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'Detailed strategy, private sector's contribution required in maritime-oriented economy'

TEHRAN- President Masoud Pezeshkian said that a detailed strategy and private sector's contribution is necessary for transformation in the maritime-oriented economy.

Making the remarks in the Sunday's session on the development of maritime-oriented economy, the president, while emphasizing the development of a detailed strategy in this field, addressed the necessity of the presence of the private sector in the industries related to the sea and stated: "For the presence of the private sector, it is necessary to prepare and compile the economic frameworks and commercial annexes of the development plans of the sea economy."

He further put emphasis on the high importance of sea-oriented industries, especially the shipbuilding industry, and said the 14th government pays special attention to sea-related industries and is doing its best to comprehensively examine the issues, problems and opportunities facing the country in this field.

President Pezeshkian has referred to the government's prioritization of the maritime-oriented economy and the importance of the prosperity of this sector on the country's growth, development and prosperity, and stated that the government is determined to implement maritime-oriented development plans. ▶ Page 4

What's Israel's goal in spreading false narratives about Haniyeh's assassination in Tehran?

TEHRAN – The Hamas Resistance movement has refuted Israeli claims about the assassination of its late political bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh, stating that he was killed by a guided missile targeting his mobile phone, not a planted bomb as Israel alleges.

In a statement on Sunday, Hamas rejected all "fabrications" by Israel, clarifying that joint investigations with Iranian authorities revealed a missile containing 7.5 kilograms of explosives was used. Hamas also condemned the assassination as a violation of Iranian sovereignty.

"The claims made by the Zionist regime are only a desperate attempt to divert public opinion from this multi-layered crime, which has been committed by clearly violating the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran and targeting one of the country's official headquarters," the group's statement added. ▶ Page 2

Swedes, Brits denounce Europe's silence on Israeli genocide in Gaza

Hundreds of Palestine supporters led silent marches on Saturday evening in Swedish and British cities to protest the European silence on the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

Protesters in the Swedish city of Uppsala carried dolls covered in red-stained shrouds to denounce the killing of children in Gaza and the attacks on civilians in tents and hospitals, and the forced evacuation of workers at Kamal Adwan Hospital by the Israeli military.

They also held pictures of people killed and wounded to denounce the genocide. The scene was repeated in the British city of Leeds to urge Prime Minister Keir Starmer to stop arming Israel and adhere to implementing the decisions made by the International Criminal Court (ICC) to arrest Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former war minister Yoav Gallant.

Anti-war and pro-Palestine activists staged a rally in central London on Thursday, coinciding with Boxing Day.

Since the start of the Gaza conflict, many countries across the world have seen anti-war protests. People from all walks of life have frequently held rallies in cities across Britain, EU countries, the United States, and beyond calling for an end to Israel's brutal war on Gaza.

Will Israel resume aggression on Lebanon after truce expires?

By Sondoss Al Asaad

SOUTH LEBANON — Various media analyses dissect what will happen after the end of the 60-day truce between Lebanon and the Israeli occupation regime. No wonder Netanyahu may commit unprecedented or familiar aggression, however, that would not be in his favor, nor even in the favor of his US and Western allies.

Following the vague fall of the Syrian government under Bashar al-Assad, Netanyahu and other Zionist officials have been intoxicated with an alleged "victory", thinking that cutting off Hezbollah's supply route through Syria would result in a complete elimination of the resistance front.

After 66 days of aggression on Hezbollah, the occupation regime realized that there was no point in a ground war, knowing that it was very costly in terms of lives and equipment. The Zionist regime is in dire need of rehabilitating its army exhausted by the Gaza and Lebanon wars. Netanyahu himself raised this issue to justify his approval of the ceasefire.

In parallel, the occupation regime has allocated 200 million shekels to facilitate the return of its colonial settlers to the occupied Palestinian territories in the north and to rebuild their demolished colonial settlements.

Israel spinning a tale to justify its occupation of southern Lebanon

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN- Israel appears to be making a cock-and-bull story to prolong its occupation of southern Lebanon.

Israeli media has revealed that the regime is considering the option of keeping its forces in southern Lebanon following the conclusion of a two-month ceasefire agreement reached with Hezbollah in late November.

According to Israel Hayom, senior political and military officials have engaged in multiple discussions in recent days concerning the possibility of an extension.

Israeli officials have cited an alleged slow deployment by the Lebanese army in the south, and the "abundance of Hezbollah's weapons and infrastructure that are still exposed in the field".

Israel and Lebanon began trading cross-border fire on October 8, 2023. That was a day after Israel initiated its genocidal war on Gaza. The Lebanese resistance movement struck Israel's strategic and military sites with drones and missiles in a show of solidarity with Palestinians in the enclave.

On September 23 this year, Israel launched a massive bombing campaign in Lebanon and a week later sent its troops into southern Lebanon.

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12 Iranian films to be shown at Dhaka International Film Festival

TEHRAN-Twelve films from Iran will participate in the 23rd Dhaka International Film Festival (DIFF), due to be held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, from January 11 to 19, 2025.

The Iranian films have been selected to be shown in different sections of the festival, which is organized by Rainbow Film Society.

In the Asian Film Competition section, three films from Iran will compete for the top awards. They include "Summer Time" directed by Mahmood Kalari, "Projectionist" by Ghorbanali Taherifar, and "Melody" by Behrouz Sebt Rasoul. The latter is a joint production of Iran and Tajikistan.

There will be five Iranian films in the Cinema of the World section including "This Controllable Crowd" by Mohammad Matin Ojani, "Barren" by Mansour Vosoughi, "Maybe Somewhere Else" by Ali Tasdighi, "Winter Threshold" by Soudabeh Bezaei, and "Maria" by Mahdi Asghari Azghadi. ▶ Page 8



Israeli forces assault hospitals, sexually abuse women and girls

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – The World Health Organization (WHO) says it is horrified by the Israeli assault on Kamal Adwan Hospital, confirming that it had lost contact with the hospital's director.

The WHO clarified that "Kamal Adwan Hospital is now empty. Last night, 15 critically ill patients, 50 caregivers, and 20 healthcare workers were transferred to the Indonesian Hospital, which lacks the equipment and supplies necessary to provide adequate care." It added that "moving these patients and treating them under such conditions poses severe risks to their survival." ▶ Page 5

Tehran, Moscow set to explore new avenues in upcoming strategic agreement: Lavrov

TEHRAN – Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has announced that a forthcoming strategic cooperation agreement between Iran and Russia is poised to open new avenues for the expansion of bilateral partnerships in various areas, including defense and security.

In an interview with Russia's RIA Novosti on Saturday, Lavrov highlighted that the comprehensive agreement will bolster security and defense relations between the two nations while also having notable global ramifications.

"Naturally, such a comprehensive and all-encompassing document also has an international dimension," the Russian Foreign Minister stated. ▶ Page 2

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Strategic confrontation with new round of hostilities

In a note, Hamshahri discussed Iran's strategic confrontation with the new round of hostilities against the Islamic Republic by the West. It said: What emerges from the recent positions of figures close to Trump is that the future American government intends to repeat the failed experience of increasing pressure against Iran and implement the policy of "maximum pressure" against Tehran. In such a situation, it seems that Tel Aviv and the European troika will play the role of Washington's two auxiliary wings. Therefore, experts believe that the future American administration will focus on "Iran's nuclear activities, the axis of resistance, and the Islamic Republic's missile program" as the main tools of pressure against Iran. In such a situation, deepening strategic relations with Russia and China is an important tool as the three countries more or less share common views in facing the United States. On this basis, in recent days, we have witnessed significant diplomatic movements in this area.

Donya-ye-Eqtesad: Iran's importance in China's security structure

Donya-ye-Eqtesad said China's support for Iran's efforts to regain its power and influence is significant as Iran has suffered blows to its allies, particularly Hamas and Hezbollah, at the hands of Israel. China would like to see a regional security structure established on balance of power, with Iran as a strong pillar and as China's partner in countering the dominance of the United States in regional security affairs; therefore, weakening Iran is not favorable based on this approach. In the future, China may prioritize restoring Tehran's power to maintain the regional power balance. This could require importing more crude oil from Iran, investing more in Iran's infrastructure, and supporting the country's regional approach. Chinese officials acknowledge that allies such as Russia, North Korea, and Iran have more in common with China in terms of interests rather than the United States. China will not allow Tehran to fail, especially since Beijing's relationship with Tehran is likely to help balance Saudi Arabia's relationship with the United States and Israel.

Siasat-e-Rooz: The need to stay on the right side of history

In its editorial, Siasat-e-Rooz addressed developments in Syria and other countries in the

region. It wrote: West Asia is still the main focus of attention in the world, while the behavior of some countries in the region shows the ideas that have been formed after the developments in Syria. One of the notable points in this process is the claim of some Arab countries, including the Arab League, about Iran's role in Syria. They have accused Tehran of interfering in Syrian affairs and demanded that Iran distance itself from these developments. Iran is worried about secession and excuses to divert public and regional minds towards unrealistic threats. Today, the West aims to implement its hegemonic goals by spreading division in the region. Experience has shown that the dream of the West and the Zionists is the destruction of the entire region, and there are no exceptions. In such a situation, the countries in the region should know that the right side of history is to side with the resistance front, which ultimately determines the fate of the region.

Iran: Ties between Iran and China reflect strategic alignment

In a commentary, the Iran newspaper dealt with Foreign Minister Araghchi's visit to China. The paper said: Araghchi's visit to Beijing at this juncture shows the sitting government's pragmatist foreign policy approach. The 25-year strategic partnership agreement between Iran and China confirms the fact that the two countries, despite having different views on regional issues in West Asia, have reached a common understanding about the importance of strengthening bilateral interactions in various areas to advance their goals and secure their interests. The relationship between Iran and China reflects a strategic alignment. Since China's Middle East policy within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative is focused on promoting economic cooperation and stability in the region, constructive cooperation with Iran will play a significant role in advancing this approach. China is one of the five countries with veto right in the UN Security Council, and its large economy has made China the first trade partner of our country. Therefore, China has provided Iran with a significant capacity to reduce the sanctions pressure.

Suspect arrested after suicide bombing in southern Iran martyrs police officer, injures another

TEHRAN – Following a fatal terrorist attack in the southern city of Bandar Lengeh, Iran's Hormozgan province, authorities took one suspect into custody on Sunday.

The suicide bombing took place on Saturday evening and resulted in the martyrdom of a police intelligence officer and injuries to another.

The terrorist attack, claimed by the terrorist group Ansar al-Furqan, targeted Captain Mojtaba Shahidizadeh, the head of the city's police intelligence, and his deputy, Captain Javad Chatr-Sahar.

According to Foad Moradzadeh, the Governor of Bandar Lengeh, the incident occurred near one of the police stations.

Moradzadeh noted that the injured were immediately transported to the hospital, but despite medical intervention, Captain Shahidizadeh tragically succumbed to his injuries.

The assailant approached the vehicle driven by Shahidizadeh and detonated an explosive device, resulting in a powerful explosion.

Shahidizadeh sustained severe injuries to his head, face, neck, and chest, and later passed away in the hospital.

His companion, Captain Chatr-Sahar, is currently undergoing surgery for injuries to his head and face.

Later on Sunday, Majid Qahramani, the judiciary chief of Hormozgan, confirmed the arrest of a suspect in connection with the attack.



"Judicial and intelligence forces are currently interrogating and investigating this case," Qahramani stated.

