

Ayatollah Khamenei on General Soleimani's 5th martyrdom anniversary:

American Bases Will Be Trampled by Syrian Youth

خداوند، مجاهدان را پر نور کندگان جهاد به اجور بزرگ برتری داده است. ۹۵

Martyr Soleimani considered defending Al-Aqsa a core principle



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While the world is celebrating New Year, Gazans are living in anguish

By Matin Jamshidi

TEHRAN – While the world is celebrating the New Year people in Gaza are suffering from the endless and tragic killings of their loved ones, starvation, disease, displacement, shortage of drinking water, hopelessness, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), etc.

The tragedies that the Palestinians in Gaza are going through have become a new normal in the deafening silence of the world. The world has become somehow indifferent to such a degree of agony by the Gazans. Groups of people who raise their voices against this savagery are simply called anti-Semitic.

One may feel ashamed of humanity when he sees so much cruelty against a nation.

However, whenever certain countries take steps at the UN Security Council to approve a resolution to pressure Israel to end its sadistic war against the Palestinians, they face the hurdle of the U.S. veto.

In the midst of all these unbearable calamities, which began in Oct. 2023, the winter is adding to the agonies of the Palestinians.

Why did Iran send Gen. Soleimani to Syria?

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT – Four years have passed since the assassination of Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani. Every time the anniversary passes, an exceptional biography of an exceptional hero comes to mind. He was a hero who devoted his entire life to others and supported the oppressed, standing tall as an impregnable barrier in the face of imperialist ambitions.

Undoubtedly, one of the most important battles Martyr Soleimani led was in Syria against the Takfiri barbarism engineered by Washington and Tel Aviv. In his book "Sobh al-Sham," Martyr Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian explains, at the request of Martyr Soleimani, the details of the Syrian crisis that began in 2011 "so that the young generation can learn about the events in Syria and part of our region, and learn about the heroism of General Soleimani."

Abdollahian thoroughly explains the motives of Tehran and its allies behind supporting Damascus at that stage: "The reader can clearly see on every page of the book eloquent scenes that reflect the courage of Sayyed Ali Khamenei,

New Year: Gazans face double whammy of Israeli airstrikes and flooding

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN- Forcibly displaced Palestinians in the Gaza Strip commenced the New Year amidst continuous Israeli airstrikes, while winter rains have inundated their temporary shelters, exacerbating their hardships.

According to the Wafa news agency, Israel's attacks on Gaza's northern town of Jabalia killed more than a dozen people in the first day of the New Year. It said most of the victims were children. Israel also carried out deadly strikes in other parts of the enclave including in the central Bureij refugee camp.

Amid Israeli strikes, cold and rainy weather have worsened the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

The Palestinian Civil Defense said floodwaters rose to more than 30cm in makeshift tents in Gaza. It said floodwaters have left displaced Palestinians exposed to the cold and inflicted damage on their belongings.

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Iran exports non-oil goods worth \$1.2b to India in 8 months

TEHRAN – Iran exported non-oil commodities valued at \$1.2 billion to India 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 India was Iran's seventh top export destination in the mentioned eight-month period.

Exporting commodities valued at \$1 billion to Iran, India was Iran's sixth top source of import in the first eight months of the present year, the official further added.

Iran exported \$2.217 billion worth of goods to India during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), according to an official with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO). ► Page 4



© ISNA / Alireza Masoumi

Foreign ministry honors terror victims in Tehran ceremony

TEHRAN – A ceremony commemorating the martyrs of terrorism and unveiling the Encyclopedia of 23,000 Iranian Terror Victims was held on Wednesday, coinciding with the anniversary of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani's martyrdom.

The event also marked the first anniversary of the terrorist attack at Kerman's Martyrs' Cemetery.

Hosted at the Center for Political and International Studies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the gathering saw participation from prominent figures, including Kazem Gharibabadi, Deputy Minister for International and Legal Affairs; Iraj Masjedi, Deputy Coordinator of the IRGC Quds Force; and foreign ambassadors.

The ceremony featured the unveiling of the encyclopedia and a photo exhibition detailing Western governments' support for anti-Iranian terrorist groups. ► Page 2

Missile capabilities secured Iran's seat at negotiation table: Araghchi

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has emphasized the critical role of Iran's missile capabilities in shaping its diplomatic engagements with global powers.

In an interview with Tasnim News Agency on Wednesday, Araghchi highlighted that Iran's strength in defense and deterrence has been a decisive factor in compelling major powers to engage in negotiations rather than resort to military action.

"Diplomacy operates on the foundation of power, and power is constructed through tangible capabilities," Araghchi stated.

He reiterated that Iran's missile program serves as a cornerstone of this power, enabling the country to secure a position at the negotiating table.

"I have said it many times, and I strongly believe that if it weren't for our missile capabilities, no one would have considered negotiating with us at all," he asserted.

Reflecting on the prolonged nuclear negotiations with the P5+1 countries, Araghchi explained that the inability of foreign powers to destroy Iran's nuclear infrastructure through military means was the primary reason they pursued diplomacy. ► Page 2

General Qassem Soleimani: master of soft power in Iran's strategic culture

By Xavier Villar

MADRID – In the global competition for influence, soft power has become a key indicator of national strength. In contrast to direct confrontations involving hard power, an increasing number of countries are opting for less costly yet equally effective strategies, using resources that attract and persuade rather than impose.

Soft power encompasses the abilities that allow states to project their influence through the promotion of cultural and political values, as well as through the development of scientific, technological, and, in some cases, even military resources. This more subtle and strategic approach turns these tools into an integrated set that drives their objectives on the international stage.

Following the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, the Islamic Republic of Iran has consolidated significant political influence in West Asia. In addition to its vast natural resources and strategic location, the region has been marked by the intervention of external actors in the internal affairs of its countries. ► Page 3

The Battle of Chaldoran: a lost war that consolidated Iranian identity

By Mona Hojat Ansari

Elegies are a huge part of Iranian mourning rituals. They don't just let mourners show their sorrow and sadness; they also keep the memories of the person alive by telling stories of their life. Anyone remembered in a ceremony with an elegy is seen as important. In public ceremonies, they are important historical, national, or religious figures, and in private ones, they are beloved family members.

Hundreds of people who participated in a mourning event in the northwestern Iranian city of Ardabil on Sunday upheld this old Iranian tradition. A reciter stood in front of the huge crowd in a roofed room, which shielded them from the mountainous city's freezing temperatures. The figures they remembered through their elegies were the martyrs who fell during the Battle of Chaldoran (Chaldiran) over five centuries ago. ► Page 2

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

What is the content of the Sultan of Oman's letter to Pezeshkian?

In an interview with Mir Golvi Bayat, an expert on Oman issues, Farhikhtegan discussed the visit of Badr al-Busaidi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Oman, to Iran. He said: Oman is one of the most important regional actors for various reasons, including mediatory roles. Omani trips to Iran always have three dimensions: bilateral relations, regional issues, and Iran's negotiations with the West, especially America. Considering the historical history of Omani mediation, especially at the level of direct involvement of the Sultan and the Sultan's correspondence, their letters have never been threatening and have always been a mediator for constructive interactions. Therefore, it is unlikely that this letter carries negative content. Probably, after this letter cooperation will begin both on the region and the nuclear issue with Europe and the United States. These cooperations will be in line with the conditions of the region. Measures may be taken to prevent the spread of war or reduce tension in the Yemen issue with the mediation of Oman. In addition to these cases, there may be discussions about nuclear issues and negotiations related to the JCPOA.

Hamshahri: Why is Carter's name linked to Iran?

In a commentary, Hamshahri addressed the death of former American President Jimmy Carter and wrote: Carter's name is linked to Iran; on the one side, he was the founder of hostile actions against Iran in various political, economic, and security levels, and on the other side, during his presidency, the American global hegemony was broken by Iran. Carter has a black record in dealing with Iran, from supporting the Pahlavi regime to organizing all kinds of conspiracies against the Islamic revolution. The people of Iran will never forget that many of America's hostile actions against them were organized by Carter. Maybe he wanted to take revenge on Iranians for all his failures. With the victory of the Islamic Revolution and the removal of Iran from the list of Washington's most important allies in the Middle East, the White House became a focus for hostile plans against Iran in various areas. Anti-Iran measures have since become a procedure in America's approaches to Iran.

Iran: Tehran needs to take quick action in the region

In an interview with Rahman Ghahremanpour, an expert on strategic issues, the Iran newspa-

per discussed the important and complex foreign policy issues that the Islamic Republic is facing. He said: How to deal with Donald Trump and his policies regarding the nuclear issue, regional developments, and the Abraham Accords along with the current developments in Syria are the most important issues that Iran's foreign policy should spend time on in 2025. Trump's return to power is a development that is closely watched by the Islamic Republic and the rest of the world. This situation means that Iran is not alone and somehow all countries are waiting or preparing to face the consequences of Trump's decisions. Moreover, various figures in Trump's proposed cabinet have repeatedly pointed out that if the Middle East case takes time, it will be managed by Israel in the White House. Therefore, it should be noted that Iran's immediate actions regarding the current developments in the region and the regulation of relations with regional and extra-regional powers should be quickly on the agenda of Iran's foreign policymakers.

Donya-e-Eqtasad: Steps to remove Iran from FATF "blacklist"

In an analysis, Donya-e-Eqtasad discussed President Pezeshkian's announcement that the Expediency Council will study Iran's membership in the FATF as it had been approved by the parliament some years back. It wrote: The intensification of economic sanctions on the Islamic Republic with Iran being on the blacklist of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has reduced the role of Iran in the global economy and minimized the amount of foreign investment. Despite the long process of being removed from the FATF blacklist, this action is highly important and a step forward to reduce economic and financial risks. This action can have positive effects on the country's economy. It helps improve international banking and financial communication because being on the blacklist makes foreign banks and financial institutions refrain from interacting with Iran's banking system. By being removed from this list, the way to re-establish financial relations with Iran is reopened and the possibility of official financial transactions is provided. Also, one of the main reasons for the reluctance of foreign investors to cooperate with Iran is the risk of being on the blacklist. Getting out of this situation can reduce these risks and attract foreign investment.

