



Congratulations on the birth anniversary of Jesus Christ to all monotheists in the world



Israel's Admission of Haniyeh Assassination

Iran says confirmation proves the legitimacy of Operation True Promise II

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Foreign adversaries cannot bring Iran to its knees: Pezeshkian

TEHRAN – The Iranian president has commended the Ministry of Intelligence for its pivotal role in protecting national security, emphasizing that external threats will not weaken Iran's resolve.

Speaking during a ceremony marking the 40th anniversary of the ministry's establishment, Masoud Pezeshkian lauded the often-unseen efforts of its staff and leadership, highlighting their spiritual and moral dedication.

"Unity among the people is the key to our strength," Pezeshkian stated. "When the public is aligned with national goals, no external power can destabilize us, and we can effectively address any challenges that come our way."

"Foreign adversaries cannot bring us to our knees. We will continue to move forward with strength and determination," the president said.

Trump's behavior will shape Iran's policies: Leader's advisor warns threats will be matched

TEHRAN – In a comprehensive interview with Al Mayadeen that aired on Monday, Kamal Kharrazi, head of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, delineated Iran's strategic responses to the incoming Trump administration, revealing Tehran's diplomatic approach across various fronts.

Kharrazi, who is also a senior advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, signaled Iran's readiness for any U.S. policy direction under Trump. ▶ Page 2

Iran to unveil its first AI-equipped oil well next year

TEHRAN- Iran's vice president for science and technology said that the country will unveil its first oil well equipped with the artificial intelligence (AI) next year.

Hossein Afshin made the announcement in a ceremony to unveil the country's first oil WRFM (Well Reservoir and Facility Management) center on Tuesday.

"Today, with the unveiling of the country's first oil WRFM center, a fundamental step has been taken to pass commercial intelligence and enter artificial intelligence in oil sector", the official underscored. ▶ Page 4

Incessant land theft in West Bank erodes myth of peace

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT - On December 18, the Land of Israel Lobby introduced a new bill to the Israeli Knesset titled "Israel's Security," which seeks to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state through the transfer of land. The Israel Hayom newspaper reported that after October 7, 2024, Israel will not allow Palestinian fighters to position themselves on its borders and endanger the "security" of its citizens, as they put it.

Meanwhile, the Hebrew Channel 14 has quoted Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich as saying he plans to confiscate about 24,000 dunams of the West Bank in 2025.

A dunam equals a thousand square meters.

Smotrich stated that there will never be what he described as an "Arab terrorist state" that threatens the existence of "Israel".

In parallel, the Mondoweiss revealed that the settlement file in the occupied West Bank is underway amid an extreme right-wing government and a supportive international climate, especially with Trump's re-election. Mondoweiss added that Smotrich had previously called for "wiping entire Palestinian towns off the map" and that the Palestinian people "should not exist." ▶ Page 5

One Palestinian child "killed every hour"

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – The United Nations have underscored the stark reality for children facing the U.S.-backed Israeli genocidal war in the blockaded Gaza Strip.

Philippe Lazzarini, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), took to social media to share a harrowing message about the ongoing tragedy in Gaza.

In his post, Lazzarini described the devastating toll the genocidal war is taking, calling Gaza "no place for children."

Citing UNICEF figures, Lazzarini revealed that 14,500 Palestinian children have been killed since the start of the war, amounting to an unimaginable rate of "one child killed every hour".

"These are not numbers. These are lives cut short," he wrote, stressing the unimaginable loss of young lives.

Lazzarini's post highlighted not only the fatalities but also the lasting scars on those who survive. ▶ Page 5

New horrific stories come out of Gaza

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN – Zionists have perpetrated heinous crimes against Palestinian people since their arrival in Palestine.

To create the Israeli apartheid regime, Zionist forces attacked major Palestinian cities and destroyed hundreds of villages.

When Israel was established in 1948,

more than 750,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homes. This was the climax of the Zionist ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

After Israel's creation, the regime not only persisted in its brutalities against Palestinians but also seized more Palestinian lands.

Israel's war on Gaza which began in October last year, has further exposed the regime's true colors. Over the past 14 months, the brutality of vicious Zionists has snowballed into cold-blooded savagery.

Since then, the Israeli army has slaughtered more than 45,000 Palestinians, including 17,000 children in Gaza. ▶ Page 5

Exclusive Interview

"War on Gaza": Joe Sacco's graphic journey through genocide

By Ali Hamedin

TEHRAN- Imagine the sharp scratch of pen on paper, sketching scenes of war, displacement, and resilience. The panels come alive, telling stories too raw for photographs and too complex for a headline. This is the world of Joe Sacco, a pioneer who turned the ink-stained pages of comics into a medium for journalism as vivid as it is visceral: Comics Journalism.

For decades, Sacco has redefined what journalism can be, using the medium of comics to plunge readers into the lived realities of those caught in warzones. From the Israeli crimes in "Palestine" (1996) and "Footnotes in Gaza" (2009) to the horrors of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia in "Safe Area Goražde" (2000) ▶ Page 8

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Foreign plotters active to stoke unrest

In an analysis, Farhikhtegan discussed the Western support for inflaming unrest in Iran. The paper said: The Leader of the Revolution said that the enemies are trying to undercut the security and stability of the country to create chaos and disturbance in Iran. Anthony Blinken, while admitting the difficulty of sabotage in Iran, said the U.S. prefers support for rebellion inside Iran. This means a chaotic design is underway. If in the past years, the Western powers - with the Zionists behind the scenes - were taking steps to create chaos in Iran, these days, especially after the new developments in Syria, now they are openly talking about stoking chaos. In addition to Netanyahu's messages and the repetition of the slogan of "woman, life, freedom", the ambassador of the Zionist regime to the United Nations said in Farsi during the meeting of the Security Council: "People of Iran, do not miss this historic opportunity." This statement shows that the support for chaos has entered a new stage and reached the official statement of the Western and Zionist authorities. Therefore, we should be aware of actions to destabilize the situation of the country with foreign designs.

Hamshahri: Iran's alternative ways to support Hezbollah

In a commentary, Hamshahri discussed the Westerners' view about the strategic relationship between Iran and Hezbollah and said: Following the fall of the Bashar al-Assad government, Zionist-Western officials and media outlets consider the cutoff of Iran's logistical route to Hezbollah as very important in weakening the Lebanese resistance movement and a "great victory" for Tel Aviv. However, Western experts acknowledge that despite the fall of the Assad government, Iran's support for Hezbollah will not hit a deadlock and there are alternative ways. Experts believe that the air route to Beirut is not the only option for Iran to support Hezbollah, and Iran's land routes through Iraq and then Jordan and the West Bank as well as maritime routes to Lebanon's coast in the Mediterranean are still considered possible options. Based on these concerns, the new Syrian government has banned any Iranian flights from crossing the country's skies. This action, above all, derives Tel Aviv's concerns about Iran's continued support for the resistance movement of the Lebanese

Iran looking to reopen embassy in Syria, declares govt. spokesperson



Iran's government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani speaks during a press conference in Tehran on December 24, 2024.

TEHRAN - The Iranian government has announced its readiness to reopen its embassy in Damascus, signaling a commitment to strengthening ties with Syria as the country faces a range of escalating challenges following recent political upheavals.

Speaking at a press conference on Tuesday, government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani emphasized that Iran is pursuing the reopening through diplomatic efforts.

"Our approach to reopening embassies has always been diplomatic, and we are prepared for this step," she said. "Syria is also ready, and ongoing diplomatic talks are focused on finalizing this process."

The announcement comes two weeks after militants from Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) seized control of Syria on December 8, ending the 24-year presidency of Bashar al-Assad. On the same day, the Iranian diplomatic mission in Damascus was stormed and looted by unknown forces.

and Palestinian people.

Iran: Situation in the Middle East will change

In an article, the Iran newspaper discussed the events in Syria and the change of conditions. It wrote: As it is clear, the military operation by "Tahrir al-Sham" that led to the fall of the Bashar government was mainly directed by Turkey and Iran has faced a new reality. Also, though the flag of the Damascus embassy in Tehran has been lowered, it is not supposed to remain so. The world of politics in the Middle East has changed. After 13 years of fighting terrorism in Syria and Iraq, Tehran wants to find a place for itself in the frontline of diplomacy. While Turkey's role in the fall of Assad was instrumental, Iran believes that this situation will not last long. Turkey's conflict with the Kurds has already worried Washington and Tel Aviv, and this has created a deep gap in favor of Iran. Although it is said what has happened in Syria has made the situation difficult for Iran, Tehran believes in its ability to negotiate with all actors.

Arman-e-Melli: Iran and Russia are tied together

The story of the relationship between Iran and Russia is as old as history and this shows that the two nations have gone through many ups and downs together. Relations between Tehran and Moscow have entered a new phase in recent decades. No matter how hard Iran tried, it could not prevent Europeans from accusing the Islamic Republic of selling arms (drones) to Russia in its war with Ukraine. Also, regarding Syria, it is said that the Russians did not do as much as they should to support the resistance front. On the other hand, the Russians have also taken certain decisions against Iran in the Persian Gulf and the South Caucasus. These moves have brought about a sharp reaction from the Iranian government and people. With all these challenges, it seems that the relations between the two countries are tied together on the international scene. If the Russians do not support Iran's interests, it will be a loss for them because Iran will continue its path in any situation. If the Russians want to take actions that are not beneficial for Iran, Tehran will reconsider its relations. We hope that the visit of Russian officials to Tehran will prevent anti-Iran moves.

Islamic Revolution principles key to Iran's global strategy, says FM

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi has emphasized that the Islamic Republic's diplomatic power is deeply rooted in the revolutionary ideals of the Islamic Revolution.

Speaking at the 14th National Conference of Political Leaders and Advisors of the Armed Forces, organized by the Army's Ideological and Political Organization, Araghchi stressed the interdependence of diplomacy and military strategy as vital components of Iran's national power.

"Diplomacy and the field are inseparable; they complement each other in achieving the nation's strategic goals," Araghchi said on Tuesday, highlighting the synergy between Iran's military capabilities and its diplomatic initiatives.

Araghchi described resistance to oppression, injustice, and foreign domination as central tenets of the Islamic Revolution's discourse. "The ability to stand against tyranny, occupation, and interference is not only enshrined in international law but also resonates as a natural human



and moral obligation," he stated. He credited the Islamic Revolution with revitalizing this ideology, which continues to shape Iran's domestic and foreign policies.

The Foreign Minister also elaborated on the indispensable role of hard power in strengthening diplomacy. "Without hard power, diplomacy cannot effectively achieve its objectives.

Economic, cultural, psychological, and soft power play critical roles in foreign policy, but hard power remains the backbone of these ef-

orts," he explained.

Araghchi highlighted Iran's unique ability to develop discourse and adapt to shifting global dynamics. "The Islamic Republic's strength lies in its capacity to create and sustain a revolutionary narrative, enabling us to navigate even the most challenging circumstances," he said.