He further emphasized that recent vigilance had prevented similar attacks, ensuring security in the province.

"The security forces are alert and ready, and such blind attacks will not weaken the resolve of the people or the officials," Qahramani added.

The Ansar al-Furqan terrorist group was established in 2013 and has been predominantly operating in Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan Province.

The terror outfit attacked an oil pipeline in 2017, and carried out a suicide bombing in Chabahar the next year.

What's Israel's goal in spreading false narratives about Haniyeh's assassination in Tehran?

From page 1 ▶ Haniyeh was martyred on July 31 in a Tehran guesthouse, hours after he had attended President Masoud Pezeshkian's inauguration.

Earlier, Israeli Channel 12 said it was releasing new details about the assassination under authorization from the regime's military.

The report claimed that Haniyeh had been under surveillance, with multiple sightings at the location of his assassination. Mossad agents, the channel claimed, planted a bomb in his room before the inauguration of the new Iranian president. The operation was nearly derailed by a malfunction in the room's

ventilation system, but it was repaired by the Iranians, allowing the attack to proceed. The channel also noted that "the initial plan was to target him during his attendance at the funeral of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, but it was later abandoned."

This report follows the Israeli War Minister's first-time admission of responsibility for the assassination after Israel's Western allies had previously denied its involvement in response to Iran's retaliation.

Hamas representative in Tehran Khaled Ghoddoumi told the Tehran Times that Israel's new lies surrounding the assassination of the

late Haniyeh are designed to serve three purposes: to avoid accountability for the crime, to foster unease about intelligence vulnerabilities, and to create divisions between Iran and Hamas.

Israel's uncharacteristic admission of responsibility for the assassination is a sign of the regime's mounting desperation, Ghoddoumi added. "Immediately after the attack, the Israeli military spokesperson denied all knowledge of the events and Haniyeh's martyrdom. However, the subsequent decision to claim responsibility was a consequence of the substantial losses the regime has experienced since that time."

Iranians mark anniversary of historic Dey 9 rallies with nationwide demonstrations

TEHRAN – On Sunday, Iranians across the nation gathered in large numbers to commemorate the anniversary of the Dey 9 epic, a significant day in the country's history that marked the end of the 2009 post-presidential election unrest.

The rallies served as a powerful expression of support for the Islamic Republic and a rejection of foreign interference in Iran's internal affairs.

In Tehran and cities across the country, people from all walks of life participated in the demonstrations, reaffirming their allegiance to the Islamic establishment. The rallies also highlighted the resilience of the Iranian nation in the face of foreign-orchestrated conspiracies.

Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, had previously reflected on the importance of the occasion, stating, "The 9th of Dey was a day when our dear people displayed such greatness that it astonished the world." He added, "The most powerful governments in the world, even with



their best efforts, cannot bring a hundred thousand people to the streets of their cities in just two days. For tens of millions to come out across a country, even under government orders, would signify an exceptionally strong government."

The Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) also issued a statement on Sunday, commemorating the 2009 pro-establishment rallies. The IRGC described the Dey 9 epic as a "glorious and

fate-determining event" that foiled the plans of "American and Zionist secessionists."

On December 30, 2009, millions of Iranians took to the streets of Tehran and other cities to counter months of unrest that followed the presidential election in June of the same year. The riots had been led by Mehdi Karroubi and Mir Hossein Musavi, two defeated candidates who alleged election fraud after their loss.

The IRGC credited the Dey 9 demonstrations with delivering a "firm, decisive, and final" response to these claims, putting an end to what they termed "foreign-backed secession."

The statement further asserted that the unrest was part of a broader conspiracy supported by the United States, Israel, and their allies, aiming to destabilize Iran under the guise of addressing alleged election fraud. The IRGC reaffirmed its commitment, alongside the Basij volunteer forces, to safeguard Iran's national security and confront any future threats or plots aimed at sowing chaos or insecurity within the country.

"Undoubtedly, the Iranian nation will remember the historical epic... at critical junctures like today," the statement emphasized. It also underscored the belief that the spirit of unity displayed during the Dey 9 rallies would empower the nation to overcome contemporary challenges, including sanctions, economic pressure, and external threats.

Araghchi travels to UAE after China talks



TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met with Abdullah bin Zayed, the deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), during a brief visit to Dubai on Sunday.

The short visit occurred when the top diplomat was on his way back to Tehran from China.

According to Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Esmail Baqaei, the visit was initiated at the invitation of the UAE's Deputy Prime Minister to discuss the latest regional developments.

Both sides reviewed bilateral relations during their meeting

and explored avenues to enhance cooperation across various fields.

They also exchanged views on the latest developments in the region.

Iran-UAE relations have recently improved, with Iran exporting \$4.8 billion in non-oil goods to the UAE in eight months and the Persian Gulf monarchy releasing \$700 million in Iranian funds.

These developments reflect Iran's push for economic cooperation and regional stability, fostering diplomatic ties to counter Western pressures.

On December 12, Araghchi and his Emirati counterpart discussed the situation in Syria, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding its independence, territorial integrity, security, and stability.

They jointly condemned the Israeli regime's ground and air attacks on Syria and stressed the need to maintain regional peace while avoiding actions that could hamper cooperation among neighboring countries.

Tehran, Moscow set to explore new avenues in upcoming strategic agreement: Lavrov

From page 1 ▶ He added that the agreement places special emphasis on enhancing cooperation in the interest of peace and security at both regional and global levels.

Lavrov pointed out that the agreement signifies a shared commitment by Tehran and Moscow to deepen collaboration in

fields such as security, defense, and counter-terrorism, while also tackling various common challenges and threats.

Furthermore, Russia's top diplomat noted that the groundwork for this partnership, which has been ongoing to some extent, will be further solidified with the signing of this strategic treaty,

expected during an upcoming high-level meeting.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is scheduled to travel to Russia next month to finalize this comprehensive strategic partnership agreement, as stated by Kazem Jalali, Iran's Ambassador to Russia.

This upcoming agreement is set

to build on the 2001 Treaty of the Foundation of Mutual Relations, which has been renewed and will remain in effect until 2026.

It also aims to strengthen collaboration in economics over the next two decades, as part of efforts to mitigate Western sanctions through trade and geopolitical alignment.



Switzerland concludes investigation into diplomat's death in Iran

TEHRAN – Swiss authorities have officially closed their investigation into the death of a senior diplomat who died in an accident in Tehran over three years ago.

The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) announced in a recent statement that the inquiry revealed "a clear picture" of the events, concluding that no criminal intervention by a third party could be proven.

The investigation was formally closed in early November, bringing an end to the probe into the circumstances surrounding the death of the First Secretary of the Swiss Embassy in Tehran.

The diplomat, a woman in her 50s whose identity was never disclosed, was found dead on May 4, 2021, near the base of a high-rise residential building in Kamranieh, a northern district of the Iranian capital.

Forensic examinations failed to determine the precise cause of her death but ruled out any signs of violence. The National Rescue Service at the time reported that she had fallen from the high-rise building where she lived. The Swiss Foreign Ministry also confirmed the death, categorizing it as an accident.

Why Resistance groups are not Iran's proxies

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN – “Iran’s proxies,” “Iran-backed groups,” “the Iran Axis”—these are the convenient labels the Western media slaps on the Axis of Resistance, the forces in West Asia that are pushing back against U.S. presence and Israeli occupation.

But, especially in the last 16 months, this kind of language has been used as a tool to diminish the raw, real struggle of Resistance groups fighting for Palestinians, to invalidate their grave sacrifices for Gaza, and to reduce them to mere puppets of a foreign hand.

Axis of Resistance: a deeper look

The term “Axis of Resistance” is used in West Asia to describe an alliance of governments, movements, and organizations united by their opposition to Western hegemony and intervention, Israeli aggression and occupation of Palestine, and terrorist groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda.

While the exact composition of the Axis of Resistance can be fluid, it is generally understood to include Iran, the Ansarullah-led Yemen, Lebanon’s Hezbollah, Palestine’s Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and Iraq’s Islamic Resistance. Syria, under its ousted President Bashar al-Assad, was widely perceived to be a member of the Axis, though some analysts contend that while Damascus had strong links to the Resistance, it remained on the periphery. They cite Assad’s decades-long policy of avoiding direct military confrontation with Israel as the reason why Syria wasn’t considered a key component of the Axis of Resistance.



The concept of resisting Western influence and domination is not new to the region. Parsa Najafi, a West Asia expert, explains, “The ideology of Resistance is deeply rooted, not a recent development. It has existed within each of these countries for decades, originating as far back as the beginnings of Western colonialism in West Asia.” Najafi provides specific historical examples demonstrating this long-standing resistance. He notes that in Iraq “a notable fight against Western hegemony occurred in the 1920s when Iraqis from all walks of life and religions united against British occupation.” This uprising, known as the 1920 Iraqi Revolt, remains a significant event in the nation’s modern history, highlighting a unified opposition to Western control and a strong desire for self-determination. Similarly, in Lebanon, resistance against external forces took root

well before the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Najafi points out, “The first movement against Israel was formed before the Islamic revolution, named Amal, meaning ‘hope.’” Amal considered opposition to Israel a core element of its identity. The late Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary-general of Hezbollah who was martyred by Israel in September, was a member of this group.

The situation in Yemen also reveals a history of resistance. “In Yemen,” Najafi explains, “people had been fighting British and Saudi control since the last Zaidi Imam was overthrown by these two countries in 1962.”

The transformative influence of Iran

The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran proved to be a transformative moment, reigniting existing anti-American and anti-Israeli sentiments

across the region. The revolution’s success in challenging U.S. influence served as a model, prompting these movements to examine Iran’s ideological foundations, particularly its Islamic roots. This shared ideological framework became a unifying force, ultimately contributing to the formation of the Axis of Resistance. Najafi clarifies, however, that “while Iran has undeniably pioneered modern anti-Western hegemony movements, it does not exert authority over other groups.” He emphasizes, “These groups share common goals and values, making it natural for Iran to provide assistance. For example, it is believed that Iran shared its expertise in missile and drone manufacturing with the Yemenis, who now make these weapons on their own and deploy them against Israel. However, the ultimate decisions about when, how, and whether to use these weapons remain solely with the Yemenis.”

Labeling these Resistance movements as Iranian proxies undermines the legitimacy of their struggles against American and Israeli occupation and intervention. This tactic, frequently used by Western media, also seeks to create internal divisions within the countries associated with these movements. For instance, Iranians are led to believe they are being influenced by Lebanon, Palestine, and Yemen, while populations in those countries are told they are being controlled by Iran.

“The West’s ultimate goal is to prevent the unification of the Muslim world,” Najafi concludes.

Iran to commemorate terror victims with updated encyclopedia launch

TEHRAN – An updated “Encyclopedia of Iranian Terror Victims” will be unveiled at a ceremony commemorating victims of terrorism, scheduled for Wednesday, January 1st.

The event, hosted by the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Institute for Political and International Studies, coincides with the upcoming anniversaries of the assassination of Major General Qasem Soleimani and the 2024 terrorist attack in Kerma.

Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araqchi will be in attendance alongside families of terror victims, diplomats killed in attacks, and representatives from foreign countries. The encyclopedia, initially published in 2011 by the Hablian Association, has been revised after more than a decade.

Iran expresses deep condolences following tragic plane crash in South Korea

TEHRAN – Tehran has extended heartfelt condolences to South Korea and Thailand after a devastating plane crash in South Korea claimed the lives of 179 people.

