

A Grim Milestone

45,000

Israel's genocide in Gaza goes unchecked



The Four Horsemen of an Apocalypse may be riding furiously in full display...

By Martin Love

NORTH CAROLINA - America is so crazed with meting out or supporting violence and theft (and even genocide, the crime of crimes, in Palestine) either alone or through its so-called allies such as the Apartheid Abomination, that it like Israel has become the most hated countries by a vast majority of humanity. This is well deserved. The dark denizens of Washington are so corrupted by bribery and greed that it boggles the mind and tortures hearts in much of the world. It's not as if the American people are "bad". Most are not just like people everywhere. But they by and large are dangerously ignorant and much of the reason for that is a mainstream U.S. media that does not tell truths but spews lies and misinformation.

Yemen might be the next target of US-led Israeli aggression

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT - Since the fall of the Bashar al-Assad government mainstream media outlets, especially those loyal to the Saudi-Emirati coalition, have adopted a harmonious discourse inciting the resumption of war against Yemen. Secret meetings were reportedly held in Cairo to discuss the available options to deal with Yemen following the fall of the al-Assad government, along with relentless demands by the Aden government to pressure the Sanaa government led by the Ansar Allah movement. Following these meetings, Riyadh has hosted various meetings. Saudi Lieutenant General Fahd Al-Salman, commander of the Joint Forces of the Saudi-Emirati Coalition, met with Othman Majli, the official in charge of the border fronts, in the "Presidential Council", who is responsible for coordinating with the US forces that were recently deployed on the Saudi-Yemeni border.

Israeli attack leaves mushroom cloud in Syria

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN - Israeli forces have launched what has been described as "the heaviest strikes" since the start of the regime's aggression against Syria. The strikes on Monday morning targeted Tartus, a major port city on the Mediterranean coast of Syria, killing civilians. Videos circulating online show the impact of the blasts triggering a huge mushroom cloud in the air. The massive explosions lit up the skies in Syria as Israeli airstrikes reportedly targeted military sites in the eastern Tartus region. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, "Israeli warplanes launched strikes" targeting a series of sites including air defense units and "surface-to-surface missile depots," with the blasts so powerful that they registered on the Richter scale at a magnitude 3.1 on seismic sensors.

Muzzling the mad dog: Bibi is barking up the wrong tree

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN - Israel's ongoing aggression against Syria coupled with the rhetoric of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has further exposed the regime's expansionist ambitions. Israel has seized additional Syrian territory since armed groups took over Damascus on December 8 and overthrew president Bashar Assad's government. The Israeli army has taken control of a long-standing buffer zone in the Golan Heights that had separated Israeli and Syrian forces for about five decades. Besides, Israeli forces have seized Jabal Sheikh (Mount Hermon) as well as villages and towns inside the Syrian territory. The cabinet of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took a step further earlier on Sunday approving a plan to expand settlement building in the occupied Golan Heights.

Iran holds first national conference on cognitive warfare command and control

TEHRAN - The First National Conference on Command and Control in Cognitive Warfare was held on Tuesday at the Army Command and Staff University (DAFOS) in Tehran. The event brought together senior military officials, including Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, Chief of Staff and Deputy Coordinator of the Army; Brigadier General Abbas Jafarinia, Deputy Intelligence Chief of the Army; Brigadier General Hossein Valivand Zamani, Commander of DAFOS; and other Armed Forces representatives. Cognitive warfare a key defense priority: senior official Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the conference, Rear Admiral Sayyari emphasized the growing importance of cognitive warfare in strengthening national defense and deterrence capabilities. "Cognitive warfare is a strategic issue that influences the defensive and deterrent capacities of any country. The Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran have been closely monitoring and advancing in this field globally, achieving significant results," he said. ▶ Page 3

Iran, Japan reaffirm commitment to regional stability through continued dialogue

TEHRAN - Iran and Japan have reiterated their commitment to ongoing consultations to address regional and international issues, with a particular focus on developments in Syria. This commitment was emphasized during a meeting on Sunday in Tehran between Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Japan's Deputy Foreign Minister Funakoshi Takehiro. During the meeting, the two diplomats explored avenues to enhance the longstanding and friendly relations between their countries. Araghchi stated, "The good and friendly relations between Tehran and Tokyo provide a solid foundation for addressing the pressing issues in our region." He added that, given recent regional developments, "continuous consultations are crucial." ▶ Page 2

Let's start law enforcement diplomacy with traffic management

By Teymour Hosseini
Traffic police chief

TEHRAN - Today, countries start by focusing on common problems and turn the resulting experiences and even knowledge-based ideas into exchangeable products in the development of international relations and cooperation. The chief of the law enforcement force of the Islamic Republic of Iran has put this issue on the agenda as a priority and, in this regard, he has traveled to several countries and has hosted several police chiefs and ministers, as well. In this line, the traffic police have also called upon ambassadors and diplomats residing in Iran, as well as overseas Iranian ambassadors and diplomats and other international organizations and institutions to develop relations by putting the issue of traffic management on the agenda, which fortunately is far from political profiteering due to its community-oriented educational and research nature. ▶ Page 7

Tehran's Cinéma Vérité honors global documentary talent

TEHRAN - The 18th edition of the International Documentary Film Festival of Iran, known as Cinéma Vérité, concluded in Tehran on Sunday, celebrating the winners in both national and international competitions. "Gingerbread for Her Dad," directed by Alina Mustafina from Kazakhstan, won the main award in the full-length documentaries category of the international competition. The film follows three generations of women from a single family as they journey from Kazakhstan to Poland in search of the grave of the man who connects them—a man who lost his life during World War II. Throughout their journey, they mend fractured relationships and confront the lingering traumas of the post-colonial Soviet era. ▶ Page 8



Pezeshkian: "The obstacle is our perspective," as Iran honors Olympic and Paralympic champions

TEHRAN - A prestigious ceremony was held in Tehran on Monday to honor 107 champions, medalists, coaches, and team leaders who represented Iran at the Summer Olympics and Paralympics in Paris. The event was attended by Masoud Pezeshkian, the President of Iran, along with numerous prominent figures from the sports community. ▶ Page 3

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Arman-e-Melli: Trigger mechanism is a lever against Iran

Arman-e-Melli interviewed Dr. Yousef Moulai, a professor of international law at Tehran University, to examine the various aspects of the trigger mechanism included in the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). He said: If the European countries concluded that Iran has not adhered to its nuclear commitments, they can refer Iran's nuclear case to the Security Council, and there will be a vote on it. The situation is not the same as in the past in which countries like Russia and China could play a special role and veto such a decision. As a result, an opponent (a JCPOA member) can fully invoke the trigger mechanism from the beginning to the end. The reports published by the International Atomic Energy Agency about Iran are negative and claim that Iran does not cooperate (with the IAEA). This issue can be a pretext for one of the European countries (Britain, Germany and France) to activate the trigger mechanism. It is not necessary to bring a special reason for this to happen, but if the current process continues, the activation of the trigger mechanism will be likely. (The trigger mechanism, set out in article 36 of the deal, involves the dispute being referred to a Joint Commission that will have a minimum of 15 days to resolve the issue. If the complainants are still not satisfied, they can refer the matter to the UN Security Council, which could vote to reimpose any sanctions lifted under the deal.)

Sobh-e-No: Netanyahu's commotion against Iran

Sobh-e-No analyzed the Sunday telephone conversations between Netanyahu and President-elect Donald on Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran. It wrote: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday that he and US President-elect Donald Trump see "eye to eye on the Iranian threat". He also said, "I unequivocally declare to Hezbollah and to Iran: In order to prevent you from attacking us, we will continue to take action against you as necessary, in every arena and at all times." Such remarks show that a new phase of commotion

against the Islamic Republic has begun.

Jam-e-Jam: Axis of resistance is stronger than ever

In a note, Jam-e-Jam dismissed comments by media outlets that Iran is similar to Syria while it was under the leadership of Bashar al-Assad. It wrote: After the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government in Syria, efforts were made in media, mainly abroad, to lead the Iranian society towards despair by inducing the failure of the Axis of Resistance. The fact is that these types of inductions are completely based on wrong calculations. By inspiring such feelings some are trying to insinuate that the future of the Islamic Republic is the same as that of Syria. This is while there is no similarity between us and Syria. Iran's political and social conditions are not the same as Syria's. Iranians are not like the Syrians, who were involved in a multi-year civil war in recent years. Moreover, our armed forces are not similar to the Syrian army. Therefore, the media persons can answer these doubts by explaining differences.

Etemad: Iran should interact with new Syria

In an interview with Shoab Bahman, a senior analyst of Eurasia affairs, Etemad discussed the developments in Syria and Tehran's foreign policy approach to the new situation in the country. He said: The developments in Syria happened so quickly that surprised analysts in international politics. Today we are witnessing a 'new season' in Syria, a season whose future is not clear. First, the composition of the leadership of this country should be determined, although the developments in Syria can affect the equations in the Middle East. Iran's foreign policy in the region is completely realistic. Of course, it cannot be out of this circle even in this sensitive situation. The fall of the Assad government has happened and today Syria is facing new conditions. Iran must come to terms with the realities of Syria and have a realistic view. That Iran wants to interact with the groups that take power in Syria is a completely realistic strategy.

Iran deputy FM says Netanyahu death sentence 'not impossible'



TEHRAN – Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi has declared that the issuance of a death sentence for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over war crimes committed in Gaza is a realistic possibility.

In an interview with Khamenei.ir, Gharibabadi asserted, "In my opinion, this is not impossible. It is possible if efforts are made." His statement follows the International Criminal Court's (ICC) issuance of arrest warrants for Netanyahu and former War Minister Yoav Gallant for crimes against humanity and war crimes, a landmark decision marking the first time the court has targeted senior Western-allied officials.

Gharibabadi highlighted the absence of a fair and impartial court to investigate the crimes of the Israeli regime and its officials. He criticized the ICC's arrest warrant as merely a "basic action of a judicial authority," emphasizing the need for stronger measures.

He pointed to a previous ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, which condemned the Israeli regime's actions in a case brought by South Africa, supported by several other countries including Spain, Mexico, Libya, Turkey, Nicaragua, and Colombia.

The ICJ case, which began public hearings in January 2024, followed South Africa's filing of a genocide case against Israel in late 2023, weeks after the ongoing Israeli war began in Gaza. The court issued preliminary orders in May to halt the Israeli invasion of Rafah and mitigate the humanitarian crisis, which has resulted in at least 44,976 deaths and 106,759 injuries.

Gharibabadi directly implicated the United States, stating, "The U.S. has not only provided military and intelligence support to the Zionist regime, but also gives political and diplomatic support," adding that Israel's actions are a direct result of U.S. opposition to a ceasefire and unwavering support for the Israeli regime.

The diplomat proposed a potential alternative: "We should try to see if it is possible to form a court consisting of two or three like-minded countries that support the Palestinian people. Within the framework of that court, it will be possible to issue such rulings," Gharibabadi explained, acknowledging the considerable challenges in enforcing such a ruling.

"However," he cautioned, "it should be noted to what extent this ruling can be enforced and what will be the guarantee of its implementation."

Iran, Japan reaffirm commitment to regional stability through continued dialogue

From page 1 ▶ Funakoshi echoed this sentiment, noting, "Japan values its historical relations with Iran. Ongoing interaction is essential not only to strengthen bilateral ties but also to assist in resolving regional and international problems."