He underscored the importance of national unity and cohesion as the cornerstone of Iran's power. "A diplomat's primary duty is to understand and utilize all elements of national power to safeguard our

interests and security. However, the true source of these elements is the people. Therefore, we must prioritize fostering national solidarity and consensus," he asserted.

'Yemen reshaping regional dynamics independently'

Araghchi also reaffirmed the country's support for Yemenis and Resistance groups across the region, while categorically denying claims that Iran provides military aid to Sana'a.

Speaking on the sidelines of the conference, Araghchi highlighted Yemen's resilience in the face of economic and military adversity.

He praised Yemenis for their unexpected and unprecedented contributions to the Resistance Movement. He underscored that while Iran supports Resistance efforts, Yemenis have demonstrated their ability to stand independently in their struggle against foreign aggression.

On Monday, Yemeni Armed Forces intensified their attacks on Israeli positions, reportedly launching two drone strikes on locations in Jaffa and Ashkelon.

Trump's behavior will shape Iran's policies: Leader's advisor warns threats will be matched



Head of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations Kamal Kharrazi during an interview with Al Mayadeen aired on December 23, 2024.

TEHRAN - In a comprehensive interview with Al Mayadeen that aired on Monday, Kamal Kharrazi, head of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, delineated Iran's strategic responses to the incoming Trump administration, revealing Tehran's diplomatic approach across various fronts.

Kharrazi, who is also a senior advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, signaled Iran's readiness for any U.S. policy direction under Trump.

"We are prepared to respond depending on the policies they pursue. They previously tried Max-

imum Pressure, which ended in failure," he said.

The senior diplomat emphasized the importance of patience, stating that while Iran is ready for any situation, Trump's "unpredictable character" makes it difficult to anticipate his decisions.

On Iran's nuclear stance, Kharrazi asserted, "If they take steps against us, it's natural for us to respond with proportional measures at the appropriate time."

In 2015, Iran signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with the P5+1 and the EU to limit its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed Iran's compliance with the agreement.

However, President Trump withdrew the U.S. from the JCPOA during his first term and launched a "Maximum Pressure" campaign, reimposing strict sanctions against Iran.

In response to the U.S. withdrawal and lack of European support, Iran began gradually reducing

its compliance with the JCPOA, reflecting a strategic adjustment rather than an abandonment of the deal.

The Syrian conundrum and Resistance's sturdiness

Kharrazi painted a complex picture of the Syrian conflict, highlighting the roles of various international actors.

He underscored the U.S. and the Israeli regime's role in orchestrating Assad's downfall, stating that the "immediate" trip of Western officials to Damascus after the recent political upheaval indicates "what transpired was part of an American plan."

He reaffirmed the resilience of the Axis of Resistance, particularly in Palestine, with the assertion, "The roots of resistance are strong and solid."

The senior diplomat emphasized the enduring nature of Resistance movements, despite changes in regional political landscapes.

Additionally, Kharrazi expressed optimism about improving relations with neighbors, notably Saudi Arabia, aiming for both Iran and Saudi Arabia to "play a pivotal role in ensuring security, stability, and peace in the region."

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

'U.S. agent assassinated Iranian military advisor in Syria: senior commander

TEHRAN - The Deputy Commander of Iran's Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, Mohammad Jafar Asadi, announced that Iranian military advisor Kiomars Pourhashemi was martyred in Syria by an infiltrator acting on behalf of the United States.

"An American agent was responsible for the martyrdom of our commander in Aleppo," Asadi revealed to an Iranian news agency on Monday.

He dismissed allegations that a Syrian general was behind the killing, labeling them as "Israeli propaganda aimed at creating discord between Iran and Syria," and emphasizing that such claims originate from the West.

Brigadier General Pourhashemi, an advisor within the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), was martyred on November 28 in Aleppo. Initially, details surrounding his assassination were not disclosed.

On Sunday, however, a correspondent from China's CGTN in Ankara claimed that Pourhashemi was shot by a Syrian officer during a meeting in a joint operations room in Aleppo, which was denied

by Brigadier General Asadi.

Further illustrating the challenges faced by the Syrian army, Asadi remarked, "With the whole world mobilized against them, they barely have food and water."

He also highlighted Russia's challenges in Syria due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, stating, "The Russians have been bogged down for a long time, with NATO's imposed war leaving them unable to do much."

Drawing a parallel with Libya, Asadi suggested that accountability in Syria has become opaque: "Now in Syria, there's no accountability anymore; you can blame anyone for any murder."

Regarding the "National Defense Forces" in Syria, established by the martyred General Qasem Soleimani, Asadi commented, "This force was formed with great difficulty during General Soleimani's time, but the Syrian army did not warmly welcome it. Assad himself didn't understand why volunteers should take up arms."

He added that, after extensive persuasion, about 120,000 people joined this force, signifi-



IRGC advisor Kiomars Pourhashemi was martyred on November 28, 2024 in Aleppo, Syria

cantly aiding the army at the time.

However, Asadi lamented the decline of this force, noting, "When militants gathered in Idlib near Turkey, Americans and Israelis supplied them with weapons, while the National Defense Forces were sidelined, their numbers reduced from 120,000 to 20,000."

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iranian parliament holds closed-door session to discuss dollar exchange rates, economic issues

TEHRAN - The spokesperson for the Iranian Parliament's Board of Directors announced that a closed-door session was held to discuss the recent surge in exchange rates and pressing economic issues facing the country.

Abbas Godrazi, the spokesperson, revealed that Tuesday

morning's meeting was specifically focused on the rising value of foreign currencies and broader economic concerns.

Prior to the session, it was announced that members of Parliament, alongside senior government officials, would review the state of the country's currency system, strategies for managing

exchange rate fluctuations, and the distribution of foreign exchange resources.

In attendance were the head of the Planning and Budget Organization, the Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance, and the Governor of the Central Bank.

Godrazi emphasized that the

key takeaway from the meeting was the need for effective collaboration between the government and Parliament.

"Both institutions must work together to restore economic stability and improve the livelihoods of citizens, ensuring the long-term health of the nation's economy," he concluded.

Israel's admission of Haniyeh assassination

Iran says confirmation proves the legitimacy of Operation True Promise II

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei told the Tehran Times that Israel's recent confirmation of Haniyeh's assassination unequivocally validates Iran's rightful retaliatory response on October 1st when approximately 200 precision-guided ballistic missiles were launched at the occupied territories.

"It was clear to Iran that Israel was behind the assassination from the beginning," Baghaei said on Tuesday.

"That's why shortly after the attack, we registered a document with the UN and emphasized that Israel had violated Iran's sovereignty and national integrity.

We also noted that we have the legal right to respond."

Israel assassinated Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh on July 31, hours after he attended the inauguration of President Masoud Pezeshkian.

A short-range projectile was fired from outside the Palestinian leader's residence in Tehran.

On Monday, Israeli war minister Israel Katz publicly acknowledged for the first time that the regime assassinated Haniyeh.

He made the confession while making threats of similar terrorist attacks against Yemeni officials.

While Iran's response came two months after the assault, Western states condemned the country for attacking Israel "unprovoked".

"There were some who argued that we should have remained



Martyr Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh at the inauguration of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on July 30, 2024.

passive because there was no official Israeli claim of responsibility.

However, our action was the necessary and justified response, and this latest development confirms that our approach was correct all along."

Baghaei stated, adding Tehran will probably be filing more documents on the matter at the UN.

Israel's shield of impunity is a license for terror and crime

Imagine a world where international rules are mere suggestions, and certain states operate with a wink and a nod.

That's the reality Israel seems to be navigating, emboldened by Washington's shadow.

Israel's admission of the Haniyeh assassination comes a couple of days after the regime blatantly boasted about terrorist attacks that killed 30 and injured over 3,000 peo-

ple in Lebanon in September.

Two alleged former Mossad agents appeared in front of CBS's camera to explain how the regime orchestrated widespread pager and walkie-talkie explosions on September 17 and 18. They claimed Israel was going after Lebanon's Hezbollah Resistance movement but some of the deceased and many of the injured were women and children.

When it comes to Gaza, there is not one war crime Israel has not yet committed.

The regime has been starving the population, depriving it of water and medicine, targeting homes, hospitals, and schools, and raining bombs on tents housing the displaced so that it can watch women and children burn alive.

All these admissions and evidence of brazen terrorist attacks and war crimes swirl around Israel,

yet the international community's ability to hold them accountable feels like a broken record stuck on repeat. Why?

Because the U.S., with its veto power at the UN, effectively acts as Israel's shield, turning the global body into a toothless tiger when it comes to restraining Israeli actions.

Every attempt to condemn or every resolution seeking accountability meets the stone wall of Washington's opposition, rendering the UN's collective voice a muted whisper.

Whenever the U.S. lacks unfettered control in an organization or is not a member, it uses coercion to prevent any pressure on Israel.

A clear example of this is the case of the International Criminal Court (ICC), where American senators spent months threatening its judges in a bid to thwart the issuing of arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former war minister Yoav Gallant.

The behavior of American officials has led to a climate where Israel can not only commit acts of aggression but can practically flaunt them, knowing that meaningful consequences are unlikely to materialize.

It's a high-stakes drama playing out on the world stage, where impunity reigns supreme and the very foundations of international justice are under assault.

Persepolis draw up list of managerial candidates



TEHRAN – A shortlist has been drawn up by Persepolis football club to succeed Juan Carlos Garrido.

A shortlist of several coaches has been analyzed however the club distanced themselves from links to some of them.

Persepolis parted ways with Garrido following poor results in the Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) and AFC Champions League Elite.

Former Iran and Persepolis iconic midfielder Karim Bagheri has been appointed as interim coach but the club will surely hire a foreign coach in the coming days.

Italian tactician Walter Mazzarri, who managed Napoli last season but without notable success, is a candidate to replace Garrido in the Iranian most decorated football team.

The 62-year-old coach boasts extensive experience across various clubs, including Inter, Torino, Sampdoria, Watford, Cagliari, Livorno, and others.

Mazzarri, who is known for his tactical flexibility and ability to organize a solid defense, has been also linked with a move to Dinamo Zagreb. He had been linked to take charge of Persepolis in the summer but the agreement fell apart at the last moments.

Argentine coach Hernan Crespo is also a candidate and is free agent after parting company with Emirate side Al Ain.

He helped Al Ain win AFC Champions League last season but was sacked after a string of disappointing results that culminated in a 5-1 loss to Cristiano Ronaldo's Al-Nassr in the AFC Champions League Elite in November.

Former Sepahan coach Jose Morais is also a candidate to take charge of the team.

The Portuguese coach left Sepahan in early November and media reports suggest that he has been linked with Persepolis.

Former Croatia and Bayern Munich head coach Niko Kovac was also a candidate but the media reports suggest that he has rejected the job and would rather take up a position at one of Europe's leading clubs.

