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West's Nuclear Blackmail

IAEA poised to pass anti-Iran resolution after Tehran warns it would take "commensurate" measures

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Mohsen Naziri Asl, Resident Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the IAEA, at the IAEA 1741st Board of Governors meeting held at the Agency headquarters in Vienna, Austria. 20 November 2024

Retaliation in sight: Hezbollah to target "heart of Tel Aviv"

TEHRAN- Hezbollah's Secretary-General Naim Qassem said on Wednesday that the resistance movement will retaliate the recent deadly Israeli strikes on the Lebanese capital by targeting the "heart of Tel Aviv"

"The response must be expected on central Tel Aviv," Qassem said in a speech on Wednesday.

Referring to a US-proposed ceasefire deal, he added that Hezbollah would not accept any truce that violates the Lebanese sovereignty.

Hezbollah seeks a "complete and comprehensive end to the (Israeli) aggression" and "the preservation of Lebanon's sovereignty... the Israeli enemy cannot enter (Lebanese territory) whenever it wants", Qassem said.

The Hezbollah chief noted, "Israel cannot defeat us and cannot impose its conditions on us."

Is a "settlement" on the Lebanese border imminent?

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT – US presidential envoy Amos Hochstein held intensive negotiations with Lebanese officials on a ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel before he headed to the occupied Palestinian territories on Tuesday night.

"The solution is imminent," Hochstein said after two hours of talks with Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri on Wednesday. Hochstein, who arrived in Beirut on Tuesday, added, "The meeting was very constructive and we have a real opportunity to reach an end to the conflict now."

For his part, Berri said, "The situation is good in principle."

Berri and Hochstein were to discuss and decide on some technical details.

Hezbollah kills 110 Israeli troops and injures over 1,050 others on border

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN- Hezbollah has announced its fighters have killed over 110 Israeli troops and injured more than 1,050 others on the Lebanese border with occupied Palestine since October 1.

A new report published by the Lebanese resistance movement states the number of Israeli casualties had been recorded until Tuesday night and does not include "the enemy's losses at its bases, military sites, barracks, settlements, or occupied cities."

The report, issued by the Islamic Resistance Operations Room, details the latest battlefield developments.

Hezbollah said its fighters continue to repel the Israeli aggression against Lebanon,

War on Lebanon: Israel stuck between Scylla and Charybdis

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN – The latest trip of US envoy Amos Hochstein to the region bears the hallmark of Washington's political maneuvering in the wake of the Israeli military's predicaments.

Hochstein held talks with Lebanese officials in Beirut on Tuesday and Wednesday ostensibly to broker a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah.

"The meeting today built on the meeting yesterday, and made additional progress," Hochstein said on Wednesday after his second meeting with Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri.

The United States proposed a ceasefire a week ago with the aim of ending Israel's war on Lebanon.

According to the US-drafted agreement, the Israeli army should withdraw

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Armenia to host Iranian knowledge-based delegation

TEHRAN –Supported by the vice-presidency for science, technology, and knowledge-based economy, a delegation of Iranian knowledge-based firms will be dispatched to Armenia to showcase the latest technological accomplishments of the country and explore markets for Iranian products.

Knowledge-based companies will display their latest achievements in medical, dental, laboratory, and pharmaceutical supplies; raw materials, medicinal products and supplements; diagnostic, rehabilitation, orthopaedics, and physiotherapy equipment; as well as hospital construction, and facilities in hospital and operating rooms, ISNA reported.

Attending meetings in Armenia's chamber of commerce, and union of manufacturers and businessmen, and holding joint meetings with innovation Page 7

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Leader urges for enhanced role of women in religious and media spheres

TEHRAN – During a Wednesday meeting with scholars and students from the Jamia al-Zahra seminary, the largest seminary for Muslim women in the Islamic world, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei emphasized the crucial role of women with profound religious knowledge in shaping media narratives and participating in international forums.

He stated, "After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, many knowledgeable women have emerged in society who must be prepared to express issues related to women and family in the media." Page 2

Tehran, Doha call for end to Gaza genocide, pledge stronger ties

TEHRAN – In a meeting held in Tehran on Wednesday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian engaged in discussions with Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Qatar.

The top officials' talks focused on bolstering cooperation between the two nations and touched upon various topics of mutual interest.

They also addressed pressing regional issues, including the urgent need to put an end to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and exploring pathways to peace in Lebanon.

Mohammed al-Thani conveyed warm regards from the Qatari Emir, expressing wishes for the Iranian President's good health and happiness, while hoping for continued prosperity for the Iranian government and its people. The Iranian President also asked the Qatari Prime Minister to send his warm wishes to the Emir.

President Pezeshkian highlighted the agreements reached during his recent visit to Qatar, emphasizing the necessity to accelerate their implementation. He reaffirmed Iran's commitment to fostering broader and deeper relations with its friendly neighbor.

The Qatari Prime Minister expressed a strong interest in furthering ties with Iran, announcing that the Emir of Qatar is expected to visit Iran early next year. Page 2

Russia, Iran urge diplomacy in Syria, Yemen as Israeli aggression threatens peace efforts

TEHRAN – Amidst growing regional instability, Russian and Iranian officials have stressed the urgent need for diplomatic solutions to conflicts in Syria and Yemen.

Mikhail Bogdanov, Russia's Special Representative for West Asia and Africa, met with Ali Asghar Khaji, Senior Advisor to Iran's Foreign Minister, in Tehran to discuss escalating tensions across the region, including the devastating situation in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen.

The officials expressed grave concern over the escalating violence in Gaza, noting the staggering death toll of at least 43,972 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and over 104,000 injured since the start of the Israeli aggression. They called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon to prevent further loss of life and wider regional destabilization. Page 2

Pezeshkian urges Pope's intervention to end Israeli violence in West Asia

TEHRAN – Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has appealed to Pope Francis for intervention to halt ongoing Israeli violence in the region, which has wreaked havoc in Gaza and Lebanon and could spread to other parts of West Asia any second.

The Iranian president's message was delivered to the head of the Catholic Church on Wednesday by Mohammad Mahdi Imanipour, the head of Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organization. The message's text was published by the president's official website the same day.

Imanipour is heading an Iranian delegation that has taken part in the 12th edition of the interfaith dialogue between Iran and the Vatican, held on November 19 and 20.

In his message, Pezeshkian expressed appreciation for the Vatican's condemnation of Israeli actions.

The message lauded the Pope's contributions to global peace and interfaith understanding, aligning with Iran's foreign policy priorities of international peace and reconciliation. Pezeshkian expressed hope for strengthened cooperation between Iran and the Vatican to advance global peace and justice. Page 3

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Israel deserves tough response

In a note, Kayhan addressed Iran's reciprocal response after Israel's October 26 attack on Iran and said: Some believe that if Iran shows a reciprocal response to the Zionist regime's aggression, we will witness the creation of dangerous conditions in which we enter into a full-scale military war. If the Zionist regime really wants a direct military confrontation with the Islamic Republic of Iran, in one case it will lead to a full-scale military war with Iran, and that is when the Islamic Republic is in a weak position and unable to defend its interests and territorial integrity. Therefore, if Islamic Iran does not give a reciprocal and stronger response than what Israel has done by violating Iran's territory, it should wait for a full-scale military war. Accordingly, Israel needs a strong response. If there had been no Leader at the head of the country, the enemy would definitely have considered some behaviors of Iranian statesmen as signs of passivity and weakness, and in this case, today we would have seen highly dangerous and costly events.

Sobh-e-No: Opportunity to set nuclear doctrine

In an article, Sobh-e-No discussed the positions of Europe and the United States regarding Iran's nuclear program. It wrote: The deadline for lifting JCPOA limitations is approaching and there is a possibility that the West will obstruct this path. Therefore, some experts believe that now is the best time for Iran to bring its nuclear program to a point of no return. If the Western countries seek to issue a resolution and put more pressure on Iran, the Islamic Republic should use this opportunity to change its defense and nuclear doctrine and adopt a more decisive position against threats. Although Iran is still seeking cooperation and resolving issues through dialogue, the confrontational behavior of the West has weakened the atmosphere of dialogue and forced Iran to take a decisive decision. Deciding on the future course will depend on the behavior of the IAEA Board of Governors and the European Troika in the coming days.

Hamshahri: Bibi using war with Iran to project himself

Hamshahri discussed the new claims by the Zionist regime's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the October 26 attack on Iran in an interview with Abolfazl Zohrevand, a member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Parliament. He said: Netanyahu (known as Bibi) claimed that the attacks of Zionist fighters caused "serious damage" to a part of Iran's nuclear program, which will hinder the progress of Iran's activities in this area. He also claimed that during the recent attack of this regime, a serious blow had been inflicted on Iran's ability to produce missiles, and he tried to make it appear that "the sky of Iran has become defenseless" in the current situation. Regarding the criticism directed at Netanyahu's government after the attack and the emphasis by the critics that the attack was "very weak", the prime minister of this regime is now trying to justify everything by projecting himself. The reason why Netanyahu claims to have seriously hit Iran's missile capability is that he recently received new news that Iran is testing missiles that can change all equations. The recent claims of the prime minister of this regime are not to show power, but securing achievement for himself from the war with Iran to escape censure from the critics.

Ettelaat: Trump looking for profit in foreign policy

In an interview with Heshmatollah Falahat Pisheh, a former parliamentarian and expert on political issues, Ettelaat sought his views about the prospects of Iran-U.S. relations. He said: Trump will pursue the same past goals through new approaches. Trump's policy is to make foreign policy profitable for America and reduce costs. For this reason, Trump is seeking to increase the costs for Iran. However, it seems that Trump is trying to offer a series of economic packages to Iran, and if his administration offers economic cooperation with Iran, Iran should welcome it. Trump's managerial approach is such that his cabinet members make bargains and even threats, and we can see that Trump has chosen persons who have made the harshest remarks against Iran. These people make threats, but when it comes to negotiations, it is Trump who tries to declare the final agreement in the form of an agreement.

Leader urges for enhanced role of women in religious and media spheres

From page 1 ▸ The Leader highlighted the importance of conveying religious content based on Islamic teachings, saying, "They should also be able to convey profound religious content in major global and Islamic assemblies, based on verses from the Quran, Hadiths, and Nahj al-Balagha." He underscored that such efforts would significantly enhance the country's standing on the global stage and contribute to the establishment of the Islamic Ummah.

Ayatollah Khamenei called for a dual focus on spiritual and moral development alongside scientific education within Jamia al-Zahra. "A woman endowed with Islamic ethics and self-discipline can transform and nurture the future generation," he asserted.

Reflecting on the historical context, the Leader noted that the establishment of Jamia al-Zahra was a visionary initiative by Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic.

He remarked, "The very formation of an institution tasked with enhancing the religious knowledge and awareness of a significant number of women and girls in the country is highly valuable." He acknowledged the challenges faced by women during the Pahlavi era, where Western cultural influences led to a decline in religious knowledge.

Ayatollah Khamenei stated, "Today, Jamia al-Zahra is responsible for this important mission; therefore, any effort to attract more students and elevate their religious knowledge is commendable." He further identified the expansion of authentic religious knowledge among the public as essential for advancing towards an Islamic civilization.

Addressing the need for modernization within theological seminaries, the Leader remarked, "Theological seminaries must address important societal issues, including economic matters, governance, and family." He emphasized that transformation is a natural phenomenon but must be guided by wise and religious individuals to ensure societal progress.

"Theological seminaries exist for the people, to promote religion, and to establish a religious governance system," he said. Ayatollah Khamenei called for updates to teaching methods and curricula in response to evolving societal needs, including financial matters and emerging topics like cryptocurrencies.

In conclusion, he warned against resistance to transformation within theological seminaries, stating, "Opposition to transforming theological seminaries is opposition to the advancement of religion in the country." He urged that those leading these changes must possess the necessary qualifications to ensure effective implementation.

Tehran, Doha call for end to Gaza genocide, pledge stronger ties

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) meets with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Al-Thani in Tehran on November 20, 2024.

From page 1 ▸ During Pezeshkian's visit to Doha in October, Iranian and Qatari officials signed agreements aimed at enhancing bilateral cooperation in various sectors, including trade, education, and sports.