Iran's top diplomat pointed out that Tehran and Tokyo share common concerns about sustainable security and stability in West Asia.

"We have common concerns about the stability and security of our region, and it's important that we work together to address these issues," Araghchi emphasized.

Funakoshi, in his remarks, stressed the need for ongoing interaction between the two nations, asserting, "Japan is committed to deepening its relations with Iran."

In addition to bilateral ties, the two diplomats discussed various regional and international issues, with a specific focus on the situation in Syria.

Both sides acknowledged that maintaining stability and security in the region is a shared priority and that their continued dialogue could significantly contribute to achieving



this goal.

"Our discussions on Syria were particularly important, and we will continue to work together to promote stability in the region," Funakoshi noted.

Funakoshi's visit was part of the 32nd consultative session between the Deputy Foreign Ministers of Iran and Japan, highlighting both nations' ongoing commitment to engage in meaningful and constructive discussions.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's deputy foreign minister for political af-

fairs, also participated in these consultations, reaffirming the necessity of such interactions for deepening relations in various fields.

"The continuation of our consultations is vital for the progress and stability of our bilateral and regional relations," he stated in a post on X.

Fostering closer ties

From 2007 to 2011, Araghchi served as Iran's ambassador to Japan.

In an interview with Japan's Kyodo News in August, Iran's top diplomat declared that "Japan can play a more

significant role in Iran's energy, oil, and economic sectors," adding that the two countries "have enormous potential for a stabilizing and mutually beneficial partnership."

Recently, Japan pledged ¥690 million (\$4.6 million) to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for the restoration of Lake Urmia and other wetlands in Iran.

This contribution aims to enhance sustainable resource management and climate resilience, reflecting a long-standing partnership between Iran and Japan.

Additionally, earlier this year, Japan expressed its commitment to assist Iran in normalizing relations with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Furthermore, analysts suggest that Japan could serve as an intermediary between Iran and the West, potentially helping to address divergences concerning Iran's peaceful nuclear program, among other issues.

CAPTION: Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (R) receives visiting Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister Funakoshi Takehiro on December 15, 2024.

International community must confront Israel's ongoing war crimes in Gaza: Iran

TEHRAN – The Iranian Foreign Ministry has called for urgent international measures to stop the Israeli regime's ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip.

Spokesman Esmail Baqaei, speaking on Monday, criticized global inaction in the face of the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza and demanded accountability for those responsible.

Baqaei emphasized the failure of international organizations, particularly the United Nations Security Council, to respond effectively to the crisis, attributing this paralysis to the United

States' unwavering support for Israel.

He condemned this lack of action as "shameful," underscoring the need for an immediate and coordinated international response to halt the violence and hold Israeli officials accountable for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Iranian spokesman highlighted the recent arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former War Minister Yoav Gallant. The warrants, issued for war crimes and crimes against humanity, underscore the

severity of the situation. Baghaei urged the states that are party to the ICC's statute to fulfill their legal obligations by enforcing the warrants and taking tangible steps to ensure justice.

He also reiterated that all states, under international law, have a responsibility to uphold international humanitarian standards and prevent genocide. Despite this, Baqaei noted that Israel has blatantly disregarded orders from the ICC to cease acts of genocide and violations of the Genocide Convention.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iranian embassy in Syria to resume operations soon: amb.

TEHRAN – In a Sunday night interview with Iranian national television, Hossein Akbari, Iran's ambassador to Syria, announced that the Iranian embassy in Damascus is set to resume its operations shortly.

Unknown individuals attacked the premises on December 8, the day President Bashar al-Assad's government collapsed following an 11-day insurgency by armed opposition groups.

Akbari highlighted that Iran had anticipated these developments and had taken measures to safeguard its embassy staff.

"We relocated our embassy personnel to Beirut for a few days to ensure their security and prevent any potential damage," he explained.

With assurances of security from all involved parties, Akbari stated that Iran plans to restart consulate activities soon.

The ambassador noted that

he and his team remained at the embassy until late Saturday night, closely monitoring the situation as Damascus was on the brink of falling.

He emphasized that the speed and nature of recent events in Syria caught everyone off guard, including government officials and even those orchestrating actions behind the scenes.

According to Akbari, the armed groups' escalation stemmed from retaliatory actions against perceived enemies, particularly after their bases were bombed by Syrian and Russian forces. This thirst for revenge, he explained, fueled their operations.

Their first target, Aleppo, however, surprisingly fell in a matter of 2 to 3 days, despite having resisted for five years during a previous insurgency. "This fundamentally altered the dynamics on the ground," The envoy explained, adding that the Syrian

army's lack of resistance encouraged armed groups to expand their operations from various directions.

Syria's future

Elsewhere in his remarks, Akbari emphasized that Syria will not follow Libya's trajectory due to distinct geographical and regional differences.

Libya experienced widespread and significant disorder following the fall of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. The country descended into a civil war, with various factions and militias vying for power, leading to widespread violence, political instability, and humanitarian crises. A single unified government has yet to be formed in Libya and different regions are under the influence of different entities.

"Syria will not become like Libya, but it will face challenges similar to those experienced by Libya," he explained, adding that each group or



region, supported by certain foreign powers, seeks to assert its rights in the future government.

Akbari reiterated the detrimental role of the Israeli regime in Syria's current predicament, aiming to prevent the establishment of a strong government that could pose a threat.

He also stated that U.S. policies align with Israel's interests, presenting daunting challenges for Syria. "The interests of the Zionist regime also shape U.S. policies," he added.

Tehran, Persian Gulf Cooperation Council discuss regional collaboration

TEHRAN – Alireza Enayati, the Iranian ambassador to Saudi Arabia, met with Jassim Mohammed Al-Budaiwi, the Secretary-General of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC), at the council's secretariat in Riyadh on Monday.

The meeting, characterized by a friendly and cordial atmosphere, focused on enhancing bilateral relations and fostering cooperation among Persian Gulf countries and Iran.

During their discussions, both officials underscored the importance of continued dialogue and positive interactions between Iran and the PGCC member states. They explored various avenues for collaboration in sectors such as trade, security, and cultural exchange, aiming to address shared challenges and seize opportunities for mutual benefit.

At the conclusion of the meeting, both officials reiterated their commitment to ongoing dialogue and cooperation. They emphasized the necessity for further engagement in various fields to enhance understanding and collaboration between Iran and the Persian Gulf states.



In a gesture of respect, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian visited the homes of the mothers of three martyrs on December 15, 2024 – two who perished during Saddam Hussein's war against Iran, and one who gave their life battling Daesh in the 2010s.

Iran holds first national conference on cognitive warfare command and control

From Page 1 ▶ Sayyari outlined Iran's dual focus: enhancing its cognitive warfare capabilities and countering the enemy's efforts to wage cognitive warfare domestically. "We aim to utilize our resources effectively while preventing the enemy from imposing cognitive warfare on our homeland," he added.

Rear Admiral Sayyari shed light on the intricate nature of cognitive warfare, which he described as a subtle but powerful tool for achieving strategic goals without resorting to physical conflict.

"Cognitive warfare is highly complex and multifaceted. The enemy uses it to dominate minds—particularly those of the younger generation, who play a crucial role in shaping



the country's future," he said.

He warned that altering the beliefs and values of young people could weaken their resolve and transform national thought processes. "The enemy seeks to influence the

minds of our youth, undermine their beliefs, and shift their values. If successful, this could erode the foundations of our society," Sayyari cautioned.

Rear Admiral Sayyari

stressed the need for national unity and awareness to combat cognitive warfare. "Society must remain united, cohesive, and vigilant. The enemy aims to strip away our sanctities, disrupt our unity, and sow division," he said.

He highlighted the steps being taken by the Iranian military to address this challenge. "We are working intelligently to gain the upper hand in cognitive warfare. Our strengths—valuable beliefs and capabilities—enable us to counter these threats and even influence the enemy using their own tools, including cyberspace," Sayyari stated.

He reiterated the importance of enhancing Iran's defensive and deterrent capabilities to safeguard the nation.

Pezeshkian: "The obstacle is our perspective," as Iran honors Olympic and Paralympic champions



TEHRAN – A prestigious ceremony was held in Tehran on Monday to honor 107 champions, medalists, coaches, and team leaders who represented Iran at the Summer Olympics and Paralympics in Paris.

The event was attended by Masoud Pezeshkian, the President of Iran, along with numerous prominent figures from the sports community.

During his address, President Pezeshkian emphasized the importance of perspective in overcoming obstacles. "I believe that there are no obstacles in this country; the obstacle is our perspective," he stated. He urged attendees to adopt a collaborative approach to problem-solving, asserting that through unity and effort, Iran can achieve its aspirations as articulated by Leader of the Islamic Revolution of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Pezeshkian remarked, "This first place will not be given to us easily. We must strive, set aside differences, and accept that anyone living anywhere in this country can achieve the best and highest through effort." He expressed confidence in the capabilities of Iranian youth and stressed the need for support and opportunities for all citizens.

The President also acknowledged the challenges facing the nation, attributing many issues to internal perspectives and behaviors. He encouraged a collective effort to rise above these challenges, stating, "If we are together, we can solve problems together." He underscored the importance of aiming high and striving for excellence, declaring that even if one faces difficulties along the way, the journey toward greatness is worthwhile.

In closing, Pezeshkian expressed pride in the achievements of Iranian athletes, saying, "We take pride in the flight you undertook that brought joy to all Iranians."

41 competitors across 14 sports competed for Iran at the 2024 Summer Olympics. The country won 12 medals in the games. In the Paralympics, Iranians took a total of 25 medals home.

Why Iran's influence in West Asia is not going anywhere

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN – A recent article published in the Foreign Policy Magazine attempts to present a narrative in which Iran's role in Syria has been diminished by Turkey's growing influence following the fall of President Bashar al-Assad.

Galip Dalay in "How Post-Assad Syria Could Unleash a New Regional Order," highlights the emergence of an HTS-led government in Damascus, the changing balance of power in the Levant, and the shifting allegiances of regional and global actors. The article suggests that these changes undermine Iran's role and reconfigure Syria's place within the broader West Asia.

However, this narrative not only oversimplifies the geopolitical complexities but also perpetuates a condescending perspective that reduces sovereign nations and their struggles to bargaining chips in the hands of external powers.

While Assad's fall undeniably marks a turning point in Syria's history, it is neither a conclusive victory for Turkey nor a permanent loss for Iran. The ongoing changes in Syria highlight the intricacies of regional politics, where Iran remains a key player with deep-rooted influence.

The article reflects on the changing alignments in West Asia and renewed Turkish ambitions. These developments have undeniably reshaped the political landscape of Syria and its neighbors. However, framing these shifts as a definitive defeat for Iran fails to account for the resilience and adaptability of Iran's regional strategy.

HTS joining the Resistance: substance or show?

The article argues that an HTS-led government might challenge Israel over its annexation of the Golan Heights and lend organic support to the Palestinian cause, positioning it as a more "authentic" ally to Palestinians than Iran. This claim appears to be both simplistic and misleading.

Iran's decades-long commitment to the Palestinian cause is well-documented, marked by consistent support for groups such as Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad that underscore its steadfast opposition to Zionist aggression.

