

Yemen Missile Blitz Rattles Tel Aviv

The Yemeni army targeted the Jaffa area in southern Tel Aviv with a hypersonic ballistic missile labeled "Palestine 2" that injured 16 Israelis



Israeli emergency services work at the scene of a missile strike that, according to Israel's military, was launched from Yemen and landed in Jaffa, south of Tel Aviv, December 21, 2024.

UNICEF: Gaza children face 'unimaginable suffering'

UNICEF has condemned the dire conditions faced by children in Gaza, describing them as "cold, sick and traumatized", with 96 percent of women and children unable to meet basic nutritional needs.

"Gaza must be one of the most heartbreaking places on earth for humanitarians. Every small effort to save a child's life is undone by fierce devastation," said Rosalia Bollen, a communication specialist for UNICEF, in a recent statement.

Israel has killed more than 45,200 Palestinians in Gaza, including 17,000 children since launching war on the enclave in October last year.

In June, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres added the Israeli military to the annual "list of shame", which is a global list of offenders that have committed violations against children.

Palestinian officials have described the decision as a step closer to holding Israel accountable for the crimes it has committed in the Gaza Strip.

The blacklist has already included terror groups such as ISIL, al-Qaeda and Boko Haram.

How Netanyahu manipulates Talmudic myths to occupy Lebanon, Syria and beyond

By Sondoss Al Asaad

SOUTH LEBANON - In a new violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and UN Resolution 1701, photos have circulated showing right-wing Zionists belonging to the "Uri Hatzvov" movement raising a banner on December 8 that read "Lebanon is ours."

The Israeli army radio has confirmed that these settlers: "crossed several meters across the Blue Line" in the Lebanese town of Maroun al-Ras.

In the early summer of 2024, Bezalel Smotrich, the Israeli finance minister, explicitly called for the occupation of southern Lebanon if Hezbollah continued to support the Palestinian resistance movement.

Then, on September 24, the Jerusalem Post published an article claiming that Lebanon was "part of the Promised Land of Israel that God will soon return to Israel." The article was deleted later as it widely angered foreign readers amidst the rising civilian casualties in Lebanon as a result of US-led Israeli aggression.

Dancing to Washington's tune: US may embrace HTS as good terrorists

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN - The United States and its European allies are mulling whether to lift "terrorist" designations for Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) which overthrew the Syrian government along with its allies earlier this month.

HTS has been designated as a terrorist organization by the United Nations, the United States, the European Union and the UK.

The HTS rebel group is an offshoot of Al-Qaeda and ISIL but has ostensibly distanced itself from them. Previously referred to as Nusra Front, the group rebranded itself as HTS in 2017 to alter public perception regarding its past actions. Despite that, the United States blacklisted HTS in 2018.

But reports suggest that the US is considering removing HTS from its terrorist list.

On Friday, a senior US official announced that her country is dropping a reward for the arrest of HTS leader Ahmed al-Sharaa, previously known by his nom de guerre Abu Mohammed al-Jolani.

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Iran issues demarche to Swiss, Italian diplomats over US-ordered arrests of citizens

TEHRAN - Iran's foreign ministry raised concerns with the Swiss ambassador and the Italian chargé d'affaires regarding the arrest of two Iranian nationals at the behest of the United States.

Deputy Foreign Minister for Consular, Parliamentary, and Iranian Expatriates Affairs Vahid Jalalzadeh condemned the arrests of two Iranian nationals as "unjust and illegal," emphasizing that they violated international law. He lodged formal protests with the Swiss ambassador (representing U.S. interests in Iran) and the Italian chargé d'affaires (where one of the arrests occurred).

In remarks to Iranian media, Jalalzadeh assured that both the consular and political sections of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are closely monitoring the cases of these individuals. "We are committed to pursuing this matter until a satisfactory resolution is achieved," he affirmed. ► Page 3

Iranian embassy employee martyred in Damascus, Iran calls for accountability

TEHRAN - The Iranian Foreign Ministry has strongly condemned the assassination of one of its embassy staffers in Damascus, Syria, following a terrorist attack on his vehicle.

The tragic incident occurred on December 15 and has drawn sharp criticism from Tehran, which is calling for swift action against the perpetrators.

On Saturday, Esmail Baqaei, the spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, expressed deep condolences to the Iranian people and the family of Seyyed Davoud Bitaraf, the victim of this brutal attack.

Baqaei described Bitaraf's killing as an act of terror carried out by "terrorist elements" and confirmed that the victim's body had been recovered, identified, and repatriated to Iran in recent days.

Baghaei further urged Syria's transitional government to fulfill its responsibilities by identifying and prosecuting those behind the crime. "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is seriously pursuing this matter through diplomatic and international channels to ensure justice is served," he stated. ► Page 2

Transit of goods via Iran's ports rises 37%

TEHRAN- Transit of commodities through the ports of Iran has increased by 37 percent in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20), the head of the country's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) announced.

Speaking in a TV program, Ali-Akbar Safaei stated that 9.366 million tons of goods have been transited via Iranian ports during the eight-month period.

Iran is one of the countries with a special status in trade and transit relations due to its strategic location and special geography, as the country is the passage of several important international corridors.

Considering its geographical location, Iran can play a significant role in the transit of goods in the region and benefit a lot from its status in this due.

While Iran is combating the U.S. unilateral sanctions on its economy, the country's ports as the major gates of exports and imports play a significant role in this battle. This role makes all-out support to ports and more development of them serious and vital.

Such necessity has led the government to define projects for more development of the ports and also take some measures to encourage investment making in ports, in addition to facilitating the loading and unloading of goods, especially basic commodities, there. ► Page 4

"In the Arms of the Tree" wins at Chennai International Film Festival

TEHRAN-The Iranian feature film "In the Arms of the Tree" directed by Babak Khajepasha won the Best World Cinema Feature Film Award at the 22nd Chennai International Film Festival (CIFF), which concluded on December 19 in Chennai, India.

Competing in the World Cinema Competition section of the festival with 11 other films, the Iranian family drama received the main award of the section, Mehr reported.

"In the Arms of the Tree" tells the story of Kimia and Farid, a couple married for 12 years, whose life crisis shatters their children's world, children who know nothing but simplicity and kindness in life. ► Page 8



President Pezeshkian urges talented youth to lead nation's progress

TEHRAN - Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has called upon the nation's talented and motivated youth to take an active role in overcoming the challenges facing the country, emphasizing their potential to drive Iran toward progress and prosperity.

Speaking at a ceremony honoring Iranian medalists from the International Science Olympiads, President Pezeshkian praised the accomplishments of the young scholars, urging them to use their skills and knowledge to contribute to the development of the nation.

The president began by expressing his heartfelt appreciation to the medalists, their families, and the officials who supported their journey to success. He described their achievements as a source of pride for the country and a testament to the potential of Iran's youth. ► Page 3

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

FATF is not the panacea

Kayhan dedicated its editorial to the belief among a group of political and economic experts who believe the solution to the country's problems lies in removing sanctions and membership in the FATF. It wrote: Unfortunately, a group inside the country, willingly or unwillingly, has completed the puzzle of the enemy in the hybrid war. They believe that nothing can be done as long as we are sanctioned and FATF is not resolved. One of the tools of the enemy's psychological operations in the hybrid war, whose main goal is to anger the people, is nothing but giving the wrong address to solve the country's problems. Contrary to the claim of FATF supporters, it is not the case that if we implement the FATF in the future we will benefit from its economic dividends. The purpose behind the formation of the FATF is not to lift the anti-Iran sanctions but to use a tool at the disposal of the U.S. Treasury Department to make the sanctions more effective. The worst condition that FATF can create for a country is "mutual action", which is referred to as "blacklisting". Until now, being on the blacklist of FATF has not had any negative impact on Iran's commercial and economic exchanges with other countries.

Iran: Diplomacy from Tehran to Cairo

In an analysis, the Iran newspaper discussed Pezeshkian's trip to Cairo to participate in the D-8 summit and said: Pezeshkian made a trip to Cairo to attend the D-8 summit. The trip is very important. It shows this event will promise new developments in the region. According to Sanaei, the political director of the President's Office, the trip is important in making arrangements to restore relations between Iran and Egypt. Also, positive steps have been taken in recent weeks to fully restore the relationship between Tehran and Cairo. This is an important development that can be considered as one of the advantages of Pezeshkian's journey. If this goal is realized, it will provide a basis for a new balance in the relations between the countries in the West Asia region and a new integration in the relations between the Islamic countries. It should be noted that from now on, there is a common understanding of solidarity among the Muslim countries. Therefore, in the current situation in the region, countries need to fill the gaps and remove hurdles. The severed relations between Iran and Egypt are among the most important of these huge gaps.

Azerbaijan thanks Iran for crucial support in D-8 membership bid

TEHRAN – Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has thanked Iran for its critical support in Azerbaijan's successful bid to join the Developing-8 (D-8) Organization for Economic Cooperation.

The acknowledgment came in a formal letter addressed to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, following Azerbaijan's accession to the group during its 11th summit held on December 19 in Cairo.

The D-8 is an intergovernmental organization established to enhance economic cooperation among eight major Islamic developing nations, including Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Bangladesh.

Azerbaijan's entry into the group was officially announced during the Cairo summit by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who chaired the gathering.

In his letter, President Aliyev conveyed his deep gratitude to both Iran as a nation and President Pezeshkian personally for their strong endorsement of Azerbaijan's candidacy.

"I deeply appreciate the Islamic Republic of Iran and Your Excellency for voting in favor of Azerbaijan's membership in the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation during its 11th summit in Cairo," he wrote.

Aliyev underscored the significance of Azerbaijan's admission, marking the first expansion in the D-8's nearly three-decade history. He described this milestone as a testament to the global trust placed in Azerbaijan's potential and a source of immense national pride.

The Azerbaijani President also highlighted that Iran's explicit support reflected the robust ties, mutual respect, and solidarity shared between the two nations.

"Iran's backing of our membership is a clear demonstration of the strong friendship, coop-

Shargh: New Middle East order and confrontation with Tehran

Shargh discussed the new order in the Middle East in an interview with Mehdi Motaharnia, a senior foreign policy analyst. He said: In the current situation, Trump either wants Iran to be his biggest partner or the biggest victim. Probably, the Israeli extremists including Netanyahu and some Arab actors in the region will try to use the radical figures in Donald Trump's foreign policy, security, and defense teams to start a big war with Iran. Therefore, the option of a full-scale war with Iran is not ruled out. If military leverage is used, Trump gives priority to a "military strike", but in the end, a military war should also be considered, which will proceed with Israeli engineering. In the current situation, Trump has shown that he does not want to intervene in Syria and wants to withdraw American forces from this country, especially when the position of Russia and Iran is weakened.

Jam-e-Jam: Grossi is supporter of the Zionists

In a commentary, Jam-e-Jam addressed anti-Iran statements by Rafael Grossi, the chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA. It wrote: Rafael Grossi's recent statements about the JCPOA have taken on more anti-Iranian dimensions than in the past and have shown that the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency has taken the role of the advocate of the Zionists. Grossi said that Iran is rapidly moving towards a nuclear weapons state, so the JCPOA is no longer relevant. Regarding these statements by Grossi, it should be noted that he has repeatedly acted contrary to the rules of the body under his leadership. The development of Iran's nuclear program is in tandem with technical needs and is carried out completely under the IAEA's safeguards. But Grossi showed that he has no authority except what is dictated to him by the Westerners and the Zionists. Contrary to what he tries to show, he has again become the tool of the oppressive powers. Grossi's political and non-technical statements cannot be justified in a situation in which Iran is threatened by the Israeli regime. Moreover, these statements are a clear violation of the rights of the Iranian nation to peaceful uses of nuclear technology.



erative relations, and unity that exist not only between Azerbaijan and Iran but also among all member states of the D-8," he said.

Aliyev expressed his commitment to upholding the principles of the D-8, stating, "I am confident that Azerbaijan, together with all member nations, will work to safeguard the organization's core values, deepen cooperation, advance shared interests, strengthen Islamic solidarity, and contribute to enhancing the D-8's global influence."

Beyond the scope of the D-8, President Aliyev took the opportunity to reaffirm Azerbaijan's dedication to fostering closer ties with Iran.

He emphasized his confidence in continued joint efforts to enhance bilateral relations, stating, "I firmly believe that Azerbaijan and Iran will continue to build upon our friendship and cooperation, grounded in mutual respect, good neighborly relations, and the shared interests of our peoples."

Concluding his letter, Aliyev once again thanked his Iranian counterpart for his unwavering support and extended his best wishes. "I wish Your Excellency health, happiness, and success in your endeavors, and I extend my wishes for lasting peace and prosperity to the friendly and brotherly nation of Iran," he wrote.