Quique Sanchez Flores is another option but it is unlikely to happen because the Spanish coaches have not been successful in Iran football so far. Paul Le Guen, Fabio Cannavaro, Slaven Bilic, Lucien Favre and Frank de Boer are among the other candidates.

Defending champions Persepolis sit fourth in the table five points adrift of the leaders and are still the favorites to win the title.

Azmoun scores as Shabab Al Ahli beat Al Nasr at UAE League Cup

TEHRAN – Shabab Al Ahli football team defeated Al Nasr 2-0 in the 2024-25 UAE League Cup Monday night.

Sardar Azmoun scored the first goal in the 47th minute at the Al Rashid Stadium and Federico Cartabia netted the second goal in the 77th minute. The UAE League Cup or the Pro League Cup is a knockout tournament for clubs in the UAE Pro-League.

The first edition of the tournament was played in the 2008-2009 season.

Niko Kovac rejects Persepolis job

TEHRAN – Former Croatia and Bayern Munich head coach Niko Kovac has rejected Ira-

nian football team Persepolis's offer.

Persepolis have recently parted ways with Juan Carlos Garrido and is looking for a replacement for the Spaniard until the end of the season.

Kovac, 53, would rather take up a position at one of Europe's leading clubs, the media reported.

Karim Bagheri has been appointed as interim coach at Persepolis.

The defending champions sit fourth in Iran league, five points behind leader Tractor.

Zarei wins gold at 2024 Asian Youth & Junior Championships

TEHRAN – Iran's Hamidreza Zarei claimed a gold medal at the 2024 Asian Youth & Junior Championships.

Zarei finished in first place with 334kg (146+188) in the Youth Men's -96kg.

Uzbekistan's Rakhmatjonov Ruslan seized the silver with 331kg (151+180) and Indian Parv Chaudhary won the bronze with 303kg (135+168).

In the Junior Men's -89kg, Iranian weightlifters Iliya Salehipour with 356kg (161+195) and Alireza Abbaspour with 355kg (159+196) won silver and bronze medal, respectively.

Gold medal went to Kazakhstan's Churkin Alexey ??? with 360kg (163+197).

2024 Asian Youth & Junior Championships are being held in Doha, Qatar from Dec. 19 to 25.

Azadi Stadium eligible for January 2: Mehdi Taj

TEHRAN – Head of Iran football federation Mehdi Taj said that Azadi Stadium is eligible for January 2.

Taj said He that renovation work is progressing and under close oversight to meet the highest international standards.

"The stadium will reopen on January 2 with a match between Esteghlal and Sepahan in 2024-25 Iran Professional League," Taj said.

"In the renovation, infrastructural parts such as mechanical and electrical facilities, and plumbing have been completed.

Other parts of the stadium, such as the seats are not yet fully completed," he added.

The Azadi Stadium is an all-seater football stadium in Tehran, Iran.

It was inaugurated on 17 October 1971. It is currently self-owned by Esteghlal and Persepolis. It is also the home stadium of the Iran national football team.

It has a capacity of 78,116 spectators, as the result of conversion to all-seater stadium. The stadium is part of the larger Azadi Sport Complex.

Ex-Esteghlal winger Ravankhah takes charge of Havadar

TEHRAN – Omid Ravankhah was named as new head coach of Iranian top-flight club Havadar on Tuesday.

He replaced Mehdi Rahmati, who left the club following poor results.

Ravankhah, 38, most recently worked as head coach in first division side Paykan football team.

He started his coaching career in Sepidrood in 2017 and has also coached Kheybar, Baadraan and Saipa.

Havadar are bottom side of 2024/25 Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) with just eight points in 13 matches.

Ravankhah played for Esteghlal from 2007 to 2011.

Japanese media says Iran planning to seek Tokyo's mediation in potential talks with U.S.



TEHRAN – Sources within the Iranian government have allegedly told Japan's Kyodo News that Iranian officials are considering approaching Japan for assistance in facilitating negotiations with the upcoming U.S. administration under Donald Trump. Tehran has not yet reacted to the report.

Japan has historically maintained friendly relations with Iran, making it a potential neutral party in the delicate negotiations.

Should Iran formally request mediation and Japan agree, analysts believe that Japan could play a pivotal role in easing tensions between Tehran and Washington.

It is believed that Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi especially has close ties with Japan, as he served as an ambassador there for several years.

Relations between Iran and the U.S. have been strained since Iranians toppled the U.S.-controlled Shah regime in 1979.

However, tensions have significantly worsened in recent years, particularly after the U.S. unilaterally withdrew from an international nuclear agreement with Iran in 2018 and imposed heavy sanctions.

Iranian officials have stated they would negotiate with the U.S. if they believe it would serve their national interests.

Tehran is currently preparing for a second round of talks with Germany, Britain, and France after convening with the European trio in November following almost 2 years of no direct negotiations.

TRT Persian launch: Turkey's soft power amidst regional rivalry

By Xavier Villar

MADRID – Less than three months after Mohammad Zahid Sabaji, president of Turkey's State Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), announced the creation of a Persian-language channel, the broadcaster has commenced its operations from Turkish territory.

During the unveiling of the project at an event held at Uluda? University, Sabaji made statements that sparked mixed reactions, particularly among Iranian media. In his remarks, he emphasized the significance of the Persian-language channel, asserting, "We must unsettle Iran." This comment has been interpreted as a signal of Ankara's regional strategy, fueling debate over Turkey's intentions in its West Asia policies.

The channel's launch takes place within a complex geopolitical context, where Turkey and Iran maintain a relationship characterized by both cooperation and rivalry. The initiative highlights Ankara's commitment to strengthening its political and media influence beyond its borders, at a time when the balance of power in the region is undergoing significant shifts.

The statements by Mohammad Zahid Sabaji, president of Turkey's State Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), did not go unnoticed in Iran, drawing sharp criticism both on social media and in official circles.

Persian-speaking users strongly condemned Sabaji's remarks, while Ahmad Norouzi, vice president of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), responded on social media: "While we remain focused on reporting the daily suffering in Palestine and Lebanon, we will not be distracted by reckless comments.

However, we reserve the right to respond appropriately. From IRIB, we trust that Turkish authorities will disavow these statements and clarify the situation."

This verbal exchange highlights a significant shift in Turkey's regional strategy, moving away from the principles initially championed by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan during his tenure as prime minister (2003-2014). During that period, the AKP advocated a "zero problems with neighbors" policy, aimed at minimizing tensions within its regional sphere.

However, this approach unraveled with the outbreak of the so-called "Arab Spring," a wave of protests that profoundly reshaped the political

landscape across parts of Africa and West Asia. In response, Ankara adopted a more interventionist stance, marking a clear departure from its original non-confrontational doctrine. This strategic pivot continues to shape Turkey's relations with its neighbors, including Iran and other key regional actors.

According to numerous Iranian analysts, Turkey's shift in regional policy is rooted in its adoption of the pan-Turkism doctrine. This political movement advocates for the unification of countries with Turkic language, such as Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan, under a shared vision aimed at bolstering Turkey's geopolitical influence in the region.

Among the nations likely to align with this doctrine, Azerbaijan stands out as Turkey's principal ally. According to Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the rise to power of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey, coupled with what Tehran perceives as an expansionist policy in the South Caucasus, has facilitated the resurgence of pan-Turkism, particularly in Ankara-Baku relations.

The strategic cooperation between the two countries, largely driven by Turkey, is viewed by Tehran as a key factor in the ongoing tensions with Azerbaijan. This partnership underscores the complexities of regional dynamics and highlights the ideological and geopolitical undercurrents influencing Turkey's foreign policy.

A turning point in this dynamic came in 2020, when Turkey provided significant military support to Azerbaijan during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Beyond backing Baku's positions, Ankara played a decisive role in operations that led to the occupation of areas in southern Armenia, including the strategic Syunik province.

These actions raised concerns in Tehran, which perceives them as an attempt by Ankara to curtail Iran's geopolitical influence along its northwestern and northern borders.

The growing collaboration between Turkey and Azerbaijan, framed within the pan-Turkist ideology, continues to fuel tensions in a region where political, economic, and cultural interests are in constant contention. The Islamic Republic of Iran is increasingly wary of any attempt to alter the current borders between Armenia, Iran, and Azerbaijan, a scenario it views as a direct threat to its geopolitical standing in the region.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Flare gas emissions at South Pars to be reduced to 3 mcm

TEHRAN - The South Pars Gas Complex, a series of refineries processing Iran's largest gas field, currently burns 7.8 million cubic meters of gas per day in its flare systems. However, by the end of 2025, the country plans to reduce this flare gas emission by nearly two-thirds, aiming for a target of three million cubic meters per day, according to the complex's Head Gholam-Abbas Hosseini.

During a recent media tour of the complex, Hosseini outlined the significant improvements made in gas production, with the complex injecting 130 billion cubic meters of gas into the national grid over the past eight months.

This marks an increase of 1.2 billion cubic meters compared to the same period last year. The country remains highly dependent on natural gas, with around 90 percent of its energy consumption linked to gas, including major uses in electricity generation and gasoline production.

He also highlighted the critical role of the South Pars gas field in meeting domestic energy demands, noting that the Persian Gulf Star Refinery, one of the main consumers of natural gas, is crucial for gasoline production.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Hosseini discussed efforts to reduce the duration of major maintenance projects at South Pars.

"This year, the average downtime for essential maintenance has been cut from 45 days to between 18 and 25 days. Plans for next year have already been developed, with further improvements aimed at maintaining continuous production and refining capabilities," he noted.

The official emphasized that South Pars is fully prepared to meet the winter demand for gas, and with improved operational readiness, the complex is poised to face any challenges in the coming months. However, he stressed the importance of better managing gas consumption across the country.

Pressure boosting in South Pars is one of National Iranian Oil Company's top priorities.

Despite the high production levels, Iran's energy consumption remains problematic. Hosseini pointed out that the country's energy intensity is 3.3 times higher than the global average. This inefficient use of energy is one of the main factors contributing to the gas imbalance, with excessive domestic consumption straining available resources.

The official also noted that many countries are astonished when they learn that Iran consumes 850 million cubic meters of gas daily, with some mistakenly assuming that figure refers to annual consumption rather than daily usage. This highlights the need for

1,500 manufacturing units active in Iran's printing, packaging industry

TEHRAN - Iran's printing and packaging industry hosts approximately 1,500 manufacturing units and 150,000 small businesses, contributing significantly to the country's industrial landscape, according to Ebrahim Sheikh, Deputy Minister for General Industries at the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade.

In an interview with IRIB News on the sidelines of the 31st International Printing, Packaging, and Related Industries Exhibition, Sheikh highlighted key challenges facing the sector, including energy shortages.

"The printing and packaging industry relies heavily on energy, especially electricity, to maintain production levels," he said, calling for greater cooperation from the Ministry of Energy to ensure a stable power supply for the industry.

