

White-Clad Man Who Confronted Tanks with Bare Hands



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Al-Jolani's pursuit of Israeli affection

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – The leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the group that led the offensive toppling President Bashar al-Assad's government less than a month ago, has asserted that his forces averted a regional conflict that could have resulted in direct combat between Israeli troops and Iraqi and Iranian forces.

In an interview with Saudi media, the terrorist leader turned politician said Israel was planning to invade Syria before the fall of Assad. "If Israeli forces had entered Syria, then Iranians would have brought in Iraqis. The chain of events would have eventually affected Turkey," he said, without mentioning that Israel appears to have proceeded with the alleged plan, as it has occupied new areas in the Arab country since Assad's departure. "Then Russia and America would have entered a war as well, and the situation could become extremely dangerous for the region," he said, apparently suggesting that the overthrow of Assad at the hands of HTS-led factions prevented an all-out regional war.

Abu Mohammad al-Jolani's remarks follow almost three weeks of incessant airstrikes by the Israeli regime, which have destroyed about 90% of Syria's military infrastructure and injured scores of civilians in the process. ▶ Page 2

Jimmy Carter: Architect of normalizing Arab ties with apartheid Israel

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN- As Americans mourn the death of former president Jimmy Carter, the disastrous impacts of his legacy, particularly in the Middle East are thrust into the limelight.

Carter died at the age of 100 on Sunday, forty-four years after he left the White House.

His tenure as the 39th US president began with his inauguration on January 20, 1977, and ended on January 20, 1981.

Undoubtedly, the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza and its brutal crimes in the West Bank, Lebanon and beyond are rooted in the policies pursued by Carter.

Abetting apartheid

Carter played a key role in aiding and abetting the Israeli apartheid regime by brokering a seemingly peace deal between Egypt and Israel in 1978. ▶ Page 5

Iran objects to Afghanistan's construction of Pashdan Dam on Harirud

TEHRAN- The spokesman of Iran's water industry considered the unilateral exploitation of the Harirud river to be a violation of customary rights and said the effects of this unilateral action by the Afghan side will not only affect the supply of drinking water and health of several million people, but also lead to widespread damage to the downstream environment.

Issa Bozorgzadeh, said that the construction and impoundment of Pashdan dam in the Harirud border basin causes the reduction of the natural flow of the Harirud border river and the occurrence of social and environmental damages in the downstream areas, especially the problem of serious damage to the drinking water supply of the holy city of Mashhad.

Referring to the multi-dimensional economic, social and cultural ties of Mashhad and Herat, Bozorgzadeh said: "We believe that all the people who live in a watershed have the same destiny, and applying any strictness and pressure to a part of the people of the watershed will inevitably affect all the residents." ▶ Page 4

Who is Hussam Abu Safiya?

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Palestinian doctor Hussam Abu Safiya made international headlines and his face went viral online amid the ongoing Israeli genocidal war on Gaza.

Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya is a prominent medical professional and a humanitarian figure known for his significant role in the healthcare sector in Gaza.

He served as the director of Kamal Adwan Hospital, providing essential medical services under extremely challenging circumstances.

Furthermore, he had a line of contact with the World Health Organization (WHO), updating the UN agency on the health crisis in northern Gaza.

Israeli forces briefly detained him in late October when they raided the hospital and killed his son.

Beyond his professional expertise, he was also an active voice for the struggles of Palestinians, effectively using social media to issue video statements and raise awareness about the dire conditions in Gaza.

This led to his rise in fame among social media users who even made cartoons depicting the struggle and brave resistance of Gaza's healthcare workers amid the ongoing genocide.

What happened at Kamal Adwan Hospital?

Kamal Adwan Hospital became a focal point of the U.S.-backed Israeli genocidal war on Gaza.

The facility, located in northern Gaza's Beit Lahiya, often

found itself at the center of bombardments and other forms of Israeli military actions.

Despite this, Dr. Abu Safiya continued his work, treating the injured and providing critical care. His leadership during these times turned the hospital into a symbol of resilience and defiance.

On Friday, Israeli forces attacked and set the hospital ablaze. Many Palestinians inside the medical center, including doctors, nurses, and patients, were detained, including Abu Safiya.

According to the Gaza Health Ministry, Israeli troops physically assaulted Abu Safia with batons and sticks while forcing him to take off his clothes.

Why was the hospital significant?

The Kamal Adwan Hospital was strategically important due to its location and role as a major healthcare provider in besieged northern Gaza.

For the Israeli military, targeting medical facilities serves as a way to exert pressure on Gaza's already dire health sector.

Amid more than 80 days of Israel's siege on many parts of northern Gaza, Abu Safiya's refusal to evacuate Kamal Adwan Hospital angered the Israelis.

The partially functioning hospital offered a last beacon of hope for Palestinians requiring medical care amid daily Israeli airstrikes and artillery shelling.

▶ Page 5



National Document for Handicrafts Development unveiled

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – The unveiling ceremony for the National Document for the Development of Handicrafts was held on Monday at the headquarters of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

The event was attended by a number of high-ranking officials, members of the Iranian Parliament (Majlis), craftspeople, and media personnel.

It featured remarks by Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts; Abdolkarim Hosseinzadeh, Vice President for Rural and Underserved Areas Development; Zahra Behrouz-Azar, Vice President for Women and Family Affairs; and Reza Alizadeh, Chair of the Parliament's Industry Committee, among several others. ▶ Page 6



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Iran, Oman offer common ground on Syria, trade, and regional issues during FM's Tehran visit

TEHRAN – Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has stated that the Islamic Republic's guiding principle is the advancement of peace and security within the region and among all nations in the Muslim world.

This commitment was highlighted during a meeting with Oman's Foreign Minister, Said Badr al-Busaidi, in Tehran on Monday. Pezeshkian emphasized that Iran's foreign policy is centered on strengthening ties with both Muslim countries and its neighbors. ▶ Page 3

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Japan Expo was a great opportunity to deal with Iranophobia

In a note, Etemad discussed Iran's withdrawal from the Japan Expo and said: Iran has withdrawn from participating in Japan's Expo 2025 due to "relevant limitations". Sanctions dealt another blow to Iran's trade and diplomacy. This withdrawal is due to the harsh conditions of sanctions against Iran and being on the FATF blacklist. Participation in the Expo could be a commercial and diplomatic platform for Tehran. This participation for Iran was not only an opportunity but also a commercial and diplomatic platform that could strengthen Iran's economic and political relations with Japan and other participating countries. More than 160 countries are going to participate in the Expo. Visitors from these countries will definitely come to the Japan Expo and will compare the countries with each other. The Expo was the best opportunity to introduce today's Iran and confront the hostile media. We could have told 28 million people (tourists) that Iran is not what was presented in the media, and now such an opportunity has been lost.

Sobh-e-No: Ankara's soft war against Tehran

In an analysis, Sobh-e-No discussed the establishment of the anti-Iran TRT Persian network by Turkey and wrote: The goal of the Ankara government in establishing the TRT Persian network is to annoy Tehran. These days, following Turkey's role in the toppling of the Syrian government by Tahrir al-Sham terrorists, this country has practically revealed its hostility against Iran and Iranians. A review of the news, reports and content of the last three weeks of the TRT Persian about Iran and the resistance front clarifies the scope of the media outlet's conflict with Iran and the Axis of Resistance. TRT displayed the biggest anti-propaganda project against Iran and the resistance to the developments in Syria. This network, like other anti-revolution networks, is managed by the Iranian people, but against the nation and country of Iran. This network is supported by the radical group of the Ankara government that follows the project of promoting pan-Turkish ideology in Iran. For this reason, we will definitely see differences of opinion between Iranian Turks and Azeris over the ideology of this network.

By Ehsan Karami

TEHRAN – After years of stagnation in northern and southern Syria, marked by the inaction against terrorists backed by a coalition of Hebrew, Arab, Turkish, and Western powers, we are witnessing a renewed wave of attacks by these groups. These actions have led to the destabilization of Syria, casting a shadow of uncertainty over the country's future and the broader region.

Regardless of what unfolds in Syria and how its neighbors and international actors like Russia might react, a crucial question remains: what will be Iran's course of action? This comes as Iran is also facing other challenges, including sanctions, occasional attacks on its scientists and allied political leaders, and a regime that's constantly threatening to strike its nuclear sites.

Given the current situation in the region, the Islamic Republic of Iran appears to have three general strategic options. Each of these scenarios carries costs. Any of these options could be chosen in an effort to halt the escalating pressures against Iran's interests and mitigate the existing threats.

1. Adopting a regional agreement and abandoning the Resistance

This involves agreeing to implement a regional agreement similar to the JCPOA nuclear deal, withdrawing advisory, intelligence, and operational forces from West Asia, and ultimately abandoning the resistance strategy.

Implementing this scenario, and consequently severing ties with the Axis of Resistance in the region, would lead to a loss of

Ham Mihan: Restoring geopolitical weight through lifting sanctions

Ham Mihan interviewed Abdolreza Farajirad, a professor of geopolitics, about the need to restore Iran's geopolitical weight through lifting sanctions. He said: The events and developments that have occurred in the region in recent months have not been pleasant for the Islamic Republic. All of Iran's regional competitors are interested in seeing Iran remain under sanctions and isolated geopolitically. Therefore, if we are able to continue our negotiations with the West in this situation and reach a conclusion both with America and Europe to lift the sanctions, all our geopolitical rivals in the region will feel weak, and again, our geopolitical weight will be restored. If sanctions are lifted, Iran can exercise more influence in the region than in the past. Today, we can overcome the current situation by concluding the talks. Last week, Netanyahu gave an interview in which he once again emphasized that he would prevent talks between Iran and the United States. The reason is that Netanyahu and his friends feel worried about possible talks between Iran and the West. They are worried that Iran will reach an agreement with the Western powers regarding the lifting of sanctions and regional issues.

Kayhan: Al-Julani's hypocritical position

In a commentary, Kayhan discussed al-Julani's hypocritical statements against Iran and wrote: In his latest statement about Iran, al-Julani said I hope Tehran will reconsider its calculations regarding 'interventions' in the region and its policies because we expected positive statements from Tehran. His hypocritical approach coupled with his numerous attacks on Iran come in a situation in which the Zionist regime is striking Syria repeatedly in a way that its recovery and reconstruction will take years. During the past few days, Iran has always supported the will of the Syrian people and stated its principled position regarding the formation of an inclusive government in the country and respect for the rights of minorities in Syria. Al-Julani's employers expect Iran to turn a blind eye to all the crimes committed over the past 13 years.

Al-Jolani's pursuit of Israeli affection

HTS leader says he prevented Israel from getting involved in war with Iran

From page 1 ▶ Al-Jolani attempting to become relevant

Recent statements by al-Jolani are being interpreted as a bid for legitimacy in the eyes of Western powers and their ally Israel, according to West Asia analyst Mohammad Reza Moradi.