Israeli Shin Bet claims unprecedented spike in Iranian espionage



TEHRAN – The Shin Bet agency of the Israeli regime has claimed a staggering fivefold rise in espionage activities associated with Iran.

According to the agency's annual report released on Tuesday, the number of identified espionage cases surged by an alarming 400 percent in 2024 compared to the previous year.

This alleged uptick reflects a growing security challenge for the Israeli regime, with implications both domestically and internationally.

The Shin Bet disclosed that it had indicted 27 Israeli settlers over allegations of spying for Iran.

The agency claimed to have dismantled 13 major espionage operations that were allegedly orchestrated by Iranian intelligence.

In one high-profile incident in October 2024, two settlers were arrested east of Tel Aviv on charges of espionage and acts of sabotage in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Furthermore, on September 19, the Israeli regime arrested another settler suspected of plotting against prominent Israelis.

The report also sheds light on the escalating cyber threats faced by the Israeli regime, with cyber-attacks reportedly quintupling in 2024.

Out of thousands of cyber-attack attempts, around 700 were allegedly thwarted, the report said, revealing significant vulnerabilities in the regime's cybersecurity defense capabilities.

Missile capabilities secured Iran's seat at negotiation table: Araghchi

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Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) speaks during an interview with Tasnim News Agency on January 1, 2025.

ered negotiating with us at all," he asserted.

Reflecting on the prolonged nuclear negotiations with the P5+1 countries, Araghchi explained that the inability of foreign powers to destroy Iran's nuclear infrastructure through military means was the primary

reason they pursued diplomacy.

"If they could have destroyed our nuclear facilities with a single military strike, why would they have bothered negotiating with us? Why would they have spent over two years in intensive talks, with the U.S. Secretary of State and the foreign

Foreign ministry honors terror victims in Tehran ceremony

From page 1 ► In his speech, Deputy Minister Gharibabadi honored the martyrs of terrorism and praised General Soleimani's pivotal role in combating regional terrorism.

He stated, "The global fight against terrorism has become a priority, and Iran, with its resilience, has faced significant challenges. Terrorism directly undermines the security and stability of societies."

He emphasized that Iran has not only been a victim of terrorism but also a leader in confronting it on both regional and global levels.

"Western countries' support for terrorism has created severe regional crises. They view terrorism as a threat only when it affects their interests, sheltering terrorists and applying double standards. How can one witness the suffering of Gaza's people and remain silent?" he asked.

Gharibabadi strongly criticized Western nations for their double standards on terrorism and their support for the Zionist re-



gime. He said, "It is disgraceful that these countries remain silent about the crimes of the Zionist regime while providing extensive support to it."

He added, "The global public recognizes that these countries welcome terrorists into their parliaments and even applaud them."

The Battle of Chaldoran: a lost war that consolidated Iranian identity



A mural of the battle of Chaldoran at the Chehel Sotoun pavilion in Isfahan

avid Shah Esmail I stood before the forces of the Ottoman Caliphate. The Iranians had powerful reasons to fight, but their opponents were far better armed, with higher technology weapons that were developed through the Ottomans' encounters with, and adaptations of, technologies from the Byzantine Empire.

"Iranians ended up losing the war," noted Hossein Salar Seyfodini, a researcher and expert on the South Caucasus politics and history. "Iran lost the city of Tabriz and swathes of its northern territories. But what it gained through the Chaldoran war helped it return them."

Iranians understood that their identity was once again under threat after a long period

of Arab rule and that they needed to become more resilient to protect it, the expert added. "What arose from the ashes of defeat was a fierce sense of national unity."

The Safavids are largely known to be the first politically independent dynasty since the Arab conquest of Iran which began in 633 AD and was largely completed by 651 AD. The founder of the Dynasty, Shah Esmail I made Twelver Shia Islam the official religion of Iran, a move that defied centuries of Sunni rule, carved out an Iranian identity, and separated it from the tapestry of its neighbors.

But the Ottomans, with their eyes set on territorial expansion and the claim to Islamic

ministers of the P5+1 meeting for 18 days to reach an agreement? The reality is that they lacked the military capability to eliminate our nuclear program," he remarked.

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

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

However, President Trump withdrew the U.S. from the JCPOA during his first term and launched a "Maximum Pressure" campaign, reimposing strict sanctions against Iran. Tehran began to scale back on some of its obligations 1.5 years later as the remaining European signatories to the deal failed to neutralize the sanctions.

caliphate, saw this as an intolerable challenge.

"While on the surface it looks like Iran just lost some territory, it wasn't the case for those that inhabited the country back then. The Ottomans wanted to rule over the Islamic world like the Umayyads and Abbasids. That's why the struggle of Iran wasn't just against an external power, but a fight to preserve the core of what made them Iranian," Seyfodini stated.

This collective consciousness would ultimately empower a resurgence under Shah Abbas I, who would build upon the lessons of Chaldoran to reclaim lost territories and establish a powerful, unified Iran, he added.

At the Ardabil event on Sunday, I encountered a man with his young child outside after the ceremony had concluded. Shortly after, the mother arrived. She spoke to her son in Azeri, asking about his day. In response, the toddler began chanting an elegy he had heard, gently striking his chest – another common Iranian practice during mourning. "This is the second time such ceremony has been held to commemorate the martyrs of Chaldoran," said the father. "I'll make sure to take Hossein with me every year," he stated, referring to his son's name.

American bases will be trampled by Syrian youth

Martyr Soleimani considered defending Al-Aqsa a core principle, Leader says

TEHRAN – Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, met with a number of Iranian martyrs’ families, including the family of the late General Qassem Soleimani.

The gathering at the Imam Khomeini Hussainiyah marked the eve of the fifth anniversary of the martyrdom of General Soleimani and his close comrade Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

During the meeting, the Leader emphasized that lessons drawn from General Soleimani’s exemplary characteristics should guide efforts toward the main objective of his school of thought, which is “the realization of Islam and the Quran.”

Ayatollah Khamenei also paid tribute to the esteemed status of martyrs and those who have defended sacred values. “If it weren’t for the pure blood of the martyrs, there would be no sign of our shrines, or any of the sacred sites today,” he stated.

The Leader characterized General Soleimani as a noble fighter and a cherished companion, highlighting his initiative and his courageous, swift, and timely presence on the battlefield as defining traits of the General.

Iran’s military power yet to be fully displayed: Army chief

TEHRAN – The Commander-in-Chief of the Iranian Army, Major General Seyed Abdolrahim Mousavi, has Mousavi asserted that the country’s full military capabilities remain untapped.

“We have showcased only a fraction of our military power, such as one underground drone base, the location of which remains undiscovered by our enemies,” he said at the Nationwide Conference on Training and Education of the Air Force on Wednesday. “If and when the time comes, they will witness Iran’s true power.”

Mousavi also emphasized the resilience of Iran’s ideological foundation. “Resistance is not just a structure or system that can break down. It is a thought, an ideology, and a culture that not only endures but becomes stronger and more widespread,” he said, citing the impact of the Al-Aqsa Flood operation.

Mousavi dismissed claims of a weakening Resistance movement as enemy misinformation. He argued that such narratives fail to grasp the depth of Resistance’s ideological roots. “Even children growing up under these circumstances are poised to carry forward the spirit of Resistance. This ideology cannot be eradicated,” he said.

The general condemned the



Ayatollah Khamenei highlighted General Soleimani’s pivotal role in combating the United States’ evildoings in Afghanistan and Iraq since the early 2000s. “The main goal behind the U.S. occupation of these two countries was to encircle Iran. However, General Soleimani, unfearful of America’s apparent might, stepped into the field, and ultimately, those occupations led to America’s defeat and the foiling of that grand conspiracy,” he asserted.

Ayatollah Khamenei described the Americans’ objective in occu-

pying Iraq as replacing Saddam Hussein with themselves and said, “The Americans had come to stay, but [General Soleimani] and his companions played a crucial role in enabling the Iraqi people to take control of their destiny through a difficult, complex, and lengthy process involving a hybrid political, military, propaganda, and cultural war.”

The Leader of the Revolution described the defeat of the US-created Daesh terrorist group as another result of the general’s presence on the battlefield.

“In confronting Takfiri terrorism, the Iraqi youth truly shone, but in thwarting that plot—upon which the life and death of the region depended—Soleimani, with his initiative, courage, self-sacrifice, and strength, played an unparalleled role.”

Ayatollah Khamenei then referred to the fatwa issued by the Iraqi maraji’ on the necessity of standing against Daesh, saying, “Thousands of young people responded to that important fatwa and came to the field, but they lacked organization and weapons.”

General Soleimani went on, with the help of prominent Iraqi fighters, especially the late Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, who was a very great and valuable person, organized, armed, and trained those youths.

He further said General Soleimani constantly strove to “revitalize the Resistance Front”. “Soleimani’s outstanding characteristic was his exceptional use of the capacities, active youth, and national forces of Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq to revitalize the Resistance in the best possible manner.”

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

Iran, European Troika set for new round of talks in Geneva

TEHRAN – A new round of discussions between Iran and the European troika—comprised of France, the UK, and Germany—will take place in Geneva on January 13.

Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs, Kazem Gharibabadi, announced the upcoming talks on Wednesday.

Gharibabadi emphasized that these discussions are not formal negotiations but rather an opportunity to clarify issues and engage in deeper consultations.

“We are not in the business of making predictions; we must enter into these talks to see what will happen,” he stated.

The primary aim of these talks is to establish the context, method, and framework for any potential future negotiations.

This round of discussions follows recent meetings in Geneva, where diplomats from Iran, the UK, France, and Germany addressed various bilateral, regional, and international developments, particularly focusing on nuclear issues and the implications of potential sanctions.

These talks were held in the aftermath of an anti-Iran resolution passed by the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in



November.

The resolution, spearheaded by the U.S. and the European Troika, accused Iran of not fully cooperating with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

In response, Tehran intensified its uranium enrichment efforts and deployed new advanced centrifuges, all under the International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) supervision.

Gharibabadi recently warned that Iran might exit the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) if the UN Security Council sanctions “snapback” mechanism is activated.