The tragic accident occurred when a passenger aircraft skidded off the runway and caught fire upon landing at Muan International Airport, southwest of Seoul.

Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman, Esmail Baqaei, issued a statement on Sunday expressing profound sympathy to the governments and people of South Korea and Thailand. Baqaei specifically addressed the families of the victims, offering prayers for those who lost their lives and wishing a swift recovery to the injured.

The Jeju Air flight, departed from Bangkok and was carrying 175 passengers and six crew members. According to South Korea’s National Fire Agency, the Boeing 737-800 jet crashed at 9:03 a.m. local time (0003 GMT) as it attempted to land at Muan International Airport. Among those on board, two were identified as Thai nationals, while the remainder were believed to be South Korean.

In the aftermath of the crash, authorities reported that only two individuals, both crew members, were rescued alive from the tail section of the burning plane.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Imam Khomeini’s ‘Man of the Year’ in 1979: Time’s choice signals new era of resistance

By Faramarz Kouhpayeh

TEHRAN – Time magazine chose Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Revolution, as its Man of the Year for 1979. The magazine’s editors explained at the time that they sought to recognize the individual who “had done the most to change the news, for better or for worse.”

Without a doubt, the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 was one of the most impactful events of the latter half of the 20th century. Both before and after the revolution’s victory in February of that year, the world’s most prominent newspapers and magazines extensively covered the unfolding events, focusing particularly on its leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, more widely known as Imam Khomeini.

In late December 1979, Time magazine’s correspondents in Iran, L. Bruce van Voorst and Roland Flamini, traveled to the holy city of Qom to interview the revolution’s leader on December 29th. This was just a day before the American weekly announced him as Man of the Year. The interview focused on topics such as the crimes of the Shah’s regime, the nature of the Islamic Revolution, international developments, the collapse of the bipolar world order, and the fate of the American detainees who had been held in Iran since the U.S. Embassy takeover on November 4th.

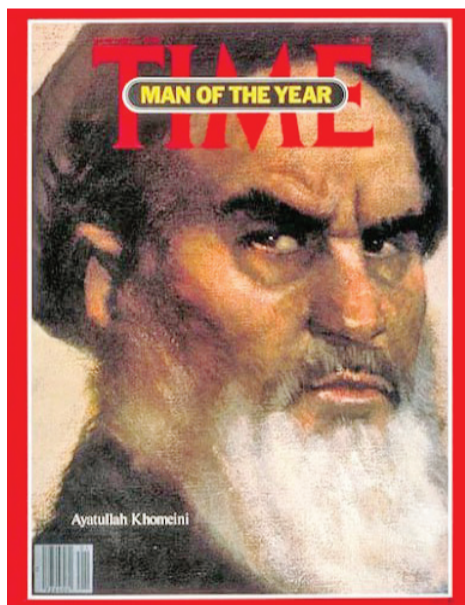
Time’s description of Imam Khomeini

Time described Imam Khomeini as “an old man of 79” who lived in “his modest home in the holy city of Qom,” a leader who had shaken the world.

“One thing is certain: the world will not again look quite the way it did before Feb. 1, 1979, the day on which [Imam] Khomeini flew back to a tumultuous welcome in Tehran after 15 years in exile,” the magazine wrote.

He was the second Iranian political figure to be named Man of the Year by Time, following democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, who was ousted in a US-led coup in 1953.

Imam Khomeini challenged the established world order and the two superpowers with his unwavering positions. Time’s editors likely portrayed a sullen-looking Imam Khomeini due to their disapproval of the American detainees being held in Tehran. The revolutionary leader had thrown his support behind the



students who had stormed the U.S. Embassy, which they dubbed the “Den of Espionage.”

In the interview, when asked about the American detainees’ release, Imam Khomeini replied, “We want to prove to the world that superpowers can be defeated by the power of faith. We will stand against America with all our might. We fear no power.”

“The revolution that he led to triumph threatens to upset the world balance of power more than any other political event,” the Time article concluded.

Imam Khomeini-led revolution’s impact on the non-Muslim world

“It wasn’t just its Islamic aspect. Non-Muslim nations, too, were likely to be drawn to the spectacle of a rebellion aimed at expelling all foreign influence,” the article stated.

The American magazine further cautioned about the Iranian leader’s inspiring ideas, noting that their influence would spread from the Indian subcontinent to Turkey and southward through the Arabian Peninsula to the Horn of Africa. “Most significantly,” it warned, “the revolution that transformed Iran into an Islamic republic, with the Quran as its supreme law, was undermining the stability of the Middle East. This region supplies more than half of the Western world’s imported oil and sits at the strategic crossroads of superpower competition.”

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

DECEMBER 30, 2024

Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

Frustrated Mosimane opens up on major Esteghlal concern

Esteghlal FC coach Pitso Mosimane is frustrated by his team’s struggles in front of the goal in recent assignments.

Despite going the last eight games without tasting defeat across all competition, the two-time AFC Champions League champions are just not getting it right in the final third. They have managed three draws in the last three games, two of them being goalless and one ending 1-1.

To sum it up, the Capital Blues have scored just two goals in the last four outings in all tournaments. The former Bafana Bafana and Mamelodi Sundowns coach has now let out his frustration and explained why things are not working well in the final third as they should.

“We have a lot of challenges, obviously the challenge is on scoring goals. I’m trying to do something about it,” Mosimane told the media.

“I played Alman [Ramezani], we can’t find goals, I played Blanco [Gustavo Leschuk]. We have scored two in four games. I tried Kooshki [Alireza] a winger, you can see I’m trying, it’s not easy to find the best person to score.

“Juma [Masoud] is sick, he hasn’t been training for two days. It’s getting more difficult with the challenges. Roozbeh [Cheshmi] is injured, Hossein [Hosseini] is injured, Zobeir [Niknafs] is injured, so it’s part of life but there is no use complaining. We can’t complain, this is what I have and we are trying to do something about it.

“I’m getting frustrated, the supporters want a win, I want a win also. [Mohammad Hossein] Eslami scored a brilliant goal against Al Ahly Saudi, he’s also injured.”

The next assignment for Mosimane will be in the Persian Gulf Pro League against leaders Sepahan on Thursday.

Terzic’s agent rejects Persepolis rumors

TEHRAN – Dirk Josef Hebel has rejected rumors linking Edin Terzic with Persepolis football club.

The German outlets reported that the Iranian club has shown its interest in signing the former Borussia Dortmund coach.

Hebel said they have not talked to Persepolis.

Persepolis, which parted ways with Spanish coach Juan Carlos Garrido last week, have also been linked with former Croatia coach Slaven Bilic.

Defending champion Persepolis sit third, five points behind leaders Sepahan in the Iran football league.

Ahmadi the Best Asian Schoolboy Boxer in 2024

TEHRAN – Iran’s Farzan Ahmadi Afzadi was named as the Best Asian Schoolboy Boxer in 2024.

The Asian Boxing Confederation’s previous project, the Best of the Asians is back in the business and the awarded boxers and officials are revealed after the selection process.

The Asian Boxing Confederation hosted its championships for both genders and all of the age groups in 2024: elite, U22, youth, junior, schoolboys and schoolgirls.

The competitions were held in Astana (Kazakhstan), Al Ain (United Arab Emirates) and Chiang Mai (Thailand) with great successes. Based on the results of the Asian Boxing Championships, the winners in all categories have been selected today.

The first Best of the Asians awards for the 2012 winners were presented during the 2013 ASBC Asian Confederation Youth Boxing Championships in Subic Bay, Philippines. Since then the Best of the Asians project was a success of the Asian Boxing Confederation between 2012 and 2018. The management of the Asian Boxing Confederation decided to renew the project after six years of break to celebrate Asia’s bests in seventeen categories.

The list of the winners in the Best of the Asians 2024

The Best Asian Elite Woman Boxer in 2024 – Chuthamat Raksat, Thailand

The Best Asian Elite Man Boxer in 2024 – Sagyndyk Togambay, Kazakhstan

The Best Asian U22 Woman Boxer in 2024 – Feruza Kazakova, Uzbekistan

The Best Asian U22 Man Boxer in 2024 – Temirlan Mukatayev, Kazakhstan

The Best Asian Youth Woman Boxer in 2024 – Abudureyimu Alimire, China

The Best Asian Youth Man Boxer in 2024 – Torekhan Sabyrkhan, Kazakhstan

The Best Asian Junior Woman Boxer in 2024 – Maftuna Yangiyeva, Uzbekistan

The Best Asian Junior Man Boxer in 2024 – Akhmad Arvaz, Kyrgyzstan

The Best Asian Schoolgirl Boxer in 2024 – Deepali Thapa, India

The Best Asian Schoolboy Boxer in 2024 – Farzan Ahmadi Afzadi, Iran

The Best Asian Referee in 2024 – Mr. Ishanguly Meretnyyazov, Turkmenistan

The Best Asian Judge in 2024 – Mr. Mekhroj Umarov, Tajikistan

The Best Asian Coach in 2024 (Elite men team) – Mr. Tulkin Kiliyev, Uzbekistan

The Best Asian Coach in 2024 (Elite women team) – Mr. Raul Angel Fernandez Liranza, China (Cuba)

The Asian Discovery of the Year 2024 – Akmal Ubaidov, Tajikistan

The Best Technical Delegate in 2024 – Mrs. Liang Yuan, China

The Best Asian National Federation in 2024 – Kazakhstan Boxing Federation

Esteghlal’s head of board of directors resigns

TEHRAN – Esteghlal football club head of board of directors Ahmad Shahriari stepped down from his role.

Ali Tajernia will replace him in the post. Tajernia is a member of the board of Football Federation and a member of the board of Esteghlal Club.

Farshid Samiei will remain as Esteghlal general manager.

Esteghlal, headed by Pitso Mosimane, sits 10th in the Iran football league with 17 points, 14 points behind leader Sepahan.

Iran to send 19 Greco-Roman wrestlers to Zagreb

TEHRAN – Iran wrestling federation will send 19 Greco-Roman wrestlers to the 2025 Ranking Series.

The first Ranking Series will be held in Zagreb, Croatia from Feb. 5 to 9.

The World Ranking Series events are the main International Tournaments supervised by United World Wrestling (UWW). These events are fully integrated into the Ranking System. These events provide points to each athlete in order to establish the World Ranking at the end of the year.

The four World Ranking Series events are organized every year (except the Olympic year where only two World Ranking Series are organized).

Iran’s Greco-Roman team:

55kg: Armin Shamsipour, Mehdi Ahadi

60kg: Puya Naserpour

63kg: Erfan Jarkani, Mohammadmehdi Keshtkar

67kg: Ahmadreza Mohsennejad, Mohammadreza Gholami

72kg: Mohammadreza Gerai, Danial Sohrabi, Iman Mohammadi

77kg: Ali Oskou, Alireza Abdevali, Amin Kavani, Amir Abdi

82kg: Gholamreza Farrokhi

87kg: Naser Alizadeh

97kg: Shayan Habib Zare, Hamidreza Badkan

130kg: Aliakbar Yousefi

The team is headed by Hassan Rangraz in the tournament.

Iran's non-oil exports rise 18% in 9 months on year



TEHRAN – Iran's non-oil exports rose 18 percent in the first nine months of the Iranian calendar year (March 21- November 20) to \$43.14 billion, according to the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Foroud Asgari said imports during the mentioned period, including gold bullion, amounted to \$50.89 billion. The weight of imports declined by 3.16 percent to 27.94 million tons, he added.