Moradi, speaking to the Tehran Times, dismissed al-Jolani's claim as baseless. "What he says holds no water. Israel was never planning to launch an invasion into Syria as it did after the departure of Assad," Moradi stated, adding, "These remarks, however, are part of a message the HTS leader is trying to send to Washington and its allies. That he is influential and that he is willing to cooperate with Americans and Israelis."

However, al-Jolani's ambition is likely to face considerable hurdles, both internally and externally. The HTS Leader's recent experiences governing the Idlib region have likely highlighted the



HTS leader Abu Mohammad al-Jolani in an interview with Al Arabiya News

challenges associated with leadership. "Al-Jolani led a semi-government in Idlib from 2017 to 2024. While the region was better off financially due to direct aid from Turkey, it was characterized by heavy-handed and extremist policies. There were routine protests taking place in

Idlib which called on al-Jolani to step down."

Al-Jolani appears to be applying similar tactics in Damascus, where his forces have expanded their influence. He recently took the first step toward becoming a dictator by announcing a three-

to-four-year delay for elections in Syria. Further cementing his authority, he has appointed only prominent HTS members to key official positions. Meanwhile, his forces are engaged in the targeted killing of Alawites and other opponents throughout Syria.

Besides his strenuous governance in Idlib, Al-Jolani is also affiliated with the time Daesh controlled swathes of territories in Syria in an era that marked some of the darkest days of history. All this makes it all the more challenging for the HTS leader to gain national recognition.

Moradi also doubts that the West will embrace the HTS leader, citing the complex landscape of Syrian politics, where other U.S.-backed groups are actively opposed to the HTS. "I don't think he would gain the support he wants from the West either, as other groups the U.S. supports in Syria are averse to the HTS, like the Kurdish militants," he noted.

Families of slain divers seek justice against U.S. in Tehran court

TEHRAN – The International Affairs Court in Tehran, Branch 55, held its second session on Monday regarding a lawsuit filed by the families of Iranian divers martyred in 1986 during Operation Karbala-4 in the Iran-Iraq War.

Presided over by Judge Majid Hosseinzadeh, the case has drawn significant attention for its focus on the complicity of the United States in the tragic deaths of 175 Iranian soldiers.

Judge Hosseinzadeh opened the session by declaring the court's jurisdiction over the case, which involves claims from 306 individuals across 15 provinces against 65 defendants, including the U.S. government and its officials.

The plaintiffs are seeking material, moral, and punitive damages for the martyrdom of numerous Iranian citizens.

Judge Hosseinzadeh emphasized the legal basis for the court's authority, citing Article 34 of the Iranian constitution, which guarantees every individual's right to seek justice.

He also referenced specific laws mandating the Iranian government and judiciary to pursue compensation for crimes committed against Iranian nationals by foreign states.

Legal arguments and historical context

Ezzeddin Soleimani, the attorney representing the families, delivered a wide-ranging argument highlighting the U.S.'s role in supporting the Ba'athist regime of Iraq



during its 1980s aggression against Iran.

He asserted that U.S. actions amounted to violations of international humanitarian law, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

"In international law, as in domestic law, aiding another state in unlawful acts can attribute responsibility," Soleimani said.

He argued that the U.S. took biased positions during the Iran-Iraq War, violating international norms.

"The U.S.'s support facilitated the martyrdom of these brave divers," the attorney said.

Soleimani further elaborated that U.S. financial, logistical, weapons, and intelligence support had been crucial in the failure of Iran's Operation Karbala-4, which led to the

capture and execution of the divers.

He also pointed out that David Crist, a former advisor to the U.S. State Department, confirmed in a 2013 interview with a British outlet that the U.S. had supplied Iraq with detailed intelligence on Iranian operations, including Operation Karbala-4.

According to Soleimani, U.S. intelligence, including aerial and satellite imagery, was provided to the Ba'athist regime, enabling Iraqi forces to anticipate and counter Iranian moves effectively.

Operation Karbala-4, launched in December 1986 during the Iran-Iraq War, was a pivotal but tragic endeavor for Iran.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran's post-Assad scenarios

Tehran should target the roots of terrorism, not its branches



Iran's strategic depth. The Shia populations across West Asia, from India to Greece and North Africa, would be subjected to massacres, genocide, aggression, and encroachment. Iran would be contained and isolated within its own borders. Its potential to act as a powerful and influential force on the regional and world stage would be significantly diminished. Furthermore, Iran would likely face internal issues such as separatism, terrorism, and widespread unrest.

2. Engaging in protracted regional conflict

This entails remaining in West Asia and engaging in a prolonged, attritional battle with terrorist groups in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon,

Afghanistan, and other areas. Given the superior economic, political, military, and security capabilities of the United States, which is backing these terror outfits, this conflict would likely continue until Iran is completely exhausted or severely weakened, draining its resources and power.

While a variation of this strategy could involve deploying significantly more military and security forces, assigning clear objectives across all fronts, and aiming to eliminate terrorism more quickly, the fundamental outcome of both approaches remains the same: the weakening of Iran's economy, war casualties, and, crucially, the failure to neutralize the threats facing Iran.

3. Targeting the primary actors and their interests

There is a strong and prevalent understanding regarding Israel's role in Iran's internal and external challenges. Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Israel has consistently been a primary actor, either directly or indirectly, in Iran's domestic and international crises. This involvement spans from sanctions, wars, and coups to cultural and economic aggression, and even extends to security sabotage and terrorist acts. This perspective is supported by considerable evidence, and, at times, Israel has even officially acknowledged its actions.

Those who subscribe to this perspective argue that a decisive solution to Iran's internal and external crises involves directly targeting Israel and its interests. Their rationale is that if Israel plays a direct role in these crises, it can be pressured to retreat and de-escalate the situation. Alternatively, if Israel's involvement is indirect, its powerful lobby and influence can be leveraged to pressure other actors to reduce tensions and curtail pressure on Iran, thereby indirectly containing the crises. The anticipated outcome of this strategy is the effective mitigation of Iran's challenges both domestically and abroad.

This perspective further contends that the conflict between Iran and the United States, as explicitly stated by the late General Qassem Soleimani, is not merely a matter of posturing or hyperbolic claims, but rather a deep-seated, existential, and identity-based confrontation. Consequently, it argues that Iran should avoid being drawn into conflicts with American proxies, such as Russia and

the situation in Ukraine, which are ultimately distractions leading to prolonged and exhausting engagements. Instead, similar to the strategy employed in Yemen, Iran should directly target the United States, Israel, and their interests, aiming to impose significant costs on its primary adversaries and compel them to reassess their actions.

While the involvement of the United States, Israel, and specific West Asian nations is clearly evident in the prevailing regional developments and the renewed emergence of terrorism, concentrating solely on countering the proxy terrorists of America and Israel constitutes a strategic miscalculation. Such a tactic would be analogous to addressing only the branches of a tree, rather than targeting its underlying roots.

Furthermore, directly attacking the main actors and orchestrators of the challenges Iran faces by targeting the interests of the United States and Israel does not constitute neglecting or abandoning the fight against regional terrorism; rather, it suggests that Iran would simultaneously address both the symptoms and the root causes of its problems.

In this scenario, Iran would be in conflict with the United States, Israel, and terrorism. However, this strategy prioritizes addressing the primary instigators of the issues rather than solely engaging with their proxies and other terrorist groups. This avoids depleting Iranian power by only focusing on those groups.

Iran, Oman offer common ground on Syria, trade, and regional issues during FM's Tehran visit

TEHRAN – Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has stated that the Islamic Republic's guiding principle is the advancement of peace and security within the region and among all nations in the Muslim world.

This commitment was highlighted during a meeting with Oman's Foreign Minister, Said Badr al-Busaidi, in Tehran on Monday. Pezeshkian emphasized that Iran's foreign policy is centered on strengthening ties with both Muslim countries and its neighbors.

He further expressed strong disapproval of the Israeli regime for exploiting divisions among regional countries and Muslim nations to their detriment.

Pezeshkian underscored the long-standing and robust relationship between Tehran and Muscat, spanning various sectors and levels, stating that "the continued advancement and expansion of constructive relations is of significant importance to the Islamic Republic of Iran." He also mentioned that Iran and Oman have reached an agreement to convene a meeting of their joint economic committee in Muscat in the near future. Both nations, he explained, are actively engaged in positive measures to expedite the implementation of previously agreed-upon deals and to finalize new ones going forward.

'Relations with Iran unwavering principle for Oman'

Oman's Foreign Minister, Said Badr al-Busaidi, responded by affirming that his country's relationship with Iran is founded on mutual trust and goodwill, expressing a desire for even stronger ties between the two nations.



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (R) and his Omani counterpart Said Badr al-Busaidi attend a joint press conference in Tehran on December 30, 2024.

Busaidi asserted that enhancing relations with Iran, based on mutual respect and confidence, is an unwavering principle for Oman.

Earlier on Monday, the Omani Foreign Minister also held a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and participated in a joint press conference.

During the press conference, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi noted that both Iran and Oman, along with the majority of countries in the region, share common perspectives on regional matters, particularly their desire for the promotion of independence and stability within Syria.

According to Araghchi, "We have a shared understanding on maintaining territorial integrity and unity, respecting all ethnicities and religions, and fostering the formation of an inclusive government in Syria." He reiterated

readiness to facilitate stronger relationships between Iran and other countries. He further noted Oman's transparent role during the nuclear negotiations which ultimately led to the 2015 nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). However, he clarified that no direct messages were exchanged during Busaidi's current visit to Tehran. He emphasized that "We will continue to exchange necessary messages with the American side at the appropriate time through the Swiss embassy."

Oman's Foreign Minister, in turn, expressed that the constructive discussions he had with his Iranian counterpart in Tehran highlighted the deep-rooted relationship between the countries. He affirmed his country's commitment to strengthening cooperation with Iran in order to serve their shared interests.

Busaidi also relayed that he had delivered a written message from Omani Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, reflecting ongoing consultations on expanding their relationship.

Similar to Iran, Oman is a supporter of the policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations, the Omani Minister stated. He also stressed the importance of preserving Syria's independence and territorial integrity, as well as supporting the country in playing its international role.

Busaidi sat down with Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf in a separate meeting before wrapping up his trip to Tehran.

ated that Iran's positions align significantly with those of Oman and most countries in the region, highlighting their collective aspiration for Syrian independence and stability.

Araghchi also acknowledged the "growing" relationship between Tehran and Muscat across multiple sectors and stated that a meeting of their joint economic committee is scheduled to be held in Oman next month. He further stated that the volume of trade between the two countries has tripled in the past Iranian calendar year, which ended on March 19th, when compared to the volume three years prior. The total value of trade between the two nations reached 2.5 billion dollars during that Iranian year, he specified.