This mechanism, outlined in UN Resolution 2231, permits permanent Security Council members and Germany to reimpose sanctions on Iran for any breach of the JCPOA.

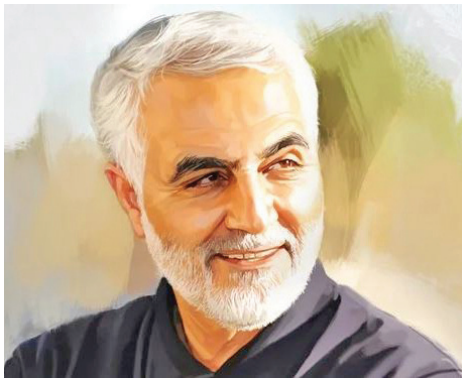
(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](#))

General Qassem Soleimani: master of soft power in Iran’s strategic culture

From Page 1 ► intensifying tensions and contributing to the emergence of various crises. This context has favored Iran’s rise as a key player in the reshaping of the regional balance of power.

The actions of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), led by General Qassem Soleimani, played a central role in the power dynamics of West Asia, particularly in Iraq and Syria. Between 2003 and 2011, the late Soleimani succeeded in significantly weakening U.S. influence in Iraq while also focusing on combating terrorism in the region.

For more than two decades, General Soleimani’s methods and principles were distinguished by his ability to manage regional and international transformations, thereby consolidating the position of the Islamic Republic of Iran both regionally and globally. In this context, General Soleimani’s operations were key to the strategic defeats of the United



States in West Asia, which not only strengthened Iran’s power but also eroded U.S. influence in the region, particularly among Arab countries. Thus, General Soleimani has been recognized as the “architect of the strategic defeats of the United States in West Asia.”

This article focuses on two central questions: What role did General Soleimani play in

strengthening Iran’s soft power in the West Asia region? And, under what strategic principles was his deployment of power developed?

The concept of soft power was introduced by scholar Joseph Nye in 1990 in an article published in The Atlantic. In his analysis, Nye emphasized the importance of understanding the different ways in which power can be exercised, distinguishing between direct power, associated with an authoritarian style, and indirect power, focused on persuasion.

In the first case, power is exercised through tools such as rewards, threats, or coercion. In the second, soft power manifests itself through factors such as the attraction of ideas and beliefs, the ability to set a political agenda, and the influence of culture, ideology, and institutions that shape the preferences of other actors.

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

SPORTS

Esteghlal v Sepahan: A classic clash under the spotlight

TEHRAN – Esteghlal and Sepahan, two of Iran’s most storied football clubs, are set to face off in a highly anticipated match on Thursday in the 15th week of the 2024/25 Iran’s Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL).

The match, to be held at in Tehran’s Shahr-e Qods Stadium. A classic rivalry that always draws massive crowds and generates intense excitement among fans.

While Sepahan currently sit atop the PGPL table with 31 points, Esteghlal find themselves in a more precarious 10th position with 17 points. The Blues, who were runners-up last season, have struggled this season and are still searching for consistency under new manager Pitso Mosimane.

The outcome of this match has far-reaching implications for both teams, as well as their rivals. A victory for Sepahan would solidify their position at the top of the table, while a win for Esteghlal could provide a much-needed boost to their season. For Sepahan’s rivals like Persepolis and Tractor, an Esteghlal win would be ideal, as it would slow down Sepahan’s momentum.

*A history of intensity

The rivalry between Esteghlal and Sepahan is one of the most intense in Iranian football. Over the years, these two teams have produced some unforgettable matches, filled with passion, skill, and drama. The statistics tell the story: in 46 historical meetings, Esteghlal have edged out Sepahan with 17 wins to their 16.

*The story of two coaches

Both teams are led by experienced managers. Esteghlal’s Pitso Mosimane and Sepahan’s Patrice Carteron have a history of facing each other in African football, with Mosimane holding a slight advantage in their head-to-head record.

*Venue controversy

The venue for this match has been a subject of much debate. Initially, it was planned to be held at the Azadi Stadium, but due to ongoing renovations, the match was moved to Shahr-e Qods Stadium. This decision has generated some controversy, with fans and officials expressing their disappointment.

Persepolis too strong for Havadar

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team defeated rock-bottom Havadar 5-0 on Matchweek 15 of 2024/25 Iran’s Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) on Wednesday.

Ali Alipour netted a hat-trick as well as goals from Issa Aleksaier and Oston Urunov.

Alipour opened the scoring for Persepolis in the 17th minute in Tehran’s Shahr-e Qods Stadium and doubled the advantage in the 52nd minute.

Aleksir scored Persepolis’s third goal in the 67th minute and Alipour completed his hat-trick in the 79th minute. Right-footed Urunov scored Persepolis’s fifth goal.

Persepolis are third with 29 points, two points behind PGPL leaders Sepahan.

Earlier in the day, Gol Gohar defeated Chadormalou 2-0 in Sirjan.

On Thursday, Esteghlal will host Sepahan in Tehran, Tractor meet Esteghlal Khuzestan in Tabriz, Kheybar face Mes in Khorramabad, Aluminum welcome Shams Azar in Arak, Foolad play Malavan in Ahvaz and Zob Ahan host Nassaji in Isfahan.

Jaloliddin Masharipov extends deal with Esteghlal

TEHRAN – Esteghlal midfielder Jaloliddin Masharipov penned a two-year deal extension Tuesday night.

Masharipov, 31, joined the Iranian football team in February 2024 on an 18-month deal.

The Uzbek international midfielder is a key player in Pitso Mosimane’s Esteghlal.

Masharipov’s compatriot Oston Urunov had penned a two-year deal extension with Persepolis on Tuesday.

Indian outside hitter Gulia parts ways with Mes volleyball team

TEHRAN – Indian international outside hitter Amit Gulia has parted company with Iranian volleyball club Mes Rafsanjan.

The 26-year-old player is a vegetarian and his food habits are very different from the Iranian food.

Gulia joined Mes from Indian club Ahmedabad Defenders for 2024-25 season but was forced to part company with the team.

Mes sits 12th in the 13-team table of 2024-25 Iran’s Volleyball Super League.

Ghandipour linked with Russian teams: report

TEHRAN – Malavan football club forward Reza Ghandipour has been reportedly linked with several Russian teams.

He has scored five goals and has had three assists in 13 matches for the Iranian team.

“Reza has received interest from Europe, but several RPL clubs have also contacted us about a possible transfer. We are currently in contact with Russian clubs about Ghandipour. Reza is a classic striker, and he is now one of the most talented young players in Iran,” said his agent.

In the recent years, several Iranian players have joined the Russian teams.

Taekwondo captain Mardani announces retirement

TEHRAN – Iran national taekwondo team captain Sajad Mardani announced the end of his professional career at the age of 36.

Mardani won the silver medal in the men’s heavyweight class at the 2013 World Taekwondo Championships held in Puebla, Mexico. He also won a bronze medal at 2022 Guadalajara as well as a gold medal in 2021 Asian Championships in Beirut.

Mardani has also been on the world’s top 5 (+ 80 kg) taekwondo weights since 2013, always and annually.

Alipour hits hat-trick to go top of table

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team forward Ali Alipour scored a hat-trick in the match against struggling Havadar on Wednesday.

Persepolis defeated Havadar 5-0 in 2024-25 Iran Professional League (IPL) thanks to a hat-trick from Alipour.

Issa Aleksaier and Oston Urunov were also on target.

Alipour has scored seven goals in Persepolis and moved to top of the league’s goal-scores table.

Sepahan forward Mehdi Limouchi and Aluminum stiker Amin Kazemian have scored six goals each.

Kish Expo 2025 to host over 300 foreign participants



TEHRAN- Over 300 foreign participants will attend Kish Expo 2025, which is planned to be held at the Kish International Exhibition Center on Kish Island in the south of Iran during January 18-24, the executive secretary of the exhibition announced.

Mohammadreza Qaderi said the purpose of Kish Expo is to create a platform for economic inter-

actions, with the axes of trade, investment and cultural exchange.

The country's first commercial, investment and cultural exhibition called Kish Expo will be held on the island of Kish from January 18 to 24, he said, adding this exhibition has been planned for more than two years with the aim of creating a platform for economic interactions in the form of trade, investment and cultural exchange at the international level.

About the companies present in this exhibition, the executive secretary of the event said that more than 250 companies in 170 booths will display their capabilities and activities in 16 specialized fields, from oil and gas and petrochemical, pharmaceutical and food industries to handicrafts and tourism, etc.

Iron ore concentrate production increases 2%

TEHRAN- Production of iron ore concentrate in Iran increased by two percent during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20), as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

As reported, about 33 million tons of iron ore concentrate was produced in the country in the mentioned eight-month period.

Iron ore concentrate is an output product from processed iron ores that have been milled (crush, grind, magnetic separation, flotation) to separate deleterious elements and produce a high-quality product.



Iron ore concentrates are deep beneficiated iron ore products, used for sintering and blast furnace production, as well as pellet production.

TEDPIX gains 28,700 points on Wednesday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 28,792 points to 2,788,214 on Wednesday, which is the fifth day of the Iranian calendar week.

TSE is one of the four Iranian stock exchanges, and the most important one. The other three ones are Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB).

On December 20, a market analyst said that Iran's stock market has seen positive momentum in the past month, driven by lower interest rates, the removal of price controls, and supportive measures from the Ministry of Economy and the Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO).

In an exclusive interview with IRIB, Ali Pazaki, a capital market expert, cited the replacement of the NIMA exchange rate with a negotiated exchange rate as a key factor behind the recent market uptick, saying: "Since many listed companies are export-oriented, this shift has boosted their profitability," he explained.

He added that the government's removal of mandatory price controls has significantly benefited certain industries, especially automotive firms. Given that automakers were subject to regulated pricing by the Competition Council, allowing their products to be priced through supply and demand on the commodity exchange has positively impacted their financial statements and those of parts manufacturers.