In addition to energy concerns, Sheikh pointed to issues such as the importation of machinery and raw materials, as well as long waiting lines that have been a source of frustration for industry professionals. He noted



greater energy conservation and management measures to align Iran's consumption patterns with global standards and ensure a more sustainable energy future.

Iran's Oil Minister has underlined "pressure boosting" in the South Pars gas field as one of the National Iranian Oil Company's (NIOC) top priorities, pledging significant progress by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (late March 2025).

"We are diligently advancing preliminary studies for the South Pars pressure boosting project, and I expect to announce promising updates regarding the finalization of certain contracts before the year's end," Minister Mohsen Paknejad said in late November.

The South Pars gas reservoir, a critical energy source for Iran, is experiencing pressure declines, raising alarms across the energy sector. Experts have repeatedly warned about the potential consequences, with the Parliament's Research Center highlighting the deteriorating gas balance in the country.

In a recent report, the center projected that by 2041, daily gas production in Iran might reach 898.7 million cubic meters, significantly falling short of the anticipated demand of 1,410.8 million cubic meters. This shortfall of 512 million cubic meters per day could lead to severe challenges in meeting energy needs, especially during the winter months.

"The declining pressure in South Pars is a pressing concern for both the oil industry and the country at large," the oil minister said, calling for immediate action to be taken to address this issue.

South Pars gas field, which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf water, is divided into 24 standard phases of development in the first stage. Most of the phases are fully operational at the moment.

The huge offshore field covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which are in Iran's territorial waters in the Persian Gulf. The remaining 6,000 square kilometers, called North Dome, are situated in Qatar's territorial waters.

The field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

that the Industry Ministry has taken these complaints into account and forwarded them to the Central Bank of Iran, urging the bank to allocate foreign exchange for the import of necessary equipment and materials.

The Deputy Minister also discussed the need for stronger support for the sector's exports. He emphasized the importance of export incentives and initiatives to help expand the presence of Iranian printing and packaging products in international markets.

The official made the remarks on the sidelines of the 31st International Printing, Packaging and Related Machinery Exhibition of Iran (IPP), which kicked off at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on Monday.

As reported, the four-day event is hosting 450 Iranian and foreign participants.

As announced by the deputy industry, mining and trade minister, the value of the export from the printing and packaging sector stands at \$400 million per annum.

Iran signs over \$1.8b investment contracts with private sector for ports development

TEHRAN - Iran's Ministry of Transport and Urban Development, in collaboration with the Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO), has signed investment contracts and agreements totaling 933 trillion rials (\$1.86 billion) with private sector entities to advance the country's port infrastructure and maritime services.

The agreements were finalized during a ceremony marking National Transportation Day under the theme "Advancing Maritime Transportation and Port Services: The Main Pillar of Marine-Based Development." The event was attended by Transport and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadegh, PMO Head Ali Akbar Safaei, members of parliament, provincial governors, and representatives from coastal provinces, the private sector, and the maritime community.

These contracts aim to enhance maritime trade capabilities, expand port facilities, and improve services critical to Iran's broader economic objectives. The initiatives are expected to modernize infrastructure and increase private sector participation, signaling a key step toward strengthening Iran's position in regional and international maritime logistics.

Iran's ports are pivotal to its economic development, serving as gateways for international trade and transit. The country's strategic location, bridging major shipping routes, provides opportunities to leverage its maritime assets to facilitate both imports and exports. Officials have highlighted the importance of private sector engagement in driving innovation and ensuring sustainable development in port operations.

Recent efforts include plans to upgrade key ports such as Ban-



dar Abbas, Chabahar, and Imam Khomeini Port, focusing on increasing cargo handling capacity, automating port systems, and reducing turnaround times for vessels. Such improvements aim to position Iranian ports as competitive hubs for regional trade, particularly in light of growing competition from neighboring countries.

In addition to infrastructure upgrades, the government has prioritized integrating ports with the country's rail and road networks to streamline logistics and boost efficiency. Enhanced connectivity is expected to lower transportation costs, attract foreign investment, and create new economic opportunities in coastal provinces.

Despite challenges posed by international sanctions, Iran is pursuing multilateral partnerships and exploring innovative financing mechanisms to sustain growth in the maritime sector. By fostering a more dynamic and investor-friendly environment, the country aims to unlock the potential of its ports and solidify its role in the global shipping landscape.

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.

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.

Petrochemical revenue to reach \$25b amid investment surge

TEHRAN - Iran's petrochemical sector is set to increase its foreign exchange revenue to over \$25 billion, bolstered by new investments in natural gas production, according to Ahmad Mahdavi, Secretary-General of the Iranian Petrochemical Employers' Association.

Speaking to local media, Mahdavi revealed that 10 agreements have been signed to address the country's natural gas supply imbalance and invest in gas fields. These agreements, totaling \$8.0 billion in investment, are expected to enhance daily gas production by 200 million cubic meters.

As Tasnim News Agency reported, the new projects are slated to be completed by the end of Iran's Seventh National Development Plan (2026). Once operational, they are projected to significantly boost the foreign currency income generated by the petrochemical sector, positioning it as a key contributor to Iran's economy.

Mahdavi urged the Oil Ministry and government to streamline licensing processes to expedite investments in this critical sector. He emphasized that these initiatives could substantially mitigate the nation's gas supply shortfall while supporting industrial growth.

Natural gas output reaches 865 million cubic meters per day

TEHRAN - Iran has increased its daily production of sweet gas to 865 million cubic meters, exceeding the Ministry of Oil's daily delivery target of 845 million cubic meters, according to Mohammadreza Jolaei, Director of Production Coordination and Supervision at the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC).

The country is also producing over one billion cubic meters of rich gas per day, ISNA reported.

Speaking during a media tour of the South Pars Gas Complex, Jolaei emphasized the vital role of the complex, which currently provides 70 percent of Iran's gas supply, saying: "Of the 850-860

million cubic meters of gas injected daily into the national grid, approximately 590 million cubic meters originate from South Pars."

In addition to gas, the complex produces 700,000 barrels of gas condensates, 20,000 tons of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG),

1,500 tons of sulfur, and 5,000 to 6,000 tons of ethane daily. These outputs underscore the complex's significance to Iran's energy and petrochemical sectors. The gas produced at South Pars is equivalent to 3.5 million barrels of crude oil, further highlighting its strategic importance.

Iran to unveil its first AI-equipped oil well next year

From page 1 ▶ Next year, the country's first oil well that will be equipped with artificial intelligence will be unveiled in the Sepehr and Jofeyr oil fields, he further announced.

According to him, the country's first smart refinery is also being prepared in Qeshm Island in the south of Iran.

The vice president for science, technology

and knowledge-based economy pointed to the need to pay attention to the introduction of artificial intelligence into the oil industry, said: "In order to achieve artificial intelligence, we need to achieve commercial intelligence first."

"We are opening one of the most important business intelligences", he said, adding that

artificial intelligence will be added to this center in the next year to provide the needed solutions.

Stating that this is a big project in the country, he said such projects are carried out in neighboring countries using the power of international companies, but in Iran it was done with domestic power.

One Palestinian child “killed every hour”

From page 1 ▶ “Those who survive are scarred physically and emotionally. Deprived of learning, boys and girls in Gaza sift through the rubble,” he said.

His words carried a stark warning about the long-term consequences for Gaza's youth. “The clock is ticking for these children.

They are losing their lives, their futures, and mostly their hope,” the Commissioner-General stated.

The post has resonated widely on social media, prompting calls for immediate action to protect Gaza's children and provide humanitarian assistance. Lazzarini ended with a powerful reminder that “Killing children cannot be justified.”

Childhood innocence has been overshadowed by devastation, trauma, and deprivation in one of the most heart-wrenching places on earth, UNICEF's Communication Specialist Rosalia Bollen said.

In an emotional statement, Bollen painted a harrowing picture of the daily reality for over a million children trapped in Gaza, urging the global community to take immediate action to save lives and ease suffering.

“Children in Gaza are cold, sick, and traumatized,” said Bollen. “Hunger and malnutrition, coupled with dire living conditions, are putting their lives at risk.

Over 96% of women and chil-



“Killing children cannot be justified.”

dren cannot meet their basic nutritional needs. Most are surviving on rationed flour, lentils, pasta, and canned food, a diet that slowly compromises their health.”

The scale of the humanitarian crisis has deepened dramatically, with aid entering Gaza at a trickle.

Bollen revealed that in November, an average of only 65 truckloads of assistance entered Gaza per day, compared to 500 daily before the war.

The northern part of Gaza, under siege for more than 75 days, has been particularly affected, with children in urgent need unable to access essential aid for over 10 weeks.

“Gaza must be one of the most heartbreaking places on earth for humanitarians. Every small effort to save a child's life is un-

done by fierce devastation,” she said.

According to Bollen, over 14,500 children have been reportedly killed in the past 14 months, with thousands more injured.

In a chilling briefing, Bollen shared the story of five-year-old Saad, a boy who lost his eyesight in a bombing and sustained severe injuries.

“When I met him, he told me: ‘My eyes went to heaven before I did.’ Hearing those words and seeing his distress was unbearable,” Bollen recounted.

As Gaza enters the cold winter months, the situation for children has worsened. Many lack adequate clothing and are forced to search the rubble for scraps of plastic to burn for warmth.

Hospitals are overwhelmed, running on limited fuel and lack-

ing basic supplies and medicines.

Diseases are spreading, further endangering vulnerable children.

“The suffering is not merely physical; it is also psychological,” said Bollen, sharing the heart-wrenching story of a seven-month-old baby boy, also named Saad, who died of malnutrition after months of struggling to survive.

“He was born in war and left this world without being given a chance to live in peace. I cannot even start to imagine the depth of suffering of his parents.”

As the world prepares for festive celebrations, Bollen called on people to reflect on the plight of Gaza's children and use their voices, political capital, and diplomatic leverage to push for urgent action.

“We must push for the evacuation of grievously injured children to seek life-saving care elsewhere and demand a ceasefire to allow aid to enter at scale,” she said.

Bollen's plea concluded with a stark warning: “Every day without action steals another day from Gaza's children.

Every delay costs more lives. This war should haunt every one of us. Gaza's children cannot wait.”

As winter tightens its grip on Gaza, the world must decide: will it stand by or stand up for the most vulnerable in society?

Incessant land theft in West Bank erodes myth of peace

From page 1 ▶ For long, the occupation entity has obstructed the establishment of a geographically connected Palestinian state through a network of bridges and tunnels that allow settlers to move separately from the Palestinians while terrorizing the Palestinians to expel them from their indigenous lands.

According to the Anti-Wall and Settlement Commission, since October 7 last year the occupation regime has seized more than 50,000 dunams of the West Bank's lands, in addition to demolishing nearly 500 homes and facilities.

The commission pointed out the continuation of demolitions and forced displacement, especially in Bedouin population centers, expanding the scope of military checkpoints and erecting iron gates in various areas of the West Bank.

The West Bank area constitutes about 21% of the historical Palestine. It includes 11 governorates, the largest of which is Hebron, followed by Ramallah and Al-Bireh.