'Oman FM carries no American message for Iran'

Araghchi also recognized the Oman government's consistent

chitect of India's economic reforms and played a crucial role in India's nuclear agreement with the United States.

President Pezeshkian's message underscores the deep respect and historical friendship between Iran and India, a bond that Singh helped nurture.

The news of Singh's death has resonated globally, with leaders worldwide honoring his contributions.

In India, a week-long mourning period was announced by the government to honor Singh, with all political activities halted. A state funeral was held for him on Saturday.

Pezeshkian extends condolences on former Indian PM's passing

TEHRAN – Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has expressed his condolences to India following the passing of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the age of 92.

"I offer my condolences to the family and relatives of the late former Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, and the entire people and government of India," President Pezeshkian stated in a post on X.

He emphasized that Singh was a distinguished leader for India and a strong advocate for fostering relations between Tehran and Delhi.

Singh, India's prime minister from 2004 to 2014, is largely venerated for modernizing the Indian economy. He is widely credited as the ar-

Warfare in West Asia: searching for the real instigators

TEHRAN – Seth Cropsey in his article published on The Hill, labeled Iran as the "source of warfare that has engulfed the Middle East since Oct. 7, 2023."

However, a closer examination of the region's tumultuous history challenges this assertion, revealing a far more nuanced reality.

The events of October 7, involving Palestinian resistance groups launching operations into Israeli-occupied territories, cannot be viewed in isolation.

These actions were retaliatory measures against over seven decades of systemic Israeli aggression, which has subjected Palestinians to violence, displacement, and dispossession.

The root cause of this enduring conflict lies in Israel's policies and the unwavering support it receives from the United States, not in the actions of Iran.

As Israel's aggressive policies in Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria, now "hints" many of us living in the region into challenging the statement made by Cropsey, a unilateral Israeli strike on Iran, as the article suggests, would only exacerbate the already-present tensions.

The U.S. policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran, promoted by the Trump administration, has similarly failed to deliver its objectives. Instead of curbing Iran's nuclear program or diminishing its regional influence, this strategy has deepened mistrust, fostered anti-American sentiment, and strengthened Iran's resolve to pursue economic and military self-reliance. Aligning with such a failed policy risks further isolating Israel on the global stage.

Shifting geopolitical realities

The article also overlooks the evolving geo-



OPINION

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY CONTRIBUTORS ARE THEIR OWN AND NOT THE VIEW OF THE HILL

Israel should strike Iran now, paving way for Trump 2.0

BY SETH CROPSEY, OPINION CONTRIBUTOR - 12/29/24 9:30 AM ET

political landscape in West Asia. Iran's strategic partnerships with Russia and China provide significant counterbalance to U.S. and Israeli efforts to isolate Tehran.

These relationships, strengthened through initiatives such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and long-term economic agreements, enhance Iran's resilience against external pressures.

Regional actors, such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, are also re-evaluating their relationships with Iran. The 2023 Saudi-Iranian agreement, brokered by China, represents a landmark shift in regional politics.

This rapprochement reduces the likelihood of Arab states supporting any Israeli military action against Iran. An Israeli strike could unravel these fragile diplomatic gains, plunging the region into deeper instability.

Overestimation of Iran's vulnerabilities

The article portrays Iran as a state on the verge of collapse, citing challenges such as the fall of Syria's Assad government. However, this narrative disregards Iran's demonstrated resilience in the face of decades of economic sanctions, military threats, and political isolation.

Iran has consistently adapted to crises by diversifying its economy under sanctions, leveraging strategic alliances, and utilizing its geopolitical position. While setbacks in Syria are notable, they do not constitute an existential threat to Iran's influence. The Islamic Republic's strategic depth ensures that it can recalibrate and maintain its position as a key player in West Asia.

Underestimation of Iran's deterrence capabilities

The suggestion that Iran would be unable to respond effectively to an Israeli strike is a dangerous miscalculation.

Over the years, Iran has developed a robust deterrence framework, including advanced missile technology and cyber warfare capabilities. These tools ensure that any direct military action against Iran would come at a steep cost for the aggressor.

Iran's long-range ballistic missiles, for instance, pose credible threats to strategic targets in Israel and U.S. bases across the region. An Israeli strike would almost certainly provoke a broader regional conflict, with devastating consequences for all parties involved.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](https://www.tehrantimes.com))

SPORTS

Taremi's future is bright



TEHRAN – Mehdi Taremi's future looks bright, as he has recently signed a three-year contract with Inter Milan, one of the biggest clubs in Italy and Europe. This move is a significant step up in his career, providing him with the opportunity to compete at the highest level and showcase his talents on a global stage.

Taremi has been a prolific goal scorer throughout his career, and his impressive performances at Porto have earned him recognition as one of the best strikers in the world. At Inter, he will have the chance to further develop his skills and contribute to the team's success in Serie A and the UEFA Champions League.

While his age (31) might raise some questions, Taremi's recent form suggests that he is still at the peak of his powers. His physicality, technical ability, and clinical finishing make him a valuable asset to any team.

Overall, Taremi's move to Inter is a positive development for his career. He has the potential to become a key player for the club and achieve even greater success in the coming years.

Mehdi Ghaedi linked with Rio Ave: report

TEHRAN – UAE Pro League club Ittihad Kalba forward Mehdi Ghaedi has been reportedly linked with a move to Rio Ave.

His countryman Mehdi Taremi played for the Portuguese team in 2019-20 season before joining Porto.

Now, the media reports suggest that Rio Ave has shown interest in signing Ghaedi.

The 26-year-old international player has been also linked with Greek giant Olympiakos.

Persepolis captain Alishah wears training mask

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team captain Omid Alishah has returned to the training after five weeks.

Alishah broke his nose after collision with the Al Rayyan player in late November.

He participated in his team's training on Sunday, wearing training mask.

Alishah, 33, is a key player for Persepolis in Iran football league and AFC Champions League Elite.

Persepolis are third in Iran league, five minutes behind leaders Sepahan.

Esteghlal, Sepahan not to be held at Azadi Stadium

TEHRAN – The match between Esteghlal and Sepahan football teams will be held in Tehran's Shohada-ye Shahr-e Qods Stadium.

The match is scheduled for Thursday in 2024-25 Iran Professional League (IPL).

It was said that the match would be held in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

The stadium is not ready yet and the league

organizers decided to change the venue.

Head of the Iran Football Federation Mehdi Taj had said that the Azadi Stadium would be ready for reopening on January 2.

Tractor Albanian forward Cikalleshi deemed surplus to requirements

TEHRAN – Tractor football team have reportedly deemed Sokol Cikalleshi surplus to requirements.

The 34-year-old forward joined Tractor from Saudi Arabian side Al-Khaleej in late August.

Cikalleshi failed to live up to expectations in the Iranian top-flight club.

Dragan Skocic's Tractor are favourites to win the title in the 2024/25 Iran's Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL).

They are second in the table, two points behind leaders Sepahan.

Iran to participate at 2025 CSIT World Sports Games

TEHRAN – Iran will send 80 athletes to the CSIT World Sports Games 2025, Javad Ramzi, head of Federation of Amateur and Workers Sports in Islamic Republic of Iran, said.

The World Sports Games will be held in Loutraki (Greece) from June 3 to 8, 2025.

CSIT, the International Workers & Amateurs Sports Confederation, celebrates the World Sports Games with up to 6,000 participants every other year. For the next edition in 2025, the federation has invited International Jump Rope Union (IJRU) to partner with them and host a competition alongside their World Sport Games.

Ramzi said that Iranian athletes will compete in karate, athletics and table tennis (men and women), judo, 3x3 basketball, wrestling and men's beach wrestling.

Sepahan striker Kaveh Rezaei to miss Esteghlal Match

TEHRAN – Sepahan football team forward Kaveh Rezaei will be absent in the match against Esteghlal.

The match is scheduled for Thursday.

Sepahan needs to win the match in the 2024-25 Iran Professional League (IPL) to keep its position at top of the league.

Esteghlal defender Rouzbeh Cheshmi will be fit for the match.

Sepahan forward Javad Aghaeipour will be fit for the match.

Persepolis still looking for a new head coach

TEHRAN – Persepolis football club sacked their Spanish coach, Juan Carlos Garrido, due to poor results on Dec. 22 and they have not yet found the replacement.

Former Bielefeld player Karim Bagheri has been appointed as the interim head coach but the club are actively searching for a permanent replacement for Garrido.

They are reportedly interested in appointing Edin Terzic, the former manager of Borussia Dortmund, however, his agent Dirk Josef Hebel rejected rumors linking Terzic with Persepolis football club.

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

Transit of goods via Iran to reach 20m tons by late March 2025

TEHRAN- The head of the International Affairs Center of the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development announced the achievement of the record of 20 million tons of transit via Iran by the end of this Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2025).

Amin Taraffo' also said: "To achieve the goals of the Seventh National Development Plan, which is transit of 40 million tons of commodities via the country per year, we must reach the transit of three million tons per month, which is now 1.5 million tons; of course, our capacity is estimated to be more than this figure."

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

As announced by the spokesman of the International Relations and Trade Development Committee of Iran's House of Industry, Mining and Trade, 1.723



million tons of commodities were transited through Iran in the seventh Iranian calendar month of Mehr (September 22-October 21).

Stating that 13.239 million tons of goods were transited via the country during the first seven months of the present year (March 20-October 21), Ruhollah Latifi said that the figure shows nearly 48 percent growth year on year.

The transit of commodities through Iran increased by 42 percent in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-October 21) compared to the previous year's corresponding period, according to a report released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

As reported, 13.239 million

tons of commodities was transited via the country in the seven-month period.

The continuous trend of recent transit records via the country and the increasing interest of governments, traders, and those active in transport sectors from neighboring, regional, and extra-regional countries in the transit and logistics situation of the Islamic Republic of Iran indicate the fruitfulness of the transformational approach of the government to the strategic issue of transit, with emphasis on the development of all-round economic relations with neighbors.

As stated by the former Transport and Urban Development Minister Mehrdad Bazrpash, the "Iran Way" initiative made by the current Iranian government, lets

the neighboring countries use Iran as a route or a solution that facilitates their access to international waters.

Iran Way initiative is the gateway to Iran's land of transit opportunities, the minister has underlined.

As previously announced by the Transport Ministry, 10.8 million tons of commodities were transited through the country in the Iranian calendar year 1401 (ended on March 20, 2023).

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

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

Paying attention to upstream documents, especially the country's development plans, and the government's decision to develop transit, paying special attention to infrastructure development, reducing transit time, making it cheaper to cross Iran, and making more advantages over competitors, due to the short path for customers, can lead to facilitating the development of transit so that the country can reach the desired growth in this due.