NDF head sends New Year greetings to sovereign wealth fund leaders

TEHRAN- As reported by the Public Relations Office of the National Development Fund of Iran, Mehdi Ghazanfari, Head of the Executive Board of the Fund, sent a New Year greeting message to the presidents of sovereign wealth funds worldwide, highlighting the importance of collaboration and innovation in addressing global economic challenges.

According to the Public Relations Office of the National Development Fund (NDF) of Iran, Mehdi Ghazanfari, the Head of the Executive Board, has extended his heartfelt New Year greetings to the leaders of sovereign wealth funds across the globe.

In his message, Ghazanfari emphasized the critical role sovereign wealth funds play in ensuring financial stability, fostering sus-

tainable development, and safeguarding the prosperity of future generations.

He underlined the significance of cooperation and knowledge exchange among these institutions, particularly amid the rapidly changing global economic landscape.

Ghazanfari expressed optimism that the year 2025 would present new opportunities for joint efforts and international collaboration, paving the way for innovative solutions in resource management.

He concluded his message with the following statement: "On behalf of the National Development Fund of Iran, I wish you and your colleagues a year filled with peace, justice, and sustainable progress."

Iran exports non-oil goods worth \$1.2b to India in 8 months

TEHRAN- Iran exported non-oil commodities valued at \$1.2 billion to India 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 India was Iran's seventh top export destination in the mentioned eight-month period.

Exporting commodities valued at \$1 billion to Iran, India was Iran's sixth top source of import in the first eight months of the present year, the official further added.

Iran exported \$2.217 billion worth of goods to India during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), according to an official with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO).

Hadi Talebian Moghaddam, the director of TPO department for Indian Subcontinent Affairs, said on Sunday that the figure shows a two percent increase in comparison to the \$2.175 billion reported a year earlier.

Noting that Iran's balance of



trade with India turned positive last year, he put Iran's last year's imports from India at \$1.916 billion.

India was Iran's sixth top source of import in first eight months of current Iranian year.

The value of trade between Iran and India reached \$1.836 billion in 2023, according to In-

dias Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The trade exchange between the two countries declined by 26 percent in 2023 compared to the previous year, the figure was reported to be \$2.499 billion in 2022.

According to the Indian Ministry data, Iran exported commodities valued at \$699 million to India during the past year, registering no significant change from 2022.

Petroleum products were the top goods imported by India from Iran in 2023, and India im-

Non-oil export from Bushehr province rises 11% in 9 months on year

TEHRAN- The value of non-oil export from Bushehr province, in the southwest of Iran, rose 11 percent in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20- December 21), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to a provincial official.

Ali Soleymani, an official with the province's customs department, said that 24.547 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$9.079 billion were exported from the province in the nine-month period, indicating eight percent growth in terms of weight as well.

He also announced that 598,000 tons of goods valued at \$1.918 billion were imported to the province in the first nine months of the present year, with 20 percent rise in value, and 26 percent growth in terms of weight, as compared to the same period of time in the previous year.

As previously announced by the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Iran's non-oil exports rose 18 percent in the first nine months of the Iranian calendar year to \$43.14 billion.

Foroud Asgari said imports during the mentioned period, including gold bullion, amount-

ed to \$50.89 billion. The weight of imports declined by 3.16 percent to 27.94 million tons, he added.

Non-oil export volume reached 116.35 million tons in the nine-month period, a 13.77 percent increase from the previous year, Asgari noted.

The average customs value per ton of exported goods rose 3.74 percent to \$371.

Petrochemical exports accounted for 50.7 million tons, valued at \$19.7 billion, representing a 33.25 percent increase in volume and a 32 percent rise in value year-on-year.

China remained Iran's top export destination, purchasing \$11 billion worth of goods. Iraq followed with \$9.4 billion, the UAE with \$5.3 billion, Turkey with \$5.2 billion, Afghanistan and Pakistan with \$1.7 billion each, and India with \$1.4 billion.

Together, these seven countries accounted for 82.4 percent of the total export volume and 82.85 percent of export value.

The UAE topped the list of Iran's import partners, exporting \$15.3 billion worth of goods to Iran. China followed with \$13 billion, Turkey with \$8.9 billion, Germany with \$1.8 bil-



lion, India and Russia with \$1.1 billion each, and Hong Kong with \$1 billion.

These seven countries supplied 75 percent of the import volume and 83 percent of import value during the period.

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

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

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

Pomegranate output rises 10,000 tons

TEHRAN- The production of pomegranate in Iran has increased 10,000 tons in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20), as compared to the previous year, an official from Ministry of Agriculture announced.

Zahra Jalili-Moghaddam, the director-general of Ministry of Agriculture for tropical and semi-tropical fruits, said that the area of pomegranate orchards in the country is 96,000 hectares, and from this area, about 1,340,000 tons of products were produced this year, which shows an increase of 10,000 tons com-

pared to last year.

Iran's Deputy Agriculture Minister for Horticulture Affairs says horticultural products account for about 50 percent of the country's annual agricultural exports and Iran exports about \$3.0 billion of such products every year.

According to Mohammad-Mehdi Boroumandi, Iran exports nearly three million tons of horticultural products to more than 100 countries around the world, annually.

With about three million hectares of gardens in the country, we produce nearly 26 million tons of

horticultural products annually, Boroumandi stated.

He said Iran is self-sufficient in the production of all kinds of fruits, except for four tropical fruits: banana, pineapple, coconut, and mango.

Of course, these are produced in the country, but the production does not meet the domestic demand.

We are among the countries in the world that use the least amount of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, the average consumption of pesticide per hectare in the world is more than 2.5 kilograms

or 2.5 liters per hectare, while we use less than one liter, the official further said.

He further mentioned some of Iran's capacities in the agricultural sector, especially in horticultural production, saying: "In the north, in Mazandaran province, which is the center of citrus production in the country, we produce three million tons of citrus fruits every year, including oranges and tangerines, and we also produce kiwis in Mazandaran and Gilan provinces, that's why we rank fourth in the world in kiwi production."

National Housing Movement loan increased



TEHRAN- Iranian transport and urban development minister announced about the increase in the amount of loan for the National Housing Movement units.

Speaking in the meeting of the Supreme Housing Council, Farzaneh Sadeq also said: "We have progressed in the completion

of the units and inaugurating them, and from now on we will continue at the same speed."

The deputy minister for housing and construction at the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development has announced that President Masoud Pezeshkian has directed banks to finance the construction of 400,000 housing units under the National Housing Movement initiative.

Habib Taherkhani made the remarks in a special News Talk program focused on the government's first Supreme Housing Council.

The National Housing Movement is one of the major policies of the government in the housing sector, and according to this policy, the construction of four million residential

units is planned for four years.

It is one of the projects through which the government is trying to help low-income individuals in society become homeowners.

According to the plan, out of these four million residential units, 3.2 million units will be constructed in cities and 800,000 units in villages.

After the National Housing Action Plan (started in 2018), the National Housing Movement is the government's second major program to provide affordable housing units for the low-income classes.

The operation for the construction of 209,212 residential units of the National Housing Movement began in February 2022.

New Year: Gazans face double whammy of Israeli airstrikes and flooding



A young girl walks barefoot, carrying empty jerrycans to collect water, after overnight rain at the refugee tent camp for forcibly displaced Palestinians in Deir el-Balah, central Gaza Strip, on December 31, 2024 [Abdel Kareem Hana/AP]



Butchering babies: Several infants have frozen to death in Gaza amid ongoing Israeli attacks.



Swedes rallied in Stockholm on New Year's Eve calling for an end to Israel's genocidal war in Gaza. [Atila Altuntas/Anadolu]

From page 1 ► The tents in areas including northern Gaza City, southern Khan Younis, and in central Deir el-Balah have been rendered unusable because of the flooding.

Hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians in Gaza are crammed into unsuitable tents, as the territory's 2.3 million population endures severe shortages of drinkable water, food and medicines.

Hypothermia kills babies

At least six babies across the Gaza Strip have died from hypothermia in just a week of cold weather enveloping the territory.

The Gaza Media Office said in a statement on Monday that Ali al-Batran, an infant displaced by Israeli attacks and living in a tent, died from severe cold and lack of heating, the statement said.

According to the statement, his twin, Jumaa al-Batran, who was in critical condition in the neonatal intensive care unit at the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in central Gaza, also died from intense cold on Sunday.

Infants are at an increased risk of hypothermia due to their bodies losing heat more quickly than those of adults. This risk is exacerbated by severe malnutrition, which affects many Palestinians who experience acute hunger as a result of Israeli restrictions on food supplies entering Gaza.

Solidarity with Gaza

Turkish people began the New Year as they rallied to express solidarity with the people in Gaza.

Tens of thousands of people in Istanbul staged a mass protest to denounce Israel's relentless and devastating war on the Gaza Strip. The rally was organized by a coalition consisting of more than 300 civil organizations.

While the world is celebrating New Year, Gazans are living in anguish

From page 1 ► Several Palestinians, including at least six babies, have died in recent days due to severe cold weather. The UN's agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) warned on Tuesday that "more babies will likely die" in the coming days.

Alaa Al-Shawish's family, who are living in a makeshift tent in Deir Al-Balah after being displaced from Gaza City, tells CNN:

"We're dying from the cold. This is not life, this is not living – I pray every day that we die to be relieved from this life." Fighting back tears, she says there is "no food, no water, no life."

Yahya Al-Batran, the father of 20-day-old Jumaa, who died from cold on Sunday, also says, "I am watching my children die before my eyes."

Why did Iran send Gen. Soleimani to Syria?

Narratives that must be recounted

From page 1 ► the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, and his wisdom in preserving Iran's security to the maximum extent. The great fingerprints of Gen. Soleimani are also clearly evident in its folds, for those who follow with an eye to the heart."

Abdollahian explains how these efforts have ward off the victory of the "Western-Arab-Hebrew" coalition against the Syrian people, shedding light on "the events that swept West Asia and North Africa. In parallel, the US-Zionist axis was waiting for opportunities to exploit these pivotal transformations.