HTS's purported alignment with the Palestinian cause is unlikely to translate into meaningful action. Its reliance on Turkey undermines its credibility as an independent actor in the Resistance. Turkey's history of pragmatic dealings with Israel and its Western ties suggests that HTS's anti-Israel stance may be more symbolic than substantive. In contrast, Iran remains the central pillar of Resistance, ensuring the Palestinian struggle is not exploited for short-term political gain.

Limits of external interference

The article suggests that the current regional dynamics mark a turning point in which other powers, particularly Arab states and Turkey,

ANALYSIS

How Post-Assad Syria Could Unleash a New Regional Order

Turkey can calm Arab nations fearful of an Islamist takeover by inviting Syria's neighbors and the Gulf states to play a central role in the political transition.

By Galip Dalay, a senior consulting fellow at Chatham House, a doctoral researcher at St Antony's College at the University of Oxford, and a nonresident senior fellow at the Middle East Council on Global Affairs.



may marginalize Iran's role in Syria. However, this interpretation overlooks the broader historical and geopolitical context.

For over a decade, Iran has demonstrated its ability to withstand external pressure and adapt to changing circumstances. Its deep economic, cultural, and military ties to Syria, forged during years of war and reconstruction, provide it with a foundation of influence that cannot be easily displaced.

Moreover, the divisions between HTS, Kurdish factions in the northeast, and other nationalist groups make it unlikely that any single actor can consolidate control over the country.

A vision of stability and resistance

Unlike the opportunistic approaches of some regional players, Iran's vision for Syria prioritizes stability, sovereignty, and long-term development. Iran has consistently advocated for a political solution that respects Syria's territorial integrity and empowers its people to rebuild their nation. This approach contrasts sharply with the exploitative strategies of actors seeking to advance their own agendas at Syria's expense.

The article's comparisons between Syria's current situation and Libya's fragmentation highlight the risks of external interference. If regional and global actors continue to prioritize short-term gains over sustainable solutions, Syria could face a prolonged period of instability and division. Iran's commitment to the principles of sovereignty and self-determination offers a viable alternative, one focused on reconciliation and reconstruction.

The article's portrayal of Iran's position in Syria simplifies a complex reality. While the fall of Assad and the rise of HTS may appear to signal a shift in regional dynamics, the broader picture tells a different story. Turkey's overreach, HTS's unforeseen future, and Iran's lasting influence ensure that Syria's future remains far from decided.

Iran remains firmly committed to the principles of sovereignty, resistance, and stability. History has shown that external interference cannot bring about lasting stability.

SPORTS

Tractor beat Malavan, Persepolis lose to Sepahan: PGPL

TEHRAN – Tractor football team defeated Malavan in their away match to remain top of the 2024/25 Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) on Monday.

Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh and Mehdi Hashemnejad were on target for Tractor in the match held at the Sirous Ghayeghran Stadium.

Earlier in the day, Sepahan defeated Persepolis 2-1 in Isfahan's Naghsh-e Jahan Stadium.

Mohammadamin Hazbavi gave the hosts the lead in the 16th minute with a header and Mohammad Khodabandelou leveled the score with a long-range shot in the 25th minute.

Persepolis defender Giorgi Gvelesiani was shown a red card in the 38th minute after VAR review.

Mehdi Limoochi scored the winner for Sepahan in the 71st minute.

In Tehran, Esteghal were held to a goalless draw against Gol Gohar at the Shahr-e Qods Stadium.

Tractor lead the table with 28 points, one point above Sepahan. Persepolis remained third with 23 points.

Iran freestyler Amouzad at Top of UWW Ranking

TEHRAN – United World Wrestling (UWW), the international governing body of amateur wrestling, has released the 2024 rankings.

Rahman Amouzad of Iran is the only Iranian among the top wrestlers.

According to (UWW), Amouzad has been placed at the top of the world ranking in the 65 kg weight category.

Mohammad Nokhodi ranked second in the 79kg weight category, and Hassan Yazdani ranked third in the 86kg. Amirhossein Zare has been ranked second in 125kg.

On August 27, 2023, the UWW announced that Amouzad was again on top of the world ranking before Serbia's 2023 Wrestling World Championships.

In another announcement released yesterday, two Iranian athletes were among the world's best Greco-Roman wrestlers in 2024.

Foolad win bronze at FIVB Club World Championship

TEHRAN – Foolad Sirjan clinched the third place in the 2024 Men's Club World Championship Sunday night.

The Iranian team triumphed defeated Cucine Lube Civitanova 3-2 (23-25, 25-23, 21-25, 26-24, 19-17). Ali Hajipour shone for Foolad with 24 points, helping them secure Iran's second podium finish in tournament history.

Dirlic from Lube Civitanova tallied 21 points for his team. Iranian player Abdolhamidi also shone, while Bottolo impressed for the Italian side.

Brazilian powerhouses Sada Cruzeiro claimed their fifth FIVB Volleyball Men's Club World Championship title in Uberlândia, defeating Italian rivals Itas Trentino 3-1 (25-22, 20-25, 25-16, 25-22).

The victory ties Cruzeiro with Trentino as the most successful teams in the tournament's history.

Davoudi, Yousefi win medals at 2024 IWF World Championships

TEHRAN – Iranians super-heavyweights Ali Davoudi and Alireza Yousefi won a silver and a

bronze medal at the 2024 IWF World Championships in Bahrain on Sunday.

Varazdat Lalayan from Armenia, second to triple Olympic champion Lasha Talakhadze in Paris in August, came out on top in a battle between three men who collectively weighed more than 520kg.

Davoudi also failed with his first two attempts in clean and jerk before giving Iran's noisy supporters something to cheer. His final lift left him on 206-253-459.

Alireza Yousefi lifted 194kg and needed 262kg to take clean and jerk gold and bronze on total – and there were more cheers when he made it. The Iranian pair won five medals between them.

Mousavi: Iranian volleyball teams have no confidence

TEHRAN – Foolad Sirjan middle blocker Mohammad Mousavi says that the Iranian volleyball teams have no confidence to face the top teams in the world.

Foolad Sirjan clinched the third place in the 2024 Men's Club World Championship Sunday night.

The Iranian team defeated Italian team Cucine Lube Civitanova 3-2 (23-25, 25-23, 21-25, 26-24, 19-17).

"I think that Iranian teams haven't had the confidence to face the top teams in the world over the last few years, both at the club and the international levels," Mousavi said.

"I hope this result shows that we can play against anyone. We have many great players in Iran and can get good results," he added.

Brazilian Sada Cruzeiro claimed its fifth FIVB Club World Championship title in Uberlândia, defeating Italian rival Itas Trentino 3-1 (25-22, 20-25, 25-16, 25-22).

Iran football federation's elections to be held on March 1

TEHRAN – The Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) elective General Assembly will be held on March 1.

In the last elective General Assembly, which was held on August 2022, Mehdi Taj was elected as new head of the federation.

He replaced Shahabuddin Azizi Khadem, who was removed from the presidency of the football federation in February.

Taj, so far, is the only candidate for the post.

Abdolhamidi in FIVB Club World Championship Dream Team

TEHRAN – Foolad Sirjan outside hitter Alireza Abdolhamidi has been chosen in Dream Team of the 2024 FIVB Volleyball Men's Club World Championship.

He helped Iran's Foolad to win a bronze medal at the competition held in Brazil.

Star opposite Wallace de Souza's outstanding performances that led Sada Cruzeiro to secure the fifth world title were rewarded with the Most Valuable Player award of the 2024 edition.

Men's Club World Championship Dream Team is as follows:

MVP: Wallace de Souza (Sada Cruzeiro)

Best Setter: Matheus Brasília (Sada Cruzeiro)

Best Opposite: Wallace de Souza (Sada Cruzeiro)

Best Outside Hitters: Alessandro Michieletto (Trentino Itas) and Alireza Abdolhamidi (Foolad Sirjan Iranian)

Best Middle Blockers: Lucas Saatkamp (Sada Cruzeiro) and Marco Pellacani (Trentino Itas)

Best Libero: Alexandre Elias (Sada Cruzeiro)

Iran achieves record gas output at South Pars

TEHRAN – Iran has set a new record for natural gas production at the South Pars field, reaching 712 million cubic meters per day, according to the head of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of the giant field development.

Touraj Dehghani announced the milestone, attributing it to the efforts of over 1,500 workers operating 39 offshore platforms and 350 wells across the shared gas field, Shana reported.

“Our colleagues have worked tirelessly, par-

ticularly after the unexpected arrival of cold weather, to ensure stable production, leading to this record extraction level,” Dehghani said.

Iran holds the world's second-largest natural gas reserves, ranks as the third-largest producer, and is the fourth-largest consumer globally.

Dehghani noted the disparity between energy production and consumption, calling the country's energy usage—especially gas—excessive relative to its population, geography, and industrial needs.

Capacity of Iran's free trade zones reaches 1.4m TEUs

TEHRAN – Iran's free trade zones collectively offer a bulk capacity of 61 million tons and 1.4 million TEUs, with the ability to handle 12 million passengers annually, the secretary of Free Zones High Council reported during a meeting with President Masoud Pezeshkian.

During the session, Reza Masrouf presented a review of the maritime economy and port capacities of key free zones, including Anzali, Kish, Qeshm, Chabahar, Arvand, Bushehr, and

Mazandaran, Tasnim News Agency reported.

In this meeting, President Pezeshkian underscored the importance of fully utilizing the existing capacities of free trade zones.

He called for the preparation of a strategic roadmap for these zones and emphasized the development of north-south and east-west transit corridors, with input from prominent consultants in the free trade sector.

NIOPDC distributes 320m liters of petroleum products daily amid unprecedented cold

TEHRAN – National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company (NIOPDC) has maintained the daily distribution of 320 million liters of petroleum products nationwide, despite severe cold weather affecting large parts of the country, according to the head of the company.

Karim Veis-Karami, the NIOPDC head, reported on Monday that extreme drops in temperature at the end of autumn have led to increased natural gas consumption, power outages, and disruptions in rail and intercity transportation.

However, he emphasized that the mentioned conditions have not hindered the supply of petroleum products across the nation.

On Saturday, December 14, a total of 153 million liters of diesel were distributed nationwide, with over 52 million liters allocated to power plants.

The remainder was delivered to sectors including transportation, agriculture, industry, and urban development, Veis-Karami said.

He also noted that an average of 123 million liters of gasoline has been supplied daily to the transportation sector this December.

Including other fuels such as kerosene, aviation fuel, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), and fuel oil, the NIOPDC has distributed an unprecedented total of 320 million liters per day.

Aluminum ingot output exceeds 400,000 tons in 8 months

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN – Production of aluminum ingot in Iran reached 400,425 tons in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20), according to the data released by the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

IMIDRO is a major state-owned holding company active in the mining sector in Iran. It has eight major companies and 55 operational subsidiaries active in steel, aluminum, copper, cement, and mineral exploitation fields.

As the organization has reported, among the country's four major producers, South Aluminum Corporation (SALCO) had the best performance in the mentioned eight months, producing 162,459 tons of aluminum ingots, followed by Iranian Aluminum Company (IRALCO) producing 115,624 tons, Almahdi Aluminum Company producing 999,954 tons, and Iran Alumina Company producing 22,388 tons of ingots.