Iran objects to Afghanistan's construction of Pashdan Dam on Harirud



From page 1 ▶ The spokesman of the water industry further stated: "Iran has repeatedly expressed its official protest

through diplomatic channels against the negative cross-border effects caused by the unilateral dam construction measures of the Afghan side in the Harirud basin and calls for joint cooperation to evaluate and reduce these effects and choose sustainable development instead of destructive development."

He added: "We still believe that the one-sided and non-participatory exploitation of the water resources of the Harirud basin is not beneficial to any of the countries in upstream and downstream."

Over 35,000 passenger cars imported in 9 months

TEHRAN - The head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said 35,127 passenger cars were imported into the country in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 21).

According to Foroud Asgari, the total value of the imported cars was \$746.3 million, IRNA reported.

"Car imports to the country [in the men-

tioned nine months] increased by 705 percent in terms of number and 768 percent in terms of value compared to the same period last year," Asgari said.

Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade lifted the ban on car imports in late May 2022.

The decision was made to reduce the imbalance between supply and demand and to improve the country's economic conditions with regard to foreign currency revenues.

\$10b to be invested for copper industry development

TEHRAN- The head of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) referred to the investment of \$10 billion for the development of the copper industry, and emphasized on the rapid implementation of the seven driving plans of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO).

Speaking in the monitoring meeting of National Copper Industries Company's driving projects, Mohammad Aghajani said the government is pursuing the implementation and completion of development projects in the mining and mineral industries sector, and in order to realize this important objective, IMIDRO has prioritized the necessary support for companies, complexes and projects.

He added that the completion and implementation of development plans for the mining sector and mining industries is the main strategy in realizing the goal of 13-percent

growth of the mining sector in the Seventh National Development Plan.

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

Having 81 different types of minerals, Iran is one of the top 10 mineral-rich countries across the globe.

In this regard, the Iranian government has been seriously pursuing several programs for promoting the mining sector as a major contributor to the country's economic growth.

Iran's mining sector plays a pivotal role in the country's economy, contributing significantly to non-oil export revenues.

With over 68 types of minerals, including large reserves of iron ore, copper, zinc, and rare earth elements, the nation ranks among the world's top 15 mineral-rich countries.

The country boasts more than 10,000 active mines, employing hundreds of thousands of workers directly and indirectly.

Key mining hubs such as Yazd, Kerman, and East Azerbaijan provinces are home to extensive operations, including extraction and processing facilities for metals and minerals critical to domestic industries and global markets.

Recent years have seen substantial investments in the sector to boost production capacity and modernize infrastructure.

The government has also prioritized the development of downstream industries, particularly in steel and aluminum production, to maximize value addition and reduce reliance on raw material exports.

Moreover, Iran's strategic location, with access to both the Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea, positions it as a key player in regional and international trade of mining products.

Despite challenges posed by international sanctions, the mining industry continues to demonstrate resilience and adaptability, leveraging domestic resources and fostering collaborations with friendly nations.

With the ongoing focus on sustainability and technological innovation, the mining sector is poised to maintain its upward trajectory and further cement its status as a cornerstone of Iran's economic development.

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

According to a report from IMIDRO, between March 20 and November 21, Iran exported 41.79 million tons of mining and mineral products valued at \$8.799 billion.

This represents a two percent increase in

tonnage and a three percent rise in export value compared to the same period last year, which saw exports of 41.14 million tons worth \$8.552 billion.

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

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

While the import volume fell by 19 percent compared to the 3.56 million tons imported during the corresponding period last year, the value of imports rose sharply by 78 percent from \$4.205 billion to \$7.496 billion.

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

Iran imports non-oil goods worth \$1.1b from Russia in 8 months

TEHRAN - Iran imported non-oil commodities valued at \$1.1 billion from Russia 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 Russia was the fifth top source of import in the mentioned eight-month period.

In early December, Russian President Vladimir Putin highlighted the stability and reliability of trade and economic relations with Iran, expressing optimism about further growth in bilateral trade volumes.

Speaking at the plenary session of the 15th VTB Russia Calling! Investment Forum in Moscow, themed "The Future of Capital and the Capital of the Future," Putin lauded ongoing projects between the two nations in logistics, energy, industry, and security.

"The North-South Corridor is operational, and the volume of transportation along this route is steadily increasing," Putin said, referring to enhanced cooperation in transportation.

Iran and Russia have initiated the implementation of two major transit-logistics projects aimed at enhancing trade routes and reducing cargo transport times. The projects include the Ulyanovsk-Astara rail corridor and the Volga-Caspian Sea river route, which are expected to cut delivery times from 21 days to seven.

According to a report on December 6, the inauguration ceremony was attended by the governor of Ulyanovsk, Iran's Consul General in Kazan, and officials from India, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Iraq, as well as managers from logistics companies, including the Iranian-Russian Salyanka port. The projects aim to expand trade fleet capacity and increase economic and transit exchanges between Iran and Russia.

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

Aref made the remarks during a meeting with the visiting Russian Minister of Energy Sergei Tsivilev in Tehran in mid-November.

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

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

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

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

his country and Iran.

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

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

Iran and Russia have been taking serious steps to boost their mutual trade over the past few years.

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

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

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

He said: "The project that we are witnessing its inauguration today, started with the aim of creating in-

tegration in the payment networks and facilitating financial transactions between the citizens of the two countries."

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

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

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

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

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

According to Farzin the new mone-

Iran and Russia have been taking serious steps to boost their mutual trade over the past few years.

In late January, Iran's late President Ebrahim Raisi said that the Islamic Republic and Russia have reached an agreement to boost the trade between the two countries up to \$10 billion.

"We agreed to remove trade barriers and boost the economic exchanges between the two countries. Currently, the level of mutual trade is not acceptable, so the two countries agreed to increase trade to \$10 billion a year," Raisi said on January 21, upon arrival to Tehran after a two-day visit to Moscow.

He also noted that the two sides also discussed monetary and banking issues during his talks with Russian officials.

The two countries also agreed to identify mutual agricultural capacities as well as suitable areas for the exchange of agricultural products in order to increase the level of trade in the agricultural sector, according to the official.

He went on to say that the Islamic Republic of Iran has very good capacities in the field of transit and transportation, saying: "During this visit, it was agreed to activate the north-south corridor. This transit route will make the time and distance of transiting goods from Russia and different northern countries to the southern regions much shorter."

A white-clad man who confronted tanks with his bare hands

Who is Hussam Abu Safiya?

From page 1 ▶ The hospital's destruction has far-reaching consequences, affecting not only healthcare but also the morale of the local population who are already grappling with a dire humanitarian crisis and famine.

Social media impact

Dr. Abu Safiya's work and his eventual detainment by Israeli forces sparked a massive wave of reactions on social media.

A hashtag with his name trended on platforms like X (Twitter), with users from across the world expressing solidarity and condemning his imprisonment.

His story became a rallying cry for activists worldwide protesting against the Gaza genocide.

Global reaction

His detention by Israeli occupation forces drew sharp criticism from international medical organizations and human rights groups.

Many issued statements condemning the targeting of healthcare workers and facilities, calling it a violation of international law.



Doctors Without Borders and other organizations highlighted his plight, demanding his immediate release and the protection of medical professionals in conflict zones.

The WHO said it lost contact with the prominent doctor after Israeli forces stormed the hospital.

More than a doctor

Abu Safiya was not only a physician but also a powerful communicator. Through his social

media presence, he documented the struggles of the Palestinian people, the conditions in Gaza, and the challenges faced by medical workers.

His posts often went viral turning him into a media force. This also made him a target for the Israeli regime, which has sought to censor any information from Gaza reaching the outside world.

Current condition

Recent reports indicate that Abu Safiya is being held in the no-

torious Israeli desert prison Sedi Teiman near Gaza. Individuals who have been released from this facility confirmed his imprisonment, raising concerns about his safety and well-being.

The story of Abu Safiya continues to inspire and mobilize people worldwide, drawing attention to the critical importance of protecting medical neutrality amid the ongoing Gaza genocide.

Targeting a hospital is an international war crime even if enemy combatants are present inside.

Since October 7, experts have said the goal behind the occupation regime's systematic crimes against hospitals was to push the remaining northern residents towards displacement and complete evacuation.

After the Israeli regime eliminated medical services in the northern governorate of the Gaza Strip and rendered its three main hospitals non-operational, a similar scenario is unfolding against the remaining hospitals still functioning in Gaza City, albeit with limited capabilities.

Jimmy Carter: Architect of normalizing Arab ties with apartheid Israel

From page 1 ▶ Then Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin and then Egyptian president Anwar Sadat signed Camp David Accords on September 17, 1978, that led in the following year to a peace treaty between the two sides. The agreements became known as the Camp David Accords because the negotiations took place at the US presidential retreat at Camp David, Maryland.

The agreements were the first normalization deal between Israel and an Arab country.

More than four decades on, it is crystal clear that the deals were a stab in the back of Palestinians and their cause.

The Carter administration had painted a scenario to motivate Arab states to reduce their support for Palestine amid the Israeli occupation. He also wanted Arab leaders to consider their own interests separate from those of the Palestinians. So far, an overwhelming majority of the Arab public has not recognized Israel and remained opposed to normalizing ties with the regime.

Political ploy

Nonetheless, Carter's political ploy led to the Abraham Accords. Despite rising sentiment against Israel's atrocities against Palestinians, Donald Trump oversaw the signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020, which normalized relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain as well as Morocco. Sudan joined the US-brokered deal a year later.

The normalization deals not only failed to improve the situation of Palestinians, but also strengthened Israel's resolve to intensify its apartheid practices.

With no doubts, Israel's recent brutal war



Jimmy Carter brokered a seemingly peace agreement between Israel and Egypt in the late 1970s as a political ploy with the aim of encouraging Arab states to drop support for Palestine and pursue their own interests.

on Lebanon and the war of genocide in Gaza are the results of US-brokered normalization deals that began in the Carter era.

Proponents of Carter, who earned a Nobel Peace Prize in 2002, characterize him as a champion of peace and democracy. However, the negative consequences of his policies on the Palestinian and Lebanese populations suggest that he may be more accurately remembered as a hawkish president rather than a dovish one. An examination of his statements regarding Iran further clarifies the debate over whether he should be classified as a hawk or a dove.

Hawk or dove?

Carter served one term as president and lost his reelection bid to Ronald Reagan. His successes eclipsed at the polls by a stagnant economy and the 1979 US embassy takeover in Tehran.

In November 1979, a group of university students took over the US embassy in the Iranian capital. They believed Washington had turned its embassy into a center of espionage against the newly established Islamic Republic. Consequently, dozens of American diplomats were taken captive for 444 days.

Carter made futile attempts to secure the release of the Americans.