"Why did the Egyptians go out and not a single bullet was fired? Why did ISIS not ap-

pear in Tahrir Square? Why did this not happen in Tunisia, while events in Syria took a deviant path and turned into a long terrorist war?" Abdollahian wonders

Abdollahian reaches the conclusion: "Other rulers began to think about what they should do" for fear that the revolutions would not shake their thrones. Washington, too, was highly concerned about the fall of its historical and traditional allies one after the other without having a suitable alternative to them.

Nevertheless, the Zionist colonial entity was the most concerned, according to Abdollahian, so after an in-depth study, the Zionist officials deduced that it was necessary to prevent this torrent by implementing a "Re-

verse Plan".

Accordingly, they decided to intervene in the Axis of Resistance's countries. "In the first stage, they wanted to wreak havoc in Tehran ... They have seriously considered targeting Iran's nuclear centers. They said we must cut off the head of the snake. After searching and examining, they reached the conclusion that this action entails complications, as it is not possible to attack Tehran and come out of the battle without losses," he notes.

Abdollahian believed that they had no other options but to "cut off the executive arms protected by Iran" such as Hezbollah, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

WORLD HEADLINES

Hezbollah chief: Lebanese resistance movement has regained its strength



Hezbollah Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem said on Wednesday that Hezbollah has recovered and regained its strength, stressing that the resistance in Lebanon endures.

During the Fourth International Conference to Honor Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi in Tehran, Sheikh Qassem stated the resistance's deep-rooted faith and loyal manpower will enable it to become stronger, Al-Manar reported.

"We've proven through resistance that we did not allow the enemy to advance," he told the conference.

"The blood of the martyrs Qassem Soleimani, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, Sayyed Hashem Safieddine, Yahya Sinwar, Ismail Haniyeh and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, along with the support of the Yemeni revolutionaries and the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq, have all created historic cooperation and achievements in our ongoing fight against the Zionist enemy."

The Hezbollah chief, meanwhile, stressed that the aggression on Lebanon is an aggression on the State and the international community, referring to the recent Israeli violations of the ceasefire between Lebanon and the Zionist entity.

In this context, he said, "Now it is an opportunity for the Lebanese State to prove itself through political action."

10 dead, 30 injured after car plows into a crowd in New Orleans



A driver in a pickup truck who officials said was "hell-bent on carnage" sped through a crowd of pedestrians in New Orleans' bustling French Quarter district, killing 10 and injuring 30 revelers early on New Year's Day.

The attack occurred around 3:15 a.m. along Bourbon Street, known worldwide as one of the largest destinations for New Year's Eve parties, AP reported.

At a news conference, New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell described the killings as a

"terrorist attack" and the city's police chief said the act was clearly intentional. But an assistant FBI agent in charge declared that it was "not a terrorist event." The news conference ended before authorities could reconcile the two characterizations.

Israel has killed nearly 1,100 babies in Gaza

Israeli forces have killed 1,091 Palestinian infants since October 7, 2023, including 238 born during the ongoing war, Gaza's Government Media Office said.

Since October 7, 2023, Israel has killed at least 17,400 children in Gaza, according to Palestinian officials. That is one child killed every 30 minutes. Thousands more are missing under the rubble, presumed dead.

Lapid calls Netanyahu's cabinet "terrible, deranged"

Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid said if an election is called, "most of the coalition members" would not return to the cabinet after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had to leave his hospital bed to vote in a decisive budget law.

"We saw what happened here yesterday. A pale and weak prime minister and Ben Gvir makes fun of him in front of the nation ... The one who needs to apologize to the citizens of Israel for the past two years and for not returning the kidnapped is the prime minister," Lapid wrote on X.

"The one who needs to apologize to us is his extremist and deranged government. The one who needs to apologize to us is every member of the coalition who knows that he is giving his hand to the most terrible and failed government in Israeli history."

Ivory Coast says French troops to leave West African nation

Ivory Coast has announced that French troops will withdraw from the West African nation, further reducing the military influence of the former colonial power in the region.

In an end-of-year address, Ivory Coast's President, Alassane Ouattara, said the move was a reflection of the modernization of the country's armed forces.

Separately, Senegal, which last month announced France would have to close its military bases on its territory, confirmed the withdrawal would be completed by the end of 2025.

Ivory Coast is home to the biggest remaining contingent of French troops in West Africa.

There are some 600 French military personnel in the country with 350 in Senegal.

"We have decided in a concerted manner to withdraw French forces from the Ivory Coast," President Ouattara said.

He added that the military infantry battalion of Port Bouët that is run by the French army would be handed over to Ivorian troops.

France, whose colonial rule in West Africa ended in the 1960s, has already pulled its soldiers out of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger following military coups in those countries and growing anti-French sentiment.

Tehran, Dushanbe discuss enhanced tourism, cultural collaboration



TEHRAN – Iran’s Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, met with Tajikistan’s Ambassador to Iran, Nizomiddin Zohidi, on Tuesday at the ministry’s headquarters in Tehran to discuss strengthening ties in tourism and cultural cooperation.

Salehi-Amiri emphasized the shared cultural and historical bonds between the two nations and proposed several initiatives to enhance collaboration.

Given our commonalities, we should work on introducing unique values and shared capacities through the production of high-quality works and multilingual films,” he said.

The minister further noted that the Iranian government prioritizes relations with neighboring countries, including Tajikistan.

We are fully prepared to develop ties with Tajikistan, and an upcoming visit by the President of Iran to Tajikistan could mark a new chapter in bilateral relations,” Salehi-Amiri added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Salehi-Amiri highlighted the potential for increased tourism between the two countries. Despite their cultural and linguistic proximity, the current level of travel remains modest.

He proposed better planning and agreements to facilitate travel, noting that Tehran

alone hosts over 3,000 travel agencies ready to promote tourism.

The minister also proposed joint cultural events, research, and restoration projects, as well as the organization of cultural days featuring intellectuals and artists from both nations.

A multilingual film showcasing the historical and cultural heritage of Iran and Tajikistan could also introduce our shared civilizational values to the world,” he suggested.

To further enhance connectivity, Salehi-Amiri mentioned plans to strengthen direct flights between the two countries.

He highlighted Kish Island’s readiness to develop a health tourism city, which could attract Tajik tourists through direct flights from Dushanbe.

Tajik Ambassador welcomes proposals

Ambassador Zohidi expressed his appreciation for the Iranian ministers’ suggestions. The cultural, religious, and historical commonalities between our nations provide an excellent foundation for closer ties,” Zohidi stated.

The envoy highlighted ongoing cultural collaborations and expressed enthusiasm for expanding tourism infrastructure, including the introduction of a direct Dushanbe-Shiraz flight.

Strengthening tourism links with Iran is a priority, and we are fully prepared to work on this,” the ambassador added.

Talks on visa waivers and handicrafts

During the meeting, Zohidi proposed the complete removal of visa requirements between the two countries. Salehi-Amiri promised to advocate for the initiative at the governmental level.

The two officials also discussed increasing cooperation in the field of handicrafts, with plans for joint training programs and the promotion of artisanal traditions in both countries.

Ancient Greeks descend from the Pontic Steppe, new study claims

A new study has revealed that ancient Greeks are descended from the Yamnaya culture of the Pontic Steppe. This has clarified important linguistic issues that researchers have been debating for decades, highlighting how DNA continues to enrich our understanding of the past.

For many years, researchers claimed that many of the populations of ancient Europe and Asia descended from the people of the Pontic Steppe. This includes the ancient Greeks, the Celts, the Romans, the Iberians, and others.

The civilization located across the Pontic Steppe, essentially the area just north of the Black Sea, is known as the Yamnaya culture. Scientists date it to c. 3300–2600 BCE. From this culture, various other cultures emerged as they spread out from the Pontic Steppe and migrated

to other areas of Europe and Asia.

That the ancient Greeks (as well as other nations of ancient Europe) ultimately originated from the Pontic Steppe is well accepted. However, there have been questions about when and how exactly this happened, and what connection there was between the migration to Greece and the migration to other areas.

A team of 91 researchers have conducted an extensive study into this subject and found some fascinating conclusions.

They sequenced the genomes of 314 individuals, which they dated to between 3200 and 100 BC. They also carbon-dated many of these individuals, allowing them to establish when they lived.

(Source: Greek Reporter)

Glimpses of World Heritage sites: Durmitor National Park

Durmitor is a stunning limestone massif located in Northern Montenegro and belonging to the Dinaric Alps or Dinarides.

It is also the name of Montenegro’s largest protected area, the Durmitor National Park, which constitutes the heart of a landscape shaped by glaciers, numerous rivers and underground streams of which are embedded in the much larger Tara River Basin Biosphere Reserve. Some fifty peaks higher than 2,000 meters above sea level rise above plateaus, alpine meadows and forests, including Bobotov Peak (2,525 meters above sea level). Numerous glacial lakes, locally known as “mountain eyes,” cover the landscape. Despite its many attractions, Durmitor is best known for the spectacular canyons of the Draga, Susica, Komarnica and Tara Rivers, the latter stands out as Europe’s deepest gorge. Durmitor is a popular tourism destination, known for superb hiking, climbing, mountaineering and canoeing opportunities. The nearby town of Zabljak is Montenegro’s primary ski resort.

Besides the extraordinary landscape beauty

and the fascinating geological heritage, Durmitor National Park is also home to an impressive biological diversity. At the habitat level, a rare old-growth stand of European Black Pine deserves to be mentioned. Favored by the altitudinal gradient of more than 2,000 meters and both alpine and Mediterranean climatic influences, there are more than 1,600 vascular plants in the wider Durmitor Massif. A great percentage is found in the park and many are rare and endemic species. Large mammals include Brown Bear, Grey Wolf, and European Wild Cat. Among the 130 recorded birds are Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, and Capercaillie.

Likewise noteworthy is the rich fish fauna, which includes the endangered Danube Salmon. The park is inhabited by farmers and shepherds, traditionally using the high-altitude meadows as summer pastures. The property is well protected and its status and international recognition have helped to prevent irreparable damage from threats, such as upstream pollution and proposed dam construction.

(Source: UNESCO)

Intl. tourism in Iran sees modest recovery, still 37% below pre-pandemic levels

TEHRAN – Iran hosted over 3.1 million foreign tourists in the first half of 2024, a 37% drop compared to pre-pandemic levels in 2019, according to updated figures from the UN Tourism.