It is called the “West Bank” because it is located west of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. It is the Palestinian land that was annexed to Jordan at the Jericho Conference in 1951, and constituted the remaining part of Palestine that the Zionists did not seize during 1948, including East Jerusalem.

During the 1967 war, the enemy occupied

the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and displaced about half a million Palestinians.

The Security Council issued Resolution 242 in November 1967 calling on Israel to withdraw and for the refugees to return to their homes.

Then in 1988, Jordan decided to sever legal, administrative and financial ties at the request of the Palestine Liberation Organization as the West Bank was no longer part of Jordan. However, religious endowments remained linked to Jordan.

In 1987, the “First Intifada” or the so-called “Stone Children's Intifada” broke out until 1991, when international parties sought to hold the “Madrid Peace Conference” followed by the Oslo Accords that were held between 1993 and 1995.

After the signing of the Oslo Accords and the formation of the Palestinian Authority, the West Bank remained subject to the dominance of the occupation, settlement policies, and economic dependence.

The Oslo Accords stipulated the formation of the Palestinian Authority as an administrative entity whose mission is to manage the affairs of the Palestinians and control their security and civil affairs in the areas subject to their self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza for a transitional period of 5 years.

According to the agreement, the lands of

the West Bank were divided into areas subject to Palestinian sovereignty and others subject to “joint Palestinian-Israeli sovereignty”, in addition to areas directly subject to “Israeli security sovereignty”, including the major settlement blocs.

During the Second Intifada that broke out in 2000, with the escalation of armed operations by the Palestinian resistance behind the Green Line or inside what became known as the Israeli depth, the occupation regime began in 2002 to build a separation wall, 85% of which lies inside the West Bank.

The wall contributed to tightening the siege on the Palestinians and impoverishing them. In addition, more than 700 barriers were erected inside the West Bank, including 140 checkpoints that impose harsh restrictions on more than 70,000 Palestinians who hold Israeli work permits on a daily basis.

The West Bank's economy generally depends on financial grants, which come from what are known as the countries supporting “the peace process between Palestine and Israel.” It is subject to the financial laws imposed by the Israeli regime under the Oslo Accords.

The settlement policy also restricts investment opportunities due to the severing of ties to Palestinian land, in addition to controlling border crossings, customs revenues, and trade.

New horrific stories come out of Gaza

From page 1 ▶ Yoel Elizur, emeritus professor of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (al-Quds), has researched Israeli soldiers' experience with brutalization. He has written an essay that appeared in the daily newspaper Haaretz.

His essay describes gruesome details of the crimes committed by Israeli military forces.

Elizur, also a psychologist, refers to a group of ruthless soldiers, who confessed to violence before the draft. He said the power they received in the army is intoxicating: “It's like a drug ... you feel like you are the law, you make the rules. As if from the moment you leave the place called Israel and enter the Gaza Strip, you are God.”

Elizur, who was the chief supervisor of the Israeli army's Rear Rehabilitation Centers (RRCs), addressed several serious offenses committed by Israeli soldiers.

“I have no problem with women. One threw a slipper at me, so I gave her a kick here (pointing to the groin), broke all this here. She can't have children today.”

“X shot an Arab four times in the back and got away with a self-defense claim. Four bullets in the back from a distance of ten meters

... cold-blooded murder. We did things like that every day.”

Haaretz essay: “An Israeli commander grabbed a little 4-year-old Palestinian boy playing in the sand in his yard, broke his arm at the elbow and stepped on his stomach three times and left, saying these kids need to be killed from the day they are born.”

“An Arab just walked down the street, about 25 years old, didn't throw a stone, nothing. Bang, a bullet in the stomach. Shot him in the stomach, and he was dying on the sidewalk, and we drove away indifferently.”

Elizur cited an instance to illustrate how junior Israeli officers instigate atrocities.

“A new commander came to us. We went out

with him on the first patrol at six in the morning. He stops. There's not a soul in the streets, just a little 4-year-old boy playing in the sand in his yard.

The commander suddenly starts running, grabs the boy, and breaks his arm at the elbow and his leg here. Stepped on his stomach three times and left.

We all stood there with our mouths open. Looking at him in shock ... I asked the commander: “What's your story?” He told me: These kids need to be killed from the day they are born. When a commander does that, it becomes legit.”

In reference to the Israeli crimes since the start of the Gaza war, Elizur said the Israeli cabinet's rhetoric of hatred and revenge has led to the mass killing of civilians in Gaza.

Palestinian prisoners released by the Israeli army have also described severe physical and psychological torture they experienced behind bars.

Israel claims to be the only democracy in the Middle East (West Asia). At least Elizur's essay has taken the lid off Israel's self-proclaimed democratic status.

Palestinian surgeon: Israel systematically destroys Gaza's healthcare system

Israel is systematically destroying the healthcare system in Gaza amid its genocidal war on the enclave, a Palestinian surgeon said on Tuesday.

Dr. Fadel Naim, an orthopedic surgeon at Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza City, said the healthcare system in the enclave is on the verge of collapse with hospitals unable to cope with the mounting numbers of casualties, Anadolu reported.

“Since the beginning of the (Israeli) aggression, the occupation has systematically destroyed every aspect of life in the Gaza Strip, with healthcare being among the most affected sectors,” Naim said in a video published on

his X account.

“Among the most affected sectors has been the healthcare system, which has been intentionally targeted at all levels from infrastructure, systems, equipment to medical personnel.”

He said that a deadly Israeli strike targeted the Baptist Hospital in October 2023, leaving over 500 people dead and causing partial damage to the hospital.

“The occupation systematically targeted all hospitals and medical facilities in Gaza, including major hospitals such as Al-Shifa, Nasser, Al-Quds, Kamal Adwan, Al-Rantisi, Al-Awda and smaller healthcare centers,” he continued.

Media Office: Israel provides full support for theft of aid in Gaza

The Gaza Government Media Office said in a statement on Telegram that Israel provides full support for the theft of aid and kills security personnel to starve civilians.

Israel has killed 723 policemen and aid security personnel since the beginning of the genocide in Gaza on October 7 last year, according to the latest statistics published by the office.

The army often targets policemen guarding aid shipments, followed by attacks by protected armed gangs, and steals humanitarian aid

as part of the starvation war imposed by Israel as collective punishment on the residents of Gaza.

“We condemn in the strongest terms the crimes committed by the Israeli occupation,” it said.

The statement added: “We call on the international community, the United Nations, and human rights and humanitarian organizations to intervene urgently and pressure the Israeli occupation to ensure the flow of aid without any obstacles.”

Protests erupt in Syria over Christmas tree burning

Protests have broken out in Syria over the burning of a Christmas tree, prompting calls for the new authorities to take steps to protect minorities.

A video posted on social media showed the tree on fire in the main square of Suqaylabiyah, a Christian-majority town in central Syria, with masked men around, BBC reported.

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the main faction that toppled President Bashar al-Assad, said foreign fighters had been detained over the incident.

HTS representatives have promised to protect the rights and freedoms of religious and ethnic minorities in Syria.

Thousands of demonstrators took to the streets across the country - through Damascus and Suqaylabiyah in Hama province.

Two masked fighters appeared in a video on

social media setting fire to the Christmas tree the night before Christians in Syria prepared to celebrate Christmas Eve.

On Tuesday more protesters took to the streets over the arson attack.

Some in the Kassa neighborhood of Damascus chanted against foreign fighters in Syria.

“Syria is free, non-Syrians should leave,” they said, in reference to the foreign fighters HTS said were behind the attack.

In the Bab Touma neighborhood of Damascus, protesters carried a cross and Syrian flags, chanting “We will sacrifice our souls for our cross.”

“If we're not allowed to live our Christian faith in our country, as we used to, then we don't belong here anymore,” a demonstrator named Georges told AFP news agency.

Trump again calls to buy Greenland after eyeing Canada and the Panama Canal

First it was Canada, then the Panama Canal. Now, Donald Trump again wants Greenland.

The president-elect is renewing unsuccessful calls he made during his first term for the U.S. to buy Greenland from Denmark, adding to the list of allied countries with which he's picking fights even before taking office on Jan. 20.

In a Sunday announcement naming his ambassador to Denmark, Trump wrote that, “For purposes of National Security and Freedom throughout the World, the United States of America feels that the ownership and control of Greenland is an absolute necessity.”

Trump again having designs on Greenland comes after the president-elect suggested over the weekend that the U.S. could retake control of the Panama Canal if something isn't done to ease rising shipping costs required for using the waterway linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

“You ask something unreasonable and it's more likely you can get something less unreasonable,” said Farnsworth, who is also author of the book “Presidential Communication and Character.”

Greenland, the world's largest island, sits between the Atlantic and Arctic oceans. It is 80% covered by an ice sheet and is home to a large U.S. military base. It gained home rule from Denmark in 1979 and its head of government, Múte Bourup Egede, suggested

that Trump's latest calls for U.S. control would be as meaningless as those made in his first term.

“Greenland is ours. We are not for sale and will never be for sale,” he said in a statement. “We must not lose our years-long fight for freedom.”

The Danish Prime Minister's Office said in its own statement that the government is “looking forward to welcoming the new American ambassador. And the Government is looking forward to working with the new administration.”

“In a complex security political situation as the one we currently experience, transatlantic cooperation is crucial,” the statement said. It noted that it had no comment on Greenland except for it “not being for sale, but open for cooperation.”

Trump canceled a 2019 visit to Denmark after his offer to buy Greenland was rejected by Copenhagen, and ultimately came to nothing.

He also suggested Sunday that the U.S. is getting “ripped off” at the Panama Canal.

“If the principles, both moral and legal, of this magnanimous gesture of giving are not followed, then we will demand that the Panama Canal be returned to the United States of America, in full, quickly and without question,” he said.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Tourism minister highlights plans to boost international arrivals



TEHRAN - Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, has announced ongoing discussions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs aimed at removing obstacles to international tourism in the country.

Speaking at a ceremony introducing the new Deputy for Tourism on Monday, Salehi-Amiri emphasized the importance of correcting global perceptions about Iran, which he underlined have been tarnished by "false narratives" spread by certain media outlets.

Salehi-Amiri highlighted the vast potential of Iran's cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts sectors as pivotal assets for economic growth and international engagement.

"Cultural heritage is our identity and a rich treasure, but it has not been adequately introduced to the younger generations," he said, stressing the need for youth to take pride in Iran's historical and civilizational capacity.

The minister also underscored the transformative role of handicrafts, which blend creativity, art, lifestyle, economy, and cultural transmission. He called for a shift toward privatization in tourism, stating, "The government must focus on policy-making, supporting the private sector, and overseeing policies, while operational matters should be delegated to private entities and associations."

Referring to over 2,700 tourism projects under development nationwide, Salehi-Amiri urged the government to streamline bureaucratic processes, remove inefficiencies, and enhance infrastructure to attract investors.