On April 25, 1980, the US revealed it had attempted a military operation known as Operation Eagle Claw to rescue the release of the captives.

But the operation failed and eight US servicemen were killed and several others were injured.

Carter explicitly demonstrated his enmity toward Iran in an interview 10 years ago.

Flight of fantasy: Jimmy Carter admitted in 2014 that he had been dreaming of "wiping Iran off the map"

"I could have been re-elected if I had taken military action against Iran. It would have shown that I was strong and resolute and manly. ... I could have wiped Iran off the map with the weapons that we had," he said in a 2014 interview with CNBC.

In the interview, Carter acknowledged his aspiration to entirely obliterate Iran, yet he had found himself unable to achieve this dream either through military or political means.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Washington continues crusade against Lebanon's Georges Abdallah

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT - Despite the French Enforcement Court's decision in mid-November to release the longest-held political prisoner Georges Abdallah next February, the "Office of External Litigation at the US Department of Justice" is pressing hard to appeal the decision, describing the ruling as "extremely dangerous" and "not in the interests of the United States, France or Lebanon."

George Abdallah was born on April 2, 1951, in northern Lebanon to a Maronite Christian family. He became involved in political work at the age of 15 and completed his studies at the Teachers' College. In the 1970s, he joined the "Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine."

In 1980, GA and others founded the "Lebanese Revolutionary Armed Factions," an anti-imperialist Marxist movement that claimed responsibility for 5 attacks in Europe between 1981 and 1982 as part of resistance in solidarity with the Palestinian cause.

GA was convicted of complicity in the assassination of Yakov Barsimantov, second secretary of Israel's embassy in France, and US diplomat Charles Robert Day in Paris in 1982, as well as the attempted assassination of US Consul General Robert Aum in Strasbourg in 1984.

In the statement submitted to the French court, the "Office of External Litigation at the US Department of Justice" points out that GA's detention was necessary to prevent him from rejoining his "terrorist" family, as he did not abandon his firm position on resistance against any occupation of Lebanon.

The French judiciary has not found any evidence against Abdallah, except for some publications indicating GA's affiliation with the "Lebanese Revolutionary Armed Brigades," which was accused at the time of planning a number of resistance operations, and a forged Algerian passport.

When he appeared before the court for the first time, in July 1986, GA was only charged with using a "forged travel document," according to the memoirs of Jacques Attali, advisor to former French President François Mitterrand.

Besides, the defense team member, lawyer Isabelle Coutin-Bayer, has revealed that on February 28, 1987, GA was suddenly summoned to trial on charges of possessing weapons in his "secret hideouts and apartments," which the court used as evidence "of his participation in the guerrilla operations carried out by the Lebanese Revolutionary Brigades in France in 1982."

GA was then sentenced to life imprisonment "despite the defense team's protest that

the evidence was not included in the original case file and was fabricated later."

In 2001, another member of the defense team, lawyer Jean-Paul Mazurier, admitted in an interview with Libération how French intelligence recruited him to make Abdallah entrust him until he was sent to meet his comrades in the "Revolutionary Brigades" in Lebanon, which made it easier for French intelligence to gather evidence against him.

In 2012, former French intelligence chief Yves Younis also admitted that the trial was a "security conspiracy that violated the law," adding, "Indeed, we acted like criminals in this case; it is time to put an end to the great injustice we have inflicted on Georges Abdallah."

On July 6, 2024, Radio France's investigation broadcasted CIA documents exposing the US pressure - especially from former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton - on Paris regarding GA. The investigation further addressed the responsibility of the former pro-Zionist French Interior Minister, Manuel Valls, who obstructed the ruling to release GA in 2012. It also highlighted the complicity of Jean-Paul Mazurier, who was expelled from the Bar Association in 1987 for his dealings with French intelligence against his client.

The Zionist organization B'nai B'rith launched an intensive campaign against the administration of the University of British Columbia in Canada to prevent the screening of the film "Fedayeen", which tells GA's grievance in a bid to prevent the Palestinian narrative from reaching Western public opinion, especially in academic circles, as it always seeks to monopolize universities to criminalize resistance and boycott the occupying entity.

The French judiciary has repeatedly blackmailed GA for his freedom by requiring him to apologize for his honorable past and to repent resistance, which he categorically rejected. In one of the trials, GA famously said: "I am a fighter, not a criminal," stressing that "the path I have taken was dictated by the human rights abuses committed against Palestine."

"In previous years, we were suffering from intimidation campaigns and disinformation against GA and his family in the French press," says Alain Boujoula, one of the founders of the GA Liberation Collective and the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA).

Until his supposed release in February, the alleged "integrity" of the French judiciary will be tested again, knowing that GA's case has been marred - for 40 years - by a lot of intrigue and politicization in flagrant violation of French laws that stipulate that those sentenced to life imprisonment must be released after a maximum of 18 years, meaning that GA's release was due in 1999.

Enabling genocide?

Former Biden officials reflect on the US president's legacy

In July, outgoing United States President Joe Biden claimed he had "done more for the Palestinian community than anybody". Maryam Hassanein, a political appointee who resigned from his administration, strongly disagrees.

"I think his legacy is the opposite," Hassanein, a former member of the Interior Department, said. "He's the president who's done the most harm to Palestinians."

On January 20, Biden is slated to leave office, joining a short list of presidents who served only a single term in the White House.

But as his tenure sunsets, some former members of his government say his approach to Israel's war on Gaza may prove to be a lasting stain on his legacy.

The war in Gaza has provoked widespread humanitarian concerns, ranging from famine to ethnic cleansing. A United Nations special committee even warned Israel's tactics in the Palestinian enclave were "consistent with genocide".

Close to 45,000 Palestinians have been killed, and more than 100,000 wounded. As many as 1.9 million have been displaced from their homes.

But since the war was launched in October 2023, the US has been unwavering in its support for Israel's campaign.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Recent developments in Syria and its implications for the Belt and Road Initiative

By Dr. Amir Azizi

TEHRAN - On December 8, the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and its allied armed opposition groups took control of Syria, including Damascus, the country's capital. Various political delegations have met with Ahmed Hussein al-Sharaa, also known by his nom de guerre Abu Mohammad al-Julani, the current de facto leader of the country, giving him some sort of political legitimacy.

So far, Great Britain, France, Germany, Turkey and Qatar, which are considered US allies, as well as the US itself, have sent their delegations to Syria. In addition, according to published news, during the meeting of the delegations, there was talk of removing HTS from the list of terrorist groups, removing the names of its leaders, especially al-Julani, from the list of wanted persons, suspending the sanctions on Syria that were imposed on the country in the past, particularly the Caesar sanctions.

At first glance, it may seem that the rise of a new regime has no significant implications for China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), especially since Syria and China have not had significant economic relations. But a closer look at the issue reveals why the recent developments in Syria could be more important for China than it might seem.

Before entering into the main discussion, it is worth mentioning that the history of recent events in Syria dates back at least to early 2011, with the start of relatively widespread protests against the then government and, ultimately, the start of the civil war in the country. In parallel with these developments, Syria gradually became a battlefield for global and regional foreign actors, especially Turkey and the US. As a result of this confrontation, various armed opposition groups, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Free Syrian Army, the Syrian Democratic Forces, the Nusra

Front (an offshoot of ISIL and Al-Qaeda that later rebranded itself into HTS), and new branches of al-Qaeda, were also either created or reared their ugly head. If they had already been created, they increased their activities. It should be noted that the Syrian civil war was part of a conflict between local, regional, and global actors that began with the first Arab Spring in 2011, turning some Arab countries in West Asia and North Africa, such as Libya, Yemen, and of course Syria, into a battlefield for such actors. Although the People's Republic of China did not directly enter into foreign-instigated Syrian civil war, it took a de facto stance on it by taking actions such as vetoing United Nations Security Council resolutions against the Syrian government and providing it with other supports. Although HTS cannot be considered an anti-China regime at the moment, considering the list of its allies and supporters, it is probably not as pro-China as the Bashar

al-Assad government.

Syria joined the BRI in 2022 by signing a memorandum of understanding although it could not benefit from the initiative for various reasons, including the sanctions imposed on it and the country under Bashar al-Assad. But the important point is that the fall of the Assad government is the latest in a chain of possibly related events that have happened in other countries in recent years. For example, relatively pro-China governments in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, countries that ironically play an important role in the BRI, have also fallen. Also, the withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan, the fall of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan under the Taliban are other important events that can be taken into account from the same point of view.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Azərbaycan Museum: a treasure of history in Tabriz



TEHRAN - Located in the historical city of Tabriz, the Azarbaijan Museum is one of Iran's most significant cultural landmarks and a must-visit destination for history and art enthusiasts.

Situated next to the renowned Blue Mosque, this museum is celebrated as Iran's second-largest archaeological museum, following the National Museum in Tehran.

Since its inauguration in 1957, the museum has served as a vital center for archeological research, artifact restoration, and cultural preservation.

It boasts an extensive collection of artifacts discovered through archeological excavations across Iran.

These exhibits span from prehistoric times to the Islamic era, offering visitors a comprehensive journey through the country's rich history. Among the highlights is a small pottery piece dating back to the fifth millennium BC, uncovered during excavations at Tappeh Esmail Abad.

The museum is divided into various sections. The ground level is dedicated to prehistoric artifacts, this section showcases stone and bone objects, pottery, and Rythons—animal-shaped utensils that provide insights into early craftsmanship and daily life.

The first floor features exhibits from the Islamic era, including artifacts from the first to fourth centuries AH, such as code locks and ancient coins.

There is also a specialized library housing rare and valuable books on history, art, and archeology.

Underground galleries feature a fascinating collection of stone reliefs, including sculptures, tombstones, and inscriptions. Stone rams and other intricately carved figures reflect the artistic achievements of different eras.

For instance, there are artworks by contemporary artist Ahad Hosseini. These sculptures delve into social concepts, exploring themes of human struggle and emotions in the modern age.

A visit to the Museum offers an unparalleled opportunity to explore the artistic and historical

heritage of northwest Iran. Its proximity to the iconic Blue Mosque makes it an essential stop for travelers exploring Tabriz. From prehistoric relics to contemporary art, the museum provides a unique blend of Iran's ancient past and modern creativity.

Whether you're a history buff or a casual traveler, Azarbaijan Museum promises an enriching and unforgettable experience in the heart of Tabriz.

Tabriz: a perfect introduction to Iran

Tabriz is a big but relaxed city, filled with hospitable people and a UNESCO-listed bazaar to explore. It is the perfect introduction to Iran for sightseers crossing over the border from Armenia, or through the Gurbulak Bazargan border from Turkey.

Downtown Tabriz is very walkable and the people are also extremely friendly, something not particularly common in big cities.