Statistics released by the UN’s tourism arm indicate that Iran welcomed 3,129,449 international visitors between January and June 2024, with fluctuations in monthly arrivals. January recorded 494,696 visitors, February 506,313, March 396,772, April 497,469, May 443,282, and June saw the highest influx with 790,917 tourists.

This marks an improvement compared to 2023 when fewer than 3 million tourists entered Iran in the first seven months. However, the data does not specify the nationalities of the travelers.

Iran’s Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts has noted that the reported figures include Iranian expatriates visiting for tourism purposes.

Officials have emphasized that increasing the influx of foreign tourists is critical for economic recovery and the development of the sector.

The decline in foreign arrivals underscores the lingering im-



Iran seeks tourism boost

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

Salehi-Amiri emphasized the importance of correcting global perceptions about Iran, which he underlined have been tarnished by “false narratives” spread by certain media outlets.

Cultural heritage is our identity and a rich treasure, but it has not been adequately introduced to the younger generations,” he

Iran pursues ICESCO heritage status for ancient port

TEHRAN – The ancient port of Tis, situated in Chabahar county in southeastern Iran, is set to be registered on the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) cultural heritage list.

Ali Darabi, the Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, announced the development on Wednesday during a visit to historical sites in Tis.

The dossier for the ancient port of Tis has been submitted to ICESCO and is now awaiting to be assessed for [a possible] registration on its Islamic World Heritage list,” Darabi stated.

He emphasized the strategic significance of this registration, aligning with Iran’s Seventh National Development Plan, which pri-

oritizes maritime-based development.

Attracting tourists to the Chabahar region, where Tis is located, is a key focus for the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts. Securing a place for Tis on ICESCO’s list would further highlight its cultural and historical importance,” Darabi added.

Tis, an area rich in history and cultural significance, reflects Iran’s enduring connection to maritime trade and ancient civilization. Its inclusion in the ICESCO list is expected to bolster tourism and preserve its historical legacy for future generations, the official underlined.

Chabahar is the only ocean port in Iran and the best and easiest access route of the middle Asian countries to free waters.

Tarikhaneh Mosque to host photo exhibit showcasing Damghan’s heritage



TEHRAN – A photography exhibition titled “Timeless Heritage” will be inaugurated at the historic Tarikhaneh Mosque in Damghan on Saturday to commemorate Tarikhaneh Day.

According to Mojtaba Akbarpour, head of the Cultural Heri-

tage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of Damghan county, the exhibition will feature selected photographs of Damghan’s historic fabric and the iconic Tarikhaneh Mosque.

Out of 200 submissions from local students and residents, 20

outstanding works have been selected for display in collaboration with our department,” Akbarpour said.

The exhibition will showcase images capturing key elements of Damghan’s historical texture, including bazaars, caravanserais, trading posts, religious centers, seminaries, and valuable historic homes.

Akbarpour highlighted the importance of preserving these sites and expressed hopes that the exhibition would raise awareness of Damghan’s rich cultural heritage.

The exhibition is open to the public, and visitors can explore it from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM at the Tarikhaneh Mosque, the official said.

said, stressing the need for youth to take pride in Iran’s historical and civilizational capacity.

Moreover, the minister announced plans to issue tourist cards for foreign visitors to facilitate currency exchange during their stay. He called on the Central Bank of Iran to address these issues as part of broader efforts to improve the sector.

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

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

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



Boasting various natural and historical attractions, Chabahar could be named one of the most underrated destinations in Iran. However, in recent years, various measures have been taken to promote the port as a safe and hospitable choice for both domestic and foreign visitors.

Tarikhaneh Mosque, also known as Tarik Khana, is a remarkable structure that reflects the architectural transition between the Sassanid and Islamic periods.

Once a Zoroastrian fire temple during the Sassanid era (224651), the mosque showcases Sassanid building techniques combined with a simple Arab design.

Its central courtyard is surrounded by an arcade, a single bay deep on most sides, except the qibla wall, which extends to three bays.

Damghan, the former winter capital of the Parthian kings and a key stop on the ancient Silk Road, lies about 350 kilometers northeast of Tehran.

UNESCO steps up protection for Ukrainian heritage sites

UNESCO has granted provisional enhanced protection to two Ukrainian cultural sites: the Odesa Literary Museum and the Babyn Yar Memorial in Kyiv.

As Russia’s war on Ukraine nears its third anniversary, UNESCO, the cultural arm of the United Nations, has been increasing its efforts to safeguard Ukraine’s cultural heritage, which has been severely impacted.

The Babyn Yar site, which honors the more than 33,000 Jews, Roma, and Soviet prisoners massacred by the Nazis in 1941, was itself struck by violence last year when a Russian missile hit nearby, killing five people. While the Holocaust memorial itself was unharmed, a nearby building intended for a new museum was damaged.

The Odesa Literary Museum is dedicated to

the literary history of Odesa and renowned writers connected in one way or another to the Black Sea port city.

The museum showcases a rich collection of manuscripts, books, and personal items from celebrated authors such as Isaac Babel, Anna Akhmatova, and Valentin Kataev.

UNESCO’s enhanced protection status provides the highest level of immunity to these sites, prohibiting their use for military purposes or direct attacks.

According to UNESCO, violations of these protections would constitute a serious violation of the 1999 Second Protocol to the Hague Convention, with the potential for international prosecution.

Since the war began in 2022, over 340 cultural sites in Ukraine have been damaged, in-

cluding 31 museums and numerous religious and historical buildings.

UNESCO has already pledged more than \$10 million (9.6 million) in aid to support the restoration of these sites, highlighting the importance of international cooperation in times of conflict.

UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay emphasized the significance of this protection, especially for Babyn Yar.

In times of war, international solidarity is crucial to protect threatened cultural heritage,” she said.

This decision will make it possible to further strengthen the safety of these two Ukrainian cultural sites, including a major site for Holocaust remembrance.

(Source: euronews)

Wild goat population in private protected areas up by 21%

TEHRAN- The number of wild goats (*Capra aegagrus*) in private protected areas across the country has grown by 21 percent compared to the past Iranian year (March 2023-March 2024), an official with the Department of Environment (DOE) has said.

Also, the population of rams and ewes has risen by an increase of 10 percent in the same period, indicating the effective performance of private sectors, the successful cooperation of public and private sectors in environmental conservation which has reduced environmental preservation costs, as well, IRNA quoted Hamid Zohrabi as saying.

According to the latest censuses, a total of 6,093 animals including 3,384 rams and ewes and 2,709 wild goats have been counted in four private protected sectors in Yazd (2), Semnan (1), and Kerman (1) provinces.

Private sector runs five protected areas

There are five private protected areas across the country measuring some 275,000 hectares.

The protected areas started activity in the Iranian calendar year 1392 (March 2013-March 2014). Three of the protected areas are located in the central province of Yazd, one in the south-eastern province of Kerman, and one in the



northcentral province of Semnan.

The population of species such as goats, rams, and sheep in these areas has increased by three to eight times, IRNA reported.

Throughout the year, the conditions of the habitats and the wildlife are monitored. The wildlife population in the protected areas is counted twice a year, in spring and winter.

Private protected areas do not receive any government grants or funds, their income comes from issuing hunting licenses, which are issued by the Department of Environment after the census and approval of the wildlife population.

Accordingly, legal hunting permits are issued every year proportionate to the increase in the population of each species.

The Department of Environ-

ment tends to develop the number of private protected areas as one of the successful methods of peoples participation in preserving biodiversity.

The increase of these areas is on the agenda, and 36 areas have been considered for this purpose, which will be given the needed license following legal steps.

Protected lands expand to 19.5m ha

Five new protected areas, measuring 230,000 hectares, have been created across the country, expanding the protected areas to 19.5 million hectares.

The protected areas under the supervision of the Department of Environment (DOE) now account for 11.8 percent of the country's lands, IRNA reported.

The history of Iran's first protected areas dates back to 1967

when the proposal for the establishment of two national parks and 15 protected areas as the first protected sites in Iran was approved.

In 1976, there were more than 65 protected areas covering an area of 6.7 million hectares in the country, which has now extended to more than 300 areas with an area of 19.5 million hectares.

The first new protected area with an area of about 63,000 hectares is located in Gavkhoni Wetland with the aim of preventing any change in land use and protecting the vegetation as well as safeguarding the wetland and birds that are present at special times when the wetland is filled with water.

The second site with an area of about 11,000 hectares is Kalate and Tang-e Sorkh located in Fars province. The goal is to preserve the diverse vegetation and pristine wildlife there. It is one of the prohibited hunting zones.

Padena, measuring 30,000 hectares area in the city of Semir in Isfahan province, is the third added area.

It can enhance the protection of the Dena National Park conservation, which is one of the most important protected areas in Zagros since wildlife moves between these two regions.

Rainfall declines by over 40% compared to long-term average

TEHRAN- Since the beginning of the current water year (September 23, 2024), precipitations have dropped by 42 percent compared to long-term average, according to Metrological Organization.

The accumulated rainfall in the current water year has amounted to 38.4 mm which indicates a 42-percent decrease in comparison to the long-term average rainfall of 66.4 mm, ISNA reported.

The average precipitations from December 24 to 30 totaled 4.2 mm, showing about 17.3 percent decrease compared to 5 mm in the long term.

From the beginning of the winter, average rainfall equaled 4.5 mm. Compared to 7.3 mm rainfall recorded in the long term, it has dropped by 38.8 percent.

Apart from Mazandaran and Kordestan provinces, the amount of precipitation in other provinces has been less than normal.

Hormozgan province recording 6.3 mm of rainfall has experienced an 85.6 percent decline in precipitations, compared to 42.2 mm recorded in average long-term.

Rainfall in Tehran has also lowered. From September 23 to December 30, 2024, the average precipitation came to 53.8 mm, decreasing by 32.4 mm compared to 79.5 mm rain recorded in the long term.

Below-average rainfall forecasted for next six weeks

According to Metrological Organization, average precipitation is projected to be less than normal from December 30 to February 18.