Iranian embassy employee martyred in Damascus, Iran calls for accountability

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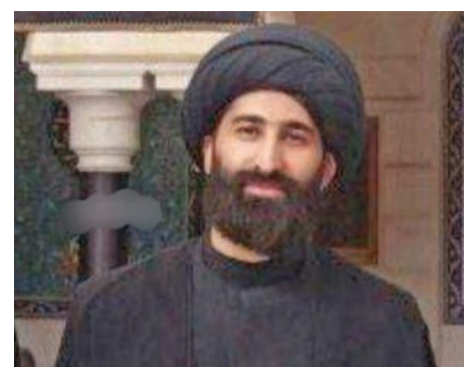
government to fulfill its responsibilities by identifying and prosecuting those behind the crime.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is seriously pursuing this matter through diplomatic and international channels to ensure justice is served," he stated.

During a press briefing on Monday in Tehran, Baqaei also addressed plans to reopen Iran's embassy in Damascus, emphasizing that security concerns remain a top priority.

"The reopening of the embassy is a significant goal, but it will only occur when the necessary conditions for the safety and security of our staff are fully met," he said.

The tragic killing of Bitaraf adds to the turmoil surrounding the Iranian diplomatic mission in Damascus, which was stormed and looted by militants, following the collapse of



President Bashar al-Assad's government on December 8.

Iran's Foreign Ministry has vowed to hold those responsible accountable while working to reestablish its presence in Syria under secure conditions.

Iran's own aircraft used in Syria withdrawal, declares foreign ministry spokesman



TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei emphasized Iran's "responsible decision" to withdraw advisors, taking into account the prevailing conditions in Syria and the broader region.

In an interview with an Iranian news agency on Friday, Baqaei stated that the decision to withdraw Iranian advisors was made responsibly, considering the current conditions in Syria and the broader region.

During a recent press conference, Russian President Vladimir Putin outlined military developments in Syria, highlighting strategic decisions involving Iranian forces and their allies.

Putin claimed, "Previously, our Iranian allies requested help to deploy their forces

into Syria. Now, they are asking for help to withdraw them. We evacuated 4,000 Iranian fighters from the Khmeimim base to Tehran."

The Russian president also noted coordinated efforts to relocate some units to Lebanon and Iraq.

In response, Baqaei suggested that certain remarks might not have been based on precise information.

He acknowledged the complexity of the situation, noting that differing narratives among involved parties are to be expected.

Baqaei further clarified the nature of the evacuation, explaining that those transported included diplomatic families, embassy staff, Iranian and foreign pilgrims, and humanitarian workers aiding Lebanese refugees.

"They were all brought back to Iran via Iranian aircraft, utilizing the Khmeimim airbase with Russian cooperation," he said.

Iran's strong diplomatic ties with Russia were also underscored, with Baqaei emphasizing ongoing dialogues at various levels.

"Our countries maintain significant relations across multiple domains, and we advo-

cate for official channels for the exchange of views and experiences," he concluded.

In separate remarks, two commanders from the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) refuted Putin's assertion regarding the number of troops transferred.

According to an Iranian news website, Esmail Kousari, a former IRGC commander and a member of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, said that far fewer troops were moved, including advisors from various countries, not just Iran.

"Our strategy was to stay until the very end in support of the Syrian Resistance, but the Syrian army and President Assad did not hold as anticipated," Kousari explained.

Mohammad Jafar Asadi, Deputy Commander of Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, reportedly echoed this sentiment, stating, "The individuals moved were not Iranian military advisors; we managed our own withdrawals."

Asadi highlighted that cooperation with Russia was limited to civilian evacuations and noted that some evacuees were from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria, primarily serving in religious roles and seeking refuge in Iran due to their Shia faith.

Pakistan's Peace and Friendship Fleet docks in Iran's Bandar Abbas for 2nd time this year

TEHRAN – The Pakistan Navy's Peace and Friendship Squadron docked at Iran's Imam Khomeini Naval Base in Bandar Abbas on Saturday, marking a significant step in enhancing educational and military cooperation between the two neighboring countries.

The fleet, comprising three warships—PNS Azmat, PNS Rasadgar, and PNS Dasht—is on a mission to strengthen the ties between Pakistan and Iran. This marks the sixth visit to the port since 2016, the most recent being in January.

The arrival of the Pakistani flotilla was celebrated with an official ceremony, attended by commanders from the Imam Khomeini Naval Region, the Pakistani political consul, and the naval attaché in Iran.

Commodore Omid Moghadam, commander of the Surface Flotilla of the Imam Khomeini Naval Region, expressed his satisfaction with the presence of the Pakistani naval ships in Bandar Abbas.

"These friendly interactions between the naval forces of allied nations are customary and vital for bolstering our maritime cooperation," he stated.

Captain Omid Maghami, commander of the Surface Navy Brigade of the First Naval Area, echoed similar sentiments, emphasizing that



Iranian and Pakistani naval forces salute in front of Pakistan's Peace and Friendship Squadron in Bandar Abbas on December 21, 2024

the presence of the Pakistani warships is a testament to the deepening ties between the naval forces of the two countries.

"Such friendly exchanges between navies enhance educational and military cooperation, as well as the exchange of maritime experiences," he noted.

During their four-day stay in Bandar Abbas, the Pakistani naval group will have a busy agenda, including meetings with the commander of the Imam Khomeini Naval Region, paying respects at the martyrs' cemetery, and visiting cultural and social sites in the city.

The itinerary also features friendly sports competitions between the Iranian and Pa-

kistani naval teams, meetings with political leaders of Hormozgan province, a friendship dinner on board both Iranian and Pakistani warships, and joint military exercises in the waters of the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

The recent docking of the Pakistan Navy's Peace and Friendship Fleet in Bandar Abbas underscores the commitment of both Iran and Pakistan to fostering stronger military and security ties.

This visit builds on past agreements, such as those signed during the late President Ebrahim Raisi's 2023 visit to Pakistan, aimed at enhancing security cooperation and paving the way for future collaborations in maritime security and regional stability.

IRGC intelligence neutralizes takfiri terrorist cell in western Iran



TEHRAN – Iranian Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) intelligence forces announced Saturday the dismantling of a Salafist terrorist cell in Kermanshah province, western Iran. The group was apprehended in Sarpol-e Zahab County following a surveillance operation. The IRGC statement emphasized its continued monitoring of anti-Iran elements and its commitment to taking decisive action against them.

This latest operation comes amidst a stepped-up campaign against terrorism by the IRGC in recent months.

The heightened activity includes a large-scale anti-terror drill codenamed "Martyrs of Security" launched in southwestern Iran in late October.

On October 31, the IRGC killed four and arrested four more suspected terrorists during the military exercise in Sistan and Baluchestan province. The operations, also involving the intelligence ministry and police, later resulted in the elimination of at least three terror teams.

Authorities stated that one of those arrested is a key member of the so-called Jaish al-Adl, the terrorist group that claimed responsibility for a deadly October 26 attack on a police convoy in Taftan County.

Iran issues demarche to Swiss, Italian diplomats over US-ordered arrests of citizens

From Page 1 ▶ Mohammad Abedini Najafabadi (38) and Mehdi Mohammadzadeh (42) were arrested on December 16, under the pretext of involvement in a January drone attack targeting an illegal U.S. military base in Syria. Resistance groups in Iraq took responsibility for the operation against the base located near the Jordanian border.

'Contact lost with Najafabadi'

Najafabadi's has been unreachable since he was arrested in Italy while he was preparing to travel to Switzerland where he lives, his family and acquaintances said to the media. His current whereabouts are unknown.

Najafabadi's university acquaintance told Tasnim News Agency that Najafabadi, a Sharif University graduate, is the CEO of Sanat Danesh Rahpooyan Aflak (SDRA), an Iranian company producing precision measurement equipment with applications in various fields,

including medicine and sports.

He also previously led Illumove SA, a Swiss company specializing in motion capture equipment, operating under Swiss governmental oversight. The source noted that the advanced technology in these companies' products allows for diverse uses after legal sales in Iran.

Whether Najafabadi's company's products were used in the drones that targeted the American base early this year remains unclear. However, no industrial or scientific tool manufacturer is expected to control the end use of its products. The arrest appears to be a U.S. attempt to deflect attention from local opposition to its military presence in Syria and Iraq.

Information on the other detainee, Mohammadzadeh, is limited; he is a U.S. resident arrested in Massachusetts around the same time as Najafabadi.



Iranian engineer Mohammad Abedini Najafabadi (38) was arrested in Italy under the pretext of connection with a January drone attack on an unauthorized U.S. base in West Asia

Diplomatic talks lay groundwork for Pezeshkian's Moscow visit

TEHRAN – Iranian Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali and Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko met Friday to discuss Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's upcoming visit to Moscow.

Iranian media quoted Jalali as saying the discussions included ongoing cooperation in various sectors, emphasizing the visit's significance.

Rudenko similarly noted, "We reviewed the agenda for future high-level meetings, including Pezeshkian's visit to Moscow and visits by Russian deputy prime ministers to Tehran." Ambassador Jalali stressed streamlining joint agreements to advance mutual commitments, saying, "It is crucial to facilitate the advancement of our mutual commitments."

The diplomats also discussed finalizing several documents for signing, including a comprehensive cooperation agreement.

The meeting also addressed consular issues and easing travel for citizens of both countries. In addition to Pezeshkian's visit, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi is expected to visit Moscow in early 2025.

The visit is expected to oversee the signing of a strategic cooperation agreement between Iran and Russia, focusing on defense cooperation, countering Western sanctions, and expanding economic ties.

Growing radical influence in Syria threatens regional stability, Leader's advisor warns

TEHRAN – In a statement released through the Mehr News Agency, an advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution warned that the rise of radical groups in Syria will have grave consequences for the entire region.

Ali Akbar Velayati said regional leaders should prioritize cooperation among Muslim nations and avoid reliance on external powers like Washington "Any action that escalates tensions will have severe consequences," he noted, pointing to Turkey's support of terrorist factions that toppled President Bashar al-Assad's

government on December 8.

The prominent members of the armed groups all have extremist roots, including their de facto leader Mohammad Al-Jolani who was a high-ranking member of both Al-Qaeda and Daesh.

"Regional allies have been warned that any contribution to fueling conflicts will quickly backfire.

They are urged to align with Muslims and resist placing their trust in foreign powers," Velayati added before condemning Israel's occupation of new areas in Syria since the fall of Assad.

President Pezeshkian urges talented youth to lead nation's progress

From Page 1 ▶ During his speech, Pezeshkian encouraged the young medalists to continue refining their expertise and channel their capabilities toward solving Iran's pressing issues. "We can and we must build this country," he declared. "Today, Iran should be in a much higher and better position than it is now, and with your help, we can achieve that vision."

The president also urged the youth to resist the temptation to migrate abroad, stressing the importance of staying in Iran to address

its challenges. "Do not leave to serve another country. Iran needs individuals who care deeply about its problems and are committed to resolving them," he said.

Pezeshkian highlighted the critical role that these young scientists and intellectuals can play in shaping Iran's future. "Your determination, knowledge, and technical expertise are invaluable. You have the power to make this nation proud and solve its problems, provided you make genuine efforts," he told the medalists.

He went on to underline the ur-

gency of having committed individuals who understand the struggles of the Iranian people and are willing to dedicate their abilities to creating solutions. "Iran is in dire need of people who not only possess wisdom and knowledge but also have the heart to alleviate the nation's suffering," he stated.

The ceremony concluded with President Pezeshkian personally awarding medals to some of the honorees, marking a symbolic recognition of their achievements and potential to shape Iran's future.

Tehran's regional doctrine: weathering storms and hardships

By Mohammad Khatibi

TEHRAN – Since Hamas launched its surprise offensive against Israel in October 2023, the face of West Asia has been changing.

The operation brought the Palestinian cause back to the forefront of media coverage and became a key topic of discussion in elite circles. Although the "two-state solution" remains a distant prospect, it has gained renewed public support in the West as a potential resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In a recent article for The Hill, Mark Toth and Jonathan Sweet argue that "Iran's nuclear phoenix may yet rise from the ashes of Gaza, Lebanon, Syria."

However, their argument is unsupported by the facts on the ground. The authors' suggestion that Iran has been completely defeated by Israel in the region is inaccurate.

Since October 2023, Israel has targeted Hezbollah facilities and fighters across Lebanon, without significant success.

Hezbollah operations continued in northern occupied Palestine and even into Haifa and Tel Aviv until a ceasefire took effect last month. Israel's operations in southern Lebanon failed to gain significant territory, and Hezbollah successfully repelled those attacks.

The Lebanon ceasefire, largely mirroring UN Resolution 1701, offers



no substantial changes. Hezbollah retains its weaponry and maintains its capacity to resume operations against Israel at any time.

In Gaza, Israel appears to lack a clear plan, and occupying the territory and building settlements is not a viable option due to several factors, including international pressure.