Also on Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi engaged in discussions with his Qatari counterpart, further solidifying their diplomatic relations.

The two senior diplomats underscored the urgent need to halt the Israeli regime's genocidal actions in Gaza and to put an end to its aggression against Lebanon.

They also discussed initiatives for enhanced consultations and the mobilization of regional and international efforts to curb the escalation of insecurity throughout the region.

Furthermore, the Iranian and Qatari Foreign Ministers advocated for the strengthening of cooperation between Tehran and Doha across all sectors.

Sistan and Baluchestan counter-terrorism drill: IRGC announces new successes

TEHRAN – The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Ground Force announced the elimination of three terrorists and the arrest of six more during an ongoing counter-terrorism exercise in Iran's southeastern Sistan and Baluchestan province, bordering Pakistan.

General Ahmad Shafaei, spokesman for the "Martyrs of Security" drill, reported on Wednesday that these actions resulted from joint operations involving IRGC Ground Force personnel, Basij volunteer forces, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies. He further noted that five additional terrorists surrendered.

General Shafaei emphasized the IRGC Ground Force's Quds Base's commitment to continuing operations until all terrorist elements are removed from the region and the exercise objectives are fully achieved.

Sistan and Baluchestan has experienced numerous terrorist attacks targeting both civilians and security forces in recent years. These attacks are attributed to terrorist groups linked to foreign intelligence agencies operating in the country's southeastern and southwestern regions. Israel has been identified as the main supporter of the terror outfits.

The October 26th attack in Taftan County's Gohar Kuh district, which claimed the lives of ten Iranian law enforcement personnel, serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing threat. The so-called Jaish al-Adl terrorist group, known inside Iran as Jaish al-Zulm, claimed responsibility for the attack, one of the deadliest in the province in recent months.

Jaish al-Zulm has a history of violent acts in Sistan and Baluchestan, including the abduction of border guards and attacks on civilians and police stations, aimed at destabilizing the region.

The ongoing IRGC drill that began a month ago has so far liquated dozens of the group's members and resulted in the arrest of several others.

Russia, Iran urge diplomacy in Syria, Yemen as Israeli aggression threatens peace efforts

From page 1 ▸ The ongoing conflict in Yemen was also a central focus. Both Bogdanov and Khaji condemned the airstrikes by the U.S. and UK for contributing to the insecurity and instability, advocating for a cessation of hostilities and a renewed commitment to diplomatic solutions.

Khaji specifically criticized provocative actions by the United States and Israel in Syria, accusing them of supporting terrorist and separatist groups to undermine the country's sovereignty. He urged respect for Syria's territorial integrity and an end to external interference.

Bogdanov echoed these concerns, characterizing the overall situation in West Asia as deeply worrying and emphasizing the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict. The meeting highlighted the shared commitment of Russia and Iran to promoting dialogue and cooperation in West Asia.

Ali Asghar Khaji, senior advisor to Iran's foreign minister (R) met with the special representative of the Russian President for West Asia and Africa on Wednesday

Separately, but in line with these broader concerns, Norway's Special Representative for Yemen, Heidi Johansen, visited Tehran for discussions with Khaji.

Johansen and Khaji shared concerns about the worsening crisis in Yemen and the spillover effects of regional conflicts, particularly the tragic loss of life in Gaza and Lebanon. They jointly advocated for an immediate ceasefire and the swift delivery of humanitarian aid to affected populations.

Khaji condemned U.S. interference in Yemen, characterizing it as destabilizing and obstructive to the peace process. He reiterated Iran's long-standing commitment to a political resolution in Yemen, emphasizing that lasting stability can only be achieved through dialogue and a comprehensive political settlement. Johansen agreed, stressing the need for enhanced international efforts to restore peace through political dialogue among Yemeni factions.

Despite a reduction in fighting in recent years, the Saudi-led war in Yemen, ongoing since 2015, remains unresolved.

Iran summons UK, Hungarian envoys over sanctions on shipping industry

TEHRAN – Tehran has intensified its diplomatic protests against recent sanctions imposed by the United Kingdom and the European Union, summoning British and Hungarian diplomats to voice its strong disapproval.

On Monday, the UK and EU announced asset freezes targeting the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) and several individuals and entities.

The sanctions were justified by allegations that Iran has been supplying drones, ballistic missiles, and related technologies to Russia for use in the ongoing war in Ukraine. Tehran has denied these accusations, labeling them as baseless and politically driven. Europe has yet to provide evidence for the claims.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry summoned the UK chargé d'affaires on Tuesday night in response to Britain's actions, warning of retaliatory measures against their "irrational behavior."

Iranian officials argued that the sanctions violated international law and undermined principles of freedom of navigation and maritime trade. During the meeting, the UK diplomat was told that such interference is unacceptable and that Iran would not tolerate actions undermining its sovereignty.

In a post on X, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also criticized the UK's "hypocrisy" in arms trade practices, pointing to reports that British-made components for F-35 fighter jets are being supplied to Israel.

He noted that these weapons are being used against civilians in violation of international humanitarian law. The Iranian minister accused the UK of prioritizing its diplomatic ties with the United States and NATO over ethical considerations, highlighting the Labour government's refusal to implement an arms embargo on Israel.

Simultaneously, Tehran lodged a formal protest with Hungary, which currently holds the rotating presidency of the European Union. The Hungarian ambassador to Iran, Giola Peto, was summoned to the Foreign Ministry to address the EU's sanctions targeting IRISL and its managing director, Mohammad Reza Khiabani.

During the meeting with the Director General of the Western Europe Department at the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Tehran reiterated its stance that the sanctions were unlawful and inconsistent with international norms.

"Iran considers such actions to be baseless and inconsistent with international standards," the Iranian diplomat stated, emphasizing that Tehran would not remain passive in the face of these provocations. "Those responsible for initiating and implementing these unilateral coercive measures must bear full accountability for their consequences."

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

West's nuclear blackmail

IAEA poised to pass anti-Iran resolution after Tehran warns it would take "commensurate" measures

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – The already strained relationship between Iran and Europe seemed destined for a further deterioration Wednesday, as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director-general held a press conference in Vienna following his return from Iran, and in advance of a critical IAEA Board of Governors vote scheduled for Thursday.

Rafael Grossi seemed to carry a cautious glimmer of hope in his remarks. While acknowledging some remaining hurdles, he reported "concrete results" from his talks with Iranian officials, suggesting a shift towards "less confrontational and more constructive" relations.

Grossi highlighted a willingness to engage: "What I see is a disposition to engage and to work with us—not only with the president, but also with the foreign minister," he stated, adding that he'd been in "intense" contact with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi even the night before.

The IAEA chief revealed that Iran had agreed to cap its stockpile of 60%-enriched uranium and accept new inspectors. He, however, quickly tempered his optimism: "I cannot exclude the possibility that this commitment might falter as a result of further developments," he said without mentioning that a looming anti-Iran Board of Governors resolution was among those "further developments".

The elephant in the room, pointedly ignored by Grossi, was the core issue: Iran's concessions were made to preempt further European pressure related to the JCPOA. Despite the West's complete abandonment of the deal, Iran continues to largely uphold its commitments. Yet, Europe, it seems, remains indifferent to these demonstrable gestures of goodwill.

Reports indicate that Germany, France, and Britain could vote in favor of their own anti-Iran resolution at the IAEA's November board meeting as early as Thursday.

Iran's foreign minister has warned of a "proportionate" response from Tehran if the board passes the resolution.

For years, the E3 has regularly passed anti-Iran resolutions at the IAEA. However, this latest looming resolution carries significantly more weight as the world is Termination Day, the day multiple UN Security Council resolutions on Iran's nuclear program would be terminated, 10 years after the JCPOA was adopted.

Once these resolutions are terminated, anti-Iran financial sanctions, as well as sanctions targeting nuclear-related material and technology and conventional arms would also be scrapped. The only thing that could stop this process is the "snapback"

The JCPOA and the snapback

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Actions was signed in 2015 when Iran agreed to curb its peaceful nuclear work as a confidence-building measure in exchange for the removal of Western sanctions.

The 2015 nuclear deal collapsed in 2018 when the U.S. withdrew, re-imposing sanctions previously lifted under the agreement. In retaliation for Washington's withdrawal and the European parties' failure to mitigate the impact of the reinstated sanctions, Iran subsequently scaled back its compliance with the JCPOA in 2019.

In the long tale of the JCPOA, Iran has no way of pressuring the West if it shuns the deal. The West, however, does. The "snapback" is a mechanism outlined in UN Security Council Resolution 2231 that allows any of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (P5) or Germany to reinstate UN sanctions on Iran if they determine that Iran is not complying with its commitments under the JCPOA. Essentially, it's a "reversal" or "snapping back" to a previous state of sanctions.

IAEA resolutions that say Iran has not been complying with its JCPOA commitments are the building block towards creating the road that leads to the activation of snapback.

What should Iran do?

At the time of writing this article, the specifics of the latest IAEA resolution against Iran remain undisclosed. Tehran's response will likely depend on the resolution's severity. Sources have told the Tehran Times that potential Iranian reactions could range from accelerating uranium enrichment and expelling UN inspectors to deploying more advanced centrifuges. However, international security analyst Abolfazl Bazargan argues that Iran should sooner or later recognize the futility of further cooperation with the West and the IAEA.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Pezeshkian urges Pope's intervention to end Israeli violence in West Asia

From Page 1 ▶ "Genocide and extensive destruction of urban and health infrastructures are taking place at a time when the majority of the martyrs and the injured are children and women", the president said, expressing regret that these violations of human rights are being committed in holy lands that have been the birthplace of prophets and messengers of peace and tranquility for mankind.

Given the escalating regional instability, Pezeshkian implored Pope Francis, as a leader of the global Catholic community, to act to prevent further aggression, secure a ceasefire, and facilitate humanitarian aid delivery. He further called upon global leaders, especially

those from Christian nations, to actively engage on this issue, believing that immediate intervention could significantly improve the plight of the wounded and those affected by the conflict.

Israel unleashed an unprecedented war against the besieged Gaza Strip over a year ago. The majority of the enclave's population is now internally displaced, with little to no access to food, water, and medical services. Over 43,000 Gazans are dead.

Israel's separate attacks on Lebanon have also left a carnage of over 3,000 people and displaced tens of thousands of the Lebanese population.

The regime has also launched attacks against Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Yemen over the past year. Analysts believe that if not reined in, Israel will start a full-on regional conflagration with international and reverberating consequences sooner or later.

Syria FM, Iran security chief discuss regional affairs in Tehran meeting

TEHRAN – Syrian Foreign Minister Basam al-Sabbagh and Ali Akbar Ahmadian, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, held talks in Tehran on Wednesday, following a series of high-level meetings with Iranian officials.

The discussions focused on strengthening and expanding economic and financial ties between the two countries, including the implementation of existing agreements.

Both sides also exchanged views on regional developments, specifically addressing the ongoing Israeli aggressions in Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. The meeting between al-Sabbagh and Ahmadian is believed to signify an important step towards closer collaboration and alignment of interests between Syria and Iran.

This high-level engagement followed Tuesday's consultations between al-Sabbagh and his Iranian counterpart, Seyyed Abbas Araghchi. The visit to Tehran marked the inaugural trip for the new Syrian Foreign Minister, undertaken at the invitation of Mr. Araghchi.

Iranian defence minister in Caracas for talks on closer military cooperation

TEHRAN – Iranian Defence Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh has called for a significant expansion of collaboration between Iran and Venezuela, highlighting untapped opportunities that could bolster ties between the two nations.

Speaking upon his arrival in Caracas on Wednesday, Nasirzadeh stressed the importance of activating the "inactive capacities" in their bilateral relationship to achieve mutual growth.

Leading a high-level delegation, Nasirzadeh is in Venezuela to attend the 10th meeting of the Iran-Venezuela Joint Economic Cooperation Commission.

The commission is a key platform for advancing the 20-year strategic agreement signed by both nations, which seeks to deepen their partnership across various sectors.

