displays only a small part of the scientific capabilities of Iranian universities, the official highlighted.

“Iran and Syria need to further expand sci-tech ties to be able to neutralize oppressive sanctions

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Iran finds herbal medicines effective in COVID-19 treatment

The Food and Drug Administration has approved four domestically produced herbal medicine effective in the treatment of COVID-19 and has issued a production license for two of them.

Kianoush Jahanpour, the spokesman for the Food and Drug Administration, told IRNA on Monday that “none of these drugs are a cure for COVID-19, but they have effects to reduce the symptoms of this disease and should be further investigated.”

تولید دو داروی گیاهی موثر در درمان کرونا در ایران

سازمان غذا و داروی ایران چهار فرآورده طبیعی تولید داخلی با اجزای گیاهی برای بهبود علائم کووید ۱۹ را تایید کرده و مجوز تولید را برای دو مورد آنها صادر کرده است.

کیانوش جهانپور سخنگوی سازمان غذا و دارو روز دوشنبه در گفت و گو با ایرنا گفت: هیچکدام از این داروها داروی درمان کووید ۱۹ نیستند اما اثراتی برای بهبود علائم این بیماری داشته اند و باید مراحل بررسی بیشتر را طی کنند.

Health insurance expands coverage for anti-cancer drugs

TEHRAN –Seven more anti-cancer drugs are now on the list of rare diseases fund with health insurance covering 70 percent of the costs, an official with health insurance organization has said.

“Currently, with the inclusion of these seven drugs, a total of 90 anti-cancer drugs are covered by rare and hard-to-treat diseases fund and the health insurance is paying 70 to 95 percent of their costs,” IRIB quoted Mohammad-Esmaeil Kameli as saying.

In the Iranian year 1401 (March 2022-2023), the late President Ebrahim Raisi's administration established a special fund to support patients suffering from rare or hard-to-treat diseases.

Services ready for cancer patients

The Health Insurance Organization is ready to provide services to patients suffering from cancer in the country, IRNA reported on December 26, 2023.

The number of health centers that have concluded contracts with the Health Insurance Organization increased by seven percent in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) compared with the year earlier.

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

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

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

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

He stated that 13,931 pharmacies, 20,804 doctor's offices, 2,049 clinics 2,446 independent laboratories, and 4261 rehabilitation centers, both

independent and affiliated with other organizations, have concluded contracts with the Health Insurance Organization.

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

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

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

Other significant services

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

Providing free insurance for low-income families, paying the medical expenses of infertile couples, providing services to the disabled, supporting patients with rare diseases, and providing services to foreign nationals are among the provided services so far, IRNA reported.

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

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

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

Marriage loans rise by 64% in Raisi administration

TEHRAN –The administration of the late President Ebrahim Raisi paid 1.57 trillion rials (almost \$2.7 billion) as marriage loans by the end of the past Iranian calendar year (March 19), marking an increase of 64 percent since the administration took office in August 2021.

A total of 480,000 marriages were registered in the same period, and about 85 percent of the couples have received marriage loans, IRNA reported.

Wedding, childbearing loans

From the beginning of the current year until April 29, the Central Bank paid 56.38 trillion rials (almost \$94 million) in wedding and childbearing loans.

Some 40.84 trillion rials (about \$68 million) were granted to the applicants for wedding loans, an increase of 28 percent compared to the same period last year, IRNA quoted Mehdi Sahabi, an official with the Central Bank, as saying.

The Central Bank also paid a total of 15.54 trillion rials (roughly \$26 million) to families in child-

bearing loans, showing a 23 percent rise year on year.

Protecting the youth

On January 28, late President Ebrahim Raisi urged relevant bodies to take action to protect the youth of the country.

The official told organizations that they can use their facilities and capacities to implement the law to protect the youth.

He pointed to the important role of cultural development in encouraging people to have children, saying that the wrong cultural development in recent decades has been one of the most important reasons for the decrease in the country's population growth.