The Israeli Prime Minister has actively blocked ceasefire efforts, a move viewed by many as an attempt to evade legal challenges he faces. Furthermore, installing the Palestinian Authority as Gaza's governing body is impractical; the PA lacks popular support and is unlikely to govern effectively without Hamas's cooperation.

While the fall of the Assad government in Syria was undoubtedly a setback for the Resistance Axis, it was not catastrophic.

The Axis was not solely dependent on Syria; Hezbollah was a significant force long before Damascus became a logistical hub, and Ansarullah in

Yemen demonstrates the viability of independent resistance movements. The country has been under siege by the Saudi-led coalition, however, it managed to foil attempts to overthrow the government in Sana'a.

Yemenis have been launching attacks in the Red Sea and surrounding waters against U.S.-Israeli interests. It has also launched missiles and drones on occupied Palestine successfully despite being constantly under attack by a U.S.-led coalition.

Toth and Sweet suggest Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons; however, Tehran's continued cooperation with the IAEA and adherence to the NPT render these comments irrelevant.

Iran's actions were reactive measures taken in response to escalations against the country. The U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA initiated Tehran's retaliatory measures, which included a gradual increase in uranium enrichment.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

IRAN IN FOCUS

DECEMBER 22, 2024

Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

Iranian athlete Marian receives three-year ban for anti-doping rule violation

TEHRAN – The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) has banned Para athletics athlete Mostafa Marian or Iran for a period of three years for committing an anti-doping rule violation (ADRV), in breach of the IPC Anti-Doping Code.

The Iranian athlete returned an adverse analytical finding (AAF) for metabolites of a Prohibited Substance in a urine sample provided out-of-competition on 27 Aug. as part of the IPC's pre-Games testing program at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.

The substance was methasterone. Methasterone is included on the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) 2024 Prohibited List under the class S.1.1 (Anabolic Androgenic Steroids).

The athlete was provisionally suspended by the IPC on 31 Aug. 2024 pending a resolution of his case.

The athlete accepted the commission of the ADRV and the consequences proposed by the IPC. As a result of his violation, the athlete will be ineligible for competition and other sporting activities (other than authorized anti-doping education or rehabilitation programs) for three years from 31 Aug. 2024 to 30 Aug. 2027.

All results obtained by the athlete from the date the sample was collected until the commencement of the provisional suspension are disqualified, with all resulting consequences, including forfeiture of any medals, points and prizes.

Each athlete is strictly liable for the substances found in their sample. An ADRV occurs whenever a prohibited substance (or its metabolites or markers) is found in their bodily specimen, whether or not the athlete intentionally or unintentionally used a prohibited substance or was negligent or otherwise at fault.

As a signatory of the World Anti-Doping Code (the WADC), the IPC remains committed to a doping-free sporting environment at all levels. The IPC has established the IPC Anti-Doping Code in compliance with the general principles of the WADC, including the WADC International Standards, expecting that, in the spirit of sport, it will lead the fight against doping in sport for athletes with an impairment.

Super heavyweight lifter Yousefi attracts world's attention

TEHRAN – Alireza Yousefi, the 21-year-old Iranian weightlifting sensation, has captured the world's attention with a stunning performance at the 2024 IWF World Championships. Yousefi's clean and jerk of 262kg not only secured him a gold medal but also positioned him as a serious contender for future Olympic glory.

The Iranian team, comprised largely of young and promising athletes, exceeded the expectations in Bahrain. With a blend of experience and youthful exuberance, the squad clinched multiple medals, including a gold for Yousefi. The team's success has breathed new life into Iranian weightlifting, which has faced challenges in recent years.

Yousefi's lift was particularly remarkable as it challenged longstanding records in the super-heavyweight category. For years, Lasha Talakhadze of Georgia had dominated the division with his unparalleled strength. Yousefi's impressive performance indicates that he has the potential to become a phenomenon in the future of weightlifting.

The Iranian team's success in Bahrain has raised hopes for a brighter future for the sport in the country. With a talented pool of young athletes and a supportive federation, Iranian weightlifting is well-positioned to achieve greater heights in the coming years.

As Iran prepares for the Asian Games in Nagoya and the Olympic Games in Los Angeles,

fans and experts alike are eagerly anticipating the continued development of Yousefi and his teammates.

The team's performance in Bahrain has demonstrated that Iranian weightlifting is back on the world stage and ready to compete with the best.

To ensure the sustained success of Iranian weightlifting, it is crucial for the federation to provide adequate resources and support to these young athletes.

Mehdi Rahmati steps down as Havadar coach

TEHRAN – Mehdi Rahmati parted company with Havadar football club following poor results in the 2024/25 Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL).

Havadar lost to Nassaji 1-0 in Tehran on Friday.

Rahmati had been named as Havadar coach in July but failed to meet the expectations.

Havadar, headed by Rahmati, sit 16th in the 16-team table with eight points out of 13 matches.

Rahmati had replaced Masoud Shojaei in the Tehran-based football club.

Iran fail to advance to Water Polo World Cup 2025 Division 2 final

TEHRAN – Iran lost to the Netherlands 18-7 in the Men's Water Polo World Cup 2025, Division 2 semifinals on Saturday.

Iran will play the losers of Germany and China in the bronze medal match.

Team Melli had defeated South Africa 2-4, Ukraine 16-14 and Portugal 15-11 in their previous matches.

Two teams from Division 2 will qualify for the men's and women's Water Polo World Cup 2025—Super Final, joining the six men's and women's teams that will be eligible through the Division 1 Tournaments.

The FINA 2025 World Aquatics Championships will take place in Singapore from 11 July through 3 Aug. 2025.

The Water Polo World Cup 2025 Division 2 is being held in Istanbul, Turkey from December 18 to 21.

Tractor and Persepolis suffer home loss: PGPL

TEHRAN – Tractor and Persepolis football teams suffered home loss in the 2024/25 Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) on Saturday.

PGPL leaders Tractor lost to Shams Azar 1-0 in Tabriz's Yadegar-e Emam Stadium. Mojtaba Fakhrian scored the only goal of the match in the 26th minute.

In Tehran, struggling Mes defeated Persepolis 3-1 at the Shahr-e Qods Stadium. Amirhossein Jolani was on target for Mes just four minutes into the match and Kofi Schulz made the scoreboard 2-0 in the 34th minute.

Ali Alipour halved the deficit in the 78th minute but Mohammad Alinejad scored the visiting team's third goal in the dying moments of the match.

In Sirjan, Sepahan were held to a 1-1 draw by Gol Gohar and missed the chance to go top of the table. Alireza Alizadeh found the back of the net with a header just two minutes into the match and Reza Asadi leveled the score with four minutes remaining.

Zob Ahan also defeated Malavan 1-0 in Isfahan. Hassan Shoushtari scored the solitary goal of the match from the penalty spot.

Tractor remained top with 28 points, thanks to a superior goal difference from Sepahan.

Foolad are third with 24 points, one point above Persepolis.

Transit of goods via Iran's ports rises 37%

From page 1 ▶ It is worth mentioning that Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization has defined a high number of projects to develop and improve the country's ports, as the country aims to double the capacity of its ports in five years.

Ports and Maritime Organization has put it on the agenda to attract 300 trillion rials (about \$600 million) of investment from the private sector in the country's ports by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (late March 2025).

As reported by the PMO portal, the mentioned investment is going to be used to develop the infrastructure and operational capacity of the country's ports.

On July 10, PMO Head Ali-Akbar Safaei said over the past few years the organization has managed to attract nearly \$1.7 billion of foreign and domestic investment in the country's ports and maritime sector.

He said some 620 trillion rials (about \$1.24 billion) of domestic investment and \$470 million of foreign investment have been attracted in the

mentioned sectors.

"The attraction of this amount of private sector investment is significant compared to the total budget of the government in the sea and port sectors," the official added.

According to the PMO head, regarding foreign investment, the organization has signed contracts with five countries including India which has so far invested \$120 million in the port sector and \$250 million in the rail, roads, and infrastructure sectors.

Referring to the growth of maritime trade in the country, Safaei continued: "Maritime trade increased from 215 million tons in [the Iranian calendar year] 1401 (2022-2023) to 237 million tons last year (ended on March 19, 2024)."

"In the first quarter of the current year, 60 million tons of maritime trade was recorded, which shows a 10 percent growth compared to the same period last year, and even a 70 percent growth was recorded in some ports of the Caspian Sea," he added.

Solar farms capacity to rise 4,000 MW by March 2026

TEHRAN - The capacity of Iran's solar farms is going to increase by 4,000 megawatts (MW) by the end of the next Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2026), the country's energy minister announced.

Abbas Ali-Abadi said that the power network of the country is large and with the annual generation and consumption capacity of about 350 billion kilowatt hours of electricity, it has technically the potential for attracting more than 30,000 megawatts of solar energy.

"We are trying to realize this potential with the cooperation of the private sector and we provide an attractive investment environment and a suitable market to attract investors to cooperate, while significant contracts have been concluded in this field since the beginning of the government," the minister added.

He further stated that considering that the current capacity of the country's solar power plants is 1,200 megawatts, with this increase, it is expected that this figure will reach more than 3,000 to 4,000 megawatts by next year, which is a significant figure.

As announced by an official with Iran's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA), the capacity of Iran's renewable power plants is going to increase by 500 megawatts (MW) by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2025).

"Considering the capacity of the new power plants under construction, the capacity of renewable power plants will increase by 500 megawatts by the end of the current year," Ali Shabnavard, the director general of SATBA's Office for Supervision of Construction and Production of Power Plants said.

This trend shows the serious determination of the Ministry of Energy and the government to

overcome the imbalance of electricity supply and demand by the development of renewable energy in the country, he stressed.

He put the current nominal capacity of the country's renewables at 1,371 MW, adding that just last week 53 MW was added to the capacity of the country's renewable power plants.

Over the past few years, the Iranian government has taken serious measures to accelerate the growth and development of renewable energies in the country.

Diversification of financing models for renewable projects, increasing the ceiling of guaranteed electricity purchase, providing the possibility of buying and selling renewable electricity in the green board of the Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), and providing the possibility of exporting renewable electricity have been the most important measures taken for this purpose.

Iranian Energy Ministry has also put it on the agenda to add 10,000 MW to the capacity of the country's renewable power plants by the end of 2025.

In January 2022, the Energy Ministry and some of the country's private contractors signed memorandums of understanding (MOU) to cooperate in the construction of new renewable power plants across the country.

In late July, SATBA Head Mahmoud Kamani said 600 renewable power plants with a total capacity of 13,500 MW are under construction across the country and with these power plants going operational the share of renewables in Iran's power generation will reach 15 percent.

"We hope that by implementing these power plants, the share of renewable energies in Iran's electricity production will increase to more than 15 percent in the next two years," Kamani said.

Mining sector achieves \$8.8b in exports over 8 months

TEHRAN - Iran's Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) announced that the mining and mineral industries sector exported approximately \$8.8 billion worth of products in the first eight months of the current Iranian year.

According to a report from IMIDRO, between March 20 and November 21, Iran exported 41.79 million tons of mining and mineral products valued at \$8.799 billion. This represents a two percent increase in tonnage and a three percent rise in export value compared to the same period last year, which saw exports of 41.14 million tons worth \$8.552 billion.

The majority of the exports during this period comprised steel, aluminum, and copper products, with a combined volume of 21.52 million tons valued at \$6.767 billion.

On the import side, the mining and mineral industries brought in 2.89 million tons of goods worth \$7.496 billion over the same period.

While the import volume fell by 19 percent compared to the 3.56 million tons imported during the corresponding period last year, the value of imports rose sharply by 78 percent from \$4.205

billion to \$7.496 billion.

This growth in import value underscores rising costs and increased demand for specific mining-related products in the domestic market.

Iran's mining sector plays a pivotal role in the country's economy, contributing significantly to non-oil export revenues. With over 68 types of minerals, including large reserves of iron ore, copper, zinc, and rare earth elements, the nation ranks among the world's top 15 mineral-rich countries.

The country boasts more than 10,000 active mines, employing hundreds of thousands of workers directly and indirectly. Key mining hubs such as Yazd, Kerman, and East Azerbaijan provinces are home to extensive operations, including extraction and processing facilities for metals and minerals critical to domestic industries and global markets.

Recent years have seen substantial investments in the sector to boost production capacity and modernize infrastructure. The government has also prioritized the development of downstream industries, particularly in steel and aluminum production, to maximize value addition and reduce reliance on raw material exports.

'13 promising weeks ahead for Iran's capital market'

TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) has forecast a robust performance in Iran's capital market through the end of the current Iranian calendar year (late March 2025), promising 13 weeks of strong activity with one initial public offering (IPO) each week.

Speaking at the opening bell ceremony of the stock exchange, Hojatollah Seyedi, the head of the SEO, noted that the stock market had outperformed other sectors this fall.

"One of the critical steps in safeguarding shareholders' rights was the inclusion of provisions in the next year's budget bill," he said, adding that this achievement would not have been possible without the support of lawmakers.