In the first week (from December 30 to January 5), the precipitation in the eastern and the central part of the country, as well as the eastern slope of central Zagros, and parts of Gilan province will be above normal, while it is predicted to be less than normal in other areas, ISNA reported.

Accumulated precipitations will be 20 to 50 mm in the central and eastern parts of the country.

The average air temperature is predicted to be normal over the Caspian coast, the northwest, and the southern part of the country, and 1-5 OC less than normal in other areas.

The temperature in central areas of the country is likely to exceed 3 5 OC.

In the second week (January 6-17), the amount of rainfall will be less than normal, and in most parts of the country, no rainfall is expected.

The east, southeast, and some central parts of the country will experience normal temperatures. In the rest areas, it will get 1-5 OC above normal.

The northwest and east of the southern Zagros mountains will experience the maximum increase (3-50C) in temperature.

During the third and fourth weeks (January 18 February 4), precipitation is expected to be less than normal in the south and east of the country, more than normal in the north, and normal in other regions.



The cumulative rainfall in the fourth week is estimated to be between 50-100 mm in parts of Zagros and central Alborz.

The highest air temperature will occur in the third week, getting 1 to 6 OC above normal.

In the southeast, south, and the provinces located in the middle and south Zagros and on the Caspian coast, it will get 1-3 OC and in other areas 3-6 OC above normal.

The air temperature will be 1-3 OC above normal in the fourth week.

Precipitation in the fifth week (February 5-11) is said to be normal in the northwest, northern Zagros, Alborz mountains, northeast, and some parts of the southeast, and less than normal in other areas.

The air temperature is estimated to be 1 OC above normal in the east and north of the country, and 1-3 OC above normal in other regions.

The rainfall in the sixth week (February 12-18) in the eastern parts, parts of the south and southwest of the country is forecast to be less than normal and in other areas, it is estimated to be normal.

It is expected that the air temperature in the sixth week in the central, and southern Zagros, as well as the south of the country, will get 1-3 OC above normal. It will be normal in other regions.

Over 250mm rain in previous water year

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

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

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

A total of 10 provinces received less than normal rainfall.

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

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

Tehran, Dushanbe foster co-op in agricultural biotech, molecular genetics



TEHRAN- Iranian and Tajik officials have agreed to boost scientific collaboration in different fields, including agricultural biotechnology and molecular genetics.

During a visit to Tajikistan, Javad Mohammadi, the head of the National Institute of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (NIGEB), held a meeting with Tajik health officials.

During the meeting, the two sides explored avenues for the expansion of scientific relations, particularly in biotechnology, and discussed ways to implement the previously signed agreements, IRNA reported.

Screening for Down's syndrome, Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD), and Phenylketonuria (PKU) as well as manufacturing pharmaceutical products and diagnostic kits are among the main focus of the collaboration, Mohammadi noted.

It also involves developing joint projects on agricultural biotechnology and molecular genetics, exchanging professors and post-graduate stu-

dents to further promote cooperation between the two countries, the official added.

Joint pharmaceutical production

In March 2024, former Health Minister Bahram Einollahi and his Tajik counterpart Jamaluddin Abdollahzadeh, in a meeting discussed ways to deepen health ties, especially on launching joint pharmaceutical production lines.

The officials met on the sidelines of the first international congress on family health, which was held in Tehran on March 5-6, the Health Ministry's website reported.

During the meeting, Abdollahzadeh lauded Iran's achievements in the pharmaceutical industry, calling for joint production of pharmaceutical products.

We can also benefit from Iranian professors and experts in the field of education, he added.

Einollahi, for his part, highlighted forming a joint working group to expand cooperation.

Exchanging professors and students, holding joint scientific conferences, and conducting research programs are among the most important topics of cooperation.

We are ready to export medicines and medical equipment to Tajikistan. We are also willing to share experiences on family health.

Referring to Iran's progress in the field of cancer treatment, he said that the two countries can cooperate in research and therapeutic fields.

Moreover, people of Tajikistan who visit Iran as tourists can further benefit from the country's

medical facilities, he noted.

National Institute of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology

NIGEB was established in 1989 under the supervision of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology. Since then, NIGEB has been given a mandate to undertake original, state-of-the-art research activities.

It was established with dual purposes of promoting research in avant-garde areas of biological sciences and biotechnology as well as providing advanced training and educational programs for scientists and students from other universities and academic institutions.

NIGEB is a pivotal hub for advancing the field of biotechnology in Iran, notable for its focus on multidisciplinary collaboration and ethical progress.

Impressively, they engage in both basic and applied research across various biotechnology sectors while considering the implications of technological commercialization and socio-economic impacts.

NIGEB's commitment to global cooperation and knowledge sharing is essential, particularly in a domain as fast-evolving and globally connected as genetic engineering and biotechnology.

Their work not only propels the scientific community within Iran but also makes significant contributions to international efforts addressing complex issues in agriculture, industry, the environment, and health. This reflects a comprehensive approach to research and education in the field.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Iran reopens schools under strict health protocols

Over 15 million students attended schools nationwide on Saturday for the new school year under strict health protocols to protect teachers, staff, and students against the coronavirus pandemic.

The opening bell of the new academic year was rung symbolically by President Hassan Rouhani at a girls' high school in downtown Tehran.

Mohsen Haji Mirzaei, Education Minister, said, more than 15 million students started the new school year in 116,000 schools across the country. This year, education is followed in three forms of in-person, virtual, and television-based, but our priority is school attendance, he noted, highlighting, all schools should strictly follow the health regulations so that the students are protected.

بازگشایی مدارس با پروتکل های سختگیرانه بهداشتی

بیش از ۱۵ میلیون دانش آموز سال تحصیلی جدید را با رعایت پروتکل های سختگیرانه بهداشتی آغاز کردند.

زنگ آغاز سال تحصیلی به صورت ارتباط تصویری در مراسمی به دستور حسن روحانی رئیس جمهور در دبیرستانی در تهران نواخته شد. محسن حاجی میرزایی وزیر آموزش و پرورش در این مراسم گفت: بیش از ۱۵ میلیون دانش آموز سال تحصیلی جدید را در ۱۱۶ هزار مدرسه آغاز کردند.

وزیر آموزش و پرورش در این مراسم گفت: امسال آموزش دانش آموزان به سه شکل حضوری، مجازی، و تلویزیونی دنبال می شود، اما اولویت ما آموزش حضوری دانش آموزان است.

Students, teachers help free female prisoners



TEHRAN- Students and teachers of a school in Tehran have contributed to the release of two women who had been imprisoned for financial issues. They have paid some 500 million rials (around 710 dollars) to help release two students' mothers who had borrowed money to start a business, but failed to pay off their debts, Mehr news agency reported.

Over 7,000 prisoners freed in 9 months

During the first nine months of the current Ira-

nian year (March 20 December 20), a total of 7,706 prisoners of unintentional crimes were released.

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

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

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

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

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

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



JANUARY 2, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The mind of a wise man is the safest custody of secrets; cheerfulness is the key to friendship; patience and forbearance will conceal many defects.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:08 Evening: 17:23 Dawn: 5:45 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:14 (tomorrow)

Resistance festival receives 3,400 submissions worldwide

TEHRAN- The 18th edition of the Resistance International Film Festival has so far received 3,400 submissions from around the world, the deputy secretary of the event has announced.

The festival has received a total of 3,400 submissions, including 2,400 domestic works and 1,000 international entries across various formats, Mohammad Ali Shojaifard said during a press conference held in Qom on Tuesday.

He expressed that this year's festival will feature eight sections, including competitions for domestic and international films, a segment titled *The World without Israel* focusing on films related to Palestine, as well as documentary, artificial intelligence, Sacred Defense, narrative writing, and reviews in the field of humanities.

He noted that the formats considered for the festival include feature films, animations, short narrative and animated films, both short and long documentaries, and series. Additionally, the narrative writing section is exclusively for screenwriters. Shojaifard added that submissions opened from mid-November, and the festival's website is now available for interested participants to register. The screening of selected works is scheduled for March in Tehran, utilizing three cinemas. This screening will encompass feature films, documentaries, and animations.

He also noted that a separate screening initiative, in collaboration with film distribution companies, will feature 50 screenings nationwide. Furthermore, a specially equipped mobile cinema truck will showcase films in remote areas of the country, with this type of screening taking place in January and February.

The festival's opening ceremony is set to be held in March at the Sacred Defense Town in Tehran, while the closing ceremony will occur over two days in the southern region near the Persian Gulf, with the specific location still pending confirmation, he added.

Shojaifard highlighted that the international committee of the festival operates independently and purposefully, pursuing the festival's goals with an infrastructural perspective.

With a new approach and the establishment of a permanent secretariat, they aim to maintain continuous international communications, transforming this secretariat into a hub for artists devoted to the ideals of resistance and revolution.

He emphasized that this festival is unique worldwide in its mission to raise the banner of unity for the resistance front and noted that the Resistance Film Festival has been operational since 1983. Furthermore, he mentioned that 18 countries are involved in organizing the festival, with participation from 22 provinces within Iran.

The head of the International Committee of the Resistance Film Festival also commented during the meeting, stating, "Our primary concern is currently the people of Palestine, who embody the concept of resistance and stand as a showcase of rights against tyranny."

At the 18th edition of the festival, we must focus on the theme of intelligent resistance, which reflects a lifestyle of standing against oppression and pursuing sustainable peace, Esrafil Kaleiji added. He mentioned that this year alone, the festival has received collaboration requests from around 30 countries, and around 18 thematic sections for nations are being created for the event.

He affirmed that the film and arts industry can transform the concept of resistance from one of war to one of peace, expressing hope for a day when the world is free from the heavy pressure of Zionist lobbyism.

Thus, the Resistance Film Festival serves as a platform for all those passionate about the resistance cause, he concluded. The Association of the Revolution and Sacred Defense Cinema and the Revayat Foundation organize Resistance International Film Festival annually.

Portrait of Martyr General Soleimani unveiled

TEHRAN- A portrait of esteemed Martyr General Qassem Soleimani has been unveiled and made available to the public, coinciding with the fifth anniversary of his martyrdom.