Based on the IMIDRO data, during the period under review, 159,416 tons of alumina powder, 269,145 tons of aluminum hydrate, and 514,420 tons



of bauxite were produced by Iran Alumina Company, indicating five percent, five percent and 41 percent growth, respectively, as compared to the figures of the previous year's same period, which were 152,293 tons, 255,897 tons, and 364,127 tons.

Due to the unique properties of aluminum and the strategic nature of this metal in the world, its use in many industries, especially high-tech industries, has expanded day by day, and the global market's need for the consumption of this metal has increased significantly.

Considering the targeting of producing high quantities of this metal

in the development plans of Iran and the construction of several aluminum ingot production factories, the importance of producing this strategic metal becomes clearer.

Aluminum industry, as one of the parent industries, plays a key role in the development of other industries in the country. Supporting this industry means supporting downstream industries such as automobile manufacturing, construction and packaging.

Also, the development of the aluminum industry can help create employment and foreign currency for the country. At present, Iran is the

18th biggest aluminum-producing country in the world.

The history of aluminum in Iran is deeply intertwined with the country's broader industrial and economic development. Over the decades, Iran has taken significant steps to develop its aluminum industry, which has become an integral part of its industrial landscape.

Iran produced more than 635,000 tons of aluminum ingots over the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19).

The country's aluminum mills continued with their production over the past year and posted a slight one percent year-on-year increase despite the energy restrictions.

According to IMIDRO, the country's aluminum production stood at around 632,000 tons a year earlier.

Iran Alumina Company produced some 222,138 tons of alumina powder, 374,106 tons of alumina hydrate, and 598,599 tons of bauxite in the one-year timespan.

Iranian officials estimate the country's aluminum sector has a value of \$22 billion, which is sufficient to meet the country's aluminum needs.

Transport minister highlights key role of transport sector in economic development

TEHRAN – Iran's Minister of Transport and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadegh has underscored the pivotal role of the transport sector in driving economic and social growth, marking the

country's National Transport Day.

In a statement issued on Monday, Sadegh congratulated transport employees and emphasized the sector's substantial contribution to the gross

domestic product (GDP).

“Transport across various sectors plays a decisive role in fostering economic and social development in societies,” she said.

Cement production declines due to energy restrictions

TEHRAN – Cement production in Iran is expected to drop to 70 million tons this year, down from 76 million tons last year, due to electricity and gas supply constraints, according to the Cement Association's Secretary.

Ali Akbar Alvandian, Secretary of the Cement Industry Employers' Association, said in a press con-

ference on Sunday that energy shortages have hit the cement sector earlier than in previous years. “Typically, gas supply to cement plants was limited from late November, but this year, restrictions began on October 7. Similarly, electricity limitations that usually start in February have already come into effect, disrupting operations at many cement

factories,” he said.

Alvandian noted that alongside gas and electricity shortages, cement plants also face challenges in securing alternative fuel such as mazut. “This issue stems from transportation constraints, as power plants are prioritized for fuel supply, leaving cement factories to receive mazut later,” he added.

Easy registration for Iran Khodro vehicles with a Bank Melli Iran proxy account

Applicants for the extraordinary sales and pre-sale plans of the Iran Khodro Industrial Group can register their purchase requests by opening a proxy account in the Firouzeh system of Bank Melli Iran and blocking an amount of 3 billion rials (300 million tomans).

According to the Public Relations Office of Bank Melli Iran, customers can visit this system from Wednesday, December 11, 2024 (21 Azar 1403), until the end of Thursday, December 19, 2024 (29 Azar 1403), to designate their accounts as proxy

accounts remotely.

Customers interested in participating in this plan can activate proxy settings for their current accounts via the Firouzeh system of Bank Melli Iran at the following website: <https://firouzeh.bmi.ir>.

Features of the Firouzeh system

The Firouzeh system, one of Bank Melli Iran's newest platforms, offers a powerful management dashboard that enables users to easily manage their accounts and transactions, with a full focus



on their proxy-designated accounts, ensuring a hassle-free experience.

Key requirements

According to Iran Khodro's announcement, the required amount to participate in this stage is 3 billion rials, which

must remain in the customer's proxy account until a prioritization [process] is determined. Additionally, conditions such as not having an active vehicle license plate, not purchasing from car manufacturers within the past 48 months, and other

stipulations will be considered.

Exemptions and additional information

Designating a proxy account is mandatory for applicants under the standard plan. However, applicants who are linked with the “Law on Family and Youth Support” or the “Replacement of Worn-Out Vehicles” are not required to open a proxy account.

It is important to note that applicants can withdraw their participation in the plan at any time, unblocking their account and retrieving the funds.



A smart step for interest-free financing

Bank Melli Iran has introduced “Generator Credit Certificates” (GAM) to support producers and facilitate short-term financing for businesses without charging interest.

According to the Public Relations Office of Bank Melli Iran, these certificates allow applicants to secure financing for businesses without paying interest, making advance payments, providing cash deposits, or maintaining a minimum account balance.

Who can use GAM certificates?

All legal entities purchasing goods and services can utilize GAM certificates. These applicants, referred to as “obligors,” must submit the required documents and evidence to the bank. After conducting credit evaluations and securing the necessary collateral and guarantees, the bank issues the GAM certificates.

Features of GAM certificates

Non-paper-based and non-transferable instruments with no interest coupons.

Each certificate has a nominal value of 1 million rials.

Maturity periods range from a minimum of one month to a maximum of 12 months.

GAM certificates can be transferred within the supply chain, and obligors are required to fulfill their obligations by the due date, including reimbursing the bank for the issued certificates.

How to obtain GAM certificates

Legal entities purchasing goods and services may request GAM certificates from the bank. After reviewing and approving the submitted documents, the bank proceeds with the issuance of the certificates.

Credit limits and additional benefits

The credit limit for each obligor is up to 200% of their last year's audited financial statements' revenue, after deducting outstanding short-term loans and previously GAM certificates.

GAM certificates exempt buyers from adhering to certain ratios specified in the regulations for large facilities and commitments.

These certificates can also be used in commodity exchange transactions and transferred between members of a single beneficiary group.

How transfer works in the supply chain

GAM certificates can be transferred within the supply chain. For example:

An automaker can transfer received GAM certificates to a supplier for purchasing needed parts.

The parts supplier can use these certificates to buy raw materials.

Similarly, the raw materials seller can use the certificates for liquidity needs.

Methods of using GAM certificates

Holders of GAM certificates can utilize them in three ways:

Retaining the certificates until maturity.

Transferring the certificates to suppliers within the supply chain.

Transferring the certificates to the capital market or monetizing them in the money market through a non-banking legal entity.

For subsequent users, GAM certificates can also be used to partially pay off debts to government agencies, as per relevant regulations.

A significant step to support producers

Bank Melli Iran is committed to reducing the financing costs of businesses and addressing liquidity shortages among producers. The bank aims to expand the use of GAM certificates as an effective tool for supporting production and growth.

What is the Chakad System (Digital Secure Check), and How Does It Work?

Chakad (Digital Secure Check) is the central system for electronic checks introduced by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI). It is also connected with CBI's Nahab system which contains the identity information of banking customers.

By assigning a unique identification number to each banking user, the arrangement facilitates easy and quick identity verification within the banking network.

A grim milestone: 45,000

Israel's genocide in Gaza goes unchecked

TEHRAN - The total death toll from Israel's 14-month war of genocide on the Gaza Strip has passed a grim milestone of 45,000.

The Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza said on Monday that 45,028 people have been killed and 106,962 others have been wounded since Israel launched war on the enclave on October 7, 2023.

The ministry added that the real toll is higher because thousands of bodies are still buried under rubble or in areas that medics cannot access.

Some 17,000 children are among those who have been killed by the Israeli attacks in Gaza.

The death toll amounts to roughly 2 percent of the Gaza Strip's entire 2.3 million population.

Israel's weekend strikes killed dozens of Palestinians across Gaza.

A Sunday overnight Israeli strike in Gaza City's eastern Shijaiyah neighborhood hit a house. Rescuers recovered the bodies of 10 people from under the rubble, including a family of four; two parents and their two children.

More than a dozen people, including six children and two women, were also killed in a sep-



A dead child is carried into the Al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital in Deir al-Balah after an Israeli strike in the Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza on December 14, 2024. AP/Abdel Kareem Hana

arate strike on a school in the southern city of Khan Younis on Sunday.

A spokeswoman for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) said she met with children injured in Sunday's strike on the school-turned-shelter.

They included a 17-year-old girl who suffered a severe leg injury and shrapnel wounds. She survived along with her twin sister and three other sisters, Louise Wateridge told the Associated Press.

Their mother died and Wa-

teridge said one of the sisters described "how their mother's bones were crushed under the rubble. There was nothing they could do to save her."

According to AP, Wateridge also met with two siblings aged 2 and 5 at Nasser Hospital where the casualties were taken. Both children have severe head and body injuries, with 2-year-old Julia losing sight in her eye. "There is nothing we can do. We are already waiting for the next attack," Wateridge quoted a doctor as saying.

Israel has not only massacred Palestinians but it has also hin-

dered the provision of essentials such as food to the Gaza Strip, in particular to the north of the enclave. The regime has used starvation as a method of warfare to further its nefarious objectives.

Wateridge has already issued an alert over imminent famine in the northern Gaza Strip.

The UN special rapporteur on the right to food said in February that the obstruction of essentials such as food by Israel amounts to war crimes.

"Intentionally depriving people of food is a war crime. Israel has announced its intention to destroy the Palestinian people, in whole or in part, simply for being Palestinian. In my view as a UN human rights expert, this is now a situation of genocide. This means the state of Israel in its entirety is culpable and should be held accountable - not just individuals or this government or that person," Michael Fakhri told the Guardian in late February.

But Israel has turned a blind eye to calls to stop its genocidal war on Gaza.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) found in January this year that there was a risk of violation of the rights of the Palestinian people to protection from genocide.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Muzzling the mad dog: Bibi is barking up the wrong tree

From page 1 ▶ Netanyahu's office said his cabinet has "unanimously approved" the "demographic development" of the occupied territory, which would seek to double the Israeli population there.

Several countries in the West Asia region condemned Israel's move. Qatar said it considers the plan a "blatant violation of international law" and a new act of aggression on Syrian territories.

Israel occupied the Golan Heights in 1967 and annexed it in 1981, a move that has not been recognized by the international community. The United States is the first country in the world which recognized Israeli sovereignty over the area in 2019. The decision was made by then US president Donald Trump.

Netanyahu has discussed his sinister schemes for Syria, Lebanon and the Gaza Strip with Trump who is set to retake office on January 20 after winning the US presidential election in November.

The Israeli premier said in a video statement on Sunday that he had held a phone call with the incoming American president on Saturday evening.

"A year ago, I said something simple: We would change the face of the Middle East, and we are indeed doing so. Syria is not the same Syria," Netanyahu said in the statement.

In his address to the UN General Assembly in September this year, Netanyahu displayed two maps, which did not identify the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but showed all the territory as part of Israel.

Netanyahu said in his weekend statement that his army's aggression against Syria aims to "thwart the potential threats from Syria and prevent terrorist elements from taking control close to our border".

In addition to occupying more regions of the Syrian territory, Israel has carried out



hundreds of airstrikes against Syria destroying much of the country's military infrastructure.

"We have destroyed the capabilities that the Assad regime took decades to build. We have also struck the weapons supply routes through Syria to Hezbollah," Netanyahu, known as Bibi, added.

The Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) rebel group spearheaded an offensive late last month that led to the ousting of Assad. But the rebel group has stated that it is not seeking a conflict with Israel.

The inaction of the HTS has emboldened Israel to continue its strikes against Syria and occupy more areas in the Arab country.

Israel's airstrikes and ground incursion into Syria has drawn widespread condemnation from countries in the region and beyond. But in the absence of any effective measures by the international community, Israel persists in its military action against Syria.

Further in his statement, Netanyahu threatened Iran and Hezbollah with military action.

"I unequivocally declare to Hezbollah and to Iran: In order to prevent you from attacking us, we will continue to take action against you as necessary, in every arena and at all times," he said.

Speaking on Saturday, Hezbollah's secretary-general said Israel has failed to eradicate the resistance movement. Sheikh Naim Qassem added that the struggle of the Lebanese people against the occupying regime will never end.

Israel began a massive bombing campaign in Lebanon in September killing more than 3,000 people. The Israeli army later launched a ground offensive in southern Lebanon. But the regime failed to achieve its goals and had to reach a ceasefire with Hezbollah in late November.

Israel's threats against Iran also come despite the blows it has received at the hands of Iranian armed forces.

Iran carried out retaliatory operations against Israel, dubbed Operation True Promise I and II in April and October.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) launched hundreds of missiles and drones towards the Israeli military, espionage and intelligence bases in response to the regime's assassination campaigns against Iranian military forces and resistance leaders.

The Iranian military operations exposed Israel's vulnerability and humiliated the regime.

Iranian officials have time and again warned that any Israeli aggression against Iran will be met with a crushing response.

does not know where they are coming from. However, it is easy to imagine the CIA may have a hand in their appearance.

A self-proclaimed Zionist, Biden is on his way out and creating wreckage for Trump to bear - Biden the worst President in recent decades. He is better suited for work in the costume of a clown vendor selling hotdogs at an amusement park in Atlantic City or Coney Island near New York City.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

From page 1 ▶ The Tehran Times, in which I have written hundreds of commentaries over more than five recent years, is a newspaper devoted to telling more truths in a month than the New York Times, say, or the Washington Post has published on foreign matters, foreign governments and countries than mainstream media has published in this century. Americans are unaware that the current Iranian government has attempted to send positive vibes to the U.S. to lift sanctions by restoring something like the

JCPOA, for one thing, but all the Wall Street Journal has posted is an article of late about how the upcoming Trump regime is beginning to study whether to try to destroy Iran's nuclear research along with, of course, the criminal Zionists. Such puts at grave risk all the U.S. military facilities in the Persian Gulf as well as the oil and gas facilities of cowardly Arab "allies". Oil at \$200 a barrel or more? Say goodbye to economic prosperity in the West at least. How stupid is that?

And how stupid are the as-

sertions of some individuals in the U.S. Congress to explain that the appearance of a number of drones spotted flying over the coast of New Jersey and some other locations are owned by Iran and have been launched by some Iranian "mothership" lurking somewhere in the Atlantic off the East Coast of the U.S.? Talk about unfounded U.S. paranoia! It's getting to the point of realizing that sanity is largely absent in Washington and the U.S. government proclaims the drones are some kind of mystery and

Syria under Israeli control: Implications for sovereignty and regional balance

By Xavier Villar

MADRID - Following the fall of Bashar al-Assad on December 8, Israeli forces have intensified their offensive in Syria.

The power vacuum left by the collapse of the Syrian government has triggered a series of strategic maneuvers in the region, with the entry of Israeli troops into key areas standing out.

The Israeli military crossed the demilitarized zone established in 1974, which separates the territories controlled by Syria from those occupied by Israel in the Golan Heights. In this context, Israeli forces have taken up new positions both in the Golan Heights and in the strategically important Mount Al-Sheikh, thus consolidating their presence in Syria.

Israeli Defense Minister Yisrael Katz announced that Israeli forces will remain at Mount Al-Sheikh throughout the winter. According to IRNA, citing Al Jazeera, Katz emphasized that he has ordered the military to be prepared to maintain its position in this key area during the winter season.

"Control of Al-Sheikh, given the current situation in Syria, is of great strategic importance in terms of security," said Israeli Defense Minister Yisrael Katz. The mountain, also known as Mount Hermon, provides Israel with a privileged position overlooking south-

ern Syria, strengthening its surveillance and control capabilities in a region marked by historical tensions and recent conflicts.

In recent hours, Israeli forces have intensified their offensive in Syria, occupying nine localities in the Golan Heights. According to local sources, Israeli troops have forced residents of these areas to abandon their homes and move further into the country, contributing to the growing exodus of civilians amidst the conflict.

The military advance, supported by armored units, has penetrated up to 18 kilometers into Syrian territory, reaching positions near the international highway connecting Damascus with Beirut. This movement places Israeli forces just 23 kilometers from the Syrian capital.

The Israeli military has reported that its air and naval forces have carried out more than 350 strikes targeting military installations in Damascus and Latakia. According to Israeli authorities, these attacks have resulted in the destruction of between 70% and 80% of Syria's strategic military assets in both cities.

Among the destroyed assets are fighter jets, radar systems, air defense systems, warships, and ammunition depots, according to the Israeli military.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Israeli attack leaves mushroom cloud in Syria

From page 1 ▶ Videos circulating online captured the moment of the explosions, showing a bright flash followed by a towering mushroom cloud of smoke.

Researchers noted that the blast signals traveled nearly twice as fast as a typical earthquake and were detected by a magnetometer station as far as 820 kilometers away in Isnik in western Turkey.

An unknown number of civilians have reportedly been killed and injured.

Hebrew media, commenting on the huge Israeli aggression, described the assault as "Hiroshima in Tartus" reflecting the intensity of the air raids.

Fires also broke out in forests at a town in the Duraykish area 32 kilometers east of Tartus as a result of the Israeli aggression.

Reporters on the ground emphasized that this was the most intense assault on Tartus, carried out by Israeli warships, and no one was able to reach the areas hit by the attack.

They added that the Israeli aggression targeted 12 sites over several hours, including radar stations, air defense systems, and strategic weapons depots.

Additionally, sources told local media that blasts continued to be heard in the Tartus coun-

tryside as a result of the attack, which targeted strategic missile depots.

This comes as reports from Syria say the Israeli occupation regime has targeted a military site in the al-Bukamal desert in the eastern Deir ez-Zor province, near the border with Iraq.

The reports noted that the airstrikes targeted more than five military sites, from Deir ez-Zor to the capital Damascus.

Meanwhile, Israeli regime forces continued to expand ground operations in southern Syria from several directions.

According to observers, the Israeli occupation forces have advanced 26 kilometers from the slopes of Jabal Sheikh (Mount Hermon) into the southern countryside of Damascus, along the border with Lebanon.

Expansion of the Israeli occupation also coincided with the eastern side of the occupied Syrian Golan reaching some 12 kilometers into Quneitra province and its eastern countryside.

Israeli occupation forces also advanced into a village in southern Quneitra, near the administrative border of Daraa province, near Jordan while simultaneously advancing in the far southwestern part of Syria in the Yarmouk River.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Yemen might be the next target of US-led Israeli aggression

From page 1 ▶ Besides, the Saudi leadership met with the Aden government's Defense Minister Lieutenant General Mohsen Al-Daari and the Chief of Staff of the General Forces Lieutenant General Sagheer bin Aziz.

Experts in Sanaa have warned about the suspicious conditions that undermine the Ansar Allah movement's military achievements over the past years, which has rejected multiple incentives, including international recognition of its authority in exchange for stopping the Yemeni support for the Palestinian resistance.

In parallel, the Aden government has renewed its demand for US support in exchange for protecting Israeli navigation in the Red Sea. In a statement, it said that "diplomatic means are no longer useful in the Yemeni file." The Aden government added, "The American and British raids will not stop Sanaa's operations or weaken it unless the internal fronts are mobilized."

In a message conveyed by its ambassador to Washington, Mohammed Al-Hadrami, to the US Congress, it further stated the policy of appeasement with the Ansar Allah movement is futile, claiming that "securing the

port of Hodeidah is necessary to stop Iran's funding of the movement."

In the same context, the Palestinian Authority, in turn, has escalated its security campaign on the Jenin camp in an attempt to win the favor of President-elect Donald Trump, to suggest that it is capable of "cutting off the head of any resistance against Israel."

A senior official in the Palestinian Authority told the Hebrew channel i24 News that "Mahmoud Abbas is trying to prove that he is still strong and holds the cards in the game."

Estimates suggest that the campaign will also extend to Tulkarm and Tubas, where the Authority's security officials do not miss an opportunity to incite resistance, claiming that "the Gaza scenario can be repeated."

Meanwhile, As Israel's colonial entity continues to obstruct the conclusion of a ceasefire deal in Gaza, Adam Boehler, the advisor to US President-elect Donald Trump on prisoners and missing persons affairs, is expected to visit the occupied Palestinian territories. Observers believe that the pressure exerted by Trump to expedite the conclusion of a deal is the main motive for this.

Historical texture around Naqsh-e Jahan Sq. to undergo restoration



TEHRAN – Isfahan province's tourism chief Amir Karamzadeh has announced plans to restore and revitalize the historical areas surrounding the southern and eastern sections of the UNESCO-registered Naqsh-e Jahan Square.

During a visit to the site on Monday, Karamzadeh and a team of officials from the provincial Cultural Heritage Department evaluated the historical texture of this significant zone.

"The department has devised a comprehensive and scientifically-grounded plan to rehabilitate all lands, structures, and historical houses in this area," the official stated. "Each will be assigned a tourism-oriented function."

As part of this initiative, these heritage sites will be incorporated into the province's tourism investment platform. They will be packaged as investment opportunities and presented to interested stakeholders in the tourism industry.

Naqsh-e Jahan Square, located in the heart of Isfahan, is one of Iran's most iconic heritage sites. Registered as a UNESCO World Heritage site, it attracts millions of visitors annually with its rich history and architectural splendor.

Meanings "Image of the World," is one of the largest city squares globally and serves as a breathtaking example of Iranian architecture. Its vast expanse and harmonious design invite travelers to embark on a journey through history, culture, and art that transcends time.

Constructed under the visionary order of Shah Abbas I in the early 17th century, Naqsh-e Jahan was the heartbeat of the Safavid Empire.

With dimensions of 560 meters in length and

160 meters in width, the square covers nearly nine hectares, making it a colossal centerpiece of the Safavid capital. It was here that culture, religion, economy, and politics intertwined seamlessly, forming the nucleus of Persian socio-cultural life.

The square's design embodies a harmonious urban ensemble, with each side graced by four iconic structures, each telling a story of its own: the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque on the east side; the Ali Qapu Pavilion on the west; the Portico of Qeysariyeh to the north; and the Royal Mosque (Masjed-e Shah) to the south.

These magnificent edifices, adorned with enameled ceramic tiles and intricate paintings, create a breathtaking panorama that captivates visitors from the moment they step foot onto the square's sandy esplanade.

The ancient city of Isfahan, situated at the crossroads of Iran's north-south and east-west trade routes, reached its zenith between the 9th and 18th centuries. During the Safavid era, it became Iran's capital under Shah Abbas the Great.

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

The Persian proverb "Isfahan nesf-e-jahan ast" (Isfahan is half the world) reflects the city's cultural and historical prominence.