Seyedi highlighted the 13 weeks of active trading ahead, emphasizing that investors can



look forward to a steady stream of IPOs on a weekly basis.

Autumn marked a rebirth for the capital market

The chairman of the Iranian Parliament's Economic Committee likened the capital market's resurgence in autumn to a "spring" after years of stagnation.

"Following months of sluggish activity, we are now witnessing a revival in the capital market, and we hope this positive trend continues to intensify through the winter," said Seyed Shamseddin Hosseini at the stock exchange opening ceremony.

He expressed gratitude to capital market officials for their ef-

orts to revitalize the stock market, noting, "These measures are aimed at protecting the interests of 50 million Iranians, which underscores the market's growing social significance."

Hosseini further pointed out that alongside the Securities Market Law, the Production and Infrastructure Financing Law has played a pivotal role in establishing a framework for the capital market's development.

He stated that the heavy responsibility of funding production, as outlined in the seventh development plan, rests squarely on the capital market's shoulders.

In conclusion, Hosseini reassured stakeholders that the next year's budget has been carefully crafted to avoid any negative impact on the stock market, expressing optimism that the market will continue its upward trajectory.

TCCIMA to host Eurasia trade exhibition, conference in Feb. 2025

TEHRAN - The Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (TCCIMA), in collaboration with the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO), will hold the third Eurasia Trade Exhibition and Conference from February 22 to 25, 2025, at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds.

Announcing the event, Mahmoud Najafi Arab, head of TCCIMA, highlighted the chamber's ongoing efforts to advance trade relations between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and to facilitate the legal and policy frameworks necessary for such cooperation.

Speaking to TCCIMA's public relations office, Najafi Arab explained that the event, organized in partnership with Pars Karen Trade Management Company and with official authorization from the TPO, aims to strengthen ties with member countries of the EAEU, including Armenia, Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.

"Considering that Iran's accession to the EAEU is being reviewed by the parliaments of the member states and the two sides also signed a preferential trade agreement in December 2023, which covers 87 percent of the region's traded goods, we anticipate significant opportunities for boosting trade and economic exchanges," Najafi Arab said.

He added that the agreement aims to eliminate trade barriers, create a shared market, and harmonize customs and financial policies among EAEU countries.

Najafi Arab also emphasized the transformative potential of transitioning the agreement to a free trade framework and the strategic importance of Iran's membership in the union as a gateway to expanded regional economic collaboration.

The official further noted that this year's event builds upon the chamber's successful initiatives in promoting economic diplomacy, such as two specialized conferences held in 2020 and 2022 and active participation in this year's EAEU annual summit in Armenia.

"These efforts underscore the EAEU's effectiveness as a global economic structure and its role in granting Iranian businesses access to extensive markets and unparalleled opportunities," he stated. He further encouraged leveraging this platform for knowledge



exchange, establishing new commercial ties, and enhancing Iranian firms' competitiveness within the union.

The upcoming four-day conference will feature discussions on enhancing trade exchanges, fostering joint investments, improving industrial cooperation, and expanding the export of Iranian goods. Distinguished guests, including representatives of chambers of commerce, government officials, and economic experts from EAEU countries, are expected to attend.

In addition, the event will host trade delegations from EAEU member states and include matchmaking sessions, organized by Pars Karen Trade Management, to connect Iranian businesses directly with potential partners and clients.

Najafi Arab concluded by expressing confidence that the event will offer Iranian traders and businesses critical insights into the EAEU's regulatory framework and economic potential, paving the way for a new era of bilateral cooperation.

The Eurasian Economic Union Minister of Trade Andrey Slepnev has recently underscored the importance of the free trade agreement with Iran, citing the country's strategic position as a primary partner on the EAEU's southern borders and a key player in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INST).

In an interview with Izvestia on Friday, Slepnev highlighted Iran's achievements in import substitution, technological development, and resilience against sanctions.

Addressing the status of the agreement, which was signed a year ago, Slepnev noted that the ratification process has been completed in four EAEU member states. "We aim to

finalize the agreement at the upcoming EAEU leaders' summit in Saint Petersburg at the end of December 2024, so it can take effect at the start of next year," he said.

Slepnev explained that by the end of 2024, 75 percent of the EAEU's trade will be conducted with countries in the south of the region, marking a decisive shift in the bloc's trade priorities. "We have reoriented our trade focus from Western countries to the south," he stated.

Previously, the European Union accounted for over 40 percent of the EAEU's trade, with the Global South comprising less than half. "Today, the share of European partners has fallen by about 2.5 times, while trade with the Global South continues to grow. By the end of 2024, we expect it to account for 75 percent of our trade turnover," Slepnev added.

Iran and EAEU also signed a free trade agreement on December 25, 2023, in St. Petersburg, Russia, aiming to eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers and facilitate economic and trade interactions. Once fully implemented, 87 percent of tariff codes for commercial goods between Iran and EAEU member states will drop to zero.

Under President Masoud Pezeshkian's administration, Iran has emphasized strengthening ties with Eurasian countries to enhance access to global markets. This strategy has translated into tangible growth, with the latest figures from Iran's Customs Administration revealing a 16 percent rise in exports to EAEU nations in the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-August 20). During this period, the export volume reached 2.2 million metric tons, reflecting a 35 percent year-on-year growth.

Iran also participated in the EAEU's annual meeting held on September 30 and October 1 in Yerevan, Armenia, with a high-level delegation comprising both public and private sector representatives. During the meeting, Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref reiterated the country's commitment to expanding bilateral and multilateral economic relations with EAEU member states.

The success of the free trade agreement underscores Iran's strategy to integrate more deeply into the regional economy and strengthen its presence in international markets.

Iran reports \$35b in technical, engineering services exports over 3 decades

TEHRAN - Iranian companies and private sector entities have exported \$35 billion worth of technical and engineering services since 1995, according to the Secretary of Iran's Association of Construction Companies.

Speaking at a press conference on Saturday, Iraj Golabatoonchi shared that this figure corresponds to over 1,000 projects executed by capable Iranian companies abroad between 1995 and 2024.

He noted that while exports of technical and engineering services faced a decline starting in 2011, the entry of Iranian companies into the Iraqi market in 2016 marked a turnaround. In that year alone, Iranian firms secured \$2.0 billion worth of projects.

However, he pointed out that exports have faced setbacks since 2022, largely due to ongoing sanctions, difficulties in obtaining bid bonds for international tenders, and other challenges.

Despite these obstacles, the official emphasized the need for Iranian companies to enhance their quality standards to align with international benchmarks. He urged firms to invest in skilled engineers and qualified personnel to improve their competitiveness.

The secretary highlighted significant opportunities in regional markets, including Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states, Iraq, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and Persian Gulf countries. Leveraging their extensive experience, Iranian

construction and contracting companies have the potential to expand their presence in these markets, he said.

Golabatoonchi lamented the absence of Iranian companies among the world's top 250 engineering firms, as ranked by Engineering News-Record (ENR). In contrast, China has 70 companies, and Turkey has 45 companies listed in this prestigious ranking.

He called for strategic planning and robust measures to elevate Iranian firms to global standards, enabling them to compete effectively on the international stage. The push for enhanced quality, innovation, and technical expertise could help Iranian firms carve a niche in the global engineering and construction industry.

Yemen missile blitz rattles Tel Aviv

The Yemeni army targeted the Jaffa area in southern Tel Aviv with a hypersonic ballistic missile labeled "Palestine 2" that injured 16 Israelis

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Just two days after Israeli warplanes launched widespread deadly airstrikes on Yemen, the Ansarallah-led government followed through on its pledge to escalate its attacks on the Israeli regime in solidarity with Gaza.

Israeli media reported that a missile launched from Yemen struck Tel Aviv, causing significant damage and leading to dozens of Israelis being injured. Despite the sounding of sirens across areas from Tel Aviv to northern Ashdod, the Yemeni missile evaded both the Israeli Iron Dome and David's Sling interceptor missiles.

Footage circulating online shows the moment of the missile's impact in the Tel Aviv area. Sirens can be heard and at least three interceptor missiles can be seen failing to shoot down the incoming Yemeni hypersonic missile. The sound of a huge explosion is also heard.

Israeli occupation police have confirmed the missile's impact and the damage caused in Tel Aviv.

The spokesperson for the Yemeni Armed Forces, Brigadier General Yahya Saree, announced on Saturday an Israeli military target in occupied Jaffa (Tel Aviv) was struck with a hypersonic missile named Palestine 2.

The Yemeni Forces clarified that the operation came as part of the fifth phase of support in the "Promised Conquest" battle.

It was conducted in response to Israeli aggression against Yemen, in solidarity with the oppressed



Israeli analysts say Israeli forces and intelligence agencies were slow to respond to the Yemeni threat

Palestinian people and their fighters, and as retaliation for the massacres against civilians in Gaza.

They confirmed that the missile accurately hit its target and that the defensive and interception systems failed to counter it.

The statement added, "Through this qualitative operation, the Yemeni Armed Forces salute all members of our great Yemeni people who have taken to the squares and arenas, affirming their confrontation and defiance of the criminal Israeli enemy."

They also extended greetings to the fighters in Gaza and praised their ongoing heroic operations against the Israeli occupation.

The Armed Forces reiterated their commitment, stating, "Our operations will not cease until the aggression on Gaza stops and the blockade is lifted."

The announcement, made by Brigadier General Saree, comes as

the Israeli occupation army admitted on Saturday that its air defenses had failed to intercept a missile launched from Yemen.

On the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) Telegram channel, a statement said, "A missile was fired from Yemen into central Israel, and a fallen projectile was identified in the Tel Aviv-Yafo area. The (IOF) Home Front Command teams and additional rescue forces were dispatched to the scene and began searching the area along with additional security forces, local officials, and emergency services to investigate the scene of the fallen projectile." The Israeli regime announced that it has opened an investigation into the attack.

The missile reportedly injured around 30 Israelis, according to the Israeli authority's admission.

Official Israeli Radio said, "The army is investigating the reason for the failure to intercept the Yemeni missile that exploded in Tel

Aviv and left 30 injured."

A reporter with the Israeli Army Radio noted, "The Air Force continues to investigate and analyze the events surrounding the ballistic missile attack on Tel Aviv. Preliminary investigations show that there was an attempt to intercept the threat using several different air defense systems. First, an Arrow intercept missile was launched in an attempt to intercept the missile during its trajectory outside the atmosphere. After this attempt failed, Iron Dome intercept missiles were activated to collide with the missile during its flight inside the airspace. Unfortunately, all interception attempts failed."

The Maariv Hebrew newspaper reported, "There have been advancements in ballistic missiles, which now surpass the capabilities of the Arrow/Hetz air defense system. Unfortunately, this flagship air defense project has failed four consecutive times to successfully intercept ballistic missiles—three times from Yemen and once from Lebanon."

Furthermore, Avi Ashkenazi, a journalist with Maariv, said that "Israel finds itself unable to address the challenges posed by the Houthis from Yemen and has failed in confronting them."

Ashkenazi underlined that "Israel realized the danger of the threat emerging from the east too late and the Israeli army struggles to handle Yemeni threats, both defensively and offensively."

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](#))

How Netanyahu manipulates Talmudic myths to occupy Lebanon, Syria and beyond

From page 1 ▶ The article highlighted the Jewish Rabbi Shai Tahan's question of "where the northern border of the Land of Israel should be religiously located," and whether Israel is "obligated to conquer the areas included in the divine promise to Israel or are those areas outside its borders?"

The Jerusalem Post also published another report in which Rabbi Yitzhak Ginsburgh claimed that God "has given the current Israeli generation the ability to receive the gift again and to conquer and settle Lebanon."

In turn, Haaretz published a report confirming that "often, religious illusions in Israel quickly turn into state policy." Besides, the newspaper conducted various opinion polls on the extent of support for establishing settlements in Lebanon.

During the recent US-led Israeli aggression, Uri Hatzvon called for exploiting the war on Hezbollah to "occupy Lebanon." In the middle of its flag is a cedar tree framed by the Star of David.

According to Eliyahu Ben Asher, one of the founders, the movement was launched on April 12, 2024, with the aim of convincing the Israelis that "Lebanon is a Jewish homeland as a first step to the borders of Turkey in the north, and the Euphrates in Iraq in the east."

Uri Hatzvon has become active after the killing of soldier Yisrael Sokol in Gaza, on January 22, 2024, who strongly promoted that Lebanon is "part of the promised land, Greater Israel." Sokol was killed along with 23 other soldiers when the Palestinian resistance blew up two booby-trapped buildings.

According to his friend Eliyahu Ben-Asher, Sokol's dream was establishing Israeli settlements in Lebanon. His family has engraved on his tombstone: "Gaza has seen you from the shadow of Lebanon's cedars."