Nasirzadeh outlined the objectives of his visit, noting that the focus will be on devising actionable strategies to enhance economic collaboration. During his stay, multiple committees—including representatives from the private sector and knowledge-based companies—will convene to identify new avenues for growth.

"Our primary goal is to propose and implement solutions that expand economic cooperation between the two countries," Nasirzadeh stated. "This focus aligns with the directives of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and the Iranian president, who have consistently emphasized the importance of fostering stronger ties with Venezuela."

The defence minister is also scheduled to hold discussions with senior Venezuelan officials, including the ministers of oil, defence , economy, and finance.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

SPORTS

Iran's progress delights coach Amir Ghalenoei

TEHRAN - Iran's journey in Group A of the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 26 thus far has been one to cherish for head coach Amir Ghalenoei.

Tuesday's 3-2 win against Kyrgyzstan kept Team Melli top of the group on 16 points, three ahead Uzbekistan with United Arab Emirates a further three adrift.

With qualification to the FIFA World Cup 26 well within reach now, Ghalenoei was pleased to see the attacking strength of his side but admitted knows defensive improvements are a must.

"We managed to get a good win on a difficult day," said Ghalenoei. "I think it was a match that made the audience happy with five goals.

"In the second half, we conceded with two mistakes. Considering the travelling conditions we had, we have to praise our players who immediately fought back and scored the winning goal and created many chances. I thank each and every one of my players," he added.

"We are happy that we got 16 points from six games. I am very happy that we became an attacking team. In our defensive structure, we have a series of problems that we need to fix in the three months we have (before the AFC Asian Qualifiers resume.)"

Goals from Mehdi Taremi and Saleh Hardani gave the Iranians a comfortable half-time lead but the situation changed quickly in the second half as Kyrgyzstan wrested control to draw level through Joel Kojo's brace.

Ghalenoei responded with tactical changes which led to Sardar Azmoun heading in the winner with 14 minutes left to play.

Iran beat Thailand at 2024 IWBF U23 Asia Oceania Championship

TEHRAN – Iran defeated Thailand 60-25 at the 2024 IWBF U23 Asia Oceania Championship on Wednesday.

Iran started the competition on Monday, defeating the Philippines 80-28 but lost to Australia 71-48 later in the day.

Iran also lost to Japan 65-58 in their third match but emerged victorious over Saudi Arabia 76-24.

The Iranian team will play India on Thursday.

The championship has brought together seven nations – Iran, Australia, India, Japan, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, and Thailand—to compete for the coveted title and the spots in the 2025 IWBF Men's U23 World Championship.

The top three teams will qualify for the 2025 IWBF Men's U23 World Championship.

The 2024 IWBF U23 AOZ Championship is being held in Bangkok, Thailand from Nov. 17 to 22.

Kyrgyzstan coach Lisitsyn disappointed with loss against Iran

TEHRAN - Kyrgyzstan head coach Maksim Lisitsyn says that he is sad due to 3-2 loss against Iran in Group A of the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 26.

Tuesday's 3-2 win against Kyrgyzstan kept Team Melli top of the group on 16 points, three ahead Uzbekistan with United Arab Emirates a further three adrift.

Having seen his side battle courageously to restore parity, Lisitsyn was understandably disappointed with the result.

"We are sad that we couldn't get something from this game," said Lisitsyn. "We created enough chances in the game but it was not enough to get the right result.

"Many thanks to our fans for being everywhere and always, especially at home supporting us very well.

"We are always grateful and this is in fact a very important factor for motivation, and when preparing for home games, the players are particularly tuned for the matches," Lisitsyn concluded.

Matchday Seven in March 2025 will see Iran face UAE while Kyrgyzstan will take on Uzbekistan.

Eskandari elected head of Iran's Bowling and Billiard Federation

TEHRAN – Hashem Eskandari was elected as president of the Bowling and Billiard Federation of Iran (BBFIR) on Wednesday.

He was elected for a four-year term till 2028.

In the elections held at Iran's Academy Olympic in Tehran, Eskandari secured 38 of 46 votes cast.

Kambiz Sanati came second with seven votes and Mohammadhossein Vaghefzadeh collected just one.

Eskandari will run the federation for the second time.

Goalkeeper Beiranvand sets milestone in Iran football team

TEHRAN – Iran national football team goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand reached 79 official matches for Team Melli.

He represented Iran in the match against Kyrgyzstan, where the Persians won the match 3-2 in Bishkek in the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifier.

Beiranvand surpassed Mehdi Rahmati (78) and Ahmad Reza Abedzadeh (77).

The 32-year-old goalie He his debut in a friendly match against Iraq on 4 January 2015, just before the 2015 AFC Asian Cup.

Beiranvand has represented Iran in in two FIFA World Cups 2018 and 2022 and three AFC Asian Cups 2015, 2019 and 2023.

Ex-Iran wrestler Mir Malek dies

TEHRAN – Former Iran's Greco-Roman wrestler Rasoul Mir Malek died at the age of 86 on Wednesday.

Mir Malek represented Iran at the 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo in the featherweight.

He also competed at the 1962 and 1965 World Wrestling Championships in the U.S. and Finland, respectively.

Tehran Times extends its deepest sympathy to Mir Malek's family, loved ones, and friends over his demise.

Hassan Yazdani to change his weight class

TEHRAN – Iranian freestyle wrestler Hassan Yazdan will change his weight class.

Yazdani, 29, won a gold medal in the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro in 74kg and claimed two silver medals in 86kg weight class in the 2020 and 2024 Olympics Games.

He has recently undergone shoulder injury and will have to travel to Paris in late January to continue his treatment process.

"Rehabilitation is an important part of his recovery. We will decide about his weight class after he is completely fit," Yazdani's coach Hemmat Moslemi said.

According to Moslemi, Yazdani will compete in the 92kg in the world championship and will also change his category to 97kg in the 2026 Asian Games and 2028 Olympic Games.

Yazdani is the most decorated Iranian wrestler with eight world and Olympics medals.

Iran, Russia determined to develop ties at maximum level: VP

TEHRAN - Iranian Vice President Mohammad-Reza Aref has announced Tehran and Moscow's strong determination to strengthen bilateral relations to the maximum level, Shana reported.

Aref made the remarks during a meeting with the visiting Russian Minister of Energy Sergei Tsivilev in Tehran on Tuesday.

As there are considerable capacities in both countries for boosting cooperation, it is important that the two sides enhance trade exchange and implement the agreements on cooperation, Aref noted.

It is an indication of the strong will of both sides to foster ties as they continue consultations, especially during the current global and regional situation, the vice president said.

The Islamic Republic of Iran says that the all-out and long-term cooperation with Russia is of paramount importance, he added.

For his part, the Russian minister of energy said there are several grounds for deepening cooperation between his country and Iran.

The exchange of meetings between the two sides' senior officials will facilitate the deepening of relations, he underlined.

Tsivilev, who is also the Russian chairman of Iran-Russia Joint Economic Committee, stressed that the committee's activities are important as it helps facilitate cooperation.

The Russian minister of energy arrived in the Iranian capital on Tuesday.

As announced by the former head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the value of non-oil trade between Iran and Russia stood at $1.5 billion in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-October 21).

Mohammad Rezvanifar has said that Russia was the fifth top trade partner of Iran among its neighbors in the mentioned seven-month period.Iran and Russia have been taking serious steps to boost their mutual trade over the past few years.

In a ceremony on November 11, Russia's Mir payment network and Iran's Shetab payment system were connected, as the two countries are increasing their financial cooperation.

Addressing this ceremony, Central Bank of Iran Governor Mohammad-Reza Farzin mentioned integration of the two countries' banking subsystems as a big step towards creating integrated economic cooperation in the region, completing the de-dollarization process and facilitating economic and tourism relations between Iran and Russia.

By connecting the national payment networks of the two countries, the borders of electronic payments will be removed and a new chapter will begin in the economic and cultural cooperation of the two nations, the official emphasized.

He said: "The project that we are witnessing its inauguration today, started with the aim of creating integration in the payment networks and facilitating financial transactions between the citizens of the two countries."

Emphasizing that this project is divided into three phases and in each phase, an important step is taken towards the realization of the final goal, the CBI governor said: "The first phase of this project, which was put into operation at the end of September and will be unveiled today, provides the possibility of using bank cards of Iran, which are under Shetab network, in Russian ATMs for tourists. In this way, now Iranian tourists can easily receive ruble notes from Russian ATMs using the riyal balance of their Shetab cards."

Farzin further emphasized that the next phases of this project will be unveiled soon with wider facilities and services.

In early July, the CBI governor said a monetary contract has been signed between Tehran and Moscow for carrying out bilateral trade exchanges.

Farzin told reporters that he and his Russian counterpart had a meeting in Saint Petersburg last Thursday where they finalized agreements already signed between the two countries.

During the meeting, the chief bankers of Iran and Russia also signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on joint measures to be taken by the two countries for the expansion of economic and monetary ties.

According to Farzin the new monetary contract enables Iran and Russia to trade in local currencies.

He added that based on agreements between the specialized delegations of the two countries, Iran's Shetab banking system would link Russia's MIR interbank system by the end of August.The official said that the new scheme would allow Iranian nationals to take ruble from Russian ATMs using their Iranian banking cards.

"During the meeting, the two sides finalized the requirements to connect Russia's Mir payment system to Iran's Shetab and this project has entered the operational phase," Farzin said.

He added that the scheme will further develop in the next phases to allow Russian nationals to use their banking cards in Iranian ATMs and will then enable using Iranian cards at the Russian poses.

"The second stage [involves the possibility of] paying with Russian citizens' cards in Iran," Farzin said, adding that in the third stage, Iranians will be able to pay with a Shetab card in Russian stores via an ordinary bank terminal.

In April 2024, the Iranian Foreign Ministry announced that the project to use Mir cards had entered the implementation stage. In May 2022, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said that the countries were discussing how to connect the Mir and Shetab payment systems.

Daily output of Iranian gas refineries stands at 840 mcm

TEHRAN – Iranian gas refineries are currently producing 840 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas per day, according to the director of production coordination and supervision of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC).

Speaking to the press on the sidelines of a visit to Ilam Refinery, Mohammad-Reza Julaei, said natural gas accounts for more than 75 percent of the country's energy portfolio, Shana reported.

"Natural gas refineries are an industrial complex consisting of process units, facilities, storage, etc., which process the received sour gas to be used in domestic, commercial, industrial, export, etc."

36 new water treatment plants under construction across Iran

TEHRAN - The head of Iran's National Water and Wastewater Engineering Company has said that 36 new water treatment plants are under construction across the country, Tasnim News Agency reported.

Hashem Amini put the total processing capacity of the mentioned plants at 2.664 million cubic meters.

According to the official, currently 178 water treatment plants with a total capacity of 13.827 million cubic meters are in operation throughout the country to provide safe and sanitary drinking water.

Iran eyes connecting its railway with China through Afghanistan

TEHRAN – The head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI), in a meeting with the head of Afghanistan Railway, said the country is eyeing to connect its railway network to China via Afghanistan, the portal of Iran's Transport Ministry reported.

"Due to the proximity of Iran, Afghanistan, and China, this route [Iran-Afghanistan-China] is the only route that can shorten the transit route and reduce the costs, so completing the Herat rail route based on a specific schedule is very important," Jabar-Ali Zakeri said in the meeting with Mohammad Ishaq Sahibzadeh.

In this meeting, Zakari stated that Iran is determined to support the development of Afghanistan's railways, noting that "the existence of a railway line in the northwest of Afghanistan and the proximity to the common border with Iran is a great opportunity for transit between the two countries."

Referring to the training courses held for Afghan railway employees in the past years, the RAI head emphasized: "According to Afghanistan's request, soon the third training course for Afghan railway employees will be held."

According to Zakeri, many of the problems faced by the Iran-Afghanistan Railway Consortium have been resolved and, currently, three trains a week are running on the designated route between the two countries.

Further in this meeting, Sahibzadeh also pointed to the growing cooperation between the railways of Iran and Afghanistan, while appreciating the training programs for 96 employees of Afghanistan Railways by Iran Railways.

"Due to the successful holding of the first and second courses, we are now waiting for the third course," he said.