Luang Prabang uses pedal power to promote tourism

VIENTIANE – An event titled "Cycling to Promote Culture" and the second "Oh!! Luang Prabang Simply Beautiful" Exhibition: Lad Xang Khong—Luang Prabang Rice Culture and Art Exhibit took place over the weekend to highlight the city's cultural attractions.

The Cycling to Promote Culture event was part of activities to promote Luang Prabang's cultural heritage, mark the 29th anniversary of the inscription of the town's old quarter as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and part of the Visit Laos Year 2024 program.

Local government officials and tourism business operators took to bicycles to raise public awareness of the need to reduce environmental pollution and preserve Luang Prabang's traditional and cultural heritage.

The cycle ride was organized in conjunction with the second "Oh!! Luang Prabang Simply Beautiful" exhibition at the Teahouse in Xang Khong village, which was the final destination of the cycling event.

The "Oh!! Luang Prabang Simply Beautiful" exhibition took place on Saturday and Sunday and included stalls selling local food and handicrafts, as well as stage performances.

The cycle ride was led by the Deputy Governor of Luang Prabang province, Ms Siliphone Souphanthong, Director General of the Luang Prabang provincial Information, Culture and Tourism Department, Dr Soudaphone Khomthavong; Director General of the Tourism Development Department, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, Mrs Phonemaly Inthaphome; and other notable figures.

Dr Soudaphone said "We organised this event to highlight the tradition of cycling and other aspects of Lao culture so as to attract more tourists to this beautiful town."

"We especially wanted to feature the traditional lifestyle of the people of Luang Prabang province

and their strong connection to rice cultivation and the many products that are made from rice."

"We also wanted to teach local people about the importance of preserving these traditions and the area's cultural heritage so they are preserved for many years to come."

The Cycling to Promote Culture and the "Oh!! Luang Prabang Simply Beautiful" Exhibition: Lad Xang Khong—Luang Prabang Rice Culture and Art Exhibit are among the main activities on the Visit Laos Year 2024 calendar, Dr Soudaphone said.

Ms Siliphone said the exhibition was an important tourist draw while also serving to publicise the province's products and crafts.

Luang Prabang is one of the most well-known provinces in Laos and attracts tourists from around the world because of its riverside location, old temples, quaint streets and alleyways, and colorful festivals.

The town's old quarter was listed as a World Heritage Site in 1995 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which determined that its architecture was culturally significant and worthy of preservation.

Popular attractions in and around the provincial capital include the Phu Si stupa, the Sae and Kuangxi waterfalls, and the large night market in the town center.

The province currently has 228 registered tourist sites, 123 tour companies, 384 restaurants, 58 entertainment venues, 41 massage parlours and spas, 196 tour guides, 116 resorts and 435 guest-houses, and accommodates an average of 11,280 tourists each day.

Over 1.9 million Lao and foreign visitors vacationed in Luang Prabang in the first 11 months of this year, an increase of more than one million compared to the same period last year and generating over US\$1 billion in revenue.

(Source: Asia News Network)

Discover the enchanting Maharloo Lake: a pink paradise

TEHRAN – Nestled in the breathtaking Fars province, just south-east of Shiraz, Maharloo Lake is a must-visit destination for nature lovers and adventurers alike.

Famous for its vibrant pink hues, seasonal transformations, and unique ecological features, this extraordinary lake, which is also known as Daryacheh-ye-Namak, offers an unforgettable travel experience.

Spanning some 600 square kilometers, Maharloo Lake is a salt-water lake that thrives in the cooler months of autumn and winter, replenished by frequent rains and the Sultanabad and Khosh rivers.

During summer, the lake often dries up, leaving behind a shimmering salt crust. Its pink color, caused by red algae (*Dunaliella salina*) thriving in the saline water, becomes most vivid in the warm seasons, particularly summer, when high temperatures amplify the lake's salinity.

Wildlife haven

Maharloo Lake is home to a variety of wildlife, including migratory birds such as flamingos, shelducks,



sandpipers, and green ducks.

In the past, up to 150,000 flamingos graced the lake's shores. Surrounding the lake, you might even encounter wild cats, hyenas, and jackals, enriching the biodiversity of this fascinating area.

A journey through time

This ancient lake, whose origins trace back over 20,000 years, holds geological and historical significance. Its synclinal sedimentary bed is enriched with clay minerals, quartz, and carbonate rocks, and its connection to the Cambrian pe-

riod adds to its intrigue.

The nearby Maharloo village, once known as Dasht-e-Gol, dates back to the Safavid era and charms visitors with its arched windows, lush pomegranate and almond orchards, and a famous mineral spring known for its healing properties.

When to visit

The best time to visit Maharloo Lake is during late winter and spring when the weather is mild and the lake is full, showcasing its striking hues of pink and red.

While summer reveals the most vivid pink tones, travelers should be prepared for the region's intense heat. Autumn and winter, though cooler, offer an excellent opportunity to witness the lake's tranquil beauty and its seasonal rebirth.

Getting there

Maharloo Lake is conveniently accessible via a 57-kilometer drive from Shiraz on the road to Fasa.

The nearby Maharloo village, with its picturesque surroundings and rich cultural heritage, makes for a perfect complement to your lake visit.

A photographer's dream

The sunset at Maharloo Lake is nothing short of magical. As the golden light dances on the pink waters, the serene beauty of this natural masterpiece creates a scene that photographers and travelers alike will treasure forever.

Experience the spellbinding allure of Maharloo Lake, where nature's artistry meets ancient history. It's a journey that promises serenity, inspiration, and unforgettable memories.

Chogha Golan: archaeologists shed new light on origins of village life in central Zagros region

TEHRAN – Chogha Golan, a Neolithic archaeological site located in the foothills of the Zagros Mountains in Ilam province, has yielded significant findings during the second season of excavations.

Led by Hojjat Darabi, an associate professor of archaeology at Razi University in Kermanshah, the research is part of a long-term initiative to study early human settlement patterns.

According to Darabi, Chogha Golan's extensive and continuous occupation history, dating back approximately 12,000 to 9,500 years, makes it a unique and invaluable site for understanding the transition to settled agricultural communities.

The recent excavation season focused on horizontal exploration, revealing well-preserved architectural remains.

Notable discoveries include small, angled rooms constructed from mudbrick and wattle-and-daub with gypsum-plastered floors, as well as evidence of early gypsum production.

These findings provide critical insights into Neolithic architectural practices and industrial activities.

"Chogha Golan represents the earliest known

site associated with the dawn of agriculture and village life not only in Ilam province but across Iran," Darabi stated.

He emphasized the importance of continued, systematic research at the site to unravel unanswered questions about the agricultural revolution in the Zagros region.

Darabi also highlighted the potential of Chogha Golan to become a significant cultural heritage landmark.

Plans are being considered to transform the site into an open-air museum and research center, with the ultimate goal of securing its designation as a UNESCO World Heritage site, the archaeologist noted.

The excavations, conducted with the approval of the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism and supported by the Ilam Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, aim to uncover insights into the origins of agriculture and village life in the central Zagros region.

According to sources, Chogha Golan is particularly notable for the early domestication of emmer wheat, dating to around 9,800 BP.

The archaeobotanical remains from Chogha



Golan provide the earliest evidence of long-term plant management in Iran.

Situated in a semi-arid region about 30 kilometers north of Mehran, it is one of the earliest ceramic Neolithic sites discovered in Iran.

The inhabitants of Chogha Golan primarily relied on hunting and the utilization of wild plants.

Chogha Golan was excavated jointly by archaeologists from the University of Tübingen and the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research in 2009 and 2010.

The site is characterized by a hill rising approximately 7 to 8 meters high and contains 8 meters of cultural deposits.

Can technology open new horizons to democratize travel?

but also about economic diversity.

More budget-conscious travelers are now able to explore the world, thanks to affordable travel options and innovative technology that helps them maximize the impact of their spending.

From near and far

One of the most significant trends in recent years is the growth of domestic travel. Domestic travel is expected to grow by 3% annually, reaching 19 billion lodging nights per year by 2030.

This trend is particularly pronounced in countries like China, where the domestic travel market is projected to grow by 12% annually, potentially surpassing the United States as the world's largest domestic travel market by 2030.

This shift towards local exploration is fueled by a desire for unique, authentic experiences closer to home.

Cloud-based software and data platforms that are fueling vertical AI help small and medium-sized businesses to digitize their booking technologies and make it easier to serve domestic travelers.

But the increase in domestic travel is not the only indicator of change.

The democratization of travel is also evident in the rise of emerging travel markets.

India, Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe are becoming significant sources of outbound tourism. Indian travel spending, for instance, is expected to grow by 9% per year until 2030.

This growth is not limited to traditional tourist hotspots. Lesser-known destinations are gaining popularity, driven by travelers' desire to explore off-the-beaten-path locations.

According to Expedia's Unpack '25 report, 63% of travelers expressed a desire to visit lesser-known destinations on their next trip.

The power of social media and technology

It should be no surprise that social media and technology play a crucial role in travel, especially in key new demographics; 92% of younger travelers reported being inspired by social media for their last trip.

Social media platforms, like Instagram and TikTok, and streaming content channels, like YouTube and Netflix, are not just influencing travel decisions, they make it easier for travelers to discover and access new destinations.

This has led to a shift in travel destination planning, as consumers begin to prioritize unique destinations (in Africa or the Caribbean, for example) over more tradition-

ally popular hotspots like Paris or New York.

Vertical AI, in particular, is revolutionizing the travel industry by providing personalized recommendations, optimizing travel itineraries and enhancing customer service.

Economic impact, sustainability and emerging destinations

The economic impact of this democratization is significant. In the United States, technology has played a pivotal role in democratizing travel, contributing to the economy by potentially employing 17.4 million people and adding \$2.2 trillion to GDP in 2023.

Moreover, the focus on sustainable tourism is opening up opportunities for destinations that prioritize environmental and social responsibility. Rwanda, for example, has successfully attracted travelers with unique experiences like gorilla trekking, emphasizing sustainable tourism practices.

Emerging new destinations have also been discovered by global travelers, fueled by a desire for adventure and new experiences. Lesser-known destinations like Reims, France; Brescia, Italy; and Cozumel, Mexico have seen increased traveler interest, as evidenced by Expedia's data from September 2023 to August 2024.

(Source: weforum.org)

Kazakhstan interested in enhancing medical ties with Iran

TEHRAN –The Kazakh ambassador to Tehran, Ontalap Onalbayev, has expressed his country's interest in expanding cooperation with Iran in the fields of medicine, medical education, and treatment.

Lauding Iran's high capacity in the health sector including high-tech medical tools, highly qualified doctors, as well as lower cost of treatment compared to other countries, the official highlighted boosting collaborations in different health fields such as health tourism, and medical education, ISNA reported.

The Kazakh ambassador made the remarks during a meeting with Mohammad-Sadeq Rezaei, the chancellor of Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences, on Sunday in Sari, the capital of Mazandaran province.

"Caspian littoral states should foster joint activities in various fields like economy, and medical sciences," he stated. Referring to the close relationship between the two countries, the official said Kazakhstan's president highly values health and medical treatment. He also voiced his country's readiness to establish a branch of Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences in Kazakhstan.

Rezaei, for his part, welcomed the idea of expanding ties in medical education by announcing the university's readiness to admit Kazakh students.