Non-oil export volume reached 116.35 million tons in the nine-month period, a 13.77 percent increase from the previous year, Asgari noted. The average customs value per ton of exported goods rose 3.74 percent to \$371.

Petrochemical exports accounted for 50.7 million tons, valued at \$19.7 billion, representing a 33.25 percent increase in volume and a 32 percent

rise in value year-on-year.

China remained Iran's top export destination, purchasing \$11 billion worth of goods. Iraq followed with \$9.4 billion, the UAE with \$5.3 billion, Turkey with \$5.2 billion, Afghanistan and Pakistan with \$1.7 billion each, and India with \$1.4 billion. Together, these seven countries accounted for 82.4 percent of the total export volume and 82.85 percent of export value.

The UAE topped the list of Iran's import partners, exporting \$15.3 billion worth of goods to Iran. China followed with \$13 billion, Turkey with \$8.9 billion, Germany with \$1.8 billion, India and Russia with \$1.1 billion each, and Hong Kong with \$1 billion. These seven countries supplied 75 percent of the import volume and 83 percent of import value during the period.

The average customs value per ton of imported goods rose 8.4 percent to \$1,821.

Natural gas in liquid form led the export list at \$6 billion, followed by liquefied propane at \$2.5 billion and methanol at \$1.9 billion. Key imports included raw gold at \$5.6 billion, livestock corn at \$2.1 billion, and smartphones at \$1.7 billion.

Asgari, who also serves as deputy economy minister, emphasized the role of trade in bolstering the national economy amid ongoing international sanctions.

Iran exports non-oil goods worth \$1.6b to Afghanistan in 8 months

TEHRAN – Iran exported non-oil commodities valued at \$1.6 billion to Afghanistan during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20), the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Foroud Asgari said that Afghanistan was Iran's fifth top export destination in the mentioned eight-month period.

In a meeting with an Iranian trade delegation in Kabul in mid-August, Afghanistan's interim Deputy Prime Minister Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund said that his country is eager to attract Iranian investors in order to develop Afghan mining industry, generate solar electricity and expand railway connectivity.

The Iranian delegation also proposed to launch a joint special industrial zone with Afghanistan.

Noting that Afghanistan has turned into a good place for making investment, Mullah said that the relevant ministries and organizations there, will cooperate and work closely with the investors.

The Iranian delegation, made up of economic and trade players, also held a separate meeting with Afghanistan's acting minister of commerce Haji Nooruddin Azizi. They called for the formation of a joint economic-mining zone between the two neighboring countries.

In early August, Iran's commercial attaché in Afghanistan said that in order to improve Iran's presence in Afghanistan's markets, the trade between the two countries should move towards newer models of cooperation.

"Afghanistan supplies more than 80 percent of its market needs through imports, and imports from Iran constitute 25 percent of this amount," Hossein Roustaei said in a meeting on opportu-

nities and challenges of the Afghan market, held by Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA).

Referring to Afghanistan's import priorities, including food, agriculture, fuel, basic goods such as flour, oil, eggs, day-old chickens, medicine, medical equipment, and construction equipment, he continued: "Iran exported more than 724 million dollars of goods to Afghanistan in the first four months of the current [Iranian calendar year] (March 20-July 21) which has increased by 28 percent compared to the same period last year."

"The establishment of national security and the central government in Afghanistan over the past two years have improved the conditions of trade with this country," he added.

Afghanistan has prioritized the exploitation of the country's mines. Therefore, Iran's traditional economic relation with Afghanistan should enter into newer models of cooperation, he stressed.

According to Roustaei, investment and operation of mines, technical and engineering services, mechanization of agriculture and smart agriculture, construction of transportation infrastructure, and renewable energies are among the new fields that should be considered for cooperation between the two countries.

Increasing non-oil exports to the neighboring countries is one of the major plans that the Iranian government has been pursuing in recent years.

Iran shares land or water borders with 15 countries namely UAE, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Saudi Arabia.

Industry Ministry targets enhanced efficiency in steel industry through value chain development

TEHRAN – Iran's steel industry aims to boost efficiency and increase value-added production by completing and balancing the downstream value chain, according to a senior official at the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade.

Vajihollah Jafari, the deputy minister for Mines and Mining Industries, said on Saturday that the ministry's policies, as outlined by the minister, prioritize improving productivity and developing downstream steel industries to enhance value-added output.

Jafari highlighted that advancing productivity and balanced development of the value

chain are integral to Iran's Seventh National Development Plan. He also emphasized the importance of addressing mining waste as part of the ministry's strategic roadmap.

"The steel sector, as one of the country's key production industries, must prioritize tackling this issue," Jafari stated.

Iran's crude steel production reached over 28 million tons in the first 11 months of 2024, registering a 0.5 percent increase compared to the same period last year, according to the latest report by the World Steel Association (WSA).

'Detailed strategy, private sector's contribution required in maritime-oriented economy'

From page 1 ▶ Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO), in a recent report, has underlined the importance of the country's maritime capacities and the role that the sector can play in developing the country's economy.

According to the report, maritime sector in Iran has very high capacity in various fields including trade, ports and shipping due to the country's strategic location, long coastal strip in the north and south and access to open waters, and can bring economic prosperity to the country.

"About a third of the country's borders are water borders, so we cannot ignore port and shipping activities because for a country that has long water borders and access to open waters, the prosperity of shipping and maritime



trade is essential. Therefore, the government should pay full attention to the strengths and weaknesses of this sector and make the best use of the current capacities with proper planning," the report read.

Increasing the share of the maritime sector in the country's gross domestic product (GDP) under the framework of the newly proposed maritime-oriented policy should be one of the most important concerns of the gov-

ernment, which can be achieved with proper planning, the PMO said.

The share of the sea in the gross domestic product in advanced coastal countries such as the European Union is 50 percent, but the figure is not significant in Iran despite having more than 5,800 kilometers of coastal strip, and this is despite the fact that there are huge capacities for the transit of goods from Central Asian countries.

In late September, Iranian Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said the 14th government is determined to formulate and implement additional and more comprehensive plans and programs in the field of maritime-oriented development.

Iran's exports to EU rise 6% despite overall trade decline

TEHRAN – Iran's exports to the European Union increased by six percent in the first ten months of 2024, despite a one percent drop in overall trade volume between the two sides, according to Eurostat data.

Total trade between Iran and the EU reached €3.77 billion from January to October 2024, compared to €3.81 billion in the same period in 2023.

EU exports to Iran amounted to just over €3 billion, a two percent decrease year-on-year. In contrast, Iranian exports to the EU grew from €654 million in 2023 to €695 million in 2024.

In October 2024, bilateral trade totaled

€300 million, marking a 19 percent decline from €369 million in October 2023. This figure is the lowest monthly trade volume since January 2021.

Iranian exports to the EU in October rose nine percent to €65 million, while EU exports to Iran fell 24 percent to €235 million.

Germany retained its position as Iran's largest trade partner within the EU, with a trade volume of €1.23 billion. Italy followed with €585 million, the Netherlands with €512 million, Belgium with €281 million, and France with €234 million.

The data underscores mixed trade dynamics amid ongoing economic and geopolitical



challenges. Iranian officials have emphasized fostering trade relations in non-sanctioned sectors and establishing trade offices to bolster economic ties with Europe.

Solar panels distributed to nomads at 10% of cost

TEHRAN – Iran has launched a program to provide portable solar panels to all its nomadic households, requiring them to pay only 10 percent of the cost, a senior official from the Organization for Nomadic Affairs announced.

Darius Nematollahi, the director-general for production improvement, said that since 2019, around 28,000 solar systems have been distributed, benefiting 10 percent of the country's 252,000 nomadic households.

He emphasized that with sufficient funding, the program could bring electricity to all nomads within three years.

Currently, only 10 percent of nomadic families have access to portable solar systems. An additional 2,000 units are ready for distribution through provincial power networks, Nematollahi said.

"This initiative is being carried out in collaboration with Tavanir under the supervision of the Ministry of Energy to ensure electricity access for nomads across the country," he added.

Generation of electricity by solar farms in Iran increased by 38 percent during the ninth Iranian calendar month Azar (November 21 – December 20), as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

As reported, the solar farms generated over 81 million kilowatt-hours of electricity in the mentioned month of the present year.

This amount of electricity generated by the solar farms prevented the emission of 56,000 tons of Green House Gases (GHG).

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

Abbas Ali-Abadi said that the power network of the country is large and with the annual generation and consumption capacity of

about 350 billion kilowatt hours of electricity, it has technically the potential for attracting more than 30,000 megawatts of solar energy.

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

Capacity of Iran's solar farms is going to increase 4,000 MW by March 2026.

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

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

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

This trend shows the serious determina-

tion of the Ministry of Energy and the government to overcome the imbalance of electricity supply and demand by the development of renewable energy in the country, he stressed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'CNG development could save 20m liters of gasoline annually'

TEHRAN – Expanding the use of compressed natural gas (CNG) in Iran could save 20 million liters of gasoline annually within three years, according to Ali Mahmoudian, head of the National Association of Alternative Fuels and Related Services.

Speaking at the national conference "Green Prosperity: Energy Innovations and Clean Transportation" on Sunday, Mahmoudian emphasized that increasing CNG usage would significantly reduce the need for gasoline imports and address

energy challenges.

"CNG currently accounts for 17 percent of the country's fuel mix, which is inadequate for a natural gas-producing nation with the infrastructure capacity to supply 50 million cubic meters daily," Mahmoudian said.

He noted that while 2,500 fueling stations are connected to the national gas network—a feat unmatched globally—expansion has stalled due to unresolved barriers.

Mahmoudian pointed out that during the 2000s, when gasoline

demand surged, the CNG industry played a crucial role in stabilizing fuel supplies.

However, the sector now faces obstacles, including tax policies, business constraints, and unfilled government commitments.

He warned of an impending fuel crisis, projecting a daily gasoline shortfall of 150 million liters by 2031 unless corrective actions are taken.

"Iran is rich in resources but poor in energy governance," Mahmoudian said, highlighting the country's underutilization of

its vast underground energy reserves.

He criticized the proposed 2025 budget, which allocates over 70 percent of funds to current expenditures rather than infrastructure, education, or research—areas prioritized by nations like Singapore, South Korea, and Japan.

Mahmoudian urged policymakers to invest in CNG development, emphasizing its potential to curb gasoline imports and deliver long-term economic and environmental benefits.

Israel spinning a tale to justify its occupation of southern Lebanon

From page 1 ▶ The Israeli army has killed about 4,000 people in Lebanon since October last year. But in the wake of Israel's failure to achieve its military goals, it had to sign a ceasefire with Hezbollah on November 27.

Based on the agreement, which would take 60 days, Israeli troops should withdraw from southern Lebanon, and Hezbollah pull back north of the Litani River, ending its presence in the south. The Lebanese army would deploy to the south to monitor the ceasefire.

Reports say Israel has violated the ceasefire agreement, that was brokered by the United States and France, more than 300 times since it went into effect.

Hezbollah has said Israeli breaches of the ceasefire include deadly airstrikes across Lebanon, shooting at civilians in the south, and flying drones and jets in Leb-



anese airspace, including over Beirut.

The Lebanese army has consistently denounced the Israeli military for deadly assaults in southern Lebanon, citing ongoing breaches of the ceasefire.