Sahibzadeh stated that the Khaf-Herat railway project depicts the friendship between the two countries, adding: "We hope that with cooperation, we will see an increase in transit, and as a result, the growth and promotion of trade between the two countries."

Reaching PTA, a prerequisite for boosting Iran-Tajikistan trade

TEHRAN - Iran and Tajikistan have emphasized the need to expedite a preferential trade agreement (PTA) and completely eliminate visa requirements to boost bilateral economic relations, the portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) reported.

During a meeting in Tehran on Tuesday between ICCIMA Head Samad Hassanzadeh and Tajik Ambassador to Tehran Nizomiddin Zohidi, both sides highlighted untapped trade potential and the importance of closer collaboration between their business communities.

Hassanzadeh noted that the current trade volume falls far short of the two countries' capabilities, saying: "Iran has significant potential in knowledge-based areas, engineering services, food industries, petrochemicals, construction materials, tourism, and information technology."

The official expressed Iranian private sector's readiness to meet Tajikistan's needs.

He also called for joint efforts to facilitate trade by exchanging trade delegations and organizing specialized exhibitions, adding that full implementation of visa-free travel could pave the way for deeper partnerships, including the establishment of joint industrial zones.

Zohidi for his part echoed the sentiment, acknowledging progress in trade volume, which has reportedly increased tenfold since 2020. However, he urged efforts to boost bilateral trade to $1.0 billion, inviting Iranian business leaders to explore opportunities in Tajikistan.

Addressing visa challenges, the Tajik ambassador noted that the current exemption applies only to flights between Tehran and Dushanbe and does not include flights operating between Mashhad and Dushanbe. "We plan to launch a new route between Shiraz and Dushanbe, and fully removing visa requirements will enhance tourism and trade."

Also speaking during the meeting, Mohammad Hossein Roshanak, head of the Iran-Tajikistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, criticized high tariffs on Iranian goods in Tajikistan compared to Uzbek imports, calling for fair trade practices to reduce costs and enhance competitiveness.

As announced by the vice chairman of Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Committee stated, Iran's export to Tajikistan has risen 33 percent in the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-September 21), as compared to the same period of time in the past yea.

Making the remarks in a meeting between a Tajik Trade Delegation and a number of traders and businessmen from Iran's North Khorasan province, in Bojnourd, the center of the province, Kazem Shirdel said that the trend of the export of Iranian products to Tajikistan has been rising in recent years.

Stating that the people of Tajikistan are interested in using Iranian products, he added: "Fortunately, the Iranian goods exported to this country are of very high quality, and this makes the people of Tajikistan welcome Iranian goods."

In late September, senior energy officials of Iran and Tajikistan stressed their willingness to expand energy ties between the two countries.

Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad discussed ways of expanding mutual cooperation with Minister of Energy and Water Resources of Tajikistan Daler Juma in a meeting in Tehran at that time.

Speaking at the meeting, Paknejad said capable Iranian companies are ready to enter Tajikistan and Central Asian oil industry's upstream and downstream activities.

Referring to the cultural, language, civilizational, and historical commonalities of the two countries of Iran and Tajikistan, the oil minister said that expanding economic relations with the friendly and brotherly country of Tajikistan, especially in the energy sector, is of significant importance.

Paknejad continued that some effective steps have already been taken for expanding economic relations with Tajikistan which is hoped to be strengthened in the future.

Elsewhere, the official said that Iranian exploration and production companies with high capabilities are ready to enter Tajikistan and Central Asia's oil and gas market.

Juma for his part emphasized developing bilateral economic cooperation, particularly in the oil and gas sector, saying: "In 2023, the ceiling of trade exchanges between Iran and Tajikistan reached 300 million dollars, and based on forecasts, it seems that this figure will increase by 60 percent in the current year."

The Tajik minister noted that trade of crude oil and oil products between the two countries could double their trade exchanges, adding: "We hope that during the visit of the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Tajikistan, the necessary preparations for expanding trade with Iran in the oil and gas sector will be made."

He noted that a significant portion of Tajikistan's crude oil and petroleum products' daily needs are currently met through imports adding: "Tajikistan has two oil refineries with a refining capacity of 500,000 tons per year to ensure its energy security."

"We are interested in having Iranian companies actively participate in Tajikistan's domestic market," he continued.

The Minister of Energy and Water Resources of Tajikistan thanked the efforts of Iran's Oil Ministry for training Tajikistan's oil and gas industry specialists and requested the Iranian Oil Minister to provide the necessary assistance for conducting advanced courses.

Furthermore, he called for deploying Iranian knowledge-based companies' capabilities for exploration, development, and production from Tajikistan's oil and gas fields.

Juma also formally invited Paknejad and Iranian oil industry experts to visit Tajikistan.

In the end, Iran's Oil Minister emphasized maximum assistance and cooperation with Tajikistan's Ministry of Energy and Water Resources.

Meanwhile, in mid-June, Iran and Tajikistan signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to cooperate in in the field of geomatics.

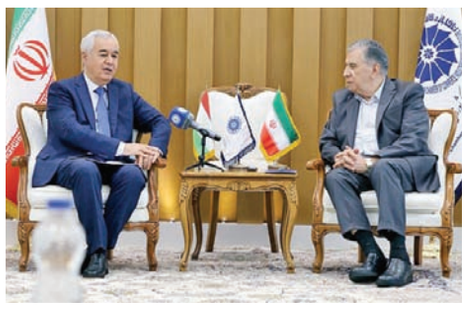
The MOU was signed by the Director General of the National Cartographic Center of Iran (NCC) Ali Javidaneh and the Chairman of the State Committee for Land Management and Geodesy of Tajikistan.

According to Javidaneh, the MOU was a turning point in enhancing cooperation between the two countries.

The Tajik official also termed the expansion of bilateral cooperation by implementing the agreement as an important step in solidifying and strengthening the bilateral relations, Mehr news agency reported.

Khojazoda Orif Ashuri added that the two countries enjoy high potential and capabilities to expand their cooperation in the relevant field.

Tajikistan's Ambassador to Iran Zohidi Nizomiddin Shamsiddinzoda, who attended the signing ceremony, expressed hope that Iran and Tajikistan would witness accelerated bilateral cooperation in the field of geomatic sciences and export of technical and engineering services.



ICCIMA Head Samad Hassanzadeh (R) and Tajik Ambassador to Tehran Nizomiddin Zohidi

Speaking in a later meeting with the head of Iran Mapping Organization to follow up the agreements inked previously between the two countries, the Tajik envoy stated that Iran and Tajikistan signed 44 cooperation documents in the previous three years, which shows that relations between the two countries are on a trajectory of growth.

He pointed to the expansion of relations between Tehran and Dushanbe and said the two sides signed 44 cooperation documents over the past three years.

The envoy underlined that Iran and Tajikistan have witnessed the expansion of political, economic and cultural relations over the past years.

He put the value of trade exchanges between the two countries in the last Iranian year (ended March 19, 2024) at $270 million.

The presidents of the two countries agreed that the value of bilateral trade should reach $500 million in near future and this shows that the bilateral cooperation is on an upward trajectory especially in the fields of trade and economy, the ambassador stressed.

Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe hosted the 16th meeting of Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Committee in late December 2023.

Former Iranian Energy Minister Ali-Akbar Mehrabian and Tajikistan Energy and Water Resources Minister Daler Juma co-chaired the two countries' Joint Economic Committee meeting.

Meanwhile, the first specialized exhibition "Made in Iran" was also held on the sidelines of this meeting.

The exhibition, aimed at introducing the capabilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran in basic industries, with the presence of 30 top Iranian companies, is being held in Dushanbe, during December 26-29.

Iran and Tajikistan on November 8, 2023 signed a joint statement and 18 cooperation documents and memorandums of understanding (MOUs) to deepen bilateral strategic relations.

The joint statement was signed between late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his Tajik counterpart Emomali Rahmon in Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe.

The documents and MOUs were inked by the Iranian and Tajik ministers in the presence of the two presidents.

As reported, the documents and MOUs pertained to a roadmap for long-term bilateral trade and economic cooperation till 2030, mutual visa-free access, anti-drug trafficking operations, transportation, crisis management, and the establishment of joint free economic zones, as well as inter-city cooperation in various fields.

Fantasy vs. reality: Israel's military death toll in Gaza hits 800

TEHRAN- Hamas has transformed the Gaza Strip into a burial ground for Israeli troops since the regime launched war on the Palestinian territory more than a year ago.

According to the Israeli army, a soldier was killed and a senior officer was seriously wounded during fighting in northern Gaza on Tuesday. It said they were hit during an exchange of fire with gunmen in the Beit Lahiya area.

The death means that 800 Israeli soldiers and officers have now been killed in fighting since Hamas carried out a surprise military attack in southern Israel on October 7, 2023, which was dubbed Operation Al-Aqsa Storm.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered his army to attack Gaza after Hamas conducted the operation.

Netanyahu, known as Bibi, has repeatedly vowed to continue the war until "destroying" Hamas and returning captives.

More than 1,100 people were killed and 250 others were taken captive during the Hamas operation.

The resistance movement freed more than 100 captives following a temporary ceasefire deal with Israel in November last year.

The Israeli army has also released some captives following brutal raids in Gaza. It has been confirmed that some others have fallen victim to friendly fire.

For now, about 100 captives remain in Gaza, though around one-third of that number are believed to have died.

Netanyahu has not only failed to secure the release of captives but he has also failed to eliminate Hamas.

In June, the spokesperson for the Israeli military expressed skepticism regarding the feasibility of Netanyahu's objective to defeat Hamas.

"The idea that it is possible to destroy Hamas, to make Hamas vanish — that is throwing sand in the eyes of the public," Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari told Israel's Channel 13.

Former Israeli war minister Yoav Gallant also said during a closed-door hearing before a Knesset committee in August that Netanyahu's "total victory" slogan over Hamas is "gibberish".

Besides, domestic protests over Netanyahu's failure to release captives have become a regular occurrence in Israeli cities.

Nonetheless, Netanyahu has maintained his aggressive stance towards the Gaza conflict.

On Tuesday, Bibi said the Israeli military is "doing a wonderful job" in Gaza.

"Here, in the central Gaza Strip and throughout the Gaza Strip, they have achieved excellent results," Netanyahu claimed.

He added, "And the best is yet to come. Hamas will no longer exist in Gaza."

The rising Israeli casualties in the Gaza Strip clearly indicates that Bibi is living in a fantasy world.

On Tuesday, the Israeli army had to prepare another coffin for its soldiers. As long as Netanyahu prolongs the war, the demand for additional coffins for his troops will persist.

US vetoes another Security Council resolution seeking Gaza truce

The United States on Wednesday vetoed a UN Security Council resolution aimed at calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, marking the fourth time that Washington has used its veto power to block a ceasefire resolution at the international body since Israel's war on Gaza began in October 2023, Middle East Eye reported.

The draft resolution was aimed at calling for an "immediate, unconditional, and permanent ceasefire" in Gaza and the release of all captives held in Gaza.

The measure received 14 votes in favor, with the US the sole member to reject it. However, because the US is a permanent member of the council, it has the ability to veto any resolution brought forward.

This draft resolution was a product of weeks of negotiations, and it was started by the elected 10 members of the Security Council.

There is no victory in Gaza

By Noura Erakat, Josh Paul, Charles O. Blaha, and Luigi Daniele

(The text below is in response to John Spencer's article that says "Israel Is Winning")

The current war in Gaza is not an isolated conflict that began on October 7, 2023, when Hamas militants launched an attack inside Israel. Framing the war this way, as John Spencer does in a recent article in Foreign Affairs ("Israel Is Winning," August 21, 2024), invites many dubious assertions about Israel's purported progress toward its war aims and its supposed efforts to protect civilians. And it accepts without question the Israeli government's official position that "Israel is fighting Hamas terrorists, not the Palestinian population," as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared in a speech in January. To simplify the conflict to a fight between Israel and Hamas is to ignore the on-the-ground realities that indicate Israel is waging an indiscriminate war on all Palestinians.