To address this issue, he called on national media, print and digital media, education, and higher education centers, and advertising agencies to work together to promote positive cultural messages about family planning.



Apiculture in Astara

Beekeepers in the northern city of Astara produce more than 800 tons of honey from some 34,000 hives per year.

Iran ranks third in the world in the number of apiaries.



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JUNE 11, 2024

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Friendship is impossible with a liar.
Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:04 Evening: 19:41 Dawn: 3:02 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 4:48 (tomorrow)

Prominent actor Abolfazl Pourarab plans to stage "Othello"



Celebrated Iranian actor Abolfazl Pourarab in an undated photo

TEHRAN- Renowned Iranian actor Abolfazl Pourarab is set to return to the stage as the director of William Shakespeare's iconic play "Othello".

The play will go on stage at Tehran's Vahdat Hall in late summer, ISNA reported on Monday.

After a 21-year hiatus, Pourarab, the renowned director, is set to bring Shakespeare's classic play "Othello" to the Vahdat Hall, a venue where he previously staged Molière's "The Miser" to great acclaim, the report added.

"Othello" is a tragic play that tells the story of Othello, a Moorish general in the Venetian army, and his descent into madness and destruction.

The play begins with the marriage of Othello to Desdemona, the daughter of Brabantio, a senator in Venice. However, their happiness is short-lived as Iago, Othello's ensign and friend, becomes jealous of Othello's promotion and begins to plot against him.

Iago convinces Othello that his wife, Desdemona, is having an affair with Cassio, a young officer who has been promoted to the position of lieutenant. Othello becomes increasingly consumed by jealousy and begins to doubt his own senses. As the play progresses, Othello's behavior becomes more erratic and violent, causing chaos and destruction throughout the city.

Meanwhile, Desdemona is innocent and loves Othello deeply, but she is unable to convince him of her innocence.

She tries to reason with him, but he is too far gone in his jealousy to listen. In the end, it

is Iago who reveals the truth to Othello, but it is too late. In a fit of rage, Othello smothers Desdemona to death, only to discover later that he has been deceived by Iago.

The play ends with Othello's tragic realization of his mistake and his subsequent suicide. The play explores themes of love, jealousy, and deception, and features some of Shakespeare's most famous characters, including Iago and Othello.

The play has been adapted several times including the 1965 film adaptation, directed by Stuart Burge and starring Laurence Olivier as Othello.

This version maintained the traditional setting and characterizations, while also emphasizing the emotional depth of the characters.

In contrast, the 1995 film adaptation, directed by Oliver Parker and starring Laurence Fishburne as Othello, introduced a more modern and urban setting, reimagining the story as a gritty and intense thriller.

In recent years, "Othello" has been adapted into various forms, including opera, dance, and even video games.

The 2013 opera adaptation by Alfonso Cassaro and Marco Tutino reimagined the story as a psychological thriller set in a modern-day mental institution and the 2018 video game adaptation by Creative Assembly envisioned the story as a historical drama set in ancient Greece.

William Shakespeare, widely regarded as the greatest playwright in English literature, was born in 1564. Throughout his career, Shakespeare wrote an impressive body of work that includes over 36 plays, 154 sonnets, and several poems.

His plays span across various genres, including tragedies like "Hamlet" and "Macbeth," comedies such as "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Twelfth Night," and histories like "Henry V" and "Richard III." Shakespeare's works are renowned for their intricate plots, memorable characters, and profound insights into the human condition, making them timeless pieces of literature that continue to captivate audiences worldwide.

Cartoon of Day



Red line in Gaza

Cartoonist: Anne Derenne from France

Turkish institute eyes expansion of film ties with Iran

TEHRAN- In an effort to develop cultural and cinematic exchanges between Iran and Turkey, the Turkish Yunus Emre Institute in Tehran, has set its sights on promoting joint activities and co-productions in the film industry.

In an interview with IRNA on Sunday, the institution's director, Ibrahim Furkan Ozdemir, highlighted the importance of strengthening ties between Turkish and Iranian filmmakers.