Lebanon's National News Agency (NNA) said Israeli strikes continued on southern Lebanese towns and villages on Saturday

night, in violation of the truce.

It noted that the attacks included "violent bombing operation" on areas between the towns of Markaba and Rab Thalathine in the Marjayoun district. Citing the Lebanese army, the NNA further said Israeli forces also invaded Qantara and Taybeh and burned a number of homes there.

Israel is not only seeking to

maintain its occupation of Lebanon but is also attempting to extend its control over the Gaza Strip. Additionally, in Syria, the regime continues to occupy regions beyond the Golan Heights.

The occupation of additional lands in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria is in line with Israel's dreams of establishing a "Greater Israel".

According to proponents of "Greater Israel", the sinister scheme refers to the notion of extending Israel's occupation and sovereignty throughout the Middle East (West Asia).

Israel's far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has already advocated for the creation of a "Jewish state" that would encompass all Palestinian territories and neighboring Arab territories.

He said in October this year that this "Jewish state" must extend into Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia.

Will Israel resume aggression on Lebanon after truce expires?

From page 1 ▶ Giora Zaltz, head of the so-called Upper Galilee Regional Council, called on the government and the IOF to "enable the return of the northern settlers to their homes." Zaltz added, "If the achievement in the north does not allow for a return (of settlers) to their homes, the government should say so."

Speaking to Channel 12, Zaltz revealed that 65 percent of the settlers, i.e. about 200,000 have been "in a war zone" for 15 months.

Obviously, Israel was forced to agree to the ceasefire after its warmongers realized that Hezbollah could not be defeated, otherwise, Netanyahu would have continued the war and finished the resistance off. Further, it seems from his statements that presently the most dangerous challenges are Iran and Yemen.

Both the Zionist proxy and its American operator are aware of Hezbollah's ability to withstand and resist long wars. They know that the movement will mull a broad range of options, including targeting vital and sensitive facilities inside the occupied Palestinian territories as it did on the last Sunday of the war, which put strong pressure on the enemy's home front.

It is worth noting that Washington was the side that relentlessly worked to stop the war and implement UN Resolution 1701; Hezbollah only agreed to its terms, not the other way around. Seemingly, President-elect Donald Trump does not prefer the option of a costly war in its classic form as he is set to assume power in the White House on January 20.

Besides, Hezbollah, after quickly restoring its military and organizational structure and turning the challenge into an op-

portunity, is now a new organization with unknown leaders whose tactics are in conjunction with an arsenal of ballistic missiles and drones that are new. These are unexplored to the enemy.

So far, and despite daily violations through which it is trying to impose a fait accompli, which Lebanon's government, people, and resistance will surely resist, the occupation army has withdrawn from 38% of the border villages. Prime Minister Najib Mikati has informed concerned parties that nothing will deter the resistance from responding to the violations after the truce.

Meanwhile, the monitoring committee for the implementation of UN Resolution 1701 continues to turn a blind eye to the daily violations to put social and political pressure on Hezbollah to get concessions, especially the election of president.

Israeli forces assault hospitals, sexually abuse women and girls

Earlier, the organization said that 12 patients had been forced to relocate to the Indonesian Hospital. "Additionally, reports indicate that some individuals were stripped of their clothing and forced to walk toward southern Gaza."

The organization also warned that the systematic dismantling of the health system and a siege for over 80 days on north Gaza puts the lives of the 75,000 Palestinians remaining in the area at risk.

On Saturday, Israeli occupation forces (IOF) set Kamal Adwan Hospital ablaze, carrying out an airstrike in its vicinity after storming the hospital and searching wounded individuals and patients.

Over 350 people inside, including doctors, nurses, hospital staff, patients, and relatives, were forcibly removed from the hospital and taken to an unknown location.

75 patients and injured people, who were already in critical condition, were forced into the hospital courtyard amid freezing temperatures.

Despite the increasingly dire needs for emergency and trauma services and supplies, only 10 out of 21 WHO missions to Kamal Adwan have been partially facilitated between early October and December, the WHO said in its December 28 report.

Despite the outrage expressed by the WHO and other international organizations, the IOF launched an artillery strike on the al-Ahli Arab Hospital (also known as the Baptist Hospital) in Gaza City on Sunday.

The IOF is believed to have targeted the upper floors of the hospital, which was the last functioning healthcare facility in northern Gaza after the destruction of Kamal Adwan Hospital.

According to local reports, the IOF used artillery shells to strike the top floor, further damaging the building.

The latest assault is part of a wider pattern of Israeli forces targeting medical facilities in Gaza, particularly in the north, where the healthcare system has been completely decimated.

Degrading treatment

Testimonies collected by the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor also reveal harrowing accounts of sexual assault against women and girls during the IOF raid at the Kamal Adwan Hospital on Friday.

The Israeli army detained dozens of women and girls, subjecting them to severe abuse amounting to sexual harassment, alongside degrading treatment that violated their human dignity.

This included beating them and forcing them to remove their hijabs and clothing.

One of the women expelled from the area told the Euro-Med Monitor team, "A soldier forced a nurse to take off her trousers, then placed his hand on her."

When she tried to resist, he struck her hard across the face, causing her nose to bleed."

Another woman reported that a soldier told a woman in their group "Take it off, or we'll force it off you."

In another incident, a woman refused to remove her head-

scarf, prompting a soldier to tear her clothes, exposing her chest.

One victim recounted being dragged by a soldier who forced her to press against him, saying, "Take it off now," while hurling obscene remarks at her.

Similarly, a hospital staff member told the Euro-Med Monitor team, "The soldiers ordered us to remove our hijabs, but we refused. They then turned to the girls under 20 years old and demanded they remove their hijabs, but they also refused. The soldiers decided to punish us by taking two women at a time and forcing them to lift their clothes and lower their trousers under threats and coercion."

The Israeli occupation regime continues to commit massacres and war crimes across the Gaza Strip.

According to Gaza's Ministry of Health's daily report on Sunday, the death toll from the Israeli genocidal war has risen to 45,514 with another 108,189 injured since October 7, 2023.

179 dead in South Korea's worst plane crash in years

The deadliest air accident ever in South Korea killed 179 people on Sunday, when an airliner belly-landed and skidded off the end of the runway, erupting in a fireball as it slammed into a wall at Muan International Airport.

Jeju Air (089590.KS), opens new tab flight 7C2216, arriving from the Thai capital Bangkok with 175 passengers and six crew on board, was attempting to land shortly after 9 a.m. (0000 GMT) at the airport in the south of the country, South Korea's transport ministry

said, Reuters reported.

Two crew members survived and were being treated for injuries.

The deadliest air accident on South Korean soil was also the worst involving a South Korean airline in nearly three decades, according to the transport ministry.

The twin-engine Boeing 737-800 was seen in local media video skidding down the runway with no visible landing gear before crashing into navigation equipment and a wall in an explosion of flames and debris.

"Only the tail part retains a little bit of shape, and the rest of (the plane) looks almost impossible to recognize," Muan fire chief Lee Jung-hyun told a press briefing.

The two crew members, a man and a woman, were rescued from the tail section of the burning plane, Lee said. They were being treated at hospitals with medium to severe injuries, said the head of the local public health center.

Authorities combed nearby areas for bodies possibly thrown from the plane, Lee said.

Fifth baby dies from cold in Gaza amid Israeli siege



The dead body of one-month-old Juma al-Batran, who had been sheltering in a tent in Deir al-Balah, Gaza, is being brought to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the city for funeral arrangements after losing his life due to the extreme cold, on December 29, 2024 [Ashraf Amra/Anadolu Agency]

A newborn Palestinian baby who was 30 days old died in Gaza from hypothermia on Sunday.

The Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza confirmed the death of Juma al-Batran, making Juma the fifth newborn baby to die from hypothermia in the besieged enclave.

Speaking to Al Jazeera, Juma's father told the news network that the family had been evacuated from Beit Lahiya to the Central

Gaza Strip eight months ago and did not have a tent.

The father told Al Jazeera he only had a few blankets and wood to protect his family, but that was not enough to protect Juma, as he was also unable to bring blankets and winter clothes.

Juma has a twin brother who is currently in the ICU.

Swedes, Brits denounce Europe's silence on Israeli genocide in Gaza

From page 1 ▶ Previously, United Nations agencies and rights groups have urged Israel to cease its military actions in Gaza.

In November, the ICC issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant for committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

Israel already stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The ICJ, known as the World Court, found in January that there was a risk of violation of the rights of the Palestinian people to protection from genocide.

It ordered Israel to "take all measures within its power" to desist from killing Palestinians in contravention of the genocide convention, to prevent and punish the incitement of genocide, and to facilitate the provision of "urgent basic services".

Israel has ignored such calls to end its genocidal war in Gaza.

Netanyahu ordered his army to launch war on Gaza after Hamas carried out a surprise military operation in southern Israel on October 7, 2023.

North Korea vows toughest anti-US policy before Trump takes office



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un held a key policy-setting meeting of the country's ruling party a week ago ahead of the new year, state media KCNA reported on Sunday.

The meeting of party and government officials decided that North Korea would launch the "toughest" strategy to counteract the United States less than a month before Donald Trump takes office as the next American president, the report said, Reuters reported.

The alliance between South Korea, the U.S. and Japan has expanded to a "nuclear military bloc" and South Korea has become an "anti-communist outpost" for the U.S., the KCNA report added.

"This reality clearly shows to which direction we should advance and what we should do and how."

The Dec. 23-27 meeting also reviewed the handling of floods earlier this year, including the plan that brought those affected to Pyongyang, the capital, according to the report.

North Korea also vowed to promote relations with "friendly" countries during the meeting.

Kim also called for progress in defense science and technology to bolster the country's war deterrence.

104% growth in intl. tourists visiting Kish Island



TEHRAN - The CEO of Kish Free Zone Organization, Mohammad Kabiri, has said that during the last month, the number of foreign tourists who visited the Island has registered 104% growth.

In an interview with IRNA, Kabiri said on Sunday that the plans to attract more foreign tourists have become easier in Kish Island.

The official made no reference to the number of tourists in a specific month or months to indicate the extent of this increase.

There are plans to introduce new tourist des-

tinations and these are on the agenda, he said, adding that new routes from Erbil, Baghdad, and other Iraqi cities have been added to the destination of Kish.

Kabiri also announced the first direct flight from Tajikistan to Kish to be launched on January 4, 2025. This achievement is the result of the meeting with Tajikistan Ambassador to Iran in Kish, he added.

Kish Island is located on the northern edge of the Persian Gulf.

Rare Safavid carpets put on show at Tehran museum



TEHRAN - The Iran Carpet Museum hosted a ceremony unveiling two exquisite Safavid-era carpets, drawing the attention of over 150 scholars, artists, and carpet enthusiasts.

Held in the Pazyryk Hall of the museum, the event featured an in-depth presentation by prominent carpet researcher and educator Touraj Zhouleh, who provided detailed insights into the intricate beauty and historical significance of the Safavid carpets, Mehr reported on Saturday. Highlighting the value of hand-woven carpet workshops, Zhouleh emphasized the role of advanced technologies in enhancing participants' understanding through immersive, multi-sensory experiences.

The expert also traced the origins of carpet studies to the mid-19th century, crediting European scholars as pioneers in the field. He noted that American researchers later expanded this discipline by employing fieldwork techniques to introduce tribal and rural carpets to the global art community.