A more accurate understanding of the war must take its broader context into account. What is happening now in Gaza is one battle within the larger conflict that has shaped the Israeli-Palestinian relationship since the founding of Israel and the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from the new state's territory in 1948. Today's fight cannot be removed from that history and geography; gaining the upper hand in the current battle is not the same as winning the wider war. Spencer falls into this trap, miscasting Israel's temporary tactical achievements as strategic victory and underestimating how Israel's unwillingness to pursue a political resolution that recognizes the Palestinians' right to self-determination will in the end diminish its chances of success.

In the war Spencer describes, Israel has three aims: "to recover all hostages, secure its borders, and destroy Hamas." To win such a war, Israel would have had to focus on taking out Hamas's military and governing capabilities. One might expect Israeli forces to launch precise strikes on Hamas military targets while Israeli diplomats lead an effort to isolate Hamas politically. Instead, Israel has conducted a campaign of broad devastation in Gaza, attacking the territory's civilian population; demolishing its health, educational, and social infrastructure; and destroying its food production, shelter, and sources of potable water. There is a disconnect between these indiscriminate tactics and the discrete goals that Spencer identifies.

Israel's actions suggest that its true goal is to terminate Palestinian aspirations for self-determination. As the fighting rages in Gaza, members of Israel's far-right government, such as Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, have vowed to resettle the territory with Jewish Israelis. The minister of national security, Itamar Ben-Gvir, has cleared the way for Israeli settlers to rampage through Palestinian villages across the West Bank. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu himself has denied any possibility of Palestinian statehood, signaling that there is no Palestinian future, with or without Hamas. The Basic Law passed in 2018 by the Israeli legislature made this much clear, affirming that only Jews have a right to self-determination in the territory that includes the West Bank and Gaza. Most recently, the Knesset's ban on the UN Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA's operations in the West Bank and Gaza not only ensures a deepening humanitarian crisis but also aims to delegitimize Palestinians' refugee status and claims to their original homes and lands. Although it insists otherwise, the Israeli government has demonstrated over the past year that its ultimate target is not Hamas but the Palestinian will to resist occupation and subjugation. It is, in effect, applying a military solution to a political problem. Far from moving toward victory, Israel is becoming less secure in the region, less stable at home, and less likely to find a durable solution with the Palestinians.

Failing strategy

Even by the measures of success that Spencer and the Israeli government rely on, the war is not going well. On all three objectives—recovery of hostages, border security, and eliminating Hamas—Israel claims to have made significant progress, but the evidence suggests otherwise. What progress Israel has made, moreover, offers a troubling precedent for the lowering of moral standards in the pursuit of victory.

The vast majority of the 251 hostages taken by Hamas and other armed groups on October 7 who returned to Israel alive were recovered through diplomatic negotiations in November 2023. The Israeli government insists that military force compelled those concessions—a claim Spencer echoes. But Hamas's expressed willingness to make a deal undercuts that assertion: in October 2023, Hamas issued a statement offering to return all civilian hostages in exchange for the release of all Palestinians held in Israel and an end to hostilities. Israel's military operations, meanwhile, have killed more hostages than they have retrieved, and the ongoing campaign threatens the lives of those who remain in Gaza. In late August, Hamas killed six Israeli hostages shortly before Israeli troops could reach them, underscoring the need to negotiate rather than use military force to secure their release—an approach supported by the majority of Israelis.

It is true that Israel's border with Gaza is more secure now than it was before the war, but that is only because the military operation inside Gaza is keeping a lid on cross-border threats. The underlying tensions connected to Israel's pre–October 7 blockade of Gaza—the very tensions that fueled Hamas's initial attack—have not been addressed. Limits on trade and humanitarian assistance entering (or leaving) Gaza are far stricter than they were before, and there is still no clear path to granting Palestinians self-determination and other political rights. Even now, Hamas militants have reemerged and attacked Israeli forces in parts of Gaza that the Israeli military had supposedly secured, and the group continues to launch rockets into Israel. As Spencer notes, Hamas has pledged to attack any other foreign security force that comes into Gaza. Thus, to hold its temporary gains, Israel appears stuck in a counterinsurgency campaign for the foreseeable future.

Israel's other borders, meanwhile, have become less secure, not more. In May, two Egyptian soldiers died in a skirmish with Israeli forces across the border. Although Egypt remains committed to the two countries' peace agreement, its ability to secure the Sinai border with Israel is increasingly tenuous. At Israel's northern border, daily clashes between Israel and Hezbollah and other armed groups have displaced more than 80,000 Israeli civilians and a million Lebanese, have left portions of southern Lebanon with Gaza-like devastation, and have not stopped Hezbollah from launching rockets into Israel. Attacks on Israel are coming from farther afield, too, including from Iran and Houthi forces in Yemen.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Hezbollah kills 110 Israeli troops and injures over 1,050 others on border

From page 1 ▶ inflicting heavy losses on the Israeli military across various fronts, including deep within the apartheid regime.

The report touches on a recent missile operation against Haifa, which it said was built on a promise to intensify and escalate the "Khaybar series of special operations".

"It also serves to refute the claims of enemy leaders regarding the destruction of the Resistance's missile force."

Israeli government ministers and senior military officials had previously claimed the regime had depleted 80 percent of Hezbollah's missile stockpile.

The report says that the attack on Haifa affirmed Hezbollah's ability to target "enemy military bases of various types simultaneously and with large salvos of precise missiles, which rained down on the occupied city of Haifa and successfully hit their targets."

"The operation achieved its objectives, with Resistance missiles striking the five announced military bases, forcing over 300,000 settlers into shelters."

Hezbollah noted that Israeli civilians are paying the price for their army's strategy of placing "military bases within settlements and occupied cities, near commercial and economic interests."

The report warns the Lebanese resistance movement has prepared itself to ensure its readiness and capability to conduct such operations in "Haifa and beyond Haifa, over a timeframe that the enemy does not anticipate."

The report highlights the failures of the Israeli occupation forces (IOF) in their botched ground invasion of southern Lebanon and the inability to establish control within Lebanese territory, despite declaring a second phase of ground operation.

"The Operations Room confirms that the concentrated and strategic defensive operations it carried out during the 'first phase' of the enemy's ground operations forced [the IOF] to retreat beyond the border in some areas and denied them the ability to stabilize in most of the border towns."

The report points out that the Israeli air force continues to attack border villages, "which it claims to control" with dozens of daily airstrikes by warplanes and drones.

These assaults, Hezbollah said, confirm the IOF's failure to establish control within Lebanese territory.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

War on Lebanon: Israel stuck between Scylla and Charybdis

From page 1 ▶ from Lebanon within a week. The Lebanese army would then be deployed along the border in southern Lebanon and Hezbollah would end its military presence in the area. The truce is believed to be in line with efforts to fully implement UN Resolution 1701 that ended the 2006 war between Israel and Lebanon.

Reports indicate that the Lebanese government and Hezbollah have agreed to the US ceasefire proposal, although with some comments.

However, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has indicated that Israel would continue to operate militarily against Hezbollah even if a deal is reached.

Israel went on the offensive against Lebanon in September, mounting airstrikes across wide parts of the Mediterranean country. The regime later carried out a ground offensive in Lebanon on October 1.

Israel and Lebanon began exchanging fire a day after Israel launched war on Gaza on October 7 last year. Hezbollah has carried out the attacks in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza.

Tens of thousands of people have been displaced in northern Israel and southern Lebanon amid the exchange of fire.

Netanyahu has said that his army's widespread strikes in Lebanon are aimed at securing the return of people evacuated from the north.

Israel has killed more than 3,500 people in Lebanon since October last year. The regime has also assassinated top Hezbollah officials including, Sayyad Hassan Nasrallah, the movement's leader.

But Israel has failed to deter Hezbollah from firing rockets and drones into Israel. The Lebanese resistance movement has hit sensitive Israeli military sites in Tel Aviv and Haifa. Hezbollah fighters have also killed more than 100 Israeli troops in southern Lebanon since the start of the regime's ground incursion more than a month ago.

Currently, Israel has been caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. If the regime ended the war on Lebanon, it would amount to conceding defeat. And if Netanyahu prolongs the war, more Israeli soldiers will fall victim to the regime's warmongering in southern Lebanon.

Against the backdrop of such developments, the US ceasefire proposal could provide a lifeline for Israel.

Hochstein's regional trip is also in line with the political ploys of the White House to distract from Israel's military setbacks.

Is a "settlement" on the Lebanese border imminent?

From page 1 ▶ "Guarantees regarding the Israeli position are the responsibility of the Americans," the veteran Lebanese politician remarked.

Hochstein also met with caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati, who stressed that the priority is to "stop the aggression against Lebanon and preserve Lebanese sovereignty over all Lebanese territories."

On the other side, former head of the occupation regime's military intelligence, Major General Amos Yadlin, who recently met with Hochstein in Washington, said, "The agreement with Lebanon is making great progress, and it is not unlikely that it will be announced at the end of this week." Yadlin added. "If an agreement is reached in Beirut, it will be signed and implemented."

However, during a meeting of the political-security cabinet and before the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Netanyahu said, "It does not matter what will be written in the agreement, the paper is just a paper." In the same context, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said, "The agreement with Lebanon is not worth the paper it is printed on."

In a commentary Channel 13 doubted the outcome of the negotiations, saying, "Hezbollah is maneuvering and will not accept the Israeli conditions." It also said, "The clause that still constitutes an obstacle to reaching an agreement is the Israeli demand for freedom of action in southern Lebanon."

Channel 12 also revealed that the Zionist entity "demands the presence of an American general in Lebanon to monitor violations of the settlement. So it is estimated that the negotiations will take time." It quoted the Zionist Agriculture Minister Avi Dichter as saying that "excessive optimism regarding Lebanon is wrong and we must continue to strike Hezbollah."

Israel Hayom also quoted an Israeli political source as saying that "reaching an agreement apparently will not happen in the coming days." The source said, "The Israeli army has approved other plans to attack the southern suburbs of Beirut and carry out assassinations wherever possible in Lebanon."

Besides, the Kan channel quoted Zionist officials as saying that the security establishment assesses that "Hezbollah intends to intensify the firing of rockets, especially at the center [of the occupied Palestinian territories] in the coming days, as a means of pressure to reach an agreement as soon as possible."

Hochstein's visit coincided with the intensification of the Israeli occupation army's attacks on the city of Khiyam to surround it in preparation to enter it as a pivotal gain that will have an impact on the political settlement.

He also met with General Joseph Aoun and discussed with him the future role of the Lebanese army in being deployed in the Lebanese areas south of the Litani River, as well as the armament, logistical and financial support it needs to carry out its role.

In parallel, Deputy Head of Hezbollah's Political Council Mahmoud Qamati told Al Jazeera that Hezbollah is only concerned with matters on the battlefield and warned against excessive optimism as the enemy could undermine any agreement at the last minute as he did previously with the Palestinians.

Mrs. Kokab a Symbol of Iranian Hospitality

By:Seyedhossein Hosseiniseddiq & Azam Sadat Hosseiniseddiq

Story of Mrs. Kokab (Kokab Khanum), one of the most popular Persian stories, was included in the second students' Persian literature book of elementary school which was written by Mohammad Reza Entezariyan from Bojnord city before the 1979 revolution in Iran, it was included in the textbook. The story of Mrs. Kokab is one of the minimal Persian stories that many students remember from the late 1970s to 1990s.

This story is about the hospitality of a woman named Mrs. Kokab who treats her intruding guests well. In this minimal story, a summary of the hospitality of an Iranian family is described in such a way that it can be visualized in the mind. It seems that in this short story, an attempt was made to convey the atmosphere of simple life to students.

Story text:

"Mrs. Kokab, Abbas's mother, is a clean and devoted woman. He always keeps the milk bucket in a cool place. She covers a cloth on the bucket so that dust does not sit on it and it remains clean.

Mrs. Kokab makes something from milk every day. Sometimes she adds cheese yeast to it and makes cheese. Sometimes she adds yogurt yeast to milk and makes yogurt. And sometimes she gets butter from yogurt.

One day some guests' intruder came to their house. Mrs. Kokab made scrambled and boiled eggs. She also put bread, butter, yogurt and cheese on the table. Everyone praised the hospitality, manner and taste of Mrs. Kokab, when they were full, they thanked God for creating all these good blessings."