Ben-Asher adds: "For Sokol, the war was not against terror, or for the sake of the house, but rather a war to return the lands of Israel to its indigenous inhabitants. He always believed that victory meant taking land from the

enemy in Gaza, in Lebanon and on the Temple Mount."

Uri Hatzvon organized its first virtual conference, on June 17, 2024, to ensure the participation of various Zionists from all over the world.

Among the attendees were: Hagai Ben Artzi, Sara Netanyahu's brother; Amid Cohen, an IDF reserve officer and the executive director of the Tikva Foundation that runs Talmudic educational projects; Judith Katzber, who advocates for the occupation of the West Bank; Daniela Weiss, head of the Nahala settlement movement and leader of the settlement movement in the Gaza Strip.

Several Zionist rabbis also joined the movement, most notably Rabbi Yitzhak Ginzburg, who promotes Talmudic ideas that have become part of Netanyahu's political hegemonic plans, which are in harmony with Trump's blatant statement: "Israel is small and its borders must be expanded."

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](#))

Dancing to Washington's tune: US may embrace HTS as good terrorists

From page 1 ▶ The announcement was made by Assistant Secretary of State Barbara Leaf, who is the top State Department official for the Middle East (West Asia). Leaf is leading an American delegation which has travelled to Syria to hold talks with Syrian new leaders in the wake of Assad's fall.

Leaf said the decision to remove the \$10 million bounty on the HTS chief came after meetings between American diplomats and the rebel group in Damascus in which al-Jolani committed to ensuring terrorist organizations in Syria do not pose a threat to the United States.

The US delegation's visit follows trips by diplomats from Britain, France, and Germany to Damascus over the past days.

Undoubtedly, the West's approach to hold talks with Syria's transitional government and al-Jolani, who is the Arab nation's de facto leader, is a positive step.

But it is evident that under the façade of negotiations Western countries, in particular the United States, are advancing their own interests.

Since toppling Assad on December 8, the leader of HTS has sought to project an image of moderation of his group, distinguishing it from the behaviors associated with Al-Qaeda and ISIL (also referred to as ISIS and Daesh).

Nonetheless, at least the United States is following a good cop and bad cop scenario through

paradoxical political and military methods.

On the one hand, Washington has vowed to remove the sanctions it imposed on Syria under the Assad government and lift the terrorist designation of the HTS if it meets certain demands.

The US has scrapped a \$10 million reward for the arrest of Syria's de facto leader al-Jolani who has been designated as a terrorist by the State Department.

On the other hand, the US is increasing its military presence in Syria. The Pentagon spokesperson has said that the US has more than doubled its troop presence in Syria.

"We have been briefing you regularly that there are approximately 900 US troops deployed to Syria. In light of the situation in Syria and the significant interest, we recently learned that those numbers were higher," Pat Ryder told reporters on Thursday.

He added, "So, asked to look into it, I learned today that, in fact, there are approximately 2,000 US troops in Syria."

Ryder's comments indicate that the US seeks to keep troops in Syria despite its charm offensive towards HTS.

On Friday, the US military also said it killed ISIL leader Abu Yusuf, also known as Mahmud, in an airstrike in the eastern Syrian province of Deir ez-Zor.

For now, in addition to adopting a good cop and bad cop policy, the US is also making a mockery of its own laws pertaining to terrorism.

In less than three weeks since HTS took over Damascus, it appears that the group and its leader are becoming good terrorists for the United States. While ISIL and Al-Qaeda still remain bad terrorist groups.

The US has no problem with terrorists as long as they dance to Washington's tune.

The US remains accused of aiding and abetting ISIL and Al-Qaeda when the terror groups committed atrocities in the areas that they had occupied. The American military, however, launched war on them when they began to spin out of its control.

Syria's emerging leadership and HTS are no different. Provided they align with US interests, Americans are likely to overlook their past violent actions and transgressions.

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Straight Truth
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Erdogan has used both subterfuge and alliance with a motley band of jihadis in Syria: National Interests

TEHRAN – In a commentary on its website, The National Interests says the long-time Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan resorted to both ploy and union with a group of Jihadists to overthrow the Assad regime in Syria.

"To replace Assad's Alawite-led government and substitute it with Sunni rule, Erdogan has employed both subterfuge and an alliance with a motley band of jihadis," Robert Ellis, a Turkey analyst and commentator, wrote on The National Interest website.

The following is the text of the commentary: Turkey is seen as the victor after the fall of Assad. Nonetheless, Ankara cannot ignore a Kurdish role in the post-war settlement.

Once upon a time, Turkey's then-prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, hosted Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad, for a family holiday in Turkey and planned a Middle East Union together with Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. But the Arab Spring changed all of that. Assad's government was toppled at the hands of an opposition led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) on December 8.

President Erdogan declared he would soon pray in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus. This, however, has taken longer than he expected.

To replace Assad's Alawite-led government and substitute it with Sunni rule, Erdogan has employed both subterfuge and an alliance with a motley band of jihadis, The National Interest said in a commentary.

In a gaffe at Harvard University in 2014, then-Vice President Joe Biden, in a Q&A, stated that America's allies in the region, Turkey, the Saudis, and the Emirates, were the largest problem in Syria.

"They were so determined to take down Assad, and essentially have a proxy Sunni-Shia war, what did they do? They poured hundreds of millions of dollars and tens of tons of weapons into anyone who would fight against Assad—except that the people who were being supplied, were al-Nusra and al-Qaeda, and the extremist elements of jihadis who were coming from other parts of the world."

Turkey's perpetual problem has been with Kurdish nationalism, ranging from the Sheikh

Said rebellion in 1925 to the so-called "dirty war" with the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party). This still resonates today with the weekly demonstrations by the "Saturday mothers," demanding to learn the whereabouts of their loved ones.

Ironically, it was Erdogan who was the first Turkish leader to admit Turkey had a Kurdish problem, which led to the Oslo talks and a two-year ceasefire until 2015. However, in a bait-and-switch deal, in July 2015, Erdogan offered Obama the Incirlik air base in return for what amounted to a free hand against the Kurds.

A second peace process has been initiated by the governing AKP's (Justice and Development Party) partner, the MHP (National Movement Party), but this has been handicapped by the removal of legally elected Kurdish mayors and the humanitarian disaster caused by Turkish airstrikes on Kurdish-held northeast Syria.

Francesco Siccardi's analysis clearly demonstrates the role of Syria in Turkey's foreign policy. The author contends that Turkey's policy in Syria is driven by domestic politics and the need to secure electoral support through an aggressive, nationalistic foreign policy.

Turkey's intervention and actual occupation of areas of Syria is marked by three cross-border operations in August 2016 ("Euphrates Shield"), in January 2018 ("Olive Branch") and October 2019 ("Peace Spring"), and internally in Idlib in February 2020 ("Spring Shield"). The latter provided a jumping-off point for HTS's successful campaign.

The first was a rebuff to the United States, as the operation was launched the same day as Joe Biden touched down in Ankara to reassure Turkey of American support after the attempted coup in July 2016.

Olive Branch led to the occupation of Afrin, a Kurdish enclave in northwest Syria, and Peace Spring was an incursion into northeast Syria, another rebuff to U.S. support for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in the war against ISIS.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](#))

Several dead, more than 200 injured in car attack on German Christmas market

Five people have been killed, including a child, and more than 200 injured after a car drove into a crowd at a Christmas market in the eastern German city of Magdeburg, officials said, BBC reported.

Many people were critically injured, Reiner Haseloff, the premier of Saxony-Anhalt state, told reporters on Saturday. German media reported 41 critical injuries.

Haseloff told reporters on Friday that the suspect - who was arrested - was a 50-year-old Saudi citizen who arrived in Germany in 2006 and had worked as a doctor.

He said a preliminary investigation suggested the alleged attacker was acting as a lone wolf. He could not rule out further deaths due to the number of injured.

The suspected attacker's motive is unclear. Social media and posts online appear to suggest he had been critical of Islam.

Footage from the scene shows numerous emergency services vehicles attending while people lay on the ground.

Further footage then emerged of armed police confronting and arresting a man who can be seen lying on the ground by a stationary vehicle.

Unverified video on social media purports to show a car ploughing into the crowd at the market.

City officials said around 100 police, medics and firefighters, as well as 50 rescue service personnel rushed to the scene.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who travelled to the city on Saturday, described the attack as a "dreadful tragedy" as "so many people were injured and killed with such brutality" in a place that is supposed to be "joyful". Originally from Saudi Arabia, he arrived in Germany in 2006 and in 2016 was recognized as a refugee.

Pakistan dismisses US official's warning over missile program as unfounded

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry on Saturday dismissed as unfounded and "devoid of rationality" assertions by a senior US official that its missile program could eventually pose a threat to the United States, Reuters reported.

Earlier this week, US Deputy National Security Adviser Jon Finer said Pakistan's development of long-range ballistic missiles made it an "emerging threat."

Finer's comments, which came a day after Washington announced a new round of sanctions related to the ballistic missile program, underscored the deterioration in once-close ties between Washington and Islamabad since the 2021 US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Addressing Finer's remarks, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said the perception of an alleged threat was "unfortunate."

"These allegations are unfounded, devoid of rationality and sense of history," the ministry added in a statement.

The ministry said its strategic capabilities were solely for defending its sovereignty and maintaining regional stability, and should not be perceived as a threat to any other country.

It also highlighted Pakistan's long history of cooperation with the US, particularly in counter-terrorism efforts, and reiterated its commitment to engaging constructively on all issues, including regional security and stability.

Iran becomes Türkiye's second-largest source of tourism in November



for the first 11 months of the year to just over 50 million foreign arrivals, breaking previous records even before year-end. Iranian visitors not only bolstered the overall figures but also signaled a strengthening of regional tourism dynamics.

The latest statistics place Germany at the top of Türkiye's tourist source markets for November, with 281,569 arrivals, followed by Iran, while Russia rounded out the top three with 254,352 arrivals. Notably, the influx from Iran outpaced Russia's growth, showcasing a shift in the composition of Türkiye's visitor demographics.

The November surge in Iranian arrivals reflects an ongoing momentum. Türkiye's Culture and Tourism Ministry credits the country's appeal to its rich cultural offerings, affordable travel options, and strategic efforts to attract travelers from neighboring countries.

As Türkiye eyes 61 million visitors and \$60 billion in revenue for 2024, the contribution of Iranian tourists will likely remain a key focus for the industry.

For 2025, projections include 64 million visitors and \$64 billion in revenues, with regional markets like Iran expected to remain pivotal.

TEHRAN - Iranian tourists have emerged as Türkiye's second-largest group of visitors in November, contributing significantly to the country's booming tourism sector.

Official data released on Friday highlighted a 27.16% year-over-year increase in arrivals from Iran, totaling 258,918 visitors, Daily Sabah reported.

The rise underscores a growing trend as Türkiye solidifies its position as a preferred destination for Iranian travelers. With the country's proximity, shared cultural ties, and diverse attractions ranging from historical landmarks to vibrant urban experiences.

In November, Türkiye hosted 2.73 million foreign tourists, marking an 8.25% year-over-year increase. This brought the total

Overtourism may prompt tourists to rethink 2025 travel plans

Overcrowded travel destinations have led to increased debate over one of the most contentious travel issues of the year. In many popular tourist destinations, locals are trying to reclaim cities for themselves or local infrastructure is straining under the pressure of too many crowds, too often.

This year was the biggest year yet of news coverage at popular European tourist sites against perceived overtourism, starting early in April 2024 when Barcelona took a bus route off a tourist map because it was overrun with tourists heading to the second-most visited site in the city, the Antoni Gaudí's Park Güell.

One local joked that the next step might be to take the park off the map, too.

Site after site followed, announcing plans to reduce tourism, from Italy's Lake Como touting the idea of an entry fee, residents of Spain's Canary Islands planning a hunger strike, and Amsterdam announcing a ban on new hotels, only giving the go-ahead on a one-out, one-in basis and only if there was a perceived sustainable improvement on what existed before.

By peak season in July 2024, things reached a head in many European places. Locals sprayed tourists with water guns in Barcelona, holding 'Go Home' banners, and the mayor announced plans to ban Airbnb by 2028.

Under a real fear of forest fires and water shortages brought on by the climate crisis, the Greek island of Santorini banned construction.

Water shortages account for a 50% decrease in wine production on the tourist island favorite, bringing the local wine economy to a low.

Shortly after, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis announced plans to restrict cruise ships as of 2025 to some of the most popular Greek islands.

In France, the island of Brehat in Brittany in the north of France reintroduced a morning quota to control overtourism.

It was Florence's turn shortly after, as a tourist caused an uproar by performing lewd acts on a statue of Bacchus, the Roman god of wine and excess, with locals crying that the ancient city was more akin to Disneyland and arrests should increase against the rising tide

of visiting tourists.

Many European cities considered tourist caps, as was instigated in Japan at Mount Fuji, and the new tourist entry fee in Venice proved to be enough of a success to continue and expand throughout 2025.