The minister further stressed the importance of global partnerships, participation in international exhibitions, and targeted advertising to counter negative stereotypes about Iran and present an authentic image of the country to potential visitors.

Salehi-Amiri revealed that talks with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are already underway to address entry barriers for tourists. "We must dispel the global misconceptions perpetuated by certain major media outlets. Revitalizing tourism will inject fresh energy into the nation's economy, create jobs, and breathe new life into management systems."

Finally, the minister underlined the need for public and private sector collaboration to achieve the goals outlined in the Seventh National Development Plan, noting that its potential success requires unified support from all stakeholders.

Filmmaker Pouran Derakhshandeh appointed Iran's ambassador for UNESCO intangible heritage



TEHRAN - Prominent Iranian filmmaker Pouran Derakhshandeh has been named Iran's ambassador for intangible cultural heritage to UNESCO.

The announcement was made during a press conference on Monday, hosted by the Tehran Intangible Heritage Center, which brought together journalists and theater professionals.

Derakhshandeh, known for her films that explore social and cultural themes, was asked to sharpen her focus on promoting Iranian intangible heritage in her work, particularly traditions preserved and practiced by women.

Atousa Momeni, head of the Tehran Intangible

Heritage Center, highlighted the significance of the appointment. "Our mission includes raising awareness, capacity building, and networking. As we succeeded in implementing these goals during a multimedia cultural heritage festival, we aim to set a similar example here," she said.

Momeni also emphasized the importance of using media as a tool to promote intangible heritage. "Over the past two years, UNESCO has stressed the role of media in transmitting intangible heritage. We see this project as a means to convey these concepts through theater to various age groups, making it a priority for us," she added.

Explaining Derakhshandeh's selection, Momeni remarked, "All of Ms. Derakhshandeh's work reflects intangible heritage. As a woman, she has delved into the lives of women and their cultural legacy. This marks the first time we proposed the idea of having an ambassador for intangible heritage to UNESCO, and we are proud to introduce her in this role."

Currently, a total of 26 cultural elements such as the Radif of Iranian music and Naqqali (Iranian dramatic story-telling) have been registered on the UNESCO list for the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Stonehenge possibly erected to unite ancient farming communities, study finds

This has been a monumental year for further insight about Stonehenge's creation. Researchers are now positing that the iconic stone circle may have been erected in an effort to unite ancient farming communities, CNN reported.

Earlier this year, experts discovered that Stonehenge's central six-ton altar stone may have come from more than 450 miles away in Scotland. It was previously known that the sarsen stones came from 16 miles away from the site, in what is now the British town of Marlborough, and that the smaller bluestones were brought from 125 miles away, from the Preseli hills in what is now Wales.

Mike Parker Pearson, a professor of British later prehistory at University College London, has proposed that Stonehenge's very creation may hinge on the stone's geographical distance. Stonehenge, he claims, may have been the result of early efforts to unite farmers and their communities across the British Isles

during a time of social change. The stones could have been a gift or signified a political alliance.

"Stonehenge stands out in being a material and monumental microcosm of the entirety of the British Isles," he writes in a new study, published in the journal *Archaeology International* on Thursday.

No other monument in the region includes stones from such distances. According to Parker Pearson, Stonehenge should be considered as much a political monument as a religious one. Though the structure is aligned to the winter and summer solstices, it may not be its primary purpose.

"I think we've just not been looking at Stonehenge in the right way. You really have to look at all of it to work out what they're doing. They're constructing a monument that is expressing the permanence of particular aspects in their world," Parker Pearson told the Guardian.

(Source: Art News)

Jolfa: a journey through UNESCO heritage and nature's splendor

By Afshin Majlesi

JOLFA - A photographer's paradise, the Jolfa region, settled in the northwest corner of East Azarbaijan province, is a treasure trove of natural wonders, historical landmarks, and cultural heritage.

Iran's Jolfa is separated by the Aras River from its namesake, Julfa, formerly Jugha, a city that serves as the capital of the Julfa District in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan.

Jolfa is a must-see destination for travelers seeking an authentic and multifaceted experience as it boasts three UNESCO World Heritage destinations; the Saint Stepanos Monastery, its neighboring Chupan Chapel, and Khajeh Nazar Caravanserai. In addition, the region is home to the Aras UNESCO Global Geopark, a realm of geological diversity and breathtaking beauty, which spans an impressive 1,670 square kilometers. The Jolfa region, which was once submerged beneath ancient seas, is now a haven for fossils, tectonic structures, and various sedimentary and igneous rocks. The geopark's mountainous terrain and its plethora of geological phenomena make it a prime destination for geotourism.

Stepping into various geosites, I was struck by its pristine landscapes and the stories embedded in its ancient formations. Those are not only scientific treasures but also artistic masterpieces sculpted by nature over millennia. From the rugged cliffs to serene valleys, every corner invites exploration and introspection. The Aras region's commitment to preserving its natural heritage while fostering educational and recreational opportunities is truly commendable.

Saint Stepanos Monastery: a testament to faith and architecture



Located in a tranquil landscape, the ancient Saint Stepanos Monastery is a masterpiece of architecture and a beacon of spiritual history. Dating back to the 9th century, this UNESCO-listed site has withstood the test of time, bearing witness to centuries of cultural and religious evolution.

Walking through the monastery's intricate stone arches and gazing at its towering dome, I felt an overwhelming sense of reverence. The blend of Persian and Armenian architectural elements is evident in every detail, from the ornate carvings to the robust walls that have protected this sacred space for centuries. Visiting Saint Stepanos is more than a historical journey; it is a spiritual experience that connects visitors to a profound legacy of faith.

Chupan Chapel: a hidden jewel of serenity



The Chapel of Chupan ("Shepherd's Chapel") is a humble yet captivating structure that once served as a place of worship for local shepherds.

Located inside an impressive geosite rich with rare fossils and bizarre-shaped stones, the chapel with its unassuming façade, offers



a stark contrast to the grandeur of Saint Stepanos. Exploring the chapel, I was enchanted by its simplicity and the stories it holds. The chapel's location near the Aras River adds to its charm, making it a peaceful retreat for those seeking comfort and a connection to the past. The Saint Stepanos Monastery and Chupan Chapel are part of the Armenian Monastic Ensembles of Iran, a UNESCO World Heritage ensemble located in the West Azarbaijan and East Azarbaijan provinces of Iran. This ensemble consists of three groups of Armenian churches, established between the 7th and 16th centuries CE.

Khajeh Nazar caravanserai: a testament to Jolfa's strategic location on the Silk Roads



Above a bend in the Aras River, this beautifully restored caravanserai offers stunning views of rugged red mountains and stretches across the historical river.

It is one of the 999 caravanserais constructed across Iran upon the order of Shah Abbas the Great, the fifth Safavid monarch of Iran from 1588 to 1629.

The three-portico caravanserai is among the 52 Iranian caravanserais collectively recognized as the Persian Caravanserai on UNESCO's World Heritage list.

Stepping inside its cozy walls, it's easy to imagine the vibrant scenes of yesteryear: merchants haggling over prices, sharing tales of their arduous journeys, and resting while their camels contentedly munch on hay.

Beyond UNESCO sites: Jolfa's enchanting attractions



Jolfa's allure extends far beyond its UNESCO-recognized landmarks. The region's natural beauty and rich history create an ambiance of experiences for every type of traveler:

Iron Bridge: a symbol of bravery and patriotism



Pol-e Ahani ("Iron Bridge"), along with the tombs of the Second World War's borderline martyrs, is located on the bank of the Aras River at the zero-point borderline between Iran and Nakhichevan.

animals, travertine stones, fossils dating back millions of years, as well as historical documents and antique tools.

In the courtyard, you will find stone rams, which, in Azerbaijani culture during the Ilkhanid era, served as gravestones for heroes and brave commanders. It also houses donated ancient books, texts, and artifacts excavated from the region. In the corridor, tall spiral tools, historically used for oil extraction, are on display.

Though the museum remains relatively obscure, its collection of fossils offers a delightful experience for visitors.

Additionally, the ecomuseum features local bread baked in traditional ovens and a variety of local dishes prepared and served on-site.

The Golfrij Ecomuseum provides a valuable glimpse into the lifestyle and heritage of the region's people from past centuries.

Border bazaars and multi-story malls



For those who love shopping, there are some border bazaars and multi-story malls where visitors can find an array of goods, from local handicrafts to international products.

Getting to Jolfa: accessibility and convenience



This cascading wonder is nestled in a lush, green valley, offering a serene escape and a perfect spot for nature enthusiasts.

The waterfall's moss-covered rocks and pristine waters create an idyllic setting for relaxation and photography.

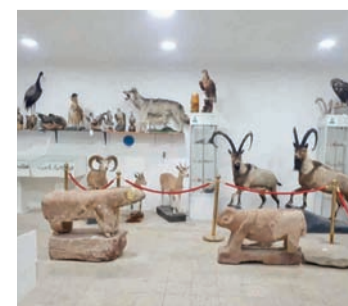
Kordasht complex



A historical site that encapsulates the architectural grandeur of the Safavid and Qajar eras. Its gorgeous bathhouse and centuries-old fortifications provide a glimpse into the opulence of past Iranian empires.

The stronghold served as the pivotal base for Abbas Mirza during the turbulent Russo-Persian Wars of the 19th century. Just a stone's throw from the fortress lies the Kordasht Bathhouse, a striking example of Persian ingenuity and luxury.

Golfrij Ecomuseum



The Golfrij Ecomuseum is located in a village of the same name, near Jolfa. It features taxidermied

Reaching Jolfa from Tabriz is a journey filled with scenic views and cultural insights. Travelers can choose from multiple modes of transportation, including private cars, buses, and trains. The railway connection, offering two daily departures, is particularly charming, allowing passengers to enjoy the picturesque landscapes along the way.

A call to adventure



Jolfa is a destination that beckons travelers with its harmonious blend of history, nature, and culture. Whether you are exploring the fossil-rich terrains of the Aras Geopark, marveling at the architectural splendor of Saint Stepanos, Chupan Chapel, or Khajeh Nazar Caravanserai, Jolfa promises an unforgettable journey.

This region, where the echoes of ancient civilizations meet the vibrancy of modern life, is a testament to Iran's enduring appeal as a land of wonders.

UNICEF improves access to safe water in flood-affected areas

TEHRAN –Following the devastating floods that struck Sistan-Baluchestan province, specifically in Chabahar and its vicinity, at the end of February 2024, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been providing critical assistance, including access to safe water, to the affected communities.

Access to clean and safe water has long been a challenge in the region, even before the floods.

Recognizing the urgent need to address this hazard, UNICEF in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education and the Ministry of Energy, initiated a comprehensive program to improve access to safe water, the UNICEF website announced in a press release on December 22.

This initiative aims to reduce waterborne illnesses, protect vulnerable families, and build resilience in the region's communities, ensuring sustainable access to clean and safe water.