He went on to stress the high



potentials of the university such as international professors, over 600 faculty members, and several hospitals that provide health services in dermatology, and cancer treatment, as well as heart and brain surgeries to international patients.

Referring to health tourism, he underscored Mazandaran's pristine nature, up-to-date facilities, and affordable costs of treatment which also provide a great opportunity for patients from Eurasian countries, including Kazakhstan, to pass their convalescence phase.

The officials agreed to prepare a draft of a memorandum of understanding to follow up on the made agreements.

Iran's health system a role model

In August 2023, former health minister Bahram Einollahi said Iran's health system is one of the

most successful models in the world. The World Health Organization has always had an effective collaboration with the country, he added, IRNA reported.

He made the remarks in a meeting with ambassadors and representatives of international organizations in Tehran.

"Cooperation among countries for health development depends on their inter-sectoral interactions and collaborations. After the coronavirus pandemic, health diplomacy has improved a lot. Health plays a key role in the diplomacy of countries because it is a common concern and pivotal point for all," IRNA quoted Einollahi as saying.

"The sustainable development of countries depends on the health issue. Therefore, promoting cooperation among nations in medical education, sharing new health technologies, developing health

and treatment systems, supplying needed medicines and medical equipment, and securing fair access to health care services should be set as priorities for countries," he added.

He went on to say that based on international organizations and global standards, Iran's medical education has reached a good point.

Domestic knowledge-based companies have made the country self-sufficient to a great extent, he said, adding that advanced medical equipment and 95 percent of the needed medicines including six approved coronavirus vaccines have been supplied by knowledge-based companies which is a source of pride. "Health tourism in the country is developing. Some 1.2 million foreign patients suffering from chronic diseases come to Iran annually for treatment," Einollahi highlighted.

"Having received accreditation in the field of medical education, we are honored to share our experiences with other nations."

In May 2023, Ricardo León-Bórquez, the president of the World Federation of Medical Education, praised Iran for progress in the health sector.

"Iran has paid much attention to the importance of medical education and can be one of the key members of the World Federation of Medical Education in the accreditation process," he added.

COMSTECH secretariats in Iran to be strengthened

TEHRAN –The Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology is planning to strengthen the three secretariats affiliated with the Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific, and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH), whose headquarters are in the country.

These three secretariats are the network of virtual universities of the Islamic world, the network of nanotechnology, and the network of science and technology parks, IRNA quoted science minister Hossein Simaei-Sarraf as saying. The official made the remarks in a meeting in Tehran on Monday with Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, the coordinator general of COMSTECH. During the meeting, Simaei-Sarraf highlighted the high capacities of Iranian scientists in conducting scientific and technological projects and called for mutual and synergistic relations between Iran and COMSTECH.

Iran targets world's 12th spot in science production

Despite ongoing sanctions, Iran is planning to elevate the country's ranking for scientific productions from currently 17 to 12 by 2027.

Due to sanctions, economic restrictions, and the limitations on publishing papers by Iranian scholars, particularly during the last three years, Iran's ranking in scientific productions has lowered from 15 to 17, Shahin Akhondzadeh, an official with the health ministry, has said. The country's advancement in science production requires compensating for the regression in research and technology through providing funds, facilitating research, and promoting meritocracy which will reduce young elites' migration, as well, the health ministry's

website quoted Akhondzadeh as saying.

COMSTECH

COMSTECH the Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) was established by the Third Islamic Summit of OIC held at Makkah, Saudi Arabia in January 1981.

The core mandate of COMSTECH is to strengthen cooperation among OIC Member States in science and technology (S&T), enhance their capabilities through training in emerging areas, undertake follow-up-actions and implement the resolutions of the OIC, and draw up programs and submit proposals designed to increase the capability of the Muslim countries in science and technology (S&T).

The ultimate aim is to build and nourish a scientific culture in addition to using S&T as a major contributor to socio-economic development and rapid industrialization.

COMSTECH works in close collaboration with various Standing Committees and other organs of the OIC, Member States of the OIC, and their major Scientific and Technological Institutions, in addition to some international organizations.

Some organizations include the World Academy of Sciences (TWAS), Islamic World Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ICESCO), Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS), Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), International Foundation for Science, (IFS), World Health Organization – Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (WHO-EMRO).

UNODC highlights Iran's substantial efforts in fight against drug trafficking



TEHRAN –The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has lauded the Iranian government for its substantial efforts and steadfast commitment to tackling drug trafficking.

On December 8, Alexander Fedulov, the UNODC Iran Country Representative, attended a high-level meeting which was held at the Drug Control Headquarters (DCHQ) on the occasion of the successful seizure of 2,400 kilograms of methamphetamine in Sistan-Baluchestan Province. During the meeting, Brigadier General Ahmad Ali Goudarzi, Commander of the Iranian Border Guard, shared details of a major drug seizure in Sistan-Baluchestan Province.

On September 10, Iranian forces successfully seized 2,400 kilograms of methamphetamine. This operation underscored the relentless commitment of Iran's border forces, who are at the forefront of combating the production and trafficking of drugs, particularly those originating in Afghanistan.

Brigadier General Goudarzi emphasized that the seizure not only reflects the escalating chal-

lenges posed by methamphetamine production in the region but also the dedication of Iran's border guards, law enforcement, and customs officials in addressing this issue.

Fedulov, for his part, expressed his gratitude to Iranian authorities for their invaluable contributions to this global challenge.

Fedulov stressed the importance of strengthened regional cooperation, and emphasized the need for further international support to bolster collective efforts in combating drug trafficking across West Asia.

The UNODC Country Representative stated that this successful operation will be presented to the international community as a testament to Iran's noble resolve in combating drug trafficking and its dedication to regional security.

Boosting Iran's capacity

To enhance the operational capacity of the Iranian Anti-Narcotics Police, the UNODC has provided them with two Medical Devices, including a portable Doppler sonography, and a veterinary anesthesia machine to support drug supply reduction activities in Iran.

In this line, an event was organized at the premises of the DCHQ in Tehran, with the presence of representatives from the UNODC Iran, DCHQ, and Iranian Anti-Narcotics Police (ANP), the UNODC website announced in a press release on November 18.

Iran remains one of the major transit routes for drug trafficking from Afghanistan to European countries. UNODC has built a strong partnership with the Government of the Islamic

Republic of Iran in several areas including the capacity building for the Iranian law enforcement forces and has been providing technical assistance to the Iranian Government in their fight against illicit trafficking of drugs and precursors.

In August, the UNODC in Iran procured and installed three X-ray Body Scanners crucial for efficiently identifying narcotic drugs concealed in the body or swallowed in three international airports of the country, namely Imam Khomeini International Airport, Gorgan International Airport, and Ahvaz International Airport.

The aim is to prevent the illegal trafficking of drugs through the air border of Iran, the UN website announced in a press release on August 7.

On August 4, the UNODC in an official ceremony handed over one X-ray Body Scanner.

The official event was organized at the Imam Khomeini International Airport, with the presence of representatives from UNODC Iran, the DCHQ, and the Anti-Narcotics Police of Iran.

The Office also provided pertinent specialized training for end users of each device, under the guidance and supervision of professional technical engineers.

Mahdi Javaheri, Director General of the International Relations Office of DCHQ, in his statements, expressed his gratitude to the UNODC for continuous support extended to the Iranian controlling entities and hoped the support will continue and increase in the future, considering the high demand for provision of controlling equipment, especially X-ray devices.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Rainfall increases Lake Urmia level

Recent rainfall has increased the level of Lake Urmia to 1,271 meters, a step closer to its ecological level of 1,274 meters.

The lake is expected to reach its ecological level within 10 years by completing the restoration plans which started four years ago.

Farhad Sarkhosh, head of the Lake Urmia Restoration Program's office in West Azarbaijan province, said that the Lake's level is now 58 cm higher than it was last year. According to the latest monitoring, the lake's water volume is estimated at more than 3.6 billion cubic meters.

He added that the lake surface area has reached 2,883 square kilometers, adding that the figure is increased by 538 square kilometers compared to the same period last year.

افزایش سطح تراز دریاچه ارومیه بر اثر بارش

بارش های اخیر تراز فعلی دریاچه ارومیه را به یک هزار و ۲۷۱ متر و ۳۸ سانتی متر رسانده است که در حال رسیدن به تراز اکولوژیک یک هزار و ۲۷۴ متر است.

به گزارش ایرنا، فرهاد سرخوش رییس دفتر استانی ستاد احیای دریاچه ارومیه گفت سطح دریاچه ارومیه اکنون ۵۸ سانتی متر بیشتر از زمان مشابه سال گذشته است. طبق آخرین پایش صورت گرفته حجم آب این دریاچه بیش از سه میلیارد و ۶۷۰ میلیون مترمکعب برآورد شده است. وی با بیان اینکه وسعت دریاچه ارومیه در حال حاضر به بیش از ۲ هزار و ۸۸۳ کیلومتر مربع رسیده، اضافه کرد: وسعت این دریاچه نیز نسبت به سال گذشته ۵۳۸ کیلومتر مربع افزایش دارد.

Intl. environmental exhibition to be held

TEHRAN –The 22nd international environmental exhibition will kick off on Wednesday, December 18, in Tehran and will conclude on Sunday.

The first vice-president, Mohammad-Reza Aref, and the head of the Department of Environment (DOE), Shina Ansari, are scheduled to attend the opening ceremony, ISNA reported.

The five-day event will be held with the theme of 'public involvement, green economy, sustainable future'.

It will focus on 'economic environment, environmental economy', to highlight the importance of social responsibility in protecting the environment.

The 22nd exhibition aims to raise public awareness about environmental issues, provide an opportunity for the exchange of knowledge and experiences among experts, specialists, and environmental activists, and introduce and encourage the use of innovative solutions and advanced technologies to reduce fuel and energy consumption.

Preserving natural resources, fostering interactions and cooperation between institutions, organizations, and companies active in the field of environment and energy, promoting the concepts of sustainability and social responsibility among the people as well as encouraging environmentally friendly behaviors are among the other goals of the exhibition. The event also seeks to persuade industries, mining, and petrochemical units to support the preservation of plant and animal species and encourage them to take steps towards enhancing air quality.

Environmental policies of current administration

During the presidential election, the environmental committee of the elected President Masoud Pezeshkian offered a program with a focus on the preservation of the environment and the stability of the country.

The program is structured around six axes: moving towards a green economy; managing and improving various quantitative and qualitative

dimensions of environmental imbalances (such as economy, energy, and water); effectively protecting biological resources (including natural resources and biodiversity); achieving good environmental governance; addressing public demands in the field of environment, and enhancing international bilateral or multilateral cooperation in the field of environment.

To compile the program, general environmental policies, Article 50 of the Constitution, and other national policy documents have been taken into account.

Moreover, the president-elect has highlighted the necessity of observing environmental considerations in development plans.

Pezeshkian believes that no development plan should be initiated without taking environmental considerations into account; in other words, the environment should be the central pillar of all development matters.

Referring to the increasing occurrence of sand and dust storms (SDSs) in the region and the environmental statement on bolstering environmental diplomacy, the administration of Pezeshkian will definitely endorse regional and global interactions to tackle not only SDSs issue but also water diplomacy and transboundary waters as other critical issues.