Popular tourist destinations were similarly overwhelmed across the English Channel.

St Ives in Cornwall, known for its artsy vibe, housing painters, craftspeople, and fishermen, lost its seasonal balance. Empty as a ghost town in winter but overwhelmed with wall-to-wall tourists in summer, its infrastructure creaks under pressure.

Just 30 miles north of the Welsh capital, Cardiff, authorities were forced to put on extra buses and tour guides to cope with the 4 million visitors.

Moreover, park officials had to ask the mass of influencers arriving to create content to adhere to 'countryside morals' and not strip down in the waterfalls to take selfies or treat the park like a beach.

Many arrived in the national park known for its changeable weather and remote locales in flip-flops and bathing suits.

Indeed, in many places, the response was as much about asking tourists to behave as it was to reduce numbers.

Spain launched a campaign to ask visitors (notably British) to act as they would at home, to put on their clothes when not on the beach, and not sing loudly in residential streets in the early morning hours if they wouldn't do so in their own countries.

The animosity in these places is as much economic as practical, whether it's the waste left by departing tourists off cruise ships, the disrespectful behavior from Bachelor parties (heavily reported in Prague), the reduced access to local sites for locals or the lack of access to affordable housing as landlords choose to rent potential homes by the night instead of by the year to earn increased revenue.

Europe is the continent warming the fastest, so the environmental impacts of tourism are very real, and many cruise operators are now choosing to head to the Caribbean instead of Europe, partly due to overcrowding.

(Source: Forbes)

How Iran's Kordasht is a beacon for heritage tourism

By Afshin Majlesi

JOLFA - Nestled in the tranquil landscapes of Iran's East Azarbaijan province, the village of Kordasht serves as a living monument to history. It resonates with the courage of Iranian soldiers who defended their homeland against Tsarist Russian invasions over the decades.

A mere 70 kilometers from the vibrant town of Jolfa, on the southern banks of the Aras River, lies a historical treasure; a blend of strategic military heritage and architectural marvels.

This is the story of a ruined fortress used by the troops of Abbas Mirza, the Qajar crown prince of Iran during the reign of his father Fath-Ali Shah Qajar (r. 1797-1834), and the neighboring attractions such as the Kordasht Bathhouse.

Perched atop a rocky hill about 650 meters above sea level, the Abbas Mirza fortress offers an unparalleled view of the Aras River and the Armenian border. The fortress served as the pivotal base for Abbas Mirza during the turbulent Russo-Persian Wars of the 19th century.

The fortress's robust stone and brick walls once bristled with six imposing watchtowers, which, even in their worn state nowadays, still radiate a sense of resilience.

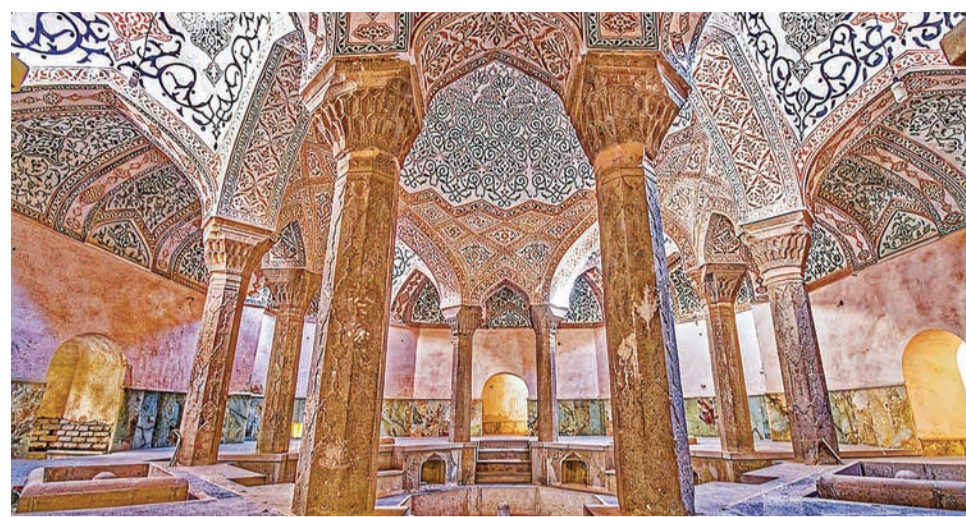
Standing here, you can almost hear the echoes of soldiers on guard, protecting the realm against the invading forces.

The fortress, however, despite its brave defenders, succumbed to Russian troops during the tumultuous events that led to the Treaty of Turkmenchay, an agreement signed in 1828 that ended the Russo-Persian War (1826-1828).

Although time and conflict have taken their toll, remnants of its lavishness remain, offering adventurers a glimpse into its storied past.

Just a stone's throw from the fortress lies the Kordasht Bathhouse, a striking example of Persian ingenuity and luxury. Originally constructed during the Safavid era under Shah Abbas I, this bathhouse was initially reserved for royalty, earning the nickname "the royal bath."

Over time, under Qajar rule,



its doors opened to the public, but the bathhouse eventually fell into disuse before being rescued by cultural heritage initiatives in recent decades.

The bathhouse is a masterpiece of Iranian-Islamic architecture. It welcomes visitors through a series of gracefully descending stairs, leading to an octagonal dressing hall known as Rakhtkan or Sarbineh. The dome

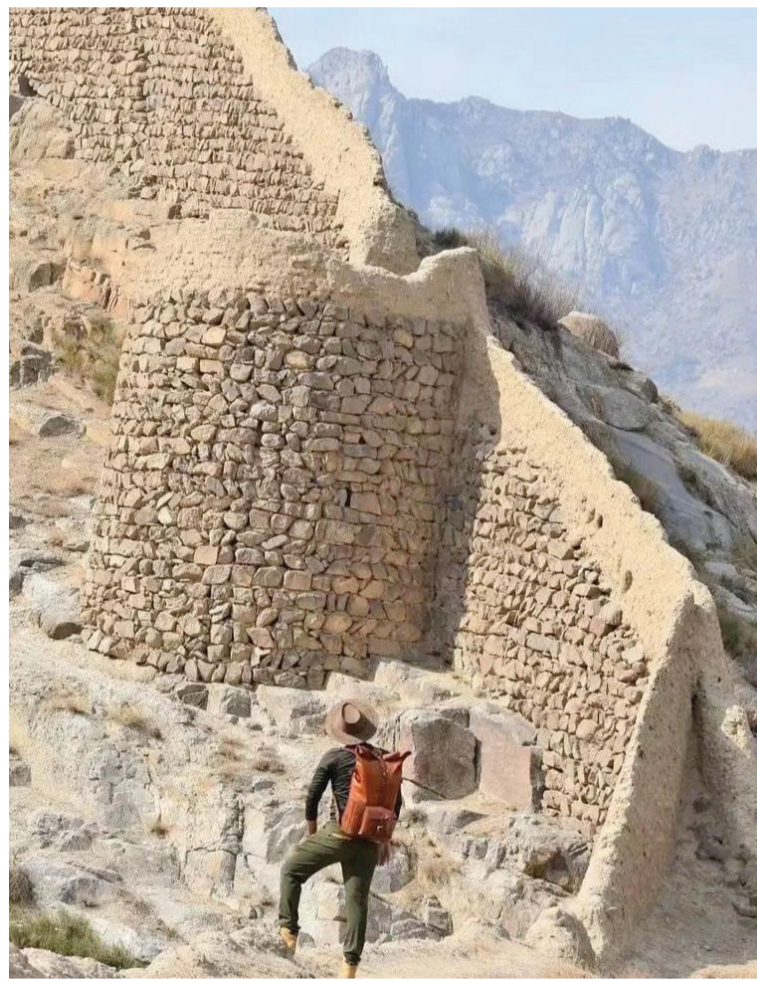
above, supported by intricately carved octagonal columns, boasts breathtaking stucco work illuminated by shafts of natural light from marble-covered skylights. This clever design not only provided uniform lighting but also maintained privacy which is a hallmark of Persian bathhouses.

The Khazineh (hot room) is another marvel. Its four-columned space features ingenious heating systems and decorative flourishes that speak of a bygone era's attention to detail. The bathhouse's layout seamlessly integrates functionality with aesthetic elegance, with every corner, from triangular pools to ornate stone footrests, all are crafted for both utility and beauty.

The charm of Kordasht extends beyond its historical structures. Encircled by verdant gardens and the flowing waters of the Aras, this village is a haven for nature lovers as well.

The fortress and bathhouse are part of a larger complex that includes a smaller bathhouse, the Divan Khaneh (reception hall), the Yakhchal (traditional ice house), and the crazy Qarib Mosque. Each structure offers its own unique window into the bygone age.

Kordasht is not just a destination; it's a journey through time. Whether you're a history enthusiast tracing the steps of Abbas Mirza or a traveler captivated by the intricate art of Persian architecture, this village offers a story that stays long after you leave.



Food festival brings Persian flavors to New Delhi

TEHRAN - The Eros Hotel, in partnership with the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Iran Culture House, and CD Foundation, hosted an exquisite Iranian food festival from December 11 to 17.

The week-long celebration immersed Delhi-ites in the vibrant hues, aromas, and tastes of Persian culture, creating a memorable experience for culinary enthusiasts.

The festival featured master Iranian chefs who presented an authentic menu showcasing the rich and diverse culinary traditions of Iran.

Each day's menu highlighted unique regional flavors, taking guests on a gastronomic journey across the country's renowned culinary landscape.

The event kicked off with an exclusive gathering titled 'Coffee Morning with the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.' This opening

event focused on strengthening tourism and trade ties between India and Iran, setting the tone for a week of cultural exchange and collaboration.

A highlight of the festival was the Iranian Food Competition and Workshop on December 12, where talented chefs demonstrated innovative takes on traditional recipes.

Judged by a prestigious panel that included Kazem Samandari, Executive Chairman of Lopera; Chef Mostafa Taheripour Isfahani from Maccan Tourism; and Chef Diwas Wadhwa, Executive Chef of Eros Hotel, the competition showcased remarkable culinary talent. Chef Neda Tavakoli from Iran emerged as the winner, followed by Hem Chandra Arya from Eros Hotel New Delhi as the first runner-up and Chef Bharat Khemani in third place.

Moreover, an Indo-Iranian cultural show on

December 16 added a vibrant dimension to the festival, celebrating the shared cultural heritage of India and Iran. The event concluded with a grand gala Iranian dinner, where participants were honored by the Iran Embassy and Iran Culture House.

Culinary highlights included traditional Iranian dishes such as Shirazi Salad, Ash Reshteh, Gheimeh, and Kuku Sabzi. Main courses like Korshet-e-Bademjan delighted guests, while desserts such as Soleh-Zard added a sweet finish to the experience.

Reflecting on the event, Chef Diwas Wadhwa said, "It was an incredible experience to be part of this cultural exchange. The collaboration between the Eros Hotel team and the Iranian chefs was seamless and inspiring. Together, we revitalized traditional recipes while preserving their authenticity for our guests."

Discover intricate craftsmanship and vibrant designs of Hamedan carpets



TEHRAN - Hamedan carpets, renowned for their intricate craftsmanship and vibrant designs, have a long-standing heritage in Iran's carpet weaving tradition.

As one of the country's prominent centers of carpet trade, Hamedan has played a pivotal role in the production of Iranian rugs, particularly during the Qajar dynasty. Through established trade routes, carpets from Hamedan and other regions like Arak and Kerman were transported to Iraq, other Arabian countries, and Europe.

These carpets, often referred to as "Mosul rugs" in Europe, are valued for their distinctive village style. Despite the lack of extensive historical documentation, Hamedan's carpet-making history is believed to span over 400 years.

A notable example includes

Shah Tahmasp of the Safavid dynasty gifting a carpet to the Ottoman Sultan Soleiman, underscoring the cultural significance and antiquity of Hamedan's weaving traditions.

Hamedan carpets are typically classified into two categories based on their origin: rural and village. Rugs from surrounding areas like Tuyserkan and Nahavand often employ single-weft weaving, while others use double-weft techniques.

The Turkish knot is the preferred method, prized for its speed and precision. Stretching methods incorporate both Persian and Turkish styles, and the carpets are dis-

tinguished by their long threads, which are trimmed manually using hand scissors.

The designs of Hamedan carpets are predominantly geometric, with occasional curvilinear motifs. Vibrant and diverse, their color palette includes shades such as bright green, yellow, gold, orange, blue, bright pink, crimson red, dark brown, cream, turquoise, black, and natural wool hues.

These unique features and the skilled craftsmanship have made Hamedan carpets a treasured representation of Iran's rich cultural and artistic legacy.

Women increase share of most-cited Iranian researchers

TEHRAN – Female scholars constitute 665 out of 4,818 most-cited researchers of the country, more than 13 percent of the total, Ahmad Fazelzadeh, the head of the Islamic World Science Citation (ISC) Institute, has said.