The artwork, created by Tahmoures Ashnagar, will be preserved in the collection of the Association of Visual Arts of the Islamic Revolution and Sacred Defense, Mehr reported on Wednesday.

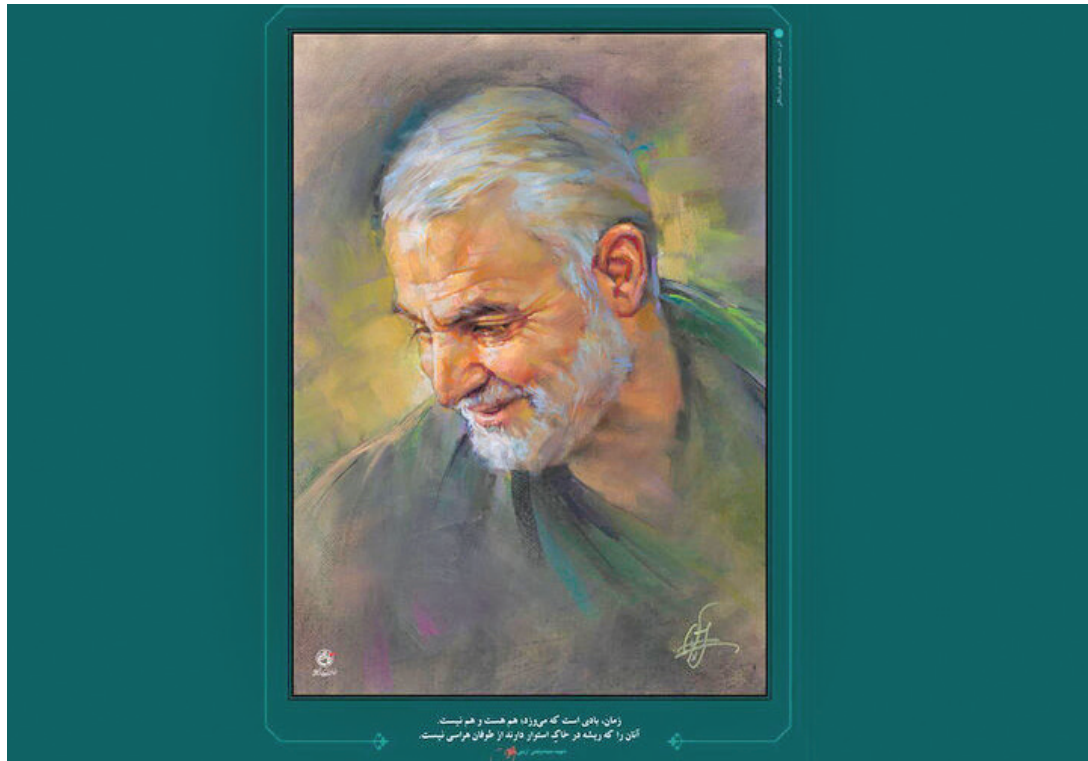
The Association of Visual Arts of the Islamic Revolution and Sacred Defense operates as a specialized division under the Cultural Foundation of Revayat Fat'h, engaging in professional activities across various fields of visual arts.

This association also spearheads the World Resistance Art Festival, dictating its policies and direction.

Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, a highly esteemed Iranian military strategist and prominent figure in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), left an indelible mark on Iran's defense efforts.

Born in 1957 in Qanat-e Malek, Iran, Soleimani devoted his entire life to safeguarding his country's interests.

He gained widespread recognition for his crucial role in leading successful military campaigns, particularly in the battle against



ISIS in Iraq and Syria. His exceptional strategic planning, exemplary leadership abilities, and unwavering commitment to preserving Iran's security earned him profound respect both within the military and among the Iranian populace.

General Soleimani, with his remarkable charm and fearless demeanor, commanded immense admiration from his comrades as well

as the general public.

His resolute dedication to safeguarding Iran's sovereignty and ensuring its security solidified his position as an emblem of fortitude and perseverance.

Despite facing numerous hurdles, such as international sanctions and political tensions, Soleimani remained an indispensable figure in Iran's military and foreign policies. His assassination in Jan-

uary 2020 had a seismic impact on the region, profoundly grieving the Iranian people and intensifying tensions between Iran and the United States.

General Qassem Soleimani's impactful contributions to Iran's defense will forever be etched in the nation's memory, serving as a testament to his enduring influence on the geopolitical landscape of the region.

Novel by Iranian author published in Germany

TEHRAN- The German translation of the novel *Muri* written by the Iranian author Mehdi Khatibi has been published by Engelsdorfer Verlag Publishing in Germany.

Almuth Degener, a specialist in Indo-European languages and a professor at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany, has translated the book into German, ISNA reported.

The story of 'Mourie' is set in Tehran, amidst an indeterminate time that blurs the past and present, resembling a journey through time. Every culture mourns its lost ones in its own way.

In Mazandaran, north of Iran, the sorrowful cries that women utter in mourning the loss of a loved one are called *Muri*.

Mehdi Khatibi narrates *Muri* through the perspective of Mahyar, a first-person narrator. Throughout the story, we witness Mahyar's troubled mind and inner turmoil. His thoughts traverse different times as he searches for true peace.

Mahyar, a complex character, has spent his entire life seeking solitude. Yet, now that he has unexpectedly found himself alone, he feels resentful. He clings to his past in search of solace for his pain.

On the other hand, the novel addresses toxic relationships that begin with passionate and warm love but gradually turn cold. These are the kinds of relationships that need a jolt to

their core.

Muri is, in essence, the introspective tale of a despairing, tormented man pushed to his limits, trapped in a limbo between love and hatred. It is a simple, captivating, and concise novel. It tells a story about loneliness and suffering the kind of suffering that unconsciously leads a person to lament.

Although the protagonist is Mahyar and the narrative focuses on the course of his life and the complexities of his mind, women play a significant role in this novel.

Khatibi is a writer, poet, and editor with a background in judicial law. He currently works as a librarian and editor.

Mithra Orchestra to hold classical concert at Vahdat Hall

TEHRAN- The Mithra Orchestra, conducted by Mohammadreza Safavi, will hold a classical concert on January 10 at Tehran's Vahdat Hall.

In the upcoming concert, conducted by Mohammadreza Safavi, the orchestra will perform works by the Soviet-Russian composer and pianist Dmitri Shostakovich, Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Norwegian composer and pianist Edvard Grieg, French composer and

organist Camille Saint-Saëns, and Russian composer Sergei Rachmaninoff, ILNA reported.

The concert will feature Ali Zarrabi as the trumpet soloist, Shakiba Khosravi as the concertmaster, and Kaveh Kashkooli as the executive manager.

The Mithra Orchestra began its stage performances in 2023 and has since held numerous monthly concerts at Rudaki and Vahdat Halls.



Michael Moore boards Palestine's Oscar Entry From Ground Zero as exec producer

American filmmaker Michael Moore has boarded Palestine's Oscar entry *From Ground Zero* as an executive producer ahead of a theatrical release on Jan. 3 by Watermelon Pictures.

The project, shortlisted for the upcoming Academy Awards in the best international feature film category, is a collection of 22 films by Palestinian filmmakers completed while impacted by the ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict, The Hollywood Reporter reported.

These Palestinian filmmakers have accomplished a cinematic miracle. They have made a brilliant film in the midst of what Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have now declared a genocide, Moore said in a statement.

The anthology of documentary, fiction and animated films was spearheaded by Gaza-born Palestinian director Rashid Masharawi and his Masharawi Fund for local films and filmmakers.

The only weapons that Rashid and these 22 courageous Palestin-

ian directors in Gaza have are their cameras and their creativity. No filmmaker, writer or artist should ever have to tell the story of their own extermination. It's an honor to stand in solidarity with them and help share their stories with the world, Moore added.

Known for his documentaries and a signature storytelling, Moore's credits include his Oscar-winning film *Bowling for Columbine*, the Cannes Palme d'Or-winning *Fahrenheit 9/11* and *Sicko*, about the U.S. healthcare system.

The *From Ground Zero* film collection comprises work by Wisam Moussa, Nidal Damo, Ahmed Hassouna, Alaa Ayoub, Karim Sattoum, Bashar Al Babisi, Khamis Masharawi, Nida Abu Hasna, Tamer Nijim, Ahmed Al Danaf, Rima Mahmoud, Muhammad Al Sharif, Basil El Maqousi, Mustafa Al Nabih, Rabab Khamis, Mustafa Kulab, Alaa Damo, Hana Eleiwa, Mahdi Kreirah, Aws Al Banna, Islam Al Zeriei and Etimad Washah.

Director Masharawi thanked Moore for getting behind the

films Oscar campaign. The team is both humbled and thrilled to be shortlisted. With Michael Moore's involvement, we are even more empowered to portray the humanity and resilience of Palestinians, share their creativity with the world, and showcase the power of cinema as a force for justice and understanding, he said in his own statement.

The Israeli occupation army has intensified its artillery shelling across various areas in the Gaza Strip, continuing the destruction of residential buildings, particularly in the northern governorate.

According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, the total death toll since the Israeli aggression began on October 7, 2023, has surpassed 45,500, with over 108,300 injuries.

The UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) says Israeli attacks on and around hospitals have pushed Gaza's healthcare system to "the brink of total collapse" and raised serious concerns about war crimes and crimes against humanity.

As if the relentless bombing and the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza were not enough, the one sanctuary where Palestinians should have felt safe in fact became a death trap, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Tiedt on Tuesday. The protection of hospitals during warfare is paramount and must be respected by all sides, at all times.

The OHCHR said it documented at least 136 strikes on 27 of the 38 hospitals in Gaza and 12 other medical facilities during the period covered by the report, which was between October 2023 and June 2024.

Those strikes claimed significant casualties among doctors, nurses, medics and other civilians and caused significant damage, if not complete destruction of civilian infrastructure, it added.

Medical personnel and hospitals are specifically protected under international humanitarian law, provided they do not commit, or are not used to commit, outside their humanitarian function, acts harmful to the enemy.

Cartoon of Day



Peace

Cartoonist: Ricardo Ferreira from Portugal