"Carpet studies go beyond technical analysis," Zhouleh remarked, "encompassing the deep connections between history, culture, society, and beliefs. Safavid carpets, in particular, exemplify the flourishing of art and culture during this period."

The two Safavid carpets will be on display at the Iran Carpet Museum until January 19, 2025, offering visitors a chance to marvel at these masterpieces of Persian artistry.

Attendees described the unveiling as a memorable moment that celebrated the artistry of this remarkable era.

Glimpses of Persian carpet

Persian carpets are sought after internationally, with patterns of Persian garden being arguably the most characteristic feature of them all. Weavers spend several months in front of a loom, stringing and knotting thousands of threads. Some practice established patterns. Some make their own.

Each Persian carpet is a scene that seems ageless, a procedure that can take as long as a year. These efforts have long put Iran's carpets among the most complex and labor-intensive handicrafts in the world. When the weaving is finally done, the carpet is cut, washed, and put out in the sun to dry.

Throughout history, invaders, politicians, and even enemies have left their impact on Iran's carpets. As mentioned by the Britannica Encyclopedia, little is known about Persian carpet-making before the 15th century, when art was already approaching a peak.

Historic stepwell discovered near the Banke Bihari temple in India

A remarkable archaeological discovery has surfaced in the Laxman Ganj area of Chandausi, Sambhal district, Uttar Pradesh, where a 400-square-meter stepwell, believed to be 125 to 150 years old, has been unearthed.

The find has garnered significant attention for its historical and architectural significance. Excavation work, conducted under the supervision of the Sambhal administration and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), is ongoing.

Stepwells, or baolis, are unique structures designed to provide access to groundwater through descending staircases.

They often served dual purposes as water storage systems and places of communal gathering. The Chandausi stepwell is believed to have been constructed during the reign of the maternal grandfather of the King of Bilari and is notable for its three levels—two made of marble and one of brick.

Sambhal District Magistrate Rajender Pensiya described the structure, stating, "The well's upper floor is constructed of bricks, while the second and third floors are made of marble. The stepwell also features four chambers, a tunnel,

and a well."

He added that excavation work has uncovered 210 square meters of the site, with efforts ongoing to remove encroachments covering the remaining area. The discovery of a tunnel within the stepwell has sparked speculation that it may have been used as an escape route during the Indian Rebellion of 1857.

This rebellion marked a significant uprising against the British East India Company. The tunnel's purpose and historical context are under further investigation by experts.

Additionally, locals claim that the stepwell, previously recorded as a pond in state revenue records, was a central feature of the area when it was inhabited predominantly by the Hindu community. Excavation began following an anti-encroachment drive and public requests to the district administration.

The work, led by Krishna Kumar Sonkar, Executive Officer of the Chandausi Nagar Palika, has revealed intricate carvings, staircases, and gated chambers. "We started the excavation work as soon as we learned of the baoli's presence," Sonkar stated.

(Source: Archaeology Magazine)

Iran could be highly attractive to Thai tourists, official says

TEHRAN - In a meeting with managers of Thai travel agencies, Mehdi Zare' Bieib, Iran's Cultural Counselor in Thailand, has emphasized the potential of tourism collaboration as a bridge to enhance cultural ties, friendship, and economic growth between the two nations.

The meeting aimed to explore avenues for joint initiatives in the tourism sector and promote cultural exchanges, ISNA reported on Saturday.

A number of plans and initiatives were also discussed for an upcoming summit of Thai travel agencies focusing on showcasing Iran's tourism potential.

Zare' Bieib highlighted the historical and cultural connections between Iran and Thailand, noting, "The ties between our countries are built on a foundation of robust cultural and social interactions."

Iran, as one of the world's oldest civilizations, offers an abundance of historical, cultural, and natural attractions that could captivate Thai tourists."

He also admired Thailand for its rich culture, renowned hospitality, and advanced tourism



industry, stating that these qualities make it a significant player in the region.

The cultural counselor further expressed hopes for mutually beneficial initiatives that would introduce Thai tourists to Iran's beauty while providing opportunities to showcase Thai culture and art in Iran.

Moreover, the official proposed facilitating tourism processes, organizing joint events, and expanding media campaigns to promote Iran in Thailand.

"Through collaborative plan-

ing and effective execution, we aim to foster sustainable tourism development for both nations," he said.

Santisap Mookhawat, director of the Thailand Tourism Association, echoed the sentiment, affirming Thailand's readiness to cooperate fully with Iran.

He proposed hosting a summit in February featuring major Thai travel agencies, ASEAN partners, and media representatives.

Mookhawat suggested inviting representatives from neighboring countries like Indonesia,

Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar to the event, enhancing regional tourism collaboration.

"This initiative will not only strengthen Iran-Thailand relations but also promote broader regional engagement in the tourism sector," he stated.

He added that approximately 20 to 25 Thai travel agencies are expected to participate, with plans for Iran's Cultural Counselor to showcase Iran's attractions through brochures, videos, and promotional materials.

The event will be fully supported by Thailand's tourism resources to ensure its success, Mookhawat added.

"This collaborative effort aims to unlock new opportunities in tourism, fostering stronger connections between Iran, Thailand, and the wider ASEAN region."

The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 28 sole or chain properties are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Restoration of Manujan fortress in southern Iran begins

TEHRAN - Manujan Fortress, a ruined rampart believed to date from the Sassanid era in the southern Kerman province, has undergone restoration.

"The current phase of the restoration project includes using adobe and handcraft techniques, plastering, debris removal, and general cleaning of the site," a provincial tourism official said on Sunday.

"This year, with allocated funding, restoration efforts have focused on the main tower of the fortress, the tallest structure in the complex located at its central point," Nader Alidadi-Soleimani stated.

"It is one of the most significant landmarks in southern Kerman province," he said.

Archaeological studies indicate that the Manujan Fortress dates back to the pre-Islamic Sasanian period.

Throughout the early, middle, and late Islamic eras, the fortress served as one of the most formidable military strongholds along southern maritime routes and in central Iran.

Situated atop the highest point in Manujan city, the fortress holds a strong presence and was officially recognized as a national heritage site in 2005.

Manujan is located 430 kilometers south of Kerman, the provincial capital, and remains a significant cultural and historical site reflecting the region's rich past.

Historical records from Iranian and Arab historians describe Manujan as a prosperous and vital city that functioned as a key trade hub connecting southern maritime commerce with northern and eastern Iran.

Previous excavations yielded a special kind of pottery as well as pieces of jewelry and glassware works that throw light on the history of the rampart.

A Sassanid archaeological landscape typically depicts a highly effective land use system and the strategic use of natural topography in the development of the earliest Sassanid cultural centers.

Sources say defensive walls have often been necessary for cities to survive in an ever-changing world of invasion and conquest.

Fortresses were designed primarily to defend territories in warfare and were also used to solidify rule in a region during peacetime.

The Sassanid era saw a general renaissance in Persian art and architecture. Palaces at Ctesiphon, Firuzabad, and Sarves-



tan, which are among the highlights of the ensemble, are just a few examples of the grandiose proportions that architecture frequently adopted.

2018 saw the designation of "Sassanid Archaeological Landscape of Fars Region" as a UNESCO site, a collection of Sassanian historical cities in southern Iran. Eight archaeological sites make up the ensemble, which is spread across the three regions of Firuzabad, Bishapur, and Sarvestan.

Kerman province is something of a cultural melting pot, blending various regional cultures over time.

It is also home to rich tourist spots and historical sites, including bazaars, mosques, caravanserais and ruins of ancient urban areas.

Kerman is bounded by the provinces of Fars in the west, Yazd in the north, South Khorasan in the northeast, Sistan-Baluchestan in the east, and Hormozgan in the south. It includes the southern part of the central Iranian desert, the Dasht-e Lut.

Japan's scenic hot springs town restricting tourists amid fights over the best photo spots

Ginzan Onsen, a popular Japanese hot spring town known for its scenic snowy views, has begun limiting entry to day trippers during winter peak season, becoming another destination to tackle overtourism amid the country's record influx of travelers.

Located in the Yamagata region about 260 miles north of Tokyo, the onsen is one of the most famous in Japan, drawing around 330,000 visitors each year.

Travelers from around the world flock to the 300-year-old town during winter not only for a dip in the onsen but its picturesque scenery of traditional Edo-period buildings blanketed in snow - speculated to be the inspiration for Oscar-winning animator Hayao Miyazaki's film Spirited Away.

But its popularity has also

caused problems for residents in the otherwise tranquil town, with reports of altercations over photo spots and parking places.

"Many guests became angry (were shouting) over good spots for the purpose of taking pictures, leading to traffic rules being broken, cheating, and making people seek better places and easier ways than others," the onsen said on its website, regretting that its "vague management" had caused issues.

Starting January 7, those wanting to enter the onsen town after 5pm will be required to purchase a ticket, according to Ginzan Onsen Information Center.

Visitors without bookings at local hotels will be banned after 8pm.

Tickets, including the bus

rides, cost 1150 yen, about \$7.

Those driving themselves will be required to park at a nearby tourist center and use shuttle buses to get into the town.

Hiroyuki Ishii, from the Ginzan Onsen Overtourism Measures Project Office, told CNN day-trippers who drove often got stuck in snow-covered roads, causing traffic congestion and blocking ambulance access.

"The area for taking photos is narrow, and sometimes visitors have a dispute with each other telling them to move out of the way."

There have been times when people almost fell into the river after bumping into each other," he added.

Ginzan Onsen is joining a raft of popular tourist destinations to regulate visits as Japan receives a record tourism boom in recent months.

The country already recorded 33 million overseas tourists this year until November, beating the 31.9 million record set by the whole of 2019, according to the Japan National Tourism Organization.

In May, Fujikawaguchiko, a small town at the base of Mount Fuji, had to erect a large black net to block the view of a popular photo spot featuring a convenience store against the famous mountain, after it caused nuisance to residents.

The net was removed in August after the craze had subsided.

Other places such as Mount Fuji and Himeji Castle - Japan's largest castle, located in western Hyogo Prefecture - are proposing to raise entry fees for visitors.

(Source: CNN)

No lack of medical supplies for EB despite sanctions

TEHRAN –Despite sanctions, Iran's Food and Drug Administration (IFDA) has managed to procure and store the essential medical supplies needed by Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB) patients, an official with IFDA has said.

EB is a severe and life-threatening skin condition that causes extremely painful wounds. Many are children, who are often referred to as "butterfly kids" because of their fragile skin.

The provided items will meet patients' needs for six months. EB Home will distribute them among patients, free of charge, IRNA quoted Mavedat Homaei as saying.

The World Health Organization has also helped the country to receive these products, the official noted.

Medicine import crisis in wake of sanctions

In a recent statement, in November, a high-ranking official at IFDA revealed that European Union sanctions have significantly impacted Iran's pharmaceutical imports, leaving patients with critical health needs particularly vulnerable.

The government is now exploring alternative pathways to ensure the steady flow of essential medical supplies to the country.

Speaking at a nursing equipment exhibition in Tehran, Fereshteh Mirzazadeh, deputy head of the IFDA, provided an update on the



measures Iran is taking to counter these obstacles.

She outlined the government's ongoing efforts to establish new transport routes and form partnerships with foreign airlines that could help bypass the sanctions.

"We are working to open special air corridors, collaborate with international firms, and strengthen domestic production," Mirzazadeh said.

"These strategies are essential to securing the medical supplies needed by our population."