"Tabrizians are incredibly warm and hospitable. Within an hour of being in the city, we were greeted and welcomed to Iran at least a dozen times. We were practically getting whiplash from looking over our shoulders so often to see who was shouting a greeting to us," according to Alexandra Reynolds, who is an American backpacker and blogger.

Like many cities in Iran, Tabriz has a long and rich history but saw many of its historic buildings destroyed by invaders or earthquakes. Tabriz became the capital of the Mongol Il-Khan Mahmud Gazan (1295-1304) and his successor, Timur (Tamerlane), a Turkic conqueror, took it in 1392. Some decades later the Kara Koyunlu Turkmen made it their capital, it was when the famous Blue Mosque was built in the ancient city.

The city retained its administrative status under the Safavid dynasty until 1548 when Shah Tahmasp I relocated his capital westward to Qazvin. During the next two centuries, Tabriz changed hands several times between Persia and Ottoman Empire. During World War I, the city was temporarily occupied by Turkish and then Soviet troops.

Digital ecosystem helps boost Vietnam's tourism growth

With over 78 million internet users and 73.3 percent of the population using social media, Viet Nam possesses an ideal environment to drive the development of a robust digital ecosystem and a thriving tourism technology sector.

Viet Nam is considered one of the fastest-growing digital economies in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Experts said digital transformation initiatives launched by the Government, along with those adopted by the travel business community such as Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality/augmented reality (VR/AR), big data, and other technologies are laying the foundation for remarkable innovations in the tourism sector.

Additionally, these technological solutions not only optimize visitors' experience but also support stakeholders within Viet Nam's tourism supply chain in operating efficiently and promoting efforts towards the goal of sustainable development.

The report "Exploring technology adoption among Vietnamese travelers", compiled by The Outbox Company – a market research and data analytics firm focusing on the tourism and hospitality sector in Asia, and Trip.com – a comprehensive international travel service provider, also highlights that popular technologies such as digital map, e-wallet, and OTA (online travel agencies) are being widely used.

Although more advanced technologies such as e-ticket, virtual assistant, and smart hotel services have yet to be effectively utilized, with the low rates of awareness and usage among Vietnamese travelers, they are increasingly becoming an essential part of tourists' trips.

According to Nguyen Anh Thu, Chief Research Officer of The Outbox Company, modern technologies present significant growth opportunities for Viet Nam's tourism industry in the future. Therefore, expanding the application of these solutions can improve users' experience and operational efficiency, and at the same time enhance the competitiveness of Vietnamese travel companies.

However, to fully tap the benefits of technology, travel firms should focus on boosting the "people-centred" mindset, and improving interfaces, user experience, and security for platforms, experts said, adding that providing accurate and transparent information as well as timely technical support will also help increase the satisfaction of Vietnamese travelers when using technological applications, especially for those less familiar with technology.

Le Truong Hien Hoa, deputy director of the HCM City Department of Tourism, said digitalization and the application of digital technologies are now the key to driving the rapid development of the local tourism sector as tourists can easily search destinations in the city via digital travel platforms and technology apps.

(Source: Asian News Network)

National Document for Handicrafts Development unveiled

From Page 1 ▶ Development does not happen with oil wells

Highlighting the significance of handicrafts, Salehi-Amiri emphasized that handicrafts represent Iranian identity.

"If progress is to happen in the country, its path is through human and cultural development. Whether it's carpets or other forms of art, they have a physical form, but it is their soul that portrays art and beauty. It is this art and creativity that keeps society alive and dynamic."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the minister said that the pace of development in Iran accelerated with the discovery of oil wells, "but now we have not and will not achieve the goals of development through oil."

"Over 100 years have passed since the discovery of oil in Masjed Soleyman. Development in Iran started with oil wells, but now we have not and will not reach the goals of development through oil."

Implementation and future goals

Speaking at the ceremony, Maryam Jalali-Dehkordi, Deputy for Handicrafts, announced the formation of four working groups tasked with implementing the document's provisions.

She expressed optimism about the transformative potential of these efforts.

Advocating for the handicrafts sector

Addressing the event, Hosseinzadeh highlighted the need for revitalizing opportunities in the handicrafts sector. "Despite holding the top position in handicraft diversity, our [country's] share of the global market is only 300 million dollars," he noted.



Hosseinzadeh advocated for regional cooperation with culturally aligned nations such as those that celebrate Nowruz (the Persian New Year) and suggested using the maximum advantage of economic diplomacy to promote Iranian handicrafts abroad.

Behrouz-Azar emphasized the significant role of women in this industry, stating that over 70% of the country's handicraft producers are women. "Handicrafts are more than art; they are narratives of life in Iran, reflecting its diversity and cultural identity," she remarked.

Behrouz-Azar also pledged support from her office to empower women artisans.

Alizadeh lauded the National Document as a well-researched initiative, emphasizing the need to address gaps such as the absence of national and global brands and the limited utility of many handicraft products. "This document provides clear directives for various agencies and paves the way for substantial improvements in the sector," he said.

Another speaker at the event was Mehdi Jamalinejad, the governor-general of Isfahan province, who highlighted the province's vibrant handicrafts ecosystem, with over 1,500 workshops and villages where every home functions as a workshop.

Jamalinejad called for institutional reforms and the establishment of a national branding system to enhance the global standing of Iranian handicrafts.

A call for the removal of bureaucratic barriers

Abdolhossein Khosrowpanah, Secretary of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, underscored the spiritual and family-centered aspects of handicrafts.

He urged the removal of bureaucratic barriers and called on government agencies to support artisans by purchasing their products as official gifts. "This comprehensive document reflects the input of over a thousand experts and craftspeople. It must be complemented with legislative action and cultural dialogue," he added.

A vision for the future

The National Document for the Development of Handicrafts is expected to address longstanding challenges in the sector and ensure the sustainability of this culturally significant industry.

The document was officially issued earlier on November 5 by President Masoud Pezeshkian as a pivotal step to bolster the country's traditional arts and crafts sector.

The document is set to be communicated to a wide range of governmental bodies, including the Ministries of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts; Economy; Foreign Affairs; Education; Agriculture; and Industry, among others. It also highlights the need for technological integration, urging adaptation to innovations such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the metaverse to ensure the sector remains competitive and relevant in a rapidly evolving global market.

Moreover, the document refers to a number of challenges and solutions on the path of its chosen goals. Despite its rich heritage and time-honored history, the handicrafts industry faces numerous challenges, including fragmented management, inadequate market access, and the absence of large-scale enterprises, part of its text reads.

Among the practical steps of the document are organizing training programs, facilitating exports, and establishing a national database for craft designs and artisans.

Currently, a selection of 13 cities and three villages in Iran have been registered by the World Council of Handicrafts as "world cities of handicrafts".

Afghanistan cultural night held in Tehran

TEHRAN - The ECO Cultural Institute hosted the Afghanistan Cultural Night & Celebration of New Year 2025 on Monday evening.

According to the public relations of the Economic Cooperation Organization, the event celebrated Afghan art, culture, and the spirit of the new year.

The evening attracted a diverse audience of art and culture enthusiasts and featured a variety of programs, including live music performances, poetry readings, and the opening of a calligraphy and handicrafts exhibition.

Prominent speakers at the event included Dr. Saad Khan, the head of the ECO Cultural Institute, and Aref Jafari, who shared insights into the cultural significance of such gatherings.

Later in the program, poets Mohsen Saedi, Zahra Hosseinzadeh, and Ehsan Badakhshani

captivated the audience with their poignant recitations.

Moreover, an accompanying exhibition of Afghan calligraphy and handicrafts was inaugurated on the sidelines of the ceremony, offering visitors a deeper appreciation of Afghanistan's rich artistic heritage.

This exhibition will remain open to the public up to January 13, 2025, from 9:30 AM to 8:00 PM with a free-of-charge entry.

As mentioned by organizers, the event underscored the ECO Cultural Institute's commitment to fostering cultural exchange and strengthening bonds among regional communities. It provided a vibrant platform to celebrate Afghanistan's artistic legacy while welcoming the new year with a message of unity and hope.

The Economic Cooperation Organization is



an intergovernmental organization that promotes economic, technical, and cultural cooperation among its member states:

Established in 1985 by Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, the organization's other member states include Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Chinese travel platforms expect holiday tourism boom, as policy support boosts consumption

As the New Year's Day approaches, there has been a notable surge in Chinese consumers' interest in travel, with some online travel platforms on Monday reporting an increase in orders for trips, hotels and flights and expecting a holiday tourism boom.

This trend is boosted by vibrant cultural events and the availability of consumer vouchers in various localities. In particular, exciting new activities related to the ice and snow economy are encouraging spending.

Zhou Weihong, a deputy general manager of Shanghai Spring Tour, told the Global Times on Monday that despite initial concerns about sales pressure due to the fact that the New Year's Day falls on a Wednesday with only a single day off, young consumers have shown a preference for extending their trips to include the days before and after the holiday.

As of now, bookings that include the date of January 1, 2025, have surpassed those from the previous New Year's Day, with bookings for

domestic tourism trips increasing by nearly 30 percent year-on-year, Zhou said, adding that the New Year's Day, winter vacation, and Spring Festival periods are crucial for promoting cultural and tourism consumption.

A peak in travel bookings was observed around December 28, with a preference for long-distance domestic tours, according to Shanghai Spring Tour.

Li Huijie, a resident of Shanghai, told the Global Times on Monday that she is taking her parents to the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions, as well as Shenzhen in South China's Guangdong Province, for a six-day trip that combines the year-end annual leave, weekends, and the New Year's Day holiday.

The demand for long-distance travel during the New Year's holiday has led to a significant increase in ticket prices for popular destinations, according to data sent by Tongcheng Travel to the Global Times on Monday.

The average price of domes-

tic flights between December 27 and January 1 has risen by over 20 percent compared to regular days. Specifically, the average ticket price for flights from major southern cities to Harbin, a renowned top ice and snow tourism destination in Northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, has surged by almost 20 percent compared to the same period last year, according to Tongcheng.

Tongcheng Travel also reported a notable increase in hotel bookings and nighttime tourism activities in places such as Chongqing, Chengdu in Southwest China's Sichuan Province, Changsha in Central China's Hunan Province, and Wuhan in Central China's Hubei Province, as people prepare to celebrate the New Year.

Meanwhile, Chinese tourists are opting for high-quality travel experiences for the New Year's Day holiday, according to a report sent by Fliggy to the Global Times on Monday. For instance, bookings for high-end hotel brands directly operated by Fliggy increased

by over 30 percent year-on-year. Outbound travel booking volumes surged by more than 80 percent year-on-year, based on a high base, according to Fliggy.

There has also been a significant increase in bookings for international hotels and air tickets on the platform. International car rental bookings also saw a rise of over 40 percent year-on-year, the platform said.