Iran and Iranians have a long history of hospitality and you can see its signs even in historical poems throughout the history of Iran. But what is the root of this Iranian table that is always ready for our guests and the belief to this sentence "the guest is God's friend"? "The guest is God's friend!" This short sentence introduces the model of Iranian hospitality to a large extent. In fact, this thinking has caused the spirit of hospitality in Iranians with its warmth and interest in warm interactions, and it doesn't even matter to them who the guest is, what is his relationship, is it a close friend or family members and relatives, or even who has stayed on the way, it means someone who has not managed to find a place to stay in that strange city. Or a neighbor to whom, as a courtesy, we bring food or welcome sweets to them after their arrival. For Iranians, it always a guest is dear, and this spirit of hospitality is a part of Iranian life, although it has increased and decreased over the course of history. In the following, you will get to know caravanserais as another symbol of Iranian hospitality and will know the role of food in Iranian hospitality customs.

Hospitality in Iran is widespread from normal visits, to special parties and events that are held for various religious or non-religious occasions. In other words, these parties are an excuse for Iranians to show hospitality and kindness.

As a sample: Hospitality of Iranians in the fourth lunar century

Ebn-e Hoqal, an Arab geographer in the fourth lunar century, said the following about the hospitality of Bouyeh dynasty and those around them: "The kings and men of Persia wear elegant and good clothes and treat those who come to them with chivalry and kindness. They are diligent in hospitality and preparing various dishes for the visitors. They decorate their tables with colorful and abundant foods, they order sweets and fruits to be brought to the guests before preparing the table. Their gatherings are free of light words and inappropriate gestures and low morals. They exaggerate in make-up, table setting and clothes. And among the elders of Persian, competition in such matters prevails. Even continuing and emphasizing Iranian hospitality, he said: "Just like all people live in the same family and in the same house, people go to each other's houses without having a history of acquaintance between them." And they welcome each other warmly. "Every property owner tries to prepare a large house so that he can receive guests better.

Caravanserais, another symbol of Iranian hospitality

In the distant past, when travel was not in the current style and were animal vehicles, caravanserais accommodation for travelers so that they could stay in them for free or at the lowest cost and relieve the fatigue of their journey. Caravanserais were so important in the past that in 719 AH, the governor of Samarkand, which is now a part of Uzbekistan country but was a part of Iran in the past, was ordered to set up an inn or a caravanserai so that, the travelers who pass through there can stay overnight and welcome them to the fullest way.

Ancient tradition of 'bread and salt'

Eating bread and salt is one of the ancient traditions of Iran and in a way it can be considered as a part of the tradition of hospitality among nobles and heroes. In the Persian to Persian dictionary of Dehkhoda, it is said about the tradition of bread and salt in Iran: In Iranian culture, if a person has been a guest of another person for food, it is said that he ate his bread and salt, and that is why, the person who ate bread and salt with him is committed and obliged to maintain his friendship and loyalty. During in Iranian traditions, the combination of the word salt and some Persian words related to it can be seen, which indicates respect for the culture of bread and salt.

The role of compliments in Iranian hospitality

Compliments, which are a part of our verbal rhetoric as Iranians, are considered a part of our verbal habits that have made so much room in Iranian culture that for us Iranians, it may not be very noticeable or we cannot easily distinguish its examples in our daily conversations. But why has this word, which basically has Arabic roots, become a part of Iranian customs?

William Orman Beeman, a professor of anthropology at the University of Minnesota and a Middle East expert on compliments among Iranians, says: "A key concept in compliments is the function that I describe as 'hand down', In other words, a compliment is a kind of lifting up the level other person and lowering oneself." He even explained that in a hierarchical society like Iran, this behavior creates social stability, because when both people do this, they reach equality. Yes! Compliments show the kind essence of Iranian people, and in fact, he has correctly described the compliments in us Iranians, and if we are right, compliments reach their highest level in Iranian parties and are an important part of Iranian hospitality.

Iranian hospitality according to foreign tourists

Jean Chardin, the famous French traveler during the Safavid era, wrote in his travelogue, "There is no caravanserai or inn in all the settlements located on the slopes of the mountains, travelers must be guests of the owners of the houses.

(See full text at www.tehrantimes.com)

Tchogha Zanbil upgrades protection: high-tech monitoring guards UNESCO site

TEHRAN – The historic ziggurat of Tchogha Zanbil in southwest Iran, a UNESCO World Heritage site, has taken significant steps to enhance its preservation.

A total of 60 new surveillance cameras have been installed to ensure comprehensive monitoring and safeguard this ancient treasure, ILNA quoted Atefeh Rashnoei, director of the Tchogha Zanbil and the nearby ancient site of Haft Tappeh, as saying on Wednesday.

"Tchogha Zanbil now benefits from full camera coverage and proper lighting, with real-time monitoring accessible via a centralized web system. These measures aim to minimize physical damage to the site," Rashnoei said.

A window into ancient Elamite civilization

Tchogha Zanbil, also known as the Ziggurat of Dur-Untash, is one of the earliest UNESCO-listed sites in Iran. Constructed around 1250 BC during the Elamite era, the site stands as a testament to the architectural brilliance of its time. Despite its global recognition, Rashnoei emphasized that only 10% of the vast ancient city has been excavated so far, leaving much of its history buried.

The city of Dur-Untash, where Tchogha Zanbil is located, was meticulously designed to align with natural phenomena, including the angles of sunlight, sunrise, and sunset, as well as the

cardinal directions. The site features sophisticated water purification and distribution systems, hierarchical urban planning, and proportional architectural designs that reflect the ingenuity of its creators.

Conservation challenges and strategies

Preservation of Tchogha Zanbil's mudbrick structures presents unique challenges, especially against environmental factors such as rainfall. Rashnoei noted, "Rainfall and water runoff are among the primary threats to the site. While we cannot control the weather, proactive measures can help protect these ancient structures."

In this effort, seasonal workshops for mudbrick production are organized in accordance with the local climate. These bricks are then used to repair and reinforce vulnerable areas of the site, the official explained.

"Moreover, a detailed mapping system is employed to identify and address potential hazards, ensuring long-term protection."

Global importance and budget constraints

Despite its unparalleled historical and architectural significance, Rashnoei highlighted the limited funding available for Tchogha Zanbil's preservation.

She said the site's inclusion in UNESCO's World Heritage List alongside iconic landmarks like Persepolis underscores its cultural value, yet financial support remains insufficient.

Glimpses of Haft-Tappeh and Tchogha Zanbil

Haft-Tappeh (literary meaning "Seven Mounds") is located 15 kilometers to the south of the ancient city of Susa, itself a highly significant archeological site in southwest Iran.

Early excavations in Haft-Tappeh conducted by the late Iranian archaeologist Dr. Ezzatollah Negahban yielded a large number of petroglyphs bearing cuneiform inscriptions in Akkadian, belonging to Elamite kings. The petroglyphs contain information on the religious beliefs, trading methods, and the political, cultural, and social relations of the time.

A topmost tourist destination in Khuzestan province, the magnificent ruins of Tchogha Zanbil (Choghazanbil) is considered by many the finest surviving example of Elamite architecture in the globe. It was made a UNESCO site in 1979. Its construction started in c. 1250 BC upon the order of the Elamite king Untash-Napirisha (1275-1240 BC) as the religious center of Elam dedicated to the Elamite divinities Inshushinak and Napirisha.

As mentioned by the UN cultural body, Tchogha Zanbil is the largest ziggurat outside of Mesopotamia and the best preserved of this type of stepped pyramidal monument. Tchogha Zanbil was excavated in six seasons between 1951 and 1961 by Roman Ghirshman, a Russian-born French archeologist who specialized in ancient Iran.

Tang-e Sulak: a harmony of cultural heritage and landscape

TEHRAN – Tang-e Sulak, also known as Sarvak, is where the history and nature tell a timeless tale in Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad province, southwest Iran.

Situated near Gachboland village, 12 kilometers northeast of Likak and 45 kilometers from Behbahan, the site offers a rich blend of ancient heritage and stunning landscapes, making it a treasured destination for history enthusiasts and nature lovers alike.

Historical significance

Tang-e Sulak dates from the Parthian era and it features remarkable bas-reliefs and inscriptions from Elymais and Parthians. The site boasts at least 14 bas-reliefs, including depictions of royal coronations, hunting scenes, fire altars, and assemblies of courtiers.

Highlights include the Bard-e Rostam bas-relief, showcasing a king hunting a lion and soldiers in intricate detail, and several inscriptions in Pahlavi script.

The artistry of these carvings, often compared to the grandeur of Persepolis, reflects the region's importance during the Elymais and Parthian periods. The bas-reliefs also draw stylistic parallels to the Sassanid era, with scholars attributing some carvings to rulers such as Bahram II and Shapur II.

As mentioned by Visit Iran, Tang-e Sulak was first identified in 1841 by Russian explorer Baron Dubour, with subsequent studies by prominent Iranologists like Henning, who highlighted the site's historical and cultural value.

The Parthian Empire, also known as the Arsacid Empire, was a major Iranian political and cultural power centered in ancient Iran from 247 BC to 224 CE.

Elymais was an ancient Parthian vassal state located east of the lower Tigris River and usually considered part of the larger district of Susiana. It incorporated much of the area of the biblical region of Elam, approximately equivalent to the modern region of Khuzestan.

Natural beauty and biodiversity

Tang-e Sulak is nestled in a breathtaking landscape of oak forests, adorned with rare and medicinal plants such as thyme, yarrow, and fritillaries. The region's diverse wildlife includes wild goats, partridges, and various bird species. With its temperate microclimate, the area stands out from its surroundings, offering a haven for flora and fauna.

Numerous springs, such as the prominent Cheshmeh Gordak, irrigate the local pomegranate orchards and provide water for nearby villages. The site is surrounded by seasonal settlements like Abdooli, Sineh Sulak, and Chal Anjir, adding to its cultural charm.

A protected natural and cultural zone

Designated as a protected area by Iran's Supreme Environmental Council, Tang-e Sulak spans over 2,000 hectares. Its rich biodiversity, combined with its historical relics, has earned the site recognition as a national natural monument. The lush forests, coupled with the ancient carvings, create an awe-inspiring experience for visitors.

Accessibility and attractions

Tang-e Sulak is accessible via routes from Likak, Landeh, and Gudban. A 2-kilometer paved road leads to the site, while a dirt road extends further into the defile, enabling easier access for tourists.

This area is a must-visit for those seeking a combination of Iran's rich cultural heritage and natural splendor. Its enduring history, intricate bas-reliefs, and pristine environment make Tang-e Sulak a true gem, offering a unique journey into the past and a tranquil escape into nature.

Traditional attire of lur ethnic group made national heritage

TEHRAN – The traditional attire of Lur women and men has been inscribed on Iran's National Intangible Heritage List.

The registration which includes various subcategories for men's and women's traditional outfits in several regions where Lur tribes reside was announced on Tuesday evening by a special committee of assessors with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, ISNA reported.

Lurs (or Lors) are Iranian people living mainly in some western and southwest parts of the country. Today, Lorestan is the name of one of the western provinces of Iran.

The word Luristan or Lorestan, is attributed to the areas inhabited by the Lurs. The boundaries of the Luristan cultural zone stretch from the eastern Iraqi plains to the west and southwest of Iran.

Previously, traditional clothing from several Iranian nomads and ethnic groups, such as the Qizilbash, Gorji, Taleshi, Qashqai, Baluchi, and Turkmen of North Khorasan, as well as Kurdish tailoring skills, had been inscribed on the same list.

The inscriptions have been made in line with the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which is aimed to preserve and strengthen intangible heritage as an integral part of cultural identity.

As mentioned by the UN cultural body, by promoting mutual respect and cultural understanding, the convention emphasizes shared values and diversity, fostering dialogue between communities and nations.

This approach helps reduce tensions, enhance social cohesion, and establish lasting peace. Safeguarding traditions, rituals, and shared skills is seen as a means of strengthening human connections and promoting peaceful coexistence.