In the past Iranian calendar year (March 2023 – March 2024), women accounted for 12.75 percent of most-cited researchers.

With 29.57 percent share, the Ministry of Health has the highest number of the most-cited female researchers, IRNA quoted Fazelzadeh as saying.

According to the recent report of ISC, in the list of one percent of researchers in the world which is based on the Essential Science Indicators (ESI) database, a total of 177 Iranian female researchers have been recognized in the areas of Agricultural Sciences, Clinical Medicine, Biology, Biochemistry, Chemistry, Pharmacology and Toxicology, Neuroscience and Psychology, Engineering, Material Science, Psychiatry/ Psychology, Computer Science, Physics, Molecular Biology and Genetics, Social Sciences, Generalities, Physics, Plant and Animal Sciences, Immunology, and some have obtained the necessary points even in several fields, he added.

The official went on to say that according to the Stanford University List which was conducted by a number of researchers from Stanford University and the Elsevier Institute via analyzing the data of the Scopus database, 73 highly cited Iranian female researchers are among the top two percent in the world (service performance) in eight subject areas including Clinical Medicine, Chemistry, Biomedicine, Strategic Technologies



(Artificial Intelligence, Nanotechnology, etc.), Biology, Physics, Astrology, Information Technology and Communications, and Engineering.

Moreover, 375 female Iranian highly-cited researchers are among the top two percent of the world (one-year performance) in 13 subject areas of Clinical Medicine, Biomedicine, Chemistry, Engineering, Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Strategic Technologies (Artificial Intelligence, Nanotechnology, etc.), Information Technology and Communication, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Physics and Astronomy, Public Health and Health Services, Biology, Statistics and Mathematics, Communication and Textual Research have obtained the necessary points.

Using the data indexed in the ISC database, ISC identifies highly cited Iranian researchers in Human Sciences, Social Sciences, Art, and Architecture.

In the latest announced list, highly cited researchers have been introduced in the period of 10 years (since 2013). The criteria for selecting researchers in this list is the number of citations made to

that was held on Monday at Tehran's Tarbiat Modarres University.

The official went on to say that in Iran, entrepreneurship officially commenced in 2000. Following that it was defined as a field of study in universities, and the first entrepreneurial major as an interdisciplinary one launched at University of Tehran.

Today, the concept of entrepreneurship is interwoven with various fields such as economy, psychology, culture, sociology, and even religion.

With the conceptual development of entrepreneurial thought, women's entrepreneurship begins to grow because there is a difference between men and women in terms of performance, motivation, and access to resources.

One of the most important differences between entrepreneurship among women and men is the issue of motivation.

Men's motivation in entrepreneurship is more concerned with earning a living and increasing wealth, but women all over the world tend to use it to strengthen the family foundation.

The most important goal in women's entrepreneurship in the current administration is to promote motivation.

Men entrepreneurs can more easily provide resources and capital for their businesses, but this happens less for women.

Therefore, educated women face funding problems to start off their business.

The government is well aware of the issue and is looking for solutions to boost access to finance for women entrepreneurs, Behrouz-azar highlighted.

their scientific productions.

Some 40 female researchers in 14 subject areas including Human Sciences, Social Sciences, Art and Architecture, Psychology, Sociology and Political Sciences, Language and Linguistics, Business, Management and Accounting, Theology and Islamic Studies, Educational Sciences, Philosophy, Geographical Sciences, Historical Sciences, Knowledge and Information Science, and other areas gained required scores.

Women hold over 24% share of inventions in Iran

According to Zahra Behrouz-Azar, the Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, women account for more than 24 percent of inventions in the country, compared to the global average of 17 percent.

"Unfortunately, only 12 percent of entrepreneurship and start-ups are founded by women. We hope that women's presence in entrepreneurship reaches 30 percent by the end of the current administration," Behrouz-Azar noted.

She made the remarks at the first national women's entrepreneurship and business conference

IRCS rescues over 600 people in three days

TEHRAN – The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) rescued 630 individuals over the past three days.

From December 18 to 20, a total of 336 relief teams conducted some 286 rescue operations, ISNA quoted Babak Mahmoudi, an official with the IRCS, as saying.

The IRCS transported 142 individuals to medical centers, the official noted.

IRCS is a top organization

In September, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) project manager, Faisal Mahboob, lauded the capabilities of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) as outstanding.

The official said he was really impressed by the capacity and the wide range of activities carried out by the IRCS.

"The International Federation will support the activities of the Iranian Red Crescent Society to commence a new phase of collaboration with the society," Mahboob added, the IRCS website reported.

In May, Pir-hossein Kolivand, head of the IRCS, said the IRCS is recognized as one of the five prominent societies worldwide thanks to its wide range of activities and great achievements both nationally and internationally.

Referring to health, treatment, and rehabilitation as one of the parts of the IRCS activities, Kolivand said the IRCS hospitals, pharmacies, and clinics meet the medical and therapeutic needs of thousands of citizens every day.

The IRCS medical centers abroad are reputable worldwide. As a humanitarian organization, the IRCS is trying to alleviate the suffering of the people involved in accidents, emergencies, and conflicts.

"Today, collaborations with knowledge-based firms have resulted in advancements in manufacturing orthoses, prostheses, artificial organs, and new medications, with plans to extend cooperation to rescue and relief efforts as well," the official noted.

According to a report released by the IFRC

on the most important achievements of the Iranian Red Crescent Society during January-December 2023, the IRCS continues to tackle the impacts of climate change, program adaptability, and preparedness efforts that have been triggered by the climate crisis.

In 2023, the Iranian Red Crescent worked on tackling climate change by developing community-level adaptation plans through volunteer initiatives and Helal Houses (community-owned Red Crescent Houses), mobilizing health caravans, and implementing early warning systems for heat waves, droughts, and flash floods.

It raised awareness among local communities and staff about climate change, created culturally appropriate educational materials, and enhanced staff capacity for climate-smart programming, the report said.

Additionally, they significantly improved drought-affected communities' access to clean water and healthcare, as well as their food security and livelihoods.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Yahya award honors dedicated rangers

Three rangers have been selected to receive the Yahya award for their outstanding efforts to safeguard the country's wildlife and environment, Fars news agency reported on Tuesday.

Ataollah Sadeqi form Kordestan province, Ali Akbar Imani Berenjestanaki from Mazandaran province and Hamid Reza Azimpour from Khorasan Razavi province were the three rangers who earned the award. Bahman Izadi, an environmental activist, who has been active in freeing rangers who are jailed on involuntary manslaughter charges from prison, also received an honorable mention.

Launched in 2014, the Yahya award annually honors the rangers who have gone far in a yearlong to protect the environment, which was first introduced by an Iranian couple, Mojtaba Ramzi and Paridokht Moshkzad, members of the Iranian Cheetah Society, through a generous donation.

جایزه یحیی سه محیطبان برگزیده را اعلام کرد

در مراسم اهدای پنجمین جایزه یحیی به سه تن از محیطبانان برگزیده به پاس از زحمات برجسته آنها در دفاع از محیط زیست کشور هدایایی اهدا شد.

به گزارش گروه محیط زیست و گردشگری خبرگزاری فارس، محیطبان عطاءالله صادقی از استان کردستان، محیطبان علی اکبر ایمانی برنجهستانی از استان مازندران و محیطبان حمیدرضا عظیمپور از استان خراسان رضوی برندگان در این دوره برگزیده شدند. همچنین از خانوادگان محیطبانان شهید نیز قدردانی شد.

همچنین افرادی فعال محیط زیست که همواره در راهی محیطبانان از حکم قضای یا زندان نقش داشته نیز مورد تقدیر ویژه این برنامه قرار گرفت. جایزه یحیی یک جایزه مردمی است و دو هنرمند ایرانی از اعضای انجمن یوزپلنگ ایرانی پردیخت مشکزاد و همسرشان مجتبی رمزی، بنیانگذار آن هستند.

SOCIETY

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Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

7

Collegiate programming contest for West Asia held

TEHRAN –Sharif University of Technology students have claimed the first top three positions in a programming contest known as the 25th International Collegiate Programming Contest (ICPC) for the West Asia region.

Hosted by Sharif University of Technology on December 19 and 20, the competition brought together some 250 students from 50 universities nationwide, IRNA reported.

The ICPC is a prestigious international student programming Olympiad. It was founded in the 1970s in the USA and has since become a global competition that gathers the best teams of students from universities around the world to solve complex algorithmic problems.

According to Mohammad-Amin Ahmadiou, an official with the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, "the contest aims to enhance technical skills, problem-solving abilities, and teamwork among students."

"Held in two sessions earlier this year, the course covers essential topics such as competitive programming fundamentals, data structures, string processing techniques, and basic graph algorithms," he added.

The official further noted that the educational initiatives are expected to significantly elevate students' knowledge and skills and develop a new generation of skilled programmers for professional fields in information technology and artificial intelligence.

This year, 80 teams composed of three students each competed against each other.

Three participating teams from Sharif University of Technology namely Ballmer Peak, Big Dash and LPO on Fire grabbed gold medals, and ranked the first to third, respectively.

Two teams from University of Tehran ranked fourth and fifth. A team from Sharif University of Technology and a team from Amirkabir University of Technology were placed sixth and seventh.

Being ranked first, Ballmer Peak team from Sharif University of Technology will participate in the ICPC world finals.

Three more teams including SENSODYNE and KhasTeAm from University of Tehran, and another one named Argons from Amirkabir University of Technology will attend ICPC in West Asia to compete against other top teams and defeat them to be able to attend the ICPC world finals.

In 2019, Iran was placed among top ten team in the world finals and grabbed the bronze medal.

In 2024, students of Sharif University of Technology ranked first among West Asian countries at the 14th ICPC, which was held from September 15 to 20 in Astana, Kazakhstan, ISNA reported.

The event was attended by 73,000 students from more than 100 countries representing leading universities in each country.

The Iranian team was composed of Ali Safari, Alireza Keshavarz, and Amir-Mohammad Shahrezaei.

Sharif University of Technology ranked 13 globally, sharing the position with Harvard University, St. Petersburg State University, University of Oxford, and University of Science and Technology of China, as well as other famous institutions receiving the highest honors.

At the international level, ICPC was first held in 1977 in the USA, University of Michigan. Since then, the competition has been held annually in various countries such as the USA, Russia, the Netherlands, Canada, China, the Czech Republic, Japan, Sweden, Poland, Thailand, Morocco, Egypt, Bangladesh and Portugal.

The ICPC community's purpose is to advance prospects for the next generation by bringing students together working collaboratively to solve algorithmically challenging problems, and preparing them to build dependable systems that benefit their neighbors with the support of universities, industry, and community leaders, globally.

Volunteer coaches prepare their teams with intense training and instruction in algorithms, programming, and teamwork strategy.

Teammates collaborate to rank the difficulty of the problems, deduce the requirements, design test beds, and build software systems that solve the problems. The team that solves the most problems in the fewest attempts in the least cumulative time is declared the winner.

Recent achievements

Iranian students won two silver medals at the International Innovation and Trade Expo (ITE 2024) which was held in London.

Organized by Kingston University, the competi-



tion was held from September 25 to 27 either in person or virtually.

One of the Iranian teams composed of Amir-Abbas Kavousi-Amin and Artin Salari designed a pair of smart glasses for the blind, IRNA reported.

The other consisting of Ilia Rezazadeh and Padra Qazvinian designed a smart system for emotion recognition through facial expression analysis.

The competition brought together many participants and inventions in diverse areas.

Students of Iran University of Science and Technology managed to win first place in Eurasia Federation of International RoboSports Association (FIRA) Open competition 2024.

The competition was held from November 6 to 9 in Van, Turkey, bringing together 130 teams from eight countries.

Iran grabbed five gold medals and two special awards in the International Science and Invention Fair (ISIF) 2024, which was held in Indonesia from November 5 to 10.

The competition brought together 1,980 teams from 24 countries competing in eight fields including technical- engineering, chemistry and nanotechnology, biotechnology and environment, energy engineering, physics and astronomy, artificial intelligence and technology, social sciences, education, and educational technologies, IRNA reported.

A total of 18 students from Iran attended the 47th WorldSkills Competition, winning 9 medals including a silver medal and medallions for excellence.

The competition was held from September 10 to 15 in Lyon, France. Some 1,500 competitors from more than 65 countries and regions around the world gathered in Lyon to compete in different skills.

Hasan Mohammadi and Hamid-Reza Hamidi won the silver medal, IRIB reported.

Iran, third top country in intl. Olympiads

Attending several international Olympiads in 2024, Iranian students managed to win 10 gold medals, 10 silver medals, and two bronze medals, ranking third globally.

The United States and China ranked first and second, respectively. South Korea and India both ranked fourth, ISNA reported.

Iranian students grabbed a gold medal, two silver medals, and a bronze medal at the 36th IOI, ranking 9th among 96 countries. Hosted by Alexandria, Egypt, the event was held from September 1 to 8.