Exchanging regional and global experiences in the field of environment, laying the ground for facilitating interactions and benefiting from global experiences and modern knowledge, and participating at various levels of environment-related negotiations in order to attract resources, enhance capabilities and secure national interests are parts of objectives in this context.

Drafting a binding legal document within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity to protect biodiversity, and manage valuable ecosystems such as national parks and national natural monuments has been highlighted.

Also, preventing the extinction of endangered species including cheetah, and bustard will be a top priority.

Let's start law enforcement diplomacy with traffic management

From page 1 ▶ We hereby invite you to share your country's experiences and studies on police management and traffic safety with the police. This transfer of experience can be definitely in the form of holding educational workshops, providing research results, inviting to travel and visit, holding joint conferences, or buying modern technologies and equipment, etc.

There is no country away from the problem of traffic. The problem is only different in quality and quantity. Of course, countries that have ex-

perienced the same problems such as old roads, the high number of low-quality cars, disorderly motorcycle riders, and unbalanced urban development have a higher priority in transferring experiences. In this regard, new technologies with the priority of artificial intelligence should not be overlooked. My office in the Traffic Police welcomes this systematic, purposeful, and smart cooperation. Of course, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be the legal conduit for this cooperation and the transfer of experiences and technology based on existing protocols.



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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

In the morning, charity is due on every joint bone of the body of every one of you. Every utterance of Allah's glorification (i.e. saying Subhan Allah) is an act of charity, and two rakath prayers which one performs in the forenoon is equal to all this (in reward).

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:01 Evening: 17:13 Dawn: 5:39 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:09 (tomorrow)

Iran Theater Boutique to host Albert Camus' "The Misunderstanding"

TEHRAN-The play "The Misunderstanding" by Albert Camus will be performed at Iran Theater Boutique in Tehran from December 22, 2024 to January 9, 2025.

Hossein Kashfi Asl will direct the one-hour play that has Mahtab Bajelan, Kimia Javaheri, Taha Ahmadi, Mohammad Niazi, and Anahid Adabi in the cast.

Written in 1943 in occupied France, "The Misunderstanding" focuses on Camus' idea of "The Absurd". It is not just a simple play, but the story of the lives of all human beings because the lives of all people are full of misunderstandings.

The book is the life story of a man named Jean who returns home after twenty years away from his mother and sister, while he is married and has earned money, to leave his mother and sister in.

Upon entering the guesthouse run by his mother and sister, he realizes that after all these years, his family did not recognize him at the time of arrival.

Misunderstandings can be more or less reminiscent of aliens. A tragedy that once again reminds us of the loss of opportunity by depicting the death of the family's son Jean.

When he throws himself into an accident and believes in the power of events, it can be said that he kills himself out of jokes and play. So one can never be a stranger forever and need to find meaning for oneself.

Camus's play is a return to Greek theater in



terms of structure: the dry state of the murder of two women, the deadly chain of crime that leads to another crime, the murder within the family, the unstoppable and unadjustable progress of the first intention, and the theme of recognition.

The three-act play is a tragedy of contemporary man, and the plot of the text, like that of Camus's other works, is a look at issues related to the philosophy of existentialism, including human freedom, the emptiness and futility of life.

The apprehension of existence and the apprehension of contemporary man, and inevitable situations.

Albert Camus (1913-1960) was a French philosopher, author, dramatist, journalist, world federalist, and political activist. He was the recipient of the 1957 Nobel Prize in Literature at the age of 44, the second-youngest recipient in history.

His works include "The Stranger," "The Plague," "The Myth of Sisyphus," "The Fall" and "The Rebel".

Philosophically, Camus's views contributed to the rise of the philosophy known as absurdism. Some consider Camus's work to show him to be an existentialist, even though he himself firmly rejected the term throughout his lifetime.

Iran Theater Boutique is located at No. 74, next to Shahrzad Theater Complex on Neauphle-le-Chateau St., Hafez St.

Cartoon of Day



Genocide in Gaza

Cartoonist: Mo Qasem from the Netherlands

Tehran's Cinéma Vérité honors global documentary talent

TEHRAN - The 18th edition of the International Documentary Film Festival of Iran, known as Cinéma Vérité, concluded in Tehran on Sunday, celebrating the winners in both national and international competitions.

"Gingerbread for Her Dad," directed by Alina Mustafina from Kazakhstan, won the main award in the full-length documentaries category of the international competition.

The film follows three generations of women from a single family as they journey from Kazakhstan to Poland in search of the grave of the man who connects them—a man who lost his life during World War II.

Throughout their journey, they mend fractured relationships and confront the lingering traumas of the post-colonial Soviet era.

In this section, "Cabin" by Iranian director Yasser Khayer received the jury's special award.

The film tells the story of Maneli, who seeks sanctuary in Aria after her father abandons her, believing his absence will be filled. However, Aria is beginning a new relationship, and Maneli's loneliness endures.

"Relentless Memory," a co-production between Argentina and Chile directed by Paula Rodriguez Sickert, received an honorable mention in this category.

The film follows Margarita, a Mapuche academic, who discovers testimonies of Mapuche prisoners in an unknown archive in Berlin, detailing their expulsion during the military invasions that established Argentina and Chile.



Shervin Vahdat and Payam Azizi, Iranian directors of the short documentary "With Confidentiality," hold their awards at the closing ceremony of the International Documentary Film Festival of Iran on December 15, 2024.

Moved by her discovery, Margarita embarks on a journey to retrace the deportation routes of her ancestors.

In the mid-length documentary section, "Unspoken" by Maciej Adamek from Poland was named best film, while "Sol" by Zahra Alboudi received an honorable mention.

In the short film competition, "The Barefoot Journey" by Bijoy Chowdhury from India was crowned best film, and "With Confidentiality," co-directed by Shervin Vahdat and Payam Azizi from Iran, received the special jury award.

"Brussels Close-Up" by Ilja Sircenko from Belgium and "Deep Memories" by Rafael Quiroga from Mexico also received honorable mentions.

In the Gaza section, "Palestinian Frames" by Saeed Faraji from Iran was named best film, while "Deferred Reclaim" by Abdallah Motan from Palestine won the special jury award.

"Beirut Boulevard," directed by Farah Al-Hashem from Lebanon, was also honored in this section.

In the national section, "Blood Father" by Tofiq Heidari won the audience award and shared the best film award with "Elevator" by Javad Razzaghizadeh.

"Blood Father" takes a non-stereotypical approach to the issues of addiction and drugs, aiming to highlight their consequences and the resulting social aberrations.

"Elevator" tells the story of Mohammad Saberi, who, after 13 years of addiction and homelessness, has reintegrated into

society and recently entered the acting industry, where he will face several challenges.

The 18th edition of Cinéma Vérité, Iran's major international festival for documentary films, was held in Tehran from December 8 to 15.

The Documentary & Experimental Film Center (DEFC) is the organizer of the event.

The festival tries to express the relationship between reality and truth through documentary films.

This year's edition of the festival had several sections including the national competition, the international competition, the Martyr Avini Award, "Gaza, Palestine, Resistance," commemoration ceremonies, and other programs on the sideline.

Persian translation of John Fante's "The Brotherhood of the Grape" hits bookstores



TEHRAN-The Persian translation of the book "The Brotherhood of the Grape" by John Fante has been released in bookstores across Iran.

Musical play "Coraline" to go on stage in Tehran

TEHRAN- A musical adaptation of the English author Neil Gaiman's 2002 novella "Coraline" will go on stage in a Tehran theater next month.

Omidreza Sepehri is the director of the play, which will be taken to the stage after a year and a half of rehearsal, Mehr reported.

"Coraline" is a dark fantasy horror novella that follows a young girl named Coraline Jones who moves into a new home with her parents. Their new residence is an old house divided into flats, inhabited by quirky neighbors, including two retired actresses, Miss Spink and Miss Forcible, and an eccentric man known as Mr. Bobo.

Coraline's life becomes mundane and frustrating as she struggles to gain her parents' attention, who are often distracted by their work. One day, during a rainy afternoon, she discovers a locked door in her living room, which is bricked up. Despite warnings from Mr. Bobo's mice about the dangers behind the door, and Miss Spink's ominous predictions after reading her tea leaves, Coraline's curiosity compels her to unlock it when she is alone at home. To her surprise, she finds a passage that leads to

a parallel world, eerily similar to her own.

In this "Other World," Coraline meets her Other Mother and Other Father, who are perfect versions of her real parents, offering excessive attention and affection.

However, their exaggerated features, particularly button eyes, unsettle Coraline. This new reality initially seems enticing; her Other Parents pamper her, toys come to life, and the world is colorful and vibrant. However, the allure quickly fades when the Other Mother reveals her true intentions: she wants Coraline to stay forever and have buttons sewn into her eyes. Horrified, Coraline escapes back to her own world, only to discover that her real parents have vanished.

With the help of a mysterious talking black cat, Coraline learns that her parents are trapped in the Other World, and it is her mission to rescue them.

The cat guides her back to confront the Other Mother, allowing Coraline to challenge her in a game. The stakes are high: if Coraline wins, she can free herself, her parents, and the souls of three ghost children trapped

death, violence and religion. Writing with great passion, Fante powerfully hits home the damage family can wreck upon us all.

John Fante (1909-1983) was an American novelist, short story writer, and screenwriter. He is best known for his semi-autobiographical novel "Ask the Dust" (1939) about the life of Arturo Bandini, a struggling writer in Depression-era Los Angeles.

Henry's tyrannical, brick laying father, Nick, though weak and alcoholic, can still strike fear into the hearts of his sons.

His mother, though ill and devout to her Catholicism, still has the power to comfort and confuse her children.

The book is typical of Fante's novels, it's autobiographical, and brimming with love,

by the Other Mother. If she loses, she must give in to the Other Mother's demand.

During the game, she faces various obstacles and uses clever tactics, as well as a lucky adder stone given to her by Miss Spink, to locate the lost souls of the ghost children.

They warn her that even if she wins, the Other Mother may still try to keep them imprisoned. Ultimately, Coraline deduces that her parents are trapped in a snow globe on the Other Mother's mantelpiece. By tricking the Other Mother, she manages to reclaim the snow globe and escapes back to her own world, slamming the door behind her and severing the Other Mother's hand in the process.

Back in her own world, Coraline finds her parents safe, albeit with no memory of their captivity. However, that night she dreams of the ghost children, who alert her that the Other Mother's severed hand is still trying to regain the key that connects both worlds. To prevent further danger, Coraline leads the hand to a well in the woods and casts it down, ensuring her safety and reaffirming her courage.

"Coraline" wraps up with her returning to her ordinary life, now fully appreciating and loving her real home and parents, having faced and overcome the darkness of the Other World.

The novella explores themes of bravery, the complexities of family dynamics, and the idea that one should value reality, even with its imperfections, over alluring fantasies.

In 2009, director Henry Selick released a critically acclaimed stop-motion film adaptation of "Coraline," which saw moderate box office success.

The film received a nomination for Best Animated Feature at the 82nd Academy Awards but lost to Pixar's "Up." While the adaptation features notable changes—such as the Beldam transforming the Other Father into a pumpkin—it largely adheres to the book's original plot.

The story has also inspired various theatrical adaptations. A musical, featuring music and lyrics by Stephin Merritt with a book by David Greenspan, premiered off-Broadway in 2009. A new musical adaptation is also set to premiere at the Leeds Playhouse in 2025.