UNICEF's response to the water crisis included critical support for water safety testing and purification efforts. "Forty water disinfection devices have been procured and distributed. These devices, which operate on solar energy, provide drinking water for approximately 200,000 people," explains Siavash Oveisi Arian, a UNICEF volunteer Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) officer.



"In addition, water quality testing laboratory equipment was distributed across the province," he added.

The laboratory equipment provided by UNICEF plays a crucial role in ensuring water safety for a large population in Sistan-Baluchestan province. Fatemeh Fadaee, Water and Wastewater Quality Control Manager of Chabahar County, explains, "We assess the water quality in the cities and villages of Chabahar, Dashiari, Konarak, Zarabad, Ghasreghand, and Nikshar, with a population of one million people, to ensure the safety and quality of the water."

This enhanced capacity for water quality testing helps

protect the health of communities across the province, reducing the risk of waterborne diseases and improving resilience against future public health challenges.

UNICEF also provided hygiene kits, latrines and showers, laboratory equipment, and water disinfection devices.

UNICEF's support to the flood-affected children and

their families in Sistan-Baluchestan, including the provision of hygiene kits, prefabricated latrines and showers, laboratory equipment, and water disinfection devices, was made possible through generous financial aid from EU Humanitarian Aid.

UNICEF responded swiftly to the humanitarian crisis in the aftermath of the floods. In the first phase, UNICEF procured 2900 essential hygiene packs including 2000 household hygiene kits, 300 baby kits, 500 Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) kits, and 100 incontinence kits to prevent disease outbreaks and promote children's overall well-being, the UNICEF website reported on April 30.

UNICEF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education and the Ministry of Energy, prioritized the provision of safe water and sanitation services to households and communities affected by the disaster to ensure that children and families stay safe and healthy.

UNICEF also delivered ten water tankers and over 3 tons of percholine powder to the affected areas, ensuring access to safe drinking water. This has also been materialized through generous European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) funding.

Normal, less than normal rainfall forecast for first half of winter

TEHRAN –Average rainfall is forecasted to be normal and, in some areas, less than normal for December 21-February 2, according to Metrological Organization.

In the first week of the first month of the winter (from December 23-29), the precipitation in the east, northeast, and some areas in the central and southern part of the country is less than normal, while in other areas it will be normal, ISNA reported.

Rainfall is expected to be above-normal in some parts of the middle Zagros. During the same period, the average temperature in the southeast of the country is 1 °C lower than normal. In the north-western part, it will be 3 to 5 °C, and in other parts 1 to 3 °C above normal.

In the second week (December 30-January 5), the amount of rainfall is above-normal in the western half of the coast of the Caspian Sea and central Zagros, less than normal in the southeast and some areas in south of the country, and normal in most other parts of the country.

The coastal zones of the Caspian Sea are forecasted to receive more than 30 mm of accumulated rainfall at the probability of 50-75 percent.

The air temperature in the south and southeast of the country is said to be 1-2 °C above-normal and normal in other regions.

Precipitation in the third week (January 6-12) is expected to be normal in the southwest and south of the country, and less than normal in other parts. The temperature will be 1 °C and 1-2 °C above-normal in the southern half and other regions, respectively.

In the 4th week (January 12-19), precipitations tend to be normal in the northwest, Caspian coast, and parts of the southern half of the country; above-normal in a few areas in the south of the country as well as South Zagros.

In the first two weeks of the second month of winter, from January 20 to February 2, rainfall is forecasted to be normal in northern provinces, and some areas in the south and west, and less than normal in other regions with the temperature getting 1-3 °C above normal.

From the beginning of the current water year (September 22) till December 15, the average rainfall in the country was recorded to be about 33 mm, indicating a 36 percent decrease compared to the long-term average which is 53 mm, ISNA quoted Ahad Vazifieh, an official with Metrological Organization, as saying.

In the current water year, all provinces had received low rainfall, except North Khorasan and Mazandaran where precipitations were normal or slightly above normal.

The recorded rainfall in Mazandaran province has amounted to 266 mm compared to the average recorded rainfall of 209 mm. The province has received 57 mm more rain.

Over 250mm rain in previous water year

The previous water year (September 22, 2023 – September 22, 2024) came to an end with receiving 252.7 mm of precipitation, showing a 19 percent increase compared to the year before.

The low precipitations at the beginning of the previous water year were worrisome, but the volume of precipitations improved with the passage of time.

Due to successive years of drought, the increase in rainfall amounts did not compensate water deficit in the country, some provinces are suffering from water shortage, IRNA reported.

A total of 10 provinces received less than normal rainfall.

According to the latest reports, the total amount of recorded rainfall in the previous water year (ended on September 23) amounted to 252.7 mm, which signifies a 19 percent increase compared to 212.9 mm rain received in the water year before (September 2022 –September 2023).

Compared to the long-term figure, 248.7 mm, it shows a two percent increase.

ENGLISH IN USE

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\$3b approved for improving safety of schools

The sixth five-year national development plan (2016-2021) has predicted a total budget of \$3 billion to be allocated for rebuilding and retrofitting old schools across the country, director of the organization for renovation, development and equipment of schools has said.

There are some 107,000 schools nationwide with 530,000 classes, 160,000 of which are dilapidated, not meeting safety standards, ISNA quoted Mehrolah Rakhshanimehr as saying on Wednesday.

He went on explain that 30 percent of the schools nationwide, equaling 32,000 schools, are old, of which some 12 percent must be completely rebuilt and 18 percent must be retrofitted.

"However, after 2 years the budget has not been allocated yet," he lamented.

درخواست تخصیص ۳ میلیارد دلار برای ایمن سازی مدارس

رئیس سازمان نوسازی، توسعه و تجهیز مدارس کشور با اشاره به وجود ۱۶۰ هزار کلاس درس ناایمن در سطح کشور خواستار تخصیص بودجه سه میلیارد دلاری تصویب شده در قالب برنامه ششم توسعه برای ایمن سازی مدارس شد.

مهراوه رخشانی مهر در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا، بیان کرد حدود ۱۰۷ هزار مدرسه با ۵۳۰ هزار کلاس درس در کشور داریم.

او اظهار کرد: از این میزان، ۳۰ درصد مدارس یعنی ۳۲ هزار مدرسه مشتمل بر ۱۶۰ هزار کلاس درس نیازمند مقاوم سازی و تخریب و بازسازی‌اند که به تفکیک می‌توان گفت ۱۸ درصد مدارس باید مقاوم سازی و ۱۲ درصد تخریب و بازسازی شوند.

با این وجود، بعد از حدود دو سال هنوز بودجه ای تخصیص نیافته است.

Over 2,000 schools to install solar power panels

TEHRAN –The Ministry of Education has signed a memorandum of understanding with benefactors to equip more than 2,000 schools with solar power panels.

Each solar power panel will produce about 20 kilowatts of electricity, 50 percent of which will be used by the school and the rest will be injected into the country's electricity grid, serving as a source of revenue for the schools, IRNA quoted Education Minister Alireza Kazemi, as saying.

More schools to go green

In April, Hamid-Reza Khanmohammadi, an official with the Ministry of Education, said seven new schools across the country installed solar panels with the aim of using clean energy.

The schools are in the provinces of Isfahan, Qom, Golestan, East Azerbaijan, Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad, and South Khorasan, IRIB quoted Khanmohammadi as saying.

Nine more schools will soon be equipped with rooftop solar panels, he added.

"Installation of these panels will bring stable income for schools and reduce their expenses."

It will also increase students' awareness and help them learn about the economic benefits of using clean energy, he stressed.

The official stated that the Ministry of Education is planning to implement almost 2,500 more projects, and some 20,000 schools will soon benefit from solar energy.

Currently, 56 solar panel projects are operating in the country with 11 schools in Qom ready to install such panels with a capacity of 220 kilowatts.

The official went on to say that the Ministry of Education wants to install solar panels in all the newly built schools with the help of school-building donors.

Solar panels will prevent the emission of 560 grams of carbon dioxide per kilowatt hour, and save about 0.27 cubic meters of



natural gas, and 0.22 liters of water, Khanmohammadi further noted.

Green schools to be constructed

In October 2023, Khanmohammadi said a total of 64 eco-schools would be built across the country meeting green management standards, the director of the Organization for

While calling the environment a vital issue, he stated, "Green management includes reducing energy, water, raw materials, equipment, and paper consumption, and recycling solid waste," Mehr news agency reported.

According to the sixth five-year development plan (2017-2021), it is mandatory to implement the green management program in all non-governmental public organizations and institutions, he stressed.

"Signing a memorandum of understanding with the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA) and the association of school-building benefactors of the country to establish small-scale solar power plants in schools with the investment of donors, holding training courses on waste management in schools, and organizing scientific field trips to recycling centers are among the other programs of the Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipping Schools in line with the preservation of the environment."

Tehran to host Iran Health Expo 2025 in April

TEHRAN –The 26th international exhibition of medical, dental, pharmaceutical, and laboratory equipment (Iran Health Expo 2025) is scheduled to be held in Tehran from April 19 to 22.

As the most important exhibition in the health sector in the region, Iran Health Expo 2025 will bring together leading healthcare professionals and companies, providing a great opportunity for domestic and international firms to showcase their latest achievements and boost their cooperation.

Several technical tours will be held on the sidelines of the exhibition to feature the health-oriented products of the knowledge-based companies to potential clients and help them expand their markets.

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

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

Iran Health expo will showcase the country's latest products and achievements in the fields of biomedical engineering, pharmacology, mobile medical applications, hospital beds, respiratory medications, pediatric medical equipment, ophthalmic supplies, orthopedic equipment, pharmaceuticals, home care products, remote therapy, physiotherapy, surgical and medical emergency equipment, sonography and endoscopy, medical applications, electrical equipment, beauty products, and plastic surgery.

Over 600 companies attended the 25th edition of the exhibition which focused on emerging manufacturing and knowledge-based companies and startups in the medical equipment industry.

Over 60 countries import Iranian medical equipment

On January 13, the head of Iran's Union of

Medical Equipment Manufacturers and Exporters said that medical equipment worth around \$20 million is exported to more than 60 countries annually.

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

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

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

Some 600 medical equipment companies are active in the country, producing around 99 percent of the medicine supplied to the domestic market.

Medical equipment manufacturers in the country produce and supply over 10,000 types of medical equipment to domestic and foreign markets. Now, various pieces of laboratory equipment are manufactured at prices much lower than the same foreign products.

On May 12, Ahmad Moslemi, a health ministry official, said with 50 percent of medical devices being domestically manufactured, Iran holds the first place in West Asia for producing medical equipment both in terms of quantity and diversity, Iranian-made medical devices worth around \$50 million are exported to 40 countries annually, IRNA quoted Moslemi as saying.

Moreover, the official said, the number of products has increased fourfold. Equipment such as implants as well as advanced medical devices are manufactured in the country as well.

In addition, the country's medical centers have been equipped with some 15,000 new hospital beds have been added to with 90 percent of the equipment produced locally, Moslemi added.