Iran attended the event online and ranked ninth globally. Amir-Ali Asgari grabbed the gold medal, Amir-Hossein Farkhondeh-Far and Amir-Reza Dorosti won the silver medals, while Parsa Farajpour-Sarabi received the bronze medal.

In a remarkable achievement, Iranian students won five gold medals, ranking first in the 17th IOAA which was held from August 17 to 27 in Vassouras, state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The five-member team comprised Hannaneh Khorramdashki, Mohammad-Mehdi Keshavarzi, Arya Fateh-Kerdari, and Ali Naderi-Lordjan, Mehr news agency reported.

Five Iranian students who attended the 54th International Physics Olympiad managed to win a gold medal and four silver medals, improving the country's ranking from 17th in 2023 to fourth this year.

The 54th edition of the IPhO commenced on July 22 in the city of Isfahan and concluded on July 28.

Iran grabbed one gold medal and three silver medals at the 56th IChO which was held in Saudi Arabia from July 22 to 30.

Ramtin Moradi Mazhar succeeded in winning a gold medal, while Alborz Rezaei, Amirkia Salimi, and Mohammad-Yasin Salehi Marzijanani secured silvers.



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

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
 Email: info@tehrantimes.com
 Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
 Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051430
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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Knowledge and wisdom are really the privilege of a faithful Muslim. If you have lost them, get them back even though you may have to get them from the apostates.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:03 Evening: 17:16 Dawn: 5:41 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:11 (tomorrow)

Iranian short film “Twenty-One Weeks Later” receives award at Spanish festival

TEHRAN-The Iranian short film “Twenty-One Weeks Later” written and directed by Nasrin Mohammadpour has received an award at the 11th La Mirada Tabú Film Festival, which was held in Zaragoza, Spain.

A total of 55 short films competed in the official competition section of the festival that took place from December 5 to 14. At the closing ceremony, the Iranian flick was presented the Mention Special Jury Award.

The 14-minute film, a 2023 production, is about a young woman who has decided to have an abortion while her husband disagrees.

Banafsheh Riaz, Leila Hassanzadeh, Soudabeh Bahraminejad, and Parisa Asgari are in the cast.

The film had its world premiere at the Wide Angle - Asian Short Film Competition section of the

28th Busan International Film Festival, in South Korea in October and won the Sonje Award, given to the best Korean and Asian short film.

Nasrin Mohammadpour, 34, is a filmmaker and social activist. Her debut short film “Left Hand” (2020) won the BNP award at the Seoul International Women’s Film Festival. “21 Weeks Later” is her second short film.

La Mirada Tabú aims to motivate artists and creators to show their view of the “taboo” concept, which is broad and diverse, and encompasses dreams, the unconscious, the mental worlds and the ghosts that populate them, the mystery, magic, even the untold reality, the unsaid, “clothes on the line,” in the workplace, emotional, family, vital... from a vision as polyhedral as human thought: carefree, humorous, dramatic, dreamlike... always respecting all ways of thinking and creativity.

IAF to host Wajdi Mouawad’s “Thirsty”

TEHRAN-The play “Thirsty” by Wajdi Mouawad will be staged at the Entezami Hall of the Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) in Tehran from December 24.

Amir Shams is the director of the 65-minute play that has Mehdi Abuhamzeh, Saeed Babaei, Sahar Mesbah, Ava Azad, and Yeganeh Rajabi in the cast, Honaronline reported.

The play tells the story of two characters, Murdoch and Norvége, who represent different aspects of adolescence and the transition to adulthood. Murdoch realizes that adulthood is not as hopeful as he imagined, which leads him to frustration and anger.

Norvége has barricaded herself in her room unable to accept her changing body. Their

stories build tension and culminate in them finding each other and fusing in an embrace, representing both salvation and damnation. The play reveals the difficult emotional experience of losing childhood hopes and ideals when facing the realities of the adult world.

Wajdi Mouawad, 56, is a Lebanese-Canadian writer, actor, and director. He is known in Canadian and French theater for politically engaged works such as the acclaimed play “Incendies” (2003). His works often revolve around family trauma, war, and the betrayal of youth.

“Thirsty” will remain until January 17, 2024, at the Iranian Artists Forum, situated at Artists Park on North Mousavi Street, Taleqani Street.

Cartoon of Day



Israel continues to surround and occupy Syria
 Cartoonist: Lutfu Cakin from Turkey

“In the Arms of the Tree” wins at Chennai International Film Festival

TEHRAN-The Iranian feature film “In the Arms of the Tree” directed by Babak Khajepasha won the Best World Cinema Feature Film Award at the 22nd Chennai International Film Festival (CIFF), which concluded on December 19 in Chennai, India.

Competing in the World Cinema Competition section of the festival with 11 other films, the Iranian family drama received the main award of the section, Mehr reported.

“In the Arms of the Tree” tells the story of Kimia and Farid, a couple married for 12 years, whose life crisis shatters their children’s world, children who know nothing but simplicity and kindness in life.

The film explores themes of familial relationships and emotional reconnections between parents and children. At the heart of the story is Kimia, a northern mother grappling with the trauma of past abuse and a debilitating fear of distance. Her husband, Farid, an Azeri father with a passion for travel and medicinal plants, adds to the tension as the couple prepares for a separation exercise.

Kimia is about to divorce Farid due to a strange illness, and this process has proceeded in mutual respect and both are finalizing the divorce. Their two sons, 11-year-old Taha and his five-year-old brother Alisan, unaware of their parents’ decision, live their normal lives and spend their days with great interest in each other until they face their parents’ decision: now the father wants to take one of the sons and the mother wants to take the other one. They have to prepare the children for this separation and start to teach them to be away from each other. The children’s perspective on the story of separation creates a new course in the life of this couple.



Taha, deeply caring and protective, is determined to shield Alisan from the fallout of their parents’ crises. The boys’ strong bond and friendship serve as a beacon of hope amid the tumult, highlighting the innocence of childhood and the power of familial love in the face of adversity.

The film captures the impact of marital discord on children, illustrating how their lives can be disturbed by their parents’ struggles. Ultimately, it underscores the importance of love, connection, and the delicate balance needed to preserve a family in crisis.

Maral Baniadam, Javad Ghamati, Rouhollah Zamani, Ahoura Lotfi, and Rayan Lotfi are in the cast among

others. A production of 2023, the film won two Crystal Simorgh awards for Best First Film and Best Screenplay upon its premiere at the 41st Fajr Film Festival.

Moreover, it was named the best film in the international section of the first edition of Iran’s Havva International Film Festival in 2023.

Recently it received the Special Jury Prize at the 10th Asian World Film Festival, which was held in California, the U.S., from November 13 to 21.

The movie has been screened in several international festivals in countries such as China, Switzerland, and the UAE. It also opened the

Kazan International Film Festival Altyr Minbar in Russia in September

The Chennai International Film Festival provides a common platform for the film fraternity to show its expression through films; understand other cultures and project the excellence of this art form; contribute to the understanding and appreciation of film cultures of the different nations in the context of the social and cultural ethos; and promote friendship and cooperation among peoples of the world.

The festival has been organized since 2003. It showcases international as well as Indian feature films. In this year’s edition, a total of 123 films chosen from 50 countries were screened.

Roberto Bolaño’s “The Spirit of Science Fiction” published in Persian

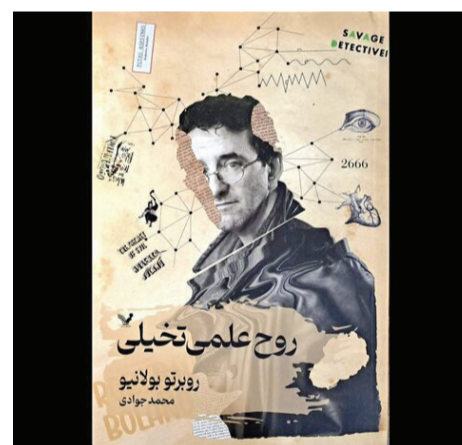
TEHRAN-The Persian translation of the novel “The Spirit of Science Fiction” by Chilean author Roberto Bolaño has hit the bookstores across Iran.

Mohammad Javadi has translated the book that has been published by Ketabsaraye Tandis Publication, ISNA reported.

Written around 1984 and published posthumously, it was published in Spanish in 2016 and in English in 2018.

Although unpublished at his death, “The Spirit of Science Fiction” was one of Bolaño’s first completed novels. It is a tale of bohemian youth on the make in Mexico City from a master of contemporary fiction.

The novel is set in Mexico City in the 1970s; the central characters are two young Chilean would-be writers who have emigrated during the Pinochet dictatorship, 17-year-old Jan Schrella and 21-year-old Remo, and Remo’s friend José Arco. Jan, a science fiction author and Bolaño’s alter ego, sits in the attic they share and writes, much of the time letters to authors he idolizes. Remo, a poet, falls in love with a girl he meets at a poetry workshop, and with Arco, also a poet, quests on the latter’s motorbike after Dr. Carvajal, who can explain the simultaneous rise of illiteracy and pro-



liferation of poetry journals in the city.

In addition to Jan’s letters the story is intercut with dreams and with flashforwards to Remo’s life after he is successful; Remo also narrates the last section of the novel, “Mexican Manifesto,” a love story that was published on its own in The New Yorker in 2013.

This kaleidoscopic work of strange and tender beauty is a fitting introduction for readers uninitiated into the thrills of Roberto Bolaño’s fiction, and an indispensable addition to an ecstatic and

transgressive body of work.

Roberto Bolaño (1953-2003) was a Chilean novelist, short-story writer, poet and essayist. In 1999, he won the Rómulo Gallegos Prize for his novel “The Savage Detectives,” and in 2008 he was posthumously awarded the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction for his novel “2666,” which was described by board member Marcela Valdes as a “work so rich and dazzling that it will surely draw readers and scholars for ages”. The New York Times described him as “the most significant Latin American literary voice of his generation”.

His work has been translated into numerous languages, including English, French, German, Italian, Lithuanian, and Dutch. At the time of his death, he had 37 publishing contracts in ten countries. Posthumously, the list grew to include more countries, including the United States, and amounted to 50 contracts and 49 translations in 12 countries, all of them prior to the publication of “2666,” his most ambitious novel.

In addition, the author enjoys excellent reviews from both writers and contemporary literary critics and is considered one of the great Latin American authors of the 20th century, along with other writers of the stature of Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar, with whom he is usually compared.

International musicians collaborate on new song about Palestine

A collective of international musicians have come together in protest of the ongoing genocide in Gaza by the Zionist regime.

Initiated by musician Najib in January and released through the emerging label KINDA, the project brought together Palestinian musician and producer Ahmed Eid, rising star Sedic Perry, and a team of producers, songwriters, instrumentalists, and vocalists from around the world to record at Out Of Time Embassy Berlin.

The song aims to further empower the shift towards cultural resistance amplifying the call for justice and raising awareness of the genocide in Gaza. Proceeds from this soli release will go towards supporting humanitarian efforts in the region.

The song commemorates the Palestinian man Khaled Nabhan, who

was killed by Israeli forces in the Nuseirat refugee camp in Gaza in December 2024. He called his granddaughter, the 2-and-a-half-year-old Reem, the “Soul of my Soul”. Reem was killed in November 2023, one month before her birthday on December 23 by an Israeli airstrike.

“Spirit of the Soul” is a deeply personal and collective tribute to the lives lost in Gaza, particularly Khaled Nabhan and his granddaughter Reem. Their story of love and loss reflects the heartbreaking realities faced by countless families in Palestine.

Through this project, the collaborating artists wanted to channel our grief into a cultural act of resistance, uniting voices from around the world to amplify the call for justice. This song is a cry for humanity, a reminder of the lives behind the headlines.

Collaborating with such a passionate team of artists and creators has been both humbling and empowering, and they hope this piece inspires solidarity and action for the people of Gaza.

For the past 439 days, tens of thousands of children and adults have been killed, and millions have been displaced.

Authorities in Gaza have reported that more than 45,000 people have been killed in the enclave in the last 14 months.

Meanwhile, famine “continues to loom in the north” and humanitarian access remains “severely restricted”, said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell, in a post on social media.

“Virtually all 1.1 million children in Gaza are in urgent need of protection and mental health support,” she

added. Echoing those concerns, the UN World Food Program (WFP) warned that Gazans were now desperately worried about not getting enough to eat. In the absence of a ceasefire, “we need to find a way of getting all the food that we have outside Gaza in”, said WFP’s Head of Emergency Communications, Jonathan Dumont.

“The devastation is absolutely staggering,” he continued, in an on-line message from Gaza. “There’s no electricity or running water or sewage (treatment). Almost everyone has lost their home. A lot of people are living in tents. We have hot meals, distributions...People come and they get really desperate. You can see it in their faces and you can see it in their eyes. To prevent famine, we need to find a way to get a consistent flow of food in.”