In addition to these international arrangements, the IFDA is prioritizing investment in local production capabilities.

Mirzazadeh expressed hope that these sanctions could ultimately become an impetus for growth in Iran's pharmaceutical sector, aim-

ing to reduce dependence on imports by improving the quality and quantity of domestically produced medications.

"We view this challenge as an opportunity to bolster our internal resources and increase self-sufficiency in the healthcare sector," she added.

EB is a severe and life-threatening skin condition that causes extremely painful wounds.

Sanctions harming right to health

In July 2022, Iranian Ambassador to Stockholm Ahmad Masoumifar severely criticized a Swedish com-

pany for refraining from selling special bandages which are vital for patients suffering from Epidermolysis Bullosa in the country.

"A Swedish company manufacturing medical supplies is still refraining from selling bandages needed for EB patients in Iran under the pretext of U.S. sanctions," the envoy wrote on his Twitter.

Across the country, 950 people have been diagnosed with EB, but considering that EB is estimated to occur in 1 newborn per 50,000 live births, it is suggested that in Iran 1,200 people are suffering from EB.

Without the bandages, they face difficulties even in their daily routine, including walking, eating, or even breathing, and unfortunately, there is no alternative treatment for such pain.

The criminal policy of the United States caused the death of 15 EB patients from 2010 to 2018 when the Swedish bandage maker decided to halt shipments to Iran due to fear of secondary sanctions as part of over-compliance.

In October 2021, experts appointed by the UN Human Rights Council said over-compliance with United States-imposed sanctions against Iran is harming the right to health, and people with rare skin diseases are among those affected, many of them children.

As a result, EB patients in Iran can no longer enjoy the right to health, said the experts.

Over 7,000 prisoners of involuntary crimes freed in 9 months

TEHRAN –During the first nine months of the current Iranian year (March 20 – December 20), a total of 7,706 prisoners of unintentional crimes were released.

Of the total prisoners who were in prison due to financial crimes, 7,282 were male, and 424 were female, Mehr news agency reported.

Tehran, Fars, and Isfahan provinces had the highest number of prisoners of involuntary crimes with 2,570, 1,295, and 1,186 cases, respectively.

On the occasion of National Mother's Day, which fell on December 22 this year, a total of 1,000 female prisoners of unintentional crimes were released across the country.

National Woman's Day (also called Mother's Day), coincides with the birth anniversary of Hazrat Fatemeh, the daughter of the holy prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

Currently, there are over 600 women imprisoned for unintentional crimes, IRIB reported.

In the last three decades, benefactors have helped releasing more than 170,000 prisoners of unintentional crimes in the country.

Governmental support

In March 2023, heads of the three branches of the government donated sums of money to help release prisoners of unintentional crimes.

Late President Ebrahim Raisi, Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei, and Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf allocated a total of 8.6 billion rials (about \$16,000) for the issue, IRNA reported.

As an annual tradition, benefactors come together in a ceremony to raise funds for releasing prisoners of unintentional crimes during the holy month of Ramadan, according to the Blood Money Organization.

Previously, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, earmarked 15 billion rials (some \$27.7) for releasing prisoners of unintentional crimes.

Asadollah Joulaei, the head of the Blood Money Organization, said on March 26, 2023, that a total of 6,875 prisoners of unintentional crimes have been released over the past 12 months, Mehr reported.

Freeing prisoners of involuntary crimes is done in three ways.

The first way is granting prisoners leave



and the second way is providing a number of them with loans to be paid inside the prison.

The third way of assistance is the release of unintentional convicts by paying their debt.

The Blood Money Organization was established in 1990. Since then, more than 160,000 prisoners of unintentional crimes who had debts have been freed.

On March 6, 2023, Mohseni-Ejei said the Leader had pardoned a sizable number of prisoners. He also said that over 80,000 prisoners have received pardons as a result of the order issued by Ayatollah Khamenei.

The top judge stressed that thousands who had been detained during recent disturbances in the country were given amnesty.

He added that the number of pardon cases could approach 90,000.

Of the total prisoners who were in prison due to financial crimes, 7,282 were male, and 424 were female.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Bikes to hold 3.5% share in Tehran transportation

Bikes will carry out 3.5 percent of the capital's total transportation, as the national document on bike transport development has proposed, deputy mayor for traffic and transport affairs at Tehran Municipality has stated. A five-year plan to develop biking in the capital has been proposed aiming to promote biking, develop bike lanes and curb air pollution.

Currently, the document is under review by the traffic council to be approved, ISNA quoted Mohsen Pourseyyed Aqaei as saying on Saturday.

As per the document, some 120 kilometers of the roads will be accessible for the bicycle riders each year, he added.

The reason behind the failure of bicycle schemes in past recent years was that the technology was overlooked in the schemes.

انجام ۳.۵ درصد از سفرهای تهران با دوچرخه

معاون حمل و نقل ترافیک شهرداری تهران از تدوین سند دوچرخه پایتخت خبر داد، براساس این سند، می بایست ۳.۵ درصد از سفرهای تهران با دوچرخه انجام شود.

محسن پورسیدآقایی در گفت و گو با ایسنا، با بیان اینکه سند توسعه دوچرخه در دستور کار قرار دارد گفت: در حال حاضر این سند سند ۵ساله در شورای ترافیک پایتخت در حال بررسی است که در صورت تصویب دوچرخه سواری ترویج و توسعه می یابد.

وی با بیان اینکه سالانه ۱۲۰ کیلومتر به مسیر دوچرخه اضافه می شود، در پاسخ به سوالی در مورد سرنوشت دوچرخه های قبلی شهرداری گفت: دلیل شکست طرح های دوچرخه در گذشته این بود که به تکنولوژی های روز دنیا توجه نشده بود.

Over 6,000 Iranian female benefactors abroad contribute to school construction

TEHRAN – More than 6,000 Iranian women who are residing out of the country are actively engaged in constructing schools, a member of international charity school-building association has said.

With the contribution of these benevolent benefactors, each school expands to six or seven schools, IRNA quoted Somayeh Hashemi as saying.

She made the remarks on Saturday on the sidelines of the first national school constructing conference in Torbat-e Jam, Khorasan Province.

Benefactors pledge \$334m to construct schools

Benefactors have pledged to provide 200 trillion rials (around 334 million dollars) for constructing schools in the current Iranian year that started on March 20, Mohammad Reza Jafari, CEO of the School-Building Donors Association has said. Over 50 percent of benefactors have contributed in building 8,000 classrooms so far this year, IRIB quoted Jafari as saying.

Referring to the number of semi-finished projects to be constructed by benefactors, he said some 1,856 schools and 9,746 classrooms need more budget to be completed.

Moreover, a total of 3,206 school projects with 1,617 classrooms are on the agenda to be built, but these projects need the support of the government to be built, Jafari noted.

In Iranian year 1401 (2022-2023), benefactors allotted 46 trillion rials (about 70 million dollars) for school construction and collected the needed amount in festivals.

In 1402 (March 2023 – March 2024), their contributions almost tripled, as it increased by 115 trillion rials (almost 191 million dollars).

Over half of schools built by benefactors

By financing 120 trillion rials (about \$200 million), school-building benefactors have contributed to the construction of 53 percent of the schools in the current Iranian year, which started on March 20.

In 1998, the Association of School-Building Donors was established, with donors allotting 170 billion rials (around \$284,000), IRNA quoted Jafari, as saying.

In the last few years, benefactors' contributions have tripled. They have undertaken the construction of more than half of the schools, the official added.

Benefactors' share increased by 300%

On July 2, the former Education Minister Reza-Morad Sahraei said over the past three years, the share of benefactors in building schools has increased by 300 percent.

If the same trend continues, constructing schools in areas where the per capita educational space is lower than the national standard, i.e., 5.30 square meters, will naturally become a priority, he said.

Over the past three years, more than 7,000 schools with 32,000 classrooms were built in underprivileged areas, the official stressed.

The fact that 64 percent of schools are constructed in rural areas and underprivileged communities highlights efforts to expand educational equity and opportunities, Sahraei further noted.

Rayan intl. programming contest slated for spring

TEHRAN –The final stage of the Rayan international programming contest will be held in the upcoming spring, bringing together 100 selected programmers nationally and internationally.

Supported by the Vice Presidency of Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy, Sharif University of Technology will host the event, IRNA reported.

The competition plays a key role in discovering and nurturing young talents. It serves as a platform to flourish creativity and innovation, and an opportunity for experts and those interested in programming to share knowledge and experiences.

Moreover, the event will help participants improve their technical skills, and solve complex problems via algorithmic thinking. It helps them to strengthen problem-solving skills, which is one of the most important skills needed nowadays.

Some 25,000 best coders from over 140 countries attended the first phase of the competition on November 30, virtually. India, Bangladesh, China, Russia, Egypt, Iran, Vietnam, Kazakhstan, the U.S., and Japan had the highest number of participants, respectively.

Based on the average scores of the top three participants of each country, China, Japan, the U.S., Hong Kong, Russia, Canada, South Korea, Iran, Poland, Taiwan, Vietnam, India, and Kazakhstan were

ranked among the best respectively.

Collegiate programming contest for West Asia

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

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

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

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

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



Cranes wintering at Bakhtegan Lake

Bakhtegan Lake is a Salt Lake in southern Fars Province with a surface area of 3,500 square kilometers. It was once Iran's second-largest lake.

Cranes have come to Bakhtegan for wintering amid low precipitation which has caused the Lake to face a shortage of water.



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

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895

Email: info@tehrantimes.com

Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000

Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051430

Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807

Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

He is the wisest and the most knowing man who advises people not to lose hope and faith in the Mercy of Allah and not to be too sure and over-confident of immunity from His Wrath and Punishment.

Imam Ali (AS)

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

Tehran cultural center screens "Small Things like These"

TEHRAN- "Small Things like These", a 2024 movie by Belgian filmmaker Tim Mielants, was reviewed at the Arasbaran Cultural Center in Tehran on Sunday afternoon.

Film critics Kurosh Jahed and Azam Sadat Shabani attended a screening of the film followed by a review session.

"Small Things Like These" is a poignant tale set in 1985, focusing on Bill Furlong, a coal merchant in the small Irish town of New Ross, who is well-regarded for his fairness and hard work. As Christmas approaches, Bill reflects on his challenging upbringing as the son of a single mother, who, despite being ostracized by her family, managed to find work with the influential Mrs. Wilson.

One fateful day, while making his coal deliveries, Bill discovers a teenage girl named Sarah locked in the convent's coal shed, forced to confront a tragic reality—she is pregnant and alone. Despite the nuns' pretense of caring for her, Sarah's predicament becomes increasingly evident. She feels coerced into lying about her circumstances, telling Sister Mary, the convent's Mother Superior, that she was locked in by other girls during a game.

Unbeknownst to Bill, Sister Mary subtly threatens him regarding the well-being of his daughters at the convent school, handing him a sealed envelope filled with cash to keep him silent. Troubled, Bill chooses not to share the envelope with his

wife, Eileen. Their exchange becomes a breeding ground for tension, as he deflects her questions about the envelope, further burdened by the moral dilemma he faces.

Visiting the local pub, Bill is advised by Mrs. Kehoe to keep quiet about the convent, reinforcing the nuns' political power in the community. However, the burden of Sarah's suffering weighs heavily on him. When he happens upon a childhood Christmas gift desire, a moment of reflection ignites a decision within him.