The upcoming New Year holiday will usher in a peak of inbound and outbound passenger flow in border ports across China, with the daily average of passenger trips reaching 2.05 million, an 18.8-percent increase compared to the same period last year, according to a forecast issued by the National Immigration Administration on Saturday.

Notably, year-end and New Year consumer promotions are gaining momentum as various localities across China ramp up efforts to stimulate consumer spending through a range of vibrant promotional activities.

(Source: Global Times)

Tehran to enhance relations with Ankara, Dushanbe in education sector

TEHRAN –Holding separate sessions with ambassadors of Turkey and Tajikistan to Tehran on Sunday, Education Minister Alireza Kazemi explored avenues to expand educational cooperation between Iran and the two other countries.

Highlighting the close relationships between Turkey and Iran, Turkish envoy, Hicabi Kirlangic, said "It is our main responsibility to facilitate the relationships between the two countries," IRNA reported.

The two officials further discussed ways to boost ties in the field of education, as well as address the challenges faced by the Iranian teachers and students in Turkey and vice-versa.

Kazemi, for his part, stressed adhering to the formerly signed memorandums of understanding.

Tajik ambassador to Tehran, Nizamuddin Zahedi, also met Kazemi, underscoring the fact that the two countries share the same history, culture, religion, and even language.

Referring to Rudaki school, which is being built jointly in Tajikistan, Zahedi asked Kazemi to address the challenges that are faced in three parts including ownership, contents of textbooks,



and management to be able to establish and inaugurate the school. The education minister, for his part, proposed establishing a joint committee to deal with the raised issues by reaching agreements and fostering collaborations.

Key educational achievements

According to the latest statistics, education space per student in Iran has increased from 5.17 square meters in the calendar year 1396 (2017-2018) to 5.28 square meters in the year 1402 (2023 – 2024).

The literacy rate, as well, has increased from 87.9 percent in 1396 to 90.7 percent in 1402, IRNA reported.

In the mentioned six-year period, the ratio of resilient classrooms improved from 0.64 to 0.82, sport space per student grew from 0.17 to 0.20, and the ratio of classrooms equipped with cooling and heating systems rose from 0.48 to 0.68.

The literacy rate has improved in urban areas as well as rural areas. From 1396 to 1402, the literacy rate among men and wom-

en amounted to 93.9 percent and 87.4 percent, respectively.

The literacy rate in urban areas was announced to be 92.8 percent, males had a literacy of 95.4 percent and females had a literacy rate of 90.2 percent.

In rural areas, the literacy rate reached 83.5 percent. Men accounted for 88.8 percent and women for 78.3 percent of the figure.

Moreover, the number of out-of-school students in primary, secondary, and high school lowered from 2.17, 6.71, and 18.19 percent in 1396 to 2.10, 5.23, and 16.12 percent in 1402, respectively.

Literacy growth rate in Iran 2.5 times the world average

In the past four decades, the growth of literacy in the world has been about 18 percent, while in the same period, this figure in Iran has been 50 percent, IRNA reported.

Nearly one year after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the Literacy Movement Organization was established by the order of Imam Khomeini with the aim of eradicating illiteracy.

At that time more than half of Iran's population, over the age of six, was illiterate. Now, Iran is on the verge of removing illiteracy.

Kazakhstan interested in expanding medical ties with Iran



TEHRAN –The high capabilities of Babol University of Medical Sciences in the health and tourism sectors have made Kazakhstan interested in cooperation with the university, Yerbol Akhmetov, Kazakhstan's consul general in Gorgan has said.

The official made the remarks on Sunday, in a meeting with Hossein Qorbani, the chancellor of Babol University of Medical Sciences, Mazandaran province, the health ministry's website reported.

During the meeting, the officials conferred on fostering ties. Dispatching skilled physicians to Kazakhstan, attracting Kazakh students, treating Kazakh patients, holding short-term educational courses, conducting joint research projects, and enhancing scientific, and educational interactions were among the main focuses of the meeting. The officials also highlighted exchanging students and professors, organizing scientific conferences, as well as providing sabbatical leaves for students and staff.

"Since the collaboration will encompass cultural, political, social, business, science, and technology sectors besides medical ties, a memorandum of understanding will be signed to follow up on reached agreements more seriously," Akhmetov added.

Qorbani, for his part, expressed Babol Medical University's readiness for cooperation with Kazakhstan, highlighting the capabilities of hospitals affiliated with the university in kidney transplant, bone marrow transplant, cochlear implantation, infertility treatment, genetics, dialysis, joint replacement surgery, radiation oncology, and dentistry.

He went on to suggest establishing a working group of experts to assess the current capacities as well as future needs.

Enhancing medical ties

On December 16, the Kazakh ambassador to Tehran, Ontalap Onalbayev, expressed his country's interest in expanding cooperation with Iran in the fields of medicine, medical education, and treatment.

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

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

"Caspian littoral states should foster joint activities in various fields like economy, and medical sciences," he stated.

Referring to the close relationship between the two countries, the official said Kazakhstan's president highly values health and medical treatment. He also voiced his country's readiness to establish a branch of Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences in Kazakhstan.

Rezaei, for his part, welcomed the idea of ex-

panding ties in medical education by announcing the university's readiness to admit Kazakh students.

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

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

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

Medical tourism

Iran has the potential to generate €6 billion annually from medical tourism with proper planning, according to Mohammad-Reza Vaez-Mahdavi, Chairman of Iran's Scientific Association of Health Economy.

Currently, the country's annual revenue from health tourism stands at €700 million, TABNAK reported.

Mahdavi highlighted Iran's goal to become a healthcare hub for West Asia in the coming years, which includes plans to export €1 billion worth of vaccines and medical equipment annually.

Iran's current annual exports of medicine amount to €200 million, but Mahdavi believes this figure can easily be scaled up to €1 billion with the right infrastructure and market strategies. Mahdavi also pointed out the need for better support systems and confidence-building measures for foreign medical tourists.

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Iran gets ready for two-week coronavirus closure

The National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control will implement a plan, according to which all occupations, except for emergency services and basic food suppliers, will be closed for two weeks in more than 100 cities in an attempt to curb the coronavirus.

Alireza Reisi, a spokesman for the Headquarters, said that "the plan will go into effect on November 21." The plan divides cities into three levels of alert, according to which, if a city is in a state of high alert, all other occupations will be closed, except for the most essential jobs, which are related to the provision of basic necessities, security, and health. Deputy health minister Iraj Harirchi has predicted that the COVID-19 death toll would double in the next two weeks. "Unfortunately, daily deaths reached over 450 in the past 10 days, and an upward trend in infection, hospitalization, and death is predicted," he lamented.

اجرای طرح تعطیلی دو هفته ای سراسری برای مقابله با کرونا هفته آینده

ستاد ملی مقابله با کرونا در ایران طرحی را اجرا خواهد کرد که بر مبنای آن بیش از ۱۰۰ شهر از جمله تهران با وضعیت هشدار بالای کرونا به مدت دو هفته تعطیل خواهند بود.

به گزارش ایسنا، علیرضا ریسی سخنگوی ستاد ملی مقابله با کرونا گفت: این طرح از اول آذرماه آغاز می شود. این طرح شهرها را به سه سطح هشدار تقسیم بندی می کند که بر اساس آن، اگر شهری در وضعیت هشدار بالا قرار گیرد به جز مشاغل خیلی ضروری که مربوط به تهیه مایحتاج ضروری مردم، امنیت و سلامت می شوند، بقیه مشاغل همه تعطیل هستند. ایرج حریرچی معاون وزیر بهداشت از پیش بینی ها در دو برابر شدن مرگ ناشی از کرونا در دو هفته آینده خبر داد. به گزارش ایرنا، حریرچی گفت متأسفانه بیش از ۱۰ روز است که مرگ های بالای ۴۵۰ مورد را تجربه کردیم و پیش بینی ها این است که فعلا روند صعودی در ابتلا و در بستری و در مرگ را خواهیم داشت.

Over 1,400 individuals benefited from IRCS services

TEHRAN –The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) provided rescue services to more than 1,455 individuals affected by blizzards and snowstorms in 12 provinces of the country over the past three days.

From December 27 to 29, 29 relief teams conducted some 77 rescue missions, IRCS website quoted Babak Mahmoudi as saying on Sunday.

They provided emergency accommodation for 12 and transferred 40 others to safe places. Some 104 individuals hit by snow received foodstuff, the official noted.

The rescuers pulled 497 vehicles out of the snow, he added.



ternationally.

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

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

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

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

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

The rescue teams provided emergency accommodation for 12 and transferred 40 others to safe places.

IRCS is a top organization

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

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

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

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

FAO, Iran collaborate to strengthen integrated management of date palm diseases



TEHRAN – The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad and the Iranian Research Institute of Plant Protection, has launched an Integrated Management Approach to address the threat of pests and diseases in the country's date palm groves.

The project, titled "Technical Assistance to Improve Integrated Pest Management (IPM) of Date Palm Key Insect Pests and Diseases," was inaugurated during an inception workshop on Monday, 30 December 2024.

Date palms play a pivotal role in the country's agricultural economy and food security, particularly in southern provinces such as Sistan and Baluchistan, Hormozgan, Fars, and Kerman. With over 93 commercial varieties, Iran (Islamic Republic) is among the world's top producers of dates. However, the sector faces significant challenges, including climate extremes, water scarcity, and improper crop management practices.

In recent years, insect pests such as the Red Palm Weevil and the Dubas bug, along with diseases like Date Palm Bunch Wilting Disorder, have caused damage to date palm groves.

Speaking at the event, Chongguang Liao, FAO Representative ad interim to the Islamic Republic of Iran, highlighted the urgency of

tackling these challenges, and stated that "Unchecked infestations of invasive pests like the Red Palm Weevil could lead to severe economic and ecological consequences."

"The Integrated Management of Date Palm Key insect pests and diseases project has been developed to address the urgent need for a comprehensive and holistic strategy that will mobilize the synergies of multiple institutions and approaches. Through this initiative, FAO aims to support national efforts by introducing sustainable and combined different management strategies and practices to grow healthy crops and to minimize the risk of pests' outbreaks," Liao explained.

The project will focus on strengthening phytosanitary measures to prevent the spread of invasive pests; improving early warning systems and efficient reporting of the population density for effective monitoring mechanisms, enhancing integrated management protocols to improve and highlight emerging strategies in combating major insect pests and diseases, as well as building national capacity to ensure that farmers, gardeners, and plant protection teams can effectively adopt these solutions.

"Prevention and control of diseases and pests requires an integral strategy which mobilizes synergies of multiple institutions," Yubak Dhoj GC, FAO Senior Agricultural Officer stated.