"We believe that joint activities and even co-productions between Iranian and Turkish cinemas should be expanded, and we intend to contribute to this by collaborating with the Iranian Youth Cinema Society," he said.

Established in over 65 countries and 100 cities worldwide, Yunus Emre Institute has been actively engaging in cultural and artistic activities with various institutions, he explained.

In addition to promoting Turkish language education, the institution has also been organizing film festivals and workshops in Asia, Europe, and the Balkans, he added.

The Turkish cultural institution has been collaborating with Iranian cultural activists for over 10 years,



participating in various festivals and events in Iran and Turkey, he noted.

"Some of these events have taken place in Tehran, while others have been held in other cities like Kermanshah. These collaborations have often taken place within the framework of cooperation with the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and relevant cultural institutions."

The institution's recent workshop on virtual reality and artificial

intelligence in Tehran was a major success, with Kenan Subaşı, a professor from Istanbul University, delivering a keynote speech on the impact of new technologies on cinema, he explained.

In the near future, Yunus Emre Institute plans to host a short film festival in Iran and simultaneously host an Iranian short film festival in Turkey, he stated.

"The institution aims to continue fostering cultural exchange between

Turkish and Iranian filmmakers, believing that joint activities and co-productions can bring about a stronger bond between the two nations."

According to Ozdemir, institutions like Yunus Emre play a crucial role in bridging the gap between Turkish and Iranian filmmakers. By providing a platform for cultural exchange and collaboration, these institutions can help create a sense of unity among filmmakers from different countries.

Iranian films honored at U.S. festival

TEHRAN- Four Iranian short films received awards at the 20th edition of the Accolade Global Film Competition, which was held in La Jolla, California, the U.S. on Saturday.

"Message" by Saeid Moltaji and "Until Mina" by Mehdi Arhami won the Awards of Merit, while "Homa" by Gelareh Abbasi, and "The Birth of a Girl" by Mohammad Kazemzadeh Mojdehi received honorable mentions.

Accolade Global Film Competition stands out as the premier virtual film competition, attracting top-tier companies and emerging talent alike. Unlike traditional film festivals, Accolade offers an unparalleled, international platform for filmmakers to

showcase their work and compete with peers from around the world.

Established in 2003, Accolade has been dedicated to providing positive exposure to talented filmmakers, including directors, producers, actors, and creative teams.

The competition celebrates and honors the achievements of creators who produce high-quality projects, identifying and promoting them through press releases to over 100,000 industry contacts and filmmakers.

Accolade is also a reliable indicator of future success, having seen numerous award winners go on to win prestigious accolades such as Oscars, Emmys, Tellys, and more.

Iran's "Central Hospital" to go on screen at U.S. festival

TEHRAN- Iranian short film "Central Hospital", co-directed by Vahid and Navid Nami, will go on screen at the Los Angeles Independent Filmmakers Showcase-IFS Film Festival, which will be held at the U.S. city from June 12 to 20.

The film tells the story of a shocking medical procedure that has taken place in a major Iranian hospital. A 19-kilogram tumor, discovered in the stomach of a corrupt city mayor, has been successfully removed during surgery. The tumor, however, poses a unique challenge due to its overwhelming stench, which is so pungent that it cannot be contained in any area.

The government is keen to keep

this news under wraps, attempting to suppress the information from being made public.

The IFS Film Festival is a premier celebration of independent filmmaking. The festival showcases a diverse range of films from emerging and established filmmakers, accompanied by press events, parties, forums, panels, and exclusive Hollywood premieres.

Beyond the annual festival, the IFS community of over 150 members - comprising filmmakers, students, and industry professionals - is committed to preserving and promoting cinema throughout the year. The festival is dedicated to discovering and highlighting innovative independent films from around the world.

Gaza's horrifying genocide through the eyes of a young Palestinian artist

Alaa Zaqout, a young woman in Gaza, shares the physical and psychological realities of living through genocide in Gaza.

Like most Gazans, Alaa and her family have been displaced several times from their home in north Gaza, which was obliterated last October.