Courageously, Bill returns to the convent's coal shed, gradually persuading Sarah to leave her confinement. As he carries her home to his family, he offers her a sense of belonging and safety. The film concludes with a dedication to the countless women victimized by the Magdalene Laundries, shedding light on a dark chapter in Ireland's history and highlighting the theme of compassion in the face of societal apathy.

"Small Things Like These" is a historical drama film adapted by Enda Walsh from Claire Keegan's 2021 novel. Starring Cillian Murphy, Eileen Walsh, Michelle Fairley, Emily Watson, Clare Dunne, and Helen Behan, the film explores the notorious Magdalene Laundries in Ireland. An international co-production between Ireland and Belgium, it premiered at the 74th Berlin International Film Festival in February, and received positive reviews from critics.

Muscat Nights Festival launched with Iranian artist participation

TEHRAN- Artists from Iran are currently showcasing their talents at the Muscat Nights Festival, taking place at the Qurum Park Amphitheater in Muscat, Oman.

The participation of Iranian artists in this grand cultural and recreational festival has been organized through the collaborative efforts of the Cultural Attaché of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Oman and the Municipality of Muscat, ISNA reported on Sunday.

Eight Iranian artists are representing a diverse range of artistic fields, including enamel, inlaid work, kilim weaving, pottery, silk weaving, wood inlay, jewelry, as well as saffron and food produc-

tion, the report added.

Moreover, nine more booths have been set up for Iranian artists residing in Oman, showcasing traditional calligraphy, miniature painting, wickerwork, fabric design, and traditional cuisine.

This festival is open to the public every day, offering an exciting array of cultural activities, including music performances, theater, poetry nights, one-day sports competitions with awards, and demonstrations from various countries.

The Muscat Nights Festival is a vibrant cultural and entertainment event held in multiple locations across Oman, including Qurum Natural Park, and will continue until January 21.

Cartoon of Day



Gaza Is a Victim of Occupation and Cold
 Cartoonist: Fahd Bahady from Syria

12 Iranian films to be shown at Dhaka International Film Festival

From Page 1 ▶ In the Children Films Section, "Nowruz" by Soheil Movaffagh, "Jockey" by Hadi Shariati, and "Miro" by Hossein Rigi will be shown.

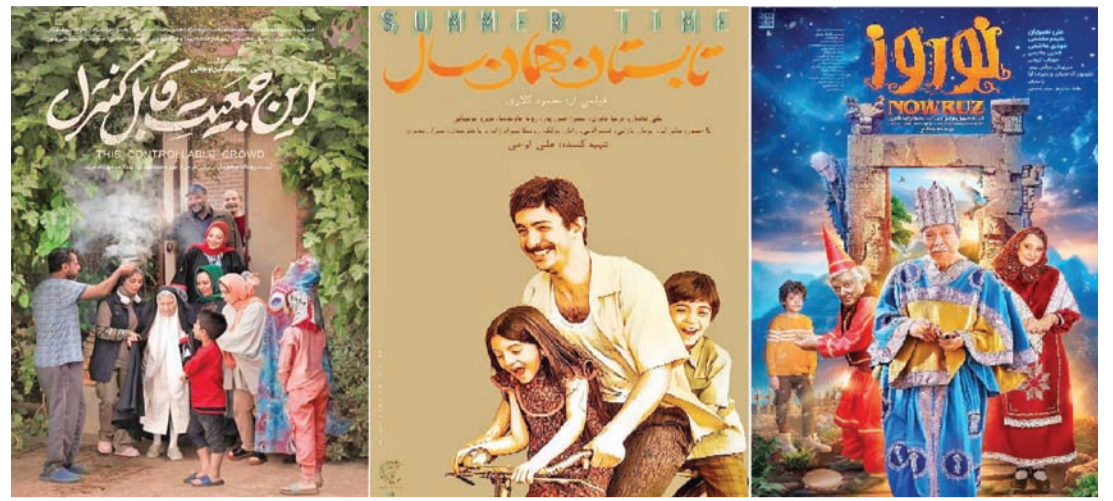
"Hello Anna" by Mohammad Hossein Soleimani Fard, which is a joint production of Iran and New Zealand, will take part in the Spiritual Film section.

In addition to the Iranian films participating in the festival, two jurors from Iran Mahnaz Tafaghi and Hoda Moghadam Manesh, will be in the jury panels of the DIFF.

Mahnaz Tafaghi will serve as a juror in the interfaith jury for the Spiritual Films section. She is an Iranian producer, distributor, lecturer, and the founder of Ayvision Films, an independent film production and distribution company.

She began her career as a journalist, working with international news agencies and contributing to various media outlets. Her passion for storytelling led her to cinema journalism, where she worked with numerous film festivals.

She later transitioned into film production and distribution, gaining experience with international



companies before founding Ayvision Films.

Her company focuses on projects from the Middle East, particularly Iran and Turkey, while also collaborating with European partners on co-productions.

AYVISION Films offers a full range of services, including development, production, post-production, and distribution. She has served as a juror in various film festivals so far.

Hoda Moghadam Manesh will be one of the jury members in the Women Filmmaker section. She started her artistic career from

young age by acting in the theatrical performances.

After performing in five plays, she entered the professional cinema. She has played in three movies so far.

In 2023, she won the best actress award from Ahmedabad International Festival in India for her role in the movie "Life and Life" directed by Ali Ghavitan. She also wrote a book focusing on art history, which was published in 2016.

The general theme of this year's edition of Dhaka International Film Festival is "Better Film, Bet-

ter Audience, and Better Society". A total of 201 movies from across the globe will be screened in various sections of the event.

Established in 1992, DIFF is a biennial film festival. It was initially organized on annual basis, but became a biennial event since 1995.

DIFF is one of the most prestigious film events in Bangladesh, dedicated to introduce the mainstream global cinema to the local film makers as well as to promote healthy cine culture within Bangladesh.

Bilingual Persian-Chinese children's book published in Iran



TEHRAN- "My Mother," a bilingual Persian-Chinese children's book has recently been published in Iran.

The beautifully illustrated work, created by Chinese writer Ge Bing and illustrated by Li Hongzhan, has been translated into several major world languages and is now available in Persian, published by Nam Publications in Tehran.

Translated by Mina Vafai, the book portrays the story of a mother who is sometimes timid, bold, strong, and even strict. Yet behind every image lies an undeniable truth: her unwavering love for her child.

"My Mother" is designed for children aged three and above, offering an exploration of maternal love with gentle illustrations

and a humorous tone.

Last week, in celebration of Mother's Day, the book—produced by the China Children's Press and Publication Group (CCPPG)—was unveiled during a ceremony in Tehran.

The unveiling of this significant cultural piece was marked by a gathering of cultural figures and book enthusiasts.

The event was supported by Kolbeh Bazi and Andisheh, featuring the presence of translator Mina Vafai, who is also a faculty member of the Chinese Language Department at the University of Tehran and the director of the Confucius Institute there, along

with other experts in the field of children's literature.

This book represents a significant milestone in cultural relations between Iran and China, serving as the first bilingual Persian-Chinese publication in the history of the two nations' cultural ties. The narrative is shared through the voice of a sweet child, capturing the essence of maternal affection in a unique and engaging manner.

This inaugural bilingual piece not only fosters understanding and appreciation between two cultures but also serves as a valuable addition to the world of children's literature in Iran.

Laleh Art Gallery hosting hand-printed works

TEHRAN-The 10th Annual Hand-print Exchange of Laleh Art Gallery is underway at the gallery in central Tehran.

The exhibition showcases more than 300 hand-printed works by Iranian and international artists, ILNA reported.

According to the manager of the gallery and the head of the annual exhibition Mohammad Ali Saeedi,

the event seeks to introduce and expand the activities of artists in the field of hand printing and share valuable experiences in this field.

For the second time this year, the art event hosts the works of international artists, including Pablo Picasso, Edvard Munch, Claude Monet, Rembrandt, Max Ernst, Salvador Dali, Utagawa Hiroshige, Paul Cézanne, Georges Braque, Fernand

Léger, Henri Matisse, Wassily Kandinsky, and René Magritte.

Iranian artists whose hand-printed works are on display include Nasser Ovissi, Ebrahim Haghighi, Mansour Ghandriz, Bahman Mohassess, Faramarz Pilaram, Marcos Grigorian, and Morteza Momayez among others.

The exhibition includes all hand-print techniques that can be re-

produced, including chalcography (engraving on copper or brass); xylography (engraving on wood); lithography (stone printing); serigraphy (silkscreen printing), monoprint (single copy printing), and digital methods.

The exhibition will run through January 19, 2025 at Laleh Art Gallery located on Fatemi Street, on the north side of Laleh Park.

Portraits of pain: Palestinian art on show in Amman

When war erupted in Gaza, Palestinian artists had only one way to share their work expressing the harrowing reality of the conflict: having it smuggled out of the besieged territory.

For six months, they handed over paintings and other artworks to people leaving Gaza through its Rafah border crossing with Egypt until Israeli ground forces closed it in May when they took control of the frontier, The Sunday Standard reported.

"The paintings document the brutality of war and massacres... carrying pain and sorrow, but also embodying an unwavering resolve," said Mohammad Shaqdi, deputy director of Darat al-Funun, an art gallery in the Jordanian capital Amman exhibiting pieces that were smuggled out in a show entitled "Under Fire".

While the works themselves managed to escape the war-torn territory, the four artists who created them -- Basel al-Maqousi, Raed Issa, Majed Shala and Suhail Salem -- were not so lucky.

They remain trapped within the narrow coastal strip where Israel's military campaign has killed more than 45,500 people, mostly civilians, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry, and created a humanitarian disaster.

The artworks "depict the daily realities of war and the hardship these artists endure, who have been displaced and lost their homes," said Shaqdi.

He said the gallery was already familiar with the artists on display before the war broke out on October 7, 2023, when Palestinian militant group Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on southern Israel.

"The language of art is universal. Through these paintings, we are trying to convey our voices, our cries, our tears and the nightmares we witness daily to the outside world," said Maqousi.

The exhibition features 79 artworks crafted from improvised materials including medicine wrappers, and using natural pigments made from hibiscus, pomegranate and tea.

The drawings show people under bombardment, displaced families on donkey-drawn carts, makeshift tents, weary and frightened faces, emaciated children clinging to their mothers and blindfolded men surrounded by military vehicles.

"I can't paint with colors and expensive pigments because there are more pressing priorities here in Gaza, like food, drink and finding safety for myself and my family" reads a text by Suhail Salem next to his sketches drawn in school notebooks with

ballpoint pens.

In a letter displayed alongside his work, Majed Shala describes how he was displaced to the southern city of Deir al-Balah. His house, studio and 30 years of artworks were completely destroyed.

"When the war first started, I felt completely paralyzed, unable to create or even think about making art," he wrote.

As time passed, "I started to document the real-life scenes of displacement and exile that have affected every part of our daily lives," he added.

His words are displayed next to a painting of a man embracing his wife amid a scene of destruction.

"These scenes remind me of the stories our elders told us about the 1948 Nakba," or "catastrophe," he wrote, referring to the exodus of around 760,000 Palestinians during the war that led to the creation of Israel. "But what we're living through now feels far more devastating, far worse than what people endured back then".

On the wall nearby is posted a message from artist Raed Issa: "We assure you: If you're asking how we are, we are far from all right! Constant bombing and terror, day and night! Gaza is in mourning, waiting for relief from God!"