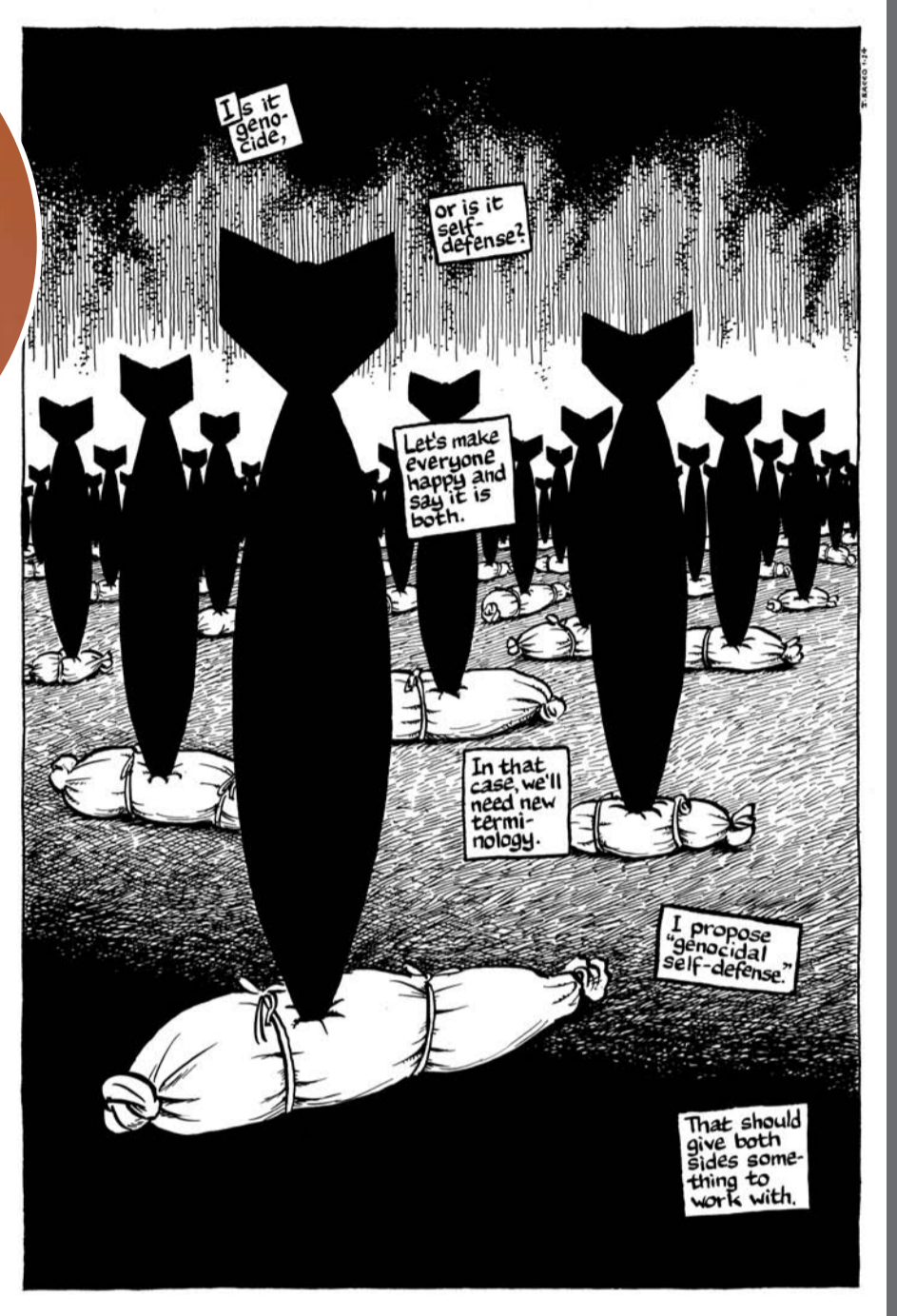
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“War on Gaza”: Joe Sacco’s graphic journey through genocide



By Ali Hamedin

TEHRAN— Imagine the sharp scratch of pen on paper, sketching scenes of war, displacement, and resilience. The panels come alive, telling stories too raw for photographs and too complex for a headline. This is the world of Joe Sacco, a pioneer who turned the ink-stained pages of comics into a medium for journalism as vivid as it is visceral: Comics Journalism.

For decades, Sacco has redefined what journalism can be, using the medium of comics to plunge readers into the lived realities of those caught in warzones. From the Israeli crimes in “Palestine” (1996) and “Footnotes in Gaza” (2009) to the horrors of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia in “Safe Area Goražde” (2000) and “The Fixer” (2003), Sacco’s work has consistently paired meticulous research with gut-wrenching art. His unique style not only documents events but humanizes them, placing individual voices at the forefront of historical and political turmoil.

Sacco’s illustrations, which place the audience directly and objectively within the depicted conditions, challenge the world’s perception of events in Palestine and the crimes of Israel. As the audience turns each page of Sacco’s comics, they accompany him on a journey in search of the truth, uncovering the dystopia of the occupied territories that biased media often avoid revealing.

■ Bombs and diplomatic cover

After years, Sacco takes up his pen again, this time to address Israel’s bloody genocide in Gaza. Titled “The War on Gaza,” this series has been published in installments on The Comics Journal’s website (TCJ.com), with the print version released by Fantagraphics on December 17.

In an interview with the Tehran Times, Sacco explained why he created the comic, saying that he was shocked by the events of October 7 and then even more shocked by Israel’s ruth-

less attack on Gaza, which right from the start seemed to be going to a very dark place.

“I knew I had to respond, but I was still unable to gather my thoughts properly. It was the plea from a friend in Khan Younis who endured the relentless bombing that finally pushed me to put pen to paper. He told me, ‘Please lift up your voice,’” he added.

The comic journalist stated that he prefers to report — going to a place, interviewing people, and letting them speak for themselves—but there was no chance to do that in this case, and there still isn’t.

Sacco mentioned that since he lives in America, its role in the destruction of Gaza became his focus in “War on Gaza.” “Clearly, the United States is actively participating in this genocide. It is providing the bombs and diplomatic cover for Israel’s actions.”

Born in Malta in 1960 to an engineer father and a teacher mother, Joe Sacco spent part of his childhood in Australia before moving with his family to the United States at the age of 12. While living in Berlin in the early 1990s, curiosity and a feeling that he was not hearing the whole story—“American coverage of the Middle East is very shallow”—propelled him to Gaza.

■ Self-defense, of the genocidal kind

On a page from “War on Gaza,” Sacco writes about the brutal crimes of the Zionist regime: “Is it genocide, or is it self-defense? Let’s make everyone happy and say it is both. In that case, we’ll need new terminology. I propose ‘genocidal self-defense.’”

Explaining the use of this new term, he told the Tehran Times that we have to interrogate what the words ‘self-defense’ means. “Are they carte blanche for any response, one without limits, including genocide? This seems to be what Israel means by ‘self-defense.’ Does ‘self-defense’ absolve a nation or group of

compliance with hard-won international laws or basic decency? I don’t think so.”

The American-Maltese journalist stated that he would like the audience of “War on Gaza” to be aware that Israel is committing a genocide in Gaza.

“I would like people to understand that killing tens of thousands of people, destroying universities and hospitals, targeting journalists and aid workers, blowing up entire neighborhoods, ruining agricultural land, forcing people to move from one location to another and attacking them anyway — that these things are intended to make life in Gaza impossible. And that much of the Western world is complicit and is even participating in these crimes.”

■ “Palestine”, the first journey to find the truth

The pioneer of comics journalism noted the impact of this medium, which combines journalism and comic books, that like all the visual media, comics has the ability to immediately make an impression, within seconds. “I use comics in a journalistic sense to take the reader to the places I have been and to meet the people I have met. If I do my research well, I can also take the reader into the past, into historical events.”

In 1992, Sacco published his report of this trip in a nine-issue graphic novel “Palestine”. The book, which was the result of interviews with Palestinians and the occupiers and narrated the history of the expulsion of the Palestinians and the beginning of the intifada, was able to win the 1996 American Book Award and was highly praised.

For this early work, Sacco spent two months in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Occupied territories between 1991 and 1992, during the first Intifada.

Travelling from taxi to taxi and camp to camp, Sacco — who holds a BA in Journalism from the University of Oregon — collected the voices of the people, incorporating them with notes on the region’s history and his reflections.

Gary Groth, co-founder of Fantagraphics, which published the graphic novel, told the Guardian that after the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7 and the subsequent bombing of Gaza demand for the book had soared.

■ Negative feedback from Zionists

Following “Palestine”, Sacco traveled to Bosnia to document the truth of the Bosnian war, resulting in the creation of two novels, “Safe Area Goražde” and “The Fixer.” “Safe Area Goražde” focuses on Goražde, which is a Bosnian Muslim area.

The journalist then returned to Palestine to cover the story of Rafah and Khan Yunis massacre by Israel in 1956 in 400-page “Footnotes in Gaza”.

After the publication of “Footnotes in Gaza”, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz accused Sacco of distortion, bias and hyperbole. In a report from this newspaper, leading Israeli military historian Meir Pail stated, “It’s a big exaggeration. There was never a killing of such a degree. Nobody was murdered. I was there. I don’t know of any massacre.”

In response to the Tehran Times, Sacco shared his opinion on the negative feedback from Zionists, explaining that because he does not have a large social media presence, he is not very aware of it.

“Also, I am very clear in my own mind that this is a genocide, so it really does not matter what negative feedback I might get,” the journalist added referring to “War on Gaza”.

■ Warmly welcoming Palestinians

In his stories, Sacco appears in a caricatured form, wearing a cable-knit jumper and round glasses (which stand in for his eyes). He even depicted the hospitality of the Palestinian people in his graphic novels.

The comic journalist explained what he remembers the most is the hospitality of the

Palestinian people. “They always welcomed me even when they questioned whether talking to me would do them any good at all.”

Sacco stated that Palestinians have almost always expressed their appreciation for his work. “They have never made me feel that it was inappropriate for a white Westerner to write and draw about their lives and struggle.”

Joe Sacco’s “War on Gaza” stands as a powerful testament to the ability of art to confront uncomfortable truths and give voice to the silenced. Through his masterful storytelling and evocative illustrations, Sacco not only documents the devastating realities of Gaza and Zionist regime’s crimes but also challenges global complicity and the narratives perpetuated by biased media.

As with his previous works on Palestine, Bosnia, and other war-torn regions, Sacco’s latest comic journal transcends the boundaries of traditional journalism, urging readers to take a deeper look at the truth of the Zionist regime’s genocide in Gaza and the United States’ contributions to this horrific crime.

Sacco writes, intelligently and sarcastically, about the repetitive conclusion of such Western crimes at the end of his graphic novel: “We know how this ends: The war-mongers will recast themselves as peacemakers and humbly nominate themselves to the Nobel committee for its prize.”