She now shelters in a single room in Deir Al-Balah, central Gaza, with her parents and siblings.

Before October 7, Alaa ran her own arts and crafts shop in the Al-Shati district. She is an interior designer by training and, before the war, spent much of her free time painting at her home by the sea.

"The sound of gunfire and tanks is approaching. They are next to us now, but I don't know where. My heart is trembling, this war has changed me and made me into a person I don't know," Alaa shares on the violence surrounding her.

"Fear grips me, and my heart won't stop racing. I've grown much older than my age, my hair is turning white with fear."

Alaa shares failed attempts at sleeping, because "the sounds of explosions are so loud that the house shakes every minute" from their force.

"Every whistling missile whispers to me: the time has come for your death. All night I pray to God that I don't die in pieces, that I die in one piece. I look at my sister soothing the children. They sit quietly and I see the fear in their

eyes," she adds.

"When there are bombs, we tell the children that it's fireworks. But when they bomb too close, that lie doesn't work. They can see our fear. Even when there are bombs far away, they jump," Alaa tells The New Arab.

Israel's war on Gaza has so far killed at least 36,586 people, according to the Palestinian territory's health ministry. Around 80 percent of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been forced to flee their homes, while entire neighborhoods have been levelled by bombing.

The brutal military campaign has seen hospitals, ambulances, and residential buildings attacked. It has also led to widespread hunger and mass displacement.

"October 9, I will never forget," Alaa says. "The sky was red and it did not stop. The sound of collapsing buildings. Shrapnel falling on our roofs. Stones are a scary thing that I cannot describe, and only those who have lived through our horror can understand. We decided to escape to my aunt's house in central Gaza, splitting into two groups so that we wouldn't die together from one bomb - all Gazans know this tactic," the young artist adds.

"Everyone has lost someone. I received news recently that the family of my best friend from university died. She's the only survivor, but her legs and hand

have been amputated.

"As for me, my uncle and his whole family were killed. They were sheltering in a mosque when they were bombed. We tried to identify their bodies and take their remains. Amal, my aunt, was without her head and hands. We couldn't find them under the rubble. The parts we did find were transferred to Shifa for burial. Days later, the Israeli army invaded the hospital and took their incomplete corpses."

Horrifying images of charred, dismembered and decapitated bodies have been widely shared on social media and news sites, triggering an outcry over Israel's atrocities.

Talking about what Alaa and her family do to pass the time, cope and survive amid war, the artist tells The New Arab, "I find some peace in my day through drawing. But I'm a painter, and I've lost my palettes and colors - there was no time to take them, or my clothes when we evacuated."

"Today there's no life in Gaza. Gaza was colorful. Now I see it in grey, as if a candle has gone out and there's no hope for it. But, God willing, we will fill it with new beautiful colors, and if I live, I will rebuild it and the first house will be my home. My place," Alaa says.

"I used to enjoy the peace of evenings, but now my mind feels like it's going to explode. I hold my phone and look at my photos from

before October 7 and cry. I haven't slept properly since then. No one has. I lie awake thinking it's all a dream."

Israel's eight-month invasion of Gaza has also caused major disruption to the water systems and supplies for the besieged enclave's 2.3 million residents.

The recent incursion into the southern Rafah governorate caused over half a million people to flee under the orders of the Israeli military, who have since bombed dozens of areas and seized control of the key border crossing between Egypt and Gaza, blocking the entry of vital supplies such as water and fuel.

"There's no electricity and no necessities of life," Alaa reveals. "Water comes just once a week, and we try to shower. It's the same day we wash our hands. Life here is not easy."

"Then I get hungry and imagine what food I want to eat. There's little here and I'm sick of the cans, it is unhealthy and I'm a person who cares a lot about what enters my stomach. But we are lucky. Many others are starving."

The number of people who have died in Gaza as a result of malnutrition and dehydration since October 7 has now reached 35, with 30 of them being children.

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), the Israeli government is using starvation as a weapon of war.