Glimpses of World Heritage sites: Kasbah of Algiers

The Kasbah is a unique kind of medina or Islamic city. It stands in one of the finest coastal sites on the Mediterranean, overlooking the islands where a Carthaginian trading post was established in the 4th century BC.

According to UNESCO, the Kasbah of Algiers is an outstanding example of a historic Maghreb city having had extensive influence on town planning in the western part of the Mediterranean and sub-Saharan Africa.

Indeed, located on the Mediterranean coast, the site was inhabited at least from the 6th century BC when a Phoenician trading post was established there. The term Kasbah, which originally designated the highest point of the medina during the Zirid era, today applies to the ensemble of the old town of El Djazair, within the boundaries marked by the ramparts and built at the end of the 16th century, dating back to the Ottoman period.

In this living environment where nearly 50,000 people reside, very interesting traditional houses, palaces, hammams, mosques and various souks are still conserved, the urban form of which bears witness to an effect of stratification of several styles in a complex and original system that has adapted remarkably well to a very hilly and uneven site.

(Source: UNESCO)

Armenia to host Iranian knowledge-based delegation

From page 1 ▶ and technology associations, as well as venture capital companies, are among the main programs of the visit.

Also, the Iranian delegation is going to hold meetings with the directors of enterprise Armenia, and the ministry of health.

Ties in medicine, medical equipment

In October, Iranian and Armenian health officials discussed ways to expand joint activities in areas related to medicine as well as medical equipment.

The former head of the Food and Drug Administration, Heidar Mohammadi, and the Armenian deputy health minister Artak Jumayan, held a meeting in Tehran on October 2, IRNA reported.

As an important step towards strengthening interactions, the two countries exchanged their lists of essential medicines and medical equipment.

> Knowledge-based companies will display their latest achievements in medical, dental, laboratory, and pharmaceutical sectors.

Also, the Armenian Ministry of Health agreed to facilitate Iran's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union and streamline the process for registering Iranian medicine and medical equipment.

In February, the Armenian deputy health minister announced the country's willingness to import Iranian medicine and medical equipment.

Talking about the remarkable achievements of Iran in dealing with the coronavirus outbreak by adopting appropriate measures, Lena Nanushyan said that Iran's progress in the field of health is significant, ISNA reported.

She made the remarks in a meeting with Mohammadi, on the sidelines of the 18th session of the Iran-Armenia Joint Economic Committee that was held in Tehran during February 14-15.

At the end of the meeting, the two sides signed 19 documents and memorandums of understanding (MOUs) to enhance cooperation in various areas.

The mentioned documents covered a variety of areas including trade, maritime transportation, food, medicine, and customs cooperation.

Noting that Iranian pharmaceutical products are famous worldwide, she said that Armenia has yet to import the products, she added.

Referring to the quality of anti-cancer drugs manufactured in Iran, she said, "We are interested in using Iranian oncology drugs in Armenia, and it is also possible to supply part of the required drugs of the country from Iranian manufacturing companies."

Nanushyan went on to say, "We are happy to sign an agreement to expand cooperation between the two countries in the field of medicine and medical equipment."

She further noted once Iranian medicines are registered in Eurasia, it will be much easier to import medicines from Iran.

Nanushyan also voiced the country's readiness to hold an exhibition of Iranian-made medical products in Armenia.

Mohammadi, for his part, referred to the production of biotech medicines, which has few manufacturers worldwide, in the country as a competitive factor of Iran-made medicines.

Currently, all medical supplements and some 99 percent of the country's pharmaceutical needs are produced domestically, the official highlighted.

Iran aims to promote women's economic, social empowerment: VP

TEHRAN – Zahra Behrouz-Azar, the Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, has stated that the current administration focuses on empowering women in social and economic areas, as well as improving their access to social services and facilities through implementing certain national programs.

Iran has always focused on programs that empower women, particularly those who are heads of household, economically and socially. Actions taken by the country have always aimed to promote women's status by observing the principles of the constitution and Islamic teachings," Mehr news agency quoted Behrouz-Azar as saying. She made the remarks while addressing the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference in Thailand.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (SCAP) convened the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing +30 review in collaboration with UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, in Bangkok, from November 19 to 21. Referring to Iran's remarkable achievements in education, health, science, technology, and entrepreneurship, she underscored the prominent role of Iranian women in these fields.

The official further said the seventh National Development Plan has stressed the need to overcome barriers to women's professional development. Accordingly, the current administration has put supporting women's entrepreneurship and home business growth on the agenda despite unfair sanctions.

Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference

The Conference brought together Ministers, senior officials, and representatives from relevant Ministries, civil society organizations, youth organizations, academia, the private sector, UN entities, independent experts, and other key stakeholders from across the Asia-Pacific region to assess progress to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) in Asia and the Pacific over the past five years.

It also aimed to review current and emerging challenges, good practices, lessons learned, and priority actions required to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and its contribution towards the full realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and provide a platform for member States and stakeholders to explore policy options and strategies, including innovative approaches, toward realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The other goals were to build regional consensus on priority actions to accelerate the implementation of commitments made in the BPfA, and consolidate regional inputs to the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women which will focus on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly.

A glimpse into the future: brain-machine interfaces

By Soroush Saki

TEHRAN - The intersection of neuroscience and technology is giving rise to a new era of human-machine interaction.

One of the most promising developments in this field is the brain-machine interface (BMI).

BMIs are devices that can record neural activity and, potentially, stimulate specific brain regions. This technology holds the potential to revolutionize various fields, from medicine to human enhancement.

How it works

A BMI typically involves implanting electrodes into the brain. These electrodes can detect electrical signals generated by neurons. These signals are then amplified, digitized, and transmitted to a computer.

The computer can process and interpret the signals, allowing users to control external devices or receive sensory feedback.

Medical applications

BMIs have the potential to revolutionize the treatment of neurological disorders such as Parkinson's disease, epilepsy, and spinal cord injuries. By stimulating specific brain regions, these devices can alleviate symptoms and improve quality of life. For example, a BMI could be used to deliver deep brain stimulation to treat Parkinson's disease, reducing tremors and improving motor function. Furthermore, BMIs could enable amputees to control prosthetic limbs with greater precision and naturalness. By directly connecting to the nervous system, these devices could provide a more seamless and intuitive experience. Imagine a person with a prosthetic arm being able to feel sensations through the artificial limb, or a person with a prosthetic leg being able to walk naturally.

Human enhancement

In the future, BMIs could enhance human capabilities, such as memory, cognition, and sensory perception. This could lead to significant advancements in fields like education, entertainment, and work. For instance, a BMI could be used to enhance memory, allowing individuals to learn and retain information more effectively. It could also be used to improve attention span and focus, leading to increased productivity and creativity.

Brain-computer interfaces

BMIs could enable direct communication between humans and computers, bypassing traditional input methods like keyboards and mice. This could revolutionize fields like gaming, virtual reality, and robotics. Imagine controlling a virtual reality environment with your thoughts, or operating a robotic arm with precision and accuracy.

Ethical considerations

While the potential benefits of BMIs are significant, it is essential to address the ethical implications of this technology. Issues such as privacy, security, and the potential for misuse must be carefully considered. As BMI technology advances, it is crucial to develop ethical guidelines and regulations to ensure its responsible development and use.

> BMIs are devices that can record neural activity and stimulate specific brain regions.

The future of brain-machine interfaces

The development of BMIs is still in its early stages, but the potential impact of this technology is immense. As research progresses, we can expect to see significant advancements in this field, leading to a future where the boundaries between humans and machines are increasingly blurred. While challenges remain, the potential benefits of BMIs are too great to ignore. By addressing ethical concerns and investing in research, we can unlock the full potential of this revolutionary technology.

Strong Families Program focuses on seven provinces

TEHRAN – The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has implemented the second phase of Strong Families Program in seven provinces of the country in a bid to strengthen family structures and enhance community resilience.

The pilot phase was initiated in the winter of 2019 in Tehran and Alborz provinces. Since then, Iran has continued to drive the program's implementation, entering the second phase with a focus on Tehran, Kerman, Lorestan, Khuzestan, Khorasan Razavi, Hormozgan, and Sistan-Baluchestan provinces, UNODC website reported.

In this line, the UNODC, in cooperation with the Drug Control Headquarters and the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Sciences, held the 'Training of Evaluators' at the International Conferences Centre on Kish Island on October 15–17. The Strong Families Program underwent a meticulous adaptation to resonate with Iranian culture, ensuring relevance and effectiveness.

Through collaboration with local institutions and NGOs, UNODC facilitated the implementation of the program in diverse settings such as schools, community centers, and health facilities.

The subsequent evaluations showcased notable improvements in parenting practices, youth mental health, and resilience.

Through cascade training of trainers and strategic partnerships with medical universities, the program's impact has extended to the seven mentioned regions. The recent training session saw implementing teams from various medical universities sharing their accomplishments, innovative strategies, and hurdles faced during program implementation.

Encouragingly, the presentations highlighted the program's high acceptance rate and governmental support, paving the way for sustainable scaling. Notably, expert facilitators namely Ghonche Raheb and Omid Massah, from the Drug Abuse Research Institute of University of Rehabilitation and Social Health Sciences, imparted essential skills and insights to participants, fostering a deeper understanding of evaluation techniques and tools. As UNODC Iran continues its mission to strengthen families and communities, the resounding success of the Strong Families Program underscores its potential for lasting impact. With a foundation built on collaboration, adaptation, and evaluation, UNODC Iran is poised to scale up the program across Iran.This training was made possible through the funding received from the Kingdom of Netherlands.

Strong Families Program

The Strong Families Program is a family skills prevention program created for families living in challenged settings that was designed by researchers and experts from UNODC.

The program aims to strengthen family bonds and increase the resiliency of families to difficult external circumstances, thereby reducing the incidence of drug use and harmful behaviors among youth who participate in the program.

ENGLISH IN USE

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Precipitation forecast to reach above normal in next 3 months

The country is predicted to receive above normal rainfall over the next three months (February 20-May 21), head of the climatological research institute affiliated to Iran's Meteorological Organization (IMO) has said.The whole country will meet normal and above normal rainfalls, the northern parts will receive above normal rainfall while southern provinces will receive normal to lower-than-normal rainfall, IRNA quoted Iman Babaeian as saying on Sunday.

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

بارش‌های کشور در سه ماه پیشِ رو بیش از نرمال است

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

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

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

© IRIB / Ebrahim Jarfi

Water scarcity haunting Hour al-Azim

Hour al-Azim wetland in the southwestern Khuzestan province is grappling with a severe shortage of water. Due to insufficient rainfall and recent droughts, now about two million hectares out of the three million hectares area of the country's wetlands are dry and turned into sand and dust spots.