By implementing these measures, the project aims to reduce production losses, improve crop yields, and ensure the long-term sustainability of Iran's date palm industry.

The Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) project is owned by Iran and for Iran. The inception workshop brought together experts, policymakers, and stakeholders to align priorities and strategies for safeguarding the country's date palm groves.

Date palms play a pivotal role in the country's agricultural economy and food security.



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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The one who gets married has completed half of his/her religion.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

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

Nooshafarin Ansari recognized for contributions to children's culture and literature



TEHRAN- The Vice President for Women and Family Affairs honored Nooshafarin Ansari, a distinguished figure in children's culture and literature, with a diploma from President Masoud Pezeshkian.

During a meeting at Ansari's home on Sunday, Zahra Behrouz-Azar delivered warm messages and greetings from the president, presenting Ansari with a certificate of appreciation for her significant contributions to culture and literature in the country.

The meeting also emphasized the importance of reading in strengthening family bonds, enhancing relationships between children and

parents, and nurturing a responsible and resilient generation.

Born in 1939 in India, Ansari was a student of Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh and Abbas Zaryab Khoyei. She has served as the Secretary of the Iranian Children's Book Council since 1079, holds a Master's degree in Library Science from the Graduate Institute of Geneva in Switzerland and McGill University in Canada, and earned her Ph.D. in Library Science from the University of Toronto.

She is a former faculty member and head of the Library Science Department at the University of Tehran, a former director of the Faculty of Literature Library at Tehran University, founder of the Library Science group in the Faculty of Educational Sciences, and a recipient of the Islamic Republic Book of the Year Award.

Her notable works include "Establishing Libraries in Rural Areas," "Developing Public Libraries," "Books for All," and "Books and Society," as well as a collection of articles on books and librarianship, and the translation of "Introduction to the History of the Muslim East" by Jean Sauvaget, which was selected as the Book of the Year.

Iranian Artists Forum to screen "Gladiator II"

TEHRAN-The Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) in Tehran will screen the 2024 historical epic film "Gladiator II" directed and produced by Ridley Scott on Friday.

The movie that serves as a sequel to "Gladiator" (2000) will be shown at 5 p.m. at the Naseri Hall of the IAF with Persian subtitle, Honaronline reported.

It stars Paul Mescal, Pedro Pascal, Joseph Quinn, Fred Hechinger, Lior Raz, Derek Jacobi, Connie Nielsen, and Denzel Washington.

Jacobi and Nielsen reprise their roles from the first film, with Mescal replacing Spencer Treat Clark, portraying Lucius Verus Aurelius.

Years after witnessing the death of Maximus at the hands of his uncle, Lucius must enter the Colosseum after the powerful emperors of Rome conquer his home. With rage in his heart

and the future of the empire at stake, he looks to the past to find the strength and honor needed to return the glory of Rome to its people.

The exiled Prince of Rome becomes a prisoner of war and fights as a gladiator for Macrinus, a former slave who plots to overthrow the twin emperors Geta and Caracalla.

The film has received generally positive reviews from critics, with praise for its performances, Scott's direction, set design, and action, while criticism was directed at the emotional tone, similarity to its predecessor, and historical inaccuracies.

It was named one of the top ten films of 2024 by the National Board of Review and received two nominations at the 82nd Golden Globe Awards: Cinematic and Box Office Achievement and Best Supporting Actor for Washington.

Cartoon of Day



Gaza's Hospitals

Cartoonist: Mahmoud Abbas

Persian translation of Enzo Traverso's "Gaza in the Presence of History" to be released

TEHRAN- The latest book by Italian researcher and scholar Enzo Traverso, titled "Gaza in the Presence of History" (Gaza devant l'histoire) has recently been translated into Persian by Iranian translator Amin Bozorgian.

The book, which was published in French and English in October, is set to be released in the near future by Mardom Negar Publications in Tehran.

In "Gaza in the Presence of History," Traverso critically examines the destruction of Gaza, questioning whether it is merely a response to the October 7, 2023 attack or part of a broader, ongoing process of dispossession and eradication.

He challenges conventional narratives that frame Israel as a democratic enclave within a barbaric Arab world and portray Hamas as a mindless, bloodthirsty entity.

Traverso argues that labeling the actions of Hamas as the "worst pogrom in history after the Holocaust" oversimplifies the situation.

This characterization serves to legitimize Israel's military response, overshadowing the historical realities of the ongoing colonization and the comprehensive segregation of Gaza over the past decades.

He emphasizes the importance of understanding terms like "antisemitism," "Zionism," and "genocide," and provides a genealogy of these concepts to move beyond Orientalist perspectives that distort their meanings. The essay advocates for a historical analysis of the current crisis, rejecting any justification for what he describes as genocidal warfare in the name of combating antisemitism.

Traverso warns that if the occupation leads to another Nakba,



it could irreparably undermine the legitimacy of Israel, rendering it unredeemable by American military support, Western media narratives, or a manipulated understanding of the Holocaust.

Born in 1957, Traverso, a historian with a notable academic background, has authored several influential works translated into multiple languages, further solidifying his expertise in the intersection of history and contemporary political issues.

He is specialized in European intellectual history, with a focus on critical theory, the Holocaust, Marxism, and memory. His works have been translated into numerous languages, making significant contributions to contemporary historiography.

After over 25 years in France, he currently holds the Susan and Barton Winokur Professorship in the Humanities at Cornell University.

Traverso earned his master's degree in modern history from the University of Genoa in 1982 and completed his Ph.D. at the

School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS) in Paris in 1989.

His academic career has spanned various institutions, including the International Institute for Research and Education in Amsterdam and several universities in France before joining Cornell in 2013.

He has received several accolades for his scholarly work, including the Premio Pozzale Luigi Russo in 2014.

Among his notable publications are "Revolution: An Intellectual History" (2021) and "Left-Wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory" (2017).

His scholarship engages deeply with historical narratives and contemporary political issues, making him a pivotal figure in his field. The Health Ministry in the Gaza Strip reported that the ongoing conflict has raised the total number of deaths since October of last year to 45,484, with around 108,090 individuals injured amid the relentless Israeli attacks.

The Ministry's statement emphasized that many people remain trapped under rubble and on the streets, with rescuers unable to reach them.

Israel's military operations in the Gaza Strip commenced in response to a cross-border attack by the Palestinian group Hamas on October 7, 2023.

This ongoing genocidal war, now entering its second year, has sparked significant international condemnation, with various officials and organizations describing the attacks and the obstruction of humanitarian aid as a deliberate effort to annihilate a population. On November 21, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, citing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

Moreover, Israel faces allegations of genocide at the International Court of Justice due to its military actions in the region.

Amol hosting courtroom drama "The Accused" by Jeffrey Archer

TEHRAN-The Play "The Accused" written by Jeffrey Archer is on stage at the Black box Theater of Department of Culture and Islamic Guidance in Amol, Mazandaran Province.

Soheil Sheikh Motevalli has directed the two-hour play that has Sahar Moshrefi, Iman Reisi, Pouneh Ghadiri, and Saeid Shafieian in the cast.

"The Accused" is a tense courtroom drama with a difference.

The audience will act as the jury, as if they were in the Central Criminal Court at the Old Bailey. You will

have to decide...Did Dr. Sherwood murder his wife? Was Jennifer Mitchell his mistress? Which of his alibis should you believe?

The choice will keep you on the edge of your seats, and at the end of the trial you will be invited to deliver your verdict of guilty or not guilty.

Once you have made that decision the play will continue – with one of two different endings, depending on your verdict. Only then will you finally discover the truth.

Jeffrey Archer, 84, is an English

novelist and former politician. His novel "Kane and Abel" (1979) remains one of the best-selling books in the world, with an estimated 34 million copies sold worldwide.

Overall his books have been published in 114 countries and more than 47 languages, and sold more than 320 million copies worldwide.

He is the only author ever to have been a number one bestseller in fiction (19 times), short stories (four times), and non-fiction (for "The Prison Diaries"). "The Accused" will remain on stage in Amol until January 9, 2025.

Art and Palestinian embroidery exhibition in Muscat

The "Hanthala of Palestine, Naji Al-Ali's Line and Thread" exhibition is being held in Muscat, Oman, and celebrates the powerful symbolism of the late Palestinian cartoonist Naji Al-Ali's work, alongside the traditional Palestinian embroidery of artist Safaa Surour.

Naji, one of the most significant Palestinian artists, was renowned for his bold political cartoons, with his iconic character Hanthala becoming a symbol of Palestinian struggle and resilience, Muscat Daily reported on Monday.

The character, a barefoot child with his back turned to the world, represents silent protest and unwavering hope in the face of oppression. Initially drawn in 1969, Hanthala became synonymous with Naji's artistic signature and continues to embody the Palestinian people's fight against occupation.

The exhibition also features Surour's intricate embroidery,

which highlights the artistic craftsmanship of Palestinian women. Her work serves as a visual representation of the rich cultural heritage and steadfastness of the Palestinian people, connecting past traditions with the present-day struggle for identity and justice.

The Bait al Zubair Foundation explained that the exhibition aims to honor Naji's legacy as a voice of truth, whose art captured the suffering and resistance of the Palestinian people. Naji's cartoons, which number around 40,000, have become a symbol of resistance, and his work remains a significant contribution to raising global awareness of the Palestinian cause.

In addition to showcasing Naji's art, the exhibition aims to foster solidarity with Palestine by introducing Omani audiences to the late artist's works, offering visitors an opportunity to connect with his legacy and the Palestinian cause. The exhibition further serves to revive Pales-

tinian heritage and art within Oman, providing a platform for cultural exchange and dialogue.

The "Hanthala of Palestine, Naji al Ali's Line and Thread" exhibition will remain open until January 6, 2025.

Decades of repression and conflict, and an Israel-imposed blockade from 2007 on the Gaza Strip, Palestine, exploded on October 7, 2023, as Hamas attacked Israel on a large scale. In response, Israel has launched massive attacks on Gaza.

Since the beginning of the war, more than 45,300 Palestinians have been killed and 106,000 injured, according to Gaza's Ministry of Health. Over 1.9 million people have been displaced in Gaza, with many people being displaced multiple times.

In Gaza, hospitals and other health facilities have been constantly under attack, leaving many not functioning. Food, water, and medicines are scarce. People are trying to survive in

extremely dire circumstances.

Areas designated as humanitarian zones have been repeatedly bombed by Israeli forces. All warring parties continue to fight in densely populated areas. Nowhere is safe in Gaza.

The Israeli army has systematically targeted public facilities, residential buildings, and infrastructure over the course of its deadly war on Gaza, exacerbating the already bad living conditions for over two million Palestinians in the enclave.

Israel has continued a genocidal war on Gaza that has killed more than 45,300 people, most of them women and children.

Last month, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

Israel is also facing a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its actions in Gaza.