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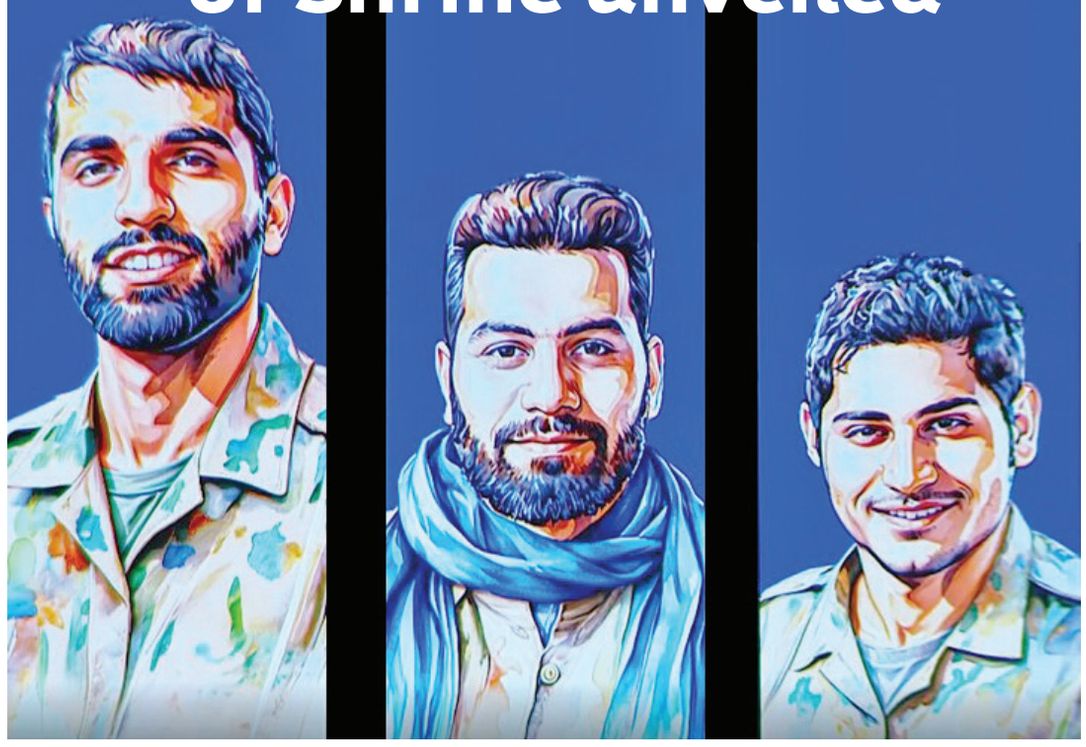
GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Every religion has its distinct characteristic, and the distinct characteristic of Islam is modesty.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Prayer Times » Noon:11:50 Evening: 17:13 Dawn: 5:20 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:47 (tomorrow)

Leader's commendation for books on Defenders of Shrine unveiled



TEHRAN- The commendations of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, on three significant books recounting the stories of the Defenders of the Holy Shrine who were martyred in Syria were unveiled during a ceremony in Tehran on Wednesday.

This event coincided with the 17th commemoration of literature on jihad and resistance, as well as the celebration of National Heroes, IRNA reported.

During the ceremony, the leader's commendations on the books "I Care About You," "Majid Barbari," and "Twenty Years and Three Days" were prominently featured and celebrated, the report added.

In his commendation of the book "I Care About You," which details the life of martyr Morteza Abdollahi, a defender of the shrine, the leader described the book as a manifestation of the Revolution's ascendance.

"This is another expression of the Revolution's rise: a brave young man with the rationality of the 2010s and the emotions of the 1980s... A reflection of the verse: 'To Him ascends good speech, and righteous deeds raise it.' It showcases a struggle on the best path and ultimately achieves the highest purpose. The knowledge and patience of the narrator—the martyr's wife—are commendable. May they be honored and proud."

He also praised the book's writing, especially noting the powerful expression of emotions in various passages, including its introduction and the poignant final lines.

"I Care About You," authored by Mohammad Rasul Mollahassani, spans 304 pages and is published by Shahid Kazemi Publishing House.

In his endorsement of "Majid Barbari," a book about the life of martyr Majid Qorbankhani, written by Kobra Khodabakhsh and published by Darkhoin Publications, the leader remarked: "Here, we witness a pure soul, a generous heart, and a helping hand extended to the weak."

"Majid Qorbankhani embodies the verse: 'And whoever Allah wills to guide – He expands his breast to [contain] Islam.' He was deserving of this ascendance, and his pure heart and noble spirit had the capacity for it... May his rewards be abundant, and may we be granted the same, God willing," he added.

Regarding "Twenty Years and Three Days," which recounts the life of the youngest martyr of the shrine, Seyyed Mostafa Mousavi, written by Samaneh Khakbazaan and published by Revayat Fath Publications, the leader stated: "This account is both enviable and heartbreaking for those like me."

"The brilliance of this young man and his peers dazzles my eyes while reminding me of the darkness in which we find ourselves. I commend the life-saving motivation that elevates Seyyed Mostafa to such heights and express my admiration for the patience and faith that bring peace to his parents in his absence. I thank God for the privilege of living in an era with such individuals," he concluded.

During another segment of the ceremony, families of the martyrs Majid Qorbankhani, Seyyed Mostafa Mousavi, and Morteza Abdollahi, along with the writers of the books were honored.

This ceremony, which saw the attendance of the esteemed families of martyrs, cultural officials, elites, thinkers, and artists, was held at the Bahman Cultural Center in Tehran and was broadcast live on KHAMENEI.IR and various television channels. Concurrently, events recognizing related literature on the heroes of the Resistance Front were conducted in 30 provinces across the country.

Iran's Cinema Verite to screen Lebanon's "A State of Passion"

British-Palestinian surgeon Dr. Ghassan Abu Sittah in a scene from documentary film "A State of Passion"

TEHRAN- "A State of Passion", co-directed by Lebanese documentarians Carol Mansour and Muna Khalidi, will go on screen at the he 18th edition of the International Documentary Film Festival of Iran, known as Cinema Verite, in Tehran.

Produced in collaboration with Iran's Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC), the film will have its international premier in Cinema Verite, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

"A State of Passion" is a feature-length documentary capturing the harrowing experiences of British-Palestinian reconstructive surgeon Dr. Ghassan Abu Sittah during the brutal realities of genocide in Gaza. The film serves as an intimate portrait of resilience, sacrifice, and unwavering commitment amidst one of the world's most protracted humanitarian crises.

The documentary opens with the chilling aftermath of Dr. Abu Sittah's 43 grueling days in the emergency wards of Al Shifa and Al Ahli hospitals, where he faced relentless bombardment and overwhelming medical emergencies. His pale, shell-shocked visage, broadcasted globally, encapsulates the emotional and physical toll taken by his experiences—a visual representation of hope and despair intermingled. The film details his relentless work treating devastating injuries, such as lacerations and unthinkable amputations performed without anesthetics, and highlights heart-wrenching stories of orphaned children, stripped of their families amidst chaos.

As viewers delve deeper into Dr. Abu Sittah's compelling journey, they are confronted with profound questions: What drives a person to return to such harrowing conditions repeatedly? How does he gather the strength to endure? The film delves into the emotional landscape of his family, who support him wholeheartedly, grappling with the constant fear for his safety yet sharing an unbreakable bond forged by a shared passion for Palestine. This passion for their homeland becomes a unifying theme, providing context for the sacrifices made and the motivations behind his valiant efforts in humanitarian work.

Mansour and Khalidi, as filmmakers and close friends of the Abu Sittah family, bring a deep sense of empathy and understanding to the narrative. They portray not just the struggles of Dr. Abu Sittah, but also the emotional weight borne by his family, illuminating the human cost of war on those left behind. Their dedication to documenting his story is palpable, as they follow him on a journey across various cities—Beirut, Amman, London, Kuwait, and Dubai—where conversations about hope, resistance, and identity unfold.

"A State of Passion" transcends traditional war documentaries by offering a deeply personal lens through which the audience can grasp the realities faced by individuals in conflict zones. It examines the intersection of medical humanitarianism and personal sacrifice, ultimately portraying a rich tapestry of resilience against the backdrop of adversity. The film invites viewers to reflect on the concept of passion—not just as an abstract notion, but as a driving force that fuels acts of courage and compassion in the face of overwhelming odds. Through its raw, emotional storytelling, "A State of Passion" affirms the enduring strength of the human spirit in its quest for dignity, justice, and peace.

The Documentary & Experimental Film Center (DEFC) organizes the 18th Cinema Verite. The festival tries to express the relationship between reality and truth through documentary films.

This year's edition of the festival, which is scheduled to be held in December, will have several sections including the national competition, the international competition, the Martyr Avini Award, "Gaza, Palestine, Resistance," commemoration ceremonies, and other programs on the sideline of the event.

35 Iranian films to attend Ahmedabad International Children Film Festival

TEHRAN-The Ahmedabad International Children Film Festival (AICFF) has picked up 35 films from Iran in the lineup for its 6th edition that is planned to be held from November 30 to December 8 in Ahmedabad, India.

The list of films from Iran in the official selection of the festival include short and feature films, animations, and documentaries, Mehr reported.

The notable titles among the Iranian works include feature films "In the Arms of a Tree" by Babak Khajehpasha and "Selfie with Rostam" by Hosein Ghena'at, the feature animation "A Passenger from Ganora" by Seyyed Ahmad Alamdar, short animations "The Alchemist's Apprentice" by Erfan Parsapour and "The Splint by Mehdi Sedighi, documentary "Angles" by Mahdi Zamanpoor Kiasari, the student film "Dark Chocolate" by Farbod Farhadiyeh, and short films "Menu" by Elnaz Ataei, "Sue" by Mohsen Khodabandeh, "Zafaraniyah" by Vahid Kermani, and "Saudade" by Mehrdad Azizi Parsa.

Ahmedabad International Children Film Festival is a rooted idea to empower and be heard for the talent, creativity and culture they choose across the globe, as for the generation to voice their belief and change in the society.

In a world where children are not merely spectators, but protagonists in their own right, this festival recognizes unique perspectives, voices, and creative expressions. AICFF provides a platform for everyone to tell stories that resonate with and across the world, reflecting not only their dreams and aspirations, but also the values, cultures, and mindsets that define our shared human experience.

AICFF is a narration of every individual's core memory from childhood. Wherein these children's centric films will play a vital role to communicate resilience, innocence, curiosity, and selfless-love to adults who tend to forget and celebrate the actual moments of life. AICFF plays a role to bridge the gap between these story-tellers and creative individuals.

Tehran meeting pays tribute to children's writer Houshang Moradi Kermani

TEHRAN- The celebrated Iranian children's book writer Houshang Moradi Kermani was commemorated during a meeting at Tehran's Arasbaran Cultural Center on Tuesday, on the occasion of Iran's Book Week.

The ceremony was attended by several scholars, literary figures, and literature enthusiasts, Mehr reported.

Moradi Kermani was born in 1944 in Sirch, a small village close to the southern Iranian city of Kerman. After completing his primary and middle school education in his village and Kerman, he pursued his love for the arts by enrolling in dramatic arts in Tehran.

Moradi Kermani continued his education at university, eventually earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in English translation. In 1961, he began his career in the arts by working in radio stations across Kerman and Tehran.

During the early 1970s, he commenced his writing career. One of his most acclaimed literary pieces, "The Tales of Majid," was originally a collection of short stories. Before its publication, it first existed as a radio program script which he had created years earlier. The book gained immense popularity, leading to its translation into several languages and being adapted into a widely popular television series in Iran.

Throughout his career, Moradi Kermani has written several children's books, many of which have won international awards and have been translated into multiple languages. His literary works encompass a wide range of subjects that delve into various themes, including social justice, environmentalism, cultural customs, and historical events.

So far, Moradi Kermani's literary works have been translated into an array of languages, including French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, Korean, Greek, and Turkish.

Moradi Kermani's writing style is notable for its straightforwardness and uncomplicated approach. He uses everyday language and accessible narrative techniques to convey complex ideas to his young readers. His books are not only entertaining but also educational, teaching important life lessons and values such as respect, empathy, compassion and kindness.

Moradi Kermani is regarded as a national treasure and a stalwart of children's literature in his homeland. He has been instrumental in shaping the reading habits of countless Iranian youths.

Cartoon of Day

Menu
Cartoonist: Anne Derenne from France

Artists unite to raise funds for medical care charity in Palestine

More than 200 artists have come together to auction their works in a fund-raiser for a humanitarian medical care charity operating in Palestine.

The donations span the disciplines of art, architecture, engineering and literature and all proceeds will go towards the work of Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in Gaza and the West Bank. The charity is still working in Gaza at a reduced capacity.

Online bidding has opened and runs until December 1 and an accompanying exhibition of all the artworks will be on show in London for two weeks, starting on Friday.

"The generosity has been immense, particularly because it's been artist-led," said artist Rana Begum, one of the organizers. "You realize what you can achieve and what you can do when so many people come together. So many people want to do something about the war, and so many feel so helpless."

The auction idea emerged a few months ago after a meeting at the Royal Academy, the UK's prestigious arts society. From there, the fund-raiser quickly gained momentum. Instead of having to plead with artists for donations, nearly everyone the organizers approached agreed to take part.

As word spread, more artists reached out, eager to contribute their work. Several offered their services for free, including the art-handling company Zhero and the gallery space, located at 14 Wharf Road near Old Street in East London, where the artworks will be displayed.